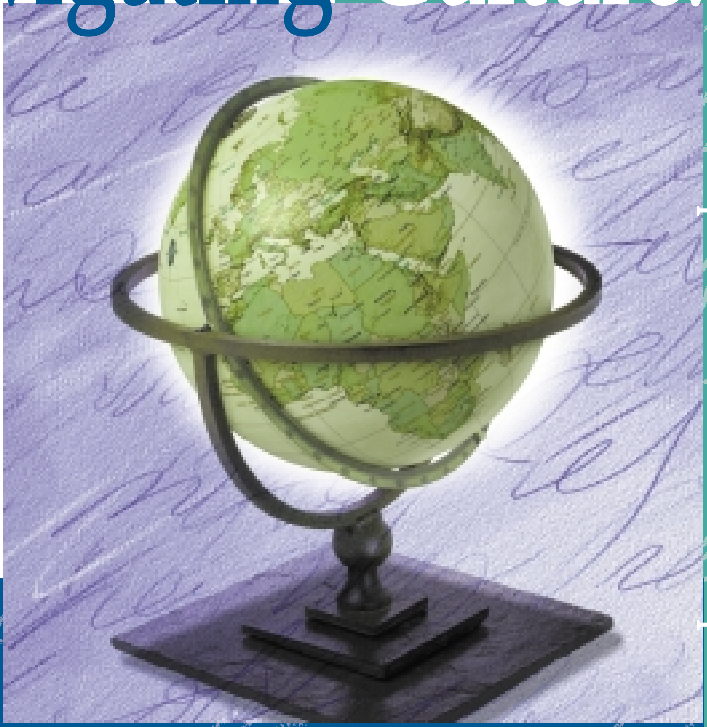
Pekka Seppälä Arja Vainio-Mattila

Navigating Culture:

A road map to culture and development



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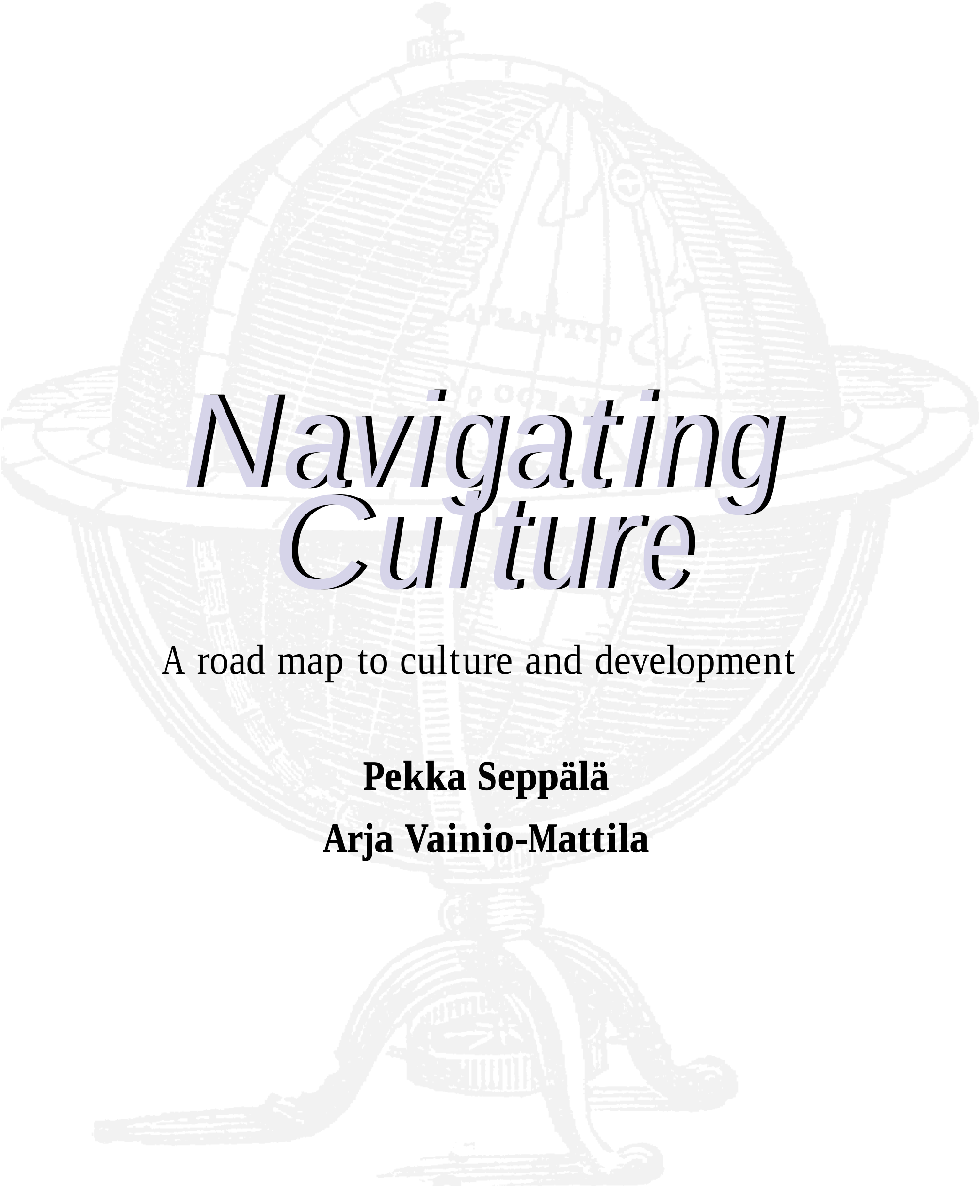

Navigating Culture

A road map to culture and development

Pekka Seppälä

Arja Vainio-Mattila

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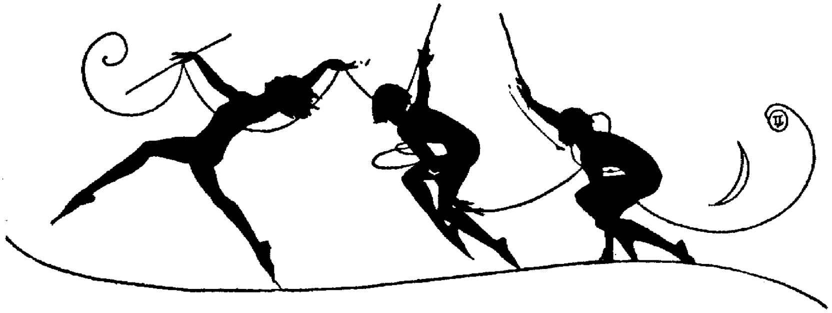
Navigating Culture:

A road map to culture and development

This manual has been written to facilitate your explorations of the impacts of culture on development, and the impacts of development on culture. It offers discussion on the meaning of culture in programme environment and suggests practical approaches to integrating cultural dimensions in programme implementation. **Navigating Culture** explores the programme cycle of development initiatives and various approaches to programme planning from the perspective of those engaged in the management and administration of development efforts, as well as from the perspective of those involved in their implementation.

Navigating Culture is intended for both individual investigation of cultural issues and as a basis for discussion with colleagues.



Dr Pekka Seppälä is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland.

Dr Arja Vainio-Mattila is an Assistant Professor of International and Comparative Studies at Huron College, University of Western Ontario, Canada.

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Foreword

In recent discussion on international development, issues of partnership and good governance have received considerable attention. The importance of mutuality, respect and clearly demarcated responsibilities has emerged as a significant theme, and has also influenced the dialogue that Finland pursues with its partner countries. This evolution in thinking is largely a consequence of political emancipation resulting in a keen awareness of each people's own way of life reflected in values, institutions and practices. In order to realize these cultural dimensions in implementation of development initiatives a capacity to adjust to different cultural settings is required. The encounter between two distinctive cultures is always a complex process in which not only simple technical facts but also fundamental values are at stake. The need for increased use of participatory approaches in project planning, implementation and monitoring are emphasized.

Navigating Culture is an inspiring piece of work because it gives tools for understanding the parameters of cross-cultural encounters in the context of aid. It discusses, questions and provides advice. The approach adopted by *Navigating Culture* makes it suitable reading by all involved in development issues, whether dealing in water or health issues and whether working as project level experts or centrally located administrators, consultants and NGO's. Although the book is tailored for the Finnish international development assistance I am happy , on behalf of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to recommend the book to our colleagues and partners everywhere.

Our thanks are due to the writers Pekka Seppälä and Arja Vainio-Mattila. We thank all those who took time to comment the work in progress, and Chantal Phillips for constructing the index. As this is a pilot manual in a difficult field, we hope to closely follow its use in practice for future revisions. The goal is to have the best possible tools at hand in order to open the doors for true participation of our collaborators and partners for sustainable development.

Irma-Liisa Perttunen
Counsellor
Adviser in culture and gender issues
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Department for International Development Cooperation

Why should you read on?

Navigating Culture is written for you who are interested in understanding the implications of working in a cultural context different from your own. It will not teach how cultures differ from each other, rather our goal is to introduce you to ways in which you can yourself, either alone or with others involved in the same programme, explore the opportunities the differences present. This "road map"will assist you in identifying potential supports to programme implementation in a specific environment. It will also assist in identifying obstacles, hopefully in time for them to be addressed.

Cultural analysis is a methodology you can use to understand how a development programme interacts with culture. Cultural analysis can be used both to understand how the programme impacts its surroundings and how the cultural context of the programme impacts strategies used to plan, carry out and evaluate development interventions. It is an integral part of any programme cycle.

Culture includes:

- values; such as religions, ethics, norms, myths, attitudes
- practices; such as traditions, gender roles, games, bureaucracy
- institutions; such as education, primary health care systems, community based natural resource management, village water committees, religious institutions

Navigating Culture will give you an opportunity to develop your skills in carrying out cultural analysis. It will also help you to develop a continuous process of reflection on culture which in turn will allow your programme to respond sensitively and appropriately within its cultural environment.

Navigating Culture includes many practical hints on how to integrate cultural sensitivity into a development programme. But the main focus of the document is on developing questions. We believe that skills in cultural analysis are best developed through a process of questioning assumptions, connections, and impacts. Ideally, cultural analysis is an interactive, participatory process involving all programme stakeholders. It is a process that leads to better understanding of the cultural context by all partners. Finally, cultural analysis can lead to a consensus about the appropriate strategies and consequently to a stronger commitment to those strategies.

How can cultural analysis benefit a development intervention?

CULTURE SENSITIVE PROGRAMMES are those programmes which have an impact of varying strength on the culture of its environment. Sometimes this impact is acknowledged, often it is not. CULTURALLY SENSITIVE PROGRAMMES strategize around culture. They acknowledge the existence of various cultures that exist within the programme environment, and identify supports and obstacles that exist within those cultures. Culturally sensitive programmes incorporate culture within their planning framework for successful programming and sustainable results.

