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Dialogue in Pursuit of Development

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	Africa Development Bank
ADEA	Association for Development of African Education
AMEBA	Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (Burkina Faso)
APC	Africa-Caribia-Pacific (countries)
ASEAN	Association of South-East Nations
AU	African Unity
BESSIP	Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme
CADU	Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit
CCC	Cooperation Committee of Cambodia
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (political party Tanzania)
CDC	Council for the Development of Cambodia
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CDRA	Community Development Resource Association (South Africa)
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSDG	Centre for the Study of Democracy and Good Governance
CSO	Civic Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency (Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs)
DFID	Department For International Development (UK)
EADI	European Association of Development Research
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ELCT	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
ESAF	Extended Structural Adjusment Facility
EU	European Union
FASID	Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (Japan)
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency (Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HRVIC	Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICAP	Instituto Centroamericano de Administración Pública
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross

IDA	International Development Association (World Bank Group)
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IDRC	International Development Research centre (Canda)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (UK)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IIRP	Ishigaki Island Research Project
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme [of Sri Lanka]
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
JOCV	Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
JSA	Joint [IMF-WB] Staff Assessment
LEAP	Legal Education Action Project (South Africa)
MAFM	Modern Africa Fund Managers
MAGIC	Modern Africa Growth and Investment Company
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MPCU	Master Plan Coordinating Unit
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLTPS	National Long Term Perspective Study
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSC	National Statistic Centre (Laos)
NSI	National Statistic Institute
NUFU	Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCID	Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
PPD	Participation and Democracy Project (Guatemala)
PER	Public Expenditure Revenue
PFP	Policy Framework Papers
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PRGF	Poverty Reduction Growth Facility
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Analysis
RDB	Regional Development Banks

RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SACG	Sector Aid Co-ordination Groups
SADC	Southern Africa Development Conference
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCB	Central Bureau of Statistics (Sweden)
SEDP	Social Economic Development Plan
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SKP	Shiksha Karmi Project
SK	Shiksha Karmis
SPA	Strategic Partnership with Africa
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
TCO	Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VIPP	Visualization in Participatory Programs
WB	World Bank
WFDD	World Faiths Development Dialogue
WFP	World Food Programme
WGESA	Working Group on Education Sector Analysis

Part 1:
Introductory chapter

Dialogue in Pursuit of Development – an Introduction

Jan Olsson and Lennart Wohlgemuth[1]

This publication deals with *dialogue*. Dialogue is often considered to be the hub of international relations, not the least in development co-operation. However, it is extremely difficult to achieve dialogue, in its true sense, between partners in development. Its efficiency is severely constrained due to the assymetry in financial and human resources and knowledge. Dialogue in development co-operation is in that respect not an interaction between equals. How to overcome such constraints is a challenge for all actors involved and the main line of inquiry in this book centering around the dialogue process, capacity development and ownership.

It should be emphasised that structured dialogue has been a key to interaction between people and groups of people since time immemorial. Dialogue has been used in religion, diplomacy, conflict resolution, private sector and knowledge development all through the past millennia. It has also been important in development co-operation, though sometimes under different labels, ever since it came into being (see box on the early Swedish/Ethiopian co-operation).

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the interaction between the different parties in an aid relationship – actually, it has become the most important parameter in the rapidly increasing research on development aid, be it on aid effectiveness, aid dependency, partnership or learning in development co-operation.

> Aid is a relationship between two parties – a donor and a recipient. The effectiveness of development co-operation therefore depends largely on the quality of this relationship. It is a complex relationship characterised by huge differences in the terms and conditions by which the parties collaborate with each other (Carlsson and Wohlgemuth, 2000).

In practice, the Common Development Framework Principles, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the United Nations Development Assistance

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[1] **Jan Olsson** (Sweden) has a PhD in business administration. He was head of the financial section of the Liberia division Grangesbergsbolaget (a mining company) 1961–65. Olsson has worked for Sida since the 1970s with various positions in Ethiopia, Mocambique and Sri Lanka and he was Councellor at the Swedish Embassy in Zimbabwe. He was assistant professor at Linköping University in the beginning of the 90s. Since 2001 he has been the head of policy division at Sida.

Lennart Wohlgemuth (Sweden) has been the director of the Nordic Africa Institute since 1993. Prior to this he worked for many years for Sida, most recently as Assistant Director General and head of the sector department. Between 1992–1998 he was a board member of the African Capacity Building Foundation and from 1989 a board member and between 1993–1999 Chairman of the IIEP.

The flagship within Swedish development co-operation in the late 1960s was the integrated rural development or CADU project in Ethiopia (Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit), building on experiences from the Comilla project in then East Pakistan. Numerous skilled young government officials got their practical schooling within the project and became future leaders who were often very critical to the methods used by government and their seniors. The green revolution package: improved seed, fertiliser, extension and credit showed the potential for agricultural development in the CADU area and led to a very successful implementation. This in turn led to extensive eviction of small-scale tenant farmers from the land, by the owners of huge tracts of land who then started mechanized commercial farming.

A CADU report on this development was classified by the Ethiopian government with the consent of the Swedish government. On the other hand Sweden started a very serious and frank dialogue on the land situation. In the end Sweden conditioned continued support to Ethiopia to a decision on land reform by the Ethiopian Parliament. This is maybe the most far-reaching demand ever put forward by a Swedish government in a development co-operation dialogue. The matter was delayed by the Parliament and was finally overtaken by events. The land reform of 1975 was not a result of a parliamentary decision but of revolutionary development in the rural areas. The Swedish intervention can very well have been an important action triggering off that radical development.

Framework have all highlighted the importance of *ownership* by the recipient country of the development process and *partnership* as the co-operating mode of operation. This implies fundamental changes in aid relationships, where dialogue is considered the key tool.

The purpose of this book is to not only highlight difficulties in the dialogue process, but also to use experiences from different contributors to suggest how to improve the dialogue on the policy, programme and project levels. We have invited more than twenty practitioners with long experience of working with development co-operation to present personal reflections and ideas about the concept and process of dialogue (see Annex). They were given a free hand though we suggested they include the following general points:

- The great change in scope and content of the aid relationship both over time and within the aid package of today, from technical assistance to budget and sector support and policy dialogue;
- The contradictions between assistance for humanitarian and development purposes;
- The 'different focus' between state-to-state relationships and assistance via private enterprises and NGOs;
- The tension between aid objectives such as poverty alleviation, gender equality, etc. and the way in which aid implementers actually live and act.

Credibility in the dialogue process is also related to individual coherence. Professionalism in this area is based on personal attitudes and values, and the ability to put them across to the dialogue partner;

- The increasing importance of economic and political reform as conditions for aid; and
- Questions such as aid dependency, ownership, partnership, good governance, good performers etc. (Annex).

This open-ended approach has of course presented a wide variety of contributions of very different kinds. There is no standard format, there is no common understanding of the concept of dialogue and the writing style differs considerably from one contribution to another. We hope, however, that this diversity in tackling the subject in question, will contribute to an improved understanding of the processes where the dialogue is the key tool in creating improved practices.

Dialogue in the development debate

Over the years, new concepts such as *concerned participation*, *sustainability*, *ownership* and as of late *partnership* have been introduced in the development debate and dialogue has been considered the most important strategic means to reach the objectives.

Both parties in an aid relationship come to the table with a multitude of background variables. These variables stem from the development agendas of the countries concerned, but also from different kinds of other domestic agendas such as agricultural or trade interests. The dialogue in pursuit of development therefore needs to take into account the great variety of forces and interests that influence and drive development. What has become more evident during the 1990s is that only optimising the requirements of development co-operation does not suffice. Development takes place in a context – political, economic, social and cultural. All these dimensions reinforce or create obstacles to change.

The parties often prepare themselves in different ways as well. The donor might prepare country analyses, sector strategies and project/programme documents for internal decisions. The recipient might write development plans, arrange annual budget discussions, write public expenditure reviews, or start poverty assessment programmes. Preparation is important but can also if there is lack of flexibility be an impediment to compromise, which is a requirement, if the dialogue is to lead to a result acceptable to both parties. Real problems arise if the parties are not equally well prepared. Many times the partners do not have access to the same resources for preparations.

An added problem in the aid relationship is the notion of aid being only a relationship between two parties which is a simplification of a considerably more complex reality.

On both sides, there is a wide range of actors who communicate with each other at different levels and in ways that are not always clear and logical. In the recipient country we find actors, they can be private or public, at four different levels: the community, the district, the province/region and the national level. They can be a community council or a women's group, a district and/or provincial council and at the national level a Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Development Planning or any other line ministry. On the donor side you will have an equally diverse set of actors, such as consultants involved in studies or in implementation, the embassy in the recipient country, the aid agency itself and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a specialised Ministry of Development Co-operation, parliamentarians, NGO representatives and others from the civil society (Carlsson and Wohlgemuth, 2000).

The word dialogue in itself carries only the message, "I am prepared to discuss". Dialogue however, is pursued in order to achieve changes. In a dialogue, it must be possible to bring forward harsh criticism or there may be total agreement between the parties. This dialogue must be based on a number of values. These values relate to fundamental questions such as mutual respect for human rights, a concern for poverty reduction, the equal rights and value of every person, democratic principles, a preference for equity and equality, as well as a respect for sovereignty.

What is dialogue?

In development co-operation, the concept of dialogue has taken on different meanings over the years. The invitation to the contributors to this book gave a rather broad definition of the concept. "The term 'dialogue' stands for the methodology of interaction between the donor and recipient. At best, it is the instrument for formulating the parameters, which together should make up the joint understanding and contract between the parties on policy, programme or project level on how to interact (Annex)."

This wide definition has prompted many authors to present their own definitions of the concept. Paulo Freire´s definition has been used both to highlight what dialogue *is* and what it *is not*. "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world….dialogue cannot occur between one who imposes his/her own ideas upon another who does not wish this imposition (Suzuki)." Another interpretation along the same line says that "dialogue means to bring about an *exchange of views*. It is not to inform about views, but exchange views, which needs mutuality and sharing (Ringström)." Lysén sees "dialogue as an inter-personal exchange with the aim of increasing understanding, learning and exchanging ideas through communication. The purpose of the dialogue is not necessarily to reach one common viewpoint but to try to understand the different participants' perspectives." The concept as such is also questioned. "The term dialogue seems a bit idyllic – it should prob-

ably rather be called a discussion on the content of the aid package (Tham, in Wohlgemuth)."

Most contributions, however, point to different types of dialogues, which can roughly be summarized as below:

- The *partnership dialogue/policy dialogue* takes place between governments, or the actors appointed by them, involved in development co-operation. This kind of dialogue is the focus of the majority of the authors in this volume. In most cases it starts by establishing the values on which the co-operation must be based and later takes the form of a management tool for monitoring purposes and to solve differences of opinion and build consensus.

- The *donor co-ordination dialogue* with national ownership in focus, should involve and preferably be led by the partner government. Comprehensive poverty reduction strategies, sector wide approaches and budget support make the dialogue increasingly multi-party (Riddell). However, a number of the contributions argue that the donor dialogue is an instrument to unite them before their negotiations with the partner government (Heijden). According to Samoff, this will foster donorship rather than ownership.

- The *donor dialogue between the headquarters and the field offices of a donor* is one aspect of dialoguing which is rarely mentioned in the contributions. How will congruence between what is said by a donor in different countries and different international fora be safeguarded? Ringström describes a case where the internal dialogue in her organisation created a new base for the external dialogue.

- The *recipient national dialogue* is the process of consultation between the government and the civil society in the country. This is part of the development of democratic institutions. Spink and Suzuki give good examples of what such internal dialogues could encompass. However, the inclusion of a wide group of stakeholders implies in many countries, where the civil society is little developed and poorly organised, that the dialogue will be weak (Riddell). Lopes points to the intention of the PRSP process as being nationally owned and developed in a participatory way. This requires long and complex dialogue between a large number of stakeholders. Some contributions suggest that peer reviews would strengthen the national dialogue. This has in particular been stressed in relation to the new African institution NEPAD (Johnson Sirleaf, Odén and Heijden).

Here we will concentrate on the first category. Although all four categories are essential in their own right, the second, third and fourth categories are of interest to this analysis only when they interact with or support the first category i.e. the dialogue between the donor and recipient. That category

could itself be divided into a number of sub-categories e.g. a more general policy dialogue based on shared values and a more technical dialogue on projects and programmes. Odén gives a further breakdown of what he calls aid modalities (project, import support, structural adjustment programmes, budget support including conditionalities). An interesting conclusion that can be drawn from most contributions is, however, that there seems to be very little difference between the sub-categories as far as problems and limits for the dialogue are concerned. Similar considerations have to be made in an actual dialogue, independent of its context.

Another point that should be highlighted from the contributions, is the fact that behind dialogue there is always a desire to 'influence' outcomes in favour of specific directions. This is true within countries and between development partners. This aspect of competition for influence drives dialogue strategies and is not necessarily a bad thing. When discussing ownership, it is not to be seen as a monolithic set of desires of a recipient, donors and other national players wanting to influence outcomes by pulling in the direction considered best for achieving development outcomes. The issues of asymmetry of knowledge and capacity to influence outcomes therefore apply not only between national governments and donors but also amongst different stakeholders in a country. "While in theory PRSPs are intended to be participatory, not much has been done in terms of strategic planning, to ensure actual and efficient participation in practice (Lopes)."

Factors that influence the quality of the dialogue
Who listens?

The dialogue between the partners in development takes place on many levels and in many ways. It takes place in UN conferences and expert groups on an international level, in the media and in direct meetings between the partners. Much of the information, and also the rules and regulations relevant to the discussions, are thus set far outside the actual meeting room (Andersson, in Wohlgemuth). There are many actors and it is usually quite clear who is talking. However, who is listening? Angela Escallon wonders whether the international community is really listening to the voices of the stakeholders in the developing countries and in particular to the poor. Often, the beneficiaries are not even invited to speak in the dialogue fora – their 'views' are presented through intermediaries, surveys, studies etc. The World Bank publication "Can anyone hear us – voices of the poor" also questions the listening abilities of the people of the world (Narayan, 2000). The President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, considers them "strong voices, voices of dignity". However, is the world listening to all the concerns, which are presented to it via all the channels of information available? The facts are there, but, who is listening? A dialogue requires all parties to talk but also to be prepared to listen (Escallon, Lysén).

Asymmetric relationships

A dialogue should preferably take place between equal partners. In development co-operation, this is a rare case. Winblad points to the fact that the dialogue between the donor and the beneficiaries usually suffers from the enormous inequality between the representative of the rich donor and the poor farmer. In addition, the dialogue seldom takes place with the beneficiaries but through a government in many cases not representing the interest of the poor (Spink and Winblad). Winblad's piece gives a rare example of a successful dialogue involving the target group.

Spink and Suzuki demonstrate what such a dialogue could look like. Many contributions point to this asymmetric relationship, which constitutes the development dialogue. "Partnership is unthinkable without a genuine dialogue, but that is difficult to establish since the relationship usually is very asymmetric due to the fact that one party has the power of money and the final decision making (Ringström)."

Lopes argues that the imposition of excessive conditionality reinforces the traditional asymmetric relationships and "rather than empowering those who could serve as catalysts for change within these societies, it demonstrates their impotence".

Edgren points to exchanges, which can be described as "power games where the stronger party will impose its will on the weaker one". He also makes use of the concept of *asymmetric information*. Besides huge differences in financial and political power between the dialogue partners there are also considerable differences in access to information. In many countries the World Bank, for example, has better information about domestic matters than their counterparts do. "This imbalance may drive the recipient into a defensive position, and rather than stimulating dialogue, abundance of material may clog up the channels of communication (Edgren)."

Tham (in Wohlgemuth) summarises this very distinctly: "It is an illusion that the development dialogue is run on equal terms. In the end the donor decides whether it wishes to give support or not and the recipient has very little to add. A partnership is also a kind of a dialogue based on the same inequalities. Aid is and has always been related to conditions put forward by the donor."

Asymmetric knowledge

Many contributions emphasise the point that the donor with all its resources has the upper hand when it comes to information and knowledge. In addition to that, most knowledge banks and knowledge networks have their centres in the developed world. This point alone makes the dialogue very difficult.

Furthermore, the dialogue tends to be based on the donors' worldview. As can be seen from many contributions, the donors' views and experiences

penetrate most of the issues on the development agenda, such as structural adjustment of the economy, human rights and poverty reduction strategies. Hence, the donor sets the tone for dialogue and defines the knowledge base for it (Spink). At the same time, the donor is often insufficiently aware of, or even prepared to understand and/or accept, beliefs, traditions and values that are fundamental to the cohesion of the society in the recipient countries. In many cases, these values are considered detrimental to development. However, it is important for a donor to understand and respect limitations and possibilities shaped by the political, social, cultural and economic context in which the development co-operation takes place (Morapaya, Mysliwiec and Suzuki).

A genuine dialogue demands that both parties analyse and reflect upon social and culture values and circumstances to see if they can be useful in the implementation of projects and programmes. "Had foreign organisations introduced human rights through Buddhist values and teaching, Cambodians might have been more receptive and certainly, the human rights NGOs would have encountered less difficulties (Mysliwiec)."

This latter argument leads us into the question of whose knowledge really counts in a dialogue. Box and Swantz make the point that there is considerable local knowledge available in most developing countries but it is not sufficiently recognised by the scientists or aid practitioners. Mysliwiec clearly puts this problem before us in her exposé of the recent developments in Cambodia seen from the horizon of the dialogue or rather the lack of dialogue. Or as Spink puts it: "It takes tremendous courage to stick to your collective local knowledge doubts when the opposing arguments are packaged in several million dollars of front loaded programme support expressed in a power point presentation."

Dialogue capacity

In view of the changed development agenda with new aid modalities, the dialogue becomes even more important than before. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), Sector Wide Approaches (SWAP) and budget support demand national ownership for a sustainable process to emerge. This rests on the ability to carry out a qualified dialogue. However, dialogue capacity is a rare asset in the most needy countries. Capacity building will therefore be a first important step towards national ownership of the development process. The capacity problem is touched upon in most of the contributions and in a few, it takes a prominent place. Riddell, for instance, treats the issue at length, looks beyond the weak capacity at the government level, and reflects on what it means that it is even more limited among other stakeholders.

Lopes stresses that for the PRSP to be effective, participation of all stakeholders is necessary in the development dialogue. To be meaningful, it

demands knowledge, hence the crucial role of capacity development, a conducive environment, information in a non-foreign language and a fair decision making process. Dialogue capacity is, however, not only a question of developing technical and administrative know-how. It also requires improved processes of participation by the political actors and institutions on all levels, by the civil society and by the beneficiaries. This is further developed by Fraford Johnson (in Wohlgemuth). As can be seen from the paragraphs below limited dialogue capacity is not only a problem for the recipient.

Participation by NGOs and the national private sector would also improve the processes as stated by Johnson Sirleaf: "This failure to conduct dialogue has limited the potential for public sector/private sector partnership which could create the conditions for enhancing private capital flows and direct foreign investment."

Women's participation

Many contributions also emphasise the gender dimension of dialogue (Lopes, Samoff, Swantz, Molutsi and Ängeby, Lysén and Winblad). Sometimes dialogue can only take place when women take part: "Her real purpose was to meet village women and by talking to them find out if and how the school was working and what the women thought about it. Her fact-finding mission could only succeed if there were no men present during the dialogue as a tradition in these villages is that women do not speak when men are present. My task was basically to keep the men at the school so that Amita could get on with the job. This rule always worked (Winblad)."

Sensitivity and secrecy

In his effort to map the development of aid modalities and the dialogue in the past decade, Odén emphasises what he calls the third wave of conditions, consisting of governance and human rights issues. These demands introduced new elements of complication in the aid relationship since they touch upon the arena of politics and come close to what is considered national sovereignty. In addition to more general discussions on this issue in many contributions (Fraford Johnson in Wohlgemuth) there are three contributions, which treat areas of democracy and human rights more specifically. Lindholt's contribution is a reflection on the role of human rights conventions as a base for development dialogue, while Molutsi and Ängeby analyse the promotion of sustainable democracy in developing countries. Hammarberg, finally, with a starting point in the EU-China dialogue on human rights, asks the question whether such a dialogue should be public or not. The very sensitive nature of these issues demands that "on both sides, whatever the nature of exchange, there is a preparedness to listen to the other party (Hammarberg)".

Ethical consideration and coherence

Some contributors make the point that dialogue requires not only good orators and listeners but that their way of acting and living influences the message. Lysén and Ringström give a number of examples where such questions influence the dialogue. Mysliwiec also makes this point very clearly in her presentation of the human rights issue in Cambodia. Communication is not only about what the partners involved say, but also about how they interact. They can use all the right words like 'ownership', 'partnership' etc., but if they do not act in line with their words their sincerity will be in doubt. Lysén, for instance, points to the fact that dialogue on gender equality demands that donors themselves act in accordance with such a policy. In addition, the demands of the Bretton Woods Institutions on liberalisation and a stop for agricultural and other subsidies in recipient countries were contrary to the way influential donors like the US and EU acted. This did not create confidence in the policies advocated. This point thus includes everything from individual behaviour of donor representatives in the recipient countries to major issues of donor coherence.

Conditionality

There are many and diverse views on this subject. A recent study on ownership (Andersen, et al., 2002) defines conditionality as: "action required of the recipient government in order to receive assistance". The study recommends that, in an ownership-based partnership, conditionality be split into four categories.

- Legal obligations – core conditionality. Conditions derived from legal requirements set by donor government e.g. financial accounting.
- Shared values and commitments – core conditionality e.g. focus on poverty reduction, fulfilment of human rights etc.
- Technically based conditions in conformity with scientific and technical knowledge in projects and programmes.
- Behavioural modification. Desire to induce the recipient government to undertake political, social, economic and development strategy changes.

The first two categories – the core conditions for co-operation – are not questioned in any contribution, as they are necessary conditions when starting any co-operation. It is the second category, which will demand a lot of the dialogue, and where listening and pedagogic presentation of arguments become important qualities for the representatives. The main divider among the contributions with regard to conditionality is the last category – behavioural modifications.

Johnson Sirleaf shows in her article that conditionality coupled to the structural adjustment programmes and embraced, not only by the Bretton

Woods Institutions, but also by an increasing number of bilateral donors, made dialogue impossible. It was up to the recipient to accept the conditions or have no funds released – rather than dialogue, dictates were the main content of negotiations.

"If a country owns a reform programme, why is conditionality needed?" This question, asked by Stiglitz (1999), is a point of departure for Lopes to discuss the risk of falling into a 'Catch 22' scenario. "The weaker national accountability is, the more donors are tempted to tighten the requirements and control mechanisms, which are difficult to meet precisely because of the weak institutions and governance." In relation to the PRSP, Lopes argues for trust and an open dialogue to avoid the process being viewed as another way of pursuing conditionality.

Odén considers three stages of conditionality over time. The first was technical/economic issues at project level. The second was related to the SAP (Structural Adjustment Programme) period with macro-economic conditionality later transformed into the present code words: liberalisation, privatisation and structural reforms. This is followed by the current emphasis of political conditions related to democracy, human rights and good governance.

In relation to the ownership study referred to above, the main question raised in some papers seems to be: If we have negotiated the core conditionalities of development co-operation in the form of shared values, why then is it necessary to continue to demand behavioural modifications?

Tham considers that "an aid dialogue should be based on knowledge of a particular situation, but should also be a legitimate way to enforce an international perspective (Wohlgemuth)". Andersson (also in Wohlgemuth) makes a strong point for the need for a sound economic policy: "For Sweden it's absolutely clear today that development is not possible when a country is implementing bad economic policies. I am quite adamant on this point. We are not going to throw away money on bad economic policies."

Dialogue as a continuous process

In several of the contributions, the new methodology of dialoguing on major policy issues in the capitals of recipient countries (Public Expenditure Revenue–PER, PRSP, Heavily Indebted Poor Countries–HIPC etc.) is discussed. Odén, drawing from a study on Swedish aid to Tanzania, adds to this by pointing to the fact that some donors increasingly delegate decision making to the embassies/aid offices: "This means that Sweden is trying to establish conditions for dialogue as a continuous process. Furthermore, a similar decentralisation process is visible amongst other donors. With enhanced co-operation between donors at local level, the policy dialogue may thus often be conducted by a group of donors and the Government of Tanzania. The continuous process makes the dialogue more informed and

reduces the transaction costs for all participants. The flipside, from the Tanzanian point of view, is a stronger continuous pressure on key decision makers."

This development is, as he states, on the one hand positive. It allows for a well-informed and frank dialogue, the risk is when the headquarters question the local decisions or when local offices are afraid of committing themselves (Parsuramen, Samoff). On the other hand the risks are very high that such continuous donor involvement will seriously infringe on ownership.

Trust

Trust, a basic prerequisite for a fruitful dialogue is often both time-consuming and person-specific. It is founded in the development of personal and institutional relationships. Over time, however, if individuals convey a congruent message, trust will develop between governments/agencies. For some contributors, trust is the key to successful dialogues. "Instead of discussing the economic issues that must have concerned him, he replied without hesitation that developing trust was the most important issue (Suzuki)." Parsuramen shows in his account on building consensus on educational reform in Mauritius the importance of building trust between the partners.

However, ruining trust is a much quicker process than building trust. Change of personnel or change of government on both sides can create a less trustful situation. The same goes for change of fundamental policies e.g. less commitment to a reform process by a recipient government or when a donor 'moves the goalposts'. In the latter case, "the government finds that in spite of implementing all conditions in an agreement, a donor is changing its mind or cancelling a disbursement because of factors external to the agreement (Odén)". The trust is ruined and the dialogue suffers.

Time

Ringström captures another very important quality of a good dialogue – having enough time. "It is always time-consuming to reach the level of a 'true dialogue' and I am convinced that most of the situations we would label 'dialogue' situations never reach that stage. They are rather monologues." In practice, it seems as if we do not prioritise dialogue in spite of its importance: "Time horizons are short and we have absorbed a work pressure that makes constructive dialogue a residual post. It seems as if we have created contradictions between effectiveness and results on the one hand and participation and dialogue on the other (Lysén)." To foster ownership on the recipient side it is necessary to give their representatives the time to reflect over and establish support for issues raised in the dialogue. This is the essence of the philosophy behind the PRSP process, i.e. the

need for an internal and an external dialogue without interventions which take time. However, in *practice* both sides consider it more important to receive HIPC status than to perform a time-consuming consultation and dialogue process.

Continuity

As the dialogue requires trust, time and understanding of each other's views, continuity is of great importance. Turnover of personnel on either side is therefore regarded as a complication regarding a sustained good dialogue. On the donor side change of personnel usually takes place every second or third year. Even if the aid agency has clear policies, which must be embraced by any officeholder, the personal element of the dialogue should not be underestimated. "It is very important that people have a profile of each other to build a dialogue. I now know that no matter how many thoughts one has put into documents, what really matters is the people who work out the things in practice. Changes of personnel easily break down relationships and healthy procedures painfully built over many years (Morapaya)." Continuity coupled with good handing-over procedures is thus important for the dialogue.

Language

Usually, the dialogue between the partners is undertaken in one of the Western global languages – English (most common), French or Spanish. In addition, most of the documentation used in the dialogue is written in the same languages. This creates problems, firstly through the exclusion of most people, particularly on the recipient side, from the discussions and secondly because it often creates misunderstandings: "The language itself, which in some cases is foreign to both parties, is bound by culturally dominant meanings (Morapaya)." In the internal dialogue, large groups are excluded if written material is not translated into local languages, a process which is very time-consuming and expensive (Winblad, Mysliwiec).

Donor co-ordination – harmonisation

Earlier, we stressed that recipient governments often lack capacity to plan and carry out a quality dialogue. These scarce resources are stretched due to lack of harmony in donor approaches. If harmonisation of procedures – monitoring and evaluation reporting, accounting, and auditing – could be agreed upon, this would drastically reduce the transaction costs for the recipient government. However, this harmony is far from being reached in many countries: "Even in contexts in which there are sound government systems, donor harmonisation does not always follow, not even amongst the

so-called *like-minded* donors, all of which support programmatic aid
(Riddell)."

How a dialogue can be facilitated – recommendations

Below follows a summary of, in our view, the most important lessons learnt
by the contributors as shown in their contributions and how the shortcom-
ings presented above can be converted into recommendations for a future,
better dialogue. We have identified three important areas: the dialogue
process, capacity building and an emphasis on ownership.

The dialogue process

- Take the international and regional development debate as point of de-
  parture for the bilateral development dialogue. This international debate
  aims at consensus building and decisions in the form of International
  Conventions, regional charters, agreements and understandings at World
  Summits and agreements on working relationships such as the Cotonou
  Agreement.
- Enter the bilateral dialogue with the understanding that all parties are of
  equal value, representing sovereign states with their citizens' best in mind.
- Share and be open and clear about values and interests that govern co-
  operation.
- When major differences occur between the parties in terms of values and
  interests, the dialogue comes under severe constraints. Openness then
  becomes increasingly important and special demands are made on all sides
  for careful argumentation and careful listening in particular. When the
  basic differences are too big and no agreements can be reached – end
  government-to-government co-operation.
- There must be a mutual respect for agreements reached between parties,
  including clarity on resource commitments, payments and reporting prin-
  ciples.
- Policy dialogue requires transparency and the necessary time for proper
  political consultations for all parties and preparedness to listen to and
  learn from each other.
- The recipients countries themselves should aim at creating dialogue fora
  which include different actors such as representatives of government, the
  political community, the civil society – men as well as women, and the
  direct beneficiaries. To the fora, also representatives of donors might be
  invited.
- Agree upon a realistic level of ambition in relation to the dialogue and
  implementation capacity of the recipient. Context-specific, tailor-made
  solutions are always to be chosen before general blueprints. Conditionality
  should never be the entry point of the dialogue.

- Emphasise trust, continuity and ample time. Parties have to be humble and open, and listen to each other to learn about and accept differences concerning political, social and economic contexts in each other's countries and respect the limitations and possibilities this knowledge brings.
- Most of the above points relate to government to government dialogue but should also apply to other kinds of dialogue (NGO, civil society etc.).

Capacity development

There is no easy way of learning to become a good dialogue partner. The contributors list a number of important prerequisites and requirements for a good dialogue, but give little guidance on how to develop the skills and, perhaps even more important, the attitudes needed. It is, however, important to:

- Find an approach for each individual country – donor as well as recipient – to bridge the knowledge gap between high level negotiations at International Conventions and UN summits on the one hand and bilateral development co-operation dialogues on the other.
- Develop special facilities for training and discussions – both in donor agencies and recipient organisations – on what is required for a good dialogue. As shown repeatedly in the contributions, much can be learnt to make dialogues function better. However, as it is often a question of changed attitudes, internal seminars and discussions led by experienced peers are a better method than traditional training classes. One area that should be prioritised is increasing knowledge and understanding of the partner countries concerning their history, culture, language(s), and beliefs.
- Develop joint special programmes for building, enhancing and/or strengthening capacity in the government and the institutions in the recipient country in order to improve their ability to discuss and negotiate with the donors. This should also encompass respect for local capacity already available including efforts to retain trained personnel in the country.
- Reduce the asymmetry of information and develop information at the recipient end through national and regional networks, and improve their access to information technology.
- Assist in the formation of groups of like-minded recipient countries to facilitate sharing of experiences from dialogue situations.

Ownership

Without ownership, there is no sustainability and thus no long-term effects on aid or any other intervention. This point, repeated in most contributions, is accepted by everyone but, in practice, overlooked again and again. We

wish to end this introductory chapter by emphasising that the question of ownership always has to be kept in mind in every step of the dialogue. A dialogue without this perspective is no dialogue. Adherence to the recommendations above could be an important step in this direction. It is not only a question of 'who listens' but also 'who cares' i.e. that the dialogue should lead to practical and sustainable results!

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About the contributions

Since the authors were given a free hand to address the subject of dialogue, there were no immediate criteria for organising their contributions. We have chosen to present them in a straightforward alphabetical order under two headings: Policy Dialogue and Projects and Programme Dialogue. However, to allow the reader to benefit from a broader perspective of the problems surrounding dialogue in pursuit of development the four contributions by Edgren, Lopes, Ouattara and Wohlgemuth, which all have a slightly broader approach to these questions, have been chosen to form an introductory block following this introductory chapter.

Introductory block

Gösta Edgren shares his rich experience from dialoguing as a high Swedish government representative and gives a general review of the subject. He introduces the concept of asymmetric information and discusses the dynamics of this asymmetry. The article also presents a set of concrete measures on how to create more room for dialogue.

Carlos Lopes, from his position as a top UNDP official, puts dialogue in the perspective of development theory advocated by Amartya Sen. From this starting point, Lopes then critically reviews the role of dialogue in the Emerging New Development Agenda manifested in the PRSP processes. He points to the 'Catch 22' scenario when ownership is threatened by excessive conditionality and discusses how to achieve a 'win-win' dialogue.

Alassane Ouattara, based on all his experience as a long-serving high official of the International Monetary Fund and as prime minister of Côte d'Ivoire, the basic requirements needed for a real dialogue in pursuit of development to take place.

Lennart Wohlgemuth summarises interviews with four important actors and policy makers within the field of development co-operation, who give their views from many years of active participation in and responsibility for the development dialogue in their respective countries. Hilde Fraford Johnson has served in two Norwegian cabinets as Minister of International Co-operation, Pertti Majanen is at present Under-Secretary within the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and responsible for development co-operation,

Gun-Britt Andersson was at the time of the interview State Secretary in the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Carl Tham was Director General of Sida in Sweden for many years.

Policy dialogue

Angela Escallon Emiliani makes a strong plea for listening to the voices of the poor and taking note of all available information on the asymmetric relations between the states and people of the world. This she claims is a prerequisite for any real dialogue.

Henrick van der Heijden, based on his long experience as an employee of the World Bank and advisor to Ministries of Finance on policy issues, argues for an evolving policy dialogue with a broader coverage and participation of all the relevant parties, along with improvements in the way it is conducted. He stresses commitment to policy reform, the strengthening of domestic ownership and the selection of the proper aid modalities.

Annika Lysén gives a perspective of a former NGO activist on the reasons for difficulties experienced in developing a fruitful dialogue. She goes on to discuss why dialogue in development is of utmost importance, how we deal with the creation of communication skills and what we can learn from civil society organisations.

Eva Mysliwiec gives an account of the history of Cambodia during the last 25 years seen from a perspective of dialogue between that country and the outside world. It is a story of how international perspectives and developments influence relationships and of gross insensitivity from the outside world for a people that has gone through the trauma of mass murder and destruction.

Bertil Odén builds his article on more than 30 years of practical work with Swedish development co-operation in mainly East Africa. From this region he describes and analyses how the dialogue concept has developed in the international debate. Three waves of conditionality and their effects on the dialogue are also identified. The article ends with the challenges for dialogue today and in the future.

Abby Riddell presents an overview of and reflects on the evolving meaning of dialogue over recent years. She details a number of topics related to the meaning and practice of dialogue under the headings of recipient country and development community weaknesses.

Margaretha Ringström's article makes a strong point for already starting the dialogue within one's own organisation so that Headquarters and the Field convey the same message. She also presents experience from dialogues ranging from dialogue with a small grass-root oriented organisation in Zimbabwe to the World Faiths Development Dialogue between the world's major religions and the World Bank.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf maintains that the initiatives by African states during

the 1970s, which were attacked and defeated by the Bretton Woods institutions, had the same cornerstones as the present New Development Agenda. The time of no-dialogue is also over. She defines the main stakeholders in the development dialogue, the main issues and the effectiveness of different instruments for dialogue.

Peter Spink draws dialogue experiences from working close to the grassroot level to explore possibilities for local action in poverty reduction in Brazil. He describes in detail the process and the debate leading up to identification of major blocks to dialogue. The article also analyses the blocks built up through evaluation by looking at the various understandings of what evaluation was at the Sida headquarters at the beginning of the 90s.

Naoki Suzuki's paper consists of two parts. The first presents major difficulties of dialogue in development, exemplified through the JICA project 'Ishikawa'. It defines five major lessons for dialogue. The second part describes and discusses the challenges in the dialogue for a practitioner and is based on a donor-funded research project. The lessons learnt in the first part are successfully put to use in this project.

Project and programme dialogue

Louk de la Rive Box and *Marja-Lisa Swantz* both give examples from the dialogue, or lack thereof, between scientists and policy makers on the one hand and traditional knowledge bearers on the other. They point to the fact that there is a great deal of knowledge in most countries possessed by the people who are supposed to carry development further. However, they stress that it is very difficult to draw upon and disseminate this knowledge.

Thomas Hammarberg gives his views on whether or not a dialogue on human rights is possible and, if so, what the prerequisites for a true dialogue are and what it should look like. From his experience with the EU-China dialogue on human rights he also discusses if and when such a dialogue should take the form of secret discussions.

Lone Lindholt reflects on the role of international human rights instruments in the aid and development dialogue. She analyses the body of human rights conventions discussing the strengths and weaknesses of, respectively, global, regional and national legislation, in relation to the development dialogue, and illustrates this by a number of cases.

Patrick Molutsi and *Martin Ängeby* summarise the experiences of dialoguing in the field of democratic development of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). The experiences are based on practical exposure when trying to apply a dialogue and participatory methodology in the field. The contribution contains experiences from four case studies from Guatemala, Indonesia, Nepal and Nigeria and reflects on some of the difficulties, challenges and lessons learnt during the first five years of field operations conducted under IDEA's Capacity Programme.

Ran B. Morapaya in his contribution shares his experiences both as a long-serving government official of Sri Lanka and as an official of the Swedish development office in Colombo, of the dialogue at project level between the two countries in question. His point of reference is his deep involvement in the Dialogue in Rural Development from the Integrated Rural Development Programme of Sri Lanka.

Nakanyike Musisi gives an account of the dialogue with the donors in the process of the major reform of Makerere University. She concentrates her account on the relationship between Rockefeller Foundation and Makerere University, which has been very important, if not decisive, for the rapid and positive development of the university in recent years. She points at what made the dialogue so successful but also the pitfalls and risks involved in such a close relationship.

Armoogum Parsuramen focuses on development aid in the field of education, in Mauritius, in the context of the preparation, formulation and implementation of a five-year plan for education. He illustrates how the government with the help of dialogue managed to build consensus with internal and external stakeholders around a broad reform agenda.

Joel Samoff in his contribution takes the new concentration on sectoral support as his starting point. Based on his assignment from UNESCO to review the education sector analysis process in a great number of African countries he makes some major observations on the Sector-Based Development and Educational Partnerships, which have serious implications for the aid dialogue.

Bounthavy Sisouphanthong gives an example of the concept of twinning between the two national statistical institutes of Laos and Sweden as a method of continuous and successful dialogue. He addresses the questions whether twinning actually works and whether it ensures a good dialogue between the partners.

Uno Winblad in his contribution points to the fact that the asymmetric relationship is not only between donors and recipients but also between the government officials in the recipient countries and the ultimate beneficiaries of aid and development. As one of very few examples of a meaningful dialogue he has witnessed in his many years of development work he describes the Shiksa Karmi Project in India. With the help of intermediaries a direct dialogue between donor-government representatives and the intended beneficiaries became possible and actually influenced the implementation of the project.

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Part 2:
Introductory block

The Unequal Dialogue

Gus Edgren[1]

An instrument for learning and appreciation

The word *dialogue* comes from two Greek roots, *dia* in this context meaning 'with each other' and *logos* meaning word. The technique of using two or several dialogue partners to make logical reasoning more lively and concrete was utilised by early philosophers like Plato and Confucius, and even today it adds dramatic emphasis to any story, be it epics, poetry or drama. In pedagogy and in modern management theory the dialogue is seen as a major instrument for developing exchange among human beings who appreciate each other's views, leading to a collective learning experience (Senge, 1990). Dialogue opens possibilities for participants to learn many things about themselves and others that they may not learn in any book.

For learning to take place, participants must of course have an open mind, not least to the possibility that their own facts may be wrong or their opinions based on flawed analysis. If the dialogue partners refuse to seriously discuss the basis for their arguments, they are building *defensive positions*, a process which often spells the end of dialogue. Such positions on the other hand are a normal element in *negotiation*, a process that differs from dialogue by aiming to resolve a conflict of interest. The outcome of negotiations may not make any of the participants much wiser and, like in gambling, it is very much influenced by the number of chips possessed by each player at the outset as well as by the tactics used by each side (Dixit and Nalebuff, 1993).

Development practitioners have a tendency to sweepingly categorise all exchanges of views and information that take place between agents of donors and recipients of aid under the common heading of 'development dialogue'. It is true that even the most hardnosed session of bargaining for turf or money may open windows for true dialogue when arguments are weighed on the basis of their strength rather than their provenance. But the use of the term 'dialogue' in such cases obscures the difference between on one hand trying to reach a common vision and on the other trying to defeat the position of another player in the game. True dialogue cannot develop where

[1] **Gus (Gösta) Edgren** (Sweden) holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Statistics from the University of Stockholm. He is a labour and development economist with experience from Swedish trade unions (TCO) and from international labour organisations. He has worked in aid administration for thirty years in different parts of the world, for UNDP, ILO, Sida and the Swedish Foreign Ministry. He is currently Sweden's Ambassador to Vietnam.

any participant is using advantages in power or access to information to impose their will on the others. The purpose of the present essay is to examine to what extent it is possible to increase the space for 'dialogue' in the intercourse of development partners by making the preconditions clearer and by changing some of the rules that guide discussions between partners in the aid relationship. The prospects differ between discussion forums depending on their function as well as on the imbalance in power and information access between the parties. We shall first consider the so-called policy dialogue, which has attracted more public attention than other more technical exchanges.

Policy dialogue: collective learning experience or blackmail?

In July 1853, when commodore Matthew Perry anchored his frigates in the Japanese port of Uraga and threatened to blow the town to pieces if the Shogun refused to receive a letter from the American president requesting that Japan open its ports to US trade, this was but the latest phase in a long 'policy dialogue' that had not gone very well for the Americans. After forcing the Japanese to receive the letter, Perry sailed and said he would return in one year's time for an answer. He left no one in doubt about what would happen if the answer was negative.

Commodore Perry's mission is a classic example of a negotiating partner increasing his *leverage* to strengthen his position in the game. His threat level may sound a bit heavy today, but only a bit. While most countries today have moral reservations as well as legal protection against blackmail and extortion perpetrated against their own citizens, such practices are not only permitted in the intercourse with foreign governments but often celebrated as great victories of diplomacy. When the European Commission used all its economic and political might including aid and trade in 1994 to force Namibia to open its waters to European fishing fleets, it was a modern replay of Perry's visit to the Shogun. These are examples of exchanges that have lost their character of dialogue and turned into power games where the stronger party will impose its will on the weaker one.

Experience from the policy dialogue of the 1990s indicates that the stronger party – mostly the donor or International Financial Institution (IFI) side – will get better results from the dialogue if it uses a less heavy-handed approach. Attempts to bully African countries into accepting Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) often raised hackles about infringement of sovereignty in negotiations which had otherwise been conducted in an open and productive atmosphere (Devarajan et al., 2001, p. 26). The World Bank's review concluded that results would have been better if the IFIs had shown more sensitivity to the views of the African countries.

The question of 'sovereignty'

> It is debatable whether an infringement of sovereignty is a real danger in these discussions, legally speaking, since the recipient has the option to reject the deal without risking being blown to bits by cannons. In this context, the term 'sovereignty' will have a moral rather than a legal meaning. A poor person has a sense of human dignity, which keeps him or her from engaging in certain acts, no matter how desperate the situation. To representatives of the poor state, the same type of limits are drawn in the name of 'sovereignty'. It is important to note that these limits are defined by the countries themselves and that they vary over time and with the sense of national dignity and propriety among political leaders on either side of the dialogue.

For many years the Nordic countries were seen as bending over backwards in order to protect the recipient's right to choose. In one of the most famous dialogues in the history of Nordic development aid, the Nordic aid agencies jointly organised a seminar in 1983 with the Tanzanian government in a gentle effort to persuade Tanzania to take decisive steps towards economic reform, in the direction suggested by IMF but not necessarily at the pace prescribed by the IFIs. The Nordic participants came back happy and relieved after having spoken their minds. But president Nyerere interpreted the discussion very differently, as unwavering support for his resistance to making up with IMF. This collective learning experience was a factor in explaining the total about-turn of the Nordic governments a few years later, from staying out of the 'Washington Consensus' of the Bank and the Fund to becoming the most hawkish supporters of enforcing the SAPs in Africa. This tilt in the dialogue mode climaxed in 1993–95, when the Nordics suspended their programme aid and it took a cabinet reshuffle to bring it back on stream again.[2] Tanzania obliged the donors as the aid relationship reached its lowest point in thirty years. A joint commission (the Helleiner Commission) managed to restore the relationship and its rules of conduct again.

Policy dialogues which are often unproductive are those concerning governance and human rights. The donor agency[3] may have been instructed by its principal to inform the recipient side about its official position, but foreign aid in itself offers insufficient leverage in vital policy issues of this

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[2] The donors had substantive reasons for ending this type of aid in view of its clear and persistent misuse by the Treasury. It was the point of leverage which was a new element.

[3] The term 'agent' or 'agency' is used here for the government agencies or officials representing the donor, IFI or the recipient government. 'Principals' in this relationship are the governments, or the boards of IFIs respectively.

nature, unless combined with trade or military sanctions (Crawford, 1997). None of the agents taking part in the negotiations are ready to listen to the arguments of the other side, and they may not even forward those arguments to their own principals. Policy conditionality related to governance and human rights becomes particularly counterproductive when it is superimposed on the IFI conditionality of economic reform. This was illustrated by the case of the Swedish suspension of aid to Zambia in 1996–98 when parliament changed the country's constitution to exclude Kenneth Kaunda from running in the elections. Needless to say, the political condition was unilaterally imposed, while the economic reforms that Zambia simultaneously undertook had been agreed with the IFIs. Dialogue is not a proper term to describe these complications.

If for a moment we disregard the stakeholders on the recipient side, the line-up of *stakeholders* on the donor side often adds complications to a policy dialogue. All donors have interests of their own, some of them related to domestic political opinion, some to economic interests and others perhaps of a more geopolitical nature. The IFIs are not supposed to have any other interests than the most effective use of their resources for reducing poverty and promoting economic growth and stability of the external account. But in actual fact, even IFIs must solicit political support among their most influential constituents (in particular the US). Taken together, all these interests often provide a rather volatile power base for the IFIs in managing the dialogue with a recipient government. This has probably contributed to their tendency to use a 'cookie-cutter' approach, recommending to all borrowers an almost identical austerity and privatisation programme. More sophisticated tailor-made approaches would have difficulties gaining the support of major donors.

A Sida evaluation of Swedish Programme Aid concludes that smaller donors like Sweden would have small means of influencing the positions of IFIs in the policy dialogue even if they wanted to (White, 1999).[4] It is probably true that the political economy as well as the bureaucratic mechanisms of the IFI makes it difficult for any outsider to dent the cookie-cutter. But Sweden as well as other donors conducts its own bilateral dialogue with the recipient, and sometimes several 'like-minded' donors join in discussing policy with a different emphasis from that of the IFIs. Such dialogues may help in empowering the recipient by offering alternative solutions, if not to the overriding macroeconomic problems at least to some of the social dimensions of economic reform. The Tanzania experience mentioned above suggests that there are limits and caveats to this line of action.

[4] White's main point here is that Sweden has never tried to formulate a 'Swedish position', let alone to pursue it.

The stakeholder line-up on the recipient side is even more complex than on the donor side. The traditional perspective of a policy dialogue includes an IFI official and a government representative, most often an official of the ministry of finance. But if we see the policy dialogue as part of a national process of policy making, a whole range of other stakeholders can be identified, from national parliaments to sector ministries, regional bodies, NGOs and local communities. Benno Ndulu has suggested that civil society and the intended beneficiaries of reform and aid transfers should be seen as the principals in a principal-agent relationship where the agent is the recipient government (ISS, 2001).

Whichever analytical assumptions one may make about their roles, it is necessary to take all stakeholders into account in order to fit the policy dialogue into its political context. As referred to below, there is an *internal dialogue* on the recipient side which is as important as any discussion with donors and IFIs. Whether or not the domestic stakeholders are involved in the actual dialogue, their support or rejection will determine the implementation of any policies agreed on. In 'Assessing Aid' (World Bank 1998) a chastened World Bank emphasises stakeholder support as a precondition for successful adjustment lending. The policy dialogue (and its financial incentives) can help in solving a collective choice problem by tilting the political balance in favour of 'progressive' forces. In this case, the policy reforms could be regarded as home-grown rather than imposed by outsiders. This is an approach which in any case has more to do with dialogue than the 'cookie-cutter' approach. But the actual practice of the IFIs still differs from this new and client-sensitive line. The record of African SAPs in the 1990s shows no positive correlation between reform and aid flows, and donors dole out the same type and volume of aid regardless of whether the policy is 'progressive' or counterproductive (Devarajan, op. cit.).

The SWAP models for applying a programme approach, and the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) process which has replaced the IMF's extended structural adjustment facility (ESAF) try to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the policy evaluation that is a precondition for funding. Drawing on a long series of sorry experiences from agency-driven SAPs based on questionable econometric models, the IFIs have concluded that sustainable economic reform must flow from domestic knowledge about what works and what doesn't (World Bank, 1998). It is still too early to tell whether a genuinely participatory approach can be fitted into the strait-jacket of the IFI's consultation processes, or indeed if they are compatible with the administrative procedures and political power play of recipient governments. At face value, however, the participatory approach presents an opportunity for collective learning within the framework of policy dialogue.

In spite of the great inequality in power between the parties and the many examples of dialogue among the deaf, there is still no denying that the policy dialogue has brought about some useful *learning* on both sides of

the table. Some of this shared experience may not have been the result of dialogue itself, but rather the opposite. Like the Japanese who were forced by cannons to trade with the US, countries that have been forced to adopt a SAP in the 1990s have discovered the advantages offered by the new policy environment and learned to exploit them. But apart from that, there are learning experiences that have been derived from the dialogue as such, and they are of greater interest to the present discussion. Dialogue and advancement of knowledge in this case are related first to the analysis of policies and their effectiveness, and second to the process of policy dialogue itself.

Dialogue about alternative policies and their effectiveness is mostly supported by studies and reports prepared by either one of the dialogue partners. Since there are many donors and international agencies involved in dialogue with each recipient government, and the analysis may be concerned with either the economy as a whole or with a sector, the volume of studies very often transcends the absorptive capacity of the negotiators on the recipient side. The few government officials who are capable of taking a strategic view of where the policy dialogue should be heading are overworked and feel bombarded with material they cannot even evaluate, much less utilise for making their points. Although the bulk of all studies will pass by their desks very quickly on their way to oblivion, some studies will attract wide attention among donor and recipient agencies and will contribute to increasing the understanding of policy outcomes. Some of them attract attention because the outcomes are too striking to ignore. In some cases, they get attention because they are pushed by important agents in the donor community, such as the World Bank. And sometimes they attract particular interest because they are the product of processes which have engaged a wide range of stakeholders on both sides and in civil society, in designing the studies as well as in evaluating their results. Again, the key to a good dialogue is patience, a quality that is difficult to maintain if the donor agents are under heavy pressure from their principals to disburse funds or sign agreements.

Dialogue among partners

Participatory evaluation of policy has become increasingly common with attempts to reinvent the aid relationship as a genuine *partnership*. OECD's development assistance committee (DAC) has suggested a number of guiding principles for making development co-operation partnerships more equal, including recipient ownership of policies and strategies, increased transparency on either side and allowing recipients to manage the coordination of external resource flows. Dialogue is seen as the most important instrument for managing these processes.

The Swedish government elaborated on these principles in a report to Parliament in 1998 on partnerships in Africa, entitled *Africa on the Move* (MFA, 1998:8). The report suggested some very ambitious principles for giving more power to the recipient side, by allowing the their governments to formulate their own strategies and policies and by adjusting the methods of resource transfer to the capacities at the receiving end. While some of these statements were quite radical and signified departure from some of the practices referred to above, the report also contained pronunciations which pointed in another direction. A condition for partnership should be 'shared values', among which a respect for human rights was paramount. There were also references to past over-reliance on state intervention in the economy, clearly based on values which Sweden no longer shared. The apparent dilemma of basing 'empowerment' on 'shared values' was later resolved by a Parliamentary Commission on Swedish Policy for Global Development, which suggested that Sweden should limit its bilateral aid to countries whose governments make credible efforts to reach the development objectives laid down by Parliament. An open, transparent and equal dialogue will be required to manage flexible aid forms like SWAPs, budget support and debt relief that could be extended to this select group of partners (Globkom, 2001).

The inter-governmental dialogue is fraught with political and institutional contradictions, and these policy statements show that even a well-meaning donor has difficulties in balancing all the interests and concerns involved. To this must be added the deeper dimensions of stakeholder participation. Even when the two government partners feel that their partnership functions excellently and the playing field is level, local communities, lower levels of the administration, NGOs and other stakeholders may feel left out of the loop and dissatisfaction may already be spreading from the bottom up. A recent evaluation of a Sida-funded area development programme in Ethiopia showed an exceptionally high degree of government ownership, but the project had been appropriated by the Ministry of Finance to the detriment of the poor peasants who were supposed to be the 'target group' of the activity (ODI, 2002). The Swedish side was reluctant to interfere in what was seen as an internal Ethiopian management question. A good and well-established partnership like the one between Sweden and Ethiopia should however, allow open discussion of such a matter, in particular since it impinges on the outcome of the project as a whole.

Dialogue at the professional and technical level

One reason for the bilateral donors' attraction to project aid has traditionally been that the aid relationship need not be encumbered by politically charged discussions about macro policy. It was long believed that whatever the macro policy framework and the political situation, it would always be

possible to do *something* useful to help in relieving poverty by way of project aid. This belief has been weakened by decades of failures by aid projects to circumvent or compensate for distorted prices and exchange rates, big time corruption and autocracy. The World Bank study 'Assessing Aid' (1998) goes a very long way in questioning if any form of aid can work in a distorted macro framework. Most bilateral donors still hope that good projects can be undertaken in bad settings, but nowadays they are much more aware of the risks.

Good project in a bad setting = risk for escalating dialogue

A very graphic illustration of the problem of launching a 'good project in a bad setting' was the Sida-supported CADU area development project which was being designed for the Arussi Province of Ethiopia in the late 60s. Building the design of small farm development on too optimistic assumptions on land tenure in the area, Sida soon realised that the existing legislation would not protect large numbers of tenants from being evicted when the external support made new farming methods profitable. The Swedish government thus made a change in the legislation protecting tenants a condition for launching its biggest ever development project in the country. This is an example of policy conditionality emerging out of the contradictions of the goals and the policy environment of a large and complex project. It was not easy for the Imperial Government to get the required piece of legislation through a parliament dominated by landlords, but in 1975 a violent revolution finally delivered the land reform. The relief was temporary, since the revolution transformed the policy environment from one bad setting to another.

The project level dialogue is generally of a professional and technical nature and will not so often lead to political controversy. Even though an appropriate policy environment is crucial for success in projects as well as in programmes, this factor is usually taken into account before the project is designed (though not always, see box). In discussions between professionals representing donor and recipient it is often difficult to find so much of the tension and inequality of the aid relationship. Other interests may be at play, but the meeting of professionals with a common scientific or technical background often leads very close to what we could term a genuine development dialogue. This is for instance often the case when research institutions in donor and recipient countries are 'twinned' and the advancement of knowledge is seen as a shared concern by both institutions.

It is interesting to note, however, that even the professional dialogue is sensitive to who is controlling the application of resources. Hence, the best dialogue appears to take place when competent professionals on the recipi-

ent side are in charge or at least partly responsible for project design. Complaints from the recipient side about a lack of influence are frequent in a mode of project implementation which leaves the most important decisions to consultants and specialists from the donor country.

Another interesting aspect arises from the fact that sector specialists on donor and recipient sides often find it easy to agree on project design and implementation, while those responsible for project finance on either side (finance ministry and donor agency respectively) may disagree with the specialists because they consider the proposal too expensive. Here, the point of debate often concerns quality versus cost, and the specialists will argue against their paymasters. In many cases, vested interests on both sides collude to prolong a project beyond the point where external resource inputs are necessary or even productive (Catterson and Lindahl, 1999). The financial programme managers on either side often find it difficult to withstand opposition when exposed to pressure from their own technical expertise.

Asymmetric information

In addition to the inequality of financial and political power which characterises the aid relationship, the dialogue partners also have widely different access to information. The recipient sometimes has the upper hand in knowing the internal workings of government and the political conditions for getting a project or policy implemented, but the IFIs are almost always better equipped with statistical data and analytical tools for evaluating the impact of alternative policies. They have access to international data repositories which can give crushing statistical evidence in support of practically every kind of conclusion that the IFI delegation wishes to pursue. In many cases, they even have better domestic data than the recipient officials, e.g. when the World Bank has funded the survey in the country and commissioned the analytical work. The negotiators on the recipient team are overworked and too few of them are experienced enough to assess the quality of all this information, let alone draw alternative conclusions from it. This imbalance may drive the recipient into a defensive position, and rather than stimulating dialogue the abundance of material may clog up the channels of communication.

Asymmetric information affects the game plans for the negotiating parties. When negotiating for a new project proposal, the donor side usually knows less than the recipient about the prospects of various preconditions being fulfilled by domestic agencies. There may be budget estimates and manning plans for implementing agencies, but only the government insiders can tell whether they are realistic. In a situation like this, the donor may wish to undertake a short-term pilot project to test the ground before making any major commitment. This gives the recipient a strong incentive

for short-term commitment of resources for the pilot, but it will still be impossible to assess the financial sustainability of a long-term engagement. When 'hooked' on an unsustainable programme, most donors prefer to stay on for too long, thereby allowing the recipient government to use its domestic resources elsewhere (Catterson and Lindahl, 1999).

Another case where the recipient has the advantage of better insights is usually when two donors are competing for the same project. If the host of the project is a sector ministry or agency, its negotiators may use the competitive situation to increase the size of the project, or even try to duplicate it in order not to lose one of the donors. Lack of transparency in combination with inter-departmental rivalries has often led to projects which are bigger and more expensive than necessary.

A more serious inequity in the relationship is caused by the recipient's lack of knowledge regarding whether and how much the donor is prepared to invest in a project. Sometimes recipients are not even informed of the actual expenditure once the project is being implemented. Some donors make available equipment and personnel from their own countries without informing the recipient about their costs. Such practices make it impossible to evaluate cost effectiveness, and the end result is often that projects use too many and too advanced foreign inputs, leading to a lack of financial sustainability. The same effect may be drawn from uncertainty regarding the total commitment of a donor to a recipient country. If one does not know where the budget limit lies, there is no disincentive to accepting even projects of questionable usefulness. And when the recipient does not know how long a donor will continue to fund a project, this is often a disincentive to providing counterpart financing, since such moves could encourage the donor to phase out faster.

It is possible to fit these uncertainties into a game theory, taking into account what the two sides want to gain and how probable it is that they will achieve it. The upshot of such analysis is that uncertainty always increases transaction costs for the operation as a whole, and in some cases it may even bring distortions in project or programme design that are big enough to turn them into 'white elephants'. From the point of view of the dialogue, the recipient's lack of knowledge of how much the donor will commit and how long he will stay is one of the most important factors behind the inequality of the whole aid relationship.

Different levels and channels of communication

A free exchange of views on development problems can be conducted through a variety of means, of varying degrees of formality. In his evaluation of Swedish programme aid, Howard White (1999) identifies several dimensions of donor influence on a recipient government, separating direct influence from indirect via other agencies, and formal channels from semi-

formal (messages, representations) and informal (including social contacts). It is clear that a donor with a wide range of engagements in the country's development can use many contact points for bringing home a point, including technical and commercial co-operation projects. White's conclusion from a study of Swedish behaviour in eight recipient countries is that Sweden rarely has a point to make in the multilateral policy dialogue and that even if it had one, Sweden would not try to lead the discussion in a 'progressive' direction.

When the dialogue heats up, all the contact points of the multi-layered networks of donor-recipient intercourse may get involved, through commercial, political development co-operation relations. In some cases, a virtual campaign has been mounted to persuade the government decision makers and their entourage about the merits and demerits of debated policies. In the capitals of small recipient economies, the donor networks are very prominent, and the decision makers should be excused if sometimes they feel surrounded by attackers who all pursue the same point. But an informal discussion forum like a seminar or a social get-together offers more space for genuine dialogue than the official meetings for negotiating a contract or for the annual review in the aid coordination group. This approach is increasingly being used both by IFIs and bilateral donors to engage recipients in a more open and incisive discussion of difficult issues of development policy.

Sida and its principals in the Swedish government have often become involved behind the scene when major controversies between a partner country and the IFIs begin to impact negatively on the macro environment for development. The best-known example is the case of Tanzania during the first half of the 80s, when the macro environment deteriorated precipitously as the country's political leadership got locked in a rather ideological battle with IMF over price controls and the exchange rate. All the Nordic countries tried to help in saving Tanzania (and their own development investments) by giving technical assistance for examining the policy options. The database as well as the collective experience on the Tanzanian side was not sufficient for explaining what would happen if farm gate prices were raised by a certain percentage or if the shilling was drastically devalued, as required by IMF as a condition for the loan. A lot of effort went into these studies without apparent results for several years. However, when the leadership changed, these exercises had prepared Tanzania for managing a more liberal trade regime.

An interesting example of a different kind is Vietnam, which in 1989–93 undertook some of the most dramatic and successful economic reforms ever done by a 'transition economy'. The most interesting dialogue in this case was an *internal dialogue* which was conducted within the leadership – there was no IFI that was ready to extend any loans to the country at that time. The reforms were driven by a sharp sense of urgency, arising from economic

failures, in particular in providing enough food to feed the population. Vietnam was extremely dependent on aid from the former Soviet Union, whose economy was also beginning to look shaky. There was no experience of managing a market based economy, but Vietnam used UNDP as one of the very few available donor agencies with access to such knowledge for introducing crash training and study visits for top officials. This technical co-operation programme probably had the highest pay-off of any aid project at the time, since it enabled the politicians and managers to keep the economy from collapsing when it was changed within a period of 18 months from a stagnating state-controlled and aid-dependent cripple to a market-oriented emerging 'tiger' economy with foreign aid dropping to only one per cent of GDP. This was not just a case of skilful management but of a widespread sense of urgency and of intensive internal dialogue, involving all levels of decision makers in the party, the bureaucracy and the military (Riedel and Turley, 1999). One can imagine how that dialogue could have turned, had the policy reforms failed to deliver the goods.

There is no manual for conducting either the policy dialogue or a programme review, and both donor and recipient agents are supposed to know the basic facts from their own experience and to learn the strategy and the game theory from their senior colleagues. This on-the-job learning does not always produce good results, which is reflected in the quality of the negotiating teams as well as in the outcome of their negotiations. I shall never forget the intimidating experience of my first visit to India as a youngish leader of a Swedish negotiating team. The seasoned Indian team was vastly superior in knowledge and negotiating tactics, but fortunately for us, their sense of fair play kept them from taking advantage of all our blunders. I have often wondered how it would feel to be a young African government official, meeting for the first time a team of IMF officials, armed to the teeth with figures and arguments for decisions which could easily land him in trouble with his minister and subsequently with his whole domestic support network. What could be done to strengthen his position in this unequal power game?

Bargaining games have been developed by IFIs and some bilateral donors to train their own junior officials together with some of their counterparts on the recipient side. But these training programmes are more concerned with technicalities of project agreements than with policy dialogue, and they would naturally not favour a negotiating path that led the recipient to exit the negotiations without a contract. A bargaining game that would strengthen the hand of the recipient would have to draw on the experience of recipients, from a large number of negotiating cases. Merely listening to some young negotiators who have just met 'the IMF man' makes you believe that alternative game plans could be developed, discussed and practised by like-minded governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Simply bringing together people from different countries with different types of

Widening choices through country programming

> In the early 70s, the Swedish government and Sida decided to follow the examples of UNDP and the World Bank in introducing country programming and 'country frames', allocations which were to be bound through two or three year agreements. There was strong support in the bureaucracy and the aid constituency for giving the recipient more influence over the choice of projects (Wohlgemuth, 1976). Introducing this new approach to my counterparts in India, I emphasised that country programming meant that they were now free to choose what to do with the entire country frame. India at that time suffered a shortage of foreign exchange, and our counterparts immediately let us know that they wanted to receive the entire country frame in the form of untied import support. Realising that such a country programme would not be accepted at headquarters if it did not include even the smallest family planning project, I appealed to my counterparts in the interest of sustainability to ask for some family planning element, which would give the programme a 'flavour' of something other than just money. This was done quoting the parallel of a famous piece of pastry known as the 'lark pie'. The pastry cook who sold it was pressed to admit that it not only contained lark meat, there was some horsemeat in it as well. The proportion was said to be fifty-fifty – one horse for one lark. I could undertake to sell such a lark pie to my principals, if only we could put in some lark among all the import support. This was accepted by the Indians with some amusement, but the sustainability of this approach nevertheless proved to be rather limited, since after some years the Swedish Parliament decided to phase out the import support programmes.

negotiating experience has in many instances produced catalysis in the form of discussion about alternative strategies. It would be in the interest of recipient countries to exploit this potential.

Even the donor side needs to learn to conduct a more effective dialogue. In recent years, the management of the policy dialogue as well as of various types of programme aid has increasingly been delegated from the donor capitals to their offices in the capitals of recipient countries. Some donors have either not authorised their country office staff to take decisions, or have posted junior staff with a low capacity to manage the dialogue (Danielsson et al., forthcoming). At the bilateral level, this reduces the effectiveness of development aid. Multilaterally, it means that some of the donor participants in the 'big table' discussion will be unable to commit their principals to a negotiated outcome. Aid coordination has improved in many countries with the help of partnership groups involving a wide range of stakeholders. These efforts will also be hampered by a lack of dialogue capacity and decision making authority on the part of some of the donor participants.

Creating more room for dialogue

This brief review of issues connected with the development dialogue suggests a number of steps to widen the space for dialogue, without reducing the room for negotiations that are necessary for concluding formal agreements between the partners. Taken together, these suggestions amount to a widening of the consultation process between donors, recipient and stakeholders to make it more reflective and analytical. This will impose some burdens on both sides, mostly on the recipient, for taking part in studies, discussions and technical work. Since all partners in this process are already overstrained and have difficulties meeting their own time lines, it is necessary to stretch the time perspective of this dialogue beyond the deadlines of Consultative Group meetings, PRSP and national budgets. The dialogue is an ongoing process whose openness and depth will suffer if it is too closely linked with the dates of the negotiating calendar. The following specific suggestions are offered:

- *Dismantle the cookie-cutters:* The experience of SAPs in the 1990s has demonstrated the weaknesses of the economic models used as a basis for the standard policy prescriptions of the IFIs. Liberalisation of trade regimes went too far, fees charged for public services like health and education excluded the poor and incentives for agricultural production did not give the expected response. It is time for the recipients to get more involved in building and testing models they can believe in and make acceptable to their political constituencies. The cookie-cutter approach to policy recommendations should be replaced by tailor-made approaches with at least a modicum of support among the stakeholders.
- *Conditionality should not be the focus of the dialogue:* If it is agreed that certain transfers are to be made conditional upon policy reform, the parties should also discuss the expected *outcomes* of reform. The formality of introducing the reform measure should not be seen as more important than the result, and discussions should continue as the parties monitor the outcome.
- *Bilaterals should refrain from political cross-conditionality:* If bilateral donors join the policy dialogue of the recipient and the IFIs, they should make an undertaking not to move the goal posts during the game by introducing political conditions which supersede the economic policy conditions (*vide* Zambia case).
- *Exchange of experience among Southern practitioners:* Like-minded recipient countries should take part in a systematic exchange of experience of dialogue and negotiating techniques in dealing with both IFIs and bilateral donors. The initiative to this study and training programme should come from the recipients themselves and should be encouraged by financial support from the donor community. The programme should try to develop alternative strategies for policy dialogue and could also enhance the skills of participants in negotiating projects.

- *Support the policy negotiations with a more open-ended dialogue:* Studies and seminars at technical and academic level can be conducted in a freer and more constructive atmosphere than the negotiating committees. Experience shows that the dialogue is more open if it is detached from negotiations, even when it deals with problems which are on the agenda of such negotiations. Timing is also essential, since the time constraints of negotiations are a killing factor as far as genuine dialogue is concerned.
- *Allow the stakeholders to express their views:* It is important that studies and enquiries for the purpose of policy formulation be undertaken in consultation with those who have an interest in the outcome. This concerns all the different levels and locations of government as well as representatives of civil society and the communities which are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries of the policies or programmes. Government has the formal right to overrule stakeholder representatives, but it should allow them to speak. A feasibility test of this approach is the PRS process, the first round of which has so far not proved to be very participatory (UNDP, 2002). Delinking of consultations from the schedule of narrow time lines seems essential if they are not to result in frustration for everyone involved.
- *Reduce the asymmetry of information:* It is impossible to eliminate the asymmetry entirely, but the partners should agree on sharing the essential data before they enter into negotiations. On the recipient side, greater openness with budget and expenditure data may be required. On the donor side, it is essential that all relevant economic and technical data be made available about proposed projects, to enable the recipient to make a proper analysis of costs, benefits and alternative uses of domestic funds. The donor's exit strategy should already be made known at the outset. Regarding the analytical base for policy dialogue, see the second point above.
- *Donor agencies must delegate authority and strengthen competence:* Increased emphasis on country level policy dialogue, programme aid and SWAPs has made major donors decentralise authority and upgrade the professional and administrative capacity of their country offices. If the dialogue is to be widened, this process must continue.

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Does the New Development Agenda Encapsulate Real Policy Dialogue?

Carlos Lopes[1]

The emerging new development agenda

Development strategies of the past half-century approached development as a technical problem that required technical solutions, such as better planning, sound macroeconomic frameworks, improved terms of trade and pricing policies, and considerable technical assistance. Not much genuine attention, however, was given to reaching deep down into society and addressing the more complex social and political realities. Today, it is well acknowledged that development, as a *transformation of society*, necessitates change that provides individuals and societies with more control over their own destiny. The process of effecting this change, though, has been filled with difficulties and complexities.

It is clear that a crucial starting point is the design of *development strategies* aimed at facilitating the transformation of society. Such strategies, first and foremost, should reflect the fundamental recognition, pointed out by Amartya Sen, that freedom is both the primary objective, as well as the principal means of development. On the one hand, development, seen through the perspective of enhancing freedoms (rather than merely increasing GDP and fostering industrialization and social modernization), is about expansion of human capabilities. On the other hand, when designing a development strategy, it is vital to note the constructive role that freedom plays in society and the fact that political liberties and human rights are among the principal components of development (Sen, 2002 and UNDP, 1992).

Development strategies aimed at societal transformation in terms of expansion of human freedoms, will help identify the barriers as well as the potential catalysts for change, and will provide for greater indigenous ownership and leadership of the change process. In addition, there will be a greater acceptance of reforms, and a greater participation in the transformation process, if there is a sense of equity and fairness about the development

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process. Increased participation will further translate into a greater sense of ownership, especially when an effort is made for consensus formation.

