

CASE STUDY 12

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING LOCAL LEADERS IN THE ASIA REGION

Authors: Lucia Nass and Tshering Choden, with contributions from Sothea Wat / VNBK Cambodia , Norbu Wangchuk / IMS Bhutan, and Nguyen Bich Tam / CECM Vietnam

Country: Asia region / Lao PDR, Bhutan, Cambodia and Vietnam

Sector: Tourism and others, GfE mainstreaming: leadership development

CHALLENGE

There is still much poverty in the Asia region, and there is too little being done about it locally. Our work on leadership development in the Asia region departs from the premise that many people want to see change happen but do not see themselves as being in a position to lead it. Under the slogan: everyone can be a leader, SNV's leadership development programmes⁸ have affected the lives and work of many. Women are now leading change in their rural communities, civil servants lead change in their government departments, and employees drive change in their enterprises. Through their actions, organisations achieve more for their societies and for poverty reduction.

Up until a decade ago, most leadership development programmes were supplier-driven, prescribed, stand-alone, theoretical courses that focused on strengthening individual skills and competencies. It is now widely accepted, however, that short-term training alone cannot bring deep and lasting change, especially when the enabling environment is unsupportive to that change.

Today, leadership development programmes are increasingly targeted at individuals with the desire and motivation to make a difference. Although most programmes target individuals (as opposed to individuals in a well-defined system), they are highly experiential and focus on the individual in relation to the group, to the team, to the organisation and to the society in which they live and work. The Leadership Learning Programme (LLP) developed by SNV in the Lao PDR in 2006 is a typical example of a programme that works through these four levels, where leadership can be exercised. The programme runs over a four to six month period and convenes about twenty participants, for instance civil servants from provincial authorities and representatives of business associations in the tourism sector. The group comes together four times for a period of three to five days each. The modules used during each of these four sessions include self-assessments, individual reflection, artistic expression, case-study analysis, simulation and observation exercises. Learning assignments to support the application and testing of new insights in the work place, and coaching services in-between and after the group meetings form an essential and integral part of the programme.

How do we multiply the capacity to run such successful leadership development programmes for client organisations at the sub-national level?

CLIENTS

There are many clients and partners involved in the leadership development programmes, as facilitators and as participants. The experience of participants has been highlighted elsewhere⁹. This time, we will focus on the facilitators: **local capacity builders** in the Lao PDR, Bhutan, Cambodia and Vietnam. These are independent organisations interested in strengthening leadership development as part of their Capacity Development repertoire.

⁸ Leadership development is not to be confused with the development of management capacities. Leadership is the desire to make a difference, and thus it applies to any person, be they in a formal position of power or not.

⁹ 1) SNV Case study 2009. 2) Leadership Development in Asia: Where to go from here? By Lucia Nass, for Capacity IS Development, Global Event, 2009. www.capacityisdevelopment.org

In 2006, **SNV Lao PDR** documented the 'Leadership Learning Programme' in four modules. It also designed a facilitator training week, and proposes joint-facilitation of at least one full LLP programme by one experienced and one new facilitator to learn the programme hands-on.

A year later, the UNDP/SNV partnership facilitated the initiation of a Leadership Forum by the National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (NAPPA), the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority (PACSA), and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI). Following the success of the first event supported by the World Bank, held in 2007 with a focus on raising awareness of high ranking government officials on the importance of leadership development, SNV kept networking towards the organisation of a second leadership forum event. It happened in 2010, organised by the original initiators, to discuss how to make leadership development *inclusive* (i.e. serving clients outside the public sector), of good *quality* and *sustainable* in the long run.

The example from **SNV Bhutan** illustrates one approach taken to scaling and adapting the LLP outside the Lao PDR. A Leadership training of Trainers (ToT) was facilitated by SNV Lao PDR partner Enterprise & Development Consultants Co. (EDC) in June 2009, with the following objectives:

- To brief participating trainers on selected topics of the four LLP modules developed by SNV Lao PDR, and to expose them to a variety of relevant facilitation methods.
- To exchange ideas and experiences on leadership and leadership 'training' in the Bhutanese and Lao contexts.
- To identify potential 'Local Capacity Builders' and partners with whom SNV Bhutan could work in the area of leadership in the future.