International development work has changed radically over the last two decades. Gone are the times when a programme consisted of a team of foreign experts arriving to build, often in a short time, a structure which then eventually was handed over to the national government. Much has been written to critique this approach. The objectives of development interventions have changed. There is an increasing focus on capacity building, and on basing programmes on resources that already exist in the programme environment to ensure their continuity. Environmental, social and economic sustainability are important. The people involved are no longer passive target groups to be mobilized but active stakeholders with an interest as owners of the development process.

Today, the focus is on the cohesion of development work with parallel, and often overlapping, processes of trade and political relations. An individual development programme exists within this wider frame of analysis. Its setting is complex, it involves a variety of stakeholders and it is often based on the collaboration of several donors. Linking development programmes to a broader context has both increased the opportunities for developing their sustainability, and the challenge of needing to understand the complex cultural issues to be addressed.

In order to achieve these new objectives we need to approach development with an appreciation for aspects that are different from our usual professional capacities. A water engineer needs to understand how scarce resources have traditionally been managed in a community in order to facilitate the development of a management system for a new rural water supply. A forester needs to understand the distinct gender roles that are related to carrying out forestry related tasks in order to plan training appropriately. An energy specialist needs to understand how community members, women and men, use various sources of energy.

More precisely, cultural analysis is a tool to:

- plan and implement programmes which are sustainable because they are better integrated into the recipient culture,
- monitor cultural sensitivity and cultural impacts of the programme, including gender roles relevant to the development initiative,
- use cultural opportunities for innovative and participatory programme facilitation, communication and advertisement,
- predict cultural constraints in order to avoid bottlenecks during programme implementation, and
- devise tools for identifying potential conflicts and for managing conflict situations.

Lack of cultural sensitivity has been established as a major factor resulting in programme failure. For this reason, investment in cultural analysis at the early stage of programme cycle is a financially justified investment.

> *"People's participation is becoming the central issue of our time… People today have an urge – an impatient urge – to participate in the events and processes that shape their lives".*
>
> Human Development Report, UNDP

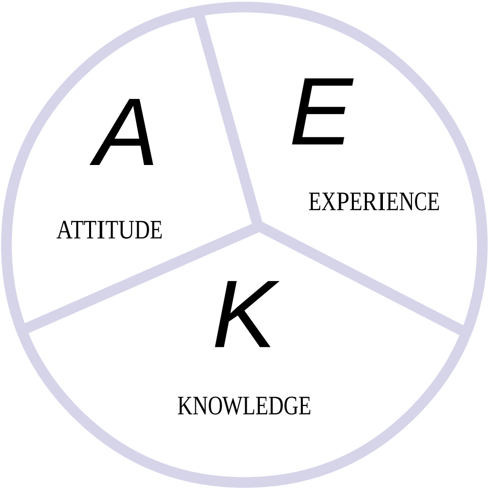
Cultural analysis can be learned

The *Navigating Culture* aims to take you on a journey of strengthening your skills in cultural analysis. As the diagram below shows, technical knowledge needed in cultural analysis forms only one third of the requirements to conduct a good cultural appraisal. Besides knowledge, one needs a positive and open attitude towards cultural issues, as well as hands-on experience of development work.

This “road map”concentrates on developing skills to carry out cultural analysis. This is what every one with a stake in sustainable development should know:

- what issues are covered by cultural analysis,
- how to define and limit cultural analysis,
- what will result from lack of cultural sensitivity, and
- what can a professional cultural specialist be expected to contribute.

For cultural analysis, you need...



Naming the Actors

Administrative language has one peculiar feature: the dominance of the passive sentence form. It is very common that the actor is left unnamed and things are said to 'happen'. We say, for example, that "plans are made..." or "programme is adjusted to local environment...". Who makes the plans? Who adjusts the programme? When the actors are left unnamed, many odd things start to happen. Conflicts over authority and division of tasks start to appear when people begin to interpret the passive tense. Difficult and labour intensive tasks can be ignored because nobody was explicitly asked to do the job.

Naming the actors is more than a good convention. When the planner names actors, she can allocate responsibilities. When the programme manager names actors, he can analyse the programme environment in detail. Often the problem is not the lack of cultural expertise but the administrative problem of locating persons who identify with the cultural issues and shoulder the responsibility for taking action.

In the following we name a few actors who are referred to throughout the text. We will try to be as explicit as possible about who should take responsibility at different phases of the programme, and how these actors relate to each other. We expect that you will be able to identify more closely with one position, and that you will feel empathy for the others. Whoever you identify with most closely, there are some pre-requisites that will make your use of the "road map" more pleasurable. We suggest that you become familiar with the following publications:

- "Guidelines for Programme Design, Monitoring and Evaluation", published by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1998.
- "Guidelines on Gender Analysis" and the sector-specific series of "Looking at Gender and..." papers, published by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1994 and 1995.

These documents are available from:

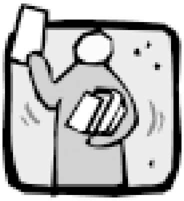
Department for International Development Cooperation
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Katajanokanlaituri 3
FIN-00160 Helsinki, Finland

The language we use to describe the roles of various actors in development is constantly changing. We have moved from the military term of "target groups" through versions of increasing equality to "beneficiaries", "stakeholders" and, most recently, "partners". Development programmes now seldom have "Project Managers", more often the programme is facilitated by a "Team Leader". We are increasingly uncomfortable with words such as "Expert" which seem to credit the knowledge of those who have had the opportunities of formal education as superior to the knowledge of those who have a lifetime of experience of living in an area and addressing its problems.

These shifts reflect the search by those involved in development initiatives for their appropriate roles. We, the authors of this book, think that this search will continue and realize that the following depictions are bound by time. We have identified some of the most common roles in development programmes, but do not mean to suggest that there are no others. The purpose of the identifications is to facilitate your journey with the "road map" by pointing out texts you may find of special interest.

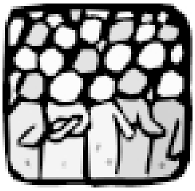
Actors

You are an Administrator if you are you typically do not work on the programme site, but are involved with tasks such as managing the planning, evaluation and appraisal of the programme. Your work may include travel to the programme site but more often you would be sending someone else. You are responsible for Terms of Reference and much of the programme documentation.



You are a Programme Planner if you are directly involved with the key tasks (like writing a programme document) during the planning phase.

You are a Team Leader if you work on the programme site with responsibilities related to overseeing the programme implementation.



You are a Technical Specialist if your contribution to the programme is defined by a sector. You often work directly training someone else to take over your job at the end of your contract.

You are a Volunteer if you are working for a Non-Governmental Organization or for a volunteer service.

You are a Cultural Specialist if your technical expertise is in culture. Your role is to facilitate the understanding of the socio-cultural context of the development initiative.

You are a Gender Specialist if your technical expertise is the socially defined gender roles within the programme area. Your role is to facilitate an understanding of who does what in the programme area and sector, and what resources do they have access to and control over.

You are a Beneficiary if the programme is expected to make improvements in your life environment.

These categories are simplifications but we use them to make the following chapters as particular as possible. The authors of this booklet are both cultural specialists, with lengthy international experience of various kinds of roles. In our experience, there are significant differences in how ‘aid works’ in various donor agencies. In this booklet we use such categories and terms which emerge from Finnish practice of bilateral and multilateral interventions. Throughout the text “Department” refers to the Department of International Cooperation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

Culture in programme implementation

> *"Culture: Aspects of a social environment that are used to communicate values such as what is considered good and desirable, right and wrong, normal, different, appropriate, or attractive. The means through which society creates a context from which individuals derive meaning and prescriptions for successful living within that culture (language and speech patterns, orientation towards time, standards of beauty, holidays that are celebrated, images of a "normal" family)".*
>
> *(Adams et al 1997:93)*

Meaning of culture in a programme environment

The programme environment is an unusual working environment. It is the space within which the development intervention physically manifests itself and in which the expatriates and their national colleagues interact. In literature on participation and inter-cultural communication, the authors often refer to "insiders" and "outsiders". D'Arcy Davis-Case in The Community's Toolbox defines insiders as "those people who identify with and belong to a community and/or have a dependent relationship with the community", and outsiders as "those people who may be involved in a community for a period of time, but who do not identify themselves, or are not identified by the community as belonging to that specific community". These are useful definitions because they serve to remind us of the over-simplification that is implicit in the "us" and "them" thinking that is often used to distinguish those who represent the donor from those who do not.

When working in the domain of development interventions, those who work at the programme site often hear phrases such as "This is the local culture", or "This is our culture". Sometimes our hesitation to follow a strategy that enforces change is due to us "not wanting to change their culture". Our relationship to cultures, to our own and others', is complex. Culture is at times used to justify decisions, to resist change and to express identity.

Culture is often perceived as an obstacle to development. In order to see culture as an opportunity, it may be useful to take a closer look at some of the common assumptions that influence the interaction between a development intervention and its environment.

Firstly, culture in the context of development interventions is often spoken about as if it existed only in the environment, as if only the recipients of the aid programme had culture and that the intervention itself was clean of such value laden impurity. Expatriates travelling to work aboard seldom have experience in articulating, or identifying, parameters of their own culture beyond the broad terms of language, food or religion. As a result it is difficult for us to understand the interaction that takes place between the intervention and its environment. The development intervention comes with its baggage of administrative, managerial, technological and social cultures.

Secondly, much emphasis is placed on coping mechanisms for dealing with the inevitable "culture shock". In fact, the whole initial contact with the new culture is articulated in terms that would lead anyone to expect great difficulties in living with this difference, never mind adapting to it. The focus is also on how this change will impact us, our survival, as we enter the new cultural context. This egocentric, and ethnocentric, approach is not conducive to us beginning to question the potential impacts of our personal arrival, and the arrival of the programme, on the recipient culture.

Thirdly, it could be said that Finnish programme personnel come from, even within the European context, a particularly homogenous background. Only in very recent years have Finns begun to address the existing diversity in Finland, and as a result Finns have barely developed the language to articulate multicultural experiences. It is not then surprising that Finns, like others in contact with different cultures, need to find ways of coping both with the apparent difference between "our" and "their" culture, and with the diversity that exists within "our" and "their" culture.

Fourthly, because of the great pliability of the concept, "culture" means so much. And yet, the concept does not even exist in many languages. For the expatriate, culture can be the many new and wonderful crafts and customs, the luscious homestead on the other side of the fence or special holidays in the calender. For the people the expatriate interacts with, culture may simply mean "our way", the way things have "always" been done.

Culture can be indentified at different levels, for example:

- → national culture
- → local culture
- → administrative culture
- → professional culture
- → project culture

Usually a cultural analysis of stakeholders requires a simultaneous reference to two or more levels of identification.

Fifthly, there is no coherent “us” and “them”. During this era of globalization it is probable, for example, that a Finnish medical doctor finds more in common with a colleague in the Philippines than with a neighbour in Finland. All of us develop lifestyles that focus on relationships with those we perceive to share our values and practices. In the context of international development, however, you may want to question this and consciously work towards a lifestyle that is inclusive, and respectful, of difference.

