



Leadership Matters

# Background Notes on Leadership

The WBI Leadership Development Program

WORLD BANK INSTITUTE

*Promoting knowledge and learning for a better world*

# **Background Notes on Leadership**

**The World Bank Institute Leadership Development Program**

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# **1. Purpose of Document**

These notes reflect work in progress and are provided solely for the information of the participants in Capacity Day 2007. The notes cover some of the issues that will be discussed during the event and are intended as a starting point for further dialogue and discussion and not to provide conclusions.

## 2. What can we Generalize about Leadership?

Some 2500 years ago Socrates argued that leadership is always situational: a leader has qualities and especially professional or technical knowledge that are specific to the situation, hence not transferable. But he also argued the other side of the coin: a good business leader, he said, would also make a good military commander for both shared certain generic leadership skills – such as being good at choosing the best people to work with, and being able to identify and work with the right allies.

Knowledge about leadership accumulated through decades of research into leadership issues seems to suggest that certain leadership characteristics that are useful in one field or culture are likely to be useful in another. If this is in fact the case, then despite significant regional differences, we would in principle be able to design courses and programs which – especially with tailored alterations – would be effective in any part of the world.

Three basic building blocks of a good leader – or generic leadership skills – may include the following:

- (i) The capacity to develop and mobilize stakeholders around a shared vision;
- (ii) The ability to ensure effective translation of that vision into concrete outcomes; and
- (iii) A commitment to integrity and ethics and the practice of accountability.

Decades of work on leadership issues have however also yielded an emerging understanding of leadership as an institutional issue, not just the issue of the skills and attributes of an (exceptional) individual. Leadership never takes place in a void, but always in a particular context. For some providers of leadership development services, this context is at country level, and what matters most here - according to decades of experience - are the institutions and values that shape a country's governance.

A symbiotic relationship exists between the quality of a country's leadership and the quality of its governance. Donors who are committed to help a country fulfill its own vision are likely to be interested then in supporting leadership programs that are not limited to training individuals but which also address capacity constraints systemically at other levels. This is in line with the New Partnership Model that is emerging for development assistance and which is likely to guide much of the development assistance in the future.

### **3. Leadership Development: Going beyond the Individual**

#### **Issue**

The demand for leadership training is significant. The supply of leadership training is vast. Access to scholarly books, journals, and website information is easy, if not overwhelming. Yet the demand for leadership training and capacity building continues. Most leadership programs focus on the broad range of identified leadership competencies.

In this note, it is suggested that public sector leadership training must focus on the environments within which leaders work, not only on the competencies required to effectively navigate those environments.

#### **Introduction**

Leadership is a key factor in good governance and the successful implementation of public sector mandates. Public sector leaders work in uniquely complex environments with multiple stakeholders and demands. In addition, some public sector leaders are working in environments with the further challenges of major conflict, significant poverty and/or limited development.

In recent years accountability has been at the heart of sound leadership practices<sup>1</sup>. Leadership competencies have been identified and corresponding training developed and delivered worldwide.

What is less common is leadership development focused on the environmental or “institutional” challenges of public sector leaders. These challenges are linked to the unique and special environments within which public sector leaders are working - the term and life cycle of government, the specific role of the leader, and the historical or cultural pattern of leadership within a given government. Leadership development needs to focus on political visions, specific strategies and timetables, as well as individual management and technical roles, in order to carry weight and sustain impact<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Leadership development: considerations**

The leadership development challenges facing the provider of such services are significant:

- Leaders are generally well educated and have been trained formally, frequently and variously on the many leadership competencies;
- Leaders are busy and the demands on them are multi-faceted;
- Leadership in the public sector is complex and leadership demands are immediate;
- Leadership training must be timely and relevant.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP. Leadership for Human Development: A UNDP Capacity Development Resource. June 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## **A stylized approach to leadership development**

In recognition of the existing supply of leadership development programs and the challenges noted above, there are a number of different institutional approaches to leadership development. Although some variations are required to accommodate unique political situations, a typical approach would focus on the practical needs within the context of the life cycle of government, which may be described as follows:

