CHAPTER 3

The dynamics of effective aid delivery: A Fiji case study

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Yumi mas toktok wantaim na wokabaut wantaim. Tasol yu mi mas wok wantaim tu (Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin). We must talk together and walk together. But we must work together too.
(Sir Rabbie L. Namaliu, 2009, p. 18)

INTRODUCTION

At a macro level, there is evidence to suggest that aid programmes can contribute positively to the national development of a country. This chapter shares insights about the effectiveness of the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID) and European Union aid delivery mechanisms of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project (LTCUP), which was undertaken in the 2000s. The AusAID component of the funding was F$25 million over a five-year period, commencing in June 2003, while the European Union component was signed in September 2004 for F$45 million (MOE, 2005). At a general level, it can be asserted that this aid programme was central to education development reform in Fiji. It contributed to significant gains in teacher development and to the upgrading of teacher qualifications. However, questions have been raised about whether the aid initiative has fully addressed the needs of the Fiji Government and its people.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the various levels of relevance of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project against the Paris Declaration and the Pacific Principles of Aid. In doing so, the effectiveness of aid delivery for educational development may be better understood. As well, a clearer appreciation is gained for the ongoing monitoring of down-stream implementation, well after donor funding has ceased. This chapter introduces the aid *bure* model of aid delivery, wherein the measure of effectiveness of aid delivery is linked to four yardsticks (effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and responsiveness) and founded on five principles (ownership, accountability, alignment,

LAUTOKA TEACHERS COLLEGE UPGRADE PROJECT

The Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project initiative was deemed timely as it addressed the needs of the Fiji Government and its people in the upgrading of the Teachers College. Previously, the Fiji Islands Education Commission had recommended the upgrade to take place (Ministry of Education, 2005). However, a central concern was whether or not delivery of the assistance worked effectively, given the following overall concerns: What things were done effectively? What things were done less effectively? What things were done but did not bring about any change?

According to O'Keeffe (2004), it is all very well to speak about development procedures, but what matters is whether they are making a positive difference to development outcomes in the recipient country. So, in May 2003, AusAID contracted Cardno ACIL (an Australian contract management company) to assume responsibility for the overall direction of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project initiative and its required services. Including the design phase, the project was scheduled to be implemented over a period of three years and eight months. Even at this early stage of the project, there were urgent administrative and procedural issues needing attention. For instance, front-line staff on site lacked decision-making authority; project staff seemed to be following one set of bureaucratic procedures, while local staff were expected to follow another; and expectations were constantly frustrated. The different parties involved frequently found themselves at loggerheads.

The project was set up in such a way as to allow for the maximum involvement of relevant stakeholders in the design process. It also allowed for a range of 'interim' implementation activities. The major activities were intended to inform the project design in three ways:

- To provide an explicit input into project design, through clarification of issues and the development of appropriate project response strategies.

- To initially make a specific contribution to programme and course review and, in so doing, provide clarification on strategies, objectives, timeframes and resource requirements for the project proper.

- To encourage positive shifts in institutional structure, culture and teaching practice activities during the project implementation phase that would lead to sustainable results.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

In the course of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project implementation, Fiji locals were not engaged as advisers and a substantial amount of money was paid to the Australian consultants who were hired to provide long-term and short-term technical assistance for the durations of their participation. All the advisers were from different Australian institutions. Even early on in the project implementation phase, the absence of local consultants had a critical bearing on the ownership and the sustainability of the project. A notable improvement, however, was that some of the project equipment and library resources were purchased from local companies and Information Technology distributors. This placed responsibility for servicing and replacement in local hands and boosted the local economy. Unfortunately, the local purchasing did not include the procurement of air-conditioning units which were needed to prolong the life of all the IT equipment.

The Upgrade Project employed seventeen overseas technical assistants, all from various Australian universities. There was a Project Leader and a Technical Director. Except for the Project Leader, all the other technical assistants flew into the country periodically for various periods of time. The availability of local expertise was entirely ignored and as a consequence the unit cost was particularly high. The non-inclusion of Fiji locals proved to have a negative bearing on the ownership and sustainability of the project.

