

Human Resource Management and Development

Key Lessons Summary

The Primary Sources of lessons in this Paper are projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP)*. The evidence for these lessons mainly come from evaluations of the projects carried out by the Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (RLEP). The evidences are included as

Thematic Lessons Papers (TLP) are intended for stakeholders who are involved in policy/programme design and influencing, in order to assist them in making

The TLPs draw together experiences of livelihoods programme in a particular thematic context. This paper focuses on the Human Resource Management and Development theme. The lessons in this document are grouped under the following key issues:

- Policy and strategy
- Systemic barriers to the development of HRM/D.
- Training Management
- HRD and Training.
- Establishment of specialised Training or HRD 'Wings'
- Resource supply in HRD and training

1. All aspects of strategic HRM/D, training management, HR planning, personnel development and performance management require a committed and sustained public sector reform process to become a reality at the organisational level. A project located within a single department can not do this.
2. The lengthy process of strategy development is a productive learning process for concerned personnel, the legacy of which, may be future initiatives once junior and middle ranking staff become promoted to senior decision and policy-making ranks.
3. Policies and strategies demanded by Ministries will be readily accepted by the relevant Ministry with less consultation between stakeholders but as long as these are not implemented (i.e. box ticking exercise) the learning process and long term potential strategy development and implementation is lost.
4. Reform in training management was successfully demonstrated within the boundaries of Rural Livelihoods Programme project log frames but was never successfully institutionalised. Too many barriers exist to coordinate projects and the organisations knowledge and skill development under one training management system.
5. Similarly two projects attempted to develop strategic HRD with one project (ASIRP) succeeding by getting the HRM/D strategic plan approved at Ministerial level. Upon implementation (as with partnership funds) this worked best with the lower administration units and junior ranking officers.
6. Nevertheless, projects efforts demonstrated that new systems are possible, staff are capable and with effective leadership, overarching commitment at the highest levels supported with a reasonable budget, reform can be a reality.
7. Organisations find it increasingly more difficult to respond to the ever more complex systems in which they work. Lessons from the RLP (i.e. 8 DFID funded projects) reveal that organisations require a more diverse skill base [e.g. social science, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Management Information System (MIS), Information Technology (IT), community management, gender, livelihoods analysis etc.) but the technical skill base should not be neglected (reiterating the value of a HRM/D strategy vertically integrated with an organisational strategy).
8. Although the developments of coordinating units (Training or HRD Wings) were enhanced by projects mandated to reform HRD, they never really went beyond merely coordinating the projects' own training programme in a reformed systematic manner.
9. Furthermore, if 'Wings' are to be successful they must be credible in the eyes of the whole organisation by employing competent staff at least with formal training in HRM/D. Further elevation of its profile and intent can be attained by the 'Wing' being steered by a senior level committee headed by the organisational executive.
10. The functions and purpose of government training centres are dependent on paradigmatic shift in training management systems which are on element of and dependent on a HRM/D strategy. Therefore, despite substantial staff training, training centre refurbishment and re-equipping the management processes and structures at training centres remains largely unchanged.
11. If projects not labeled as 'training projects' utilized the services of professional trainers then quality of training and evaluation of training could be better assured.
12. Resource allocation and training material development may become less repetitive and more

*8 projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP)

1. Fisheries Training and Extension Project- II (FTEP II)
2. Agricultural Services Innovation Reform Project (ASIRP)
3. Research and Extension in Farm Power Issues (REFPI)
4. Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA)
5. Support For University Fisheries Education and Research (SUFER)
6. Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP)
7. CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme (CARE RLP)
8. Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM2)

Introduction

The basic tenet for Human Resource Management and Development (HRM/D) is that the people working in an organisation are its greatest asset for achieving objectives. HRM is a coherent and holistic approach to the management of people that requires and develops organisational structures and systems, individual attitudes and behaviour. Commonly, HRD refers to 'training' or development of skills and is regarded as part of HRM. Other principle elements ascribed to HRM may be; recruitment, induction, performance management, career development, reward and recognition.

