Twinning as a Method of Capacity Building

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August 1998

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AGENCY

Department for Democracy
and Social Development

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1. Executive Summary

This report is to be read in conjunction with our Interim Report (December 1997).

In accordance with our Terms of Reference (see 2.1, below), much of this report consists of a description and analysis of Sida's current Twinning method. We have made a number of recommendations on how the method might be improved. Some are amenable to implementation more or less straightaway at relatively little cost. Others are of a more strategic nature, requiring more time and other resources to implement.

Our study leads us to the view that the Twinning method has several potential advantages over other methods of development cooperation, particularly that, if conceived and implemented carefully, it offers enhanced possibilities for organisational learning and sustainable capacity building.

However, our judgement is that this potential is not currently being fully exploited. Twinning arrangements have produced major benefits at the level of professional/technical upgrading, as would be expected from intensive inputs of Swedish expertise and generous Sida funding, but we found less evidence of outcomes in terms of sustainable institutional capacity building. Indeed, our impression is that, contrary to Sida's high expectations of its distinctive advantages, in operation Twinning becomes a rather routine process, viewed by developing country partners as an unexceptional way of delivering aid which presents few fundamental challenges and provides essentially the same benefits as alternative methods.

We formed the view that institutional development and organisational learning are generally not issues of major significance for partner organisations in current twinning arrangements. Even at the individual level, the focus is on training rather than learning, which results in the usual emphasis on formal off-job training rather then seeking opportunities for learning from work.

Our analysis of the reasons for this has led us to present some ideas on how the current Twinning approach might be renovated, and to consider how Sida might

further enhance its development cooperation in the realm of governance by moving *beyond* Twinning. Below, we summarise briefly the main points of our consideration of these issues.

- Renovating the current Twinning approach

This form of institutional capacity building should be regarded as *organisational cooperation*, wherein learning opportunities will arise for both parties and should be sought by them. This perspective emphasises that the two organisations are equally responsible for outcomes, and differentiates between the focus of the cooperation (a specific organisation) and its institutional domain context.

All stakeholders in a cooperation should understand at the outset that the intended outcomes of the partnership are at the level of sustainable organisational learning and development; and that all activities will be undertaken and evaluated within this context and the broader context of Sida's superordinate goals.

Sida should therefore provide the 'developed' organisational partner with very clear guidance on: Sida's superordinate goals; Sida's understanding of organisation and institution building; Sida's view on sustainable organisational outcomes; the nature of the desired relationship between the partner organisations; the optimal duration of the relationship; the roles of the long-term adviser and consultants; the selection of staff for the project; managing and maintaining the vitality of the relationship; and terminating the relationship.

Rather than assuming, as at present, that the 'obvious' suitable partner for the developing country organisation is a Swedish counterpart which is in the same 'business', Sida should adopt a broader view, taking into account the macro and micro contexts of both potential partners; the most pressing needs of the developing country partner; and the track record of the potential rich country partner organisation.

Staff selection is a critical factor in organisational cooperation and should be based on careful job analysis. The key position is that of the long-term adviser (the teamleader), whose role needs to be carefully defined and whose performance should be closely monitored. Generic qualities of project staff which should be stressed are: possession of a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the major aims of development; capacity to understand and analyse broader organisational

and managerial issues as well as technical ones; good interpersonal and cross-cultural skills; patience tact, energy, tenacity; and some ability to assess issues of strategic significance to the developing country partner and its institutional context.

In order to manage and maintain the vitality of partnerships, it is important that from the outset organisational cooperation projects should be clearly understood as major change processes built around a radical intervention in an existing organisation. The pre-project dialogue between stakeholders must focus on the real challenges which the project will present, rather than on the narrow operational considerations which the logical framework methodology encourages.

Therefore Sida should establish a clear framework of organisational learning and sustainable change for organisational cooperation partnerships, within which all project activities will be coordinated. We have outlined a model of organisational learning, which could provide this framework.

Sida will need to make judgements about likely project duration, based on a thorough analysis at both the organisational and contextual levels. To encourage the partner organisations to focus on organisational learning and capacity building, and to provide a 'natural' end to the cooperation, Sida should agree with them a coherent schedule of planned stages in the project.

A major threat to sustainability at the organisational level is that trained staff may leave the developing country partner once the project ends. This needs to be recognised from the outset by all stakeholders, and built into the projects intended outcomes. To reduce the threat, the developing country organisation must provide clear career opportunities, especially for young professionals, and offer ongoing developmental opportunities and challenges within a culture of organisational learning. The issue of rewards, including salary levels, should be addressed throughout the cooperation.

- Beyond Twinning

The macro and micro environments in which organisational cooperation takes place are crucial. As far as possible the parties concerned should have a similar view of what a proposed cooperation would entail. Therefore it would be important to establish early on a forum for the debate of meaning.

This assessment of the environment would involve considerations beyond the parameters associated with the current twinning method, to examine the broader governance context of the proposed cooperation. Guidelines to such considerations might be provided by the establishment, by Sida, of country profiles, which could form the starting point for development cooperation in governance. The profiles would provide a framework for making assessments of: country characteristics and circumstances; governance institutions; government organisations; and human resources.

Targeting of projects would be further refined by a thorough appreciation of the domains of development cooperation within governance at which particular lines of cooperation might be directed (a domain of development cooperation consisting of: one or more institutional elements; a number of organisations; and a wide range of activities). Critical elements of this targeting process would be: domain selection; selection rationale; domain development; and evaluation. We have provided an example of a critical path to assist decision-making in this process.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Purposes and Scope of the Study

The Terms of Reference for this Study are appended to this report. In essence, the purposes of the study were to provide evidence to enable Sida to make informed judgements about the efficacy of institutional twinning arrangements as vehicles for sustainable capacity building , and to explore ways of enhancing the method.

Key issues to be investigated included: learning processes, at the individual and organisational levels; assumptions about skill and knowledge transfer; effects of asymmetrical patterns of power, influence, resources, expertise, and experience between twinned organisations; incentives and disincentives inherent in the twinning process; contradictions between sustainable capacity development and improvement at the technical level; and expectations and perceptions of Sida and the partner organisations.

2.2 Data Collection Methods and Sources

Two current twinning arrangements were selected by Sida as case studies for the collection of primary data: between (1) Statistics Sweden and the National Statistical Centre, Laos, and (2) the Office of the Auditor General, Namibia, and the Swedish National Audit Bureau. Semi-structured interviews with individuals in these four organisations and in other relevant organisations, such as Sida, line ministries and international agencies, were the main method of data collection.

Sources of secondary data included: documents produced by the developing country partners constituting 'outputs' of the two twinning arrangements studied; documentation relating to the two cases studied, including project documents, progress reports, reviews, and reports of short-term consultants; documentation concerning other Sida twinning arrangements, including project proposals and formal evaluations; Sida policy papers on development cooperation, institutional development, logframe analysis methods, and evaluation; relevant publications by Statistics Sweden and the Swedish National Audit Bureau; scholarly journal articles on development cooperation, twinning, institutional development, organisational learning, civil service reform, and associated issues; unpublished papers; and reflections on the experience of the two researchers.

3. Key Issues and Definitions

Sida's Division of Democratic Governance is charged with managing its co-operation within the broad field of governance in poor countries. This section discusses some of the key issues within this broad field with a view to providing clarity of definition, and a backdrop against which to set the more focused analysis of 'twinning' which follows.

3.1 Superordinate Goals

The superordinate goal of Swedish development co-operation is to raise the living standard of people in poor nations. It attempts to do this by promoting economic growth, economic and social equality, economic and political independence, democratic development, environmental quality, and gender equality. The idea of sustainability is central to Swedish development co-operation.

There is growing international consensus concerning the validity of such aims. For example, since 1990 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has

been developing the notion of *sustainable human development* (SHD), which focuses on people's capacities to improve their own lives through better education and health, higher incomes, and the sustainable use of the earth's resources.

3.2 Governance

Governance can be defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It consists of institutions, organisations and processes through which citizens and others articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations.

The centrepiece of governance is the state, but it also includes the private sector and civil society. All three are critical to achieving the super-ordinate goals of development. The main job of the state is to create a conducive (transparent, fair, accountable, responsive, efficient, effective etc.) political and legal environment for economic and social activity. The private sector provides jobs and generates economic activity and income. Civil society facilitates social and political interaction and provides alternative means of expression ('voice') and choice (means of 'exit') to different segments of society.