The Project Leader was responsible for providing the overall management of the project, including financial and human resource management. He was also tasked with passing on technical knowledge and skills to the national principal and senior management group of the Lautoka Teachers College. It was interesting to note, and somewhat surprising, that the cost schedules for two the long-term personnel, the Project Leader and the Technical Director, were not disclosed in the project documents. In my examination of the costs, however, I calculated their costs to have been AUD $1,047,375. The Project Leader would have been paid AUD$837,900 over a period of three years, while the Technical Director would have been paid a quarter of that, AUD$209,475, for a nine-month input. Based on this estimation, between them the two long-term advisers accounted for 20% or a fifth of the total allocation of the AusAID project funding. The total technical assistance cost of the short- and long-term advisers added up to one-third of the funding for

The sum total of consultation fees added up to more than A$2.2 million. The amount, which excluded the consultants' hotel accommodation and travel costs, added up to a substantial sum of the total funding of the project. This issue of aid dollars being repatriated to Australia is referred to by Baba (1987) as the 'buccaneering' of Australian aid assistance.
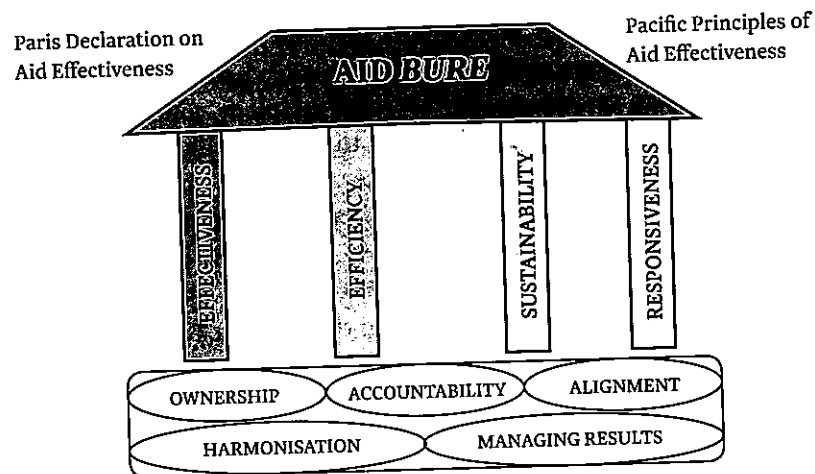
Such disparities of shared benefits point to issues of aid negotiation, which has long been considered to be the shared responsibility of both donor and recipient. While this theoretically holds true, both parties are required to demonstrate genuine partnership in forging a mutual relationship between equals. Dollar and Levin (2006) have argued that donor governments everywhere are overstretched in terms of cash, human resources, skills and expertise and should therefore limit committing their resources only to what recipient communities are unable to do for themselves. This applies to countries like Fiji. However, it remains doubtful that donors in general exercise their power in a fully respectful, egalitarian manner. Often preference is given to a paternalistic approach that subordinates locals, making aid donors appear to be indispensable providers (Mascarenhas & Sandler, 2006).

A series of lessons can be drawn from the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade experience. Not least among these is that aid recipients should be encouraged to engage and instigate proactive actions in various phases of negotiation including aid delivery. To provide for optimum learning and the capturing of useful inputs, a flexible rather than a blueprint approach should be adopted.

The relationship between the donor and recipients is also critically important. One cannot function and engage fully without the other. Unequal engagement tends to lead to what Manor (2007) has called illusions of the mind, a deception which, if unchecked, will not only undermine the sense of a shared perception of reality, but will also damage and hinder regional relations; in extreme cases, this can lead a nation and its people down the path of delusion and poverty because of unsustainable aid projects. This may be aggravated by indebtedness and when economic pressure builds up, exacerbating already wide disparity gaps. Poorly negotiated initiatives can add economic pressure to already critical situations. What arose from my research findings was a relatively simple, concrete model which might well serve to guide and support the formation of better relationships. I call it the aid ...

AID *BURE* MODEL FOR AID DELIVERY

The last decade has witnessed a paradigm shift in many aid donor countries and agencies from a traditional aid delivery arrangement to a more collaborative and sustainable approach, primarily concerned with poverty reduction. If developing countries have to sustain important aid initiatives, which are largely imposed as top-down approaches, such strategies must be dropped, not least because they have failed to address the most relevant needs of recipient countries (Wendt, 2000).

Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

Pacific Principles of Aid Effectiveness

AID *BURE*

EFFECTIVENESS · EFFICIENCY · SUSTAINABILITY · RESPONSIVENESS

OWNERSHIP · ACCOUNTABILITY · ALIGNMENT
HARMONISATION · MANAGING RESULTS

DONOR
- User friendly aid policies
- Donor support for capacity-building
- Aid conditionalities
- Need to work within explicit government-owned framework
- Sensitivity to country context

RECIPIENT
- Priorities and aid planning
- Ownership
- Strong public management of fund
- Human resource and institutional development
- Good governance
- Decentralisation
- Community-building and organisation involvement
- Integration of aid projects into budget process

Source: Adapted from Ruru, 2010, Field data

The word *bure* in Fijian refers to a Fijian house. The aid *bure* model is premised on the idea that well-planned practical aid interventions focus on two sets of key relationships: donor interests and recipient needs. In this model, these sets of relationships are necessary to reinvigorate thinking on the effectiveness of aid delivery. A model can be described as a heuristic device, a practical guide to focus on and metaphorically contribute to the debate on aid effectiveness. The aid *bure* model is a simple, concrete image of the aid delivery processes.

In the aid *bure* model there are four yardsticks (effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and responsiveness) which act as pillars that support the aid *bure*. These yardsticks rest on the foundation of the five key principles (ownership, accountability, alignment, harmonisation and managing results) and underlying indicators of aid effectiveness. The five key principles, together with the global (Paris Declaration) and Pacific regional (Pacific Principles) agenda of aid effectiveness, form the stringing of foundations with aspirations. The four pillars have the capacity to support the aid initiative but only if the global aid measurements and indicators have already been achieved through genuine partnership.

PARTNERSHIPS

According to Overton and Storey (2004), effective partnerships can be built in ways that reinforce unequal donor-recipient power relationships. Particularly, local people—the recipients—must first be empowered to define their own problems and seek their own resources and solutions so that they maintain ownership and projects demonstrate independence. In seeking to grow true partnerships, donors and recipient institutions need to know if strong cross-party commitments to a set of common objectives can be established. Often the developing country is the necessary starting point for organising cooperative efforts through relationships and mechanisms that reflect their particular local circumstances (Greeley, 2007a). For example, civil society and local institutions often have an indispensable role to play in any development initiative. To ensure greater partnership and sustainability, local institutions need to be involved in the early days of any project undertaking. When engaging in any bilateral agreement, stakeholders need to be committed to ensure project sustainability.

In education projects, local consultants need to be engaged in the Initiative. In the Pacific context, consultants need to forge good working

relationships with regional institutions like the University of the South Pacific because, at the end of the project tenure, institutions like this will be available to pick up the work and use the results as benchmarks for future sustainability and meeting the needs of the local people. The University of the South Pacific had only minimal involvement in the implementation phase of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project, although it was mentioned in the planning stage of the project. Projects in the Pacific region will not be sustainable if the relevant stakeholders are not included in the project design and consultation phase. According to Greeley (2007b), local partners in civil society should espouse exclusivity to maintain the ownership that is needed to maximise aid effectiveness. Innovative approaches need to be recognised in identifying the strengths and consequences of the Initiative at the institutional and organisational levels (UNESCO, 2000).

The strength of development assistance and development cooperation can be fully realised through the achievement of goals and objectives. In the aid *bure* model, the two cornerstones involved in the partnership of any aid intervention are the aid donors and the aid recipients. Valderrama (2004) emphasises that nothing shapes the future directions of aid more than the commitments that donors and recipients make between them. These commitments can develop or destroy their relationships but either way they define aid effectiveness.

For a genuine relationship to be formed, each party must acknowledge the uniqueness and autonomy of the other. Therefore neither of the two can claim to be superior to the other, but both need to complement each other. When a partner assumes a superior position, then the efficacy of a genuine aid partnership is seriously compromised. Genuine partnership is forged when each partner observes appropriate aid protocols.

DONORS AS PARTNERS

Often development aid is not as effective as it could be partly because donors are not living up to their commitments. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2000), some donors still maintain old-style relationships with developing countries by imposing policies rather than maintaining an open dialogue with countries. The policies that donors propose should be based on the outcome of participatory policy dialogue with the stakeholders rather than imposing ones that are based on the opinions of their (donor) experts. The policies

as a means of empowering the recipient country. Donors need to direct aid to be country-owned, harmonised, aligned with national plans, mutually accountable, results-based, and supported by shared policies. A minimum of conditions should be imposed by aid donors, thereby shifting away from 'tied aid'. Needless to say, not all donors are willing to 'untie' their aid (United Nations Development Programme, 2000). As noted by the United Nations Development Programme (2000), under such policies aid cannot be harmonised and can result in the recipient country struggling under the burden of donor-initiated activities.

