

Capacity Building for Effective Involvement in Sector Development Programmes

Concept note on:

Joint Learning Programme on Sector Wide Approaches

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1. – Context

The proposal for a joint donor learning programme on sector approaches was first presented at the 2004 Copenhagen Train4Dev Workshop. The proposal was supported by a number of donors who concluded that “there is a strong need to promote a greater and shared understanding of the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) as a dynamic process, and the practical issues related to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of sector programme support.” It was agreed that this shared understanding could be promoted by bringing donor agency staff and national partners together in joint in-country learning events outside the day-to-day setting.

The Joint learning program (JLP) on SWAp started formally in January 2006. In October 2009, 21 events were carried out in twelve African, five Asian, three Latin American, and one Middle Eastern country. Over the last years the SWAp secretariat was assumed by Denmark, who manages notably the basket fund created to finance the learning events.

The future works of the JLP SWAp sub-group should keep in mind one key issue which can be summarized as follows: “*The JLP approach is based on the assumption that learning should be tailored to the specific needs in a sector. Therefore, the JLP events were not planned centrally but based on demand expressed from the sectors themselves...*”¹ From this point of view the learning events should respond to country needs and not only to the donor strategies.

The JLP core group meeting, which took place in September 2009 in Oslo, decided to entrust the AFD with the secretariat of JLP/SWAp sub-group. In order to organise the future work plan, AFD invited the donors² involved to a meeting from 30th November to 1st December 2009. The present concept note presents the conclusions of this meeting and indicates the next steps for action by the JLP SWAp sub-group.

2. – Objectives

In recent years, donor and partner country staff have developed relevant skills on SWAp in broad terms. Yet, in spite of this real progress in knowledge and skills, effective harmonisation and alignment in the context of SWAp processes remains a major challenge for donors and national development partners. To meet this challenge, the JLP has to further two main objectives.

One overall objective, which is to improve aid effectiveness through enhanced harmonisation and alignment within the SWAp processes, and the immediate objective of enhancing capacity among donor and partner country staff so that they can effectively participate in SWAp processes.

A response has been found through the JLP. Given that the JLP aims to closely link current thinking and good practices to the actual SWAp processes in the sector(s), it has developed a useful operational orientation that focuses on ongoing processes in the sectors concerned.

3. – Approach, methodology and outcomes

As mentioned above, the learning events will be demand-driven and offered on request. Nevertheless, some learning events will be organised at the request of one or more partners of the SWAp sub-group. Three kinds of learning events will be proposed:

1. – Donor staff learning event (half- or 1-day event), with the objective of developing general knowledge on the sector-wide approach: concepts and tools. This event could be based on case studies.
2. – Donor staff learning event (2- or 3-day event), which will have the objective of developing general knowledge on the sector-wide approach: also covering concepts and tools but specialised on one or several sectors.

These two kinds of learning events could be organised at the same time.

¹ See Options for the future – working paper – SWAp-JLP Executive committee – 17 February 2008.

² The donors who attended the meeting were: Belgium, Denmark, European Commission, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands and France.

3. – Country and donor staff learning event at country level.³ The learning events will be demand-driven and offered on request and they will typically address the needs of a specific sector in a specific country to ensure a practical approach of high relevance for the participants. Learning events, where views are exchanged and concepts discussed, can facilitate the development of a common language, vision and working framework among donor and partner country stakeholders. However, the learning/training needs will vary considerably from country to country and sector to sector.

In the previous concept note, the intended learning outcomes of the JLP were defined as follows:

“By the end of a learning event participants should be able to improve their work performance in relation to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of SWAp processes by:

- Working with SWAp as a dynamic process towards increased harmonisation and alignment of aid to nationally owned policies, processes and accountability mechanisms;
- Sharing a language and understanding of the key components of sector programmes, and promote joint assessment of these components as basis for decision making about scope and modalities of donor support to a sector programme;
- Taking the key advantages and disadvantages of different support modalities to sector programmes into account in their work to foster joint support;
- Understanding the typical joint instruments used to make sector programmes operational, and their own role in this context;
- Dealing with typical risks, difficulties and dilemmas which occur during the preparation and implementation of sector programmes;
- Participating in the preparation of the next steps of the ongoing SWAp processes in “their” sectors”.