A promising new beginning to address the above is found in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) process. Launched by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in response to the ongoing reflection within the development community on the effectiveness of aid, the PRSPs call for a change in the design and management of international development co-operation, at the core of which is the emphasis on country ownership and control. The following paper will examine the role of dialogue in the context of this newly emerging agenda – an agenda that reflects the wide consensus reached in the 1990s, through a series of Global UN Conferences, and that is encapsulated in the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which focus on human development outcomes as the focal point for coordinated action between development partners.[2]

Defining the role and locus of policy dialogue in the poverty reduction development agenda requires a better understanding of its nature and its potential to catalyze and propel the transformation of society. This paper will examine the limitations of PRSP conditionality as pertaining to policy dialogue, testing it against the application of the generally accepted principles of local ownership, participation, and empowerment. The main objective of the argument will be to outline the useful and constructive role that well structured and genuine dialogue can play in promoting ownership and facilitating sustainable transformation. In search of the role of dialogue, it will look at a number of pertinent questions: In a world of huge disparities, perverse interests, glaringly unfair practices, and asymmetric power relationships, does it make sense to talk of 'win-win' dialogue? How can the playing field be leveled for the sake of reducing poverty and inequity?

Have we learnt from the past?

> *"The initiative for change can come from different places but the most responsibility lies with those who are more powerful in a relationship (Chambers, 2001)."*

Development aid was conceived in the post-war era as an attempt to fill the gaps between developed and developing countries. The first few decades of its conception were dominated by growth theories of development

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[2] The eight MDGs are: i) eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; ii) achieving universal primary education; iii) promoting gender equality and empowerment of women; iv) reducing child mortality; v) reducing maternal mortality; vi) combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB; vii) ensuring environmental sustainability; and viii) developing a global partnership for development. Specific targets and timeframes have been identified for each one of the MDGs.

(Rodenstein-Rodan, Harrod-Domar and the highly influential Rostow) and the simplistic supposition that the process of development everywhere followed a similar pattern regardless of local conditions and enabling circumstances. The gap-filling approach was underlined by the assumption that poor countries would be provided with temporary support in terms of capital, skills and structures that would quickly enable them to provide for themselves.

From being an unquestionable end, development is now at centre stage under harsh scrutiny. So is development aid, which is criticized for eroding ownership and commitment and thus not only distorting the incentive structures in developing countries, but also undermining the functional capabilities of national actors, creating dependence and subordination instead of independence and sustainability. Aid relationships are found to be asymmetric, discontinuous, and distorted, which is exemplified and compounded by the language of development contaminated with metaphors of hierarchy and inequality: aid, assistance, developed/developing, donors/recipients, etc. (Ribeiro, 2002).

The shift of control and power from the intended beneficiaries of aid to the providers has been generated by the fact that the financing of development programs comes from the supplier and not the receiver (Morgan, 2001). Moreover, disparities in power and infringement of non-development agendas have led to the wrong structure in aid relations, deforming and turning them upside down. As a result, international agents are often much more responsive and accountable to their domestic stakeholders than they are to the countries they are trying to assist. Implementing agencies, for their part, often answer to those who pay them. And, recipient governments in turn can find themselves more accountable to the international funding community than they are to their own electorate (Morgan, 2001). Thus, over the years, development institutions have emerged as bureaucracies of different size and complexity that operate on the basis of power and, according to critical voices, can create development *objects* rather than *partners* (Ribeiro, 2002).

Recent years have witnessed a shift of emphasis in the development discourse. From crude cold war rationale of 'no questions asked' we are moving towards a focus on effectiveness and results. And central to the debate is the issue of how linear development is and how much room should be given to the actors of a particular society to exercise their choices. The perspective of development as expansion of human capabilities highlights the interdependence of freedoms and their constructive role in development. Human capabilities are influenced not only by economic opportunities, but also by political freedoms, social facilities, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives (Sen, 2002). All of these freedoms and opportunities are complementary to one another, and reinforce each other. For example, political and

civil rights tend to enhance economic freedoms by giving voice to the interests of the deprived and vulnerable. As Sen puts it, "It is because of these interconnections that free and empowered human agency emerges as a powerful engine of development" (Sen, 2002).

In response to criticism of erosion of ownership and motivation, recently more attention has been given to local agency. The new vocabulary of aid includes terms like empowerment, accountability, ownership, partnership, participation, transparency and primary stakeholders. Yet the principles denoted by the use of this terminology are not always realized in practice. As Morgan points out, notions of commitment and ownership remain abstractions that either are too subjective or too political to analyze with any rigor (Morgan, 2001). The obstacles in the way of change are rooted in personal and institutional inertia as well as issues of control, risk-aversion, extra workload, staff constrains, vested interests and power. Entrenched practices favor top-down short-term development targets, while the incentive system disempowers and frustrates front-line field workers (Chambers, 2001). Thus, the conceptual challenge remains intact: What is meant by initiatives becoming national and promoting indigenous approaches?

The narrow focus of past, and even recent, development approaches is astonishing. They failed to recognize that: (i) successful development efforts in many other countries, including the developed world, had involved an active role for government; (ii) many societies in the decades before active government involvement – or interference, as these doctrines would put it – failed to develop (indeed, development was the exception around the world, not the rule); and (iii) worse still, marked economies before the era of greater government involvement were characterized not only by high levels of economic instability, but also with widespread social/economic problems (large groups of society were often left out of any progress).

The lack of appreciation for the role of government is only one part of the problem. Our grasp of the role of markets has been equally narrow. Going back to Sen's idea of the interconnection of freedoms, we should note that markets, too, are interrelated to other institutions and freedoms. The ability to participate in the market is conditioned upon economic opportunities to enter the market mechanism, as well as general conditions such as education and basic health. Although the market can be a powerful tool of development, freeing the markets *alone* is not enough to facilitate development. Instead, it should be done simultaneously with the freeing of all other aspects of present unfreedoms.

Hence, in the context of this new development agenda, whose core objective is the transformation of society with respect to widening of choices and freedoms, it is essential that countries adopt broader, holistic development strategies, guided by longer-term development vision. The new approach should recognize the importance of growth (increase in GDP per capita), but only as part of the story, for, as Sen points out, poverty cannot

be assessed only in terms of low incomes but should be seen for what it is – a combination of unfreedoms (lack of capabilities) of many kinds (Sen, 2002).

Moreover, real societal transformation is believed to enhance the likelihood that the underlying policies and development strategies will be durable, withstanding the vicissitudes sometimes accompanying democratic processes. While development strategies are crucial in the process as catalysts of society-wide change, it is the principles of participation and ownership that dictate the pace of transformation. True ownership further entails (i) the recognition that asymmetric relationships need to be addressed; (ii) the acceptance that capacity development is essential for development; and (iii) the necessity to move the debate on ownership from rhetoric to reality (who owns the idea).

PRSP perspective of the discourse

As a response to the accepted shortcomings of structural adjustment, the newly emerged focus on aid effectiveness, and the realization of the crucial role of ownership, the IMF and World Bank (December, 1999) approved a new policy instrument, PRSP, designed to serve as a framework document on concessional finance for poverty reduction and sustainable growth. Initially, PRSPs were intended as the basis for external debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative. Subsequently, the World Bank and the IMF have extended PRSP coverage from the 41 HIPCs to some 30 additional IDA-eligible countries (International Development Association). The PRSP process emerged about a year after the introduction of the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), which was designed as a background for the strategic orientation of government and development partner interventions around countries' main development priorities. The concept of the PRSP is underpinned by a set of values that emphasize policy dialogue coupled with national ownership and execution. As such, PRSPs are increasingly becoming the main vehicle for donor support to governments in developing programs.

PRSPs are intended to be nationally owned and developed in a participatory manner. Accordingly, the recipient governments are supposed to take on major responsibilities, including consultation between the various development partners and national stakeholders. The operational deployment of the CDF-PRSP system, therefore, requires long and complex dialogue with a large number of partners, both local and external, including institutional negotiating platforms such as Consultative Groups or Round Tables.

PRSPs, however, are also subject to scrutiny and approval by the IMF and World Bank Boards, following a Joint IMF-WB Staff Assessment (JSA). Hence, one of the ambiguities of PRSPs has been the fact that they are intended both as a country-owned programming framework and as a basis for World Bank/IMF lending scrutinized by their boards, which gives rise to a number

of questions and concerns with respect to participatory policy dialogue and conditionality, such as:

- Is PRSP dialogue (and participation) active or token, since PRSPs are dependent on an external approval process (including when there are existing parliaments) instead of the envisioned country-owned process subject to country-led approval?
- Is haste/consultation trade-off (due to PRSP links to decisions on debt forgiveness) limiting the time given to consultation with all stakeholders – including civil society, the poor, women, and the private sector – and thereby inhibiting the essential broad national ownership?
- Is the presence of conditionality in the PRSP process consistent with the concepts of local ownership and partnership with a borrower? How does conditionality relate to policy dialogue? Does conditionality replace or enhance policy dialogue?
- How will the ambiguous relationship between PRSP and the macro-economic imperative, which is translated in the establishment of parallel negotiating mechanisms for WB and IMF disbursement, be resolved?

Ownership with participation – the need for inclusion and consensus building

Policies that are imposed from outside may be grudgingly accepted on a superficial basis, but will rarely be implemented as intended. The role of dialogue between recipients and donors is thus very important for the communication of concerns, the understanding of challenges, and for establishing transparency about processes. Inclusion in the process of design and programming (and not only implementation) fosters ownership and commitment as opposed to exclusion which can lead to resentment based on alienation. Involving recipients in the process of discussing change influences and reshapes their ways of thinking. It encourages recipients to develop their analytic capacities and increases their confidence in their ability to use them. Moreover, in order to achieve the desired national commitment and ownership, the initiated policy dialogue must be participatory. Policy dialogue cannot be just a matter of negotiations between a donor and the government. It must reach deeper involving all groups of society including civil society, the private sector, women and the poor. The universal marginalisation of women in decision-making, for instance, has left their concerns unheard, thus significantly hampering the development process. Fostering consultation with all stakeholders is a principal objective in policy dialogue in order to ensure the incorporation of all parties' interests. Only by involving all societal groups, can the process of strategy formulation elicit the commitment and long-term involvement that is necessary for development to be sustainable.

The participation of all stakeholders in policy dialogue, however, has been hampered on the one hand by the lack of capacity among society groups, and on the other by the poor knowledge (or suspicion) with which civil society may be greeted by donors and partner governments. In that respect, civil groups who are the ones to give voice to often-excluded members of society (such as women) are an important part of the social capital that needs to be strengthened. Recent overall contraction in the role of governments has been accompanied by an exponential growth in the number of *civil society organizations* that are playing an increasingly important role in the development process. These organizations span a wide spectrum: from large politicized associations and unions through to small but vociferous, and often well-funded and organized, advocacy NGOs and development NGOs. They now serve as a channel for well in excess of 40 per cent of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to small, traditional community-based institutions. The role that ODA has played in the creation of NGOs has also been significant, resulting in the growth of special interest NGOs that direct involvement in the management of ODA. They have gradually assumed an oversight function on the management of both external and domestic resources allocated for the purposes of development.

The importance of participation, as the answer to the question of *what* needs to be done in order to assure a productive policy dialogue and a successful development intervention, has been generally agreed upon. However, we need to consider the other side of the coin; that is, we have to answer the question of *how* (how are we going to achieve a constructive participatory dialogue?). In the case of PRSPs, which are explicitly intended to be developed through a participatory process incorporating contributions to policy design from across society, not much attention has been given to *how* best to facilitate involvement of all stakeholders in the dialogue processes or *how* to ensure that the dialogue/participation is active and not merely symbolic. We need to respond to the challenges of the question 'how' by reconsidering the role of planning. Running away from the traps of rigid short term planning we have swung the pendulum to the other extreme – lack of foresight. Thus, in their enthusiasm for ownership and participation, some have implied that the participatory process by itself would suffice. But while individuals within a community may physically participate in policy discourse about what to do and how to do it, there must be more to this process than the simple act of discourse.

First, in order to have a constructive and meaningful participatory policy dialogue, the participants should be fully informed as well as capable of contributing to the debate; hence, the crucial role of learning and capacity development. In the PRSP process, the governments of the South are required to develop new policies with little capacity and the weight of old prescriptions, while civil society generally lacks the capacity to participate effectively on the level of macro-economic debate (see box 1 and 2). More-

The Cambodian Experience (1)

Cambodia has completed and submitted an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) in October 2000 while the full PRSP is anticipated to be completed by October 2002. The I-PRSP process in Cambodia was undertaken in May 2000 and was completed on October 20, 2000. The NGO Forum completed an in-depth critique of the final I-PRSP document. The local Cambodian NGOs participated through this forum as well. Other institutions working on PRSPs in the country included the well-respected Cambodian Development and Research Institute (CDRI), Oxfam, which submitted a report on the PRSP process in March, as well as some of the UN agencies, including UNDP. The I-PRSP went through a total of 8 drafts, and consultations were based on these drafts. However, all the drafts were in English and not translated into Khmer. That led to the exclusion of most Khmer NGOs from participation in the consultation process, especially those located in the provinces, as well as many in the various line ministries that were to contribute to the IPRSP.

The NGO community planned to hold consultations between August and October. However, the meeting part of the consultation process took place in August 2000 and consisted of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), donors and the international financial institutions. The head of the NGO Forum and the Co-operation Committee of Cambodia (CCC), both ex-pats, were invited to participate but were uncomfortable at making significant contributions before the NGO consultations had taken place, as they would not be representative of the wider NGO community. Following the meeting a number of NGO consultations were conducted including a one-day workshop in October 2000, the results of the which were sent to the intergovernmental council to review and include in the I-PRSP. However, the Council had already accepted the I-PRSP and had sent it to Washington for approval.

In response to CSO concern about lack of involvement during the preparation of the I-PRSP the UN Agencies, UNDP and other bilateral donors have strongly advocated that the poverty reduction processes take into account the country's limited absorptive capacity. In its review of the Cambodian I-PRSP, the IMF also comments on the government's weak adminis-

over, the idea of participation is an empty concept if key materials are presented for discussion only in a foreign language, as for instance in Cambodia's I-PRSP (see box 1). Second, participatory dialogue requires a conducive environment. Merely calling for participation does not resolve the issue of incentives: individuals (and groups of individuals or organizations) need to be motivated to participate through systematic civic engagement. Third, there has to be a sense that the process of decision making is a fair one, for it will be difficult to sustain participation if participants sense that they are not being listened to and that their views are not taken into account in decision-making, i.e. the participation is merely symbolic (see box

trative capacity and difficulties in coordinating arrangements among different government and donor agencies and among various policy and planning initiatives. The core of UNDP/Sida programme in support to Poverty Monitoring will target the strengthening of the capacity of the Council for Social Development, an inter-ministerial and policy-driven institution responsible for initiating, promoting, coordinating and reviewing pro-poor policies and programmes. A leadership capacity development component will be established to support decision makers' capacity.

Even before it is launched, the PRSP in Cambodia is already redundant. In addition to the World Bank's PRSP, Cambodia has a social economic plan (SEDP) supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the first phase of which ran from 1995 to 2000, and whose second phase, the SEDPII, was being designed just as the PRSP arrived. The RGC asked its donors at the annual donors' consultation meeting in 2000, to be allowed to combine the two strategies into one paper. However, the two main contenders, the World Bank and the ADB were not able to reconcile their differences, and the RGC, unwilling to lose the support of either of the two, was forced to plan and operationalise both of the plans through its under-resourced and over-stretched government, whose ministries will be struggling to meet the demands of two major donors, while trying to keep within the constraints of the IMF's dictate on fiscal stability.

National priorities were again not taken into consideration in terms of the timing of the PRSP. Originally it was to be started and completed by the end of 2001 bringing it on-line soon after the SEDPII was approved in March 2001. The rapidity of moving from I-PRSP in October 2000 to full PRSP in December 2001 coupled with the SEDPII process was untenable and many external commentators, including the UNDP and Sida, pushed for the World Bank to slow down this process. It was not until April 2001, however, when the World Bank, after the SEDPII itself was put back to December 2001, relented and in consultation with the RGC set a new deadline for the end of 2002.

Source: UNDP, 2001 and World Vision, 2002

1 and 2). Fourth, in order to achieve a genuine and constructive participatory dialogue a sufficient time should be allotted to the process. A major obstacle to the actual participation of all stakeholders in the PRSP process has been its link to decisions on debt forgiveness. That is, the government, in its desire for rapid debt relief and IDA lending, can undertake PRSP preparations with haste, thus limiting the time for dialogue and consultation with all societal groups (see box 1 and 2).

Thus, while in theory PRSPs are intended to be participatory, not much has been done, in terms of strategic planning, to ensure actual and efficient participation in practice.

The experience of Senegal (2)

Senegal's I-PRSP was approved by the Bank and Fund in June 2000 and the deadline for final submission of the full PRSP was set as December 2001, thus leaving Senegal a year and a half to complete the PRSP. Actually, however, the process was not launched officially until the end of June 2001 at a national workshop, effectively compressing the process into six months. The workshop was attended by local and central government, NGOs, trade unions, the private sector, university and donors. It presented information about the HIPC Initiative and the sharing of the national diagnosis of poverty, together with the methodology for formulating the PRSP. However, civil society was expected to comment on the analysis already prepared by government without having received it in advance. As a result of the limited time, many of the critical components of the PRSP process were rushed through in July and August, while the synthesis from all the studies and surveys was done in a mere fifteen days in November and presented as a draft PRSP that was handed over for submission in December 2001. A notable area of weakened civil society participation was on the level of macro-economic policy and it was unanimously acknowledged by donors, government and civil society that the latter lacked the capacity to participate effectively on that level. Time constraints on the PRSP process have thus, according to many of the participants, compromised not only the quality of the data analysis and resulting proposed strategies, but also the participation of civil society that was felt to be an intellectual rather than an effective exercise.

Source: UNDP, 2001 and World Vision, 2002

Ownership versus conditionality

Conditionality and borrower ownership can be contrasted by posing the question – "If the country owns a reform program, why is conditionality needed?"(Stiglitz, 1999).

This much seems clear: effective change cannot be imposed from outside. Indeed, the attempt to impose change from the outside is as likely to engender resistance and give rise to barriers to change, as it is to facilitate change. At the heart of development is a change in ways of thinking, and individuals cannot be forced to change how they think.

In fact, interactions between donors and recipients may sometimes actually impede the transformation. Rather than encouraging recipients to develop their analytic capacities, the process of imposing conditionalities undermines both the incentives to acquire those capacities and the recipients' confidence in their ability to use them. Instead of involving large segments of society in a process of discussing change – thereby changing their ways of thinking – excessive conditionality reinforces traditional asymmetric relationships. Rather than empowering those who could serve as catalysts for

change within these societies, it demonstrates their impotence. Thus, the aid process creates a 'Catch 22' scenario: the weaker national accountability is, the more donors are tempted to tighten the requirements and control mechanisms, which are difficult to meet precisely because of the weak institutions and governance. Donors' further disengagement from countries with insufficient conditions, in reality only aggravates the situation for the poorest of the population. Such countries need more not less. If the development process is not successful that does not mean that we should abandon it altogether, but rather that we should change the method of intervention to one that works in those particular conditions. For example, in a case of weak and/or uncooperative governments we should look into working with other partners, such as civil society and NGOs, toward creating the necessary conditions for reforms to take hold.

The lending and resource mobilization under the PRSPs provides a test case for the compatibility between conditionality and ownership, since conditionality remains an important component of the PRSP process. In the context of the PRSPs, the World Bank and the IMF view conditionality as a policy compact based on mutual commitment to poverty reduction and policy reforms. They see conditionality as a lender's commitment to engage and lend, whereas a borrower ownership represents the country's commitment to improve policies and institutions, with the aim of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable growth. Under that view of conditionality, instead of imposing a position on a borrower, a lender commits to lend under certain jointly determined conditions. But if a consensus has been reached about the broad objectives of the program and its directions, there should be little (if any) need or justification for imposing conditions – especially when conditionalities are intermediate conditions, such as economic stability, that have not been proved to guarantee poverty reduction.

Further, the WB and the IMF have suggested that conditionality should be seen as a process that evolves over time, with the due consultation of all concerned parties, and as such, is a part of the dialogue between the lender and the country, and not an alternative. By looking at conditionality as a process built around dialogue, the World Bank and the IMF have tried to give a new meaning and modality to conditionality. It is to form an ongoing process through which the Bank and the borrower would develop and nurture trust and commitment as the reform program progresses. This, however, makes sense only if there are options to choose from. If the blueprint is designed and advanced by only one party, dialogue as such is a mere pretence. If PRSP conditionalities are not disclosed and brought to the public domain it further enhances mistrust. Although the forms of conditionality and ownership evolve over time, it is akin to a 'repeated game' that builds, but also can destroy reputation and trust, and thus hamper the dialogue. Without trust and open dialogue, there is the danger that PRSPs can be seen as yet another donor requirement rather than a donor support to gov-

ernments for poverty reduction, and thus PRSP preparations can be driven not by the country's broad development needs but by the desire to obtain continued concessional assistance from the IMF/WB, as some recent PRSP cases have shown (see the example of Cambodia in Whaites, 2002).

The limited ability to minimize policy disagreements has been a major obstacle on the road to successful development. The capacity to resolve disagreements is an important part of social and organizational capital. Reforms often bring advantage to some groups while disadvantaging others. There would be a greater acceptance of reforms – and a greater participation in the transformation process – if there is an effort for consensus formation, a sense of equity and fairness, and a sense of ownership derived from participation. Numerous examples have shown the importance of consensus formation in achieving macroeconomic stability. By contrast, a decision to, say, eliminate food subsidies that is imposed from the outside, through an agreement between the ruling elite and an international agency, is not likely to be helpful in achieving a consensus – and thus in promoting a successful transformation. Hence, if policymaking processes are to be 'democratized' then so should also be the case with conditionalities; that is to say, the poor themselves should be involved in determining the conditionalities.

In search of 'win-win' dialogue and engagement

The first step toward 'win-win' dialogue and engagement in the development field is to identify and address the challenges of the aid process: (i) understand development as transformation, and (ii) recognize that the asymmetric donor-recipient relationship can be a major obstacle for building partnership and fostering local ownership, the lack of which is a fundamental problem that can throw the development process into reverse.

A major step in addressing and tackling the asymmetry in aid relations, caused by the fact that development interventions are financed by the providers and not the receivers, is to strengthen the voice of recipient countries in aid policy debates. A Southern parallel to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) could provide a vital way for balancing the donor-recipient relationship. The South needs a more coordinated and sophisticated capacity on development aid negotiations.

Moreover, consultation with recipient countries should not only involve the government, but also should reach deeper into society and engage all stakeholders. Establishing national forums for all stakeholders would further strengthen local accountability in recipient countries and thus provide an alternative to the mechanism of conditionality. Such forums could help bridge the leadership gap and get reforms underway, especially in countries where governance structures are weak. However, this arrangement is not always possible or feasible. Governance peculiarities and cultural differences can make this approach foreign and inaccessible.

Public goods

> The employment of a participatory process that allows all parties to voice their interests in a fair dialogue is also critical for the provision of public goods (national or global) such as clean air, counteracting the threat of global warming and the spread of HIV/AIDS, etc., for which the market would not otherwise provide. Development co-operation policies need to be assessed through the lens of public goods (both national and global), which are vital for people's well-being. The under-provision of global public goods can overnight wipe out years of development efforts, as for instance, through financial crises or the spread of AIDS, which can reverse gains in life expectancy, education, agriculture, and trade. In order to facilitate closer linkages between domestic policy-making and international co-operation it is important that civil society organizations become more systematically involved, since by definition, public goods are subject to market and government failures (Kaul and Ryu, 2001). The adequate provision of public goods is essential for the effectiveness of aid and poverty reduction and calls for a participatory process where all groups – including civil society, women, the poor and the private sector – can express their concerns.

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What are the Requirements for a 'Dialogue in Pursuit of Development'

Alassane Dramane Ouattara[1]

The current situation both in Africa and Asia appeals to all of us simply because in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia, more than 40 per cent of the people still live under the poverty threshold – 800 million people in the world, of whom 200 million children suffer from malnutrition. In the forty-eight least developed countries, school attendance rates do not exceed 36 per cent. The most dangerous transmittable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis disproportionately affect poor populations in developing countries. Globalization which appears mainly as a growing increase in trade and private investment flows, creates opportunities although it entails risks of marginalization. The debt burden often deprives developing countries of any bargaining power. The increase in imbalances proves that growth and certain forms of aid are not always sufficient to solve the problem. Poverty and the exclusion it leads to are the main sources of conflicts as well as threatening the stability and security of too many countries and regions.

More than ever, the question of development is paramount and it calls for more solidarity among the inhabitants of our world. Obviously a lot has been done in terms of aid for development, nevertheless, a lot more needs to be done. Given the lessons from the past, it seems that efforts should be geared towards three directions today if development aid is to be more efficient and a dialogue in pursuit of development possible.

For a shared vision of both partners – the donor and the recipient
Principles and objectives

Any efficient development policy rests on the principle of a human, social and sustainable development based on fairness and participation. Promotion of human rights, democracy, respect for law and order and good governance of public affairs are part and parcel of the process. The main objective of any efficient development policy must be poverty reduction in order to eliminate poverty in the long run. This implies backing durable eco-

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nomic, social and environmental development, promoting progressive integration of developing countries in the global economy and the will to offset all imbalances.

The development policy of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and of bilateral aid agencies must therefore reinforce poverty reduction strategies, with their different dimensions, and aim at consolidating democratic process, peace and conflict prevention, development of social policies, integration of social and environmental objectives into programmes for macroeconomic reforms, taking into account gender issues, reforming or favouring the advent of an adequate institutional framework, capacity building among public and private stakeholders and developing a preparedness to counter natural disasters.

Need for a consultation framework stressing real equality between partners

Both beneficiary and donor countries must be able to exchange ideas in an adequate framework for mutual ownership on a reciprocal basis. Ownership by partner countries of strategies for their development is essential to achieve success. It must be emphasized that effective involvement of all actors (civil society, private economic stakeholders, governments, development agencies, embassies etc.) is essential.

To this end, the involvement of the largest sections possible of the society must be encouraged to ensure more equity, a share for poor people of the benefits of growth, and the reinforcement of the democratic process.

The commitments made by both developing and industrialized countries during major United Nations conferences constitute a common reference framework for the type of development, which underlines social and human aspects, and the durable management of natural resources and the environment. *The impact of an adequate consultation framework on the quality of dialogue among partners needs no longer to be explained*. This dialogue must ensure cohesion between policies led by a given country and multilateral and/or bilateral assistance. It must also address the conditions for efficient co-operation aimed specifically at capacity building and good governance in the partner country to ensure transparent and responsible management of all resources earmarked for development. These parameters must be taken into account so that resources are allocated in such a way that they go to where there are greater opportunities for efficient and durable poverty reduction.

Coordination, complementarity and coherence for more efficient assistance[2]

Coordination

Coordination between donor countries is a must to prevent redundancies and duplication. For instance, the European Union has a strategy in forestry. Within the union, every country has its own forestry policy under the aegis of its development agency. It goes without saying that there are real risks of dissipating energy and resources with conflicts of interest as a result.

There should be particular stress on intensifying coordination between embassies of donor countries and development agencies in the field at the closest level to the partner country, and at all stages from designing to implementing and assessing the development programmes by taking advantage of strategy papers produced by the country. Such an approach goes hand in hand with the decentralization policy that lenders like the World Bank and the European Union wish to implement.

It is important to reinforce co-operation between departments and different aid beneficiary sectors in developing countries. As a matter of fact interaction between sectors must also be taken into account before assisting a given sector. For instance, aid for palm oil tree development must take into account the impact of such a development on the environment.

Complementarity

Reinforcing complementarity is essential for better division of work between various lenders. No funding institution can claim excellence in all countries and co-operation sectors. It is therefore necessary to share experience acquired by multilateral and bilateral institutions as well as international financial institutions to reach a case by case approach whereby tasks will be distributed with due respect to the primary role of the partner country and the comparative advantages of each party.

Coherence

Much more coherence is required between the different political actors of development aid geared towards durable development. Efforts must be made so that the objectives of development policies are taken into account when designing and implementing policies which affect developing countries. To do so systematic and thorough analysis is needed of possible side effects of measures taken in very sensitive areas as well as consideration being given to the development issue in decision making processes within development agencies.

[2] These terms are internationally accepted and are part of the Cotonou Agreement.

Aid geared towards priority actions capable of creating a dynamic of durability and effective ownership by beneficiaries

In line with the aforementioned objectives and principles, it is necessary to look for means that will help optimize the impact of development policies. To this end, defining priorities and drafting clear-cut sector-based strategies are essential. Constraints related to the management of a number of sectors selected according to their contribution to poverty reduction may be considered acceptable as long as the development activities involved thereby offer added value.

As an example, the European Union has decided to focus on six sectors identified according to the added value of community action and the contribution to poverty reduction: the relationship between trade and development; regional integration and co-operation; assistance to macro-economic policies and promoting fair access to social services; transport; food security and durable rural development; institutional capacity building. Special attention needs to be paid to issues like human rights and the environment, gender and good governance.

Conclusion

A reform of external aid is essential if the required efficiency is to prevail. The lending community, the international financial institutions and all partners to development are rightly involved in a melting process that is the new managerial approach to external aid and which is, above all, their responsibility.

This approach must have an impact on all tools of development aid. Better management and more efficient earmarking of resources for projects require the introduction of rolling programming so as to favour the integration of the needs and performances of beneficiary countries, their evolution in time, an increased resort to sector-based assistance and direct financial aid, where possible in conjunction with follow-up monitoring.

In addition, the community of lenders must learn more from the past and develop an approach based on results. Assessment processes must be reinforced and based on the principle of independence. Lessons from assessment results should govern the designing of new programmes and projects.

The link between co-operation for development and humanitarian aid is a key issue. Actually, this fixes the lenders' capacity to adjust their co-operation in accordance with the evolution of needs in countries which are the victims of wars or natural disasters. The emergency, upgrading and development continuum must be maintained.

Finally, in order to improve procedures, management committee missions should be directed towards the strategic aspects of co-operation. Such a measure will enable member countries to pay more attention to individual

country policy programming, sector based strategies and themes that require European coordination before discussions at international level. It is obviously efficient to seek to maintain greater transparency and close monitoring of individual projects through functional coordination.

Dialogue in Pursuit of Development: Interviews with Four Nordic Policy Makers in Development Co-operation

Lennart Wohlgemuth

As an employee of the Swedish aid agency Sida for 28 years (in the management group for seven years), I have closely followed the discourse on how to relate to the recipient in aid programmes and projects on every level – project, sector, as well as the national level. I was convinced at an early stage that the relationship per se between the donor and the recipient could make or break the outcome of activities. So, how, in practice, were these relationships built? The importance of the leaders on both sides during discussions, as well as their supervision of others supposed to get the relationships to work, should not be underestimated. The following contribution is based on interviews with four such important actors and policy makers within the field of development co-operation. All four, who were interviewed separately on different occasions, have been working within this field at different levels and with different aspects for many years. Hilde Fraford Johnson (HFJ) has served in two Norwegian cabinets as Minister of International Co-operation. Pertti Majanen (PM) held different positions within the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is at present Under-Secretary of State. Carl Tham (CT) was Director General of the Swedish aid agency Sida for eight years. Gun-Britt Andersson (GBA) held different positions at the Swedish Foreign Ministry and Sida, and was at the time of the interview State Secretary of Development.

1. *The first question relates to dialogue as a tool to develop central messages between a donor and a recipient, reaching compromises between the two parties. This concept has become increasingly important in the past few years during discussions on partnership. As a politician and policy maker having to oversee the implementation of aid objectives set by the government and parliament, how do you see this dialogue in practice?*

CT: In reality, the perspective has changed very little over the years, even if the vocabulary has changed a number of times. Thirty years ago, we talked about 'aid based on the recipient's conditions' and today we discuss 'partnerships'. Ideally, one should start from each country's special circumstances, and then, depending on that country's development policy, aid should fill in the gaps. In practice, it has never worked that way, but the dialogue always starts with these premises – discussing the recipient country's development policies, plans and where we as donors could best assist. The so-called 'planning discussions' Sweden had under the 'country programming'

era are a case in point. They could be carried out over a long period of time, be very complicated and full of conflicting arguments – a real dialogue. I personally many times issued instructions to the Swedish representatives for such discussions. But what we wrote down was one thing – the reality something totally different. Sometimes issues were brought up that we couldn't find a solution to. The delegates then had to return to Stockholm, find new solutions and receive new instructions in time for the final negotiations based on a government mandate. At that time, questions should have been cleared, but that was not always the case. The term 'dialogue' seems a bit idyllic – it should probably rather be called a discussion on the content of the aid package.

HFJ: What we are really interested in is a dialogue where donors can present their ideas on development and poverty reduction strategies but where it is left to the partner country to judge these, put forward their own ideas and make their own decisions – including designing national poverty strategies that are to their liking. This is extremely difficult in practice. On the one hand donors have quite definite ideas about what is conducive to poverty reduction and what should therefore be included in PRSPs, and on the other hand partners are in dire need of our money in order to do what they themselves think is necessary. In the light of this asymmetric relationship and in the light of capacity shortages and our partners' need for time to internalise new ideas, it is perhaps particularly important for us donors to show restraint in this dialogue and curb our urge to push what we see as good ideas.

GBA: In order to carry out a dialogue, all parties have to acquire certain basic knowledge adapted to the specific situation of each case. As donors, we continuously have to develop our capacity for analysis in order to better understand the world, relations between people as well as the development process. In order to do this, we have to broaden our work on policies and strategies. The Swedish Foreign Ministry is at present following up on its policies towards Africa. Important tools in this process are the international work on norms and strategies brought up in connection with UN conferences on different important issues. Preparing these conferences, all countries (developed as well as developing) work together, creating a common understanding on central issues. I see this multilateral work, which lately has been supplemented by the extensive development work within the European Union, as central for improving development in all countries. This process creates a jointly owned value system as well as ways to analyse and understand how development is going to be tackled. It's a base when we get to the dialogue on more mundane and practical issues. Also, with this kind of preparation, we create legitimacy. When we get into any development discussion – or dialogue – we can legitimate our issues by referring to joint understandings, built on agreed norms and conventions within the fields of, for example, human rights, rights of the child or environmental

issues. Even when common values are not present, these norms still act as a good starting point.

PM: In June 2001, Finland had its first seminar on democracy in international relations, focusing on the dialogue between the North and the South. M. Ahtisaari was the keynote speaker and many representatives from the South, both from governments and civil society, participated. In December 2002, we will have another, bigger, conference convened by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which will launch the Helsinki Conference process on the same theme. This work is planned to set the basis for a more equal dialogue between the North and the South, between the public sector and civil society. The basic aim is to increase democracy and equality in international relations.

The criteria we have for our aid is also part of the partnership we try to develop. Dialogue is the proper way to communicate. In what other way could we put forward our criteria and the recipients their aims and goals? To me, dialogue is the most important instrument in development co-operation, and recently it has become a lot more comprehensive. Earlier, we talked about a political dialogue, meaning the political relationship between the two parties, mainly directed by our department for political affairs. Today, the development co-operation dialogue is much like the political dialogue, but more comprehensive, also dealing with social and cultural issues. The dialogue is certainly there, but is always threatened by the lack of equality in the donor-recipient relationship.

2. You all point to the fact that dialogue has become more comprehensive over the years. What about the dialogue on political reform? Is it there at all, and if it is, what are the gives and takes?

GBA: Here, a country's intended direction is important – a clear trend and belief in increased participation is necessary. In the agreement between the European Union and the APC-countries (the Cotonou agreement), adherence to the principles of democracy is one of four basic or founding elements. Many countries at present seem to be striving to become formal democracies, introducing multiparty elections, but we know that there are many limits with regards to a democratic culture, institutions as well as the majority's lack of influence. Some countries have inherited systems from former colonial powers, often not conducive to their particular situations, limiting broad participation. When this is the case, we should not hesitate to put forward alternatives and draw upon our own and others' experiences. In the end, however, the choice of system must always rest with the recipient country. After all, it's their development. The dialogue here is much like a political discussion within our own country – it consists of thorough investigations, discussions and, finally, the striving for some kind of consensus.

It is important to distinguish between a situation where parties in princi-

ple are in agreement, but solutions to more specific problems are discussed, and a situation where there is fundamental disagreement on basic issues. In the latter case, there is a clear limit to what a donor can do. If there are neither prerequisites nor any interest for a democratic development, we, as donors, must ask ourselves if we want to continue our support. So far, aid relations have been much too bilateral in character. The unfair relationship between an economically strong donor and a financially weak recipient must change. This is the reason why I think the African initiative for economic and political co-operation, NEPAD, is so interesting, as well as ECA's present work with developing criteria and guidelines for good governance and peer pressure, i.e. a mutual learning process in Africa very similar to the one that Europe has pursued over the last fifty years within the OECD and even more so within the EU. Look at what is required of the countries trying to enter the EU. They have to face real 'dialogues' in the form of negotiations, the basis is the EU aquis. Something similar is lacking in our relations with the developing countries. However, some of these elements exist in agreements from the UN Conferences on what good policy for sustainable development is. Also, the four elements within the Cotonou agreement are important for Sweden in its bilateral dialogues, particularly the paragraph according to which a dialogue on political questions should be started before problems develop which lead to clashes and abrupt discontinuation of development co-operation.

So, according to you, the Cotonou agreement is normative even for bilateral relations?

Yes, of course it influences them! We are a party to that agreement, and we participated in the formation of all other EU policies towards different countries and international situations. These policies have institutionalised the dialogue and created an order for how and when assistance should be discontinued, thereby increasing the impact, even if we, in our bilateral relations, can act independently of these policies.

   CT: The dialogue with reference to human rights and democracy is more complicated and much more dependent on specific circumstances. Take Kenya, for example. Everybody was aware that the real problem for the democratic process, to stop corruption etc, was the central leadership. Though there was a multiparty system, we were aware of how it was manipulated. We did protest against many things, among others the closures of the university, but one could argue that we should have done more. In practice, however, we were hostages of the recipient. We had to assess if we thought the situation to be completely unacceptable and if so our only option was to withdraw completely. Kenya knew that the world was watching what they were doing and we thought our job was to watch that they didn't go too far.

The Swedish government did include conditions, particularly when it came to economic reforms, but regarding the more basic political questions, there were no precise conditions. We did not put forward conditions such as 'you have to implement democracy within one year or we will withdraw' – we kept up dialogues over long periods of time. Tanzania is one example. In 1992, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I discussed an introduction of a multiparty system with the party secretary of the only party at that time, Chama Cha Mapinduzi. Many Tanzanians insisted that one party was enough and our discussion mainly dealt with what the requirements would be in a situation of more than one party.

When it comes to the question of poverty alleviation, it sometimes seems as if the interest is bigger at the donor end than in the country in question. Then, the dialogue becomes more of a monologue. Agreements and international conventions in connection with this question are also a result of joint international work and can be used as an instrument for a moral and legal world order – an expression of international ethics. Therefore, it seems legitimate to keep up such discussions with recipients to make our ambitions clear. Of course, there are limits to and difficulties in these discussions.

One has to see aid in a wider perspective, as part of a greater idea – and looking at it as part of a more general world order is not something new. It all relates to the conditions for human development. An aid dialogue should be based on knowledge of a particular situation, but should also be a legitimate way to enforce an international perspective.

HFJ: Yes, the dialogue is there. The dialogue on good governance, human rights and democracy is an important part of Norway's relationship with our partner countries. We are well aware of such deficiencies in partner countries and we point them out whenever there is reason to do so. But the dialogue can and must be improved. This includes reform in the public sector and fighting corruption. It also includes sectoral reforms in e.g. education, health, rural development etc. Political reform is not only about political parties and freedom of speech. It is about reforming the public sector, too.

In addition, in the Norwegian government's action plan for combating poverty we explicitly state that there is also a need to strengthen political parties and NGOs so that they can act as 'watchdogs' for human rights and democratic development. This cannot be done as an 'undercover operation'. It must be clearly understood and accepted by the authorities in our partner countries. In my opinion, such co-operation strengthens the dialogue and the partnership itself.

PM: One of Finland's criteria for giving aid is that we want to be able to see clear signs of democratic development. Other criteria are human rights development, the fight against corruption and good governance. When we observe a deterioration of human rights or a turning away from democratic development, we have to clearly state our opinion. I must say that our ap-

proach today is very open. Questions like these have been raised many times in Kenya. In Zambia, especially during the recent developments, we have been very frank, as was also the case, with the former government of Nicaragua. What is important is that our approach has to be dynamic, not looking at how the situation is at the moment, but at the direction shown by the present government.

For a partnership to work, we, of course, have to give equal opportunity and attention to what the recipient has to say and we try to be as objective as we can, but if we are not satisfied with the developments, the aid will be affected, as has been the case in some countries.

3. *What about the dialogue on economic reform? Is it different from the dialogue on political reform?*

HFJ: Well of course the dialogues are different but that is not to say that one is more important than the other. Both address crucial institutions in society and focus on capacity building in these institutions. Good governance in the economic field must be emphasised as a necessary, but not sufficient, path to take for a country that wishes to shed the yoke of poverty. However, this also presupposes institutions in the political field that function. It is the task of political institutions to implement good economic policies and therefore the shortcomings of these institutions need to be addressed as well. I might add that in my view, a dialogue on economic reform in some respects may be less sensitive than a dialogue on democratic reform. We have to understand that it is difficult for a ruling party to enter into a close dialogue with western governments on political reforms that will ultimately erode the basis for their own political power.

Open, frank and informed discussions on economic reform can indirectly pave the way for sustainable democratic development. One of the most important areas for dialogue here, is to build on the Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) of the IFIs and discuss the impact of the macro-economic reforms in terms of poverty reduction. It would be interesting if an informal dialogue could take place between the country, the IFIs and major bilateral donors in this area. But we are not there yet. The other area I want to emphasize is fighting corruption. This is crucial. Economic reform without addressing corruption is in vain. We are strengthening our approach here, but still there is too much silence in this area from the donors' side.

In this respect both a will and a capacity for reform play an important role. If a government demonstrates a lack of will to implement sound economic policies and fight poverty, then we probably do not want to maintain any large-scale government-to-government assistance relations with that government. But initially we have to assume that we are dealing with governments we have reason to believe are serious in their intention to fight poverty. This also entails a will to design and implement sound economic

policies. However, if countries fail to implement such policies, the logical thing for us is to concentrate the dialogue on their ability to implement. In this respect assistance for capacity building is crucial. If a country over a longer term shows no will to improve its ways, it will have an effect on the level of funding to that country.

When the will is there, and the problem is rather capacity, it's different. Many countries have obvious difficulties in this field, and one of the areas we focus a lot on these days is therefore their capacity to manage public resources. There is a widespread need for more knowledge and better systems for public resource management in many countries, and there is also a need for better coordination of all the different attempts by donors to assist.

When it comes to failure to meet IMF benchmarks in the short term, we are wary of stop-go reactions that may have a detrimental effect on what we are trying to achieve. We do see the need to give clear signals, but at the same time we have to remember that we are supposed to be dealing with responsible governments and that all of us are interested in the long-term results. Therefore we have to concentrate on the efforts that countries make to reach these objectives. We should be flexible regarding the means used to reach them and the time frames, as long as the countries demonstrate the will to do so.

GBA: For Sweden it's absolutely clear today that development is not possible when a country is implementing bad economic policies. I am quite adamant on this point. We are not going to throw away money on bad economic policies.

So, what would you suggest if a country is implementing such a policy? Withdrawal?

Our policy has, of course, more variety to it than that. But, if a country implements a policy leading to high inflation, continuous devaluations and imbalances in the economy, resulting in misallocations of resources in the society, aid cannot affect the situation very much. What you can give in such a country is technical and competence developing assistance as well as, by different means, give support to reform processes. We would, however, not give any budgetary or balance of payments support.

Assessing the direction of economic policies and reforms in a country is not always easy. The discussion around the structural adjustment policies over the last twenty years is a case in point. Sweden has not always followed the lead of the Bretton Woods institutions. From our own development experience, we know that for an economic policy to work, a number of things have to be done in the right way – a certain way for every specific situation. It is necessary to be humble when assessing other countries, but there must at least exist a will to implement policies for a general economic balance, which also makes

things possible for the private sector. I believe that the poverty reduction strategies, discussing the use of available resources and social responsibility, are great contributors to sound economic developments.

PM: No, no, a fulfilment of IMF requirements is not something we push for. Sometimes we even agree with the recipient that other measures should be tried and support them. Again, what we have been adamant about are democratic issues, human rights, good governance, the fight against corruption, as well as the question of a peaceful development, disarmament and no military action in neighbouring countries.

CT: When it comes to the dialogue on economic reforms, the major financial institutions, i.e. IMF and the World Bank, set the conditions and even if we sometimes feel that these conditions are too harsh, there is very little Sweden can do about it. Sweden does, however, as a member of these institutions, accept that such conditions are set.

4. Let's turn to some more practical questions regarding the dialogue. If you are to start a new country programme, how do you prepare for that dialogue and how do you feel about the implementation of that dialogue in practice?

GBA: We develop a document – 'country strategy' – in which we bring up all relevant questions and conclude what kind of support would be preferable in that particular country or circumstance on a macro level as well as on programme and project levels. To compile this paper, competent personnel are needed who do not solely rely on blueprints and preconceived ideas. And true ownership is very important not only something we repeat without practical consequences. We also have to carefully respect our counterparts' views and since we are pressing for democracy, we should also act in a democratic way and allow different groups in each recipient country to participate in the dialogue and guarantee their influence.

HFJ: We also used to prepare country strategies. After the system of national poverty reduction strategies came into common use we began to wind up this practice. What we do now is compile information from the vast body of country analyses available and we try to relate our 'business plans' to the countries' PRSPs. In the light of their priorities and in the light of which other development activities are taking place, we assess how *our* assistance can make a difference. This implies figuring out what our comparative advantage can be in meeting the priorities of that country. It has to be complementary to what other donors are doing. It is the country's own priorities that will determine our own efforts. This is done through a dialogue with the country. All options are open: programme assistance, cofinancing with other donors, etc. Even project assistance may be considered if it is appropriate, although this is a less effective form of assistance that we are trying to move away from. The main thing for us is to make a real contribution to the fight against poverty.

PM: Before we have the annual dialogues, including the annual negotiations, the mandate is discussed by our board and is then approved by the Minister for Development Co-operation. There are things that it is necessary to discuss that we have to cling to in the mandate, but it is flexible in such a way that the delegation, depending on the situation, can make necessary changes and bring up new issues. Actually, the whole process has been simplified by the new government white paper on development co-operation issued in February 2001. The list of 13–14 criteria in that paper is always part of the discussions, but every country's special situation naturally decides what emphasis is to be put on each criterion.

When I was referring to the equality in the development dialogue, I was talking about the old-fashioned donor/recipient relationship – a relationship still reflected in discussions in many countries. Many partners are not yet ready for an open discussion. The big issue today is how to promote a more equal discussion in bilateral relationships, and maybe even more importantly during international discussions within the WTO, UN, IBRD and Regional Development Banks etc where the dialogue could be greatly improved.

Personally, I think that the development dialogues in which Finland takes part are very comprehensive. Closely following what is going on within the EU, the World Bank and the UN etc, assists us to better proceed in our bilateral relationships and sometimes we can promote an issue on behalf of our partner countries within the international fora.

So far, we have only discussed the formal dialogue between governments, but then there is the large field of more informal contacts. These contacts may be very important in trying to influence people. There are, of course, big risks involved when people with money go around trying to influence others with less money and that is actually yet another factor that should be tackled when discussing dialogue. It is fortunate that the term 'ownership' has now been forcefully brought into the dialogue. We often feel that in trying to tackle a problem within a project, we damage the ownership, but I can't see how we can handle crucial issues in any other way.

We are very good preachers of democracy in our bilateral relationships and inside other countries, but we should also demonstrate that we know what we are talking about when conducting our international affairs. These are the kinds of issues raised in the present Finnish discussions. This is a question of credibility.

CT: I am quite certain that conditionality has become even more prevalent than it was earlier. Demands on cost recovery in education, water supply and health have been enforced in many countries, often by conditions set by the World Bank and the IMF. Often, it is easier to implement a proper dialogue on a sector or project level, but one might run into problems here as well. An example from the Swedish development co-operation would be the paper and pulp factory, Bai Bang in Vietnam. Discussions and nego-

tiations between Sida and the authorities in Vietnam were never-ending and the Vietnamese really knew what they wanted to do and what to request from Sweden. On a number of occasions, Sweden put up conditions – most often as a result of political discussions in Sweden, many times introduced by the media. One example was the working conditions of female forestry workers. How we worked with that project! After several years, it was decided that Sweden was going to support the upgrading of the factory and then withdraw. The pressure from different groups, such as suppliers of goods and services from Sweden and abroad was enormous. They stated that the result of this decision would be disastrous and that the whole project would come to an end. The Vietnamese would also have preferred to see an extension of the assistance. Sida, however, insisted, and I am happy to say that all went well, perhaps because of all the commotion and good preparations for the withdrawal. It can of course be discussed if it turned out well with reference to the original ideas, but, as it developed, it became quite a success and I'm therefore tempted to conclude that the long and tough discussions together with the conditionalities within this particular project contributed to that success.

As can be seen from this tale, lobby groups can be very insistent, but, according to my experience, their influence is not very strong. Political pressure groups, on the other hand, are usually more successful since they affect the government more directly. There is no question about the fact that many decisions are made in Sweden and then implemented in the partner country without much dialogue. During my time as head of Sida, I initiated the reduction in technical assistance and also ended a number of projects that had been supported for many years. The dialogue is then solely a way of transmitting the message of a decision taken by the donor and agreeing on how this is going to be implemented. It is an illusion that the development dialogue is run on equal terms. In the end, the donor decides whether it wishes to give support or not and the recipient has very little to add. A partnership is also a kind of dialogue based on the same inequality. Aid is and has always been related to conditions put forward by the donor.

I would like to return to the Bai Bang project. The Vietnamese originally asked for support to this project right from the beginning. Sida and its Director General were not so keen and neither was the Swedish government, including Olof Palme, which questioned the idea of the project. At the time, it was very hard to say no to the Vietnamese who were very insistent. When a positive decision had been made, the project developed in spite of many big problems and the Vietnamese were very committed all the time, something I think is absolutely necessary in order to be successful. Today, too few governments are interested in the well-being of the poor in their own countries. They are eager to discuss these issues at international conferences, but do very little to develop policies for the redistribution of income.

There is, of course, a limit to what they can actually do, but the lack of will to try is devastating. When it comes to aid in general, I think this lack of will is the real problem.

So you are pessimistic about what can be achieved through dialogue?

No, what I suggest is that if we are to give aid, we have to keep up a discussion with the recipient on the prerequisites, possibilities and general policies of the assistance. These discussions may include general conditions regarding democratic development, as well as more specific conditions regarding import support, sector support etc. Two things must, however, be clear. Firstly, the donor must decide whether the conditions in a certain country are such that it is at all possible to give assistance and such a decision cannot be reached through dialogue. Secondly, the donor always has the upper hand and, thus, the dialogue can never be equal, even if it's possible to work in an atmosphere as if it was. I remember one time when Sida discussed a new phase in the country programme with Angola and the discussions came to an abrupt halt and the Sida delegation left Angola totally devastated because they couldn't reach an agreement. In these circumstances it would be easy to keep up the illusion that aid discussions really are on equal terms, as if it was an agreement between an employer and a trade union, but in the end – relations are not equal.

5. *You send out a lot of people to participate in dialogues on difficult subjects as discussed above. How do you prepare the members of your staff before they enter these discussions? Do they receive any kind of training within the field of dialogue or communication?*

PM: The more difficult a situation is, the higher the level of discussion must be. It is really a matter for a director of a unit to discuss human rights issues or civil rights violations or problems of democratisation. When heavy criticism is to be delivered, the discussion has to take place between high-level partners to be able to get the message through. Regarding training and preparing personnel for dialogue, there is still much to be hoped for. The only way we prepare ourselves for a dialogue is through the preparations of the mandate and the discussions related to the approval of that mandate. Then there is a meeting with the delegation before the dialogue starts – that is all. When we prepared the new White Paper for the Finnish government, we also paid attention to these issues and we were discussing some kind of sensitivity training to at least make delegates aware of what issues must be on the agenda. How you teach a person to bring up issues in a culturally correct and constructive way I don't know. I would not encourage anyone without long-term experience within this field and contacts with that particular country to take part in such dialogues. It's a difficult job that needs skilful people. At the same time we have to confess that we learn by doing

– and this also means making mistakes. Humbleness, understanding and commitment to the issue are important qualities in this regard.

Have you talked about these questions more informally with your heads of department and other people?

I have had personal talks with some people, new ambassadors for example, who were going to encounter these kinds of situations. Depending on which countries they are to work in, I always try to raise these questions. I now realise, however, that we have a huge gap to fill here – we should do more and I have now been given some ideas.

HFJ: Heads of delegations sent to discuss issues of great strategic importance and carry out dialogues on PRSPs are almost invariably people who are skilled in international negotiations and who have a thorough knowledge of the topics in question. In general and apart from the on-the-job training they receive, all personnel who are posted to missions abroad and who are responsible for development assistance have to go through a lengthy training programme covering a wide range of topics that are relevant for dealing with host country authorities.

As to the question whether we discuss these matters internally the answer is yes. We sometimes discuss this when the cultural setting is very different and the message is particularly delicate. It may sometimes be difficult to get across messages pertaining to human rights and democratic development when the points of departure differ a lot. Diplomatic skill is needed to avoid giving offence and blocking further dialogue, although a lot has changed in this area with the political reforms in so many countries during the 90s. Personality, experience and formal training are all very important when difficult messages are to be conveyed.

CT: We sent out a lot of staff to discuss different matters with counterparts. My only expectation was that they would bring up the issues we had been discussing at home and bring back our counterparts' reactions. Final discussions were never a matter for Sida personnel – it was a matter for the government. My expectation from these final discussions was that the Swedish position was made clear, but I never expected a counterpart to immediately state that they would carry out things in the way we would like them to. These kinds of issues were continuously discussed between Sida and the foreign ministry.

I always had full trust in my collaborators. Most people higher up in our hierarchy were very experienced and I do not think I could have added much to their basic knowledge. There are no handbooks on how to implement a dialogue. Long-term experience is the only way to learn how to handle these discussions and I found that people with less experience most often turned to more senior staff when they experienced difficulties. Of course, you could always argue that we could do a better job with better

trained personnel, but I see this as a minor problem compared to other issues within this field. Take for example the problems all the different donors in a single country cause. They all come with different agendas. Sometimes two donors might push for the same question, but in totally different directions. This situation certainly does not assist development in that country, but I see no immediate solution to that problem. I had great hopes that the EU could act as an aid coordinator at least for the European countries, but for the time being, everybody seems to be so critical about the way the EU handles its own development assistance that a logical conclusion is instead that we should cut down on the development co-operation of the EU.

GBA: I see it from another perspective. Development co-operation is about finding approaches to reforms and interventions that can promote sustainable development in the partner country. We in the main donor countries have acquired experiences in the course of our own transformation and development that are sometimes appropriate to share with countries that are 'latecomers' in modern development. As donors we have also gained useful experience and developed theories, for example, in our discussions within the DAC and other, far too often donor dominated, fora. However it is a problem that we have relied too much on these perspectives in our dialogue with partners in the south. Our prescriptions have varied over the years and I have doubts about the whole approach of thinking that we could convey useful messages through a dialogue sometimes linked to conditionality sometimes not. Even with the best intentions it tends to become paternalistic and if so it will seldom lead to good and lasting results. That is why it is so important that opportunities are actively searched for where developed and developing countries meet more as equal partners. The major UN conferences have often been criticised for being too big and costly and producing too many words. I do not share that criticism. Their most fundamental contribution has been that they have provided a platform for a dialogue on more equal terms than ever before across development and cultural gulfs. We need more not less of such a dialogue. Our European experience tells us that peer learning and peer pressure among equals yield results. It is therefore also encouraging that, for instance, African countries through the new African Union and NEPAD have expressed their intention to assume greater responsibility for development and monitoring of governance and policy in their own continent. It is a tremendous advantage if bilateral relationships and partnerships at country level where all or most donors cooperate can build on such mutually agreed and established norms and approaches.

An important element in management and staff training within aid agencies should be to follow closely and deepen the understanding of an existing agreement and how its implementation can be a purpose as well as leverage in the development co-operation. That is how the EU-aquis is ap-

plied or functions in the ongoing accession, stabilisation-and association processes in Europe. The use of PRSPs as tools of coordination is a promising development in this respect. The present donor mentality has to give way to relationships based on common values and objectives as well as mutual respect between the parties. This of course also implies that we have to accept that no aid, except humanitarian and possibly aid involving measures to promote human capacity building, should be offered in cases of serious mismanagement and bad governance.

Part 3:
Policy dialogue

Dialogue on International Co-operation: Who Listens?

Angela Escallón Emiliani[1]

A voice of a social development leader from Colombia

A dialogue requires, in the first place, that someone speaks and expresses his/her voice, and that someone wants to listen and actually is able to do so. In this case, I am speaking and my voice is my own experience as a citizen and as a professional who comes from a developing country. But who listens and reacts?

- Who cares when international agreements and harsh realities, known and accepted by all, do not lead to any changes whatsoever?
- Who cares when studies on the consequences of globalisation show that the poorest are the ones most affected by it?
- Who cares when the Nobel Prize awardee Amyrta Sen puts emphasis on the importance of believing in people's capacities, while at the same time a paternalistic and neo-colonial view is maintained by the north?
- Who cares when social movements request dialogue, but people of authority discuss various options when extreme violence appears?
- Who cares when countries' external debts extinguish their development possibilities?
- Who cares when the World Bank reports that, in the past ten years, there has been a 20 per cent reduction in resources for co-operation projects?

Poverty is not just an economic problem defined as earning below one dollar per day or the absence of basic services. Rather, poverty should be understood as the absence of opportunities, alternatives and resources; to have to migrate from one country to the next, to live marginalized, to feel marginalized and to be marginalized.

It appears that the third millennium will be characterized by very significant qualitative changes that will be contradictory: the speed of new developments will increase the gap between north and south, new technologies and science will isolate and serve very few. It seems that problems rather than benefits, are being globalised. This reality demands reflection.

Still, among the various development institutions, there are great differ-

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ences in how international co-operation is interpreted, identified, defined and finally executed. Differences that appear to be subtle but are not. We cannot, for example, lose sight of the fact that the difference between giving and receiving actually means a relationship of power. This relationship of power is the main obstacle to a constructive dialogue.

When in a dialogue situation, donor and recipient countries must overcome problems such as:

- Divergences between the donor's interests and the recipient countries' needs.
- Different visions of local capacities and social capital potential. A paternalist approach persists if 'the truth' continues to belong to developed countries.
- Setting of relations based on conditions with donors.
- Underestimation of an important resource: lateral learning possibilities between nations based on mutual exchanges of successful experiences and best practices in similar cultural and geographical habitats. Up to now this has not been considered as an important instrument/tool for co-operation.
- Absence of effective coordination mechanisms among all participants.
- Lack of understanding that co-operation is [also] a matter of attitude.

Overcoming these problems is possible if both the governmental and non-governmental levels adopt mechanisms and have the will to do so. In order to succeed in coping with the above mentioned obstacles – on a governmental level they need to:

- Create mechanisms that can generate new spaces for dialogue and inter-communication where coordination and partnership result in articulating joint strategies for intervention as well as delivery of resources.
- Generate strategies through the formal channels of governments which ensure solid goals that respect and support international agreements.
- Complement these strategies with appropriate mechanisms to call in the private sector to participate, to propose and implement specific and common goals.
- On the level of Ministries for Foreign Affairs and agencies, it is important to improve evaluation mechanisms as well as reduce the time it takes to respond to project proposals.
- Create a follow up mechanism to observe the fulfilment of international co-operation agreements for development.
- Create an information system to control and exchange information on economic resources, geographical coverage, international goals and agreements.

…and at the non-governmental and the private sector level they need to:

- Incorporate the private sector more actively and with a greater role into social programs.
- The concept of social responsibility should be reinforced and widely expanded.
- As a basic condition, legal systems and democratic structures need to be reinforced to guarantee and strengthen participation.

Let us all contribute with the best we have, so that the dialogue will not repeat the words of a well-known Austrian thinker who said some years ago:

"History tends to be mean, with reason, to those who could have triumphed, but were not capable of doing so."

Making the Policy Dialogue more Effective: What the Development Co-operation Record Suggests

Hendrik van der Heijden[1]

Introduction

The record of development experience in the Third World during the past 30–40 years reveals notable development successes, especially in Asia. These successes reflected the 'good' economic governance and self-help in these countries, and of donor policies and programmes that supported this positive governance. In contrast, development performance in African countries has been much less impressive, reflecting their governments' far less than full commitment to economic growth and poverty reduction, as well as the ineffectiveness of development co-operation in that continent.

Clearly, the policy dialogue between donors and recipient governments has not been effective in sub-Saharan Africa. Put differently, donor efforts to induce and sustain policy reform through persuasion and the application of leverage have not been successful in Africa. In particular, the record tells us that donor practices to shore up recipient countries' weak commitment to economic growth and poverty reduction by the provision of aid were not successful when there was only a loose connection between the granting of aid and the conditionalities formulated under the 'policy dialogue'. As a result, the development performance of many 'poor reformers' remained poor, and aid thus provided failed to generate development. This was so because aid began to substitute for essential internal developmental efforts in the 1990s, rather than to supplement them.

As aid dependency rose, domestic ownership – so important for sustained development – began to be diluted, reflecting the inverse relationship between aid dependency and domestic ownership. Not surprisingly, development policy was increasingly being formulated to 'please' donors, to attract yet more assistance from abroad. Much of this persists today. The table below shows the comparatively meagre internal developmental effort in sub-Saharan Africa and its high degree of aid dependency for the 1990s:

Table 1. Internal development efforts in sub-Saharan Africa

Region	Savings, per cent of GDP	ODA, per cent of GDP	ODA per capita (USD)
Sub-Saharan Africa	14	4.1	21
Low-Income Countries	19	1.3	7
South Asia	19	0.9	4
Latin America	20	0.2	9
East Asia	37	0.5	4

Source: World Bank, World Development Report 2000/2001.

As policy reform was considered essential to bring about positive developmental outcomes, in many forums a 'development policy dialogue' took place between donors and recipient governments to define what such policy reform would consist of, and to ensure that aid would be committed and disbursed in support of the agreed-upon policy reforms. Unfortunately, unlike what donors did in Asia in earlier periods, in sub-Saharan Africa they did not link the implementation of policy reform programmes to their provision of foreign assistance, despite their statements that they would concentrate their aid on the 'reforming' countries.[2] In the 1990s, donors were not be successful in inducing recipient governments to reform their policies as long as they were not firm in their reactions to shortfalls in policy performance.[3] By the end of the 1990s the World Bank felt it had to admonish donors to focus their aid more on 'reforming' governments in Africa, implying a severe criticism of bilateral aid policy in the 1990s. However, the Bank's statements rang hollow, as not infrequently – and *inter alia* in Zambia in the 1990s – the World Bank itself let commitment and disbursement pressures prevail over policy performance criteria. Fortunately, many donors now feel that new approaches are needed to confront the lagging development performance of countries where inadequacies of economic policy and governance are key obstacles to progress.

Few people would deny that the key to development progress in sub-Saharan Africa lies in the design and vigorous application of strongly domestically-owned policy reform programmes, supported by adequate levels and modalities of external aid. Few people would deny also that the initiative for policy reform in sub-Saharan Africa must come from within, and that a strong recipient government commitment to economic growth and poverty reduction is essential for the achievement of development success. On the donors' side, the key question now is how to focus aid programmes

[2] *Inter alia* in the meetings of the Special Programme for Africa as well as in the DAC/OECD.
[3] This often happened because of donor feelings that the immediate alleviation of poverty commanded the highest priority; or because of non-economic policy considerations.

more effectively on inducing, supporting and sustaining improvements in development policy and governance. This is the challenge of today's policy dialogue.

Approach adopted in this paper

This paper argues that imperfections in the policy dialogue between donors and governments in sub-Saharan Africa have contributed to the disappointing developmental performance of that continent. It will illustrate this by pointing at key issues that came up in the interaction between donors and the recipient governments, particularly in Zambia. Other experiences are also used for proposing improvements to the policy dialogue.

The evolving and widening coverage of the policy dialogue

An important objective of the policy dialogue that donors conduct with a recipient government is to ensure, *first*, that it fully understands the policy intentions of the government that asks them to support its programme, so that eventually donors can propose and implement the most suitable aid intervention; and, *second*, that in the recipient country a maximally supportive policy environment is in place (and stays in place) to ensure positive development results and the effective utilisation of donor aid. To achieve that objective, donors engage in a policy dialogue in several ways and in several forums.

Over the years the policy dialogue has covered an increasingly wide spectrum of issues, reflecting the evolving understanding of what brings about development. Development, growth and poverty reduction are no longer seen to come only from capital accumulation (which is what foreign aid was originally set up to facilitate), but increasingly from 'good development policy and good governance'. Donors now feel that much development progress can be achieved in developing countries if the governments of these countries would only reform their policies. In the light of the foregoing, they also believe that they need to, and are able to provide, something more than money. They believe that an important component of aid is the transfer of 'knowledge', including the transfer of technical and institutional knowledge of 'what worked elsewhere', in particular of 'what policies worked elsewhere'.

In the policy dialogue of the 1990s, donors even went beyond a discussion of the appropriateness of recipient government policies in relation to the achievement of development objectives, and began to embark on a discussion on the objectives of these development policies, including the balance between economic growth and poverty reduction. Several donors did this because they felt that such a discussion was needed to maintain or strengthen the mandate of aid in their own countries, which required them

to demonstrate to their public that the recipient country's overall policy was 'appropriate', thus 'supportable'. They felt they needed to be able to demonstrate (which they could not for sub-Saharan Africa) that the recipient countries were doing all they could do to help themselves. The latter was not always so: a clear case where aid did not supplement – but merely substituted for – internal resource mobilisation was provided by Zambia in the second half of the 1990s, when its government relaxed its revenue mobilisation effort as donors stepped up their aid, thereby increasing Zambia's dependency on donor financing and not its development effort.

Government Revenue and External Grants 1990–1999
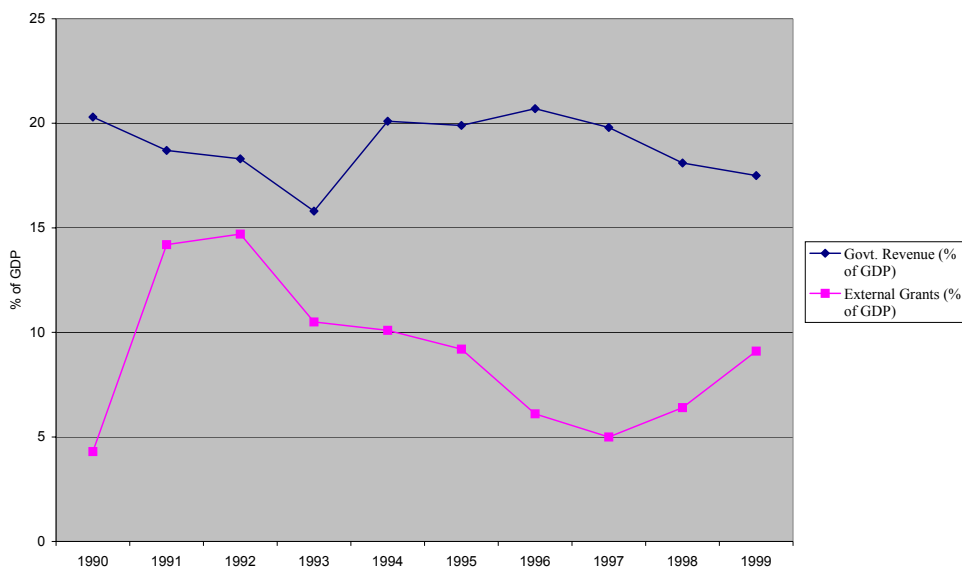
Source: van der Heijden, Hendrik, 2000.

In today's policy dialogue, donors and recipient governments discuss such diverse issues as democratisation and political governance, participation, efficient and honest government, institutional development in the public and private sectors, the functioning of markets and the role of trade, the challenges of human resource development, as well as the financing of development including self-help and progress towards self-sustained growth and poverty reduction.[4] This provides much scope for discussion, and creates a need for thorough economic and political analysis which not all donors possess as of yet.

[4] These issues may not all be dealt with at the same time. Sometimes the World Bank works out a Strategy Paper in which the sequence of policy reform is identified, and linking specific 'programme assistance operations' to these policy changes.

The evolving and widening participation in the policy dialogue

On the recipient governments' side, their participation in the policy dialogue was, for a long time, limited to their core economic ministries, which 'facilitated' the policy dialogue with donors but which made for only limited 'ownership' of the policy reform programme. A welcome development in the 1990s was that the policy dialogue began to encompass a wider audience in developing countries, with increased participation by their sectoral ministries, and by non-state actors, including non-governmental organisations. In some countries (e.g. Zambia), members of parliament also participated in the policy dialogue.[5] Donors have often helped to achieve that result by inducing recipient governments to open up the process so as to ensure the achievement of a wide consensus on the policy reform programme.[6] In the Solomon Islands, newly elected members of parliament were briefed on pending issues of policy reform. On the donors' side, as well, the 1990s saw an evolution. While consultative groups and consortia remained the main institutions for the policy dialogue, Sector Aid Coordination Groups (SACG) also emerged. The World Bank also involved recipient governments and bilateral donors more fully in the design of its programme strategies.

Leadership in the policy dialogue on economic and financial matters has mostly been provided by the World Bank and the IMF. On the whole this leadership has been helpful and based on high-quality economic analysis. One problem, recently resolved, was that for a long time there were overlapping responsibilities between the two Bretton Woods Institutions which complicated matters. A second problem was that in the policy dialogue the leadership of the Bretton Woods Institutions was not always accepted. Of special importance has been the problem that donors – including, at times, the World Bank itself – have not always followed the guidance provided by the IMF. The resulting disharmony in donor positions led to failure of the policy dialogue. Recently this also happened in Solomon Islands where the country's main bilateral donor went against the IMF leadership in the policy dialogue with the government, which contributed to the abandonment of the recovery programme. Lack of harmony in donor approaches has been a key cause of reduced effectiveness of the policy dialogue.

Another factor reducing the effectiveness of the policy dialogue has been the conflict between the World Bank's role as a significant provider of financial assistance and the Bank's leadership of Consultative Groups. Not infrequently, the World Bank felt it was under important commitment and disbursement pressure, and in the case of Zambia was several times reproached by bilateral donors for presenting a less than demanding approach to the

[5] In Zambia the IMF successfully held seminars for members of parliament.
[6] In the Solomon Islands, donors supported the establishment of the Economic Association of Solomon Islands which stimulated the internal debate on economic and financial policy reform.

policy performance of the government, so as to be able to disburse its pro-gramme assistance which was essential to help settle overdue loan and credit repayments to the Bank. Generally speaking, while the policy branch of the World Bank admonished bilateral donors not to provide Balance of Pay-ment support when the policy environment was unfavourable, in the case of Zambia, the Bank was the last donor to react to negative trends in policy performance by withholding its balance-of-payments support.