Within this broad account of governance, Sida's activities have concentrated on governing institutions such as legislatures and electoral bodies, and on public sector organisations such as offices of the auditor general, statistics, and taxation, and training organisations. Co-operation has therefore taken place at both the level of the institution and the organisation.

3.3 Institution and Organisation Building[1]

A number of different terms are used to connote the major means that development co-operation agencies employ in their attempts to attain the super-ordinate goals of development. Terms such as 'capacity building', 'institution building', 'institutional and organisational development', and 'institutional capacity building' are often used inter-changeably and without sufficient

[1] Our definition of institution building reflects what appears to us to make most sense from our knowledge of the literature (e.g., Blunt & Collins, 1994; Edwards, 1997; Grindle & Hildebrand, 1995; Moore, Stewart & Hudock, 1994; World Bank, 1997), and from our experience and assessment of conventional practice in the field. Conceptual debates which have been adequately covered elsewhere will not be repeated here.

definition. In this paper, we have chosen to use the term institution building to convey what is frequently intended by the use of such terms.

Institution building is widely seen by development agencies as an important - possibly the most important - means for the achievement of the superordinate goals of development, such as poverty alleviation and SHD.

The term institution building in practice usually embraces programmes of constructive change in single *organisations* or clusters of organisations. Such change is designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of organisations and their capacity to develop new capabilities independently, that is, their ability to learn from, and adapt to, their environments. The ability of organisations to learn from and adapt to environmental pressures - that is, to be responsive - underpins the development of new competencies and capacities which are essential to the sustainability of high levels of performance and efficiency.

The term institution building is also used to refer to the strengthening or re-design of the broader mechanisms, or *institutions*, which regulate societies and economies - for example, macro-economic management systems, legal and judicial systems, electoral systems, and so on.

In the last ten years or so, the upsurge of interest among development agencies in issues of governance has meant that more and more development co-operation is being directed at institutions *per se*, rather than organisations.

Some development agencies appear to see more clearly now than they have before the distinctions between institution building at the organisational and institutional levels, as defined above (e.g., UNDP, 1997).

Nevertheless, we feel that clarity and understanding, particularly for the uninitiated, can be improved further - in two main ways. First, the use of the word *institution* is imprecise in the term 'institution building' because it can connote co-operation either at the level of the institution or at the level of networks of organisations or single organisations. In our view, institution building and organisation building or organisation development should not be used interchangeably.

Second, in all aspects of institution building and organisation building, it is necessary to take account of contextual or environmental factors. In our view, the context within which development needs are situated should, in conjunction with those needs, constitute the deciding influences on the form that institution building or organisation building takes, the manner of its delivery, and so on.

Consistent with this view of the imperatives of context is the likelihood that the concepts of institution building and organisation building themselves will have different meanings for the various parties involved. It follows from this that views of institution building and organisation building which are rigidly unilateral may founder for this reason alone. It is therefore desirable that issues of interpretation by the different parties involved be brought out and explored as early as possible so that differences of expectation can be minimised from the beginning, and so that recognition is seen to be accorded to the possible validity of other views.

3.4 Sustainability

In organisations and institutions, as with biological organisms, sustainability implies survival, which depends on a willingness and capacity to learn and adapt quickly and well to changing circumstances.

The idea of sustainability has been applied most widely in relation to the natural environment. In this context, sustainability is usually taken to mean that future generations should have available to them a natural resource base which is at least equivalent to that enjoyed by people now. This implies that organisations and institutions which are sustainable should learn and adapt in ways which take particular account of the rate of depletion of non-renewable resources. This, of course, is much easier to say than it is to translate into practical guidelines for organisation building, but less so for institution building. At the institutional level, the principle is much more amenable to conversion into broader policy and strategy mechanisms of societal and economic management.

3.5 The Imperatives of Context

It is axiomatic that the priorities attached to strategic initiatives, and their nature, should be dependent on perceived needs, on the opportunities and threats seen to

exist in the surrounding environment and the strengths and weaknesses of the actors involved.

This simple logic, which is pragmatically rather than ideologically driven, is applicable to questions of development co-operation strategy at all levels. Country needs and circumstances should clearly shape the nature of, for example, social and macro-economic policy, supporting legislation, and priorities for action.

However, when it comes to development strategy ideological preferences have frequently been, and in many instances still are, exercised at the expense of pragmatic concerns. In the economic sphere, for example, the limitations of ideologically-driven macro-economic policies have become apparent in recent years as a result of the remarkable achievements, in terms of economic growth with equity, of a small number of economies in East and Southeast Asia. These economies did not conform to the then (1980s) conventional wisdom of state minimalism, yet they prospered - for a while. With the 20/20 vision afforded by hindsight it is now possible to see the flaws inherent in some of the underlying institutions of governance (particularly those concerned with the regulation of the financial systems), which were largely responsible for the recent collapse of some of these economies.

It is not yet fashionable to do so, but questions of political legitimacy can be analysed in much the same way, with similar results. Cuba, for example, rates well on some social indicators and this gives it a relatively high score on scales such as the human development index (of the UNDP), yet its political system is widely criticised. Similar points can be made in relation to China and even Singapore. In particular, China's remarkable economic accomplishments in the past twenty years or so are unparalleled in human history. India, on the other hand, has been a strong democracy for many years yet relatively little has been achieved in the way of poverty alleviation. Political legitimacy can therefore clearly be a function of either pragmatic (usually economic) considerations or ideological ones, and it is surely for poor people to say (explicitly or implicitly) - rather than to be told - which system produces the better results for them at a particular time and, accordingly, which one they prefer.

Institution and organisation building are subject to precisely the same considerations. As with the other notions discussed, ideology in institution and

organisation building - writ small because it is less obvious than in the political or economic domains - can often get in the way of, or drive out, the pragmatic goals of development.

3.6 'Meanings' and Perspective

We also believe that, in relation to any development co-operation activity, it is reasonable to ask, 'whose definitions should count?'. We say this because implicit in the way that terms like institution building tend to be used by development agencies is the assumption that there can only be one - universal - meaning attached to them, which is usually determined by the rich countries themselves. This is the same assumption that underlies notions such as 'good governance', 'human rights' (as opposed, say, to responsibilities), 'fiscal responsibility', 'appropriate technology', and so on. In nearly all of these cases, interpretations of the meaning of a particular term, and its significance, will depend on the position from which it is perceived or one's perspective: in line with the saying that, 'where one stands on a subject very often depends upon where one sits'. Yet this truism is rarely acknowledged, either in the words or deeds of development agencies.[2]

An increasing number of educated people in poor countries understandably and justifiably resent having their worlds defined for them in these ways. As a result, there is mounting opposition in poor countries to the hegemony of (usually) western ideas. Such dominance by the West is seen to be based not so much on the intrinsic intellectual worth of the ideas in question as their rich-country origins and authorship (e.g., Blunt & Jones, 1997).

Of course, some ideas are more politically sensitive than others, and therefore tend not to evoke strong reactions. Institution and organisation building may well fall into one of the less politically sensitive categories. This does not make the terms less amenable to different interpretations, but just less likely to evoke resentment or resistance when they are used by development agencies and others as if only one interpretation existed or mattered.

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[2] Even systems whose essence is said to be participative and consumer-driven - such as political democracy at the macro level and process consultancy at the micro level - are often presented as universal truths or cures, that is, as panaceas (Blunt, 1995, 1997).

We favour an approach which attempts to take account of the existence of different interpretations, even though this makes such terms as institution and organisation building more difficult to define and to use.

PART A: SIDA'S EXISTING TWINNING APPROACH

4. The Current Practice

The intention in this section is not to restate established descriptions and definitions of the twinning model, but rather to examine those characteristics of twinning which this study appears to emphasise or question. As our Terms of Reference imply, twinning can be seen in retrospect as a development in the early 1980s which resulted partly from dissatisfaction with the results delivered by the then conventional form of development cooperation known as technical assistance. The main pillars of that approach were the provision of physical infrastructure in the form of buildings, vehicles, and equipment, accompanied by high levels of formal education and training. Technical assistance was delivered in-country by specialists (often called 'experts') from the donor country who visited the recipient country on a long-term or short-term basis.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is not difficult to identify the elements of this approach, and the assumptions behind it, which made it an unlikely vehicle for sustainable development. In particular, it can be seen that learning of new knowledge and skills from technical assistance was at the individual level. The hope was that this would lead *somehow* to enhanced performance at the individual *and* organisational levels; there is very little evidence that this ever happened.

