'Making Ownership Real'

An analysis of 'ownership' in technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands.

BY

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Abstract

Recipient country ownership has been seen by many aid experts, to be an important way to improve the effectiveness of aid delivery. Technical assistance projects consume 25% of worldwide ODA,[1] and have been criticised by many aid experts for being ineffective.

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) has received a large amount of technical assistance over the last ten years and therefore makes it a useful government to use as a case study to answer the main question of this thesis: Is the transfer of ownership in technical assistance projects shifting from the donor to the SIG?

The research has found that the SIG has more ownership of their technical assistance projects at the management level than at the operational level. The main constraints to SIG having more ownership at the management level were in the areas of technical advisor (TA) recruitment and performance management processes, and some areas of aid funding.

At the operational level of technical assistance projects, the amount of SIG ownership was significantly less. Many of the restraints in the transfer of ownership to the SIG counterparts were at the individual TA level, and were largely related to poor working relationships between individual TAs and counterparts caused by shortcomings in TAs' capacity building and people management skills and TAs' lack of knowledge of the SIG working style and environment.

More ownership needs to be transferred at the operational level for the SIG to have 'real' ownership of their technical assistance projects.

[1] OECD, *Perspective Note: Technical Co-operation for Capacity Development*, OECD, (2011), pg 4.

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Acronyms

CV	Curriculum Vitae
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
GNI	Gross National Income
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Government Organisations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NDS	National Development Strategy
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODA	Official Development Assistant
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Cooperation
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PS	Permanent Secretaries
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
TA/s	Technical Advisor/s
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Introduction

The most effective way to implement development aid has long been disputed. Since the beginning of modern aid in the 1940's, development aid organisations have taken different approaches to improve the effectiveness of aid delivery. Since the 1990s, there has been a renewed effort towards promoting recipient country 'ownership'[2] of aid projects.

Transferring ownership to the recipient country can help address aid effectiveness issues raised by aid experts. Allowing recipient countries to have more ownership over their development aid, and letting them choose the types of projects they need, helps ensure recipient country buy-in and commitment, which ultimately can improve the likelihood of success and the sustainability of a project. If recipient countries had more ownership of aid projects, it would help dispel concerns about donor driven aid projects that address the needs of the donors rather than the needs of the recipient country.

Allowing recipient countries to have more ownership in the implementation of their aid projects would also improve the effectiveness of aid programmes. If recipient governments could make their own decisions regarding procurement of aid goods and services, it could address issues around tying of aid and of employing aid professionals that have the wrong skill set or lack of local knowledge.

During the 1990s, in recognition of recipient country ownership, some donors began to implement budget support type funding models. These models directed aid funding into the recipient governments' finances, which gave the recipient countries more control and ownership of their aid funding. In 1999 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank initiated the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in recognition that poor countries need to have ownership of their development reform programmes.[3] Ownership is also a key principle in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness that was ratified in 2005 by over 100 developed and developing countries.[4]

[2] For an explanation of what 'ownership' means in terms of this thesis, refer to section 2.2.
[3] https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[4] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827300.pdf (last accessed 11th January 2015).

A 2011 World Bank report reiterates the importance of recipient country ownership by stating: 'Country ownership has become probably the most prevalent and widely held principle in development assistance in recent years, reflecting the growing recognition that donor-driven development assistance and technical solutions imported from other countries were often ineffective in bringing about sustained change.'[5]

With more and more donors appreciating the need to transfer ownership of aid projects to recipient countries, changes to projects have been put in place and a level of commitment has been made by donors to transfer ownership to recipient countries. So has ownership in aid projects shifted from the donor to the recipient country?

The main purpose of this thesis is to assess whether ownership has transferred from the donor to the recipient country in the field, rather than just in the headquarters of donor organisations. The research focuses on technical assistance projects that are carried out in the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) to assess whether ownership is transferring from donors to the SIG.

The research has focused on technical assistance projects as they make up such a large proportion of worldwide Official Development Assistance (ODA): technical assistance projects consume 25% of all ODA.[6] The research has also focused on technical assistance as aid experts have widely criticised technical assistance projects for being ineffective. With such a significant amount of aid money being spent on technical assistance, this is an important area to research.

The SIG has received a considerable amount of technical assistance, especially since the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) intervention into the Solomon Islands 'ethnic tensions' in 2003. As the SIG has had such a large number of technical assistance projects, it is a suitable government to use for this research.

This research concentrates on technical assistance projects where a technical advisor (TA) is contracted by a donor to work alongside a SIG public servant,

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[5] Nicola Smithers, *The Importance of Stakeholder Ownership for Capacity Development Results,* World Bank Institute, Washington, (2011), pg 8.
[6] OECD, *Perspective Note: Technical Co-operation for Capacity Development*, OECD, (2011), pg 4.

known as a counterpart, to help build the counterpart's capacity to be more effective and efficient in his or her government role, and to help build the capacity of the counterpart's government department.

The TA role is quite different from other training or capacity building roles we see in developed countries. Technical advisors can spend one to two years working alongside their counterpart on a daily basis. It is hard to image any developed country's government approaching capacity building of staff in the same way. The TA role, therefore creates its own set of unique challenges.

Chapter one reviews the history of modern aid and the different methods that donors have employed over time in their aid delivery. The chapter demonstrates how 'ownership' has moved in and out of favour with donors over the years, and how today donors view ownership as a key factor in improving the quality of aid delivery.

Chapter one also highlights some aid effectiveness issues that have been identified in aid development literature, and discusses how recipient country ownership of aid programmes can help address some of those issues.

Chapter two describes what technical assistance projects are and what technical advisors do. It explains how technical assistance projects are often about training staff and bringing in changes, and the importance of ownership in both workplace training and in change management.

Chapter two also discusses the importance of ownership at the operational level of technical assistance projects. For example, if recipient countries have ownership at the programme country level, but have little ownership at the operational level, then there will be little buy-in or commitment at the level where the capacity building or changes are being implemented.

The chapter highlights many criticisms relating to the effectiveness of technical assistance projects and discusses issues related to technical assistance projects, which it shows often relate to the same issues of aid effectiveness as identified in chapter one. Accordingly, the chapter shows that many issues in technical assistance projects can also be addressed by giving the recipient country more ownership of their technical assistance projects.

Chapter three gives a brief overview of the Solomon Islands. This chapter also summarises the Australian led RAMSI intervention, which included a large number of capacity building technical assistance projects. The chapter reviews existing RAMSI evaluation reports and looks at issues RAMSI had in their technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands.

Chapter four discusses the research that was undertaken in the Solomon Islands to assess whether ownership in technical assistance programmes is shifting from the donors to the SIG. The research had two different perspectives: the management perspective and the operational perspective. The research included semi-structured interviews with SIG managers, donor representatives, TAs and SIG counterparts.

The standard questions asked of interviewees were derived from ownership principles, technical assistance project issues identified in aid literature, and existing donor reports on technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands.

Often donor reports on technical assistance projects review their progress, highlighting what is working and what is not. This research considers a different aspect of technical assistance projects and focuses on whether ownership of the projects is shifting to the recipient country.

International donors and development organisations reviews on 'ownership' are often at the broader country level, such as reviews of the Paris Declaration, whose main ownership focus is on recipient countries developing their own National Development Strategies (NDS). There are fewer reviews of 'ownership' at the operational level, for example, where technical assistance is being carried out.

This research assesses not only how much ownership SIG managers and donors have in technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands, but it goes one level deeper and assesses how much ownership the SIG counterparts & TAs have.

The research found that SIG ownership of technical assistance projects was increasing at the management level. The main areas where more ownership could be transferred to the SIG were in the TA recruitment and TA performance management areas. More ownership could also be transferred in some areas of aid funding.

At the operational level of technical assistance projects, the amount of SIG ownership was significantly less than at the management level. Many of the restraints in the transfer of ownership to the SIG counterparts were at the individual TA level. Many TAs did not build strong relationships and encourage their SIG counterparts to take ownership of both their individual and organisational capacity building. This was largely due to the TAs lack of people management and capacity building skills, as well as inappropriate working styles. Solomon Island Government counterparts also had little involvement in the recruitment and performance management of the TAs they worked with.

More ownership needs to be transferred at the operational level for the SIG to have any 'real' ownership of their technical assistance projects.

Chapter One – Aid Effectiveness and Ownership

This chapter reviews the history of modern aid and the different methods that donors have employed over time in their aid delivery. The chapter reveals how recipient country ownership has once again become a high priority of donors in attempts to improve aid effectiveness. The chapter also looks at aid effectiveness issues and how recipient country ownership can help address them.

1.1 Concise History of Modern Aid Delivery

The modern era of international aid can be traced back to the 1940s and the end of World War II. In 1948 the United States (US) President Harry Truman along with his Secretary of State George Marshall implemented the Marshall Plan to assist with the reconstruction of war ravaged Europe.[7] The Marshall Plan was seen as a way to calm fears of global stagnation, to prevent developing countries falling to communism, to bring economic progress to poor countries and to access untapped markets of poor economies.[8] It was seen as a win-win scenario for all concerned.[9]

In 1949 Truman gave the first speech by a national leader expressing why governments needed to provide aid to develop poor countries.[10] He stated:

> *'More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people'.*[11]

In 1948 the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was established to run the Marshal Plan.[12] In 1961 the OEEC evolved into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[13] During the

[7] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 24.
[8] Damien Kingsbury, Joe Remenyi, John McKay & Janet Hunt, *Key Issues in Development*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, (2004), pg 27.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 24.
[11] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 15.
[12] http://www.oecd.org/about/history/ (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[13] Ibid.

1940s the World Bank and the IMF were established to help address economic and social issues.[14] The United Nations was created in 1945. It took over from the former League of Nations,[15] with the purpose of working towards world peace and development.[16] Some of the international non-government organisations (INGO) were also founded during the 1940s, such as OXFAM and CARE[17] with similar objectives. Other INGOs already established included the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) established in 1863[18] and Save the Children established in 1919.[19] By the end of the 1940's most of the major organisations that are involved in development aid today were established.

Between 1950 and 1990 development aid was heavily influenced by the Cold War. McKay writes 'During the Cold War, both the US and the Soviet Union saw aid and development programmes as a major weapon in the battle to gain support for their ideologies and systems'.[20] This influenced donors' choice of which countries they worked with. The end of the Cold War, some say, saw the end of 'political aid' and along with it there was a significant drop in world aid, commonly known as Official Development Assistance (ODA).[21] The reduced level of ODA was also linked to large fiscal deficits of donor countries and concerns about the environment into which aid funds were being directed.[22]

During the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, development took a 'do as we did' approach.[23] It was believed that developed countries had advanced because of sufficient capital, export earnings and skills, therefore that was what developing countries should be provided as aid: investible funds, balance of payments support and technical assistance.[24]

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[14] Damien Kingsbury, Joe Remenyi, John McKay & Janet Hunt, *Key Issues in Development*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, (2004), pg 47.
[15]http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006AC19C/(httpPages)/242056AEA671DEF780256EF30037A2A8?OpenDocument (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[16] http://www.un.org/pubs/cyberschoolbus/unintro/unintro.asp (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[17] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 15.
[18] http://www.icrc.org/eng/who-we-are/history/founding/index.jsp (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[19] http://www.scnorway.ru/eng/history/ (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[20] Damien Kingsbury, Joe Remenyi, John McKay & Janet Hunt, *Key Issues in Development*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, (2004), pg 49.
[21] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 38.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 24.
[24] Ibid.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s development aid discourse had a focus on recipient country ownership and many believed that budget support was the best form of aid.[25] The World Bank's 1969 Pearson Commission, which reviewed the previous 20 years of development assistance,[26] stated:

> *'The formation and execution of development policies must ultimately be the responsibility of the recipient alone, but the donors have a right to be heard and informed of major events and decisions.'* [27]

Poverty became more of a focus in the 1970s. Prior to this time there were no data even to estimate the number of people worldwide living in poverty.[28] In 1970 the General Assembly of the United Nations set the ODA target for countries at 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI).[29] Although this target remains in place today,[30] it has not been achieved by the majority of OECD countries.[31]

During the 1970s and 1980s development was linked with economic growth.[32] However economists were discovering that growth did not necessarily mean that the benefits of growth would 'trickle down' to the poor.[33] In 1972 the World Bank, in response to these findings, adopted a 'basic needs approach'.[34] This approach was to have more of a focus on individuals' well-being in terms of their food, health, education, shelter and clothing.[35]

With the economic recession of the late 1980s and with some countries defaulting on their debts, donors started to focus on the need to stabilise poor countries' economies.[36] The IMF started focusing on 'structural adjustment' programmes that required recipient countries to liberalise and deregulate their economies.[37] This era brought in more complexity with donors imposing more conditions to

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[25] Alf Morten Jerve, *Ownership and Partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems of aid?* Chr. Michelsen Institute, NORAD, (2002), pg 8.
[26] http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTARCHIVES/0,,contentMDK:20121526~pagePK:36726~piPK:36092~theSitePK:29506,00.html (last accessed 28th January 2015).
[27] Alf Morten Jerve, *Ownership and Partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems of aid?* Chr. Michelsen Institute, NORAD, (2002), pg 7.
[28] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 31.
[29] Ibid, pg 32.
[30] http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/press/07.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[31] http://www.oecd.org/newsroom/aid-to-developing-countries-rebounds-in-2013-to-reach-an-all-time-high.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014) (only 5 of the 28 OECD countries reached their ODA target in 2013).
[32] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 24.
[33] Ibid, pg 31.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

funding and the linking of policy advice to ODA.[38] The move to structural adjustment programmes clearly marked a move away from recipient country ownership.[39]

By the 1990s donors were moving towards the 'institutional' agenda of good governance and respect for human rights.[40] As Browne writes the focus had now moved to a 'do as we say' approach,[41] and with it a further step away from recipient country ownership.

During the 1990s some donors starting to re-focus on approaches that transferred more ownership to the recipient country. Some donors moved back to 'budget support' funding for both recurrent & capital expenditure by recipient governments.[42] Other donors started to use a sector-wide approach (SWAp) form of funding[43] which channelled funds to whole sectors such as health or education rather than small discrete projects.[44] SWAps were introduced with the aim of greater harmonisation and alignment in order to reduce the administrative burden on the partner countries and to allow partner countries more leadership in order to foster greater partner ownership and sustainability.[45]

In 1999 the IMF and World Bank initiated the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).[46] The PRSPs were introduced in recognition of the need for poor countries to have 'ownership' of their reform programmes.[47] PRSPs are prepared by the governments of low income countries. They assess the state of poverty in their country and describe the programs that the country will pursue to promote growth and reduce poverty in their country.[48] The PRSPs are used to help guide policies regarding debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.[49]

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[38] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 35.
[39] Alf Morten Jerve, *Ownership and Partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems of aid?* Chr. Michelsen Institute, NORAD, (2002), pg 10.
[40] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 24.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 47.
[43] Ibid, pg 196.
[44] Ibid, pg 47.
[45] http://www.aid.govt.nz/sites/default/files/SWAps%20-%20Sector%20Wide%20Approaches.pdf (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[46] https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

In 2000, leaders of 189 countries signed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).[50] The MDG were focused around reducing poverty, improving health and education, promoting gender equality, ensuring environmentally sustainability and developing global partnerships for development.[51]

According to the United Nations MDG 2012 report, although progress is being made towards most of the goals many donors and recipients are lagging behind their targets.[52] The report indicates that there are, however, positive signs that poverty targets will be met before 2015 target date.[53]

In 2005, in an attempt to improve aid effectiveness, over 100 developed and developing countries signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.[54] The Paris Declaration was based on five principles: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability.[55]

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness set targets to improve aid effectiveness by 2010.[56] Unfortunately only one of the 13 targets was met.[57] A 2011 evaluation report of the Paris Declaration concluded, however, that almost all of the principles and commitments remained relevant in improving the quality of aid, that there was far more transparency in aid then than 20-25 years ago, and that there was far less donor-driven aid.[58]

Following on from the Paris Declaration, and keeping aid effectiveness as a central goal, were the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (AAA),[59] the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in 2011[60] and the 2014 Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) meeting in Mexico.[61]

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[50] http://www.mdgfund.org/content/MDGs (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[51] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 42.
[52] United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals Report*, New York, (2012), pgs 4, 6, 16, 20, 26, 30, 38 & 46.
[53] Ibid, pg 4.
[54] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827300.pdf (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[55] Ibid.
[56] OECD, *Aid Effectiveness 2011: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration*, Better Aid, OECD Publishing, (2012), pg 15.
[57] Ibid. The only target met was co-ordinated technical co-operation.
[58] B .Wood, J. Betts, F. Etta, J. Gayfer, D. Kabell, N. Ngwira, F. Sagasti, M. Samaranayake, *The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration*, Final Report, Copenhagen, (2011), pg xv.
[59] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[60] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[61] http://effectivecooperation.org/hlm2014/ (last accessed 9th October 2014).

Summary

Since the beginning of modern aid, the importance of 'recipient country ownership' has dipped in and out of favour with donors. During the late 1960s and early 1970s some donors were focused on recipient country ownership and had principles around respecting the needs and priorities of the recipient governments.[62]

The structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s saw a shift back to more donor control and less recipient country ownership. Since the 1990s the importance of recipient country ownership has once again become an important focus of donors. Donors' commitment to recipient country ownership is reflected in the promotion of PRSPs and in different budget support funding models. In 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness further acknowledged the need for recipient country ownership to ensure aid is more effective.