- Preparation for a government transition: Transitions of power represent a critical moment in our democratic systems<sup>3</sup>. Public sector leaders can contribute to a new government's smooth assumption of power by effectively anticipating their interests and preparing for their needs. A well planned and executed transition also contributes to the establishment of positive working relationships based on mutual trust and respect, and the public sector credibility necessary for effective planning and implementation of a new agenda;
- Prioritization and communication of a new government's agenda: Elections generate promises and raised citizens' expectations. New governments must *prioritize* and *communicate* quickly and effectively within the context of fiscal and practical realities.
- Policy, program and service implementation for results: Citizens anticipate *rapid results*. Identifying and managing the changes needed to ensure real and concrete results within the life cycle of the government may constitute one of the greatest challenges for public sector leaders.
- Ensuring a legacy: Political leaders expect to make a difference. The assurance and effective communication of legacy achievements demonstrates real leadership.

## **Tools for leadership development**

In order to effectively respond to these varying issues and demands, leadership development programs need to be individually and uniquely designed, with topics chosen to relate to specific partner priorities. The competencies that are required to address immediate commitments and challenges should be targeted. Further, such programs need to be innovative and flexible.

Tools and instruments that may be used for leadership development include:

- Peer-to-peer learning;
- Practitioner-to-practitioner arrangements;
- Access to best practice and lessons learned in other countries;
- Twinning;
- Mentoring;
- Coaching;
- Access to knowledge and information;
- Access to global networks;
- Case studies;

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<sup>3</sup> Donald J. Savoie, Editor. Taking Power: Managing Government Transitions. Institute of Public Administration in Canada, 1993.

- Learning seminars;
- Process-oriented practical pilots.

### **Factors for success**

Key principles for leadership development:

- Programs must be demand-driven;
- Programs/interventions must have clearly identified objectives;
- Programs/interventions need to be customized and designed through a participative approach, which is based on local needs, context, and culture;
- Programs/interventions need to address personal attribute development and not just technocratic skills. As such, interventions may use learning methodologies which are unfamiliar to those used to 'expert' or 'solution providing' models, and should be introduced carefully.
- The targeted audience for interventions should also include non-government actors - civil society and private sector representatives.

## **4. Rethinking the Leadership Development Industry**

### **Introduction**

As the world is shifting away from old-style management towards a new concept of good leadership, the leadership development industry (LDI) has exploded. Hundreds of leadership publications, training programs, consultancy techniques, best practice models, executive coaching and mentoring programs are now available and are helping private sector enterprises and governments to face the challenges of a constantly changing world.

All these concepts and methods have generated documented results in developed countries - where best practices in leadership development are readily available, as are the resources to obtain their delivery. The problem with the current market model, however, is that, until recently, developing countries were left out of this industry. This situation is, however, changing.

Developing countries still face extraordinary economic, social, and environmental challenges. Leaders from developing countries are increasingly pressured by the development community to be more committed to new governance models and to effect better development results. A new generation of national-level leaders in developing countries is now responding favorably to the population's needs and is now responding more consistently to their population's needs.

The aim of this note is to explore a variety of thoughts on the recent evolution of the LDI in developing countries – to provide a point of departure for further discussion and work. How can it be adapted to different cultural environments? How can it be made effective in poor countries? How can it be tailored to public sector needs, versus specific business imperatives?

### **Adapting to the specific context of developing countries**

The development and use of leadership approaches has grown over the last decades -- particularly in OECD countries. As a result, leadership concepts and tools are well adapted to rich countries where highly skilled human resources are widespread, where the processes of decision-making and implementation capacity are well organized, and where institutions are relatively resourceful. By contrast, developing countries usually struggle with resources of all kinds: human, financial, material, institutional and so on.

The governance environment is also fundamentally different in developing countries. The accountability framework is often weaker, lack of transparency is often a key issue, decision making processes occasionally fail to operate effectively and efficiently, the informal sector is ubiquitous, and economic, political, legal, and social systems may not accept the rule of law.