HRM/D is described as process governed and directed by policies, strategies, rules and culture. A simple strategic model is comprised of four key components viz; Mission, Objectives, Strategy, Implementation and Review. The term 'strategic management' defines the process by which these long term aims, the strategy and implementation are managed. 'Strategic HRM' deals with the longer-term people issues, as part of the strategic management of human resources, in accordance with its organizational strategy and mission statement.

Implementation of strategic HRM is dependent on efficient vertical integration between organisational strategy and HRD/training strategy or policy (i.e. the links between the HR activities and the organisation's strategy and, the horizontal integration which refers to the links between the HR activities themselves and to the fact that the conduct of one HR task may influence the conduct of another).

Thematic Lessons

Key Issue 1 Policy and strategy

During the last decade donors have shifted from direct skill and knowledge enhancement through intensive training programmes to developing in-house capability by creating a resource base and developing a training policy and HRD strategy to cement

Key lesson for 'better practice'

A systematic approach to HRD with a clear strategy and action plan can be developed and implemented at the Divisional and District level involving field officers and managed by a central Training Wing but still does require project support and funding. Therefore, given the 'enabling environment' two GoB Departments have demonstrated within the RLP, effective implementation of strategic processes for training management and HRD at the Divisional, District and Upazilla administrative levels. The details

Lessons Learnt

- Projects located in government departments are unable to successfully reform organisational policy and develop HRM strategies because the whole process is too dependent on wider public service reform.
- Even then the development of policies and strategic plans for HRM/D in Government departments may only be sustained with full Departmental and Ministerial backing driven by radical reform of public service management systems. Projects generally successfully complete strategies through a long iterative and consultative process in which participants benefit from inter-sectional discussions and learn more about organisational analysis and strategic planning processes.
- Projects striving for strategic interventions form working committees and many consultative workshops. If the end result is not a working strategy then considerable time has been forfeited from the core business of the organisation and this may be detrimental to organisational performance. Solid guarantees at the most senior level must be sought before embarking on such a long and time consuming process. Developing strategies without the guarantees and merely hoping that champions at the very senior level will take the process forward after strategy development by projects is a very risky strategy for organisational reform.
- A 'policy' requested by the Ministry to a project will be approved very quickly but evidence is still patchy regarding implementation.
- Capacity to change through projects is easier to mediate at the local level (e.g. new approaches, integrated working,

Key Issue 2 Systemic barriers to the development of HRM/D

If human resources are an organisation's greatest asset then the effective management of this asset would potentially lead to a 'quantum leap' in overall organisational performance thus justifying focusing support for the HRM development process. However

Lessons Learnt

- Generic elements of HRM are probably the most important barriers to most endeavours striving to achieve organisational change e.g. new extension approaches, management systems, M+E, MIS, strategic planning, restructuring, HRD, gender reform etc. If gains can be made in these areas then evidence suggests from the RLP projects working in government Departments, comprehensive sustainable reform for all interventions is *more likely* to be successful.
- Departmental staff had responded well to essential training in management and core HR elements but without a clear mandate for change these skills tended to become eroded over time (evidenced by project training evaluations). The lesson here is that the HRD principle of training to close a skill gap for 'today's' requirement and not what might be 'tomorrow's' requirement must be adhered to.