[62] Alf Morten Jerve, *Ownership and Partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems of aid?* Chr. Michelsen Institute, NORAD, (2002), pg 8.

1.2 Aid Effectiveness - Issues

Since Truman's speech in 1949, billions of dollars have been invested into trying to improve the lives of those in need but many of the concerns that Truman expressed remain valid. This highlights the ineffectiveness of much of the aid money already spent and the huge challenges faced in implementing aid projects, from the points of view of both donor and recipient countries.

To understand the effectiveness of aid at a deeper level, more complex questions need to be considered.[63] For example Riddell asks the questions – Does aid work if:

- *'There are immediate benefits but they are not sustained?*
- *Aid is only channelled to those able to use it well, excluding those who may need it but cannot use it well? For example should aid go to governments where corruption is high and there is less chance the aid will be used effectively, even though there is a great need for it?*
- *Aid contributes to the recipient country but it is not cost effective?*
- *Aid achieves the initial output goal but not the long term goal? For example aid is used to send people on a training course to help gain employment, all people complete the training, but only a few actually do gain employment afterwards.*
- *Capacities and governance is strengthened in governments but their economy doesn't grow and their poverty remains high?'* [64]

It is therefore not easy to assess the effectiveness of aid. It is also important to remember, that the answers a donor might give to these questions could be quite different from those of a recipient country. Often the reasons behind the need for receiving aid and the need for giving aid are different and hence the answers as to what is effective aid will also be different.

There are many explanations given in aid discourse concerning the reasons for aid ineffectiveness. A common criticism of aid is that it is often intended to advance non-developmental objectives of donors.[65] There are often other reasons why aid

[63] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 170.
[64] Ibid, pg 170-171.
[65] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 9.

is given, other than the direct need of the recipient country, such as the donor country's commercial, geopolitical, strategic/security or historical (especially colonial) interests.[66] Some examples of these counterproductive interests are Japan using aid to leverage small states to buy votes in support of allowing whaling, Australian aid promoting Australian technology for commercial advantage and the US using aid in favour of Israel and Egypt for foreign policy purposes.[67]

Tying of aid is something that has always been present in aid and is often condemned. Tying of aid may be in the form of agreements that commodities must be purchased from the donor country, that firms managing development contracts must be registered in the donor country or that only donor country expatriates may be placed as TAs.[68] This can lead to the donor country benefiting more than the recipient country. In terms of Australian aid this is often referred to as 'boomerang aid': aid from Australia given to another country with the majority of the aid money eventually ending back up in Australia.

Donors have been criticised for setting up parallel management structures in an attempt to avoid using the recipient countries' ineffective ones.[69] Having two management systems for the same organisation leads to further inefficiencies, confusion and issues around sustainability when the donor's program ends and its system becomes defunct. When donors use the recipient countries' systems it helps them understand the difficulty recipient countries have in achieving their own tasks as well as meeting the donor countries' reporting requirements.

As mentioned in section 1.1, the number of conditions attached to aid increased considerably in the 1980s. Placing conditions on aid has often been seen as ineffective.[70] Inconsistency of conditions imposed by many donors on one recipient government has made meeting all the conditions very challenging and often led to inefficiencies. The IMF and World Bank have not always agreed or had consistent conditions.[71] Booth writes that a core aim of the PRSPs was to

[66] Ibid.
[67] Damien Kingsbury, Joe Remenyi, John McKay & Janet Hunt, *Key Issues in Development*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, (2004), pg 72.
[68] Ibid, pg 75.
[69] David Booth, *Introduction and Overview (PRSP)*, Development Policy Review, 21 (2) (2003), pg 139.
[70] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 47.
[71] Ibid.

reduce the number of uncoordinated demands made on recipient governments, but there is little evidence that this has been achieved.[72]

Often conditions of aid grants or loans were connected to the recipient country changing its policies. As Browne writes, this type of conditionality can be perceived by recipient governments as undermining their sovereignty.[73] Browne goes on to say that policy change is often seen as desirable by donors for ideological reasons but not by recipient governments, who may have many other competing domestic pressures.[74] Browne states that policy change has to come from within and not be enforced by donors.[75]

The focus on improving economic growth in developing countries as a way to reduce poverty has also had its sceptics. As mentioned in section 1.1, the economic growth of a country does not always mean that those most in need will benefit from that growth. Browne writes 'research has shown that there has been a very uncertain correlation between aid and growth.'[76]

Good governance and democracy have also been heralded as the way forward for developing countries. However these ideals can also be questioned when we consider China as an example of a country with exceptional growth, where there has been demonstrably poor governance and no democracy.[77]

Donor countries have often been criticised for not reducing or dismantling their own trade and agriculture protectionism, which can impact severely on developing countries.[78] OECD countries have often been called hypocrites for requiring developing countries to privatise government assets and liberalise their economies while restrictive practices and tariffs of OECD countries cost developing countries billions of dollars a year.[79]

Aid professionals, although usually experts or competent in their own specific jobs, have been criticised for their lack of understanding of the wider world of aid and

[72] David Booth, *Introduction and Overview (PRSP),* Development Policy Review, 21 (2) (2003), pg 153.
[73] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 56.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, pg 26.
[77] Merilee S. Grindle, *Good Governance: The inflation of an idea*, HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Services, Harvard University, (2008), pg 10.
[78] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 11.
[79] Damien Kingsbury, Joe Remenyi, John McKay & Janet Hunt, *Key Issues in Development*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, (2004), pg 80.

not learning lessons from past aid interventions.[80] Further criticisms have been made of the selection, training and conduct of experts in terms of their knowledge of local structures and cultures.[81] Often aid professionals earning huge salaries relative to local wages live in isolated 'expat' environments and take little part in local social events.[82] For aid professionals to be effective they need to understand and adapt to the local context.

The issues identified above do not cover all aid effectiveness issues, but they do represent some of the key aid effectiveness concerns. Many of the issues identified may be addressed by the donor focusing more on the transfer of 'ownership' of aid programmes to recipient countries.

As mentioned in the introduction, if recipient countries had more say about what programmes operated in their country there could be less chance of donors pushing their own non-developmental objectives. Similarly if recipient countries could choose where they procure their aid-funded goods and services, it could address the issue of tying aid and may be more cost effective. The untying of aid may also mean that recipient countries may choose to contract more aid professionals from their own country or region. This may address the issue of aid professionals not fully understanding the local context.

With recipient countries having more ownership they could choose their own economic growth and trade policies and choose their own forms of government and good governance, rather than have policies dictated to them in conditions on aid.

If recipient countries had more ownership of aid processes and their own management structures were used by donors, it could address the issue of donors using parallel management structures. Conditions on aid could be managed in a more mutually acceptable way if recipient countries were given more ownership of their aid programmes. As Stiglitz writes 'If the country owns a reform program, why is conditionality needed?'[83]

[80] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg xvii.
[81] Anders Danielson Paul Hoebink & Benedict Mongula*, Are Donors Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 169.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Carlos Lopes & Thomas Theisohn, *Ownership, Leadership and Transformation,* UNDP Earthscan, (2003), pg 56. (Stiglitz, 1998).

This is not to say that 'ownership' is the silver bullet that will address all aid effectiveness issues. Along with more ownership, recipient countries would also have more responsibility. As Riddell states, development aid is provided and required by countries that usually have weak capacities and capabilities of governments, weak institutions, weak accountability and limited abilities to draw up home-grown plans and programmes and to implement them.[84] Therefore recipient countries may not be ready for full ownership of aid programmes and the transition of ownership may take time.

Another factor that impedes donors transferring ownership is corruption. As the 2011 OECD report on Aid Effectiveness states, 'corruption undermines efforts to promote development and reduce poverty. It can distort decision making, access to public services and markets.'[85]

[84] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 371.
[85] OECD, *Aid Effectiveness 2011: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration*, Better Aid, OECD Publishing, (2012), pg 79.

Summary

Riddell states that 'over the past 20 to 30 years, the evidence suggests that the aggregate impact of aid provided by individual donors has increased, although from a fairly low base.'[86] Aid effectiveness is not, however, improving as much as the global community would like.

Today donors and recipient countries are increasingly focused on working in partnership and transferring the ownership of aid programs from donors to recipient country organisations as key means to improve aid effectiveness.

Recipient country ownership is also important in technical assistance projects. The next chapter will review what is involved in a technical assistance project and what a TA role entails. The chapter examines different issues that arise in technical assistance projects and discusses how recipient country ownership can help address them. As technical assistance projects involve training and change, this chapter highlights the importance of ownership not only from the aid delivery perspective, but also from the workplace training and change management perspectives.

[86] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 257.

Chapter Two - Technical Assistance & Ownership

2.1 Technical Assistance – Introduction

Technical assistance projects are invariably about building the capacity of an organisation and its people. The OECD states that most donors view 'capacity development' (often used interchangeably with 'capacity building' and 'capacity strengthening')[87] as a primary objective of their systems of development co-operation.[88]

The OECD defines capacity development as

> '*The process by which individuals, groups and organisations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organise their systems, resources and knowledge; all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives.'* [89]

To put it more simply, Grindle and Hilderbrand use the definition for capacity building 'improvements in the ability of organisations, either singly or in cooperation with other organisations, to perform appropriate tasks.'[90]

There is a range of means available to improve the ability of organisations to perform tasks. Of these, technical assistance is the most common practice traditionally used by donors to promote capacity development.[91] 'Technical assistance' (often used interchangeably with 'technical cooperation')[92] may be in the form of:

1. **Study** assistance through scholarships and traineeships,
2. **Research** into the problems of developing countries, including diseases,
3. **Personnel** experts, including long and short term deployments of both expatriate and national personnel.[93]

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[87] Merilee S. Grindle, *Getting Good Government,* Harvard Institute for International Development, Boston, (1997) pg 6.
[88] OECD, *Inventory of Donor Approaches to Capacity Development: What we are Learning*, OECD, (2009), pg 4.
[89] http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=7230 (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[90] Merilee S. Grindle and Mary E. Hilderbrand, *Building sustainable capacity in the public sector: what can be done?* Public Administration and Development, Vol 15, (1995), pg 445.
[91] OECD, *Inventory of Donor Approaches to Capacity Development: What we are Learning*, OECD, (2009), pg 6.
[92] OECD, *Perspective Note: Technical Co-operation for Capacity Development*, OECD, (2011), pg 4.
[93] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 28.

'Technical assistance' can serve different purposes.[94] The European Commission divides the purpose of technical assistance into four areas:

1. **Capacity Development** – often comprehensive and complex,
2. **Policy/Expert Advice** – often short term, limited in scope and purely technical in nature,
3. **Implementation** – where there is limited capacity in the recipient country and it cannot manage the implementation of urgent service delivery programmes,
4. **Preparation or Facilitation of Cooperation** – where expertise is required in the formulation of a programme.[95]

The research in this thesis will focus on the operational side of technical assistance provided by personnel experts for capacity development. A personnel expert, or, as used in this thesis, technical advisor (TA), has a unique position. Many TAs will be contracted for one to two years to work side-by-side with a recipient country counterpart each day. As the TA and counterpart work so closely together a good working relationship is vital to the success of the project.

The main purpose of many TAs' assignments is to both build the capacity of their counterpart so that the counterpart can more effectively and efficiently carry out his or her duties and to build the capacity of the counterpart's organisation. The main focus is on training (capacity building) the counterpart, which may include the TA working with the counterpart on improving processes, procedures, policy etc, this often means implementing change within the organisation.

As the TA and the counterpart are working together on a daily basis, they are also working together on carrying out the normal duties of that role. The TAs role is different from a consultant's role. A consultant may be contracted to carry out a certain task; as the TA is not employed to carry out that task, but to build the capacity of the counterpart so the counterpart can carry out the task.

Often TAs step over this line, and get involved in completing the task. There are many reasons why this can happen, such as a deadline is going to be missed if

[94] European Commission, *Making Technical Cooperation More Effective,* European Communities, Luxemburg, (2009), pg III.
[95] European Commission, *Making Technical Cooperation More Effective,* European Communities, Luxemburg, (2009), pg III.

the TA does not step in and the local manager expects the TA to ensure the task is completed; or a lack of capacity building skills on the part of the TA; or achieving the task is a goal set in the TA's 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) and therefore failure to complete the task reflects on the TA's performance. The TA's ToR, therefore, need to be clear to be sure that all parties understand what the role of the TA is.

The TA/counterpart model for capacity building in developing countries is quite a different approach to capacity building from that used in developed countries. It is highly unlikely that a government in a developed country would contract a trainer (i.e. the TA) for one to two years, to work side by side with one of their staff members in order to build his or her capacity. The TA role is therefore unique and creates its own unique challenges, which cannot be approached the same way as if the TA was a trainer, consultant or change manager working in a developed country.

The large difference in capacity building approaches does raise the question of whether TA/counterpart arrangements are the best way to build capacity in developing countries. This thesis does not explore that question in any depth, but only identifies it as a separate issue.

Brief History of Technical Assistance

Technical assistance can be traced back as far as the 18th century when Peter the Great invited the best engineers, shipbuilders, architects and craftsman from Europe to assist in the modernisation of Russia.[96] In the mid-19th century Japan brought in over 3,000 foreign experts to assist the country to 'catch up with the West'.[97]

Of more modern times, Morgan breaks down technical assistance into three generations. Over the three generations we see donors' emphasis on recipient country ownership transition from negligible, to a major focus in donors' delivery of technical assistance projects:

> ***First Generation:*** *(1960's-80's) During this period technical assistance projects were mostly supply (donor) driven and therefore had little focus on*

[96] Stephen Browne, *Aid & Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder?* Earthscan, UK & USA, (2006), pg 3.
[97] Ibid.

recipient country ownership. Donors' technical assistance projects were focused on gap filling of individuals and the transfer of knowledge and techniques.

Second Generation: *(turn of the century forward) During this period donors started to focus on country commitment and ownership. Technical assistance became more centred on capacity development. In response to recipient country demands, donors' started to allow recipient countries more control, clarity and accountability of technical assistance projects.*

Third Generation *(emerging) Today, the trend for recipient country ownership intensifies with the Paris Declaration. Today donors' have a better understanding of complexities of development and see indigenous institutions, cultures and structures as key dynamics of change. Donors' are now making a deliberate effort to shift control and decision making to local systems and actors, building on their strengths not weaknesses.*[98]

Riddell talks about aid in the early years being focused on filling skills and knowledge gaps with the assumption that these skills were largely held by donor countries and they (simply) needed to be transferred to recipient countries.[99] Riddell goes on to say that technical assistance was either linked to other aid projects or free standing skills training initiatives, and that both types continue today.[100]

As mentioned in the introduction, according to the OECD around 25% of overall ODA is spent on technical assistance.[101] This represents in absolute terms around $25 billion USD a year.[102] In 2012 the New Zealand and Australian ratio of technical assistance to ODA was 18% and 38% respectively. For New Zealand this equates to $79m of $449m ODA and for Australia $2,048m of $5,403m ODA.[103] Therefore technical assistance is a significant part of ODA for all

[98] OECD, *Perspective Note: Technical Co-operation for Capacity Development*, OECD, (2011), pg 5. (Peter Morgan 2009).
[99] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 203.
[100] Ibid, pg 203 & 207.
[101] OECD, *Perspective Note: Technical Co-operation for Capacity Development*, OECD, (2011), pg 4.
[102] Ibid.
[103] http://www.oecd.org/development/stats/statisticsonresourceflowstodevelopingcountries.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014) (all dollars are in USD).

countries, including New Zealand and Australia.

Summary

Technical assistance projects are invariably about building the capacity of an organisation and its people and have always been a large part of aid development programmes.

There are many ways to build capacity, however this thesis focuses on technical assistance projects that have a donor supplied TA, who is contracted to build the capacity of the recipient country counterpart and the counterpart's organisation.

The provision of technical advisors, is a unique way to carry out capacity building. Their role therefore has its own unique challenges.

2.2 Technical Assistance & Ownership

As we have seen, many donor organisations have recognised the importance of transferring 'ownership' from the donor to the recipient country when working in development projects, including technical assistance projects. The OECD states 'that without ownership, aid cannot be effective in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable economic development.'[104] The OECD also states that ownership is essential because 'the forces for change will only arise out of the political and social system of the [recipient] country.'[105]

The findings of a report by Baser and Morgan state 'progress on capacity development depends critically on the level of ownership, commitment and motivation of country actors, i.e. their ability to commit and engage.'[106]

The World Bank & IMF strongly promote country ownership, stating of PRSPs that they 'should be prepared through a country-driven process, including broad participation, that promotes country ownership of the strategy and its implementation.'[107]

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[104] OECD, *Issues Paper for Roundtable 1: Whose ownership? Whose leadership?* Paris: OECD, (2008), pg 1.
[105] Nicola Smithers, *The Importance of Stakeholder Ownership for Capacity Development Results,* World Bank Institute, Washington, (2011), pg 8.
[106] Heather Baser and Peter Morgan, *Capacity, Change and Performance,* European Centre for Development Policy Management, Maastricht, (2008), pg 59.
[107]http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTPCENG/0,,contentMDK:20538767~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:410306,00.html (last accessed 07th January 2015).

The importance of transferring ownership to the recipient country is also reiterated in the Paris Declaration, the first of the Declaration's five principles being 'ownership.'[108] Under the ownership principle, the Declaration states the donors' commitment as: 'respect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it'.[109] The principle encourages recipient countries to develop their own NDS to address their own development needs.[110]

Transfer of ownership is often discussed in aid-related discourse at the country level or management level of aid projects, for example in the development of the NDS and PRSPs. This thesis also addresses the transfer of ownership at the operational level, at the level where aid projects are actually carried out.