Overall, only very late in the 1990s did the World Bank come to recog-nise the critical importance of 'good governance' in the development proc-ess, and was handicapped by its Articles of Agreement from pursuing this matter vigorously. Several other aspects of World Bank leadership in the policy dialogue have at times been questioned by other participants in the process. Their questions centred around inadequate consultation with bilat-eral donors, the Bank's lack of recognition of the importance of good gov-ernance, and in the case of Zambia, lack of attention to the most critical issue of development in that country, namely the copper sector. These were factors that also reduced the overall effectiveness of the policy dialogue.

There is a question whether, because of its own operational involvement in the recipient country, the World Bank should in future continue to play the lead role in the macro-economic policy dialogue. In the 1990s, there were instances in Zambia when the World Bank's coordinating function in the policy dialogue was compromised by the Bank's own operational im-peratives. Thus, a case can probably be made for experimenting with new substitute lead donor roles. For example, there may be merit in experi-menting with a lead role to be played by an impartial 'peer'. This is contem-plated for the NEPAD arrangement and would follow the positive example set in the 1960s by the Alliance for Progress in Latin America. Under the latter arrangement, a Secretariat was established – headed by a prominent citizen of Latin America – under which a Group of Wise Men conducted performance reviews of Latin American countries, aided by experienced technical advisers. Several aspects of this arrangement worked well.

The record of the 1990s also clearly suggests a need for enhancing the effectiveness of the lead donor concept at the sectoral level. What makes for a good lead donor in the policy dialogue on sectoral issues? In the case of Zambia, the Government rightly felt that such lead donors should have a thorough knowledge of the sector, which normally required the lead donor to have an in-country presence and to have played a significant operational role in the sector. If these requirements were met, positive results were achieved through sector coordination efforts led by a bilateral donor. Those bilateral donors who were successful as leaders in the sector policy dialogue had 'knowledge' of the sector, not only of the sector in the recipient coun-try, but also knew what had been successful and what had not been success-ful elsewhere. They included, for Zambia, GTZ of Germany and NORAD for the water supply sector, and USAID in agriculture.

In Zambia, a serious and as yet unresolved problem affecting the policy dialogue on governance has been the absence of a lead donor on governance, which forced its government to discuss governance issues individually with several donors. This became virtually unworkable as each donor attached importance to different aspects of governance. This problem was not fully addressed by the involvement of IDEA of Stockholm in the middle of the 1990s, and the leadership question remained a major problem for the dialogue, as was frequently mentioned by the government. For the future, a case can be made for NORAD and Sida to develop a sector leadership role in governance. This may be all the more useful and important now that four Scandinavian countries have jointly established a Trust Fund for Strengthening Governance with the African Development Bank. In the Zambian case, the confusion over with whom and how to dialogue on governance issues was only resolved when the government itself developed a National Programme for the Strengthening of Governance in Zambia. This, of course, is the ultimate model for the policy dialogue: a recipient government that leads the process.

Experiences with the conduct of the policy dialogue

Over the years, donors have endeavoured to influence recipient governments in the design and implementation of their macro-economic programmes and policies in a variety of ways: through discussion and persuasion, the provision of information on policy effectiveness elsewhere (the World Bank now calls itself a 'knowledge bank'), by providing financial and technical assistance support for policy reform, and through the application of leverage ('conditionality'). Increasingly, the aim of donors has been to foster strong domestic ownership of policy reform through capacity building.

This lesson could have been learned much earlier. A Summary of the Study carried out by the Task Force on Concessional Flows stated in 1985: "The case of India showed another important feature: that policy dialogue is one thing, leverage another. The attempt of the donors to force a devaluation in India proved to be a turning point in aid relationships which lasted for many years. The devaluation was needed; but its timing was poor and the aid package which was promised to support it disintegrated within a year. The consequence was a growth of nationalistic and independent-minded sentiment in the government."

Source: World Bank, "Does Aid Work?", Summary of Draft Report, January 1985.

The lesson of experience with the policy dialogue in the 1990s is that imposing policy reform from the outside – sometimes referred to as a 'monologue plus money' – is by itself an ineffective approach.

Policy reform, if introduced on that basis, is usually short-lived. It is now generally accepted that strong domestic 'ownership' of policy reform programmes – including wide political support – is the key to their successful implementation and to the sustainability of its results. Rather than being imposed, policy reform needs to be 'embraced', is the commonly accepted conclusion of the 1990s. Donors have contributed to the embracing of policy reform in several ways. First by 'going upstream' through 'collaborative economic work programmes'. The latter included the joint review of a country's economic situation and prospects (which permitted the dissemination of lessons of experience learned elsewhere), the conducting with World Bank help, of public expenditure reviews, the provision of technical expertise by the IMF through its consultations missions, statistical missions from the IMF, and technical assistance provided by the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department. Of particular importance is that, in the future, lead donors (including bilateral donors) could more effectively share with the recipient government their knowledge and experience of the magnitude and speed of change that was politically acceptable in other countries, and, perhaps even more important, what was *not* acceptable elsewhere The introduction of a peer review process may be helpful in this regard.[7] This is so important because donors (and developing countries'

In Zambia several attempts at policy reform in the 1980s were frustrated by this phenomenon. In 1991, when reviewing the history of economic reform in Zambia, Professors Phillips and Burrell, both CIDA-provided economic advisers to former President Kenneth Kaunda, made the following points:

"Most of us who were involved in pushing for reform failed to appreciate how truly difficult reform was bound to be to implement, given the institutional and political limitations in Zambia."

"With hindsight it appears to us that the President was a victim of the same syndrome that struck ourselves, the Bank and Fund and bilateral donors as well, from time to time – an excessive case of over-optimism bordering on self-delusion."

"The whole process by which these programmes are negotiated tends to encourage all parties to go beyond what is probably realistically possible, and then express surprise when it cannot be pulled off."

Source: Phillips, Dr. Allan, and Brunell, Peter (1991) "Review of Zambian Economic Advisory Services (1966–1991)", CIDA Report, Ottawa, 1991.

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[7] Often the staff of Bretton Woods Institutions are reproached for not having 'political experience'.

governments themselves) have shown a tendency to overestimate what is administratively and politically feasible in terms of the magnitude and speed of policy reform.

In addition to their capacity building efforts, in several countries donors have also begun to promote an internal policy dialogue under which policy options have been debated by government core economic and other ministries with different segments of civic society. Fortunately, the elaboration of Poverty Reduction Strategies has now become much more participatory, as has the preparation of World Bank Strategy Papers. This process has been aided by the publication of IMF and World Bank country reports, which provided a good analytical basis for these internal discussions. Obviously, it would be most useful if, in future, recipient governments themselves would put together their economic programmes, as was recently done in Solomon Islands where the IMF and the World Bank were presented with a fully prepared economic and financial recovery programme for 2002–2004, which could serve as the basis for the policy dialogue.

The experience of the 1990s is that the embracing of policy reform can be facilitated if the policy dialogue is de-linked from the provision of financing. An example of an 'unencumbered policy dialogue' is presented by the IMF whose Article IV consultations provide an excellent opportunity for a constructive discussion of the country's economic and financial situation and policies. These consultations are followed by a discussion in the IMF Board and now mostly culminate in the publication of a consultation report. These consultations, which normally take place annually, are not linked to the subsequent provision of financing by the IMF itself.[8] The high quality of the Article IV discussions also results in a significant capacity building element for the recipient country's core economic institutions.

It may also be useful to de-link the policy dialogue from the provision of financing in meetings of consultative groups which in the 1990s have focused far too much on the formulation of external assistance pledges. For the future, it would be more productive in the case of those countries that present special policy reform difficulties, as happened in the case of Zambia in the mid-1990s, to have a two-step consultative group meeting process under which the first meeting would focus on a discussion of the key development issue and where an agreement could be forged on the policy reform programme. A follow-up meeting at a later stage could then take stock of the progress with policy reform implementation and – in the light of the progress made – donors could then make their assistance pledges. This could help in restoring the centrality of policy reform in the development cooperation relationship.

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[8] However, other donors – the World Bank and BOP donors, for example – might base their financing decisions on the outcome of these consultations.

Linking the results *of the policy dialogue to the provision of financial assistance*

The conduct of policy discussions is widespread internationally and is not limited to the dialogue between donor countries and institutions and governments of developing countries. This is not surprising since the policy framework of any country is of importance to other countries as well. Thus, in the OECD detailed discussions are held on the economic policies of all its member countries. The European Central Bank and the European Union conduct surveillance activities of their member countries to ensure that members conform to the understandings reached under the Growth and Stability Pact. The ASEAN Secretariat also carries out surveillance activities for its members in East Asia. In the case of the European Union there is provision for sanctions if member countries persistently do not adhere to the understandings incorporated in the Growth and Stability Pact.

The development co-operation system provides for explicit and direct links between the implementation of policy reform in developing countries and the provision of financial assistance by donors. The linkage of policy reform implementation and the provision of aid will typically become stronger as a recipient government's dependency on donor support increases (and as development performance recedes), and if high, would provide a justification for making such a strong link. If practised effectively, the 'application of financial leverage' could become an important instrument for making certain that agreed-upon policy reforms are indeed implemented.

To induce the Zambian government in the 1990s to implement its programme in accordance with its design, donors made certain that there would be a direct link between programme implementation and the provision of financial support. Donors did this by applying several inducement techniques. Sometimes, they would formulate quantitative or 'qualitative', or 'structural' but 'time-tabled' benchmarks, for government action, the meeting of which would demonstrate to donors that programme implementation was on track.[9] An example was the inclusion in Policy Framework Papers (PFPs) of 'time-tabled' policy reform commitments. This technique was employed by the IMF under its programmes and also by the World Bank in its 'policy-based operations'. It made for very explicit 'conditionalities'. Sometimes conditionalities would also be formulated in more general and qualitative terms, such as 'making progress with strengthening governance', which left much room for interpretation. And sometimes there would be no conditionality at all, because all policy measures had already been taken by the government. But the general principle was that donors would make certain that they could adjust the implementation of their aid programmes to changes in reform programme implementation

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[9] And thus, that the release of financial support was justified.

by the government. The problem in the 1990s was that this system was not practised effectively.

The Zambian experience provides an example. In the 1980–1999 period, Zambia's government entered into numerous commitments on macro-economic and sector policies with the IMF, the World Bank, the AfDB, and – more generally – with several bilateral donors on governance. By the second half of the 1990s Zambia's policy autonomy had become seriously circumscribed by these commitments. On top of this, Zambia made numerous commitments on sector development policies and programmes with the World Bank in agriculture, manufacturing, the energy sector, road transport, the environment and the social sectors, water supply and sanitation. In addition, there were programmes for public service reform, privatisation and governance. It is no exaggeration to say that by the end of the 1990s any significant modification to Zambia's macro-economic or sector policies required prior consultation with, if not approval of, the donor community, whether from the IMF, the World Bank, the African Development Bank or from major bilateral donors. The immediate consequence of this was that the locus of decision making on Zambia's policies and programmes shifted out of Lusaka and towards Washington DC (IMF and World Bank), Abidjan (AfDB), Paris (the Paris Club), as well as to the capitals of donor countries. If anything, Zambia's reform programme became

Graph. Bilateral and Multilateral Assistance 1980–1999
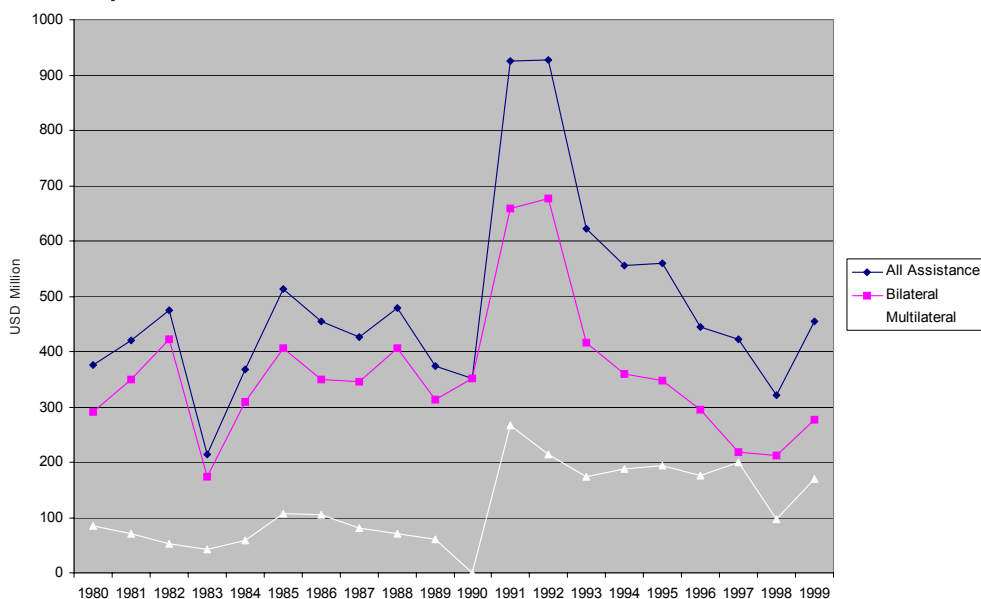
Source: van der Heijden, Hendrik, 2000.

'foreign-owned'. Yet, donors made no effective use of this 'ownership' and were not successful in preventing development performance from deteriorating to the extent that it did.

As the graph above illustrates, in the 1980s the Bretton Woods institutions reduced and eventually suspended their aid to Zambia, reflecting their judgements that the government's economic policy reform efforts were inadequate. Yet, except for one year (1983), bilateral donors maintained high levels of financial support, and even increased it in some years. In the 1990s these positions were reversed when bilateral donors curtailed their assistance and phased out their balance-of-payments support because of their judgement that the government's efforts to strengthen governance were inadequate, while the Bretton Woods institutions initially expanded, and subsequently maintained their programme aid. The end result was that the efforts of a divided donor coalition to induce the government of Zambia to strengthen its economic and political governance were not successful, be it with respect to economic governance in the 1980s or political governance in the 1990s. Clearly, the absence of harmonisation of donor postures and the fragmentation of donor positions contributed to the low effectiveness of the exercise of leverage in Zambia. The Zambian experience and, quite likely, the overall experience in sub-Saharan Africa, shows that the use of aid by donors to induce improved policy performance cannot be fully effective if donor postures are not harmonised.

Until the mid-1990s, the development dialogue reduced the 'policy autonomy' of several governments of sub-Saharan Africa further. To illustrate this, the abandonment of nationally prepared development plans and programmes, and their replacement by tripartite PFPs, had two unfortunate effects. *First*, there would be less national 'ownership' of the country's development strategy and programmes, as the substituting PFPs which were formally agreed upon between the recipient government, the IMF and the World Bank were for the most part drafted by IMF and World Bank staff, only 'in consultation with' ministries of finance and central banks. Their preparation would not usually involve the active participation of other departments of government. *Second*, compared with the earlier development plans, the content of PFPs was usually less comprehensive, and their coverage was largely of financial issues,[10] and with comparatively less attention given to sectoral development issues and to national investment plans. While in the 1990s there was a strong movement towards Sector Investment Programmes, this did not make up for the loss of the Public Investment Programme which faded away.

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[10] This was reflected in the Matrices for Policy Action attached to PFPs. See for example: International Monetary Fund: Policy Framework Paper – Zambia: Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility Policy Framework Paper, 1999–2001, March 1999.

Fortunately, with the advent of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in the second half of the 1990s, the trend towards reduced national ownership of policy reform programmes began to be reversed. This came about because of the strong insistence of the donor community that the PRSPs should be strongly domestically owned and that the initiative for their drafting should be returned to the national level, with an input from a cross-section of society. While this reflects an improvement over previous practice, the inclusion in the PSRPs of development targets and objectives, including the millennium objectives, which are not fully reflective of national circumstances and priorities but which derive from internationally-agreed upon objectives can be questioned.

Implications for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole

The key problems thrown up by the Zambian experience are in large measure also those of many other countries of sub-Saharan Africa whose economies are characterised by declining internal savings, high levels of dependency on the charity of aid donors,[11] and low levels of self-reliance:

Table 2. Domestic savings and foreign aid in the developing countries

Region	Domestic savings per cent of GDP 1980	1999	Foreign Aid per cent of GDP 1998	Foreign Aid per cent of GDP (USD) 1999	Aid as per cent of investments 1998
East Asia and Pacific	35	37	0.5	4	1.5
South Asia	19	19	0.9	4	4.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	16	14	4.1	21	24.1

Source: World Bank, World Development Report 2000/2001

As in the case of Zambia, in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole the high levels of dependency on donor financing also appear to have reduced indigenous ownership of development programmes. It is, therefore, not surprising that the World Bank concluded that in Africa the development agenda was "increasingly being perceived as being shaped by donors".[12] Neither is it surprising that in the same publication the World Bank signals that "it remains to be seen how well partnerships can resolve the tensions between the objectives of recipients and individual donors, and how far the behaviour of donors will change to facilitate African ownership of its development agenda". But it is surprising that the Bank puts the principal burden of behaviour adjustment on the donors' side, rather than on the governments of sub-

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[11] In fact, in its publication of December 2000 "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?" the World Bank wrote "Africa is the world's most aid dependent and indebted region".
[12] World Bank (2000), "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?", Washington DC.

Saharan African countries. In fact, there would appear to be ample scope and need for African governments to take more responsibility for stepping up economic policy reform, internal resource mobilisation and investment so that dependency on foreign aid can be reduced and development efforts expanded.

The policy dialogue in the future: enhancing its effectiveness

The key question addressed in this paper is "how for sub-Saharan Africa the policy dialogue can be made more effective, so that it can better induce, support and sustain policy reform". The following nine points are proposed as the essential ingredients of an effective dialogue:

(i) Strengthening the commitment to policy reform

The *first* priority is to make sure that the governments of sub-Saharan countries become more committed to economic reform. A first step in this regard has fortunately been taken and is reflected by the adoption of the NEPAD programme. Policy reform can clearly be better embraced if donors and recipient governments aim more vigorously at strengthening the internal policy dialogue in the recipient countries. This would include going 'upstream', i.e. providing support for the establishment and strengthening of those in-country institutions that deal with the design of economic/development policy, as well as the provision of technical assistance through more collaborative economic work. It would also mean making certain that there is general political support for the policy reform programme. Donors can help here by holding (or supporting) in-country seminars, by support-

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The review of the Zambian policy reform did throw this up as a central issue: "…there was little attention paid to the whole issue of political viability and of the need to ensure that a government could show some concrete positive results emanating from an unpopular set of policies"; and "

…much of the opposition to reform within the leadership merely reflected a lack of understanding… The negative consequences of policies were clear but the positive sides were not. This had an extended effect insofar as it was the responsibility of the leadership to ensure that the policies were properly explained to the population that was affected by them, through a carefully planned programme of publicity. In Zambia, this was one of the weakest links in the chain of policy reform implementation, and it showed little sign of improving, right to the end."

Source: Phillips, Dr. and Brunell, Peter (1991) "Review of Zambian Economic Advisory Services (1966–1991)", CIDA Report, Ottawa, 1991.

ing institutions such as the Economic Association of Zambia or the Economic Association of Solomon Islands,[13] by facilitating seminars for parliamentarians and by holding in-country seminars on poverty reduction strategies.

At the international level, the introduction of a peer review system would also help in 'locking in' the commitment to policy reform and poverty reduction. As with the policy dialogue for OECD countries, the country analysis could best be done by an independent secretariat whose report would be published. This could have a positive impact on the internal debate, which will have to become the most important component of the policy dialogue.

(ii) Restoring the centrality of policy reform in the development co-operation relationship

The second step in enhancing the effectiveness of the policy dialogue is restoring its centrality in the development co-operation relationship. Even in the World Bank commitment and disbursement pressures have reduced that centrality. Inasmuch as the key priority is the establishment of a proper policy environment in sub-Saharan African countries – *and not the provision of donor finance* – the highest priority is for donors and the recipient government to improve that policy environment. That can be done through the earlier-described persuasion process, including by changing the modalities of the Consultative Group process, by introducing the 'two-step approach' of policy discussions and commitment pledges.[14]

(iii) Formulating objectives and targets of policy reform which are feasible and not excessively ambitious

Experience in Zambia and Solomon Islands shows that both donors and recipient governments tend to adopt excessively ambitious targets for policy reform and self-help, well ahead of the political capacity to achieve them. The final result is not infrequently political rejection of the entire reform programme when more measured and sustained progress would have been feasible. In addition, policy reform programmes would benefit if they covered key issues only, so that the earlier 'micro-management' aspect of policy reform can be dispensed with. This point has now been accepted by the IMF.

When financial dependency on external donors rises – when all or most investment is financed by donors – there is a tendency for much of the policy reform discussions to be directed at satisfying donors so that they will release their funds. This is a perverse aspect of the policy dialogue and should be avoided. After all, countries should not design policies to please donors but, rather, to ensure their own development.

[13] The latter received financial support from the Government of New Zealand and DIFID.
[14] This is the 'Consortium Approach'.

(iv) Giving as much attention to the implementation of
      policy reform as to programme design

Donors often tend to concentrate on the design issues of policy reform and spend far less time on addressing implementation issues. This issue is not just of relevance for the substantive feasibility of implementing the targets that have been agreed upon, but also affects the administrative and political feasibility of reform programmes. Technical assistance and capacity building are thus essential ingredients of policy reform programmes and of donor support to these programmes. So are efforts to strengthen the public's understanding of the ultimate benefits of reform programmes.

(v) Strengthening domestic ownership and, thus, the sustainability
     of policy reform by strengthening the self-help aspect of reform

The record of the 1990s shows an inverse relationship between financial dependency on donors and ownership of the policy reform programme. Where national ownership was reduced, there has been a corresponding reduction in programme sustainability. The key is for donors to ensure in the development policy dialogue that the recipient country's own financial contribution to the development increases over time, and that it does not decrease, as it did so precipitously in Zambia in the 1990s:

Table 3. Zambia: dependency on external assistance

	1990	1999	2000
Macro-economic dependency			
External assistance as per cent of GDP	10	13	…
Net external assistance as per cent of gross domestic inv.	35	62	
Fiscal dependency			
Per cent of a*ll* expenditures financed by donors	32	34	34
Economic sectors			62
Social sectors			49
Per cent of capital expenditures financed by donors	69	90	90
Per cent of public investment financed by public savings	81	5	…

Source: van der Heijden, Hendrik, 2000.

(vi) Establishing a more direct and stronger link between the provision of financial assistance and the implementation of policy reform

As self-help declines and dependency on external donor support rises, the development policy dialogue should move from persuasion to leverage application. The latter can only be successful if the entire donor coalition is united in enforcing the agreed upon 'conditionalities'. This means that 'lead donor positions' should be supported, and not undermined. Alternatively, donors should be guided by the conclusions and recommendations coming from possible 'peer reviews' under NEPAD.

(vii) Improving the support of the policy dialogue by selecting the proper aid modality

It will be of merit if donors avail themselves of the proper aid instruments to facilitate the linking of financial assistance to the implementation of policy reform. Experience of the 1990s indicates that a discussion/resolution of project level issues can best be handled in the context of a project, while the resolution of a sector policy issue is best handled in the context of sector programmes. Similarly, the resolution of a general policy issue can best be handled as part of a balance-of-payments support operation. With the rising need for strengthening the policy dialogue donors should diversify their aid instruments by adding non-project assistance to their programmes. The latter would also have the advantage of quite easily permitting co-financing operations with the Bretton Woods Institutions, which would strengthen more harmonised and coordinated support for the policy dialogue.

(viii) Revamping the lead arrangements for the economic policy dialogue

Experimenting with new approaches to lead donor arrangements for the policy dialogue is opportune. Current thinking about the proposed peer review under NEPAD is of merit and deserves support. Peer reviews can have the effect of enhancing the 'African' ownership of policy reform programmes, but the process would have to be carefully watched to ensure that it is sufficiently demanding of recipient countries to create a proper balance between internal self-help efforts and donor support needed to achieve domestic ownership and, thus, programme sustainability.

(ix) Strengthening the lead arrangements for the strengthening of governance

Of high priority is the strengthening of lead arrangements for the policy dialogue on governance issues which are currently far too weak. A case can be made for Sida and NORAD to develop a sector leadership role in governance, possibly in association with Transparency International and IDEA.

Concluding observations

These lessons of experience have been drawn up, if for no other reason than to prevent yet another unwelcome development performance in the future. Clearly, donors must ensure that there will be a radical change in the approach of governments in sub-Saharan Africa, to political and economic governance These approaches should become much more energetic, result-oriented and transparent, as well as more self-help based. These are the very attributes of 'domestic ownership'. Only when the national leadership in these countries begins to display demonstrable commitment to, and ownership of, its policies and programmes, can the long overdue reversal of the continent's economic and social decline be initiated. Meeting this challenge demands a fundamentally different approach to development co-operation and to the policy dialogue, namely one that does *not* attempt to achieve economic development by maximising the provision of and access to external assistance and debt relief but, rather, one that aims at maximising internal development efforts through policy reform. Only then, can external assistance and debt relief become more effective and make a lasting impact on the recipient country. Thus, there is need to focus the policy dialogue on – and to link the provision of external support more directly to – efforts which developing countries themselves are making towards more self-financed and faster economic growth and poverty reduction, via genuine ownership of their economic development programmes and policies.

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Dialogue in Pursuit of Development – NGO Experiences

Annika Lysén[1]

In development co-operation thousands of meetings are held every year — round tables, consultative group meetings, yearly reviews, conferences and workshops. People gather at conference centres around the world with many greetings, cheerings and namedroppings. "Hello! How are you? What do you think about the latest developments?"

We all try to hold our teacups as firmly as possible and, at the same time, get a picture of what the situation looks like at the moment and catch up on who has changed position since last year. Suddenly someone claps his hands. "Please, let us begin. The agenda is very full".

And indeed it is. Many things need to be deliberated upon in a short time; a presentation of the state of the nation, reports on programmes and budget discussions. There are also some financial problems that need to be solved. Donors express concern and the chairperson tries to get a solution before the meeting ends. Participants start to get quite tired.

At the end of all these conferences we tend to agree that it was good to meet, that there were some interesting inputs and that it is important to meet again. Still, we often leave with an unsatisfactory feeling that problems were not solved, that the process did not take us forward and that there was not enough time to really talk to one another.

Why then is it so difficult to move forward with something that we all agree is important – to communicate constructively with one another in a dialogue? From my experience working both with civil society organisations (CSOs), and bilateral aid, I will bring up three areas where I think reasons can be found for the difficulties experienced in developing a fruitful dialogue:

- Unclear purposes
- Lack of time
- Complexity of roles: attitudes and relationships.

I will then continue to discuss why dialogue in development is important, how we deal with competence in communication and what we can learn from civil society organisations.

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When referring to 'us as donors' I am not talking about any specific organisation, but discussing aid agencies in general. I will give a number of examples from South Africa, where I was working 1991–1994 as a representative for a Swedish donor organisation. Since this period I have visited the country a number of times, in different capacities.

I will focus on the *process* of dialogue and refrain from a discussion about content. I see dialogue as an inter-personal exchange with the aim of increasing understanding, learning and exchanging of ideas, through communication. The purpose of dialogue is not necessarily to reach one common viewpoint but to try to understand the different participants' perspectives. This can lead to a more honest and constructive discussion. Dialogue can take place at different levels and places and in many forms. An improved dialogue in development can lead to more efficiency, but is not in itself a blueprint for success. However, without a dialogue co-operation will have few chances of succeeding.

Unclear purposes?

As partners in development co-operation we have a certain culture of meeting one another, perhaps in the form of conferences and seminars with a multitude of participants, and bilateral meetings between donors and recipients. All these meetings make demands on our time, since they need preparation and are subject to reports. Considering this, it is amazing how often the purpose of meetings, seminars and conferences is unclear and without a commonly understood aim. As a result we tend to have different expectations when we meet. If we do not agree on what we want to achieve, or worse, do not even bother to find out what it is, the dialogue is greatly hampered.

Certain meetings, like round tables and yearly reviews, are held regularly, and the purpose is therefore easily taken for granted. These meetings tend to focus on the contributors' need for information. Quite often financial problems and budget considerations take up considerable discussion time. It is more rare to meet in an open dialogue to discuss implications and impacts of ongoing programmes and lessons learnt from evaluations, even though this does happen.

There are also meetings and conferences on specific issues, such as poverty, growth, HIV, the environment etc., which is valid, but there seems to be an over-emphasis on information. The question remains at the end about what to do with all the information. Traditionally it has been the benefactors initiating these forums and this naturally has affected the setting of the agenda. Northern partners – be they donors, academic institutions or civil society – can finance their own daily work and have a far greater freedom to organise conferences, invite people and refund them for their costs, as well as to decide when to participate in conferences organised by others. There-

fore it is more likely that they perceive a discussion as a dialogue, which might not be the case for Southern partners, who generally have less influence on the setting of the agenda. Southern partners are dependent on external funding for travelling and initiating conferences. This is not to say that South-South dialogue is not taking place. In recent years quite a number of initiatives have been taken to strengthen communication and learning between partners in the South.

When working in South Africa a friend living in a township asked me once "Are Swedes not capable of writing?" She had received a number of visitors wanting to see the apartheid reality and she happily assisted them and showed them what it meant to live under squalid conditions. A great number of different people came to South Africa at the time – academics, people representing solidarity movements, aid agencies, cultural workers and journalists. All were equipped with a camera and were very serious in their missions to get information to bring back to Sweden. After saying goodbye they assured her that they would keep in contact and send some copies of the photos they had taken, but rarely were letters sent to South Africa after the trips. Hence, the ironic question from my friend, who became less enthusiastic about visitors, not only because of the lack of letters, but primarily because of a growing feeling that for the visitors, returning to Sweden with valuable information was more important than the meetings themselves.

Since my work involved contacts with community organisations and non-governmental organisations, NGOs, I discussed visitors' impact with many of them. International solidarity was one of the main pillars in the strategy of the liberation movement and South Africans were eager to receive foreigners who were willing to fight apartheid. Many valuable contacts were made and bonds of friendship developed. Yet, at the same time, my friend's feeling that visitors were more interested in gathering facts for their own reports, rather than having a dialogue, was shared by many.

Lack of time

In recent years stress has become a major issue at workplaces, and development co-operation is certainly no exception. It is rare that I meet anyone working in the development field who does not complain about too much work. Time horizons are short and we have absorbed a work pressure that makes constructive dialogue a residual post. It seems as if we have created a contradiction between effectiveness and results on the one hand and participation and dialogue on the other.

The packed agendas can be understood from an individual perspective. We want to do our best and time is a limiting factor. Therefore it is easy to become absorbed in one's own work. We act as individuals and plan accord-

ing to our own situation, but in partner countries we make an impact also as a group, which we often forget.

In development co-operation there is a considerable production of documents, reports, studies, planning papers, evaluations, information materials, magazines, strategies and research reports. We try to acquire information about as much as possible, but there is always more to read. Perhaps we should ask ourselves whether all documents are effective in relation to results. Less production of documents might create more space for dialogue and learning. Could the number of the many deadlines be reduced or be made more flexible? Most of them are donor driven and perhaps not always in the interest of partners. There is much room for improved planning, time management and rethinking of what is really important. More activities in the form of conferences and seminars, and document production are not always needed.

Complexity of roles: attitudes and relationships

Within the dialogue between development partners, at times we are also frustrated because of attitudes. Out of respect for those who organised the meeting, and perhaps also because we do not know how to make the process constructive, we often keep quiet and do not raise criticism, although it does happen that someone breaks the ice which can stir up quite a number of emotions. I will never forget when a prominent leader from an African country rose up at the very end of a major meeting and said: "I thought I would not be humiliated after independence, but this meeting has proved me wrong. I am shocked by the attitudes that some donors have towards Africans." After that he walked out and there we were left in the room, all with different views on what had happened and why this man reacted in the way he did.

There are of course less dramatic examples of people's frustrations. After a workshop participants wrote: "we were very happy with the facilitator since she treated us as grown-ups", which shows that paternalistic attitudes are still common.

With a more healthy and trustful relationship, there would be less 'hidden communication' and dialogue partners could concentrate on the content of the discussion. Therefore we should not be surprised that the dialogue between benefactors and intended beneficiaries has failed in many ways, since one partner has dominated the discussion and focused primarily on concrete results and less on relationships.

This focus is a reflection of the Western culture, which values highly people's actions and is not very process-oriented. This can be contrasted with the traditional African society, where relationships are the centre of life. A South African Xhosa proverb goes "Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu"

which can be translated "People are people, through other people".[2] This reflects the importance of group solidarity and communal context. In a historically difficult environment close relations have been a matter of survival and even today people's identity is determined by interactions with others.

Another aspect is an unawareness of the impressions you make when coming from overseas. If you are shy, it can be interpreted as if you are keeping a distance. If you are used to lecturing and talking in an authoritarian way, people can easily perceive you as paternalistic, or even as racist. In addition, difficulties are too often discussed before trust has been built, and this has a tendency to increase conflicts rather than solve them. A critical self-analysis can help us to understand what impressions we make. As representatives of aid agencies, we are used to observing and evaluating others but we could learn a great deal if it were sometimes the other way round. We still have a tendency to think that 'they' are the ones that will learn from us, but as a South African community worker once said: "We don't only have problems here, we have assets as well. But if you want to find them, you must look for them and not only ask about our problems".

Keeping these perspectives in mind, it is no wonder there is much frustration in development co-operation. However, the whole partnership debate can be regarded as a kind of 'meta-dialogue', a discussion about how we communicate. If we keep old attitudes and perceptions of each other we will not be able to harvest the benefits of a partnership. A change of attitudes and values can improve dialogue and vice versa, but it will take a long time and consequently the discussion about partnership will continue. In the short run we can respond to this challenge through effecting a change in practical arrangements and methodology, such as moving consultative group meetings from the Western hemisphere to recipient countries and having regular consultations on issues of concern.

Issues around the quality of dialogue do not only concern the relationship between donors and recipients, but are also an important process within aid organisations. Organisational cultures can be rather problematic, no matter if we are talking about multi- and bilateral aid agencies, non-governmental organisations or church structures working with aid. Different internal cultures and weak communication affect relations to partners, who can receive conflicting messages. A high turnover rate of staff aggravates the problem. There might be an existing hierarchy that hampers the willingness of employees to express themselves freely, which may undermine participation and dialogue in partner countries. The internal agenda becomes more important than what actually happens in partner countries. One important question for us as donors is therefore if we live according to the develop-

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[2] This is how the proverb is presented and translated in Allister Spark's book *The Mind of South Africa*, 1991.

ment policies we write. If we think participatory methods are useful in Africa, we have to consider to what extent people can participate in our own organisations. If we believe in equal gender relationships in partner countries, we have to ask ourselves what the gender situation looks like on our side. Are we democratic, are we using logical framework analysis and are we transparent?

Another aspect concerns aid agencies' focus. One person told me a little disillusioned "I used to think that the head office was to service the field offices in their work. After many years of experience I would say that in reality it is the other way round". A Eurocentric perspective is of course something that we do not advertise and seldom want to speak about — officially we always have the poor as our main focus, be it in information material or reports. The World Bank's 'Attacking Poverty' says: "The poor are the main actors in the fight against poverty. And they must be brought centre stage in designing, implementing and monitoring antipoverty strategies." Most of us would agree with this statement, but few can honestly say that this is the case. Do we really listen to what the poor are saying? Do we enter dialogues with open minds, meaning that we, both donors and recipients, would be prepared to change our views and plans if that is what a constructive dialogue concludes? Do we develop working methods that encourage participation rather than individual performance?

Why is dialogue important?

The democratic transition in South Africa is a good example illustrating the role an open dialogue can play in development, both at the national and local level. A fundamental challenge to the liberation movement was, and still is, to transform from having a struggle perspective, to including all South Africans in reconstruction and nation-building. The transition period at the beginning of the 1990's centred upon negotiations between strong opponents, which eventually led to democratic elections. This dialogue was not without conflicts, rather the opposite, as the road was lined with stumbling blocks, but there was a strong commitment to discuss problems and to include and listen to as many stakeholders as possible. Without this inclusiveness the country would most probably not have been able to move in a direction of reconciliation, peace and development.

This national dialogue has also been reflected at the local level. The legacy of apartheid created prejudice and suspicion, which make joint efforts difficult, but it seems in cases where participation and dialogue have been at work, a stronger foundation for development has been built.

Let us take a housing scheme in a township as an illustrative example. Many actors are involved and given their professional roles and personal backgrounds they have different ways of communicating. Persons from outside are engaged as technicians, politicians, NGO workers, builders or finan-

ciers and all of them have to relate to the target group – the people in the community. The community is not homogenous, but consists of men and women, youth, children, employed and unemployed, people with financial resources and those that are extremely poor. In such schemes – as in all development programmes – different kinds of problems arise so that without a constructive dialogue between the different actors, conflicts may erupt and become severe and difficult to solve. On the other hand, when professionals and community leaders are eager to communicate and work in a participatory manner there is a higher awareness of obstacles that must be overcome in order for the project to continue. This increases the chances of solving problems, compared to a situation where they are denied, overseen or not acknowledged. An inclusive consultation process might take a long time, but prove to be more effective after all and the process in itself then becomes part of human development. A housing scheme does not only have to result in houses, but in increased human capacity, where all actors learn and acquire valuable experiences. It is often said that "development is not a product, but a process".

The example above is similar to international development co-operation, where people with different personal backgrounds and professions work together, like in a township, there are many who want to assist, with opinions on the development process.

Dialogue in development can be seen as a way of exploring different actors' perspectives and through this process increasing understanding of context and discover ways to proceed. New solutions and thoughts can be found, provided there is a willingness to seek answers, rather than to present fixed solutions. In a fruitful dialogue there is both an acceptance and an appreciation of different approaches and experiences. There are many ways to interpret a situation and by reflecting on what has been said learning becomes an integral part of the dialogue. Serious differences may arise in a dialogue, but the challenge is not for everyone to agree on everything, but to understand divergent positions. The process of learning is then not only one-sided but becomes a mutual experience which means that dialogue is not confined to a certain kind of meeting, between a certain kind of people but can take place anywhere – in a township, a rural village, a district council, a ministry, an international conference or even within an aid organisation.

Summing up, dialogue is essential for efficiency in development co-operation, since it broadens perspectives, increases learning and provides room for developing relations. It might happen that results will differ from what we expect and that we have to do some rethinking. Seen within the context of partnership, dialogue is essential in building a stronger ownership which means that participants have to be prepared for the consequences of dialogue. It is not only a concern between two partners – the donor and the recipient – but is essential in all the many different relations in develop-

ment co-operation. Through a constructive dialogue actors can better understand each other and as a consequence spend more time on implementation, rather than on dealing with problems and misunderstandings.

Competence in communication

It is not possible to standardise a process for dialogue, since it is dynamic and is dependent on who participates. We can however acquire communication skills that are useful. How we express ourselves and how we listen are central in the dialogue and depend on a range of factors, including professions, culture, language and personal backgrounds. Dialogue is therefore both an issue about how we act as organisations, as well as individuals. Two persons can go through exactly the same kind of training, but the outcome will be quite different.

For many professionals, such as medical doctors and nurses, social workers, teachers, and journalists, competence in communication is a requirement and on-going training is common, which does not seem to be the case for staff in aid agencies. When positions are advertised social competence is often mentioned as a merit, but not enough is done to follow it up.

Communication skills and human relations are areas that can be much developed. This would help us to be more constructive as development partners, and facilitate a better understanding of social dynamics in partner countries. In concrete terms capacity building in this area can be training in interviewing, techniques for dialogue, running workshops and seminars and listening skills. The latter is something that is often taken for granted, even though it is demanding to be a good professional listener.

Working in development co-operation involves a great deal of analysing and judging situations, which requires a good understanding of social and cultural dynamics. If we are too focused on our own missions, we will not be able to grasp the complex reality around us and as a consequence we will easily miss both opportunities and valuable information. The Non-Governmental Organisation Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) brings up the importance of development practitioners having a holistic competence in order to deepen the ability to truly grasp situations, including the impact of their interventions. In one of CDRA's reports it is stated that: "Development is not always visible – like a plant growing under the surface of the ground, a great deal may be happening that is not readily apparent. We need to develop capacities to access and understand this movement in order to have a full understanding of the process at work – be it in preparation for an intervention, or as part of a process of understanding its impact. This demands a good understanding of the rhythms and patterns of human, group, organisational and community development (World Bank, 2001, p. 12)."

In other words, when talking about aid practitioners' competence in communication and social relations, it is not only a matter of capacity in methods and techniques, it is a broader concept and has to do with interest in other people and willingness to seek new perspectives. It is also a question of being conscious of underlying effects that an intervention may have and of developing a capacity to interpret situations. Another important ability is self-understanding. To live according to principles is very difficult, if there is no reflection on how you live and act. This goes beyond the discussion about aid-workers' practical arrangements, even though a large difference in living conditions can obstruct contacts between foreigners and local citizens. However, there is no guarantee that a simple lifestyle in material terms will automatically lead to genuine contacts and an understanding of the surroundings. It is more a matter of being flexible, open and willing to learn and share.

What can we learn from civil society organisations?

At present there is a general agreement that there should be a wider participation in aid co-ordination processes and that dialogue should take place between different actors in the development arena. With a broadening concept of ownership all stakeholders in a Southern country should be involved in the development agenda, not only governments. When formulating documents such as Poverty Reduction Strategies the importance of involving civil society and the private sector is increasingly stressed. With CSOs moving from a traditional role of being implementers of social projects to a role where they are to take part in and influence policies, their dialogue with partners is also taking a new path. However, as Christian Aid points at in a study (Richmond and McGee, 1999) there is still a long way to go before they are truly included: "If the desirability of better aid co-ordination and Southern ownership of national development programmes are 'well-established facts', how to achieve effective civil society participation is less clear." Christian Aid therefore gives some recommendations both to donors and to civil society. They bring up the importance of taking CSOs seriously and providing the support mechanisms and time required for CSO consultation. It is obvious that it is not enough for donors or Southern governments only to invite civil society to their meetings, there must also be a commitment to listen and learn from CSOs. Christian Aid's study focuses on formal meetings like CG-meetings and Round Tables, but much of what is raised is important for other processes as well.

Most CSOs have direct contact with communities and quite a number are working with participatory methods so they can therefore make valuable inputs not only on content, but also on processes, especially concerning dialogue. In a booklet on running community workshops produced by the CSO Legal Education Action Project (LEAP, 1991), some very basic rules are presented such as:

- Everyone must understand the aim of the workshop
- One should build on people's own experience and understanding
- Formal inputs should be strictly limited
- Everyone must have a chance to talk and participate

The booklet gives very concrete directions on how to involve people in a dialogue and how to make sure that the aim of a workshop is fulfilled. When reading it I see that much of what is presented has elements of various communication theories, even though in a simplified language, which is not surprising since achieving results in community work requires good communication skills and a willingness to involve people or, to use LEAP's words – too much 'teaching' can send people to sleep. Most people working with development co-operation have at times fought sleepiness during long speeches, read straight from a paper during meetings and conferences. With a more inclusive and dynamic approach we would most probably gain more. Civil society organisations have experiences both of working directly with communities at local level, but also of monitoring authorities in a watchdog role, and can therefore bring in new perspectives in bilateral and multilateral aid discussions. We tend to meet as 'benefactors' and 'beneficiaries', but a wider participation in the debate increases our possibilities to understand situations in a more holistic way which is becoming more and more important as we enter areas like budget and sector support. Just because civil society organisations have experience of participatory methods, it does not necessarily mean that they always represent the poor but their voices will bring other dimensions than those of government and aid organisations and the fact that they are working with communities equips them with insights of local realities.

A true dialogue

One occasion in 1991, when I was still new at my job in South Africa, comes to my mind. Together with several other representatives from the donor community I went up north, visiting refugee camps — Mozambicans were fleeing from the civil war, via the Kruger Park. They did not receive legal status in South Africa, since the government at the time did not recognise them as refugees. The conditions in the camps were therefore extremely difficult. I was equipped with my camera and eager to get as much information as possible to send home to Sweden. Our group was introduced to hundreds of refugees and formal speeches were made. I received valuable information, but I wanted to talk to someone individually so I sat down with a lady who looked very much older than me. I soon understood that her life had made her face so wrinkled, her war experiences were terrible and the flight to South Africa had been full of danger. She had lost her husband and some of her children. She showed me a small food parcel that she had to survive on for the coming fortnight. After some time I had to break off, since my colleagues were waiting for me to leave for another camp. They teased me, calling me a newcomer on the job, since I was so eager to speak with the refugees. Before leaving, the lady asked me whether I had been given something to drink and she said: "I don't know your country, but I understand it is far away. You have travelled a long distance to come and talk with me and I am grateful. You must be very thirsty, since the sun is so hot. Wait a moment and I will arrange something." She turned to her compatriots and discussed with them. After a while she took my hand and gave me a few rand. I understood that they had made a small collection. "Take this and buy yourself something to drink" she said and took farewell of me.

Why then ending with this story? Well, I think it goes to the core of a true dialogue. We met, something unexpected happened and the perspectives changed.

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The Case of Cambodia

Eva Mysliwiec[1]

The need for a new paradigm of development co-operation

There are three compelling arguments which suggest that it may be time to consider a new paradigm of development dialogue and co-operation.

At the start of the 21st century, the challenges to development co-operation are unprecedented. Two phenomena in particular account for the extraordinary state of the world today, which in turn calls for a new paradigm in the way the international community approaches co-operation as well as in the nature of the dialogue itself. First, at the close of the twentieth century, the number of disasters the international community is called upon to respond to has increased fivefold, and they are nearly all of human creation (Schriver, 1995). Wars, civil conflict, genocide, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, and authoritarian regimes have devastated entire nations and their societies. The relief, reconstruction, and development efforts of today must respond not only to the alleviation of physical human misery, and restructuring of basic institutions and infrastructure, but must also attend to the healing of a damaged humanity. What is so challenging in such situations is that the context, circumstances, culture, nature of the transition, and national and international considerations will affect understanding between partners and the effectiveness of dialogue and co-operation.

The second phenomenon relates to the dozens of countries which in the mid-1990s embarked on the path to democracy; many have had little previous exposure to democracy and lack a tradition of genuine participation. In both situations, the implications for the quality and effectiveness of dialogue and interventions are profound. Where the moral fabric of society has been devastated by violence, and in societies where there has been little experience with democratic principles or respect for human rights, there exists an opportunity, and one might even say a responsibility, in development dialogue to demonstrate a morality which can help to establish societies. The term dialogue as used here encompasses not only messages and attitudes conveyed through discussion, but also through actions.

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A third factor which adds urgency to the need for change in the donor-partner relationship, is the failure of development co-operation to reverse the widening gap between rich and poor nations.

The Cambodian experience of the last two decades offers a rich source of food for thought on development co-operation, having been witness to some of the best and worst of development practice. Many factors, both internal and external, have contributed to shaping the relationship and dialogue between Cambodians and the aid community, requiring difficult adjustments on both sides. The relationships and nature of that dialogue have changed over time, with Cambodians today taking a more active role in defining the terms of the relationship, which includes a broader range of interlocutors and stakeholders. What has dialogue meant for Cambodia? What values have been communicated? How does one promote genuine partnership and ownership in an aid-dependent economy? What lessons can we draw from Cambodia's recent experience?

Cambodia's transitions

Contemporary Cambodia is a country at peace and undergoing dynamic changes. While this says something about the resilience and determination of its people, there is no contradiction in pointing out that it is also still a fragile and vulnerable society, deeply marked by a legacy of violence and conflict, and by the punitive policies imposed by most western nations during the 1980s and early 1990s. The following brief chronicle of Cambodia's recent history is intended primarily to provide context and possible answers to some of the questions raised above, and to illustrate the changes in relationships and dialogue in international co-operation since 1980.

1954–1970: Independence

The period following independence from France is viewed today by many Cambodians as a time marked by tranquillity and development. However, development during this period, until the civil war in 1970, was largely a top-down process. The government service noted for its weakness in planning, neglected to involve the poor in their own development (Muscat, 1989). Bilateral aid was available for development in this period but came to an abrupt end with the onset of the American/Vietnam War. No indigenous NGO movement was in evidence, although a civil society was present in many forms.

1970–1975: War

Between 1970 and 1975 Cambodia became the victim of an undeclared war. Bilateral development assistance ended and was replaced by NGO

assistance in the form of relief to victims of war. At this time, the United Nations played a minor role in the training of Cambodian government staff.

1975–1979: the "Dark Years"

Cambodians, refer to the Khmer Rouge period as the "Dark Years", marked by fear, internally imposed isolation, destruction, and genocide. There was no international presence in Cambodia at this time, apart from China and North Korea. The war and the Khmer Rouge period brought about the total devastation of Cambodia and its people and turned the development cycle back to zero. The most tragic events of this period are the decimation of nearly a quarter of the population and the unravelling of the fabric of society. The educated class of professionals and civil servants especially fell victim to the genocide, thus leaving much of Cambodia's future infrastructure severely handicapped. The physical destruction resulting from this period is well documented. The moral and spiritual damage to Cambodia's society, culture, and psyche is less measurable but deeply affected future reconstruction efforts, relationships, and how Cambodians viewed their role in the development process.

1979–1982: 'Year zero' and the emergency

In 1979 the international community responded generously to appeals to avert widespread famine in Cambodia, following the liberation from the Khmer Rouge regime. However, multilateral relief programmes were greatly delayed owing to difficulties in the negotiation process between the new Vietnamese-backed Cambodian regime and the multilateral relief agencies. Lack of trust on both sides, the necessity for the new regime to assume sovereignty and control without having any resources, and the inexperience of the new regime placed them at a great disadvantage in dealing with the aid community. It might be understandable that the scale and logistical means envisaged by the relief agencies in some respects could be viewed as a threat by a new regime not yet well established and without resources of its own. Failure on the part of multilateral relief agencies on the one hand to appreciate the importance of these factors for restoring Cambodia's self-esteem and sense of identity, and, on the other, their intransigence in the setting of conditionalities delayed critical relief efforts for almost a year. Meanwhile, a handful of international NGOs initiated emergency programmes both inside Cambodia and in border camps just over the Thai-Cambodian border. Their flexibility and willingness to put humanitarian concerns above political considerations helped to avert a greater disaster. The massive relief operation spanned virtually every sector of the economy and society with priority going to restoring health services, agricultural production sectors, and

transportation. The scale of the devastation made logistics and monitoring a huge challenge. One of the critical roles which the aid community was called upon to assume, was to bear witness to the countless mass graves being unearthed all over the country, and to listen to Cambodian people who sought release in the telling of their tales of horror.

Several points regarding the dialogue between Cambodians and the aid community merit noting. Firstly, building relationships of trust, restoration of self-esteem and confidence, are key to empowering development partners from post-conflict societies. Furthermore, this is a long-term process. Extending the hand of trust when partners are unable to do so, is critical for initiating a relationship with partners.

Secondly, the scale of the devastation and the isolation of the country encouraged good co-operation and coordination between the few UN agencies, International Red Cross, NGOs and government counterparts active there. This greatly enhanced the process of relief and rehabilitation in a situation where institutions of state were extremely weak. Cambodian ownership of the process, albeit exercised through excessive controls, also encouraged greater coordination among agencies.

Thirdly, the politicisation of aid not only perpetuated people's suffering, but served to polarise Cambodians and contributed to prolonging civil conflict for another decade.

Fourthly, while the issue of human rights figured in dialogue between the international aid community and the new regime, it was selectively applied. The silence around the issue of human rights abuses which took place during the Khmer Rouge period, and any consideration of a tribunal did not seem to be a priority for the United Nations or the majority of its member states at that time, despite attempts by the new regime to enlist support for a tribunal. In this respect, inconsistency between the values (i.e. respect for human rights, justice) espoused by the international aid community and their behaviour in respect to the abuses committed during the Khmer Rouge period, gave confusing messages. Consistency, or lack thereof, between the message and behaviour, in this case in respect to human rights, remains an impediment to effective dialogue on the topic.

1982–1987: Isolation and reconstruction

In 1982 the United Nations declared the Cambodian emergency to be over and an aid embargo, by all but the socialist bloc, was imposed on Cambodia in order to force an end to the Vietnamese 'occupation'[2] of the country. The aid embargo, which would not be lifted until the signing of the Peace Agree-

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[2] The majority of western nations perceived the Vietnamese liberators as invaders, and objected to the newly installed Cambodian government and the presence of Vietnamese troops in the country.

ment in 1991, and the absence of critical rehabilitation assistance deprived the Cambodian people of many basic human rights and inflicted tremendous physical and moral suffering on them (Mysliwiec, 1988). In spite of tremendous constraints, including continued fighting between government and resistance forces, Cambodians managed to restore basic infrastructure in the country. During this period bilateral assistance for emergency and basic rehabilitation was channelled through the UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, and ICRC. By far the biggest constraint was human capital, as many intellectuals and trained cadres had been decimated in the Khmer Rouge period or fled abroad. The limited availability of external assistance fostered both pragmatism and self-reliance among Cambodians. Priorities had to be set for the use of limited external resources, and policies and strategies were evaluated on an annual basis, and adjusted if they did not produce the desired outcomes. For example, agricultural production had been collectivised in the early 1980s. Collectivisation however, had been virtually abandoned by 1985 when it no longer served its purpose and had become a disincentive to investing in land improvement and increasing productivity. Similarly, the monopolistic state purchasing policies were also gradually abandoned. The point here is that there was time for reflection and evaluation, policies were adjusted if found inefficient in meeting the desired objectives, priorities were set for use of scarce resources, and it was a Cambodian owned and Cambodian controlled process. Equally important was that Cambodians demonstrated both ingenuity and a capacity to rebuild their country.

This phase in Cambodia's process of reconstruction presented daunting challenges as well as opportunities for the small western aid community working in the country. As the government consolidated itself, policy towards western aid agencies became more restrictive. Western agency personnel could not be directly involved in the training of Cambodian partners, and had to channel all assistance through cumbersome centralised government institutions. NGOs in particular, traditionally recognized for their strength in working at the grassroots level, found themselves increasingly uncomfortable in their new role of 'supporting' the central administration. This situation conditioned a process of self-reflection and learning within some organisations, leading to change. Others, as is still the case today, expected dramatic changes from Cambodian partners, but did not, or perhaps could not, perceive the need for change on their own part. It would be difficult to imagine developing a constructive dialogue on the basis of such unequal perceptions.

By 1986, the continuing suffering of the Cambodian people caused by the on-going armed conflict and embargo compelled NGOs to launch an international advocacy campaign with the aim to bring about pressure for incremental change in the western policy of isolation and embargo. The core of the campaign was that the embargo deprived the Cambodian people in Cambodia and in the camps along the border, of basic human rights

to health, education, and other aspects of development. Another issue was that of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. The silence of most western governments on both counts was deafening. This inconsistency in values undermined any effective dialogue with the Cambodians on more recent human rights issues. Also, one should not underestimate the psychological damage inflicted by the embargo on an already wounded Cambodian psyche. To be shunned by a majority of the world's nations, after emerging from the nightmare of genocide led many Cambodians to ask what it was about them that elicited such punitive reactions. This negatively impacted on the Cambodian people's capacity to restore their self-esteem and confidence, and placed another constraint on dialogue.

In retrospect, three observations in particular stand out from this period. Even though human capital was devastated as a result of conflict and the genocide, capacities to rebuild communities and the country did and do exist in Cambodia, and need to be supported in ways that do not undermine them. The experience from this period also demonstrated that having the space and time to reflect on the effectiveness of policies contributes to ownership of reforms.

Emergencies and hardship create opportunities for building strong relationships between partners, provided that the partners stay in the country long enough to take advantage of this. Many of the agencies that worked in Cambodia during the embargo earned the respect of their Cambodian partners. Mutual respect is an important pre-condition for effective dialogue and building meaningful relationships. Unfortunately, the high turnover rate of personnel in some agencies did not allow them to maximise the opportunities present in the situation.

If one accepts that dialogue must be based on a number of values which relate to fundamental questions such as mutual respect for human rights, the equal rights and value of every person, and democratic principles, then it also follows that credibility in the dialogue process derives from coherence and consistency in communicating those attitudes and values across to the partner.

1988–1991: Liberalisation

Three events had a significant impact on Cambodia during this period, and on the nature of development cooperation. First, the meeting between Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Prime Minister Hun Sen raised hope that a peace settlement might be within reach. The second event was the final withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989. Third, at this time Cambodia introduced a number of internal reforms, including liberalisation and a move towards a market economy. These changes made it politically feasible for multilateral agencies under the umbrella of UNDP to send preparatory missions to Cambodia. Increased bilateral funding became available for hu-

manitarian activities, but was being channelled through NGOs, many of whom were now coming from the border to work inside Cambodia. Other opportunities emerged as well. Agencies (mostly NGOs) were able to expand the scope of their work and its geographic location; they could now be more involved in the training of Cambodian counterparts, and could participate more meaningfully in the planning and implementation of programmes. NGOs began to shift to their more traditional community based roles.

Perhaps the most notable feature about development co-operation during this period is that the multi/bilateral donors used NGOs as substitutes for Cambodian institutions. The incumbent Cambodian regime was still not recognised by the United Nations, and many donors believed that direct assistance to the incumbent government could negatively impact the peace negotiations. Consequently, little assistance was available at this critical time to help the Cambodian administration to prepare for negotiations with multi/bilateral donors and the Bretton Woods institutions, and to plan for a large influx of aid. The use of NGOs as substitutes for Cambodian institutions served to shift control of the reconstruction process and agenda out of Cambodian hands to the donors and aid agencies, and virtually excluded many Cambodians from participation in the process. After almost fifteen years of isolation, and having few options open to them, Cambodians were greatly disadvantaged in discussions with the 'reconnaissance' missions of multi- and bilateral donors such that one can hardly refer to these discussions as 'dialogue'. The fact that few Cambodians had had the opportunity to study English, and that it was rare to find international agency officials who spoke Khmer, made language a significant barrier to Cambodian participation and to human resources development.

The most valuable contribution made by the international community during this period, was efforts in support of the Cambodian peace negotiations which resulted in the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in October 1991.

1992–1997: Transition

There is much debate in international circles about the achievements and negative consequences of the Cambodian peace process, and particularly about the benefits and legacy of the UNTAC intervention in Cambodia. It would be a vast undertaking, beyond the scope of this contribution, to do justice to the topic, nevertheless it is possible to single out some of the factors that have contributed to Cambodia's reconstruction and development, and those that have disempowered Cambodians from being full partners in their own development.

The most notable achievements and contributions of development co-operation during the transition period which followed the Paris Peace Agree-

ment, were the organisation of the UN supervised multi-party elections in Cambodia in 1993 which resulted in a coalition government, an environment conducive to the emergence of a civil society, the return of many of Cambodia's diaspora, and the reintegration of Cambodia into the world community. This was a time of hope, opportunity and tremendous challenges as Cambodians embarked on a number of transitions simultaneously, from war to peace, from a centrally planned to a market economy, and from a one party system to a democratically elected multi-party government. These were viewed by many Cambodians and donors as important benchmarks for nation building and for democratisation, although real peace did not take root until 1998, with the defection of the remnants of the Khmer Rouge. These achievements however have cost Cambodians dearly, both figuratively speaking and in real terms. Among these costs were loss of sovereignty as Cambodians forfeited effective control of the rehabilitation/ development process, failure of the international community to deal effectively with the Khmer Rouge even when they failed to abide by the terms of the peace agreement[3], the beginning of over-dependency on foreign assistance which at the time represented two thirds of total government expenditure. More significant still, Cambodians lost confidence in their capacity to direct and manage the process of reconstruction (Curtis, 1998).

It is almost inconceivable, with all the knowledge that resides in development organisations, derived from decades of experience and reflection, that Cambodia fell victim to some of the most appalling development practice. In *Cambodia Reborn*, Curtis describes the post- UNTAC situation as development anarchy, and states that many donors either tended to assume that Cambodia was without established institutions or out-rightly rejected them as illegitimate. Curtis further characterises the donor community as lacking discipline and any real commitment to coordination, although the latter was frequently proposed if not practised by the donors themselves. Cambodians were often treated by bilateral and multilateral agencies as victims rather than participants or partners. And the hundreds of fact-finding missions, which passed through Cambodia at the time, rarely included Cambodians as team members. Information technology and expertise were concentrated in agencies and mission reports were rarely reviewed with local officials or distributed widely; neither were they translated into Khmer. Some donors were very insensitive to the issues of Cambodian consultation and participation in the design and decision making process and often hid behind the pretext of maintaining neutrality. Another weakness in development co-operation that precluded any type of meaningful dialogue was the low priority given to developing relationships. It seemed that the pressures of large scale, bi/

[3] This resulted in the continuation of civil war in Cambodia until 1998. There was still no attempt by the United Nations to address the issue of a Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

multilateral funding dictated the demand for quick impact projects and visibility at the expense of developing relationships and processes that ensured Cambodian participation. As a result, many of the interventions proposed by aid agencies often conformed more to donor agendas and priorities than they did to those of the Cambodian people. Similarly many donor agencies by-passed, or did little to strengthen, local institutions which could have played an important role in reconstruction. This perhaps comes from the fact that many agencies operating in Cambodia were largely ignorant of traditional forms of social organisation and relations in the society, of how much had changed and what remained. Lack of knowledge of such aspects is typical of top-down approaches to development around the world. Furthermore it is crucial for ensuring that projects respond to local needs and for enlisting the active and sustained participation of stakeholders. What is tragic is that without such knowledge the donor community missed tremendous opportunities to transform the past systems and structures which may have contributed to economic and social inequities and conflict. A study of the relationship between culture, values, experience and development practice conducted in Cambodia in 2001 (O'Leary and Nee, 2001) identifies this problem as an on-going issue in development cooperation. The study found that "some of the characteristics of Cambodian patron-client relationships which encourage dependence, gratitude and maintenance of unequal relations were replicated within development co-operation".

The normalisation of aid relations following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords created space for the development of civil society, and particularly of human rights NGOs. While this was incontestably a positive development introduced through development cooperation, opportunities were missed on several fronts, and again largely due to lack of understanding of local values and social organisation. The new human rights organisations which emerged during this period encountered tremendous resistance and difficulties in their work partly due to the nature of their sensitive work, to the lack of professionalism and bi-partisanship of some staff, but also because human rights were seen by many Cambodians as a Western-introduced 'concept'. Buddhism however, which is Cambodia's main religion, embodies many of the same values as are encompassed in human rights such as respect for human life, compassion, truth, justice, and non-violence. A former Cambodian Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs, now retired from public life and who devotes his time to Buddhist study and his meditation centre, once told me in discussing the issue of human rights in Cambodia, "had foreign organisations introduced human rights through Buddhist values and teaching, Cambodians might have been more receptive and certainly the human rights NGOs would have encountered fewer difficulties". Also, the fact that development professionals focused the 'dialogue' on human rights mainly on civil and political rights (many development professionals equate human rights with civil and political rights)

undermined the potential of aid to promote awareness and understanding of all human rights. The continuing silence over the past Khmer Rouge atrocities and lack of action in response to their failure to abide by the peace agreement, further eroded the credibility of dialogue on human rights.

Another missed opportunity was the donor community's understanding of civil society – which according to most in the donor community – meant the newly created local NGOs. This 'civil society' was largely created by donor funding and the need to implement donor agendas. Consequently, development co-operation failed to engage local and traditional institutions (such as the Buddhist community) and to develop partnerships which might have accelerated and enhanced the effectiveness of development and democratisation objectives.

Another factor which contributed to creating an unequal relationship between Cambodians and donor agencies was the undermining of Cambodian self-esteem and self-confidence, even when donors were trying to be supportive. At the Tokyo conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia in June 1992 donor governments and international organisations, one after the other, made reference to the suffering of the Cambodian people, and to the 'lack of capacity', or 'limited capacity', of Cambodia to reconstruct itself due to the legacy of the past. Donors generously pledged up to US$2.29 billion and voiced their commitment to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia, which would begin in earnest *now* that they had entered the picture. There was an almost complete negation of the twelve years of hard-won experience, resourcefulness and dedication which the Cambodian people had applied since 1980 to rebuilding the nation and to capacity building efforts. The tendency of the newly arrived donor community to disregard everything pre-UNTAC, and the common reference in development dialogue to 'lack of capacity' and 'limited capacity' became over time a self-fulfilling prophecy, and on occasion served to justify the heavy reliance of donors (and eventually of Cambodians) on technical assistance.

That Cambodians, with the support, and perhaps even in spite of, the donor community made slow progress towards stability and reconstruction is testimony to their resilience and their resourcefulness. The DAC Regional Consultations on Development Challenges and the Role of Development Co-operation in the three Mekong countries of Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam organised by OECD in Phnom Penh in June 1996, offered some valuable insights into how participants felt about their development co-operation experience and suggested ways to strengthen local ownership and participation in the development process.

Participants urged a change of dynamic in development cooperation, where ownership and participation replaced the old donor/recipient relationship of dependency. Such a relationship required maturity and had to be frank and open. Interestingly though, local participants did not view this relationship as being equal, "the government and people had to be the senior partner".

Participants put a high value on respect of sovereignty and understanding of customs, social and cultural traditions. This, they argued, would encourage national pride which in turn would strengthen local ownership, help sustain progress and enhance the effectiveness of assistance in the long term. They also urged donors to be more realistic in their assessment of progress; not to scrutinise every minor deviation, but to look at the track record of overall progress. And they asked for patience when they made political and social adjustments at their own pace and in "conformity with their own ethos evolved and refined over a millennium" (OECD, 1996).

The participants also recognised their own obligations and responsibilities, and urged greater trust and confidence from donors. They agreed that ownership should be responsible and accountable and that they should make better use of instruments such as national budgets, public expenditure reviews, and public investment programmes to increase transparency. At the same time they urged greater coherence and transparency by the international community as well.

To contribute to a more effective dialogue and co-operation which was based on mutual respect, they asked donors to avoid linking grants with conditionalities and using trade and economic sanctions as a weapon to impose changes on their societies.

Conference participants urged donors to avoid rushing to implement quickly conceived schemes because of their own disbursement and budget schedules, and acknowledged that donors had sometimes engaged in activities not rooted in their countries due to the absence of a clear sense of national strategies, or ignorance about cultural values and societal organisation. As a result well-intentioned resources were wasted, they said.

1998–Present: Reconciliation and reform

Despite some setbacks in democratisation and a return to violence in 1997, by 1998 Cambodia had at last achieved peace and some form of reconciliation, through a negotiated agreement with armed remnants of the Khmer Rouge who until then still controlled some parts of the country.[4] The return of territorial integrity and the successful implementation of the first Cambodian managed multi-party national elections were great achievements for Cambodians and did much to boost their self-esteem and confidence. The newly elected Second Legislature of the Royal Government of Cambodia, with 'encouragement' from the international donor community, now

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[4] It was only two years following this negotiated settlement between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge that suddenly, the issue of a tribunal became a priority for donors, after almost twenty years of silence. For the Cambodian government it had now become a much more complex issue.

turned its attention to an ambitious reform agenda that spanned many sectors including economic reforms, demobilisation, administrative reform, judicial reform, as well as governance reform and social sector reforms. Human resources were acknowledged by all to be the single most significant constraint to implementing the reform agenda. All parties to the co-operation recognised that such an ambitious programme, would require a significant amount of financial resources and technical assistance, and a new dynamic of co-operation based on partnership, participation from all sectors of society, and local ownership. But what did this new rhetoric really mean?

Before answering this question it is important to note that tremendous strides have been made in Cambodia, in terms of Cambodian participation in and greater ownership of the development process and agenda, and this in itself has empowered them to be a more effective partner in development dialogue. A number of positive trends and practices in Cambodia's more recent development co-operation experience have contributed to this progress. The first is experience, both on the part of Cambodians and the donor community. Cambodians have always demonstrated great pragmatism when given the opportunity and space to evaluate their situation. Time for this is however is becoming increasingly scarce as the demands of the reform process and of the donors increase, both in number and complexity. This experience has also contributed to bolstering Cambodian self-esteem and confidence in their capacities as partners in development. Increasing capability on the Cambodian side as a result of technical assistance, and the many opportunities for study and training have contributed to strengthening and expanding Cambodia's human resource base.

An investment in studies and research has yielded valuable knowledge to guide the reform process and development interventions. More is known today about the political economy of the country, how power is exercised and what is left of traditional social organisation and values. This has been critical for undertaking institution building and for engaging broader sectors of society in the development process and dialogue. A commitment to evaluations on the part of donors and Cambodians alike has contributed to learning from weaknesses as well as best practice, resulting in more effective programmes. A long-term, pilot, national programme in decentralised planning, SEILA, yielded rich lessons in strengthening local planning processes and in involving local communities in applying their knowledge to address their own problems. The long-term and sustained support for the programme, as well as reliance on regular evaluations and partner dialogue greatly contributed to its success. This experience has become the basis for nation-wide decentralisation reforms, which started with Cambodia's first commune election as recently as February 2002.

A regular in-country coordination/consultation mechanism led by government was essential to avoid the danger of donors taking over the development and reform agenda. Government/donor working groups have been

established in key sectors of reform to regularly review the progress of reforms, set priorities and identify benchmarks for monitoring. The working groups met quarterly under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, but this has now been reduced to twice a year because of the work involved. This mechanism serves to put Cambodians and their donor partners on a more even footing in dialogue, as it assesses both the strengths and weaknesses of development efforts, and raises difficult issues in an open, frank and constructive manner. As a coordinating mechanism it contributes to greater coherence and credibility on the part of both partners – the Cambodians and the donor community. It puts the onus on donors to coordinate themselves, and Cambodians as well, as each working group has one spokesperson and only one report is tabled at the meeting. Another benefit of this consultative process is that it contributes to making donors more realistic in their assessment of progress; and to seeing the track record of overall progress, rather than focusing on isolated details of what has not been achieved. This mechanism merits further attention and study as a potential model for other countries. Cambodian ownership as well as the high commitment on the part of both the Cambodian leadership and the donors are key to its success. The quality of dialogue and effectiveness of this consultative process would be further enhanced if it could be disassociated from the donor pledging conferences or conditionalities in aid. Also, the process is still somewhat imbalanced in that it is viewed by many donors as a means to hold Cambodians accountable, and not themselves. Cambodians either do not yet have enough confidence to hold donors accountable as well, or have not yet mastered the art of doing so, although there are encouraging signs of this beginning to happen.

One such example is a report from the Council for the Development of Cambodia, the body mandated by the RGC to coordinate international aid and investments, to the April 2000 pre-consultative group meeting in Phnom Penh, *Building More Effective Partnerships for Development in Cambodia* (Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2000). A central theme in this report, which we will see reflected again in two studies discussed below, is the effectiveness of capacity building and technical assistance. The report attributes the lack of genuine progress in capacity building to: the proliferation of formats/demands by donors with regard to rules and procedures for procurement, disbursement, reporting, accounting and auditing; the setting up of parallel systems (Project Management Units, PIUs, etc.) that put more priority on reporting to donors than to government, while competing with government for qualified personnel; the topping-up of civil servants' salaries in donor-funded areas; and the excessive reliance of donors on expensive experts from their own countries, who are given too much say in the implementation of donor-funded activities. The report also makes a plea to donors for a shift in the development co-operation approach, from donors pursuing their individual programmes towards a cautious and selective im-

plementation of a sector-wide approach on a pilot basis in selected sectors (health, education, rural infrastructure, governance, and private and financial sector development). It is a courageous report and represents the first time a formal report has been presented to donors highlighting some of the weaknesses in development co-operationwith concrete suggestions to enhance partnership, ownership and the effectiveness of development cooperation.