One of the expected results of the ToT was that the participants are able to build upon the LLP and adapt the topics, materials and facilitation methods to the Bhutanese context, and to the objectives and target audience of particular programmes/training they will be involved in.

Participants included national private consultants, lecturers and teachers from organisations that already had basic knowledge and experience with developing leadership skills. Some participants were from organisations with the potential to develop capacity building programmes and partner with SNV in this area in the future.

The approach taken to **scaling in Vietnam** was slightly different. SNV focused on running the LLP once with the Centre for Community Empowerment (CECEM), to ensure that it would work in the Vietnamese context where leadership development could be observed with suspicion. The programme was offered to a group of tourism stakeholders in Northern Vietnam. The idea was to create momentum in the group to lead on tourism development in the eight Northern provinces. This failed in part because due to SNV staff turn-over there was not enough follow-on in between the four modules. Nevertheless, the Vietnam programme was very successful at the level of individuals and their organisations. We have also learned valuable lessons about what works and what doesn't in the Vietnamese context. For instance, participants initially had trouble understanding leadership as a quality and rather understood it as a position. When asked to illustrate an experience with leadership, they would draw a picture of a hero. This signals a lack of proactive behaviour to making change happen in society.

In Cambodia, SNV works closely with VNBK on leadership development in the agricultural sector. In approaching this work VNBK was able to draw on the leadership modules that had been developed by SNV Laos, and used in SNV's work in the tourism sector in Cambodia¹⁰. VNBK noted similarities between the approach and materials developed by SNV and their own leadership programme for community development facilitators known as CHART (Creative, Holistic, Action-Reflection for Relationships Transformation).

An initial needs assessment of SNV/VNBK client Cambodian Provincial Farmers' Association (CFAP) uncovered two important findings, namely 1) CFAP lacked a coherent sense of purpose with regards to its work with farmers – what would it look like if there was a strong and active farmers' network? And What role can we

¹⁰ See 2009: Bto Report LLP Cambodia – Second Phase

OUTCOME

play in making that happen?; 2) CFAP also lacked basic organising and facilitation skills. This led to the design of a two-module intervention: a 3-day module ('Leading Yourself') focusing on promoting credibility through trustworthiness, self-awareness, empathy and vision. The second 2-day "Leading your Team" module two focused on relationship and team building. Each module was designed to be community-friendly and relevant to farmers groups and other community leaders.

After six months, 10 out of 20 participating consultants/organisations reported back to SNV Bhutan that they had been able to build on the LLP materials and localise these to their own institutional needs and requirements. Among those who actively build on the LLP modules, we can illustrate three different approaches:

- 1. Embracing important aspects of the LLP programme to capacity development interventions:** Mr. Phuntsho Namgay, Bhutan Management Development Consultancy, did not facilitate the leadership development programmes as such after the ToT, but used LLP materials to develop a training manual for planning and prioritization by Gewog Administrative officers in eastern districts of Bhutan. In collaboration with the Department of Local Governance (DLG), he is now using LLP materials to design leadership training for local elected leaders after the local elections. The training responds to needs expressed in the Capacity Development Strategy for Local Governments.
- 2. Adapting the LLP programme for a specific target group.** Ms. Tshering Dolkar - freelance consultant - developed 2 basic leadership skills training manuals for farmers' groups in Bhutan. She has successfully adapted the SNV materials to the Bhutanese context. The DAMC (Department of Agriculture Marketing and Co-operatives) under the MoAF has now also included Leadership training as part of a nation wide capacity building master plan framework for all the farmers' groups and cooperatives (target: mainly elected representatives) in the country.
- 3. Regularly offering the leadership programmes:** Mr. Norbu Wangchuk from IMS (Institute for Management Studies) developed a close working relationship with EDC as a regional partner, not only for leadership but for a wide range of capacity building programmes. IMS first successfully offered a leadership programme to all school principals of Thimphu, Bhutan's capital city. The next significant leap was to offer the programme to superintendent police from all over the country. A total of 20 top police officials from all districts of the country were trained. The programme aimed at developing new leadership for top police personnel as the police reformed itself to provide citizen friendly services. The chief of police has acknowledged the success of the programme. Today, IMS is recognised as a reliable centre for leadership capacity development and delivers successful leadership programmes for various clients from the government, corporations, private sector and NGOs. IMS is currently delivering leadership programmes for women who want to stand for local elections.

