



Selected Case Studies on Facilitating
Learning and Change

VBNK Annual Impact Assessment 2012

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1. Introduction

VBNK began in 2006 the annual impact assessment of service delivery, and we designed our assessment approach based on results-chains. Typically, we selected themes¹ for enquiry, decided on focus areas and accompanying research questions, and adapted a methodology, such as focus group discussions, stories of significant change and in-depth interviews, which allowed us to test our assumptions about the delivery of selected services, the subsequent application of learning by participants, and evidence of change.

The previous annual assessments stressed describing the “use of outputs”, that is, what did participants do, and in some cases, what did organisations do, after their participation in the learning event; was there a change at the work place? We often discovered that we were able to describe what was done, however we weren’t always able to describe the effect (and benefits). This year we approached the assessment a bit differently.

First of all, we decided that we should look for effects over a longer time period. In particular, we agreed to base our assessment on measuring the performance indicators that we set forth when we established the strategic plan for 2010-2012. Here, we described expected outcomes and specified indicators. This decision meant that our assessment has to expand gathering information on what changes took place and what evidence exists describing the benefits.

We then asked ourselves:

- What do we want to focus on learning about?
- What information do we already have? (For example, what information has been routinely collected through our monitoring and evaluation data? What documentation do we have?)
- What secondary documentation is available in order for us to refer to longitudinal change stories (i.e. external assessments)?
- What story can we tell? Where do we have ‘solid’ evidence? What are the information gaps for describing that story?
- How can we get information to fill the gaps?

Following on, we devoted time during the already scheduled internal Learning Week, and our staff explored the answers to the questions, and searched our data base to bookmark what data exists, and searched selected external data bases. These enquiries led us to agree on three themes for *Impact Assessment 2012*:

- Empowering women and female workforce;
- Influencing individual performance - affecting organisational effectiveness; and
- Demonstrating innovative approaches to capacity development in Cambodia.

¹ After two years’ experience we became more selective and decided annually on special themes: *Daring to Share from Their Hearts* (2008); *Learners Celebrating Success* (2009); *Rising to the Challenge* (2010) and *Are there Shifts in Thinking and Ways of Behaving?* (2011).

Under these themes, we are presenting a series of case studies that are representative of our service delivery strands, which include leadership and organisational development, coaching and facilitation and training. (We did not develop any case study related to the fourth service strand, action research and evaluation.)

All of the case studies tell a story on what results and effects were achieved and influenced by VBNK's service delivery. We are reporting primarily about results and effects, since we want to draw out what evidence exists to document change. Having said this, we want to add that the case studies do not describe much about what we did to achieve the results. We limited ourselves to only a few case studies where we mentioned the approach and methodology. Our reason for doing so is in past years we extensively assessed ourselves on how well, or not, we applied capacity development approaches and selected methodology to fit the situation.

THEME 1: Empowering Women and Female Workforce

VBNK is committed to developing and implementing gender sensitive programmes. In the last year, 68% of our participants have been female. Many of our programmes are focused around women’s empowerment and we include gender consideration into our design and evaluations. We have also conducted internal learning events – including a series of empowerment workshops with VBNK female and male staff – where we critique our own values-based practice.

Our case studies under this theme for *Impact Assessment* 2012 are about two programmes, **Women’s Progressive Leadership in Elections**, and the other known as the **Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E)** factory-based education programme.

CASE STUDY 1: Women’s Progressive Leadership in Elections

The Women’s Progressive Leadership in Elections Programme increased the number of women in leadership roles in Cambodian society by strengthening their understanding of and participation in the electoral process. The programme has also proved to be effective in addressing and overcoming a variety of gender roles engrained in traditional Cambodian society.

Evaluations of the programme have documented personal change stories these women experienced. With a new-found sense of pride they recall their own behaviour changes to now being more assertive, open-minded, goal-oriented, and engaged in democratic processes and in matters that concern their communities.

In 2010 the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), following consultation with the National Election Committee (NEC), approached VBNK to help IFES design and deliver a Women’s Leadership Programme, which sets out to engage more women in the election process in Cambodia through knowledge transfer and personal empowerment. The funding for the programme, called “Women’s Progressive Leadership in Elections” comes from the USAID Programme “Accountability in Governance and Politics”.

The leadership programme is comprised of three week-long training modules (delivered over a 6-month period to 35 women in a province) and a learning forum (one time in each province), which creates the opportunity for the participants to reflect on what they have learned. The training sessions are designed to help women become familiar with the concept of democracy, women’s rights and election processes and, ultimately, to have more women engaged and employed in the electoral or political systems in Cambodia. In the past two years we have held the programme in eight provinces and 280 women, age 18 to 45, participated. (Currently, we are preparing for the third round, which will include six more provinces during 2012 and 2013.)