Another key difference is the cultural context. Leadership development specialists must be prepared to seek help in adjusting their concepts and tools to the cultural, social and religious particularities of the country in which they are asked to work.

Most principles for leadership emerged from private sector organizations. General Electric, Federal Express, Toyota, Johnson & Johnson are among the large companies that are associated with notions of successful leadership and change management. The philosophy, values and mission of these companies are very different from those of governments and non-profits. These concepts might be applicable to private sector organizations in developing countries. But in international development, the principles of country ownership and public sector accountability are major issues; leadership development concepts and tools are likely therefore to require adaptation to the public sector's unique characteristics.

These are some of the most important challenges that the LDI faces when it is implemented and adapted in developing countries. In order to adapt to the specific context of poorer countries, it must practice what it preaches and undergo some radical changes.

### **Rethinking the leadership development industry**

John Adair, a UK expert on leadership, identifies five areas where the LDI should adapt:

1. The LDI should be customer-focused. It should do market research into the emerging leadership development needs of nations and regions. This calls for innovations in content, methods and pricing.
2. With regard to content, the LDI has to stop simply selling Western concepts of leadership. There is now a body of knowledge about leadership which draws on traditions from around the world. Only LDI organizations who are masters of that emerging body of knowledge will survive in the new global market place.
3. The LDI, as in all other markets, is a competitive one. In the effective delivery of national leadership development strategies, however, only organizations that can work together as members of a team will find a place in the sun.
4. The natural tendency of the LDI is to seek to go up-market. High profits are generated by providing high-priced products and services to very few customers. In contrast, the developing world needs High Volume, High Quality, Low Cost programs. An LDI is needed which can operate in the new demanding environment, and in which scale and proven cost-effectiveness are major concerns.
5. To be successful, the LDI does need to offer services at a significant discount in the developing world; but not without reward. By working in the developing world, the LDI will become truly global and discover new vision and new sources of inspiration, which will enrich its service delivery in its more lucrative markets, and, more importantly, do its part to help create a world free of poverty.

## 5. Strengthening the Focus on Outcomes<sup>4</sup>

### Introduction

This note explores accountability as it pertains to leadership, and does so within a focus, not on leadership per se, but on outcomes. Making an orientation to outcomes the fundamental cornerstone of all technical assistance, including leadership support, can help support leaders to achieve the development goals that make a real difference for their people.

Leaders need a variety of capacities to conceptualize and communicate both what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. They also rely on the capacities of the systems around them to implement their vision. What kind of support do leaders need in order to increase accountability for development outcomes? How can civil society stakeholders be mobilized in this participatory process?

Donor consensus on the primary importance of outcomes is the backbone of present day development efforts and has given rise to increased donor harmonization in planning and implementation and the attempt to create common platforms for knowledge sharing, joint analysis, and mutual accountability. Mechanisms like the PRSP are catalysts for defining expectations on both country and donor sides.

Iteratively assessed implementation and effective reporting hold leaders to account for what they achieve and can expand the capacities of governing systems. National leaders face some key challenges in creating a culture of results and shifting their governments toward an outcomes orientation. For an outcomes focus to be fully owned and successfully integrated within national policy initiatives, the leadership culture must itself be outcomes driven, and not just focused on compliance, or on implementing new administrative and operational systems.

This often means changing law, policy, and institutions. Viewed simplistically, the 'public sector' is an administrative, bureaucratic culture that emphasises the management and measurement of inputs, activities and outputs. A results-oriented culture, however, focuses on the achievement, monitoring and reporting of outcomes.

The former requires public managers and leaders to be familiar with and apply appropriate laws, hierarchies, regulations and procedures; the latter requires managers and leaders to diagnose problems, design solutions, take risks, and develop adaptive implementation approaches. Successful leadership involves an appropriate combination of new and old ways of operating; ensuring effective administrative accountability is

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<sup>4</sup> This paper is an adaptation of a background paper entitled "Leadership and Accountability: Creating a Culture of Results," from *The Third International Round Table on Managing for Development Results*, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, February 5-8, 2007, which can be found at [http://www.mfdr.org/RT3/Glance/Documents/Leadership\\_final.pdf](http://www.mfdr.org/RT3/Glance/Documents/Leadership_final.pdf)

combined with results-focused innovation and mobilization of stakeholders and resources.