There are certainly other good examples of development partnership and meaningful dialogue in Cambodia. For example, the practice of some donors, albeit too few, of sharing and discussing evaluation reports with partners; some are even beginning to include partners in the evaluation processes. The commendable efforts of donors to ensure civil society participation at the consultative group meetings and in donor/ government working groups have broadened the dialogue and enriched the outputs.

Nevertheless there are still many constraints and weaknesses in development co-operation which continue to hinder meaningful dialogue, genuine participation, and ownership of development goals and programmes. Two important studies conducted in Cambodia in the last two years shed light on these issues and offer practical suggestions for optimising development co-operation efforts and resources. I will borrow liberally from both these studies. The first study, *Technical Assistance and Capacity Development in an Aid-Dependent Economy: The Experience of Cambodia* (Godfrey et al., 2000) looks at how the magnitude of aid has impacted on Cambodia, and to what extent external assistance can develop the capacity of counterparts in an aid-dependent economy such as Cambodia's. The second study, *Learning for Transformation* (O'Leary and Nee, 2001), is a study of the relationship between culture, values, experience and development practice in Cambodia. It looks at why development co-operation aimed at capacity building has not been very effective in empowering Cambodians to participate fully in the development process, or fallen short in fostering genuine change.

Technical assistance and capacity building in an aid-dependent economy

The high proportion of aid invested in technical assistance in Cambodia, as a part of overall development cooperation[5], warrants a close scrutiny of the study's findings. Critical to the discussion of technical assistance and capacity development in Cambodia is an understanding of the special nature of

[5] Technical assistance accounted for approximately 19 per cent of the total external assistance in 1992. The share of technical advisors rose to 46 per cent in 1996 and 57 per cent in 1998. In 1998, $230.5 million of a total of $403.9 million in external assistance was spent on TA. From 1995–98 the figure was over $200 million each year. In 1997, technical assistance accounted for 74 per cent of the entire expenditure of the Cambodian government. The amount of technical advisors exceeds the entire annual budget of many ministries.

the country's dependence on aid, and of the distorting effects of large-scale aid on Cambodia's economy. One result is the high proportion of educated people, Cambodia's scarcest resource, being drawn to work in donor agencies and international NGOs, or being attached to projects as salary-supplemented counterparts. Secondly it means that donors and NGOs virtually fund the social sectors, education, health and rural development, while government spends most of its resources, on defence and security. This situation eases the pressure on government to raise more revenue as a proportion of GDP and to raise salaries and accelerate the pace of administrative reforms.

As to how technical assistance works in an aid-dependent economy of this kind, the study suggests that it has been more successful at raising individual capacity than at developing institutional capacity, although some respondents were not so positive. One senior government official felt that there had been little benefit from technical assistance, which tended to solve problems in the short term but did not build capacity for the long term. Another, the head of a donor agency, saw technical advisors in Cambodia as capacity substitution rather than development. A former head of a multilateral organisation in Cambodia was recently reported as stating that "technical assistance often becomes a matter of expediency for donors and government officials in a hurry. It is easier to pay someone an excessive salary than to struggle to find the right people to complete a project (Phnom Penh Post, Sept. 2002)".

The study revealed that chief technical advisers generally saw themselves more as managers rather than facilitators, trainers, or communicators. They expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of briefings they received from donors and executing agencies, and complained about the lack of briefings from government. The latter may well reflect the lack of ownership of technical advisors projects by government. Chief technical advisors complained of too many projects, which were overlapping, uncoordinated and patchy in terms of coverage, and pulling Cambodian partners in different directions. An example given was that of "the HIV/AIDS sector where there are thought to be 20 too many expatriate advisers (Godfrey et al., 2000)".

One of the more significant obstacles to capacity development highlighted by the study, are the structural problems relating to ownership. The study found that in the fifty projects sampled, few are demand driven; most are donor driven in their identification and design. The government's role is usually limited to day-to-day operations, with little say in personnel and financial issues. Another weakness of development co-operation in Cambodia is that many agencies do not implement projects through normal government channels. Multilaterals have tended to set up Project Implementation Units, while some NGOs bypass government completely. The study revealed that only 58 per cent of projects in the study sample were structurally well positioned for capacity development, meaning that they were both

owned by government and implemented through normal government structures or local NGOs. There tends to be greater government ownership in loan projects, as government owns the funds that have been borrowed. In these projects the government tries to restrict the proportion of technical advisors.

Lack of transparency affects information about costs in particular and is an impediment to ownership as well. Some donors do not disclose information about costs for technical advisors, or salaries and benefits of their international staff. This not only makes it impossible to monitor the cost-effectiveness of projects but also conveys the wrong message about governance.

The study also exposes some of the wider problems arising from the special nature of Cambodia's aid dependence. These problems not only threaten the financial sustainability of projects, but may also contribute to reducing the efficiency of the whole institution. One such problem is the chronic under-funding of government, which is reflected in low salaries. This is in turn reflected in the absence of middle level people in many government departments who do not receive supplementation and who must work outside in order to supplement their meagre salaries and survive. Most projects try to deal with the problem by supplementing their counterparts' salaries in one way or another. Donors further exacerbate the problem by competing for counterparts by outbidding each other. The practice of salary supplementation acts as a disincentive to the large majority of staff who do not receive supplementation, and as an impediment to ownership.

Other structural problems in Cambodia are also a constraint to capacity development. One donor representative synthesised this into two sentences: "Most technical advisors is a waste of money in the absence of certain conditions, such as good governance, a functioning judiciary, the rule of law. The Cambodian government hasn't made the reforms necessary to use technical advisors well."

The study concludes by offering a series of propositions which could serve as a basis for a 'Code of Practice' which would contribute to improving development co-operation and the effectiveness of technical assistance. The authors concede that given the vested interests on both sides, progress towards more effective partnerships is unlikely to be smooth, but certainly worth the effort. The propositions are lifted from the study verbatim, though not in their entirety.

Salary supplementation. The most urgent single priority is to abolish project-related salary supplementation and, instead, ensure that key government officials are paid a living wage for full-time commitment to their work. This will involve agreement between government and donors on: the creation of a Salary Fund into which donors will pay an amount equivalent to what they would otherwise have spent on salary supplementation or other incentives; and agreement on a timetable for the transfer of responsibility for

financing this Fund from donors to government. This proposal would fit well into the plans to create a core group of civil servants 'for Priority Missions', currently being discussed by those responsible for administrative reform.

Two-way transparency. Donors should recognise that the purpose of technical assistance is ultimately to increase the welfare of Cambodians and, accordingly, should seek the most cost-effective way of achieving this. This involves complete transparency about all costs and willingness to consider alternative modes of implementation. Transparency has to be two-way, however. Government should also make available to donors information on the distribution of salary supplementation, etc.

Implementation through intermediaries. From the point of view of capacity development, cost-effectiveness implies that all projects should have counterparts, whether in government or in a local NGO. Direct implementation at community level without a local counterpart by an international organisation should be ruled out as cost-ineffective.

Ownership. The government should play a more active role (in collaboration with donors and executing agencies) in design and (transparent) selection of projects and personnel: its concern should extend to ways of reducing the cost of projects without reducing their effectiveness, and to monitoring and evaluating performance. *The aim should be for government to achieve at least the same degree of ownership of grant-aided projects as it already has of loan-funded projects.*

Guidelines. There should be clear official guidelines for the use of technical advisors personnel by government departments (primarily for capacity development), provision of counterparts, and selection for training, and similar guidelines for donors, executing agencies, and project team leaders.

Project Implementation Units. The concept of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) should be re-examined, and alternative ways of managing assistance through normal government structures, without affecting transparency and efficiency, should be explored. One suggestion worth considering is that each ministry/organisation should have only *one* unit for managing and monitoring *all* its projects.

By-passing government. No external technical assistance projects should by-pass government structures, whether central or local, altogether. For NGOs this would merely mean registering with the relevant ministry (as most do already) and making sure that they liase with the relevant branch of local government.

Role of government. In all this the role of government should be that of a facilitator, prudential regulator, and coordinator, with the aim of getting the best for Cambodia out of technical assistance, rather than that of detailed controller.

Learning for transformation

The study, *Learning for transformation*, reinforces many of the findings from the CDRI technical assistance study, but also offers the unique perspective and experiences of NGOs. In relation to partnership in development co-operation the study posits that the imbalance inherent in donor/client relationships, makes them particularly difficult relationships, even when the donor organisation is trying to be supportive and sensitive to this. This power imbalance in donor-partner relationships stems directly from the donor having the funds and the right to 'decide' whether or not the partner receives funding, or will continue to receive funding.

Participants in the study identified donors' project aid procedures as a constraint to the participation of civil society in development cooperation, and see them even as an obstacle to the flexible and less known approaches needed to support local initiatives and grassroots organisations. Development administrators, they claim, are not always convinced about the relevance and implications of encouraging participatory approaches. Their experience has been that 'getting things done' and disbursement often outweigh other considerations and work against participatory development. The study suggests that translating participation objectives into reality calls for changes in attitudes and practices concerning the way activities are conceived, designed, financed, and timed. Recognising that process is as important as output, which is increasingly the case among donors and partners, is already a step in the right direction.

The study offers some insights on the need for improved understanding as a basis for dialogue and effective cooperation. NGO development practitioners point out that capacity builders need to be conscious of the factors – within themselves – and within participants – which inhibit the facilitation of learning. "Technical advisors need to understand more explicitly what people whose capacity they are endeavouring to strengthen are facing regarding the dilemmas of development practice in Cambodia. Foreign development influences (capacity building (training), organisational culture and the expectations of donors) are being laid over the underlying formative influences of culture and trauma and are also impinging on development practitioners', attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Development practitioners struggle to accommodate what is culturally and socially acceptable and expected, and the demands of their work, which at least in theory is calling them to behave in a very different way" (O'Leary and Nee, 2001). Another key weakness in technical assistance is that training, at least in Cambodia, has largely focused on the transmission of information, particularly the technical content; it has not really challenged the development practitioners to discern their own values and to clarify how they fit in relation to development values. Training that is mainly technical is not aimed at changing attitudes and perceptions. The application of knowledge about gender makes the case very clearly. "Most development

practitioners have attended training on the theory of gender but the degree of internalisation and commitment varies from no discernible change in attitude or belief, to those who had embraced the concept to some degree (O'Leary and Nee, 2001)."

Requirements for a development dialogue

In the last decade Cambodia has undergone dynamic change and the nature of the development dialogue and of development co-operation has changed as well. Development organisations have become significantly better at evaluating their work, and generating development knowledge. Making the link between learning and integrating that learning into development practice, however, remains a significant challenge to development cooperation. Also, organisations for whatever reasons, are slow to change; much of the expectation of change in a donor-partner relationship has been largely one-sided. Yet, if donors do not sufficiently appreciate the need to change, it is unlikely that they will be able to stimulate change in others. One need only look at the poor record of development co-operation in reversing the widening gap between rich and poor nations, to realise that there is a need for a new paradigm in development dialogue and co-operation.

Post-conflict societies, which are today making unprecedented demands on ODA, pose complex challenges and special opportunities in development cooperation. They offer rare opportunities to change past systems and structures which may have contributed to economic and social inequities and conflict. In such situations development dialogue can make an invaluable contribution in fostering positive social change. At the same time opportunity engenders a responsibility to understand the context, the culture, the traditional forms of social organisation and power, lest ignorance leads to new forms of dis-empowerment or replicates old forms of inequity. Making the time to build and nurture relationships of trust based on mutual respect, and making the effort to learn about and understand the societies we are attempting to assist are fundamental pre-requisites to any meaningful development dialogue and partnership.

Where development dialogue provides an opportunity to transmit values caution must be exercised. The level of conscientisation of indigenous groups may differ widely from that of foreign agency staff acting as catalyst. There is always the danger that foreign agencies unintentionally manipulate and impose their own ideological frameworks and priorities on local groups by promoting, for example, western models of 'empowerment' or 'participatory development', or western economic frameworks, especially where the process of the local people's 'critical consciousness' has not yet had time and opportunity to ripen and mature. Western options of self-reliance and independence (encouraging communities) have not always been suitable when a development strategy based on the concept of interdependence between

villagers and their government institutions would have been much more appropriate in Cambodia, and more realistic in terms of long-term sustainability.

Coherence is essential for the effectiveness and credibility of a donor country's stance on good governance and participatory development. The conflicting signals of the donors, and inconsistency between rhetoric and action in respect to human rights in Cambodia has damaged their credibility, and seriously weakened their position in the current dialogue on the Khmer Rouge tribunal. An exclusive focus on civil and political rights only, has resulted in lost opportunities to sensitise Cambodians on other basic rights.

Participation is still more rhetoric than reality. There is need to improve the rhetoric of dialogue between donors and recipient countries. There remain a number of obstacles to genuine participation. In many cases the existing focus of participation is too narrow. Often, donors negotiate with governments or existing non-representative institutions; donors also relate mostly to other donors and do not always share information with civil society. Even though there is a perceptible increase in workshops which engage civil society and local actors, there is seldom time for meaningful participation, and too little information available in the local language. Other prerequisites for real participation include: *interdependence and equality; mutuality* – sharing information and analysis (translation of reports); *inclusion* – government and civil society are involved in design and planning, with Cambodians taking the lead in developing their development objectives and priorities; *respect for local capacity* – aid should complement and supplement local resources.

Ownership is a subtle concept because it is in the minds of people. Governments or people can be said to own an activity when they believe that it empowers them and serves their interest. Government ownership is not something to be awaited however, it sometimes needs to be nurtured. Whereas accountability to the donor increasingly takes precedence over the needs of communities, reversing this trend would go a long way towards strengthening local ownership of development goals and interventions. Time, which allows for reflection and internalisation of new ideas, is a critical factor in ownership, and for meaningful participation as well. Timetables need to respond more to Cambodian needs than donors' programming needs, and the process needs to take precedence over getting things done. Giving partners a say in the selection of technical assistance and greater responsibility for the financial management of projects will also contribute to greater ownership, particularly of grant aid.

Accountability and transparency are essential elements for partnership and should extend both ways. Non-transparent donor requirements and procedures, and tying aid to donor conditionalities, particularly in relation to procurement of goods and services from donor country suppliers, contribute to a lack of trust regarding the donor's motives and discourage national owner-

ship of the process. Adopting practices that encourage trust, such as incorporating technical co-operation in the budget and the opening up of procurement markets would enhance the accountability and transparency of technical co-operation and contribute to national ownership as well. On the other hand, a partner government must be able to convince donors, also through transparent mechanisms, that donor resources will be used efficiently, for the purposes mutually agreed upon. Accountability has too often been seen by the donor as a one way process. Establishing mechanisms through which donors can be held accountable by communities or individuals, and introducing performance indicators for technical assistance would contribute to restoring some balance in the relationship between the partners in development dialogue.

There is no shortage of knowledge on what is needed to transform the development partnership into a meaningful process of dialogue and effective cooperation. Today's development discourse reflects many of the principal elements of an effective partnership, genuine participation, and local ownership of the development process. Evidence thus far however, suggests a huge gap between rhetoric and actual practice. The real question perhaps is whether there is within the donor community, the capacity and commitment to change and to envision a new paradigm of development cooperation.

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Dialogue – the Concept, the Aid Modalities and the Risks

Bertil Odén[1]

> *"No outsider should impose risk preferences on those who must live with the consequences."*
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> *Joe Stiglitz at the 1998 Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics.*

Introduction

The concept of *dialogue* is as elusive as that of *partnership*. And as concepts both have been introduced from the donor side, in spite of their allusion to a relationship between two equal partners. The two concepts are also mutually interconnected. In recent times, dialogue is considered the only politically correct way to relate in a genuine partnership.

In this chapter I will discuss the following issues:

- The dialogue concept and how it has developed in the international development co-operation debate.
- How the changing modalities of development co-operation have affected the dialogue.
- Recent improvements in and future challenges for the dialogue process.

The concept and its development

In the invitation to contribute to this volume the dialogue concept is defined as "…the methodology of interaction between the donor and recipient. At best, it is the instrument for formulating the parameters, which together should make up the joint understanding and contract between the parties on policy-, programme- or project level on how to interact".

Taken in this sense dialogue is as old as the aid relationship itself, and there was a dialogue before the term was introduced in the development co-operation context. It has changed over time, following the shifting trends among what nowadays often goes under the label 'donor community'.

In recent years dialogue has often been defined as discussions taking place

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between the developing partners, which are not directly related to actual projects or programmes, but to policies or other external circumstances that shape the framework of those activities. Traditionally the main context for this dialogue has been annual consultations and other high level meetings. This is however also changing.

The Swedish Embassy in Dar es Salaam belongs to those 'pilot cases' to which decision making has been delegated from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sida headquarters in Stockholm. This means that Sweden is trying to establish conditions for dialogue as a continuous process. Furthermore, a similar decentralisation process is visible among other donors. With enhanced co-operation between donors at the local level, the policy dialogue may thus often be conducted by a group of donors and the Government of Tanzania. The continuous process makes the dialogue more informed and reduces the transaction costs of all participants. The flip side, from the Tanzanian point of view is a stronger continuous pressure on key decision makers.

Dialogue is closely linked to two other concepts: partnership and ownership. *Partnership* refers to the quality of development co-operation. It has as such to be based on common basic values and mutual trust, allowing for open discussions, where co-operating partners respect the existence of differing interests. As president Mkapa of Tanzania has pointed out, genuine partnership cannot be akin to that of a horse and its rider. Nor can it share the profits, but not the risks (Mkapa, 1999). *Ownership* is the level of control that the receiving government or other stakeholders in development co-operation have over the content, conditions, planning and implementation of a specific activity undertaken in development co-operation. The logic of full ownership contains full responsibility for implementation. *Dialogue* can be the process in which the content of the partnership is identified. The balance between the two partners in the dialogue depends on the level of ownership of the activity. Finally, there exists a fourth concept that in many respects is in contradiction to these three, namely *conditionality*. This concept is strongly related to the structural adjustment programmes, launched by the World Bank in the 1980s. Although conditions are formally agreed upon by the partners, they are de facto defined and decided by the donor, while the recipient feels it has to accept the conditions in order to receive the resources.

Trust is a basic prerequisite for partnership and a fruitful dialogue. Trust is at the same time something, which can only be built up during a long period of co-operation. Trust is something fragile and also susceptible to factors outside the development co-operation framework. Change of government may change a donor's policy significantly. One recent example from Denmark shows that the result can be interrupted bilateral development co-operation in some countries. A change of government on the recipient side may also imply that previous distrust from the donors is replaced with

the benefit of the doubt. Zambia has experienced two such occasions. The first one was when Chiluba replaced Kaunda as president, after winning the multiparty elections. The second was when Chiluba, two presidential periods later, was succeeded by Mwanawase. In both cases the incoming president was elected on a strong anti-corruption agenda.

The dialogue and the changing modalities of development co-operation

The dialogue has passed through a number of stages over the years and is closely linked to the aid modalities of the various stages. The first stage

Rural water supply (1960s and 1970s)

The Tanzanian rural water supply programme was a major part of the Swedish Tanzania co-operation from the late 1960s and Sweden was its largest donor until the early 1980s. The Government of Tanzania in 1971 adopted a twenty-year plan according to which the whole rural population would be provided with access to piped water by 1991. In the *Ujamaa* era the aim of the programme was politically attractive, particularly as water was considered a free commodity for the consumers. The technology was based on diesel-pumps and long distance pipes, demanding maintenance and supply of spare parts. It was large scale and capital intensive. When international oil prices increased in 1973 and 1979, the programme became financially unsustainable. The ownership of the programme by the beneficiaries in the villages was low. The dialogue related to this project consisted mainly of engineers, linked to the programme, talking to engineers, linked to Sida. On the political side the rapidly increased resource flow to the Ministry of Water increased the status and power of the ministry and its leadership. Evaluations soon reported lack of maintenance and weak or non-existent local ownership. A broader and more transparent dialogue, including the feasibility of the twenty-year plan at an early stage, would possibly have resulted in a more sustainable programme.

In 1975 the planning of a new programme started, based on the experiences from the rural water supply programme. The result was HESAWA, described in one report as "the most ambitious among donor funded projects, based on participation and integration of health, sanitation and water activities" (Therkildsen, 1988). The conceptualisation was donor-driven and consultant-intensive. At the same time participation by the beneficiaries was significant and a number of impressive results were recorded during a period with a very difficult macro economic environment. HESAWA thus developed into a programme, which at the same time was donor driven and highly participatory. The trust and the quality of the dialogue was high between the donor agency and the project management, while that between those partners and the responsible ministry became more and more eroded.

comprised two categories, which could be called project dialogue and internal government dialogue.

The project dialogue focussed on technical, organisational and micro economic issues and was normally related to projects or co-operation activities in geographically restricted areas. The partners were mainly project experts, appointed by the aid agencies, and sector ministry and local authority officials. This dialogue seldom reached the higher national policy level. However it often had policy implications. It could also be based on a clear national government sector policy, which was developed solely by the partner government, and accepted as a project frame by the donor. The individual projects normally had their own administration, in line with the then current UN project thinking. Often a parallel and more intense dialogue took place between the project management and the aid agency. There were often more open differences between these partners, than between the project management and officials of the receiving country. Another discussion emerged when technical assistance was given by several donors and the technical assistance staff had different ideas as to how to handle the project. Such conflicts could hamper the implementation of a project significantly. Examples from the 1970s include the controversy between the management and the technical staff of the Adult Education Institute in Dar es Salaam and the rural water supply programme. These examples reflected of insufficient dialogue, or possibly dialogue between the wrong partners.

Another type of dialogue during this first phase took place within the Tanzanian government structures. As the number of skilled Tanzanians was very limited due to the colonial legacy, advice on the Tanzanian side was often provided by external experts, working within Tanzanian institutions. A dialogue took place between Tanzanian decision makers and Tanzania's externally recruited advisors. It did not require a parallel system to that of the Government.

During the 1970s, resource scarcity was seldom an issue that was discussed between the donors and the recipient government. Instead governments often proposed shopping lists, within the framework of five-year development plans, from which donors could pick and choose. In practice, they thereby set the priorities of the development budget, as projects not selected by donors had no alternative funding and therefore were not implemented.

Thus at the policy level the government of Tanzania formulated a policy of *ujamaa* and *self-reliance*, the government of Kenya a policy of *harambee*, and the government of Zambia a policy of *humanism*. To the extent these policies were to be implemented through the development budgets, the priorities were set by the donors through their selection of projects.

The insistence on a medium term development plan as a framework for development co-operation was probably the first macro conditionality in the history of development co-operation. Ironically, at that time the emer-

ging aid agencies in the OECD countries, encouraged by the World Bank, insisted on such plans as a prerequisite for development assistance, while they themselves were busy dismantling the last remnants of such plans.

In the era of the cold war, there were also donors with their own five-year plans, prepared to support African countries. The African continent developed into an arena for super power competition and development assistance was an important instrument of influence. Here the dialogue was non-transparent. It gave some African countries the option to look for alternative sources of development funding, if Western countries were not interested. A major example on the continent was the TAZARA, the railway from Dar es Salaam to Zambia, which made it possible to transport the Zambian copper by rail and still avoid using the routes via apartheid South Africa.

TAZARA (1980s and early 1990s)

The World Bank and other western donors, declined to fund the railway when the plans were presented in 1966. But the People's Republic of China was prepared to finance this major investment, which was finalised and handed over to the joint Tanzanian-Zambian railway authority, TAZARA, responsible for the management, running and maintenance, in 1976. Within the frame of the SADC (Southern Africa Development Conference) regional co-operation in the 1980s, Sweden and other Western donors agreed to support transport corridors, including TAZARA. The project has since then run into a large number of problems. Lack of transparency and trust, complicated organisation due to the joint ownership by Tanzania and Zambia of the TAZARA, fragmented donor support and contacts have contributed to a very problematic dialogue, based neither on shared values nor on open discussion of the different interests involved.

During this period, the most common modality of aid was the project. Its size could differ from World Bank-led financing of large hydropower or trunk road projects to minor technical assistance activities, supported by various UN agencies and bi-laterals. Technical assistance in the form of experts and volunteers penetrated the institutions of most African countries, or was established as specific project management units. Another popular modality was the integrated rural development programmes that mushroomed in African countries during the 1970s, with their own project management, normally separated from the government institutions.

After the rise of international oil prices in the 1970s and the subsequent international stagflation, the debt and resource gap increased, at times dramatically. Import support became a new aid modality, but initially within the administrative framework of continued state-driven production, with parastatals as major beneficiaries.

Import support (late 1980s)

In the late 1980s Sweden was one of the providers to an administratively allocated import support scheme. With the scarcity of foreign exchange in the economy during this period, receiving an allocation under this scheme was highly attractive. A significant part of the Swedish resources was allocated to projects or enterprises also receiving Swedish development assistance through other co-operation modalities. A free quota element, to be allocated by a committee in the Ministry of Finance was also included. This import support scheme was however highly bureaucratic and lacked transparency. Donors found that a number of importers received foreign exchange without paying any of the required counterpart funds in Tshs. The accountancy system and the auditing of the scheme became extremely tense issues in the development dialogue, and lack of information created increasing mistrust. The notion of partnership was far away. With very slow progress in the dialogue Sweden and other donors eventually decided to temporarily end this aid modality.

During the 1980s, in the wake of the debt crisis, IMF stabilisation programmes and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes, emerged as a new modality. This was the hey-day of aid conditionality. The dialogue had mainly narrowed into a monologue; sometimes the dialogue remaining was that between the World Bank local office and its headquarters in Washington.

The 'home-grown' structural adjustment programme (early 1980s)

An interesting example of policy dialogue between the Government of Tanzania and the Nordic countries resulted in an attempt to establish the home-grown structural adjustment plan of 1982–85. This was seen as an alternative to what was expected from the Bretton Woods institutions. The background was the breakdown in the relations between Tanzania and the IMF in 1979 and the subsequent problems in the relations with the World Bank and some other donors.

This exercise was based on strong trust between the partners, and a recognition by the Government of Tanzania that structural adjustment was needed, not only in order to increase the rapidly shrinking flow of development assistance, but also for sustainable development. The Nordic countries financed an expert group that in co-operation with Tanzanian authorities presented a plan that was endorsed by the Government, which however did not manage to implement it. Thereafter even the Nordic countries took the position that the Governments of Tanzania had to come to an agreement with the IMF, as a prerequisite for continued development co-operation. While the Nordic initiative failed to provide an implemented structural adjustment programme, it is considered to have contributed to bridging the gap between Tanzania and the IFIs. This would probably have taken a longer time without the previous attempt, which was based on a trustful dialogue between the Governments of Tanzania and the Nordic countries.

Soon the list of conditions to be fulfilled in the Washington-led SAPs expanded and agreements with countries like Tanzania and Zambia contained more than one hundred conditions to be met by the borrowing country in order to have the agreed credits disbursed. Most of them were conditions/reforms/activities that were to be introduced and/or implemented in a short or medium term perspective. The time planned for the implementation was regularly underestimated. Some of the reforms that were part of the conditionality package dealt with core economic policy issues of a kind that none of the major shareholders in the World Bank would have dreamt of introducing in such a short time span in their own countries.

This can be regarded as a special case of conditionality. According to an experienced Sida representative, the incentives on both sides were pushing the partners to sign agreements, based on conditionality, rather than a genuine dialogue. The borrower's intention in most cases was to receive the first disbursement and then forget about the conditions, so-called implementation slippage. In the World Bank system – at least until recently – good staff performance was equal to getting many agreements processed and signed. The result was a low degree of ownership of the reform package at the receiving end (Edgren, 1996).

The outcome was that many countries could not fulfil the conditions and they were therefore declared 'off-track' by the IMF and the World Bank. Many reports were commissioned to find out why. Was it due to 'lack of political will', lack of capacity or something else? Gradually an understanding emerged, that at least some of the conditions and particularly the short period to implement them might have been unrealistic. During this period the conditionality monologue gradually transformed into a dialogue, as the IFIs in Washington realised that without ownership, it was difficult to implement even the most necessary reforms. *Aid and Reform in Africa* is a recent World Bank study, confirming this conclusion.

The budget support, emerging out of HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) debt relief schemes and the subsequent PER (Public Expenditure Revue) processes have made the budget process and other central economic policy issues more transparent to donors, but also to the citizens of the partner country. Donors' stronger involvement in budget issues also implies that they are becoming more interested in offering advice and introducing indicators or benchmarks to be able to monitor the performance. This means that the advice and the conditions from the donors touch upon the most central issues of Government economic policy, and therefore are also more politically sensitive.

The third wave of conditions emerged in the wake of the cold war, when governance and human rights issues became more important for aid donors. For the major powers it was no longer a question of allocating aid to countries, just because they were considered to be 'on the right side' in the cold war, irrespective of human rights and democracy records.

After the end of the cold war good governance and democracy were introduced as main aims in the international development co-operation dialogue. This also raised the issue of what should be considered policy dialogue between co-operating partners for development and what could be considered unilaterally imposed conditions which one partner in that relationship tries to impose on the other. By this move, the donors entered a much more ambiguous field, in which the scope for subjectivity is wider and the complexity of the issues is greater. Most importantly, the issue of political sovereignty is more sensitive than that of economic sovereignty. This has had an impact on the dialogue, particularly for its role as an instrument for change.

It is thus possible to distinguish between three stages of conditionality over time. During the first one, donors focussed on technical/economic issues at the project level. Then followed debt crisis and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) period. Conditions replaced the dialogue, at least initially. They related to macro economic stability at the first stage and to liberalisation, privatisation and structural reforms during its second stage. This was followed by the present period, when political conditions are added, focussing on governance, human rights etc.

The three stages of conditionality affected both the substance and the role of the dialogue. It should be noted that when a new stage was introduced, the previous ones did not disappear but existed in parallel. The matrix in table 1 is an attempt to systematise the process.

Table 1. Level and content of the dialogue

Substance/ Level	Project	Sector/ Region	National	National – local
Policy content or outcome	Technical Organisational Micro economic	Sector policy Regional dev.	Macro policy	Governance Democracy Human rights
Relationship govt./central administration vs citizens	Low account-ability and transparency	Some accountability	Some account-ability	High transparency Broadly based
Form of organisation	Specific for the project	Contained in regional system or specific to programme	Increasingly included in national budget	Increased focus on non-govt. stakeholders
Degree of ownership	Aid agency/ NGO project managem. Line ministry	Aid agency Line ministry GoT	Aid agency Donor group GoT	Donor group GoT*

* Government of Tanzania.

Improved dialogue and future challenges

The macro economic reforms and the liberalising and privatising of the Tanzanian economy started in the mid-1980s. However, it was not until 1995 that the economic reforms took off. Most macro economic indicators have since then improved considerably. The budget deficit has been reduced, no net domestic borrowing is necessary to finance the budget expenditure, the inflation has been reduced from around 30 to less than 5 per cent, the foreign exchange reserve covers more than five months import, etc. Budget and financial management reforms are under implementation. The country reached the HIPC completion point in November 2001. The GDP growth has increased gradually and was 5.6 per cent in 2001. During this period Tanzania has moved from being regarded by the donor community as one of the bad reform cases, into the position as one of the shining stars in the reform class.

The dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions on macro economic policy during the last few years has therefore been very smooth, and controversies are rare. The PRGF (Poverty Reduction Growth Facility) missions by the IMF have declared Tanzania 'on track' four consecutive times, and the Government of Tanzania received a lot of praise from the donors during the consultative group-meeting in September 2001. It can be argued that the Tanzanian government, as represented by the President and the Ministry of Finance, has internalised the Washington Consensus. It should however be noted from the increasingly open public debate in Tanzania, that neither all government institutions, nor all Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) representatives in the Parliament, seem to be convinced of the virtues of the ongoing privatisation of parastatals or the trade liberalisation.

The public debate regarding the privatisation of utility parastatals, such as the electrical company TANESCO, the DAWASA water and sewage authority, Air Tanzania and Tanzania Railways shows that the present smooth dialogue on economic reforms may be more problematic in the future. It cannot be precluded that the government has to change its position, due to strong political pressure from its own political constituency.

One important part of the reform process is the Public Expenditure Review, PER. Initially, it was driven by the World Bank, mainly as an instrument to monitor HIPC conditions related to budget performance. Gradually it has emerged as an important part of the Tanzania budget preparation process, led by the Ministry of Finance. Over a period from September to May, representatives from various Tanzanian ministries and other authorities linked to the PRSP and the donors supporting this programme meet regularly. Together they identify important issues to be analysed as a preparation for next budget, the need for capacity strengthening and financial management reforms, and improved coverage and integration of external resources in the government budget. PER as such has developed into an integrated part of the Tanzanian budget preparation process. The donor representatives in the PER Working Group are participating in a discussion,

which is crucial to the budget guidelines prepared by the government. The PER has thus developed into a more or less permanent, low-key dialogue between the government and local representatives of those donor agencies that are most active in providing budget support.

It could be argued that this arrangement has led to increased donor responsibility for the outcome of the budget process. However, the work is carried out at the technical level and the results are fed into the ordinary Tanzanian budget process. The Tanzanian ownership is therefore not diluted. However, PER implies that the aid agencies involved are provided with improved information regarding the budget process as such, and thereby also its weaknesses. This increased transparency may be considered sensitive by some interests on the Tanzanian side.

Still more contentious are, however, the issues related to the third wave of conditions, those on governance, democracy and human rights. This realm contains a lot of sensitive issues, bordering on the national sovereignty. The attitude of the Tanzanian government during the presidential election in Zimbabwe in February 2002 is a case in point. Here president Mkapa and many of his ministers very strongly criticised the EU, UK and other countries for involving themselves in internal Zimbabwean policy. This was interpreted by some donors as a defence of the policy of president Mugabe including the attacks on the commercial farmers and the violence and harassment against the political opposition. The following period provided a number of indications that not only election monitoring, but also other governance issues were sensitive issues, when becoming public.

One of the more important contributions to this discussion came from the former prime minister and respected judge Joseph Warioba in a paper on good governance and its increasing role in the aid conditionality package (Daily News, 22 March, 2002). Judge Warioba was chairman of the Commission on Corruption, which produced a strong report a number of years ago and he is very active in the struggle against corruption in the country. In his paper he criticises the donors for using double standards when monitoring elections in different countries. He argues that this double standard is also used when aid giving countries demand a policy from the poor countries that they themselves are not prepared to implement. Finally he warns his Tanzanian countrymen about being too dependent on development assistance, as that hampers the scope for an independent policy and strengthens the dependency syndrome, that is already visible.

As a good dialogue has to be based on trust, factors eroding mutual trust between the partners are also a threat to the dialogue. These factors may be of different kinds. One consists of political decisions by the Government, which are perceived by the donor community as incompatible with agreements in force. One recent example is the decision to buy credit financed radar equipment for air traffic control from the UK that was considered too expensive and technologically sub-optimal. Some donors were concerned

that this was not compatible with the HIPC agreement. Tanzania's Minister of Finance during the budget debate in June 2002 said, that if the donors reduced their aid due to this procurement, then "we will eat leaves", but not give in to donor demands.

A second category is decisions by the Tanzanian government that reduce the trust among donor governments regarding the Tanzanian commitment to reforms. One recent example was an amendment to the law regulating the shipping sector, to reintroduce the monopoly of the state-owned Tanzanian shipping agency. In this context it should be mentioned that there is resistance by some groups towards the economic and political reforms that the government is implementing. The government may be committed to reforms, but there are various views on the speed and the scope, including influential forces defending the old system. Some of the arguments used in this debate are in general strongly critical to anything foreign.

A third category is decisions by the donors to 'move the goalposts', meaning that the government finds that in spite of implementing all conditions in an agreement, a donor changes its mind or cancels a disbursement because of factors external to the agreement. The decision by the British Minister for International Co-operation to freeze the disbursement of the second tranche under the ongoing budget support from UK, is one example. (The radar equipment issue was solved during a visit to Tanzania by the Minister in early July, and is no longer a problem in the relations between the two countries.)

The critique on donors' behaviour from representatives of the government and Parliament in Tanzania has in some cases been strong. Whether this type of public debate should be considered as part of the dialogue is unclear. The public rhetoric may carry people away on both sides, which in turn may erode a feeling of trust between the developing partners. A direct policy dialogue, rather than one via mass media, could play a constructive role in such circumstances.

The outcome of all this is a tendency in the public debate to blame various problems on external factors, and in particular on foreign companies or aid agencies. This can be seen as a renaissance for the rhetoric of president Nyerere. President Mkapa is following in his footsteps also in the sense that during recent years he has increasingly become one of the major African spokesmen in the North-South dialogue on development.

During recent years a number of bilateral donors have delegated the decision making to, and enhanced the mandate of, their country representations. In Dar es Salaam this increases the potential for meaningful and flexible dialogue with the Tanzanian authorities, including the PER process, and the regular monitoring of the PRSP proceses. Another area, where the decentralisation is very helpful is the process of harmonising the planning and monitoring processes that are linked to all types of development co-operation. When the aid agencies accept joint evaluations, assessments and monitoring missions, the

transaction costs for the government and the donors are reduced. Here decentralised decisions and flexibility on the side of the donor community are important for an improved and informed dialogue with the Government.

With increased decentralisation of decision making to the field offices, and donor harmonisation at the country level, the dialogue tends to become an ongoing process, much more closely integrated in the budget preparation and implementation. The need for annual consultations and other high level meetings as platforms for the dialogue is thus reduced.

Two different trends in the dialogue process thus are evident. One is the integration of a low-key and continuous dialogue into the Tanzanian budget process, providing a very good opportunity for constructive co-operation and reduced transaction costs. The other is a more defensive and potentially trust-eroding discussion based on some contentious issues in the realm of governance and democracy, together with a growing concern among donors that Tanzania once more may show itself as an expert at the correct policy formulations, while the implementation is slow. To this can be added an increasing critique against anything 'foreign' in the Tanzanian public debate. The relative strength of these two trends will decide which direction the relations and the trust between Tanzania and its co-operating partners will take.

The role of NEPAD

Finally, the question can be asked, if NEPAD (New Economic Partnership for African Development) provides the framework for a new type of dialogue. Will some of the issues that are contentious at the national level be more easily resolved at a regional level? It is obvious that as an African initiative NEPAD has better chances to involve itself in national governance issues with less defensive reactions from the governments implied. Here is one of the main attractions of NEPAD to the donor community. Should NEPAD not be able to take on this role it may still be a platform for dialogue on dimensions beyond the aggregated national dialogue issues.

In a widely reported speech at a symposium in Addis Abeba (27 May 2002), the prime minister of Ethiopia, Ato Meles Zenawi, argued: "The focus of our dialogue in the context of NEPAD with our development partners must therefore not be on the specifics of their obligations for Africa's development, but on the full recognition of their direct and material interest in it. Once we have consensus on the underlying interest, achieving consensus on the specifics will not be all that difficult." The initiators of NEPAD seem to envisage a dialogue at the highest policy level, rather than on what Prime Minister Zenawi calls 'the specifics'. It is too early to assess the potential of NEPAD as a lever for Africa in the international development dialogue. If it does not deliver on issues like good governance and peer review, the present problems at the national level may just be magnified in a global context.

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Reflections on Dialogue in Current Development Co-operation

Abby Riddell[1]

Introduction

Dialogue is a fundamental constituent of development cooperation, probably more so today than in previous times. This is because the shift toward programmatic aid away from projects entails the inclusion of development partners at the budget table, a position formerly reserved predominantly for the IMF. This shift away from delimited projects toward recipient-country-led work programmes has emerged from lessons of research into aid effectiveness and has brought about an increasing accountability of developing country governments to their own stakeholders, rather than primarily to the development agencies that support such programmes. An increasing exchange of ideas – one definition of 'dialogue' – is more necessary than when compartmentalised, bilateral projects were more prevalent. Dialogue has been 'bought', essentially, the price being less day-to-day control over expenditure, placing the onus of development on the recipient country governments themselves.

Poverty reduction and comprehensive development strategies are the new compasses, and sector wide approaches or direct budget support are two new means of providing aid. There is also an attempt, through such means, at coordinating support from the development banks and multilateral and bilateral donor agencies. Thus, dialogue is increasingly multi-party, and not a *tête-à-tête* between a bilateral and a recipient government.

One can trace the roots of dialogue to the earliest days of development co-operation, when 'partnership' was an important theme, emerging from post-colonial relationships, viz. the Report of the Commission on International Development chaired by Lester Pearson and entitled *Partners in Development*.[2] But then as now, the partnerships, and the dialogue based on such partnerships, were unequal. Even the proposition, that there should be 'dialogue', comes from the development agencies. Developing countries

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[2] Pearson, Lester B., 1969, *Partners in Development: Report of the Commission on International Development*, Praeger, London.

have not bandied around the industrialised countries asking to talk. Nor is their understanding of the word 'development partner' anything but loaded with what is expected of them as partners, though codes of conduct for development agencies are beginning to appear.

Dialogue, like partnership, has been a dialogue of 'un'-equals. The better the ventriloquism on the part of the development agencies, the better the relationship with recipient governments and the constituent dialogue, for the discussion themes have emerged from the agencies, not the recipient governments. Their concern to report to their own constituencies (increasingly based on assurance of 'value for money') necessitates their covering certain ground. Accountability is more difficult when funds are not earmarked and it is the Minister of Finance, or, indeed, the President who is seen to be responsible, increasingly, for impact and not the project director!

On the more positive side, where trusting relationships have been developed over time, through transparent and meaningful dialogue, these new modalities of aid have worked successfully. Donors and recipients are both pleased with the outcome and, often, tangible results are achieved. Indeed, the fact that dialogue is seen to be important recognises the recipient's side of what increasingly is a complex, political bargain: the recipient government must trade the institutional development of government systems for grant and loan monies. This is not to imply that recipients are not interested in such improvement, just that it often requires astute, national, political bargaining. However, whilst some of the modalities of aid are changing, there is much that is constant, especially in the context of development cooperation. This short paper reflects on the evolving meaning of dialogue over recent years, in a number of different settings. The first section focuses on the current context of development co-operation. The second section details a number of topics related to the meaning and practice of dialogue in this context.

The current context of development cooperation

Notwithstanding the increased focus on globalisation which has brought with it an enhanced awareness of the political dangers of the growing economic inequalities between and within countries, development assistance is diminishing not increasing. In real terms, the total aid provided by OECD donors in 2000, $53.7 billion, was 8 per cent less than the total aid provided in 1992.[3] This is despite sizeable increases in the numbers of people living in poverty, despite the special programmes of assistance that have been designed for the poorest countries, the bulk of which are in Africa and South Asia, and despite the special attention being given to the human

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development needs of the most disadvantaged. The increased focus, for instance, on education, has not brought about the disbursement of larger funds, even if the pledges and commitments to such increases have been forthcoming. Conference pledges for Education for All in 1990 had to be revisited at the Dakar conference a decade later.

Within the context of inadequate funding, made worse through the unsustainable debt burdens that have accumulated over an even longer period, it is understandable why making aid more effective where it is being used has grown in importance. Not surprisingly, aid has been found to be most effective in countries which have efficient government systems, good governance, and where markets are operating more efficiently and effectively. Unfortunately, this often means that where aid is needed the most, it is least effective because government systems are not reformed, nor are markets operating smoothly. Such inefficiencies, in fact, are often the basis of the preparatory capacity building required for the flow of programmatic funding.

The move away from projects has been due in part to the realisation that unless government systems are strengthened, development through the project mode will be unsustainable, the proverbial problem of the project ending, and so with it the beneficial outcomes. Using sector wide approaches, covering health, education and water, for instance, has been one means of coordinating development assistance in line with government policy and assisting the development of such sectors as a whole, instead of piecemeal projects. They have been based on government strategies often designed with the assistance of development partners, but intended to be implemented through government systems, rather than project implementation units run in parallel with government.

The World Bank's *Comprehensive Development Framework*, succeeded predominantly by poverty reduction strategies, has been a further means of coordinating not only development assistance, but the overall integration of priority sectors. Here, again, there has been an attempt to have the government take overall responsibility, integrating development assistance into the government's own medium term expenditure frameworks.

Projects have not disappeared, however, nor have these attempts at coordinating development assistance included all partners. Neither has there been a uniform position across the spectrum of development banks and donor agencies where such comprehensive strategies have worked successfully. Indeed, the respective agencies have often continued to adopt different approaches which require specific accommodation by the recipient countries.

This is all by way of saying that dialogue with any grouping of development partners in the above context is 'loaded'. One way this is manifested is through recipients adopting alternative domestic positions, playing off different national constituencies against each other. For instance, there will be

those who stand to lose from a diminution of project aid, and there will be those who stand to gain by different divisions of the overall budget, etc. Second, dialogue is loaded by alternative postures *vis à vis* the different development partners and their particular involvement and histories of co-operation with the country. Thirdly, it is loaded by other budgetary demands made on the government quite outside the 'development' context, which do not appear on the 'radar screen' of the aid professionals.

Topics

Recipient country weaknesses: the need for capacity development

The new aid modalities require increased dialogue. However, it is not always clear that the dialogue takes place in earnest, despite the good intentions of the development agencies in attempting to ensure national ownership and responsibility and thereby, hopefully, sustainability of programmes. This is because aid recipients cover a wide spectrum, and the least needy are likely to have the greatest capacity to engage more seriously and effectively in dialogue. So, typically, dialogue, and the flow of programmatic funding, necessitates considerable capacity building. Sometimes this capacity building appears as disguised conditionalities, even when agreed by all. For instance, it may be a requirement that World Bank procurement procedures are followed, and in order to adapt the national system satisfactorily, an international 'expert' comes as part of the overall package. Very typically, financial management systems require reform, not least in sectoral ministries which have not traditionally managed development budgets, relying only on recurrent expenditure budgets for so long. Consequently, planning within the framework of longer term development needs has become a barren exercise, hardly carried out beyond the delineation of particular percentage hikes from the previous year's budget. Thus, activity-based planning and budgeting and the development of medium term expenditure plans that attempt to match resources with development needs is frequently a new area for skills development, requiring a package of reforms to be negotiated as a first stage of necessary capacity building.

Capacity building is nothing new; the rhetoric surrounding its implementation may be, but capacity building has been a fundamental part of development co-operation since the earliest stages of such assistance. What is different in the new aid modalities is that typically, it is seen as part of the overall strengthening of government systems, and not merely a temporary 'shot in the arm', as an adjunct to a project. However, the modalities of technical assistance have not really changed, despite their wider remit in current programmatic aid. So capacities have to be developed to ensure 'real' dialogue, but only rarely is it asked how the recipient government can be in control when the judgements are being made precisely of its incapacity.

Nor can capacities be developed overnight – especially in the cases where the technical assistance cannot be nationally vetted and nationally supervised, most common in the weakest of countries. Yet, the aid clock keeps ticking and in the context of contemporary dialogue amongst many development partners, disbursement remains the key indicator of performance, so the pressure is on to utilise the funds allocated in any particular fiscal year, or to come up with loans – in the case of the World Bank and other development banks. However, clean bills of health cannot be readily given to systems having to undergo fundamental change, as for instance, when a finance ministry and its constituent sectoral ministries must make a change from cash accounting to activity-based budgeting. So issues of trust arise. When can the monies flow? Lack of trust in such cases may undermine continued dialogue.

There are wider issues here. If the dialogue remains weak with some government representatives, it may also be even more limited, or entirely absent, with respect to the inclusion of a wide group of stakeholders in countries in which civil society is least developed or poorly organised. Recent efforts to be more inclusive have led to non-governmental organisations being invited to be round the table. This is important, but questions remain about who precisely these organisations represent and, especially, how they represent conflicting interests of different groups of poor people. Many have narrow bases, and the more requests for dialogue, the more the same individuals appear around different tables. So dialogue is fraught where it is needed most.

Looking more closely at such 'extended' dialogue, we see the perspectives of the different groups of actors. Take as an example an education ministry and a finance ministry engaging in discussion with a group of like-minded bilateral agencies and various development banks, such as the case in Mozambique. The education ministry, typically, is balancing various concerns. First, it is trying to ensure that the quality of education and access is enhanced. This aligns it with the development goals of its partners. Yet, despite the attraction of the aid monies to boost teacher development, educational materials and for example, girls' scholarships, the ministry is having to rely on a teaching force whose pay is beneath the poverty line, so generating enthusiasm for the proposed education reform programme is tempered by the realities of most teachers' working conditions. The finance ministry, for its part, has to consider the budget demands of the education ministry against all the other competing demands for expenditure. If it agrees to the educational reform and the prerequisite capacity development that comes with it, it is having to watch the whole public sector, so strengthening financial management in education is a piece of a larger pie. Meanwhile, the finance ministry is involved in other sectoral negotiations as well as wider, macroeconomic issues beyond the narrower framework of public expenditure. For their part, the development agencies have pledged increased

funds, especially towards meeting international development targets, but some of them sit around the table concerned only with education and monies cannot be disbursed because of the fiduciary risks. Thus, the road to effective financial management in the education sector is a long one. Meanwhile the development bank representatives are worried that no loans have been committed, or if committed, little disbursement has taken place due to the weak procurement and financial management systems. However, the wider public sector reform that would bring about such improved financial management is even longer in coming.

None of the issues raised here means that individual partners do not appreciate the constraints on their respective abilities to conduct dialogue freely and openly. Rather, they exemplify the importance of wider issues and their influences. One could add lots of other, and by no means atypical, constraints, such as a strong teachers' union and the threat or actuality of a strike, the large staff mobility within the respective ministries and development agencies, resulting in changes in personalities around the table, the fact that ministry officials are also juggling the demands of development partners not currently around the programmatic aid table, such as JICA and USAID.

Some of these problems can be highlighted through the additional example of the very early use of programmatic aid in Namibia in the early 90s. In this instance, monies had been committed by USAID for basic education, and the time had come to determine the indicators by which progress would be judged. USAID representatives sat around a table with several Ministry of Education staff, including the Minister. A fierce debate ensued over each indicator suggested because the Ministry staff felt that the lack of trust between the two development partners was so great that choosing indicators was like selecting a noose with which to hang themselves. Without minimal trust, even seemingly neutral indicators can be vigorously contested.

Development community weaknesses: the need for policy harmonisation

Besides the weakness of recipient governments and other stakeholders or the importance of trust in development co-operation, there is also the issue of weaknesses amongst the development community regarding the coordination of its efforts. Although one of the aims of the new programmatic aid modalities is to reduce the transaction costs for recipient countries as well as to make aid more effective, there are few instances in which the whole development community in any one country is contributing solely to programmatic aid or loans – not least, for some of the reasons given above. Even in contexts in which there are sound government systems, donor harmonisation does not always follow, not even amongst the so-called *like-minded* donors[4], all of which support programmatic aid. In practice there are

often significant differences of opinion when it comes to policy implementation in particular countries.

One example will suffice to portray these differences. In Mozambique several *like-minded* donors, including Britain, Sweden, Holland and Ireland, have been cooperating in the education sector for several years. A decision was taken to pool funds in support of basic education in order to ensure that the education reforms could get started, alongside an extensive capacity development programme required to create a sound financial management system. Despite initial agreement amongst this group of donors, the Department For International Development (DFID) pulled out of the pooled sectoral fund, favouring direct budget support with only nominal linkage to the education sector, focused, instead, on a project to reform the public sector as a whole. At the same time as these two efforts were underway, Danida, another so-called *like-minded* donor, initiated another very large education project, requiring extensive technical assistance selected and hired by Danida. This was all developed alongside a previously committed World Bank loan for the sector, of which only a small proportion had been disbursed. All of these programmes continue, Mozambique having to 'ride' the inconsistencies within even these *like-minded* donors.

This example is by no means exceptional, and of course it omits those other donors who do not even sign up to or join in a programmatic aid initiative and remain committed to the project approach in their aid modalities, such as Japan (since the mid-1990s the largest bilateral donor) through the Japanese International Co-operation Agency, JICA. One can see what a confusing picture is created by such diverse policies. The recipient government has to contend with the different positions taken by each donor or, at best, each group of donors, and weigh up its own stance with respect to those pooling funds, those giving direct budget support, and those running discrete and different educational projects. All this is before one even begins to consider any coordination of monitoring, evaluation and reporting on education for these respective groups.

Another tension that often arises in the 'dialogue' concerns the document preparation required by the different development partners. Where programmatic aid works successfully, as has happened, for instance, in Uganda, the number of documents required is reduced substantially. However, where different partners adopt different aid modalities and procedures and require different processes of review, the already considerable demands of document preparation for programmatic aid are multiplied by the individual demands made of the recipients. Also, programmatic aid demands wider government endorsement than is required for projects, and this often means

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[4] This is a term of self-reference, disliked by those not included, for the group: Danida, DFID, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norad and Sida.

establishing different review processes which go beyond any individual project implementation unit. Although, taking a long view, the performance appraisals required probably provide good training grounds for ministry staff, where these are carried out by what often becomes an elite group within the Ministry concerned with the programmatic, as opposed to the project, aid, different problems and tensions are created. Too great a focus on producing documents, rather than on deepening the discourse and dialogue between partners to increase trust between them, can also detract from the dialogue itself.

A final weakness of the development community relates to the focus on technical assistance, as well as the development advisers placed *in situ*, and the consistency of the development agency's policies. The institutional development that is required for programmatic aid and for successful dialogue supporting such modalities relates no less to the development partners than it does to the recipient governments. Though this is recognised, it is not necessarily addressed comprehensively. One manifestation of this problem is the prevalence of agency representatives not appropriately orientated to the new aid modality, who act in 'project mode'. Another is the technical assistance that is offered as a 'stop-gap', plugging holes in implementation capacity, rather than developing sustainable capacity. Those empowered to engage in dialogue or capacity building for strengthening government systems must be competent, but must also be committed to such modalities. Competent, but inappropriately focused individuals can lead to great frustration in the implementation of programmatic aid. Feedback from donor representatives in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as Latin America and Asia, confirms the institutional inconsistency within several development agencies, of policies made at headquarters, but implemented with substantial variation from headquarters policy, in-country. Agencies must alter their own performance evaluations to recognise policy implementation in practice, and not merely competencies for jobs that do not get carried out because of poor implementation interfaces.

The accompanying box, detailing dialogue surrounding an education 'SWAP' in Zambia, will help illustrate many of the points made above.

Concluding remarks

Clearly, there are considerable experiences and weaknesses of dialogue taking place under the new programmatic aid modalities, weaknesses of both the development agencies and the recipient governments. It is to be hoped that what we are seeing at present, is a transitional phase of the new approach: that despite the capacity development needed in the recipient countries and despite there being insufficient coordination and harmonisation of the development community, the strides being made to engage in far-reaching dialogue with recipient country governments and other stake-

holders are an important step that has the potential to lead to sustainable government systems, sustainable economies, and meeting the development needs of millions of people. As one works through the dialogues that form the basis of poverty reduction strategies, sector-wide and direct budget support, however, one can recognise traces of what has been. The commitment to the international development targets made by the development community has to be matched with a commitment to change its own institutions as much as to strengthen those of its partners with whom the development community is in unequal relationships. This is in order to be sure that development institutions inculcate the appropriate competencies and attitudes toward reform that are required to engage in strengthened dialogue with those with whom they are in dialogue.

Dialogue surrounding an education 'SWAP': the Zambian BESSIP

Several of the issues noted here are exemplified by the case of dialogue surrounding the establishment of a sector-wide approach (SWAP) in education in Zambia, in the late 1990s. In Zambia, the World Bank had been in discussion for some time with government officials attempting to establish the basis of support across the whole education sector. Frustration with the difficulty of coordinating the four ministries responsible led to the delimitation of sub-sectoral support for 'basic' education, entailing only one ministry. Dialogue between the Ministry of Education and the wider donor community led to a 'joint appraisal' of what became the "Basic Education sub-Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP)", the financial requirements of which needed to include contributions from across the development community of some USD280m for the period 1999–2002. Substantial, pooled budgetary support for the programme was pledged by Britain, Norway, Ireland and Holland, all of whom were committed to non-earmarked, programmatic funding.

The World Bank, however, was the first agency to enter into negotiations with the Zambian Government on an IDA credit for BESSIP. Because of the Bank's procedural requirements, these negotiations entailed the specification of certain management modalities. For instance, a Bank-approved financial management expert was to be appointed, as well as a procurement expert to lend support to the establishment of sound, Bank-vetted systems, as well as to track IDA funds specifically. Various indicators, similarly, were agreed by which the progress of the educational reform would be assessed. Representation to the Zambian Government by the Dutch and British observers to the IDA negotiations led to some modifications of the 'conditions', given that this first agreement was likely to affect the whole of BESSIP and thus to make the bilateral agencies beholden to certain Bank-specified conditions of the agreement.

Further agreements between other development agencies and the Zambian Government followed. Four of the *like-minded* agencies were willing to

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'pool' their monies in a joint fund for use by BESSIP. Other *like-minded* agencies were more risk-averse, such as Danida, and chose to remain more substantially within a project modality. Other bilateral and multilateral agencies, such as USAID, JICA, Finnida, the EC, the AfDB and UNICEF, sustained or began new projects, contributing to BESSIP, but retaining more agency control. Different development agency representatives exhibited different capacities and competencies in the wider development community, also reflecting the different histories of their agencies' co-operationwith the Zambian Government and the Ministry of Education in particular. Many of the agencies had in place technical advisers within different parts of the Ministry of Education.

The restructuring of the Ministry of Education, identified at the 'joint appraisal' by Government and development agencies alike as a linchpin to the educational reform, remained an agenda item rather than a practical reality, frustrating the development of appropriately located management responsibilities within the Ministry, not least with respect to the envisaged, but yet to be realised, overall decentralisation of the Ministry. Requests for the use of 'pooled' BESSIP monies vied with those in line for projectised expenditures, for which some managers lower down in central or regional positions had responsibility. Non-government organisations, very belatedly, were invited to participate in joint 'donor' meetings, remaining relatively marginalised when compared to the roles played by donor representatives, strengthened by their agencies' financial support. Dialogue continues concerning the further development and refinement of the programme of activities, the most influential places around the table being assumed predominantly by those with most financial clout. However, the Government cannot afford to exclude those clearly not working in or even towards a programmatic mode, so the 'dialogue' includes all the many facets of individual development agency positions.

To Be is to Relate

Margaretha Ringström[1]

The statement *cogito, ergo sum*, which means, "I think, therefore I am", is a well-known quotation by the 17th century French philosopher Renée Descartes. This might be an important insight, but to me the statement "to be is to relate", whose originator I do not know, is an even more important truth. Because I relate I know that I exist. A human being cannot exist in a vacuum. Only in relation to another human being do I become real.

For every human relationship dialogue is essential. According to the dictionary dialogue means to bring about an *exchange of views*. It is not to inform about views, but exchange views, which needs mutuality and sharing.

Dialogue is supposed to be an essential component in development co-operation and of course it is. Not only as a means of communication between donors and recipients, that too often takes the form of information, but within and among all the different actors involved in one way or another.

We should not think that dialogue is an easy thing. It demands a lot of honesty and openness from those involved. And it could be risky because you never know if your dialogue partner is prepared to open up even if you yourself are. Especially in relationships that are asymmetric because one party has the money and the other needs that money you often encounter problems. I have many, many experiences of such situations and it takes a lot of time to get behind politeness, lip service or the humiliating feeling of dependency that so often characterizes the 'receiving' partner in an aid or development relationship. It is always time consuming to reach the level of a true dialogue and I am convinced that most of the situations we would label dialogue situations never reach that stage. They are rather monologues.

Many contacts and relationships have been established between the north and the south. The question is how many of those relationships are unprejudiced and how many show a genuine respect for each other's uniqueness and human dignity?

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Dialogue has to begin at home

From my experience as head of a development co-operation organisation I know that a constant dialogue among the staff is necessary. It is not enough to formulate a mission statement or put a policy on paper and then think that it will work. You have to constantly discuss and share views about visions, goals and methods if you want to internalise ideas and through that form your own and your colleagues' way of thinking and attitudes.

This is possible in a relatively small organisation, but seems to be very difficult in large ones. Heads of European and United States development agencies — church-run or church-related — meet regularly in different types of networks. During such meetings we in many cases express similar ideas concerning ideology, policies about partnership and common goals. I have often had a feeling that we shared the same basic values and that we looked at the role of our organisations in a very similar way. Most of these organisations also had the most beautiful policy papers about respect, human rights, human dignity, justice, equality and ecumenical discipline.

However, in regional meetings in different parts of the world I often met the area secretaries from the same agencies who acted as if they were the real experts on the situation of a certain country or region. Sometimes they expressed values and attitudes that made me feel embarrassed to be identified with the donors. I have vivid and painful memories from such meetings in for example, the Middle East and East Asia. My conclusion was that the wonderful statements made by the leaders of the organisations and the policies approved of by their decision makers had stayed at the top level and had never permeated the whole staff. To me that was a sign of lack of, or at least insufficient, internal dialogue. Dialogue has to begin at home.

To prove that this is important I also want to tell you a true story about gender awareness. In the beginning of the 1990s we started to discuss how to handle the need of gender analysis and attitudes in our work and in our relationships. Of course we had been dealing with women's issues and women's projects but now the time had come to broaden the scope. We had big plans to formulate a questionnaire and send it to our partners around the world challenging them to realise the importance of gender work and to ask them how they dealt with that and what plans they had. Luckily we had the idea to consult some female friends from Africa, Asia and Latin America who happened to be in Sweden for some meetings. We called a meeting, told them about our ideas and ambitions and asked them to help us to focus the right topics in our questionnaire. Their spontaneous reaction and firm advice was that we should cancel the whole idea about a questionnaire. Instead we should start at home with ourselves in our own staff with gender education and awareness raising. Why should we preach gender equality among our partners if we were not practising it ourselves? We needed our own internal dialogue. And that was the starting point for compulsory gender training in our organisation. Some op-

posed it of course with the argument that they did not need it since they were already so aware. Afterwards the same people confessed that they had not understood how unaware they actually were. Without going into details these new insights, no doubt made a tremendous difference in the way staff then discussed and acted. When area secretaries came home from their regular partner visits their reports were very different and they had consulted other people than they did earlier, which was mainly a male leadership, and new issues were brought to their attention. Our own internal dialogue created a new external dialogue. But we had to start at home and together form a common approach and attitude that create a collective vision accepted and internalised by everybody. However, the dialogue has to be continuous.

Dialogue with partners for a common strategy

In all forms of development co-operation dialogue is absolutely crucial. Partnership is unthinkable without a genuine dialogue, but that is difficult to establish since the relationship is usually very asymmetric due to the fact that one party has the power of money and the final decision making.

For some years my organisation made a serious attempt to investigate what mutuality and partnership could be like if money was not involved. Together with a rural grassroots-oriented organisation in Zimbabwe we made a mutual agreement to try to find out if true partnership is possible.

We agreed that our relationship had to be built on common concerns, visions, goals and values as well as respect, honesty, transparency and mutual accountability. We agreed to disengage from the power of money and that we wanted to accompany each other in the growth of people on both sides. We had to ask ourselves what we wanted from them and if we had anything to offer except money.

We made exchange visits to sit down and discuss, to have a dialogue about our common experiment. The visits were made on equal conditions. We paid for our own trips to Zimbabwe and Sweden respectively, but the local costs, including pocket money, were taken care of by the hosting organisation. We discussed our two organisations, who we are, what we want to achieve, how and with what we could contribute and what we expected from each other.

We agreed to be transparent about our policies, our budgets and our personnel policy, to look upon differences as richness, to be true to our own convictions, but at the same time be open for questioning and criticism. We decided to show each other mutual respect and look upon each other as both givers and receivers, to try to be each other's mirror and to try to develop together as you do in personal relationships and not avoid creating a mutual dependency. We used the terminology of being each other's mentors. We agreed to be open about our self-interests on both sides and that

we in our own contexts had to build bridges between micro and macro analysis and not preach anything we did not practise ourselves.

This dialogue took place over some years and we learnt a lot, but unfortunately it has not been possible to bring it forward in spite of all the important agreements and forward looking strategies. The main reason is that the Zimbabwean organisation lost their founder and leader and my organisation which I left four years ago has not had the possibility to invest the time and strength needed to bring such an experiment forward. Dialogue takes time and a sustainable willingness to listen, to learn and review your own thinking. In a result-oriented world it is difficult to find that time, but during the time I was involved in development co-operation I do not think I have ever tried anything as important as this dialogue project.

Dialogue as development advocacy

Development is a concept which can mean many things and obviously means different things to people depending on who is trying to define it. National governments, international financial institutions, churches, people's movements, environmental groups etc have their own interpretation of sustainable development.

It is important to accept this and try to enter into a dialogue to increase our understanding while being prepared to review our own understanding.

In the beginning of 1996 the Church of Sweden made such an attempt by inviting high representatives of the World Bank to visit Tanzania and our sister church The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT). A personal invitation was made by the Swedish Archbishop to the Managing Director of the World Bank, the Executive Director for the Nordic and Baltic countries and the members of staff at the Bank responsible for East Africa. A consultation called The Arusha Consultation was held for one week, including seminars and discussions as well as field visits to expose the tough reality under which so many poor people live. Host for the visit was the Bishop of ELCT. The week ended with an open conference on Structural Adjustment in Tanzania in which Tanzanian government officials also took part.

The idea was to discuss and share views and experiences based on our different roles and from different perspectives and find out how much we had in common and where it was not possible to meet. The background was of course the intense criticism of the structural adjustment programmes from churches in Africa and their demand to replace them with something meeting the needs of the poor, their demand for debt cancellation and a democratisation of the financial institutions. The other important theme was people's participation and how to achieve that.

It was a good meeting with lots of time and opportunity to discuss and to listen to each other. The meeting ended in a mutual understanding of the

great importance of an ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders in the development process and — most importantly — involving those directly affected by development policies, the poor themselves, who are the experts on poverty. Without a dialogue with people and without engaging those affected in the design and implementation of economic reforms, these will never reach the goals of long-term sustainable development.

One of the most important outcomes of this dialogue was that a contact was established between an African church and the World Bank. ELCT got direct access to this institution that has been followed up during the regular visits made by the Bank to Tanzania. Earlier attempts to come in contact with even the World Bank resident mission in Dar es Salaam had failed. But even more important is perhaps the fact that ELCT through this consultation was suddenly seen as an important development actor by its own government. That had not been possible before. A contact was established.

Among the issues discussed people's participation was central and the consultation concluded that development is a process that begins with respecting people's knowledge systems, involves them in a dialogue for reform and empowers the people themselves to design their own structural change.

This example shows how important it is to create meeting places, forums for dialogue, where partners can get the opportunity to speak to those they need to speak to but usually do not reach. I think dialogue as part of advocacy in this sense is underutilized and that donor agencies together with their partners should develop it as a means of highlighting important issues by involving those concerned. Hence we need much more jointly planned advocacy work with our southern partners.

Development dialogue between religions

Among churches and other faith communities the concept of dialogue is used to describe inter-faith discussions and relationships. Unfortunately the role of religions has very seldom been discussed in relation to development and poverty eradication in spite of the fact that it has to do with culture, values, spirituality and our relationship with each other and with the earth. But since 1998 a World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) has been going on between people of the worlds' major religions and the World Bank (focused on poverty reduction and development). WFDD is co-chaired by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Two worlds, which hitherto have viewed each other only from a distance have come together and had the opportunity to talk to each other. A dialogue has started.

Religious organisations have always worked to counteract poverty. They have provided services such as health care and education, supported income generating activities by farmers, fisherfolk and slum dwellers. Thus they have

a lot of knowledge about development planning and implementation. WFDD recognises the importance of dialogue and greater understanding between religious communities locally, nationally and internationally and improved policies and practices.

Globalisation offers a unique occasion to learn from each other. Uniformity and homogenisation are not the aim but rather the tending of diversity in unity. Humankind is diverse and needs diversity for its survival in the same way as nature needs bio-diversity. Each culture, each civilisation is called upon to relate to others in a spirit of interest and love. The alternative is deterring. Relating to the otherness of the other, entering into dialogue with the unknown may be difficult, but it is necessary. Relating to the other is a matter of opening up, while being true to oneself. That is the art of religious dialogue and has to be the model for every dialogue.

The religious followers involved in this dialogue are Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Taoists who all are concerned about the unacceptable levels of poverty in the world. The intention is to bring new perspectives both to the World Bank and to the faith communities, which will lead to changes in their policies and improvements in their practical work with poor communities. The poor should have access to the aspects of modern life which they find desirable, but they should also be free to preserve and develop their own most treasured values and heritage.

Several meetings have taken place. Some of them have gathered representatives from all the religions, others have been in the form of a dialogue between the Bank and one religion. During 1999 a lot of work was done by all involved to comment on the drafts of The World Development Report 2000. These comments have been published under the title *A different perspective on Development and Poverty*. The cover states that "it is the invisible which makes the visible world possible".

There are several reports from people involved in the WFDD work which show the enthusiasm that the Dialogue has engendered in countries like India, Ethiopia and Tanzania and the expectations for results in areas such as health and food security. There are also plans to start similar work on the issue of post-conflict reconstruction with special emphasis on the incorporation of traditional cultural practices. WFDD has also started to gather material for studies to demonstrate the role of spirituality for the effectiveness and sustainability of poverty reduction programmes.

The September 11 events have generated a lot of comments within the WFDD. People from a wide range of religious traditions condemn the attacks and are looking forward to a deeper reflection on the state of the world and the role religious communities could play to bring about peace and justice.

Among the comments received by WFDD are found the following words of the Dalai Lama:

> If you wish to experience peace, provide peace for another. If you wish to know that you are safe, cause others to know that they are safe. If you wish to better understand seemingly incomprehensible things, help another to better understand. If you wish to heal your own sadness or anger, seek to heal the sadness and anger of another. Those others are waiting for you now. They are looking to you for guidance, for help, for courage, for strength, for understanding and for assurance at his hour. Most of all, they are looking for your love.

A Jew talking about Israel says: "Here too, religion has frequently been abused to fan the flames of hatred. While voices calling for reconciliation through dialogue between religions have been few and feeble. Despite decades of commendable inter-faith activities in the country, to date only an extremely limited circle of individuals has recognised that religious faith and commitment without dialogue threatens the stability of society, and thus seriously engages in dialogue."

The core programme of 2002 is focused on the contribution of religious communities to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and how they can bring to it their experiences of grass roots work, their views on values and the need for holistic development.

In September 2002, a third meeting of religious leaders will be held and the main issue will be the international Development Targets and how the faith communities can co-operate and contribute to their fulfilment.

I regret that this very important initiative seems to be relatively unknown. One reason might be the fact that the dominating development theories of our time seldom count on religion and realise its importance — both negatively and positively — for societal development. It is important to create space for a dialogue where your own belief and traditions encounter, and are enriched by, the thinking and traditions of other faiths. That can lead to joint action for a better world.

Dialogue between civil society organisations and governments

Sweden has a long history of discussions and political dialogue between the government and the civil society organisations. In many developing countries that kind of dialogue is still very weak or even non-existent, which undermines the possibilities for a people based and sustainable development. The concept of popular participation can easily be abused by governments and be interpreted merely as a question of how to inform people about their decisions. Civil society sees popular participation as a basic process where those involved, the poor themselves, are identifying and interpreting the problems they face and the solutions they want.

Today there are great expectations in the PRSPs, that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have introduced. Civil society is supposed to play an active part in the analysis, the strategizing and the supervision of

the implementation. Unfortunately, in many countries this popular involvement is only for show and without any serious wish to create a dialogue and a co-operation. The initiative from WFDD mentioned above is thus very important.

