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The Rapid Results Approach

A Tool for Leadership Development and Institutional Change

The following article is based on the summary from the volume *Leadership for Development Results*. This volume is a compilation of country case studies from the "Leadership and Change Forum," Marseille, France, October 2007. The complete case studies as well as more information on the Forum can be found at the World Bank Institute (WBI) Leadership Development Services website: www.worldbank.org/capacity/leadership.

Good leadership is vital in the fight to reduce poverty and improve lives. And the challenge of leading for results is acutely felt in fragile and conflict-affected states, where the populations' needs are urgent ? but where government capacity to deliver critical programs is often eroded, and institutions are weak or dysfunctional.

Ultimately, it is leadership that accounts for the stability of the state and good governance. Political leaders play the central role in institutional and state formation. And they are the principal forces that drive the institutional change process ? a process that must engage diverse stakeholders with competing and often conflicting interests.

The Rapid Results Approach

The World Bank is using the rapid results approach to link leadership to managing for results through practical capacity support to clients. The Bank helps leaders engage operational teams in government to achieve tangible results in 100 days. In the process the RRA reveals institutional bottlenecks; and diagnosing and removing these can help make a government more effective.

The RRA has been applied in about 23 Bank operations in 21 countries since 2002, primarily in Africa, and also in South Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa and to a lesser extent in Eastern and Central Europe, with some notable successes.



Findings

The RRA has been used by the Bank and its clients to

- Improve capacity for diagnosing institutional constraints
- Improve capacity for project/program planning and implementation
- Increase the results focus of a project/program
- Strengthen a sense of accountability
- Enhance engagement between leadership and other stakeholders across multiple sectors
- Jump-start implementation of difficult or problem projects

How RRA pilots have been combined with high-level consultations to link leadership to results.

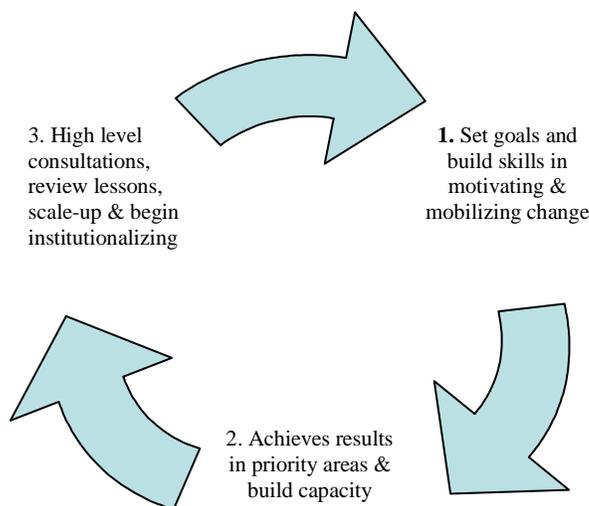
The World Bank Institute's (WBI) high-level consultations have provided a venue for convening multi-sector leadership teams and political leaders to discuss the constraints to achieving their goals, and to consider strategies for overcoming them. In Burundi, CAR, Madagascar and Morocco, RRA pilots were combined with high-level consultations to deepen the understanding of senior government officials and political leaders on the benefits and challenges of achieving pilot goals, and to learn from the experiences of their peers in other countries.

The WBI team works to engage political leadership by sharing lessons from other countries, often with support from peers. The WBI team

and local partners tailor a high-level consultation that addresses the client's specific needs and uses RRA to introduce a stronger results orientation. The more abstract dimensions of the leadership learning program are linked to observable results, thus contributing to operationalizing change.

The use of high-level consultations, paired with the RRA, illustrates how this can work. The process is diagrammed and described below.

From leadership to results: The virtuous learning cycle using high-level consultations and RRA pilots



By combining high-level consultations with rapid results pilots, participants were able to go from the abstract concepts of leadership to a concrete understanding of strategy and implementation, linking knowledge directly to the experience of achieving results. The rapid results

pilots delivered valuable lessons and, tangible results, while the high-level consultations built the commitment and receptivity of the new government.

The RRA, combined with high-level consultations, can produce the following learning outcomes:

- Enhanced skills in setting priorities, diagnosing and solving problems
- Facilitated consensus and teamwork between political

and operational leaders, civil society and government, and national and local leaders

- Development of strategy and plans with a results focus
- Increased transparency and accountability
- Delivery of tangible results from the implementation of policies and strategies

Context and Demand

Where country-readiness and pressure to produce tangible results is high, the RRA, with its tools, strategies, and accompanying teamwork, can open the door for engagement across a range of difficult development situations.

In Kenya and Madagascar, new elections created high expectations among citizens. Newly elected leadership teams responded to the political imperative for change by breaking away from business as usual to launch early reforms. Each government sought to institute new national strategic plans that would improve the quality of life for citizens, produce more inclusive growth and opportunities, and build ownership for these plans.

