

Learning from Sida Support to Institutional Development in Lao PDR

Interim Report from Learning Exercise

**Pernilla Sjöquist Rafiqui
with Liz Goold**



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AGENCY

Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit

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UTV Working Paper 2006:3
Commissioned by Sida, Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit

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Date of Final Report: October 2006
Printed by Edita Communication AB, 2005
Art. no. SIDA31919en
ISBN 91-586-8267-8

Foreword

Institutions – formal and informal rules for human interaction – are crucial for development, but existing institutional set-ups in many developing and transition countries prevent development and poverty reduction from taking place. Supporting institutional development is thus a strategic issue for donors – and increasingly so, in light of the Paris Declaration and current trends towards programme support and capacity development. However, institutional development is not easy and experience-based knowledge about how to successfully support such processes of change not readily available.

Within a broad evaluation theme on these issues, the Swedish Embassy in Laos and Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) initiated a learning exercise about supporting institutional development for Sida staff and project partners in Laos 2006. The purpose was to contribute to learning about how to support institutional development better – in Laos specifically, but also more generally on basis of the Lao experience. A process-oriented and participatory approach was adopted, based on a series of workshops, combined with individual and group conversations.

The present report is an interim report from the learning process. It summarises and synthesises the outcomes of the learning exercise up to and including two major workshops in June 2006, with a particular emphasis on lessons learnt and implications for Sida. Its immediate use was to inspire further conversation and deepen the learning among the workshop participants during the process, but the report was found useful also to others. Hence, it is published by UTV to facilitate further dissemination and use of the insights and lessons learnt. It is written by Pernilla Sjöquist Rafiqui, with text contributions from Liz Goold as well as support from her as facilitator for the learning exercise and from Gun Eriksson Skoog, the team leader. A Final Report – less detailed and concrete, but further synthesised and based on the entire learning process – will follow.

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1 Introduction

In 2006, Sida embarked on a learning exercise about its role and support for institutional development in Laos, so that it can continue to improve the way it offers this support in the future. For Sida, institutional development is an important means for contributing to poverty reduction. The learning exercise is a result of: (i) previous efforts by Sida to support institutional development in Laos, (ii) a study on the topic within the roads and forestry sectors (Rafiqui 2003), and (iii) the launching of a broader theme by Sida's evaluation department UTV in 2004. It is a joint exercise between UTV and the Swedish Embassy in Laos.

This is an interim report with the purpose of providing a synthesis of outcomes of the learning exercise so far, with a particular emphasis on lessons learnt and implications for Sida. Its immediate use is as an input to the two remaining mini-workshops that are to be held in Vientiane in September. Hence, it offers participants a summary and synthesis of the lessons that have emerged, together with numerous implications and reflections to inspire further dialogue and deepener learning. A second use of the interim report is to serve as a base for the final report, which, in turn, aims at providing a platform for continued learning after the conclusion of this particular learning exercise.

The interim report is a synthesis by the author (Pernilla S. Rafiqui) with inputs and guidance from the other members of the facilitation team.¹ It offers an overview of the learning exercise and workshop process so far in terms of outcomes and lessons. It is, however, an interpretation of lessons, implications and discussions that have taken place. Hence, it is open to re-interpretation and further discussion. The intent is that interpretations and reflections found here will be useful and stimulate further thinking and dialogue in the upcoming workshops.

The report has two basic parts. The first takes a backward looking view and provides a summary and synthesis of key points and lessons of seeking to influence institutional development in Laos. The second looks instead forward by drawing out implications for Sida from these lessons, as well as addressing the issue of ways forward and where we go from here. The report ends with some further reflections and comments of a more general nature around the issue of institutional development and the role of Sida, provided by the author with input from the facilitation team. Moreover, for those who need to refresh their memories as to the basics of the learning exercise, Appendix 1 offers a brief summary in terms of its fundamental parts, focus, overall guiding questions, key theoretical concepts, and approaches.

¹ The facilitation team, based in Stockholm, Sweden and Oxford, UK, consist of Gun Eriksson Skoog (team leader; senior evaluation officer at UTV), Liz Goold (facilitator; independent consultant), and Pernilla S. Rafiqui (resource person; Ph.D. candidate).

2 Reporting back.....

This section reports back outcomes, lessons, and implications drawn by all participants in the learning exercise at various stages in the process (conversations and workshops) as interpreted by the author and facilitation team. In addition, the team provides further interpretation and reflections, particularly when it comes to linking with the institutional perspective or drawing out implications for Sida.

The structure of this section follows the “inward-outward motion” that can be detected in the so-called Egg-frame (see Figure 1 in Appendix 1), which was used through the workshop as an illustration of the institutional perspective adopted here. That is, the start is the broader context and how it affects Sida and the projects (the inward facing arrow), followed by how Sida supported projects have, or have not, influenced the institutional set-up in Laos (the outward facing arrow). Given the importance of relationships to the topic under investigation – institutional development – outcomes and implications from sessions addressing Sida’s role and relationships are also reported here.

2.1 Putting projects and Sida within their context

Participants started the workshops by situating themselves and their activities in the larger context. For project-level participants, this also aimed at helping them introduce their projects to each other. The exercises were somewhat different between the workshops – a time-line exercise for the projects and a stake-holder mapping exercise for Sida – which are why the outcomes are separated below.

Project workshop

Project participants were asked to identify key positive or negative influences, changes or factors – from the level of the individual to that of the institutional framework in the egg-frame (see Figure 1 Appendix 1) – that had significantly influenced the projects, particularly in their work with institutional development. To this end, they drew time lines of the major history of their projects, which contributed to the shared or general understanding of the institutional and reform context of the project. Based on the time lines a set of contextual factors, or changes in the context, that have constituted sources change – and sometimes even drivers of change – were identified. These are synthesized into themes below.

Influential factors and changes in the institutional framework

1. *International factors or changes.* The globalization process, the Rio Conference on Environment in 1992, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were mentioned. These factors go hand in hand with the opening up of the Lao economy and society to the outside world, as does the Lao membership in ASEAN. Participants drew the lesson that these and other changes that are part of the opening up the country, puts the old system under strain, which in itself constitutes an impetus for (further, institutional) change.
2. *Government policies, laws, decrees and regulations.* Examples mentioned were the EPL on the environment and the NGPES on poverty reduction in Laos. These were reported as an important initiating force for change in four of the five projects at the workshop. Such changes illustrate changes in formal institutions or rules of the game. Given that the projects are located at governmental organizations with the mandate to implement formal rules and regulations, changes in such rules tend to initiate or drive work with institutional development within those organizations, and projects.

Influential factors and changes in the system of organizations

1. *Changes in internal rules of the public administration.* Three forces that had influenced the projects work with institutional development were related to rules that are internal to the public administration were mentioned, the first being salaries and recruitment policies. The second was the decentralization reform, which was considered particularly important in influencing change. While considered needed for bringing the ‘grassroots’ in, decentralization is partial and incomplete which implies that it is open for discretion and bypassing of the new formal rules by powerful people, for instance provincial governors. One interpretation is that, in practice informal rules still apply – or that the old formal rules still remain in place. Implementation was thus raised as a major and third issue – much change in formal rules has started but implementation is difficult/more challenging.

One lesson forwarded by the workshop was that in order to implement formal institutional change, it must be complemented with implementation guidelines – and to implement guidelines, capacity building is needed. For decentralization reform to be effective (not only nominal) it was suggested that not only execution and implementation need to be decentralized, but so does authority and decision-making power. A further suggestion was that the rules of the game need to be established as close as possible to where activities take place. An implication of this is that projects and programs need to be adjusted to their contexts.

2. *Changes in demand from “clients” or users of projects’ services or products.* Examples include changes in agricultural markets, peasant demand, users of statistics, investors’ interests and local construction consultants. Changes in demand from these groups were seen as a strong force initiating and driving change by project and organizations affected.
3. *Changes in roles and mandates of the project organization.* The appointment of the NSC (National Statistics Center) to be the coordination for the production of official statistics in Laos serves as one example. Roles and mandates in themselves reflect rules of the game and changes in these have crucially affected some projects and their host organizations.
4. *Establishment of important partner organizations.* The establishment of important partner organizations influenced some project organizations in important ways, usually by strengthening their mandate or enforcement capabilities. Examples include NAFES (for NAFRI), and NEC and PECs (for STEA).
5. *Changes in Sida support.* Changes in Sida’s policy (e.g. toward poverty reduction or rural development), donor harmonization, and Sida’s way of working also constituted important factors influencing the projects. It was particularly mentioned that Sida’s overall country strategy is unclear and its multiple goals create confusion. On the other hand there is also a perceived need to adapt the projects to their specific context and that Sida therefore needs to have a better understanding of the project context. Sida sometimes disregards the local process needed and the time it takes, and it adopts a too technical approach – hence it needs to adjust its approach to the different projects and their different contexts. Also, Sida’s monitoring is perceived as weak.
6. *Weak coordination between sectors, programs, and projects.* This was reported as an important influencing factor – although as an example of a negative or hindering factor of change.

Sida workshop

A similar context-mapping exercise was done during the Sida workshop, but the focus was on locating Sida in the context of other stakeholders or actors – both in Laos and Sweden. The exercise was phrased as “what relationships and actors do we bring with us into the room” the resulting image was a compiled picture of relationships reported by the Embassy, Sida Stockholm and one NGO. The major outcomes of the exercise were the following:

1. *Strong links to Sida Stockholm and other donors in Laos.* The exercise showed that the Embassy has many linkages with Sida headquarters in Stockholm, which is not very surprising. This may have been emphasized further by the participation of representatives from Stockholm, whom added their own layer of links with the Embassy in Laos. Likewise, the Swedish Embassy has links to most donors active in Laos and close relationships with some of them, for example the World Bank where close cooperation has been established in some sectors, such as roads. In general, there are a lot of activities going on among and between the donors, as put by one participant ‘it is a boiling pot of activities, that produced bubbles all the time’.
2. *Relatively weaker linkages to the Lao side.* It was clear from the image that emerged on the white board that the Embassy had weaker ties with Lao organizations, both in terms of numbers and depth. And there were no direct links to the Party. There is much more activity going on the “donor side”, i.e. between the donors, than “across the line” to the “Lao side”. The contrast to “the boiling pot of activity” analogy used above was clear and commented on by all the participants in the workshop.
3. *Weak linkages to NGOs and other organizations active in Laos.* The Embassy had in general very few relationships with foreign NGOs present in Laos, and even fewer with the small number of civil society groups that are allowed to exist in Laos. The participant from SNV, a Dutch NGO that works with capacity development (among other things), had, on the other hand, many links to other NGOs and smaller donors active in the country. In addition, perhaps given the nature of the project she is now working on – capacity development of leaderships within the Lao administration from an ID perspective – they have now established direct links and relationships with the body within the Party that oversees personnel issues within the Ministries.

Comments

These observations from the project workshop suggest that important sources or driving forces for (institutional) change in Laos may be of a “top-down” down character (emanating from the Party or Government) as well as of a “bottom up” character (from client’s demands or the market). These sources or forces may partly be caused by changes in the international or regional environment and in Lao’s relationship to the outer world. However, forces for change also seem to come “from within”, not least in the sense that partial reform (or partial institutional change) may create incentives and pressure for further reform. Effective implementation of new formal rules may require complementary and additional changes in other rules, regulations and guidelines – as illustrated for instance by the decentralization reform.

As a result of the stakeholder mapping exercise in the Sida workshop it became clear that the Embassy has much stronger and clearer relationships with other donors in Laos (and Sida HQ) than with “the Lao side” or NGOs and the few civil society organizations that exist in Laos. This was commented on by the Embassy explicitly; there is lots of stuff happening on the “falang” side (“a boiling pot of activities”) but not in terms of relationships and activities with the Laos side. One interpretation of this is that the Embassy has not been thinking strategically about its relationships with actors, and whom they have contacts with, to its full potential. This interpretation is perhaps underlined by the fact that a stakeholder mapping exercise was later suggested by the participants to be made part of the coming planning days in September (as part of the session on ways forward found in the end of the report).

A final observation is that the Party was not mentioned as an influencing factor or important stakeholder in either of the exercises, until it was added to the image by one member of the facilitation team in the Sida workshop. For the Sida workshop this may be explained by it having been thoroughly discussed by the Embassy in the preparation of this exercise. In fact, from their perspective, one of the justifications for the learning exercise was to seek to move beyond a focus on the Party and the limitations it poses when discussing and working with institutional development in Laos. Such a dialogue was not held with project

party participants, and here there may be different explanations for its absence in the dialogue of the project workshop. Is, for example, the presence of the Party perhaps taken for granted to a degree that it was not reflected on by the participants? Or is it too much to expect that the role of the Party will be discussed in such a short time period as the workshop constituted? A general lesson from working with organizational development is that it takes time to build a climate of openness, particularly among participants who do not know each other since before hand. Perhaps these workshops should be regarded as a stepping stone in that direction, where a foundation of important relationships is laid that may lead to a better understanding of this particular aspect of mechanisms behind institutional change in Laos.

2.2 Affecting change in the rules of the game

In order to ground the learning process and the theories about institutional development in their own practice, participants in both workshops had the opportunity to share their experience of seeking to affect changes in the rules of the game within their organizations and as well as beyond them. Similarly, policy level conversation partners were asked to reflect on their experiences of affecting internal and external rules of the game. This section is a summary and synthesis of lessons and implications for Sida strategies and ways of working as drawn by workshop participants and policy makers. When appropriate and possible, the findings have been interpreted in institutional development terms (using the Egg-frame) by the author. The section ends with some reflections by the facilitation team.

Lessons on affecting rules of the game WITHIN the organization

Project workshop participants were asked to find and explore an example of a positive change in internal rules of the game that they had been part of, and that had lead to actual changes in their behavior as well as that among their colleagues.² They shared their experience in the form of a story. This particularly exercise was not done in the Sida workshop, and only outcomes from the project workshop are reported here. A summary of lessons drawn during the workshop and grouped under themes is presented below:

1. *Readiness to change at higher level.* One of the most clear and unanimous lessons was that there has to be a readiness for change at levels higher than that of the project – particularly within the Lao political level. Without support from higher levels within the hierarchy it is almost impossible to instigate institutional change in Laos.
2. *Opening up of the country creates new needs.* One lesson was that the opening up of Laos in the last decades has put the old system under strain, and that this created a climate in the country that in general is more receptive to change now than before. The decentralization policy, for example, raises the need for cooperation and coordination (both horizontally and vertically) among actors in Laos, as well as the need for management structures that support this. There was a general perception among participants that there is recognition of the need for more cooperation and lesson learning from each other at current in Laos. This workshop was stated as an example of that.
3. *Culture and relationships.* The need to recognize and respect cultural differences was mentioned on numerous occasions – the term “Lao-Falang” learning was used for this ongoing process of learning from each other that takes places within the projects. One lesson drawn by the Lao participant was that they need to be more frank with their international counterparts and tell them – directly but perhaps in an informal setting – about problems or issues they are concerned with early on and as they appear, and not at the end of their stay in Laos. A major lessons was also that there is a need to

² Institutional development within the organization refers to changes in formal and/or informal social behavior rules, changes in work routines and practices – “how to do things” – resulting in changes in behavioral patterns. It also includes changes in attitudes, perceptions, and values regarding one’s own work and roles.

consciously plan time and space for this learning (and frankness), as part of an ongoing dialogue between the partners.