The twinning idea was Sida's distinctive response to the perceived deficiencies of the conventional technical assistance approach (Dyrssen & Johnston, 1991). Essentially, it sought to address the apparent deficiencies of the conventional technical assistance approach by shifting the emphasis from the development of individuals to the development of organisations and institutions. This shift in focus was stimulated and reinforced by an emerging literature which sought to apply theories and practice of organisational development - which had been around since the 1960's in other fields - to international development cooperation.

Sida's method for doing this involves the creation of partnerships between organisations with similar remits, in developing countries and Sweden. As we note in Section 7, below, this approach offers several potential benefits. Sida has accumulated considerable experience with this approach in a number of countries during the past two decades.

In recent years, again influenced by contemporary writings on organisations, a new conceptual framework has emerged, which might offer insights into the potential offered by twinning arrangements. This is built around the notion of organisational learning. It is not difficult to understand the attraction of this idea for organisations like Sida, incorporating as it does the assertion that only organisations which are capable of learning will be able to survive in a world of accelerating change. As our Terms of Reference indicate, Sida now believes that the efficacy of the twinning approach rests on the assumption that "two institutions with the same or similar task in their respective countries should be able to create a more dynamic cooperation atmosphere", and the hypothesis that "the twinning of two organisations means learning; that the two organisations learn from each other through sharing experience".

5. Learning Processes in the Current Approach

The questions for us, then, are: *Does* twinning mean learning? If so, *how* does organisational learning happen? *Do* organisational partners in developing countries become learning organisations? If so, what are the *factors* which influence success? Learning theorists cannot agree how one individual learns from another, so how might we conceptualise and operationalise the notion that organisations can learn from each other ? How might organisations successfully share their experience?

5.1 Dimensions of the Learning Process

The word twinning suggests that the end product of the process is two organisations which are more alike, the implication being that the more developed of the partners (in this context, the Swedish one) serves as a *model* for the less developed one. The implied learning process is copying or modelling. Study visits would be examples of a specific modelling activity in a twinning project. This

basic level of learning, if and when it takes place, is unlikely by itself to ensure sustainability.

Learning at the cognitive level - that is at the level of understanding and assigning meaning - is essential if the partner organisation is to develop the crucial ability to *adapt* new skills and knowledge (see our discussion above of the Imperatives of Context and Meanings and Perspective). *If* the partners in a twinning relationship share the understanding that the purpose of their cooperation is institutional development, then it is at this level that one would expect them to engage in a continuing dialogue about what the western concepts central to the twinning model *mean* in their relationship; that is, concepts such as organisational partnerships, sustainability, institutional capacity building, organisational learning, individual learning, and human resource development.

We did not find this to be the case in either of the projects we studied. This is understandable since the 'developed' agencies were selected by Sida primarily because they are in the same 'business' as their developing country partners, not because of their expertise in institutional capacity building or organisational learning.

To take just one of these concepts - organisational learning - as an example: this notion, currently very much in vogue in western industrialised countries, incorporates an ideal picture of 'the learning organisation'. Its claimed attributes include inspirational leadership, skillful change management, penetrating vision/mission statements, participative management styles, transparency, open communication, flattening of organisational architecture, downsizing, delegation of decision making authority, and empowerment of stakeholders.

It is not hard to see that Sida's current hypothesis that twinning leads to organisational learning is unlikely to be fulfilled if either of the twinned organisations either does not accept these claims or is unable to enact them. Similarly there will be major problems if one organisation enters a twinning arrangement believing these current western preoccupations to represent *the meaning* of organisational learning (and therefore its overall goal in the cooperation), while the other partner assigns either no significance or a different meaning to the concept.

In the projects we studied this concept seemed to be unknown to the developing country partners and of relatively low operational priority for the Swedish agencies.

A number of major learning theories emphasise that learning is incomplete without *action*, which provides material for reflection and review, for conceptualising reality, and for experimenting with changed behaviours. This indicates that *both* partners should be involved in all aspects of training activities - planning, design, implementation, review and follow-up. This is important, for example, when short-term consultants conduct training sessions: unless both partners are fully involved in these ways, such training activities are unlikely to engage the learners in action and are therefore unlikely to contribute to sustainable capacity building. The possibility for this kind of *joint* planning and action (i.e. institutional cooperation) over a lengthy period is claimed to be one of the distinctive advantages of the twinning model. This level of involvement was evident to a greater extent in the Namibian project than in the Laos case.

5.2 Learning Processes in Twinning Arrangements

Let us consider some of the activities which are typically used in a twinning arrangement to promote learning and ask whether and how twinning might make a difference:

- Formal, off-job training courses - useful primarily to enhance individual learning of knowledge. It is well known that the major weakness of this type of training is the problem of transfer of learning from the classroom to the job. Twinning might help to overcome this problem if the more experienced organisation recognises it as such and helps its partner to implement the necessary managerial support to enable individuals to put classroom-based learning into action back on the job. This may help in translating the learning into improved individual performance, but doing so at the organisational level is much more problematic. We found a greater awareness of this in the Namibian cooperation than in the Laos project, reflected for example in the intensive programme of trainer training in OAG, and the introduction of systematic on-job training .

- In-house training courses - used for improving individual knowledge. The transfer of learning problem is less serious in this type of training, although it still

needs attention. In twinning arrangements such courses are often supplied by short-term visiting consultants from the Swedish partner organisation, which causes problems when, as sometimes happens, the consultants are not familiar with the environment or the most pressing needs. As we have noted above, maximum organisational benefit is likely to accrue when *both* partners are involved in *all* aspects of the course - learning needs analysis, planning, selection of trainers, implementation, assessment and evaluation. Additionally, such courses should target whole work groups, rather than individuals.

In our view this could be an area of weakness in the Laos case, where it was apparent that short-term consultants from Stockholm made little effort to build institutional capacity in the Statistics Centre to enable them to run such courses themselves - a key capability for sustainability. For example, post-course reports by visiting consultants were written in English only, meaning that only one perspective - the visiting consultants' - was reflected. This implies that this important component of the cooperation is *owned* by one partner only - Statistics Sweden - thus excluding significant learning opportunities for the staff of the Centre.

In the Namibia project, in contrast, short-term consultants were selected from a wider range of backgrounds and worked closely with OAG trainers.

- On-job training. This is probably the most effective training method for skill improvement, because there are no learning transfer problems. In many developing country contexts this type of training is neglected, even resisted, either because its benefits are not recognised or because it does not offer formal qualifications. In a twinning arrangement, this might be overcome if the experienced partner can demonstrate real benefits at both the individual and organisational level. This is more likely when on-job training is made systematic and thoroughly evaluated. As we noted above, this was the case in the Namibia cooperation to a greater extent than in the Laos case.

- Study visits. Perhaps the most questioned practice, in cost/benefit terms, these visits present two possibilities. They make it possible for representatives of the partner organisations (usually at the managerial level) to meet and become acquainted with each other's environment and operations. And they offer opportunities for these individuals to consider other possibilities. The assumption

is that learning takes place from such visits, but this is unlikely unless they are carefully planned, with specified intended outcomes in terms of *learning* and *action,* and rigorous evaluation.

However well managed these various methods are, they are unlikely by themselves to produce learning at the organisational level. Experience demonstrates that the hope that the training of individuals eventually produces enhanced organisational performance is rarely justified. How then might the organisational partners fulfil Sida's hypothesis that they learn from each other by sharing experience?

5.3 Organisational Learning and Twinning

Here it is useful to return to the concept of organisational learning. As we have noted earlier, this notion is the subject of an enormous output of writing and debate. Much of it lacks coherence at the conceptual level, while the populist promotion of the idea makes ridiculously exaggerated claims for the promise of 'the learning organisation'. Field (1998) and Sharratt and Field (1993), having surveyed the literature on the learning organisation, criticised much of it as offering rhetoric rather than reality.

