

# Leading, Learning and Adapting Toward Development Results

An Example from Civil Service Reform in Sierra Leone

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**Key words:** capacity development, leadership, change management, implementation support, ‘problem driven iterative adaptation’ (PDIA), ‘science of delivery’, Sierra Leone, civil service reform.

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## Abstract

In recent years of constrained funding and growing pressure to demonstrate results, the international development community has placed increasing focus on the *'how-to'* of delivering results when implementing a project. Evolving approaches and principles are being applied to help facilitate developing country governments deliver results, execute their reform agendas, drive sustainable organizational change, and develop leaders and change agents. Leadership, team-building and incremental capacity development are of growing relevance as a means to overcoming capability challenges that may stymie successful execution of reform agendas.

To develop its efforts on this, the World Bank has begun to consolidate various approaches and lessons on implementation *'know-how'* and *'do-how'* derived from previous project execution and delivery in real-time. Leadership for Results (L4R) is one such emerging approach. It complements traditional technical advice and financing provided by the World Bank on the *'what should be achieved'* of the development project, and aims to support client governments on the *'how-to'* of implementation to deliver results.

This paper illustrates one example of how a results-based lending project of the World Bank and Government of Sierra Leone applied the L4R approach to help implement and deliver results towards reforming their civil service. Principles of a Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach to development were operationalized throughout the L4R process of facilitating learning-by-doing, providing feedback loops and creating opportunities to adapt implementation as needed. This paper captures how this combined process enhanced the capability of government agencies and increased chances for progressive steps towards reform of their civil service.

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## The Changing Environment for Engaging with Client Governments

In an era of constrained financial resources and growing scrutiny from donors there is heightened pressure to demonstrate results of development initiatives. In response to this, a broad landscape of international development organizations and professionals<sup>2</sup> have been striving to better serve client governments and increase development impact through various new strategies and program approaches. In particular, there has been a groundswell of development professionals striving to become more supportive to clients and implementers in government agencies throughout the most challenging part of their work: implementing their development project and delivering real and meaningful results to beneficiaries. At an organizational level, the challenge has been to drive the shift from a focus on process, to a focus on achieving results. This means moving from a perspective of designing projects to receive approval by the board of the donor organization, towards designing projects that stand the highest chance of being realistically and successfully delivered to improve lives of beneficiaries – and offering services along the way that support and assist clients during implementation.

Over the past three years, the World Bank Group, has undergone significant shifts in its approach to, and mode of engagement with, its client country governments. The institution has sought to increase its development impact by becoming “*more focused on delivery than ever before*” given that “*most [development project] failures happen during delivery*”<sup>3</sup>. Towards this end the World Bank committed to “*strengthen implementation and results...streamline our procedures and simplify processes*” and, overall, be held “*accountable not for process but for results*”.<sup>4</sup> To reinforce this effort, the Bank has also been intent on fielding a “Science of Delivery” (SoD) that aimed to produce a cumulative knowledge base of delivery know-how and do-how on achieving results. It aimed to help guide Bank staff as they shifted from the more traditional role of project preparation and supervision, towards helping them focus more on providing tangible support to government counterparts throughout the process of project implementation. In essence, it means staff will need to “*engage with the client to diagnose problems, experiment, learn, course-correct, implement and deliver multi-sectoral solutions.*”<sup>5</sup>

The institution also set out to become a ‘solutions bank’. This was not intended to mean that it would offer “*ready made solutions for every development problem*”, rather that it would “*work with partners, clients and local communities to learn and promote a*

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the recently established ‘Doing Development Differently’ community that brings together various international development partners to drive forward this shift in how development work is facilitated and achieved in various contexts; also, the Global Delivery Initiative established between German GIZ and the World Bank; the Adapting Development work of the U.K. Overseas Development Institute, amongst others.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Yong Kim, Remarks as prepared for delivery: *World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim at the Annual Meeting Plenary Session*, Tokyo, Japan, October 12th, 2012

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> “*This requires incentives geared to reward solving problems versus taking projects to the Board, as well as a different way to engage with management and the Board*” –Available at: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/what-science-and-what-delivery>

*process of discovery*”, knowing that “*the best solutions to economic and social problems often lie with the individuals and communities coping with these challenges in their daily lives*”.<sup>6</sup> In support of the idea that there are local solutions for local problems, and that a process of discovery, learning and adaptation is useful for facilitating the delivery of results, the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)<sup>7</sup> is becoming a set of guiding principles applied in project design and implementation within specific segments of the World Bank<sup>8</sup> and other international development partners.

The World Bank’s comparative advantage has expanded beyond its focus on the traditional primary offering of support - finance - and evolved to include the *range* of solutions it can offer to address challenges that countries face. In this respect, not only financing but also the quality of technical assistance and support in developing capacity to deliver results becomes increasingly important, particularly in lower-capacity client countries. The Leadership for Results (L4R) program is one example of a very practical approach within the World Bank that provides support to enhance capacities that are required throughout the implementation and delivery phase of many projects. As a learning-by-doing approach (described below) that supports leadership and implementation teams, it operationalizes the shift towards helping clients on the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’ of their development project. L4R is part of enabling the World Bank to become a “solutions bank” and to support clients in achieving results - focusing particularly on the importance of leadership and adaptation during implementation.

The practical application of the PDIA principles and the L4R approach will be documented and explored in this paper through the real-time implementation process of a World Bank/Government of Sierra Leone project to address a significant challenge to development in the country: reforming the civil service. The application of PDIA principles during the process of *designing* the civil service reform project has been documented previously.<sup>9</sup> This paper seeks to capture how PDIA principles were operationalized during the process of project *implementation*.

This paper weaves the narrative of leading, learning and adapting through applying the L4R approach and PDIA principles in six main sections. Section 1 provides context and explanation of the development challenge to be addressed in Sierra Leone and the corresponding capability challenges envisioned as potential hindrances to achievement of objectives. Section 2 introduces the Leadership for Results approach as it was tailored to support the client in this particular project to launch and facilitate the project implementation process. Section 3 details how this approach unfolded in reality with the government agencies, leaders, teams and coaches. Section 4 highlights the mechanisms that supported learning and adaptation throughout implementation – short cycle results and feedback loops - and how local challenges were addressed with local solutions. Section 5 captures some of the main lessons learned from this adaptive implementation process in order that these may be of benefit for future projects that adopt

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<sup>6</sup> Jim Yong Kim, 2012

<sup>7</sup> Andrews, Pritchett, Woolcock, 2013

<sup>8</sup> For example, the Governance Global Practice of the World Bank

<sup>9</sup> Roseth and Srivastava, 2013

a similar approach. Section 6 concludes by trying to connect these lessons to the larger movement in international development towards facilitating development initiatives in different, more innovative ways – and in supporting clients in the most difficult, yet impactful, phase of a project: implementation.

## **1. THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE**

### **Context for Civil Service Reform in Sierra Leone**

Since the 1960's after gaining independence from the U.K., and particularly during the civil war from 1991 until 2001, the public sector in Sierra Leone has suffered progressive depletion of skilled manpower in the middle- and upper-level cadre of professional and technical staff. The lingering consequence was an inability to provide basic services to its citizens. This has tragically become an evidently urgent and dire situation in the context of, for example, poor health service provisions relating to the recent Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone and neighboring countries.

Structural human resource reasons for an under-performing civil service (and consequent inadequate provision of public services) include the “missing middle” level of management as well as a need for improved functioning of high-level leadership and strategic planning. Basic human resource issues also compromising service delivery include: inadequate staff competencies, inadequate pay, no formal performance appraisal system, non-meritocratic recruitment and poor external competitiveness. It has been challenging to draw skilled and motivated employees from the private sector, or back from countries they emigrated due during, and as a result of, the civil war.

At the same time, development partner programs offering independent short-term solutions had the unexpected consequence of displacing development of comprehensive medium to long-term solutions. For example, to draw talent back to Sierra Leone from overseas, Local Technical Assistant positions were created and funded by donors. These employees are paid at substantially higher salaries than regular, mainstream civil servants, in an unsustainable manner and with a demoralizing effect upon mainstream civil servants. In addition to these challenging circumstances, the government was facing rising pressure to decrease the wage bill of civil servants within the overall context of increasingly limited fiscal space (prior to the influx to government income from iron ore revenues). Such circumstances led to a strong desire by the country's leadership to reverse the continual erosion of social service delivery by undertaking a broad-gauged civil service reform process.

The GoSL began to address this and approved a salary reform policy accompanied by a plan for a comprehensive public sector reform (PSR) action between 2009 and 2014, ‘Improving Productivity through Management and Pay Reforms’. However, the results of these initiatives were slow to materialize, and led to calls for deeper, more focused change by donors, civil service staff, country leadership, and the

citizenry. Analysis<sup>10</sup> of internal civil service stakeholders indicated awareness that change was about to take place, with a general belief in or commitment to change, but with different levels of confidence in the integrity and ability of key government actors to carry out any proposed reforms. Greater engagement of Permanent Secretaries and professional heads in key ministries (e.g., health, education) was perceived as vital to the success of any such initiative, although these executives were not involved in shaping the reform agenda.