In the spirit of participatory engagement, the recipient country needs to forge genuine consensus with donors when drawing up their project agreements. Similarly, if donors' needs are to be properly consistent with the recipient country's development strategies, the donor countries' interests should complement the recipient's needs. A mutual understanding is crucial in assuring ownership and the sustainability of any aid intervention.

RECIPIENTS AS PARTNERS

When aid recipient governments question aid effectiveness, they tend to be asking for better aid harmonisation. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2000), the New Partnership for Africa's Development has asked donors to change the way they deliver aid, calling instead for mutual accountability and better policy coherence. The recipient country needs to adhere to certain criteria and forge genuine partnerships which take into account the interests of the donor. The recipient country needs to have a clear set of development priorities. When this is in place, donors are less likely to impose their own interests and are more likely to enhance and comply with the recipient country's vision and development strategies. Support for the realisation of such a vision will help aid donors by assuring them that the recipient country will claim ownership and take responsibility for the sustainability of the project. However, the acknowledgement of the formation of consensus arrangements should be established in the early planning stage.

The recipient country needs to strengthen its financial accountability through transparent public financial management procedures. A sound accountability mechanism will assure strong utilisation of donor assistance. Donors are interested in the efficient and effective use of their funding assistance. Donor countri...

misappropriation of donor funds can weaken the aid relationship and result in the failure of development projects. It is important that capacity-building through human resource development prepares local personnel to support and manage projects following principles of best practice.

Donors want their assistance to be delivered effectively. Therefore it is the responsibility of the recipient country to establish a reliable socio-economic framework to manage their domestic affairs through good governance and strong policies to encourage growth (Collier & Dollar, 2001). The involvement of various stakeholders can ensure greater participation of community partners in any aid project. Participation will also empower people to contribute to community development, which in turn can promote initiatives taken because the sense of ownership is assured. The recipient government needs to integrate the aid project into the budgetary process to ensure that, once the donor withdraws, the recurrent costs necessary to sustain the Initiative are able to be met.

PLANNING

Sound planning is crucial to any integrated project (Gallus, 2004; Singer, 1965) in order to ensure that all elements of the Initiative are in place. The planning stages of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade showed that it was biased toward the aid donors rather than the aid recipients, particularly those who were to benefit from the Initiative. Although some locals were involved in the planning stage, their engagement was not critical enough to address some of the culturally sensitive needs of the Lautoka Teachers College community. A similar experience was seen in the curriculum course design, where the basic planning did not avoid the dysfunctional outcomes of existing Lautoka Teachers College diploma curriculum and the Fiji National Curriculum Framework. However, it was assumed that further improvement was to have been implemented following a planned review of the courses' accreditation.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The importance of harmonising donor interests and recipient needs cannot be overestimated. Once tied into an ongoing interactive relationship, a more harmonised strategy gets rid of a centralised, top-down and inflexible arrangement, issues which resulted, again and

The aid *bure* model incorporates the moral imperatives of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and uses its principles as yardsticks against which development progress can be measured. Internationally the five partnership commitments of the Declaration (namely ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing results, and mutual accountability) should form the foundation of the development compact between the developed and developing partners. As a part of this compact, the developed partner is expected to increase development assistance, and adhere to practices that will enhance the impact of aid on poverty reduction, promote equality, increase growth, build capacity, and accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (OECD, 2006).

Both donors and recipients need to adhere to these commitments. However there are at least three major challenges to the principles of the Paris Declaration which are also articulated in the Pacific Principles on Aid Effectiveness. Consequently, if aid is to be effective, these must be addressed. First, it is inappropriate for recipient countries to accept a subordinate role, especially when it is completely unnecessary (for example, undervaluing the skills of locally qualified people and qualifications). In the first instance, local expertise should be acknowledged and given priority over hiring overseas consultants.