4. *Ownership and commitment.* Another clear lesson was that in order for change to occur, projects need to be well integrated into the structure of the organization that it works with. The goal of the international consultants should be to develop the organization, not the project. In general it was felt that symbols are significant as they influence how project staff and others identify with the project, or the organization in which it is placed. This includes physical location and the use of organizational rather than project logos, but also what language is used and how day-to-day activities are conducted. Tags (that state what physical equipment belongs to be projects) were questioned as they add to the differentiation and separation of the project from the organization. One conclusion was that the “birth” or “conception” of a project has far reaching consequences as that is when much of this is laid out, as is the ground for assessment of the project. It was argued that appropriate time and thought need to be put into investigating and formulating the project’s purpose, aim, and design in order to make it realistic, feasible, and sustainable.
5. *Strategic thinking, flexibility and focus.* Sida’s overall country strategy needs to be clearly linked to and supported to both the Lao side and Sida. And it needs to be clear on how the project relates to both. It needs to be flexible and adaptive to the overall to the local Lao context; while at the same time have a clear focus. In general what is asked for is a strategic framework that helps in keeping the project focus and that gives reasonable room to maneuver within that framework.
6. *Access and timing.* International consultants (and in extension Sida) has to be mindful of local time schedules and seek to adapt rather than imposing one’s own, i.e. that of the project. This may in turn have implications for how projects are evaluated by Sida. One example is when time schedules that are internal to Sida set those of the project, but do not conform to those in Laos which makes it difficult for the project to deliver right results at the right time. The ability to create and see opportunities with Lao decision makers – and then act on these – at the “right” time will greatly increase the chances of success of the project. Likewise will a good and well targeted flow of information (and PR) of the project and its achievements within the Lao administration help to open up access and improve its influence. However, it has to be ensured that different audiences are addressed and responded to appropriately.
7. *Leadership and management.* For change to occur the leadership has to be visionary and with a clear mission. Moreover, there has to be respect on both sides between leadership and staff, and the attitude toward the staff has to be that they are human beings – not “units”. Incentives are important as staff needs to be motivated and acknowledged for good work done, and these are not limited to monetary incentives in terms of pay. It was felt that if bosses at higher levels understand problems or issues faced by the project well, then it is easier to get support. Regular meetings and communication between management and staff – and with higher level management – are important success factors.
8. *Good working climate/environment.* Perhaps related to the above was the feeling that in order for change to happen there has to be a good working climate and work environment. This incorporates both physical infrastructure (such as ICT technologies that allow you to perform your tasks), and the mental and cultural climate.
9. *Development of (local) capacity.* Finally, a whole set of lessons were related to capacity development within the projects. Some related to skills, such as specific management skills, LFA skills, negotiation skills, skills in influencing and dialogue. Others had more to do with mind-sets, such as a change in ways of thinking about what constitutes professionalism. The phrase “we can’t be ducks” captured this and relates to the Lao traditional admiration of the duck for being able to do everything; swim-

ming, flying, and walking. The ability to do it all used to be revered also within the Lao working culture. Now, however, that has changed and there is more stress on specialization and on increasing ones skills in certain areas – on professional expertise. One clear lesson was that sustainable capacity development requires long-term thinking and planning, and that international consultants share their knowledge in the way they work. There is a need to create space and support for on the job training, and on the job training should be framed by clear structure, terms-of-reference, and role definitions. Increased capacity also leads to increased interest in self-improvement, which is beneficial for the team and the project. Finally, it was added that in order to develop local capacity outside or beyond the organization, local consultants should be brought in where possible.

Lessons on affecting rules of the game BEYOND the level of the organization

All participants within the learning exercise – both workshops and policy makers – were asked about their experiences of seeking to affect changes in rules of the game beyond the level of the organization, that is, formal and informal institutions that applies to systems of organizations and society at large (see Egg-frame in Appendix 1). Participants in the project workshop were, for example, asked to identify examples where their respective projects had promoted institutional development at a level beyond the organization itself and where a positive effect had been achieved. Hence, they were asked for changes in formal or informal rules of the game that had resulted in actual changes in behavior among actors outside of the project/organization and been adopted as new rules-in-use. In the Sida workshop, participants were asked to share their experience in the form of a story, initially in pairs and then in groups of fours, out of which key insights and learnings were shared

Examples of achievements

Table 1 summarizes the achievements that were reported in the project workshop, based on an interpretation (by the facilitation team) of these using the institutional terminology and analytical framework offered for this learning exercise.³

From the table we see that all but one example given concerns formal institutional change, and this usually targets the institutional framework directly. Considerable work is also going into the implementation of such formal rules, often in relation to the mandate of the host organization, and this involves rules and behavior practices governing the systems of organizations.

Taken together, Table 1 *provides a neat illustration of the various steps and phases that working with institutional development at the level beyond the organization might involve;*

- producing reports that raise awareness and produce knowledge that affect strategies, which in turn may feed in to policy and future rules and regulations (STM at TD);
- drafting a decree and successfully receiving approval from the national legislature (Statistics at NSC);
- transformation of formal rules in rules-in-use by focusing on implementation (SEM at STEA, Statistics at NSC);
- how formal and informal rules intact at the local level to create rule of the game that are used and followed, rules-in-use, (LSRSP III at MCTPC);

³ The five projects reported a total of eight examples, but only seven are included here, as one was interpreted as primarily a change of rules of the game within the organization in question, and not beyond it.

- how the aim of influencing policy, or the institutional framework, can also start with informal institution building within an organization and among individuals working there, in order to work with strategic issues and affecting change in also formal institutions governing higher levels of aggregation in the egg-frame (LSUAFRP II at NAFRI).

Table 1: Achievements in terms of promoting ID beyond own organization.

Project	Achieved ID	Type of ID	Level in the Egg	Additional info
Statistics 5 At NSC	Approval of the < Statistical Decree	Introduction of a new formal rule	Institutional framework	Enforcement difficult, still a nominal change?
Statistics 5 At NSC	Establishment of NSC's role as a survey < organization	Implementation of an existing formal rule	Systems of organizations	Transforms a nominal rule into a rule-in-use
Statistics 5 At NSC	Improvement of NSC's role as producer/ < provider of national statistics	Implementation of an existing formal rule concerning is role	Systems of organizations	Transforms a nominal rule into a rule-in-use
SEM At STEA	Drafting of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Decree	Potential introduction of a new formal rule to clarify STEA's mandate to implement the existing EIA regulation.	Institutional framework. A complement to an existing formal rule that aims at specifying rules of the game at the systems of organizations level.	The decree still has to be approved.
SFM At Tax Dept.	Completion of the Tax Gap Study, an input to the formulation of the Tax Gap Strategy. Both are initial steps to a tax policy or reform.	Potential instigation of change in the formal rules of the game.	Institutional framework.	Achievements so far: the study improves understanding and is being used within the TD, which facilitates communication.
LSRSP 3 At MCTPC	Establishment of ownership of Basic Access Roads and their maintenance within rural villages.	Actual change in formal, most probably complemented by changes in informal rules.	Systems of organizations concerning the roads sector, at local levels.	Example of change in rules-in-use; both informally and formally.
LSUAFRP 2 At NAFRI	Development of a culture of research at NAFRI.	Part of ongoing change in informal rules of the game within NAFRI.	Within the organization, but aims at new role within the system of organization and influence on government policy within the overarching institutional framework.	The new research culture expresses itself in the ways staff thinks and takes ownership of activities.

Source: summary and compilation by the facilitation team.

Table 1 also illustrates that effective ID involves several steps and stages to become rules-in-use. Hence, working with effective ID is in most cases a step-by-step process. Observing the different steps in that process may be one way of identifying indicators to assess if a process of ID is actually on its way. For example, at any one point in time success may be observed in some steps, but in order to achieve a change of rules-in-use more steps might be needed.

Lessons on affecting change beyond the level of the organization

What follows is a synthesis across sources (policy conversations and both workshops) of lessons drawn by the participants based on their own personal experiences of successful cases of promoting institutional development (policy conversations), or those shared by the projects and reflected in Table 1 (both workshops). The lessons have been grouped under a number of recurring themes where they are discussed in some detail along with implications for Sida that was drawn by the participants themselves on some occasions.

1. *Institutional development takes a long time.* This lesson was drawn by all participants in the exercise, policy makers and workshop participants alike. Project participants in particular, stressed this point a lot, stating, for example, that “it is a never ending process”. Taken together, ID is perceived as a long-term and step-by-step process in which communication (between Sida and Ministries, between Sida and projects, between projects and the organization in which they operate) is an important part. Sida concluded that the long term aspect of ID work has implications for how projects are designed, both in terms of ambition level (what can realistically be achieved within the time frame of the project) and the role of the international consultant (if there on a short term basis). Based on their own experience of seeking to promote ID, Sida workshop participants also concluded that it takes a long time and pointed to this having to be accounted for in Sida’s internal planning process and accepted within the organization. They also reflected that occasionally other donors have shorter time frames, which may conflict with that of Sida.
2. *Working with institutional development is choosing a difficult path.* This lesson and observation came from the policy conversations, and was made with reference to the Egg-frame (Figure 1 in Appendix 1). The point was that working with capacity development in a traditional and narrow sense (focusing on training of individuals) or with support to formal institutions (drafting of laws and regulations) is easy. It is to work with the rest, “the stuff in between” that is difficult and more sensitive; because it has to do with how people think. Using a computer analogy, the lesson was summarized as “working with hardware is easy, working with software is difficult”. It was also pointed out that there is a division on the Lao side of what type of ID projects and programs they really want; some argue for “form/hardware” (such as physical resources, training) while others want “substance/software” (such as culture, charters, codes of conduct) based on it being needed for long term sustainability.
3. *Working with institutional development requires high level support.* This is a theme that emerged across groups of participants. Policy participant argued, continuing on the above, that given that ID from a broad perspective gets in to areas that are sensitive, such as the organization of the Lao system and the way people think, the Lao need to have their say and be in charge of such interventions. An implication or word of advice for Sida was ‘if you want to take the “software” or difficult path you need to know what you are doing (be clear on your goals and consistent in your message) and to know if the planner is with you or not’. Hence, in their minds, such interventions need support from the highest levels within the Lao bureaucracy and should preferably be backed up by conversations at the government-to-government level. As to the projects, policy makers argued that they need to be anchored at the political level and be able to successfully coordinate between ministries to get results. This was backed up the lessons drawn in the project workshop where participants found that it was easier to promote institutional development if appropriate support was given from higher levels within the hierarchy. Sida drew the lesson that, to be successful, ID requires political support as well as organizational resources.
4. *Change of formal rules is not enough.* One project specifically pointed to the lesson that change in formal rules are not sufficient to achieve actual institutional development, that is, a change in rules of the game that result in changed behavior. Implementation and enforcement are also needed, and this in turn may require change in informal rules. Although it was not specifically discussed how enforce-

ment relates to implementation, a connection can be made to the policy conversations. In general, Sida got much appreciation for taking a broad perspective to institutional development, its long-term commitment, and focus on implementation, the last of which was considered rare in the Lao context. Connecting policy to every day activities – to them the essence of ID in a broad perspective – may be difficult, but it is seen as essential. Sida's focus on implementation offers a coherent framework that can even be used to fend off other donors; “just writing action plans leaves us with one approach per \$”, as one policy maker put it, and little steering on how to actually do it.

5. *Sida is not clear and consistent about its own aims and priorities with supporting ID.* This came through as another lesson from the policy level conversations. The message was that there are many and sometimes overlapping policies and new parameters being thrown in all the time, which forces the Lao side to rethink and rewrite the project proposals multiple times. To them, it is a time consuming process that causes uncertainty about Sida's aims and priorities; “we feel as if the finishing line keeps moving” as one conversation partner put it. In addition, different Sida program officers appear to interpret and prioritize between policies and parameters differently, which results in inconsistency of the message from Sida to the Lao. In time periods of high turnover among staff at the Embassy, this can be a problem.
6. *Flexible approach – with a strategy to help focus and prioritize.* The importance of a flexible approach was a recurrent lesson from the project workshop. There has to be enough flexibility in the project to allow for change to happen, which includes a mind-set of not being afraid of making mistakes. A flexible approach is helpful also from an ownership perspective as it gives more room for projects to adapt to local conditions, and, in that way, for increasing accountability of the project. However, a related lesson was that within that framework there has to be a clear strategy that helps management to stay focused on not sway off the track, and to prioritize when needed.
7. *Institutional development involves changes in mind-sets.* A change in mind-sets among project members is often a prerequisite to achieve institutional development beyond the level of the organization. One project described it as “we had to change our perceptions – from doing by ourselves, to letting people do by themselves”. For those involved, this was a major shift in focus and a major lesson learnt. It is also an example of “stepping out of the box” in the sense of double loop learning in Appendix 1.
8. *The importance of informal meeting and relationships.* The importance attributed to informal meetings and relationships to share information and discuss problems by the projects, was picked up as a significant lesson by the participants in the Sida workshop where it was discussed what this implied and how to best relate informal meeting to formal. One lesson was that informal contacts and networks should be used more strategically, for example by maintaining good relationships with potential champions of change – and finding new such candidates. There was a suggestion that good relations (build on trust; being polite, non- aggressive, and non-confrontational; downplaying whom is sitting on the money; and gently delivering critique) combined with informal conversations is a good way to help to get accurate information, and a sense of what is possible to do and not possible to do at certain points in time. A further suggestion was that it is situation specific what is the best relation to use; sometimes it is an informal conversation by a Lao or Swedish program officer, sometimes it is a formal conversation lead by AnnLis.
9. *Create and use windows of opportunity.* A related lesson from the Sida workshop when participants reflected on lessons from their own experience of promoting ID was to “use windows of opportunity – be smart” by, for example, letting ideas float around and when a solution to a problem is looked for more information is fed into the network of contacts to see what comes out. It was pointed out, however, that it requires a lot of knowledge and understanding of the local context to be able to see and grasp windows of opportunity. Nevertheless, it was identified as a key to success. Working with ID within

organizations may be one way of creating windows of opportunity, as it involves changing ideas and established ways of thinking.