A 20 year old university student from Phnom Penh wrote:

“I am so happy to have the opportunity to join the Women’s Progressive Leadership in Election programme. This programme is special because it is not incorporated in the government school or university. The programme encourages a woman to show

her capability, express her voice, and helps a woman understand her own value in the society. The programme also promotes women to have courage to serve in the election process and in many other social activities. I think the programme helps women become good leaders in the future, too."

And a 21 year old with polio from Banteay Meanchey province wrote:

"Before I attended the programme and the same as at the beginning of the training, I felt shy and felt not confident, especially in the meeting, and I often didn't have success; I don't know why. After I attended the programme, I gained more knowledge related to elections and other skills such as planning, team work, presentations and negotiations. It leads me to become a new person with braveness, knowing how to challenge and express ideas and have a good relationship with friends. Now, my friends more acknowledge and respect me than before."

Many of the young women described their learning journey as 'life-changing'.²

Independently evaluated pre- and post-test data have shown high levels of knowledge retention and "dramatic" increases in confidence related to working together as part of a team, presenting ideas and speaking in public, planning and managing an event, resolving disputes through negotiation, and participating in interviews.

IFES systematically analysed the data, and their most recent key findings are as follows:³

High Levels of Knowledge on Electoral Issues Retained

Knowledge increased on all electoral knowledge questions following the trainings. After the final training, nearly all respondents correctly answered all the knowledge-based questions: for each question the percentage of correct answers is 99% or higher.

Confidence Levels High Across Various Leadership Skills Areas

Confidence in leadership skills (such as: working as part of a team, presenting ideas to a group, speaking in public, planning and managing an event, resolving disputes through negotiation, and participating in interviews) was clearly lacking before trainings began (only 19% said they were *Very Confident*), but participants' confidence increased after each of the trainings and confidence increased to its highest level following the final training (72% said they were *Very Confident* in these leadership skills).

Improved Feelings of Preparedness, Confidence, and Knowledge of Working on Elections in Cambodia

Participants highly rated their level of preparedness to work, confidence to work on elections, and knowledge of the electoral process in Cambodia. Average ratings on a scale of one to ten, with 1 being "*not at all prepared to work on elections*" and 10 being "*fully prepared to work on elections*" have increased after each of the trainings and increased to

² The IFES Country Director for Cambodia shared the findings and analysis during his presentation at the VBANK 15th Anniversary held 10 April 2012.

³ Evaluation Following Training #3, Cambodia Women's Progressive Leadership in Elections Programme, April 2012.

the highest levels after the final training. The average rating was 7 prior to the trainings and after the final training the average rating increased to its highest level of 9.

Prior to the Commune/ Sangkat election (June 2012), IFES contracted VBNK to organise and facilitate four forums and invite the women who previously participated in the modular training programme; 261 participants from 8 provinces attended the half-day learning forums. The purpose for the forum was to refresh participants' understanding about recruitment and selection process of Polling Station Commission (PSC) officers, including the application date, how to complete the application form and how to seek for information. The forum aimed also to encourage female participants to apply for a job at the commune council/ national assembly election.

Following on, 196 women applied for a job with the PSC and 173 were successful. The successful applicants received positions such as: Chairperson of the Commune Election Commission (CEC), Chair of PSC, Deputy of PSC, 1st Assistant and 2nd Assistant, Secretary and observers. Another 25 participants reported that they were involved with political parties and/or stood as candidates during the election.⁴

In September 2012, VBNK designed and facilitated the reflection workshop with programme participants who successfully gained the job with NEC. During the one-day workshop the participants recounted their experiences of applying and working with the Polling Station Commission, and how the Women's Progressive Leadership in Elections programme prepared them for the NEC position and responsibilities. The discussions led to drawing out lessons learned and providing recommendation to ensure the relevance of the programme into the future, including how the programme's training and learning activities empower women involved increasingly in politics/ elections.

⁴ Report on Women's Forum, VBNK, June 2012.

CASE STUDY 2: Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement - an innovative, factory-based education programme

Workplace engagement programmes have been addressing the living and working conditions of a female workforce in the garment sector. At the same time our programmes have positive effects on key business indicators, e.g. reduced absenteeism and staff turnover, enhanced work relations between the workforce and management, and increased productivity.

We complemented our monitoring and evaluation data with the findings by an external organisation. The global evidence points to the Cambodia programme positively influencing change and impact.