However, it is useful to remember that the concept of organisational learning is in fact not new. Argyris and Schon (1978), Kolb et al (1971) and Revans (1980), for example, developed theories of learning which incorporate the possibility of learning at the organisational level. The common element in Kolb's experiential learning theory and Revans's action learning theory is the notion of learning from experience. Both theories emphasise that learning takes place when individuals *critically reflect* on their experience, generalise from that reflection, and as a result experiment with new behaviours. Revans's approach appears to be particularly relevant to the notion of sustainable development: Revans emphasises that organisations will be able to survive and prosper in turbulent times only if their ability to learn from their experience exceeds the rate of change.

These influential theories indicate that for learning to take place at the organisational level, management must: a) encourage *questions* by employees at all levels; b) develop throughout the organisation the *skills* of critical reflection; c) present regular and varied opportunities for sharing questions and reflection; d)

constantly search for opportunities for learning from the organisation's ongoing operations, successful and unsuccessful; e) take *action* based on such learning; and *critically reflect* on the outcomes of such action. Together these elements in time create a *culture of learning.*

Of particular relevance to twinning arrangements is d) in the previous paragraph: constantly examining opportunities for learning from work, which in 'learning organisations' becomes a habit, initiated by the question "what can we (or what did we) learn from doing this?" This has the advantage that it undermines the common assumption that learning can be achieved only through formal training. It is a regular criticism of development cooperation that there is a misplaced faith in 'training, training, and more training', yet alternatives are rarely tried. In relation to our two case studies, for example, if viewed within the framework of the preceding paragraph, the undertaking of the Agricultural Census by the National Statistical Centre in Laos could be an excellent vehicle for learning; likewise the performance audits by OAG in Namibia.

It is generally accepted that the quality of leadership is the crucial element in changing the culture of an organisation. Leaders must provide a vision of what the changed organisation will be like and inspire employees at all levels to work towards this vision. From our short acquaintance with the two case studies, we formed the view that both of the developing country partners - in their distinctive ways - had able leaders who were prepared, at least, to support the change process.

Using the criteria proposed above, we found more evidence of learning at the organisational level in the Namibia case than in the Laos one. There were a number of reasons for this, including: a leader (the Auditor-General) who has a healthy scepticism concerning donor assistance and requires convincing evidence of its potential benefits for his organisation; a teamleader who seems to have achieved a productive balance between sensitivity to the OAG context and significantly influencing the direction of the project; a body of long-term advisers who are actively interested in promoting a questioning climate and who see a major part of their role as the provision of continuous on-job training; a body of young, recently appointed staff, recruited to OAG from the University and the Polytechnic, who are articulate, questioning, and ambitious for professional careers; top managers who generally see the advantages to be gained from moving to a more open, participative management style, and are prepared to

undertake training to enable them to change the culture of OAG; the creation of a cadre of enthusiastic trainers in OAG; achievement of very considerable, and continuing, increases in OAG's budget for training; training activities which are clearly seen to enhance performance and are linked to promotion; active steps to move towards a reward system linked to performance; and increased professional competence and job satisfaction from successfully undertaking several performance audits, which OAG was not capable of doing previously.

It would be misleading to suggest that the creation of a culture of learning in an organisation is unproblematic. However, it seems to us that this focus does present an *ideal* for twinning arrangements to aim for, and that it could be explicitly specified in project outcome terms. Such a focus on learning would provide a clear framework within which project activities could be evaluated at the level of institutional capacity building. It would require that both partners in the cooperation, and Sida, should be flexible in implementing the project's logical frame (the intention of which is to provide certainty and predictability). This appears to have been the case in the Namibia project.

6. Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Twinning Practices

6.1 Strengths

As we have mentioned earlier, Sida acknowledges that the strengths of twinning over earlier methods are assumed or hypothesised. This is reflected in the rather general descriptions of the advantages said to be provided by twinning arrangements.

Sida, for example, in addition to the assumption and hypothesis quoted above, asserts that Swedish partners are good conveyors of learning and that twinning has the following advantages: ability to provide a broad range of relevant services; comparable institutional mandates; competence and skills of close applicability; corporate identity; collegiality; and easy, effective interaction. Also, internationally known Swedish agencies (like RRV and Statistics Sweden) have easier access to developing country governments than, say, private consultancy firms. Johnston (1998: 53) adds that "a forum for the exchange of professional skills and institutional praxis is created".

Statistics Sweden cites advantages such as: long-term relationship; involvement of both organisations in issues of organisation, management, administration, rules, systems, values and attitudes; corporate skills; sharing of professional skills and institutional praxis; increased credibility and legitimacy in relation to reform processes; support and autonomy for risk taking; and coordinated step-by-step flexibility. And their partner in Laos, the National Statistical Centre, emphasises increased confidence, flexibility, and - significantly - access to otherwise unavailable resources.

Berg (1993), who describes twinning as having great promise in some circumstances, identifies common interests and understanding of issues, interaction among a wider range of individuals, and adaptability to unpredicted factors. And Cooper (1984: 2-4), defining twinning as " a professional relationship between an operating entity in a developing country and a similar but more mature organisation in another part of the world", adds: the possibility of instilling a sense of pride and will to achieve; the possibility of developing management capabilities; and possible psychological and political advantages, "in that the twinning contract gives at least the appearance of a two-way exchange".

A more recent perspective is offered by Franks (1998), who sees twinning arrangements as "an increasingly important tool" (p.2) in providing opportunities for international cooperation and the sharing of knowledge, and for "breaking down the barriers between problems and approaches in developed and developing economies" (p.9), at a time when distinctions between the two are becoming increasingly blurred.

Allowing for the rather vague, unproven, and perhaps exaggerated nature of some of these claimed strengths, it is clear that - at least as an ideal - twinning appears to offer some distinctive advantages over other techniques for development cooperation.

For the developing country partner, however, frequently the obvious (and probably more desirable) benefits are those provided equally by other forms of cooperation, including technical assistance: access to otherwise unobtainable physical resources such as vehicles and computers; unusual opportunities for individuals to further their careers via expensive education and training, and for foreign travel; and the status which comes from donor attention over a lengthy

period. The additional benefits *potentially* offered by twinning, from this perspective, are the enhancement of organisational confidence which comes from the backing of an empathetic partner organisation, and the stimulus of working with a wider range of fellow professionals. We found these elements to a greater or lesser extent in both of our case studies.

For the Swedish partner there is the possibility for significant income generation on a stable, long-term basis; opportunities for expanding professional competence; opportunities to provide some staff members with professional challenge, overseas travel, and financial reward; and the possibility to achieve an enhanced international profile.

And for Sida perhaps the main operational advantage is that a project is entrusted to a single organisation, rather than demanding the commissioning of numerous individual consultants or companies. More broadly, Sida's reputation is enhanced internationally as having successfully pioneered and consistently supported this form of development cooperation.

The descriptions quoted above can be seen as attempting to capture the tone or flavour of a managed relationship between two organisations which ideally can produce satisfactory outcomes - organisational and individual - for both, while contributing to the developmental goals of the donor whose funds support it.

6.2 Weaknesses

Turning to the disadvantages of the method, Sida, Statistics Sweden, and Berg (1993) all acknowledge that it is more expensive than other conventional methods, and that gap filling and more limited transfer of knowledge can be achieved more cheaply in other ways. Berg (1993) additionally argues that there are particular risks associated with twinning, particularly that of selecting unsuitable partners. The fact that two organisations are engaged, for instance, in collecting, analysing, processing, and disseminating statistical data does not necessarily indicate that they will be suitable partners. It may be that that task is in fact the *only* thing they have in common; there may be fundamental differences between their political, social and geographical contexts, their size, their experience, their histories, their organisational status and location, their resource bases, their organisational cultures, their leadership and management practices, their technologies and

operating methods. In this connection, it would be almost impossible to find two more unalike contexts for development cooperation than the Office of the Auditor General, Namibia, and the National Statistical Centre, Laos. Yet in both cases the cooperation method used was to twin the 'target' organisation with its Swedish 'counterpart'.