10. *The importance of building trust and relating to resistance to change.* Likewise, participants in the Sida workshop identified trust – meaning that we will not come to destroy but to build – as a key factor for success. And it can take a long time to build trust in Laos where there is a genuine suspicion that foreigners come with the hidden agenda of wanting to change its political system, and the communist ideology that is at its core. Foreigners from the West can be seen as having a negative influence on the workplace as they may change inside rules and ultimately try to change you and the way you think – which would create pressure for changes the political rules of the country. Having informal relationships with the Chinese or Vietnamese is easier as they share the same system and ideology. So in working with ID, which actively does seek to change internal and external rules of the game, it is only natural to come across resistance to change. Part of that can be attributed to the natural fear of change that we all can feel, but part can be related to the specifics of Laos in the way just described, and part can be a deeper systemic question about the role and agenda of Western donors in aid. This lesson has a number of implications for Sida, such as, for example, what skills and competences are needed among Sida staff and consultants to inquire into perceived resistance of change in Laos, and open up a dialogue about its own underpinning values for its presence in Laos.
11. *“Chicken or egg sequencing” – to promote ID from within or beyond the organization?* One observation and lessons drawn in the Sida workshop is that there does not seem to be a clear case for what is the best practice or way to approach institutional development. Using the Egg-frame (Figure 1 in Appendix 1); should it be supported from “the outside and in” and start at laws and policies, or should it be supported from “the inside and out” starting at changing internal rules of the game within organizations? Should a change in policy be the point of departure, or the point of arrival? It was suggested that the solution is perhaps situation specific in that for some interventions it is better to start with “groundwork” within the organization that leads to change beyond it, while in other cases it is the other way around. Yet in many other cases, perhaps in most, one may have to work on two fronts simultaneously and be aware and creative about how to link the two. For example, working at the high level by being part of negotiations and drafting of formal rules and regulations while at the same time working at the ground or project level with changing internal rules and ways of thinking. The work with human rights is one such example.

Workshop participants were also asked specifically about factors or forces that had worked to help or hinder their chosen case of achieved ID. Taking out those that were similar across project or of a non-project specific nature, helping factors include high level and political support as well as change in demand for the products or services provided by the project from end users (or clients), or from high levels within the Ministry. Pressure on conformity to international standards or agendas from external agents (such as the World Bank or the ASEAN) was identified as another helping factor or force. Hindering factors include dealing with sensitive issues, shortage of staff, “red tape” at central and provincial levels within the bureaucracy, difficulties in changing roles and self perceptions, and language barriers.

Comments

One first reflection is that many of the lessons from affecting change within an organization are similar to affecting change beyond the level of the organization – there might be similar principles of change that are at work at both level. Hence, lessons from affecting change within may be useful for working with ID at the level beyond the organization.

Drawing on the issue of “chicken or egg sequencing” raised above, a related observation is that the listed lessons point at ID and change within the organization is relevant for institutional development beyond

it limits or within society at large. If an organization is to promote institutional development in its context, it may very well need to change its internal rules of the game – in terms of own ways of working and interaction with other organizations within the system (or systems) of organizations that it is part of. The self perception and interpretation of the organization's role are important parts of this (as exemplified by the NAFRI and Statistics stories).⁴ One implication is that the approach of supporting institutional development within the larger context via support to organizations with a role and mandate to enforce and draft laws and regulations, which Sida is already using in Laos, is valid – as long this support take into account the issue of change of internal rules of the game and does not stop at knowledge creation.

Moreover, and perhaps contrary to common believes, the lessons presented here indicate that *projects* placed within organizations *can be tools for institutional change*. At current there appears to be an assumption that program support and harmonization will have a greater chance at affecting institutions, which may very well be true. Nevertheless, these workshops show that also projects can be part of promoting institutional change.

A further yet related observation concerns how to link the lessons that have come out of the workshops to the existing thinking around capacity development that Sida is using. From a general perspective, some of the points under lessons from affecting change within the own organizations, for example the importance of visionary management and good working relations, are not specific to an institutional development perspective but could be part of “regular” work with capacity development. Likewise are some of the themes that are important to broad capacity development approaches, such as relationships and culture, central also to the institutional perspective. One question that emerges is, hence, how to relate these two – the approach of capacity development in a broad sense and the institutional development approach explored here – so that they can inform each other. More specifically, how can lessons from this workshop be used as in input into that inquiry?

A final note is that the group of Lao policy makers that wants ID interventions to provide “substance or software” constitutes a potential pool of likeminded to identify and tap into. Perhaps Sida already has relations with some; how can those relations be used strategically and to find more?

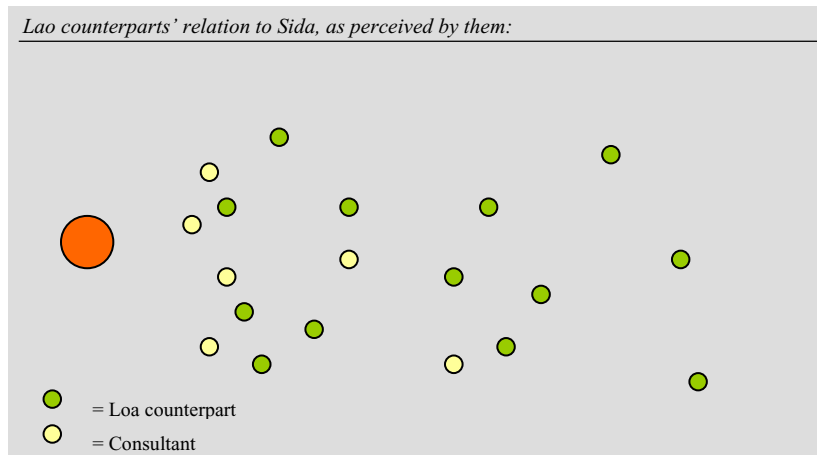
2.3 Roles and relationships of Sida

The relational nature of institutional development became a recurring theme within both workshops. Given this, it was seen as important to explore this more deeply in relation to the immediate relationships that Sida had – with Lao counterparts and Swedish consultants. This was done in the form of a spatial exercise in both workshops with participants physically positioning themselves to each other. The focus was on how participants perceived the relationship with each other, in terms of the quality and closeness. This section reports the outcomes of these exercise for each workshop separately, followed by comments from the FT.

⁴ Hence, one way of supporting institutional development may be to promote ID work within organizations, for example by focusing on implementation of formal rules in order to make them actual rules-in-use. Another option is to support organizations to become agents of change within the wider context in which they operate. The case of NAFRI suggest that it may then be important to support the organization as such, to strengthen its identity as an actor that can promote change with a certain degree of independence and ambitions reaching beyond its own borders. Having said this, it should be acknowledge that an organizations is always susceptible for changes in its role and mandate. Within a political system such at that is Laos, the threat of revoked rights of initiating and executing activities in an independent fashion is always present and need to be taken into account when support strategies are formed. In fact, the ongoing decentralization process has been marked by such steps going first forward and then back, which indicates the contested nature of decentralization within a still highly centralized system.

Project workshop

In the project workshop, it was interesting to note the different perceptions between consultants Lao counterparts. On the whole, Lao counterparts placed consultants much closer to Sida than consultants did themselves. The final mapping showed the configuration of how both international consultants and Lao counterparts placed themselves in relation to Sida (see illustration). Noteworthy, none of the Lao participants considered themselves to be closer to Sida than the international consultant working on their project, even if they had been working there longer or held high positions.



It was recognized by Lao and consultants that there was a danger of blurred boundaries between Sida and consultants, leaving Lao counterparts feeling that they are serving “two masters”. This was further underlined by a cultural familiarity between Sida and consultants and the possibility they have of using informal channels for communication, whilst Lao have to use proper protocol. The Lao felt that the roles of consultants and domestic counterparts were complementary, but that more value needed to be given to the local ‘know-how’ they carry. From an ID perspective, this is particularly relevant given the importance of the understanding of the local context.

This reflection led to further discussions about Sida ways of working, in particular the handling of reviews. From an ID perspective, these kind of procedures can be a ‘window of opportunity’ for further exploration, but in the way they are done they can also reflect some of the lessons found here about effecting institutional change within organizations (particularly the use of informal meetings, ownership, access and timing).

Sida workshop

A similar exercise was carried out within the Sida workshop, where Lao embassy staff positioned themselves in relation to Lao counterparts and international consultants. A striking outcome was the positioning of the Swedish program staff in relation to international consultants (closer) and Lao consultants (further away), as compared to Lao program staff (closer to Lao counterparts). Although it is hard to draw conclusions given the low number of participants, the fact that it led to an animated discussion among those involved could suggest that this is a potential area for further exploration within the Embassy; what are the internal relations between Swedish and Lao staff at the Embassy and how does the nature of these relationships impact Sida’s role in institutional development?

Comments

Some pointers for further discussion and learning that came out of the spatial exercises which may have relevance for Sida's role and relationships in ID include:

- Ensure that the relationship between Lao and Sida is the most important and that roles and boundaries are clear between all three parties. Be mindful about blurring boundaries between Sida and international consultants in communication and informal relationships – keep to task!
- Given the importance of local know-how, consider how to use Lao as Sida consultants and how to develop local capacity
- Pay attention to the process of reviews including; ownership, creating informal spaces before the formal review to deal with any sensitive issues, discussion about choice of consultant to perform the review, and feedback on the report by Lao
- To ensure that communication goes beyond one individual in Sida – to minimize dependency on one individual in the light of the relatively short length of stay at the Embassy in Vientiane. How might relationships and learning be broadened to ensure the investment and institutional memory is built on?

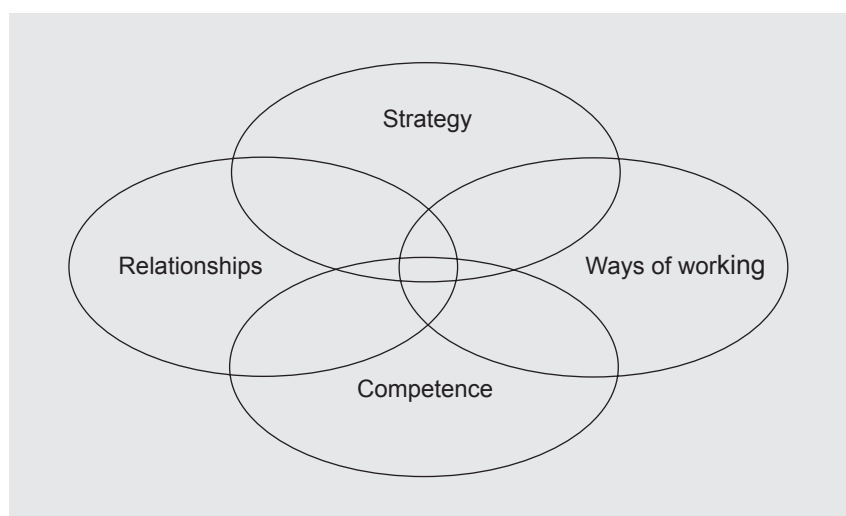
3and reflecting forward

In this part, we shift the focus somewhat from reporting back experiences and lessons drawn on them to investigate implications and ways forward of all of this for Sida. The text is based on outcomes from the workshops and conversations with policy people, but it does not follow the “inward-outward-motion” in the egg-frame (Figure 1 in Appendix 1) any more. Rather, the text is organized around themes that appeared and reappeared during the learning exercise; links are made across workshop sessions and sections in the report when so needed. In other words, the interpretation of outcomes shines through more here than in the previous part, which is seen in, for example, the reflective questions raised in the text. Each section ends with comments from the facilitation team.

3.1 Implications for Sida

Implications of all these lessons for Sida were discussed in designated session within the workshops, in relation to *strategy*, *relationships*, *ways of working*, and what *competences* support to ID requires. Implications for Sida were discussed in the conversations with policy makers in relation to the same topics.

These topics are all related and interlinked, which was visualized in the Sida workshop by this illustration. As indicated, topics do overlap, and strategy is underpinned by (and/or has implications for) relationships and ways of working, as well as for competences. Capacity and competences, in turn, form the basis for the other three areas.



A number of themes emerged in relation to each of topics or each, which are synthesized and discussed here.

Strategy and role

The implications for Sida that emerged in the learning exercise with regards to strategy and role can be centered on a number of questions that concern important issues to consider:

1. *How to think strategically about the importance of informal relationships?* The importance of “the informal” in terms of relationships, ways of solving problems, and exchange information in Laos was perhaps the most recurring theme of all during the workshops, as well as policy level conversations. Even though not specifically mentioned from a strategic perspective, it is suggested here that it is an important

dimension that should not be overlooked. From a strategic perspective “the informal” is not just as a lubricant to ensure that projects or programs run smoothly, but a way to get accurate information about other issues and local time agendas, as well as a sense of what is possible and not possible to do. Hence, thinking strategically about the importance of the informal in Laos means understanding and making use of an existing informal rule of the game, and to let it inform Sida’s ways of working as well as the competences it builds. Here there is a clear link to dialogue and the issue of its strategic use. One message from the policy conversations was that dialogue can be a very valuable tool – if used when the timing is right and in the right way, meaning discussing the “right issue at the right time, and at the right level”. Thinking about and using Sida’s informal relationships in a more strategic fashion might help in to understand when and what level that might be.

2. *How to meet demands of high level support while having little direct access?* A very clear message in the exercise was the need for high level support in working with institutional development in Laos. Projects asked for support from higher levels within the organization where the project was place, or above that if necessary. People at the policy level suggested that “air cover” provided by dialogues at the government-to-government level would be a good way of supporting their own efforts at promoting institutional change. Apart from concerns about roles and mandates – what can really be expected of Sida in terms of providing high level support – a specific issue is the restricted access that Sida (and other donors) have to key decision makers within the Lao bureaucracy. How can institutional and relational insights from the workshops be used to think strategically about this?
 - Are there other, perhaps more indirect, ways that could be used?
 - Does Sida provide information to the right access points at present or are there potential relationships, actors, or forums than are being overlooked?
 - Is Sida thinking creatively about supporting an emerging leadership for the future in Laos, within own projects or outside of them, by thinking in the long term and viewing relationships as investments in human capital – while taking the specificities of the Lao system into account when it comes to actual form of such support?
3. *How is existing contextual knowledge reflected in Sida strategies?* A particular question raised in the project workshop was how contextual understanding and local expertise that Lao counterparts, but also international consultant, have can be reflected in Sida’s strategy documents on Laos? At current, project participants feel they offer little or no contribution to that process, although all had great influence into the proposals and contracting documents of their respective projects. How can this knowledge be channeled into strategic thinking and documents at Sida?
 - What are the channels available at present, are they the right ones?
 - Can and should LÄR, or others, be brought in to help create spaces and/or processes for participatory strategic thinking that draw from practice and which could inform or be part of the bigger strategy process at Sida?
4. *How are project and sector perspectives reflected in Sida strategies?* There was a clear message of a need for a sectoral approach when working with institutional development from the project workshop, which included having a clear support policy and strategy for each sector. At the same time, it was also seen as important that there be greater coordination between sectors, and it was suggested that Sida might take a lead in that. One reflection on this is that that despite the workshop’s emphasis on the project level, participants appeared to identify with and talk mainly about sectors when it comes to strategy. This should resonate well with Sida participants who were concerned that its role should not be over identified with supporting just its projects. Some of these questions reemerge in themes below. How can institutional and relational insights from the workshops be used to think strategically about this?