Women play a crucial role in the apparel industry, comprising a majority of the world's garment workers. The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) and Gap Inc. are collaborating to help female garment workers fulfil their potential through education. Gap Inc.'s programme on Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E) is an innovative, factory-based education programme that provides training for life skills, such as problem-solving and financial literacy, as well as workplace skills to help women advance beyond entry-level positions. ICRW partnered with Gap Inc. on the initial development and implementation of the programme, which was piloted in India, one of Gap Inc.'s largest sourcing markets.⁵

VBNK trainers have been working together since 2009 with trainers from CARE Cambodia and provided training for improving the capacities of the female garment workers in the workplace and in building life skills.

Thus far the programme has been delivered to 740 women in Cambodia over the course of three years. Female garment workers learn about communication skills, problem-solving, decision-making, time management, financial literacy, sexual and reproductive health, etc.

The training modules facilitated by VBNK are on four subjects each year (communication, problem solving and decision making, time management and financial management). The participants attend a series of 90 minute training sessions scheduled after the day shift, or before the night shift. There are eight sessions to complete for each module. The CARE responsibility for training has the same time requirements, and CARE staff provide training on three additional subjects (gender, literacy, and health and nutrition).

VBNK regularly conducts end-of-module evaluations, and follow up interviews with the participants and their supervisors. Triangulation of data clearly shows that the programme is achieving results in a number of areas.

Supervisors and line leaders (including one male who had attended PACE training sessions) felt very happy with their workers who joined training because they observed that their staff changed in situations such as helping each other in the line (at factory), and helping to solve personal problems (e.g. with husband) during break time conversations.

⁵ See <http://www.icrw.org/where-we-work/evaluating-factory-based-education-program-garment-workers>

We have the assumption that if, in skill training sessions, the participants build close relationships, respect and encourage each other, then they will have increased positive feelings about themselves, and act more bravely and more confidently when they respond to events in their life, both at the factory and at home.

The factory managers indicated in the impact assessment (VBANK, 2011) that *“the programme aligns well with the factory’s promotion plans ... decisions about who to promote are based on skills ... being brave to speak out, seeking help, and asking and answering questions.”*

Communication between workers and leader is going well, there have been more opportunities for staff to help each other, and to discuss how to improve work performance. One of the factory workers described her impression,

“Before when I talked with a man I was very shy and scared. But after role-playing in the class I no longer feel scared because I have a clear reason when I talk with a man.”

A line manager expressed her observations:

“As a line leader, I can say that my staff, who attended training, have good communication with each other, i.e. the way they speak to each other, they listen to each other from the start of the story to the end. Before, my staff spoke rudely to each other, there were conflicts --- not speaking to each other for more than one year. The effect of this changing is that they produce output on time with the quality and the quantity required.”

The female garment workers stressed that their work life is now better, because there is clearer and more supportive communication, more cooperation and more trust and openness.

These findings have been confirmed by independent research conducted by the International Centre for Research on Women. In 2011, Gap Inc.'s PACE programme was recognised by the Clinton Global Initiative in New York as an exemplary approach to economically advancing women worldwide.⁶

ICRW evaluates the programme’s impact on participants in all countries where the programme is being implemented. Initial results are promising. Women demonstrate more willingness to take on responsibilities and assume leadership roles; communicate better and more effectively at work and in their homes; show improved ability to solve workplace problems; and are better able to support their peers. In addition to gaining more respect from their family members, women also value themselves more.

Engaging with women in garment factories has benefits and demonstrates to companies that investing in training programmes for staff will have a measurable positive effect on key business indicators, e.g. reduced staff turnover and increased productivity – the end result is a happier more productive workforce, good for the women workers, good for the bottom line.

⁶ <http://www.icrw.org/media/press-releases/gap-inc’s-pace-program-honored-icrw-innovation-award>

The value proposition of the programme can be summarised as below:

<p>Provide training to the female workforce in factories that address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Skills (communication, problem solving and decision making, time management and financial management, and reproductive health) ❑ Confidence to apply these skills (e.g. negotiation, self-esteem, etc.) 	<p>Business results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced absenteeism and staff turnover; ▪ Enhanced work relations between the workforce and the management ▪ Increased productivity / less down time <p>Social development results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved health outcomes (informed choices about marriage and pregnancy) ▪ Increased self-esteem and confidence to speak out ▪ Increased ability to influence decision making ▪ Access to promotion / other employment ▪ Planning / saving for the future
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The creative approaches facilitated by VBNK while providing skills training encouraged participants to build good relationships with each other through sharing their own stories. The approach encouraged the female garment workers to strongly participate in the training sessions. This transferred across to the workplace. One worker commented to us:

“I understand that helping another is very important for me (when I help my friend who cannot finish sewing on time, I get help back from my friend later). Helping each other makes me have friends and my work runs smoothly.”