Second, if there is a demonstrable shortage of people with the appropriate administrative/management competencies (for example, in planning), and the recipient country lacks the expertise to run a compatible aid relationship, it is clearly in the interests of the donor partner to build the capacity of local people. This exercise to address local needs was not undertaken by the donors as part of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project. Thirdly, the absence of transparent and ethical administrative practices, resulting in a history of nepotism, cronyism and corruption (for example, charging fees for assigning building and consultant contracts), should not be ignored. It is the aid recipient's responsibility to address this weakness which, when left unresolved, easily undermines the quality of aid effectiveness. During the Upgrade Project there were signals of unethical practices which required attention but were not dealt with.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The achievement of policy coherence is crucial to ensure that donors accept the need to bring other policies in line with development goals (Hunt & Morton, 2004). Central government departments (the National Planning Office and the Ministry of Finance of Fiji) need to be involved in aid policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Coxon (2003) believes that a consultative process needs to be established to ensure the participation of all groups within the society, particularly those most affected by policy decisions. The World Bank (1998) has also stated that development assistance is more about supporting good institutions and policies than about providing capital. Pasteur and Scot-Villiers (2006) argue that, at the end of the day, it is the commitment to reducing the aid governance gap that will lead to appropriate aid policy changes, and better decisions for effective action can then be made. In other words, projects are deemed to perform better when based on clear policies (Collier & Dollar, 2001; Greeley, 2007b; World Bank, 2001). To ensure effective and efficient aid implementation, there is a need for continuing efforts to be made to achieve greater collaboration between donor communities and multilateral organisations (Narayan, Chambers, Shah & Petesch, 2000). All parties need to adhere to their commitments and give their stamp of approval to aid policies which contribute to the development of quality aid delivery (Rosser, 2007).

The developed and developing countries that agreed to the global agenda, as outlined in the Paris Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, seemed serious but the nature of their commitments is not entirely clear. There is, therefore, a need for greater advocacy to generate greater public awareness within national governments if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved and to benefit from the profile they deserve. Greater policy alignment is required to ensure that harmonisation is enhanced. This will reduce the duplication of assistance efforts and encourage joint donor/recipient formulation of country assistance programmes. There is a need for more publicity through regular donor and development assistance recipient meetings (Kelep-Malpo, 2005). The policies and conditions of development should be clarified to promote adherence, encourage cooperation through political will ratification, and strengthen advocacy of consensus through political will (Dorovolomo, et al., 2008). This global consensus could be promoted nationally through the implementation of the recommendations.

FOSTERING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The very idea of international aid and its ethos of 'helping people to help themselves' suggests the notion of leadership which is essential to project success (Caar, McAuliffe, & MacLachlan, 1999, p. 67). Therefore development, and the engendering of effective leadership skills, is important and needs to be fostered by leaders (Nayacakalou, 1975; Sanga & Walker, 2005). This reflects an increasing emphasis on inspiring people and encouraging their participation rather than the more dictatorial or bureaucratic approaches often associated with management (Knights & Willmott, 2007). Friedman (2000) further adds that organisational cultures need to change from the top down. If there is commitment to this principle, then guidance can be provided by existing leaders to sustain the process once the project ends (Pascoe, 2004). There is a need for visionary leaders who can make a difference. To legitimise their role and to be accepted as agents of change in any aid initiative, such leaders have to be dynamic and be seen to be out in front (Manor, 2007).

In development projects, people with good management skills are required as they were in the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade initiative. In Fiji, if institutional development is to proceed, personnel need to develop the negotiating skills to openly liaise with the Ministry of Education and other funding agencies. There is a need for greater capacity among senior officials to manage and to sustain projects. However, recognition of the role of support staff is equally important because they play a critical role in seeing that things are done (Massell, 1998; Malphurs, 1996; Shuster, Larmour, & von Strokirch, 1998). Leadership often boils down to one basic question, namely, what degree of worker participation is appropriate? In an aid project like the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project, this ranged from minimal consultation to local people having full control over key decisions at the planning, implementation, review, and evaluation stages.

PROGRAMMING APPROACHES AND DELIVERY

A shift away from the traditional three- to five-year project approach to a more flexible programme approach also appears to be a better arrangement to meet the needs of the Fiji (and Pacific) people. The project approach tends to treat the design documents as blueprints rather than working documents. This allows for some marginal changes

are sometimes required. In contrast, a programme approach often uses a rolling annual plan and a budget framework, which greatly increases flexibility. As a continuum, the project approach is at one end and the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) is at the other. The SWAp approach affords more flexibility because donor agencies tend to put money into the partner agencies' own budget process across a whole sector such as education. Unfortunately the Government of Fiji has not adopted this approach to aid delivery and continues to entertain a bilateral arrangement where the national government scrutinises and determines all foreign aid.