5. *How to relate Sida's institutional development approach to that of other donors?* There was a clear message from both projects and policy makers that Sida's approach to institutional development – and capacity development – is broader than that of other donors, and usually more long-term. One participant even called it “unique” in the Lao context. This confirmed the impression held by most Embassy staff. In general, Sida received much appreciation for this, even though it was pointed out from the policy level that it potentially is a much more difficult path to take as it concerns how the Lao system is organized and run, and, not least, “how people think”. Referring to computer technology, the analogy was “hardware is easy, software is difficult”. At the same time it was a consistent message in both workshops (projects and Sida) that more coordination is needed with regards to institutional development efforts, and that Sida needs be involved in this work. Another message from the project workshop was that Sida should not abandon its long-term and broad approach to institutional development. Taken together, they might be interpreted as saying that Sida should seek to take a leading role in the donor harmonization process around capacity development that is currently taking place in Laos. As discussed in the Sida workshop, this process further underlines the need for Sida to
- articulate the distinctiveness of its own approach (and its underlying values) to institutional development and capacity development, and
 - to relate that to the donor harmonization process.

Here, there was a clear message from the Sida workshop that working with institutional development is not something Sida can do on its own; it is too complex, and takes too much time and resources, and may be an area in which cooperation and collaboration is highly beneficial. Hence, a set of questions need to be asked, such as:

- What constitutes core non-negotiable aspects of Sida's approach to institutional development, and what are the trade-offs?
 - How might Sida use its existing experience and relationships to influence other donors and support a more coordinated approach to ID amongst donors, in order to have more influence on Lao Ministries and the Government?
 - And, ultimately, what role does Sida want to take when it comes to donor coordination concerning institutional development in Laos; does it want to follow or seek to influence and lead that process? How might it use principles of ID drawn from here in the way it does that?
6. *How to think strategically about capacity building, using an ID perspective.* One clear message from international consultants in project workshop was that Sida would benefit from viewing capacity development also from a strategic standpoint and that the institutional development perspective would be useful in that. Such an approach to capacity development puts a greater emphasis on the intent behind capacity development interventions, and it includes a view of human capital and relationships as strategic investments. This has a number of implications for Sida in terms of what it chooses to support and fund, and four such that emerged in the workshops are mentioned here.
- Project workshop participants especially asked for capacity building support to be invested in networking, learning and relationships across sectors. There was a clear message for a sectoral approach from the project workshop, which included having a clear support policy and strategy for each sector. At the same time, it was also seen as important that there be greater coordination between sectors, to allow for cross-sharing, building relations, and possibly greater leverage and support.
 - Another message was that if understanding the local context is important, Sida should have trust in and support local capacity building, perhaps also that of local consultants from the region.

Such an attitude of trust will influence relationships and ways of working; as put by one participant ‘how may the Lao be consultant or teacher to Sida?’ What implications does this have for attitudes toward and making use of consultants from other parts of the region (e.g. Vietnam or China)?

- Thirdly, there was a clear message about the importance of supporting local and strategic future leadership within the organizations and projects where Sida is present – at central levels as well as in provinces and regions. This came both from the international consultants in the project workshop, but also from the Sida workshop. A useful example of how to work strategically with capacity building and leadership came from the participant from SNV who shared her experience from a capacity building intervention with Lao leaders that aims at building a peer group with institutional thinking.⁵ What could be learnt from this approach in the type of training Sida supports and funds, given the importance of leaders in ID, what other initiatives in leadership development can Sida learn from (within Laos) and outside?
 - Finally, strategic capacity development from an ID perspective also has implications for how Sida approaches its own learning in this process, and two potential avenues were highlighted and argued for in the workshops; by example from others (such as SNV) and by feedback given from “the ground” in workshops such as this one.
7. *How to link support to institutional development to poverty alleviation?* During the Sida workshop it was noted that the link between the institutional change concept and poverty alleviation had not been made explicit so far, and that it ought to be essential in influencing how Sida thinks strategically about supporting institutional development. ‘Institutional change can never be an end in itself – it is only “good” if poverty is reduced’ it was argued. This raises further questions regarding ways in which the institutional development concept (and theory) can influence the way Sida thinks about poverty, and how to reduce it in Laos.
- What are the ways by which social formal and informal rules of the game influence poverty in Laos? Are there institutional causes of poverty and institutional constraints to poverty reduction at work – what are the underlying processes and mechanisms?
 - How can Sida make use of that knowledge in the way it chooses to fund and designs projects or programs, or participate in coordinated activities with other donors?
8. *How to start using institutional and relational thinking in practice?* Sida identified as one significant lesson and implication of the workshops that it should start to view all its existing interventions from an institutional and relational perspective, rather than seeking to add something new to its agenda. This has implications for the way Sida works in Laos, the relationships it holds and competences that it and its partners needs to have, which will be further elaborated on in the following sub-sections. However, all of these carry strategic dimensions and implications as well. One specifically discussed by Sida was the importance of mapping out strategic contacts and relationships that need to be nurtured in its work with supporting institutional change in Laos. Some further implications and reflections on this theme from the facilitation team are found under “comments”.

⁵ The participant from SNV shared the design and intent of a leadership development program for leaders at regional/provincial level that was just starting. The program included an institutional perspective as a module on leaders in society. The institutional perspective is also reflected in the way the program is designed (it is, for example, a long-term program rather than one-off event) and in the way it seek to build relationships and learning within a peer group of future leaders, who, in turn, may provide important support in the future when trying to effect bigger changes. By working across sectors and at regional level the program is also encouraging cross-learning as well as reaching leaders who have considerable influence at that level, now and in the future. In sum, the intent of this capacity building program was institutional rather than just development of individual skills.

Relationships

A second theme was implications for Sida with regards to its external and internal relations.

1. *How to work more consciously with an ID perspective?* One important lessons and implications from the workshops was that Sida should start to view all its existing interventions from an institutional and relational perspective (see above). This in turn implies letting such a perspective influence how Sida looks at the relationships it holds, and those that they perhaps should or want to hold. It was, for example, suggested in the project workshop that Sida should consider engaging with local or international NGOs or small donors (within Laos or the region) and not just work with the big donors and agencies. If followed, what could be learnt from their approaches and the relationships they hold? What competences, capacities, and resources does building such relationships require?
2. *How to avoid the risk of side-lining Lao counterparts?* The spatial exercises underlined the perception that international consultants and Sida program officers are more closely related to each other than to their respective Lao counterparts. Sida voiced intent to form closer relationships with the Lao counterparts in the future, but also raised concerns over how to go about that without interfering too much in the projects and placing itself between the consultant and the Lao. In finding that out, an ID perspective puts emphasis on asking questions such as how experiences when it comes to forming close relationships with Lao counterparts that national program officers hold can be drawn on better. But also, what are the specific constraints or difficulties that national program officers might face in building closer relationships, given their nationality?
3. *How to value formal and informal relationships in the Lao context?* As informal relations have been found to be crucial within the Lao context the ability to form, uphold, and use informal relationships must also be valued. This has implications for how to create space, flexibility and competence for this to be more than only lip service. It also has implications for how to incorporate such skills into works assessments of Embassy staff. Moreover, putting higher value on informal relationships involves considering how to value and use information that has been obtained through informal relationships in an acceptable and proper way, and how to appropriately link informal relationships to formal relationships.
4. *How to relate to resistance to change and the perceived “falang hidden agenda”?* The issue of resistance to change and how to deal with that surfaced on a number of occasions throughout the learning exercise. Partly a natural and human phenomenon (we can all feel fear of change and the unknown) in the Lao case it may also stem from the perception of foreigners coming to offer aid with a hidden agenda – that of changing the political system and ideology that is its core. Hence, in Laos fear and resistance to change might be “personal” in nature (e.g. fear of losing one's job, of new demands, of being demoted, or failing in performing new tasks), or it may be of a “systemic” nature (e.g. not wanting to be associated with changes that challenges the prevailing system too much). The two may require rather different responses, the first involving more conventional thinking based on lessons from capacity development and change in general. The second source of fear requires a better understanding of the context and the role the individual is asked to play in the process of change within that context – hence, more thinking inspired by ID. One implication for relationships is how these can be used to inquire into the sources of resistance to change, and for getting a better understanding how to address these. Another is to consider what impact perceived attitudes such as “we think you should change in this way” – whether true or not – have on Lao openness to change and ownership of the goal and process of projects aiming at institutional change? How does this influence the relationships held?
5. *How to address cross cultural relationships at the Embassy?* This implication was not drawn specifically in the workshops or conversations, but is raised here as an example of how to apply the principles of ID to

one's own relationships and practices (in this case the Swedish Embassy). In the general spirit of institutional and relational thinking, it could be asked, for example, what influences and forms relationships between national program officers and Swedish program officers at the Embassy? Whose voice is heard or valued the most? What processes and spaces are needed to encourage an environment that is supportive and open to learning and dialogue within the Embassy itself?

Ways of working

The sessions also picked up a number of implications for Sida's ways of working:

1. *How to work more consciously with an ID perspective?* To start to view all its existing interventions from an institutional and relational perspective also has implications for Sida's ways of working. It translates into applying an "ID lens" to all its everyday practices, such as design of Terms of Reference for evaluations, project memos, reviews, and thinking through the processes before a meeting or evaluation takes place. What are the competences, capacities, and resources that this requires?
2. *How to respond to the importance of informal meetings?* One clear message from the workshops and policy conversations was that up front and frank dialogues should take place – and when doing so it should be in an informal setting. In Laos this is particularly important if sensitive issues or problems need to be discussed. Participants stressed that this is a complementary and important part of formal processes (such as annual or mid-term reviews) and opportunity to informal discussions need to be made a natural part of these, in particular before the final formal review session. One interpretation offered in the project workshop was that within the Lao context it may be beneficial to strive for a process in which as few surprises as possible emerge at formal meetings; important issues should preferably be negotiated and resolved beforehand so that nobody loses face and the parties more or less can just sign the formal documents. Adhering to this informal rule of the game has implications for Sida's way of working. How can Sida see to that space is offered for informal meetings within its formal processes? How can informal spaces inform creative use of formal spaces as windows of opportunity for mutual understanding and learning, particularly given the seniority of those present in those present?
3. *Given the long-term, flexible and broad nature of ID – what are the tradeoffs?* In the workshops there emerged almost a consensus that institutional development demands a long-term, flexible approach in which time has to be given to informal ways of working. The implication is that it takes time to work with ID, for all parties involved. Perhaps other issues have to be dropped or reduced in scope or ambition. The Embassy, for example, has to ask what priorities need to be made in terms of resources and time. And what priorities need to be made in term of competence building, the number of staff needed, and the approach used?
4. *How to create space for dialogue?* Given the importance of informal conversations in Laos in general and the nature of institutional development in particular, one message from the Sida workshop was that it is important for Embassy staff to create time and space for dialogue. One implication is to consider how demands from Sida headquarters in Stockholm restrict or support this; what may need to change in internal Sida relations and incentives to support an active use of dialogue? Another implication is for Sida to develop its thinking about who its partners in dialogue are, and what to dialogue about. For example, can existing relationships and forums, such as the monthly consultancy meeting hosted by the Embassy, be used in more creative and strategic manner as spaces for dialogue and informal conversation? Who gets invited to attend? What is the purpose of the meeting? Last but not least importantly, what are the specific competences that Embassy staff need to engage in fruitful dialogue, and how can they attain those?

5. *How to avoid the risk of side-lining Lao counterparts?* As outlined above, the spatial exercises underlined the perception that international consultants and Sida program officers are more closely related to each other than to their respective Lao counterparts. Attempting to change this by creating closer relationships with Lao counterparts has implications not only for relationships that Sida holds, but also for its ways of working. How are, for example, communications, negotiations over Terms of Reference for consultants, and monitoring of performance conducted?
6. *How to offer opportunities for continued learning within and between sectors?* Project participants asked explicitly for specific opportunities for continued exchange of experiences and learning of working with ID from projects within same or other sectors. It was argued that such opportunities allow not only for the creation of new relationships and networking. They can in themselves also contribute to building a momentum for change by creating a common understanding and thinking among participants, and ultimately develop a more strategic way of working with issues related to ID. What are the implications if Sida picks up this request; how can such opportunities be created in the future, and what would be the right form for it?

Competence

Finally, a number of implications centered on capacity and competence emerged:

1. *What competences are needed to build an effective ID approach?* If an ID approach is to be effective, a number of competences need to be in place. One is the understanding of the ID approach itself; others are competences in dialogue and relational ways of working. A general question is what the implications are for learning programs at Sida to support the need for these skills and competences?
 - a. There was, for example, a clear message from the Sida workshop that more training and support is needed in the practice of dialogue. What might this mean for the preparation of new staff, on-the-job training, and coaching activities within Sida – and is it real dialogue or the ability to make skillful conversations that are asked for (see Appendix 1.6 and footnote 6 below)?⁶
 - b. During the Sida workshop it was also argued that self-awareness and emotional competence needs more attention given the relational nature of this work – what are the implications for training and hiring of consultants and Sida staff of this, and what to do if some partner lacks it?
 - c. Participants in the project workshop also stressed the importance of on-the-job or work-based learning, not just training to develop skills and awareness needed. What are the implications of this for LÄR?
2. *How to deal with challenges to ways of thinking among the non-Lao?* Adopting a capacity development strategy based on an institutional development perspective may challenge ways of thinking and established roles not only of Lao counterparts, but also of some consultants. What does this mean for existing training and learning provided by Sida? What are the implications for choices of consultants? In a similar way established ways of thinking among Sida staff may be challenged, one example being the ‘need to think outside the box’ that the adoption of an ID perspective in all interventions may require. What competence is needed to do that, and how might this be nurtured within the Embassy?