An associated issue concerns the motives of the twinned organisations. An inescapable contradiction is inherent in that it is in the interests of the twinned organisations, and the individuals in them both to prolong the project and to complete it. Sida's concern naturally will be for the project to achieve its aims on a sustainable basis as rapidly as possible. The balance will vary according to circumstances, but it will present problems for Sida if both partners, for different reasons, simultaneously find it in their interests to prolong their relationship. Johnston (1998:56) adds that it may be difficult for the aid agency to evaluate and terminate twinning projects, which may become " arrangements among friends". Equally seriously, he points out the danger inherent in twinning arrangements that the 'developed' twin may assume a position of superiority in the relationship and expect a passive, dependent partner (the antithesis of sustainability). A surprising and welcome aspect of the Namibia project is that RRV recognises the danger that an unduly prolonged partnership might encourage dependency and has actively worked towards the termination of the twinning element of the cooperation within a relatively short (in institutional capacity building terms) timeframe.

It is not uncommon for the more mature partner to be operating on commercial lines, seeking to make financial gains from the partnership. This factor may build into the relationship tensions which are difficult to reconcile. Further, development cooperation is unlikely to be the primary function of the mature partner, which may have negative consequences for the partnership if, for instance, it adversely affects the scheduling of project activities and the availability of short-term consultants.

Whatever formula of words is used to suggest otherwise, it is ingenuous to deny the reality that the twinned partners are *not* equal and cannot become equal (although in fact the word twinning implies that this will happen). Unless this is openly acknowledged and sensitively managed to produce a healthy 'psychological contract', unfortunate consequences such as increased dependency

(the antithesis of sustainable development) or resentment may occur. We felt that in both of our case studies, there was some degree of consciousness of this issue.

Probably the most serious threat to long-term institutional sustainability in twinning arrangements is the possibility, indeed the probability, that individuals who receive training in a project - "the lifeblood of an effective state" (World Bank, 1997: 92) - will leave the organisation when the project is terminated and they no longer enjoy the benefits it has provided. This is a difficult problem, particularly in many developing countries where salary levels in the private sector exceed those in the public sector, and it has ramifications well beyond the boundaries of most twinning projects. The problem is well known and occasionally receives formal acknowledgement, but more frequently it is put aside in the hope that things will improve at the macro level in time, or rationalised away by the argument that at least the nation has benefited from the training provided in the project.

The position in the Laos cooperation is at present not threatening, but there is a real danger that the National Statistical Centre may experience increasing staff turnover as the termination of the project becomes more imminent. In the Namibia project this has not yet proved to be a major problem, partly because salaries in OAG are comparable with those in other parts of the public sector and the private sector. In addition, the project has produced a career structure which new entrants find attractive, and there is the prospect of continuing opportunities for professional and personal development. We feel that these are key factors in making sustainability more probable, and that Sida should form some estimate of their likelihood before initiating future institutional capacity building projects.

In relation to this study, another disadvantage of the assumptions made by Sida about the implementation of the twinning method is at the conceptual level: the model may limit or discourage exploration of other ways of constructing a viable organisational cooperation project and, more broadly, of alternative approaches to development cooperation in governance. For example, at present it tends to direct attention towards improvements in supply (e.g. of information) and away from demand. In transitional economies especially, the stimulation of demand is often a powerful stimulus to the reform processes which Sida wishes to support.

For reasons examined earlier, current twinning arrangements focus explicitly on discreet organisations as sites of action for development cooperation in the realm of governance. This has advantages, as we have discussed above, but the danger is that a twinning project may operate virtually in a contextual vacuum; it may produce a pocket of enhanced organisational capacity operating in unchanged surroundings. Typically a twinning project will be located in a state organisation which Sida considers to be a key component in a domain within the realm of governance. The project will be supported because Sida believes that this will produce systemic improvements which will impact positively at the level of Sida's superordinate development cooperation goals.

However, such organisations function within a domain hierarchy. Intervention by Sida at the intermediate level may fail to produce sustainable results if support and reinforcement is not provided at the higher levels of the hierarchy where policy is made and at lower levels where policy is implemented. For example, a twinning arrangement for a national statistics office may not be successful if at the policy level of government there is a lack of ability to interpret and use statistical information, however well presented; or if farmers are unaware of the existence of useful information or unable to get access to it (demand considerations). These are the kinds of issues illustrated by the Laos project, which in our view would have more chance of long-term impact if Sida had explicitly included them in its pre-project analysis.

Finally, it seems relevant here to mention the relationship of the twinning approach to Sida's logical framework ('logframe') methodology. The logframe is a tool and like all tools is designed for precision. It is clearly good at doing what it is designed to do: to measure those aspects of a project which are capable of measurement, like inputs, activities, and outputs. It cannot encompass critical contextual realities such as political, social, cultural and psychological perspectives, attitudes, and prejudices. This means that it cannot measure complex social *processes* where linear causality cannot be established, such as organisational learning and the development of sustainable organisational capacity. This is why we consider that a model for understanding and judging these processes, like that explored in 5.3 above, should provide the broad framework for twinning arrangements (of which the activities specified in the logframe would be a part).

These considerations have led us to consider ways to renovate the existing twinning approach (Part B.), and to explore issues which we see as crucial to any consideration of the possibility for moving beyond the current twinning model (Part C.).

PART B. RENOVATING THE TWINNING APPROACH

Bearing in mind our earlier discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the twinning model, and drawing upon lessons from existing partnerships (including the cases studied in Laos and Namibia), in this Part we discuss possibilities for enhancing the method.

7. Refining the Notion of Organisational Cooperation

We emphasised earlier that notions such as institution building do not have a single, accepted meaning, and it has not been our intention to formulate yet more definitions of such concepts. However, for practical reasons alone we believe it would be helpful if the notion of twinning could be clarified. Essentially, to obtain some of the advantages described earlier, Sida uses development funds to facilitate a long-term relationship between two organisations, in the belief that by thus enhancing the performance of the developing country partner benefits will be produced 'downstream' at the level of Sida's superordinate development goals.

As we suggested earlier, the twinning label seems to imply that the intention is for the developing country partner to become more like its more experienced twin. This appears to carry the unfortunate connotation of a senior partner and a junior partner, which is the antithesis of Sida's position on development cooperation. We suggest that this form of institutional capacity building should be viewed as *organisational cooperation*, wherein learning opportunities will arise for both parties, and should be sought by them. This would make it clear from the start that the two organisations are equally responsible in the cooperation, and it would differentiate between the focus of the cooperation (a specific organisation) and its wider institutional domain context.

The notion of the implicit 'psychological contract' is relevant here. During our study we read and heard descriptions of the developing country partner as 'the client', 'the recipient', and 'the user', while visiting short-term consultants from

the Swedish partner were referred to as 'experts' - terms which hardly convey an impression of equality.

It is essential that it should be understood from the start by all the stakeholders that the intended outcomes of such partnerships will be at the level of organisational development, and that all activities within the project will be undertaken and evaluated in that context. This should incorporate the notion of organisational learning, which we explored in Section 5. This is essential because the partner organisations - as currently selected - are not in the 'business' of organisational development. Their natural and understandable inclination is to emphasise the professional and technical outputs of the project, which are essential for capacity building but are unlikely to produce sustainable organisational improvement without an explicit framework which is fully understood by both partners.

In the two projects we studied it was apparent that major improvements at the professional and technical level had been achieved, as would be predicted by advocates of the twinning method: a combination of professional expertise and the generous Sida funding could be expected to produce such relatively unproblematic outcomes. Overwhelmingly, the inter-organisational dialogue - including progress reports - emphasised this professional/technical aspect.

In contrast, the language of sustainability, broad development objectives, and institutional capacity building was almost non-existent. Therefore, one has to ask: who *does* regard these as institutional development projects? Clearly, the answer is Sida, but it appears that this focus is not sufficiently communicated to the twinned organisations, probably because it is difficult to specify in concrete project outcome terms (particularly by the 'logframe' methodology).

For this reason, we have proposed a model of learning at the organisational level (Section 5) which could be a framework for organisational cooperation, and in the remainder of this Part we examine other elements which we consider to be crucial.

8. Critical Elements of Organisational Cooperation

The major distinguishing features of the twinning approach are: a) its base in a partnership between two organisations; b) its emphasis on sustainable organisational capacity building; c) its relatively long-term focus.