Finally, culture is dynamic and continuously changing. Fundamentally development is about change. The development interventions Administrators, Planners, Team Leaders, Specialists and Volunteers are engaged within have been conceived to explicitly cause change. This change is taking place regardless of the development intervention, but when such an intervention exists it will influence the direction and speed of such change. An example of this is the change in gender roles that takes place both as part of the ongoing change that characterizes culture, and as a result of specific interventions. Often the direction of technical change is very well articulated. The programme documents, for example, spell out procedures for introduction of new technology, training and monitoring environmental impacts. There is little reference made to impacts of social change that technical change will produce in its wake. Baseline and feasibility studies establish the status quo of the social and sometimes cultural context, but they seldom identify strategies for monitoring impacts of social change.

The following are some principles that describe the potential impacts of social change caused by development interventions. Those of us working in development programmes are used to conceptualizing development exclusively as a positive process towards a desirable goal of modernization, and the following list may seem particularly negative. However, as long as social and cultural change is not consciously integrated in the programme cycle processes, the likelihood of negative change is considerable.

To start moving from ideas about culture in the programme environment towards practice, let us look at three ways in which different dimensions of culture are represented: values, practices and institutions.

Potential negative impacts of ill-planned social change

Every act of development necessarily requires an act of destruction.

- Introduction of a new activity always displaces an indigenous activity.
- The adaptive potential of a population is limited and every change reduces that potential. Every act of change potentially impairs the physiology, psychology and behaviour of the population.
- Modernization erodes the support mechanism for managing social stress.
- Change always produces psychological loss, as well as compensation for such loss.
- Change threatens the nutritional status of population.

G. N. Appell in The Real and Imagined Role of Culture

Values

> *Culture is a dimension of the totality of social, political and economic relations. (Lourdes Arizipe in Culture and Knowledge in Development)*

The values that each of us lives by have been acquired through a process of socialization. When we are born, we know nothing about ourselves, our family or our community. As we grow, we learn about the way things are done. We also learn eventually that things are done differently by others and elsewhere, and we learn to make value judgements about the superiority of one way over another.

As people, we are able to rationalize on the basis of our knowledge to the extent that we often ignore how limited that knowledge really is. There are plenty of examples in our own cultural context about how our very firm beliefs about the way something ought to be done have changed to another equally widely and fundamentally held belief. For example, let us look at some of the recent changes:

- In the 1960s it was believed that children should be weaned at around six months of age to avoid skewed relationships with mothers. In the 1990s most mothers believe that children should be breast fed as long as it remains a feasible option for the mother.
- The roles of women and men in our society are continuously changing. You need only to think about the typical day of your grandmothers and grandfathers and compare it to that of your own or your daughters and sons.
- Early last century slavery was an integral part of life in the United States. It was accepted by the white population as right and a privilege. While racism still exists, and is even on the rise in some parts of the world, slavery is no longer a socially accepted value or practice.
- The right of women to vote, as well as suffrage for black, landless or North American native populations, is another example of how thinking has changed around the globe.

When our own value systems keep shifting, it is perhaps understandable that dealing with a very different value system is even more difficult. As we strive to cope with everything new, we often focus on facets of other cultures that seem to be shared by a large section of the population, or seem to be permanent. These are aspects of the culture new to us that we can identify and name as different.

Our understanding of “development” is based on a system of such cultural values. Verhelst writes in *No Life Without Roots* pointing out the irony of the West superintending ‘universal’ values for global development when in fact there are striking commonalities in the values of, for example, Hindus, Buddhists, Polynesians, Africans and Amerindians, all of whom emphasize:

- The community over the individual
- The cyclical rather than linear nature of the universe
- Harmony with - rather than dominance over - the physical environment
- “Being” rather than “having” or “doing

The tension between individual freedom and the welfare of the group is a continuous conundrum in our society. An important aspect to bear in mind is that even the cultures that are found at either end of the continuum between extreme individualism to extreme collectivity recognize the importance of both the individual and the group. And that most cultures are not found at the extremes of this continuum, but somewhere in between.

Cultures that emphasize individualism tend to value merit and competition. Individual rights and obligations are enshrined in law and protected by courts. Children are taught the importance of always doing your best, and the importance of solving problems yourself. Success follows hard work and rewards for individual achievement motivate accomplishment. In cultures that are oriented towards collectivism, the individual is given security by the group. The emphasis is on maintaining good relations and coherence within the group, and thus avoiding situations of competitions and exaggerated focus on individual achievement. The difference of collective and individual cultures also has an impact on our image of ourselves. Finns are often puzzled at how in many African countries their colleagues refer to people around them as “brothers”, “sisters” or “cousins” even if there is no apparent blood relationship. In individualist cultures people tend to develop their identity in terms of independence, while in collectivist cultures the identity is developed in terms of interdependence.

Cultures also differ in their view of the way the universe is organized. Cultures that view the universe in linear terms see development as a succession of stages. After reaching a stage, we are immediately focussed on the next stage and on strategies that may take us there. This view impacts us as individuals as well as societies. Theories of modernization as a way of explaining development are typical examples of linearity. The developing world are catching up with the stage reached by the developed world, the rural areas are catching up with the stages reached by urban areas, and women are catching up with men. Cultures that perceive the universe as a succession of interlocking cycles tend to focus more on the responsibility of the group for the future that comes from our involvement in the universe again and again. A good example of this is the practice of the first nations people in North America who use as a criteria in decision-making the impact the decision will have on the seventh generation coming after the decision-makers. It is not as important to always improve conditions from one stage to the next, but to find a balance that can be maintained throughout the cycle.

Cultures differ greatly in their relationship to the environment. It is not necessary in this context to romanticize indigenous environmental practices as fundamentally sound. Rather the important difference is in the relationship perceived to exist between human systems and natural systems. The very word environment suggests something that surrounds and is therefore separate from us. In other cultures the view that humans are an integral part of the environment is upheld as vital.

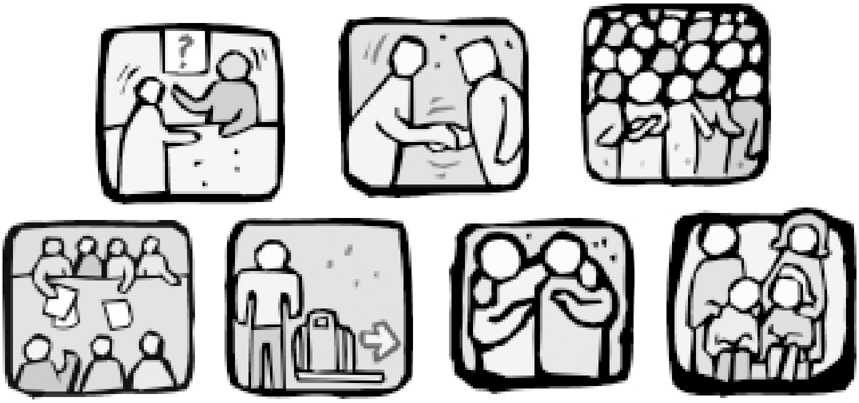
The focus that some cultures put on “doing” and “having” is closely associated with the linear world view. It is by doing that we achieve more, and a measure of our achievement is what we have. On the other hand, we conclude according to this view, those who do not have wealth, cannot be doing very much because if they did, they, too, would prosper. Listening to programme (expatriate) personnel talk about their work, the frustration with failing to get their colleagues motivated to do enough is pre-eminent. Cultures that focus on “being” allow for action to be tailored by prevailing needs rather than acting to fulfill a preconceived agenda, the purpose of which is achievement of goals often determined by external agencies.

In order to develop an understanding of cultural values in the programme environment, we may want to ask ourselves:

1. How does the life experience (for example: work/family/gender) of individuals I work with differ from my experience?
2. How does this difference of experience reflect on a) their values b) my values?
3. Which of the shared values are relevant to our partnership in this programme?
4. Which values need to be re-aligned to accomplish a productive working relationship?

Having answered the above, we may assess:

5. How is the programme likely to impact existing cultural values in its environment?



" If we are to archive a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the wohle gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse gift will find a fitting place."

Margaret Mead

Practices

> *Culture is the total sum of the original solution that a group of human beings invent to adapt to their natural and social environment. (Thierry Verhelst in No Life Without Roots)*

When we travel to new places and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds to that of ours, it is often at the level of cultural practices that our strongest experiences of sharing and conflict take place.

Some of these experiences are amusing and become anecdotes shared for years to come. Who has not heard of stories of Finns eagerly introducing new colleagues to sauna or of the neophyte traveller dealing with grilled rat on the menu? While the stories are often funny and light hearted, we should remain aware of their potential to stereotype groups of people. Anecdotes are tools of cultural interpretation, of the cultural analysis if you will, that we are carrying out. They point to practices that we find exotic and different, and in doing so sometimes blind us to the diversity and familiarity.

Other experiences are just plain frustrating and puzzling. Misunderstandings take place, people give wrong impressions, and sometimes intolerance develops. Cultural differences in time management and prioritization are common. The idea of "saying things as they are" is regarded as honesty by some, just plain rude by others. We often hear comments about the need in some cultures to "save face", but are not sure what this means. The frustration arises from the fact that these are situations in which we are expected to partake. Unlike the rat on the menu, we can't just shrug away the fact that no-one seems to understand the importance of weekly programme debriefings or that no-one seems to adhere to the rules about programme vehicles. The programmes come with ambitious expectations for performance at individual and collective levels, expectations which have often been defined by agents external to the programme milieu, and we often attribute to cultural difference the obstacles we experience in meeting these expectations.

Further difficulty in many of the programme contexts is caused by the fact that the programme in the first instance has to deal with a bureaucratic culture which itself has been imposed. The colonial culture struggles for existence with indigenous practices, which themselves are heterogenous. Sometimes the differences within groups that seem culturally homogenous are greater than those between groups. An example of this is the position of women and men in societies. It has been argued that women of many cultures share a similar position of oppression, while men enjoy a shared culture of dominance. Again, we may want to reflect on the existence not only of an insider culture and an outsider culture, but multiple insider and outsider cultures.

Language is a very obvious barrier to communication when two people from different cultures meet. We may be bilingual or multilingual, and still not be able to express ourselves or understand what is being said. It is important to remember that when there is a barrier there are people on both sides of the language barrier. In some ways language is among the easier cultural difficulties we encounter because it usually does not come as a surprise, and because there are strategies for dealing with it. Sometimes we have access to interpreters that can help us solve the problem in the short term. Inviting a colleague to translate can be a way of getting to know each other better, as long as the invitation is not perceived as a demotion. Willingness to participate in language training is a key strategy.

How do Finns manage intercultural communication?

Culture in Finnish Development Cooperation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Evaluation Report 1998:1) discusses this and other themes based on experiences in Ethiopia, Vietnam and Mozambique.