THEME 2: Influencing individual performance - affecting organisational effectiveness

We continually stress collecting evidence on what enables or hinders individual participants to apply their learning into their workplace and/or to influence change. Our intention is to find out how our work results are influencing individual performance and affecting organisational effectiveness. This is especially important for us since it influences VBNK's managing service delivery, namely leadership development and organisational change.

In our leadership and organisational development services we facilitate processes to diagnose the system and describe strengths, identify the causes of difficulties and draw out the connections between individual and organisational performance.

Experience shows that leadership engagement is closely linked to the success of an organisational change effort. VBNK's leadership development programmes address the core challenges facing development practice in Cambodia and the inseparable link between personal change and social change (as highlighted in *Learning for Transformation*, 2001).⁷ VBNK's approaches to leadership therefore guide development practitioners and leaders through an experiential and holistic personal process of learning and values clarification to help them become clearer about what supports development processes within themselves and others.

CASE STUDY 3: Organisational Development of Local Partners

VBNK applied an approach to organisational development that stressed building understanding, commitment and ownership for the change process. We have set out the importance of taking a measured approach that would allow each organisation to fully understand what it was doing and why, and to internalise the learning along the way.

We have described scenarios and facilitated processes that uncovered ways to strengthen organisational effectiveness of our partners. Our methodology emphasised: diagnosing the system and describing strengths, and identifying the causes of difficulties and drawing out the connections between individual and organisational performance.

In July–October 2008, VBNK entered into an agreement with an *International NGO (INGO) working in Cambodia* to assess the organisational capacity of the INGO's Local Partners in Cambodia. VBNK presented the findings to the INGO at the end of the assessment period.

The assessment results and action points for the different partners were presented back to individual local partner organisations for clarification and validation. The assessment findings and agreed strengths and areas for further intervention were consolidated for each organisation.

⁷ Moira O'Leary, and Nee Meas (2001) *Learning for Transformation: A study of the relationship between culture, values, experience and development practice in Cambodia*, Phnom Penh: Krom Akphiwat Phum.

Following on, VBANK was sub-granted by the INGO to provide support to developing the organisational capacity of their partner LNGOs during the period of September 2009 to August 2010.

The objective was to improve the organisational capacity of nine out of 11 targeted LNGOs through the following interventions:

- 1) Conduct a leadership workshop for senior management to develop organisational change plans.
- 2) Support the implementation of consistent and transparent application of financial procedures, human resource policies and organisational performance management procedures.
- 3) Review current organisational performance management practice and identify priorities for further support.

An initial progress report was sent to the INGO (1st of March 2010), followed by a second progress report (1st of June 2010). The final report provided the INGO with a summary of the accomplishments of the agreement, the methods used, and the products developed, including a discussion of findings and notation of particular successes and strategies that did not achieve the anticipated effect.

In August 2012, the INGO approached VBANK to do a follow up assessment of the 9 LNGOs to determine what progress has been made and to identify potential future OD support needs. Two other IAs, which are not part of the 2009 and 2010 implementation, were also included in the study. The INGO wanted to use the results of the assessment to make decisions about which LNGOs it would continue to support and also to inform a new funding arrangement, where OD support will be managed under the umbrella of a selected local organisation.

Specifically, the inquiry addressed the following questions:

- What changes in systems/ processes have taken place in the organisation in any of the domains following the intervention? (*Output level*)
- [How] have these new systems/ processes been applied consistently, e.g. have recruitment practices changed? Are the human resource policies being applied consistently? Are recruitment processes transparent? (*Progress and use of output*)
- How has this translated into improved organisational performance? (*Outcome level*)
- In addition the inquiry asked: What factors helped to influence progress and achieving results? And what factors limited/ continue to limit progress and achievement of positive results?

Based on the analysis via triangulating data from report progress in 2010, plenary reflection session, focus group discussions, individual interviews and questionnaire, we have learned that there were four critical success factors:

- Leadership determines readiness:

Organisational readiness is widely recognised as a critical change factor determining success in all organisational development interventions.⁸ When organisational readiness is low or absent, there will be little or no progress in the other change domains. Directors that actively championed the change process and demonstrated willingness to change set the tone at the top for changes throughout the organisation. Most of the LNGOs, who have changed and successfully implemented systems, policies and procedures, were able to describe how their directors had played an important role in ensuring change.

“After the intervention, our director saw the importance of financial management to organisational success. She spoke with many donors to convince them to help us with funding and to provide further QuickBooks training. She also ensured that there was translation of financial policies and procedures, and reviewed the improvement of current implementation of the integrated accounting system. She always follows up our implementation and ensures that programme staff comply with our financial policies and procedures.”

- Ability to critically self-review:

A closely related factor is the ability to critically appraise the organisation’s performance and to identify how the organisation must grow and evolve to remain relevant to the external environment.