⁶ Institutional development is linked to a more dialogic way of working. However, as indicated in Appendix 1.6 the term “dialogue” may have become somewhat diluted in its use in Sida (as well as elsewhere). Based on this learning exercise there seems to be scope for supporting competences in skilful or generative conversations. This includes inquiry skills and listening skills, an ability to see patterns and make connections, enable assumptions to surface, and generate meaning. How might the Embassy build opportunities to encourage and practice such conversations, to give each other feedback, and to get appropriate support in developing this way of working?

3. *Consultants as gap-filler or capacity developers in ID work?* During the second workshop, Sida raised concerns over the role of the international consultant – is he or she a gap-filler or a capacity developer? The first implies more of an implementing role while the other is more of a coaching role, with rather different demands on competences and capabilities. A coaching role for capacity development with an ID perspective requires analytical skills (based on the ID perspective) as well as relational skills and understanding of learning. How is this reflected in the way Sida chooses its partners and the training/orientation/support offered to them?

Comments

On reflecting on the implication that Sida should start viewing all its existing interventions from an institutional perspective rather than adding new things to its agenda (point no 7 under Strategy and role) two additional interpretations can be made.

1. The first is that Sida should take a strategic look at its entire “portfolio” of interventions in Laos from an institutional development perspective. This was not mentioned explicitly in the workshop but touched upon indirectly throughout, and is now picked up here. Such a probe would include asking questions like:
 - When is project support appropriate and when is the sector the right approach?
 - What sectors (and actors) in the Lao economy and society constitute forces of institutional change, and should Sida support them? Are they inside or outside the current portfolio, and why? The emerging and evolving private sector was, for example, identified as one force of change during the Sida workshop but is not part of Sida’s current portfolio – how should Sida relate to it?
 - What role does a particular intervention play in the process of institutional development in Laos? For example, is it seeking to influence the institutional context directly or is the focus on implementation and enforcement of existing formal rules of the game? What are the strategic implications; what efforts should be directed at what level, how are long-term ambitions linked to immediate “on the ground” work; what conversations and relationships require formal attendance from the Embassy, and when is the informal route better?
 - Who are the collaboration partners for each intervention? Are there some that are normally not worked with but that would add, for example, contacts or relationships that Sida does not have on its own, or a perspective or way of working that is particularly beneficial for the issues at hand?
 - And, relating to point 7 above, how are the current interventions linked to poverty reduction in Laos – does an institutional perspective or lens reveal new and different ways of working?
2. The second additional interpretation is for Sida to take a look at its own role within the systems of donor organizations in Laos in the light of the lessons on affecting institutional change that have emerged in this workshop. That is, to view itself as an agent of change located within a system of organizations (of donors and within Lao society at large) that is involved in a process of institutional development and to see if any of the principles of institutional change could be applied also to Sida, in terms of its strategies and its relationships with other actors.

A further comment relates to Sida’s role in supporting institutional development. Participants in the Sida workshop put emphasis on the need to be able to work with institutional development on both high and low levels; the message was to work with what you have and that high level support is needed, for which there might be a role for Sida. If linked, one further interpretation is that there is a role for Sida to play in the interface between experience grounded in practice, and high level policy. The experience Sida has

by working with institutional development in practice gives credibility to work at the high policy level. The issue is that one has to draw lessons and learn continuously from these practices, which implies that it can be a strategically informed decision to create time and space for continued learning from the projects to inform Sida's policy work – as well as the other way around.

This can, however, go beyond sharing information from every day practice and interactions with partners around ID (at project and policy level), by looking at the connections across projects/sectors, as well as any deeper/broader issues that may surface. This may allow for the Embassy to start drawing on and developing its own learning and about supporting ID. What kind of learning culture may be needed with the Embassy to support this? Learning from experience may also raise implications for how the Embassy and Sida at large works, as the workshops demonstrated. For example, how might the development of terms of reference for evaluations, reviews, setting up and facilitating meetings incorporate an ID perspective. To what extent is a consistency of approach needed and how might this be translated into way of working, procedures, and learning support needs?

Finally, taken together the themes and implications presented here point to Sida facing a set of *strategic dilemmas*, for example:

1. Supporting projects vs. sectors?
2. Supporting projects vs. organizations?
3. Supporting ID within vs. beyond organizations?
4. Supporting current vs. future leaders?
5. Seeking vs. “creating” leaders
6. Taking a leading role vs. being a follower in the harmonization process

Without being subject to a thorough analysis, the lessons and implications drawn by the workshop participants in this learning exercise seem to suggest to; focus on sectors and organizations, to support ID both within and beyond, to support both current and future leaders, to both seek and “create” new leaders, and to take a leading role in the harmonization process in terms of ID. But, can the approach used for this learning exercise – based on participatory learning and dialogue – be used to give additional guidance in how to relate to these dilemmas? As a matter of fact, it can. When faced with a polarity like the ones above there is a natural tendency to seek to split into one or the other, and to be stuck in “either or” thinking. If, instead, the polarity is held, or one stays with the dilemma, something new – a third way – can emerge. A way of holding that tension is to, in the spirit of double loop learning, look into what the underlying assumptions of the dilemma are. Perhaps the upcoming workshops would be one arena for deepening and going into these dilemmas.

3.2 Ways forward – where do we go from here?

The workshop structure was based on Kolb's learning cycle (see Appendix 1.5) which links and puts emphasis on Experience – Reflection – Sense making – Action. In the light of this if, addressing areas that participants want to explore further and take action on, indicate areas in which reflection and learning has occurred. Hence, the sessions on ways forwards were important parts of the workshops.

Project workshop

At the end of the project workshop, there was an opportunity for participants to meet in project/organizational teams to identify areas they wanted to explore further and take action on, as a result of the

workshop. The following is a summary from key points in the workshop feedback and follow-up evaluations (expressed in the language of the participants):

SEM at STEA:

- A similar workshop process would be good for us
- start to sketch out a strategy for institutional development

LSRSP III at MCTPC:

- The recognition that leadership is important –will try build up ‘small’ middle- level leaders
- The need to change attitudes – we need to learn from foreigners, be more open
- To spell things out more openly – to increase common understanding
- Build trust & delegate – to improve teamwork
- The need to challenge our own programs – so that we can solve our own problems and not run away from them
- Involve myself in the project preparation and implementation- to be part of the project more [from Ministry level evaluation]

Statistics V at NSC:

- Before we focused only on the ‘organizational’ and ‘systems of organizations’ level (in egg framework) – we need to add the wider institutional framework & relations to clients/data providers
- We will use the Egg model as a way to look at how we include relations with clients and data providers in a strategic and systematic way
- We will use the ‘Flower’ model of facilitation as used in the workshop (task, process, underlying assumptions/mind-sets) in forthcoming management seminar
- Manage and integrate project activities into overall organization/institution activities
- Properly identify and improve an appropriate coordinating mechanism across different institutions (key partners, stakeholders)

LSUARP II at NAFRI:

- Build on and use the learning about other projects, and the approach to learning participation & facilitation used in this workshop
- Take up a better understanding of concept of Institutional development into work
- Improve leadership & way of working with partners
- To have a more explicit institutional focus on information activities (rather than implicit)
- To develop more connections with STEA ‘some good discussions with STEA consultants and staff were started because of this workshop’

SFM at TD:

- Need to improve coordination with Tax Department and STA (Swedish Tax Authority)
- Question: do we have enough team work? Have to consider how to develop relationships; we will have a meeting next week about how to work informally and strategically.

Some of these ways forward indicate real shifts in thinking around institutional development (within and beyond the level of the organization), which link to some of the lessons already stated, for example:

- an emphasis on thinking explicitly and strategically about ID
- greater emphasis on coordination within and between sectors/projects
- to think beyond the project and organizational level
- to build relations and team work and develop trust and dialogue
- the importance of leadership and supporting its development
- to be more involved in project design and implementation
- learning from the participatory approach and facilitation used in the workshop for their own work and taking ID forward

In the workshops and in the follow-up evaluations, there was also a clear message from projects participants about the usefulness of coming together in this way across projects and sectors, in order to share experiences, build relationships and deepen learning. The participatory and open approach was also much appreciated. In terms of ways forward, it was seen as important to build on this opportunity- and have a follow-up (maybe once or twice a year). A concern raised in the beginning of the workshop was it was perhaps overambitious to expect people to open up and build trust in just one workshop. It was felt that given that institutional development is a process, a long-term process on top of that, workshops like this one, or something similar to it, should perhaps not be offered only once. In response, in the Sida workshop, Sida was concerned about ownership about that process and of taking too much of a project approach as that is a type of intervention that Sida is perhaps is moving away from, or sees itself be moving away from in the future. A reflection on this is found under “comments”.

Sida workshop

For Sida, a discussion about ways forward was opened up at the Embassy following on the main workshop, and there was a further opportunity to expand on these in a follow-up evaluation questionnaire. The following is a summary of those main points, grouped under the same heading as used previously under section 3.1 (for implications for Sida); strategy and role, ways of working, relationships, and competences and capacity.

Strategy and role

- Conduct a mapping exercise of key stakeholders from ID perspective
- Coordinate understanding about ID and capacity development with other donors
- Coordinate with donors and ministries about ID, ‘those meetings could also be organized by the projects themselves after being introduced to the network; by us’
- Promote harmonized, coordinated institutional development, not ‘single-donor, ‘Sida-project’ specific
- Support a collective voice amongst donors ‘a collective voice is much stronger than a fragmented individual voice’
- Tone down ambition around ID – be more context specific

Relationships

- Review consultants’ meeting – purpose, membership. Clarify Sida relationship to other Swedish actors – manage boundaries
- Create meeting opportunities between projects, for local and international counterparts to meet informally for exchange of ideas

Ways of working

- More informal meetings prior to midterm review
- Consider institutional development in memos, projects and reviews
- Continue thinking and anglicizing projects from ID perspective, including project committee meetings ‘perhaps put up an institutional development reflection point for all our discussions’
- Raise questions of ID everywhere- and try to create space to enable implementation
- Further conversations with POM and LÄR
- Be more alert to the changes and be more flexible – seeking windows of opportunity ‘to influence the mindset of high ranking govt. officials through dialogues with the sector in which Sida is supporting’

Capacity and competences

- Influence Sida's internal capacity development program /approach – e.g. dialogue and linking dialogue to institutional thinking
- Clarify key concepts and practice of ID, CB, dialogue – make links between them. How might this institutional perspective integrate into the work done by Sida concerning capacity development?
- Encourage counterpart inter-change meetings organized by the Embassy
- Consider training and capacity-building under institutional angle
- To consider the consequences of what is already approved in instructions, policies etc concerning institutional development – in terms of competence and the resources needed of doing this 'in the field where the actual work has to be done'
- To discuss how UTV and LÄR can work together in the future to enhance learning

Again, the actions and ways forward expressed by the Embassy, are an indication of the thinking and learning that has taken place, both through the workshops and in-between. It will be important to prioritize areas for action and follow-through and those that may need further reflection within the Embassy, for example, the donor harmonization – project dynamic. The workshop(s) in September will offer a space to build this platform for action and strategic thinking, along with engagement with project participants on actions that can be taken at that level.

Comments

Regarding the message to Sida from the project workshop that some kind of meeting across projects and sectors should be arranged regularly, a link can be made to the earlier discussion of Sida's role in the interface between policy and practice (or high level and groundwork). As argued there, Sida's work with institutional development in the projects gives it credibility in its promotion of ID at other "higher" levels – in particular if that work is properly informed by its groundwork. This is perhaps the light in which the project workshop message should be seen; the goodwill and relationships are now there to be built on if Sida so chooses. It can be seen as an opportunity to apply some of the lessons coming from the workshop about building on existing human capital – alongside looking at the bigger donor picture and harmonization. In essence, facilitating and deepening experiences from supported projects might give greater credibility and substance when seeking to influence or coordinate with donors and relate to higher level officials. The mini-workshop in September could be a place to explore this further – and to look at other opportunities to bring together projects and other stakeholders (e.g. Ministries, donors) sectorally and/or cross-sectorally in order to 'lift' the analysis to higher levels.

If the outcomes under ways forward indicate where thinking has been going and where there is energy for further work, there is a clear message of the need to think about the relationship between capacity development, institutional development, and dialogue. And once that relationship is established, what approach to learning that should be adopted.

3.3 Reflection on lessons and insights from the evaluation

The following is a summary of key lessons and insights related to institutional development drawn from the follow-up evaluation that regard the overall workshop process. The points here complement and add to the lessons already stated, and give a steer for further follow-up – perhaps in the September workshops. They have been grouped around themes that reflect the content of the points made in the evaluations. The brackets indicate where the information comes from (LPP = Lao project participant, IC = international consultant from the project workshop, and Sida = a participant in the Sida workshop).

Understanding and ways of thinking

- a growing recognition about the need to think at an 'higher level' applying an institutional lens consciously to everything we do 'raise questions related to ID everywhere (Sida) and at strategic level rather than seeing it as an add-on activity' (LPP, IC, Sida)
- An awareness and use of concepts, like 'rules of the game' and reference and use of the 'egg model' (LPP)
- The importance of 'a common language and an understanding of concepts, perspectives, theories' (Sida)
- The need to change our attitude towards change 'in order to understand where we are, we need to look backward and forward, learning from the past, taking into account the dynamic nature of problems and understanding the stand of main actors' This needs to be the basis for analysis. The importance of learning to live with changes 'whenever possible find a way to convert a threat into an opportunity' (Sida)
- Institutional development is 'complex, opaque and difficult to achieve. Moreover, it is open to other definitions than those chosen by the resource persons' (Sida)
- ID can be promoted through own networks, friends and other networks beyond Sida 'as I believe that changes comes from inside and by taking initiative' (Sida)
- Improved understanding of the concept and approach of ID, and appreciation of the reporting back from the project and policy level and the discussion this allowed for among Sida officers. (Sida)

Strategy

- The importance of identifying the right stakeholders if taking an ID perspective and timely discussion with government high officials (LPP, IC)
- Identification of the importance of the great human capital and relationships that Sida has built up which may 'help Sida influence decision-making more so than the activities/projects' (IC)
- The 'feedback from project and policy groups were limited in terms of the political threats from the outer sphere of their institutions, thus lost opportunity to discuss and find ways to penetrate the walls of the black box' (Sida)

Ways of working

- The importance of developing formal and informal coordination and communication skills 'good internal network building and setup is a ground for extending the external network from the grassroots to the top' (LPP)
- The importance of team work within the project and government staff is essential (IC and LPP)
- More involvement of project and government staff in project formulation, implementation, review and evaluation (IC and LPP)
- To have informal meetings and to agree before a formal meeting (Sida)

Relationships

- Re-looking at relations and roles in the projects 'cultivating closer relationships with the local counterpart and letting the consultants be consultants' (Sida)
- The second day should have been spent on the issues that were looked at towards the end 'relationships between consultants, Lao staff, and Sida and access to power and decision makers, the party' (IC)

Competence/capacity

- the development of own listening skills (IC)
- how to facilitate learning from the workshop itself (LPP)
- the transfer of knowledge between TA and local counterpart should not only be left to individuals...the unit or division member should be involved and take part in the implementation in order to improve not only the individual but also the organization' (LPP)

In terms of some of the overall lessons learnt, it is interesting to note the feedback concerning ways of thinking and how this has developed or raised further questions, which in itself is an important indicator of learning. It may be important to explore some of these concepts more, in relation to Sida's actual practice in Laos. There is scope to make stronger links between capacity development and ID – or rather applying an ID perspective to capacity-building – and what that means for not only for Sida practice in Laos, but also how it might be taken forward in Stockholm by UTV, LÄR and others.