Non-verbal communication, our facial expressions and the way we move and hold ourselves, is a big part of cross-cultural communication. Misunderstandings based on non-verbal communication are often harder to detect than ones based in language differences because we are not always aware of messages we send non-verbally, and even less aware of the interpretation being assign to them. Experts in cross-cultural communication explain that whereas words tend to carry ideas and facts, we use non-verbal communication to express emotion, mood, identity, and attitude. Some cultures put more faith in words and pay less attention to non-verbal behaviour. This varies from culture to culture. It is good to be aware of the fact that non-verbal behaviour is often very subtle. In the process of becoming familiar with a new cultural environment we need to give ourselves time to consciously sensitize ourselves to these differences. Examples of such culturally defined forms of non-verbal communication include such things as appropriate distance between people when speaking, forms of greeting, gesturing and degrees of intimacy between workers and supervisors.

The style in which we speak, including loudness and the type of language, can be another problem. Depending on the situation we select to speak in a formal or in a more intimate style. Cultures differ greatly in their rules about the style that is appropriate. This is influenced by the relationship of the speakers, their gender, age and status. The style of speech we choose, sends an immediate message about the respect we show to the person we are talking to as well as about our self-esteem. One example of the kind of adjustment we need to make is “small talk”. In Finnish it is uncommon to prelude a conversation with leisurely chat about the weather and traffic jams, it is often appropriate to be forthright and to the point. In many cultures this is considered rude, there needs to be space for communication that expands beyond the factual matter at hand.

We also have to deal with situations in which cultural practices are abhorrent to us. Such practices could include female genital mutilation, child brides, and or widow purification customs in some places. It is important to remember that such practices are also being challenged from within the culture. These are situations in which we often struggle between avoiding ethnocentricism on the one hand and cultural relativism that may deny basic human rights on the other. It is important to remain true to the values that are part of our self-definition as individuals and cultures. Awareness of this kind of cultural practices may cause us to make a decision which falls somewhere on the continuum from declining a position in which our own values would be compromised to accepting the practice.

It is also necessary that we question our own limits of tolerance. Gender roles are a good example of a culturally and socially defined issue on which there is great difference of opinion on the desirability of change. It is also a good example of how whenever there is change, there are both losers and winners as a result of that change. A common argument against working for change towards equality has been two pronged; on the one hand we should not meddle in someone else's culture, on the other equality is a western feminist concept and it is therefore wrong to impose it on developing countries of the South.

Both of these arguments are extremely patronizing, assuming that somehow it is our responsibility to protect the cultures of the South from change. They also ignore the fact that all cultures, everywhere are undergoing continuous change caused by both external and internal factors. Finally, the arguments reflect an inexcusable ignorance of existence of southern feminist movements, and their work towards equality. The resistance to this change is of course motivated by the challenge to existing power structures that it presents both in the North and the South.

In order to develop an understanding of cultural practices in the programme environment, we may want to ask ourselves:

1. Identify some things you do (for example, how do you like to greet people, how do you dress, who do you address first in a group) that you think are based on your own culture.
2. What practices exist in the programme environment that are not universal in the cultures of all the participants?
3. Which of these practices relevant to the programme implementation?
4. What modifications are necessary, and by whom, in order to maintain a productive working relationship?
5. How is the programme likely to impact on existing cultural practices in its environment?

"True development rests on the recognition and the application of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all, both as individuals and as people, and as people, and on the obligation of the various States to promote and protect those rights."

Parallel Popular Summit, to the APEC conference, Kyoto 1995

Institutions

> *Culture refers to an organizing concept, a system of allocating meaning with conceptual, perceptual, organizational, relational and communicative aspects.*
>
> *(Joanne Prindville in Society, Culture and Sustainable Development)*

> *"Institutions are established societal networks that covertly or overtly control the allocation of resources to individuals and social groups and that set and influence cultural norms and values. Examples of social institutions include the legal and criminal justice system, various forms of media, banks, schools, and organizations that control access to, or the quality of employment and education."*
>
> *(Adams et al. 1997:93)*

Cultural institutions are ways in which the community organizes itself to sustain its life. These institutions, such as health care or religious institutions, are not often linked directly to government agencies and are frequently ignored by programmes. They are not usually housed in well posted buildings and do not carry out their business via fax on letterhead paper. But they do govern communities. They are not institutions of bricks and mortar, but can place blinkers narrowing our vision like that of carriage horses. They influence decisions regarding natural resource management, religious behaviour, health, education and social life of the community. Often these informal cultural institutions exist within formal institutions. Let's look at an example:

In Northern Namibia where the communities have always lived with water as a scarce resource, the programme in question facilitated the development of a rural water supply system. There was no doubt that this was a priority to the Government and to the communities alike. Problems arose from the approach adopted towards the management of the new wells. As the wells were constructed, Water Point Committees were set up to maintain and control the wells. The Committees also served as a link between the community and the programme. The main problem with this approach was that it was based on the assumption that there was no management structure in place for water supply when in fact communities had always carefully maintained their water sources to have access to this scarce resource. The existing structure was a combination of private (in that the wells were identified with an owner whose primary responsibility the well was), and communal (in that no-one was denied access to water). The new structure parallelled these old management institutions, and initially caused confusion relating to access to water and to control over well use and maintenance.

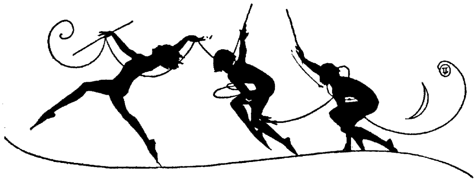
Recognizing forms of organization, association and self-help, such as the local water resource management system of the above example is vital to understanding cultural institutions. Another important issue is recognizing socially and culturally determined variables, such as age, caste, ability, class, sexuality and gender. Of these gender is the most important in that it cross cuts all other socially and culturally defined variables. The following is an excerpt from the Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development Our Creative Diversity:

"Every culture not only offers its children an account of the existence of the two genders and their multiple roles, according to kinship, sexuality, work, marriage and age, but also provides them with broad guidance on how to handle the relationships between them. There can be no substitute for this type of account and guidance transmitted to each individual through a body of attitudes, narratives, images and myths. The cultural interpretation of gender is central to the identity of every individual." (Pg. 130)

There are three key aspects to understanding gender. First, gender is a social and cultural concept. This means that roles that are assigned to women and men on the basis of gender vary from one location to another, from one generation to another, and from one time to another. This is different from sex based roles which, due to their biological basis, do not change. Secondly, every culture has a gender based division of labour. This means that the roles of women and men in relation to, for example, resource management, health decisions, educational opportunities or access to specific knowledge will vary from one cultural context to another. Thirdly, gender roles are changing everywhere in the world. They are part of culture which is dynamic and are influenced by a variety of internal and external factors.

In order to develop an understanding of cultural institutions in the programme environment, we may want to ask ourselves:

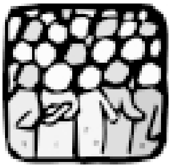
1. In what cultural institutions do I play an active role? Think about your family, community and work place.
2. What cultural institutions exist in the programme environment that are directly relevant to the programme activities?
3. What are the gender roles in the areas of the programme activities? Think also about other culturally determined roles based on, for example: age, ethnicity, caste, religion etc.
4. How do the gender roles differ in terms of access to and control over the use of resources in the area of the programme mandate?
5. How is the programme likely to impact existing institutions in the area? Think about both positive (desirable) and negative (undesirable) impacts.



Cultural diversity as an opportunity

> *"Cultural freedom, unlike individual freedom, is a collective freedom, It refers to the right of a group of people to follow a way of life of its choice. Cultural freedom guarantees freedom as a whole. It protects not only the group but also the rights of every individual within it. Cultural freedom, by protecting alternative ways of living, encourages experimentation, diversity, imagination and creativity. Cultural freedom leaves us free to meet one of the most basic needs, the need to define our own basic needs. This need is now threatened by both global pressures and global neglect."*
>
> *(Pérez de Cuéllar et al. 1995:15)*

> *"It is generally assumed that while all persons share some traits with all others, all persons share other traits with only some others, and all persons have still other traits which they share with no one else. Based on this assumptions, each person may be described in three ways: the universal characteristics of the species; the sets of characteristics that define a person as a member of a group; and the person's idiosyncratic characteristics. Diversities which are neither universal nor idiosyncratic are often referred to by the word culture. In this usage, each "group" has a specific "culture". Obviously, each individual is a member of many groups and, as such, participates in many cultures at any given time."*
>
> *Rajkumari Shanker in Diversity and Development*



In discussing sustainable development Fransesco di Castri writes in *Keeping the course between globalization and diversities* about the need to find a synthesis of the two trends; globalization and diversity. Globalization is often seen as a threat to cultural diversity, but the phenomenon should be credited with opportunities for better understanding of other identities and an appreciation for their contributions. Excessive globalization can, however, lead to increased cultural uniformity which can lead to lifestyles ignorant of historical and cultural heritage. Development interventions can easily function as vehicles of globalization as they function as conduits not only for technology and skills, but for values and ambitions.

The report *Our Creative Diversity* directs future cultural policy to move towards a new vision of pluralism. Allowing for multiple solutions, diversity and pluralism, are driven by a need for increased flexibility and in part by a desire to move away from the expensive, supply-led approach to the states' role as a promoter of culture. Cultural policies have often been rigid in their support of nation building. This approach is challenged in Our Creative Diversity, not by questioning this motivation, but by promoting attention to more immediate needs. Recognition that culture is being participated in by a whole host of forces traditionally left outside cultural policies has engendered a drive to put people, and not institutions or products, at centre stage of cultural policy formulation. The report refers as an example to a recent cultural policy, in which crafts, dress, design, food, traditional medicine, environmental practice and religion are all important components.

Another example of dealing with cultural diversity is North America where the United States and Canada have adopted very different approaches. The United States views itself as a “melting pot” of many cultures. The idea has been that as wave after wave of immigrants has landed in the United States, they have become American. Canada on the other hand views itself as a “mosaic” of cultures. In Canada communities are encouraged to maintain their cultural ties, such as language and religion, and to contribute to the definition of Canada as a multicultural country.

Practising cultural sensitivity and cultural sustainability

Inter-cultural communication is by now a well established field of study. We will briefly discuss four areas that have been identified by experts in cross-cultural psychology as focal to facilitating communication across cultural barriers, namely:

- social identity and prejudice
- values and rules clarification
- perspective-taking
- communication strategies

Gallois and Callan in Communication and Culture: *A Guide for Practice*

It may be obvious that a variety of social forces, such as history and language, influence the stereotypes, prejudices, and biases between people. In the same way as we all have personal identities, that identify at home and at work, we also have social identities. Our social identities bind us to groups of others. For example, I am a Finn, an engineer, a mother and an environmentalist, all examples of social identities. We often use these identities to create social connections. An example of this is a Finn driving along a highway in Tanzania and stopping as he sees a car by the road with a Finnish flag on its bumper. In one context I may introduce myself as an engineer, in another my motherhood may be more relevant, in yet another: my nationality. We try to identify what it is that we have in common with the person we are communicating with.