The governing boards for four of the LNGOs are functioning well. Their boards meet regularly and provide guidance and support. Interestingly, these organisations also have strong programmes and secure diverse funding. Their success has been shaped by recognition of the value of a fully functioning board and a willingness to ask: what do we need to do to support the governance structure? How can we do this without relying on donors?

Some of the LNGOs have committed to a ‘narrow’ programme focus and are dependent on funding from only one or two donors. This places them at risk. Yet they seem unable to imagine a different future or to see how the programme might evolve, in order to remain relevant to the changing external environment and to community needs. Those organisations ‘externalise’ the issues, e.g. ‘the problem is that the donors will not provide more funding,’ rather than what can we do to strengthen our credibility and secure new funds? ‘The board is not functioning because the board members are too busy,’ rather than am I engaging the board and making the most of what a board can offer? Am I ‘disengaging’ the board because I am concerned about lack of control?

- Demonstrating ownership and commitment for change process:

During 2009 and 2010, all of the LNGOs expressed an interest in organisational development, and the LNGOs wanted to quickly fix everything. There was also an expectation that VBANK would do the work – revise and update policies or develop a

⁸ See, for example, Phum Thol, Sim Chankiroth, Dennis Barbian & Graeme Storer (2012) "Learning for capacity development: a holistic approach to sustained organizational change," in *Development in Practice*, 22:7, pp. 909 - 920.

new strategic plan and then present the finished products. We were clear that our role was to facilitate the change process and that the organisation – ultimately senior management was responsible and accountable for leading organisational change. This resulted in disappointment for some LNGOs.

Revising policy documents or developing strategic plans was the desired end game, but the process was equally important. And that making space for staff to get involved and to provide input would ground the resulting policies and ensured understanding and buy-in in relation to any proposed changes. Those LNGOs who have successfully implemented the new systems, policies and procedures, also acknowledged the important of their engagement in the change process.

“...I know the reason for writing a certain article into the policies because we worked together with VBNK to do this. I am confident in providing orientation to other staff, as I am the one involved in developing the new policies ... We have used the process that we learned from VBNK to develop our accounting system and to develop a system to manage funds at the commune level. With that process, we can develop a simple system that fits with commune capacity and the resources available.”

- Drivers of change:

Some organisations were compliance driven – this is something we will do, as the donor is demanding it. Documents have been produced in English (for the donor) but not translated into Khmer for staff. A strategic plan developed in a facilitated workshop has not been written up. Unfortunately, those organisations that did not demonstrate ownership and commitment are also those that did not (fully) implement the revised plans, systems, or policies and procedures.

Overall, the findings led us to group the 11 LNGOs into three categories:

- *Becoming Resilient* (stable and diverse funding to support programme portfolio; strong programme support functions, robust and ready to apply for *Good Practice Project* (GPP) certification) = 3 LNGOs
- *On the Way* (foundations in place but still need focused OD) = 4 LNGOs
- *Require Significant Organisational Development* (weak or lack of systems and which were struggling to survive) = 4 LNGOs

We constructed four scenarios to represent the groups (see Figure 1, next page).

Figure 1: Four scenarios

<p>Scenario 1 – same, same</p> <p>The NGO continues in the same way with insufficient funding to cover all operating costs / inequity in terms of staff benefits exist and morale is low</p>	<p>Scenario 2 – the bridge</p> <p>The NGO is able to secure new funding (although still small and short-term) from a new donor that gives it time to regroup and rethink the future.</p>
<p>Scenario 4</p> <p>Funding from single donor stops and NGO unable to secure new funding. What benchmarks would indicate the NGO is sliding from 1 to 4? How to plan for close down in a way that is respectful of all staff?</p>	<p>Scenario 3 – the bright future</p> <p>The NGO revises its strategy and program focus and secures multi-year funding and builds robust management systems to boost donor confidence and credibility.</p>

If the INGO decides it wants to continue supporting the organisational development of LNGOs, then we provide two recommendations:

- First, encourage back donors to adopt a systems approach to OD – the whole organisation (not bits and pieces) and also to ask, which organisations are delivering on project results?

It is also important to acknowledge that building resilient local NGOs (particularly when starting with small, fledgling CBOs) requires a long-term commitment to a process of change. OD cannot be successful with piece meal and one-size-fits-all approaches.

- Second, there is scope for further strengthening the systems, policies and procedures of the current LNGOs to ensure they can deliver on quality technical and operational services and achieve results.

CASE STUDY 4: Leadership Development Programme (LDP)

VBANK's innovative approaches to leadership development programmes set out to (a) challenge mind set, value assumptions, hierarchical leadership styles and power dynamics that constrain participatory development in Cambodia; and (b) to develop strategies to address cultural and social obstacles to change and development.