Civil society organisations have a crucial role to play in strengthening the ability of citizens and disadvantaged groups to participate fully in their societies. They also have an important role to play in helping governments to become more responsive. An open and continuous dialogue is necessary to achieve a common understanding and to generate common goals. Ensuring fuller and more consistent participation in the development analysis, in the policy dialogue and in development programmes must be a critical objective for governments and other actors in the development arena.

Always dialogue

I have tried to show how important dialogue is in every human relationship and that it is essential at every stage of development co-operation. Others are covering the topic of dialogue in project or programme planning, implementation and evaluation that has not been dealt with here. However, I want to remind us of the often forgotten need for a long-term and frank dialogue also when there are plans for phasing out development co-operation and support. It has been of great interest during the 1990s to many development organisations and agencies to plan for concentration and focus and reduce the number of partners and projects. There are many good reasons for this. There are also good reasons for co-ordination between different donors. However, my experience is that decisions of that kind are often taken without proper dialogue. Instead of real communication about that kind of plan partners have often only been informed about the decisions when they were almost taken.

A relevant test of every human relationship is the golden rule to treat everybody in the same way, as you want to be treated. If we remembered that simple but extremely difficult rule, many things would certainly be different in our life together in this world.

Let me end with a didactic poem about the necessary conditions for a true dialogue.

We have to learn how to listen to each other
We have to learn to understand each other's dreams about a better world
We have to learn to reveal our dreams about the world in which we live
We have to learn to make our dreams a reality
We have to learn that together we have power
We have to learn that each and every one of us has a responsibility.

The example of Ramon Llull by Kaj Engelhart, Caritas Sweden

Dialogue – A Matter of Attitude
There can be no serious interreligious dialogue without a common attitude towards dialogue: a personal, reflected position of firm adherence to a religious conviction combined with a humble readiness to listen attentatively to one's counterpart and grasp, intellectually and intuitionally, what he or she conveys of knowledge, experience and vision. The more this prerequisite prevails, the more qualified and dignified the dialogue will be.

In the official documents from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) in Rome, the main Vatican institution dealing with this issue, the distinction is made between roughly four different levels of interreligious dialogue. One is the simple everyday living together of people of various religious backgrounds, sharing the same residential area, shopping zone and places of work. The second is the level of personal exchange about religious topics between neighbours, friends and colleagues of different denominations. Third comes the sharing of religious experience such as worship, cult and celebrations by persons of different creeds. And the fourth and last one is the theological discussion on a professional, academic level between scholars representing diverse religions.

The attitude of dialogue is addressed in some of the documents from PCID. It is seen as an important part of the tradition of interreligious dialogue as it has been practised to various degrees through the ages. Today, interreligious dialogue plays a major role in Catholic thinking and preaching on international, cultural, ethnic and political matters.

A rather early example of the discourse on the attitude of dialogue is provided by Ramon Llull, Latinized Raimundus Lullus, a missionary and philosopher, born around 1233 in Mallorca. He was given a nobleman's upbringing and as a young man of 30 had a vision of Christ crucified. It made him decide to dedicate his life to the conversion of Muslims. After nine years' studies of Muslim and Christian thinking, he had another vision, revealing to him how to reach this goal. This is the subject of his "Art of Finding Truth". Around the age of 50 he started travelling widely to find support for his endeavours. As a result of his labours, the Council of Vienna 1311–12 decreed the establishing of studies of Oriental languages (Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac) at five universities.

In his works, Llull treats his method of converting Jews and Muslims through rational arguments and without referring to the authority of sacred scriptures. He tries to relate all forms of knowledge to the manifold 'dignities' of God present and recognizable in creation, basing his teaching on the monotheistic outlook common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

On several visits to North Africa, Llull engaged in an intense missionary activity and heated debates with learned Muslims. In Tunis, later in Bougie in Algeria, he caused so much irritation that he was thrown into prison and was almost beheaded. He was saved, however, and died in 1315 or 1316, possibly on another missionary visit to Tunis.

Behind this elderly missionary's sometimes frenzied proselytising striving, however, there is also in him a noble view on relations between reli-

gions. In his book *Llibre del gentil e dels tres avis*, The Book about the Pagan and the Three Wise Men, he tells the fictitious story of a pagan who sets out on a journey to find the answer to the existential questions of life. He encounters three men, a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim, and each of them presents his religious conviction and gives his answers to the pagan's questions.

Whereafter – and this is the noble part – the three men withdraw, letting the pagan reflect upon the answers and choose his own way. Last of all, as a supreme expression of the writer's tolerance and respect towards the other religions, comes the sentence: "And each of the wise men bade the others farewell in a very friendly and courteous way, asking them for forgiveness if he had said anything depreciatory about their religion. And all of them offered each other forgiveness."

This could be thought and formulated in the 1270s. It is to be wished that such an attitude could have marked all intercourse between religions. This is the attitude of dialogue.

The Development Dialogue: Reflections of an African Practitioner

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf[1]

Introduction

According to the African Development Bank,[2] net external financing to Africa in the year 2000 was approximately US$26 billion, a continued and sharp decline from the peak years of the 1980s.

This compares with the goal of US$64 billion annually set by the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) to enable the region to achieve the estimated 7 per cent annual growth which is needed to meet the International Development Goals, particularly the goal that would reduce by half the proportion of Africans living in poverty by the year 2015.

This ambitious NEPAD goal would seem to fly in the face of the message conveyed by the trend in official assistance, a message of the need for change in the approach to and management of the aid processes.

The need for change has been the source of several studies in the past few years. For example, in *Foreign Aid in Africa*, Jerker Carlsson, Gloria Samalekae and Nicolas Van de Walle point out that: "Development aid is a phenomenon of the post-war period. As such, it has grown considerably and given rise to a number of institutions, bilateral as well as multilateral, solely employed in delivering aid to poor and developing countries. Aid has traditionally been seen as something temporary, something that can only complement existing national resources and effort. After almost forty years in existence, aid has become something permanent."

The entitlement perception

A review of aid and the dialogue associated with it must start with the attitude toward aid, an attitude which has contributed to the dependency on aid.

Two generations since the abolition of slavery, Africans continue to point to the debilitating effects of slavery and colonialism and to the reparation that is owed to Africa for the imposed interruption in its evolution to statehood and the exploitation of its resources.

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[2] African Development Bank, 2001, *African Development Report*.

It is recalled that four centuries (1500–1900) of slavery robbed Africa of some 20 million of its able-bodied men and women, while 20 years (1880–1902) of colonialism subjected 110 million Africans to domination in artificial geographic groupings in a land area of 10 million square miles.

Generations of Africans still cling to the notion that in providing assistance, Western countries are merely giving back a small portion of Africa's resources which the West has used to develop its own economies. This entitlement perception is reinforced, even today, by the view that the political independence achieved since the 1960s has not transformed into economic independence resulting in continued exploitation of a region which in terms of its endowment – 75 per cent of the world's reserves of diamonds, 70 per cent of phosphates and chromium, 65 per cent of manganese, 40 per cent of gold, and other natural resources such as bauxite, copper, iron ore – should not be poor or dependent upon foreign assistance.[3]

Although a new generation of African leaders are resolved to put history behind them, much more needs to be done to give recognition to the fact that the leadership and policy failures since independence are more rightly the causes for Africa lagging behind.

Colonial alliances

Another historical dimension to aid and the aid dialogue can be found in the trading relationship which existed between the major western powers and their colonial states. After independence, the three major powers – Britain, France and Portugal – established and reinforced in their colonial states their own language, social and administrative systems. This facilitated a trading relationship supported by aid flows. There were marked differences in the manner in which those special relationships impacted the management of the state and its resources. In the Anglophone states, the system of public administration patterned after the British system was established primarily for the efficient management of centralized public resources upon which trade depended. In places with an inhospitable climate such as West Africa, traditional structures and systems were left largely unchanged; in others, such as certain countries in East and South Africa, the introduction of a dual system allowed the settlers to develop and operate in parallel to indigenous systems an institutional environment similar to their own.

In Francophone countries, where assimilation into French culture and society was the goal, the management of national resources and the trading systems was largely controlled by agents or representatives of France, most often directly through a physical presence.

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[3] Corporate Council on Africa, 2000, *Atlas of Africa*.

In the Lusophone countries, the Portuguese established enclave administrative structures essentially to facilitate the exploitation of resources. Local systems and structures, mostly undeveloped, were simply ignored.

Independence in all countries was followed by rapid growth in the public service and in the number and range of institutions created to manage new programs of development. However, the growth in institutions was not matched by the development of an indigenous capacity to manage these programs and the increasing level of resources that would flow from the colonial power to their allied states. Thus, post independence 'dialogue' in the ex-colonial states amounted to not much more than discussions or information exchange between officials of the beneficiary countries and representatives from the partnership colonial countries as to the policies and programs to be undertaken in promoting the country's development. In many cases, those policies and programs were intended merely to serve the interests of the colonial partners. Thus more of colonisation than dialogue.

Post independence – the evolution in aid

Independence brought a weakening in the direct domination of the colonial powers in aid decisions as the multilateral institutions, particularly the Bretton Woods Institutions, took on a more important role in the formulation of policies and establishment of priorities. Buoyed by huge amounts of capital raised in the world capital markets, the Bretton Woods Institution soon replaced the colonial allies as the prime external stakeholder in the 'dialogue' relating to development. However, the quality of country participation in the dialogue did not change significantly, given the generally low level of capacity to understand the implications and the internal and external dynamics of the development processes. It was thus considered a normal and acceptable practice that policy prescriptions in the form of Letters of Intent to be signed by country authorities were prepared in Washington, most frequently with conditionalities that failed to recognize country specificities. In those limited cases where a discussion or dialogue on the policy

Traditionally, 'negotiations' between country representatives and those of the IMF and the World Bank on the country's economic plans and progress took place at the Fund/Bank headquarters in Washington D.C. or at the Annual Meetings and were limited to officials of the Ministries of Finance, Economic Planning, Budget and the Central Bank. Other sector ministries or agencies were involved only marginally. Little or no discussion, dialogue or exchange through the media, Parliament or, with those affected by or benefiting from the adopted policies and programs. As a result, when they failed to work many such policies and programs were reversed, sometimes inspired by public rioting.

issues took place within the country, this was restricted to those governmental bodies with direct responsibilities for economic and financial matters.

Any serious attempt by the recipient country to argue regarding the inappropriateness of one policy issue or the other would be met with a threat to deny or delay the needed assistance.

One such issue on which differences remain to the present day relates to subsidies on agricultural inputs. The Bretton Woods Institutions were adamant in their refusal to accept the argument that subsidies were necessary to reduce costs and thereby stimulate production. Their position seemed particularly difficult to accept since agriculture subsidies have been used, and still is, by the developed countries to accumulate the surplus that now constitutes food aid.

> During discussions with World Bank authorities during the 1978 Annual Meetings the Liberian delegation sought approval for a programme including subsidization of fertilizer to stimulate production of rice, the staple crop. This was expected to lead to a reduction in the importation of rice and the pressure which this implied on scarce foreign exchange. The bank authorities were adamant, in reiterating the professional argument about the linkage between subsidization and misallocation of resources. The delegation retreated without much of a dialogue and returned home, after which the program of local production was cancelled. Very little explanation or dialogue ensued at the local level on an issue on which the local population was already highly radicalised and sensitised. A few months later, in 1979, a rice riot occurred followed a year later by a *coup d'état* which ended over one hundred years of stability in one of Africa's two non-colonized countries.

It was clear in relationship with donors that on policy issues that affected the donors' interest, there could be no dialogue; the beneficiary countries acquiesced in order to obtain the funds released. Operational policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions also contributed to an undermining of the potential for dialogue. Because their performance was judged in terms of the quantity of aid delivered – i.e. how many projects they took to the Board – staff of the Bretton Woods Institutions allowed little space for the recipient stakeholders to understand the issues, and the implications related to the policy prescriptions and conditions of an aid supported program.

The increasing dominance of the Bretton Woods Institutions also had an effect on bilateral assistance and relatedly on the relationship and the dialogue between the bilateral donors and the recipient countries. A large number of bilaterals expressed confidence in the professional superiority of the Bretton Woods Institutions by transferring an increasing proportion of their resources through those institutions. For countries without colonial

ties, this had the effect of undermining the spirit of dialogue that had been established with beneficiary countries and their bilateral partners.

The economic crisis

The world economic crisis of the early 1970s, brought about by the increase in oil prices and the decline in primary commodity prices, exposed the fragility of African economies – many of which experienced a decline so severe as to wipe out the social gains that were achieved following independence. It also brought to light the many reversals that followed the failure of policy prescriptions administered by the Bretton Woods Institutions in the decade following independence.

Yet the economic crisis left the majority of African countries with no alternative but to go to the Bretton Woods Institutions, on their terms and conditions, to access the resources required to maintain basic social services. The structural adjustment regime was thus started – a regime that would deepen the dominance of the Bretton Woods Institutions. For Africa, it was hardly a time to promote equality and dialogue, despite the enhanced abilities and capacities of the beneficiary countries. Although new strategies and options were clearly needed, it was also hardly a time to promote Africa's own development agenda – such as the Lagos Plan of Action, which grew out of a process of dialogue among African policy makers.

At the 1979 OAU Summit, the African leadership adopted essential elements of Africa's first homegrown development framework, the Monrovia Delegation. This was followed one year later, in 1980, at the OAU Summit by the Lagos Plan of Action. This attempt by Africa to establish its own development priorities was quickly undermined and dismissed without dialogue or support by the Bretton Woods Institutions and their main bilateral shareholders primarily because the agenda sought to transform African economies from primary production to competing industrial states.

Similarly, the plan formulated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to address Africa's economic decline – the Alternative Strategies for Structural Adjustment – was defeated by the Bretton Woods Institutions leading in the process to the dismissal of the ECA head, Dr. Adebayo Adedji.

Both the Lagos Plan of Action and the African Alternative Framework Structural Adjustment Programs for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation are reflected, thirty years later, in the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the PRSPs and other development agenda which stress Africa's ownership and participation.

The period of structural adjustment also coincided with the period of political havoc in the region, as several African countries had been taken over

by military rulers, many with the assistance and support of the western powers as a legitimate response to country mismanagement and economic failure. Structural Adjustment thus became synonymous with military rule and the discipline which was said to be implied.

By the mid-1980s structural adjustment had run its course, with mixed results. In terms of stabilizing African economies from the free fall condition of the 1970s, structural adjustment programs can be judged successful. But in terms of creating the conditions for the transformation of Africa's dependent and monocrop economy into a diversified economy capable of sustained growth, structural adjustment was a clear failure. At the same time, it became clear that the new political order of military regimes provided no solution to the major mismanagement of the state. To the contrary, military regimes proved to be more corrupt and far less responsive to the needs of the population.

Aid donors searched again for new measures: a development regime which aimed at both economic and political reform, thus giving credence to the long denied interrelationship of these two development parameters. Good governance, under whose umbrella political reforms were introduced, became a major tenet of the new development agenda. Ownership, participation, consensus, dialogue all became standard elements of a broad macro economic policy framework.

Who are the main stakeholders in the development dialogue? What are the issues and how effective are some of the instruments that promote such dialogue?

The beneficiary countries

Countries benefiting from official assistance have always faced limitations in capacity – the ability to understand fully the implications of the policy choices and the issues that surround the dynamics of development. This limitation contributes to the inequality in knowledge and hence the quality of the dialogue between aid donors and beneficiaries. For many countries the inadequacy in capacity is due to the migration of skills from the local unfavourable political environment. This in turn is due in part to inadequate levels of compensation and incentives at the country level. As a result, country representatives in dialogue were faced with the untenable situation of being unable to reject the dictates of donor representatives on the issues of the size and compensation of the work force, even though these dictates were in sharp contrast to the compensation and life style of the donors themselves. The donor position on this important issue boiled down to a reluctance to get sucked into the financing of local costs or budget expenditures. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that no serious dialogue took place under these conditions of gross inequality and insensitivity. The use of technical assistance, promoted by both donor and beneficiary countries as

the solution to the problem proved to be generally too costly and ineffective in terms of strengthening and sustaining the country's national capacity.

Too often by capitulating to the interests and the wishes of the bilateral partners the beneficiary countries have also undermined their capacity and the chances of becoming equal in the dialogue. Moreover, the failure to create an internal dialogue, most often due to political repression, bad economic policies and practices or corruption, has also undermined the legitimacy and the credibility of the beneficiary country to argue for home-grown approaches and priorities.

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda left the country totally devastated with the bulk of civil servants having fled the country. The new Government established salary and wages of civil servants as a number one priority in order to make the government functionable. In keeping with the established practice of zero financing of local cost, each donor move to set its own priorities with little respect for the capacity circumstances of the country and the Government established priority in this regard. Very little dialogue was allowed on the subject. The Government remained strong and determined to stand by its priorities. Efforts to help the devastated country were undermined by this stand off until a dialogue led to a solution on the subject two years later.

A more effective system of dialogue would have resulted in more meaningful donor response to the catastrophe faced by the Government after the genocide. This may also have given the Hutu Prime Minister of that time more strength and stature to start the process of reconciliation thereby arresting the ethnic fractures which subsequently emerged. The lesson learned is that dialogue requires timeliness and flexibility in policy to achieve satisfactory development results.

The bilateral partners

Strategic importance (of the beneficiary country) and national interests (of the donor country) has long been the trademark of bilateral aid relationships. For those countries classified as strategically important, there was little need for dialogue which would allow a discussion on alternative choices and options to achieve a specified development objective. On both sides, priorities and the resources to support their implementation were determined primarily with a view to maintaining the strategic relationship and importance. National interest on the part of the donor followed a similar course. Although some dialogue took place during exchanges with the recipient country, in most instances, policies and priorities were largely prede-

termined based upon the interests of the donor or the perceived view of the donor as to what was good for the beneficiary country.

Change in bilateral relationships has taken place over time, particularly with the increased use of consultative mechanisms such as the Bretton Woods Institutions sponsored consultative groups and the UN sponsored round tables. These mechanisms were established in the 1980s in support of the Structural Adjustment Regime and have since been used as mechanisms to forge a consensus on the proper country policies and programs worthy of donor support. Most bilateral partners are members of this consultation mechanism. There are advantages and disadvantages in the use of this mechanism. The advantage lies in an increased pool of resources released simultaneously in support of a program. The disadvantage is the total deference to the Bretton Woods Institutions with consequential limitations in the scope of bilateral dialogue.

> In 1993, UNDP was faced with a long-standing practice in several francophone countries of financing educational grants to university students who continued to remain in school over a prolonged period of time. The practice conformed to that which was established in bilateral arrangements with France. Without much dialogue on the means or the effect of such practice, and facing financial constraint of its own, UNDP move to discontinue the practice. Eventually, UNDP was replaced with traditional bilateral donors.
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> Neither side initiated a dialogue to examine the merits and effects of such practice. UNDP thus faced relationship difficulties for this unilateral action. Several years later, within the context of the Round Table consultation mechanism, a solution was found. Clearly, an established practice of dialogue would have led to a more timely arrangement thereby avoiding hardships imposed upon the beneficiary students and the countries concerned.

Multilateral partners

The multilateral partners in the development dialogue are dominated by the Bretton Woods Institutions. This has not augured well for the promotion of a true dialogue because of the significant resources at their disposal and because their policies and priorities are mostly dictated by their majority shareholders, the major western countries. In Africa, the other significant multilateral partner, the African Development Bank, has been unable to partner with countries in such a way that would strengthen the capacity of the country to advocate and succeed in promoting acceptance of home-grown views on the development dialogue.

A major constraint on country dialogue with the multilateral institutions is the consultative group process which brings beneficiary bilateral and multilateral partners into dialogue with the beneficiary on the country's poli-

During the period of his presidency at the World Bank, Robert McNamara decided that rural development would be the chosen priority of the Bank for the developing countries, particularly in Africa. Export agriculture was at the centrepiece of this policy. All countries benefiting from bank resources were required to change their national priorities in order to accommodate Mr. McNamara's desire. As a result, many countries had to shift priorities from health and education which could have had a more sustainable effect on the population. Several years after Mr. McNamara's policy was introduced, the world market prices for primary products collapsed bringing into reversal the gains of the years dedicated to the rural development focus. Education and literacy became the victims of this unsuccessful World Bank policy.

cies programs and performance. Many participating institutes have made it clear that this mechanism which is dominated by the donors is a major inhibiting factor on the quality of partnership dialogue and/ or the ownership and participation by the aid beneficiary.

The United Nations system

Important partners in the development dialogue are the several agencies of the United Nations system which have the general advantage of residency in the beneficiary country. Continuing interaction with country representatives on development is supplemented by the round table consultative mechanism. Unlike the consultative group, the round table is intended to provide the opportunity for true dialogue in that it allows full participation of both donor and beneficiaries. However, the limited capacity of UN agency representatives has constrained the quality of the dialogue as well as the supporting studies and analysis upon which this is based. This in turn has limited the support of the bilateral partners for the round table process.

   As the major delivery vehicle for humanitarian assistance, either directly or through NGOs, the United Nations has become a major proponent of humanitarian aid, thereby crowding out resources that would otherwise be directed to development assistance. In turn, the productive effort and capacities of the beneficiary countries have been undermined, forcing them to become increasingly dependent upon aid. The contradiction between humanitarian and development assistance has a long history, going back to the 1950s when the United States introduced the delivery of rice and other grains under the PL480 program. It is argued that the same principle is applied to current food programs of the UN System whose primary objective is to support the agriculture policies of the US and the European Union, thereby enabling them to reduce the level of their surplus food stocks. An attempt by the UN to interconnect humanitarian and development as-

The consultative group was conceived by the World Bank in the 1980s as a mechanism for forging consensus and mobilizing resources among the major donors of a developing country. In meetings, every one or two years, in which the country is represented by its economic and finance decision makers, a consensus is reached regarding the policies, priorities and performance of the country. This review forms the basis for the level of financial support which the country will enjoy for a given period.

The consultative group meeting which is held for the larger or better-endowed economies of the developing countries is overwhelmingly dominated by the Bretton Woods Institutions.

The round table is a parallel mechanism to the consultative group which is also held periodically to review the policies, priorities and performance of the poorer and less endowed developing countries. The Round Table process, which is managed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is more inclusive in its country representation. This is considered a plus. It is also more inclusive in the participation of UN agencies. This is considered a minus.

Both the consultative group and the round table provide the potential means for a dialogue between beneficiary and donor countries. However, the quality of this potential is undermined in the consultative group by the imperialism of the Bretton Woods Institutions and in the round table by the lack of full confidence by the donor community in the professional quality of the UNDP led economic analysis.

The Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA) formerly the Special Program for Africa is a resource mobilization mechanism designed by the Bretton Woods Institutions as a support for Structural Adjustment. It is an effective mechanism for dialogue among the donors on the policies, priorities, and performance of those countries covered by the mechanism.

The lack of country representation makes the SPA a donors' club with little scope or intent for dialogue with the beneficiary countries.

Ten years of pressure on the Bretton Woods Institutions to open the SPA to a true dialogue has produced little success other than token representation in the form of a presentation by a country or African institutional head at the opening session. UNDP has been consistent in its push for equalizing and rationalizing these three well established dialogue mechanisms.

sistance – introduced in the early 1990s as 'the continuum' – made little headway because supporting bilateral donors preferred the separation, thereby giving more prominence to humanitarian assistance. In the delivery of humanitarian assistance, there is limited scope for a dialogue. The beneficiary country establishes the humanitarian need; the bilateral partners, through the UN system or through NGOs, respond in accordance with their availability and interests. In this fast and easy solution, beneficiary countries have lost the opportunity to support more aggressively food production and food self-sufficiency primarily through smallholders' production.

The non-governmental organizations

The number and role of non-governmental organizations in the development processes of African countries grew exponentially following the collapse of Africa's economies in the 1970s. In a short time thereafter NGOs became an alternative to the state machinery in the delivery of external assistance. While justified in many cases due to the limited capacity or the predatory nature of the state, too often NGOs took upon themselves the role of protectors of the 'society', advocating within and outside the country for the support of priorities more consistent with their own mandates than with national development objectives. The general mutuality in distrust limits efforts on the part of NGOs, on the one hand, and the Government, on the other, to design proper internal consultative mechanisms that provide the opportunity for dialogue. This opportunity should be explored thereby giving the NGOs a more formal role and higher stake in the country's performance.

Following the 1997 elections, the runner up in the Liberian presidential race election established a community self help development NGO (Measuagoon) as a response to the grave social conditions of the population which was exposed during the campaign.

The NGO was clear in policy of full inclusiveness by all communities which met self help requirements. Despite this, the NGO was attacked and vandalized several times by government directed forces claiming that its support was obtained from donors to strengthen the political advantage of the founder. The truth is that the NGO had not benefited from donor support but was solely dependent upon contributions by Liberians.

Although the erroneous and politically motivated accusation of the Government might have been easily dismissed through investigation and dialogue, donors to whom several proposals submitted by the participating committees had been sent took the course of least resistance by refusing to consider the proposals. A dialogue on the issue was denied. As a result, the added value to the poor did not materialize due to donor fear of a repressive Government.

Effective dialogue between beneficiary countries and donor require the courage to confront a Government with the facts when the welfare of the poor is at stake.

The private sector

In the majority of African countries private enterprises comprise large transnational corporations, most frequently the extractive industries which operate as enclaves; medium sized agro-industrial manufacturing and trading houses and a large number of informal marketers. Except for infrequent

meetings called at the executive level on specific issues and exchanges through chambers of commerce, there is hardly a dialogue with the private sector. In fact, private enterprise would prefer to distance itself from the clutches of predatory governments. This failure to conduct dialogue has limited the potential for public sector/private sector partnership which could create the conditions for enhancing private capital flows and direct foreign investment. This would also ensure that private entities with external shareholding are not used to implement and enhance the policies and practices of the bilateral partners from whose countries they come.

The New Development Agenda

Three new processes, still in evolution, constitute the new development agenda – the primary tenets of all of these are ownership, good governance, sound economic policies, partnership and good performance, all achieved through an enhanced dialogue process.

First, there is the National Long Term Perspective Study (NLTPS) or Africa Futures Program introduced by the United Nations Development Program in the early 1990s. Two equally important objectives guide the NLTPS agenda – the Process which consists of participation by the general public in the determination of development priorities and the Product which results in a realistic long-term development plan that takes into account the country's endowments, the regional and global dynamics and the results of the Process itself. While strong in internal dialogue, the NLTPS lacks an effective means for dialogue between the beneficiary country and the donors. As a result, it has not received the support that would make it a successful instrument for designing and implementing the development agenda.

Second, there is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) introduced by the Bretton Woods Institutions in the late 1990s. Similar to NLTPS the PRSP stresses ownership and participation, giving scope to beneficiary countries to determine their own priorities based upon an internal consultation process. It introduces new elements of partnership, requiring the donor countries to change their policies and processes so as to achieve common standards and allow more space to the beneficiaries. The strong backing in resources by the Bretton Woods Institutions has made the PRSP an acceptable instrument for dialogue. However, the linkage to HIPC and the lingering dominance of the Bretton Woods Institutions results in strong scepticism as to the real motivation and the long-term results.

The third new process is NEPAD the home-grown African development agenda which is based upon a double compact. There is an internal compact between the governing authorities of the country and citizenry in which participation, accountability and good governance provide the foundation for ownership. There is also a compact between Africa and its partners who commit to a dialogue based on equality and respect for the beneficiary coun-

try's priorities. Africa's partners are also expected to commit to providing the required level of resources that would enable Africa to achieve its development objectives.

NEPAD has two innovative mechanisms which are welcomed by some and condemned by other African countries. It would exclude from participation in the programs and benefits of NEPAD those countries which do not measure up to the predetermined standards of economic and political order and it would subject countries to a periodic peer review of adherence to and satisfactory performance by those standards. Two factors limit the potential success of NEPAD. First, there is the lack of participation by the African population itself. Second, there is justified scepticism as to whether the level of external resources will be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, all the processes which underpin the new development agenda have been long in coming and are likely to impact development results in a very positive way.

The quality of dialogue is also likely to be significantly enhanced by these new processes. African countries should rise to the challenge of these changes by taking charge of the development agenda, irrespective of the role and the support of their partners.

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Dialogue from a Field Perspective

Peter Spink[1]

In 2001, the World Bank set up a special project with support from the Netherlands under the title of The Governance Knowledge Sharing Program.[2] It originated from concern by the Dutch Government about the lack of success of many technical assistance programs in effectively developing government capacity, especially amongst the poorer countries. The mission of the program is "to improve the capacity of the World Bank client governments, through better governance knowledge, to use donor technical assistance, where necessary to challenge it, and to generate effective government reform solutions". In a circulated discussion document, the project team leaders put forward four propositions on why development assistance was apparently less effective than it could be in the governance area. These were: that the messages of donor assistance, the knowledge that donors wished to impart, could be the wrong ones; that the messages could be too costly to implement; that the messages were not being well delivered and as a result not being absorbed; or that the messages were not welcome. Whether or not these four are the only four, they are sufficient to illustrate why the invitation from the Swedish Foreign Ministry to discuss dialogue has come at an appropriate time; for both the special project and the invitation point in the same direction; concern with the quality of the discussion of development action.

This simultaneous recognition by the Bank and members of the donor community that all is not well in aid relationships is a very important pin-prick of light in a tunnel that has been growing increasingly darker over the years. Many of us can testify to a narrowing and growing homogeneity in development approaches (Spink, 2001 a)[3] and to an increased intolerance in accepting the messy ways by which people construct their destinies. More and more agencies and field staff appear to be 'sure' of what is required and

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'sure' of how to deliver it; 'development' after all is now a university degree complete with masters and doctorates and journals, not forgetting laptops and international business travel. Evaluation, the art of attributing value, has become a precise and independent instrument for measuring the return on international effort and terms like competence and commitment are often used to describe the collective capacity of whole populations to absorb 'important' lessons for change.

There is nothing wrong with trying to develop knowledge and with trying to find our way around problems; indeed, the two go very much together. But there does seem to be something not quite right when knowledge begins to be presented with the kind of certainty that neither expects, recognizes or respects the collective ability to doubt. Doubting is about being able to call into question, about expressing concern and being unsure; about mistrust and being undecided; about not being convinced. Not being convinced does not mean that people are 'unknowledgeable' or 'pathologically resistant to change'; rather it just means that there are other arguments in circulation, other versions and places from where people can talk. We are not 'not convinced' because we are nowhere and waiting to be persuaded into being somewhere; rather we are 'not convinced' because where we are, the versions that are circulating and within which we find ourselves are other ones.

Thus, my starting point for thinking about dialogue or conversation is social or, better still, inter-social; certainly not individual or interpersonal. When two people meet to converse, they have available to them all the other conversations and potential conversations in which they have found themselves, separately or together, and within which they can position themselves along with a vast variety of known and unknown others. When people coming from a variety of different settings meet to converse, so the variety grows and grows. Increasingly in aid relationships there is concern to broaden the number of different voices present in the discussion of what has taken or might take, place and there are even special techniques for doing so (Cornwall, 2000). But this is of little avail if the root conversation does not allow for disagreement or debate and if such broadening is seen as simply one more stage in project implementation. Dialogue does not happen because two or more people open their mouths, making sounds and gestures, but because people seek to 'con-verse' and are able to find themselves in the same talk, moving through time and space, sometimes present and sometimes not. To seek to connect with the various implicated others in a way that is open in terms of results is to seek dialogue; for in the 'conversing' anything can happen. The alternative is monologue, in all its varieties and forms. Finding each other in talk, finding the 'con-verse', can imply working within and across existing repertoires or building new ones and it is the second that, almost by definition, characterizes the search for dialogue in the development arena.

Different practices of talk happen not merely as a result of cultural or ethnic distinctions of language, but also and largely in relation to different approaches to knowledge, or to recognize their plurality, *knowledges* (Spink, 2001 b). As such, these differences happen as much within specific cultural or societal boundaries as between them, turning the search for the 'converse' into a challenge of spaces and places. Take for example all the various social epistemologies present in the extended family of sciences; each with its own set of assumptions and views about what can or cannot be said, or of how knowledge claims can be effectively judged.

We can add to this the many traditional *knowledges* that are around, not as *knowledges* that can be surpassed and included within a more mature and scientific understanding, but as knowledges in their own right that include practices and innovations. What is traditional about traditional knowledge, as a recent document produced in relation to indigenous peoples' property rights pointed out, is not its age-old appearance "but the way in which it is acquired and used" (Cunha, 2001). It is a way of producing innovations and transmitting knowledge through specific practices that continues to be active and actual, even though in a very different way from other knowledges. Traditional knowledges, whilst having their epistemological specificity, nevertheless open the door for the recognition of other forms of situated local knowledges; those knowledges that grow up around the mid-range of places and questions, including what is often referred to as common sense. All are lived-in sources of explanations about ongoing events and ways of changing them; here practice and expediency is as much a language within which to talk, as is that of theory and strategy. All are talked into being by people in their everyday life-worlds who, in turn, become their explanations; be these scientific, local, common sense or traditional. Different practices of talk can also be a result of counter-hegemonic and counter-ideological positions, assumed explicitly in relation to locally seen attempts at domination rather than in relation to specific themes and issues; they are the discourse practices of resistance and are counter in that they are produced in relation to power.

With so many different knowledges around, so many different positions from where to be, it seems fair to suggest that dialogue – apart from in the very basic manner of the disposition of humans to find each other in language within a moral commonwealth of some form (Selznick, 1992) – is never likely to be a pre-given; on the contrary it is somewhere that you might eventually get to if you are lucky. Indeed, in development assistance with its overlay of scarce funds and resources it is probably fair to say that the cards are firmly stacked against dialogue and that this has been a steadily worsening rather than improving situation. It takes tremendous courage to stick to your collective local knowledge doubts when the opposing arguments are packaged in several million dollars of front loaded program support expressed in a power point presentation.

Are things that bad? The answer would seem to be yes; things really have to be bad for the World Bank to recognize that knowledge sharing is in a mess. Or for certain bilaterals to wonder seriously if the growing trend for integrated joint donor action and funding is not in fact generating a line of minimum least resistance in which nobody is really satisfied but where everybody can write their back to office reports, money can be handed over, results accounted for on a logical framework chart and careers can progress.

In many settings, such self-reinforcing cycles of proto-dialogue can go on forever, even generating mediocre increments of apparent change. Here hope lies in the possibility that many of those involved are aware of what is happening and have not given up seeking where possible to find a way through. But despite such good will present throughout the complex matrix of different donor and aid recipient organizations and actors, the poor are getting poorer, social exclusion is rampant, women continue to be totally unrepresented, hundreds of different peoples remain prey to cultural, economic and even physical annihilation and the environment is being ripped off at an alarming rate.

Working at dialogue in a local context

The confirmation that dialogue cannot be taken as a given, came in a very practical way to my colleagues and I in some work we have been doing to explore possibilities for local action in poverty reduction in Brazil. We are doing this in two ways: firstly, through identifying cases and describing what is being done and, secondly, gathering together those directly involved in the experiences along with academics, activists and local government practitioners to debate the practices and their results in order to build guidelines for future action (Camarotti and Spink, 2001 a).

The approach that we developed drew on a variety of sources, amongst which were large group dynamics, town meetings and gatherings of social movements. The idea, as we expressed it, was to bring together different knowledges, experiences and ideas within a climate of dialogue and mutual respect. Over the space of a year, we gathered together some 130 academics, activists, NGO workers, local government officials, community leaders and people directly involved in programs and projects that had a direct impact on poverty in four meetings of between 35–45 people, each of which lasted two days. Three of the meetings looked at specific aspects of poverty and social exclusion at the local level: urban services, socio-economic urban and rural development, generation of income and employment. The fourth sought to pull the stands together and was attended by over 50 people from the previous meetings.

The following are examples of some of the 23 experiences that were in debate:

- joint programs being run by local governments and recyclable materials collectives to organize and utilize the economic potential of waste materials; often including support to cooperatives and the creation of educational opportunities for children
- job creation programs linked to environmental preservation
- low cost housing programs being run jointly by municipalities and neighborhood groups which promote community involvement in land title regulation, construction work, income generation and in linked initiatives in areas such as health and education
- local health programs, often administered jointly by local governments and community associations, using small mobile health teams and local health centers to reach areas with little access to health resources and promote inclusion of low income communities within the health service
- volunteer health programs focused on pre-natal and early infant child care for the most vulnerable sectors and joint church, local government and non-governmental programs working with vulnerable groups such as street children, child prostitution and family violence
- programs being carried out by rural workers and small farmers associations in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and development agencies to gain better access to markets through product processing and market related activities, also creating income and job opportunities for the wider community
- creation of market gardening zones around urban areas to provide opportunities for rural workers affected by agricultural transitions
- local government involvement in support of more equitable relations between raw material extraction communities and the final purchasers, building up chains of fair trade relations involving workers associations, non-governmental organizations and business firms
- self-help urban industrial and small business craft cooperatives
- micro-credit programs developed by local associations, or through joint partnership with state and local governments
- business support for community and local government initiatives
- various forms of school grant programs designed to provide a stimulus for low income parents to maintain their children in school
- various forms of inter-municipal working in joint planning of industrial development, environmental management and food supply

In each meeting, the focus was on the debate of the experiences themselves and in the discussion of ideas that seemed to be emerging. Time was monitored to ensure that whilst those who presented the experiences might talk for 15 minutes, everybody else had to content themselves with between 2–5 minutes of comment. Like a town meeting, Quaker church gathering or the eighteenth century French civic assemblies, everybody sat around a square and raised hands to put their names down on the list to talk. Nobody was

invited or allowed to attend who could not guarantee to stay the whole time – no matter how important the excuse – and the academics were not allowed to present papers; just like everybody else they had to get in the queue to talk.

At the end of each day and at the beginning of every second day, one or two different people from different reference groups were asked to produce a ten minute synthesis of what they saw as the pivotal ideas and the same was done at the beginning of the second, third and fourth meeting about the meetings before. Finally, over a period of four months, the synopses of the principal points and a résumé of the different statements, questions and arguments went around and around among all who took part until a consensus was reached on a number of questions and not on others. This became the final document which again was circulated until all were in agreement that is was a fair reflection of where things had got to. All those who took part were identified in the document, as were the views that were raised (Camarotti and Spink, 2001 b).

The first meeting was really chaotic. The academics became furious that they could not just butt in and talk whenever they wanted to and got even more furious when they were told to finish what they had to say because somebody else wanted to speak. They saw their purpose in life as systematizing the experiences that was their view of dialogue; they were quite happy to have people from the different experiences participating, but there were limits. Those involved in the experiences attacked the academics as being over theoretical and out of touch but were also very nervous about describing what they did because "it seems so simple". The NGO workers got confused and did not know on whose side to place themselves and the local government staff and community leaders were concerned about practical conclusions... in other words, nobody connected with anybody. Some people could not take it, others could; yet others saw it as a challenge and, fortunately, more wanted to join in. By the final meeting, major discussions were taking place over two to three hours with everybody being able to talk two or three times and – more importantly – listen to what was going on. It was not a breakthrough, but it was a glimpse of what is possible.

Since then we have carried on with our town meetings – albeit of an invisible and extended town – and have been able to engage some of the international agencies, students, trades unionists and others along with colleagues from the first cycle and always, always, many experiences and people who are engaged in original innovations. In the last one nearly 100 people took part over two days and the square was now five to eight rows deep on all sides. In discussion was how the public sector can intervene locally in producing fairer and more just trade relations. Amongst those present were two Brazilian State Governors, representatives of self-managing workers collectives, European fair trade agencies, NGOs, academics, local government staff and many others. Ten experiences were fully debated and many more brought into the discussion.

The final summing up was made independently by a leading political scientist and a spokesman from an agricultural workers union cooperative that over twenty years has grown to become a major economic and social force in the region in which it is installed.

What was important about these different events was not just the results of the discussions but the discussions themselves; both went together. As all of us gradually unlearned our professional frameworks and relearned how to be with each other in talk so the knowledges began to connect. After all knowledge is not an abstract being that floats around in the air; it is present in talk, in places and in the resolution of problems. As the knowledges began to connect, so ideas began to emerge and to 'make sense', often very different from ideas that were previously held or that were common in the field of social action. More important still, many have been taken forward by those involved independently of any specific mandate or documented conclusion.

Amongst the various examples that could be given of the conclusions reached, is one with considerable consequences for the process of aid. This was the recognition that the activities, projects and programs under discussion, many of which were highly successful, were very much processes in action and not pre-planned models of intervention with phases, indicators and goals. There were no precise objectives, clear strategies and well-defined procedures and budgets; rather the opposite. They took shape inductively in practice and with time, integrating other elements and ideas within the flow of action. They were negotiated along the way, taking advantage of openings and possibilities, being influenced by new arguments and contributions. If there was any planning, it was much more adaptive, messy and incremental than elegant and concise. Even in so-called 'integrated' activities and approaches, it was not possible to identify a programmatic plan that had been previously defined and was capable of guaranteeing results. Frequently, what were described as strategies were, in fact, the ex-post recognition of links between different actions adopted, rather than the ex-ante specification of causal steps. The activities, projects and programs that seemed to have been effective were the result of people trying to solve problems the best they could, rather than the application of planning and decision technology. They were collective and turbulent learning processes rather than the technological application of ideal models; they were about innovation rather than best practices. They used knowledge to get going, but gathered further knowledge, pragmatically and locally relevant, along the road often in the shape of inter-organizational links, partnerships and alliances with a variety of different groupings.

This notion of dialogue as 'where we are trying to get to' rather than as 'where we start from' has proved very useful in many respects. It has enabled us to understand how equality and inclusion must be understood as social starting points rather than social goals and, at the same time, how the

blocks and barriers that prevent them are very much present in everyday actions. Getting different knowledges into the same space is only a prologue to dialogue, dialogue itself is when the ideas start to flow, when the 'con-verse' begins. Recently working with colleagues in Chile, Argentina, Peru, Colombia and the USA, we used some of these ideas to set a very different base line for a series of important comparative studies on popular participation and local democracy. The discussion, between academics and NGO activists could well have led to a highly complex set of criteria for comparative work. Instead we used the following very simple starting point: that the cases chosen should be capable of talking with one another, that we should be able to imagine them being together in debate and argument.

Another important lesson is that building dialogue does not necessarily mean consensus. On the contrary, it is very important to be able to recognize agreement, disagreement and the very important intermediate zone of doubt, uncertainty and the sense of themes that have still to be worked on or that need to be left for later. One of the important tasks for those who present the summing up statements at the end of our town meetings is to identify where they think ideas are lining up and when they are not and what should be done is left in an open-ended manner. It is for this reason that we make a point of choosing people (two or three) from the different groups of actors present.

Blocks to dialogue

If dialogue is about connecting and about processes that are built up over time, rather than something that is instantaneously available when a meeting starts or when somebody asks 'any questions' after a twenty-five minute presentation, then perhaps a useful contribution to the rediscovery of dialogue as humanity in action may come from understanding those events and happenings, views and perspectives that become blocks on the way to achieving it.

A number of blocks were identified in our discussions about poverty, especially around the haphazard way in which action takes place. Many times the key to the knowledge puzzle is local; solutions are built up bit-by-bit and take place in the 'place' of everyday life. Such social processes do not fit easily into the 'project' model and language and terms such as 'participative planning' can refer to very different dynamics and 'places' than do expressions such as "we got together and talked about what was possible". Forcing such process and events into the conventional language of aid can very easily de-skill the various collective others present through denying them the language of their practice. Working from bits or parts rather than from 'systems' or 'wholes' requires a lot of openness to learning by doing – for all the different sides involved. It recovers the legendary art of the possible within the democratic framework of debate and collective decision.

Another important arena in which to look for and understand the subtle way in which blocks are built up is that of evaluation. Let me again use a practical example. In 1992, Sida had decided that it would be interesting to carry out an impact evaluation of a public administration masters degree program that was being supported in the Central American region. As part of the assignment, I spent some time in the Sida headquarters in Stockholm talking to colleagues from different divisions, including the evaluation group and also digging through many different documents in the library. One of the things that very quickly struck me was the presence of different and at times antagonistic versions of what evaluation was, yet at the same time how these differences were somehow accepted and tolerated within that strange, relatively warm and open hearted, alliance of views that was Swedish aid at that time. As a way of passing this picture to my colleagues in Central America I suggested that the different approaches could be grouped into three main strands, all of which had their own worldviews and were products of identifiable circumstances (Spink, 1993). The three were: 'being useful'; 'what happened – accountability and learning'; and 'what does it mean'. All of them were present, with different supporters and different arguments, in different parts of Sida at that time; they were some of the versions that were circulating about ways of attributing value.

'Being useful' referred to those approaches to evaluation that are more concerned with understanding whether actors are able to do what they see as important to them, whether what they are trying to do seems to make sense in the circumstances, whether they were able to do it and whether it was as useful as was thought. Key here is that there is no a priori assumption about what 'useful' means and consequently of what criteria should be used to evaluate projects. The process is interactive and based on an underlying concern with whether the aid being provided was useful; which implies thinking about both the aid and the way it was provided and the use that those involved were able to make of it. These are points that open discussion rather than close it, for they ask questions of both donors and those receiving aid; they require both to be open about what they are hoping for and what they see as important. The result is a kind of 'muddling through' oriented to the construction of a joint value frame rather than precise and measurable goals, performance targets and check lists.

'What happened' approaches to evaluation and analysis begin with the assumption that evaluation is a technical matter. Things take place that can be measured and there are a variety of methods for doing this which can be looked at in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Evaluation will need to take into consideration a number of questions that will require discussion. For example: what data is or can be made available; what the possibilities for working with 'end users' are; what resources are available on both sides; how much evaluation is needed and at what points in the process. However, once these questions have been resolved it will be the responsibility of

donor and recipient technical staff to get on with the studies and provide the answers. Here there is a real and objective world that can be measured and where technical values can be placed on the results. Sometimes, 'what happened' approaches can take certain sub-routes which on occasion can be found together, but not necessarily so. The first of these, 'what happened – accountability', is concerned with providing accurate accounts of what is taking place and what the results are, so that reports can be made on both sides about how the aid is being used. This tends to lead to a more managerial interpretation of projects and programs and the use of statistics and techniques such as cost benefit analysis. Terms such as objectives, goals, performance and results are seen as helping to clarify more precisely what was intended and how to measure whether it took place. How to do this, however, is very much a technical matter and it can be left to the specialists to provide the framework.

The second, 'what happened – learning', is also technical, but is based on the view that there are many similarities between evaluation and research and that in looking at what took place, much can be learned that will help both ongoing and future activities. Research provides a reference for the development of ideas and the application of concepts; it refers to that which is measurable and knowable. It allows for a variety of quantitative and qualitative techniques that can be discussed and debated in methodological terms and for which specialists have important contributions to make. Concern here is often more with the consequences and impact of the results of aid supported activities; for it is there that there is much to be learned that could aid future action. Development and change may be difficult processes, but there are technical solutions.

The third approach can be summed up in the somewhat existential phrase: 'what does it mean'. This approach shares some of the concerns behind 'being useful' but blends these with the research orientation of 'what happened'. The result is an investigative and reflective posture that may go in any direction and where it is expected that what might come out of an evaluation may be very different from what went in. 'What does it mean?' is a question that refers to everything and everybody in all directions over time; there is no *a priori* significance for events, nor any assumptions about a logical and problematic real world. On the contrary complexity and multiple causality are the starting points for an interpretative process in which nothing can be taken for granted and in which worldviews are taken as social constructions. Thus the meaning and realism of goals, of the language of projects and evaluation are all open to question, as are implicit assumptions about society, culture, institutions and development itself.

In trying to describe these different ways of looking at evaluation, it was clear that there were many areas of overlap. People would position themselves within one and argue about the others; but would do so within a sense of conviviality that accepted that these were different approaches, but

that all models are products of their circumstances and there was just as much reason to have goals as to not have goals.

At that time, 1992–1993, it was possible to circulate a document in which the presence of these different approaches was accepted by those involved as being the way things were. Equally it was possible to sit down in San José, Costa Rica, with colleagues at the Instituto Centroamericano de Administración Pública (ICAP) and talk for a number of days about whether we thought an evaluation study made sense, what we thought it would be interesting to do, what values we thought were important, what success meant and how we understood results, consequences and impact. Our Sida program officers had sent the message "do it if it makes sense, do it the way you think it makes sense and don't do it if it doesn't" and we took them at their word. The result was very interesting and raised a number of useful insights and questions and took about a year between different meetings, the fieldwork and the discussion of results (Mejia and Spink, 1994).

Would that be possible nowadays? I fear not. Looking back over these different approaches that all circulated around the networks of Swedish aid workers at the time, today the picture would probably be very different. The multilateral and bilateral agencies have basically moved in bulk into the 'what happened' mode, where the logical framework analysis exercises increasingly hegemonic influence. I doubt if anybody says "don't do it if it doesn't make sense" anymore. On the contrary, the project financing agreement will have already specified when the evaluation is to take place, how many person days are to be allotted and what questions are to be answered. Echoes of the first approach, 'being useful', can still be found but usually within the non-profit philanthropic foundations where value coherence is still an important matter. The third approach, 'what does it mean', has migrated to the NGO community, at least within its more critical actors; the others have had to follow their financers within the second approach. Is it possible to recover the acceptance of variety and to recognize that if evaluation is about attributing value then the discussion of the values to be attributed should be the widest possible? Such a discussion is not a technical matter, nor a question of designing indicators or developing theories about evaluation. It is the opposite: engaging different people in the debate about what value should be attributed to an activity – what we have called in the Brazilian context democratic evaluation.

Engaging with others

If dialogue is not to be taken for granted and seen instead as something to be achieved, it follows that dialogue cannot be reduced to a 'round the table presence' at a single meeting. Indeed such approaches to dialogue are often the ones that subtly and not so subtly exclude rather than include: who can get to the meeting, who can travel to the local town, what time do

the buses stop, who can register presence and who is invited. Dialogue, on the contrary, needs to be seen as a process that happens over time and that need not be restricted to any one place. Indeed if we understand dialogue as the construction of conversation between different viewpoints, knowledges and the like that are themselves conversations, then everything is moving at the same time in different ways in overlapping and multiple networks of meaning production. Dialogue therefore for aid and the very special type of relationship that takes place between countries should never be restricted or even imagined as beginning and ending with conversations between donors and government representatives. On the contrary it should be seen as seeking to hear different views, inform both known and unknown others about what is being considered, seeking to gather views and bring these forwards for debate.

After all, resources are being articulated around activities that are being seen as priority. But priority by whom? Here there is no point in donors hiding behind the diplomatic convention of government sovereignty when the very same donors have signed international conventions and declarations in a number of areas. Working with colleagues in the Division for Democratic Government in Sida during 1998 to debate what we had learned from Swedish support to State and Public Administration Reform in a variety of different countries, we carried out an exercise of listing the various conventions to which the Swedish Government had pledged support and the resulting specific Sida policy statements in the areas of poverty reduction; gender equality; sustainable development; and peace, democracy and human rights. One of the conclusions that we came to was that given that all of these are constructed and confirmed in everyday activities, what was needed was a 'rights based approach' to public administration reform (Division for Democratic Governance, 1998). That is, we should be discussing the effectiveness of reform activities not simply in terms of service provision, but – to follow the lead from the mainstreaming of gender questions – in terms of their impact on the everyday construction of rights, the reduction of poverty and the sustainability of development. Such an approach would be the logical consequence – if we were to be sincere – of Sweden's different commitments in the international arena. Should we pretend that such commitments do not exist or should we recognize that, like it or not, they are part of the processuality of dialogue?

Take, for example, those resources that are delivered through financial donations and loans. More and more, the bilateral donors are gathering together with the different regional and international development banks to create packages of 'basket financing' that provide a mixture of donations and loans. What should be our aim when we seek to build dialogue in a setting where part of the aid package is 30 million dollars in loans to be repaid, or with specific aid linked to donor country specific export credits or many of the other financial tie-in mechanisms that exist, or even when it

is a straightforward donation? Who should be in the discussion – those that are contracting the loan on behalf of their government or those that will be paying the loan in future years? Should it be those that are negotiating the funds and credits, or those that will be using them or those for whom the funds will be used? Who should be able to give their opinion about donations and about technical support; who gets to be able to use the consultants? What, indeed is the limit here? How do we bring in the other voices that are part of this broader process of dialogue? In some cases this can be done actively, by creating forums and workshops to debate programs and projects, to discuss evaluation of activities; but in other cases it will have to be done through field studies, documents and other outreach activities. However do we allow for this? How do we move towards greater transparency as a constituent feature of building dialogue?

These are all very real questions in public sector management projects and ones that cause me many moments of doubt. Administrative reform activities tend to use a lot of money, mobilize a lot of consultants and take a long time. Such resources could build a lot of wells and help a lot of original peoples; yet decisions are taken – albeit with tremendous love and care – between donors' representatives, their technical advisors, government officials and their technical advisors. Is this dialogue enough? How can information be provided about what is being discussed to those that in various ways are involved or affected by the decisions. This question has already begun to make its presence felt in settings in which original or minority peoples are in different ways excluded from the ongoing political process and its institutions, but also applies in most if not all settings of social, political and cultural inequality. At present the concerns of some of these different actors are brought in through evaluation and impact studies or through questions raised in liaison meetings. But it is one thing to ask about the effects on gender relations, or ethnic minorities, or the elderly, but something very different to develop mechanisms to ensure that these same actors are actively present in discussion both before and during the activities being supported, as well as after. To take an example, how many of the international community's efforts and how much of its support to activities in the Amazon basin are discussed and debated beforehand with the many different original peoples of the region? Many documents that donors prepare for the partner country governments are restricted and are not made public unless the partner country government so wishes; most aid relationships are government to government or, in practice, executive branch to executive branch. How might donors work more closely with parliaments and national assemblies? Or, where local government work is taking place, with local councils and neighborhood assemblies. How much communication of what is taking place is effectively going on; how wide are the catchment's areas for opinions and views; how many different knowledges are being drawn in and debated?

In these questions there is no obvious line on the ground that, once we have got past it, means we can all feel easy and go to bed and sleep peacefully. There is, rather, the uneasy awareness of how much we are dependent on the presence of moral concerns with human dignity and with the quality of collective life and how much a prey we are to the increasing professionalisation of the donor community, its career necessities and its restricted views of knowledge. Currently Sida is supporting the process of State Reform in Bolivia. Currently means since about 1990 and supporting means that it will probably go on for another 10 years, spanning many different governments, technical staff and Ministers. A number of different donors have been involved, some have come and others have gone; so have the Sida desk officers, local residents and program staff. I wonder what dialogue means in this setting, I wonder if we will be able to recognize the challenge and work together in trying to achieve it…

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The Challenge of Dialogue for Practitioners: Risking the Unexpected

Naoki Suzuki[1]

Introduction

Dialogue in international development is challenging for both donors and recipients. While dialogue obviously involves listening and speaking, can a donor really listen to a recipient, comprehend the message, and act on it? And can a recipient really speak truthfully to a donor, without inhibition? Both donor and recipient may appear fully capable of listening and speaking. However, if listening[2] requires donors to change their plans, and if speaking out causes recipients to risk their funding, can the parties still maintain meaningful dialogue?

This paper attempts to describe the challenges, constraints and opportunities of dialogue from the practitioners' viewpoint. Practitioners in international development are the ones who normally work under an implementing agency and make most of the direct contacts with all concerned parties to coordinate all necessary tasks. Thus, they play a critical role in facilitating dialogue between donors and recipients.

This paper starts by presenting contextual challenges to donor-recipient dialogue, including conflicts between stakeholders, inequalities in donor-recipient relationships, and development discourse in general. The paper then analyzes a critical event in a project funded by Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) to identify five important issues on dialogue. The case suggests that risk taking is required for a donor to establish effective donor-recipient dialogue.

The second half of the paper is devoted to describing and analyzing a research project in which I participated. Although it is different from development projects, this case can exemplify the nature of interactions between a donor and a recipient in government-funded development projects, and

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[2] Forester (1989) clearly distinguishes listening from hearing. Listening involves both speaker and listener as subjects rather than objects, while hearing involves an object. Listening requires care that creates a sense of mutuality.

thus it can yield insights into the challenges, constraints, and opportunities that development practitioners may have to confront when they try to address issues at hand in the face of conflicting stakeholders. From this account, I draw practical lessons for practitioners who, through their day-to-day work, try to be accountable to a donor and a recipient as well as to other concerned parties. It is my hope that these lessons will not only provide development practitioners with relevant resources for their daily strategies that facilitate dialogue, but will also deepen our understanding of the importance of dialogue to development efforts.

Difficulties of dialogue in development

Conflicts among different stakeholders

Freire (1970) states that "[d]ialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world (76)." Dialogue may involve information exchange and may take a certain form, but it cannot be reduced to information exchange and its techniques. Dialogue is neither an instrument for promoting one's personal interest nor merely a means of communicating self-satisfaction; rather it is a collaborative praxis by which participants construct the world together. As praxis involves both action and reflection, dialogue can occur among people who interact with others not only through action but also through reflection. Thus, dialogue, Freire (1970) continues, cannot occur between one who imposes his/her own ideas upon another who does not wish this imposition. Similarly, dialogue cannot occur when one party denies the other the right to speak his or her mind.

If development is the process of working together with all concerned people (and not instrumentally using others) to construct (and not impose) the world that we envisage, dialogue is its necessary ingredient. Although it is easy to understand this concept, practicing it in a real development context is not as easy, for several reasons. First, dialogue must mediate conflicting visions. The world that people in need seek for their future cannot easily be constructed because everyone has a different vision of the future. Second, dialogue must address conflicting interests among stakeholders who occupy different social positions. Third, people usually do not grasp the importance of dialogue because it appears to be merely a mode of communication.

Obvious inequality between haves and have-nots

The relationship between a donor and a recipient can best exemplify how different stakeholders in a development project can refuse and/or avoid dialogue as a result of their unequal relationship. By definition, donors have rich resources at their disposal, such as budgets, staff, expertise, knowledge,

and information, while recipients lack the resources they need to deal with the issues at hand. Donors can decide to support recipients, while recipients can only wish and wait for donors' good will (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

This one-way relationship is likely to discourage dialogue. In such an unbalanced situation, can donors humbly listen to recipients' concerns? Can donors motivate themselves to bring those concerns to bear on their own actions? And can recipients frankly express their concerns to donors? Or do recipients feel obliged to thank donors for their support, but hesitate to speak out about their concerns or articulate their suggestions? Experience and logic indicate that, even if recipients are not satisfied with the way they are supported by donors, they rarely dare to raise their concerns out of fear of upsetting donors and losing their support.

Development discourse

In addition to the ways that the donor-recipient relationship structurally discourages dialogue, the discourse of international development also plays a role in enforcing a top-down relationship between the two parties. To a great extent, the dominant development discourse shapes contexts that influence the donor-recipient relationship. Current discourse about development does not necessarily embody positive values. When US President Truman made his inaugural speech on January 20th, 1949, he introduced the term 'underdevelopment' to characterize the status of two billion people on the earth who were living in so-called 'economically backward' areas (Rist, 1997:70). The term 'underdevelopment' was widely circulated for the first time through this official speech to explicitly problematize the situations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This 'Point Four'[3] speech played a critical role in initiating and shaping a system of international development that has endured for more than fifty years.[4] This system ranks each country along a linear underdeveloped-developed continuum,[5] and encourages underdeveloped countries to 'modernize' (in Western terms) in order to become developed through economic growth. Industrialized countries often intervene in these countries in the name of development (Preston, 1996).

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[3] President Truman's inaugural speech is often referred to as 'Point Four' because he made four points, the fourth of which addresses the need to extend development support to poorer countries (Rist, 1997, p. 70).

[4] Development discourse in the last half century is of course not only dominated by the modernization approach represented by Truman's Point Four speech. Different development theories, especially neo-Marxist development theories such as dependency theory, world systems theory and modes of production theory, analyze the issue of development from different perspectives (So, 1990; Hettne, 1990; Black, 1991).

[5] See the Human Development Index in the *Human Development Report* that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has published annually since 1990.

Observing the impact of these authoritative assumptions on the development of 'underdeveloped' areas, Illich (1997) argues that development defined by the rich actually contributes to widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Goods such as cars, highly advanced medical treatment like brain surgery, and scholarships for higher education may benefit a small number of upper- or middle-class people, but not the majority of the population in 'underdeveloped' countries. Illich's term, 'development as planned poverty' (Illich, 1997: 95) is embodied in each of these prepackaged modernization goals designed by development experts.

If development is synonymous with modernization, as Illich argues, domination rather than dialogue appears to better characterize the donor-recipient relationship. In so far as donors treat modernization (as they define it) as the core of development, they listen to recipients only to the extent that the recipients are willing to adopt modernization as their goal. Depending on recipients' attitudes, donors can always stop supporting them.

So far, the above analysis suggests that structurally and historically constructed donor-recipient relationships only discourage dialogue. But our understanding may be furthered if we consider what donors and recipients actually are. Shall we treat them as organizations, groups, or individuals? Although we tend to treat a donor or a recipient as a homogeneous entity and personify it, each donor or recipient organization is characterized by internal complexity and diversity that has the potential to result in conflicting interests among its staff members (Suzuki, 1998). To take the intra-organizational dynamics into account requires that individuals be treated separately from their organizations.

As individuals (and not organizations) can actually listen and speak, dialogue actually occurs between individuals. However, because complex relationships between an organization and its staff members significantly influence staff practices, dialogue between individuals is inevitably influenced by, and influences, their organization. The following section presents a case to illustrate how dialogue actually occurs between people in a real project setting.

An example of dialogue: the Ishikawa project

The Ishikawa project is often referred to as one of the rare success stories among many Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects. This case illuminates the critical roles that the leaders on both the donor and recipient sides play in enabling dialogue by developing mutual understanding.

In August 1995, the governments of Japan and Vietnam launched a joint research project entitled *Study on Economic Development Policy in the Transition toward a Market-oriented Economy in Vietnam*, based on consultations between the governments during 1994 and 1995. The objective of the

project was to provide the government of Vietnam with policy recommendations for its legal systems and national economic plans through intensive levels of intellectual support. While JICA implemented the project under its Social Development Studies Program, the project's research group members, consisting of scholars and high-ranking officers, were organized by and worked under the direction of relevant steering committees on both sides. Shigeru Ishikawa of Japan and Nguyen Quang Thai of Vietnam headed the project as the general leaders of the research group. Because of the significant role that Ishikawa played in the success of this project, it was known as the 'Ishikawa Project' in Japan. For Ishikawa's efforts in this assistance project, Vietnamese Communist Party Chairman Le Kha Phieu expressed his deep appreciation to then Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi in person when Obuchi visited Vietnam in December 1998 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1999).

A major reason why Chairman Phieu expressed his deep gratitude for the project was that Ishikawa developed a respectful relationship with the Chairman.[6] When I interviewed Ishikawa in October 1997, I asked what had been the biggest challenge in conducting this project. Instead of discussing the economic issues that must have concerned him, he replied without hesitation that developing trust was the most important issue. Japan's economic growth with phenomenal industrialization, Ishikawa explained, was a product of economic theories and policies that Japan adopted after WWII. Ishikawa's team encouraged the Vietnamese team to consider these economic theories and policies for their future.

But that was still not enough to motivate the Vietnamese side. Without trust, Ishikawa continued, the Vietnamese counterparts would not seriously consider adopting these theories and experiences for their own policies. Rather than imposing his suggestions on Vietnam, Ishikawa waited until he gained Chairman Phieu's trust. At the time, the decision to wait appeared to be both passive and ineffective. However, the decision paid off; and this would not have been possible had Ishikawa been unwilling to take a big risk.

A staff member of JICA who coordinated this project told me that the indefinite waiting period was exceptionally difficult because it not only created a sense of uncertainty among the Japanese project staff but also disturbed the entire project scheme that was controlled and administered under the Japanese government's annual budgetary system. If JICA cannot implement a project as scheduled, its competent authorities such as the

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[6] During the discussion in the fifth meeting of *Ajia Keizai-Josei Kenkyukai* (Seminar on Asian Economic Situations) conducted by the Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Finance, Japan, on February 22, 1999, the Chair of the seminar, Hara, who worked together with Ishikawa for the 'Ishikawa Project', clearly stated that the personal friendship that Ishikawa developed with the Party Chairman had a crucially important impact on the entire project.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) come to doubt JICA's ability and discredit its work. In the worst case, JICA could suffer a budget cut or personnel changes. The indefinite waiting period was risky for JICA as an institution as well as for the individual JICA staff members who coordinated the project. Ishikawa apparently convinced JICA staff as well as his own team members to support his strategy.

Ishikawa's stance of waiting for the Vietnamese team to take the initiative set his team apart from the project managers' position. With this action, he expressed his commitment to the Vietnamese team. He demonstrated consideration for the Vietnamese team's need for reflection, and thus encouraged dialogue with them. He did not impose his ideas on them but respected them as the owners of the project's efforts. His team maintained an advisory position and encouraged the Vietnamese team to make its own judgments and decisions. Waiting was an act of voluntarily giving up the authoritative position that Ishikawa's team could have kept if they had wanted. Ishikawa deliberately put himself in a risky position, but waiting played a role in developing mutuality between the two teams as a tangible form of dialogue.

From this example of waiting, several lessons for dialogue can be drawn. First, dialogue involves a specific action in a given situation. Although dialogue is an abstract term, putting it into practice requires taking concrete action. While donors can welcome dialogue so long as it stays at a conceptual level, they tend to adopt a defensive stance once it entails specific action — such as waiting, in Ishikawa's case.

Second, actual dialogue takes different forms in different situations. In Ishikawa's case, waiting was a relevant form of dialogue. But this does not mean that waiting always works as dialogue. A practitioner, thus, needs to examine a given situation carefully and deliberately in order to determine the proper action for promoting dialogue (Forester, 1999; Suzuki, 2001 b).

Third, actual dialogue takes place between persons. While we can refer to dialogue to explain donor-recipient relationships generally, dialogue in action occurs only between individuals — e.g., between Ishikawa representing the Japanese side and Nguyen Quang Thai representing the Vietnamese side. Persons can speak and listen but governments or development organizations obviously cannot. When we examine how dialogue occurs, we need to take a close look at how individuals who represent institutions of both types interact.

Fourth, dialogue involves taking risks. For a representative of the donor side such as Ishikawa, it is a major challenge to take recipients' concerns seriously, and critically evaluate and change initial plans, schedules, decisions, budgets, visions, etc. At the same time, it is a challenge for a recipient's representative to put aside his fears of upsetting a donor and speak honestly to the donor about his concerns. Without risk-taking on both sides take, dialogue can hardly occur.

Fifth, leaders who have decision making authority play a critical role in facilitating dialogue. The first four lessons above indicate that actions that individuals take specifically to avoid or minimize risks actually inhibit genuine dialogue. Taking into account the power distribution within an organization, leaders definitely sit in a better position to initiate risk-taking in order to facilitate dialogue.

With these lessons for dialogue in mind, this paper now turns to my personal account of a research project to analyze the challenges, constraints and opportunities for a practitioner to facilitate dialogue.

Practitioners' challenges: Ishigaki Island Research Project (IIRP)

IIRP was a group project I organized in my capacity as a researcher at the Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID).[7] It was not a development project but rather a research project. However, this case is relevant for practitioners who work in the field of international development as the case clearly delineates practitioners' challenges in the face of tensions between a donor and a recipient. The case is particularly relevant for practitioners who work for Japanese development organizations, because this project's scheme was more or less the same as the project scheme of Japanese ODA.

This section describes the IIRP process, giving special attention to critical events. While the account's personal nature inevitably entails biases, it is not intended to denounce the actors involved, but rather to ground readers in the context of research processes and provide them with a deeper understanding of practitioners' positions.

Project initiation

IIRP was a project that I organized and conducted as part of a three-year study commissioned by MOFA, entitled *Study of Systemizing Experiences in Development*. At FASID, I was assigned responsibility for the NGO-related part of this commissioned study in the form of a project entitled *Marginalization and NGOs*.

I started the *Marginalization and NGOs* project by forming its membership. I met with active NGO practitioners and convinced them to join the study group by explaining that this study was to contribute neither to FASID nor MOFA but to the NGO community more broadly. These practitioners,

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[7] FASID is a non-profit organization with legal status accorded jointly by MOFA and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. FASID conducts education and training of a new generation of Japanese development professionals, and research on international development.

who were not usually keen about government-funded projects, kindly accepted my request to participate, partially because I used to work for an NGO and had a personal network within the NGO community.

After the membership formation, the group decided to spend the first year sharing their own experiences working for NGOs and identifying issues and problems that NGOs have faced.[8] After a year of monthly meetings in the FASID office, the group felt a need to go out and conduct field research to further our understanding of how the issues and problems we identified could be dealt with in a specific and concrete development setting. In particular, the group members were interested in how NGOs as outsiders can play a facilitative role for project beneficiaries without imposing ideas on them, developing top-down relationships or creating unilateral dependency.

The group members discussed and chose Ishigaki Island in Okinawa, Japan from among several possible research sites. Among many reasons for selecting Ishigaki, a decisive one was that most study group members showed a strong interest in Ishigaki.[9] A couple of the members who actually wanted to leave the group after the first year agreed to stay if we chose Ishigaki.

Contacting Ishigaki

Prior to initiating group research in Ishigaki, I visited the island for the first time as the group's representative, met with local leaders such as local government officers, members of the municipal assembly, community activists and local NGO practitioners, and explained the objectives of the research to them. Although I had to be accountable to FASID as well as MOFA, I also wanted to contribute to the study group members as well as the Ishigaki people through this project.

I knew that, in addition to the problems islands typically face, such as the lack of higher education institutions, the low numbers of doctors, and the limited job opportunities, Ishigaki suffered from environmental destruction caused by the exploitative activities of outside developers. People who kindly gathered for my meeting were keen to address these issues, and ac-

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[8] For a detailed report of the first year's research activity, see Suzuki (1999).

[9] In addition to study group members' interests, five additional reasons were noted: First, because Ishigaki is an island and thus by definition somewhat isolated, the impact of outsiders on it can easily and clearly be identified. Second, the scale of Ishigaki Island was proper for our research: about 45,000 people live on this island, which has an area of 230 square kilometers. Third, the long history of Ishigaki's cultural, economic and social interactions with Southeast Asia and China encompasses valuable experiences from which the study group could learn. Fourth, Ishigaki has faced typical developmental problems that Asian, African and Latin American countries have experienced. Fifth, studying development issues in Ishigaki could yield insights into the need for intra-national development issues within Japan more broadly.

tive community organizers were eager to defend their land, jobs, culture, environment, etc. We in the study group thus felt that we stood on the same side as the Ishigaki people, who wanted to prevent their land from destruction.

Before my trip to Ishigaki, I had expected only to receive a cooperative reply regarding our research plans. Contrary to my expectations, our plans were met with considerable skepticism. One inhabitant pointed his finger at me saying, "I hate a person like you who comes here to conduct research for your own interest. We have received many researchers from mainland Japan. Because we, islanders, are hospitable and kind to outsiders, we try to help others as much as possible. But what has been happening is very exploitative. We receive nothing. After taking care of outsiders, we get nothing but feel exploited. When you go back to Tokyo, you write a paper for your own promotion. How about our benefit? I do not like you!"