In the context of cross-cultural communication, social identities are adaptable. People who meet across cultures do so usually because of work or travel. This means that outside the context of work they deal with each other in terms of other social identities. Sometimes we are faced with a situation where our preferred identity is not even recognizable to the person we are communicating with. In one context we are perceived as a highly learned Doctor of Something Important, in another we are seen as a woman with barely the right to speak. Our stereotypes of other cultures can be so strong that we remain oblivious of behaviour contrary to them. In one programme, for example, a technical expert held so hard to the stereotype he had of Tanzanians as bad time keepers, that he himself regularly turned up late for meetings, frustrating the Tanzanian colleagues who would be there on time!

Clarifying values and rules is a good principle for cross-cultural communication. Its pre-requisite is that each on of us is able to articulate what our expectations are, what those expectations are based on, and be willing to negotiate. The old wisdom of “Do in Rome as the Romans do” goes only so far. It is not possible for us to adopt completely new cultural values or practices, or to function according to cultural parameters based on institutions we are unfamiliar with. But it is possible for us to reflect on the differences in dialogue with those we are working and living with. Cross-cultural communication can be a positive experience of exchange for all parties in the process.

The perspective we need to take in the context of cross-cultural communication is that of a learner. This may seem sometimes contradictory to our perceived position as a teacher/ expert in the context of development programmes. Our perspective should be open to multiple ways of accomplishing tasks, to a diversity of solutions and to complexities in the context of work.

Conscious selection of appropriate communication strategies is important and should be done together with other participants in the programme process. The choice of a communication strategy will determine who can participate in the process and who can’t. In interpersonal communication, a choice of strategy will have implications on how we are perceived as a colleague, a supervisor or a friend.

1. *Respect loyalty to culture: people belong to cultures and feel loyal to them, as they do to other important social groups.*

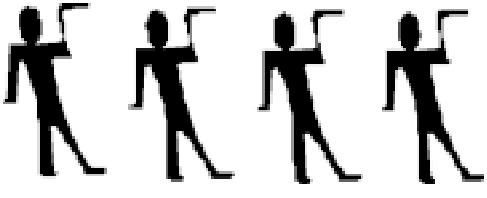
2. *Cultural bias is inevitable: cultures and other groups are sources of self-esteem, as well as knowledge, values and beliefs.*

3. *Social rules influence communication: members of a culture share social rules which govern communication in many contexts.*

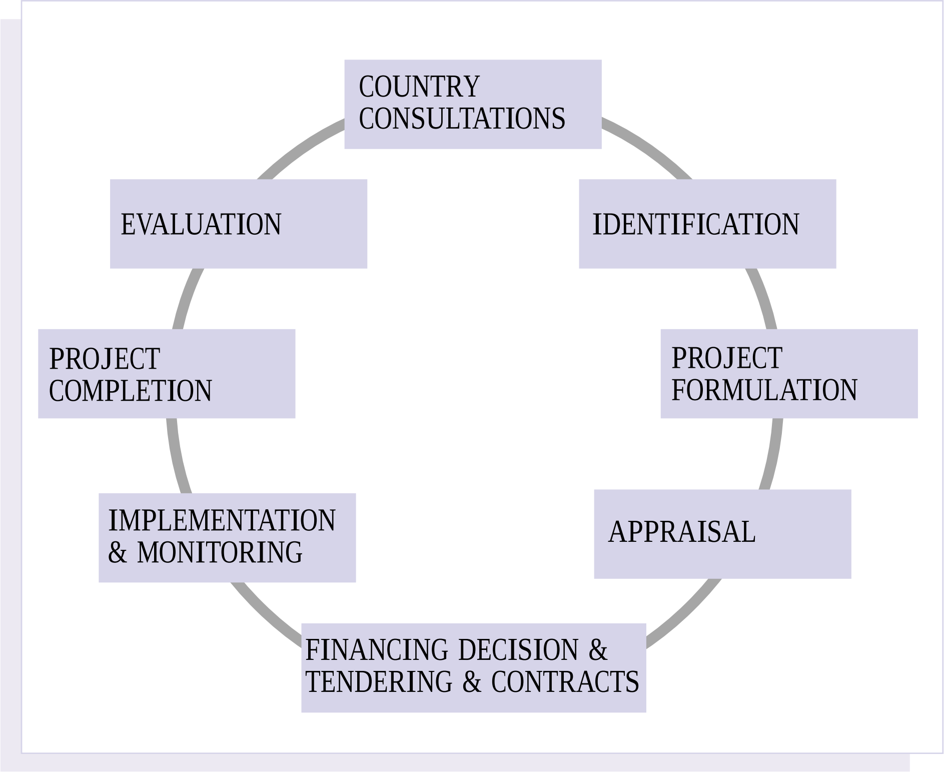
4. *Social rules are learned without being taught: they are also bound up with important values.*

5. *Cultural differences are not the only differences: people within a culture vary at least as much as people within (different) cultures.*

Gallois and Callan in Communication and Culture: A Guide for Practice

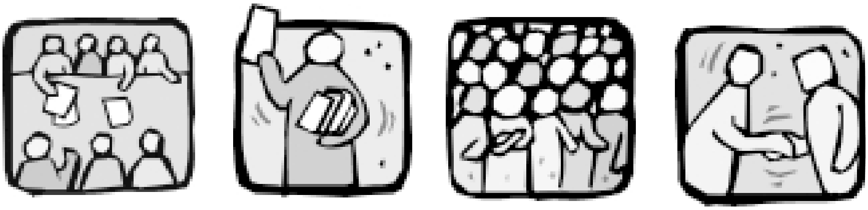


Culture and the programme cycle


COUNTRY CONSULTATIONS
IDENTIFICATION
PROJECT FORMULATION
APPRAISAL
FINANCING DECISION & TENDERING & CONTRACTS
IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING
PROJECT COMPLETION
EVALUATION

Programme cycle

The Programme Cycle is discussed in more detail in *“Guidelines for Programme Design, Monitoring and Evaluation”*. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with these guidelines prior to tackling this chapter. In this chapter our goal is to identify the opportunities for cultural analysis within the structure provided by the Programme Cycle. This chapter introduces stakeholder analysis as the means for connecting cultural analysis with programme planning, implementation and evaluation. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on ownership of development.



Cultural analysis as a part of the Programme Cycle

The Programme cycle is a framework for a programme starting from its initial idea until its completion. The programme cycle features events of the programme evolution. The programme cycle is usually conceived from the perspective of programme administrators; it ensures that the administrator is able to use plans and monitoring reports to check the progress of the programme.

Implementation is only one of such events in the programme cycle, even though, in reality, implementation usually takes place over years during which major adjustments are often made. For a team leader, the issue is how to balance between following the letter of the project document and adjusting to changing circumstances in the programme environment. Another issue is how to balance between the production of complete reports for programme monitoring purposes and responding to the daily needs arising from the programme environment.

These two issues are recognized in the Finnish planning guidelines, and currently the programme cycle is perceived to be a tool for reflective and flexible programme development.

In the following, we present a list of concerns that need to be addressed at the various stages of the project cycle in order to adequately examine cultural implications.

Cultural analysis during the programme planning

1. Country consultations

√ Expect negotiators to prepare themselves by familiarizing with cultural diversity in the partner country

√ Include members with cultural/gender expertise in the negotiation team

2. Programme identification

√ Define the cultural environment of the programme by identifying existing values, practices and institutions that will interact with the programme

√ Carry out a preliminary stakeholder analysis, including identification of needs and resources

√ Identify strategic and practical gender needs in the programme sector

3. Programme formulation

√ Include members with cultural/gender expertise in the formulation team

√ Address culture and gender issues in the Terms of Reference

√ Carry out a full stakeholder analysis, including gender analysis

√ Determine cultural and gender specific objectives for the programme

√ Address ownership of programme activities in order to secure sustainability and replicability

4. Appraisal of the programme document

√ Include members with cultural/gender expertise in the appraisal team

√ Address culture and gender issues in the Terms of Reference

√ Appraise cultural impacts of the programme objectives: What will change? Is the change acceptable?

√ Appraise gender implications of the programme?

Cultural analysis during the programme implementation

5. Financing decision and tendering

- √ Give credit for cultural and gender expertise in tenders, including planning, indicators, outputs and team members
- √ Include culture and gender expertise in the panel that chooses programme implementors

6. Work planning

- √ Identify gender sensitive indicators for each task
- √ Identify culture specific indicators for each task
- √ Ensure culture/gender sensitivity in budget allocations
- √ Ensure culture/gender sensitivity in programme/staff meetings

7. Reporting

- √ Disaggregate all information by gender
- √ Report on the cultural impacts of each activity

Cultural analysis in monitoring and evaluation

8. Internal programme monitoring

- √ Make use of participatory methods of programme monitoring
- √ Institutionalize the monitoring of cultural and gender implications in the programme

9. External programme monitoring

- √ Conduct focal group discussions to identify how social groups interact in programme implementation
- √ Identify obstacles the programme may face in addressing gender and culture issues

10. Final evaluation: lessons learned

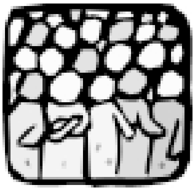
- √ Include members with cultural/ gender expertise in the evaluation team
- √ Address culture and gender issues in the Terms of Reference
- √ Test the original assumptions regarding programme impacts on culture and gender roles
- √ Ensure that all stakeholders are aware of what steps are being taken to phase out external programme support
- √ Identify measures to be taken to safeguard the interests of marginal groups during and after programme completion

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a methodology which aims to define the actors who have 'stakes' or interests in a development programme. All kinds of stakeholders can be included in the analysis: individuals and organizations, those who are directly connected to the programme and those whose connections are more indirect. Stakeholder analysis attempts to identify the nature of everyone's interests; what these interests can contribute to the initiative and what potential conflicts we should be prepared for.

Identifying stakeholders

There are many ways people can be related to the programme. You can make a good start in identifying stakeholders by asking these questions:



- who depends on the programme?
- who is interested in the outcome of the programme?
- who will influence the programme?
- who will be affected by the programme?
- who will work against the programme?

(Danida 1996:59)

The next step of stakeholder analysis is to understand how the various stakeholders will impact the programme. Here we can rely upon the conventional SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) model supplemented with some questions:

S.W.O.T.

Strengths refer to what the stakeholder is able to contribute to the programme.

Weaknesses refer to what the stakeholder cannot contribute to the programme.

Opportunities refer to ways in which positive change can be promoted based on both strengths and weaknesses.

Threats refer to factors that may limit the opportunities and/or the positive change.

An Administrator and a Planner should make a preliminary listing of stakeholders as early as possible. The stakeholder analysis should continually evolve, it can be added to and modified as programme planning advances. The stakeholder matrix is a reference list which can be used as a tool for checking that the views and concerns of the key stakeholders are well incorporated in the plans.