Currently, Sida's main criterion in constructing a twinning relationship is that the two organisations should be in the same 'business'. We have suggested earlier that this may not necessarily be the only or best option, and that Sida should take a broader view of potential partners for the developing country organisation. This would require that Sida should provide the 'developed' partner with very clear guidance on: Sida's superordinate goals; its understanding of organisation and institution building; its view of sustainable organisational outcomes; the nature of the desired relationship between the two organisations; the optimal duration of the relationship; the roles of the long-term teamleader and advisers; the selection of staff for the project; managing and maintaining the vitality of the relationship; and terminating the relationship.

8.1 Identifying Suitable Organisational Partners

Our discussion so far, and below in Part C, suggests that the following factors need to be taken into account in the establishment of organisational partnerships:

- the macro and micro contexts of both partners, including system compatibility, pace and direction of governance reform, infrastructure, language, and so on;
- the most pressing needs of the poor country partner (PCP) - that is, to what extent are they primarily technical or organisational or managerial; and
- the track record of the rich country partner (RCP), particularly the extent to which this reveals its level of understanding of the key issues and aims of development and its commitment to their realisation.

8.2 Staff Selection and The Role of the Long Term Adviser

Our observations from the case studies in Laos and Namibia, and our broader experience, confirm the well-established view that staff selection is critical to the success of organisational co-operation. Without question, the key position is that of the long term adviser (LTA), whose role needs to be carefully defined and whose performance should be closely monitored.

We would expect that for all adviser positions (long term and short term) the RCP would demonstrate a clear appreciation of the need for selection to be based on careful job analysis. Our sense is that in many cases insufficient attention is paid to this critical issue, or more attention is paid to its form than its content.

Thorough job analyses should yield the specific technical and human requirements of the job in question, but there are also a number of generic qualities which we feel should be stressed, in particular:

- possession of a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the major aims of development;
- capacity to understand and analyse broader organisational and managerial issues as well as technical ones;
- good interpersonal and cross-cultural skills;
- patience, tact, energy, and tenacity; and
- some ability to assess issues of strategic significance to the PCP and the domain of the PCP.

The LTA plays a vital role in the success or failure of organisational co-operation. Ideally, the role should be seen by all concerned as a broad and demanding one involving more than technical advice and 'housekeeping'. Most critically, perhaps, the LTA should be the strategic viewfinder and sensor for the RCP - what directions should the co-operation be taking to ensure sustainability and institution and/or organisation building? What are the emerging key developments in the PCP and its domain? What are the implications of these for co-operation activities? What are the key technical as well as managerial and organisational issues?

He or she should also be capable of playing a similar strategic role for the PCP, but only when the PCP wants this, and only in a way which does not build dependency or act against sustainability.

The range of possible strategic questions is great - encompassing such issues as the mission, role and function of the PCP itself, its culture, its structure, its human resource management strategies, marketing, inter-organisational interactions, and corporate image. The ability to deal well with such issues demands LTAs with the capability of a good chief executive officer as well as diplomatic skills and the ability to do all of these things in a foreign culture - demanding indeed.

Nevertheless, we believe that the role should involve these elements, as successful organisational co-operation depends so heavily on them, and the LTA is very

often the best person to take ownership of these critical issues for the RCP and to sense how far to go in relation to them from the point of view of the PCP.

The strategic management of the co-operation, and the success of the co-operation, will hinge largely on the way in which the LTA and the leadership of the PCP tackle these issues together.

8.3 Managing and Maintaining the Vitality of the Relationship

Sida recognises that building sustainable organisational and institutional capacity requires a long-term commitment by the stakeholders involved. It is important that the excitement and interest generated by the initiation of a new organisational cooperation project should be maintained throughout the years of the relationship.

Despite Sida's high expectations of the method, it seems to us that twinning as it is currently implemented is viewed by the developing country partners as an unexceptional way of delivering aid, which presents them with few fundamental challenges. Also, as we have discussed in several places in this report, the more mature partner organisations have naturally tended to emphasise the delivery of technical/professional expertise rather than sustainable institutional capacity building. Thus, despite Sida's perception of the advantages of twinning, our impression is that in operation it generally becomes a rather routine process.

In contrast, our experience is that real organisational change and development is a challenging, involving, and exciting process. Recognition of the reality of organisational cooperation projects as major processes of change and development would do a great deal to vitalise the relationship over substantial periods of time.

In this connection it is important that Sida and the potential partner organisations should recognise that the proposed project will be a major *intervention* in an existing organisation, which will have both foreseen and unforeseen consequences. This is a contextual issue, which requires that Sida should have a good understanding of the potential developing country partner organisation at the outset.

Although the focus of Sida and the more mature partner organisation will understandably be the cooperation project, it has to be understood that for the developing country partner the project will be just a part - possibly a small part -

of its operations and its broader concerns. Nevertheless, all parties need to recognise that major changes in any part of an organisation *will* have effects in all parts and at all levels of the organisation. Some of these effects can be predicted; some cannot.

The implications of this are significant. It is important that organisational cooperation projects should be clearly understood as major *change processes*. The management of the developing country partner in particular has to be aware that the establishment of an organisational cooperation project within its structure will have wider consequences than the delivery of equipment and the training of staff. In other words, the pre-project dialogue between the stakeholders must focus on the major challenges which the project will present, not just discussion of the narrow operational considerations which the logframe methodology encourages.

If this initial shared perception of a project can be established - and it will primarily be Sida's role to establish it - then all the activities within the project will be seen within the broad framework of fundamentally changing the developing country partner. Discussion of learning and sustainable capacity will thus become a natural element of the cooperation.

This would reduce the current tendency where, to a greater or lesser extent, in the twinning arrangements with which we are familiar - including the Namibia and Laos cases - attention is overwhelmingly fixed on technical/professional upgrading. Hence, crucial issues of management and organisation generally receive attention late in the project, as something of an afterthought.

Within a clear framework of organisational change, it will be much more natural to view activities within the cooperation as learning opportunities, as we suggest in 5.3, above. Change processes constantly present new challenges which can become significant vehicles for learning and development. For example, in any cooperation project, evaluations - internal and external - present major opportunities for the questioning and critical reflection processes which we discuss in 5.3. The question "what can we learn from this" would thus become a routine element in the evaluation process.

This line of argument clearly implies a more active role for Sida, particularly in the phase of establishing organisational cooperation projects.

8.4 Optimising the Length of the Relationship

Current thinking about sustainable capacity building acknowledges that it is likely to be a rather lengthy process. As we have emphasised earlier, such complex social processes are not amenable to precise target setting or measurement; they require *judgement*. Hence it is not possible to say with any confidence what the minimum and maximum duration of an organisational cooperation project should be. One thing which has impressed itself strongly on us during this study is that each twinning project is unique and that tidy generalisation is not practicable. Compare, for example, the case of the National Statistics Office (TAKWIMU) in Tanzania and that of the Auditor General's Office in Namibia. The former twinning arrangement is now 15 years old, while the latter one is just about completed after less than five years.

This means that Sida, in setting up organisational cooperation projects, will need to make judgements about their likely duration. To be realistic, these judgements will have to be informed by a thorough analysis, at both the organisational level and the contextual level (along the lines we propose in Part C). Judgements will naturally need to have a degree of flexibility, but it is important that all stakeholders should know when the project is expected to be completed.

It would also be advantageous if Sida at the outset were to agree with the two organisational partners the planned *phases* of the cooperation within the intended total duration. This would help the organisations to focus on the developing processes of organisational learning and capacity building, and it would reduce the tendency for managerial and organisational issues to be raised late in the cooperation, after the professional/technical development has been substantially completed.

As we have pointed out in 6.2, the end of a twinning project can be painful for all parties, particularly if it has been lengthy or successful. This would be alleviated if the project planning process were to incorporate the stages suggested above, so that the cooperation was seen to have a coherent schedule of stages and a 'natural' end.

As the Namibia case is currently illustrating, the formal organisational partnership is just one form of organisational cooperation. It is likely that Sida will consider continuing financial support for the developing country partner after the

termination of the formal project. This may take the form of a less formal consultant/client relationship, or the provision of advisory services by the developed country partner, on request. Or it may involve Sida in funding activities in the broader context of the cooperation, to reinforce its intended macro effects. An example of this is that Sida may want to consider how the Public Accounts Committee in Namibia might be helped to make the best use of the performance audit reports now being generated by the OAG as a direct result of the twinning arrangement which is about to be terminated. The broader contextual analysis which we propose in this report will considerably assist such considerations.