The approach taken in the workshops

In the project workshop, a strong feedback was the appreciation of the opportunity to come together and share experiences at a 'higher level' beyond activities and to engage openly in small groups and participatory exercises, as well as thinking about concrete ways forward.⁷ As summarized by a Lao participant;

'despite the short period of time, we were able to share a lot of experiences (negatives and positives) strengths and weaknesses of different Sida supported projects. Furthermore, it was particularly helpful to allow group discussion so that we all were able to actively participate, we had great chances to share our thinking and originate / propose a number of relating recommendations and suggestions' (LPP)

There was also a sense of not being alone – that others shared similar issues and challenges:

'understanding that different organizations have own problems when implementing projects and local counterpart and foreign advisors' (LPP)

For consultants it also aided understanding:

'to discuss the history of the project as seen through the eyes of the Lao colleagues. It provides a window of understanding on their own perceptions of the program' (IC)

As well as offering a different kind of opportunity to come together, this workshop process could also be seen as a concrete example of applying some of the lesson about institutional development that came through during the workshops:

- building on existing human capital and relationships
- offering space for development of trust and relationship and understanding
- encouraging analysis at a higher level beyond the everyday project detail, as well as learning across sectors

In terms of what could have been done differently regarding the approach, a few participants in the project workshop felt that more time was needed or that there should have been fewer objectives in the workshop. One participant felt that more support from the facilitation team in reporting back and focusing conclusions from the small group work would have been helpful. Given the complex nature of institutional development, these comments seem to underline the importance of giving adequate time, space, and support if learning is to be meaningful. This, in turn, may have implications for the way this issue is approached in the future.

In the Sida workshop, one participant felt that the feedback from the project workshop was too detailed without having adequate time to draw out more general knowledge from the lessons learnt. Another participant was concerned that the workshop was not context specific enough, leading to too much 'project focus' and that the perspective of the Embassy got lost 'when trying to accommodate the interests of other departments/Sida as a whole'. Given the assumption in the learning exercise that ID has implications for how Sida works as a whole as well, this comment would be interesting to explore further.

⁷ For a review of the experience based learning approach taken in the workshops, please see Appendix 1.5.

Comments

Given the centrality of process to the nature of institutional development, what can be learnt from the approach taken in the learning exercise to encourage spaces for more open sharing and learning from practice – as well as exploring some of the challenges faced in doing that? These workshops offered the participants only a short time together and so, it may require follow-up to build on the seeds of trust and openness expressed in these evaluations. But there is an opening – and an appreciation of the approach taken by Sida – which could be built on, within Laos but also within Sida itself.

4 Final comments

The perspective on institutional development applied in this learning exercise implies that there is a need to increase our contextual knowledge and use that wisely. That requires first all some analytical skills in order to investigate and better understand that context – an institutional approach – and then to draw implications from that for strategy, ways of working, competences, and relationships. The institutional approach is, hence, important as a way of thinking, or a lens through which you can see the world, as well as a tool for sharpening strategies. The sections on implications and ways forward in this report, indicate a shift in thinking about institutional development along these lines, from a particular type or kind of support to a way of thinking about all interventions and relationships.

More specifically, adopting an institutional approach or lens requires the ability to take a step back and to ask “what game is being played here?”; what are the rules and who are the actors involved? If necessary, a follow up question is “how can the rules of the game be changed?” In general there is a strong link to inquiry within an institutional perspective, which is an overlap with the approach to learning that is used in this process. Institutional analysis is about asking questions in a double loop fashion, and to arrive at “better” and more accurate questions that in the process go to the root of the problem.

An institutional perspective or approach also encourages taking a long-term perspective; to every now and then lift one’s eye from the intricate of the daily activities and look back at what has happened. This in order not only to learn from the past but also to see what changes have actually occurred – to put the small steps and slow motion of the process of institutional development into perspective. Usually, that is a rather encouraging endeavor. It tends to bring out the depth and magnitude of changes that otherwise easily go unnoticed or are too slow to be seen.

In order to develop an institutional approach, apart from theoretical inputs, this exercise also emphasized the importance of working with and learning from the existing practice of partners and the Embassy itself. It suggested giving value to the ability to build relations and to engage in skilful conversations and dialogue. This in turn, may give Sida more credibility and ability to engage with and collaborate with other strategic actors on these issues, for example other donors or Ministries. Moreover, if Sida wants to take this approach to institutional development further within its own institutional context, then it will also be important to apply some of the thinking, lessons, and principles of ID to itself.

Finally, a set of questions that have not been specifically addressed in this report is those that guide the entire learning exercise:

1. How has Sida support for institutional development influenced the institutional set-up in Laos?
2. What has helped and what has hindered that contribution?
3. What are the implications for how to support institutional development?

Issues to explore further regard how the learning that has taken form in the workshops can inform these questions, and the outcomes and lessons reported relate to them. What insights are there that may contribute to respond to these questions, but also open up for new areas of inquiry?

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Appendix 1. The learning exercise in brief

In order to reconnect with the learning exercise and the subject under investigation – that of Sida support to institutional development in Laos – this appendix presents a quick overview of its core parts, focus, concepts and approaches. For a more detailed description on these topics, please see the background pack that was distributed prior to the June workshops.

1.1 Learning exercise fundamentals

The focus of the exercise is institutional development (ID) and its overall aim is to learn more from Sida's experience of supporting institutional development in Laos, and to draw lessons to inform future strategies and work. This translates into learning more on what has worked well, and why; on what has not worked well, and why; and on how Sida can improve its support to institutional development – in Laos and in general. The fundamental purposes and underlying principles of the exercise are found in Box 1.

Box 1: Exercise fundamentals

The learning exercise has two main purposes:

1. To contribute to learning for Sida. It should help the Embassy develop its ways of working with support for institutional development more long term, strategically, and methodologically. It should also contribute with relevant lessons and methods development for Sida as a whole.
2. To contribute to learning for Sida partners in Laos. Notably Lao counterparts, but also international consultants and possibly others.

The basic underlying principle is that of a common learning exercise in which all those who participate explore their experience and draw lessons for future work. It is performed as a participatory learning process, based on the assumption that learning largely takes place through interactive reflection, conversations and exchange of experience. It is not a traditional evaluation; Sida headquarters does not evaluate or control the Swedish Embassy and Sida does not evaluate and control its partners in Laos. Rather there is an element of self evaluation as any assessment of achievements is done by those who participate and concerns their own work.

Apart from contributing to learning as described above, the learning exercise will provide input into two other processes at Sida:

1. The mid-term review of the Swedish Country strategy for Laos in late 2006
2. The broader UTV evaluation theme on institutional development

Source: Eriksson Skoog, Gun (2006).

The process *consists of three basic parts*: (i) formal and informal interviews and conversations with Embassy staff, international consultants and Lao counterpart involved in Sida supported projects with ID components, as well as with a handful of Lao policy makers; (ii) a series of workshops run in Laos, two in June 2006 and two to be held in September 2006; and (iii) an extension phase including a final report and, potentially, Sida in-house workshops or seminars. All three are important parts of the process and bear equal weight in terms of learning (an outline of the process up until now is found in Appendix 2). Nevertheless, the workshops are key focal points in the process as they constitute arenas in which abstract concepts are discussed and made concrete, experiences are formulated and shared, and common themes or differences are explored.

1.2 What have we done and where are we at?

Preparatory face-to-face conversations were held with workshop participants in May. In parallel, people at the policy level were interviewed as to their experience of working with institutional development in Laos in general, and with Sida in particular. In June, two separate and sequential workshops were held in

Vientiane. The first (on June 8-9, two full days) hosted international consultants and Lao counterparts from the following Sida supported projects, which had been selected based on containing substantial institutional development elements:

1. *Lao-Swedish Road Sector Project (LSRSP 3)* 2005–2009 at the Ministry of Construction Transport Post and Communication (MCTPC).
2. *Lao Swedish Upland Agriculture and Forestry Research Programme (LSUAFRP II)* 2006–2011 at the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI).
3. *Strengthening Environmental Management (SEM II)* 2005–2010 at the Science Technology and Environment Agency (STEA).
4. *Statistics V* 2005–2008 at the National Statistics Centre, under the Committee for Planning and Investment (CPI).
5. *Strengthening Fiscal Management in Laos (SFM)* 2003–2006 at the Tax Department, under the Ministry of Finance.

The second workshop (June 12–13, 1 ½ days) was attended by all staff at the Swedish Embassy in Vientiane complemented with a few concerned participants from Sida headquarters in Stockholm, as well as one representative of an international NGO working with capacity development and institutional development in Laos. Lists of participants in both workshops are found in Appendix 3. The intent of these workshops was, in short, to offer the opportunity to explore experiences of promoting institutional development in Laos, and to draw lessons and implications for Sida based on those experiences.

In completing the June workshops, the Embassy and facilitation team shared an understanding that, given the time limitations of the second workshop, there was still a need for the Embassy staff to deepen its learning and discuss further how to let an institutional perspective inform its work in Laos. Moreover, there was a perceived need among participants in both workshops that they – Sida and the project – now ought to meet to learn from each other directly and to continue the dialogue for the future. There was a need to create time and space for both these

In order to create time and space to meet those needs it was decided that a second round of workshops should be given in September, which is where we are at now. This time the process will start with a ½ day mini-workshop for staff at the Swedish Embassy, followed by ½ day joint mini-workshops to which all participants of the June workshops have been invited. The overall purpose of these two mini-workshops is to complete the workshop part of the learning exercise, and to provide a platform for further learning and action with regards to supporting institutional development (more specific purposes are found in the workshop invitations).

1.3 Institutional development – what do we mean?

The definition of institutional development that is guiding this learning exercise in all its components (including the workshops) is based on that used within UTV's evaluation theme on institutional development.

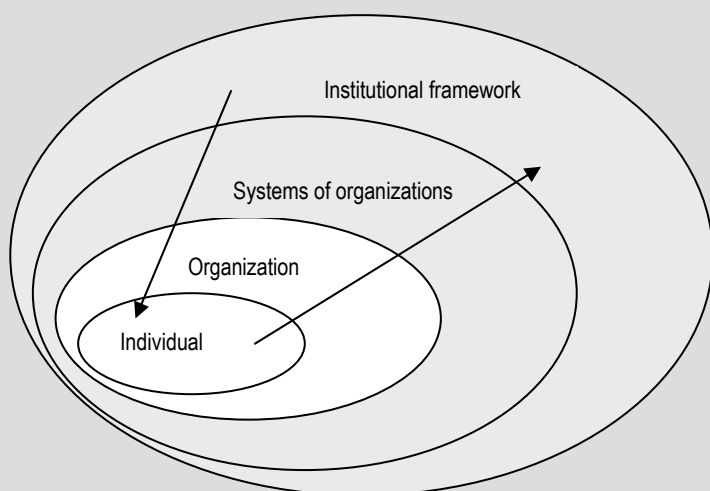
Institutional development (ID) refers to:

‘The development of formal and informal “rules of the game” that guide people’s behavior and interaction, both within/ between organizations and in the wider society’

Hence, formal institutions includes laws and regulations while informal institutions include norms, traditions, and other informal rules that people take into consideration. In order to visualize this rather abstract concept the following illustration was used in conversations, in preparatory material as well as in the workshops (Figure 1).

For the purpose of this learning exercise, the “Egg-framework” serves to illustrate a number of things. *First*, that individuals and organizations of various sorts are embedded within the institutional context within which they operate, which is illustrated by it “embracing” all lower levels of aggregation in the figure. *Secondly*, that the institutional framework, or set-up permeates all levels at which organizations and individuals operate, and, hence, influence their decisions and behavior.⁸ This is illustrated by the inward pointing arrow. *Thirdly*, individuals and organizations may influence the institutional framework through their actions and behavior, which is illustrated by the outward pointing arrow in the figure. *Finally*, in contrast to common day terminology, there is a *separation between organizations and institutions* in this framework. Institutions are “rules of the game” while organizations are “players of the game”; they both influence each other but are not the same thing. This is illustrated by the difference in shading in the figure.

Figure 1: The Egg-framework



Source: Adapted from Sida (2005) *Manual from Capacity Development*, Department of Policy and Methodology, page 32.

A final distinction, which is not reflected in the egg-frame, is that between nominal rules and rules-in-use. Put simply, rules-in-use are those that people would refer to if asked about what guided their decision or behavior; they are the ones that actually influence peoples’ behavior and interactions. Nominal rules in use, in contrast, exist but are not adhered to. As a result, a change in nominal rules of the game would not result in people changing their behavior.

Hence, institutions – formal as well as informal – are at work at levels in society. The institutional set-up influences the way individuals, organizations and projects act, as well as is influenced by behavior and actions take by individuals or organizations. Sometimes such institutional change or development is lead-

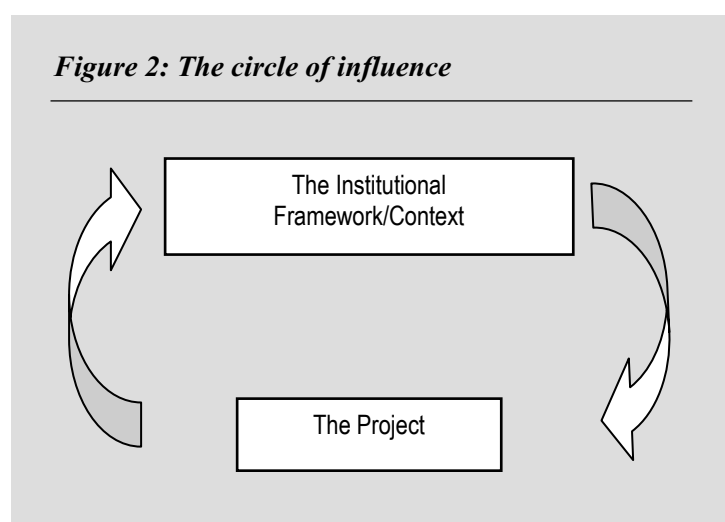
⁸ The terms “institutional framework”, “institutional context”, and “institutional set-up” are used interchangeably in this document.

by particularly powerful or influential actors, and sometimes by means of coordination between a number of actors with less direct access or means to influence change in institutional framework.