Time and resources were sought to create a results-based culture of accountability in the Sierra Leone civil service—along with the necessary vision and focus on links between individual performance, program delivery, meeting beneficiary needs, and disseminating information about results achieved through citizen charters. Sustained support to the leadership of key government agencies was singled out by development partners as being crucial to this based on their attempts at similar public sector reforms. UK Department for International Development, for example, previously attempted budget support for this and expressed skepticism about the degree to which results-based financing could provide adequate incentives for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), as well as other implementing partners, to work together to achieve common objectives.

Expectations were high for dividends accruing to the population through improved services despite admittedly low capacity. To deal with capacity constraints linkages between better staffing policies and practices (recruitment, remuneration and performance management) and tangible development outcomes in priority sectors (e.g., health, education) had to be identified and solidified.

## World Bank Support to Reform Efforts

In response to the government's need to reform its civil service, and in support of efforts under the GoSL PSR program<sup>11</sup> 2009-2014, the World Bank with the GoSL jointly prepared the Pay and Performance Project.<sup>12</sup> The development objective was explicit; *“to improve competitiveness in pay, performance management, and accountability, and increase recruitment of middle and senior staff in the civil service of Sierra Leone.”*

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<sup>10</sup> Koroma, Sidratu (2012). World Bank Rapid Assessment of Dynamics of Public Sector Reform in Sierra Leone, Freetown.

<sup>11</sup> The World Bank Sierra Leone Pay and Performance Project was based upon the government's public sector reform program on “Improving Productivity Through Management and Pay Reform”, though this document was not finalized until the Project was well into the preparation process.

<sup>12</sup> The P&PP is a US \$17 million IDA-financed civil service reform project. The project has a US\$15 million results-based component that disburses against the achievement of 15 disbursement-linked-indicators (DLIs), which mark important milestones and results along reform paths identified by the government team in each of the three reform areas. A US 2 million technical assistance component supports the achievement of these indicators by providing specialized consulting services and urgently needed physical inputs. *Roseth and Srivastava, May 2013.*



The Bank and government converged in agreement upon use of an instrument that contained disbursement conditions along the lines of a results-based lending instrument.<sup>13</sup> That would allow the GoSL to receive more fungible funds that would be transferred to the Consolidated Fund of the government, and that would help the Bank ensure it would not be supporting an unsustainable civil service wage bill and that would also incentivize some progress against critical reform measures.

A set of conditions under a disbursement plan was developed and tied to specific results indicators--known as Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs)--in a program results matrix (see annex 1). Incentives for achievement of results would be given to reach an overarching goal. Interventions focused on three areas: pay reform, recruitment and staffing, and performance management and accountability. The implementation of the government program was viewed as challenging and probably high-risk over the life of the Project. It also would require **dedicated leadership** to meet the challenges associated with this type of change.

### The Capability Challenge to Reform

The Project included a Technical Assistance component to help support the client in achieving these DLIs and results. In this results-based lending model, borrower implementation capacity is required to deliver specific results, outputs and outcomes so that funds may be disbursed to the client. Therefore, success depends both on capacity *already existing* within government agencies as well as necessary capacity for success of the project *being developed in real-time*, where necessary, during project implementation.

During the stages of the P&P project formulation with the World Bank, the operating environment in the country was considered. This included government capacity, public financial management initiatives, decentralization work, and public sector reform initiatives more broadly. The Project was assessed as being risky by the World Bank and so diagnostic work was undertaken to determine the potential binding constraints to the public sector reform in the country, and outline potential solutions to them. A critical challenge identified was the insufficient capacity amongst those responsible for implementation and supervision, and the lack of coordination amongst key agencies. It was evident from the project design phase that “*the intense level of engagement would need to be sustained (if not stepped up) during implementation if the project is to achieve its potential.*”<sup>14</sup>

In the post-conflict, low-capacity context, and in light of a rapid assessment of the public sector<sup>15</sup> in Sierra Leone, Bank Operations invited the World Bank Institute

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<sup>13</sup> The project design was in the spirit of a Program for Results (PforR) lending instrument.

<sup>14</sup> The Bank realized that a considerable amount of trust-building was required with government counterparts and so it invested in ‘face time’, including five two-week trips within eight months (much higher than average face-to-face client engagement during project preparation). Roseth and Srivastava, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Koroma, 2012.

Leadership Practice<sup>16</sup> to dialog with the government about ways to install the requisite capacity in “real-time”. A learning-by-doing approach to support was envisaged to help ensure the GoSL could fully achieve its planned outcomes. Subsequently, the World Bank Leadership for Results (L4R) program was asked to support client implementation and develop capacity in key implementing agencies throughout the project lifecycle.

## 2. APPLYING A NEW APPROACH TO SUPPORT CLIENT IMPLEMENTATION

### The Leadership for Results (L4R) Approach

In the World Bank, the client Leadership for Results<sup>17</sup> (L4R) approach codified its approach to deliver performance results after experience supporting operational lending projects in different countries and projects. This wealth of knowledge led to insights about how to apply and adapt specific implementation tools based on their complementarity to assist leaders and their teams in achieving project goals—especially during complex challenges. Given that “*leadership contributes to change when it builds change space*,” the L4R approach creates the requisite organizational space for change to happen and then facilitates the change process among stakeholders over the life of the project<sup>18</sup>, in an adaptive and iterative manner. This action-oriented approach applies to leaders at each organizational level: strategic/political decision-makers, operational management, and team leaders.

The L4R process was tailored to support the specific needs of the client in Sierra Leone. It was designed to consist of:

(i) *systematic use of a results-focused methodology* - the Rapid Results Approach, RRA<sup>19</sup> (see Annex 4) – which is used to develop better management techniques during implementation that assist government teams to deliver results. The methodology implements Rapid Results Initiatives<sup>20</sup> (RRIs) – which are “*small projects designed to quickly deliver mini-versions of the big project’s end results*”<sup>21</sup> in around 100 days. Through learning by doing, Rapid Results practitioners, including those from the

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<sup>16</sup> The Leadership Practice is now situated within the Leadership, Learning and Innovation (LLI) Vice-Presidency established in July 2014.

<sup>17</sup> The Leadership for Results (L4R) program has undergone reform in the process from its transition within the World Bank Institute Leadership Practice to the Leadership, Learning and Innovation VPU created in July 2014. The program of support itself has evolved based upon learning and experiences from its implementation in recent years. The new program is named Collaborative Leadership for Development (CL4D).

<sup>18</sup> Matt Andrews, 2010

<sup>19</sup> The RRA was developed circa 1960 by Schaffer Consulting for private sector companies in the United States to enable them to quickly tackle and overcome hurdles towards attaining a project’s goal.<sup>19</sup> The RRA was more recently, circa 2007, formally adapted by the Rapid Results Institute to support development projects of developing country governments in overcoming constraints to project implementation.

<sup>20</sup> Please see Annex 4 for a more detailed description of the RRA and an RRI

<sup>21</sup> See Matta and Ashkenas, 2003

World Bank and the Rapid Results Institute<sup>22</sup>, have recognized the value of ensconcing the RRI within the broader objectives inside project results frameworks.<sup>23</sup> The RRA process “*bonds itself to the established work program and timeline for Intermediate Results as well as agreed project DLIs—which are aligned to longer-term project goals--and supports engagement of strategic leaders in a forward-looking and backward-planning process*”.<sup>24</sup> The process involves both team and leader coaching and training initiatives to help teams deliver on their own self-identified results chains. Beyond the tangible short-term results of an individual 100-day Rapid Result Initiative in achieving a DLI, the methodology supports the institutionalization and sustainability of skills and capacity acquired by adapting new approaches to getting things done, e.g., working in teams, collaborating across agencies, and encouraging innovative thinking to develop solutions when problems arise; and

(ii) *Leadership fora* facilitated periodically during project implementation for political, strategic and operational leaders to jointly review progress, learn from the process of implementation thus far, strategize, problem-solve, reinforce alignment with priorities and take decisions. The intention in Sierra Leone was to link strategic decision-making with implementation realities of RRIs by bridging communication between decision-makers and implementers. This process was also, thereby, linking leadership to learning to adaptation of implementation goals to keep progressing toward development objectives.

Given the complexity of implementation arrangements (see Annex 3) for the civil service reform project, as well as institutional fragmentation and low levels of inter-agency trust, implementation was expected to pose challenges for leaders at different levels as well as in various ministers throughout the civil service.