If ownership is to be transferred fully from donor countries to recipient countries, the transfer of ownership needs to happen at all levels, from the management level down to the operational level. Much of the success of technical assistance projects will rely on what happens at the operational level, at the level where capacity building is carried out.

The 'Bonn Consensus', a joint workshop between the OECD and the German government in preparation for the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action,[111] reiterates the importance of ownership at the operational level in technical assistance projects in one of its six areas of action. It states:

> *To enable developing countries to exercise ownership of capacity development through technical co-operation, external partners agree to:*
>
> a) *the joint selection and management of technical co-operation to support local joint selection and management of technical co-operation to support local priorities,*
> b) *expand the choice of technical co-operation providers to ensure access to sources of local and south-south expertise*.[112]

[108] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[109] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[110] Ibid.
[111] http://www.capacity.org/capacity/opencms/en/topics/international-cooperation/the-bonn-workshop-consensus-priorities-and-action.html (last accessed 18th January 2015).
[112] OECD, *Issues Paper for Roundtable 1: Whose ownership? Whose leadership?* Paris: OECD, (2008), pg 5.

Stephen Browne, in his book, *Developing Capacity Through Technical Cooperation*, comments on the importance of transferring ownership at the operational level. Browne states that 'local stakeholders need to be part of the discussions on terms of references, the selection of suppliers, project management & staffing and monitoring & evaluation.'[113]

A report by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), stated that 'Ownership is about who decides what in the process of aid delivery, who initiates and identifies the needs, who prioritizes, who plans and designs, who makes procurement, who implements, who supervises, who evaluates.'[114]

NORAD states that 'ownership' in this sense refers to the same concerns as the term 'recipient responsibilities' which NORAD describes as:

> *'the recipient is to define needs, prioritise activities, make policy decisions, direct the planning of activities and their implementation, allocate resources, facilitate effective utilisation of external and internal resources, and be responsible for the actual implementation.'* [115]

The term 'ownership' in aid discourse can be applied in different ways, but for the purposes of this research the focus of 'ownership' will follow the NORAD example and look at the practical implementation of capacity building technical assistance programmes designed with a technical advisor and a local counterpart.

As stated earlier, capacity building can be defined as 'improvements in the ability of organisations, either singly or in cooperation with other organisations, to perform appropriate tasks.'[116] One of the key mechanisms in capacity building is the transfer of skills and knowledge.[117]

A workplace learning review completed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research highlighted some key principles about learning in the workplace that are also important in capacity building projects. The review states,

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[113] Stephen Browne, *Developing Capacity Through Technical Cooperation: Country Experiences,* Earthscan Publications Ltd, UK, (2002) pg 131.
[114] Alf Morten Jerve, *Ownership and Partnership: does the new rhetoric solve the incentive problems of aid?* Chr. Michelsen Institute, NORAD, (2002), pg 5.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Merilee S. Grindle and Mary E. Hilderbrand, *Building sustainable capacity in the public sector: what can be done?* Public Administration and Development, Vol 15, (1995), pg 445.
[117] Training is a two-way process and therefore the technical advisor should also be open to learning.

for example, that workplace learning works best when: 'Learners are engaged and have some ownership of the goals and processes', 'workplace learning is aligned or reflects the (desired) workplace culture' and 'the teaching is sensitive to the learner's pace and level'.[118]

When capacity building is taking place it is therefore very important that the counterpart actually wants to be involved in the capacity building process and is engaged. It is also very important that the counterpart has some feeling of ownership of his or her learning process, that the training is appropriate for the organisation and that the training is carried out at the counterpart's pace and not the pace of the TA. The focus of the capacity building should be squarely on what the recipient organisation and individuals require in their learning.

In a counterpart/TA relationship, there is often a power imbalance, with much of the perceived power sitting with the TA.[119] This power imbalance may be connected with the TA's link to financial resources, that TAs are perceived to have more knowledge and experience than the counterpart and that being an 'expert' TAs can have a higher status than the counterpart.[120] The power imbalance may be amplified when there are old colonial ties between the technical advisor's country and the counterpart's country.

The issue of power imbalance can make the transfer of ownership more challenging. Aid literature cites 'power imbalance' as a contributing factor to the failure of capacity building.[121] It is important that the counterpart/TA relationship is on a more even playing field. The ability to achieve a more even playing field is often down to how the technical advisor approaches the relationship.

Often in capacity building technical assistance projects, the TA will be involved in implementing changes, for example changes to processes, system or policy. Implementing change has its own set of challenges. When organisations are changing, people are key to the process and must be included from the outset.[122]

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[118] Karen Vaughan, *Workplace Learning: A Literature Review,* New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Competenz, Auckland, (2008), pg 25.
[119] Mona Girgis, The Capacity-building Paradox: using friendship to build capacity in the South, *Development in Practice,* 17:3, (2007), pg 354.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid. (Referenced Berg 1993: Hailey 2005, Postma 2003, UNDP 2002).
[122] Robert A. Paton & James McCalman, *Change Management: A Guide to Effective Implementation*, Sage Publishers, London, (2008), pg 382.

Robert Paton and James McCalman, write in their change management book 'Through active participation you accomplish two things. You gain commitment and ownership of the change process by all: those experiencing the change will not need to be pushed and they will begin to drive change themselves.'[123] They go on to say 'When people feel ownership of the change process and can see the opportunities it offers, then they will be committed to its satisfactory accomplishment.'[124]

The authors also state that 'Change management is about people management.'[125] They state the following basic requirements in change management: openness, communication, involvement and empowerment.[126]

These 'basics' of change management are also key also in the counterpart/TA relationship. For any changes to be made, whether at an organisational or individual level, there must be 'buy-in' from the counterpart. In order for change to be sustained after the project ends, the change process needs to be owned by those in the organisation (i.e. the counterpart) rather than those that are bringing in the changes (i.e. the TA).

Paton and McCalman go on to say that change agents need to have abilities over and above their functional skills and knowledge: they need to feel comfortable in dealing with interpersonal relationships, coping with conflict, ambiguity and human emotions.[127] They go on to say that technical skills can be readily taught and acquired, however people skills are the more important and often the more difficult competencies for people to acquire.[128]

Summary

As we can see, recipient countries' ownership in capacity-building technical assistance projects is not only important for effective aid delivery, but also for learning to take place, for changes to be made, and for projects to be sustainable. If ownership at the management level is shifting to the recipient country but there is no transfer of ownership at the operational level when implementing the project,

[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid, pg 385.
[125] Ibid, pg 382.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid, pg 383.
[128] Ibid.

then ownership is not transferring fully and the project is unlikely to have any lasting positive effect. As stated by the European Commission in their guide *Making Technical Cooperation more Effective*, 'Ownership is not expressed in words but by continuous action.'[129]

[129] European Commission, *Making Technical Cooperation More Effective,* European Communities, Luxemburg, (2009), pg II.

2.3 Technical Assistance - Effectiveness Issues

Technical assistance is often considered ineffective. According to Berg, 'almost everybody acknowledges the ineffectiveness of technical cooperation in what is or should be its major objective: achievement of greater self-reliance in the recipient countries by building institutions and strengthening local capacities in national economic management.'[130]

Technical assistance critics have spanned the history of modern aid. In 1969 the World Bank's Pearson Commission noted that 'technical assistance often develops a life of its own, little related either in donor or recipient countries to national or global development objectives.'[131] In 1991 an OECD/DAC report stated that 'donor technical cooperation was too fragmented to create sustainable systemic capacity in developing countries, and may have contributed to preventing the emergence of sustained local capacities'.[132] In 1993 the World Bank vice president, Edward Jaycox, described technical assistance as 'a systematic destructive force that is undermining the development of capacity.'[133]

In 2002 the then Dutch Minister for Development Co-operation stated 'The presence of so many experts in Africa in particular has undermined the confidence of countries in their own abilities. Technical assistance has not done enough to give poor countries the ability to stand on their own two feet.'[134] In the same year the Dutch Minister decided to discontinue the provision of technical assistance.[135] In 2006 the former Director of Budget in the Ministry of Finance in Afghanistan stated 'Afghanistan is a failure as a case for technical assistance.'[136]

There have, however, been some successes in technical assistance. Morgan writes that in the later part of the 20th century technical assistance made genuine contributions, especially in areas such as meteorology, agriculture, health,

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[130] Elliot J Berg, *Rethinking Technical Cooperation: Reforms for Capacity Building in Africa*, UNDP, (1993) pg 244.
[131] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 31.
[132] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 205-206. (OECD 2002)
[133] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 24.
[134] Ibid.
[135] OECD, *Inventory of Donor Approaches to Capacity Development: What we are Learning*, OECD, (2009), pg 33.
[136] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 31.

population and high technology.[137] These successes appear to be linked through the commonality of being in non-political environments.[138]

Morgan does however go on to say that technical assistance has had a pattern of poor performance and had been labelled 'corrosive' by the UNDP.[139] He also states that technical assistance has led 'to the erosion of the ownership, commitment and independent action of national actors' and 'in too many cases led to a sense of dependence.'[140]

Greenhill refers to reviews undertaken by the UNDP that show that technical assistance had been effective at getting the job done, but far less effective in developing local institutions and strengthening local capacities.[141]

Riddell reiterates this by stating that 'short-term technical assistance has had a tangible positive effect, but donors have been far less able to make lasting contributions to capacity development and institutional strengthening.'[142]

Overall, technical assistance given to countries in need, comprising a quarter of the world's ODA, is failing to achieve its goals. In the commercial world an activity that consistently showed such poor performance would have been axed long ago. So why do donor countries continue to spend so much of their ODA on technical assistance?

Greenhill argues that donors need to maintain control as they have pressure from their superiors to disburse funds and ensure projects are delivered on time, as well as ensuring that aid money is well spent.[143] Contracting TAs who work directly in the recipient organisation assists with meeting those requirements.[144]

Greenhill goes onto to say that donors use technical assistance in conjunction with conditions on aid to promote reforms they consider important.[145] Greenhill further

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[137] Peter Morgan, *Technical Assistance: Correcting the Precedents,* Development Policy Journal*,* UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 5.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 29.
[142] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 254.
[143] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 37.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.

states that technical assistance contributes to donors' geopolitical objectives by increasing their ability to influence political decisions in line with the donors' priorities and also provides a good source of income for donor country firms.[146] Morgan reiterates this point by stating that many technical assistance projects were 'designed to meet supplier objectives such as commercial gain, political support or cultural penetration.'[147]

With all the pitfalls of technical assistance, it is important to acknowledge that technical assistance, when implemented well, can provide excellent support to capacity development and also help ensure sustainability.[148]

There are many issues that are consistently associated with the poor performance of technical assistance projects and many of those issues relate to aid ineffectiveness in general. Many of the issues identified can also be addressed by donors allowing more recipient country ownership. The issues can be split into two groups: management issues and operational issues.

Management issues, as the name suggests, are related to how the technical assistance project is managed. Management issues often involve people in senior positions, such as the recipient country administrative head of government department (managers) and donor representatives.

A common management issue identified by aid experts is that technical assistance projects are donor 'supply' driven, rather than recipient country 'demand' driven.[149] With a lack of recipient demand and therefore a lack of ownership of the project, the advice given can have a tendency to be ignored and, worse, be irrelevant to the recipient country.[150]

Donor 'supply' driven technical assistance projects can undermine local capacity and often lack sustainability.[151] The more that reforms are seen to be shaped by

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[146] Ibid pg 40.
[147] Peter Morgan, *Technical Assistance: Correcting the Precedents,* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 9.
[148] European Commission, *Making Technical Cooperation More Effective,* European Communities, Luxemburg, (2009), pg 10.
[149] Anders Danielson Paul Hoebink & Benedict Mongula, *Are Donors Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 162.
[150] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 37.
[151] Anders Danielson Paul Hoebink & Benedict Mongula, *Are Donors Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 162.

external advisors, the higher the likelihood that the recipient organisation's sense of accountability for the development outcomes will erode.[152]

In donor 'supply' driven projects, technical assistance is often offered on a 'take it or leave it' basis.[153] Unfortunately, the offer of technical assistance can be seen as a 'free good' and it is often accepted without having alternative uses of the funding offered or considered.[154]

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, under its ownership principle, recognises the importance of recipient country demand driven projects. The declaration encourages recipient countries to set their own national development strategies and for donors to respect the recipient countries' leadership over their development policies and strategies.[155]

Botswana is a good example of a country that has taken ownership of much of its donor aid,[156] and ensuring its projects are demand driven. The Botswanan Government rejects all assistance that is not channelled through national budgets and financial management systems.[157] All technical assistance is contracted by the government and integrated into the human resource planning of the public service.[158]

Another management issue relates to aid funding. Although many donors today are moving towards recipient countries having more ownership of their aid funding through budget support models, SWAps etc, the bulk of technical assistance funding is rarely 'entrusted to or seen by recipients'.[159] If donors allowed more recipient country ownership of aid funding, recipient countries would have more responsibility, which may increase their commitment and help ensure that funds are better integrated into their NDSs. This should lead to better utilisation of technical assistance resources.[160]

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[152] Arild O. Hauge, *Accountability – to What End?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 77.
[153] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, (2006), pg 40.
[154] Ibid.
[155] http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf (last accessed 18th January 2015).
[156] Arild O. Hauge, *Accountability – to What End?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 88.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, (2006), pg 45.
[159] Arild O. Hauge, *Accountability – to What End?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 80.
[160] Anders Danielson Paul Hoebink & Benedict Mongula, *Are Donors Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 167.

As mentioned earlier, a further management issue is the tying of aid. Technical assistance projects are often criticised for 'tying' the funding for TAs, which incurs greater costs.[161] Riddell highlights a Ugandan example of long-term technical assistance where costs were 100% to 300% more when recruited through bilateral agencies than other sources.[162]

The tying of aid can be both official and unofficial, with many countries that have formally untied their aid still recruiting firms largely from their own country.[163] In the 2005-06 year the United Kingdom, where aid is untied, awarded at least 80% of its aid contracts to United Kingdom firms.[164] If recipient country managers were able to make their own decisions about the procurement of aid goods and services, then the issue around 'tying of aid' would no longer be relevant.

Another technical issue at the managerial level is how the TA's ToR are developed. Often rewards for aid workers (including TAs) are focused on meeting output targets and not on achieving long-term sustainable development.[165] Often TA contracts or expected outputs do not have any performance indicators relating to capacity building.[166]

How the ToR are drafted can affect how the TA implements the technical assistance project at the operational level. If a TA's ToR have targets mainly based on achieving certain outputs (eg corporate plans are completed or budgets are approved), the TA will often focus on achieving those output targets. As a result the capacity building aspect of the role can be neglected.

Sometimes the TA's ToR require the TA to perform a skilled job and to train recipient country counterparts at the same time.[167] For example, Australian Treasury advisors have always been asked to strike a balance between the twin objectives of improved capacity and good policy outcomes.[168] Riddell states that

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[161] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 34.
[162] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 101.
[163] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 35.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Arild O. Hauge, *Accountability – to What End?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 78.
[166] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 30.
[167] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 204.
[168] Harry Greenwell and Bede Moore, *Capacity development in economic policy agencies,* Economic Roundup, Commonwealth of Australia - Department of Treasury, Issue 2, (2014), pg 20. The presumption is made that 'good policy outcomes' are from the perspective of the Australian Government.

when advisors have been required to undertake roles with this dual purpose, some TAs have been successful in completing both objectives, but it was far more common for advisors to prioritise completing the technical task rather than the capacity building task.[169]

When a TA's ToR have a dual purpose of performing a technical role and training, the ToR must have separate goals and targets for each purpose. The recipient country managers and donors need to work closely together to ensure that the most effective ToR for each type of TA role are compiled and implemented.

A further management issue the technical assistance literature discusses is also connected to the recruitment of TAs. Often TAs are selected for their technical expertise and not for their ability to train or mentor staff,[170] and therefore TAs often lack expertise in capacity building.[171] Ensuring TAs have the right skill set is vital in ensuring an effective project. Recipient country managers should play a key part in the process of TA recruitment to ensure the best TAs are selected.

The second group of issues, operational issues, is related to how the technical assistance project is actually carried out. Issues at the operational level often involve people working directly in the implementation of the technical assistance project, such as the TA and the counterpart.

When TAs implement changes in recipient countries, they often try to replicate the systems and processes from their own countries without enough consideration of the local country context. It is unlikely that a single 'blueprint' approach to technical assistance will be effective.[172] Often so-called 'best practices' in one country are not 'best practices' in all countries and therefore assumptions about transferability of practices should be viewed with caution.[173]

If counterparts and their supervisors are given more control around changes that TAs want to implement, it is more likely that changes will be more appropriate and

[169] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 204.
[170] Niloy Banerjee, Leonel Valdiva and Mildred Mkandla, *Is the Development Industry Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 140.
[171] Romilly Greenhill, *Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, (2006), pg 30.
[172] Stephen Browne, *Developing Capacity Through Technical Cooperation: Country Experiences,* Earthscan Publications Ltd, UK, (2002) pg 32.
[173] Ibid, pg 33.

effective and that the counterparts will be more committed to the changes, which will increase the likelihood that changes are sustainable.

Another operational issue relates to the consistency of advice given by successive TAs. This issue is common in long term projects where donors do little to ensure co-ordination between advisors. In many cases aid organisations have poor institutional memory.[174] A review by ActionAid reported the Cambodian Government stating 'when foreign advisors change, they often provide advice which contradicts that of the previous advisor.'[175]

When a counterpart receives conflicting advice from successive TAs, it can obviously cause confusion and in some cases can lead to de-capacitating the counterpart. Although this issue is at the operational level, it could be addressed by recipient country managers, donors and TAs working closely together to ensure that the overall agreed objectives, and the way to achieve them, remains consistent.