New leadership teams must inspire and engage administrative leaders, persuading them to carry out new agendas and adopt new roles, including new ways of doing business and new attitudes and/or changes in behaviors.

This was the case in CAR, where civil servants had stopped reporting for work. An important aspect of RRA here was building ownership and commitment and mobilizing support for implementation from the senior leadership and mid-level managers to the local level and beyond to ordinary citizens.

In Madagascar, the Bank's leadership development

interventions helped the new president build ownership for the country's five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), first among his cabinet and then across the country for the Madagascar Action Plan.

In Morocco, Sudan and Sierra Leone, leadership workshops/seminars and the RRA pilots were instrumental in helping to build the local government's capacity to jump-start implementation in support of decentralization.

Sudan, CAR, Sierra Leone, and Burundi share the challenges and constraints of countries in post-conflict transition. Sierra Leone and Sudan turned to decentralization as a means of bringing the government and service delivery closer to the people, with a bottom-up approach. By contrast CAR and Burundi used top-down approaches, relying on the strong personal commitment of high-level government officials and their willingness to act as champions to break down barriers to change.

The RRA appears to be well suited for dealing with the conditions of fragile and conflict-affected states, where there is an acute need for implementation capacity, along with human resource constraints. These and other challenges call for learning on the job.

RRA has been valuable in helping achieve project results across a range of difficult development circum-

stances. When WBI first recommended the use of RRA in Burundi, it met with some skepticism. In response, WBI brought in RRA coaches from CAR to share their experiences, describing both the successes and challenges of managing ambitious change initiatives in the security and customs sectors. The government of Burundi then agreed to initiate two pilots using RRA in the Ministries of Education and Public Health.

RRA has subsequently been used in pilots across eleven ministries. RRA coaches from CAR, Madagascar, Kenya, and Yemen have traveled to other countries in the region to share their experiences and, in a few cases, to help implement RRA pilots.

The Changing Role of Leaders

RRA helps government leaders conceptualize and communicate what they plan to do and how they will do it. RRA also helps mobilize change throughout an organization, as evidenced in the case of Kenya, where RRA has helped mainstream a government-wide policy of results-based management. In Kenya, political leadership at the highest level emerged as the main driver in the implementation of reforms.

New business practices and processes that also empower leadership include the delegation of responsibility and

accountability, more systematic frameworks for collaboration and for sharing information, enhanced monitoring of implementation and feedback, process decentralization, and participation.

As an experience-based learning tool, RRA requires leadership teams to be flexible, adaptive, and opportunistic as they work to achieve objectives amid unanticipated constraints and changing conditions. The methodology relies on learning-by-doing, and an experimental approach, where lessons are drawn from both successful and unsuccessful results in the short term, and applied more broadly.

In this way the RRA provides tools for mitigating risk, which allows leadership teams to take limited risks without investing beyond the pilot. Should the gamble pay off, then the government may opt to scale up the results. A successful pilot also produces a demonstration effect, which may enable a new leader to deliver on a few campaign promises quickly.

Impact and Institutionalization

In institutionalizing the impact of the RRA, the results achieved are more a means to an end than an end itself. Vertical scalability of the RRA works best in sectors where there are tangible products, services and benefits, as in the case of Burundi's education sector,

where - for the first time ? textbooks reached schools on the first day of class. This was piloted in one area and eventually scaled up throughout the country.

There are drawbacks to applying RRA that must be considered in working to institutionalize its benefits. First, leadership teams can become unstable from the high turnover of trained government personnel (serving as RRA coaches). It may be difficult to find enough personnel to keep teams on track with the additional workload required of the RRA. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems may be inadequate because of poor metrics, and project M&E systems have at times failed to link with national M&E systems, creating parallel or stand-alone systems in support of RRA pilots.

There is also the risk of poor donor coordination, and, at the other extreme, the use of sector-wide approaches may make it more difficult to apply RRA.

Conclusion

For public sector reform, good leadership means the ability to drive change toward achieving the right results. The Marseille Forum cases document how RRA has been used to strengthen the capacity of government leadership to make change happen in countries in transition, including those in post-conflict situations, in newly

elected governments, and in governments undertaking large-scale reforms.

As a methodology for leadership development, RRA has helped leadership teams set goals and priorities, mobilize consensus, engage and inspire their governments to implement change and deliver on promised results.

With the help of RRA, political leaders have learned how to make institutional change happen. The case studies illustrate that when capacity support to government leaders incorporates the practical, hands-on experience of achieving tough goals, this can lead to changes in performance, as well as the development of new leadership skills, greater capacity, and learning for leaders at all levels.

By linking leadership with managing for results, the approach has been instrumental in prompting change, both in scaling up broader governmental reform initiatives and in targeted small-scale interventions.

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