## Launching the Process for Implementation of Civil Service Reform

The L4R program began in March 2012 to support key project Implementing Agencies in delivering specific results. Agencies requesting and receiving this support included the Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU), the Human Resources Management Office (HRMO), and the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED). The L4R engagement was prepared using a collaborative and inclusive approach for government counterparts at various levels of government in several agencies so that they themselves could develop a platform on which results-focused dialog and capacity building at the working level could take place, including collective problem-solving among the leadership cohort. This yielded three important benefits:

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<sup>22</sup> Matta is the President and Founding Board Member (2007) of the Rapid Results Institute and a senior partner of Schaffer Consulting, the parent for-profit firm of the not-for-profit Institute.

<sup>23</sup> Campos, Randrianarivelo, Winning, 2013

<sup>24</sup> Moira Hart-Poliquin, 2012

- reassuring stakeholders of their ability to achieve DLIs through initial piloting plus the demonstration effect of results;
- providing a system for monitoring implementation and solving problems in real-time to meet scheduled DLI timelines; and
- establishing the basis for results coaching during implementation to motivate capacity development within and across implementation teams.<sup>25</sup>

At a broad level, the program was designed to strengthen team capacity for reaching agreed goals by means of coaching throughout implementation, as well as by convening leadership-level retreats supporting a two-pronged, learning-by-doing process as mentioned above. This design was also informed by key principles contained within the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) change framework (Andrews *et al.*, 2012) for creating a space for change and facilitating an iterative process throughout implementation that also helped teams develop their own solutions and learn from their own experiences through coaching and feedback loops.

The relatively short timeframe for achievement of DLIs lent itself to a short feedback loop to facilitate rapid experiential learning for both government and World Bank staff about what results were actually achieved by using a phased approach with frequent reviews (e.g., quarterly). RRIs provide structured support to implementation results delivery and learning by doing. Combining RRIs with periodic leadership forums facilitated to review and assess these initiatives guides implementers going forward and increased the likelihood of project success - which is phased, results-focused, and client-driven as well.

The role of leaders in creating the required organizational space for change and innovation was also emphasized. This was to demonstrate the benefits of shared (team-based) leadership and joint accountability to overcome seemingly intractable organizational constraints, such as recruitment to fill priority vacancies--a joint effort by MoFED, PSC, and HRMO. Each agency was to be mutually accountable to the other for specific results against measurable outcomes. During this process, skills were acquired to build requisite capacity for team adaptation and innovation, and to illustrate commitment to change and accountability for results.

As the process began with the launch of a pilot phase, leaders of key Implementing Agencies (IAs) judged if the initial pilots were valuable, and, if so, the process would be ramped-up in all of them, and potentially across sectors, i.e., into line ministries by linking improvements in performance of civil servants to improved outcomes in service delivery for citizens. A pre-condition for success of any ramp-up was top-level engagement. This was to require a formal endorsement of the approach by the project's Leadership Team identified in the project design--or at least endorsement and support of the Project coordinating agency--the Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU)--to demonstrate commitment to achieving results. Their role was to endorse initiatives, monitor implementation status in multiple initiatives, and deal with obstacles to achieving results.

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<sup>25</sup> Moira Hart-Poliquin, 2012

## **Table 1: Expected Outcomes through support from the Leadership for Results Program**

### ***1. Outcomes for Government in Public Sector Reform:***

- Improved project (and eventually development) effectiveness, along with enhanced government capacity, through introducing a new form of implementation support that is well-suited to accompany the needs under results-based programs.
- Lessons learned on managing resistance to change through building confidence of stakeholders by using new methods and tools – such as the Rapid Results Approaches (RRA), coaching performance appraisal tools, new recruitment approaches, etc.

### ***2. Capacity Development Outcomes for Civil Servants:***

- Competencies of leaders at different levels: these would be developed in such a way to be relevant for implementation in any sector. They include competencies to foresee the implementation path through the life of a program, identification and mitigation of potential obstacles, working across teams and with leaders to unblock obstacles, especially at the political level, and learning from implementation in real time.
- Coaching skills to help manage change: these would be fostered within different ministries through action learning, networking with other countries, and the possibility for LforR high-level events to facilitate the development of capacity for RRA, for Results-based management (RBM), and for leadership coaching in areas such as strategic communication, negotiations, and conflict resolution.

(Moira Hart-Poliquin, April 2012).

In essence, the L4R program aimed to provide a structure to deliver results and then combined it with forums for communicating and consolidating commitment to priority actions among leadership during high-level meetings, meant to address bottlenecks that teams lacked authority to resolve. Of importance is that the Leadership Team of the project was also expected to inform the Head of State about key breakthroughs and significant institutional changes that are taking place in public sector reform generally. This combined process helped leverage implementation of short-term measures on the critical path for broader systemic change for strengthening government capacity to implement a broader Public Sector Reform program.<sup>26</sup>

The program approach was broadly supportive of the Project's "working with the grain"<sup>27</sup> strategy to use existing country systems - rather than create or transplant an external, artificial Project Implementation Unit (linked to the World Bank). The approach reinforced the joint working objective of the government to implement a results-focused project that would encourage joint accountability and, ultimately, help develop country systems through working inside these systems and learning from the process how they could be improved.

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<sup>26</sup> Hart-Poliquin, 2012

<sup>27</sup> Booth, 2009

### 3. THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS ACHIEVED

#### Pilot Phase

Between 2004 and 2009, the World Bank and GoSL Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project (IRCBP) provided first-hand experience to government leadership in Sierra Leone with the Rapid Results Approach (RRA). Building on interaction with the government on this experience as well as current realities, the design and priorities of the L4R Program were developed at the request of the Minister of Finance and core members of the P&P Project Leadership Team. The L4R commenced by launching some upfront Rapid Results Initiatives to help deliver on initial DLIs. This was considered the most effective support mechanism to jump-start actions. Most middle managers and their implementing teams welcomed the idea of helping agencies catch up on steps needed to meet DLIs, which were planned to begin January 2012 but had not begun serious implementation even by April 2012.

In response, the L4R team delivered a project orientation session with training on the RRA to staff within key implementing agencies in early June, with Rapid Result Initiatives (RRIs) aligned with DLIs and launched by team leaders by end June. Orientation and familiarization of staff with the design and content of the Project, and their role in achieving its objectives, was a critical part of the training component. During the early project stages, the idea was to intertwine work at the leadership level that included design of the project, with work at the frontline middle management level that included fostering an understanding and sense of ownership over their respective components that they would be responsible for implementing.

The pilot phase of L4R in implementation was important to the success of the project for two reasons, according to the principles of the PDIA change framework:

- (i) it signals the legitimacy of the achievements of the local civil servants (and other community actors, where applicable), and shows that progress *is possible* in their context using self-identified goals and solutions, rather than making an “appeal to external policies and programs that have been deemed to work elsewhere” (“*isomorphic mimicry*,” or “*transplanting preconceived and prepackaged best-practice solutions*”<sup>28</sup>); and
- (ii) it demonstrates results in a short period, i.e., experiential learning can be captured quickly, fed back into the design for new solutions to use in subsequent initiatives.

Moreover, the cycle for iteration to develop next steps is shorter (on approximately a quarterly basis) and more substantive than in post-facto project evaluations, where typically a mid-term review of the Project must occur followed by two or more years (!) of implementation, or even project close to learn and apply new learning.

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<sup>28</sup> Pritchett, Woolcock, Andrews, PRISM Vol.3, Issue 3

The L4R approach aimed to support government and address this in two key ways: first, launching short-term results-focused Rapid Results Initiatives that would show progress quickly and would be aligned to longer-term achievement of DLIs; and, second, facilitating team sessions and leadership-level dialogues to review progress and learning, problem-solve, make strategic decisions based on the short RRI cycle feedback loops, and adapt or course-correct where needed to move forward.

There were several components contributing to the success of the pilot phase which will be unpacked below: team engagement; coaching support; leadership engagement; and, monitoring and evaluation. These all played their part in facilitating the achievement of results under the project and in the release of disbursement funds from the Bank to the government.

### Team Engagement

Lack of confidence and motivation typically is a major constraint for the implementers (or “front-line workers”<sup>29</sup>) of World Bank/government projects—who generally have “*not been part of the conversation about change*” and “*have no incentive to contribute ideas about how things could be improved.*”<sup>30</sup> In this instance, the L4R process engaged strongly with, and empowered the RRI teams to become part of the discussion on changes and how they should happen.

For example, Ms. Daphne Young (Head of Selection and Development of the PSC and team leader of RRIs) in September 2012, expressed this in saying: “*there has been a beautiful articulation of the project, its milestones and DLIs by government leadership and World Bank, but the key is in its implementation and how we, in our teams, actually go about making these changes.*” Mr. Mohamed R. Koroma (Director of Strategy and Planning in the HRMO and team leader of RRIs) echoed this sentiment and was highly appreciative of the value-added in the work-planning phase of the RRIs. He believed it “*brings focus to activities and increases the sense of ownership of teams over the milestones and DLIs in the P&P Project,*” since teams go through a process of “*designing the plan and the timelines for themselves,*” so they become part of the conversation and the design of how to make change happen.