1.4 Institutional development – what are we interested in?

For the learning exercise, the Embassy proposed that the exercise needed to focus or start from the project level, as Sida supported projects in a number of sectors are what they mainly work with. In line with the illustration above, it was recognized that the Lao institutional context influence the projects and their outcomes, as well as that the projects in return influence – or seek to influence – the institutional context. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.

At the onset of the learning exercise there was a recognized need to better understand and take into account the Lao institutional context and the way it influences the projects that Sida supports in Laos (the right downward arrow). At the same time, there was also a need to learn more about how development of the institutional set-up takes place, as well as how Sida can improve its way of working – in terms of its strategies, methods, and relationships with partners – so as to support such ID in a successful manner (the left upward arrow).



Both arrows in the figure were seen as important, but it was decided by the Embassy and UTV jointly that this learning exercise should focus on the left upward arrow, that is, on how Sida-supported projects and other development efforts have (or have not) contributed to the development of the institutional set-up in Laos, as a mean to promote poverty reduction.

The overall questions that are guiding the entire exercise are, thus:

1. How has Sida support for institutional development influenced the institutional set-up in Laos?
2. What has helped and what has hindered that contribution?
3. What are the implications for how to support institutional development?

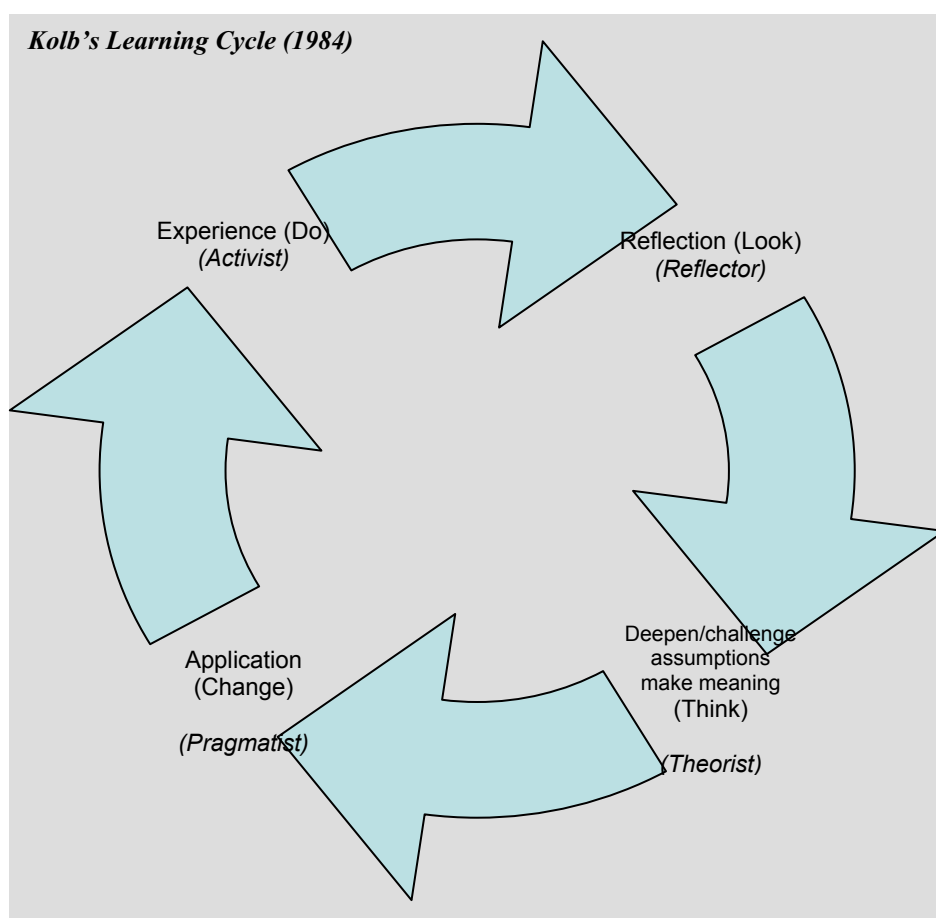
It was also agreed that a particular focus should be given to ‘dialogue’ in the exercise.

1.5 Learning – what do we mean and how do we use it?⁹

The overall intent of this exercise has been to contribute to learning about Institutional development and its practice – for Sida primarily (in Laos and more widely) but also for Sida partners in Laos. How we understand learning will inevitably impact on the approach taken- this section outlines the learning approach taken in the workshops – and to an extent, in the overall exercise- and some of the underlying theories/assumptions informing it.

1.5.1 Adult learning cycle

The learning approach used in the workshops is based on the adult learning cycle (see Kolbs' cycle below).



This works on the assumption that adults learn best, when they have the opportunity to:

- i) draw on their experience,
- ii) are able to reflect on it,
- iii) deepen understanding and make meaning out of that experience (which may involve relating it to other theories or models, or challenging existing mind-sets and assumptions), out of which new insights and ways of thinking may emerge
- iv) apply these in action and changed behavior/practice. And then repeating the cycle again

⁹ This relies on text provided by Liz Goold.

Each stage of the learning cycle informs the other- learning is a continuous and iterative process. Reflection is also not just at one stage- it needs to happen at every stage- all the time. This is sometimes called ‘reflexivity’ – reflection-in-action.

It is also possible to apply different learning styles to this cycle of learning (indicated in italics). This is where people may feel more comfortable with a particular learning style, which means they give a preference to some stages of the learning process to the detriment of others. For example, the preference for experiencing to the extent that people develop an addiction to activities and rush around constantly on the go. This results in plenty of experiences on the assumption that experience is synonymous with learning. (At a broader level, this activist tendency can be seen in the development sector, where more value appears to be given to action and results than to reflection and inquiry).

In the workshop, this design sought to model the learning cycle as well as cater for different learning styles, where possible through a mix of activities and processes

- i. *Experience*: We sought to offer opportunities for participants to share and build on their own experience, through the sharing of stories and examples from practice and exploring their organizations histories and contexts. There were also some experiential exercises, for example, the spatial mapping exercises looking at perceptions of relationships between Sida, consultants and Lao counterparts. In the Sida workshop, the experience from projects and policy level was also fed in.
- ii. *Reflection*: Small group work with guiding questions offered opportunities for reflection and deepening.
- iii. *Deepening/making meaning*: Some theoretical frameworks were offered to help make sense of experience from an Institutional Development perspective – and how this related to experience, although there was insufficient time to deepen or challenge this, including the models themselves. This may be looked at further in the September workshop.
- iv. *Application/Change*: There was some space to explore implications of the ID approach based on learnings from experience, what this might mean for changes in practice, for projects and Sida and what action are needed. There will be more space to ‘ground’ this in the mini-workshop in September.

1.5.2 Learning is relational – creating the right conditions

The approach to learning used here assumes that learning and change are predominantly relational rather than individual processes. This implies that in order to facilitate learning and change, it is important to pay attention to the quality of relationships, conversations and interactions taking place between people – in everyday organizational life, as well as structured spaces. This relational approach also emphasises the importance of peer learning. In the workshops, spaces were created both within the workshop and informally outside it over drinks and food to build relationships and encourage quality conversation.

Also, it is important to create the conditions for learning- for example, where people feel they can be open, to inquire into their own experience and share insights, thoughts and feelings with others. The workshops sought to pay attention to this, whilst recognizing the limitations of time- and the fact that openness cannot be forced when people have only just met. Relations and trust needs to be built over time- hence the desire for project participants to meet again.

1.5.3 Single-loop and double-loop learning

Learning can be looked at different levels. *Single-loop learning* involves the transfer of knowledge and skills and immediate problem-solving which may lead to improvements to existing practice and procedures. *Double-loop learning* involves inquiring into existing mind-sets and ways of thinking/doing things, which may challenge underlying assumptions and beliefs upon which practice and procedures are based. This

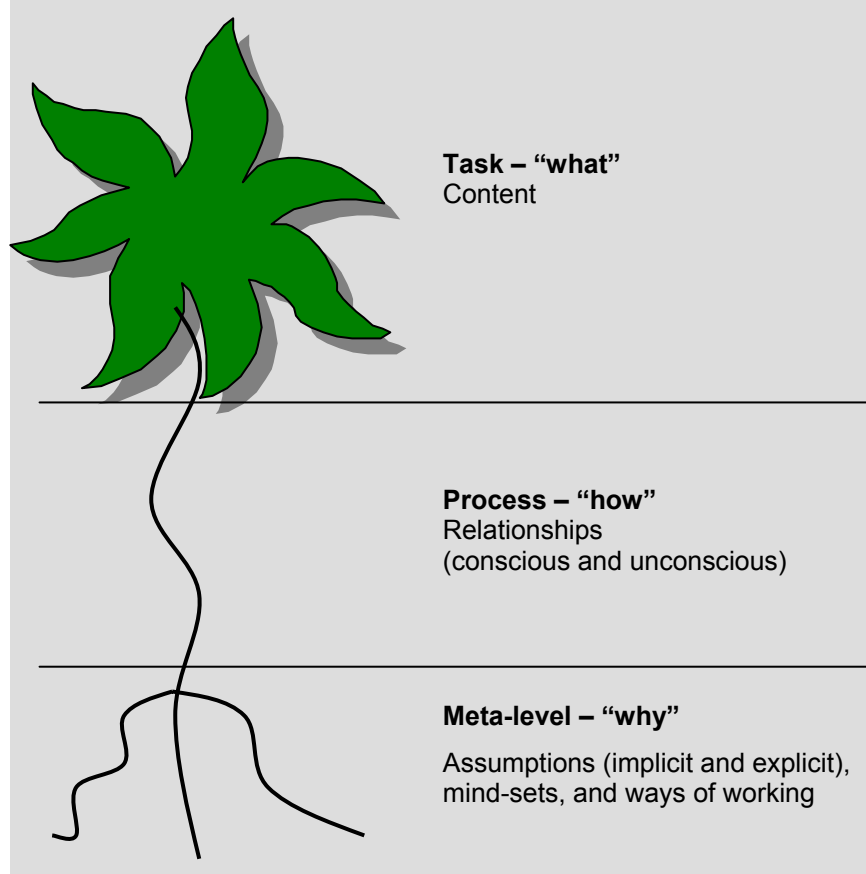
is sometimes called ‘thinking outside the box’. Both are needed, but from an Institutional Development perspective, greater attention may be needed on double-loop learning given the emphasis on exploring underlying mind-sets, ‘rules of the game’ that may well be informed by the wider institutional set-up. By its very nature, double-loop learning can be threatening to the prevailing status quo, leading to the reinforcement of barriers and defenses against learning at an organizational level. These need to be identified and consciously worked with, if a supportive environment is to be created that allows for this type of learning to take place – at an individual and collective level (see Goold 2006 for further exploration of these barriers to learning).

As indicated in the learning cycle, the approach taken in these workshops sought to encourage double-loop learning but this does demand space and time if it is to go beyond the single-loop level meaningfully. The workshops in September may be an opportunity to revisit this but from an ID perspective, it may well have implications for the type of workshop interventions that Sida may want to support in the future. There may also be broader implications related to the barriers to learning within Sida itself which may need further exploration if this approach is to be taken forward.

1.5.4 The role of the facilitator

Creating and ‘holding’ open learning spaces and encouraging deeper inquiry can often be helped by the presence of a facilitator. The approach to learning above informed the role of the facilitator in the workshops. This was illustrated in the workshops using the ‘flower’ picture (see below), where the facilitator seeks to work at three levels; the task at hand, the process and dynamics of the group (how we are doing it)

Figure 3: The flower of facilitation (Soth 2006)



and also the underlying assumptions and mind-sets that might be at play (why we are doing what we are doing) – and helps to surface or pay attention to these, where appropriate/possible.

Again, there are direct links here if wanting to take an Institutional Development approach in terms of the implications for existing capacity and external resources – local or international – if seeking to work more in this way.

1.6 Dialogue – what do we mean and how do we use it?¹⁰

Dialogue as a means or way of supporting institutional development was one topic that the Embassy wanted to explore further in this learning exercise. This request was based on a perceived need not only to improve their competences in conducting dialogue, but also how to better understand it in order to use dialogue more strategically.

As a contribution to this, some background reading was offered prior to the workshop– which offered different approaches and meanings attached to dialogue and competences involved. These included:

- a chapter from the book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (Isaacs 1999) about the art and practice of generative dialogue
- a short handout on dialogue drawing out the key principles and practices and making a clear distinction between discussion/debate and dialogue
- a recent paper from Sida about understanding of dialogue (POM/INFO 2006)
- two chapter from an EGDI book on the use of dialogue within development (Olsson & Wohlgemuth 2003)

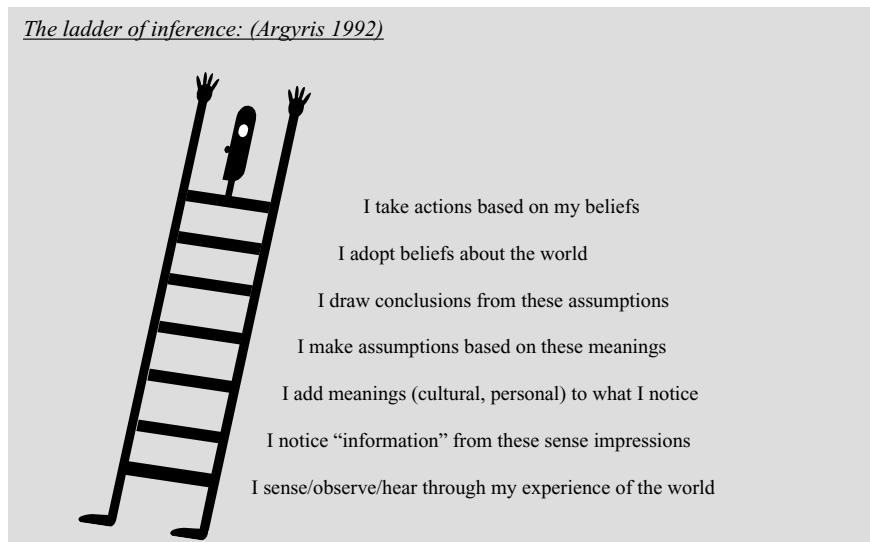
The main point of the first two articles was to stress a view of dialogue which is more about finding a way of thinking together, out of which new meaning may emerge. An essential feature is to reveal and suspend assumptions- without trying to defend them. It is not about trying to change anybody's opinion. This is contrasted with discussion and debate, which emphasises analysis, where each puts their point of view, where the prime aim is for one or more ideas to win out against others. The approach to institutional development within this learning exercise has emphasised the importance of building relationships and creating space for conversation, in order to make sense of the context you are working in. Developing the art and practice of dialogue or generative conversation therefore plays a central part in this.