A further operational issue is the lack of involvement counterparts have in their TAs' performance management. Although recipient country counterparts are the people who work most closely with TAs, they are invariably, excluded from the TA performance management process.[176] It is more likely that the TA will be supervised by the donor or the agency responsible for managing the project on the ground, or both.[177] For example, Australian Treasury advisors remain attached to the Australian Treasury for performance appraisals and promotions.[178]

The lack of recipient country ownership around TA performance management can leave both counterpart and managers dis-empowered. If recipient countries had more ownership, then recipient country counterparts or the counterpart's supervisor could take the lead in the TA performance management process. This

[174] Anders Danielson Paul Hoebink & Benedict Mongula*, Are Donors Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 170.
[175] Romilly Greenhill*, Realaid: Making technical assistance work,* ActionAid International, Johannesburg, (2006), pg 30.
[176] Niloy Banerjee, Leonel Valdiva and Mildred Mkandla, *Is the Development Industry Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal*,* UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 140.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Harry Greenwell and Bede Moore, *Capacity development in economic policy agencies,* Economic Roundup, Commonwealth of Australia - Department of Treasury, Issue 2, (2014), pg 14.

may improve the overall performance of the TA from the recipient countries perspective.

When considering the issues around technical assistance, it is important to remember that often TAs are working in challenging environments. Technical Advisors' ability to build capacity is directly affected by the broader context (economic, political & social) that they are operating in.[179]

Without government commitment and political support from the recipient country, capacity building can be very challenging. A World Bank review reiterated this by acknowledging that the greatest successes for capacity building occurred when there was political support for them.[180] The OECD state that 'capacity development requires strong ownership and leadership by country champions with sufficient power and dedication to overcome inertia and resistance to change.'[181]

It is also challenging to build capacity in organisations that suffer from disincentives such as low salaries, few promotions for local staff and widespread corruption.[182] As mentioned in section 1.2, often corruption is seen as a major reason why donors can be reluctant to hand over ownership of projects.[183]

When the recipient country has insufficient capacity to ensure that 'active' ownership takes place, however, this disability will limit the level of capacity building that can be achieved by the technical advisor.[184] It is not always easy for TAs to build capacity, as reiterated in a World Bank report that admitted 'we do not understand fully how to help improve institutions and governance, especially in the poorest countries where the needs are greatest.'[185]

Summary

Technical assistance projects have been widely criticised for being ineffective ever since they first began. The core objective of most technical assistance projects is

[179] Merilee S. Grindle and Mary E. Hilderbrand, *Building sustainable capacity in the public sector: what can be done?* Public Administration and Development, Vol 15, (1995), pg 445.
[180] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 209
[181] http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-development/44696212.pdf (last accessed 9th October 2014).
[182] S. ibi Ajayi & Afeikhena Jerome, *Opportunity Costs and Effective Markets,* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 39.
[183] Anders Danielson Paul Hoebink & Benedict Mongula, *Are Donors Ready for Change?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2 (2002), pg 165.
[184] European Commission, *Making Technical Cooperation More Effective,* European Communities, Luxemburg, (2009), pg 8.
[185] Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford University Press, UK, (2008), pg 211.

to build capacity; but they are often criticised for doing the complete opposite. They have even been criticised for preventing the emergence of local capacity.

Issues in technical assistance projects can be split into two groups: management issues and operational issues. Many of the management issues relate to how the technical assistance program is identified, designed and managed. Some management issues can be addressed by donors allowing recipient countries more ownership of technical assistance projects - for example, recipient countries having more ownership over identifying the needs of projects, aid funding and in the procurement of aid goods and services. Other management issues can be addressed by improving how the TA's ToR is designed and by ensuring that TAs have the appropriate skill set.

Many technical assistance operational issues are related to how the TA works and what involvement the counterpart has in the project. If counterparts and their supervisors had more control over the implementation of technical assistance projects, it would help to address issues concerning inappropriate changes implemented by TAs. If counterparts are involved in TAs' performance appraisals, it may improve how TAs work with counterparts, which may improve TAs' overall performance.

To avoid inconsistent advice from successive TAs, donors need to brief incoming TAs about previous TAs' experiences and to ensure that incoming TAs have a good understanding of the objectives of the project.

Technical advisors often work in challenging environments. They are, however, paid to build capacity of counterparts in developing countries, where conditions for everyone are often challenging. The more donors and TAs allow recipient country managers and counterparts to have more ownership of projects, the more effective and sustainable technical assistance projects will be.

2.4 Chapter Two – Technical Assistance & Ownership – Summary

Chapter two has explained that technical assistance is typically about building the capacity of an organisation and its people. Many of the issues with technical assistance are reflected in broader aid effectiveness issues, as discussed in Chapter one.

The literature on technical assistance has shown that there is a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of technical assistance. The significant amount of criticism is very concerning, if we consider that 25% of worldwide ODA is spent on technical assistance.

As reiterated earlier, recipient country ownership has become an important focus of many donors' efforts to improve the effectiveness of aid. Recipient country ownership, however, is not only important from an aid perspective. It is also important in workplace training and in change management processes. As TAs are working in an aid environment, carrying out training and often bringing in changes, ownership becomes even more a key factor in technical assistance projects.

In this chapter I have shown that technical assistance issues can be divided into two categories: management issues and operational issues. Many management issues can be addressed by donors allowing more ownership to recipient country managers. Many operational issues can also be addressed by giving the recipient country more ownership, but in operational issues it is both donors and TAs who need to transfer ownership to counterparts and their supervisors.

The issues found in the literature on technical assistance, and discussed in chapter two, frame my primary research to analyse levels of ownership in technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands, which is detailed in Chapter four.

Before we look at those findings, however, I will give some background information on the Solomon Islands and give some context to technical assistance projects there. I will also review some donors' assessments of technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands, to see whether the same issues identified in aid literature in this chapter have also been identified in the donor assessments.

Chapter Three - Solomon Islands Background

3.1 Solomon Islands – Facts and Figures

The Solomon Islands is located in the south-west Pacific Ocean[186] between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. It covers 27,556 square kilometres and is spread over 922 islands.[187] It has a population of 550,000 (2012) of which 79% (2013) live in rural areas and 40% (2013) of the population are under the age of 15 years old.[188]

The capital is Honiara. It has a population of 68,000 (2011) and is situated in Guadalcanal, one of the 9 provinces in the Solomon Islands.[189] The other 8 provinces are Malaita, Western, Central, Choiseul, Makira, Rennell & Bellona, Isabel and Temotu.[190]

English is the official language in the Solomon Islands, but Solomon Islands Pijin is the lingua franca for the majority of people.[191] Sixty three other distinct languages are spoken in the country.[192] In more rural areas the local language is predominant and in some areas neither English nor Pijin is spoken.

The Solomon Islands gained independence from Great Britain on the 7th July 1978 at which time it joined the Commonwealth.[193] It has a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy,[194] with 50 Members of Parliament elected for a four year term under a first-past-the-post electoral system.[195] The Prime Minister is chosen by Parliament.[196]

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186 http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon_islands/solomon_islands_brief.html (last accessed 16th December 2014).
187 http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Solomon-Islands.php (last accessed 16th December 2014).
188 https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=SOLOMON%20ISLANDS (last accessed 16th December 2014).
189 http://www.clgfpacific.org/userfiles/1/files/Solomon%20Islands%20local%20government%20profile%202011-12.pdf (last accessed 16th December 2014).
190 Ibid.
191 http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon_islands/solomon_islands_brief.html (last accessed 16th December 2014).
192 Ibid.
193 http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Solomon-Islands.php (last accessed 16th December 2014).
194 Ibid
195 http://www.clgfpacific.org/userfiles/1/files/Solomon%20Islands%20local%20government%20profile%202011-12.pdf (last accessed 16th December 2014).
196 http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/solomon-islands/constitution-politics (last accessed 16th December 2014).

The Solomon Islands' major trading partners for exports are China (40.4%), Australia (24%) and the United Kingdom (8.2%).[197] The major exports are logs, minerals (primarily alluvial gold), palm oil and kernel, fish, cocoa, coconut oil and copra and sawn timber.[198] The principal import sources are Australia (28.7%), Singapore (21.4%), China (7.8%) and New Zealand (6%). The main imports are refined petroleum, rice, large construction vehicles, delivery trucks and cars.[199]

The Solomon Islands is a Least Developed Country (LDC)[200] with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $1.096 billion USD and a GNI per capita of $1,610 USD (2013).[201] The Solomon Islands is a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group Free Trade Area (MSG-FTA), the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).[202] Aid receipts account for approximately 25% of the Solomon Islands GDP, making it one of the most aid-dependent countries in the Pacific.[203]

The Solomon Islands has been a member of the United Nations since 1978 (year of independence).[204] The Solomon Islands has signed up to the MDG's[205] and to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.[206] Currently there are many international organisations operating in the Solomon Islands including: the United Nations,[207] the World Bank,[208] the Asian Development Bank (ADB),[209] the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC),[210] the European Union (EU),[211]

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[197] https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=SOLOMON%20ISLANDS (last accessed 16h December 2014).
[198] http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Solomon-Islands.php (last accessed 16th December 2014).
[199] http://atlas.media.mit.edu/profile/country/slb/ (last accessed 7th December 2014).
[200] OECD, *Managing Aid for Trade and Development, Solomon Islands Case Study*, OECD, (2012), pg 4.
[201] http://data.worldbank.org/country/solomon-islands (last accessed 7th December 2014).
[202] OECD, *Managing Aid for Trade and Development, Solomon Islands Case Study,* OECD, (2012), pg 4.
[203] Ibid, pg 5.
[204] https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=SOLOMON%20ISLANDS (last accessed 7th December 2014).
[205] http://www.undp.org/content/dam/fiji/docs/Final_SI_MDG.pdf (last accessed 7th December 2014).
[206]http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/countriesterritoriesandorganisationsadheringtotheparisdeclarationandaaa.htm (last accessed 7th December 2014).
[207] http://www.pacific.one.un.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=117&Itemid=168 (last accessed 7th December 2014).
[208] http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pacificislands/contacts (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[209] http://www.adb.org/offices/pacific/contacts (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[210] http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/where-we-work/asia-pacific/solomon-islands-red-cross/ (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[211] http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/solomon/eu_partnership_booklet_final.pdf (last accessed 13th January 2015).

Save the Children,[212] World Vision,[213] Oxfam,[214] and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).[215]

Countries that have diplomatic presence in the Solomon Islands include: New Zealand, [216] Australia,[217] Republic of China (Taiwan),[218] Britain,[219] Japan,[220] and Papua New Guinea.[221] In 2011, the Solomon Islands received 9% of New Zealand's ODA, making it the second largest recipient country of New Zealand ODA.[222] In the 2011/12 financial year, the Australian Government figures for ODA show the Solomon Islands as its fourth largest recipient of aid, at 6% of Australian ODA.[223]

3.2 Solomon Islands – Brief History

In 1893, the British Government established a protectorate over what we know today as the Solomon Islands.[224] As mentioned in section 3.1, the Solomon Islands gained independence from the British in 1978.

During 1998 to 2003 the Solomon Islands experienced civil unrest, commonly known as the 'ethnic tensions'.[225] The conflict had its roots in a complex mix of economic, social and ethnic issues centred around two main ethnic groups, being those from Malaita and Guadalcanal.[226] There were violent clashes involving rival militant groups over the five year period, which significantly destabilised the

[212] http://www.savethechildren.org.au/our-work/where-we-work/pacific-islands/solomon-islands (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[213] http://www.wvi.org/solomon-islands (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[214] https://www.oxfam.org.au/about-us/countries-where-we-work/solomon-islands/ (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[215] http://www.spc.int/en/contact-us.html (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[216] http://www.nzembassy.com/solomon-islands (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[217] http://www.solomonislands.embassy.gov.au/honi/home.html (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[218] http://www.taiwanembassy.org/SB/mp.asp?mp=267 (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[219] https://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-high-commission-honiara (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[220] http://www.sb.emb-japan.go.jp/ (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[221] http://www.pngembassy.org/government.html (last accessed 13th January 2015).
[222] http://nzadds.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/summary-show-me-the-money-v3.pdf (last accessed 16th December 2014). Papua New Guinea was the largest recipient of New Zealand ODA at 11%.
[223] http://aid.dfat.gov.au/Publications/web/australias-international-development-assistance-program-2013-14/Pages/australias-international-development-assistance-program.aspx (last accessed 16th December 2014).
Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were the equal largest at 13% and Sub-Saharan Africa 3rd largest at 12%).
[224] Ibid.
[225] http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Solomon-Islands.php (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[226] Ibid.

Solomon Islands.[227] During the 'ethnic tensions' more than 200 people were killed and thousands were adversely affected.[228]

[227] http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon_islands/solomon_islands_brief.html (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[228] http://pacificpolitics.com/files/2013/04/Solomon-Islands-TRC-Final-Report-Vol1.pdf (last accessed 8th January 2015).

3.3 Solomon Islands – Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

After unsuccessful requests for help with the 'ethnic tensions' by two Solomon Islands Prime Ministers, Ulufa'alu in 2000 and Sogavare[229] in 2001,[230] the Australian Government agreed in June 2003 to lead a cooperative intervention [231] which resulted in the formation of RAMSI.[232]

The intervention was subject to obtaining the support of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the passing of legislation by the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) to enable the intervention. The RAMSI treaty, an agreement between the SIG and the other members of the PIF, established the legal framework for the mission's deployment. The Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003 gave effect to the RAMSI treaty,[233] allowing the first RAMSI personnel to be deployed in July 2003.[234]

The 15 countries from the PIF make up the members of RAMSI.[235] The initial deployment of police and military personnel were made up as follows: Australia (1,575), New Zealand (273), Fiji (136), Papua New Guinea (83), Samoa (15), Tonga (45), Kiribati (5) and Cook Islands (2).[236]

Prior to the July 2003 intervention, the Solomon Islands Government was barely functioning. Government funds had been ransacked and bled dry by a small number of the population who were either ex-militants or corrupt politicians.[237] You could not say, however, that the government authority had collapsed. A government was in place throughout the tensions period 1998-2003. After the coup in June 2000 the militants did not try and take over government. They

[229] Sogavare is the current Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands Governor General declared Manasseh Sogavare as Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands on the 10th December 2014. (http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/831). (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[230] Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, *Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands*, The Contemporary Pacific, Vol.17, (2005), pg 286.
[231] R.J. May, Weak States, *Collapsed States, Broken-Back States and Kleptocracies: General Concepts and Pacific Realities*, The New Pacific Review, vol 2:1, (2003), pg 46.
[232] http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Solomon-Islands.php (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[233] http://www.parliament.gov.sb/files/committees/foreignrelations/submissions/RAMSI-Sub.pdf (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[234] R.J. May, Weak States, Collapsed States, Broken-Back States and Kleptocracies: General Concepts and Pacific Realities, *The New Pacific Review,* Vol 2:1, 2003, pg 46-47.
[235] http://www.ramsi.org/about-ramsi/ (last accessed 16th December 2014).
[236] Jon Fraenkel, *The Manipulation of Custom: From uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands,* Victoria University Press, Wellington, NZ, (2004), pg 167.
[237] Sinclair Dinnen, *The Solomon Islands intervention and the instabilities of the post-colonial state,* Global change, Peace & Security, 20:3, (2008), pg 341.

installed the then leader of the opposition Manasseh Sogavare to replace the ousted Prime Minister. In December 2001 elections were held and Sir Allan Kemakeza, became the Prime Minister.[238]

Australia provided aid to the Solomon Islands throughout 1998-2003. The Australian Government position was that the way forward was up to Solomon Islanders, and that solutions had to be developed within the country and not imposed from the outside.[239] In January 2003 the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, stated:

> "*Sending in Australian troops to occupy the Solomon Islands would be folly in the extreme. It would be widely resented in the Pacific region. It would be difficult to justify to Australian tax payers…..it would not work….foreigners do not have answers for the deep-seated problems afflicting Solomon Islands."*[240]

Yet by July 2003 the Australian Government had assembled the RAMSI force and had landed in the Solomon Islands. When the Australian government accepted the request for help by the then Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza, Australian Prime Minister Howard made it clear that intervention would be an 'all or nothing' exercise.[241] It would not focus solely on restoring law and order, it would also include deployment of expatriate personnel into the Finance Ministry, Prisons and the Justice Department, and would require unhindered access to payroll and other financial records.[242] The Australian Foreign Minister at the time, Alexander Downer, stated 'that it would be necessary to completely redesign the place.'[243]

RAMSI was founded on three key pillars:

1. Law and Justice,

2. Economic Governance and Growth,

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[238] http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/539 (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[239] Clive Moore, *Happy Isles in Crisis*, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, (2004) pg 199.
[240] Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, *Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands*, The Contemporary Pacific, Vol.17, (2005), pg 287. (The Australian, 8 Jan 2003, quoted in Wright 2003).
[241] Jon Fraenkel, *The Manipulation of Custom: From uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands,* Victoria University Press, Wellington, NZ, (2004), pg 165.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Jon Fraenkel, Joni Madraiwiwi & Henry Okole, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands 2002-2013*, Honiara: Government of Solomon Islands (2014) pg 78. (Reference: See Braithwaite, Pillars and Shadows).