These middle-level operational managers and leaders of RRIs have empowered front-line workers in their team through delegation of responsibilities and team building. Their successes also indicate that goals designed by the government during Project preparation were well aligned with the needs of local agencies (as opposed to the recommended solutions proposed primarily from successes in other countries), and were realistic within the local context and institutional parameters. In addition, throughout the pilot phase, innovation occurred within teams during implementation to meet results

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<sup>29</sup> Andrews, Pritchett, Woolcock, 2013

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.6

statements. This created *space for novelty*,<sup>31</sup> and the innovative contributions of local agents were not crowded out. The local efforts and solutions to challenges were captured throughout implementation and fed back into the design of initiatives going forward. For example, in PSC the teams held civil service examinations on Saturday and double-shifted when they received many more applicants than anticipated. Another example is the PSRU M&E specialist travelling to individual MDAs with a flash drive to collect data from them when the internet wasn't functioning.

## Coaching

One of the most significant contributions L4R made to RRI implementation of DLIs was the recruitment of a Rapid Results coach based in Freetown<sup>32</sup> and available to provide support to teams on a daily basis. The coach was highly experienced in supporting Rapid Results Initiatives, and quickly able to get up to speed on the complex issues and challenges confronting the P&P project implementation. The role of this coach was key to the process of helping teams maintain focus and energy, empowering individual team members, managing team dynamics and facilitating problem solving with local teams. She had local in-depth understanding of government and public sector reform: she was able to hit the ground running and connect with teams and gain their trust. This created a space where they could be more innovative, take risks in doing things differently, and venturing outside the traditional “group think” dynamic that can be a risk in large bureaucracies and government.

Mr. Ansu Tucker, Director of Human Resource Planning and Budgeting of the HRMO, and team leader of RRIs, confirmed in September 2012 that this coaching was central to helping teams “*contextualize their thinking*” to “*understand the logic between milestones, DLIs and outcomes*” and “*translate these concepts into action-oriented terminology for the teams themselves to move forward with concrete steps,*” knowing that they were supported along the way in their efforts.

With the growing complexity of steps to be completed for each DLI, and as the teams became more embedded in implementing the Project, the need for support from an additional coach arose. A second coach was recruited from the cohort of trained coaches (from the decentralization project 2005-2009) and now coordinates with the initial coach. This initial coach is now recruited by, and integrated formally into, the PSRU. This transition has helped institutionalize efforts and embed further local ownership within government of this project and the results needed.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.5

<sup>32</sup> Based on experience, coaching support provided by the original recruited coaches in April – who were based in Sudan and Rwanda – was not able to quickly enough (given distance) respond to the day-to-day needs of the government teams, and were perceived as externals not as well situated to understand the day-to-day dynamics and challenges in government.



## Leadership Engagement

In complement to the coaching support at the more technical level of day-to-day implementation efforts, the LAR program staff facilitated high-level discussions between strategic leaders and members of the Leadership Team of the project. The government participation in the mid-term review and final review of the pilot phase initiatives, as well as the one-day strategic leadership events (in June 2013 and February 2014), became pivotal orientation and decision-making events. These events helped connect project leaders with project implementers and enabled RRI team members to pose questions, request support, and ask for guidance from the strategic leaders; in turn, the leaders were able to understand better some of the day-to-day processes they needed to know be more effective.

These sessions also facilitated *“the bottom to top, and top to bottom communications”* (M.R. Koroma, March 2013), which does not always happens in individual agencies, let alone across agencies, or between leaders and from leaders to teams and vice-versa. They also helped individuals in teams as well as in formal leadership positions realize that, *“we’re not going through this alone. Sometimes we wonder when sitting in our office why others are doing this to us and making our life difficult, but when we come together like this and talk about it, it helps to understand the other persons perspective and realize they’re also in [the] same boat* (Daphne Young, March 2013). Others reported their realization that *“we have 360 degree leadership: everyone is a leader in helping drive things forward,”* rather than passing the buck and waiting for others to act. They learned from these events what each other was working on and who could help them with what, making them proactive in seeking assistance to advance their work.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is additional critical area where the LAR process helped support learning and subsequent gains in performance throughout implementation of an RRI. This took the form of increased emphasis being placed on M&E and tracking of progress and achievement at the micro-level of RRI activities and on a short-term basis. Political and strategic leaders have been able to deepen their understanding of the change process at a more granular level using data gathered by RRI teams, which track the micro process of achieving RRIs in the broader political context of change and reform. Teams also used tracking graphs to show to others - in visual form - the weekly progress. These graphs can be helpful in depicting when activities plateau, and can help in connecting these plateaus to blockages elsewhere in the system (i.e., fund flows, NASSIT social security numbers) that signal areas for remedial action.

While tracking of progress of RRIs helps mobilize teams and engage leaders and beneficiaries in the P&P Project, M&E has not been used to gauge how the overall civil service reform is progressing in terms of impact that reaches beneficiaries due to improved service delivery e.g. in health or education. It is too early in the civil service

reform to realistically measure this – and it is considerably more downstream that it becomes difficult to make it attributable to the project’s activities and priority objectives.

### Sample Results Achieved and Related Disbursements

By February 2014, after 20 months of implementation, the HRMO and the PSC, supported by PSRU, achieved the following concrete results:

- (i) **Recruitment to fill critical vacancies:** Recruitment of 137 new civil servants to fill priority vacancies to execute critical functions of the government: Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Food Security, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and National Fire Services;
- (ii) **Performance Management process introduced:** Finalization of new performance management guidelines and appraisal forms (none existed previously), and training on these provided to 230 officials (permanent secretaries and HR managers and staff) by the Performance Management team. A first cycle of personnel annual appraisals has been completed as part of a shift towards accountability and support for improved performance;
- (iii) **Human Resource Planning:** Completion of manpower hearings and finalization of a remuneration survey by the Human Resource Planning consultancy team to better plan for recruitment needs in the following year. The purpose of the remuneration survey was to help determine whether some jobs to be recruited need to be given a market premium;
- (iv) **Cleaning up the payroll:** Payroll cleaned and ongoing improvements to its integrity, including preparation of a comprehensive list by grade of all civil service employees (19,733) for each ministry. Ongoing effort to ensure movement and changes to the payroll for appointments, promotions, transfer resignations, dismissals, and retirement are supported and recorded by adequate documentation. Issuance of 1477 NASSIT (social security) numbers (of the 2,000 required) from AGD for new civil service personnel; and,
- (v) **Communications with citizens:** Dynamic interactive website has been launched for the Public Sector Reform Unit to communicate with citizens on progress being made under the Project, as well as presentation and facilitation of local forums to discuss issues, and radio discussions by experts, with call-in questions from citizens.

The achievement of these results meant that the Bank was able to disburse to the Government approximately US\$8.9 million of project funds by June 2014.

In terms of *soft results*, all teams affirmed that there is now stronger inter- and intra-agency collaboration and increased trust and communication. The former Director of the PSRU in September 2012, and the current Director of the PSRU in October 2013 noted that inter-agency collaboration definitely increased while implementing DLIs. RRI teams reported that the Rapid Results intervention helped to grow a common understanding of how the work of all teams is intertwined, and demonstrated how efforts are mutually supportive in achieving overall Project goals. Various teams also reported

that the RRI set-up encouraged work across teams and across agencies, as many of the RRIs instilled joint accountability between ministries and are dependent on each other for their success. For example, the payroll integrity team in HRMO achieved some of its objectives specifically because of the recruitment of officers under the remit of the PSC recruitment team. Teams attested to the facilitative role of the coach as a key mechanism for helping them understand the value of weaving together the strands of the P&P Project across agencies, keeping them motivated despite challenges, and using this process as an opportunity to learn from each other.

## 4. LEARNING AND ADAPTING THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

### Short Cycle Results and Feedback Loops

The short cycle of holding facilitated review sessions of team progress approximately every 100 days – and convening all teams, relevant agencies and their leaders in one place helped facilitate reflection on teams own work, as well as how it fits within the broader picture in relation to the work of the other RRI teams involved. It has helped teams to ‘shrink the change’,<sup>33</sup> as expressed by Ms. Mary Rogers in the newly created Performance Management Department, March 2013: *“sometimes an activity in the Project seems so enormous it feels overwhelming, but with RRIs we’re able to have those results statements broken down into smaller activities we feel better able to handle - we are able to bite what we can chew.”*

This purposefully orchestrated phased approach to implementation has facilitated short feedback loops and learning around specific changes in teamwork and engagement with other agencies (for example engaging with Accountant General Department, Ministry of Finance and between project implementing agencies as described above) that can become institutionalized as a new way of working together.