The validation of the stakeholder matrix is best achieved in a planning workshop to which representatives of the stakeholders are invited. The focus of the workshop should be as explicit as possible (e.g. the relationship between programme objectives and activities,

Stakeholder matrix

Stakeholder	Interest in the programme resources and outputs	Methods of influencing the programme operations	Strenghts: capacity to contribute to the programme output	Weaknesses: factors limiting the capacity to contribute to the programme output	Relative importance of the stakeholder for the programme operations

as presented in Logical Framework matrix). However, the participants should be probed to justify their contributions. The participants should be encouraged to refer to facts and values, material interests and cultural aspirations.

Ownership of development

According to the contemporary development discourse, the recipient should have ownership of the programme in order to enhance programme success. The concept of programme aid is built upon the idea of advancing recipient ownership. Ownership is a positive term. It can be used to focus the vital question: Is this programme sustainable because the recipients are willing to commit themselves to its objectives?

OWNWERSHIP can be defined as a commitment or active interest in the achievement of the objectives of a programme. Naturally, the people in whose living environment the programme is implemented have a crucial role in this respect. If they feel committed to the objectives, the programme is likely to succeed.

Broad ownership is necessary

"The context in with most projects are located is often characterized by the dominance of one stakeholder, usually the line agency responsible for the imlementation of the project. Such dominant stakeholders may actively work to exlude other stakeholders, including intended beneficiaries from being involved in project design and implementation."

Ownership in the Finnish Aid Programme
(Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Evaluation Report 1996:3)

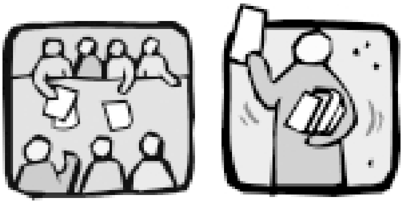
Nevertheless, ownership should never be limited to one or two key stakeholders. Ideally, ownership is broad based, meaning that the programme invited the commitment of a variety of stakeholders. Ownership has a strong foundation when all parties who need to make sacrifices for the programme, have a positive view of its importance.

The only way to verify ownership is to put it to test. The recipient governments are asked to include their budgetary contributions, however small, in the common programme budget. The villagers are expected to provide a labour contribution, however minimal, to the advancement of construction work, and so on. When these contributions are expected, a mutual relationship in which all parties are active partners evolves. Conditionalities are the flip-side of ownership. There is no way of verifying ownership, unless there is a mutually agreed list of benefits and obligations.

Ownership is a tricky concept and a careful analysis of ownership leads in surprising directions. Anthropologists have noted that 'ownership' (of something, say, land) is conventionally used to mean a relationship between two persons, an owner and an excluded person. To own really means a capacity to exclude somebody else. If we speak of the ownership of land, we actually mean that the owner has the capacity to deny all others from utilising that land.

Cultural dimensions of programme planning and administration

Finnish project planning methodology is described in *Guidelines for the Programme Design, Monitoring and Evaluation published* by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This chapter complements the Guidelines by focussing on cultural issues in programme planning. The primary audience for the chapter is the Administrator in a funding agency, Administrators in consultancy companies and the Programme Planner.

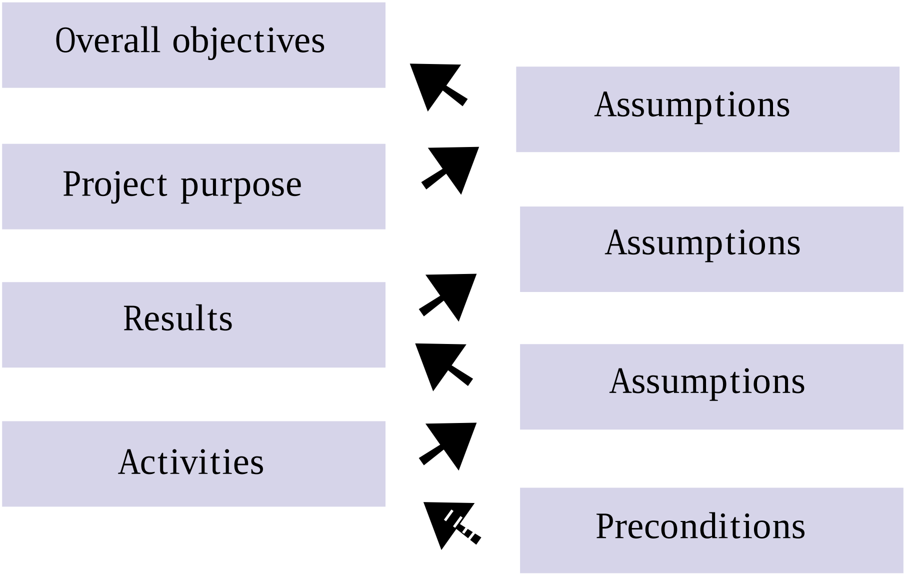


More planning—or less planning?

A Finnish saying is: “Well planned is half completed” (Preparation is half the battle!). And indeed, hindsight often teaches us that hastily conducted planning fails to take note of even the most evident cultural issues. Programme planning is the art of negotiating between developing a rigid framework and not having enough of a one. Programme indicators need to be developed for the work to be done, but too stringent measures may prevent opportunities for adjustment in later stages.

Cultural issues tend to be rather difficult to predict. Therefore it is important that the planning system establishes a protocol or procedure of revisiting critical cultural issues repeatedly throughout the programme cycle. CULTURALLY SENSITIVE PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION refers to the *institutionalisation* of a process during which the responsible persons are continuously alerted and able to react to cultural problems and opportunities.

Logical Famework



Logical framework

Logical framework analysis is a systematic tool for project planning which is based on an internally coherent set of questions and answers. It is a planning tool to be used after the stakeholder analysis has been conducted. The major elements of logical framework analysis are presented in “Guidelines for the Programme Design, Monitoring and Evaluation” (1997). The linkages between the elements are presented in the above figure.

The Logical Framework is based on the idea that the events that take place in a development programme are causally linked. In other words, we assume that if the inputs are available, then the activities will take place. If the activities take place, then the outputs will be produced, and so on until the actualization of the programme objectives. The uncertainties of the process are explained by assumptions (or external factors) at each level.

This distinction between factors which are apparently under programme control (inputs, activities, etc.) and those which are not (assumptions) is a weakness of the logical framework analysis. The problem is that the factors which are beyond our control are seldom considered seriously. A factor can be beyond our control but it can still be critical to the success of the project.

It is easy to cover the “assumptions” with general statements (like ‘democratic conventions are respected’), unrealistic statements (‘all stakeholders agree upon the priority of the project area’) or simple false statements (like ‘administrators have gained or have access to proper training’). Categorically, the columns for ‘assumptions’ and ‘preconditions’ *should not* include anything that may jeopardize the project. The columns for ‘assumptions’ and ‘preconditions’ deserve to be taken seriously.

The following guidelines for defining assumptions are derived from DANIDA’s handbook Logical Framework Approach: A Flexible Tool for Participatory Development.

- Identify assumptions on each level from activities to objectives. Start from activities and move upwards.
- State the assumptions with the same level of specificity as used for project elements.
- State the assumptions as positive conditions that have to prevail.
- Evaluate the assumptions for importance, relevance, and probability.
- Do not include assumptions that, in your best judgement, will prevail.
- If assumptions are found to be important, relevant but very unlikely to prevail, they are so-called “killer”-assumptions, than can “kill” the entire project. Your choices are to:
  - redesign and add project activities and outputs to influence the assumptions, if feasible, or
  - choose another strategy that makes the assumption unimportant or irrelevant, or:
  - abandon the project!

Three types of planning: blueprint, collaborative and participatory planning

Blueprint planning

Blueprint planning refers to planning conducted by a professional planner without the broad participation by other stakeholders. Blueprint planning is feasible when a programme is not culture sensitive. Therefore, one of the first things to establish in a planning process is to which extent is the programme culture and/or culturally sensitive? (See Page 7). The answers to this question can then be used as a basis for developing appropriate planning mechanisms as well as programme goals and activities.

According to the *Guidelines*, the first step of cultural analysis is to ask whether the programme deals with a culture sensitive issues. There are criteria which help to distinguish between the sensitive and less sensitive programmes. According to earlier Department guidelines, cultural sensitivity can be assessed on the basis of the following questions:

Are local know-how/knowledge and values important in the implementation of the programme?

- There are different cultures involved in every project: local, government, donor, consultant. Do they have fundamentally different points of view and expectations concerning
    a) the aim and content of development?
    b) the objectives of this programme?
- Does the implementation of the programme require a change in local knowledge, habits and values?
- Does the implementation and management of the programme involve the participation of local people?

If the administrator, or other external technical specialist, is unable to assess the culture sensitivity by applying criteria for culture-sensitivity, she can employ a cultural specialist to work, just for a few days, to list the potential cultural issues (for this sector, this country, these institutions, these possible intervention types).

If the administrator is unable to carry out (or commission) an appraisal of cultural sensitivity, she should ask herself the following bottom-line question: "Does the programme aim to change the life of the beneficiaries in any fundamental way?". If the answer is positive, we are dealing with a culture sensitive programme.

Collaborative planning

In the Guidelines collaborative planning is defined as " planning based on the collaboration of officials/technical experts and the representatives of key stakeholders". This kind of planning affords more opportunities for integrating a broader range of perspectives on culture than blue print planning which relies heavily on the expertise of the outsider. Collaborative planning is based on consultation among the stakeholders while the responsibility for organizing this consultation process often remains with the outsider.

Participatory planning

Development interventions can also adopt a participatory planning approach. This approach differs fundamentally from the conventional project planning procedure. When a participatory planning approach is chosen, the external planning accomplished as desk work or through brief missions is limited to defining the programme layout in very broad strokes. Specific activities and strategies are defined by the stakeholders directly, and terms of reference should reflect a need for flexibility to make adjustments that will impact on resources eventually used.

Once the planning team has been selected, it advances to the programme site. The team acts as one of the stakeholder involved, not as the owners of the initiative. Often the initial planning phase needs a whole year, in order for the programme document to truly reflect the negotiations that have taken place in the locality of the programme implementation.

Although the planning phase with this approach is more expensive it usually pays off because the programme is more likely to be based on realistic assumptions and thus to lead to sustainable development impacts. Cultural issues are also often addressed as a result of the embeddedness of the programme in its environment.

In practice, the participatory planning approach means handing planning responsibility to a consultancy company and the recipients. Participatory planning requires long-term commitment to create sustainable results. For this reason, it may be justified that the planning team continues its work during the implementation of project.

The situation creates a dilemma for an administrator who wants to control the project. The external appraisal of the project document can turn out to be very difficult. Any big change in the project document reduces the legitimacy of the participatory process.