At the same time the programmes recognised that effective leaders must also develop professional will and the professional skills to achieve the best long-term results and to act as catalysts for change in their organisations and communities. VBANK's leadership development programmes address both relationship competence and technical competence.

There is an inseparable link between personal change and social change; VBANK's approaches to leadership development have guided development practitioners and leaders through an experiential and holistic personal process of learning and values clarification to help them become clear about what supports development processes within themselves and others.

An assumption central to VBANK's approach to leadership development is that development facilitators will be more effective in bringing about positive and lasting change within the communities they serve if their work is not constrained by the demands of a 'blueprint project cycle'. Therefore, the programme has an emphasis on building enabling and participative relationships and analysing and responding to the socio-cultural contexts in which they work. This requires that:

- They work through a process of self development, values clarification, team building and trust building and explore how to apply their learning to their work.
- They are given tools, skills and confidence (space, safety and permission) to challenge the hierarchical leadership models that constrain participatory development and to respond to issues of importance to the communities where they work.

Central to the approach to leadership development are four capabilities shown in the "leadership capabilities framework" (Figure 2 next page).

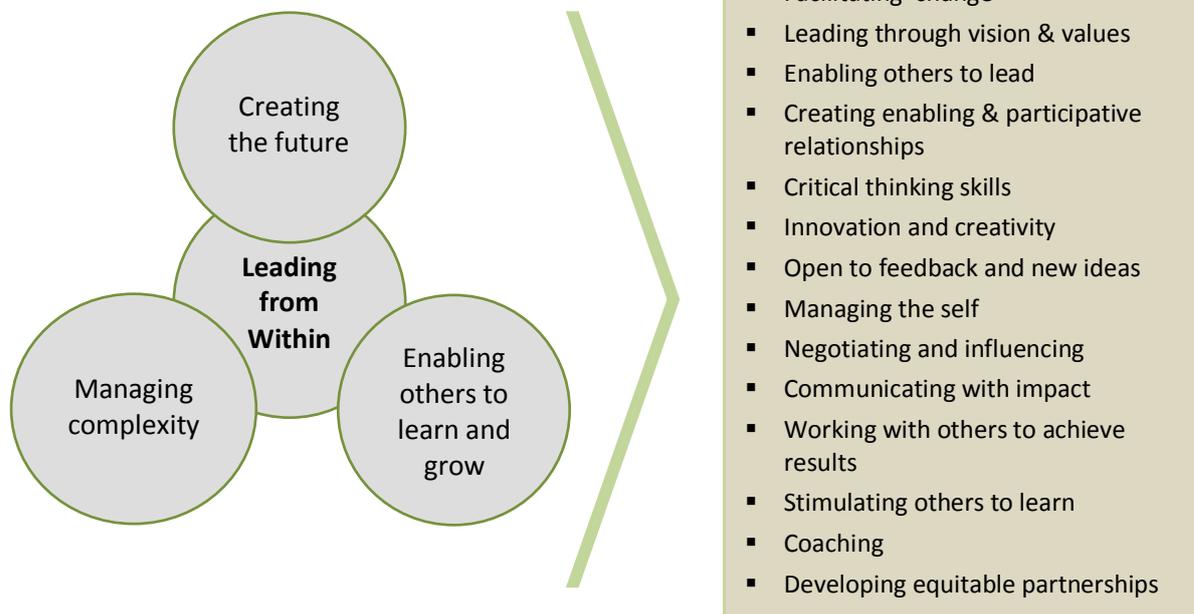
- Leading from within (which lies at the core of the framework and responds to the need for a more caring and compassionate development practice);
- Creating the future (leading through vision and values);
- Managing complexity (strengthening analytical capacity); and
- Enabling others to learn and grow (through participatory and empowering strategies).

The Leadership Development Programme (LDP) is a flagship area that informs other VBANK capacity development services, one of which is the open-access leadership development programme for mid- and senior-level managers.

The VBANK open access LDP comprises five one-week modules training and follow-up coaching. The LDP 2011 commenced from February and concluded by October. We

conducted end of module evaluation and reflection. The feedback from the participants (at the end of module 1) was positive. The end-of-module reflection included this participant’s comment: *“the learning approaches ...were really out of the ordinary... but I have accepted to take on this [challenge]”*.

Figure 2: The leadership capabilities framework



Several participants commented that the learning approaches *“pushed me to think deeply and led me to be more self-aware”*. One participant exclaimed,

“Previously I would follow other people’s ideas, so that I would not be wrong. But now I have my own vision and my own values!”