Perhaps more importantly than this, however, it has helped individuals and teams overcome the uncertainty and inertia around whether the reform is possible. It has developed confidence that they themselves have within their own agencies the capacities to problem-solve and make progress in their own part contributing to the broader-scale reform in the civil service. As Mr. Mohamed R. Koroma, Director of Strategy and Planning in the HRMO and team leader of RRIs stated at the leadership retreat in June 2013: *“This program has brought us all together under one umbrella - it’s a very big step we’ve taken... We must emphasize lessons learned from the process in the past year and more... The point is we had to bring everyone on board and everyone has now been brought on... I’m very hopeful and happy for the level of collaboration we have attained and I’m quite sure that whatever challenges we have on disbursements is just a delay – but money will come... we will re-strategize and try to achieve our aims. We’re not heading for failure – yes, delays are there, but now let us focus on lessons learned. In payroll integrity our main lesson was that we didn’t know the resources in terms of*

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<sup>33</sup> Heath & Heath (2010)

*human capacity that we had in our team: our staff can think fast and make things happen where there is difficulty – we came up with answers ourselves.”*

## Local Challenges, Local Solutions

Drawing on its own strengths, as advocated by principles of PDIA, the government sought its own solutions to its own specific challenges - the major one of which was the funds flow. The government, through collaboration across agencies and perseverance at each step in the system, was able to solve the challenge and improve its country systems through this process.

Initially, local challenges arose that were beyond the control of the teams but were crucial to their success. Most common were delays in agency allocations from the Ministry of Finance. As the Project was designed to be executed using country systems (i.e., without a specific Project Implementation Unit to distribute funds from the World Bank), funds flowed through required government bodies, e.g., Treasury and Ministry of Finance. A staff member at the PSC in September 2012 observed that *“Rapid would be out of Rapid Results Initiatives without sufficient resources.”* The PSC and HRMO faced significant budgeting challenges and struggled to push forward with their initiatives. By end September 2012, PSC still had not received the budget allocation for the second quarter of the year due March 2012; and the HRMO had only just received the second quarter allocation. The lack of funds available on a timely basis significantly impacted RRI progress. As Mr. Koroma explained in October 2012, *“we cannot be certain when the money will come to do the next step in the RRI, and so the RRI flounders.”* However, teams were dedicated and persisted to focus intently on delivering on activities that did not require funds, for example, design of guidelines and training materials for introducing performance appraisals.

By June 2013, however, progress was made in this regard, with disbursements from the World Bank received by the government consolidated fund in April 2013. Yet, the next challenge was for these funds (or a portion of them) to reach the implementing agencies and teams of this project. This did not happen until June showing that the ‘country systems’ require focused efforts for improvement in funds flow, and that significant learning was needed from this first blockage to make the necessary adjustments. Emerging from the mid-point review of early June was the message that despite the disbursement, the long delays before receiving funds in PSC and HRMO had held teams back again in implementing various activities in their work-plan. While unfinanced activities had advanced, for example, long-listing and short-listing candidates for recruitment, other activities with cost implications, such as delivering training sessions and printing appraisal forms, had been held up. Nonetheless, once they received funds, they re-doubled their efforts to speed up progress - for example in PSC they accelerated the interviewing process for recruitment by operating on Saturdays.

Messages from the RRI mid-point review percolated upward into a Strategic Leadership Interactive Session held in June 2013, bringing together Project Leadership as well as other development agencies (EU, UNDP) that were also working on civil service

reform. This helped smooth the transition in leadership of the HRMO and PSRU nominated after presidential elections in November 2012, and provided a platform for on-boarding of new leaders. Ensuring continuity for the work of the implementing teams through maintaining support of their leadership was a critical function of this session. It helped to bring them up-to-speed quickly and inform them of issues and challenges needing focused attention. It also served to share donor perspectives also working on civil service reform, provided an update the RRI from the mid-point review, and shared questions, contributions and discussions of staff with their new leadership and other donors.

A key outcome was the very public expression of commitment by the Budget Director to all operational staff under this project who were dependent upon his allocations that they could hold him accountable. He was nominated as the focal point in the Ministry of Finance, to facilitate timely transfer of government funds to the agencies—even though fund flow problems occurred and accountability vigilance needed to be maintained. A second outcome was appreciation of lessons learned by government agencies, which went through a steep learning curve within the PSRU and AGD in transferring funds and procuring equipment under the Technical Assistance component of the project. This is expected to lead to smoother implementation of processes in future.

The main message is that despite fund flow constraints, the teams found ways to continue their efforts. It also illustrates how the local challenges accompanying the delayed flow of funds were eventually overcome with local solutions created by the affected bodies. Through the process of facilitating collaboration and creative problem-solving using teamwork, coaching and leadership platforms, the challenges seemed surmountable. For example, emerging from discussions at one facilitated leadership session, the Budget Director in MOFED indicated at that time the *“issue of delays should not be a pointer on why we would fail. It actually gives us opportunity to think on how to do things better. For the first time we are using existing country systems – we therefore have to set up a system that is capable of meeting the needs of MDAs and that facilitates flow of funds from outside donors more efficiently. But we won’t get it right first time. It’s only now that we know the real challenges, having tried to do this in past months, that we have been able to learn from it and what is needed. We will be faster next time and we will work with the three RRI teams so we will together achieve the DLIs.”*

## **5. LESSONS LEARNED FROM AN ADAPTIVE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

### **Learning from Sierra Leone**

What can be observed in the narrative and analysis of this experience in Sierra Leone is that is possible within the World Bank and government structures to work with a process that encourages collaborative leadership, learning-by-doing, developing capacity in real time, and adapting in response to evolving needs throughout the implementation phase of a project.

From this experience we can draw several lessons that may be extrapolated to a broader level and applicable in different project contexts.

*Dedication and commitment of key government leaders and implementers can counter some of the effects of an evolving political economy in the country.* The political economy evolved following the design of the project: in late 2011/early 2012, US\$15-17 million of project lending seemed a sufficient incentive to strive for results; however, since then government income projections have grown substantially due to a boom in iron ore. Real GDP growth increased to 15.2% in 2012 after expanding by 6% in 2011, due to the commencement of iron ore production.<sup>34</sup> In retrospect, US\$1million per DLI had a greater incentive effect to MoFED at the start of the project, when the government faced severe budget constraints, than it does now. It is important to take into account how substantially increased national revenue influences the level of motivation for government to focus on achieving DLIs. However, despite the disbursement amounts to MoFED, the key implementing agencies of PSC and HRMO are very much still engaged in the project for reasons of wanting to improve the functioning of their own institutions and the services they provide. The dedication and commitment of the Chairman of PSC, the Director-General of HRMO and the Director of the PSRU, and their staff, is ongoing and impressive.

*Adapting to the changing political reality is paramount - a process of documenting successes prior to the transition helped with gaining buy-in from new leaders to become supportive of the existing work, and facilitation of an on-boarding leadership event for new agency leaders helped to mitigate the risk of any disruption to continuity of this work.* Transitions in leadership after national elections in November 2012, as well as the transitions throughout government by staff changing posts, could have been highly disruptive to the project, but with careful stakeholder mapping, planning and facilitation, this can be smoothed. In this case, the director of the PSRU as well as the Director General of HRMO changed after election. Moreover, the chairman of the PSC has been scheduled several times to retire. All three were key leaders and transitioned out following the design and initial implementation of the project.

*Designating middle management as RRI team leaders, to compensate for the effect of transitions at leadership level, helped mitigation measures to keep the reform process on track and to preclude politics and transitions from neutralizing or reversing progress made.* The focus on the middle management was vital to create the right environment where incentives could take hold and be sustained in the midst of external and internal leadership changes.

*Fostering a sense of ownership amongst these implementers (who had largely not been involved in project design discussions) to drive forward the steps along the reform path was critical.* Without a process of allowing the implementers/operational staff the space, time and support to dig deep and unpack the details and indicators of the project that they were expected to implement, there would likely have been stagnation right at

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<sup>34</sup> World Bank, Sierra Leone Overview, available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/sierraleone/overview>

the outset. Understanding their role, contributions and how they fit into the big picture was a major motivator, which, in turn, greatly helped in their problem-solving when difficulties hit. The *team-building* component under each RRI added value by bringing together the right people to achieve the goals and orienting individual team members of their role in the overarching project objectives. Teams have been learning-by-doing themselves in real-time. The coach has been supporting on improving team dynamics and communications, and assisting in conflict management that has helped build teams.