PART C: BEYOND TWINNING

Much of our discussion to this point has examined the nature of twinning - as we observed it in the case studies in Namibia and Laos - its strengths and weaknesses, and means for its improvement. We have suggested, for example, that in setting up what we prefer to call *organisational co-operation* considerable care should be taken to ensure as far as possible that the parties involved have a broadly similar view of what the co-operation will entail. That is, it is important to establish early on an open forum for the debate of *meaning*. The meaning attributed to events, actions, and statements will vary according to many factors, among them: the stage of development of the nation and therefore its, and its citizens, needs and wants; the situation of the co-operating organisation(s) in the poor country; and so on. In short, the macro and micro *environments* within which co-operation takes place are (or should be) crucial to all aspects of the form that the co-operation takes, and the manner of its enactment.

A thorough assessment of the environment requires one to move beyond the immediate context of organisational co-operation - that is, beyond the conventional parameters normally associated with twinning. In other words, it is necessary to examine the broader governance context within which organisational co-operation is situated in order to make the best use of scarce resources. It is in this sense that we propose the merits of looking beyond twinning.

9. Contextual Variables

Most informed observers these days would probably agree that context matters and should therefore be taken into account in development co-operation within

governance. But there would probably be much less agreement about *which* aspects of context are important, and *how* they should be incorporated into calculations concerning development co-operation. Unfortunately, empirical and theoretical research into these questions is sparse and so there is not much guidance to be found in the literature.

Judgements about the ramifications of contextual variables for development co-operation within the field of governance must therefore be founded on what appears to make most sense to knowledgeable interested parties, on the basis of their experience and on the basis of logic and argument.

Examples of the sorts of factors which in our view should inform development co-operation in a more self-conscious way are set out below. Much of this information exists in high quality documents which are published annually (e.g., the *World Development Report* of The World Bank and the *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme). However, it seems to us that such information could be used in a more structured and deliberate manner in the design of much development co-operation within governance than it is now.

We do not have the resources in this assignment to discuss each of these variables in any detail or to say how they, or some variation of them, might be employed to establish country profiles, which could be up-dated periodically, and could form the starting point for development co-operation within governance in all of its facets. Our intention at this stage is simply to raise this as a matter for discussion, and to propose what appear to us to be some plausible possibilities.

In the categories set out below, the intention should not be to engage in detailed discussion of each of the items listed, but rather to make brief one or two sentence assessments which can give an indication of the state of affairs in each case and a reasonably accurate overall picture. However, once a likely target domain for co-operation has been identified, more detailed examination of that domain and its domain hierarchy will be necessary.

- **Country characteristics and circumstances**

1. Natural resource base
2. Population size, density, growth rates, urban/rural distribution, and ethnic heterogeneity
3. Human Development Index scores or similar
4. The position of women in society
5. The position of minorities

6. GDP, GDP growth, and *per capita* GDP in parity purchasing terms
7. Sectoral development
8. State of the environment
9. Geographic size and port access
10. Infrastructure
11. Special hazards or circumstances (e.g., famine, genocide, 'unexploded ordinance', etc.)
12. Risks or threats

- **Governance**

1. Broad nature of the economy (transitional etc.)
2. Legal institutions: laws, judiciary, courts, enforcement etc.
3. Form of political legitimacy
4. Political system
5. Leadership
6. The position of women
7. Public sector
8. State owned enterprises
9. Civil society
10. Private sector
11. Relations between the state, civil society and the private sector
12. Extent and nature of popular participation
13. Corruption
14. Major domains of policy co-operation and sources and forms of such co-operation
15. Risks or threats

- **Institutions**

1. Strength, independence, impartiality and transparency of major institutions of governance (e.g., electoral and legal systems, the judiciary, law enforcement, and so on)
2. The position of women
3. Impartiality
4. Levels of remuneration
5. Major domains of institutional co-operation and sources and forms of such co-operation
6. Risks or threats

- **Government Organisations**

1. Responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency
2. The position of women
3. Impartiality
4. Inter-organisational co-operation
5. Leadership
6. Levels of remuneration
7. Major domains of organisational co-operation and sources and forms of such co-operation
8. Risks or threats

- **Human Resources**

1. Education and skills and gaps
2. Gender issues
3. Discipline and commitment

4. Labour force flexibility
5. Major domains of co-operation and sources and forms of such co-operation
6. Risks or threats

Elsewhere in this report we have hinted at the merits of moving beyond the immediate context of organisational co-operation. In relation to the Laos case, for example, we suggested that organisational learning about the best ways to generate and use information was a function of demand as well as supply considerations - downstream, the needs and awareness of farmers, and up-stream the ability of policy makers to comprehend and make use of the information supplied. In Namibia, the issue of audit of capital works had clear downstream and up-stream ramifications which should have informed analysis and action in the Office of the Auditor General.

The limitations of isolated 'one-shot' development co-operation initiatives have been recognised for some time - as in the UNDP's attempts to overcome the shortcomings of the project approach by introducing the much broader notion of the 'programme approach'. However, that attempt has been impeded by a lack of conceptual clarity concerning the nature of the programme approach and the extremely complicated programme design procedures attached to it. The programme approach is by no means unique in these respects.

Our argument to this point demonstrates that we are in favour of development co-operation in governance which is under-pinned by a more inclusive profile of country characteristics and circumstances. In this view, 'one-shot' designs are not ruled out so long as they are well targeted or situated. They should be regarded as one of a number of possible means or vehicles of co-operation that can be used in any development co-operation setting.

We believe that targeting for any development co-operation technique will be most accurate and effective when it is conducted on the basis of:

- a well articulated country profile, based on criteria such as those set out immediately above; and
- a thorough appreciation of the *domains* of development co-operation within governance at which particular lines of development co-operation will be directed.

10. Domains of Development Co-operation

A domain of development co-operation consists of: (1) one or more institutional elements; (2) a number of organisations; and (3) a wide range of activities, all of which formally have a common purpose or common purposes. However, the different perspectives brought to bear by interested parties will mean that perceived purposes for a particular domain will be likely to vary.

Accordingly, in the first domain example set out below (the private sector), the state, and development co-operation agencies, might give precedence to the purposes connected with the provision of employment and the generation of national wealth, while shareholders are more likely to be interested in returns on their investment.

EXAMPLE 1

***Domain*:**	the private sector
***Common purposes*:**	to make profit for shareholders to generate national wealth to provide employment
***Institutional elements*:**	macro-economic policy industrial relations policy
***Organisations*:**	small, medium and large firms conglomerates multinationals
***Activities*:**	sectoral: agribusiness, construction, manufacturing etc.

EXAMPLE 2

***Domain*:**	information
***Common purposes*:**	government decision-making private sector decision-making civil society participation transparency accountability

	education economic performance
Institutional elements:	political system all policy
Organisations:	central statistical office ministries other state entities decentralised units the media users (civil society, private sector, etc.) providers
Activities:	collection and analysis presentation and dissemination interpretation and use marketing

10.1 Domain Selection, Development and Evaluation

We have argued throughout this report that co-operating agencies need to be able to make rational judgements about the targeting of their assistance. Critical elements of such a process are set out below.

- ***Domain selection*** - this will depend on an assessment of country profile characteristics. Selected domains, and their priority, will clearly be those which are considered to possess special strategic significance for the realisation of superordinate development objectives, such as poverty alleviation. That is, selected domains will be those deemed on the basis of careful assessment to be most likely to yield the greatest benefits for the largest number of *poor* people in the shortest time. Selected domains can therefore be expected to vary from one country to another.
- ***Selection rationale*** - the country profile assessment should result in a coherent rationale or argument concerning the selection of particular domains. Several benefits will flow from this. First, it will assist with targeting and technique selection within the domain. Second, it will strengthen the position of the development agency in relation to its own accountability and transparency. Third, it should make co-operation more comprehensible, and therefore more manageable, for development and implementing agency staff and other

interested parties, not least in the poor country itself. Statistics, audit and tax are clearly of importance in nearly all governance settings, but equally clearly their *relative* importance will vary from one set of circumstances to another; and the nature of the organisations concerned will vary, as will their domain hierarchy.