I was shocked to have an islander expressing such sentiments toward me. In reactionary fashion, I attempted to persuade them by saying that the intent of the research was to generate knowledge that would be relevant not only for development practitioners but also for Ishigaki islanders. This explanation, however, only fueled their negative feelings against me. Everybody started speaking out. "Do you really know our interests?" "You are cheating!" "I do not understand why you came here." "I am not interested in working with you." "Your research is not our interest. But how come you say this is also our interest?" Obviously, my attempt failed. I gave up trying to convince them and simply asked: "We are interested in doing this research here. But, in return, what can we do for you?" When I asked about their interests instead of defending my interests, their stance towards me changed a bit.

A senior person proposed to host an open forum to share experiences of both Ishigaki islanders and our group members. He suggested to me, "With the forum, we, islanders, can also learn from you while you learn from us." I immediately agreed, feeling that he had helped me out of a tense and negative situation caused by my tactless explanation. In fact, his suggestion did make sense. Both sides could learn from each other and our group could still conduct our research. Moreover, the process of preparing for the forum would provide valuable opportunities for our group members to learn how the islanders work with outsiders. I promised the islanders that I would get approval from my organization to host a forum.

Commitment in the face of pressure

Our research group members favored action research and willingly agreed to host a forum as an obvious obligation we owed the islanders. My immediate superior also agreed with the shift of our research approach from an orthodox style to an action-centered one and approved the plan to host a

forum. The final hurdle for approval was the executive director of FASID. Because he had to be accountable to MOFA, the funder of the project, he obviously took the change of the research plan seriously. Bypassing my immediate superior, he made a direct request to me to explain the change.

Our forum was scheduled to take place just before the Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in 2000. As the host country of the Summit, the government of Japan, especially MOFA, was sensitive to any Okinawa-related activities. Although our forum was planned in Ishigaki, which is 400 km away from the main island Okinawa where the Summit would be held, MOFA wanted to keep my project under their control.

When I had initially proposed IIRP to MOFA through FASID's administration, the administration expressed interest in integrating IIRP into other Summit-related events to demonstrate FASID's loyalty to MOFA. Knowing the strong feeling among the Ishigaki islanders that they did not want to be on display to serve the interests of outsiders, I had protected the project by saying that it was a research project, not an event, and therefore not suitable for inclusion in the Summit. Now, my request to host a forum appeared to contradict my earlier characterization of the project as strictly a research project. This made the executive director deeply sceptical about my attitude and performance.

I introduced the concept of Participatory Action Research (Whyte et al, 1991; Greenwood and Levin, 1998) in hopes of convincing him that we could best learn about the issues and problems of Ishigaki through two-way interactions with the islanders rather than by observing and interviewing them. I argued that, as we were requesting their co-operation, we should also grant their request, even if it involved a change in our research plan. Before the executive director questioned me, I had already contacted several key participants and asked them to set aside several days for the forum. Though the executive director criticized this contact as 'overstepping the mark', it contributed to his decision to grant reluctant approval for the forum.

The impact of hosting a forum: mutuality and confrontation

With a budget from FASID, Ishigaki's leaders took the initiative to prepare the forum, and the study group helped and supported them. Recognizing that self-reliance is a major development issue for small islands like Ishigaki, we decided to make the theme of the forum *Self-Reliance of Islands and NGOs*. Our interests were to understand the roles that NGOs as outsiders can play in helping islands achieve self-reliance in the face of marginalizing forces from outside that deprive islands of economic, political and social autonomy.

We invited four NGO practitioners from abroad as guests to share their experiences as well. We shared the challenges islands face *vis-à-vis* a number

of internal and external pressures; analyzed possible roles that NGOs could play to tackle the challenges; and discussed possibilities for future collaboration among participants. At the end, we adopted the Yaeyama[10] Declaration to conclude the forum.

Prior to the forum, conflict between the executive director and me was not evident, although I understood his scepticism, which was reasonable from his point of view. I intentionally avoided confronting him in the time leading up to the forum: if he exercised his authority to freeze the project, all our efforts to host the forum would be in vain, and the people concerned would feel betrayed. Completion of the forum relieved me – I had kept my promises to both the Ishigaki islanders and the study group members.

For the executive director, however, the forum provided the impetus for decisive action against me based on my performance. He called me to his office and questioned me, blamed me and the other study group members for our incompetence, and informed me of my salary cut starting from the next month due to my poor performance – for which, according to him, MOFA was laughing at me.

I asked him to attend our study group meeting, raise his concerns to the members, and discuss the project frankly, because research activities naturally involve a continuous process of trial and error. Unfortunately, he left FASID to become an ambassador[11] after a few months without attending our meeting. Although I was not satisfied with the way I was treated by the executive director as an individual and FASID as an organization, I was satisfied that I was accountable to the study group members as well as the Ishigaki islanders. The study group members could learn both from sharing opportunities with the islanders and from collaborative processes that we undertook for preparing the forum. We produced a final report for MOFA (Suzuki, 2001 a) to conclude the research project.

Lessons for practitioners

The above account of project processes can deepen our understanding of the relationship between dialogue and the actions of practitioners. First, a practitioner should recognize that dialogue is influenced to a great extent by project context. Second, a practitioner must take the different and sometimes conflicting interests of stakeholders into account when he or she seeks dialogue in action. Third, a practitioner has opportunities to make critical

[10] As Ishigaki island is one of Yaeyama islands that share a distinctive social and cultural background, we called the forum the *Yaeyama Forum*.
[11] All previous executive directors of FASID came from MOFA to work for a couple of years before they were assigned ambassadorial positions. Having little incentive to work for an organization that did not appreciate my performance, I also left FASID and started teaching at a university.

decisions that facilitate dialogue. Fourth, dialogue is not only a decision to respond to a request but also, and more importantly, a commitment to put the decision into practice. Fifth, a practitioner's day-to-day work, which may appear to have nothing to do with dialogue, does in fact influence the potential for dialogue to take place. Sixth, developing relationships with other stakeholders establishes a favorable environment for dialogue to occur. Seventh, expecting the unexpected and always reflecting critically on one's own frameworks, ideas, actions, plans, objectives and processes constitute an advisable stance for practitioners who value dialogue.

Acknowledging contextual challenges

A practitioner should not underestimate the influence of the context in which a project takes place. Projects are not conducted in a vacuum: each project has a specific and unique context that influences and shapes its features. Project contexts thus contribute to determining how easily and to what extent dialogue can be developed between a donor and a recipient. Project contexts are largely determined by the relationships among stakeholders. In particular, the social, political, economic, and cultural positions of donors as well as recipients greatly influence contextual configurations.

In the case discussed above, the project was initiated by the study group, approved by FASID, and funded by MOFA, with little or no input from the people of Ishigaki. This organizational arrangement had a great impact on the processes of project formulation. First of all, the study group decided to visit Ishigaki for our own research interests without giving much thought to the willingness of the Ishigaki islanders. Second, our group prepared its project proposal with little input from Ishigaki. Third, an approval by FASID and a budget allocation by MOFA were the fundamental conditions for project implementation. These aspects all constituted potential obstacles to genuine dialogue with the islanders.

Development projects are supposed to address problems identified in the field. Imposing an idea developed by a donor can cause a recipient's situation to deteriorate rather than improve. Japan's ODA Charter (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1996), adopted in 1992, explains as the basic philosophy of ODA that the Japanese government supports the self-help efforts of developing countries. Accordingly, ODA projects are supposed to meet the needs of recipients.

However, this recipient-centered policy does not necessarily work in practice because of the contextual constraints under which Japanese development organizations work. One major contextual constraint is budgetary: an organization's annual accounting system cannot necessarily reflect the needs of recipients but rather often reflects Japan's political and economic situation (Hook, 1995; Katada, 2001).

While problems such as poverty, social insecurity, HIV/AIDS, political instabilities, etc. in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been aggravated rather than ameliorated, the budget of Japanese ODA has continuously been cut back for the past few years due mainly to the ongoing problems facing Japan's economy. In theory, ODA projects depend on recipients' requests; yet in practice, they depend in large part on the Japanese government's economic and political status. Needs identification and needs-based project planning are important aspects of dialogue in practice. These efforts, however, can bear fruit only if enough resources are secured for the activities they suggest. Without resources, any efforts at genuine dialogue may be in vain. Budget-driven development hinders needs-centered dialogical development.

In addition to the budgetary issue, the relationship between development projects and national interests also shapes project contexts. The objectives of development projects are not necessarily limited to supporting countries in need. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, recognizes the advancement of US foreign policy objectives as one of its major organizational missions. Since Japan's ODA budget originates from tax revenue, ODA projects must be accountable to taxpayers. Naturally, because taxpayers are citizens of a nation with its own distinctive interests, development projects have to be justified in light of these national interests.

Both budgetary concerns and national interest frame the donors' stance toward projects and limit their ability to respond flexibly to recipients' ideas and concerns. These contexts can thus work against dialogue.

Dealing with multiple accountabilities

A development practitioner must be accountable to multiple stakeholders with different perspectives and concerns as well as different capacities. One common challenge facing practitioners implementing projects is that the interests of the project's various stakeholders are often not merely diverse but conflicting. A practitioner must adjudicate conflicting interests in a justifiable manner.

In fact, conflicting interests may not necessarily become apparent because different stakeholders — such as, in this case, MOFA and the Ishigaki islanders — do not usually come into direct contact. A practitioner who does have direct contact with different stakeholders, however, can sense the latent conflicts among them. The practitioner then plays a mediating role among stakeholders and seeks to reflect their concerns in the project in practical ways.

In the case of IIRP, the major stakeholder groups were MOFA, FASID, the study group members and the Ishigaki islanders. Because MOFA was a funding agency and FASID was an implementing organization, FASID was

supposed to be accountable to MOFA. As a researcher with FASID, I did not have direct contact with MOFA, but had to be accountable to my immediate superior as well as to the executive director, who in turn were directly accountable to MOFA.

On the other hand, as a representative of the study group, I was accountable to other group members who trusted that the study attempted to benefit the NGO community. The research site selection was an opportunity to demonstrate my accountability to the group members. Most members showed a strong interest in visiting Ishigaki and that was indeed a major reason for selecting the site. Although I did not have any intention of exploiting Ishigaki, I definitely prioritized the group's interests over the interests of the Ishigaki islanders, whom we had not even met at the time. In the face of pressures from MOFA and the executive director, I perceived the field selection as an opportunity to strengthen our solidarity as a group.

While MOFA, FASID and our study group members all had their own concerns and interests regarding IIRP, the Ishigaki islanders also had their own concerns, which our group did not consider until I visited and listened to them.

A practitioner inevitably not only faces but also must deal with different interests. As the IIRP case demonstrates, a practitioner is inclined to deal with issues that directly influence him or her. Tensions derived from stakeholders who have direct contact with a practitioner are near enough to occupy his or her time, mind and energy. A practitioner would consequently pay less attention to unidentified or uncertain issues, such as the interests of the Ishigaki islanders, although attention to their interests may be critical for dialogue to occur.

When a practitioner prioritizes proximity over importance, he or she may pay less attention to an important developmental issue in the field due to the lack of its direct impact on him or her. But inattention to issues in the field can marginalize a recipient and severely hinder reflections from the field. For dialogue to occur, a practitioner must pay particular attention to accountability to recipients (Chambers, 1983).

Making the best use of opportunities for change

Any practitioner confronts opportunities to bring about change. Even if the change that a practitioner can cause at a given time is negligible, its ultimate impact may be significant. Working under a given project scheme, a practitioner often feels powerless, unable to do anything creative and confined to mechanically implementing a project as planned. However, this feeling does not necessarily reflect the reality. A practitioner can indeed take a different course of action if he or she can take a risk and assume the responsibility it entails. The question of bringing about a change is a question of taking risks.

If a practitioner gives up hope for change and fails to seize the opportu-

nities that arise for bringing it about, he or she will become a tool that performs tasks mechanically and without critical reflection. In this case, reflections offered by a recipient do nothing positive — they simply disturb the mechanical process. The practitioner in this context can lose motivation to listen to the recipient and dialogue can become almost impossible.

In the case of Ishigaki, I made a quick decision to support the idea of hosting a forum without consulting other group members or FASID's administration. It was a risky decision, but I was more focused on its benefit — it was decisive in securing the support of the Ishigaki islanders. If FASID's administration had not approved it, I would have been in trouble with all parties concerned. Whether my decision was good or bad is another issue; the point here is that the opportunity for creating a change presented itself, and I was able to seize it, with help in the form of pressure from the people of Ishigaki. It is important that practitioners maintain their hope that opportunities for change exist even in a greatly constrained environment.

From decision to commitment

When an Ishigaki islander proposed the forum, I immediately agreed to the idea as if he was helping me out of a difficult situation. My decision to host a forum was thus illogical in light of our research objectives, although after I agreed to the forum, I tried to generate persuasive reasons for linking our research to it. The Ishigaki islanders had easily seen through my scheme. Having had many negative experiences in the past, it was natural and understandable that they maintained a sceptical stance toward me. I think they wanted to observe how I would actually act on the decision I made. Sharing my decision with other group members put me in a position to commit myself to taking risks.

Dialogue — naming the world together, as Freire characterizes it — is dynamic. It involves processes of naming, which are more than one-shot decisions. A decision to initiate a new course of action is important, but it is still not enough for dialogue. The link between decision making and collaborative processes is essential for materializing dialogue.

We realize that making a decision in favor of a recipient, and thereby initiating change from the status quo, is not as easy a task as we often imagine. It goes against the normal dynamics of institutional arrangements, as institutions always prefer stability (Meyer and Zucker, 1989) and resist challenges to established hierarchies. But a practitioner should not be satisfied with merely reacting to a given situation so that he or she can complete daily administrative tasks. This complacency can only contribute to maintaining the status quo. Rather, a practitioner should be motivated to take a proactive stance, critically analyze a given situation, and make a decision to initiate change.

By itself, this proactive stance is still insufficient to ensure collaborative work with a recipient. A practitioner who seeks to induce a recipient to behave in a certain way can demonstrate an intention by listening to the recipient. But if it is to result in change, this intention must be backed up by commitment to change, which is the next challenge for a practitioner. As my case suggests, this commitment does not necessarily require a strong will on the part of the practitioner: when a practitioner announces his decision to others, he puts himself in a position that intensifies his sense of responsibility for translating the decision into action.

Recipients, who know that practitioners are sometimes better at saying than at doing, want to see tangible action rather than facile decisions. Only when the decision materializes as actual practice does the recipient come to know that the decision maker is truly listening to the recipient's message. That is when both sides feel that they are engaged in dialogue.

Valuing day-to-day practices

While dialogue requires a commitment to translate a decision into action, that commitment does not remain abstract. It takes concrete forms in day-to-day work. Commitment to host the forum, for example, required convincing FASID's administration as well as study group members. The actual practice of convincing is again not abstract and may involve a number of activities. In this case, those activities included holding a meeting to share the idea of the forum with the study group members, preparing justifiable reasons to legitimate the change, talking with the executive director to sound out his feelings and understanding about hosting the forum, re-scheduling the project to accommodate the change, and so forth.

All of these activities are concrete forms of commitment that embody the reflective part of dialogue. The activities, however, do not guarantee any particular outcome — hard work can turn out to have been in vain if it fails to turn a decision made into a promise kept. The donor side can be upset about a suggestion to make a sudden change and may decline to approve it. Once this happens, the practitioner may lose the trust of the donor. Moreover, the practitioner may even lose the trust of the recipient due to failure to keep a promise.

Of course, a practitioner must understand the donor's concerns and faithfully present a reasonable plan in a convincing manner. The practitioner should also keep the recipient informed about ongoing situations and the practitioner's efforts. Yet, in the worst case, the practitioner must accept a donor's negative response, which can result in losing the recipient's trust. A practitioner who commits to mediating two conflicting parties inevitably ends up in a vulnerable position. Practitioners facilitate dialogue in day-to-day, concrete yet risky actions, which should be a valued aspect of development.

Building relationships with others

Building relationships among stakeholders is key to enabling genuine dialogue: these relationships engender commitment and accountability, which in turn can prompt people to make courageous decisions and take significant risks for each other's sake. Yet relationship building among stakeholders, while obviously important, is problematic. Should stakeholders develop their relationships instrumentally, as a project tool? If relationship building is not instrumental, should stakeholders develop relationships anyway, for the sake of the relationship itself?

Dialogue in international development embodies a tricky combination of project means and ends. While dialogue is normally a desirable means to implement a project, it can also influence the ends of the project through the processes of praxis (action and reflection). Dialogue itself can be instrumental because it can contribute to effective and efficient project implementation. Yet, dialogue cannot occur between persons who deal with others instrumentally, for dialogue is not imposition.

Dialogue invites us to think critically about our dichotomous understanding of relationships among stakeholders with different interests: disagreement does not necessarily destroy these relationships. We can disagree while also maintaining the relationship.

The relationship, developed through dialogue, also facilitates dialogue. A challenge for practitioners is to maintain or even deepen the relationships among stakeholders while simultaneously conveying necessary information to them even when that information does not reflect their opinion. Once the relationship is built, stakeholders as well as practitioners can talk about conflicting issues in a caring manner without destroying the relationship. Any small interactions among stakeholders can contribute to building the relationship that becomes the foundation for dialogue. Practitioners, therefore, should not underestimate the value of ordinary conversations with stakeholders as the relationship cannot be built either quickly or instrumentally.

Expecting the unexpected

One of the most critical events associated with the IIRP was the emotional response I received from the Ishigaki islanders when I introduced our project plan to them. The response was totally unexpected. Luckily, I managed to handle it with the help of an islander's suggestion. That event formed the relationship between the stakeholders (the study group and the islanders) and shaped the characteristics of the project to a great extent. It underscores the fact that dealing productively with the unexpected can require significant changes in a project.

Thus, in the field of international development, taking the unexpected into account is at the heart of dialogue. One can easily imagine how hectic it would be if multiple parties with conflicting interests incessantly changed their plans. In a situation with this dynamic, a pre-planned schedule cannot work. To be effective, practitioners must remain flexible, adjusting to accommodate dynamic situations. But what is the impact on flexibility when a donor asks practitioners to submit a project plan and schedule for implementation in advance?

Clearly, practitioners must submit a proposal to get funding for a project. At this early stage, practitioners hope that a project can be implemented as planned. Soon after a project is launched, however, practitioners face a number of unexpected problems. Some can be minor yet others are too significant to ignore. Facing critical problems, practitioners are challenged to make changes. We cannot always foresee what problems will emerge, but we know that unforeseen problems can emerge at any time and require us to make changes in our project.

From the beginning, practitioners have to prepare themselves to change their plan and schedule as a project unfolds. Moreover, when they deal with a donor, they should communicate honestly with the donor about possible changes that may result from the unexpected before they actually begin the project.

In the case of IIRP, I did not prepare myself to change the schedule. I did not even think of changing it until I was criticized by the islanders. Nor did I talk with the executive director about possible changes. Had I prepared myself to change the project plan, would I have explained the possible change to the executive director in advance? I do not think so. My close relationship with the study group members as well as the Ishigaki islanders distanced me from the executive director, who appeared to be observing my behavior sceptically. I had opportunities to develop a relationship with him in ordinary daily situations, but I did not dare to do so, and instead avoided the opportunities.

This case suggests that it is advisable that the relationship be built before the unexpected emerges. Dialogue cannot occur if a practitioner has a prejudice against others. Whether the other is a donor or a recipient, a practitioner who humbly and honestly communicates with them has a better chance of developing the relationship. That relationship is the foundation that enables dialogue to take place even in situations involving conflict. With dialogue, we learn from each other; and only with dialogue can our development endeavors bear fruit we can all enjoy.

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Part 4:
Projects and
programme dialogue

Voices on the Dialogue between Scientists and Traditional Knowledge Bearers

I. Policy making, science and traditional knowledge bearers

Louk de la Rive Box[1]

A general question needs to be asked: is formal science relevant to technology development for solving problems in poor tropical countries? Take the case of medicine: of the 1,223 drugs marketed worldwide between 1975 and 1996, only 1 per cent (13) were developed to treat tropical diseases. Out of the 95,000 articles published in medical journals in 1995, only one-fifth of one per cent (182) dealt with tropical diseases. Out of the global spending on health research, only one-fifth of one per cent concerned pneumonia and diarrhoea, which together account for 11 per cent of the global disease burden, especially in poor countries (UNDP, 2001). This is the case for medicine, but in environmental science the situation is not likely to be much better.

The problem is aggravated by the perceived irrelevance of traditional science, especially in many African countries. Paulin Hountoundji, a respected African philosopher, calls this 'mimetism' or an extreme attentiveness 'to the intellectual fads of the West'. His view is that African research has been 'irrelevant' for two reasons. "One was the oppositional stance of most African intellectuals and their unwillingness to be 'usable'. [...] The second, and more serious problem was whether our basic research really addressed the key issues and whether, when it borrowed concepts, it was sufficiently sensitive to the specific of our own conditions (cited in Mkandawire 2000, p. 211)."

All in all, this is quite an indictment of traditional science: it is perceived as largely irrelevant, and when relevant it might exacerbate the cleavages between rich and poor.

The subsequent question is therefore: Is the type of knowledge that modern science produces to blame for this? Could it be that another type of knowledge would be more relevant to the needs of the poor in poor

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countries and produce fewer inequalities as just indicated? This is a question that has increasingly occupied social scientists.

The knowledge network approach advocated in the Human Development Report assumes an appreciation for joint learning. Joint learning means: common authorship of the insights obtained. Some examples may clarify this point.

When Dutch soil scientists in Vietnam discovered a certain type of soil deterioration, they described it and were the first to publish the findings. When I asked how they had found out about the phenomenon, it became clear they had followed a farmer's tip about the process. They had described the process, not discovered it. Was the farmer's name included among the authors of the publication?

When a Dominican plant pathologist discovered the incidence of a blue mould on tobacco in the late 1970s, her peers and the public widely (and rightly) hailed her. When I asked how she had found out about it, she acknowledged the tips she had received from the growers. She had 'certified' the disease, but had not discovered it.

These examples are indicative of a more general phenomenon: how to acknowledge the contribution of non-professional scientists to such knowledge networks. In traditional science the case is simple: the scientist or group of scientists who first publish can claim primacy. The technologist who first patents an invention can claim the proceeds. In the emerging mode of knowledge production this becomes much more complicated. Especially for the type of knowledge that is the subject of international co-operation arrangements.

This problem needs to be tackled for both pragmatic and ethical reasons. If science is not a world unto itself any more and involves non-professionals, then these non-professionals have a right to profit from the prestige or the profits. This argument applies to the soil scientist in Vietnam, but also to the pharmaceutical company that has engaged in 'gene hunting' and has appropriated a particular substance through the involvement of tropical farmers.

It is striking to note how little formal science has acknowledged these types of insights, which are often gained through informal knowledge networks. The phenomenon has been well known throughout the history of science, the distinction between 'scientist' and 'dilettante' being a fairly recent one.

Learned societies would have both categories among their membership, and stimulate their scientific curiosity. Anne Record (1994) studied the contributions of so-called artisan-entomologists, zoologists and botanists in early 19th century Britain. She shows that these artisans, or working men, had extensive correspondence networks. Their letters provide "tangible evidence of their scientific skill and signalled acceptance by a wider community of their right to practise natural history". With the professionalisation of science, distancing has occurred between the two categories. Therefore, the

role of the non-professional in discovery and invention may have become less and less recognised.

Yet, the trend may be reversed, for various reasons. In rich countries an ever-larger part of the population has pursued higher education, thus contributing to a democratisation of science and scientific knowledge. In many fields of scientific endeavour the role of the non-professional has continued, or has increasingly been acknowledged. In archaeology the role of the amateur has been extensively debated, as well as in fields such as astronomy, history (especially local history), botany and plant breeding. In ongoing phenological research on the effects of climate change on flora and fauna in the Netherlands, for example, the principal researcher has requested the audience of a popular radio programme to report the first sighting of a plant or animal in a given season. The research profits from the vast network of lay informants or observers provide a wealth of information.

In poor countries, local informants have become a recognised part of research teams. Take the case of the huge natural inventory compiled by researchers from the Merck Company in Costa Rica, where local farmer informants were formally included in the teams (Brush, 1998). Their knowledge was recognised in subsequent publications. The research would have been impossible without these trained lay informants.

In Africa, recent studies point to the existence of rich indigenous scientific knowledge in many parts of the region. [...] The region's *Materia medica* of more than 1,000 animal, plant and mineral products for the treatment of illness is a resource that Western-trained scientists are widely studying. [...] The challenge seems to be how to integrate this African indigenous knowledge [...] into mainstream analytical science (Bass, quoted in Adeboye 1998: 177–178).

The success of these approaches lies in the careful linkage of a fairly traditional (possibly even disciplinary) knowledge with user (or practitioner) knowledge. The recognition of user knowledge is the key to its sustainability (Brush 1998). The resulting knowledge network can be remarkably dynamic, as the Costa Rican and South African cases illustrate. It made good commercial sense to a transnational company like Merck – just as it made good scientific sense to the researchers involved. Thus, a dialogue between scientists and traditional knowledge bearers should be sought and initiated.

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II. How can we make scientists listen to those with local knowledge?

Marja-Lisa Swantz[2]

There is a credibility gap between local knowledge and scientific knowledge as the latter is based on the idea that science proves the truth-value of its knowledge while the experimental and experiential local knowledge does not use the same systems of evidence. When local knowledge is even partly based on a belief system, which to the scientist is not rational, he/she dismisses it as a curiosity, an object of study but not useful knowledge.

Scientists have conveniently prefixed ordinary people's common knowledge with the prefix *ethno-*. We have ethno-science, ethno-botany, ethno-technology, etc. signifying different forms of local knowledge or indigenous/endogenous knowledge, knowledge of the people. Ethnology and ethnography, on the other hand, are recognised as branches of social science signifying scientific research done on ways of living and material culture of an ethnos, a people. They depend on people's knowledge but do not promote it nor do they even always give credit to the owners of the knowledge. There is an ethnological school promoting ethno-methodology, and that gives credence to everyday knowledge. It bases its method and substance of study on the claim that also scientific knowledge builds on everyday knowledge, and thus there is no break between the two – they are part of the same continuum.

What changes scientists' attitude toward local knowledge? A simple answer is that their attitude invariably changes when scholars take the local people seriously, whose life situation they study, and *turn them into partners and actors in the study instead of dealing with them as objects of study*. This is the cardinal factor in research, which in fact *requires a change of paradigm in research methodology*. Action research and participatory action research have this basic factor as their starting point. When people whom scientists ordinarily take as objects of their research *become research partners* their knowledge becomes an integrated part of the scientific work. The truth-value can then be found in dialoguing with those who test the value and usefulness of their knowledge in everyday life. The partners also learn through experience the weaknesses and gaps in their knowledge and thus their need for new knowledge too.

[2] **Marja-Lisa Swantz** (Finland), PhD from the University of Uppsala with long experience as a missionary and researcher particularly from Tanzania is now Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Helsinki University.

In the *Participatory Action Research* in 1975–1980, a team of Tanzanian and Finnish researchers (of whom I was one) worked with the pastoralist Parkuyo Maasai in the Bagamoyo District of Tanzania. The problem the government requested the researchers to study was how to get the people to send their children to school. The people had threatened the education officer with spears, who had come to their kraal to register the children, and the government asked us to communicate with them on their behalf.

We had shaped our research from the start so that the people were active partners in our research. We were totally dependent on them for any knowledge about their life, cattle, social relations, etc. Our researchers were young and had only elementary knowledge about pastoralist life in comparison with the people with whom we started sharing life. To live together, not coming to people as experts, as scientists, as people from another class, is essential in getting into a dialogue with any group of people.

The Maasai had very little prejudice about us outsiders, the men communicated with men and we women shared life with the women. The overall outcome was that the men who in the beginning swore that their girls would never go to school (only one, the Christian chairman of the village did send his girl to school) now did send most of both the girls and the boys. The main problem was that the government was unable to meet the requests of the people. The cattle people feared that their daughters would no longer remain with the cattle if they went to school. They requested that the local school, to the building of which they had contributed, would also teach modern cattle practices. They would have provided the cows and a man to take care of them. The government did not even consider such a possibility, although I personally worked very hard on all levels to to draw attention to the problem of the cattle keepers. Both other Tanzanians and the scientists see the Masaai as a curiosity, not as a source of knowledge in relation to cattle and pastures. We, nevertheless, managed to get a real dialogue going. It so happened that the veterinarians who were regional livestock officers, held a seminar for the Maasai, made them sit at desks, and wrote Latin names of medicines etc. on the blackboard. I happened to come for a visit just then. But the Maasai men managed to turn the situation around. They started asking the veterinarians whether their way of castrating was right. In doing so, they were able to get real help for their real questions. Information that the officers got from the Maasai men came by the way, accidentally. This could have been a real chance to learn from the Maasai. In such a situation a wise officer, and correspondingly, a wise researcher would have had a real opportunity to activate people's own knowledge.

However, very often when a researcher in such a situation obtains new knowledge, he/she turns it into his/her knowledge and does not give credit to that source.

There are also many examples of knowledge, which we do not consider useful, but which is important to the people. We tend to set our research

problems from our ways of thinking and what we consider significant. In my view, the questions for research should come from the people and from their life situations. Communication should go both ways.

It is all a question of attitudes. You have to ask the question: What formulates the attitudes, which resist the local knowledge and prejudge it to be wrong? *Why do we continue to set our research problems from our own theories instead of conducting research which starts from people's own problems, the way they set them and see them, and how they are useful to them?*

My answer to these questions is that the scientific knowledge system determines the paradigms and the methodologies. Scientific institutions dominate knowledge totally. It is not possible for the students to deviate from the conceptualisation of the scientific school of which their teachers are part. It is part of the social systems of domination. Science has to maintain the belief in its superiority. There might be some sense in it since we, indeed, also need scientific authority at times. But can local knowledge not be integrated?

I am now writing my own story "In Search of Living Knowledge". I call it living knowledge when it is part of people's life and lives and does not hinder me from seeking knowledge where I experience life and find wisdom.

Is a Dialogue on Human Rights Possible?

Thomas Hammarberg[1]

Background

The international discourse on human rights has tended to focus on short-comings in the *South*. Most countries put on the agenda of the UN Commission on Human Rights have been Asian, African or Latin American. As a rule, they have been poor and less influential in international affairs. This has disguised the fact that there are serious human rights problems in other parts of the world as well, including in the richer countries.

Another recent trend is that human rights have been made a more important aspect of international affairs. Within the United Nations they have been *integrated* – at least in theory – as an essential aspect into all major programs, be they related to security, economic and social issues, relief operations or development. Also in bilateral relations, human rights have been given more prominence, in particular in contacts between European and developing countries. A number of governmental aid agencies have integrated a human rights dimension into their approach to development support.

At the same time, the discussion on human rights versus *national sovereignty* has continued. The UN Charter already made clear that human rights are a matter of international concern and that it is legitimate for the world organization to take positions in this area. This has been, at least implicitly, recognized by the overwhelming majority of member states in UN discussions, for instance at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993.

However, controversies remain on *how* human rights concerns are acted upon in relation to individual countries. Governments under scrutiny have pointed at the tendency of selectivity: "Why us and not them?" In fact, the States listed by, for instance, the UN Human Rights Commission have clearly deserved such attention; individuals in these countries have been violated. In fact, the countries listed by, for instance, the UN Human Rights Commission have clearly deserved such attention. The problem is rather

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that some other countries have been treated as if they were immune. The reason in these cases is obvious: they carry political weight. Such selectivity politicizes the international discourse and undermines the notion of impartiality.

Governments in the South have also reacted against the *manner* in which critics have voiced their concerns. The 'naming and shaming' have irritated some political leaders deeply. This in particular as such criticisms have often had a moral tone, implying sometimes that the failures of those responsible have criminal dimensions. It is symptomatic that governments fight hard to avoid even being mentioned in the Human Rights Commission.

The sensitivity of being targeted has increased with the discussion on humanitarian intervention. The very term 'intervention' has become sensitive not least after the 1999 bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was justified by NATO, partly, as an action for the protection of the human rights of the Kosovars. A number of member states of the United Nations have reacted against what they see as a tendency by the United States and NATO to consider using military means for neo-colonial ambitions.

Politication of human rights

The human rights community has reason to consider the implications of these complex tendencies.[2] For one, several rights groups were once inspired by the anti-colonial movement and cannot be insensitive to the risk that human rights rhetoric may be used with hegemonic ambitions. What approach would be appropriate?

Human rights are political by their very nature and raise sensitive issues in the political arena. If not, they would fail to encourage genuine reform. However, there are negative aspects of politicization and these have probably reduced the effectiveness of the human rights efforts. One example is the above-mentioned 'selectivity' in the choice of countries to be monitored, a tendency which in turn has contributed to a North-South divide.

The rich Western countries which dominate the international human rights discourse, in particular the United States, have defined the key issues in a partial manner. Economic and social rights, seen by developing countries as especially important, have been ignored or not recognized as more than 'ambitions'. Development programs and human rights work have been seen

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[2] The 'human rights community' is not a well-defined category. I use the term to describe an informal network of organizations, institutions, academics, other professionals, writers and other activists contributing to the human rights cause. It should be recognized that there are a number of individuals in the inter-governmental organizations, in particular the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who make important contributions. Some national governmental structures pursue a policy which is clearly pro-human rights.

as separate efforts. There has been little recognition that implementation of human rights standards do require resources, including financial ones.

The *style* of the discussion and communications has also been dominated by an American approach. The complaints from Southern governments about lecturing and finger pointing – sometimes on weak factual basis – are not without some justification. Combined with the US and European (and Australian) complacency and lack of willingness to consider their own short-comings, an atmosphere has been created which has not encouraged con-structive exchanges.

Some dictatorships in the South have used their third world position or earlier injustices to disguise their own current violations. President Mugabe in Zimbabwe has justified his repressive measures as corrections of the colo-nial past. This is a challenge to the principle of human rights universality and should not be read through a romantic lens.

The ongoing 'war against terrorism' has complicated the picture even fur-ther. The very governments which have described themselves as being the defenders of justice and due process, have pushed others to introduce legis-lation and security measures out of line with the agreed international hu-man rights standards. Again, this has enhanced the impression of hypocrisy. The double standards applied to violations in the Middle East have raised similar concerns among governments in the South and human rights groups.

The narrow definition of human rights and the random and inconsistent approach to their promotion and protection have made the work for inter-national standards more difficult, both for the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations. In many Southern countries there has been an unfortunate confusion between international and US policies, amplified by the fact that the US approach tends to be more reflected in the media.

Defining human rights

Human rights are not 'natural' or handed down by a divine power. They are the result of human efforts to define and agree upon certain basic rules of behavior by the state towards the individual. The first internationally agreed and comprehensive listing of the rights came with the 1948 Universal Dec-laration of Human Rights. The 30 articles of the Declaration have later been elaborated and legally anchored through the agreements on more precise international conventions on civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; racial discrimination; torture; women's rights; and the rights of the child.

These rights have derived their strength from the fact that they have been so obviously relevant and essential. Whatever was said when they were once drafted, they have taken on a life of their own. Civil society groups, individuals and the media in country after country refer to them as decisive in matters seen as very important. It is this extra-ordinary response to the

standards, which has made them special and given them a moral weight which no government of today can afford to totally ignore.

This popular and moral dimension of human rights cannot easily be unraveled. There is, however, a need to counter hypocrisy and develop a serious approach to implementation. There should be a conscious effort to secure as broad a global support as possible for human rights, without deviating from the principles. As the field is politically so sensitive, consistency and evenhandedness are crucial.

If the ambition is genuine progress, which it must be, finger pointing is not sufficient. There are a number of additional approaches, which could effectively be used to promote human rights in international relations. Some of them relate to *dialogue* and others to what has been called *capacity-building* and support therefore.

Dialogue and human rights

Dialogue on human rights is seen as the opposite to confrontation. In reality, however, the choices are more complex. A dialogue could be frank or circumspect, public or confidential. A longer dialogue could have any of these features, at different stages.

The very term 'dialogue', however, indicates that on both sides, whatever the nature of the exchanges, there is a preparedness to listen to the other party. One-way preaching is not the same as dialoguing. In that sense, there has been too little of dialogue in the field of human rights – and what we have seen, has been too shallow.

The human rights struggle is built on two complementary efforts: one, to underpin the understanding of the human rights standards and enhance the capacity to realize them, and, two, to monitor implementation. The second gives information for improving on the first – in a never-ending cycle.

The UN program for human rights is built around these concepts. Special Rapporteurs and other 'special procedures' report on the factual situations and the technical co-operation program offers possibilities for governments to be given assistance to start remedying the problems. Training courses for relevant government officials, the creation of an office of an Ombudsperson or support to civil society groups are possible options.

The treaty system based on the six major human rights conventions is to a large extent based on self-monitoring and dialogue. There may be frank exchanges when government delegations appear in front of the treaty committees, but the purpose is to identify genuine problems and discuss remedies. Again, the technical co-operation program is linked to these dialogues. The idea is that other UN structures too, like UNICEF, would consider observations made during these procedures when framing their long-term country programs.

This constructive approach, inspired by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has to some extent reduced the tensions in the discussion on individual countries.[3] Still, few governments are easy about opening themselves up for being tested on the status of human rights in their own back yards.

The High Commissioner has played a key role in promoting dialogue on human rights between religions and other groupings. The second incumbent, Mrs. Mary Robinson, took initiatives for a discussion on Islam and the Universal Declaration. Further, she convened seminars on poverty and human rights and also promoted a dialogue on economic and social rights as well as the concept of the right to development. Each of these initiatives was controversial but was taken in the spirit of seeking a broader consensus and more effective implementation of all human rights.

Should human rights exchanges be public?

Within the human rights community there have always been suspicions against official 'dialogues'. This is partly based on bad experience. Governments have defended passivity in relation to violations in other countries with references to confidential diplomatic efforts, which sometimes have not been genuine.

Even in this case, Mary Robinson set a good example. She had an endless series of meetings with government representatives. At each of these closed encounters she raised the particular human rights concerns relevant to the country in question (including the rich ones). The style was at the same time both friendly and frank – no double standards here.

The perhaps most sensitive aspect of the human rights exchanges is *whether they are public or not*. A number of governments are prepared to entertain harsh criticism as long as such points are made behind closed doors. This can relate to a custom of not wanting to 'lose face'. Governments may also fear that public criticism from outside would be particularly devastating when people are not accustomed to free discussion. In other words, dictators tend to be surprisingly thin-skinned in relation to negative publicity abroad.

This has contributed to a trend of organized dialogues between critics and certain governments. Perhaps the most controversial case is the dialogue between *China and the European Union*. The EU troika meets a Chinese delegation at ambassadorial level every six months for a one or one-and-half day discussion on human rights concerns. The discussions have been relevant and frank, but confidential.

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[3] The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was established in 1994. The first High Commissioner was Jose Luis Ayala who stayed in the post until early 1997. His successor was Mary Robinson whose mandate expired in September 2002.

Beijing became interested in this prolonged exchange as it saw this as an alternative to a critical resolution in the Commission on Human Rights. The Chinese have made clear that they may terminate the dialogue if the EU sponsored such a resolution – and the EU countries in the Commission have not opted for sponsorship for several years now. When Denmark once did, Beijing threatened, in strikingly rude language, to terminate business contracts.[4]

The jury is still out on the wisdom of the EU dialogue with China. No doubt it has had some positive effects; it probably has helped the Chinese administration to focus on some reforms in the judicial system and to push for ratification of some international standards, notably the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Likewise, it has had some informative value for the EU partners. The side discussions on individual cases of prisoners have provided at least some factual information of relevance.

The downside has been the impression that the dialogue itself is a 'deal' and that EU has paid a price of inaction at UN level. Several non-governmental groups have been critical towards this which in turn has made the EU foreign ministers anxious to show that the dialogue has indeed produced result. They have therefore defined bench marks for Chinese progress on key issues, which the Beijing delegation has seen as unwarranted dictating and 'conditionality'.

It has been obvious that the time perspective has differed between the two parties. While the Europeans requested fairly rapid progress, the Chinese pointed out that established procedures could not be shortcut. In particular, they emphasized that the People's Congress, the parliament, needed time to scrutinize government proposals. The implication was that the EU delegations demonstrated insufficient respect for the independence and working practices of the parliamentary body. EU representatives saw these arguments as less than genuine.

I took part in the EU-China dialogue at two meetings 2000–2001 and concluded afterwards that these meetings could be meaningful if they were taken seriously by both sides. The constant rotation of EU delegates is problematic, the competence among the EU negotiators has varied and there is an obvious lack of continuity. Also, a strange feeling developed that EU was more dependent or keen on the dialogue than the Chinese, which contributed to the cautious approach by the EU in the Commission on Human Rights. The interest in some EU countries of entering the Chinese business market amplified that impression.

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[4] In reality, the Chinese "sanctions" against Denmark were minimal and short term.

The implied understanding from the beginning on both sides was that the dialogue offered an opportunity to discuss the situation in China. This meant that the discussion was not mutual in the sense that the situations in both China and Europe were covered. With time, however, the Chinese delegation proposed to correct this and asked questions about European problems. This confused the EU delegation as it changed the original understanding about the purpose of the dialogue and also put it in the uncomfortable position of having to represent the 15 member states on aspects for which the delegation had no mandate.

The broader lesson for both sides should be that such discussions are useful if they are unconditional, well prepared and conducted in a frank atmosphere of mutual respect. Of course, the seriousness will be tested by the extent of *concrete results*. If the talks are used to give the impression of genuine concern but not backed up by real political will, they will not be sustainable.

There is a need for regular public accounting, though not necessarily open reports on each individual meeting. It is not easy to find the ideal combination of using the possibilities of diplomatic exchanges and acting with transparency. The guiding star should be what can honestly be assumed to render best results. It should be recognized that informal exchanges in a non-confrontational setting can be constructive. No government is monolithic and it might be important to offer those delegates who are interested an opportunity to discuss in depth matters which might be regarded as taboos at home. However, the credibility of the approach requires that there will be public reports sooner or later.

Implementation of human rights

Those who are serious about human rights should reject simplistic notions. The discourse is not primarily about naming 'good' and 'bad' governments or establishing a ranking list. There are shortcomings and problems in all countries in relation to human rights; those responsible should demonstrate a determination to address them – this is the point about *political will*.

Implementation of human rights has several dimensions. Human rights theorists often talk about the three dimensions: respect, protect and fulfil. Governments should themselves avoid violating the norms; their agents should not practice torture, for instance. This is not sufficient, there is a need to offer individuals a protection against violations by others and also to secure that the right to, for example, health and education be made real, which will require that resources are made available for this purpose.

The informed human rights discussion is therefore not only focused on whether a certain government respects the norms but also on what measures it takes to ensure that the rights are protected and fulfilled. This opens

discussions about legislation, the nature of the judicial system, concrete measures against discrimination and participation of concerned individuals, human rights education and awareness, training and instruction of law enforcement personnel, ombudswork and other monitoring systems, response to civil society initiatives, etc.

Actions in these fields depend on political will, but progress cannot be immediate and also depend on personnel and financial resources and other circumstances. There is a growing realization that human rights can only be ensured through a consistent policy of such 'institution building'. Development co-operation has increasingly been directed towards developing an independent judiciary, training of a professional police force, reviewing of the legislation and encouraging active non-governmental groups.

Such discussions between donors and developing countries do not exclude frank exchanges about the current human rights situations. In fact, the dialogue about capacity development has to be built on an honest assessment of the present in order to be meaningful and effective.

Development co-operation and human rights

The bilateral dialogue between a donor and a developing country is usually conducted at several levels at the same time – during ministerial visits in both directions, between diplomats or during the regular negotiations between government delegations on future development co-operation. This is when political views on human rights are integrated into the discussions on co-operation.

Developing countries tend to oppose 'conditionality', *i.e.* that aid be conditioned on a certain level of human rights performance. At least at international conferences, they have described such conditions as a form of blackmail and suggested that they reflect a neo-colonial attitude and undermine the spirit of mutual respect.

This position is understandable. There could, however, be different forms of 'conditionality'. One would be that no co-operation is established – or that ongoing programs are interrupted – if there are serious violations in the recipient country. A softer form would be that assistance is only provided if used for human rights reform.

Are there agreed norms in this area? There is a reference in the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to international co-operation in order to also enable poor countries to implement the standards on, for instance, the rights to health and education.

This has been interpreted as a signal that richer countries should be prepared to assist others in their efforts to realize such costly rights. However, it would be to stretch the interpretation of these provisions to describe them as definite obligations to give aid.

Providing assistance is still a matter that can be unilaterally decided by each individual government. Bilateral as well as multilateral aid is voluntary. Even in the richest countries such budget posts are not popular. Only five of the donor countries have reached the long ago agreed target of providing 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Product for development co-operation.

A donor government must justify these expenses and convince the public that such money is well used. As the majority of the citizens in the donor country cannot see any direct result of the assistance, it has become important for their governments to seek ways to show its positive impact. This in itself leads to a form of indirect conditionality.

Furthermore, donor agencies have pointed out that there is a clear correlation between the effectiveness of development co-operation and the degree to which human rights are respected. Freedom of speech, for instance, could be essential to minimize mismanagement and corruption.

The link between development programs and human rights goes further than that. Implementation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights can be seen as the very purpose of development work. In that perspective, aid is a *means* for making a reality of human rights.

This view would give important nuances to the discussion on 'conditionality'. The conditions would focus on will and the genuine intentions of the recipient government rather than on the present status of human rights. As the donor participation is voluntary it is hard to object to such goal-oriented, indirect 'conditionality'.

NGOs and human rights

Non-governmental groups (NGOs) in the donor countries also relate to colleagues in the South, sometimes in the form of a dialogue. One basis is that Western NGOs get funding from governmental agencies at home to be used in partnership with groups in developing countries. Indeed, a substantial part of development aid today is channeled that way.

This kind of dialogue is delicate and requires a special study. As always, money could corrupt the relationship and make the recipient adjust its positions to suit the donor partner, particularly as many human rights groups in the South are inevitably poor. It has happened that the Western organizations have listened badly and pushed through programs which were not of highest priority or even desirable. Western consultants have been used when local capacities would have been more appropriate.

At the same time, there are many examples of outside NGOs which have provided good advice based on experience in other parts of the world. In addition, such co-operation has sometimes given an 'umbrella' protection for local groups against harassment by domestic authorities.

A trend nowadays is that assistance is used for regional networking, which offers local groups the possibility of learning from one another. By and large, this has been positive. One important such regional grouping is *Asia Forum*, a human rights network with its secretariat in Bangkok, which has contributed to building the capacity of its members. Again, such co-operation also functions as a form of political protection.

Another observation is that donor groups often learn more from such a dialogue than the local ones. This has been obvious in the case of Cambodia, where experienced domestic groups have given donor partners lessons about 'reality' which, in turn, has enhanced the credibility of the assisting organizations in their home environment.

Amnesty International (AI) relates to domestic groups as 'colleagues' rather than in a donor-recipient relation. AI may provide advice on, for instance, research techniques as well as an international protection (often via the media) while the local partner above all provides the actual facts. This is often a most constructive relationship and the fact that AI is not a donor may actually simplify matters. However, this may require that there are other foreign groups providing material resources.

Such aid can be delicate as governments sometimes regard the local human rights activities as a political opposition force and, therefore, money from abroad is branded as intervention in domestic politics. This makes it more important that there is a respectful dialogue between the foreign and local NGO.

A particular dilemma is whether international or outside NGOs should consult local human rights groups before acting on violations in the country in question. Not doing so could undermine the strategy of the local groups. On the other hand, these could also become hostages when the strategies are coordinated. Usually this dilemma is resolved through informal contacts, but the risk is there – in both directions.

Supporting individual cases

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has working techniques of interest for the discussion on how to assist in individual cases. Its program for prison visits allows it to see individual prisoners and take care of their health and well-being. This is made possible in a number of countries because of the ICRC policy of not reporting in public. Neither does it question the legitimacy of the imprisonment itself.

The Amnesty International approach is different. Member groups 'adopt' individual Prisoners of Conscience and exert pressure, both public and direct, for the release of these prisoners. Both seek a dialogue but the Amnesty International approach is often seen by governments as confrontational because it sometimes uses publicity.

In reality, the two techniques are complementary. While ICRC tends to be more effective in improving prison conditions, the Amnesty International pressure does sometimes result in releases.

Through the years there have been a number of attempts to bargain for the release of prisoners or for them to be allowed to leave their country. In the former East Germany, this developed into a business via a well connected East German lawyer who, against payment, organized exit visas. The US government and private US initiatives have managed to organize the release of some few Chinese prisoners on condition that they left the country (for the US). Earlier, some of the Russian dissidents were exiled under similar circumstances.

Human rights organizations have been hesitant about such deals. The minimum requirement, of course, should be that the prisoner him/herself is in agreement: to be barred from living in one's own country, and perhaps even be deprived of your citizenship, is a heavy punishment. If such deals become common, there might even be a risk that people are kept as hostages in preparation for a deal.

The 'buying out' of prisoners is of course totally different from the heroic efforts made by Raoul Wallenberg when rescuing Jews in Budapest in 1945 or Ambassador Harald Edelstam protecting left wing activists and refugees in Santiago de Chile in 1973. They used their diplomatic status to the utmost in order to save lives. They stood up against brutal military forces and entered negotiations in order to give time and space for persecuted people to escape.

It happens that governments raise individual cases during high level visits or aid or trade negotiations; this is usually done as a confidential side issue. The initiating side may present the approach as a matter of good will. The implied message would be that agreements on the main agenda would be facilitated if the other side demonstrated generosity regarding the individual cases raised. It is not easy to know how often this happens, but there is an impression that this technique could have an effect not least when business deals are the 'real' agenda.

Conclusion

To sum up, dialogues on human rights are not only possible, they are necessary and important as one method of enhancing the understanding of the rights and the importance of their realization. The perception that such exchanges result in a sell-out of the standards is a simplistic one.

The atmosphere of confrontation – with moral overtones – which has developed in the field of human rights, does not make such dialogues easy. In principle, however, human rights representatives should be prepared to talk even with the 'devil', if that could help.

Dialogues should be seen as one of the potential instruments for change. Whether they yield results or not depends on how they are framed and conducted. Serious, competent preparation is one key aspect. A genuine dialogue also requires an open, self-critical and listening attitude – which should, and could, be combined with a principled approach. In order to protect the credibility of such talks they should not exclude other actions and be accounted for in public at some stage. They should never compromise the agreed international standards.

Human Rights Instruments in the Aid Dialogue – Reflections

Lone Lindholt[1]

Introduction

A human rights focus is important in the aid dialogue for the simple reason that the absolute majority of countries receiving aid, also seem to have a generally poor human rights record. Human rights have therefore risen in importance on the international development agenda over the previous decades, and since 1993 when the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights laid down once and for all the principle of indivisibility of human rights, the discussions have increasingly also focussed on the implementation of economic and social rights.

This essay represents reflections on the role of international human rights instruments in the aid and development dialogue, based on more than a decade of research and dialogue oriented teaching in a non-European context, involving government and civil society actors around the world. In the following, I will analyse the body of human rights law discussing the strengths and weaknesses of, respectively, global, regional and national legislation, in relation to the development dialogue, and illustrate this by a number of cases. Finally, on the basis thereof, I will reflect on some of the basic questions and assumptions pertaining to this area, which guide our approaches to it.

The regime of human rights law – strengths and weaknesses as basis for dialogue

International instruments

The body of globally applicable human rights instruments has been richly developed over the last 50 years, mostly by the United Nations. We now have scores of human rights conventions (legally binding, but for the ratifying parties only) and declarations and principles (not legally binding but

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with ideological and political value), formulating standards both generally and in relation to specific rights.

One obvious advantage of these instruments is that, in principle, they apply to every state in the world, and therefore presume to have legitimacy in relation to every society on earth – in short, the argument for universality. This is particularly the case with such a document as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, probably the closest we come to a valid source of universal human rights. However, we have often seen this instrument rejected as such, primarily based on the (contested) claim that few or none of the states outside Western Europe and North America which are now struggling through the process of development, actually participated in the process of its formulation (Lindholt, 1997).

The drawback of these instruments in general is that their formulations reflect many different agendas, that they are very much subject to a process of negotiation and compromise, and that, as a consequence, their formulations are relatively imprecise and limit themselves to stating the main aspects and limitations of key human rights principles. Especially in relation to economic, social and cultural rights the documents often use formulations such as 'best attainable state' and operate on the basis of progressive realisation, i.e. states are obligated only as far as they are capable of fulfilling the rights. In later years this lack of precision has, to some extent, been alleviated through interpretative decisions from quasi-judicial bodies and through the process of formulation of General Comments. All of this gives us a better, but still far from satisfactory, basis for measuring state compliance. In addition, attempts have been made to formulate indicators simplifying the exercise and, for instance, allowing for a shift in focus from 'result' (as too vulnerable to fundamental conditions and outside factors) to 'conduct' i.e. how states actually behave in relation to specific human rights (The Danish Centre for Human Rights, 2001).

Given this rather contested field, we must conclude that the global instruments have their strengths when it comes to establishing a feeling of common ground between states in various parts of the world. Provided, of course, that the partners engaged in the dialogue have not only sufficient knowledge but also willingness (*i.e.* can generate enough political support) to operationalise these instruments, their provisions can serve as a good basis for constructive approaches to an improvement of the human rights situation. On the other hand, the debate surrounding their 'true' universality may be used less constructively to sideline substantial discussion on the basis of these instruments – and so, as always, the success ultimately depends on whether the parties are committed to constructive dialogue, in which case the international instruments may be considered a tool rather than a guarantee in themselves.

Regional instruments

An alternative to using the global documents is to take as an outset the general regional human rights conventions, at present the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, all of which are supplemented by instruments in particular areas. As with the global instruments, they are also subject to the process of ratification and bind only state parties, which is less of an issue now because of the almost universal ratification within the respective jurisdictions. This of course does not apply to those regions not covered by any regional instruments, most notably Central, East and South East Asia and the Pacific, where the choice is still limited to either the global or domestic instruments.

These instruments are not in their fundamental nature universal, even though they each reflect most of the same human rights standards and principles, and so their use as a basis for the aid and human rights dialogue means that either party must be willing to depart from its own indigenous basis and operate on what may be 'foreign ground'. However, when we use the standards as a basis for determining the status of human rights in a particular country, it should be obvious that the legitimate basis of such analysis should be the instrument applying to that particular region, rather than that of the other party. To put it in simple terms, when donor country representatives from Western Europe take, tacitly or even explicitly, as the outset for judging other countries' human rights (even to the extent of aid conditionality) the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, they must expect to be rightfully met with criticism and rejection, i.e. this is hardly a good starting point for dialogue. For those professionally engaged in this type of work, however, it can be a worthwhile exercise to learn about the extent of the human rights obligations incurred by another State Party through regional human rights arrangements, e.g. learn whether an African state has ratified the African Charter as well as the OAU (now AU) specialized conventions relating to children and refugees, and to bring those to the negotiating table. When it comes to using these standards in a more proactive manner, their obvious strength is that they negate the argument so often presented in relation to the global instruments that they do not correspond to or take into account the context, history, cultures or other key 'flavours' of a particular region. In other words, using the regional instruments as a basis for dialogue requires more negotiation, and a learning process and willingness not to stand on one's own on the behalf of both parties.

Domestic law/constitutions

When it comes to using domestic documents as a point of departure, typically the Constitution and/or Bill of Rights, it goes without saying that this must of course be that of the recipient state. Many of the same considerations apply as in relation to the regional instruments (above), but of course even more so in the sense that the country providing assistance, but also being in a position to exercise conditionality, may have to deal with interpretations of human rights which are quite far from its own. In earlier times most national constitutions were a blueprint of the European Convention, as was the case when the British colonies gained independence in the early 1960s, but even though donor influence in the constitutional processes in many countries has been significant, the formulations are far more reflective of contextual interpretations of human rights principles. Ultimately this stretches and tests our willingness for dialogue, because as we in these cases move solely on the recipients' turf, we may have to confront how much diversity, cultural relativism or at least interpretations within a certain margin, of the so-called universal standards we are willing to live with, especially as donors?! We may even have to accept that a seemingly globally applicable standard like "freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment", which is found in most of the global, regional and national instruments, may be subject to different interpretations. For instance, in a European context it is uncontested that the principle is incompatible with any type of corporal punishment, while in an African or Asian context this may not be the case at all, as several states accept moderate forms such as 'caning' as a legitimate penal sanction.

Provided, however, that one can overcome such differences, the national Constitutions have the important advantage that in terms of legitimacy, they rise above the international regulations, simply because they must be seen as an indication of a given state's commitment, expressed at the highest level of law. Therefore, in the aid dialogue, to point one's finger at the obligations which the states have declared themselves willing to undertake, expressed in the Constitutional Bill of Rights, is a very strong argument – especially if followed by an indication of understanding of, and willingness to help in overcoming, the difficulties which a developing and/or transitional country may be faced with when it comes to their implementation in reality.

Three illustrative cases

In the following, I will give three stories as case examples, illustrating how the human rights instruments described above, at various levels, can play a significant role in relation to development dialogue, spanning from inter-state negotiation to various training and teaching sessions.

Mozambique and Danish aid negotiations – the beginning of Danish development human rights aid

During the bi-annual aid negotiations in the late 1980s, the Danish delegation acted upon the fact that as human rights had now officially become a criterion and objective in Danish development co-operation, they needed to raise the issue with the delegation from Mozambique – a country with a less than perfect human rights record, but also a country just emerging from decades of liberation struggle and civil war. They did so, apparently in a serious and concerned, slightly admonishing manner, and the expectation was probably that the African delegation would look shamefaced and agree that yes, they would try to do better. However, the somewhat unexpected reaction was rather different: when faced with the issue, the chairman of the Mozambican delegation eagerly agreed, that yes, the country was faced with huge problems in relation to the fulfilment of the human rights standards, and he was indeed happy that it was being addressed, because now he wanted to ask Denmark for assistance to help improve the situation – in other words, a very constructive response, but also one which fired the ball back into the Danes' court. This conversation eventually led to a number of projects in various areas, and in this way became significant for later human rights activities as part of development co-operation with a number of countries.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the training of lower court judges in Nigeria

Towards the end of military rule in Nigeria in the late 1990s, Denmark and the Danish Centre for Human Rights was asked to initiate assistance to a programme of training lower court judges in Nigeria in human rights. This initiative only came about because of co-operation between committed individuals in a government branch, the Judicial Training Institute, a national human rights institution in the form of the newly established Human Rights Commission of Nigeria, and the civil society organisation Civil Liberties Organisation. The training sessions, each lasting several days, served as a real eye-opener for the judges, because they had been told that "human rights are anti-government" and that it was something in which they should therefore not involve themselves in any way. In order to overcome this, the teaching focussed specifically on the right to a fair trial, as defined not just in the Constitution, but also in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which at that time was being incorporated in Nigeria. With this as its starting point, a very constructive dialogue on their role in implementing human rights, was carried out, and ultimately several of them involved themselves more actively in the local human rights community.

Introductory course for human rights activists in Malawi

In 1995, the first two-week human rights training course for institutions in civil society was held, with the participation of the Law Commissioner, the newly appointed Ombudsman and a number of organisations. This was allegedly the first of its kind ever in Malawi since the end of the Banda dictatorship, which led to the adoption of the new multi-party system and a Constitution rich in human rights principles. However, the Bill of Rights contains only civil and political rights, while economic and social as well as vulnerable groups' rights are located in a separate chapter entitled *Principles of National Policy*, which in contrast are not legally enforceable. One course participant was extremely bitter because of this, maintaining that it, for instance, meant that disabled persons' rights were not sufficiently ensured and which prevented his organisation from taking effective action on the basis of the Constitution. After a while it was suggested to him that he might take a different approach, and instead focus on the fact that the Constitution did, in fact, mention the rights of the disabled, in this way distinguishing itself from most other contemporary Constitutions. He could then consider approaching the government and encourage it to acknowledge that it had taken upon itself obligations in this area, while offering the assistance of his organisation in their implementation, for instance by drawing up action plans and providing public information. In this way the key national human rights document and its formulation would serve as a very constructive starting point and basis for dialogue between government and civil society.

Basic questions and assumptions

One of the first issues we must examine in relation to human rights aid and development, i.e. based on the fulfilment of standards formulated in the global, regional or national documents mentioned above, is: *Who initiates and carries out the dialogue?* As the cases outlined above show, the initiative can come from two different sides, either from the donor, or from human rights actors in a developing country representing government or civil society.

The background for the first scenario is the fact that over the last decade donors have increasingly incorporated human rights as a pre-condition, *i.e.* as a negative criterion, for development assistance. Therefore, a government may decide that human rights conditions are not sufficiently acceptable to warrant a continuation of development aid to a particular country. This is indeed the most drastic solution, and usually such a decision will (and ought to) be preceded by first attempting to address the issue through negotiation. The donor country or institution may ask for improvement, while the state being criticised will naturally wish to take a position of defence, often attempting to explain this with a reference to the particular circumstances in which it finds itself.

This scenario obviously presents an opportunity for dialogue, where the human rights conventions and standards, supplemented by governmental, NGO and international bodies' assessments of the human rights situation, can form an excellent basis for discussion. Unfortunately, however, this opportunity is far from always, or even rarely, used as constructively as one might wish. Very often such discussions are influenced by a myriad of differing agendas, many of them politically oriented, and so both parties may not really have room to listen openly to each other's stories and truths.

To avoid this, a constructive approach would be to look at the state's obligation according to its ratification or adoption of these conventions and standards, analysing not only whether violations of any of them occur but, more interestingly, why they occur. Such analysis would, in many cases, indicate that violations are caused by a combination of two different factors, namely lack of *commitment* and/or lack of *ability*, and the interesting object of examination is then the relative balance between these two factors. In other words, if a transitional or newly democratic government has to prevent the police from violating the human rights of members of society, this should be viewed against the background of the obstacles, e.g. the need to provide education and training on human rights standards to an entire police service, as well as poor salaries, inhuman living and working conditions for officers due to lack of sufficient funding, and a political demand for effective combating of violent crime in society in general (Lindholt, 2002). In order for the dialogue to be constructive, donors on the one hand need to be sensitive to such lack of ability, but the recipient state must also not fall for the temptation to compensate for a lack of commitment by over-emphasising its structural problems.

However, one problem in relation to the ability for human rights standards to serve as a basis for analysis is that, in most cases, they have been defined in overall terms, necessitating interpretation, and that in only very few cases (for instance in relation to torture) are the precise definitions spelled out clearly enough so that no misunderstanding should occur on whether there is a violation or not. Any donor or institution embarking on such a process of assessment may therefore have to be prepared to operate in an area which is contested and fraught with potential for clashing between differing positions.

In the second scenario, where the initiative to a dialogue on human rights comes from either a governmental institution, a national human rights institution or a civil society actor, the approach will typically be quite different, because the main reason for contacting a foreign donor institution or country will often be not only existing serious human rights problems, but also a commitment to remedy these and to implement human rights principles – in other words, addressing an area where there is determination to achieve progress, and where the problems in themselves are not only recognised but even form the justification for asking for assistance. This naturally becomes

a far more constructive platform for dialogue, and just as in the examples mentioned above, the various human rights documents (i.e. the domestic Constitution and those global and regional instruments which have been ratified) serve as the primary basis of discussion.

The second question we need to ask is: "How equal can the partners be in this dialogue?" In the first scenario described above, there is an obvious imbalance, in the sense that when fulfilment of human rights standards becomes a negative criterion, the entity sourcing the critique as well as the funding clearly has the upper hand. This can be illustrated by the fact that it is immensely difficult for a government with a less than perfect human rights record to prove that it is doing its very best to improve conditions. Similarly, it is almost too easy for a donor government or institution to choose not to find these efforts or claims sufficiently convincing to merit funding or other types of assistance to the development process. When it comes to the second scenario, where the initiative lies with the government in need of assistance but also taking the initiative to start the dialogue, the government or institution being approached has a more difficult time rejecting assistance, simply because it can only refer to different priorities, lack of funding etc., but not to the poor situation in itself. Here we, therefore, see a more equal dialogue, where both sides have a commitment to achieving results, where the donor institution may also have to be able to show that it is in fact 'doing something about human rights'. The final irony of comparing the two scenarios is that they show that a poor human rights situation can be viewed either as a reason for providing assistance, or on the contrary, for removing it, and that the outcome to some extent depends on who takes the initiative to address the situation constructively and openly.

Conclusion – and one more case

The analyses above have shown that human rights instruments at all levels can play a key role in the development dialogue, and that the significance increases with the extent to which they are used as constructive tools and standards to measure not just the static situation but also developments for better or worse. This remains the case even though the standards in these instruments are not always clearly defined, and furthermore are subject to the universalist-relativist schism as well as to differing political and other agendas. In this respect, attempts to formulate indicators may serve a useful purpose, as they create a more objective and operational basis for the analysis. Finally, the example from Malawi shows that it makes sense to focus and use constructively what is already in place, in the realisation that human rights standards will almost never be completely as we want them to be anyway.

Two lessons may be derived from the discussion above

Firstly, when measuring state behaviour in relation to human rights, especially in developing and/or transitional countries, we should look at *conduct* rather than *result*, and for instance choose indicators reflecting this in particular. They must to a certain extent take various difficult elements in the context into consideration, i.e. measure movement rather than status, and attempt to establish whether there is relative progress, instead of measuring countries against one another.

Secondly, a constructive starting point for dialogue in relation to human rights in the development process, is to set out with the assumption that "everybody is in favour of human rights, in their own way", rather than the approach sounding somewhat like "government representatives are defensive and NGOs are aggressive about human rights, and both of them look out purely for their own interests". Also, even in the most oppressive contexts, 'pockets of commitment' to human rights can be identified, and it is with these that we have the chance to start a constructive dialogue, often with quite unexpected results as shown in the Nigerian example.

The final case to be mentioned here is only a few weeks old, and is from an Open University Course in a law faculty at one of China's oldest and most prestigious universities outside Beijing. Here, lawyers, judges, prosecutors, members of the public administration, teachers and people from civil society organisations came together for two weeks to learn about human rights – to many of them a first-time experience. Already on the second day, when discussing the Chinese Constitution and its relatively limited mentioning of human rights as well as attempts to reform it, a young practising lawyer stood up and eagerly put the key question to the professor and to his fellow participants: "How can I, in my work, contribute to ensuring that China will eventually have a Constitution reflecting all human rights?" This to us was another illustration of how a human rights instrument, in this case national and less than ideal with respect to civil and political rights, became the catalyst not just for his dialogue with other professionals, but most importantly also with himself. If it continues, there is no telling where it might lead him!

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Dialogue as a Method for Development Assistance: International IDEA's Experience with Democracy Assistance

Patrick Molutsi and Martin Ängeby[1]

Introduction

Dialogue and partnership have become pertinent tenets of the philosophy and methodology of development assistance agencies since the beginning of the 1990s. Currently both bilateral and multi-lateral agencies/organizations describe dialogue as the main tenet of their development assistance approach. Dialogue as a method assumes that there is a partner to work with. The language and approach of dialogue and partnership however has fundamental implications on the traditional approach of development assistance. It requires a significant paradigm shift from defining the needs, the objectives and implementation of a development assistance project/programme on behalf of the target group to working with the latter in defining their needs, project design and implementation. In this context, dialogue and partnership have empowerment of the target group and sustainability of the project/programme activity as the main philosophy and goals of development assistance. The challenge however, is that of translating the dialogue philosophy and methodology into practice.

This essay shares the experience of International IDEA[2] in promoting sustainable democracy in developing countries. The experiences are based on practical exposure trying to apply a dialogue and participatory methodology in the field. From the beginning IDEA recognized that democracy is a value-laden concept. The definition, challenges, choice of institutions, the reform process and practice of democracy will differ from one country to another and within each country actors will have different views, goals and

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[2] International IDEA, hereafter IDEA, stands for International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. It is an intergovernmental organisation of 20 countries and was established in 1995.

perceptions which need to be brought into a broad consensus framework within which democratic reforms can take place. The emphasis of IDEA's democracy support programme is on the consistency of the principles and values of democracy as a political system and mode of governance. Given this understanding, it's partners have necessarily been those groups of actors who share common principles and values of democracy. Values such as the right of people to live in freedom, peace and security; the right to choose the government of their liking and to participate in the affairs of their society have been critical to the organization's capacity building methodology. The democracy assistance programme is therefore about identifying partners and working with them to entrench these principles and values in their respective societies.

Overview of IDEA's capacity building/dialogue methodology

Advancing democracy goes beyond strengthening the electoral process; it also entails the consolidation of democratic institutions and practices. It includes all aspects of governance and the relationship between the state and its citizens. The challenge today is not simply to establish and maintain democracy in form, but to achieve it in substance. This is a long-term process that must be nurtured within each society through dialogue and participation.

The mandate of International IDEA is to promote and advance sustainable democracy worldwide. The Capacity Building Programme works towards attaining this objective on two levels of interaction.

First, it works on the ground in specific countries. The Capacity Building Programme aims to enhance a country's capacity for democratic reform by increasing the range of options and comparative lessons available to actors and institutions who perform key functions in democratization processes, and thereby improving their performance.

Second, it assists the international community in improving the quality of its interventions, both in political support and in resource allocation to countries involved in democratization processes, as well as by developing and advocating common approaches on strategic democracy assistance.

The country programmes obtain significant regional spin-offs in establishing networks of democracy experts and further initiatives for democratic reforms. At the same time, the regional context and dynamics constitute a major component in the country programmes. Hence, regional programmes gradually complement the country programmes.

The methodology of the programme has been specifically developed on the basis of the principles for democratic development that International IDEA is advocating. It is innovative in meeting the challenges of operating in politically complex circumstances. Considerable efforts are made in continuing to harvest the lessons from experiences in implementation, and to

further refine the dialogue methodology. This has been a process of both internal reflection and external inputs.

Table 1. The Four Phases of Dialogue

Core Functions	Methodology	Products
Facilitating dialogue	Participatory and empowerment approach	Widened national space for dialogue and debate about democratic reforms
Assessing democracy	Comprehensive, locally owned, agenda with a focus on the dynamics of democratization	Assessment reports with democratic reform agenda, Capacity Building series of publications
Establishing and/or strengthening local permanent structures for democratization	Advice about institutional development and brokerage of international assistance	Institutional capacity to implement the democracy reform agenda's and monitor the democratization process
Providing policy advice on strategic democracy assistance	Sharing of lessons learned	Policy seminars for IDEA member states and others

The overall objective of the country programmes based on the foregoing methodology is to promote democratic reform by:

- Identifying a cross-sectional group of actors in a given country and/or region as a partner.
- Assisting this group to conduct an assessment of the challenges and opportunities for democratization facing their country. The extensively consultative and consensus building assessment results in a Democracy Assessment Report as a blueprint for political reforms.
- Using the results of the dialogue process (Assessment Report) to set the country specific agenda for democratic reform. This often includes further dialogue and debates on identified issues for example, undertaking a widespread consultative discussion around constitutional reform and also providing limited technical assistance to key institutions which need it such as the election management body, the courts, parliament, etc.
- The overall outcome has been to build a long-term culture of dialogue in societies which had limited or blocked situations and where lack of dialogue contributed to deepening conflict.