3. Machinery of Government.[244]

The relationship between the SIG and RAMSI has at times been fractious. This was especially so during the previous term in office of the current Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, between May 2006 and December 2007.[245] During that term, Sogavare questioned the legal basis for RAMSI and 'alleged the support given to RAMSI was the result of a lack of knowledge and ignorance.'[246] Sogavare also challenged the need for such a large number of RAMSI TAs.[247]

Although the numbers of RAMSI soldiers present in the Solomon Islands decreased rapidly not long after the RAMSI intervention, the numbers of RAMSI TAs deployed to the Solomon Islands rapidly increased. The total number of personnel deployed to the Solomon Islands in 2006 by all donors was 473, of which 364 were RAMSI personnel.[248] This is a relatively large number when you consider the total number of public servants prior to the ethnic tension was approximately 7,500[249] and the population of Honiara at that time was 50,000.[250]

Over the ten year duration of the RAMSI mission, Australia funded around 86% of its costs.[251] The two largest contributors were Australia (expenditure of approximately AUD $2,400 million) and New Zealand (expenditure of NZD $347.5 million).[252] A report based on the 2007-08 financial year found that only 10.5% of RAMSI's expenditure remained in the Solomon Islands,[253] hence the reference to 'boomerang aid', that ends up back in the country that provided the aid. A large proportion of this 'boomerang aid' returned to the donor country in the form of expatriate TAs' salaries.

On the 1st of July 2013, RAMSI's military component was withdrawn and most of RAMSI's development assistance activities were transferred to bi-lateral

[244] http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Solomon-Islands.php (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[245] Jon Fraenkel, Joni Madraiwiwi & Henry Okole, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands 2002-2013*, Honiara: Government of Solomon Islands (2014) pgs 17 & 32.
[246] Ibid, pg 31.
[247] SIG senior public servant, interviewed in November 2014.
[248] Heather Baser, *Provision of Technical Assistance Personnel in the Solomon Islands*, European Centre For Development Policy Management, Discussion Paper 76, (2007), pg 6.
[249] Ibid, pg 4.
[250] Ibid, pgs 5-6.
[251] Jon Fraenkel, Joni Madraiwiwi & Henry Okole, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands 2002-2013*, Honiara: Government of Solomon Islands (2014) pg 83.
[252] Ibid, pg 84. Figures include both bi-lateral aid and RAMSI associated expenditure to the Solomon Islands.
[253] Ibid (referenced Peace Dividend Trust, The Economic Impact of Peace and Humanitarian Operations in Solomon Islands, September 2010, pg 15).

programs.[254] At the time of writing, the only area where RAMSI continues to operate in is building the capacity of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.[255]

3.4 Solomon Islands – RAMSI and Technical Assistance

RAMSI was largely a technical assistance operation.[256] A 2007 report reviewing the 'Provision of Technical Assistance Personnel in the Solomon Islands' looking at the RAMSI experience, stated that 'The SIG seems to have a paradoxical attitude towards technical assistance personnel, on the one hand viewing technical assistance as historically largely ineffective, and on the other indicating a significant need for technical assistance in the long term.'[257]

The report went on to say that the absorptive capacity of the Solomon Islands was stretched, that many RAMSI activities had followed a direct approach[258] and the engagement of SIG had been low.[259] The report suggested that to help ensure sustainability, RAMSI should consider shifting from a 'task orientated [approach] to one that built more on the interests and motivations of Solomon Islanders',[260] in other words give more ownership to Solomon Islanders to decide what they need in aid assistance. It also expressed the importance of involving the SIG in assessment processes.[261]

The report discussed the tension around the twin objectives of RAMSI of getting the job done and developing capacity.[262] The report went on to say that Australia was heavily focused on tangible results and those results were a prerequisite for funding further activities.[263] It suggested that incentives need to encourage TAs to

[254] http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon_islands/solomon_islands_brief.html (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[255] http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon_islands/solomon_islands_brief.html (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[256] Heather Baser, Provision of Technical Assistance Personnel in the Solomon Islands, *European Centre For Development Policy Management,* Discussion Paper 76, (2007), pg v.
[257] Ibid, pg iv.
[258] Ibid, pg 17. **Direct approach** in this report means 'controlling, engineering and designing the process of capacity development while trying to engage country partners through consultation.' **Indirect approach** in this report means 'working with country processes by finding and starting with the initial motivation of actors.'
[259] Ibid, pg vii.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid, pg 43.
[262] Ibid, pg 30.
[263] Ibid.

take indirect approaches and to ensure that Solomon Islanders had the maximum opportunities to learn through doing.[264]

Another issue highlighted by the report was that RAMSI TAs did not have a common understanding of capacity development.[265] The report went on to say that often TAs had been hired for their technical skills and not for their mentoring/coaching skills; but even if the right skill set was held by the technical advisor, often the impact was at the individual level only.[266] Concerns were also raised by both Solomon Islanders and expatriates about the high turnover of TAs and about the short term of assignments, which tended to pressure the TAs to get the job done rather than focus on capacity building.[267]

A ten year review of RAMSI stated that although the Solomon Islands Parliament had endorsed RAMSI, many politicians and public servants remained ambivalent about the mission.[268] Examples of the ambivalence given were the offence caused by expatriates walking uninvited through villages and the large pay differentials between Solomon Islanders and expatriates.[269]

The review went on to quote the then Prime Minster, Dr Derek Sikua, as referring in 2008 to 'a local perception rightly or wrongly that this Assistance [RAMSI] has been at the expense of local ownership and that the partnership has been unequal.'[270] A civil society activist was also quoted stating that 'RAMSIs withdrawal is timely. It is time to give back ownership to the people.'[271]

Both of these quotes, along with the issues identified above, indicate that the RAMSI operation, which was largely a technical assistance operation, was focused on 'getting the job done' and did not focus on transferring ownership to the SIG and its public servants. Although there were positive outcomes from the RAMSI operation, especially around restoring law and order and financial

[264] Ibid, 43.
[265] Ibid, pg 35.
[266] Ibid, pg 36.
[267] Ibid, pg 37.
[268] Jon Fraenkel, Joni Madraiwiwi & Henry Okole, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands 2002-2013*, Honiara: Government of Solomon Islands (2014) pg 22.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid. (Reference: Hansard 24th July 2008. Corrected).
[271] Ibid, pg 23.

stabilisation,[272] the operation was less successful in transferring ownership to the SIG and in building sustainable capacity in the SIG.

3.5 Chapter Three – Solomon Islands Background - Summary

In chapter three I have given a brief background to the Solomons Islands and the RAMSI intervention and discussed the large numbers of TAs working in the Solomon Islands. Many of the issues discussed in the RAMSI technical assistance reviews were similar to the issues identified in literature discussed in Chapter two. The issues identified in the reviews has also contributed to the framing of my research detailed in Chapter four.

The next section, Chapter four, is concentrated on the research carried out in the Solomon Islands, and differs from many other technical assistance projects reviews based in the Solomon Islands. The research uses effectiveness issues that have been identified in aid literature and donor reviews as a basis, to assess whether ownership is transferring from the donor to the SIG. Ownership has been identified as key to improving technical assistance effectiveness, and therefore it is important to use ownership as a lens through which to view technical assistance projects.

The research assesses the transfer of ownership at both the managerial and operational level. If the transfer of ownership to the recipient country is going to be 'real' ownership, it needs to happen at both the managerial and operational level.

[272] Heather Baser, Provision of Technical Assistance Personnel in the Solomon Islands, *European Centre For Development Policy Management,* Discussion Paper 76, (2007), pg 32.

Chapter Four – Making Ownership Real in the Solomon Islands

Introduction

As we have seen so far, a substantial portion of worldwide ODA is spent on technical assistance projects; but much of the aid literature criticises technical assistance for being ineffective. Many of the issues identified as causing technical assistance to be ineffective can be addressed by the transfer of ownership by the donor to the recipient country. It is therefore important to review technical assistance projects through the lens of ownership.

4.1 Research methodology

The purpose of the research undertaken for this thesis was to assess whether ownership of capacity building technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands is shifting from donors to the SIG. The focus of the research was split into two sections.

The first section focuses on the managerial level of technical assistance projects and the findings from interviews with SIG managers and donor representatives. The SIG managers included Permanent Secretaries and the City Clerk. It assesses whether ownership of technical assistance projects is shifting from donors to the SIG at the managerial level.

The second section looks to the operational side of technical assistance projects, i.e. how the actual technical assistance project is carried out. It focuses on the findings of interviews with SIG counterparts and TAs. It assesses whether SIG counterparts have any ownership and influence over how the TA is carrying out the individual and organisational capacity building.

The Solomon Islands Government has 24 Ministries.[273] One elected Member of Parliament (MP) is responsible to Parliament for each ministry as the minister for that particular portfolio (eg Minister of Health). A senior public servant is appointed as head of the administration of the ministry, and is known as a Permanent Secretary (PS). The PS supports the minister and is responsible for

[273] http://www.commerce.gov.sb/Gov/ps&mins.htm

implementing the government's policy and for the effective day-to-day management of the ministry.

The PS is also the 'accounting officer' for the ministry and therefore is responsible for all of the money that has been allocated to the ministry. In the Solomon Islands money allocated to a ministry is from the government's central fund and may include money provided from donors in the form of 'budget support'. The PS is the main contact for all initial interactions with external organisations, including donor organisations.

In the Solomon Islands the head of administration of a City Council is called a 'City Clerk' and the head of administration in a Provincial Government is called a 'Provincial Secretary'. These officials largely have the same function as a PS in central government, but they are responsible correspondingly to all Councillors and Members of the Provincial Assembly.

As mentioned previously, many Solomon Island public servants have been allocated a donor supplied TA to work alongside them in order to help build their capacity and the capacity of the SIG counterpart's department. Most SIG counterparts are in middle to senior public servant roles and often have a team of people to manage.

My core research method was semi-structured interviews with SIG representatives involved in TA projects. I then undertook qualitative analysis of those interviews to identify common themes, patterns or discrepancies, and to analyse against the key themes identified in the literature. The majority of interviews carried out for this research were undertaken in the Solomon Islands in November 2014. Protocol in the Solomon Islands requires all external parties first to seek approval from the PS in order to talk with their staff. Therefore this was the starting point of my research. I also sought consent from donor representatives to interview donor supplied TAs. Interviews were either carried out in English or Solomon Island Pijin (and transcribed into English) depending on the interviewees' preference.

In total, 19 semi-structured interviews were completed. For each interview the participant signed a consent form. The interviews undertaken included five PSs

and one City Clerk, eight SIG counterparts, four TAs and one donor representative. The research focused more on SIG public servants perceptions and views of SIG ownership, rather than that of donors or TAs as SIG public servants views are crucial when assessing what ownership SIG has.

Background information was also obtained by informally talking with others that had experience in working in or with technical assistance projects and from my five years' experience working as a TA in the Solomon Islands.

Most interviews were recorded and transcribed. They were on average one hour long. The basis for the questions came from issues already identified in the aid literature and from donor reviews in the Solomon Islands. Interviewees in each category of role (i.e. PS, donor representative, TA, counterpart) were asked the same standard questions and some of those questions were the same across all four categories. This enabled comparisons within similar roles and also comparisons of views across the different roles. In some cases additional questions were asked arising from different responses to the standard questions.

To ensure confidentiality requested by most interviewees, I will refer to PSs and the City Clerk as 'SIG managers' and to SIG public servants that have worked with donor supplied TAs as 'SIG counterparts'. To further ensure the confidentiality of those interviewed I will refer to the central government ministry and local government as the 'government department'.

4.2 Research Findings: Technical Assistance Projects & Ownership - Management Perspective – Summary

The research into the management of SIG technical assistance projects was focused in four main areas, which align with the key aid effectiveness issues identified in Chapter 2. First, it examined whether the ownership principle in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was being adhered to in the Solomon Islands. Secondly, it evaluated whether the need for projects was being identified by the SIG rather than by donors. Thirdly, it assessed whether ownership was

being transferred to the SIG in terms of donor funding, and lastly it considered how much involvement SIG managers have in the recruitment and performance management of TAs.

The research showed that the amount of ownership the SIG has of its technical assistance projects at the senior management level is increasing. The Paris Declaration had helped initiate the SIG NDS, and also the Declaration helped SIG managers to understand what rights they had in aid programmes.

Managers overall felt that they had more ownership around identifying their needs. Identification of projects was therefore more demand driven than previously. There was an increase in the amount of funding from donors that is being channelled through SIG financial systems in the form of budget support, which has increased SIG ownership of aid funding.

Managers felt that they were always involved in the recruitment of TAs, but did not always have enough say in final recruitment decisions. Managers felt they had less ownership in the performance management of TAs.

4.2.1 Management Perspective – The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005

Findings

The SIG is a signatory to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005[274] and the Declaration is an important document in the Solomon Islands. One public servant stated that the Paris Declaration is 'the crest of the aid co-ordination policy, any donor dealing in the Solomon Islands has to accommodate the Paris Declaration Principles.'[275] She went on to say that the Paris Declaration was a live document that was still relevant today.[276]

The NDS in the Solomon Islands was initially developed in response to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005.[277] All SIG ministries are required to comply with the NDS.[278] Donors in the Solomon Islands also adhere to the SIG NDS.[279] The current Solomon Islands NDS covers the period 2011 to 2020.[280] Currently the NDS and a 2013 NDS Performance Report has been submitted to the IMF as an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP).[281] A new PRSP is due to be submitted by June 2015.[282]

The Paris Declaration has also influenced ownership of aid projects in the Solomon Islands at the senior management level. One SIG manager stated that because of the Paris Declaration, Solomon Islanders had learnt more about the rights of the recipient country and once they had more capacity they were able to challenge the donors more.[283] She went on to say that since the Paris Declaration was adopted it was more likely that the full cost of a project would be shown to the SIG managers and, where SIG manages had the capacity, they could now

[274]http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/countriesterritoriesandorganisationsadheringtotheparisdeclarationanddaaa.htm
[275] Interviewee 6.
[276] Interviewee 6.
[277] Interviewee 6.
[278] Interviewee 6.
[279] Interviewees 6 & 19.
[280] http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-sol-2015-2017-sd.pdf (last accessed 20th January 2015).
[281] http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2014/cr1412.pdf (pg 13) (last accessed 11th January 2015).
[282] Ibid, (pg 11) (last accessed 11th January 2015).
[283] Interviewee 1.

demand their priorities: they now had a lot more influence and control in their aid projects than ever before.[284]

Conclusions

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which prompted preparation of the SIG NDS, has assisted in the transfer of ownership to the SIG. From the responses of interviewees it was clear that they considered that donors were complying with the Paris Declaration principles and the SIG NDS, which has resulted in the SIG having more control of the types of projects that are being implemented by donors.

The Paris Declaration also assisted SIG managers in the Solomon Islands to understand what their rights were when engaging with donors, which has helped SIG managers to challenge donors. Projects are now more demand driven, which has also had a positive effective on shifting the ownership of aid projects away from donor control and towards the SIG.

4.2.2 Management Perspective – Demand versus Supply Led Technical Assistance Projects

Findings

All interviewed SIG managers whose ministries engaged TA, were involved in identifying the need for technical assistance.[285] There was one case, however, as mentioned earlier, when the SIG manager felt the need for the TA had ended but the donor preferred the contract to be extended.[286] The requirement for the technical advisor in that case was therefore donor led.

Solomon Island Government managers were also involved in setting or reviewing the TAs ToR.[287] The ToR were often drafted by donors, but given to SIG managers for their comments and approval.[288]

[284] Interviewee 1.
[285] Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 5, 6.
[286] Interviewee 4.
[287] Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 5, 6.
[288] Interviewees 4, 5, 19.

As one SIG manager explained, Parliament now demands to know why TAs are needed, how much a ministry is receiving for the technical assistance project and where the money is spent.[289] She went on to say that this was a good internal check that the technical assistance is required by the ministry[290] and therefore increased the amount of SIG demand driven technical assistance projects.

This has been a big change since the initial 2003 Australian led RAMSI mission which brought with it hundreds of TAs. As mentioned in section 3.3, the deployment of so many TAs was largely driven by the Australian Government's requirement for an 'all or nothing' intervention package and therefore demand was driven by the donor.

As mentioned in section 3.3, in his previous term as Prime Minister the current Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, [291] often challenged the necessity for large numbers of TAs in the Solomon Islands under RAMSI.[292] As Prime Minister again, Sogavare will no doubt continue his scrutiny of the number of donor-supplied TAs, which will further ensure that any technical assistance projects are driven by demand from the SIG.

The importance of demand driven technical assistance projects was reiterated by a SIG manager who stated that one of the main factors for the success of an aid project that he had been part of was that the project did not have its own agenda, or its own programme of activity.[293] The SIG manager went on to say that everything done under the project had to be linked to the ministry's corporate plan, but he had heard of other donor projects focused on activities outside the ministry's corporate plan.[294] He also stated 'From the very beginning I emphasised that the ownership was with the ministry and the way to do it was I

[289] Interviewee 1.
[290] Interviewee 1.
[291] The Solomon Islands Governor General declared Manasseh Sogavare as Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands on the 10th December 2014. (http://www.parliament.gov.sb/index.php?q=node/831). (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[292] SIG senior public servant, interviewed in November 2014.
[293] Interviewee 5.
[294] Interviewee 5.

had to demand that the execution of the project must be aligned to the [ministry's] corporate plan.'[295]

Conclusions

From the research it was clear that aid projects and decisions relating to the need for technical assistance are becoming more driven by demand from the SIG than in the past. SIG managers are heavily involved in identifying SIG needs and approving TAs ToR. There are some individual cases where the need for TAs is still being driven by the donors, but this is not to the same extent as when the RAMSI programme was fully active.