This shift may also necessitate leadership development interventions and support that promotes the pluralistic and broad-based growth of leaders in all walks of society – for existing leaders, but also for emerging leaders of the future – youth, representatives of disadvantaged groups in society, and social activists.

There is a need for a generic leadership paradigm that connects leaders across the political, private and civil society sectors, accounting for the different emphases of different cultures and regions, but identifying and building on commonalities.

Over the last two to three decades, it has become clear that while people may have different leadership proclivities, there are certain dimensions of leadership which are key to development in a wide array of cultures and contexts, and that they can be cultivated. These can be summarized as follows:

#### Recommendations

- Political will is vital; understand and involve political decision makers in time; map political processes in the country to keep tabs on what is driving politicians.
- Ensure effective integration of short-term concerns of politicians and long-term development objectives.
- Use political processes (e.g. elections, parliamentary debates) to ensure that focus on outcomes is on top of the political agenda.
- Feed politicians with PRSP results at critical moments in the political process.
- Politicians should be held accountable for outcomes through participatory process involving civil society organizations. The Poverty Observatory approach in Mozambique is recommended as a model.
- It is important to transform data into information for policy makers; the delivery of statistical data should be timely, user friendly and accessible for policy makers and align to the policy-making and budget cycle

1. Vision: the Change Dimension. This is the capacity to engage various constituencies to produce a shared vision of the future, identify realities to be addressed to reach the vision, and to inspire, motivate, and mobilize others to achieve the vision/change. It includes the ability and willingness to address difficult or controversial issues, such as gender equality, that require debate and the longer-term investment so fundamental to sustainable development;
2. Effectiveness: the Competence Dimension. This is the capacity to: (i) diagnose underlying problems/issues; (ii) prioritize among multiple and competing challenges; (iii) find solutions (technical capacity); (iv) mobilize stakeholders; and (v) implement (management capacity) (vi) learn and adjust;
3. Accountability: the Integrity/Values Dimension. This is the commitment to serve the public good, to personify individual and professional ethics, and to champion accountability relationships that inspire mutual trust in institutions, communities, and society as a whole.

## **Creating Effective Accountability Structures**

Accountability of leaders is largely dependent on the existence of effective protocols through which civil society can question the actions of government, including any failure to deliver promised development results. Development interventions must include supporting the constituents, civil society groups, and other organisations that represent the demand side of the results agenda.

Accountability for outcomes also means abandoning the mentality that “accountability” is solely synonymous with being audit-ready. It means setting up appropriate legal and institutional frameworks to ensure that communication of results and feedback on performance are easily facilitated, and entrenching a statistical capacity, such that decisions can be evidence-based.

At country level, leaders have an enormous potential to communicate a future vision and to energize and mobilize the actors and momentum required for real change. The adoption of results-focused leadership and management mechanisms normally exposes capacity development needs at leadership and management level, making more obvious the need to identify and develop leadership in partner countries, and to create links and relationships among those leaders, potential leaders, and ex-leaders.

## **Conclusions**

Accountability to citizens and donors means accountability for outcomes. Leaders have a responsibility to produce real results. Using the principles described above and focusing on outcomes as the basis for developing new capacities:

- Supports the clarification of accountability relationships in the public sector to improve policies and service delivery;
- Reinforces transparency;
- Provides a common discourse, translating realistic expectations into results shared by multiple stakeholders, based on key agreements which are held consistent over time and tracked using statistical systems.
- Provides a way of simplifying the complex task of national leaders by providing an operational roadmap: a ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’, based on a clear model of change.
- Helps define leadership’s role and forms the basis of an ‘accountability contract’ between the state and citizens.
- Lets governments maintain ownership and manage their relationships with donors.