Moreover, SNV Bhutan is now working in partnership with three of the ToT participants, namely the Rural Development Training Centre (RDTC), the College of Natural Resources (CNR) and IMS to diversify leadership training for the grassroots communities through farmer's groups and co-operatives. The partners developed a generic manual for training in leadership consisting of six units which are targeted at developing leadership capacity of the leaders in farmers' groups and co-operatives. The manual design takes characteristics of the target audience, e.g. literacy level into account, is fully bhutanised, and has been translated into the national language. It is currently being piloted in seven districts of the country and will soon be used by different capacity builders in the country as part of the roll out of the capacity building masters plan for farmers' groups and co-operatives.

In Vietnam, CECEM is keen to participate in the development of a new paradigm of leadership and believes young people are the most suitable target group. The organisation is working with VTV6, the youth TV channel in Vietnam, and with the

Youth Union to scale-up leadership development in secondary schools and universities across the country.

At the Lao leadership forum 2010, EDC presented their innovative “Leadership Digital Academy”, a website in the national language. Providers have connected leadership development with Buddhist teachings, and with numerous legal references concerning human resource development. The website serves as a space where users can access a network of leadership development practitioners. Users and providers find space to share and discuss leadership issues. The site aims to steer leadership development and increase public access to resources concerning leadership.

The Lao Leadership Forum noted that the Lao institutes providing leadership development services, such as PACSA, NAPPA, as well as over 25 private and not-for-profit capacity development service providers, increasingly co-operate and support others on this subject in neighbouring countries.

The collaboration among EDC in Laos and IMS in Bhutan emerged out of the ToT workshop organized by SNV. It may serve as an example of increased collaboration across borders. IMS invited EDC twice to support delivery and development of IMS programmes, and is now looking forward to honouring the invitation from EDC to be a partner trainer in one of EDC’s regional programmes.

The collaboration journey between EDC and IMS is growing, and just over a year since the first meeting, it is already at the stage where it broadens to leveraging each other’s expertise and experiences. Progressing towards synergistic relationship, IMS and EDC could engage jointly in research, consultancies and training programmes both in Laos and in Bhutan. Through this positive, self-financed, institutional relationship, IMS and EDC can combine their resources, expertise and experiences to benefit both countries.

IMPACT

An organisational baseline survey, assessing the situation before the programme, is an integrated part of SNV’s leadership learning programmes in Asia. Assessments after two years clearly show the impact of the programme on the performance of provincial authorities in Laos. At the level of individuals, increases in knowledge and skill sets lead to better personal performance and motivation. At the organisational level, increased outputs and quality of services were measured (e.g. significantly reduced time in processing of permits). At the institutional level, increased openness and improved inter-agency relations have been observed. Less tangible effects such as improved motivation, better team relations, more effective communication, enhanced participation of staff, improved morale, and fewer employee transfers are common. Case studies reveal that improved leadership results in improved service delivery and significantly higher contributions to development.

In Vietnam, the case from Mr Hieu, an employee from a tourism company in Northern Vietnam, illustrates the type of changes that can occur already during the 6-9 months of the programme. Mr Hieu explained at the end of the program: “What helped me most is to give up old habits and adjust to new situations. I applied this to myself, and my company’s income has already increased by 20% because I tapped into a new market for Northern Vietnam tourism. I have been promoted, because everybody can see the difference in me.”