The more SIG managers decide whether technical assistance projects are needed (or not), the more the ownership will shift. The continued pressure from Parliament and SIG managers to ensure technical assistance projects are needed, will help ensure the projects continue to be demand driven.

[295] Interviewee 5.

4.2.3 Management Perspective – Funding Technical Assistance Projects

Findings

Both the New Zealand and Australian aid programmes provide SIG with some form of budget support. The New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP) has used a SWAp approach in its funding of the Solomon Islands Education Programme since 2004.[296] The EU has more recently moved towards this form of funding and has recently held workshops for all government ministries regarding their requirements around budget support.[297]

Budget support in the Solomon Islands does come with conditions. Some SIG managers felt that TAs were always part of the package and they did not have a choice around accepting budget support without having a donor supplied TA.[298] Some budget support contained conditions that the TA must authorise payment of any of the donor funds[299] and therefore the SIG did not have full control over the funds.

Another SIG manager explained that an evaluation was done by donors to assess the SIG eligibility for budget support. Where the donor was not 100% confident that the SIG could meet all requirements, the package was offered with a TA, who could assist with capacity building and to ensure that the SIG could meet the donor's budget support conditions.

Since the recent fraudulent use of AUD$1.5 million of Australian Aid money in the Solomon Islands Health Sector,[300] financial TAs employed by Australian Aid across all SIG ministries are required to endorse all expenditure that is linked to Australian Aid money.[301] There was a general feeling that some financial TAs were employed only to ensure the correct use of Australian Aid money and were not in fact required for financial capacity building.[302] One SIG manager stated that

[296] http://www.aid.govt.nz/about-aid-programme/measuring-results/evaluation/activity-reports/2010-review-and-evaluation-reports/review-solomon-i (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[297] Interviewee 6.
[298] Interviewees 1, 5, 6.
[299] Interviewees 15 & 16.
[300] http://devpolicy.org/in-brief/corruption-scandal-rocks-solomons-health-ministry-20130925-1/ (last accessed 8th January 2015).
[301] Interviewee 10.
[302] Interviewee 10.

he did not require a financial TA and would have preferred a TA in another position, but negotiations with the donor were unsuccessful.[303]

One SIG manager expressed concerns regarding budget support in situations where the recipient organisation was not ready for full ownership.[304] He felt that before direct funding was given there should be appropriate structures in place, and that TAs should help with setting those structures up.[305] The preference expressed by the SIG manager was one of 'partnership' until the recipient government department was totally ready for full 'ownership'.[306]

Frustration was expressed by another SIG manager over access to approved donor funding.[307] Although he was told it was up to the SIG manager how the funds were to be used, on each occasion that the funding was requested it had been declined.[308] He stated that he had wasted time writing up project proposals for funding just to have it rejected. Exasperated by this process, he asked the donor 'just tell us what you want us to request, just tell us what you want us to tell you.'[309] To add to the frustration at the end of the financial year, a donor representative said to the SIG manager 'you didn't use the money that was given to you last year.'[310] He replied by saying 'I was a little bit reluctant to request it.'[311]

Funding for TAs was not allocated within budget support funding and TAs were paid directly by the donor or donors' managing consultants. Some international consultants who were employed for short term technical assistance, however, were paid from budget support funding.[312]

Conclusions

Budget support and SWAp models of funding help shift ownership of projects to the recipient country, and this is happening in the Solomon Islands. Having budget support and SWAps in place does not, however, necessarily mean that ownership has been fully transferred to the SIG. As we have seen, in some cases

[303] Interviewee 4.
[304] Interviewee 2.
[305] Interviewee 2.
[306] Interviewee 2.
[307] Interviewee 4.
[308] Interviewee 4.
[309] Interviewee 4.
[310] Interviewee 4.
[311] Interviewee 4.
[312] Interviewee 16.

there are conditions in place that restrict the funds being fully utilised by the SIG and fully integrated into its procedures.

Donors have assessed that SIG is not ready to receive full budget support without certain conditions. The recent health sector fraud has not helped to build donor confidence. In one instance funding was approved but not processed as budget support was completely controlled by the donor, to the point where the SIG manager gave up applying for it. In all government departments interviewed, the SIG had no control over payments to TAs.

Overall ownership by the SIG in terms of donor funding is increasing, but the transfer of ownership is only at the early stages. With continued use of budget support and SWAp funding models, and with fewer conditions (when donor confidence is stronger), clearer rules around access to other funding and more consideration about how TAs are paid, the SIG is likely to gain more ownership over donor funding.

4.2.4 Management Perspective – Recruitment and Performance Management of Technical Advisors

Findings

Except in the case of one donor, SIG managers were heavily involved in the recruitment process of TAs and were always on the selection panel. Two SIG managers from different government departments, referring to the same donor organisation, stated that when the panel did not agree on the best candidate then the donor organisation gave the SIG manager the final say.[313] One of the SIG managers went on to say when the panel does not agree on a candidate 'they [donor representatives] give it to me to make the decision, it's because I will be responsible on the ground to keep the peace.'[314]

The same SIG manager, although feeling he had a lot of control in the recruitment process, also stated that he was not involved in agreeing the final contracts of

[313] Interviewees 2. 5.
[314] Interviewee 5.

TAs.[315] He did see the draft contracts but not the final ones, and he believed that he should have access to them.[316] As TAs were paid directly by the donor and not through the SIG financial system, he did not know the full cost of TAs working in his government department.[317]

He went on to say that any TAs recruited with this particular donor were found on the international market and he did not feel like they had to be recruited from the donor's country.[318] This donor did not seek to tie aid when recruiting TAs.

Another SIG manager, referring to a different donor, felt that although he was included in the interview panel the panel had more people representing the donor than the SIG. The panel normally had 2 donor representatives and 1 SIG representative. The SIG manager stated that he 'can be used as a 'puppet' just to show they [the donor] have some SIG representation on the panel.'[319]

He went on to say that they get Curriculum Vitaes (CVs) from many different countries, PNG, Samoa, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and Canada and that he could tell from the applicants' CVs, the way they spoke and their understanding about the Solomon Islands who would be the right person for the TA role.[320] He stated, however, 'when it's one against two, the two will always win' and therefore had felt he had very little say in who was finally recruited.

The SIG manager also stated that usually the TA that was selected by the donor was from the donor organisation's own country,[321] although this was not a requirement and therefore there was some unofficial tying of aid to the donor's country.

In the case of a third donor organisation, two public servants from different government departments stated that SIG management had no say at all in which TAs were recruited and how the project was carried out.[322] One SIG manager did state that although he did not have any say in who was recruited or how the project was carried out, he was given all the details of expenditure and felt that

[315] Interviewee 5.
[316] Interviewee 5.
[317] Interviewee 5.
[318] Interviewee 5.
[319] Interviewee 4.
[320] Interviewee 4.
[321] Interviewee 4.
[322] Interviewees 5, 9.

that particular donor had been very transparent.[323] He felt, however, that he had very little control or ownership of that donor's projects.[324]

Another public servant discussing this same donor stated that the donor always contracted TAs and contractors from its own country and therefore most of the aid money went back to the donor's country.[325] He believed that the SIG had little control of this process and what was done did not always produce the best outcomes for the Solomon Islands.[326]

Technology has played its part in improving the level of SIG ownership and control in relation to recruiting TAs. One SIG manager said that the internet had allowed them to search on the candidate to find out more information themselves.[327] Another SIG manager stated that she had had issues in the past with recruiting TAs that could not speak English, even when it was stated they could on their CVs. Today they carried out all interviews by telephone, which addressed that problem.[328]

Some SIG managers were involved in evaluating the performance of their TAs and signed off TAs performance reviews[329] One SIG manager stated he was involved in an informal process of performance review,[330] and another stated he had no involvement in TAs' performance reviews at all.[331]

One of the SIG managers stated that they had come a long way with their current donor project, but he felt that the evaluation of TA performance assessments was one area that could be improved.[332] Most SIG managers felt that when they were not happy with the performance of a TA, donors would listen to their concerns.[333] One public servant, however, felt that if you were not happy with the performance of a TA you were stuck with him or her, as you wouldn't complain to the donor because you would not want to upset the donor.[334]

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[323] Interviewee 5.
[324] Interviewee 5.
[325] Interviewee 9.
[326] Interviewee 9.
[327] Interviewee 1.
[328] Interviewee 6.
[329] Interviewee 4, 6.
[330] Interviewee 5.
[331] Interviewee 2.
[332] Interviewee 5.
[333] Interviewees 1, 4, 5, 6.
[334] Interviewee 9.

Another SIG manager noted that one donor had formally started to include SIG counterparts feedback on their TAs' performance (as well as feedback from SIG managers), for the performance management process for their TAs.[335]

Conclusions

As we can see from the findings in this section, there are varying levels of involvement of SIG managers in the recruitment and management of TAs, and therefore varying levels of ownership of this aspect of technical assistance projects. The variation was largely related to the differing practices of each donor.

This would suggest that some donors were transferring ownership to the SIG more than others. The results, however, showed that donor organisations that gave more ownership to the SIG in the TA recruitment process did not give as much ownership in the TA performance management process and vice versa. This suggests some inconsistency in how donor organisations view the importance of transferring ownership to the SIG in the recruitment and management of TAs.

Recruiting the most appropriate and effective TA is crucial to the success of the technical assistance project. Overall, more ownership should be given to the SIG in both TA recruitment and TA performance management to ensure the best choices for the SIG, and ultimately the donor,[336] are made. After all, as stated above by a SIG manager, they are the ones that will have to keep the peace on the ground, and they are the ones that will be working on a daily basis with the TAs.

[335] Interviewee 4.
[336] Contracting the most suitable TA for the project will be far more cost effective for the donor than contracting an inappropriate TA.

4.2.5 Management Perspective –Conclusions

The review of ownership from the management perspective has found that at the broader level the SIG is increasing the amount of ownership it has of aid programmes and therefore of technical assistance projects. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness has helped enable the SIG to develop its own NDS and to ensure SIG managers have a better understanding of their rights while dealing with donors. The Paris Declaration and the SIG NDS has enabled the SIG to take more ownership of their technical assistance projects.

Technical assistance projects were more likely to be identified by SIG management than in the past, especially since the 2003 RAMSI intervention. Identifying the need for TAs was more demand driven by SIG than supply driven by donors. With the involvement of Parliament and SIG managers in this process, the transfer of ownership will continue to be strongly driven by the SIG.

Several donors are now funding the SIG through budget support and SWAp arrangements, which increases SIG ownership of the donor programmes. Conditions and day-to-day practices, however, restrict the amount of control and ownership the SIG managers have over their aid funding.

Some of these conditions and day-to-day practices have been in response to fraud issues and donors not having full confidence in SIG financial systems. Other restrictions are too controlling, especially where the funds are not held with the SIG. Donors need to be clear what funds can be spent on to ensure that SIG managers have access and can decide how best to use the funds.

Further consideration needs to be given to how TAs are paid. If ownership is to be transferred to the SIG in this area, as a starting point all SIG management should be made aware of the full cost of their TAs. To transfer more ownership to the SIG, as in the case of the Botswana government,[337] donors should also consider where possible using budget support models for funding TAs.

The research showed that there were mixed levels of ownership by the SIG in TA recruitment and TA performance management ranging from high levels of SIG ownership to none at all. The more donors consistently transfer ownership to the

[337] Arild O. Hauge, *Accountability – to What End?* Development Policy Journal, UNDP, Vol 2, (2002), pg 88.

SIG in both the TA recruitment and TA performance management areas, the more appropriate the recruitment will be, and the more effective the engagements will be from the SIG perspective.

4.3 Research Findings: Technical Assistance Projects & Ownership - Operational Perspective - Summary

The research into the operational aspect of SIG technical assistance projects was focused in four main areas. First, it examined issues in the TA/counterpart working relationship and how that affected ownership. Secondly, it reviewed the working styles of TAs and the impact different styles can have on TA/counterpart relationships. Thirdly, it reviewed how technical assistance were being implemented at the operational level and how that impacted on ownership. Lastly, the research assessed what level of involvement SIG counterparts had in TA recruitment and TA performance management.

The research revealed that there has been less of a shift of SIG ownership at the operational level of technical assistance projects, compared to the management level. In many respects the TA has the main control and ownership of the technical assistance project on the day-to-day operational level.

Technical advisors' ownership and control of the technical assistance projects were reflected in their interpersonal relationships with counterparts, the working styles of TAs and how TAs implemented the projects. Solomon Islands counterparts had little involvement in either TA recruitment or TAs' performance management.

4.3.1 Operational Perspective – Interpersonal Relationships

Introduction

Workplace training research shows that training works best when learners are engaged and have some ownership of the training goals and processes and the teaching is sensitive to the learners pace and level.[338] Change management experts state that those bringing in change need to have more than their functional skills, they need to feel comfortable in dealing with human emotions.[339]

[338] Karen Vaughan, *Workplace Learning: A Literature Review,* New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Competenz, Auckland, (2008), pg 25.
[339] Robert A. Paton & James McCalman, *Change Management: A Guide to Effective Implementation*, Sage Publishers, London, (2008), pg 383.

There was a general consensus among interviewees that one of the most important qualities that made a good TA was the ability to build a good relationship with the SIG counterpart.

When the relationship between the TA and counterpart is not good, and in some cases completely breaks down, it creates a negative tension and resentment between the government department and the donor. Money is wasted paying for a TA who cannot work with the SIG counterpart. The relationship problems arising in this scenario may prevent future technical assistance projects effectively working within that government department.

Ensuring the SIG counterpart has some ownership of the capacity building technical assistance project will be hindered if there is not a good relationship between the SIG counterpart and their TA.

Findings

Most government departments that had hosted donor funded technical assistance had experienced relationships between SIG counterparts and TAs that had completely broken down, to the point where it was no longer feasible for them to work together. One SIG manager said it was not uncommon to have to dismiss TAs.[340]

There were examples, however, where the SIG counterparts stated that they had experienced respectful TAs who worked well within the Solomon Islands culture and work environment and who had helped to build their capacity to do their job.[341]

One SIG counterpart said that his TA had always given him choices and different options to consider when he put ideas forward, which had helped him to develop in his own space.[342] A further SIG counterpart had said that her TA had good technical skills and was able to transfer the skills to her.[343]

There were, however, many examples where SIG counterparts and their supervisors had felt the TA had not acted in a respectful manner. One SIG manager stated that their SIG staff had on some occasions not come to work as

[340] Interviewee 6.
[341] Interviewees 7, 8, 12, 13, 14.
[342] Interviewee 7.
[343] Interviewee 8.

they did not like the way their TA approached them.[344] He did however go on to say that sometimes this was legitimate but sometimes it was just an excuse not to come to work.[345]

Another SIG counterpart stated he found it quite frustrating working with a TA who did not have any local or indigenous knowledge of working in the Solomon Islands, as she dictated how the project was to be run and never asked for the SIG counterpart's input, even though the SIG counterpart had a wealth of knowledge in that area.[346] He went on to say that the TA never listened to him and never asked what he needed.[347]

Another SIG counterpart stated that his TA decided on one piece of work and pushed him to complete it, without realising that he had other work to do, which was frustrating.[348] Another SIG counterpart stated that sometimes TAs had been racist.[349]

One SIG manager stated that a TA who had a poor relationship with her SIG counterpart had repeatedly pushed him to get the SIG counterpart sacked.[350] The SIG manager felt that this was inappropriate for a TA and not the way it worked in the Solomon Islands.[351]

Another SIG manager stated that sometimes TAs were of the view that their recommendations should always be implemented and became angry when they were not.[352] The SIG manager went on to state of TAs, 'your responsibility is to give me options. You don't give me decisions, you give me options. I make the decisions, whether you like it or not, I make the decisions.'[353]

Another SIG counterpart with over 10 years' experience of working with TAs in the Solomon Islands stated that earlier advisors who came in soon after the 'ethnic tensions' were 'helping us to put things in place, they were "pulling us up", but they

[344] Interviewee 4.
[345] Interviewee 4.
[346] Interviewee 11.
[347] Interviewee 11.
[348] Interviewee 14.
[349] Interviewee 11.
[350] Interviewee 4.
[351] Interviewee 4.
[352] Interviewee 5.
[353] Interviewee 4.

were replaced by advisors that were very bossy.'[354] She went on to say that often when TAs left the Solomon Islands people just went back to their old systems.'[355]

This SIG counterpart was the only counterpart who was interviewed who felt she had ownership of the technical assistance project.[356] She stated that she had to make it very clear to the TA that she (the SIG counterpart) was the leader and the supervisor of the TA.[357]

One SIG manager stated that TAs can sometimes be seen as a threat, in the sense that they can take away responsibility and authority from the SIG counterpart and may reduce the counterpart's chance of getting a promotion.[358] He went on to say that some TAs used tactics to extend their contracts as they could earn more money and be treated with more status while working in the Solomon Islands than in their own countries.[359]

One SIG manager stated that 'a trap for TAs, is when the TA comes in and assumes they know how to build the capacity when in fact they don't know the meaning of capacity, it's a disaster, especially when the TA has no administrative skills or people management skills, that then becomes a difficulty and challenge in itself.'[360]

There was a general feeling that with the sustained presence of so many TAs over ten years, coupled with the many issues with interpersonal relationships between SIG counterparts and their TAs, there was some technical assistance 'fatigue' in the Solomon Islands.