Table 1 General level of preparedness for organisational change in DAE

Barriers/issues	Capacity	Willingness	Remarks
Pay rise	No	Yes	Public sector reform required and reduce dependency on renting seeking
Change of Bureaucratic culture	No	Limited	
Developing team work/spirit within the organisation	Limited	No	Many senior officers maintain control and command attitude
Giving autonomy to their staff	No	No	Lack of trust
Systems of staff' appreciation	Yes	Limited	Keen to introduce but lack of trust in assessment
Punishment for poor performance	Limited	Limited	There may be some external pressure
HR planning	No	No	Requires organisational plan and commitment
Staff recruitment	Limited	Yes	External pressure make difficult to fair selection of candidates
Better utilisation of staff	Yes	Yes	Political pressure may stop it
Succession plan	No	No	Promotion is done on the seniority basis
Change of organisational structure if required	No	Limited	Support from Ministry and probably beyond is vital
Mechanisms of developing good leadership	Yes	No	Difficult to practice in present organisational context.
Stopping frequent change of head of the organisation	No	No	Threat to senior officers in the queue
Increasing budget for extension activities	Yes	Yes	Practice of routing through projects 'mainstreamed'
Enhancing promotion	No	Yes	Only possible through adoption of HRM approaches
Changing promotion criteria (seniority)	No	No	Require total reform of public service system
Reduce donor dependency	Limited	Yes	Improve efficiency in-house and divert funding from development (projects) to revenue i.e. operationalise core business.
Improve management practices	Yes	Yes	Constrained by other factors.
Design/redesign Job description	Limited	Limited	Variable
Introducing accountability	Yes	No	Change in organisational culture and overall 'rules of the game' first.

Key Issue 3 Training Management

The management of training is one of the functional components of delivering a HRD strategy. It is the process in which training and skill development is administered according to a set of defined standard practices. All training is usually coordinated centrally

Key lesson for 'better practice'

If good training management practices and use of skilled master trainers developed by projects is to be sustained overarching reform of organisational HRM/D strategies and approaches should be a conditional prerequisite. For government departments this

Lessons Learnt

- The management of training is an organisational function that projects can have greater impact upon reform without formal Ministerial approval but full internalisation of the process does ultimately require formal changes to service rules and a fundamental reform of organisational structure. Projects circumvent outdated training rules and facilitate necessary cooperation between senior staff across sectional administrative levels.
- Effective training management processes can be developed successfully under the auspices of a project and are appreciated by those involved. However, the new procedures are project driven and without an organisation wide mandate tend not to be implemented by other projects.
- The organisational staffing structure and chain of command is such that a number of senior officers in Departments would need to actively participate and coordinate in the management process (projects can facilitate this). Cross-cutting and inter-sectional working relationships are commonly not practised well. The organisational culture tends to favour a system working along lines of patronage, sectional territoriality, service length and fierce rivalry. Internalisation of training management is unlikely without an apex body coordinating training headed by a Director reporting to the Director General and all training interventions funded by projects are channelled through the apex body.
- The development of acceptable training management procedures is a lengthy process but it does expose senior personnel to systematic strategic planning. Furthermore, the development of training management practices can represent a 'quick-win' pilot (two years) demonstrating effective annual planning, implementation and evaluation bound by a long-term strategy.

Key Issue 4 HRD and Training

For decades this has been the main focus of development assistance through infrastructure development (e.g. training centres), resource supply and training. This is still important within the RLP with the training projects attempting to deliver the training through new strategic initiatives (changing the 'rules of the game') and non-training projects (i.e. those not specialising in training

Key lesson for 'better practice'

The best results for skill development are when projects combine elements of HRD approaches; participatory needs assessment prior to formal courses (with stringent evaluation) followed by intensive mentoring and support over a period of 6 months to one year (e.g. CARE RLP, FTEP-II and FFP) and in two projects (FTEP-II and ASIRP) performance appraisal linked to rewards.

Lessons Learnt

- This is still an area that all projects can excel in raising skill and knowledge levels, improving self esteem and confidence. Sustained and progressive staff development can yield improved services to beneficiaries even in the absence of a coherent strategy.
- Organisations and their staff working in natural resources are severely lacking in conflict management, community support and social development skills and are constrained in implementing their programmes in a more holistic way.
- For best results, training should be implemented by professional trainers and not administered through a cascade training approach.
- Training activities tended to be managed on a semi-commercial basis responding to the needs of projects, rather than host

agencies, which tends to diminish the role of a HRD strategy and Training Wing unless the projects are incorporated into an already established strategy.

