ipat

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DOING DEVELOPMENT DIFFERENTLY

Effective Advising in Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Contexts – How

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1. WHAT IS IT?

We are familiar with the '3Ds' of 'diplomacy, development and defense'. The '3Ds' of 'Doing Development Differently' focus on the 'how' of the way 'development' is done. 'Development' here includes the efforts at state & institution building or institutional reform. The 'DDD Manifesto' emerged out of a workshop in October 2014, and is being signed and promoted by a slowly growing network of individuals and organisations. It is a reaction against a dominant mindset and practice of grand designs; comprehensive plans that are then rolled out; pre-determined results by preset time frames; linear cause-effect relations in logframes as if the world were controllable; a belief in 'best practices' irrespective of contextual factors, and in 'solutions' that will work everywhere etc.

2. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

"It is common that the pendulum of economic development scholarship and practice swings back and forth from one set of (faddish) ideas to another. But beneath this back-and-forth cycling is another, longer cycle the tension between a search for grand, seemingly scientifically-grounded solutions, and an approach to problem-solving which self-consciously is more pragmatic and incremental. (…)

In time this bold, but open-minded quest for insight congealed into something very different: the sequential embrace of one 'magic bullet' after another as the solution to development's challenges – each advocated enthusiastically by its champions, only to be superseded by a new generation of very different and ever-more-ambitious certainties. First came a pre-occupation with increasing capital investment (the focus of development efforts into the latter 1970s). Limited results led to a turn to economics, and an insistence that results depended on 'getting incentives right' via structural adjustment policies. The 1990s witnessed the emergence of an even more ambitious agenda, with an insistence that far-reaching institutional reform—get 'good governance' right—was necessary for development. The past decade has been characterized by a pre-occupation with quantitative, results-based approaches—most vividly evident in the enthusiastic embrace of randomized control trials as a way of identifying what works, and by Jim Kim's assertion, within months of becoming World Bank president, that the organization needed not just to support what works, but to embrace "the science of delivery".

Emerging scholarship and innovation by practitioners suggest that this long-cycle pre-occupation with grand solutions may be turning. While the protagonists of new approaches vary in many specifics, most share the following:

- An insistence that the appropriate point of departure for understanding and influencing development is to explore the way things actually are on the ground, rather than superimposing some normative 'best practice' vision of how they should be.
- The use of 'good fit' orienting frameworks as guides for helping to identify a variety of distinctive trajectories of change—each with distinctive patterns of incentive and constraint, and thus distinctive entry points for seeking to nudge change forward.
- A focus on working to solve very specific development problems—moving away from a pre-occupation with longer-term reforms of broader systems and processes, where results are long in coming and hard to discern.
- An emphasis on ongoing learning—in recognition that no 'good fit' blueprint can adequately capture the complex reality of a specific setting, and thus that implementation must inevitably involve a process of iterative adaptation.

Indeed, against the backdrop of the current discourse, the sly irony with which Yale Professor Charles Lindblom entitled his classic 1959 article, "The Science of 'Muddling Through'," takes on an especially contemporary flavor. Lindblom contrasts "the attention given to, and successes enjoyed by operations research, statistical decision theory and systems analysis…[and…] wherever possible quantification of values for mathematical analysis" with the reality that: "making policy is at best a very rough process. Neither social scientists, nor politicians, nor public administrators yet know enough about the social world to avoid repeated error in predicting the consequences of policy moves. A wise policy-maker consequently expects that his policies will achieve only part of what he hopes…[and]… proceeds through a succession of incremental changes…." (Levy 2014)

3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

Here a good summary by Duncan Green of a report on 'Adaptive Development. Improving services to the poor' that offers the theory and practice examples that underpin the DDD Manifesto:

"The starting point is that 'Change is almost always driven by domestic forces, and often occurs incrementally, as a result of marginal shifts in the ways interests are perceived, especially by elites.' (pg. 4)

ODI argues that "the best approach for domestic reformers and their supporters combines three key ingredients.