- ***Domain development*** - this will entail co-operation aimed at strengthening one or a combination of institutional elements, organisations, and activities within a particular domain. The mix of co-operation targets within a domain, and the development co-operation techniques or vehicles employed, will depend on a careful assessment of the needs and structure of the domain within the broader context of the country profile, the activities of other agencies, emergency considerations, and so on. In Laos, for example, organisational co-operation might have attempted to improve user understanding of information, and the downstream dissemination of information, as well as supply. This in turn will have ramifications for the development activities within the organisational co-operation.
- ***Evaluation*** - this should be conducted at two levels: first, at the level of development co-operation activities at the target sites within the domain; and second, at the level of the overall functioning of the domain itself where possible knock-on effects from the target site can be assessed.

11. Decision-making Critical Path

We envisage a critical path containing answers to the following basic questions, some of which will already be a part of Sida practice.

- Does the country satisfy the means test criteria for Sida co-operation?
- Does the country profile give enough relevant information for a judgement to be made about priority needs and strategic development co-operation domains within governance, or strategic entry points? If not, where can such information be obtained? If the information is not available or readily obtainable, are the country needs so urgent or extreme that co-operation should proceed as best it can with the information to hand?
- What are the major needs?
- What are the strategic development co-operation domains within governance? What is the logic connecting them to the major needs?

- Are the selected domains subject to different risks or threats? Are any of these risks or threats so great as to make progress within the domain too difficult to justify the investment of scarce resources?
- Which of the strategic domains or entry points matches Sida's strengths and capabilities best?
- What are the structures of particular domains and the most critical needs within them?
- Which development co-operation techniques or vehicles are best suited to the particular needs and circumstances of the domain?
- Does Sida have experience of using that technique in this particular domain? Is such experience deemed necessary in all cases?
- Are the expectations (of all parties) of development co-operation within selected domains reasonable given the overall country profile and the particular circumstances within the domain and at the target sites?

APPENDICES

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C. Terms of Reference of the Study (attached)

Depart for Democracy and
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1997 09 29
rev 1998 06 15

TERMS OF REFERENCE

STUDY ON THE MODEL OF TWINNING AS A METHOD OF CAPACITY BUILDING

Background

Institutional twinning as a method of capacity building for institutions has been applied by Sida since the beginning of 1980's. The method aims at pairing the recipient institution with its corresponding institution in Sweden. Twinning is utilized in three main areas of public administration support: auditing, taxes and statistics through The Swedish National Audit Bureau, The National Tax Board of Sweden and Statistics Sweden. This form of cooperation has been rather unique for Sida and Sweden. The reason is that Swedish legislation allows government agencies to sell services to Sida or other contract partners in developing countries (The Export Services Act).

The structural adjustment and civil service reform programmes in the developing world aiming at better macro-economic management and a more slimmed, effective, efficient and accountable civil service have led to an increased demand for sustainable institutional capacity. Accordingly, the importance of institutional capacity-building becomes more and more significant in all sectors of development assistance in order to secure sustainability. In this context the twinning model might be worth exploring further.

Against this background, Sida's Division for Democratic Governance would like to get a better understanding of the nature and elements of the learning process taking place within the institutional twinning model The division has therefore decided to conduct an in-depth study on this issue.

Outline of the problem and issues

The distinctive character of the twinning arrangement is described by the following: It provides the recipient with a broad range of services through a sister institution which has a comparable institutional mandate. Consultants from the sister institution will have a range of competence and skills of close applicability, a broad backup facility and a "corporate identity" or "collegiality" permitting easier and more effective interaction with their counterparts.

The assumption has been that two authorities/institutions with the same or a similar task in their respective countries should be able to create a more dynamic cooperation atmosphere than if a private enterprise or an individual is charged with the same tasks. The so called corporate skills are said to be significant factors facilitating the cooperation and capacity-building whereas there is a widespread opinion that individual experts as conveyors of capacity-building in general terms do not work so well. Sida's experiences seem to indicate that Swedish institutions which are much similar to the recipient institutions are good conveyors of learning.

A "normal" twinning project usually contains both learning in subject matter/technical areas related to the output of concrete products (audit reports,

statistical surveys etc) and learning related to management/organizational issues. Recipient institutions usually seem to be more inclined to adopt know-how in subject matter areas whereas the areas of policy; management and planning are more sensitive. Behind this simplified description which shows the composition of a project, however, more complex issues could be found which relate to general problems within each institution such as attitude towards change, personal relations, situation of power, and those who concern the relation between the twins i e the relationship client/seller and the contradiction between the similar areas of activities and disparity when it comes to resources.

Objective, method and questions to be dealt with

The main objective of the study is to analyze learning as part of the process of cooperation between two organizations. Learning might be formal or informal, it might be deliberately planned or accidental. In either case, the hypothesis is that the twinning of two organizations means learning; that the two organizations learn from each other through sharing of experience.

The study should address the why, what, whom as well as the how questions. It should do this by looking at the organizations as a whole as well as at the indiviuals, involved in or affected by the cooperation between the two organizations.

The study shall be carried out using a case study method and is suggested to encompass two projects: the cooperation between the Swedish Natinoal Audit Bureau and the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General in Namibia on the one hand and the cooperation between Statistics Sweden and The Statistical Central Office in Laos on the other.

The reason for proposing the two above programmes is that the cooperation has been going on for quite

a long time and the methods of work and procedures for handling various issues should be fairly well established.

Questions to be dealt with

The study should deal with the following questions:

Examples of questions at the level of the organization include:

- What drives the two organizations to learn from each other? Are there incentives or disincentives built into the twinning relationship, for example: conflicts between capacity development and delivery of products, the problem of inequality between the partners and conflicting expectations on the part of "clients"(Sida, the government) on the two organizations.

- What issues are addressed? Is there a focus on policy issues, administrative issues, or issues of the culture of the organizations? If so, why is priority given to certain types of issues?

- Do the two organizations have deliberate strategies for development and change?

Examples of questions related to learning among individuals include:

- Incentives and disincentives of learning

- Individuals or groups targeted for learning

- Structured and planned programmes of learning

- Content and focus of such programmes

- Learning that takes place informally in an unstructured waY

- Approaches to learning within the two organizations.

The main emphasis should be on learning as process. To the extent possible, it should also look at the effects of this process as it is manifested in changed behaviour of the two organizations and of individuals within the two organisations.

The study should seek to draw conclusions from the analysis directed towards Sida, the Swedish institutions and the recipient country. How can conditions for a more effective learning process be created?

Composition of the study team

The team is suggested to be composed of preferably two persons with compentence within the area of pedagogics/learning processes and institution-building. The work will be carried out both in Sweden and in Laos and Namibia. Also the Division of Democratic Governance will be represented in the team. Local consultants could also be hired if need be.

Duties of the consultants

The consultants in the team shall:

-prepare for the assignment on the basis of the issues discussed above inter alia by elaborating the necessary questionnaires and inteviews, taking into account evaluations, studies etc that have been conducted during the last few years on twinning cooperation,

-read, annotate and compile information from existing documents on the 4 offices, as well as supplementary information on institutional twinning programmes;

-apply the relevant instruments to investigating the role, attitudes and approach of SCB and RRV as regards learning in twinning programmes,

- visit CSO in Laos and Auditor General in Namibia and carry out the necessary investigatory work,

- present a report of approx 30 pages with the following components:

* Analysis of actual learning in the case studies,

* General conclusions,

* Recommendations for measures and activities to be undertaken based on observations and conclusions.

Time schedule

The study should be conducted for in two phases between October 1997 and September 1998 where phase one includes the cooperation in statistics and phase two the cooperation in auditing as well as the final report. The estimated time requirements look as follows:
1 week of preparation in Sweden, 2 weeks of work in Namibia and Laos each including a workshop and 2 weeks for preparing the final report including a workshop.

Reporting

A draft report in English of the first phase shall be presented for discussion with the Divison of Democratic Governance not later than 15 December 1997. The draft final report should be subject to a workshop for all actors involved if possible also including representatives of the recipient institutions. The final report should be submitted in four copies to Sida not later than 15 September 1998.

The report shall contain an executive summary and shall give practical recommendations on how Sida

can develop twinning as a method for capacity building.

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