Similarly, in the end-of-module evaluation of the Cambodia programme, participants indicated that the content of the training has been relevant to their current work situation. Most were excited about turning the learning outputs into daily behaviour. They also commented on how the workshop process has helped them to explore and learn about themselves, their team as well as their partners; and helped them to think and reflect on their actions. Additionally, one of the shifts observed by VNBK in the last module was that women present spoke more. One women leader in the community was much braver to speak up and occasionally volunteered to present the ideas from the small group work to the plenary. Many of participants committed to adapt the participatory approaches learned from the two training modules to use in their work with communities (vegetable groups/CFA leaders).

It must be noted that there is not much codified evidence of LLP impact on poverty reduction available, also not outside SNV, in part because leadership development is often seen as an enabler of other capacity investments. Therefore,

LESSONS LEARNED

UNDP argues that “the question of attribution and ‘plausible association’ will be difficult to answer and its impact difficult to assess”. A longer time element is necessary to monitor change at the poverty reduction level in a reliable manner. In order to convince governments and development partners to invest in leadership capacity development, evidences showing return on investment is critically important. Thus in the coming years, SNV hopes to contribute to further building this impact evidence base.

The most important lessons learned are about **scaling a successful programme through local capacity builders.**

1. From the start of LLP development in Lao PDR in 2006, SNV has worked in partnership with LCBs to increase outreach of the programme. These LCBs continue to offer the programme to their clients, and help spread the practice within and outside their country.
2. Scaling has not required many inputs from SNV. The three cases from Bhutan illustrate that the one week leadership ToT organised by SNV Bhutan and EDC Laos for capacity development service providers, combined with action plan follow-up activities from SNV governance advisors in Bhutan, certainly helped to build up LLP delivery capacity in Bhutan both in the public and private sector.
3. Ongoing networking is also key to keeping the issue high on the agenda of partners and clients. It doesn't hurt to be aligned with organisations like UNDP and the World Bank Institute, which take great interest in leadership development and support it with funding and research.
4. Selection of LCBs is critical. In 2008 in Cambodia, EDC from Lao PDR also supported introduction of the LLP. The ToT week didn't work well, because the selected participants from the Ministry of Tourism had very little training background. The collaboration with renowned institutes like VNBK in Cambodia, CECEM in Vietnam, and upcoming institutes like IMS in Bhutan prove more successful to sustain leadership development services in the long-term.
5. LCBs take inspiration from their colleagues in other countries, especially from those that manage sustainable capacity development organisations. This suggests that SNV should invest more in establishing contacts among LCBs so that these can develop peer to peer learning and collaboration arrangements.
6. LCBs have their own resources, and they invest these in the development of their own programmes and their own capacities.

TESTIMONIALS

“I would like to confirm to you [SNV] that the training had made me a better trainer. I feel more confident today as a trainer than I had been before the LLP workshop.”¹¹ Mr. Norbu Wangchuk, Institute for Management Studies.

“Last year, SNV Bhutan invited us to train local providers of leadership development programmes, and we have since been hired back three times already without any SNV or donor involvement.” Ms Thiphaphone Phetmany, Director Enterprise Development Consultant Ltd Lao PDR.

“I want to take the leadership development programme to a young target group. It is shocking how little young people in Vietnam know about inequality in our country. This programme will help them see it and do something about it. I'll propose to use CECEM's own money to invest in running this programme for youth.” Ms. Bich Tam Nguyen, Centre for Community Empowerment.

When SNV Executive Director Dirk Elsen visited Cambodia, VBNK met with him briefly to talk through some of the leadership and skills building work they are doing with SNV. Dirk asked – among others – how the relationship between VBNK and SNV might evolve. Director Graeme Storer suggested: “that we could co-operate on learning events/consolidating regional best practice and bring these to learning events like the UNDP/SNV event in Bangkok last year. A second was a grander possibility of a regional emergent leadership programme (starting, perhaps, with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar) that would target younger, middle-level leader/managers that will be running their organisations in 10 years.”

¹¹ UNDP, December 2007, *Fostering capacities for leadership*, practice note (first draft)