## **Issues for discussion**

- A results approach relies on learning from experience and acknowledging outcomes. What approaches can be used to develop this reflective culture given that leaders are also accountable for scarce resources?
- Institutional change is a long road: Are there examples which can assist national leaders in getting ‘quick wins’ and so win broader commitment to the longer process?
- How important are laws, policies and regulations for implementation?

## 6. Leadership Development: Targeting Youth

### Introduction

Leadership development activities targeting youth have indicated that beneficiaries of such activities can act as ambassadors for social change within their immediate communities. Their impact, however, is not through directive action or personal qualities (as might be implied by more individualistic models of leadership), nor necessarily through transformational or inspirational influence (although this could be used), but primarily through the facilitation of a perceptual shift from the idea of the leader as an exceptional (and usually senior) individual to the notion of ‘everyone as a leader.’

### From “I” to “Us”

There has been a tendency for mainstream leadership theory to present leadership as the property of the “leader” and to contrast this against the role of the “follower” (who is invariably presented as someone who is, in some way, subservient and dependent). Even more inclusive models such as “servant leadership” (Greenleaf, 1970) and leader-member exchange theory (Katz and Kahn, 1966) support this notion, despite giving rather more attention to the role and importance of followers in the process.

Such relatively static representations of leaders and followers mask the embedded and systemic nature of these relations and the dynamic processes by which roles are negotiated and constructed. In reality, it is hard to identify a leader who is not also in some respect a follower, and vice versa. Within a given situation, which individual is most aware of what needs to be done and is taking responsibility to make it happen can continuously shift.

By combining the concepts of role taking, identity construction and the relational self, we can begin to map out a more accessible and sustainable mechanism for leadership and social change. These are not new ideas, but continue to receive lamentably little attention in the wider literature.

### Youth development programs

A number of lessons can be drawn from experience developing and implementing various leadership programs targeting youth. Effective programs:

- Address how young people can deal with issues of concern to them (participation, decision-making, education and training, employment, housing, etc.);
- Lead to an increase in self-confidence, new skills and competencies and have a positive impact on young people’s educational, or professional, pathway;
- Strengthen young people’s sense of solidarity through more extensive participation in community service activities;
- Encourage the participation of young people in democratic life and in systems of representative democracy, and to be active citizens in the civic life of their communities;
- Be planned so as to encourage young people’s initiative, enterprise and creativity;

- Contribute to the development and understanding of cultural diversity and fundamental common values by facilitating joint activities of young people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and thus developing the intercultural learning of young peoples, promoting tolerance and addressing non-violent conflict, in order to foster social cohesion;
- Reinforce co-operation in the field of youth (good practice exchange, strengthening organizations);
- Organize structured dialogue between the various actors in the field - the young people themselves, program staff, policy makers;
- Have a particular focus on less favored regions, with projects aiming at the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities who face multiple obstacles in terms of location (e.g. deprived urban areas, isolated rural areas);
- Improve young people's access to information and communication services and increase the participation of young people in the preparation and dissemination of user-friendly, targeted information products.

Eligible activities might include

- Training activities;
- Thematic seminars;
- Youth exchanges with an innovative content between different parts of a country, region or other countries;
- Voluntary service activities;
- Networking activities.

**References:**

Gergen, K.J. (1999): *An Invitation to Social Construction*. London: Sage Publications  
 Greenleaf, R. (1970): *Servant as Leader*. Center for Applied Studies

## **7. Evaluating Leadership Development**

### **What is evaluation?**

Evaluation is systematic inquiry about programs' logic, resources, activities, outputs and outcomes and impact; i.e. it is a process of collecting and synthesizing information or evidence in order to better understand or document the merit and worth of an initiative. It is retrospective in nature, but will often have a prospective dimension as the evaluation report will include recommendations on how to improve the ongoing program or future programs, or replicate an existing program elsewhere. At the same time, such efforts also contribute to building capacity for better future evaluation systems.