*Coaching of teams* was critical. Having a core person who was able to help teams problem-solve, and to go between teams and assist communication flows within agencies, across agencies and have credible access to the strategic leadership in the Project was of immense help in boosting collaboration as well as tracking progress. One coach, initially recruited by the World Bank then later integrated into the PSRU, seems to have had greater traction in gaining access to leadership and in participating in critical project meetings within government than the coach that remains recruited by the World Bank. This is a point to note in terms of the coach effectiveness - that it may be more influential and impactful to work with a coach that is also internal to the government. The flip-side argument to that is, of course, that they lose their more 'independent/neutral' status from the government that can offer them space to act and perform a role that other civil servants are unable to fill.

*Review sessions that provide feedback loops and help in documenting progress under the RRIs were key to keeping the teams together and moving forward at the operational level.* LAR facilitated regular feedback loops, both during the RRIs and at RRI review sessions, as well as between leadership and RRI teams, which help keep moving activities forward to the next step. Indicators for team achievements were created under the RRI methodology. The RRIs have essentially made it easier to teams to scale down what the project requires into incremental stages that seem more achievable to them.

*Bridging the gap between leadership and the implementation/operational level staff is critical* – particularly in situations where there is a “missing” or insufficient middle level of management. Facilitating communication and problem-solving between these individuals and groups can make significant differences in strategic decision-making as well as day-to-day decision-making – each feeds into the other in the big picture. The LAR specifically facilitated leadership dialogue to engage the political level to help implementation teams, i.e., alleviating blockages at their level to help operational staff in RRI teams move forward and communicate successes upward at a national level.

*Working with 'country systems' has some major teething problems where institutions are not equipped or ready – significant investigation and investment must be made upfront to ensure this does not derail progress of a project.* There was no Project Implementation Unit and the MoFED and other key implementing agencies had to resolve blockages in the system of transfer of funds. As the Budget Director has remarked, the initial 'teething problems' have been identified and are in the process of

being confronted. Learning within the countries own institutions and systems has been taking place, but with the trade-off of delays in the project.

*DLIs must not be focused on to the exclusion of intermediate indicators.* The planned reform path was designed in such a way that achievement of the intermediate indicators act as building blocks towards fulfillment of higher-level DLIs. However, given that no fund disbursement is linked to intermediate indicators, implementing agency teams had a tendency to focus directly on working towards the DLI requirements. RRI is one way in which implementing teams can pay more attention to goals on a smaller scale than DLIs. It is recommended to more strongly and purposively guide the focus of the RRI teams towards intermediate indicators right from the beginning of the effectiveness of the project. This is designed to lead to more sustainable change.

*The process of 'course correction' and adaptive implementation by way of learning, reviewing and adjusting of the results framework under the project was necessary.* It is already well known amongst development practitioners that *civil service reform is not a linear process and does not conform to a project document designed at the beginning of the project.* The reality of implementation sets in quickly and the political economy of the country and incentives to deliver on the results waned (sometimes this can be very unexpectedly the case). The process of adjustments made have allowed both the Bank and government to keep making progress to the best of the government's ability - for the benefit of the citizenry - rather than getting the label of being 'stuck'.

*A facilitated dialogue around adjusting the project results framework helped the government and Bank gain insight about what worked and what did not, and how to incorporate more flexibility and responsiveness to change or adjust to what is realistic and achievable was needed.* Given the extremely challenging operating environment throughout 2013 (due to excessive spending prior to national elections in 2012), the project activities requiring to be completed that year suffered in their implementation from lack of funds. Also, largely due to World Bank disbursement delays and government budget allocation delays using country systems, as well as a lack of progress on the ongoing (even before 2009) challenge of mainstreaming Local Technical Assistants<sup>35</sup>, revision of the results framework was completed. The process of dialogue and agreement was facilitated under the L4R approach with the Leadership Team. The Rapid Results review sessions throughout the year helped to maintain an *open and regular dialogue with the government on actual progress (versus planned progress)*. The L4R facilitated Leadership Team dialogues that provided a platform for discussion and negotiation with leadership in key agencies on: (i) what may be realistically achieved on time; (ii) what may be achievable but with an extension of timeframe; and (iii) what is

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<sup>35</sup> "The issue of "mainstreaming" Local Technical Assistants (LTAs) is a challenge that spanned several World Bank projects [including the Integrated Public Financial Management Project 2009, IPFMRP]. LTAs were originally hired through donor-financed projects to temporarily supplement capacity in key government positions in several MDAs... and are remunerated at levels much higher than regular civil servants... the LTAs were retained by the government - at their elevated salaries - without ever having to compete for their positions... This has served to erode the *esprit de corps*... It has long been recognized that this issue needs to be addressed but almost no progress has been made". Roseth and Srivastava (2013).



unlikely to be achieved. This *cooperative environment* between Bank and government allowed space for the government to express its requests and needs, and for the Bank to be responsive and responsible in making necessary adjustments to the project lending agreement. This was done in a timely fashion, having had a system for tracking progress and a warning system well in advance that deliverables may be off-track in terms of what was planned within the project agreement.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As the development community struggles to find ways and means by which they can better support client country governments efforts to reach their desired results under projects, it must remember to not only focus upon what the trajectory of reform (and the steps and activities along the way) *should* look like, but also be more cognizant of what the implementation phase realistically *could* and *would* look like - particularly once any challenges in terms of capabilities to implement have been taken into account. There are many incentives driving project designers (both within the government and within the development partner) to design a project that encourages them to be (perhaps overly) ambitious and optimistic. Politically, it looks good. Yet, without full consideration and accounting of capability constraints to capabilities needed to achieve the development objective, the project risks remaining just that – an objective.

A greater connection between the design phase and the implementation phase over the life of the project cycle is critical. Investigating and accounting for the gap between the ‘should’ and the ‘could’ allows project designers to ensure that what is being designed is implementable - particularly in lower capacity countries. Effective leadership, processes to capture learning and facilitate adaptation or ‘course correction’ are needed to support this. Approaches, such as L4R, that can support the development of client capacities in real-time, as well as foster a sense of ownership, to lead and manage project implementation and deliver results can greatly aid client leadership to become more successful. And building in processes for leadership to review, learn and adapt along the way is advised to support continuous progress by the client. Rather than having a locked in reform path projected several years ahead that both the client country and development organization are tied to, the greatest benefit and most realistic option for successful achievement is in becoming more flexible to reflect evolving realities. For example, while project designers in Sierra Leone could not have predicted the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in March 2014, the likelihood of a crisis further limiting implementation capacity was foreseeable. The project objectives must be able to adapt and respond to changing client situations and priorities.

This paper has provided an example of one approach, L4R, that was operationalized in the context of a civil service reform effort in Sierra Leone. It has presented a narrative and analysis of the ‘how-to’ approach used to support clients in implementation. In summary, the results-based process began by unpacking initial activities detailed in the project design to make them operational, fostering a sense of ownership amongst implementers, clarifying roles and responsibilities towards reaching objectives, and assessing additional capacity requirements in order to support

development of the implementing agencies. The process deepened incrementally over a two-year engagement in the delivery of results for the project as well as learning by teams and leaders. The first phase focused on capacity building blocks to provide a solid foundation for broader and deeper systemic changes. The real-time ‘demonstration effect’ gave leaders and their teams the confidence to address more complex goals in the second and third year of the project. It also generated credibility among government agencies that they could actually make progress towards real change and improvement in an area of reform (civil service) that is notoriously difficult to implement. Facilitated dialogue at the leadership level connected learning from review of implementation realities with strategic decision-making and adaptation of project goals and timelines to their needs and changing context. This client-driven change process, in turn, enabled government to obtain funding from the World Bank by meeting agreed results and indicators, which then intended to support institutional strengthening by civil servants that would subsequently improve public service delivery. This paper demonstrates that all of this was achieved while staying within the Bank’s project cycle requirements.

However, the next step for the World Bank and other international development partners might be to develop a less burdensome, bureaucratic process than project restructuring that can support and respond to adaptations requested by the client government to the development project.<sup>36</sup> While efforts have been made in recent years by the World Bank to offer more flexible means of lending to borrowing governments, e.g. Program for Results, this mode of lending is reported to have limited flexibility in projects due to exclusions on procurement of large contracts.<sup>37</sup> The World Bank currently has a commitment from its President, as quoted at the beginning of this paper, to streamline processes and bureaucracy. This may provide a window of opportunity within the institution to encourage greater advocacy and experimentation around working with clients to adapt projects where clients are requesting greater flexibility - particularly at times that do not fall squarely within the period of mid-term review or situations where project restructuring would be burdensome.

If this is to succeed, it will require effective leadership at all levels, a process of regular feedback loops providing opportunities for review and learning from experiences, and a greater authorizing environment for adaptation to become possible.