A proper analysis of the benefits of a programme approach is best done through a 'contribution analysis', which not only allows the achievements to appear in the log frame's outputs and outcomes, but also considers whether they have made any contribution to the partner agency's strategic objective outcomes (Roche & Kelly, 2003). In short, donors should not simply focus on outputs but, rather, whether they have made a difference to the recipient partners, particularly to the lives of the people.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Engaging local governments and putting them in the driver's seat of development processes require effort. The results achieved by building local capacity to undertake sound political, economic and social policies can be rewarding. As underlined by the World Bank (1998), institutional capacity to manage and coordinate aid is often a condition that is missing from country-led partnerships. Achieving ownership and building capacity go hand-in-hand and should be approached simultaneously as mutually reinforcing processes. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2000), the concept of capacity-building in asserting the demand for strengthening the key governance of institutions is a high priority. The term embraces many activities, from establishing a transparent legal framework to developing local entrepreneurships. More generally, the combination of partnership and capacity-building, while carrying the potential for tension, lies at the heart of efforts to promote sustainability (Schoeffel, 1985).

LOCALISATION AND OWNERSHIP

Under the Paris Declaration, development partner assistance and aid projects should be locally owned as well as aligned with national policies, plans, and programmes. There is a need for greater awareness for ownership at a broader community level of public ownership. Ownership of programmes and projects by national governments is increasingly recognised as critical to the success of any intervention. Evaluation findings show a strong link between the level of local ownership and the performance of a project (United Nations Development Programme, 2000; Buchan, 2003). Increased local support due to buy-in and ownership by the national government is one of the attributes of enhanced project sustainability and achieving project objectives.

The importance of a fundamental shift in attitude that values the involvement of local people in managing and implementing aids cannot be overemphasised. According to the Canadian International Development Agency (2004), locals need to take responsibility for the destiny of their development initiatives. It requires building the capacity of state institutions and changing public service cultures through an attitudinal shift (Knights & Willmott, 2007). As locals, we have to take care of our own issues and solve our own problems. The need for greater localisation of aid effectiveness requires not only being involved in implementation, but also having the capacity to sustain quality aid delivery. As locals we need to contextualise and localise aid effectiveness principles through critical analysis and adding new goals without blindly accepting other people's aid principles. To make the most of potential development initiatives, we must insist on participatory and consultative processes that give local citizens opportunities to influence overall programme design and implementation (Caballero, 2004; Manor, 2007).

However, these participatory and consultative approaches should complement and enrich efforts to strengthen national capacities for sustainable development. As a basic principle, locally owned country development strategies and targets should emerge from an open and collaborative dialogue between local authorities with civil society and with external partners about their shared objectives and their respective contributions to the common enterprise (Curtin, 2004). Each donor's programmes and activities should then operate within the framework of a locally owned strategy in ways that respect and encourage strong local commitment, participation, capacity development, and ownership

partnerships will vary considerably, it is possible to suggest areas in which undertakings might be considered by partners as part of their shared commitment to objectives. Although the design and the delivery of the project can guide the process, local factors are most decisive in determining project outcomes (Pascoe, 2004).

To give substance to the underpinning belief in local ownership and partnership, we must use channels and methods of cooperation that do not undermine those values. Acceptance of the partnership model, with greater clarity of the roles of partners, is one of the most positive changes we are proposing in the framework for development cooperation (Crocker, 2008). In a partnership, donors should not attempt to do things *for* developing countries and their people, but rather *with* them. It must be seen as a collaborative effort to help them increase their capacities to do things for themselves. According to Nyangu (2004) there is a need to develop and implement a 'work with' and not 'talk at' attitude to project delivery.

DEMOCRACY

In the 1990s the promotion of good government and democratisation and their relationship to political conditionality came to be listed on the agendas of international aid agencies (Burnell & Morrissey, 2004a). As a result, democracy has been mentioned by donors as an important precondition for aid to be effective, and there is at least some evidence that donors have acted accordingly by giving more aid to democratic governments (Burnell & Morrissey, 2004b). Political instability and capacity gaps have escalated recently in Fiji and have resulted in a situation where the best government policies and development-partner funded projects cannot be properly implemented. McGillivray et al. (2006) argue that political instability and aid effectiveness have been analysed by further augmenting the aid growth with an index of political instability. The index is the weighted sum of coup and regime changes and is intended to measure instability of political élites or institutions similar to the Fiji experience. Donors have had major concerns about the standards of governance, transparency and accountability that have, in the past, led to the withdrawal of development partners or a reduction in development partner assistance (Larmour, 1997).