### **Why evaluate leadership development?**

Simply put, evaluation has three overriding purposes: accountability, learning and decision making. It helps document intended and unintended outcomes (accountability), and it provides insights into the change process that has brought about these outcomes (learning). Thus, it can encourage more comprehensive discussion about the continued relevance of a program and on what works and why. In WBI, evaluations are used inter alia to help demonstrate how a targeted organization, or a country's institutions, policies or enabling environment have changed as a result of the program or initiative. This information can then be used to make choices about next steps or future efforts (decision making). Evaluation is also sometimes used to fine-tune a proposed or existing leadership development intervention as it can assist by providing observations and insights to guide a program's inevitable changes and evolution. This is particularly important in leadership development programs; demands on leaders constantly change and there is therefore sometimes an element of "moving goal posts" which means that the role of evaluation is not only to track if objectives and goals are being met, but also if these remain relevant and priority in the light of new insights and changing circumstances.

### **What do we want to know?**

Evaluation is basically about asking questions, and identifying the right evaluation questions is the first step in a good evaluation. For leadership development, critical questions would include:

- What difference does leadership development make?
- What types of programs and support have been most effective in enhancing leadership capacity?
- What outcomes and impact can be expected from leadership development?
- Is the investment in leadership development worthwhile?
- How can leadership development efforts be made sustainable?

Many of the leadership development programs and initiatives which donors, including the WBI, support are conceived in response to a country's or an organization's strategic needs. Any effort to develop specific competencies, build leadership capacity or create a shared leadership culture, for instance, is driven by a larger strategic or organizational

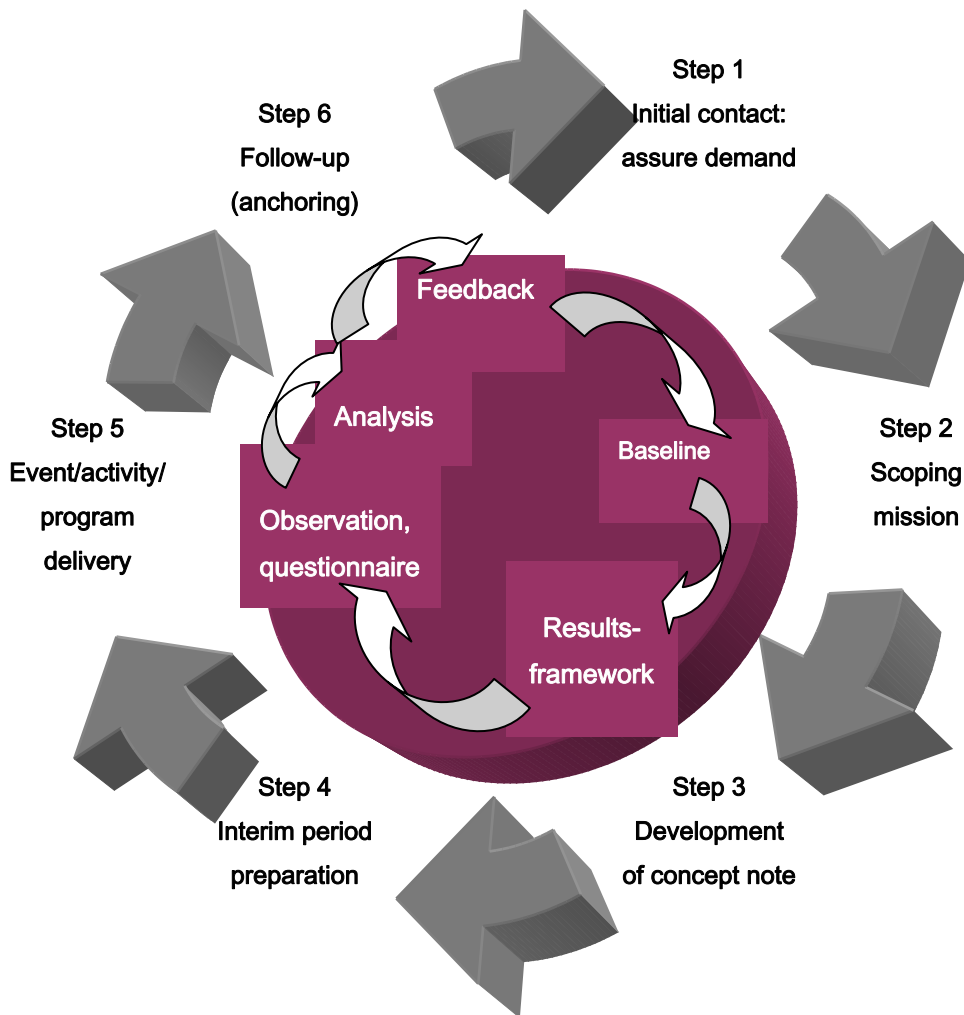
goal or demand. Evaluation, then, should assess the strategic purposes of the initiative as well as the quality and effectiveness of the initiative itself.