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Andrews, *Can the World Bank do PDIA?*, available at :

[http://matthewandrews.typepad.com/the\\_limits\\_of\\_institution/2013/10/can-the-world-bank-do-pdia.html](http://matthewandrews.typepad.com/the_limits_of_institution/2013/10/can-the-world-bank-do-pdia.html)

<sup>37</sup> World Bank, Operations Policy and Country Systems, *PforR: Consulting on the Results of the Two-Year Review*, 2014

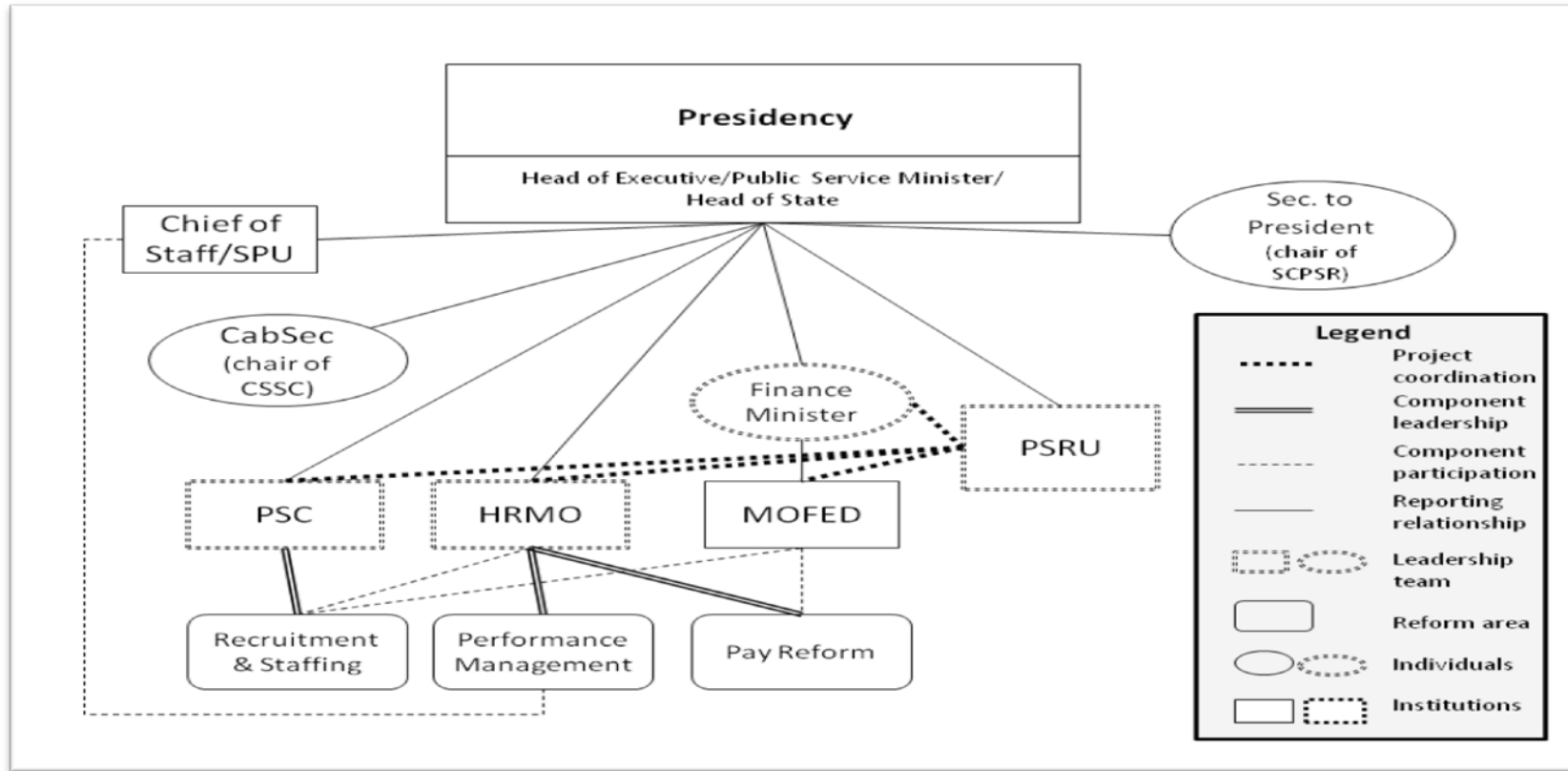
## Annex 1: Disbursement Linked Indicators by Year

DISBURSEMENT LINKED INDICATOR	ACTIONS TO BE COMPLETED FOR DISBURSEMENTS IN YEAR 0 (THROUGH JUNE 30, 2012)	ACTIONS TO BE COMPLETED FOR DISBURSEMENTS IN YEAR 1 (JULY 1, 2012 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2012)	ACTIONS TO BE COMPLETED FOR DISBURSEMENTS IN YEAR 2 (CALENDAR YEAR 2013)	ACTIONS TO BE COMPLETED FOR DISBURSEMENTS IN YEAR 3 (CALENDAR 2014)
(1) Pay reform	(1.1) HRMO has conducted and completed a remuneration survey.		(1.2) All Civil Service jobs have been evaluated in accordance with a Job Evaluation Scheme and assigned to a Grading Structure approved by the CSSC. (1.3) 100% of Civil Servants in Grade 6 and above are paid in accordance with the approved Pay Structure.	
(2) Recruitment and staffing	(2.1) The appropriate open, competitive and merit-based Recruitment Procedures have been designed by PSC in collaboration with HRMO and approved by CSSC.(2.2) Seven staff have been recruited to PSC and trained to manage recruitments and selection.	(2.3) At least 60% of Priority Vacancies have been filled in accordance with the Annual Recruitment Plans and the approved Recruitment Procedures.	(2.4) At least 80% of Priority Vacancies have been filled in accordance with the Annual Recruitment Plans and the approved Recruitment Procedures. (2.5) LTAs have been integrated in accordance with an approved Mainstreaming Policy and Action Plan.	(2.6) At least 90 % of Priority Vacancies have been filled in accordance with the approved Recruitment Plans and the approved Recruitment Procedures.
(3) Performance management		(3.1) Appropriate guidelines for Performance Contract management for Civil Servants in Grade 11 and above in all Ministries prepared by HRMO & approved by CSSC.	(3.2) All Pilot Ministries have completed one annual cycle of the Performance Appraisal Process for Civil Servants in Grades 7 to 10.	(3.3) At least 80% of annual Performance Appraisal Reports for CY 2014 for Civil Servants in Grade 7 to 10 in Pilot Ministries of appropriate quality. (3.4) At least 80% of annual Performance Reports for CY 2014 for Civil Servants Grade 11 and above on Performance Contracts in Pilot Ministries of appropriate quality. (3.5) All Ministries' performances against Performance Targets evaluated jointly by the Recipient and relevant non-state actors. (3.6) Publication of: (i) all Ministries' Performance Targets; and (ii) achievements against Performance Targets.

## **Annex 2: Sierra Leone Timeline of Leadership for Results Applied to the Pay and Performance Project**

- **Interviews and meetings conducted in April 2012** with Director of PSRU, DG of HRMO, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service, Chief of Staff - discussions with all three technical teams on implementation challenges informed design of L4R intervention;
- **Team training delivered in June 2012** to implementing partners and operational stakeholders (45 persons trained) on Rapid Results Approach in order to create awareness of value-added of L4R for the P&P project and to generate draft work-plans for Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) to assist in delivery of results on DLIs.
- **Stakeholder orientation workshop conducted in June 2012** at which the refined work plans were presented to leaders to gain their buy-in for continued support throughout their implementation while creating team ownership.
- **International coaches helped form RRI teams in June 2012** and proposed an effective mechanism to carry the momentum forward and monitor progress
- **National coach was recruited in October 2012** acting as a day-to-day and on-the-ground contact point for project management, team-building, monitoring and evaluation, problem-solving and communication flow
- **Mid-Term review was conducted in November 2012** and provided an opportunity to reflect on progress made and, where necessary, they re-directed any areas needing adjusted, added and removed team members where helpful
- **Final Review was conducted in March 2013** at which results achieved were discussed, experiences shared, lessons learned were harvested, discussion on how to move this forward in Year 2
- **Launch event for second cycle of RRIs was held in March 2013** developing strategies for how to ensure Year 2 DLIs are met and breakdown for work-planning, designing team composition and attributing roles to team members
- **Mid-Term Review of Second Cycle of RRIs** was held in June 2013 to track progress, determine any needs for refinement of planning, and agree actions required to overcome challenges encountered thus far to achieve goals on time
- **Interactive Session on Strategic Leadership was held in June 2013** inviting leadership in the P&P Project as well as other development actors in civil service reform to facilitate discussion, agreement, and further refining of *a strategy with commitment to action* amongst these key actors to continue successes and move forward to achieve Year 2 DLIs, by further strengthened collaboration across implementing agencies and also including MOFED.
- **Final Review of second cycle RRIs and launch of third cycle RRIs was held in October 2013**
- **Mid-term review of third cycle RRIs held in February 2014** to bring together RRI teams to review progress in order to update leadership on potentially realistic and unrealistic achievements, requests for support and suggestions to leadership going forward.
- **Facilitated leadership meeting held in February 2014** to support open discussion on progress to date, challenges that risk non-achievement of DLIs, course correction around goals and timelines and potential need for project restructuring.
- **Leadership and team building training provided in February 2014** to address how all staff, regardless of hierarchy of job titles and grades, can exercise leadership - in an effort to mobilize people that must work together to enhance work across agencies in improving the country's civil service.