For the future the intended outcomes remain the same.

4. – Organisation, management and financial aspects

Considering that only a limited number of SWAp subgroup members are ready to participate in a basket fund in 2010, the organisation described below has been retained.

During 2010, the SWAp subgroup will operate on the basis of joint initiatives “à la carte”, which would be T4D labelling. This organisation will provide a greater degree of flexibility and reactivity: in addition to respecting the strategy and priorities of all SWAp stakeholders, it will enable all members to participate in the learning events organized within the SWAp subgroup according to their resources and capabilities.

The functioning of the Steering Committee, which will meet new partners, will remain the same as that described in the previous SWAp concept note. The Executive Committee⁴ will be withdrawn in 2010; it could be recreated if a basket fund is established in 2011.

The role and scope of the Steering Committee may be defined as follows:

It is expected that at least⁵ members will participate in the financing of different events (basket fund), although the financing of selected events only will also be possible. Each of the financing donors will obtain a seat on the Steering Committee.

The JLP Steering Committee has the overall responsibility for directing the JLP and taking principal decisions concerning the planning and implementation of the programme. The Steering Committee will be chaired by AFD.

³ During the previous years, a “standard” three-day event was organised at country level but, where relevant, it could be preceded by a half-day “starter” session for participants unfamiliar with some basic issues. The 3-day event may be followed by a half- to 1-day follow-up session for senior level representatives who cannot attend the full event.

⁴ The possible role and functions of this Executive Committee is described in attachment 1.

⁵ Currently 8 donors are involved (Belgium, Denmark, Inwent, GTZ, Luxembourg, Netherlands, European Commission and AFD).

The Steering Committee will mainly coordinate and communicate by e-mail and videoconference, but it is envisaged that it will also meet at least once annually. The main responsibilities of the Steering Committee will be:

- Approval of annual plans, progress reports, budgets and accounts⁶
- Final approval of selected applications

The members of the Steering Committee will further inform their own country representations about the JLP and participate in monitoring the implementation of selected events if needed.

For the reasons given above, no basket-fund will be created in 2010. Nevertheless, before the T4D core group meeting planned in January 2010 in Vienna, donors involved in the SWAp initiative will be able to give:

- A draft list of countries and sectors priorities
- The learning events (country, sector, etc.) that they wish to finance in 2010
- The approximate amount of their financial commitments for 2010

A steering committee meeting will be organised in 2010 to examine how and if a basket-fund could be created: subscribing donors, minimum fund required, basket-fund management modalities, etc.

⁶ If a basket-fund is created.

Attachment 1

Role and functions of the Executive Committee if a basket fund is created in 2011:

The learning programme will be managed and administered by the Executive Committee. It is proposed that three members sit on this committee (**to be chosen**). The Steering Committee should subsequently determine and endorse the final composition of the Executive Committee. AFD, which is in charge of running the sub-group, is one of the Executive Committee members.

The Executive Committee will be responsible for the management and administration of the JLP. AFD will be responsible for managing the programme, including management of the joint account of the participating donors during the full duration of the programme.⁷ AFD is also, where appropriate, authorised to prepare and manage the contract with the consultant selected for the implementation of each phase of the programme. The consultant will be recruited according to French procurement procedures.

The principal activities and responsibilities of the Executive Committee include (based on the 2005 concept note):

- Preparing the annual plans, budgets and accounts⁸
- Reporting to the Steering Committee
- Monitoring the implementation to assure that the content, approach and the quality of the events are satisfactory and in line with the international agenda on aid effectiveness
- Writing the progress reports
- Updating, where appropriate, the operational procedures for the implementation of the JLP
- Preparing a list of potential consultants
- Preparing the Terms of Reference for the recruitment of a consultant for each event
- Preparing the contract with the selected consultant for each event if a basket fund is created
- Liaising with the implementer
- Facilitating the liaison between the lead donor contact person in the country and the implementer
- Assessing the SWAp event applications and presenting the selected applications to the Steering Committee for final approval

The Executive Committee will prepare a set of operational procedures to clearly determine the delegation of responsibility between the three members.

⁷ See footnote 5

⁸ See footnote 5