However this is not to ignore that donors also pursue their own ~~economic and political interests~~ when deciding on aid (Alesina & Dollar,

domestic governance to attract donor governments that are keen to support 'value for money' initiatives and feasible returns on investment through development assistance. Delors (1996) argues that education development cannot give everyone the means to play an informed and active part as a citizen except within the framework of democratic societies. Political relations between the Fiji Government and major development partners, particularly Australia, New Zealand and the World Bank, have sometimes triggered a lack of trust on both sides. Thus, it is hypothesised that aid will have a greater impact on growth in countries that have embraced a greater degree of democracy.

PROJECT MONITORING AND REVIEW

When a project document is reviewed for sustainability, it is very important to carefully examine the provision made for physical structures and resources. The recipient government's commitments need to be reviewed to see if they address the challenge of recurrent costs. The inclusion of appropriate local input adds strength to local voices and develops a better appreciation of available skills. This capacity, which up till now has been minimal, becomes especially important when Technical Advisory Groups are set up to monitor and evaluate processes. In light of this, the inclusion of local consultants is essential. Not only do they have the necessary skills, but they are also competent in other ways. Their local knowledge is invaluable and places them in a position where they can contribute more than foreign counterparts. Right from the start, the voices of all stakeholders need to be made prominent in the decision-making process and not just those of a selected few. In the case of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project it was obvious that there was a lack of representation of the aid beneficiaries or aid recipient. As a result, a major concern is to find ways of measuring aid impact more effectively and evaluators need to realise that the impact of development aid on people can be measured without their being closely involved in the whole process. It is through 'participatory evaluation' lenses that evaluators are able to see things from the viewpoints of local aid recipients.

CONCLUSION

It has been stressed that each developing country and its people are ultimately responsible for their own development. Thus, the developing country is the necessary starting point for organising cooperation efforts, through relationships and mechanisms that reflect the particular local circumstances. Some developing countries will need special help in building the necessary capacities. Development cooperation at the regional level and along sectoral lines is also important. However, these approaches should complement and enrich efforts to strengthen national capacities for sustainable development. As a basic principle, locally owned country development strategies and targets should emerge from an open and collaborative dialogue between local authorities and civil society and with external partners, about their shared objectives and their respective contributions to the common enterprise. Each donor's programmes and activities should then operate within the framework of that locally owned strategy in ways that respect and encourage strong local commitment, participation, capacity development, and ownership. While the particular elements of partnerships will vary considerably, it is possible to suggest areas in which undertakings might be considered by the partners as their commitments to shared objectives. As illustrated by the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project, local engagement in all aspects of the project phases is crucial for the assurance of the sustainability of the Initiative.

If aid effectiveness is to be measured by the achievement of Millennium Development Goal targets, then the greater part of the international aid vote should clearly be invested to achieve this result. However, the issue of the amount of money made available is not only the way to achieve Millennium Development Goal targets. Are the aid donors seriously willing to re-examine their aid policy inherited from their colonial predecessors? Or will change be the watchword? The few indications we have so far, from campaign statements and the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness, have pointed to the need for change. Yet the critical test remains the extent to which these are seen in practice. Can donors meet the standards and guidelines laid down in Paris? Can true partnership be formed? The case of Fiji is particularly challenging. Clearly, traditional donors are in no mood to extend aid when political issues command such a high profile. Will other donors enter into a significant aid relationship with Fiji?

Although the guidelines for aid effectiveness have been agreed to and signed off, they have yet to become fully operational. Developed countries need to improve the quality of international development assistance not only by providing more money to reduce poverty, promote equality, increase growth, build capacity, and accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, but also by improving the way aid is managed. As stated, aid should focus on poverty eradication, targeting key social services such as health, education, water and sanitation, while ensuring that cross-sectoral issues such as gender, human rights and environmental preservation are also taken into account. However, the focal question is whether the delivery of the aid is working effectively. Based on the example of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project, it is not enough to simply speak about procedures. Greater attention to these wider issues would result in better development outcomes that meet the needs of local people.

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