Of the SIG counterparts interviewed, only one of the respondents said that TAs were his preferred choice to build his capacity.[361] Most respondents preferred overseas and in-country short term courses, work attachments in other governments' corresponding ministries, and formal university education. There were a few respondents who said some TAs would be good, but there was a strong preference for more regional or local TAs who would not be so costly and

[354] Interviewee 10.
[355] Interviewee 10.
[356] Interviewee 10.
[357] Interviewee 10.
[358] Interviewee 2.
[359] Interviewee 2.
[360] Interviewee 5.
[361] Interviewee 14.

who would have a good understanding of the local culture, work environment and issues.[362]

Interpersonal relationships are key in any capacity building technical assistance relationship. As one TA stated when asked what qualities make a good TA, 'people engagement, being able to talk to people at an operational level.'[363] He went on to say that 'many TAs are great at talking at the management level, but they need to come down the ladder, they need to come down a few rungs and talk to the people that make a difference at the operational level.'[364] He believed the reason for this was that many TA's were 'good policy people but not necessarily good people people.'[365]

Conclusions

In the same technical assistance project, with the same government department and donor, the outcomes of the project could be very different depending on the individual TA. If an effective TA is replaced by an ineffective or inappropriate TA, the outcomes of the project change with the change of advisor. The level of ownership the SIG counterpart has also changes depending on the individual TA.

Unfortunately there were many examples where the SIG counterpart had felt his or her TA had been rude, racist and bossy. Solomon Islands Government counterparts often felt TAs had put their own agenda before the counterpart's, and that counterparts had little say or control on how the capacity building was being carried out. The responses were not all negative, but the negative responses were strongly felt.

The cause of breakdowns in these relationships can be attributed to both the SIG counterpart and the technical advisor. Solomon Islands Government managers need to ensure the most appropriate[366] SIG public servant is selected to be a counterpart. It is, however, the responsibility of TAs, as the professionals

[362] Interviewees 5, 12, 13.
[363] Interviewee 17.
[364] Interviewee 17. (paraphrased)
[365] Interviewee 17.
[366] As mentioned earlier in section 2.2, it is very important that the counterpart actually wants to be involved in the capacity building process and is engaged.

employed to work within a development context, to use their technical expertise and relationship building skills to do all they can to develop respectful and trusting relationships, that allow for the capacity building of their SIG counterparts.

As mentioned in section 2.3 and in the RAMSI review of technical assistance in section 3.4, it is a common problem that TAs are selected for their technical skills and not for interpersonal relationship and capacity building skills. When a TA does not have the right skill set the results can be quite damaging and can hinder future attempts to build capacity. This continues to be an issue in the Solomon Islands today.

Although in the research there were many examples of good relationships with TAs, there were many more examples of difficult or destructive relationships. It may be that difficult experiences stay with people more than average or good experiences do. When interviewees shared good experiences of working with TAs, confidence had been built and it was clear that the SIG counterpart had felt more empowered.

It is, however, also clear from this research that the breakdown of interpersonal relationships is hindering the ability of many TAs to build the capacity of their SIG counterparts and their government departments, and to ensure that SIG counterparts have the confidence to take ownership of their own development and that of their government departments.

4.3.2 Operational Perspective – Working Styles and 'Pushing'

Introduction

The basics required in any change management process are openness, communication, involvement and empowerment.[367] Workplace training research shows that training works best when it fits in with the desired workplace culture.[368] Technical advisors are involved in both change management and training.

As with interpersonal relationships, the TA's working style can affect the level of ownership that SIG counterparts have in the process of building their capacity and the capacity of their organisation.

As we have seen, interpersonal skills are crucial for building the strong relationships required in technical assistance projects that transfer skills, build confidence and empower SIG counterparts to take ownership. The working style of the TA is linked to the interpersonal relationship, but moves away from the personal and looks more to how the TA operates in a work environment.

Findings

In many cases TAs saw the SIG manager as their boss for operational issues.[369] One SIG manager stated that a TA would report on day-to-day issues to the SIG manager and also to the donor.[370] This was a positive change, as in the past TAs did not report to the SIG manager.[371] This shows that ownership is shifting towards the SIG.

While working in SIG departments, most TAs interviewed spoke in English, although some understood Pijin. As mentioned in section 3.1, English is the official language that is used in government but on a day-to-day basis many Solomon Islanders prefer to use Pijin.

One SIG counterpart stated that English was good to use at a senior level, but when consultation was required in the villages it was advantageous for TAs to

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[367] Robert A. Paton & James McCalman, *Change Management: A Guide to Effective Implementation*, Sage Publishers, London, (2008), pg 382.
[368] Karen Vaughan, *Workplace Learning: A Literature Review,* New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Competenz, Auckland, (2008), pg 25.
[369] Interviewees 1, 11, 12, 15, 18.
[370] Interviewee 1.
[371] Interviewee 1.

speak in Pijin.[372] In my own experience of conducting these interviews and building capacity as a TA, people generally felt more comfortable speaking in Pijin or a mixture of English and Pijin. Being able to use both languages facilitated the interview and learning processes.

In the Solomon Islands people generally take an indirect approach in their working style, avoiding confrontation and being respectful of hierarchy. Often in a western working style a more direct approach is taken, confrontation is encouraged to a point where people can challenge each other, and everyone is treated reasonably equally regardless of their seniority. For example, management often reiterate that 'everyone's ideas are valuable.'

When a TA uses a direct working style in the Solomon Islands, the results are usually quite negative. One phrase that was often used by SIG counterparts to describe how their TA worked with them was 'they push'. A SIG manager stated that often TAs would push and push their counterparts wanting to get things done, 'but in the Solomons, Islanders don't want to be pushed all the time. The stronger you are pushed, the more likely you will do the exact opposite, and you will just lock the door.'[373]

He went on to say that sometimes he reminds TAs who are working in his government department that 'a softer approach is better'. When asked why TAs took this direct approach, the SIG manager replied that it stems from advisors needing to achieve their ToR and that their image is important, in terms of perceptions of their success as advisors. Advisors do not want to be seen as incompetent, which they may be when outputs are not achieved.[374]

A SIG counterpart also stated that he was often pushed and at times felt as if he was against a brick wall, unable to move due to the blockages being outside his control.[375] He also believed the TA kept pushing, even though he could not do anything about the issue, as the TA would be rated on what he had achieved.[376]

[372] Interviewee 11.
[373] Interviewee 5. (paraphrased)
[374] Interviewee 5.
[375] Interviewee 14.
[376] Interviewee 14.

Another SIG counterpart also stated that TAs pushed counterparts because they had a reputation they wanted to keep and if they didn't achieve things then it would go on their record.[377] She went on to say that 'in the Solomon Islands we need to talk to people properly, get people to understand the situation, not telling people straight on, pushing it to them, telling them you can't do this or you can't do that, we do it in a different way here, slowly, slowly, until we reach the goal, not just directly.'[378]

The SIG counterpart also stated that 'different processes take time in the Solomon Islands, you couldn't expect something will change the next day, they [TAs] have to understand that this is how it works here and you just can't come here and force what you are used to.'[379] Another SIG counterpart stated that when TAs take a direct approach it is like they are taking over the role of their counterpart.[380]

A SIG manager stated that your achievements in building the capacity of your counterpart are like you are looking in the mirror.[381] Your work should be a reflection of your commitment to them.[382] He went on to say that when the counterpart has done well and is in the limelight, the TA should step aside and know that it is a reflection of his or her work, but many TAs do not do that: they want to stand in the limelight too.[383]

Some SIG counterparts felt TAs were too closed in the way that they worked. One SIG counterpart stated that his TA would keep her work to herself, then when she was finished she would give the SIG counterparts the reports to review.[384] He went on to say that in the Solomon Islands people worked together, that they would sit down and discuss and compromise before they sent out reports for comments and for final draft: it was more of a team effort.[385]

A SIG manager stated that sometimes the SIG counterpart can feel frightened of the TA, an outsider. [386] He went on to say that it was important that TAs had an

[377] Interviewee 12.
[378] Interviewee 12. (paraphrased)
[379] Interviewee 12. (paraphrased)
[380] Interviewee 11.
[381] Interviewee 5.
[382] Interviewee 5.
[383] Interviewee 5.
[384] Interviewee 11.
[385] Interviewee 11.
[386] Interviewee 2.

open door policy, and that TAs mixed around and got to know the Solomon Islands staff and not just stick to themselves.[387] One SIG counterpart stated that when she worked with a previous TA who had an open working style, it was very easy to approach him, and that she felt comfortable with going to the advisor on any issue.[388]

Along with the issue of SIG counterparts not feeling comfortable with TAs who come from outside of the Solomon Islands, TAs are often treated as someone very senior by SIG counterparts. Some SIG counterparts said that it was difficult for them, because of their culture, to question TAs or tell them they are wrong, because of their seniority, even when the SIG counterpart knew that what they were advising would not work in the Solomon Islands.[389]

This issue, if not realised by the TA, can affect the amount of counterpart 'buy-in' or ownership of changes that are made by the TA. For example, if a TA drafts a policy and gives it to the SIG counterpart to review, the SIG counterpart may not feel comfortable telling the TA that he or she thinks it is wrong. The TA may think that consultation has been done and the SIG counterpart is happy with the changes, when in fact the SIG counterpart is not.

One SIG manager stated that he encouraged his staff to challenge him if they did not agree with what he way saying, but because of his seniority, staff would not usually challenge him.[390] This issue was exacerbated for TAs who were not from the Solomon Islands.[391] It wasn't until the TA left that his staff would voice their complaints.[392] The SIG manager went on to say that this was more common in Melanesian culture than in Polynesian culture.[393]

Another issue that was highlighted by interviewees was TAs failure to respect confidentiality. One SIG counterpart had felt that information that had been shared within the government department had been used by the TA on other projects he had been working on, which had caused a loss of trust and respect.[394]

[387] Interviewee 2.
[388] Interviewee 13.
[389] Interviewees 12, 14.
[390] Interviewee 5.
[391] Interviewee 5.
[392] Interviewee 5.
[393] Interviewee 5.
[394] Interviewee 14.

Three interviewees also stated that they had experiences of TAs criticising their government department externally.[395] They had all felt this was an inappropriate way for the TAs to act. One SIG manager stated that the TA should not be criticising the government as they are working for the government and therefore 'should not be outspoken like that'.[396]

Another issue around working styles was that some TAs did not follow SIG protocols. One SIG counterpart stated that some TAs did not follow SIG protocols especially around setting up meetings.[397] He stated that meetings between ministries should always be arranged through the Permanent Secretary, but at times the TAs were setting up meetings between ministries through other TAs and the PS was not aware of the meetings.[398]

Conclusions

The working style of the individual TA greatly influences the transfer of ownership and ultimately the success of the technical assistance project. Technical Advisors who adopted an indirect and open working style, similar to the Solomon Islands style of working, were accepted and appreciated by SIG counterparts, as were TAs who respected the SIG hierarchy and worked within the government department's management structure. In these cases the SIG counterparts felt more empowered and were more involved in how the TA carried out capacity building.

Many TAs, however, had direct and closed working styles, which had detrimental effects on the transfer of ownership and on capacity building of their SIG counterparts and SIG government departments. When a more western, direct working style was used and/or the advisor had a more closed working style, SIG counterparts often resented the approach and it led to some SIG counterparts becoming disengaged from their job, and therefore had a demotivating effect on them. It also meant that SIG counterparts were often dis-empowered.

[395] Interviewees 1, 11, 14.
[396] Interviewee 1.
[397] Interviewee 14.
[398] Interviewee 14.

In some cases it appeared that TAs were not aware of different working styles and used the same approach as they would in their own countries. This may have been due to their lack of understanding about the Solomon Islands, lack of capacity building skills, or both.

Some TAs did not always follow the correct SIG protocols, some criticised the government and did not always respect the confidentiality of information that was gained while working in the government department. These actions led to a loss of trust and respect and in some cases had a disempowering impact, in that SIG counterparts felt the person who was supposed to be building their capacity was in fact acting in ways that were detrimental to their government department.

Overall the research indicates that the TA's working style can have a huge impact on the amount of ownership the SIG counterpart has over their capacity building and the capacity building of their government department. Technical advisors working in the Solomon Islands need to adapt their working style to be more conducive to the Solomon Islands working style, to ensure their working style encourages the SIG counterpart to have more ownership and to take the lead in their own capacity building and that of their government departments.

4.3.3 Operational Perspective – Implementation of Technical Assistance Projects

Introduction

As previously mentioned, many aid experts believe that recipient countries should be heavily involved in the implementation of technical assistance projects and therefore that ownership of the implementation of the technical assistance projects should be transferred to the recipient country.

This section will therefore focus on how much ownership has transferred to the SIG in the implementation of their technical assistance project.

Findings

Many SIG public servants believed that TAs were implementing 'blueprints' from their own countries and not working with the SIG to ensure changes were appropriate in the SIG context. One SIG counterpart believed that TAs were not trying to bring in 'blueprints' of their own countries' policy and procedures into their government department, but she believed that it happened in other government departments.[399]

Another SIG counterpart stated that often systems that were brought in from the TA's home country were too complex and fell over after the TA had left.[400] Another SIG counterpart stated 'They [TAs] are here to give advice, not here to impose their values on our plans that we try and put in place.'[401]

One SIG manager said that sometimes TAs tried to bring in their own countries' systems, but she had stood her ground to ensure that what the TA was doing was useful for the Solomon Islands.[402]

There were some issues of inconsistency of advice between successive TAs. One SIG manager stated that sometimes a TA would say the previous TA was wrong and that the work had to be done in a different way.[403] He stated 'we end up

[399] Interviewee 13.
[400] Interviewee 9.
[401] Interviewee 11.
[402] Interviewee 6.
[403] Interviewee 4.

reversing back, turning back, and reversing back.'[404] The frustration caused by the differing views had led some of the agencies under that government department to refuse to have any further technical assistance.[405]

As mentioned in sections 2.3 and in the RAMSI review discussed in section 3.4, TAs can often end up doing more of the inline work rather than capacity building to ensure that they meet the requirements of their ToR. Although most TAs have ToR that state their main objective is capacity building, TAs often find it challenging to balance their capacity building role with actually getting the work done. One TA stated that although they should be focused 100% on capacity building it was more like 60% technical and 40% capacity building.[406] One SIG counterpart stated that when TAs were here it was all about getting the job done, rather than capacity building.[407]

One SIG manager stated that for TAs 'there is always the temptation when you know everything and you know your counterpart is slow to grasp what you want them to do, just to do it yourself.'[408] He went on to say that he always has to remind TAs that they are here to build capacity.[409]

One TA stated that there was always a constant battle going on in your head between that careful balance of building capacity and doing it yourself.[410] Most TAs find it difficult to miss a deadline and will usually undertake work, if the counterpart is unable, to ensure the job is completed on time. In some cases this is expected by both the SIG and donor and therefore, as mentioned above, there is a careful balance between capacity building and doing the job that needs to take place.

One SIG counterpart expressed concerns over consultants being paid to do specific work rather than it being completed by SIG counterparts and their TAs. When asked why he thought this was done, he replied 'There was a lot of money

[404] Interviewee 4.
[405] Interviewee 4.
[406] Interviewee 18.
[407] Interviewee 13.
[408] Interviewee 5. (paraphrased)
[409] Interviewee 5. (paraphrased)
[410] Interviewee 16.

with the project and they [the donor's project manager] had to spend the money'.[411]

Solomon Island Government counterparts who had TAs that worked part time and therefore were not in the country full time, stated that they had no control over when the TA would be in-country.[412] If the SIG counterparts had particular issues they needed help with, they didn't feel they were able to ask the TA to be available in-country for them. One SIG counterpart stated 'when I need them they are not here and when I don't need them they are here.'[413]

Another SIG counterpart stated that the communication between herself and her TA was not good and she never knew when the TA was coming or for how long, which made planning very difficult.[414] Largely the SIG counterparts concerned did not have an issue with the TA being part-time. They stated that TAs who communicated well and who could be contacted when they were not in-country worked well: it was when the SIG counterpart had no idea when the TA was coming that caused the problems.

There was frustration expressed about the amount of time it took to teach TAs about Solomon Island systems. This was compounded when there was a series of short term advisors.[415] One SIG manager stated that having to keep training successive TAs about the way that processes and systems worked in the Solomon Islands was de-capacitating for SIG counterparts.[416]

The majority of SIG counterparts considered that they did not have much say in how the technical assistance project was being carried out by the TA. One SIG counterpart stated that they were not dictating the terms and they had little control.[417] Another SIG counterpart stated that 'it's just done to you, and not just you but the whole government department.'[418]

Conclusions

[411] Interviewee 14. (paraphrased)
[412] Interviewees 12, 13, 14.
[413] Interviewee 12.
[414] Interviewee 13.
[415] Interviewee 4, 7.
[416] Interviewee 1.
[417] Interviewee 13.
[418] Interviewee 14. (paraphrased)

When a TA tries to implement a 'blueprint' of his or her own country's systems or processes into another country with little thought to the local context, it can be very ineffective. Apart from the process simply not working, it also usually means counterparts feel little 'ownership' of that new process or system. In this research many SIG counterparts felt that TAs were imposing 'blueprints' of home country systems that were not appropriate to the SIG context.

There were some real issues with in-consistency between successive TAs which had led to a lot of frustration, even to the point where some agencies were refusing to take on TAs. In some cases, this lack of consistency in advice meant that SIG counterparts became disengaged with the processes and felt disempowered. This led to reduced feelings of ownership around both the technical assistance project and the SIG counterpart's role.