The LDP module two focused on developing the interpersonal skills necessary for promoting healthy relationships and effective teamwork. The end of module evaluation indicated that 80% of participants were satisfied with their learning. The participants said that they had been able to strengthen the relationships with each other through noticing their own needs and wants and clearly communicating these needs to others. They demonstrated awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others and committed to watch out for ‘unhealthy’ patterns in their relationships at work and in the family.

The third and fourth modules covered organisation-learning, systems thinking, aligning values and exploring external and internal obstacles to change. Module 3 introduced a sand tray coaching technique to help participants visualise organisational systems without having to rely on language. The participants reported that using this tool was a simple and effective way of looking at family structure and organisational problems.



Module 4 focused on internal obstacles to learning and development. The classroom was turned into a 'clinic' where everyone could be authentic and genuine with each other and confront their learning obstacles.

At the end of the programme (completion of the fifth module), the participants commented on how the programme had impacted on their work relationships and relationship with each other. They enjoyed the friendliness of and support from their peers and noted an improved ability to give and receive feedback. All participants highlighted the value of the 1-1 coaching sessions, noting how the coaches guided them through questions to surfacing issues and to decide on an action to address the problems identified. They explained that the coaches had helped them focus on their whole story across the nine months of the course. This gave them clarity and direction. They added that *"the coaching session helped lighten up practical issues encountered at work"*.

One male participant reported:

LDP "...is the key to help me out with my problems – gave me strengths that can lead me to solutions and facing challenges ...to analyse, observe, self-evaluate, communicate and share, and to understand how to get out of the triangle."

Two of the women participants commented that they felt their self-confidence had developed a great deal throughout the course and that they now feel able to speak up more clearly and strongly, especially to their line managers and to men in their organisations. The VBNK facilitators also noted that the women in the group, in particular the younger women, had become much more confident in their participation throughout the programme.

VBNK has continuously refined its approach to leadership development to demonstrate its application across a range of contexts.

In addition to the open access leadership development programme VBNK customised services to address specific needs of different populations. For example, in 2011, a VBNK team facilitated a challenging piece of work for an INGO operating a project in one of the provinces. We facilitated a leadership workshop to mediate and transform conflict situations, including interpersonal conflicts, cross-cultural misunderstandings and dysfunctional teams, and to address underlying relationship problems. The result of our work was noticed by our external consultants,⁹ who drew their own conclusion after speaking with our clients. They reported,

"One client described VBNK's facilitation process as "magical" in healing broken and dysfunctional relationships within their organisation. The client described in detail how after listening to the situation, the VBNK team carefully crafted a customised workshop to address the underlying relationship problem and literally transformed the relationships among the project staff within that short timeframe. The project staff went from being angry, non-communicative and crying ... to being friendly, joking with each other and committed to working together again ... The mood changed dramatically from that of despair and enmity, where the project was in serious danger of faltering, to a renewed sense of hope and camaraderie."

⁹ Two external consultants carried out the VBNK strategic review in November to December 2011.

THEME 3: Developing Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Cambodia

We selected two cases studies. One study examines the community conversation as the means for bringing together a select group of individuals to engage in face-to-face dialogue and collaborative problem solving around key issues, such as social accountability and inclusion and empowerment. We draw out examples on our experience facilitating different community conversations to illustrate how participatory and creative processes have been used to encourage confidence to speak out, to generate new thinking, to promote dialogue across difference, and to help individuals break away from a culture of blame that discourages community engagement in development.

The second case study is about our opportunity to contribute to a tailored capacity building programme that led to measurable, positive business results of Domestic Private (clean water) Service Providers (DPSPs), e.g. expanded customer base, improved service performance and an increase in profits. At the same time, more rural households were able to access quality and affordable domestic water services.

CASE STUDY 5: Community Conversations

VBNK applied the learning forum approach to facilitate community conversations that promoted citizen participation. The approach provided a safe space for community members to meet other civil society actors and government/ local authority representatives to identify and seek solutions to critical development issues. By participating, communities developed the skills and confidence to overcome hierarchies that have traditionally limited their involvement in democratic processes and dictated who has the right to speak. In this way, shared ownership of development initiatives by a broader sector of society was made possible.

Community conversations are about breaking down hierarchy and promoting equity through open access to information and participation across lines of gender, age, hierarchy and ethnicity.

In Cambodia we witnessed that the community conversation was a powerful mechanism to break the silence about the recent past and to create new possibilities for creating choices. Its power is that it provided communities with the space to identify and talk about issues that are important to them and about subjects that may be otherwise silent.