For WBI this means looking at what the outcomes and eventual impact is at three levels: the level of organizations, the level of institutions and policies, and the level of a country's enabling environment. As such, the focus is not on the individual, but on the change individuals initiate and the ensuing impact at the three levels described.

### **When to initiate the evaluative process?**

Ideally, the evaluation process should be initiated – and be integrated in - the design process of a leadership development program - as shown in the box below. To have full effect, it should be a concurrent and integrated process that accompanies the design and delivery process and engages both the donor and the host country/beneficiaries

### **Aligning design and delivery with M&E**



## What are the preconditions for good evaluation?

For an evaluation to be able to fulfil the purposes stated above effectively, evaluative evidence must be available. Therefore, when developing a new initiative, a good monitoring or performance management system should also be developed to allow tracking of individual output, intermediary outcomes, and indicators on the process of developing leadership capacity.

## How to evaluate leadership development?

The specific designs and methodologies of leadership development evaluation will vary depending upon the nature of the leadership development program and the organizational or country context. Some generally acknowledged good practices include:

- Working closely with local counterparts in order to build M&E capacity - evaluative processes contributing to building such capacity;
- Enhance the evaluation mindset of participants in leadership programs: using evaluation effectively also accelerates desired changes;
- Involve stakeholders in the process in order to appropriately consider multiple needs and perceptions;
- Align the design and delivery process with the Monitoring and evaluation process;
- Clarify outcomes to the extent possible with stakeholders (recognizing that there may be different kinds and levels of outcomes, which may also change over time);
- Discuss the purpose of the evaluation and how information will be used before beginning the evaluation;
- Use a variety of evaluation tools so as to arrive at solid findings.

## Evaluation Mindset: A Quality of Good Leadership

An evaluation mindset is not for evaluation specialists alone. In fact, a good leader who is committed to the “New Partnership Model of development”<sup>5</sup> will also be committed to managing for development results and would hence have understood the need for an evaluative mindset and the value of an evaluation culture. Indeed, “People can improve their effectiveness by adopting an evaluative perspective as a natural part of the way work is done. Leaders who have a process for learning from the successes and trials of their work are typically more successful than those who do not.”<sup>6</sup>

Leaders with an evaluation mindset typically:

- **Ask questions:** an important skill is asking the “right” question;
- **Facilitate dialogue:** a key ability is to bring together diverse points of view and through this gain enhanced understanding and consensus;
- **Reflect:** reviewing ideas, understandings and experiences leads to greater insights and understanding;
- **Examine underlying values, beliefs and assumptions:** uncovering values, beliefs and assumptions helps leaders understand that their perspective is one among many.

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<sup>5</sup> A model that emphasizes country-driven development supported (rather than led) by donors (see IDA 15: Selectivity and Performance: IDA’s country assessment and development effectiveness)

<sup>6</sup> Centre for Creative Leadership

## **Evaluating Evaluation**

A true evaluation mindset will not content itself with the results of the evaluation, but will also evaluate the evaluation process itself. Indeed, how the evaluation process is conducted may contribute to the overall learning outcome and therefore needs to be assessed. Further, evaluations should also contribute to enhancing the evaluative capacity of the target beneficiaries - where the evaluation process itself needs to be reviewed from this perspective with a view to continuous improvement.