### Annex 3: P&P Implementation Agencies' Organogram



#### **Annex 4: The Rapid Results Approach (RRA)<sup>38</sup>**

The **Rapid Results Approach (RRA)** was developed by the private sector in the U.S. for the private sector to support improved performance and shareholder value and has been proven to strengthen implementation capacity, accelerate the achievement of concrete results, and introduce a culture of results for those organizations that use it. It is a methodology of good management techniques drawing on theory and principles of change, which has been used by Schaffer Consulting<sup>39</sup> for the past 50 years to facilitate change within organizations. It unleashes creativity and capacity, accelerates learning from years to 100 days and introduces basic management disciplines that allow efforts to succeed. It has been adapted by the Rapid Results Institute<sup>40</sup> to the developing country context for application within government ministries and is customized to each specific country situation. It has proven to be highly instrumental in changing attitudes, behaviors, and processes and, most critically, it has allowed governments through the ‘demonstration effect’ of successful service delivery projects to enhance their credibility amongst citizens. Its success depends heavily upon the commitment and engagement of leaders to explore new ways of doing business – with a unique focus on the attainment of concrete results while developing capacity through ‘learning-by-doing’.

**Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs)** are “*small projects designed to quickly deliver mini-versions of the big project’s end results*”.<sup>41</sup> RRIs are the engine that drives the RRA. RRIs support project implementation through a series of highly choreographed 100-day initiatives that produce highly ambitious and tangible results that can be leveraged to contribute to larger-scale reform/change processes. They are structured, team-based projects that are focused on results. In the short-term they are designed to release group adrenalin by launching action on a real challenge with a very ambitious goal. They are designed and owned by the team, and ideally, once achieved, will produce very tangible results within 100 days. In the longer-term, efforts are sustained and built upon, leading to new ways of working, stimulated innovation, more collaborative team work, and behavior changes within the team and, ultimately, the organization. Each project is completed within a short - and fixed - period of time, usually around 100 days, and is facilitated by a coach trained in implementing RRIs. At the outset, the RRI team establishes in a specific and measurable manner a stretch result, then undertakes the planning and monitoring of the initiative, and each team member effectively implements the required elements tasked to him or her to achieve the RRI goal.

Each RRI team has between 6 to 10 people who feel a real sense of accountability to perform at a higher level. Team members are identified and selected as being those who have a vested interest in the success of the RRI, as well as those whose collaboration will be required to make it a success. This normally includes cross-department, or cross-ministerial team membership, as often accomplishments are not possible working only within the realm of one department/ministry but require cross-support in completing the chain of actors to alleviate any

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<sup>38</sup> See Schaffer and Ashkenas, 2005

<sup>39</sup> Further information available at: <http://www.schafferresults.com/>

<sup>40</sup> Further information at: <http://rapidresultsinstitute.info/>

<sup>41</sup> Matta and Askenas, 2003

potential systemic blockages. In addition, it is highly beneficial to have as team members the intended beneficiaries of the desired RRI goal as this informs the design and execution of the RRI.

The team has a *clear and compelling statement* of what will be achieved – involving a result with a real impact, not an activity or an enabler. They have a work plan with steps to achieve the goal, involving experimenting with new strategies, ideas, or processes, or new ways of doing the same things. In essence, an RRI team is a temporary governance structure that undertakes an experimental process which includes team leaders, team members, a team coach, a monitoring and tracking system, weekly progress status updates, mid-course reflection and evaluation, and sustainability plans.

**The main steps in implementing a Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) are:**

## **SHAPING PHASE**

### 1. Framing the Focus:

- Clarification of the overall policies and strategies in which the RRI will be situated;
- Affirmation that the RRI goal will generate a result which will contribute to the attainment of the desired outcomes of these policies and strategies;
- Assuring commitment and engagement of highest level of leadership;
- Identifying an appropriate local sponsor of the RRIs. This person can, for example, be the Minister of the relevant ministry under which the RRI will be launched. The sponsor is normally a person whose role is: (i) to identify the priority area of strategic importance to which RRIs may contribute; (ii) develop the initial strategy; (iii) to help people learn, develop skills, and exercise leadership all along the RRI cycle; (iv) to review the results of the RRI team at the final review session, and (v) begin to lay out plans for the next steps.
- Identifying a Strategic Leader for the RRI. This person can be, for example, a Deputy Minister of or a Director General within the relevant ministry in which the RRI(s) will be launched. The Strategic Leader is normally a person whose role is: (i) to identify the desired outcome (within the priority areas identified by the sponsor) to which the RRI will contribute; (ii) to be an initial point of contact for supporting the RRI team (including freeing up resources) and alleviating blockages to their success; (iii) to mobilize and influence actors concerned by the RRI throughout the RRI cycle; (iv) to review the results of the RRI team at the mid-point and final reviews; (v) to collaborate with the sponsor on how the RRI team may move ahead in the next cycle and facilitate a smoother work environment for them to succeed, based upon lessons learnt from the previous RRI cycle.

2. Orientation and Prioritization Workshop: A large group of stakeholders are brought together to agree upon initial priority areas for action in which RRIs may be useful to jumpstart implementation and accelerate achievement of results. The areas identified by these stakeholders are ideally those around which there is a readiness and urgency to act and improve upon the current situation (what keeps them awake at night?).

3. Training of Rapid Results Coaches: A workshop to train local rapid results coaches. The local coaches support rapid results teams on the process of applying the principles of Rapid Results.
4. Orientation work sessions: These sessions are designed to help Rapid Results team leaders and strategic leaders to think strategically on how RRIs can contribute to the achievement of the overarching policies and strategies, and to decide upon priority areas for which RRIs can show initial concrete results. This is a necessary prior step to the launch workshop in terms of providing guidance to RRI teams during the launch workshop when they will design their RRI goal and work-plan. It helps ensure alignment between overarching strategies and desired outcomes, and the goal of the RRI team as a smaller part contributing to their achievement.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**

5. Workshop to Launch Rapid Results Initiatives: The Rapid Results team leader and members identify their 100-day RRI goals and develop their work plans to accomplish these goals. The launch is the event, which marks the effective start date of the RRI. The RRI goal fixed by the team and aligned with priorities defined by leaders must be challenging but achievable, clearly specified, measurable, meaningful value for the beneficiaries. Most of all the team must be excited and proud, be prepared to work very hard and solve problems rather than succumbing to them. The work plan outlines the respective responsibilities of each team member.
6. Progress Management and Monitoring: The team must ensure that it executes its work plan, and so it implements monitoring mechanisms which allow it to adjust its actions, if necessary, either in terms of operations between the team members, or in terms of more complex matters such as milestones towards the RRI goal, or revision of the RRI goal itself. Tools such as tracking charts, individual follow-ups by the coach and team meetings are introduced and utilized to assist in monitoring progress.
7. Reviews: Mid-Term and Final: The reviews constitute major events at which the progress of the RRI team towards achievement of their RRI goals are reviewed by the Strategic Leader and sponsor. These events are also, and almost more importantly, an opportunity to review the changes and improvements in work methods, communications and team behaviors that may have been fostered through operating under a new culture of focusing upon results and which have been adopted during the RRI process. This is significant in terms of changes within individual team members, within RRI teams, and over time can have implications for positive changes at the institutional level.

### **SCALING-UP – INSTITUTIONALIZATION PHASE**

If the government judges the initial set of pilot initiatives as valuable, the process can be scaled up within a sector, across sectors, or sub-nationally, whichever is relevant. If scaling up is to succeed, top-level engagement is a necessary condition. In some countries this takes the form of a formal endorsement of the approach from the head of state as a demonstration of his commitment to achieving results on national priorities. In other countries it takes the form of a



decree from the council of ministers, or even the setting up of a special cross-ministerial unit, sometimes in the presidency.

In most cases the appointment of a steering group at the ministerial, head of organization level (sometimes represented by proxies) is an important step for sustained operational effectiveness. Their role is to endorse initiatives, monitor implementation status across multiple initiatives, address critical obstacles and share innovative solutions. Most importantly, they are expected to appraise the head of state of key breakthroughs and important institutional changes taking place. To expand interest, they can sponsor workshops to share lessons across ministries, which in many contexts have proven to be considerably valuable.

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