- Projects not specifically labelled as training projects need to engage the services of professional trainers to improve delivery and evaluation of training objectives.
- The Resource Centre Model developed by ASIRP had a positive impact in terms of farmer contact. The high level of enquiries made by women farmers is particularly significant, and it makes it a strong candidate for mainstreaming.
- NGOs benefit substantially from training; they offer a nationwide presence, with built-in women and poor focus and access to funds but GoB/NGO attitudes preclude strategic partnerships for services delivery which is a constraint to maximising client benefits. Cost-effectiveness is unclear.
- Training is often considered important for the wrong reasons e.g. prestigious and possible lucrative overseas trip, additional income, relief from office mediocrity, meet friends and colleagues. This trend may be reversed if the overall structure and promotional processing for a career in these agencies conform with the principles of HR planning so that officers may specialise or be motivated to do so.
- Overseas training should be built into a career and promotion plan which ideally forms part of an overall HR organisational plan and training overseas is only justified if gaps in the personal development plan cannot be filled in-country. Lessons learned from the RLP reaffirm the widely held belief that although overseas training may have some positive short term gains, skills are often eroded over time, if not part of an overall HR development plan.
- Improved selection of candidates for postgraduate training was achieved by introducing a merit-based selection system managed by a committee of senior officers but rigidly driven by DFID and DANIDA projects. However this was not mainstreamed and only ever had tacit approval by GoB.
- Short study tours are useful for introducing ideas but not skills. However, use of new ideas must be carefully considered. For example, it was learned that during overseas tours new technologies and projects witnessed by the visitors may not actually be

Key Issue 5 Establishment of specialised Training or HRD 'Wings'

Implementation of strategic plan to develop an organisation's human resources must be coordinated and managed by a specialised unit often known as 'Training Wing' in Bangladesh although it does accurately describe its function. Essentially its main function would be to oversee the entire human resource management process but in the initial phases for GoB departments this would be

Key lesson for 'better practice'

If donors support a coordinated approach to systematic HRD cemented in project documents rather than prescribed project-specific training then the role of training wings to develop organisational and strategic HRD will become more apparent to GoB

Lessons Learnt

- Institutions do recognize the need to establish mechanisms to co-ordinate training (e.g. Training Wing of DoF and DAE) but there is an inherent difficulty of getting all projects to buy in to a common training management mechanism, lack of will at the senior level, confusion over the role of apex training institutions and Training Wing and insignificant revenue funding for training. Therefore the 'Wing' is established but as of yet does not have a primary role in HRD.
- Departments and more importantly the Training Wing itself lack staff trained in HRM/D and no provision to recruit HRM/D specialists. Other Departmental staff lack the confidence in the staff of the 'Wing' to implement new HR related initiatives.
- Recently, the Government of Bangladesh has published and gazetted the Public Administration Training Policy (PATC). It states, *“Training institutions will enjoy financial and administrative autonomy...”* It also says *“Training institutions will make effort to become financially self-sufficient by generating funds through selling appropriately designed training*

Key Issue 6 Resource supply in HRD and training

This relates to equipment, refurbishment of training centres and training material development and supply. These are areas donors have excelled in over the years and have served the institutions well although it can be argued better coordination between the

Key lesson for 'better practice'

Resource and equipment supply and overseas training should remain an important feature of donor-funded programmes/projects. There is a trend to move away from this due to lack of sustainability or utilization of skills imparted but evidence from RLP shows

Lessons Learnt

- Despite the benefits mentioned above, the provision of equipment through projects reinforces the project isolationism (and thus departmental fragmentation) as project managers become more territorial to avoid loss or sharing of the resources. Holding Project Managers (which are artificially created post for the project) wholly responsible for equipment etc. enhances the 'ring-fencing' attitude.
- Projects create pockets of resource-rich centres within institutions which lead to an imbalance in organizational performance and sustainability.
- Resource development and supply is governed by project documentation and its concomitant objectives not organisational requirement. Sections receiving equipment through training projects face a funding vacuum for many years post-project resulting in rapid deterioration of equipment.
- Resource and equipment supply can have a positive effect on engaging staff constructively for other project activities even if it is not essential equipment for them to carry out project duties.