How does the above relate to Sida's view and experience of dialogue – in Stockholm and in Laos? What might be the implications be for taking up this kind of approach to dialogue with policy makers within Sida? What kind of conditions might be needed for this? What relationships, competences/ qualities and capacity might be needed?

Some of these questions were to be explored within the workshop with Sida, as well as having an opportunity to practice some skills in dialogue. However due to time constraints, this had to be cut out- which an interesting learning in itself. A short input on inquiry skills (see the ladder of inference to the right) was presented during the Sida workshop. It illustrated how easily we “jump to conclusions” that reinforce beliefs, without inquiring first into what we see or experience. Inquiry skills include the ability to suspend assumptions, to inquire and ask the “right” question that opens up rather than closes down conversations, the ability to see and listen deeply for underlying patterns and connections, and so on. If Sida want to take a more dialogic approach to its work, then these types of skill sill need support and development.

¹⁰ This section relies on text provided by Liz Goold.

The ladder of inference: (Argyris 1992)



The question of dialogue, its intent and how the term carries different meanings may need further exploration if Sida is serious about its use within an ID context- particularly as the term ‘strategic conversation’ is now being offered. How might dialogic practices inform this? Is there any underlying tension/contradiction if dialogue is seen as being about influencing another party to adopt Sida’s point of view – and how might this be acknowledged? If dialogue seems too compromised as a term, how might ‘skillful conversations’ be encouraged more?

These and the questions above are still worthy of further discussion within the Embassy, and further support from LÄR may be useful here.

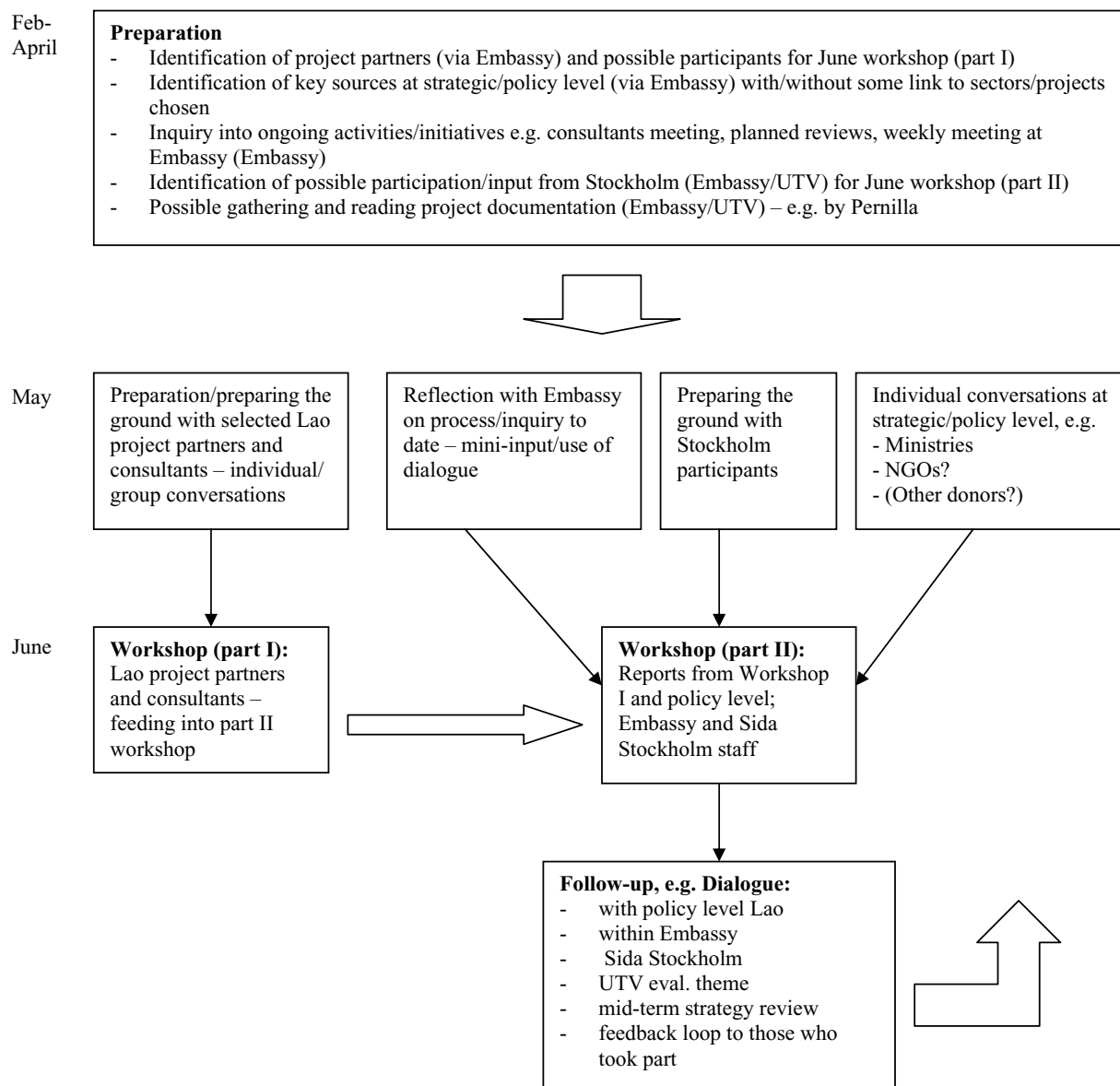
There are also clear links to the practices of dialogue and the ‘double-loop learning approach used in this learning exercise. For example, drawing on and valuing the experience of those in the room, inquiring into assumptions, and drawing out new meanings and insights together. How might these practices support ‘the thinking outside of the box’ that some in the Embassy desire- for itself and in this process but also in its work with other donors and Ministries?

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Appendix 2. Outline of the overall process of the learning exercise

Summary of process institutional development learning exercise laos



Note: The illustration does not include the addition of the mini-workshops to be held in September.

Appendix 3. Workshop purposes and outlines

Outline of projects workshop: 8–9 june, 2006

Purpose of the workshop:

1. To offer an opportunity for you to explore together your own experience and insights about promoting institutional development and Sida's role and support in this.
2. To draw out lessons from this exploration for both your own future work and to help guide Sida's strategy and practice in supporting development within this area.

Day 1: Thursday, June 8, 8.30–17.00

Session 1	Introductions, Setting the scene, Agreeing the process for these 2 days Who are we as a group? Introducing our projects/organisations – mapping the context and relationships we work with
Session 2	Sharing our individual stories of positive institutional development – within our organisation – What has worked? Where have things got stuck? What does this tell us?
12.00–13.00	Lunch
Session 3	Sharing our stories of institutional development beyond our organisations – What has worked? Where have things got stuck? What does this tell us?
Session 4	Helping and hindering factors and Sida's role
17.00–18.30	Drinks, snacks and informal sharing

Day 2: Friday, June 9, 8.30–17.00

Session 1	Drawing out common principles/key lessons from experience sharing
Session 2	Exploring roles and relationships in promoting institutional development – between Lao counterparts and Swedish consultants and Sida, and other key stakeholders
12.00–13.00	Lunch
Session 3	What are the implications for ways of working – for Sida, for Ministries, for each other? What needs to stop/start/continue
Session 4	What message/actions/insights do we want to take back with us? What message do we want to share with Sida – and those at policy level? Next steps

Outline of Sida workshop: 12–13 june, 2006

Purpose of the workshop:

To contribute to Sida's own learning about how it can support institutional development and influence the institutional set-up better – in Laos and more generally – and to start considering the implications for its future work.

Objectives:

To create an opportunity to:

- Reflect on the experience from project and policy levels about supporting institutional development within the Lao context
- Explore your own experiences of supporting institutional development in Laos/beyond, both in terms of individual experiences and common (dialogue) structure or process
- Begin to consider different approaches to ‘dialogue’ plus how this related to your experience and practice
- Draw conclusions from the collected experiences/lessons that can inform and develop Sida’s strategies and methods for supporting institutional development in Laos/more generally
- Start identifying the implications for Sida’s practice, relationships and internal ways of working – both within Laos and the wider organization.

<i>Day 1: Monday, June 12, 12.00–18.30</i>	
12.00–13.00	Lunch
Session 1	Getting started Setting the context- mapping significant actors and relationships
Session 2	Feedback of and reflection on main learnings/reflections from project level workshop
17.00–18.30	Dinner
<i>Day 2: Tuesday, June 13, 8.30–17.00</i>	
Session 1	Sida/Embassy staff’s experience of effecting change in the ‘rules of the game’- drawing out key lessons and principles
Session 2	Feedback and reflection on feedback at policy/Ministry level
12.00–13.00	Lunch
Session 3	Exploring roles and relationships between partners, consultants and Embassy (exploration of dialogue was not possible due to time restrictions)
Session 4	Implications on Sida’s role and practice- reflection on key messages coming from project level workshop and Sida’s own
18.30–	Reception at residence of AnnLis

This workshop was followed by a mini-workshop/meeting next day in order to pull together the key implications and to identify possible ways forward. This included an agreement to have follow-up workshops in September. These would be (i) for the Embassy, and (ii) for the project partners and the Embassy together to consolidate the learning from this exercise – and to look at how this might be taken further into practice

Appendix 4. Lists of workshop participants

Project participants at workshop on june 8–9, 2006

No	Name	Position	Organization
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry			
1	Dr. Bounthong Bouahom	Director General	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI)
2	Mr. Sisongkham Mahathirath	Programme Coordinator	Lao-Swedish Upland Agriculture and Forestry Research Programme
3	Mr. Houmchitsavat Sodarath	Director	Northern Region Agriculture and Forestry Centre (NAFReC)
4	Mr. Phouthone Sophalithath	Head of Capacity Building Component	LSUAFRP
5	Mr. Michael Victor	Acting Team Leader and Information Services Adviser	LSUAFRP
Ministry of Communication, Transport, Posts and Construction (MCTPC)			
6	Mr. Phan Phouthavong	Deputy Director	Roads Department
7	Mr. Souvanny Ratanavong	Deputy Director General	Personnel Department
8	Mr. Sengdarith Kattignasack	Director	Local Roads Division
9	Mr. Dick Jonsson	Team Leader	Lao-Swedish Road Sector Project 3, Maintenance Component
10	Mr. Belal Hussain	Team Leader	Rural Accessibility Advisor, Lao-Swedish Road Sector Project 3, Basic Access Component
Prime Minister's Office, Science, Technology and Environment Agency (STEA)			
11	Dr. Viengsavanh Douangsavanh	Acting Director General	Department of Environment, NPD of Strengthening Environmental Management (SEM) Project
12	Mr. Somlith Phannavong	Deputy Director	Environment Policy Division, Department of Environment, Administrative Project Manager SEM
13	Mr. Ketkeo Salichanh	Deputy Director	Division of Environment Promotion, Department of Environment, Technical Manager SEM
14	Mr. Peter G. Jensen	Team Leader	SEM Project
15	Mr. Roderik Chisholm	Institutional and Management Adviser	SEM Project
16	Mr. Keophouthone Inthivong	Local Institutional Management Adviser	SEM Project
Committee for Planning and Investment, National Statistics Centre (NSC)			
17	Mr. Hans Pettersson	Team Leader	NSC
18	Mrs. Phetsamone Sone	Director of National Accounts Division	NSC
19	Mr. Bounmy Vilaychit	Deputy Director of Survey Division	NSC
Ministry of Finance, Tax Department			
20	Mrs. Manivone Insixiangmay	Deputy Director	Tax Department
21	Mr. Saythong Ouiphilavong	Chief of International Taxation Affairs	Tax Department
22	Mr. Henrik Konkel	International Advisor	Tax Department

Participants at Sida workshop on june 12–13, 2006

No.	Name	Position	Organization
	From Stockholm/ UK		
1	Mr. Stellan Arvidsson	Learning Specialist	Division for Learning and Competence Development, Department for Human Resources and Organizational Development, Sida
2	Dr. Gun Eriksson Skoog	Evaluation Specialist	Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, Sida
3	Ms. Liz Goold	Facilitator/learning specialist	Independent Consultant, Oxford
4	Mr. Jörgen Schönning	Head of Division for Asia	Department for Asia, Sida
5	Ms. Pernilla S. Rafiqui	Ph.D. Candidate in Economic Geography	Stockholm School of Economics
6	Mr. Peter Swartling	Head of Division for Learning and Competence Development	Department for Human Resources and Organizational Development, Sida
	From Embassy of Sweden, Vientiane		
7	Ms. AnnLis Åberg	Chargé d'Affaires a.i.,	Sida
8	Mr. Jörgen Persson	Counsellor	Sida
9	Ms. Anne Kullman	First Secretary	Sida
10	Mr. Daovong Vongxay	National Programme Officer	Sida
11	Mr. Sombath Southivong	National Programme Officer	Sida
12	Ms. Dalavieng Thiladej	Assistant PO	Sida
13	Ms. Somphith Inthalangsy	Executive Secretary	Sida
	From other organizations		
14	Ms. Karin Schulz	Senior Advisor Capacity Development	SNV Netherlands – Laos

UTV Working Papers

- 2002:2 Approach to Private Sector Development in the EEOA Programme, Zambia
Stephen Goss, Roger Blech, Guy Scott, Christopher Mufwambi
- 2004:1 Evaluation of Integrated Area Programmes in Bosnia-Herzegovina
– a Report from an Evaluation Workshop
Joakim Molander, Maria Elena Wulff, E. Anders Eriksson, Jonas Bergström,
Katica Hajrulahovic, Tale Kvalvaag
- 2004:2 Integrating Gender Equality into Development Co-operation – Drawing Lessons
from the Recent Evaluations by Sida and the European Commission:
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- 2005:5 Sida Support for the Development of Institutions – Formal and Informal Rules:
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- 2006:2 Changes in the International Context of Health Cooperation
Samuel R. Bartlett (ECON ANALYSIS), Therése H. Persson (ECON ANALYSIS),
Philip Swanson (ECON ANALYSIS)



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