As mentioned in section 2.3, the rewards for many TAs are focused on meeting output targets and not on achieving long-term sustainable development. Outputs are considerably easier to measure than outcomes. For example, it is easier to measure whether a corporate plan has been completed than whether capacity of the counterpart has been built, but achieving outputs does not necessarily mean that capacity has been built.

How the ToR have been set up, often by the donor organisation, can influence how the TA implements the technical assistance project. If the TA is going to be measured against the outputs that have been achieved and not on the capacity that has been built, then ultimately the TA will become more driven to achieve outputs. The focus on 'getting the job done' rather than capacity building has had a disempowering effect on some SIG counterparts. As with other research, this research found that TAs in the Solomon Islands also struggled with the right balance of capacity building and getting the job done.

Solomon Islands Government counterparts often felt disempowered when consultants were brought in to do the work of the SIG counterpart, especially when the SIG counterpart did not work closely with the consultant. Often consultants are brought in for specific types of work, particularly when the job needs to be done quickly, but if not handled properly using consultants can cause the SIG

counterparts to be left out and have little control over matters for which they are responsible.

Part time TAs can have the added benefit that SIG counterparts do not get too reliant on their TA, but it is dis-empowering if the SIG counterpart has no say over the times when TAs are in the country. From an ownership point of view, the ideal situation would be the SIG counterpart being able to dictate when the TA would be in-country. This may not always be practical, but SIG counterparts should at least have some say as to when they require the TA to be in-country.

Overall, the research indicates that the implementation of technical assistance projects are largely controlled by TAs. Some more experienced SIG counterparts and SIG managers were able to have more influence over how TAs implemented their work, but most SIG counterparts felt that the project was being done to them rather than with them. They therefore felt little ownership in implementation of their technical assistance project.

4.3.4 Operational Perspective – Recruitment & Performance Management of Technical Advisors

Introduction

This research has shown the importance of ensuring the right individual TA is selected to work with each SIG counterpart. It is important that the TA is able to build strong interpersonal relationships, has a working style that is appropriate in the Solomon Islands context and can implement capacity building technical assistance projects in an empowering way.

As discussed earlier, allowing SIG managers ownership of TA recruitment and TA performance management is important in selecting the best TA. It is also important for the SIG counterpart, the person the TA will work with most closely, to have some ownership of the process. For this research, it was therefore important to assess whether SIG counterparts were involved in the recruitment and performance evaluation of their TAs.

Findings

The research revealed that there was only one instance where a SIG counterpart was on the interview panel for recruitment of a TA.[419] Generally SIG counterparts had no say in who it was that they were going to be working alongside. Most SIG counterparts indicated that they would like to be part of the interview panel or have some say in the recruitment of their TA.

One of the main reasons for SIG counterparts being excluded from the recruitment process was that SIG recruiting processes routinely involved only high level SIG public servants in the recruitment process.[420] Another contributing factor was how the donor determined the composition of the interview panel.[421] As mentioned earlier, one donor allowed only one SIG representative, which would normally be the SIG manager, and therefore did not allow a SIG counterpart to be present as well.

Solomon Islands Government counterparts were not usually involved in any formal assessment of TAs performance. One donor, however, has recently changed its procedures so that SIG counterparts will be formally involved in the performance management of the TAs.[422] A donor representative stated that on some projects SIG counterparts were formally involved in the performance management of TAs and on others they were not formally involved at all: it did not have a consistent approach across all of its projects.[423] Other donors did not include SIG counterparts formally or informally in the performance management of their TAs.

Conclusions

Although all interviewees agreed that the relationship between the SIG counterpart and the TA was vitally important to the success of any capacity building technical assistance project, only one SIG counterpart had ever been involved in the interview panel and selection of their TA.

While in many government recruiting processes only senior staff are involved in the recruitment process, recruiting a TA is quite different from recruiting an in-line government

[419] Interviewee 10.
[420] Interviewee 5.
[421] Interviewee 4.
[422] Interviewee 4.
[423] Interviewee 19.

employee. The TA will often be working closely on a day-to-day basis with the SIG counterpart for one to two years.

Ensuring that the SIG counterpart has some say in selecting the TA, ensures that there is some 'buy in' from the SIG counterpart, and may increase the likelihood that the TA and the SIG counterpart are compatible working together.

It is a positive sign that one donor has started to include counterparts in the performance reviews of TAs. Having counterparts involved in the formal performance reviews of TAs may influence how TAs work with their SIG counterparts.

If the SIG counterpart has more involvement in the TA recruitment and performance management processes, it may address the issue of power imbalance between the two. Technical advisors may see the SIG counterpart as more of a colleague, or an equal, and be more responsive to SIG counterparts' needs.

Overall, more ownership of TA recruitment and TA performance management needs to shift to SIG counterparts to improve the compatibility of TA and SIG counterparts and the overall success of capacity building technical assistance projects.

4.3.5 Operational Perspective – Conclusions

Ownership of projects by the SIG decreases as we move away from the management level towards the operational level. Although there are signs of some ownership shifting from the TA to the SIG counterpart, in general the TAs have most of the control over how capacity building technical assistance projects are carried out. Interpersonal relationships and the working style of individual TAs are crucial to the success of the project and to the level of ownership that is given to SIG counterparts.

Technical Advisors who have an open and non-direct working style, and can work within the Solomon Islands context, can have very successful relationships. If a TA has an appropriate working style, it can help foster SIG ownership of changes that the TA wants to implement, and help empower SIG counterparts to take the lead in their capacity building process.

When TAs do not build good working relationships with their SIG counterparts or when a TA does not work within the SIG working style, invariably the SIG counterpart/TA relationship breaks down or becomes ineffective. According to interviewees there had been a mix of successes and failures, but when relationships had broken down there had

been lasting detrimental effects, and in some cases the SIG counterpart had ended up being dis-empowered and ownership of their SIG role had decreased.

The research found that SIG counterparts were generally not involved in how the implementation of their capacity building or the capacity building of their government department was carried out. The implementation was largely controlled by the TA. Many SIG counterparts felt left out of the implementation process and with little ownership felt that the project was being done to them rather than with them.

There are some positive signs that more ownership is shifting to SIG counterparts in terms of assessing the performance of TA, but SIG counterparts have little control or ownership over the recruitment of their TA. Giving SIG counterparts more say in who they are working with could help improve the compatibility of TA/counterpart relationships and the success of capacity building technical assistance projects.

4.4 Chapter Four - Making Ownership Real in the Solomon Islands – Summary

The research in this chapter has focused on assessing whether ownership is shifting from donors to the SIG, at both the managerial and operational levels. The research entailed interviewing SIG managers, donor representatives, TAs and SIG counterparts. Interviewee standard questions were based on technical assistance issues identified in aid literature and donor reviews of projects in the Solomon Islands.

In reading the research conclusions, it is important to consider that as the research is based on interviewing people, there is a methodological issue that the research is reporting on peoples' perceptions. The research also has no comparative study to assess the results by.

This research is not suggesting that increasing recipient country ownership is the only way to improve the effectiveness of technical assistance projects, but it is one approach that is strongly identified as important in the aid effectiveness literature (as reviewed in Chapter 2). Unlike many reviews of technical assistance projects in the Solomon Islands, which focus on what is working and what is not, this research takes a different angle. It uses issues identified in aid literature and donor reviews as a basis to assess whether the SIG is obtaining more ownership in its technical assistance projects.

The results of the research indicate that the SIG has more ownership of technical assistance projects at the management level than at the operational level. SIG managers have more ownership in technical assistance projects than SIG counterparts do.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness has been instrumental in both the SIG developing its own NDS and in SIG managers understanding their rights as a donor recipient. The higher the level of experience and confidence of SIG managers in dealing with donors and in managing their government departments, the more they are able to demand what they need in their technical assistance projects, and therefore the more ownership they have. Technical assistance projects are now largely demand driven by the SIG, compared to the past when provision of large numbers of RAMSI TAs was supply driven by the donor.

The research found that although more donors are using funding models that promote recipient country ownership, such as budget support and SWAps, there are many conditions in place that restricted full ownership. In some cases this was justified due to corruption issues. Some donors' restrictions on other forms of funding are unnecessarily impeding the funds being used.

Solomon Island Government ownership of technical assistance projects could be increased if SIG managers were given the details of the full cost of TAs and, where there are no major financial management issues, TAs were funded through budget support type models. The main reason why donors do not transfer more ownership in their aid funding to the SIG is related to corruption and poor financial management processes. Solomon Islands Government ownership in aid funding should continue to be transferred to the SIG, but at a rate that is in-line with improvements to financial management issues. It could therefore take time.

Most SIG managers felt they had involvement in the TA recruitment process, except in the case of one donor, however they did not always have complete ownership over the process. If donors allowed SIG managers to make the final TA recruitment decisions, it would help reduce the amount of inappropriate TAs that are selected.

Technical advisors generally reported to SIG managers on operational issues, and to their recruiting donor on all other issues. The amount of SIG manager ownership in the TA performance management process is relatively low. If SIG managers played a key part in the TAs performance management, it may influence how TAs approach their roles and also help technical assistance project outcomes to be more in line with the needs of SIG managers.

As with other research, it is recommended that donors in the Solomon Islands give more ownership to SIG managers in the TA recruitment and TA performance management processes. The transfer of ownership in this area should have few barriers in the SIG and therefore willing donors should be able to transfer ownership in TA recruitment and TA performance management processes quite easily.

The majority of SIG counterparts had very little ownership of the technical assistance projects they were involved in. Many SIG counterparts felt that their

capacity building technical assistance project was being done to them, rather than with them.

There were some exceptions: where TAs had built strong relationships with counterparts and were able to give counterparts space to make decisions and take control; or where the SIG counterparts had years of experience both in their technical field and with working with TAs. Some TAs had a good working relationship with their SIG counterparts, but still had most of the control at the operational level of the technical assistance project.

Many of the impediments to the transfer of ownership to the SIG counterparts were at the individual TA level. Capacity building technical assistance projects usually involve two individuals working closely together. Major issues arose when the TA lacked relationship and capacity building skills and had little understanding of the Solomon Islands indirect working style and environment.

As other research has shown, many TAs are selected for their technical ability and not for their capacity building skills. Selection of TAs in the Solomon Islands is no exception. Although people management skills might be seen as part of capacity building skills, it is important to consider them separately. If TAs are expected to bring about change, and work closely on a daily basis with a counterpart, they need to have excellent people management skills. Obviously the technical skills of TAs are also important, but TAs will not be able to use their technical skills productively if they have not created a respectful, trusting and open relationship with their SIG counterparts. If TAs do not create good relationship with their counterparts, it can leave counterparts feeling demotivated and disempowered.

Solomon Islands Government counterparts are often middle managers who respect hierarchy, and are generally by culture not confrontational. Technical advisors are often seen as high-ranking, so if a TA has not built a good relationship with the SIG counterpart, he or she may not be aware that the counterpart is not happy with the way the TA is approaching the project, as the SIG counterpart is unlikely to express their concerns with the TA. When this situation occurs there is often little sustainable benefit from the TA's work.

When the TA/counterpart relationship completely breaks down, it not only affects the counterpart but can effect the entire organisation, and hinder any successive

TA's ability to build trusting and open relationships. The cumulative effect of many poor TA/counterpart relationships has taken its toll in the Solomon Islands, with many Solomon Islanders feeling some 'TA fatigue'.

Many of the examples raised by SIG counterparts were of negative experiences with TAs. The proportions of good and bad experiences recounted may not have fairly reflected the actual rate of good and bad technical assistance experiences. If so, this is likely indicative of the significance of the effect that bad experiences have had on those interviewed.

Many SIG managers and counterparts had concerns over the large amount of aid money that was spent on TAs. Many SIG public servants felt that there were more cost effective ways to build their capacity and the capacity of their government department such as: overseas and in-country short term training courses; short term work attachments in other governments' corresponding ministries; and formal tertiary education.

Where SIG public servants thought a TA would be useful, they preferred to have a local or regional TA, or a TA that had experience in the Solomon Islands, who could understand the working environment and the people of the Solomon Islands better.

Technical Advisors need to have more than excellent technical, capacity building and people management skills, they also need to be able to adapt their working style to be more in sync with the Solomon Islands indirect and open working style, and to understand and comply with the SIG protocols. Donors need to work closely with the SIG to ensure that contracting TAs to work with SIG counterparts is the best way to build capacity of their public servants and their ministries.

Solomon Islands Government counterparts usually had little involvement in the recruitment and performance management of their TAs. This was partly due to the SIG practice of involving only high level SIG managers in the recruitment processes and partly due to some donors restricting the number of SIG officials on the interview panel.

Recruiting a TA is quite different from recruiting a SIG staff member, and therefore a different approach should be taken in their recruitment and performance

management. Allowing SIG counterparts some ownership and control over the person they will be working with will improve the compatibility of the TA/counterpart relationship and increase the commitment of the SIG counterpart to the project.

Allowing the SIG counterpart more input into the TA recruitment and performance management processes may also help balance the power relations between the two as the TA and counterpart may be seen as standing on a more equal footing. Changing the power dynamics of the TA/counterpart relationship may also support the SIG counterpart to take the lead in the project.

The research at the operational level also found that SIG counterparts felt that TAs were often driven by the output goals of their ToR, and that focus hindered the amount of capacity building the TAs carried out. As other reviews have indicated, this research found that the TAs' ToRs need to set goals that encourage TAs to achieve better capacity building outcomes.

Donors, and SIG managers that deal with donors, usually have experience in aid development issues, and this has helped SIG managers have more ownership at the management level. As mentioned in other research, TAs usually have little experience in aid development issues, as their expertise is usually in a different field. This has been reflected in relation to the Solomon Islands in this research. To ensure there is a better understanding of the importance of key principles such as 'ownership' in aid development, TAs and SIG counterparts should receive more training in aid development principles.

In summary, this research has found that the SIG has more ownership in its technical assistance projects at the managerial level than at the operational level. The findings are indicative of the amount of focus donors have had on recipient country ownership at the managerial level compared to the operational level.

Conclusions

Since the beginning of modern aid, the importance of recipient country ownership has dipped in and out of vogue in aid development discourse. Since the 1990s, recipient country ownership has been seen as a way forward in improving the effectiveness of aid delivery and has been reflected in budget support models, PRSPs and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Technical assistance projects, which consume 25% of all ODA,[424] have been heavily criticised in aid literature for being largely ineffective. Some aid experts go as far as saying they have achieved the exact opposite of their core goals of capacity building; i.e., that they have prevented the emergence of local capacity.

As ownership is seen as a key way forward in improving aid effectiveness and as technical assistance consumes such a large part of worldwide ODA, assessing whether ownership has transferred to the recipient country in technical assistance projects is very important. The SIG has been a large recipient of technical assistance and is therefore a useful government to use as a case study in this research.

This research has focused on both the management and the operational side of technical assistance projects. If ownership is not transferred to the recipient country at all levels of aid delivery, then it is not being as effective as it could be.

The research sought the views of SIG managers, donor representatives, TAs and SIG counterparts. The research has found that the SIG has more ownership of its technical assistance projects at the management level than at the operational level. To transfer more ownership of aid funding at the managerial level, issues around corruption need to be further addressed. Determining the level of preparedness of the SIG before the transfer of more ownership of aid funding takes place, should be an open joint process, involving both the SIG and the donor, with measurable targets.

There are some managerial level changes that could be made more immediately including: giving SIG managers more control over TA recruitment and TA

[424] OECD, *Perspective Note: Technical Co-operation for Capacity Development*, OECD, (2011), pg 4.

performance management; and improving TAs ToR to include more capacity building goals.

At the operational level, and especially between TAs and SIG counterparts, there was little transfer of ownership to the SIG counterpart. Many SIG counterparts felt that the technical assistance projects were being done to them rather than with them. Impediments to the transfer of ownership at the operational level were largely related to poor working relationships between TAs and counterparts and were often due to the individual TA's lack of: capacity building skills, people management skills, knowledge of SIG working style and environment, and understanding of the importance of recipient country ownership.

If SIG counterparts could take the lead in their capacity building, and in the capacity building of their government department, TAs' capacity building would likely be more effective for the SIG. It would also have more SIG commitment, and therefore will be more likely to be sustainable.

Often TAs are experts in their own profession, but they are not necessarily experts in aid delivery, capacity building or people management. It is therefore up to donors' to educate TAs about the importance of recipient country ownership when implementing technical assistance projects.

It is important that SIG managers select the most appropriate SIG counterparts to work with TAs. It would be beneficial if SIG counterparts were given more training in aid development issues, such as the Paris Declaration, so they could have a better understanding about aid principles, such as ownership, and how that applies to them.

Technical assistance work is unique. Technical advisors work in challenging environments, but TAs remuneration often reflects the challenging environments and the specialist skills required. In most cases, a challenging environment should not stop the TA transferring ownership to the counterpart. Donors and SIG managers should ensure that TAs have the right capacity building skills, people management skills and technical skills, and ensure that deploying a TA is the best way to build the capacity of the counterpart and the government department.

The majority of SIG counterparts are ready to have more ownership in technical assistance projects, so it is up to TAs to ensure their approach and working style encourages SIG ownership. This can be challenging for TAs who have been consultants or managers and are used to being leaders, but they need to let the SIG counterpart take the lead in SIG capacity building technical assistance projects.

If ownership of technical assistance projects is going to be 'real' for the SIG, then the large focus of recipient country ownership at the managerial level needs to continue, and there needs to be a much stronger focus on SIG ownership at the operational level.

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