The case studies[3]

The present case studies from Guatemala, Indonesia, Nepal and Nigeria reflect some of the difficulties, challenges and lessons learned during the first five years of field operations conducted under IDEA's then Capacity Building Programme and evaluated by an independent consultant agency in 2000. Each case is indeed unique. Different countries have distinctive histories and particularities in demography, socio-economic development, state-civil society relations, and institutional development. At the same time, it is important to note that the approach and principles underlying the work are the same. And, subsequently, that this approach means considerable investments in terms of both time and consultations, but that the approach simultaneously ensures local ownership of the processes of dialogue and assessment facilitated by the organization.[4]

Guatemala

In December 1996, Guatemala ended a long period of authoritarian rule and internal armed conflict with the signing of the Firm and Lasting Peace. The signing of the Peace Accords was an important milestone on a long journey towards national democratic transition and a negotiated peace facilitated by the international community. It was against this backdrop that it was decided to respond favourably to a request by the Government of Guatemala to assist in the implementation of the 1996 Peace Accords. IDEA saw Guatemala as an interesting case in which to test and further refine its Capacity Building methodology and an important opportunity to begin developing a programme in Latin America.

The Guatemala programme has strictly followed the four-stage Capacity Building methodology. The first phase through 1997 was marked by the consolidation of IDEA's entry into Guatemala and the development of a contact group. The second phase was a two-year period from 1998 until early 2000, marked by intensive country-level activities focussing on the preparation of a Democracy Assessment and consolidation of the contact group under the umbrella of the Participation and Democracy Project (PPD).

[3] This section draws heavily on IDEA's 2000 Comprehensive Evaluation conducted by E.T. Jackson (Pty) Ltd of Canada. We are grateful for their critical evaluation. The authors have selected only relevant sections of the Evaluation for the purposes of this paper.
[4] IDEA has operated in a number of other countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania, Slovakia and Burkina Faso. Recently, new operations were started in Georgia and the South Caucasus; and Peru. All the cases except Peru have used or attempted to apply the same methodology with varying degrees of success. Among the most successful cases is Burkina Faso and much less successful was Bosnia-Herzegovina. The four cases selected for presentation here were chosen because they were evaluated more comprehensively and at the same period of time using a similar methodology.

During the third phase in 1999, activities focussed on the public agenda that emerged from the Democracy Assessment along five major axes: (a) electoral participation; (b) training for political parties; (c) fiscal reform; (d) reconciliation; and (e) dissemination and dialogue of the public democracy agenda. Policy advice was also provided to the international community. The fourth phase began in 2000, with formal IDEA withdrawal from the Guatemala programme and the handing over of responsibility for further democracy promotion and development activities to the contact group.

There have been a significant number of outputs achieved during the two years of the programming in Guatemala, mainly measured in terms of forums, workshops, seminars, and publications. Within the Guatemala programme, several outcomes can be noted: (a) IDEA-supported activities have resulted in the articulation of a public agenda for democracy development in Guatemala; (b) IDEA-assisted activities were instrumental in bringing together diverse groups from the far left and the far right of the political spectrum, the military, and the private sector to discuss and debate the democracy agenda for Guatemala; (c) the availability of information on norms, guidelines and practices from international and inter-cultural settings through seminars, forums, and workshops was an important outcome in stimulating broad-based political education at the national, regional, and municipal levels and especially within indigenous communities; (d) IDEA's stakeholder network and key democratic institutions, such as the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Congress, benefited from technical advice and expertise provided by the organization in critical areas of the implementation of the Peace Accords.

While the project activities have resulted in some positive outcomes, the volatile political situation, highly complex social issues, and poor economic conditions within the country have constrained contributions to overall democratic development. Today, many of the strategic priorities for the successful achievement of the Peace Accords remain merely topics of discussion. IDEA has had limited influence in securing commitments at the highest political levels and has been unable to mobilize broad enough support within the various social strata in support of the democracy agenda.

Relevance: One of the principal goals of the Democracy Assessment report and the dialogue strategy was to lay the foundations for an inter-cultural dialogue on democracy in Guatemala, a critical element for sustaining both commitment to and compliance with the Peace Accords. IDEA was strategically positioned to facilitate this process, having established high-level contacts with political and private sector elites and a stakeholder network that encompassed a number of respected and competent civil society organizations. Thus, it clearly had leverage with critical democracy actors with whom the dialogue process could be pursued. Nevertheless, throughout 1999, it was unable to capitalize on these opportunities for a number of reasons.

The first relates to the extremely difficult political conditions within Guatemala. Despite its substantial political access, IDEA was unable to sufficiently capture the far right political parties and ensure their commitment to and ownership of the democracy agenda within the timeframes of its project. Secondly, the project strategy developed for 1999 identified five priority areas for action, which deviated from a focussed approach for democracy dialogue and broadened the scope of the programming to include substantial technical assistance efforts. While the technical assistance was in support of the implementation of the democracy agenda, the evaluators felt that given the instability of the political climate and the lack of social cohesion within the country, the organization would have been better served by remaining committed to supporting the dialogue process. Stakeholders also reported that there was a clear need for continued emphasis on stimulating public opinion and discussion in civic and inter-cultural forums under the guidance and support of a competent, neutral partner like IDEA.

Sustainability: While IDEA spent much of 1997 evaluating the democracy environment in Guatemala before deciding to implement a full-fledged capacity building programme, it does not appear to have integrated the elements of a comprehensive stakeholder analysis as part of its phase one capacity building assessment activities. The absence of a good stakeholder analysis perhaps led to some early programme decisions that may not have been in the best interests of the long-term sustainability. There are significant questions about the degree of ownership of the stakeholder network of the Guatemalan programme. There is little evidence to support the consolidation of the IDEA network in support of democracy promotion and dialogue. Its withdrawal at this stage of the Guatemala programme appears premature. Neither the PPD nor its stakeholder network appears to have the legitimacy or degree of consolidation needed to manage and sustain the demands of the new programme.

Given that the network is not fully mature, the PPD may not have either the network or the high level contacts necessary to sustain the objectives of democracy promotion and dialogue on its own. Moreover, one of the key obstacles for the PPD noted by the evaluators was a lack of recognition of its work. PPD is not known as a special project, and all of its work has been done in the name of IDEA. PPD's calling card in Guatemala was the IDEA hat it wore, and it is not known on its own merits. This may leave the PPD without either a clear mandate or corporate identity.

Partnership: The partnerships which have been entered into in Guatemala, either in terms of local participants in workshops or seminars or partners for programme activities, have been suitable and have consistently contributed to positive project outcomes. Stakeholder observations indicated that IDEA experts, workshop participants, and organizers alike have supported programme goals and objectives at all levels. Most of the partnerships appear to be temporary, however. The organization's relationship with

stakeholders seems to be largely conditional on whether or not they were engaged in project activities together. While some stakeholders were consulted on programme priorities and design, since stakeholder relations were relatively weak, their inputs and participation as full and equal partners in developing and implementing the Guatemala programme and its subsequent phase were not integrated into programme development. In addition, IDEA does not seem to have capitalized on the expertise and organizational strengths of its partners.

Appropriateness of Design: While programme design has been consultative and one of IDEA's stakeholder representatives has been engaged to support strategic planning for the 1999 and 2001 programmes, it still appears to have been heavily influenced from Stockholm and Costa Rica. To some degree this is a reflection of the limitations of the NGO sector in Guatemala as well as the organization's own inexperience in managing complex projects with civil society partners. It is perhaps unrealistic to have expected its relationships and ability to mobilize its partners to have crystallized within the very short time frame allowed under the capacity building methodology. However, the use of more participatory approaches in project design and much longer time frames than currently used by the capacity building methodology are more likely to result in greater collaboration and coordination with stakeholder groups as well as higher degrees of ownership in project processes and intended outcomes.

Indonesia

IDEA's entry into Indonesia was a strategic decision of the organization taken in late 1998. The initial programme strategy aimed at supporting the development and drafting of Indonesia's new electoral laws and preparatory activities for the election, particularly for electoral management and domestic observation and monitoring. Following the elections, IDEA chose to focus its programmes in three key areas: (a) core institutions of democratic governance; (b) regional autonomy; and (c) women's political participation. The strategy outlined targets three principal functions to: (i) facilitate dialogue to review, promote, and monitor the democratic reform process; (ii) establish and strengthen local institutions for democracy promotion and; (iii) provide policy advice on strategic democracy assistance.

There have been a significant number of outputs, mainly measured in terms of forums, workshops, seminars, and publications. There are also notable outcomes from the projects, including: (a) the sharing of ideas among domestic participants from different backgrounds, in addition to international experiences shared by guest speakers and experts; (b) IDEA-facilitated activities provided opportunities for local partners to access information about democratic institutions and processes for which the country has minimal reference or experience; (c) the creation of contacts, if

not networks, among people with similar interests and goals; and (d) the results of discussions and research activities, packaged in a variety of formats from handbooks to conference proceedings function as a medium for political education. The quality of the programmes/projects and the products have been considered high by stakeholders and their usefulness remains unquestioned.

It is doubtful that the organization's initial efforts to begin a democracy dialogue through its working group partners will succeed in its present configurations. The current working group profile indicates that IDEA does not seem to have sufficient understanding of the stakeholders. Its current approach embodies inherent weaknesses. First, it does not seem to include activists from different backgrounds. Second, there are few opportunities for the characteristics of local networks. Third, there is limited evidence that it has fully understood how civil society organisations develop co-operation and create networks that bring people with similar interests but different backgrounds or organisational profiles together in Indonesia.

Relevance: All projects conducted by IDEA have high relevancy to the Indonesian situation, and it is clear that the organization has given some thought to the contributions it can make in the field of democracy development in Indonesia. However, the objectives for establishing and strengthening local institutions for democracy promotion, while within the core of the Capacity Building methodology, are highly ambitious considering its limited human and financial resources.

The democracy assessment project, which culminated in the publication of a democracy agenda for Indonesia in October 2000, is highly relevant in the context of ongoing debates on constitutional amendments and could provide much-needed guidance on critical issues to be addressed over the coming months and years. IDEA's programme and its project elements have generally been valid stepping stones to enter the very complex issues of the democracy transition in Indonesia. The democracy assessment and the agenda it produces will be critical tests of IDEA's value and penetration into that transition process. It will be crucial to mobilise the capital, both social and intellectual, that it has built during the first 18 months in Indonesia to remain strategically focussed on dialogue promotion and strategic democracy advice and not on technical co-operation.

Sustainability: Since the programme in Indonesia is fairly new, it is somewhat premature to make judgements about the sustainability of its efforts. As IDEA's projects are highly process-oriented, the identification and selection of partners is a critical and sensitive issue. The organization has not sufficiently analysed or assessed the capacity and commitment of its local partners and stakeholders. Its network is composed of talented individuals with high credentials, committed to the democracy agenda but not necessarily yet to IDEA or its approach. This has serious implications for the sustainability of the network. Though its working group members are asser-

tive, there was little evidence of local ownership at this stage of IDEA's programme.

The other dimension of sustainability is obviously the financial one, and IDEA has had difficulty mobilising resources in support of its work in Indonesia. While the Member States have all been supportive of its work, they note its low profile in the country and the effect this may have on raising additional funding from outside its traditional resource base. Without funding for its future programmes, the organization may in effect lose the investments of the past 18 months. The inability to confirm a longer term presence in Indonesia therefore leads to questions of sustainability and the level of commitment on the part of potential partners.

Partnership: The selection of participants and local partners for IDEA's programme activities is largely appropriate. This pertains to both those experts invited as speakers and discussants, as well as members of the democracy assessment working groups, workshop participants, and local organisers. However, a number of issues were raised with the evaluators which also indicate that the skills and constituencies of its partners are not fully accessed and it needs to be more sensitive to these issues.

The reason why Indonesian partners decide to work with the organization therefore appears to rest on the following principles: (a) they feel that the project is an important contribution to democratisation; (b) IDEA is part of a wider network which is important for their organisational goals; and (c) their impression that IDEA has a flexible agenda and approach.

IDEA's management structures currently do not encourage shared ownership and decision making with its partners. The lack of decentralized decision making authority at the field level has left the impression with many stakeholders of a highly centralized, Stockholm-driven capacity building process that does not always act in the interests of the Indonesian partnerships.

Appropriateness of Design: Programme development has been participatory in some respects, but appears to be heavily influenced by the components of IDEA's capacity building methodology and directed from Stockholm. On specific project activities, there is some evidence of participation by partners in the planning of activities, especially in the case of workshops which have been subcontracted to partners to manage.

The partners who were interviewed also commented on the highly academic approach required by Stockholm, especially the rigidity of the democracy assessment framework, which in their view did not necessarily reflect the needs or vision of all stakeholders. These observations point to the dilemmas IDEA faces in ensuring the quality products for which it is well-known while also creating the environment and conditions in which their stakeholders can provide the inputs and analysis necessary to ensure ownership of and participation in a highly process-oriented approach and outputs.

Nepal

In 1996, IDEA was just beginning to contemplate how to organize its work and to develop programmes and activities to implement its mandate to "promote and advance sustainable democracy worldwide" and "to strengthen and support national capacities to develop democratic instruments". It had begun to identify key subject areas for the exploration of its normative frameworks and was looking for possible opportunities and entry points to begin developing country-level activities to support its goals for democracy promotion and development.

It was during this period that Nepal was experiencing considerable political turmoil and continual power clashes between and within its nascent political party system. For IDEA, Nepal looked to be a promising setting in which to develop a democracy support project. It became an early testing ground on how to conduct a democracy assessment, which would later be modified and consolidated in the Capacity Building approach.

Key outputs so far of the programme in Nepal include the following: a) registration and establishment of the Centre for the Study of Democracy and Good Governance (CSDG); b) A number of studies were conducted on different issues of relevance; and c) establishment of a loose network of NGOs working on democracy and good governance. Some of the outcomes include: a) the Centre was established and started functioning; b) key political leaders in the country realized the need for an apolitical civil society; c) policy recommendations on reform of the civil service were forwarded to the Prime Minister; d) the CSDG started collaborating with other agencies and Government ministries to provide support services for their programmes related to communication and consensus-building on various developmental issues.

Relevance: IDEA has not only brokered financial support for programme activities, but it was indirectly instrumental in the evolution of an NGO like the CSDG. The CSDG has however, still to become an effective, self-sustaining and broadly accepted democracy actor in Nepal. For instance, the CSDG defines its role as support for institutional development for the consolidation of democracy. However, the methodology it employs and the approaches it has developed in the design and implementation of its programme activities in fact bypass the formal channels and institutions of democracy to work only with a select leadership from some political parties. Given the political environment in 1998 when the CSDG formally began its programme activities, its approach towards national consensus building and support for the development of a democratic culture among various institutions, facilitated by IDEA through its methodologies and the provision of tools and options, was clearly an appropriate intervention.

Sustainability: There are some positive factors which could contribute to the sustainability of the CSDG and its consensus-building efforts. The first relates to the structure of the Centre. Despite changes in the membership

of the Board when some of the key founders left the level of interest and commitment remains high. This augurs well for longer-term sustainability. The apolitical forum of the CSDG is accepted, giving it credentials among various organizations which have expressed interest in working with it. Thus, the relationships of the CSDG now transcend IDEA and extend to other international agencies as well as various government ministries. However, the Board members have not proved active and effective actors and the Centre has in the process failed to follow through some of IDEA's methodology and knowledge resources availed to it.

The second factor relates to the funding strategies and financial stability of the CSDG and the impact this has for sustainability. The Centre needs to reduce its financial dependency on IDEA and work to broaden its funders beyond locally based international donors in Nepal.

Partnership: The analysis of the consensus-building process has revealed that there is little evidence of the use of participatory methodologies and approaches by the CSDG in its programme activities. The consensus-building approach is not a full-fledged consensual process nor is it very participatory. Moreover, the CSDG's partners and network are extremely narrow. It does not appear to be knowledgeable about or comfortable with the activities and efforts of active NGOs and other civil society organizations working on democracy issues, including human rights, press freedoms, and constitutional and judicial reforms. The CSDG's partnerships are largely confined to the political parties through its Board members. It has not been able to capitalize on important democratic entry points, such as the electoral commission, or secondary stakeholders, such as UNDP, to broaden its potential partnerships and expand its network. Therefore, the CSDG has contacts rather than stakeholders.

Appropriateness of Design: The design of the Nepal programme does not sufficiently articulate overall programme goals to guide the implementation of activities and inputs. In fact, the CSDG itself looks as if it is a project of IDEA in Nepal with the studies on civil service reform as one of the sub-activities. The project design and methodological approach is heavily focussed at the political level. It is essential to ensure that there are both inputs and feedback from civil society organizations (both formally and informally) to advocate and influence the political elite.

Nigeria

The main focus of the programme, which started in September 1999, has been the Democracy Assessment which was an attempt to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the challenges and opportunities for democratization as well as to facilitate political dialogue during the process of carrying out the assessment. In the context of the overall objective to promote democratic reform, the specific objective of the Democracy Assessment is to pro-

vide an agenda setting document which in turn is expected to promote a national dialogue.

The other major component of the Nigerian programme has involved assistance to the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC) which was set up by President Obasanjo in June 1999. In response to the Commission's request, IDEA provided international comparative experience to enable the Commission to clarify its mandate, set up its structures, and develop an appropriate strategy and methodology.

Some of the outputs of the programme in Nigeria are: a) country-wide consultations for Democracy Assessment were carried out; b) the Report of the Democracy Assessment has been completed and widely disseminated and debated across the country; c) a network of international experts was established for possible assistance to the Nigerian constitutional reform process. Several constitutional reform activities and processes using the experiences of the international team of experts have since been held; d) a round table was organized for HRVIC on international comparative experiences in redressing human rights abuses in the context of national reconciliation; and e) a study visit was organized for HRVIC to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The most important outcomes are: a) through the Democracy Assessment project which used a participatory process of dialogue and consultation, Nigeria's main democratic challenges and opportunities have been identified, and recommendations made for democratic reforms; b) an agenda for democratic reforms has been set for a national dialogue in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria; c) networking amongst pro-democracy activists and scholars has been enhanced; d) Nigerian ownership of the Democracy Assessment project and process has been cultivated; and e) HRVIC's capacity to carry out its mandate was strengthened.

Relevance: The programme in Nigeria is based on a sound understanding and appraisal of the Nigerian political scenario and dynamics. This understanding and appraisal were gained through several fact finding and feasibility missions to Nigeria which involved consultations with a wide cross-section of Nigerian stakeholders engaged in the democratic process. Through this process, IDEA undertook a systematic and thorough risk-assessment of its possible interventions.

Sustainability: The domestic policy and the national institutional environment arising out of President Obasanjo's commitment to building democracy and some actions already taken by him are certainly conducive to the maintaining of the programme's results. The international environment is equally conducive to the maintaining of results whereby a number of multilateral and bilateral agencies and private foundations are actively involved in providing assistance in support of the various aspects of the democratization process.

Although Nigerians have developed ownership of the Democracy As-

sessment exercise, the momentum and potential interest that the report of the Assessment is expected to generate for initiating a national dialogue for democratic reform will depend on what credible and workable approach, mechanisms, and key players drawn from both the civil society and the government IDEA will use to initiate and sustain a serious national dialogue. IDEA should devise and set up a systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track progress on the achievement of the programme's results.

Partnership: The programme's management structures are generally coherent with a partnership approach. IDEA has been able to involve the participation of a wide range of individuals and organizations both in the non-governmental sector and the government sector for both its current projects and also for those that are in the process of being negotiated. This has been facilitated, in part, by IDEA's personal contact with Obasanjo in Stockholm before he was elected President, the President-Elect's invitation to IDEA to address the cabinet-in-waiting on the theme of *Democracy, Myths and Realities*, and its collaboration with the Nigerian pro-democracy movement that was in exile before Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999. This background which has accorded IDEA a good degree of credibility, high profile and influence in Nigeria has in turn facilitated the development of partnerships with several stakeholders.

In order to foster Nigerian ownership and build the sustainability of the political dialogue that is planned to follow from the Democracy Assessment, and at the same time in order to build local capacity and ownership, IDEA should develop an appropriate mechanism that involves a number of Nigerian organizations and institutions to drive and manage the process of political dialogue.

In the light of the limited financial resources available to IDEA, it should explore partnerships with suitable private and political foundations operating in the country for the purpose of obtaining co-funding for its projects and activities without losing its visibility. Alternatively, it should take a lead to facilitate the convening of a forum of interested private foundations for its partners who can then negotiate additional funding support.

IDEA should also develop a closer relationship with multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and private foundations in Nigeria to share information and develop potential synergy that can add value in informing the evolution of its programme.

Appropriateness of Design: The Democracy Assessment project represents a highly relevant and important niche for IDEA in contributing to the capacity building of Nigerians for democratic development. The critical necessity of carrying out the democracy assessment exercise as an agenda-setting process for initiating a national dialogue cannot be over-emphasized. While other international and bilateral organizations and agencies support different and specific aspects of democratic development such as the strength-

ening of the democratic institutions for good governance, none of them are inclined to support a complex, long-term and process-oriented project.

In implementing the Nigerian programme, there has been a good match between the needs of the programme and the knowledge, expertise, and personal skills of the resource persons who are mobilized to provide the appropriate assistance. This is true of both the team of Nigerian and international resource persons who were contracted to conduct the Democracy Assessment and the international resource persons who provided international comparative experience to HRVIC.

IDEA's Nigerian programme is generally responsive in a timely manner to the opportunities and problems as they emerge in the programme environment.

All the Nigerian stakeholders of the programme are satisfied with both the nature of IDEA's assistance and the programme's results achieved so far. The Democracy Assessment project is viewed by NGOs, political parties, and government institutions as an appropriate and worthwhile investment for the building of the democratic process in Nigeria. HRVIC is highly appreciative of IDEA's assistance, which it considers to be very significant, professional and timely, in building its capacity to carry out its mandate. However, some NGOs, including those who were consulted during the Democracy Assessment exercise, are unclear about IDEA's agenda.

Although democracy and good governance are intimately intertwined, IDEA's conceptualization of its development philosophy on democratic development should be linked more explicitly with good governance, particularly the elements of accountability, transparency, participation and the rule of law. By so doing, apart from its own merit and rationale, these key issues of good governance that have bedevilled many countries including Nigeria can be more explicitly addressed in the Democracy Assessment.

Although the appropriateness of the methodology used by IDEA for carrying out Democracy Assessment has been tested and proved, value will be added if IDEA facilitates a greater degree of participation by a country's key stakeholders in the further adaptation and refinement of the methodology to better suit a given national context without compromising its basic rationale and paradigm.

For a more effective management and implementation of the Nigerian programme, the organization should define the goal, purposes, expected results and performance indicators of the programme as a whole as well as of the programme's constituent projects.

General lessons and challenges

Several issues of direct relevance to the subject of dialogue emerge from the foregoing case studies. The common and by no means minor one was that despite every effort and clear intentions of the methodology to map

out and involve all the stakeholders in each country, the evaluators were still informed that the methodology was rigid, less inclusive and not adequately participatory. This is an important lesson for those opting to carry out dialogue as a philosophy and methodology of assistance. It is very demanding in resources – time and human skills – and above all it takes a very long time to effectively reach out to all important stakeholders. The second related issue is that of relating to stakeholders as equals and avoiding the risk of overshadowing them or creating the traditional shortcoming of past development assistance strategies – *dependency syndrome*. In the three cases of Guatemala, Burkina Faso and Nepal, where IDEA chose to reduce its visibility and engagement in favour of its institutionalized contact group, the difficulty has been their inability to sustain their funding and activity levels without IDEA's fundraising efforts. This has obviously been too demanding for IDEA's limited resources.

The other issue related to the length of engagement and the timeliness for reduced involvement with a given partner has been when to leave the country and when that happens what guarantees there are that the project will be sustained. On average IDEA has spent up to four years in each country where it has worked. However, according to the evaluators a much longer time frame is required for this type of work to be sustainable. In the case of IDEA the evaluators raised two key issues of structural relevance and resource management. First, they received concerns about centralized management of projects and resources at headquarters. Second, they were concerned by the lack of local management capacity of projects. The staff was inadequate and/or too junior to manage at appropriate levels.

Conclusion

The methodology of dialogue is complex, very demanding in time and human resources and its impact takes a very long time to realise. The issues of inclusiveness, participation and partnership; sustainability and process orientation are critical for a successful process of dialogue. While these are complex and demanding issues it is clear from the case studies presented here that, first, the stakeholders appreciate dialogue very much, and second, that in the area of political assistance there is no other option but a dialogue process. Furthermore, although dialogue is a process it still requires to be underpinned by a methodological framework which entrenches the values, milestones and expected outcomes. IDEA has learned immeasurably from this approach and continues to refine it with more field cases and further dialogue.

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Reminiscences of a Dialogue in Rural Development from the Integrated Rural Development Programme of Sri Lanka (1976–2002)

Ran B. Morapaya[1]

The challenge of partnership

Human interaction is basic to the development of thoughts, ideas and action responses which leads to managed and directed changes. Left to itself the world is constantly subject to change, but for the human being to effect conscious and desired change interaction among different stakeholders in a society full of diversity is needed. When it comes to a partnership in development, when one party is a recipient and the other is a donor, the interactions are very challenging as regards content and methods. The language itself, which in some cases is foreign to both parties, is bound by culturally dominant meanings. Person to person communication is also biased by one's own prejudices. The development dialogue encompasses exchange of information, opinions, ideas, views, determinations and judgements and projects are carried out through representatives from both parties. The give and take is not purely personal as in a business deal. The resource is commonly owned and transferred in the name of the poor who do not directly negotiate the deal. This outline reveals the complicated, ever changing facets of the role and function of dialogue in development. It encompasses the formal and informal talking, the exchange of ideas, face-to-face discussion, the question and answer session. It happens at all levels, in international forums, in seminar sessions, at the government to government level, at the level of political heads, agency representatives, at programme and project level, at beneficiary levels at the grass roots. This narrative is based on the project and programme experiences of Rural Development in Sri Lanka that commenced in the mid-seventies and continued until the turn of the century. The programme was called The Integrated Rural Development Programme of Sri Lanka (IRDP).

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Integrated rural development in Sri Lanka: the macro level

During the first phase of the programme a significant macro policy change was observed. The socialist government, which pursued closed economic policies, was replaced at a general election bringing to power a regime which introduced open market policies that promoted foreign investments. The previous regime nationalised businesses in critical sectors, even without compensation in some cases, for example, foreign owned plantations, petroleum, shipping and insurance. There was no dialogue. It was a one-way street with the government making decisions based on centrally planned socialist policies. Overall, very little donor support came in, and what there was came mainly from socialist countries to build publicly owned industrial plants such as a steelworks (USSR), a textile factory (East Germany), and a plywood factory (Romania). Apart from a few linkages and exchange of ideas through Commonwealth connections the dialogue and the discussion on development were dogmatic rather than open discourse. The dialogue with the western countries was very limited. A centrally prepared Ten Year Development Plan gave only limited opportunity for dialogue. The donors' only link was with the External Resource Department of the then powerful Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs whose primary motive was to balance the external budget in a controlled economy.

The change of government and thereby policies in 1977 suddenly altered the character of the development dialogue, with a large number of donor agencies, both bilateral and multilateral visiting the country, establishing their offices, and involving themselves with an increasing intensity in funding development programmes. The revived interest from the international community was considered by the new regime as a positive sign and they renewed their efforts to widen the coverage of the exchange of ideas into the policy area as well. An important lesson is to be learned from this phase of intensified and sustained interaction. In building a development partnership between donor and recipient there is a need for sequencing and putting methods, techniques, guidelines, priorities in place first, and then building structures and institutions to enable the dialogue.

The programme identification stage

Moving on from macro level to programme level introduces a different but livelier scenario with direct people to people contact which is what dialogue is all about. The openness and willingness to speak out at this level have to be accompanied by knowledge and the ability to do so. There were definite pitfalls in language and technical matters related to the area of support as well as details of the project contents. Starting from scratch the IRDP was built into one of the lead programme of the country in about five years, involving ten donors (World Bank, Asian Development Bank,

IFAD, UNDP, Sida, Norad, Finnida, Jica, GTZ and the Netherlands). Eleven projects were started throughout the country.

Looking back is a useful exercise in identifying and analysing good practices in development dialogue. As a representative from the recipient side I look back to realize that in comparison to other donor supported projects in the country, the people involved in the start-up of IRDP already had some exposure and experience. The core professional staff consisted of a number of graduates with social science degrees, some of whom had post-graduate training from British and Australian universities through Colombo Plan scholarships. Another factor was that in the mid–1970s, a UNDP funded Development Planning Unit housed within the Ministry of Planning had three expatriate consultants (a Swedish professor, and two academics from Finland and Pakistan). Together with several locals, [the author was one of them] they developed a project document for a pilot IRDP in one district, which was expected to be replicable in other districts. I would like to list four factors essential to the opening of the dialogue:

- Institutional leadership is essential in opening, maintaining and expanding the richness of the dialogue and the new head of the Ministry of Plan Implementation had private sector experience and was also an academic teaching law at an Australian university immediately before his new job. He had being closely involved with the head of the government in the political campaign and had direct access to authority. He had the social and cultural finesse to meet visiting donors and delegations on an equal footing and be treated accordingly, unlike many others who are prepared to play second fiddle in order to raise a loan or grant, which allows them trips abroad.
- The secretary developed and cultivated the skills of his support staff to match the demanding qualities of foreign missions and delegations.
- The ministry itself was under the President.
- The IRDP had the document to start the dialogue, and also had expatriate advisors as their colleagues on their side of the table for moral support at discussions with donor delegations. Many local bureaucrats greatly feared facing a mission on unequal terms and the consequent exposure of their shortcomings resulting in loss of self-esteem in the presence of subordinate officers.

My understanding is that if these factors had not been present the donors would have gone for other technologically simpler physical construction projects in order to build a dialogue friendly aid relationship before agreeing to complicated social engineering projects such as the IRDPs.

The project initiation stage

The policy dialogue of the IRDP was influenced by the World Bank Policy Paper on Rural Development which focussed on an integrated approach and local initiatives with horizontal integration in a given area and vertical integration at local, regional and national levels. This was rather a new approach in Sri Lanka. It went down well with the newly elected government which wanted to deliver some tangibles to the rural regions which had been deprived of them for decades. The objectives and the strategies of the donor and the government matched well, making the dialogue easy.

The project dialogue had a good start in the form of the replicable model from one district. But I recall when I was a government official, how we had to stretch our meagre resources for visible impacts and hurriedly prepare transparencies of the organisational structures to satisfy the enquiring and very probing donor mission members some of whom were academics from universities. Over a wide conference table which could accommodate about twenty, we made a pleasing spread of our documentation and maps etc. The location of the meetings with donors was the National Operations Room at the Central Bank building, then the tallest and the most impressive building in town and one of the few air-conditioned places available for the public service to make the delegations from cooler climates happy and receptive. Fieldtrips for donors and social events for local recipients which build trust, the base for fruitful dialogues were graciously included in the costs by the World Bank project. The programme and project dialogues were personally led by the Secretary of the Ministry because no one in the project region could do so due to language deficiencies.

At times the field level interactions with direct beneficiaries and grass root level politicians needed direct translations by hand picked officers. Everybody in the field does not understand English though at times one feels that in Sri Lanka, English is not a barrier. Logistics in the field become a testing ground as to how capable a district administration is to work up to donor requirements which are quite demanding. This form of structured dialogue is quite outside the normal governmental behaviour. In the case of multilaterals interactions are supported by consultancy documents and seminars leading to the 'blue print model', where most of what is given has to be taken by the recipients as a package, with little change over a five year period. The important distinction here is that the bilaterals such as Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands introduced a variation to the already developed replicable World Bank model, by introducing what is known as a 'rolling plan model' thus opening up the opportunities to develop and maintain a continuous dialogue. The model starts with a broad framework of understanding the objectives and works out the strategies for annual programmes. In this way, reviews and dialogues enable the lessons learnt to be incorporated into the project at different stages. This has its obvious weaknesses but its strengths are that it enriches the contents of the intervention packages

by drawing from the field level experiences, a thorough discussion and exchange of opinions and ideas and values from the grassroots all the way up to the national policy makers. It is in this model that one finds today the very much appreciated participatory approach involving the target group, the rural poor.

Over time, this dialogue resulted in the social mobilisation methodologies now adopted by multilateral donors such as the World Bank. Thus, one could say that Sri Lanka's IRDP went through a full cycle of dialogue, with the World Bank influencing the first replicable project model from which the other bilaterals took the basic framework to which they applied a process of dialogue. The World Bank project now promotes social mobilization as a basic requirement to ensure beneficiary participation. On the recipient side a very hard bargaining process can be recalled in the Sida supported Matara project. It almost came to a halt when the demands from the midterm mission on defining the target – the poor – were too restrictive. Funding drastically tapered off to a minimum level for over a year. As a result of a more favourable turn of events it picked up again with the next mission. The dialogue was then led by a rural development consultant with Asian background from Uppsala University. There was more give and take because both parties loosened up their dogmatic standpoints.

Project implementation stage: structures, ideas and people

There were periodic exercises at the field level on a quarterly, annual and also a three year project cycle basis with participation from the donor headquarters and the country missions, the recipient headquarters, and at the field level the district administrative head and the project functionaries. These events were scheduled one year ahead of time thus bringing in the culture of preparation for talks which was rather foreign to the local functionaries. The professionally supported documentation of the progress and experiences gave the background information for a structured formal dialogue sometimes continuing for a full day, with joint calling for explanations, taking decisions and giving directions. The proceedings were recorded and gone through, word by word, and agreed upon before circulation. This is the flesh and blood of the dialogue in development.

The quarterly events at the project level were capped up with a national dialogue, a national steering committee for the whole of IRDP which brought together more than ten projects and perhaps an equal number of donors. This was a development dialogue at its best bringing issues from the local level to a national forum for a dialogue contributing to and leading towards national policy.

These meetings brought together the heads of national institutions related to the issues to be discussed on the agenda. The preparation of the agenda itself also took the form of a dialogue through calling for issues and

solutions, and distributing the material ahead of the meetings to enable an open and transparent discussion. This dialogue was very much looked forward to by the donors. During the period for the meetings, the venues for the dialogue changed to the different district headquarters with a second day spent at the location for direct field observations. It broadend the content of the dialogue covered by like-minded donors across the wider community of expatriate development workers.

The quarterly progress review was capped up at the national level by a national steering committee at the National Operation Room of the Ministry of Plan Implementation bringing in the heads of national level organisations to take up the undecided policy issues that could not be attended to at the national and/or subnational project levels. All donors, around ten of them, were also represented. The criss-crossing of experiences and ideas even from outside the country added to the richness of the content of the dialogue. One such instance is Sida's adding Grameen Bank experience to social mobilisation activities in the Sida supported IRDP. These ideas were also carried over by the other donor representatives to different forums.

I recall from my government days, a very interesting, but rather odd, role played by some donor representatives. When I was the second in command in the government ministry running the IRDP, I cultivated a close understanding with some visiting heads of mission (in one notable case a World Bank young professional who was eager and dynamic). I could convince them on some points on which I could not convince my peers. The mission heads gladly put the ideas across as if they were their own and, hurrah, they were accepted as bright ideas by the top boss!

The language was a critical factor, as the proceedings were mostly conducted in English. The Sri Lankan counterparts were more open than usual with their limited vocabulary in English in these discussions. They usually fight shy of speaking in broken English with their local counterparts scared that they will be laughed at for breaking the rules of the Queen's colonial English, but they were quite at ease breaking the tradition and speaking freely with expatriates, so much so that I have very often been asked by my Swedish colleagues after I started working for Sida, as to why the locals stick to English when they speak to each other. I have explained many times to the Swedes that it is considered discourteous to speak in a language unknown to them when visitors are present – it arouses mistrust and blocks the dialogue which is built on trust.

Unlike earlier colleagues from Sweden, the present day aid-workers enjoy showing that they are quite different from locals even at mere social gatherings or drinking tea in the embassy staff room! Even if it is only a person dealing with simple day to day administration in the embassy, it is helpful to have an attitude of promoting goodwill among people of two countries. The internal working cultures, built painstakingly over a long period by Sida, should be continued and developed. Even in the local govern-

ment establishments those who are replacing the old guard are less capable of going through the dialogue exercise successfully.

Poverty, the main reason why a foreign donor is there in the first place, is often a contributing factor to the fact that things do not work the same way as aid workers expect them to, i.e. proceeding neatly from one step to another obeying the Log Frame Model. We deal foremost with people who may not always be that rational, and who will understand things differently. Dialogue needs to be alive and returned to over and over again, to get all sides to understand each other. Having worked on both sides of the divide I now realise the transmitting mechanism and receiving mechanism are conditioned by cultures and attitudes and the personal background of the representatives from both sides. For more than a decade and a half in my experience, Sida was represented on most occasions by those who could realise and respond to this sensitivity with a considered behaviour pattern. They had a broad outlook and appreciated the differences in the cultures. They brought in a sense of maturity from their wide travels and exposure. I have seen a gradual erosion of that culture among the second and the third tier personnel.

Sida, over a period of time, developed a routine of going down to the field at least a day ahead of the quarterly meetings or annual reviews. They were scheduled to include regular field visits and discussions with beneficiaries. The dialogue was conducted in a mix of the local language and English. My experience was that coming out of the meeting my expatriate colleagues never felt that they were left out of the process because of language difficulties. I often wonder how and why this cannot be the norm in the day-to-day government practice in non-foreign funded government business where a discord emerges due to language barriers. I had never before experienced such participatory techniques in my long career in the government department. Maybe that is due to the colonial mentality inculcated in us, that we the government officers, should be seen to be above the ordinary public in our dealings. This dialogue process made me think differently. The field level interactions and the dialogue held at the houses of the poor, seated on their benches or mats, enjoying a cup of tea with them was a very rich and rewarding experience. It helped to form our views on the target groups' approach on poverty reduction and social mobilisation. When we got back to our desks and read through the dry data and statistics, our experiences gave life and understanding to the figures.

These field visits made prior to meetings contributed to a healthy dialogue resulting from the time schedule of such events. There were times early on in the poverty reduction and participatory programmes where the Head of Mission visited the field direct, in the deep rural locations, sat with the poor in their houses, discussed intimately things such as gender concerns, interacting with the beneficiaries, personally listening to them, their problems and aspirations. I used to translate such dialogue word for word,

while at the same time they had already expressed some thoughts by their body language, eye contact and movements. (Sri Lankans are fond of nodding their heads in different ways, vertically up and down or sideways. It was fun when my foreign friends tried to figure out which was which for yes or no!) This perhaps is the best form of direct dialogue so far developed in aid programmes. It is very interesting to recall a number of instances when such heads of mission accompanied me to meetings with political dignitaries. The local political head, without knowing how much more than the heads of mission knew from first hand knowledge, tried to explain to them how the poor people suffer and how more aid to perhaps a pet project (maybe a road to help his political supporters) was explained as benefiting the poor!

Recalling my Sida experience at the local mission the dialogue can also run into either voyages of discovery if the wavelengths coincide with those of the boss or it can really run riot. This is not something particular to an Embassy. I left government service when the dialogue hindered my expectations but found a place of acceptance in Sida where the dialogue was free and welcome. The weekly planning meeting of the Head of Mission and the Programme Officers was a rich new experience of a dialogue technique for me. Earlier it was something confined to the Swedish staff and we locals had not been included as I had heard from my colleagues. But the Head of Mission at the time with a fair bit of Asian exposure thought otherwise and it opened many a pleasant vista for enriched dialogue experience. We felt at ease in the crowd and could contribute and were given an appreciative hearing. But as time went on after two rounds of changes at the top I felt the depth in the dialogue content was being replaced by mere form.

I recall that agreed minutes written after an annual review – the basis of the next year's programme of work – was a lengthy document discussing the past experiences and going deeply into the work progamme based on these experiences and giving directions. It was followed seriously and monitored. I recall how suddenly my superior came into my room while I was engaged in work with the Sida Stockholm representative on drafting the document. The person directed us to put it into two pages only and even gave us a structure of how to do it… "It is agreed 1..2..3.. etc" and just annex a time schedule for the follow-up events. My resistance about throwing the baby away with the bath water and explanations as to why we did it the way we did, and later even an explanation to the Head of Mission did not change the matter. The number of pages to make it easy for the management to read was more important and sacrosanct! No dialogue, no discussion, a 'do what we say' type of direction came and being a local employee I simply obeyed to avoid future complications to my employment. Dialogue between two unequal partners can be costly. By the time the individuals in question left Sri Lanka, some things were irreparable both for me and the programme. Maybe by that time the policy emerging was to leave the project

detail management to the locals, "let them own it, we are only funders at a distance and have no time to think of details". Locals themselves need to graduate and passing on the ownership is one way to do it. Yes that sounds good, but it is how we do it that matters a lot. To be fair in my critical assessment of the changes it should be mentioned that the Embassy office was depleted to a minimum of expatriate staff and the local programme officers had to do things beyond their responsibility to keep up with the work and hold the fort for better times.

Lessons learnt

I have drawn extensively from my personal working experience at Sida in Sri Lanka. My work in the Embassy added to my knowledge base. I believe that if I had previously known some of the simple practices I learned working for Sida, my earlier efforts on the recipient side, heading the IRDP would have been greatly facilitated. It is very important that people have a profile of each other to build a dialogue. I now know that no matter how many thoughts one has put into documents, what really matters is the people who work out the things in practice. Changes of personnel can easily break down relationships and healthy procedures painfully built over many years.

Playing on both sides of the divide, as I did, may have sounded like playing a double game to some of my colleagues on the government side, mainly because they thought that they would be exposed for any tricks which could be played on gullible donor missions. But the more enlightened persons know that it was a greatly beneficial role where we could be used to explain the issue in the local language as well and be assured of a considerate hearing and outcome. Individuals in a foreign environment always have to do a great balancing act with sensitivity – prepared to be open and listening. I am sure this kind of situation also arose for the Swedish expatriates working as consultants in the ministry office, attending the donor mission reviews as a part of local project management.

To help keep the dialogue going, the expatriate staff that comes to work in developing societies should remind themselves that the recipient country is the way it is because things do not work the same way as in the donor society, and that is why they are there in the first instance. The social, cultural and personal background of the dialogue partners debars a cordial and rewarding understanding unless people are accommodative, constructive, positive, and willing to compromise, and strive for consensus building and have a conciliatory approach. I have found in the latest and the most difficult areas for building a dialogue i.e. democracy, human rights, peace building and humanitarian aid, that many donor workers do not seem to practise what they have come to inculcate in others. Some seem to follow their personal agenda, others are exposed to Asian culture for the first time and

tend to judge from African experiences. The local society is not favourable to such attitudes. The last, but not the least, point I would like to make to my colleagues in the recipient countries is that they have to come to terms with the fact that things are changing fast in the foreign aid context. They have to acquire knowledge and skills to clearly put across what they think, and professionally advocate and vocalise their case to live up to the requirements of today's aid and development dialogue.

The lessons learnt could be summarised into a few words: Dialogue can give enjoyment at times to invigorate us, it can develop an attitude of conciliation, concurrence and consensus. Wait for a window of opportunity, and attempt a continuous improvement rather than big things with one shot.

Promoting Empowerment: A Unique Grant Relationship Between Rockefeller Foundation and Makerere University

Nakanyike B. Musisi[1]

Introduction

The past nine years have seen an increase and change in aid coming to Makerere University. The institution is receiving funding from the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Swedish International Co-operation Development Agency (Sida), the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries, the Norwegian Assistance Department (NORAD), the Canadian Centre for International Development Research (IDRC), US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank to mention but a few.[2] The University has at the same time experienced growth in the student body from 7,344 (of which 6,643 were government sponsored and 701 were privately sponsored) 1993/4 to 25,245 (of which 19,112 are privately sponsored) in 2000/2001, while programmes expanded from 29 in 1993/4 to 65 in 2000/1.[3] Growth of this nature is inevitably leading to changes in the institution's culture, organizational and management structures; broadening the mandate and vision, while at the same time necessitating strategic planning in an attempt to clarify focus, develop a shared vision and remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment.

During the period between 1970 and 1995 aid was earmarked for specific areas such as agriculture, health and education. The recent change involves a transition from earmarked to institutional capacity building support similar to aid in the immediate period following the colonial period.

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[2] Detailed information on what programme or projects are funded by each of these donors can be accessed through the Planning and Development Department, Makerere University.

[3] Academic Registrar's Office. The number of students and programmes continues to grow. Although not yet officially confirmed, the figures for the student body have risen to slightly over 30,000 students.

Increasingly, literature and research addressing and analyzing donor/recipient relations (Hudock, 1995; Wallace, et al, 1997) indicate the importance of situating the analysis within the context and environment that the relationship develops.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section one gives the contextual background. The aim is to equip the reader with an understanding of the Rockefeller/Makerere University funding relationship. The second section covers the dialogue during the grant application. Section three deals with the unique process of managing the Rockefeller grant. While in section four, I give my personal reflections and analysis of this relationship as someone who has been involved in this new and emerging funding relationship between Rockefeller Foundation[4] and Makerere University right from the start. In section five, as a way of looking at the challenges facing the relationship, some anxieties on both sides are tabled. This concluding section also looks at what can be learned from the Makerere University/ Rockefeller Foundation relationship.

At the core of the chapter is a set of questions. What is behind this relationship? To what extent is the Rockefeller funding influencing Makerere University's agenda or threatening the University's autonomy to set its own agenda? What are the ingredients of the relationship? What lessons can be learned? The nature of the relationship that is emerging is discussed in terms of its originality, accountability, legitimacy and empowerment. My position is that this negotiated relationship is yielding remarkable outcomes and has the attributes of a partnership. Makerere University is not passive in the partnership but moving from unplanned change to strategically charting its[5] future.

Background

Makerere University enjoyed the reputation as a leading university in Africa in the pre and post independence periods. The country fell apart when Idi Amin came to power, and with it, the university crumbled. The 1970s witnessed dramatic insecurity, a near total collapse of the economy and a curtailment of human rights. University professors and teaching staff left Uganda for better-paid jobs, security for themselves and their families and a healthier

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[4] Rockefeller Foundation continues to fund programmes at faculty levels, e.g. Faculties of Agriculture and Medicine while at the same time engaged in this Institutional Capacity Building funding arrangement.

[5] I am grateful that I was invited to write this chapter and consequently forced to step back and reflect on a relationship I am currently centrally involved in. The Rockefeller and my Makerere colleagues' assessment, experience and accounts may differ from what I present here, but I write in my capacity as elected Executive Secretary of the Innovations at Makerere Committee.

academic environment. The 1980s began with hope as Idi Amin was driven out and elections were held. Unfortunately civil war followed, the economy collapsed further and as a result university salaries were eroded to the point of insignificance. Makerere salaries were simply too low for staff to survive on; infrastructure fell into disrepair, the library could not afford new acquisitions, science labs had no chemicals or reagents and the quality of teaching declined. The academic staff who could find employment abroad left the country; those who remained were forced to 'moonlight' by running businesses, driving taxis or taking a second job, to make ends meet. Needless to say, there was little ability let alone 'will' to plan, within this context, for Makerere University's growth.

However, the country was transformed after 1986 under the relatively stable government of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni through policies of decentralization, liberalization, privatization and deregulation. Makerere did not return to a position of past glories of status and respect, but continued to suffer because the country was so impoverished. Makerere was forced to innovate because government support had been eroded through the years and never regained the levels previously enjoyed. Government priority shifted away from support to tertiary education, as in the post-colonial period, towards primary education and economic recovery in the 1990s.

By the early 1990s, Makerere University was at a low point, witnessing the transformation of the country while suffering from deficient financing. Therefore, out of desperation and need changes were ushered in, which began the processes of transformation. The highlights of these changes included: a dramatic change in admission policy; income generation from private fee-paying students; a move towards decentralization of academic matters to faculties and institutes; introduction of new demand driven courses;

Graph. Total annual Enrollment
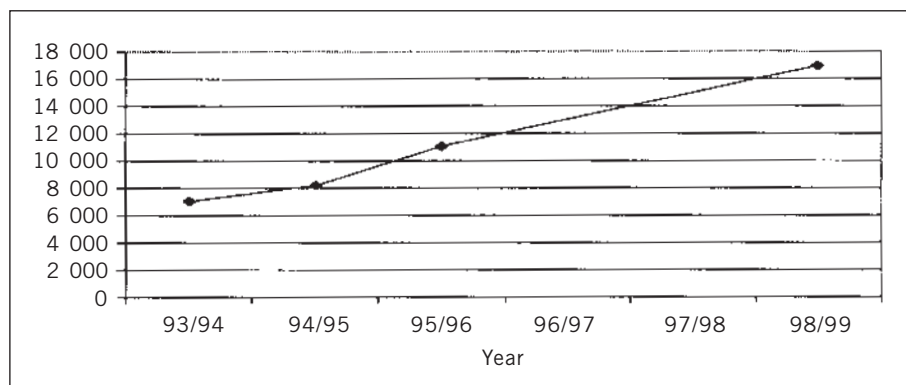
Source: Academic Registrar's Office.

campus based consultancy services; establishment of commercial units and curriculum development. Decentralization following the admission of fee-paying private students enabled faculties to innovate with curricula, new degrees and to pay incentives to teaching staff through a kind of profit sharing formula adopted by the University as a whole. Thus, the faculties that recruited private fee paying students were allowed to retain most of this earned income. One new way of attracting a larger number of fee-paying students was the arrangement of night-courses.

These developments have resulted in increased revenues as the number of fee-paying students increased; construction of new buildings, as well as maintenance of old infrastructure; payment of salary 'top-ups' to many teachers allowing them to devote their time to academics; and improved communication and teaching aids. These innovations and commensurate revenues have also raised the hope of improved funding for research and services as well as some increases in salaries and other fringe benefits for the staff on a systemic basis rather than as an ad hoc arrangement. As entrepreneurial initiatives became rewarded, the campus gradually came alive again.

We can conclude that economic necessity stimulated innovation, which generated income for the more popular faculties. However, the fruits of this growth in student enrolment have not been equally distributed – some faculties, such as sciences, have been left behind just as impoverished as before. These islands of underdevelopment on the campus pose a challenge to the planning and management of Makerere University as a whole. The future of the science subjects as well as the overall quality of education was the main worry. Administrative and management systems were strained to breaking point by an increased work load without any changes to the systems themselves in terms of computerization and modernization, resulting in inefficiencies and bureaucratic delays.

Development of the grant application–innovation begins

The dramatic transformations in Uganda during the early 1990s, created a vacuum in human resources, especially regarding appropriately trained and educated personnel in the areas of policy, management and service delivery. The Government of Uganda together with donors, such as the World Bank and DANIDA developed training programmes to meet urgent short-term needs. These short-term training courses were developed mainly by outside institutions and were both expensive and foreign, although they had the capacity to deliver results. An alternative was soon developed. The basic idea was that Makerere University would have a better chance of developing and delivering a sustainable appropriate training and educational programme to meet the changing demands for human resources. Therefore, the Government of Uganda appealed to Makerere University to play a more

effective role in the wider transformation of the country by helping to fill the human resource needs, created by the government's policy of decentralization, through a review, a reorientation and a renewal of its curricula in short and long-term education and training.

The dialogue between the Government and the university was facilitated by Rockefeller Foundation in 1998 and 1999. Coincidentally, when Makerere University experienced fundamental changes, the Rockefeller Foundation's Africa Regional Office was also reorganized. The Foundation had been made up of mutually exclusive programme departments, operating independently through grants that were uncoordinated in the field. The staff were now challenged to work together in a team integrating their various grant making departments, and then with a common vision, select priority countries where coherent programmes could be supported. Uganda was selected as a priority country and Makerere University was identified as an appropriate institution to support.

In March 2000, the University Vice Chancellor and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance established "The University Capacity Building Committee" consisting of seven Makerere members drawn from the Deans and Directors and seven members from the Ministries of Finance, Education and Local Government as well as from the Economic Policy Research Centre. The committee informally became known as the Committee of Fourteen or, the C-14 in short. To enable the C-14 to operate, Rockefeller Foundation was requested to appoint two facilitators. The facilitators led the sessions through questions that were written on cards. Responses from all fourteen members were likewise collected on cards with one idea per card. Members then clustered the cards, giving rise to the next round of questions. For example a question in the early stages might have been: "What are the two main problems facing decentralized district administrators?" This question would generate two or three cards per participant and the typical cards might have included: "Shortage of trained human resources. Shortage of personnel. Too few women professionals. Not enough doctors. Shortage of engineers. No one trained in planning. Too few accountants." A follow up question might have been "How can the problem of professional human resource shortages be addressed?" In this manner every idea counted. Strong personalities and loud or articulate persons were put on an equal footing with reserved and more thoughtful members of the committee. Once the problems and broad solutions were identified in the plenary, the facilitators would break the group down into three or four smaller working groups where more detailed questions were asked. Sufficient time was given for small group discussion and then each group reported their recommendations. At this juncture, comments were collected and the group went back to do revisions. Thus, defence of the ideas of the group was avoided and the smaller group could accept and incorporate ideas generated in the larger plenary or they could reword their recommendations, as they saw fit. Other

participatory techniques were employed such as role plays on contentious issues. However, if an issue divided the group then the facilitator would review both positions and it would come back on the agenda at the next meeting. Overall teamwork and synergy was promoted, arguments avoided, feelings dealt with immediately and productive work encouraged.

Through this participatory process the C-14 developed an initial grant proposal based on incremental steps that was owned and understood by the whole group. Rockefeller funded the primary research and the expenses of the planning meetings. The C-14 had three mandates. First, to undertake primary research on the demand for human resources from the perspective of the districts. Second, to plan how Makerere University could mount a programme to create the capacity to meet the changed needs for graduates brought about by the government policy on decentralization; and third, to develop a proposal for funding the programme to be presented to the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Bank.

The proposal developed by the C-14 was unique in many ways: it was the first time the Government of Uganda and Makerere University were brought together in such a planning process (previously Makerere had kept itself separate by attending to its own planning which invariably involved blaming the Government for neglecting its financial and other requests and resulting in misunderstandings over the years); it was developed out of original primary research carried out as a result of the 'demand' for human resources (as opposed to the normal 'need' based starting point and from the perspective of the district rather than central government); the participatory facilitation process enabled the Government and Makerere to 'fast track' the planning process. The goals, objectives, priorities and activities as well as the mechanism for implementation were oriented towards promoting innovation, delivering training to the districts, improving the quality of education for all graduates and contributing to the transformation of both Makerere and civil society.

Grant synergy between Makerere and the Government

The planning process identified separate problems facing the Government of Uganda and the University. These gave the rationale for working together. The government problem statement was:

> In pursuit of modernization and motivated by the desire to achieve popular participation, the Government of Uganda implemented a policy of decentralization in the early 1990s. However implementation of this policy was undertaken without a comprehensive human resource programme at the national and local government level. Consequently this has adversely affected the implementation of decentralization and other programs at the local level.

The Makerere University problem statement

Although Makerere has a long history of making 'the' major contribution to preparing human resources for Uganda, the university has not produced enough appropriately trained graduates to meet the evolving national needs since the problems of the 1970s and early 1980s. Moreover graduates have lacked the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for successful implementation of the decentralization programme with respect to both managerial and service delivery. In view of this situation, and given Makerere's strong foundation and historical role, there are challenging opportunities to introduce training and courses which are more relevant to the needs of society, in order to provide the critical human resources with skills, knowledge and attitudes demanded by civil society, especially the districts.

When the grant for implementation was received from Rockefeller Foundation by Makerere University, the Vice Chancellor transitioned the C-14 (which had hitherto been constituted as a planning committee), into the implementation committee. The committee acquired a new name: *Innovations at Makerere Committee*, popularly known as I@Mak.Com for short. The appointment of non-Makerere staff to this committee was even more unusual because in the past the University had appointed its staff exclusively to powerful committees, especially those with resources to allocate. I@Mak.Com was entirely a Makerere affair from this point on because members were appointed by the Vice Chancellor for the purposes of implementing the programme. The decision making authority rested with the group of Deans and Directors from the University, because the grant was made to Makerere University.

The goal of I@Mak.Com is to develop Makerere University into an institution of excellence in higher education in the area of decentralization through; a) training of existing and future district human resources as demanded and according to the needs of government; b) producing more and better educated graduates to meet the 'changing' needs of Ugandan society, especially in the area of decentralization; c) undertaking research to inform public policy on decentralization and ; d) developing Makerere as a recognized centre of and for innovation.

Makerere faculties, institutes and units were encouraged to develop concept papers of five pages or less containing innovative ideas on how they could promote the goal. These were read and accepted or rejected by the I@Mak.Com. If the concept paper was accepted, and 75 per cent were successful, then the author(s) received $2,500 to undertake a feasibility study. The results of the feasibility studies were again submitted to the I@Mak.Com and this time the proposal was scored for various elements by each voting member, and the score sheet was signed. Each feasibility study which achieved a score of 65 per cent was funded by up to $10,000 to enable the unit to undertake a pilot project of the concept. Approximately half of the feasibility studies were funded. The pilot project was evaluated by the unit, by the

recipients and by an outside evaluator appointed by the committee. The results were returned to the committee and scoring was once again undertaken. A 70 per cent achievement was required to be awarded up to $30,000 for full implementation. Approximately 70 per cent of the pilots were successful. This scoring was felt to bring about greater objectivity, transparency and accountability.

In order to achieve their goals, the I@Mak.Com have to assure that their work is within that of the strategic planning process, carried out simultaneously. Therefore, the question of how set goals fit within the context of the larger Makerere strategic plan became highly relevant. The simultaneous work of the strategic planning process at Makerere and the C-14 was complementary and synergistic. There was no overlap and duplication by the two processes, however, they covered similar ground with the I@Mak.Com process going into far more detail in setting out plans for implementation, while the strategic planning process was based on a planning process embedded in the twenty-nine units of the University. This can best be seen in the vision and mission statements, which were derived from the strategic planning process:

Vision: "To be a centre of academic excellence, providing world-class teaching, research and service relevant to sustainable development needs of society."

Mission "Makerere University's mission is to provide quality teaching, carry out research and offer professional services to meet the changing needs of society by utilizing world wide and internally generated human resources, information and technology to enhance the University's leading position in Uganda and beyond." (Italics added to highlight the central position of meeting changing needs of society which embraces the main emphasis of the I@Mak.Com program.) (See Makerere University Strategic Plan 2000/1–2004/5.)

One of the principle obstacles in the process of reorienting the University community was the question of how to mobilize the professional staff and convince them to move towards revamping the curriculum to better meet the needs of society, especially with regard to decentralization. Directives and circulars were not enough given the three decades of neglect, low salaries, crumbling buildings, and inadequate libraries. The accumulation of problems, combined with a doubling of student numbers, larger class sizes and inadequacies in the administrative support systems, demanded a more dramatic plan. Encouraged by the Government's experience of reorganization, a mobilization plan was drawn up. It culminated with a large conference with over one thousand members of the Makerere staff for the launch of the Programme of Innovation at Makerere. Well articulated presentations were made by the members of the I@Mak.Com group, in an innovative format involving non-Makerere staff, professors and other professionals, who challenged the lecturers.

Reflections on the relationship of Makerere and Rockefeller Foundation

There are six identifiable unique elements that contribute to the relationship between Rockefeller Foundation and Makerere University. These are briefly described below.

- The coincidence of reorganization within Rockefeller Foundation at a time when Makerere itself, as well as the Government of Uganda, was in the process of change.
- The transition from earmarked to systemic support to Makerere University through substantial grants by Rockefeller Foundation. The first of these grants was to the planning process of I@Mak.Com. The second phase saw annual grants for implementation.
- The composition of the planning and later the implementation committee. With the encouragement of Rockefeller Foundation the University and the Government formed a joint planning committee. Based on the success of this process the Vice Chancellor appointed the implementation committee based on the membership of the planning committee.
- All meetings were held over the weekend and out of office hours and on a residential basis in a hotel outside Kampala. This assured availability of members, separation from pressures of family and friends and put everyone together in a 'captured' setting.
- Two professionals trained in participatory techniques facilitated the meetings. This process made the university and the government equal as there was no hierarchy, no chair, no traditional presentation of papers and ideas were collected. The facilitator posed questions that were geared towards broad issues related to Uganda and incrementally evolved into more specific questions of the capacity, systems, goals and innovative approaches of the University. It was a synergistic and incremental process that encouraged teamwork and joint ownership of the outcome.
  Participation and facilitation are keys to success.
- The planning process did not engage consultants. However, the facilitation process enabled the C-14 and I@Mak.Com to obtain information from persons with experience through a process where experts answered questions asked by the committee members, in a structured setting with rules for questioning and answering. Most other major aid supported initiatives in Uganda, are planned by consultants, who are technically well qualified and produce good work but which are not designed by the people who will implement them and therefore not owned by the country, making implementation slow and difficult.

In a negotiated relationship, such as the one between Rockefeller and Makerere University, influence and power are understood beyond the obvious donor-client bond of money giving and receiving. Vulnerability and

strength in the relationship can be understood in terms of Makerere University and Rockefeller's new and emerging institutional culture; ethos; their needs and the strategic use of communications, such as proposal writing; support for research to inform planning processes; guidelines to access funding through competitive rather than prescriptive processes; facilitation of planning and decision-making; as well as immediate generation of unedited meeting reports shared with Rockefeller Foundation; mobilization of Makerere University staff; procedures of accounting and evaluation as well as rules of conduct for committee members and for voting. The results of these new strategies and approaches have seen confidence levels grow throughout the process, confidence in the committee, confidence in the decisions taken, fewer top down decisions, independence to chart the direction of grant allocations and disbursement, and more funding.

Given the history of the 1970s and 1980s aid, donor checklists and demands everywhere are getting longer (Wallace et. al., 1997) – this has not been our experience with Rockefeller. On the contrary, we have been able to work in freedom, with a broad scope and confidence.

Comments that the committee received from Rockefeller personnel from the Regional Office and New York focused on the process outcome presented in the meeting reports shared with them within two days of each meeting. Once the C-14 proposal was accepted by Rockefeller Foundation and by the University, the details were developed in several subsequent consultative meetings. This process can be compared with the Makerere University/World Bank funding relationship that is also emerging to facilitate the same programme of training for decentralization. Although the World Bank is coming as a co-funder, the emphasis has been on getting Makerere to follow the letter of the law as prescribed by the World Bank in their general and specific conditionalities in every step of the process. The World Bank began with drawing up a proposal that required Makerere University to follow their detailed procedures. Although acknowledging the process that had already been accomplished with Rockefeller Foundation it has no room to follow this process. According to the World Bank officials, the overriding objective of their rigid procedure was to provide a legitimate framework of accountability, procurement, evaluation and monitoring within the Bank's framework. Although when compared with the Rockefeller's, the World Bank process can be described as a more 'rigid one', it still became relatively interactive thanks to the personalities involved on the part of the World Bank.

When the Vice President and the Regional Director of the Rockefeller come to sit in on the I@Mak.Com policy meetings, they participate as all other members without any attempt to give directives on how to go about our business. The methodology of Visualization in Participatory Programs (VIPP), requires them to fill in cards, pin them up and rearrange them as they share their anxieties and queries about the process, direction etc. Other

Innovations Committee at Makerere with Rockefeller Vice President Dr. Joyce Mock, Regional Director Dr. Cheik Mbecki; World Bank Representative Ms Preeti Ahuja, and Dr. David Court. Entebbe, Uganda

members openly share with them our anxieties and questions about their moves and suggestions. At no time have I ever left a meeting with the Rockefeller team feeling resentful or feeling belittled (made to feel like you are a beggar/pauper and hence lower as a human being). The Rockefeller/ Makerere partnership is more flexible, interactive and empowering than any other relationship I have directly been involved in. They give us room and space to shape the process. Rockefeller acknowledge in different ways the fact that Makerere has taken and suggested proactive and different ap-proaches in proposal development, consultations, and mobilization of the Makerere community and in allocating funds.

Although Rockefeller encourage reporting against the project aims and objectives, and continue to push for more and better evaluations and moni-toring, they have not pushed a particular formula down Makerere's throat. This does not in any way minimize their eagerness for quality and concern for measurable outputs.

Sailing in unknown waters: issues of concern and lessons to be learned

The products and outcomes of the Rockefeller funding to Makerere can be seen in terms of capacity building for Uganda; especially in improved relevance of training and education in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The importance of this is easily understood when observing Uganda's population growing from over 6 million in 1962 to over 22 million in 2002. The quality of education at Makerere will be especially significant to meet the demands of decentralization, but also in the fields of research and policy development.

Additionally, an equally important result is the synchronization of training with the changing needs of society, notably the policy on decentralization, which will stimulate innovation and changes impacting other unrelated educational programmes. For the first time, Makerere is establishing identifiable steps, which will improve management, provide an opportunity for funding to curriculum revision and the development of new courses. Establishment of a decision making based on internal competition for funding is not only an empowerment boost to Makerere, it provides a basis for rapid appraisal and evaluation of the performance of Makerere units.

Finally, an important outcome of the Rockefeller grant to Makerere is the strengthening of future generations of young Ugandans, who hold the key to the future. Needless to say, the success of the Rockefeller funding remains to be evaluated and seen in the quality of the capacity development of the University and of the individual departments, institutes and faculties as well as the districts and Government of Uganda. As someone who has been involved in the partnership from the beginning, my perspective is one of confidence, hope and optimism.

Nonetheless, some questions still persist and these have to do with sustainability and institutionalization of the processes. First, while consultants have not been employed in this process, the use of an outsider international facilitator with a unique set of attributes and who serves as a cohesive force in the process, raises the question of what would happen if that person was not available? Second, when main persons in the I@Mak.Com leave, how do we secure that successors are willing to continue such unusual arrangements, unorthodox meeting formats and quite innovative decision making processes that are so different from what Makerere has known as 'normal'? Third, how will the World Bank's involvement, meeting nearly half of the funds tied to specific activities managed by the secretariat and only monitored by the I@Mak.Com, affect relationships and procedures? Fourth, the committee itself comes up for review in September 2002 as the initial two-year term of the members expires. How do we appoint new members who will grasp the meaning of the enterprise without the benefit of experiencing the process of developing the concepts? Currently only

two persons are working full time at the secretariat–the task manager and a secretary who are complemented by three other part time professionals drawn from other full time positions within the University. No other multi-million dollar project within Uganda is implemented with such a small full time staff; is there a risk of low effectiveness or delays given the reliance on such a small base?

In spite of these questions, and anxieties, the Rockefeller/Makerere partnership appears to be pioneering a promising trend for donor agencies – particularly in the development of empowering ties. Through this funding, Rockefeller is helping Makerere touch base with the reality and conditions under which local governments have to perform their duties. Judging by the districts' excitement over and their involvement in the process coupled with the diversity of programmes to be implemented, one is tempted to believe that the programme will help to address the needs of society in an innovative way.

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Development Assistance to Education – The Case of Mauritius: Changing Assistance to Partnership

Armoogum Parsuramen[1]

This contribution will focus mainly on development aid in the field of education, with specific reference to the case of Mauritius, in the context of the preparation, formulation and implementation of a five-year Master Plan for Education. It illustrates how the Government managed to build consensus with internal and external stakeholders around a broad reform agenda.

The Mauritian experience with respect to international assistance for education has many lessons to offer – in terms of innovative practices, policy changes and more importantly, on the shift from assistance to constructive partnerships, based on dialogue and transparency.

From conditionality towards dialogue and mutual learning

The development of the Mauritian education system has evolved over many years, with the support of external agencies both in terms of technical advice and financial support. It has a primary education enrolment rate of over 90 per cent. Education is free from primary to tertiary level. It is a country without any mineral resources and its economy rests on sugar production, the export processing manufacturing sector and tourism. It has a democratic government founded on respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

In the late 1970s, substantial loans were contracted with the World Bank for the expansion of educational opportunities through the construction of new junior secondary schools, for strengthening management and administration and improving education quality. The aim of the project was to improve efficiency, ensure equity, quality, human resource development, and institution building. This assistance was subject to certain conditions, namely that Government will introduce (a) regulations on budgetary and financial control of private secondary schools, (b) a new junior secondary school curriculum, (c) a Form III examination, and (d) double shift utilization of Bank-assisted schools among other things.

These conditions could not be implemented as they aroused massive discontent and were not accepted by the parents, trade unions and the public at large. The practicability of these conditions was questionable and it was

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not clear whether they would have yielded the desired results. This experience proved that reforms in education were bound to fail if they were not country-owned and were not supported by all the stakeholders in the country, which is receiving aid. It also demonstrated that such a situation benefits neither the donor nor the recipient.

In the 1980s, in the context of a deteriorating economic situation, growing unemployment, currency depreciation, the future expansion of education, both in terms of quantity and quality, was put at stake. The country had to resort to structural adjustment programmes. This often-criticized form of development aid imposed stringent conditions that (a) the recurrent and capital expenditure on education be reduced, (b) the concept of free secondary education be revised, (c) some private secondary schools be closed down, and (d) there should be no further construction of secondary schools.

It was difficult for the Mauritian Government to put these conditions into practice, because there was no doubt, that in a country where high value is placed on education, any reduction of educational expenditure would create social unrest and instability. In fact, the closing down of a number of private secondary schools resulted in tragic human problems and deterioration of relations in the sector. It demotivated the teaching force and created instability.

In addition the Government believed that education should remain a predominant priority and that it had to invest in human resources. It strongly resisted measures proposed by the structural adjustment programmes. The donors were informed that the Government would continue to invest in its human resources and in particular, maintain free secondary education. This action was motivated by the principle underlying its policy document on education, which was embodied in a White Paper in 1984: "Our main resources are our people. It is on their abilities, attitudes and skills that the nation's future well-being must be based. In so far as education helps to build these qualities, it is basic to our development (World Bank, 1978)." While this may not have been appreciated then, in 1991 the World Bank representative complimented Mauritius on its futuristic vision.

National leadership and consultations as key

Following the World Conference on Education for All, the Mauritian Government initiated the project for the formulation of a five-year Master Plan for education. Guided by the principles underlying the World Charter on Education for All, the plan formulation, preparation and implementation were carried out with the collaboration of donor agencies and all stakeholders, right from the outset. The participatory approach was favoured as we did not want to have plans and programmes, written without consultations and which did not capture the aspirations and hopes of the people, and in particular the grassroots people who often have no voice in policy formulation.

Our past experience had shown that policies imposed by external agencies do not necessarily satisfy the social, cultural and economic needs of the country and may lead to the disruption of social peace. This time the Government was keen to ensure that the new collaboration process engaged with international partners would be based on constant dialogue and understanding. It chose its international partners and took the lead in the exercise of initiating educational reforms. It set out the parameters for collaboration with the external agencies.

Great care was exercised to ensure that the plan was country-owned and that it became a Mauritian plan reflecting the aspirations and hopes of the Mauritian people. A steering committee and sub-committees were established to examine different aspects of the plan. Wide consultations were held with teachers, students, educationists, managers, educational authorities, and non-governmental organisations. Views expressed in the press and meetings were compiled and studied by technical staff and recommendations made for inclusion in the plan.

UNDP formed part of the working group, which was responsible for the plan preparation and it agreed to coordinate responsibility for donor assistance.

Dialogue during the planning phase

A number of external agencies were involved in the first part of the exercise, as follows:

- The expert assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was sought and obtained to discuss the status of teachers, in view of the specialized nature of the subject. This component was a very crucial aspect of the education reforms and had significant financial implications.
- UNESCO extended collaboration for the formulation of strategies for the tertiary education sector and rationalizing the structures and funding of tertiary institutions.
- UNESCO technical assistance covered a number of specialized areas – including education planning, secondary, technical and vocational education, examination reform, curriculum improvement and education of children with special needs.
- Its technical support was also extended to the development of a strategy for a nine year basic schooling system which was enunciated in a Green Paper.
- UNICEF was associated with the formulation of policies for preschool education and for ensuring that the interests of children, specially of the girl child were generally respected throughout the plan.
- UNDP being the resident coordinating agency of UN, formed part of the working group, which worked on the plan preparation and provided funding for study tours and technical assistance.