Participatory planning can also go astray. After all, the planning team needs to ground its work within the existing institutional framework. The planning team needs to do legitimation work - making deals, giving and taking - which may supersede the action project agenda of providing measurable services. The administrator who has a control function needs to evaluate the process with various stakeholders but most importantly with the expected beneficiaries.

The overwhelming experience with participatory planning is that the more participatory the process, the more ownership by various stakeholders and the more successful the programme. It is well worth our while to take on the challenges of participatory planning.

Resources for cultural analysis

In this chapter the *Navigating Culture* will direct you to some of the resources that you can use to carry out cultural analysis, or to move your programme towards being more culturally sensitive.

People

What can you expect from a cultural specialist?

Programme Administrators and Team Leaders face similar problems: How to define and limit the scope of cultural analysis? And how to make it relevant to the programme? This may seem like a daunting task but there are many ways to organise cultural information in a meaningful way. Often the problem is not how to find a cultural specialist but how to supervise the work. The problem of supervising focuses on the difficulty of communication across disciplines and fields of knowledge. Some problems are exemplified through the following statements by administrators, team leaders and technical specialists:

"Cultural experts speak their own jargon."
"Cultural experts just criticize development projects, they do not take any responsibility."
"Cultural experts have unrealistic expectations. They expect that everybody else should use half of their time on cultural issues."
"Why should we know more about religions and myths? What is the connection to the real work we do?"
"Cultural experts are too slow. They need months when we only have days."

These problems have their origin in the difficulty of establishing terms of reference for cultural specialists, and the difficulty of ensuring that these terms are followed. Let us approach the question differently. Do you, as an administrator or a team leader:

- define the audience for the work of the cultural specialist,
- allocate responsibility to the cultural specialist,
- connect the cultural analysis to the work of a project/programme, and
- set realistic and definite timetables for cultural analysis.

Cultural specialists should not be called upon to make miracles. Cultural issues are seldom problems which can be solved. Cultural issues are matters to be lived with. Cultural issues tend to be persistent and require constant interest. If they are acknowledged, there is a good chance that one can create a way to live with them. If they are not acknowledged, they continue to press and cause inconvenience - like a shirt that is too small!

Cultural analysis is a complex task, requiring special expertise which can only be accumulated through education, further training and work experience. We do not claim that cultural analysis is an easy task to manage, possible once you have located a pocketful of handy tools. We do claim, however, that cultural analysis techniques help Administrators, Planners and Managers to know, what they can expect from the Cultural Specialist.

Cultural specialists are occasionally called into the programme work as a decoration. It is nice to have a cultural analysis which delineates some exotic aspects of the surrounding culture. The specialist is given the task to work on her or his own and make a separate report. Such work has the minimal value of advertising concern for “soft values”. For a programme, such an add-on is next to useless. They are not what we call cultural analysis. A valuable cultural analysis is one which makes awkward questions and binds these questions into the daily programme work.

Many tasks related to the cultural field are extremely labour intensive tasks. Think about communicating the programme framework to people living in one hundred villages and who are used to oral communication. Or, think about community participation (i.e. activating marginal stakeholders) in a situation where the existing local administration does not have the capacity to organise consultations and sometimes even hinders democratic participation. These examples show that goals need to be set realistically and even tasks that sound simple, like ‘include all stakeholders in programme formulation’, may imply a lot of work over a period of several years.

What can you expect from a gender specialist?

A gender specialist is someone with experience in carrying out gender analysis; s/he is able to facilitate the understanding of who does what in the programme environment, what resources do they have to do it with, and who has access to and control over the use of these resources. Often a gender specialist is also able to provide training on gender analysis.

An understanding of gender roles is vital from the early stages of programme development. Think, for example, about strengthening non-wood forest product processing. The programme needs an understanding of who collects these products, who plants and tends to them, who markets the final products, who has received training to do what they do, who has access to credit and so on. Literally millions of development dollars have been wasted because we have not taken the time to ask some very simple questions about the programme environment.

A gender specialist can also assist in identifying gender sensitive indicators for work plans, evaluate programme impacts on gender roles, and facilitate the development of gender sensitive strategies for avoiding undesirable impacts.

What can you expect from community insiders?

Often the real expertise about the programme environment, both physical and cultural, is with the people who live and work within it. There are many reasons for ensuring that this knowledge and expertise is utilized at different stages of a programme's evolution.

Firstly, a development initiative must have a basis in resources that the population who will have responsibility for its continuity also have access to and control over to ensure its sustainability. Local knowledge is an important resource, and it is often underestimated. For example, in Northern Namibia people utilize shallow wells dug in the sandy earth as a primary water source. When asked about the life span of such wells, outsider engineers (both Namibian and expatriate) estimated it to be around three to five years. In fact many of the wells had originally been established by the great grandfathers and grandfathers of current users. It is easy to develop programmes based on assumptions made based on our experiences elsewhere, rather than to take the time to ask, often simple, questions that can easily be answered by the people living in the area.

Secondly, replicability of a development initiative also depends on the users having the knowledge base necessary for the establishment of a similar initiative. To replicate well construction or nursery development, an expertise of local organization and institutions is often even more important than the relatively straight forward technical expertise.

Community insiders can be a variety of groups and/or individuals. Their comfort level with the outsiders culture may vary to a great degree. If you are working to strengthen a government institution and most of the "community" are people who have been exposed to the outsider's culture(s) through travel and education, you will not encounter many problems in communicating. If you are working in rural areas where you do not share a language with most of the community members, you will often find it necessary to work through an intermediary.

Here is a list of issues to be sensitive to when working with community insiders:

- if someone is working for a programme, they have the right to expect a remuneration
- don't demote your colleagues to a translator
- when working with a translator, make sure they understand that they are not expected to interpret the message, just to translate
- as with any group of people, there will be different perspectives on "facts" about the programme environment. Consider that there are perspectives that we hear more often (e.g. of men, educated, upper class, landowners etc), and there are perspectives that need opportunities to be expressed (e.g. of women, children, elderly, illiterate, landless etc).

Administrative tools

Administrators and Managers often conduct cultural analysis in the course of their working day. The normal programme planning and administration requires making decisions which are based on cultural notions of what is the practice, what is feasible and what is sustainable.

In carrying out such analysis, the Administrator/Manager enjoys the advantage of being positioned at the apex of official information flows. If you are in this position, we would encourage you to develop a personal practice cultural analysis. You could, for example:

- draw stakeholder maps of your programme(s),
- develop check-lists of cultural issues,
- make use of a personal collection of handbooks on cultural analysis, and
- locate reference persons with intimate knowledge on the recipient countries and cultures.

All such practices have a single aim: institutionalising right questions within the programme frameworks and demanding answers on them.

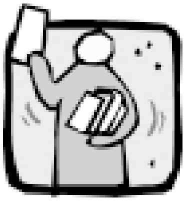
In Appendix I we have included a list of selected books, manuals and internet sources which you may find helpful for cultural assessment. Getting access to some of these texts when you need them most may not always be easy, and we suggest that you consider establishing a programme library. This is also a way of making the resources available to the entire programme team.

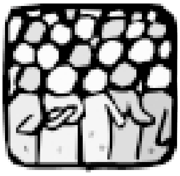
What an administrator or a team leader also needs to recognize is that at times there is a need for advice and support of an specialist in culture or gender issues. Such times would include situations in which the programme activities are identified as culture sensitive, or when the programme scope is so large that the expertise is needed in order to include an adequate scope of issues. Another reason would be when the expertise is needed not only to identify culture sensitive issues but to train programme personnel in cultural analysis. You may also be constrained by lack of time or other resources, and call on an specialist to ease this load.

One of the most fundamental reason for cultural analysis is to be able to anticipate potential conflicts caused by the changes effected by a development initiative. The final chapter looks more closely at this issue.

> *"Culture is dialogue, the exchange of ideas and experience and the appreciation of other values and traditions; it withers and dies in isolation."*
>
> Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies

Solving social conflicts





Accept that conflicts exist

While discussing cultural values, practices and institutions, we often alluded to the meeting of two cultures in the development context being a source of profound differences. Development initiatives are by definition based on unequal social relationships. Consequently, development programmes are prone to social conflict. Such conflicts should not be perceived as a failure, but as an integral part of the process through which stakeholders take on increased ownership of the initiative. The focus should always be on the potential for learning that exists in every conflict situation.

In this final chapter, we will discuss briefly how to identify emerging conflicts and how to deal with them. The purpose is to emphasize the fact that conflicts can be harnessed for constructive purposes.

Cultural basis of interests

Earlier we introduced the concept of stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis provides a sound platform for the initial analysis of the sources of a potential conflict. The method includes the identification of interests of the stakeholders. When a conflict is emerging, one can always try to locate the interests of the related parties on the object of conflict. It is far too simplistic to expect that the ‘interests’ of a stakeholder are reducible to personal enrichments. Usually the situation is more complicated. The analysis should reach beyond the immediate project/programme setting and locate the cultural roots of the stated interests. For example, the interests of a technical specialist are culturally constituted and the interests of a beneficiary are based on a different set of cultural values. While analysing a conflict situation, one needs to advance from the focal interests outwards towards the cultural basis of interests.

Interests of the stakeholders of a programme are culturally determined. The planners and managers need to understand the cultural connections between these interests.

Let us consider the following example. The planners are initiating a programme which is very labour intensive. Earlier experience shows that in the programme area it is customary to take long leaves for funerals and similar occasions. Here we have a conflict of interests. The planners have an interest in an efficient labour-intensive programme. In this particular case, the employees have an interest to attend a funeral - a consideration arising from outside the programme. In order to accommodate both interests, we need to analyse the cultural basis of each interest. The planner is accountable to her employer in a western society. The western labour norms prioritize work commitments often at great personal cost. This norm is supported by the obligation of the employer to pay a wage that helps the employee to meet external pressures. On the other hand, the workers in the programme area are used to a situation in which the employer has no such obligation. Consequently the workers often need to supplement they salary with other activities. Attending funerals does not look like a way of supplementing income - it seems to empty pockets rather than fill them. However, if a worker does not have adequate salary and needs to continue cultivation in rural areas alongside the employment (or to keep open the prospect for returning to the countryside) it is important, given the cultural rules of land tenure, that a worker attends the funeral and shows involvement in kinship affairs. This is a necessary part of an informal communal social security system.

The problem of work absenteeism can now be looked from two perspectives:

1. Employer perspective
- labour rules, labour negotiations, salary, social security
- ideas on work ethics, time, division between work and non-work

2. Employee perspective
- salary and other income, lack of social security
- ideas on work ethics, time, division between work and non-work

We have not solved the problem. But when you as a Team Leader understand how the conflict emerges, you will be in a better position to negotiate. Cultural analysis starts from real problems but solutions are often found in informed communication.

Solving social conflicts in the programme context

It is essential to locate areas in which potential conflicts can be dealt with in an efficient and neutralising manner. The current management literature does not state that the manager should, or could, eliminate all possible sources of conflicts. Instead, the manager has to be able to manage conflicts and contain them within reasonable bounds.