- **Working in problem-driven and politically informed ways**. This might seem obvious but is rarely the norm. Such an approach tracks down problems, avoids ready-made solutions and is robust in its assessment of possible remedies. Too often, diagnosis only gets as far as uncovering a serious underlying challenge – often linked to the character of local politics. For example, studies of medicine stock outs in Malawi and Tanzania and of human resources for health in Nepal reveal how power, incentives and institutions lead to chronic gaps in supply. It is difficult to identify workable solutions to such problems, and attempts to do so often focus on the wrong things. Doing things differently means understanding what is politically feasible and discovering smart ways to make headway on specific service delivery issues, often against the odds.

- **Being adaptive and entrepreneurial.** Much development work fails because, having identified a problem, it does not have a method to generate a viable solution. Because development problems are typically complex and processes of change are highly uncertain, it is essential to allow for cycles of doing, failing, adapting, learning and (eventually) getting better results. This requires strong feedback loops that test initial hypotheses and allow changes in the light of the result of those tests. Some of the greatest success stories in international development – the South Korean industrial policy being only one example – are the result of a willingness to take risks and learn from failure.

- **Supporting change that reflects local realities and is locally led**. Change is best led by people who are close to the problem and who have the greatest stake in its solution, whether central or local government officials, civil-society groups, private-sector groups or communities. While local 'ownership' and 'participation' are repeatedly name-checked in development, this has rarely resulted in change that is genuinely driven by individuals and groups with the power to influence the problem and find solutions." (pgs. 4-5)

    Donors can help reform processes to adopt a problem-driven and adaptive approach, but if they are to be effective they must act as facilitators and brokers of locally led processes of change, not as managers. This means big changes in the way aid agencies work. And agencies will not change without new guidelines from the highest level: from ministers and other politicians who, in turn, respond to the perceptions and interests of voters and taxpayers.
    We propose, therefore, some major changes in how aid works and in the way aid is treated in public policy debates.

- **Aiding development that is politically smart and locally led**: Aid should do more to support initiatives that are problem-driven, adaptive and locally led. These initiatives need financial and other support that is fit for that purpose.

- **An explicit refocusing of the debate on how aid works, not the total volume spent**. There are many areas where spending that benefits poor countries could be increased, but the current debate about targets for aid spending is too focused on the ability of the donor country to pay, rather than whether those funds are used effectively. Looking at how aid works is more important than how much to spend.

- **A new and more honest dialogue about development and aid with the public**. According to recent evidence, ordinary citizens in donor countries are often irritated by simple 'heart strings' appeals. Many would welcome a frank discussion on how development happens, why it is often difficult and how aid can best support development that is both genuine and lasting. Efforts to support such a debate should be scaled up." (pg. 6)

- **Results and monitoring**. "Doing things differently should actually be more oriented towards results in two respects. First, over reasonable periods of time (which will vary according to the objective), programmes should be able to make plausible claims of having made a contribution to positive development gains, or else they should not be supported. Second, much greater efforts should be made to build up and document experience on the intermediate change processes.

Process measures of this sort could include the following:

- **Measures of the extent to which issues have local salience or relevance, and whether processes give priority to local leadership and capacity.** This could be based on asking simple questions about the extent to which users and local networks and organisations are involved in issue selection, design and implementation, or through perception or survey data to track how this changes over time.

- **Evidence of adaptation to context**. This means taking into account sub-national variance, local (formal and informal) institutions, the strength of networks, power relationships and more. This might include evidence of the use of the best knowledge available about the local political economy and its dynamics.

- **Evidence of learning in action**. This would measure the use of feedback loops, of evidence on past experience, and adaptation to changing conditions on the ground.