- The World Bank representatives were equally associated with the plan preparation and provided technical expertise and professional guidance, especially for financial analysis, projections of school population and education spending and assisted with educational planning.

The whole process was dynamic and innovative in approach. Thus, though there were several external collaborators, the whole exercise remained an essentially national undertaking, with international experts joining our national working group from time to time to provide expertise and to act as catalysts for the policy dialogue. This involvement of external agencies from the very outset of the exercise facilitated the acceptance of the plan, gave it added credibility and contributed to the building of consensus on major policy issues.

Dialogue and resource mobilization

After the formulation of the plan, the next phase was the mobilization of resources for its implementation. This constitutes another example of the efforts made to genuinely build in dialogue, participation and national ownership in development co-operation. UNESCO played a key role in this exercise by hosting a donors' meeting at its headquarters in Paris. The list of donors was drawn up with the assistance of UNDP, which had a coordinating role. The donors' meeting brought together the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIDO, ILO, the African Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Caisse Centrale de Co-operation Economique, the European Economic Commission, the Swiss Investment Development Agency, the Organisation of European Economic Community as well as representatives of some donor countries, namely Australia, France, Germany, India, Japan, UK and USA.

The donors' meeting involved careful preparation and the Mauritian government was fully conscious of the need to demonstrate its seriousness, credibility, and strong commitment to implement the plan. The dialogue with the donors was based on the arguments that investment in education could only lead to positive results for economic growth and social development and that it would be beneficial to the country as a whole.

We indicated to the donors that the government's past investment in education had yielded rich dividends and that Mauritius had been ranked in the UNDP Human Development Report as a country with a high human development rate (Human Development Report, 1991). We further argued that investment on education is a global concern and that educational inequalities hinder individual freedom, the respect of human rights and achievement of peace. We also demonstrated the government's genuine and firm commitment to implement the plan and that it would, above all, ensure the rational utilization of donors' resources.

The donors' meeting concluded with pledges and expressions of intent on the part of the donors to support the implementation of the educational development plan.

Each of the donors specified its own criteria for recognizing the merits of the plan. While the World Bank was appreciative of the constructive policies and of the fact that the plan was based on a true national consensus on the policies themselves, UNDP pointed out that "the programme for the development of education is of necessity ambitious with an innovative policy of a nine year education for all and major improvements in quality, relevance and equality at all levels of education" (World Charter on Education for All, 1990).

The African Development Bank was satisfied that the objectives of the plan were in conformity with the guiding principles of the organisation for lending in education in Africa. It stated that the "five major areas of concern – quality, equity, relevance, efficiency and financing are well among the major problem areas which the AfDB has set out to tackle in Africa" (Mauritius Master Plan for Education, 1991).

The Swiss Investment Development Agency supported the initiative on the grounds that "the approach adopted involving national staff at all levels, including intersectoral co-operation is a promising example of how education plans could become effective implementation of the World Charter on Education for All".

For UNESCO, the plan contained modern policy and strategies for a new decade of progress for the country in the social, cultural, intellectual and economic spheres.

As regards the World Bank, it stated that the plan was discussed by its executive directors and it endorsed the growth strategy of the country, improving labour force quality, and that it was also central to the bank's strategy to support the country's transition to a higher – skill and higher technology economy with NIC status by the start of the twenty-first century. It summarized its partnership with Mauritius in the following terms. The Bank considered that the "on-going policy dialogue and long-standing support for education and training has placed it in a partnership position *vis-à-vis* the country's education sector. Its principal role, therefore is to participate as a partner in the development of Mauritius education and, as an external agency, to help stimulate the institutional and policy changes and reforms needed".

Lessons learnt

The partnership with external agencies was a new experience, the first of its kind for the country – it was rewarding both for the government which could mobilize resources and international co-operation for the develop-

ment of education and for the donors, who could work towards the furtherance of their objectives and replicate the model elsewhere. The experience provided abundant lessons not only for the country itself but also to other countries, which intended to embark on the formulation of a plan for educational development. The concept of development aid gave way to partnerships and co-operation, which in the field of education may take different forms, such as technical assistance, resource flows, policy advice, capacity building etc. It illustrated the fact that the effectiveness of development assistance depends on a number of factors, which are enumerated below:

- There are a variety of ways in which foreign assistance can help to catalyze change through a combination of policy advice, technical assistance, resource flows among others. It is for the recipient and the donor to discuss and agree on the type of assistance, which would be appropriate for each project or programme. This requires extensive consultation between the two parties, where both the recipient and the donor should understand each other's imperatives. Sometimes there are wide gaps between the working styles, managerial and professional practices of international experts and local staff, leading to tensions and conflict. Constant dialogue and consultation helps to create mutually beneficial collaborations and partnerships.

- Donors have their own criteria and specificities, which have to be satisfied, namely conformity of the project objectives to the donors' ideals and principles and international organizations, conventions and charters. For example, lauding the Programme for the Development of Education in Mauritius, the UNDP representative affirmed that it focused on issues of "quality, relevance and equality at all levels of education. It fits well with the Programme approach recommended by our Governing Council…(Mauritius Master Plan for Education, 1991)".

- The projects or programmes should be feasible, viable and show that they will produce effective results for the benefit not only of the specific sector but also of the country's economic and social development as a whole. Supporting the initiative of the Master Plan, the Director General of UNESCO highlighted the fact that it implied "a human-centred development of the people, by the people, for the people… and will serve as a model for other countries in the Africa region and beyond (Mauritius Master Plan for Education, 1991)".

- Government should show its seriousness of purpose and commitment to implement the projects and programmes. This commitment should not only be a statement of intent but equally be supported by adequate budgetary allocation. Commitment also implies the political willingness and ability of government to take risks, to introduce some of the needed policy changes. The Government of Mauritius had estimated that the implementation of the Master Plan would require USD 61 million and

in order to demonstrate its seriousness of intent had pledged to contribute one third of the costs from its own exchequer (Mauritius Master Plan for Education, 1991).

- The plan and projects should be relevant to the national economic and social needs and rally public opinion. There should be an indication that social partners and stakeholders are willing to participate in the implementation process. As Minister of Education, I had ensured that a national consensus was built by involving all the stakeholders in the discussions: heads of organisations, members of the public, the opposition parties and media. This is a slow and complex process but necessary to achieve the credibility that donor agencies seek to support.

- The implementing agencies should demonstrate that the necessary conditions for effective implementation and efficient use of resources actually exist. The Master Plan was a success because in addition to its vision, it had a well-articulated proposal for implementation ¾ not only were the implementation agencies identified but also the timeframes within which the activities would be completed. The Master Plan Coordinating Unit (MPCU), with a full-time manager, coordinated the monitoring and evaluation of the project. There was a synergy between the Ministries of Education, Finance and Economic Planning so that all available resources could be mobilised for the efficient and effective implementation of the Master Plan.

According to a World Bank Appraisal Report in 1995:

> The first lesson from past projects is that a clear vision and a policy framework for institutional changes and investments should be prerequisites for project design. Secondly project design should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of a rapidly changing economic and social environment. Finally past experience also shows that a project should not support experimental and innovative activities for which little commitment exists on the part of parents, who are key decision makers.

It further points out the need to obtain "consensus on the policy action at the outset, providing flexible financing mechanisms, and including periodic and mid-term reviews". It also underlines the need for improvement of education's linkages with the labour market through employer involvement.

For the first time, several international organizations and donor countries had associated with the Government in the preparation of the plan and offered assistance of this magnitude without any restrictive preconditions. In fact, in the agreed minutes of negotiations with the World Bank on the Mauritius Education Sector Development Project 1993, it was stated that: "There are no conditions of effectiveness, the loan is expected to become effective soon after the signature of the Loan Agreement (Mauritius Education Sector Development Project, 1993)."

The Mauritian experience is an example of multilateral co-operation and dialogue where each partner understands the variables and the imperatives of the other. It exemplifies the concept of partnership as opposed to aid, based on exchange and mutual benefits. The Association for Development of African Education (ADEA) has used this example as a model and has published a case study of Mauritius as part of a series of six case studies on policy formation in Africa.

In his 1996 report to UNESCO, Jacques Delors underlined that "the main parties contributing to the success of educational reforms are, first of all, the local community, including parents, heads and teachers; secondly the public authorities and thirdly the international community. Many past failures have been due to insufficient involvement of one or more of these partners. Attempts to impose educational reforms from the top down, or from outside have obviously failed" (Delors, 1996). These words are amply illustrated in the Mauritian example which succeeded in creating the 'grand alliance' spirit and mobilizing both local and international partnerships while ensuring that the plan remained a Mauritian plan.

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Sector-Based Development Co-operation: Evolving Strategies, Persisting Problems – a Place for Dialogue

Joel Samoff[1]

Introduction[2]

'Partnership for international development co-operation' is the currently preferred characterization of foreign assistance. No longer the rich uncle helping the indigent and perhaps profligate nephew, but partners working side by side to enable the poor to become more self-sufficient. There have been important conceptual shifts in how aid is described: from charity to technical assistance to co-operation to partnership. Most recently, attention has shifted to knowledge and expertise. Providing advice, not funds, must be the principal role of international aid agencies, the World Bank tells us.

In a setting of reduced direct major power confrontation and an expanding gap between the most and the least affluent countries, foreign assistance becomes central to international co-operation, security, and peace. Many perceive global immiseration as the principal threat to their own standard of living and more generally to international economic growth and stability.

Though many regard Africa as so troubled, so distant, and so inconsequential that it can safely be ignored, it is in Africa that the rhetoric of partnership and development co-operation will be most sorely tested. Hence, Africa is especially important in understanding the new ideologies of aid precisely because it is so poor, accounts for so little of the world's trade, and is currently experiencing declining aid and increasing debt. The widespread consensus that access to education differentiates the developmentally successful countries from the others insures that support to education will be central to the aid relationship and that the ideas that frame its availability

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[2] This paper is based on my contribution to a probing and frank discussion of external support to education and development co-operation at Nordic Solidarity: Conference on the Role of Education Policies for Development Co-operation, Oslo, June 2002, "Sector-Based Development Co-operation: Critical Issues." For the observations developed here I have drawn on earlier presentations of several of the themes, including "The Evolution of Education Aid to Africa: Changing Terminology, Persisting Practice," Comparative and International Education Society Annual Meeting, Washington, March, 2001.

and use can and will have a substantial impact on efforts to forge international partnerships and promote sustainable development.

Notwithstanding the adoption of the new terminology and optimism about improved co-operation and coordination, the available evidence suggests little has changed in the aid relationship. Though rarely discussed explicitly, national and institutional interests structure the provision and receipt of external support. The size of the education gap to be closed in most of Africa and the many pressing demands on available resources combine to nurture heavy reliance on external funding, which in turn makes it difficult for the government to assert and maintain an independent posture. Collectively, funding and technical assistance agencies apparently continue to instruct more than listen and thus undermine the dialogue and partnership they claim to construct. The pressures to maintain the aid relationship, including its patterns of influence and dependence, regularly overwhelm initiatives to change it.

Let us consider the evolving terminology by reviewing concrete experiences in Africa. What do we learn from observations in the field?

Evolving terminology

Recent discussions of external aid, and especially aid to education, assert the importance, and in some countries experience, of a transition from project assistance to sectoral support. That shift, from a focus on relatively discrete activities to an integrated approach to the education system as a whole, has been accompanied by an evolving understanding of the role of funding and technical assistance agencies. In a recent interview one funding agency official characterized that transition: "There has been an evolution of thinking among the donors. We have moved from doing to countries to doing for countries to now doing with countries (Samoff, 2001 a)."

The apparent trend is toward sectoral support. Note that the common terminology is often used inconsistently. While some regards 'programme support' and 'sectoral support' as synonyms, others distinguish the two, suggesting a continuum from project (narrow) to programme (broader) to sectoral (broadest) support. The term 'sector' is generally understood loosely to refer either to all education activities or to one or another of the major education sub-sectors. Programme or sectoral support is expected to have several powerful advantages for both the government and its foreign partners: a clear global vision, a strengthened national role, including both leadership and ownership, improved coordination, less duplication of effort, economies of scale, and integrated activities. The program or sectoral approach reflects a holistic understanding of education. Where efforts are linked across the education sector, progress in one area, say school construction, will not be undermined by inattention to another area, say preparing teachers or instructional materials for the new schools. Similarly, a sectoral ap-

proach is expected to facilitate broad campaigns to address high priority goals, for example literacy or improved access for girls or students from disadvantaged regions.

It is important to note here that while it is common to present the programmatic or sectoral approach as new or relatively recent, in practice some foreign assistance has for many years had a sectoral character. That is, from the funding agency's perspective, discussions about overall assistance began with an assessment of the state of the education sector, the agency's interests, and the government's priorities. Attention then turned to individual projects. Though funded separately, they were expected to be complementary and, ideally, mutually supportive and reinforcing. Hence, it may be that what is new about the sectoral approach is neither broad approach nor budgetary support but rather increased coordination among the external agencies.

It is equally important to note that governments have necessarily had a sectoral approach to managing the education system. While particular projects and other activities may receive special attention, they are accountable for the education system as a whole.

If sectoral support is the wave of the future (or present), what exactly is it? Once again we find sharp differences among agencies (and governments). Most of those involved understand a sectoral approach to include: (a) explicit leadership by the national government, including coordination of external assistance; (b) active participation by all or nearly all the organizations and agencies that provide support; (c) focus on the education sector as a whole, or on one of its major sub-sectors (for example, basic education); (d) a nationally developed policy statement and programmatic framework, with an associated projection of revenues and expenditures; (e) harmonization of externally supported activities, guided by national policy and priorities; (f) common implementation, managerial, and administrative structures (generally, governmental rather than external agency or externally created, funded, or managed institutions), including reporting formats and periodic reviews; (g) assured long-term assistance; and (h) pooled sectoral funding, leading toward direct budgetary support.

Perspectives on several of these elements, however, remain sharply divergent. For some, a sectoral approach implies a commitment to direct budgetary support, if not in the present then at some point in the future. A variant on this position, often termed 'basket funding', expects external assistance from several agencies concerned with the same activities to be pooled.

To reiterate, this perspective – that a sectoral approach implies budgetary support or common funding – is sharply debated. Some involved in education support understand a sectoral approach to suggest simply a broader or more inclusive orientation than a focus on a particular project or a more holistic approach to education development, with clearer recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the many activities of the

education sector. Hence, in this view a sectoral approach neither requires nor expects common funding or direct budgetary support.

Indeed, some argue forcefully that while it might seem attractive and is being provided in some countries, direct budgetary support is simply not practical. In their view, that approach creates too many opportunities for diverting funds. There would be less, not more, coordination and control. Observers have noted that direct budgetary support is likely to shift influence within the government. Senior officials in the finance ministry would become even more active participants in setting education policy and perhaps managing education programs, while those units currently responsible for negotiating and managing project and program aid would likely have reduced financial leverage and perhaps a reduced overall role.

The discussion of a programmatic or sectoral approach to education assistance is commonly accompanied by the assertion of the importance of the national role in setting and managing the education development agenda. On the face of it, that seems hardly worth mentioning. In the public discourse no one seriously argues that anyone other than the recipient country, in practice the national leadership or those charged with managing the education system, should set goals and determine objectives. Notwithstanding that apparent consensus, the practice has been otherwise. In many ways, some more obvious and others far more subtle, external actors have influenced and constrained the national education agenda. Indeed, even as there is rhetorical agreement on country-led development, foreign governments, international organizations, and other external agencies impose firm conditions, make explicit demands, and implicitly influence education objectives, priorities, and practices (Samoff, 1995; Samoff, 1999).[3] Reviews of the education sector analysis process by the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis (WGESA) of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa have highlighted several of the pathways of this influence and their role in impeding progress toward effective dialogue, genuine partner-

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[3] The World Bank offers numerous examples of these divergent orientations. Periodically it announces that it has been too directive and that is must listen more and insist less. Equally often it asserts its roles as (a) expert development advisory service, better informed and more experienced than African decision makers and practitioners, and (b) protector of the interests of disadvantaged groups. The former Vice President for Africa expressed these conflicting orientations clearly, announcing that the World Bank would no longer dictate development plans to African countries and would stop "imposing" foreign expertise on reluctant African governments and shortly thereafter asking rhetorically, "How do you get girls educated in the Sahel, except through conditionality?" The practices of other external agencies manifest a similar duality. I have explored this issue in "How do you get girls educated in the Sahel, except through conditionality? External Agencies and Education in Africa," (Boston: Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, March, 1995). For an overview of external influence on education policy and practice more generally and references, see Joel Samoff, "Institutionalizing International Influence," in Robert F. Arnove and Carlos Alberto Torres, eds., 1999, pp. 51–89.

ship, and national ownership of externally funded activities (Samoff and Assié-Lumumba 1996).

Assessments of sector wide approaches to aid to education diverge. Interviews with funding and technical assistance agency officials reflect the range of opinions. While some regard sectoral approaches, including pooled funding and budget support, as the necessary and inevitable mode for organizing aid, others see a sectoral approach as one strategy among many, more appropriate in some places than others and quite undesirable or unworkable in still others. Some see sectoral approaches as a powerful means for strengthening national leadership and autonomy, while others worry that combined action by external agencies risks reducing the options available to the national leadership and undermining still further its capacity for independent action.

Indeed just as advocates of sectoral approaches offer a list of positive features and consequences (summarized above), so the critics outline what they find especially problematic: (a) creating SWAPs generates very high transaction costs, especially activities delayed waiting for the SWAP to be agreed and established; (b) SWAPs tend to be dominated by the largest or strongest funding agencies (in each setting), while smaller agencies and other education sector organizations are largely excluded; (c) the major focus of SWAPs is generally on macro-level policies, especially economic policies, with corresponding inattention to learning and learners; and (d) in practice, SWAPs become an obstacle to decentralization, accountability, and local participation. That last critique is central to assessing claims about development co-operation partnership. Most discussions of SWAPs, for example, refer to co-operation between external agencies and government, usually understood to be the ministry or department responsible for education. While official documents may refer to communities or civil society, rarely do the institutional arrangements of sectoral approaches include formal roles for non-governmental organizations (local, national, or international), teachers, parents, and students.

Observations from the field

The development assistance literature has begun to focus analytic and evaluative attention on sectoral approaches. Many agency-commissioned reports offer enthusiastic conclusions about the effectiveness and value of a sectoral orientation, while others are more critical in their observations (World Bank, 2001; Al-Samarrai et al, 1999). To contribute to the assessment of changing patterns of education assistance, the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis in 1997 commissioned a comparative analysis of modes of aid provision, with particular attention to sectoral approaches, in three African countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mozambique (Buchert, 1999). Unfortunately, to date it has not proved possible to complete the Ghana

and Mozambique case studies. I draw here, therefore, on the Burkina Faso case study, which focused particular attention on the development of the Ten Year Plan for Basic Education (Samoff, 2001 b). Exploring aid to education in Burkina Faso permits deepening our understanding of this arena of international co-operation and contestation and enables us to explore what has or has not changed. Burkina Faso is currently among the largest recipients of development aid in West Africa. Fieldwork in Burkina Faso in 1998 and 1999 included a review of aid documents and correspondence and extended interviews with senior education and development officials and funding and technical assistance agency representatives. Supplementing that data collection are information from a national review of education sector studies undertaken by researchers at the Université de Ouagadougou and interviews with French foreign ministry aid officials (Ilboudo et al, 1999).

While a single case reflects the particular circumstances of that case, nonetheless it does permit observations and insights not readily available in the documents prepared by funding and technical assistance agencies and in the reports and commentaries of their senior staff. In addition to the observations of the research in Burkina Faso, I draw here on more than two decades of studies of and work in education sector analysis and co-operation in Africa.

Critical issues: experiences in Burkina Faso

What have we learned about the attitudes and practices of sectoral approaches and partnership in Burkina Faso's education sector? Reliance on foreign assistance remains substantial. Indeed, reaching the major targets of Burkina Faso's Ten Year Plan for basic education is deemed to require extensive and continuing external aid. As one very senior education ministry representative noted about World Bank support: "We simply cannot do without it."

With few exceptions, education officials in Burkina Faso, both national and foreign, report that they are moving toward a sectoral approach, that development co-operation partnerships have improved, and that the Ten Year Plan for Basic Education will facilitate further progress in that direction. Other evidence and our own observations confirmed that the agency coordination group seemed to be functioning effectively and meeting the expectations and needs of both agencies and the government. Led by an energetic civil servant sensitive to the complexities of his task, the basic education ministry characterized itself as confident of its ability to guide national education and lead education development, including foreign contributions.

At the same time, the interviews suggest that perhaps far less has changed than those generally optimistic comments indicate. Most funding and technical assistance agencies adhere to their interests, priorities, and procedures

and are often reluctant or unwilling to compromise with the government or with other agencies. Though occasionally rhetorically assertive, the government seeks to avoid jeopardizing the external funds on which it has come to rely. The general inclination to pay little attention to relevant earlier experiences in Burkina Faso and elsewhere is compounded by the restricted access to foundation studies and other documents, with potentially serious consequences for the elaboration, implementation, and sustainability of the Ten Year Plan. In addition, an opportunity to develop and reinforce capacity for education research is lost. Overall, then, what seems new here is neither a broad sectoral approach nor budgetary support, for there is a previous history of both, but rather apparently increased coordination among the external agencies.

Thus, notwithstanding the apparent consensus that a sectoral approach and partnership are the order of the day, continuities across the nearly four decades of Burkina Faso's independence are striking. Discussing the sectoral approach, one official commented: "At high levels, people talk about sectoral support. At the base, there are projects."

Observations on sector-based development and education partnerships

Let us return to the sectoral approach and partnerships for education development. What do we learn from this review of the development of the Ten Year Plan for Basic Education in Burkina Faso and of sectoral approaches in other countries? To facilitate discussion in a setting that is commonly more attentive to policy statements than to empirical studies of practice and that for both funding and technical assistance agencies and national governments is periodically far too self-congratulatory, I shall phrase these observations sharply.

(i) *In much of Africa, programmatic or sectoral support – foreign assistance to a broad range of related education activities, usually in basic education and/ or literacy – is in practice not a recent innovation. What is more recent is the effort to increase coordination and co-operation among the external funding and technical assistance agencies.*

While the explicit rationales and formal policy statements on program support and sector support may be recent, the practice has a longer history. Indeed, in some countries since the end of European rule at least some external agencies have supported distinct but related activities across the education sector, or more commonly, across basic education and/or literacy. That is perhaps clearest in countries where the former colonial power has maintained an active education support program. In this regard, it is useful to note that alleviating poverty and improving the standard of living in

Africa have been common rationales for foreign aid for decades, and in fact one public justification for colonial rule itself.

That observation suggests the importance of examining carefully earlier foreign aid that shared many characteristics with what is now termed sectoral support, even though the terminology may have differed.

What does seem to have changed in recent years are the relationships among the external funding and technical assistance agencies. The adoption of a sectoral approach seems to have fostered efforts to improve coordination and to some extent co-operation among those agencies. In a few countries, the government seems to have played a prominent role in fostering and encouraging that coordination and co-operation. Improved coordination seems especially likely in the context of a larger commitment to closer relationships, for example among the countries of the European Union. That, however, is certainly not automatic. Notwithstanding their organizational pressures to cooperate, the commonalities in their institutional frameworks, and the ostensibly integrating role and force of the United Nations Special Initiative for Africa, the UN agencies in a specific country may find it just as difficult to work with each other and with other organizations, as do the national agencies.

Experiences from Burkina Faso:

Managing and monitoring the implementation of the Ten Year Plan for Basic Education will involve both the government and the funding and technical assistance agencies and will thus provide another arena for discussion, negotiation, alliance and coalition construction, and exercising influence. Overall, what stands out here is neither a broad sectoral approach nor budgetary support, for there is a previous history of both, but rather apparently increased coordination among the external agencies.

It is difficult, however, to attribute the improved coordination to a new sectoral approach or to new attitudes toward partnership. In part, the situation, especially the increasing role of the European Union, is itself a pressure and a vehicle for improved co-ordination. Equally or more important, the expertise, competence, and style of the individuals in the key roles, as distinct from new approaches or strategies, strongly influence the patterns of interactions between the government and its partners.

(ii) Notwithstanding the apparent consensus in official statements, there are persisting and sharp disagreements on the real value of increased coordination among the funding and technical assistance agencies and on the principal obstacles to achieving it.

When asked, nearly everyone asserts the importance of improved coordination among funding and technical assistance agencies, and nearly everyone

laments the difficulties in working toward it. In private moments, however, that consensus evaporates. Government officials complain strongly about the time required to deal with successive agency delegations and about the multiplicity of procedures and forms required to report on funds received. At the same time, some government officials are deeply concerned that improved coordination among their development partners will result in a strong alliance that will make it even more difficult to pursue national objectives that are not in accord with external agency priorities or preferences. Working with each agency individually is preferable, they insist, because that approach leaves the government greater room to maneuver, even to the point of seeking support from another agency for activities one agency has declined to fund. Similarly, agency officials are troubled when they discover that two agencies are supporting similar activities, commissioning overlapping studies, and recruiting technical assistance with the same expertise. At the same time, some agency officials are sharply critical of the philosophy or approach or expectations or style of other agencies and work hard to distance their own work from that of other agencies whose activities they do not respect or approve. In sum, both government and agency officials periodically conclude that less coordination is better.

Not surprisingly, there is little consensus on the obstacles to improved coordination. Funding and technical assistance agencies resist and indeed impede coordination, we are told, because each wants to plant its national flag, that is, claim clear, unequivocal, and public responsibility for particular activities. The government resists and indeed impedes coordination, we are told, because it prefers to deal with agencies individually, hoping to play one against another.

There are, it seems to me, several implications here. First, improved coordination among funding and technical assistance agencies is not necessarily or automatically desirable. The level and forms of coordination that best suit government and external agencies must be determined in specific settings rather than generalized across Africa. Second, there may be large benefits in small improvements in coordination and co-operation. It may be possible, for example, to make progress toward common reporting procedures without envisioning common ('basket') funding or even a single standardized reporting format. Third, improved coordination will require finding ways to continue to highlight and value the activities of particular agencies. Ultimately, each agency must report to its parent government and citizens on what the assistance it has provided, rather than foreign aid in general, has accomplished. That is likely to become even more important where governments become more conservative and where economic boom is replaced by slow or no growth. Whatever forms it takes, improved coordination will need to respect the unique roles and contributions of each agency.

> *Experiences from Burkina Faso:*
>
> Many external agencies insist that their principal role is to provide technical assistance, while many Burkinabè insist equally strongly that most technical assistance compromises the development of national expertise. After years of support for capacity building, agencies complain that there is not sufficient national capacity to assume control of major programs and activities.

(iii) *Foreign aid, whether for education or other sectors, is primarily a foreign policy tool intended to serve the providing country's national interests as they are understood by that country. That role for education aid will continue.*

Historically, foreign aid has consistently been used to influence behavior deemed important to security and other national interests. Equally important, aid providing countries must justify their allocations of public funds in terms of national interests understood and respected by their citizens. As long as territorially defined nation states continue be the principal sites for legislation and tax collection, that link between foreign aid and national interests will continue. That connection may be stronger in some settings than in others, and the emergence of new arrangements (for example, the European Union) may influence the specification of national interests.

It is of course not unreasonable for countries to have interests and to pursue them. What is short-sighted is to act as if that were not the case.

The primary implication of this observation is that the most effective development co-operation strategies will be those that respect the interests and sovereignty of the parties involved. For Africa, that means understanding and working to support, rather than simply tolerating, the notion that aid to Africa must provide visible and tangible benefits to the aid providing countries. For the aid providing countries, that requires recognizing that assertions of authority and demand for control that threaten the sovereignty of recipient nations are just as likely to jeopardize development co-operation as would attacks on their own sovereignty. Though readily acknowledged, that mutual respect for partners' interests is very difficult to accomplish.

(iv) *Within Africa, orientations toward education (and other) assistance periodically shift between a preference for aid as charity or transfer of resources and aid as development co-operation.*

African governments would prefer foreign assistance that arrives in predictable volumes and at predictable intervals with no or at worst, very few, conditions. That is conceivable if foreign aid were understood as charity, as affluent people who are moved by the immiseration of poverty might hand a coin to a street beggar. But African countries do and should reject the role

of beggar, for those who provide charity do not regard those who receive it as their equals. The charity orientation undermines respect for Africa, its peoples, and its governments, and thus ultimately has a very high cost. If, as several commentators have advocated, affluent countries were to accept a responsibility to pay reparations to Africa for the exploitation and depredations of colonial rule and unfavorable terms of trade, that might be another approach to aid without conditions. But for the present, reparations seem too unlikely to feature prominently in this discussion.

At the other end of the aid continuum is development co-operation among independent and sovereign partners. While there are important differences of resources and power among the partners, the partnership itself can and should be founded on a notion of fundamental equality. Aid in this mode, however, requires respect for divergent national interests, discussed above. Aid in this framework will necessarily carry at least some conditions, for conditions can be used to require attention to particular national interests. Indeed, some aid providers insist that to be effective the aid relationship needs conditions.

Since both charity and conditions are fundamentally distasteful, African governments may periodically find the one or the other more attractive, or rather, less unattractive.

(v) 'Country led development' is both essential to effective foreign assistance and at the same time in sharp tension with the aid relationship.

As I have noted, it is commonly assumed that adopting a sectoral approach to education assistance will foster and strengthen the national role in setting goals, objectives, and priorities and in establishing and maintaining the framework for development co-operation. Beyond the general sense that determining development objectives is a national prerogative and responsibility, that enhanced national role is expected to enhance the relevance and strengthen the sustainability of education development initiatives. Pragmatically, country led development is a prerequisite for national appropriation and ownership. The national education community is unlikely to be strongly committed to an education development agenda that it perceives to have been externally set. Formally, all funding and technical assistance agencies regularly reiterate their commitment to that strong national role and their willingness, indeed obligation, to situate their own activities within a nationally designed and managed framework.

At the same time, many agencies maintain objectives and procedures that reflect their own understandings, goals, priorities, and formal responsibilities. Notwithstanding reaffirmations of the importance of country led development and of instructing less and listening more, at least some agencies continue to assert an explicitly directive leadership role. Their language is that of instructor rather than partner. External constraints and influences

can be direct and indirect, obvious and very subtle. Formal conditions for foreign aid are the clearest but not the only forms. Throughout Africa we find programs and priorities that frank local observers insist would not have been adopted or assigned high priority without external pressure (girls' education and environmental education are common examples). That perspective should not surprise us. By their nature, external funding agencies are structurally obliged to impose conditions and assert influence. By their training and socialization, agency officials are expected to know what is best, what works and what does not, and what ought to be done. Aid conditions – the antithesis of country led development – are essential to progress.

In addition, country led development requires a strong and assertive national leadership that is willing on occasion to terminate negotiations or even a funded program rather than acquiesce to external direction. Structurally, however, the large gap to be closed where many school-aged children are not in school and many adults remain unable to read and write comfortably increases the reliance on external funding. A government that jeopardizes that funding puts its entire development agenda and perhaps itself at risk. That in turn leads the education ministries regularly to defer to the external agencies: "Everything they do is directed by one agency or another. MEBA [the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy in Burkina Faso] is not yet strong enough to insist on what it wants."

Experiences from Burkina Faso:

Indeed, in both written documents and comments during our discussions, agency personnel were generally quite critical of the Ten Year Plan. Asked to comment on a revised draft, agency representatives noted that it was an improvement over earlier versions but still lacked focus and coherence. Their language was pointed. It is "off the mark on important points". "It does not recognize or frame sharply the strategic choices to be made." "It lacks important options." The content and tone of their response was both striking and revealing. Writing to the government, the external agencies announced what ought to be done or what should be done, both in terms of the document and its education policies: *Chaque document devrait avoir....* On the eve of its adoption, they proposed a fundamental reorganization of the document.

That duality appeared clearly throughout our discussions on the preparation of Burkina Faso's Ten Year Plan for the Development of Basic Education. Notwithstanding reaffirmations of the importance of country led development and of instructing less and listening more, at least some agencies continued to assert an explicitly directive leadership role. As their recent communication show, their language is that of instructor rather than partner. External constraints and influences can be direct and indirect, obvious and very subtle. Formal conditions for foreign aid are the clearest but not the only forms. Several people told us of programmes and priorities that in their view would not have been adopted without external pressure.

   These observations suggest that as we wrestle with notions of country led development, we must recognize that (a) aid dependence and country led development are incompatible and (b) as long as the heavy reliance on foreign aid continues, the immediate task is to work on transparency and clarity about roles rather than assuming that external agencies ('development partners') have no interests or can ignore them or will subordinate their own sense of what must be done to decisions of national education officials.

(vi) While improving the flow of information and development expertise is a high priority objective, combining external funding and advice is inherently problematic.

As I have noted, the World Bank and other agencies increasingly assert that even more important than the funds they provide is their expertise and advice. In practice, external support has nearly always carried conditions and therefore advice. The current emphasis reflects the prominence of notions of knowledge management within the World Bank and other agencies and an understanding of what has come to be called the 'knowledge era', in which information is deemed more important for economic growth and development than land, labor, and capital.

   While information of various sorts may come to play new roles, and while strategies for developing, organizing, storing, and disseminating knowledge will be affected by rapidly changing technologies, it is far from clear that combining the provision of funds with the provision of authoritative claims about what constitutes development knowledge and the institutionalization of funding agencies as development advisory services will serve poor countries well or will advance development co-operation.

   The potential problems here are numerous and well beyond the scope of this discussion (Samoff and Stromquist, 2001). Still, in a discussion of development co-operation and partnership it is important to note briefly some of the risks of this combination of funds and advice. What is deemed valid and legitimate information ('knowledge') will become increasingly centralized in the North. Information that is collected in the South will be shaped and framed by its interpreters, that is, those who create and manage the development knowledge databases and information systems. That powerful role in determining what is and what is not knowledge will be obscured by the mystique of science and scientific method. The centralization of the determination of what is knowledge entrenches the role of the elite education and research institutions in the world, nearly all located in the most affluent countries. What is deemed to be the important knowledge is likely to become more technical and less humanistic and critical. The projection of broad, nearly universal access to web-based information databases underestimates both current technical obstacles and cost and the likelihood that in the current global system, the technological gap will increase, not decrease.

Overall, information databases created and maintained by authoritative institutions in the North with substantial economic leverage and ideological influence are most likely to reinforce existing power relations, both within and across countries.

(vii) Compared to project support, sector support has both important advantages and the potential for important disadvantages.

Addressing the entire education sector (or sub-sector) rather than individual projects ought to facilitate a holistic approach to education as an integrated system in which each of the elements affects all of the others. Clearly, it makes good sense to strengthen the links between reforms in, say, teacher education to developments in the preparation of instructional materials. Similarly, efforts to increase enrollment among females will require attention to school location, and construction, to curriculum and pedagogy, to textbooks and wall charts, and to management and administration. When managed effectively sectoral support highlights the links among problems and thereby reduces the risk that problems in one area will impede or undermine policies or programs in other areas. Sectoral support also provides a foundation for greater coordination of the aid provided by external funding and technical assistance agencies within a framework established by the national education leadership.

At the same time, much more than was the case with a focus on particular projects, sectoral support legitimizes external intervention throughout the education sector, including policies and activities that receive no external support. An external agency, for example, may insist on reviewing policies and programs in, say, special education, even though it has no direct role and plans no direct role in special education. The education ministry's objection that the insistence is inappropriate since that agency has not been asked to support special education is likely to be overruled. Sectoral support becomes a warrant for all agencies to intervene in all areas. Within a sectoral approach, the national leadership may find it much more difficult to pursue policies in particular areas that are at odds with the priorities and preferences of the external agencies, even though there has been no request for foreign support in those areas.

(viii) The background, experiences, preparation, expectations, style, and sensitivity of key officials of the government and of the funding and technical assistance agencies generally have greater impact on the nature of the aid relationship and on the nature of development co-operation than the formal approach to education assistance.

Formally, approaches to education assistance have changed over time. We have been concerned with what has been described as a transition from project support to programmatic or sectoral support. Whether or not within a sectoral

approach, there have been many efforts to reform the aid process. Some agencies have provided direct budget support or other non-project assistance. Particular funding and technical assistance agencies have periodically relocated primary responsibilities and authority for their support from headquarters to field offices and the reverse. Procedures for proposing and negotiating support arrangements, evaluating proposals, releasing and using funds, and activity and financial reporting have been modified, some many times. Organizational rearrangements, relocations of authority, and other modifications of the forms and management of the aid relationship are likely to continue.

In practice, the initiative, sensitivity, responsiveness, and manner of the people involved seem to matter more than the general approach and formal procedures. Particular government officials and their agency counterparts seem to be very effective in finding fertile ground for co-operation and in developing strategies that achieve significant results while respecting each government's interests and sovereignty. They manage to do so within very different ways of organizing external support to education in Africa (for example, project vs. sectoral). Other officials in the same roles are much less successful, no matter what the general approach.

The implication here is that while there are certainly grounds for working to improve the general approach, we cannot assume that the outcomes are primarily a function of the approach adopted rather than the people involved. Nor is it necessarily the case that problems in the past can be attributed to the ineffectiveness or inappropriateness of earlier approaches.

Promise and problems. Opportunities and constraints. The aid relationship remains contested terrain.

Experiences from Burkina Faso:

Has coordination among the funding and technical assistance agencies and between them and the government improved? Nearly everyone interviewed, including both government and agency officials, considered the coordination group, then led by the Netherlands, to be very effective. Most thought that the coordinator provided informed and sensitive leadership. He was both willing to take the initiative and at the same time remained responsive to his constituencies.

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Dialoguing in Development Co-operation – a Case of Twinning

Bounthavy Sisouphanthong[1]

Introduction

Dialogue became a key word in development discussions during the previous decade. These dialogues mostly refer to high-level discussions on governmental level. However, is there not a need for dialogue on the programme and project level in order to achieve better understanding of the co-operationprocess and how to meet the mutual needs?

Dialogue can be used in various ways for promoting the advance of the development process.

- As an instrument for addressing the fundamental questions concerning long-term goals, institutional context.
- As an instrument for arriving at a mutual understanding of policies, objectives and programmes on project level.
- As an instrument for reaching agreements on necessary changes.
- As an instrument for reaching agreements on how to solve problems.

The Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) has been using the concept of twinning for its assistance for capacity building and international development. In this paper, experiences will be summaries from a twinning co-operationbetween two national statistical institutes, i.e. the National Statistics Centre (NSC) of Laos PDR and the Central Bureau of Statistics Sweden (SCB).

Organisation development

Since 1992 the NSC has cooperated with Sida in implementing a project, which aims to strengthen the capacity of the NSC and promote the country's capability to produce official economic and social statistics.

SCB is the partner 'twin' for technical assistance. The two twinning partners are their opposites in many aspects. In terms of size, for example, it is

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Twinning as a means of capacity development — explanatory note

Twinning in the vocabulary of development co-operationmeans that an organisation – in a donor country – is paired with its equivalent in a partner country with the aim of strengthening the institutional development of the organisation in the latter. The institutional strengthening takes place through a combination of exchange of staff, training, short-term and long-term advisers, study tours etc.

The basic idea behind the twinning arrangement is that the two 'sister-organizations' should have a high degree of similarity in mandate, role in society, functions and responsibilities. The staff should be able to meet as professionals with a common basis of knowledge and professional culture. In a successful twinning project a high degree of mutual confidence is developed, making it possible for the 'donor twin' to also identify and discuss sensitive development issues.

Twinning has been used by Sida since the 1980s as a means for capacity development in strengthening/building government institutions in the South. The Swedish institutions involved in the twinning projects have been *inter alia* the Central Bureau of Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Tax Authority, the Swedish Auditor General, and the Swedish National Police Board and Swedish University departments.

Twinning as a concept has been broadened and is now also used to characterize co-operation in other fields than government institutions. Co-operation between municipalities in developed countries and twin municipalities in other parts of the world sometimes falls under this heading.

Twinning has proved successful for building professional capacity in an organisation either to create a basis for organisational changes or organisational development or as direct input into on-going organisational development. Twinning seems to have been less successful as a method for management development or the change/development of managerial or administrative systems.

a David and Goliath situation. The NSC has a permanent staff of 54 persons while SCB has over 1,200. NSC (including its predecessors) is a young organisation while SCB is the world's oldest national statistical institute. However, even though the partners are very different they share many of the problems encountered by national statistical institutes all over the world.

The objectives

The ultimate objective on a national level for the project is to support the NSC to develop a well functioning statistical system, capable of producing statistics in the different areas required. To fulfil the ambitions stated as national objectives, the NSC has to:

- Develop the capacity to produce and co-ordinate the production and dissemination of relevant, accurate and timely statistics to meet the needs of information from the Government, governmental institutions and the society at large;
- Improve the capacity and capability to advise and supervise the production and dissemination of statistics within other departments, provincial governments and other organisations or enterprises;
- Increase the capability to develop and improve the Lao statistical system to meet new demands for information.

Organizational set-up

The organisational set-up of the twinning project included the following functions:

- A team leader representing SCB, stationed at NSC;
- A Lao counterpart representing the NSC;
- A joint committee for the planning and supervision of the project development;
- A project coordinator at SCB;
- Short-term consultants from SCB;
- Study tours for the NSC staff to Statistics Sweden or other national statistical institutes.

Strategy

The strategy for the twinning co-operationcan be described as in figure 1. Together the two partners were to climb the steps and eventually reach the top where NSC emerges as a self-sufficient organisation capable of fulfilling its role as the national institute. (See figure 1.)

Twinning as a method: the experiences of NSC

The ten years of collaboration with SCB have resulted in tangible improvements at NSC. We have now a modern IT infrastructure in the office. The staff has learnt how to use statistical software and to operate IT-networks and databases. The staff has learnt English to communicate with the counterparts, almost all of the staff have a passable command of English and many speak good English. The capacity to carry out surveys has been improved, and so on. However, the ten years have also given us insights into problems and obstacles and also ideas about how to overcome the problems. Some of the lessons learnt are listed in the following.

- *The understanding between partners is crucial.*
  This is often an obstacle to the smooth running of the project, at least in the first year(s). The process of 'getting to know each other' and building

Figure 1. The steps to a self-sufficient NSC

What should be done?

Sustainable organization	Develop NSC's capacity as a 'learning organization'. Achieve national and international recognition. Achieve financial sustainability on a level that fulfils the official statistics assignment of NSC.
Managerial skills	Develop planning systems, office routines, human resources development, budget and cost accounting.
Professional skills	Improve competence and capacity in the fields of: 'statistical thinking', survey design, sample design, data analysis, national accounts, business registers, international classifications, database design and maintenance, presentation, publication.
Infrastructure, equipment	Up-grade the NSC in PC's, local area networks, data base servers, and statistical software.
Basic skills	Develop the competence of NSC staff in ability to understand, speak and write English. Other basic skills, like mathematics, ability to communicate orally and in writing, have not been covered in the cooperation.

Develop-
ment of:

a common ground for the work can take time. Differences in cultures, institutional and organisational as well as social, often hamper the work in the beginning.

Misunderstandings or 'not understanding' are common in the beginning. The issue of objectivity was difficult at the outset. For example, there are situations where there is a need to have some crude data ready very quickly for a decision maker, perhaps something he/she needs in a political discussion. Then SCB said: "No, this is not objective statistics, this is too much assumptions and guesswork. If you are going to call it statistics, you need data of better quality." We did not understand these

things in the beginning. Why could we not we use our quick estimates if the decision maker needed some data?

- It is extremely important to have a *precise frame of cooperation*.

  We have to design how the co-operation should be from the early stage and who will be the real partner, SCB or the International Consulting Office within Statistics Sweden? This must be clear in order not to create confusion. However, the frame of co-operation can be flexible in some aspects. The demands from some areas might differ from other areas and also be different from time to time. It is our experience that these things were not fully discussed at the outset of the project, a better dialogue should have taken place. It is, for example, probable that a better dialogue would have resulted in a clearer understanding on both sides of the problems with the national accounts and the business register and, consequently, that more resources would have been allocated to these areas at an early stage.

- The *long-term contract* is very important for twinning co-operations.

  It helps us to think about development in a long-term perspective. That is not the case in many other development projects, where everything is supposed to happen very fast, which often means that somebody from abroad is actually doing it. The long-term contract allows us to have a long-term perspective in our development work and to maintain an on-going dialogue with our partner.

- Furthermore, the *personal relations* are very important.

  It takes some time to build up trust, but now we have come to know Statistics Sweden, we know their capacity and we know the people working there. We talk about many things, not only about the question of funding.

- In twinning the *transfer of knowledge* is a key concept.

  This is not a simple process, particularly in the twinning cooperation, due to the fact that the staff of each organisation has different qualifications. Thus the question of how to transfer the knowledge is important. Should we merely copy experiences and skills from the sister organisation or should we focus on *learning* (application of skills and experiences in the local context)? This is an issue that we did not discuss explicitly at the outset of the cooperation. A thorough discussion in the beginning would have clarified the roles in the transfer process better. However, even without that discussion we can see a gradual shift from copying (which is the predominant way of learning at the early stages in the knowledge transfer process) to learning through application of acquired knowledge in the local setting. An example is the rather technical area of sample de-

sign. At the start of the project the capacity to design samples was very limited. During the first years of co-operation some of the staff acquired the basic theoretical knowledge of sampling but they were not confident when it came to applying the knowledge on real sampling problems. Today the NSC staff design samples for the NSC surveys and also act as consultants and teachers to the Government and to organisations on sampling matters.

- The *integrity* of a national statistics institute (NSI) in relation to government and other stakeholders is important.

  The NSI must be able to present impartial statistics founded on facts without undue interference from external actors. In a twinning co-operation the 'developed' partner may be able to support the national statistical institute in its efforts to strengthen the integrity.

Conclusions

Twinning is a workable tool and it is needed in development work. But it also needs long-term commitments from the partners of twinning co-operation in order to be successful. Each partner needs to have a clear understanding of the project from the start. The design of the co-operation should be set in agreement between the partners. The design should allow for flexibility in implementing the project.

To fulfil the above we must have continuous dialogue, which will strengthen and support those needs. There is no blueprint or fixed model for a twinning cooperation. Every twinning co-operation has its own key issues and specific relations between the partners. You cannot foresee all the things that will happen during the cooperation. To handle this situation an 'atmosphere of continuous dialogue' has to be created on all levels within the co-operation.

Dialogue at the Grassroot Level: The Shiksha Karmi Project in India

Uno Winblad[1]

Meaningful dialogue?

A prerequisite for a meaningful dialogue is that we can identify and involve the intended beneficiary. Between the intended beneficiary and the donor there are several levels of bureaucracy – all of which do not necessarily share the values and visions of the donor or the needs and desires of those that the donor wants to reach. My experience as a field worker, researcher and teacher in Africa in the 60s, 70s and 1980s is unequivocal: during those years I met very few senior government officials or politicians who were genuinely interested in the development component of the foreign aid. His (at that time they were always male) main concerns were rather: What type and how many 4-wheel drive vehicles would we provide? And what about a new office building for the department?

Officials at some of these levels understandably feel threatened by the prospect of a direct dialogue between the intended beneficiary and the foreign donor, a dialogue emphasizing transparency, openness and honesty. For the ruling class such dialogue is a subversive activity. The dialogue must be controlled and can therefore only be allowed if conducted through 'official channels'.

A real dialogue is only possible between equals. At a rhetorical level we are of course all equal, but in a world of donors and recipients some tend to be more equal than others. This is obvious in the case of the rich donor representative versus the poor farmer but most equal of all tend to be those representing the higher levels of the ruling party in the receiving country.

However, I have encountered a meaningful dialogue a few times in my 40 years of relating to development aid. The prime example is the Shiksha Karmi Project in India, a case where direct dialogue between donor representatives and the intended beneficiaries actually influenced the implementation of the project.

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The Shiksha Karmi project

The Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) has been called "one of the most successful primary education projects in India" (Agneta Lind, Head of Education Division, Sida, in Ramachandran 2001, p 5). The project was initiated by NGO activists and senior officials in Rajasthan, India, in response to the appalling situation in many village schools. Sida funded a large part of the project.

The Shiksha Karmi Project is unique in several ways. It was conceived and implemented by government and NGOs together. It is based on continual dialogues between villagers, project workers, NGOs, government bodies and the donor. It has successfully reached some of the most disadvantaged communities ('Scheduled Castes' and 'Scheduled Tribes') in Rajasthan.

The problem to be tackled by the project is the fact that in thousands of villages and hamlets in Rajasthan the primary education system does not work. There is often a primary school building, but no teacher and no support system. Only about half of the 6–11 year old children attend primary school and the dropout rate is around 55 per cent. The official literacy rates are amongst the lowest in India: 55 per cent for men, 20 per cent for women (1991 Census). In many remote villages there are no literate women.

There are four major reasons for this:

1. *Absent teachers:* Teachers, often with an urban, middle-class, high-caste background, do not want to live in an isolated village amongst low-caste or tribal people speaking a different language.
2. *Corrupt government education system:* Teachers are allowed to draw a salary even though they rarely or never visit the school they are supposed to serve. (In return for this 'benefit' the teacher has to pay off school inspectors and others in the educational hierarchy.)
3. *Social conservatism:* Child marriage is common and many parents believe that investment in girls' education will have negative social and economic consequences for the family.
4. *Poverty:* Many households are poor and children must contribute to the household economy from an early age.

The project dialogue

The Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) was designed to address the first three reasons: absent teachers, corrupt officials and discrimination of girls. Villages were to be selected on the basis of remoteness, irregular teacher attendance and low enrolment of children. The primary school teacher posted to the village would be withdrawn and replaced by two young persons, 'Shiksha Karmis' (education workers), from the village. The assumption was that young persons with only primary schooling can become barefoot teachers in their own villages after a short initial training period and further on-the-job training.

This basic concept was developed in a dialogue between social activists in a local NGO (SWRC in Tilonia) and a couple of progressive, high level civil servants. It was then tested in a pilot project in 13 villages. Sida was asked to become a partner when the government of Rajasthan decided to turn the pilot project into a full-scale programme covering thousands of villages.

The project document (Government of India, 1987) envisaged that after 6 years the SKP would run activities in 2,000 villages and enrol 300,000 children. (In 2001 the project was in operation in 2,700 villages, catering for 200,000 students.)

The project was to be managed by the Shiksha Karmi Board, a semi-independent body controlled by the state government and staffed with government education officers on secondment. Twice a year there would be a Joint Review of the project by a committee including representatives of the Government of India, the Government of Rajasthan and Sida. The purpose of the Joint Review was to assess the progress of the project, identify problems and bottlenecks and approve targets, action plans and budgets.

The project Document states that "/As/ the project represents an innovative approach to elementary education it is extremely vulnerable. It must be closely monitored and frequently evaluated". Background information for the Joint Review was to be provided in reports by the Project Director, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Jaipur and a Swedish consultant ('the review consultant').

The Joint Reviews offered excellent opportunities for dialogue between government officials from India, Rajasthan and Sweden. But the NGOs, the Shiksha Karmis, the schoolchildren and the parents had no place at the table. Their voices could only reach the Joint Review through the reports by IDS and the review consultant.

This paper is written by a participant observer who, as the review consultant, for eight years, followed and to some extent influenced the development of the project. The review consultant and his team of Indian sub-consultants, all women, visited and revisited hundreds of remote villages and took part in a lively dialogue between villagers, NGO activists, government officials and donor country representatives.

The work of the review consultant

The main task of the review consultant was to find out through observations and dialogue in the villages what was really going on in the project: Were the Shiksha Karmis given basic training and follow-up training? What did they think about it? Were the schools functioning? Were there evening classes for children unable to attend in daytime? Had the equipment (blackboards, chalk, exercise books, pens, textbooks, posters, and kerosene lanterns) arrived? Were the Shiksha Karmis paid on time? Did they receive money to purchase kerosene and other consumables? Did all children of

Uno Winblad with Shiksha Karmis, Rajasthan, 1998.

primary school age in the village attend? The girls too? If not, why? Were there other problems? What did the parents say about the school? When the schools had been in operation for a few years we could also look at retention rates, achievements and the functioning of the support structure.

Another major concern was to prevent the Shiksha Karmi Project from reverting to normal educational sector routines of inefficiency and corruption. From our previous field-based work in India we knew that it can be extremely difficult to find out what is really going on in a project. In rural Rajasthan there is an age-old culture of silence and a deep distrust of visiting officials. A common practice in the villages is to put on a show to impress visitors. Government officials willingly take part in such charades. They want no negative feedback, as their own reports to higher levels must be positive.

Nor could we rely on official reports with their city-male perspective and emphasis on input and quantitative data. The well-known tendency amongst urban-based officials to concentrate on easily reached project sites and avoid the hardship of visiting remote villages also had to be taken into account.

Our approach was to focus on what was happening in the project villages, including the most remote ones, and through dialogues with local NGOs, Shiksha Karmis, parents and children give the Joint Review a clear picture of what was happening and early warnings about potential problems.

Our first task was to recruit a highly qualified team in India: all women, university graduates and NGO activists. We had to have women team mem-

bers to be able to approach village women. University education was important as the job required the ability to plan and carry out surveys and to write reports in English. NGO background was helpful, as the job required that they spent long periods in the field under tough conditions. This background also made it easier for us to gain the confidence of the many local NGOs involved in the project.

Dialogue at field, board and review levels

As Sida-appointed consultants we carried out the dialogue at three levels: Field, Board and Review.

Field and Board

Already in our first dialogue with a group of Shiksha Karmis at a training camp we came across a significant problem: in many project villages Hindi is a foreign language. The pupils (and their mothers) do not speak or understand Hindi. This problem is not mentioned in the Project Document, nor dealt with in the basic training course. Our Indian colleagues on the Shiksha Karmi Board and the Joint Review committee refused to acknowledge the issue. It was politically too sensitive. The Shiksha Karmis themselves solved it by giving all instruction in both Hindi and the local, tribal language.

However, the dialogue in the Shiksha Karmi Project does not begin with the arrival of the review consultant. A dialogue between the Board and the local education authorities is the first step in deciding which villages to approach. Officials of the Shiksha Karmi Board then visit each candidate village to discuss with villagers and the village leaders the possibility of opening a Shiksha Karmi Project school.

Dialogue is not only verbal. Actions speak and observations played an important role in our fieldwork and were often starting points for dialogues.

On certain topics a dialogue is not possible. For example, we observed that many village records showed that the number of girls was much smaller than the number of boys. We came across villages where there were only 50–60 pre-school-aged girls for 100 boys. This may indicate the practice of female infanticide. Villagers as well as the Shiksha Karmi Board members refused to talk to us about this.

During the first couple of years we concentrated on the supply system (payments to Shiksha Karmis, lanterns for evening classes, blackboards, books etc). If these seemingly simple issues did not work, the project would be doomed: the Shiksha Karmis would stop teaching and the parents would stop sending their children to school. These were straightforward issues: we just asked the Shiksha Karmis when the previous salary was paid and checked the equipment available against the list of what was supposed to be there.

Issues related to enrolment and attendance were not quite as simple because payments and promotions were tied to recorded enrolment and attendance figures. To diminish the risk of our visits turning into staged performances we had to take a number of precautions, including not revealing beforehand which villages we intended to visit. It did happen a few times that the local education officer took us on time-consuming detours so that Shiksha Karmis and villagers could be forewarned about our arrival and have time to stage the standard show.

One evening my Indian assistant and I arrived very late in a district town. We went to the District Commissioner's house to report our arrival and were invited to spend the night there. We were supposed to start before daybreak the following morning as the village we had selected was hours away and had no proper road access. The Commissioner wanted to know which village we were going to visit. We told him that we had made a random sample of the project villages and as a matter of policy would not reveal the names of the selected villages. He insisted though, and as it was by then already past midnight we gave him the name of the village selected to represent his area. He would not be able to contact the village before we arrived anyway, as we were to start very early in the morning, and the village had no telephone.

The following morning we arrived and parked our jeep by the school on a hilltop right outside the village. There were plenty of children, including a remarkable number of girls, in every classroom. We followed our normal routine: I stayed at the school with the Shiksha Karmis and the village headman pretending to scrutinize the attendance register. My assistant, Amita Prasher, ran off to the village with her cameras, ostensibly to take some pictures. Her real purpose was to meet village women and by talking to them find out if and how the school was working and what the women thought about it. Her fact-finding mission could only succeed if there were no men present during the dialogue as a tradition in these villages is that women do not speak when men are present. My task was basically to keep the men at the school so that Amita could get on with the job. This rule always worked. After an hour Amita returned reporting that early in the morning a messenger had gone from door to door telling people to send their children to school, washed and nicely dressed. How the District Commissioner had managed to get the message to the village we never found out. But we dropped this particular village from our sample.

Usually we succeeded quite well in establishing dialogues. During the first couple of years we could visit each village several times and attend a number of Shiksha Karmi training sessions. Through repeated meetings and dialogues the Shiksha Karmis came to know us and realized that we were on their side and that they, through our reports, could bring urgent issues to the attention of the Board and the Joint Review. As the project expanded and covered many hundreds of villages, most of them without road access,

we were, however, unable to visit most of them. This had a noticeable effect on the quality of the dialogue. The Shiksha Karmis and the villagers did not get to know us. For them we were just another couple of visiting officials and the less we were told about the real situation, the better.

In an attempt to overcome mistrust by increasing the transparency of our work we translated the Joint Review report to Hindi. Copies of the Hindi version were sent to Shiksha Karmis and NGOs involved in the project. The initiative was a great success at the grassroots level but was not appreciated by the Shiksha Karmi Board and we were told by the Joint Review never to do it again.

One of the project's major concerns was to increase the number of women Shiksha Karmis. The Project Document states "Each village should have two Shiksha Karmis, in principle one female and one male...". In most project villages there were no women with the 5 years of schooling required for selection as a woman Shiksha Karmi. In many of the remote villages there were no literate women at all. The project therefore established special training centres for women, each centre managed by a local NGO. After spending up to 3 years at such a centre a woman could be selected for regular Shiksha Karmi training.

The first training centre was opened in Mada village in 1990 and two years later there were 5 such centres in operation, each managed by a NGO. One member of our team, Manya Jayaram, visited all the centres one year. Through her dialogues with trainees, trainers and managing NGOs we were able to give the Joint Review an in-depth picture of common problems and conflicts and a set of recommendations (Jayaram et al., 1992).

After spending several days at the training centre in Mada, Manya concluded that the centre was doing well: "There is enthusiasm and will amongst the trainers and trainees to succeed at what they have set out to do. The NGO is also a knowledgeable one that can actually contribute and add to this project. However, there is a gap between the NGO and the Shiksha Karmi Board which needs to be bridged."

A year later some members of our team went to Mada to check on reports that the first group of trainees who had completed three years at the centre had failed their basic Shiksha Karmi training. Our dialogues with the women, trainers and the head of the managing NGO revealed a rather sad story: after taking part in their first regular, 37-day Shiksha Karmi training camp (held elsewhere in Rajasthan, far away from their home area) all the 10 women from the Mada Centre were told that they had failed and were sent home. We managed to find and talk to 8 of them and this is what they told us:

All the other 25 SK trainees at the training camp had 10 years or more of primary schooling and all but two of them were male. The Master Trainers as well as the other trainees had Hindi/Rajasthani as their first language. But the Mada women came from tribal villages and their mother tongue was a

local language, Vagdi. Before coming to the Mada centre they had little opportunity to speak, or even listen to, Hindi.

The other trainees would laugh at them as soon as they said something in Hindi (or for that matter when they said something in Vagdi). Even some of the Master Trainers would ridicule them. Their language difficulties were compounded by the fact that the Master Trainers, who came from other parts of Rajasthan, spoke Hindi with an unfamiliar accent. This resulted in misunderstandings and poor spelling during dictation exercises. As a result of the oppressive and fearful atmosphere at the camp, the ridicule that they were subjected to, and the intimidating presence of a large number of men, after a couple of days the Mada women decided not to speak during the rest of the training camp.

At the end of the 37-day training camp the Mada women were told that they had failed and made to understand that they would not be employed as Shiksha Karmis. They returned to their respective villages as 'failures' and therefore faced a lot of problems: their in-laws were angry and threatening; other villagers were scornful, several of the Mada trainees were abused and beaten by their husbands and a couple of them admitted to us that they had contemplated suicide.

The Director of the NGO responsible for the management of the Mada centre pointed out to us that the expulsion of this first batch of graduates from the centre would make it difficult to recruit new trainees. He also suggested that the Board needed to restructure its 37-day training course. It was designed for trainees who have at least eight years of formal schooling. His own centre had to work on building up the self-confidence of the trainees by exposing them to the surrounding world through frequent study visits and contacts with government functionaries.

While we were in Mada investigating the case of the rejected trainees we also met two experienced women Shiksha Karmis who claimed that they had been dismissed by the Board for some unspecified 'weaknesses'. This seemed to us so exceptional that we decided to pursue the matter and document it in our report.

In our report to the Joint Review we pointed out that these two cases, the rejected trainees and the sacked women Shiksha Karmis, indicated a remarkable lack of sensitivity to the plight of women in rural Rajasthan. In our report the previous year we had already stated that "Staff at all levels of the project... need to be sensitised to gender issues..." and reiterated our recommendation "...to establish a special task force of five mobile, dynamic and sensitive women. Their task would be to promote gender issues and bring more women into all levels of the project with the ultimate aim of increasing the enrolment and attendance of girls".

Eventually the rejected trainees and the sacked women Shiksha Karmis were given a second chance. But the basic problem – the lack of a gender perspective among Shiksha Karmi functionaries – remained and was stated

as one of the main areas of concern in an appraisal carried out eight years later (Ramachandran, 2001).

All the Shiksha Karmis we met voiced their worries about the future: Is the project going to continue beyond the first few years? What will become of them when Sida no longer supports the project? In our reports to the Joint Review we pointed out that these worries had to be taken seriously and that it was necessary to keep the Shiksha Karmis informed about the intentions of the donor and the governments.

Review

The information we gleaned during our dialogues in the field was forwarded together with recommendations to the Joint Review. During the Review there was never enough time for a real dialogue. Our reports did influence the proceedings but on the Indian side there was a noticeable reluctance to accept criticism and recommendations from a non-Indian consultant. The problems we pointed out were usually denied and our recommendations, at least initially, ignored. However, a year or two later similar recommendations were often put forward by the Shiksha Karmi Board or the Institute of Development Studies and subsequently accepted.

The Swedish delegation usually accepted our statements and recommendations. Here the problem was rather the rapid turnover and the variable professional standard of the Sida officials involved.

Conclusions

Our approach, basing appraisals on what was really happening in the project villages and how the project was perceived by the intended beneficiaries, worked well. Perhaps too well for some of the officials of the Shiksha Karmi Board. Our extensive trips and many dialogues with Shiksha Karmis, parents and local NGOs enabled us to identify a number of problems that otherwise would never have been brought to the attention of the Joint Review. During the first couple of years attempts were made to prevent our extensive field visits and Sida's attempts to base the review consultant in Rajasthan were blocked. But we struggled on, visited even the remotest villages, stayed overnight to be able to meet the farmers when they returned from the fields and spend the evening talking to them about whatever they wanted to bring up.

The resulting dialogues and observations enabled us to identify problems at an early stage. We were thus able to point out:

- Deficiencies in supply system and support structure.
- Growing dissatisfaction amongst the Shiksha Karmis about service conditions and lack of career opportunities.

- The fact that most evening schools did not function.
- Appalling conditions at some of the training centres for women.
- Maltreatment of women and a lack of sensitivity to women's issues.
- Inaccurate reporting.

Our work was supported by the fact that the Shiksha Karmi Project itself was based on participation, loosening up of hierarchies and the development of gender sensitivity. It was greatly facilitated by the fact that it had the support of several high level civil servants in the Government of Rajasthan as well as the Government of India. Without that support there would have been no dialogue.

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Annex

Notes sent to the authors

A proposal for a volume on "Dialogue in Pursuit of Development"

During recent years there has been great interest in the interaction between the different parties of an aid relationship. This issue has become the most important parameter in the rapidly increasing research on development aid, be it on aid effectiveness, aid dependence or on learning in development co-operation.

EGDI recently commissioned a study on learning in development co-operation. In the study learning is seen as a process of interaction between organisations, through which lessons from experience are accumulated, synthesised and brought into the development of policies, activities and work modalities. This study as well as many others assume that knowledge is possible to disseminate from one party in the aid relationship – mostly presumed to be the donor party – to the other. What is known from all these studies is, if it all materialises, it is a very difficult and tedious process. The constraints for transfer of knowledge and thereby learning are many and complex, but will not be repeated here. Suffice to say that the learning process in development co-operation offers its own complication in addition to the ones of relationships in general.

Aid is a relationship between basically two parties – a donor and a recipient. The effectiveness of development co-operation therefore depends largely on the quality of this relationship. It is a complex relationship characterised by huge differences in the terms and conditions by which the parties collaborate with each other. Since donors and recipients have very different roles and positions within the structures of aid, what they consider important to learn may differ in some, but not all, respects. If the propose of learning is improving the effectiveness of aid, then learning becomes an issue which cannot be confined to one party only. Effective learning does require that both parties learn and that they have an opportunity to share their experiences and jointly work out an agenda of action (Carlsson and Wohlgemuth, 2000).[1]

The term "dialogue" stands for the methodology of interaction between the donor and recipient. At best, it is the instrument for formulating the

[1] Carlsson, Jerker and Lennart Wohlgemuth (eds), 2000, *Learning in Development Co-operation*, EGDI 2000:2, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International.

parameters, which together should make up the joint understanding and contract between the parties on policy-, program- or project level on how to interact.

Both parties in an aid relationship bring a multitude of background variables when they meet. These variables stems both from the development agenda of the countries concerned but also from all kinds of other domestic agendas such as domestic agricultural interests, trade interests, etc. Dialogue in pursuit of development needs, therefore, to take into account the fact that many other forces/interests than development co-operation influence and drive development. What has become more evident during the 1990s is that optimising the needs of development co-operation only, does not suffice. Development takes place in a context – political, economic, social and cultural. All these dimensions reinforce or create obstacles to change.

The parties might also have prepared themselves in different ways. On the donor side the preparation can take the form of country analyses, sector strategies and project/program documents for internal decisions. On the recipient side it can take the form of development plans, annual budget discussions, public expenditure reviews, poverty assessment programs etc. Good preparation is important but can also be an impediment to compromise – a requirement, shall the dialogue lead to a result acceptable to both parties. Real problems arise if the parties are unequally much prepared. Many times the recipient does not have as ample of resources for preparations as the donor.

An added problem in the aid relationship is the notion of aid being only a relation between two parties – the donor and the recipient – which is a simplification of a considerably more complex reality.

On both sides there is a wide range of actors who communicate with each other at different levels and in ways that are not always clear and logical. In the recipient country we find actors, they can be private or public, at four different levels: the community, the district, the province/region and the national level. They can be a community council or a women's group, a district and/or provincial council and at the national level a Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Development Planning or any other line ministry. On the donor side you will have an equally diverse set of actors, such as consultants involved in studies or in implementation, the embassy in the recipient country, the aid agency itself and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a specialised Ministry of Development Co-operation (Carlsson and Wohlgemuth, 2000).

The word dialogue in itself carries no message. In a dialogue severe criticism can be brought forward, likewise there may be total agreement. Dialogue is pursued in order to achieve changes. This dialogue must be based on a number of values. These values relate to fundamental questions such as mutual respect human rights, the equal right and value of every person, democratic principles, a preference for equity and equality etc.

Having pointed out all the complications, it is supposed that dialogue

solves the entire problem. Over the years new keywords, such as concerned participation. ownership, sustainability and now in the past few years partnership, have been introduced to point out this fact. In the preparatory work leading up to the new Swedish Africa policy "A new partnership" a number of interesting studies were launched on how to improve the dialogue between the parties to create 'real partnership'.

This dialogue, on which one so heavy relies and put so much faith in, what does it look like in reality? Who are actually dialoguing? How is it prepared for? The EGDI hopes to contribute to the understanding of this very important feature of development co-operation. There is particular need for studies on the subject; a topic which is policy relevant for development co-operation. The proposed approach would be to allow actors in the field of development co-operation to present their own account of how they experience the dialogue, in its widest meaning. In other words, it would provide them with an opportunity to tell their own story.

An anthology with essays based on such an approach should become more accessible to a wider audience, and not only to specialists and researchers. As a possible second phase a more analytical paper might be produced partly based on empirical evidence from the collection of papers to this book. Thus, the intention is to produce a book targeting all that work in development co-operation, or have an interest in this field.

The idea is to invite people with long experience of working with development aid inside and outside donor and recipient agencies to present their very personal reflections and ideas about dialogue on some 10 pages. The contributors should have a rather free hand to approach the subject they think is most relevant. Below follows, however, some observations that might be taken into account:

- The great change in scope and content of the aid relationship both over time and within the aid package of today, from low level technical assistance to budget and sector support and policy dialogue;
- The contradictions between assistance for humanitarian and development purposes;
- The contradictions between state-to-state relationships and assistance via private enterprises and NGOs;
- The tension between aid objectives such as poverty alleviation, gender equality, etc. and the way in which aid implementers actually live and act. Credibility in the dialogue process is also related to individual coherence. Professionalism in this area is based on personal attitudes and values, and the ability to carry them across to the dialogue partner;
- The increasing importance of economic and political reform as conditions for aid; and
- Questions such as aid dependence, ownership, partnership, good governance, good performers etc.

THE EXPERT GROUP ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (EGDI)

The Expert Group on Development Issues, EGDI, was established by the Swedish Government in 1995 with the objective of contributing to an increased understanding of development issues in a global context and increasing the effectiveness of development co-operation policies.

The task of the EGDI is to initiate studies that will have the potential to make contributions to development thinking and policy-making. In order to ensure a close relationship with research and policy communities around the world, internationally renowned members with extensive networks in their respective fields work as members of the Expert Group.

Opinions and conclusions in EGDI publications are those of the authors and do not commit the Ministry.

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Dialogue is often considered to be the hub of international relations, not the least in development co-operation. However, it is extremely difficult to achieve dialogue, in its true sense, between partners in development. Its efficiency is severely constrained due to the assymetry in financial and human resources and knowledge. Dialogue in development co-operation is in that respect not an interaction between equals. How to overcome such constraints is a challenge for all actors involved and the main line of inquiry in this study.

More than twenty practitioners with long experience of working with development co-operation present personal reflections and ideas about the concept and process of dialogue.

Fourteen factors are singled out as highly influencing the quality of dialogue:

- Who listens?
- Asymmetric relationships
- Asymmetric knowledge
- Dialogue capacity
- Women's participation
- Sensitivity and secrecy
- Ethical consideration and coherence
- Conditionality
- Dialogue as a continuous process
- Trust
- Time
- Continuity
- Language
- Donor co-ordination

These factors are discussed with examples from *inter alia* Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Mauritius, India and Tanzania. Sixteen recommendations for how dialogue can be facilitated are identified and center around concepts such as *the dialogue process, capacity development* and *ownership*.

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