Key Issue 7 Management of Training Information Systems

To replace laboriously compiled paper-based MIS of basic training information projects developed computerized user-friendly database systems to greatly improve planning, monitoring and decision-making.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

A computerized MIS is unlikely to be sustained within one section; it must become a department-wide functional component essential for effective performance of the organization. Training information is reliant on the sharing of data with other sections e.g. personnel data such as staff addresses, transfers, retirement date must be linked with the personnel section. These systems

Lessons Learnt

- Projects developed computer-based information management systems to support the HRD programme (mostly the project's own prescribed training activities) and trained local government staff to operate the system but without the whole HRM process institutionalised this met the common fate of part or all ending with the project
- Government departments do not have the IT capacity in terms of hardware (computers) and personnel specialising in sustaining these systems.
- Introduction of these may hamper development of more traditional and manageable systems. Once the organizations are able to prove sustainability in maintaining simple computerised office network then introduction of complex computerised management systems may be introduced.
- Every effort must be made to keep it simple and understandable.
- The maintenance of personnel databases tended to be met with suspicion for some influential employees rather than support.
- Involvement in the development process should engage as wide an audience as possible beyond the project envelope,

Way Forward?

1. **Public sector and institutional reform.** A coherent sector strategy is a prerequisite for sustainable HR strategy and supporting structures. Since this is probably at least a ten year process;

Departments need to develop improved in-house training management practices and utilization of training resources especially training centres and, effectively utilize their own resource persons (developed over more than a decade of donor supported capacity building) to improve and update the skills of junior staff and new entrants thus, preventing knowledge erosion in the organisation.

Donors may support an overarching reform of HRM/D in the public sector but with concurrent funding to Departments that have established fully functional HRM/D units guided by an organisational strategy e.g. HRD strategy responds to a national fisheries/research/agriculture strategy (i.e. for DoF, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, DAE)
2. **Strategic groups.** The formation of a high-level strategic HRM policy group, and a lower level working group, to support the change process. The strategy group would be led by the MOE and contain members from the Public Service Commission (PSC) and MOF who are highly influential in HR management. In addition, there would be private sector/NGO representation to expand the knowledge base of HRM and share good practice.
3. **Institutional Analysis.** Linking the Local Consultative Groups (LCG) to the 'Strategic Groups' is an opportunity to develop an institutional analysis study funded by the LCG donor representatives which may provide strategic direction for overarching public service reform for HR in the civil service. This would set in motion a programme to address HRM/D and could develop better performing Departments working in accordance with the reformation process. This provides donors with an opportunity to support skill development once again but this time as part of a public sector reform initiative.
4. **Support for in-country HRM development.** The Bangladesh Society of HRM (BASHRM) has established itself as the only forum for HRM professionals within Bangladesh. If the Society were well developed, it could become the professional body for HRM in the country. Support could include a small scoping study to examine how the Society could be developed, where and how the public sector would fit, timescale for any support and long-term sustainability. The professionals affiliated with BASHRM may be utilized for the analysis recommended above and advise strategic groups.
5. **Co-ordinated support for MIS Development.** There is currently duplication of MIS development for HRM systems. This could be established as a standardised system to meet all HRM needs. Support could include an initial review of current systems and an agreed plan on an integrated approach to MIS development.
6. **Developing a Code of Conduct.** The purpose of a code of conduct is to provide a framework for accountability; maintaining

Further Reading

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*More information on these themes & issues can be found in [Project Output to Purpose and End of Project Review documents](#) accessible at [RLEP](#).