- **Measures of innovation and entrepreneurial action**. Sources of inspiration here may include recent attempts to monitor and measure innovation processes and impacts. Another type of test could assess the extent to which initiatives rest on a series of 'small bets' – i.e. spread their risk across activities – and specify the ways in which they will test and measure the effectiveness of different approaches." (pg. 42)

As for measuring state capability we need to "shift the focus of governance indicators to measures of state capacity that capture performance in core functions, rather than the adoption of particular institutional forms. Examples include the ability of a state to register all children at birth or to reduce road-traffic deaths; both of these calls for a type of state capability that could be applied to a range of development challenges. However, there is also a broader need for a better approach to identifying and measuring practical steps that can be shown to lead to improved outcomes." (pg. 42)

What would make the DDD even more convincing: A clearer gender perspective and more explicit attention to the importance of political contestation and power imbalances (Green 2015:8)

Sources:

Doing Development Differently 2014 Manifesto: **http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com/the-ddd-manifesto/**

Green, D. 27 March 2015: The Best Synthesis So Far of Where We've Got Doing Development Differently. **http://blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/best-synthesis-so-far-where-we-ve-got-doing-development-differently**

Green, D. 2015**: Fit for the Future? Development trends and the role of international NGOs. Oxford, Oxfam discussion paper http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/fit-for-the-future-development-trends-and-the-role-of-international-ngos-556585**

Levy, B. 16 December 2014: 'Doing Development Differently' **http://blog.oup.com/2014/12/doing-economic-development-differently/**

Wild, L., D. Booth, C. Cummings, M. Foresti & J. Wales 2015: Adaptive Development. Improving services to the poor. London, Overseas Development Institute **http://www.odi.org/publications/8125-adapting-development-service-delivery-sdgs**

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THE DOING DEVELOPMENT DIFFERENTLY MANIFESTO.

Statement from the October 2014 'Doing Development Differently' workshop

"Too many development initiatives have limited impact. Schools are built but children do not learn. Clinics are built but sickness persists. Governments adopt reforms but too little changes for their citizens.

This is because genuine development progress is complex: solutions are not simple or obvious, those who would benefit most lack power, those who can make a difference are disengaged and political barriers are too often overlooked. Many development initiatives fail to address this complexity, promoting irrelevant interventions that will have little impact.

Some development initiatives, however, have real results. Some are driven domestically while others receive external support. They usually involve many players – governments, civil society, international agencies and the private sector – working together to deliver real progress in complex situations and despite strong resistance. In practice, successful initiatives reflect common principles.

- They focus on solving local problems that are debated, defined and refined by local people in an ongoing process.
- They are legitimised at all levels (political, managerial and social), building ownership and momentum throughout the process to be 'locally owned' in reality (not just on paper).
- They work through local conveners who mobilise all those with a stake in progress (in both formal and informal coalitions and teams) to tackle common problems and introduce relevant change.
- They blend design and implementation through rapid cycles of planning, action, reflection and revision (drawing on local knowledge, feedback and energy) to foster learning from both success and failure.
- They manage risks by making 'small bets': pursuing activities with promise and dropping others.
- They foster real results – real solutions to real problems that have real impact: they build trust, empower people and promote sustainability.

As an emerging community of development practitioners and observers, we believe that development initiatives can – and must – have greater impact. We pledge to apply these principles in our own efforts to pursue, promote and facilitate development progress, to document new approaches, to spell out their practical implications and to foster their refinement and wider adoption.

We want to expand our community to include those already working in this way. We call on international development organisations of all kinds to embrace these principles as the best way to address complex challenges and foster impact. We recognise the difficulties, but believe that more effective strategies and approaches can generate higher and lasting impact."

RELATED VIDEO CLIPS

- "International aid must support local reformers, not impose ready-made solutions."
  Leni Wild, 3 min 10 secs.
  http://www.odi.org/opinion/9223-mdgs-service-delivery-development

- A series of short video clips about 'Doing Development Differently'
  http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com/videos/

- What is Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation? Lant Pritchett, 4 min 18 sec.
  Building State Capacity Video 8, **http://buildingstatecapability.com/tag/bsc-video/page/4/**

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