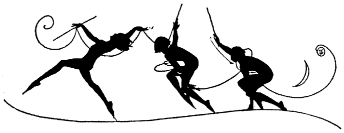
A programme requires a productive level of conflicts. This means a level which helps the programme to adjust itself to the internal and external pressures and to develop accordingly. If the programme has too much conflicts, this may lead into the escalation. This means that the importance of conflict grows far beyond the proportions that the issue would actually call for. The first signs for the escalation of a conflict are the stealing of programme property and the spreading of unfounded rumours. When a conflict escalates further, the conflict is brought into daylight and the high level decision-makers are drawn in to take sides.

If there are too few conflicts, the results may be as disastrous. The lack of conflict may lead into withdrawal or suppression. Withdrawal refers to the avoidance of social contact. Both parties show indifference towards the other and simply ignore that there is an acute problem. Examples of withdrawal are the lukewarm participation in programme meetings and the lack of financial commitment. Suppression, on the other hand, is a situation where the social interface is very active and there are a number of ways of communicating views, but where these ways are so ritualised that no real message is transmitted. If there are real problems, they are not addressed because the claims of solidarity and organisational structure prevent the open dissenting expressions. The negative impact of conflict suppression on the sustainability of the programme may be difficult to detect and sometimes it becomes visible only after the programme has been completed.

Every programme has both formal and informal channels for communication. A productive level of conflict can be achieved when :

- a system of reporting allows for the identification of disagreements,
- both formal and informal channels can be used for solving social conflicts, and
- a neutral third party can be used to mediate difficult conflicts.

Interestingly, cultures differ enormously in how conflicts should be dealt with. The traditional Finnish manner of solving conflicts through a serious face-to-face discussion may be suitable in some countries. In some others, a totally different set of tools is necessary. Conflicts are a critical test-case on cultural understanding for the development worker. Navigating through a cultured landscape is an art of avoiding potholes and locating opportunities, and an endless learning process.



APPENDIX 1

Readings on culture and development cooperation

Documents by the Department of International Development Cooperation, Finland

Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1998). Guidelines for Programme Design, Monitoring and Evaluation. 80 p. plus annexes.

> These are the official guidelines for managing Finnish development programme and programmes. It shows the integrated approach towards programme design, monitoring and evaluation. This text is necessary reading for anybody working with the Finnish aid.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
– (1993). Looking at Gender and Forestry.
– (1994). Looking at Gender, Water Supply and Sanitation.
– (1995). Looking at Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development.
– (1995). Guidelines on Gender Analysis.

> These are a collection of current guidelines for addressing gender issues in projects/ programmes in different sectors. It is recommended that you read at least the general ("Guidelines on Gender Analysis") and the one most relevant to the sector of your work.

Moore, Mick et al. (1996). Ownership in the Finnish Aid Programme. 106 p. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Evaluation report 1996:3.

> Ownership is a difficult issue to define precisely. This report provides a very clear-cut and sharp analysis of ownership in a number of Finnish programmes. It also gives practical recommendations on how each party can enhance the ownership base of an aid programme.

Vainio-Mattila, Arja (1997). Participation: Concept, Practice and Implications for Finnish Development Cooperation. 37 p. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Blue Series 1997:1.

> This document provides an introduction to participatory development by exploring examples from various agencies.

Vasko, Veikko et al (1998). Culture in Finnish Development Cooperation. 189 p. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Evaluation Report 1998:1.

> This is a report on a thematic evaluation of the role of culture as a quality factor in Finnish development cooperation based on experiences in selected projects in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Vietnam.

Culture, Gender and the Practice of Development

Adams, Marianne et al (1997). Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A sourcebook. 374 p. New York & London: Routledge

A great resource for those who want to explore a variety of social justice issues in depth. Issues covered include, for example, racism, sexism, homophobia, antisemitism and ableism

Appell, G.N. see Boulton, Alistair

Boulton, Alistair (1993). Cultural Sustainability: A preprequisite for success. Development Express No. 93-06.http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/dex9306.htm

A good overview of the role of culture in development.

DANIDA (1996). Logical Framework Approach; A Flexible Tool for Participatory Development. 140 p. Royal Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

This book gives what it promises: a presentation of the Logical Framework in a most approachable manner. The book gives a step-by-step approach on making a Logical Framework analysis as a work process. The book points out that many problems of Logical Framework appear from its unflexible use. The authors show that Logical Framework is an excellent tool when it is used in a reflective and open manner.

Davis-Case, D'Arcy (1990). The Community's Toolbox. 146 p. Community Forestry Field Manual 2, Rome: FAO.

A good introduction to participatory field techniques for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Gallois, Cynthia and Callon, Victor (1997). Communication and culture: a guide for practice. New York: Wiley.

A practical guide to issues arising from cross cultural communication.

Lourdes, Arizipe see Boulton, Alistair

Mikkelsen, Britha (1995). Methods for Development Work and Research - A Guide for Practitioners. 296 p. Sage Publications: New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London.

This is a practical and well-informed guidebook on collecting and analysing socio-cultural data in the third world context. The book presents a number of different methods (like surveys, interviews, PRA-methods, sustainability analysis) and guides the reader to use them in combinations instead of relying on one method, only.

Parker, A. Rani (1993). Another Point of View: A manual on gender analysis training for grassroots workers. New York; Unifem.

This manual introduces an alternative gender analysis model which uses a matrix as its basic tool. The Gender Analysis Matrix is the only gender analysis methodology to explicitly include culture in its analysis.

Pérez de Cuéllar, Javier et al. (1995). Our Creative Diversity.309p. UNESCO Publishing, Paris

This is the official world document which lays down principles for addressing cultural diversity in a plural and rapidly changing world. It contains a vision and a call for action in a selected number of problem areas. This is essential reading for Cultural Experts and anybody organising a culture programme. It is less operational for people working with other programmes and looking for practical guidance on how to deal with cultural dimension.

Prindville, Joanne see Boulton, Alistair

Shanker, Rajkumari (1996). Diversity and Development. Development Express No. 05 1996. Http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/dex9605.htm

A short analysis of how cultural diversity factors in development.

Wilde, V. & Vainio-Mattila, A. (1995). Gender analysis and forestry: International Training Package. Rome; FAO.

A package of seven booklets including guidelines and checklists on how to develop gender analysis training, how to carry out gender analysis and how to utilize participatory methodology in doing so.

World Bank (1996). The World Bank Participation Sourcebook. Washington D.C.

A good sourcebook on participation, including case studies and methodology. Also available electronically at http://www.worldbank.org/html/wbi/sourcebook/sbhome.htm

Verhelst, Thierry (1990). No life without roots: culture and development. London: Zed Books.

Internet resources

Development Express
http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/xpress_e.htm

A collection of papers commissioned by Canadian International Development Agency on a variety of issues, many of which are relevant to culture and gender.

Finnish Aid
http://global.finland.fi

Home page for official Finnish aid.

Fourth World Conference On Women in Beijing, China in 1995.
http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/women.html

Home page for the most recent United Nations Conference on Women.

OneWorld
http://www.oneworld.org/front.html

A great site linking over 200 organizations working in intrenational development. A good site to access for news, policies and activities in the field.

APPENDIX 2

Glossary

Cultural analysis is a methodological framework developed in diverse contexts to organizing information on variety of cultural issues.

Cultural diversity within a society recognizes and acknowledges the existence of a variety of cultures. These can be based on ethnicity, but also on other determinants. For example, we refer to youth culture, sports culture, popular culture and so on.

Cultural pluralism within a society refers to a high tolerance of various groups manifesting their values, practices and institutions.

Cultural sensitivity refers to the degree to which the programme addresses cultural issues.

Culture sensitive programmes are those programmes which have an impact of varying strength on the culture of its environment. Sometimes this impact is acknowledged, often it is not.

Culturally sensitive programmes strategize around culture. They acknowledge the existence of various cultures that exist within the programme environment, and identify supports and obstacles that exist within those cultures. Culturally sensitive programmes incorporate culture within their planning framework for successful programming and sustainable results.

Ethnocentric refers to a perspective that is bound by the values, practices and institutions of one ethnic group. Within the development context ethnocentricism often manifests itself as “eurocentricity” meaning that European/Western/Northern/First World values, practices and institutions are perceived as superior and/or as the point of departure.

Gender refers to the socially defined roles of men and women, while sex refers to the biologically determined roles of women and men. In general roles based on sex, such as childbirth, are permanent and universal. Gender roles, however, change from one location to an another (fuelwood collection is predominantly a male activity in Northern Europe, but a female activity in Africa), over time (the role of an individual changes, for example, from that of a child to a parent), and from one generation to another (you need only to think about how different your grandparents days were from your own!).

Gender analysis refers to a systematic way of looking at the different impacts of development on women and men. As development programmes have actively sought to reach women, we have learned that gender has a lot to do with what work we do, how much time we have to do it, and how much money we have to do it with. Gender analysis requires separating data by sex, and understanding how labour is divided and valued. Gender analysis must be done at all stages of the development process; one must always ask how a particular activity, decision or plan will affect men differently from women. (Parker 1993:74)

Multiculturalism refers to the policies related to attempts to maintain equal opportunities to all ethnic groups within a society.

Socio-economic dimension answers questions on how to balance between economic growth and social equality.

Socio-cultural dimension answers questions on how to balance between the universal values, such as human rights, and particularistic values, such as the supremacy of male elders over women and youths.

Stakeholders are groups of people, organizations and institutions who have a direct or indirect interest, or a role, in the programme, or who affect or are affected by it.

APPENDIX 3

Test your skills!

The following is a set of questions based on materials in this booklet. Use them to check how familiar you have become with the landscape of culture.

In answering the following questions, it may be helpful to refer to a case, such as the project or programme you are currently involved in. Here is one example you can use:

The programme is aiming to increase the number of all-year feeder roads. However, motor vehicles are limited in number and most of the ones in the area are used for crop collection. People are more concerned in public transport: easy access to market towns and to hospitals.

? What cultures do you represent? What cultures does your project represent?

? What makes a project culture sensitive?

? How do you ensure that women, men, girls and boys are appropriately involved in project activities?

? How can the project ensure that the interests of the local people are met?

? Which local institutions participate in the project? Why? Which ones do not? Why not?

? How can the project promote local ownership of its activities?

? What makes a project culturally sensitive?

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Navigating Culture:

A road map to culture and development

How can cultural analysis benefit development intervention? These guidelines will assist you in cultural analysis, a methodological and analytical tool, which helps us understand how development programmes interact with cultural settings. It also helps field workers integrate local cultures into whichever project management technique they may be using.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Department for International Development Cooperation

Information Unit
Kanavakatu 4a, 00160 Helsinki
tel. + 358 (09) 1341 6391, 1341 6370
fax + 358 (09) 1341 6375

Homepage: http://global.finland.fi