Each year, VBNK hosts a community conversation that brings together community members, from different age groups and life experiences, development practitioners and local authority and government officers (altogether as many as 100 people ranging in age from 17 to 70) to identify and discuss critical social development issues. The theme varies each year:

- In 2010, participants explored the theme: “How Can We Work Together to Promote Social Harmony and Security?”
- The 2011 Community Conversation focused on answering an overarching question: “How can citizens, NGOs and local government officials work together to ensure that

public services meet the needs of communities and also contribute to poverty reduction?"

- In 2012, we focused on *"Promoting Inclusion and Non-Discrimination for Children with Disabilities in Schools"*.

Community conversations have continually been part of our annual impact assessment (IA) exercise. This means that we interviewed participants, for example, the women and men who attended the conference in 2009 were included as impact assessment respondents in 2010, and again in 2011, and those who joined in 2010 we met them again in 2011 and 2012, and so on. We have applied this practice because we are aware that the identification of change and effects are not so typical within one year after the community conversation. The most often expressed change is that participants tried in their own context to be more facilitative for participatory events.

We documented each of the community conversations, which included receiving feedback on the final day from the participants about their experience during the 2-3 days community conversation. This feedback helped us know what female and male participants recognised as new for themselves and what changes they observed in themselves. We often received comments about the positive satisfaction with participation and opportunity to speak out.

Participants expressed their appreciation of the creative methods that had been used and the way the VBNK facilitators managed the learning atmosphere that made them feel safe and brave to speak out. They valued the opportunity to engage with different groups (e.g. youth and elders, government and non-government) to work together, build relationships and strengthen their networks. For example, in 2010, a middle-aged woman from Kandal province explained her experience:

"At first, when I came to the conference I saw myself as a person with low knowledge compared to people from NGOs and from the Government. In fact, the process encouraged me a lot to speak from my heart about what I wanted to say."

In other comments, participants expressed their appreciation of the community conversation process. A woman from Khmer Youth Association said,

"I feel very appreciated and happy when elders listened to my ideas as a young girl."

A NGO trainer based in Kampong Cham province summarised his impression about the process:

"... the methodology of the conference ... is simple but specific and deepened conversation, which is helpful for participants to actively participate (at least 70% to 80% participation). It is a good model for a civil society organisation to put into practice in their communities so that community members will fully participate and contribute to the activities."

We also recorded comments from women, elder men and youth. They describe similar experiences about the community conversation. A female Government official pointed out that:

"... it is a man's world" ... and we sometimes do not value ourselves and we give our power over to men ... Sometimes we feel that our ideas are not worth much, and so we don't believe we have much to contribute in meetings about

development. But in this conference people did listen when we spoke ... we need to build our skills and confidence."

An older man from the community had this to say:

"Usually, we take the easy path ... we like to sit back and watch things happen and then later we complain and criticise the results ... we should be more active and join in."

For the youth group, there was the insight that they needed to think harder and more deeply about issues. A young man working as a community volunteer expressed his insights in this way:

"I am a Community Volunteer. Through the conference, I have come to understand more about critical issues that communities are facing and I have thought more about practical solutions, which are concrete and useful for my community. Most importantly, the process helped me to think deeper and to be more critical. This really pushed me hard ... it pushed me further than my current thinking level. This has not been easy for me. Yet at the end of the conference, I realised that this is an important skill for me to develop more in my life."

Community conversations examined issues. Participants gained opportunity through the process to see themselves from another perspective. For example, a session highlighted the lack of working together. The desire for sharing and collaboration came through in comments made by both Government and non-Government staff:

"I (female NGO staff) learned that when I face a problem, I should step back and put the issue encountered on a table with other colleagues for feedback, and then explore and select an option to try out."

"I (female from the Provincial Department of Women Affairs) want to hear from other stakeholders, such as NGOs, who also work for women and children ... because I will get different ideas from this collaboration."

An Excellency, Deputy Governor for Preah Sihanouk Province, captured well the relevance of the community conversation approach. In his opening remarks (at the Community Conversation 2010), he expressed his support for the forum and bringing together people from different walks of life to talk about how to promote social harmony and security in Cambodia. He emphasised that *"problems often arise because community members, NGOs and the Government do not listen well to each other."*

The annual impact assessments have confirmed that the creative approaches used in the community conversations encouraged individuals to listen to one another, to talk about and let go of the past and to learn anew. For participants in the community conversations, increased confidence has been the precursor to more equal participation in both family and community lives.

The impact assessment findings confirmed that the creative approaches used during the community conversations were a trigger for the freedom to speak up. As one of the women said:

"... I heard others listening to me, and this allowed me to feel valued. The turning point was the new methods of silent drawing in a group to create a picture

and the exercise on river of life. The river of life was an entry point for expressing my own history ... I liked this because I didn't feel on the spot."

Participants expressed that they have been able to make progress in moving away from the blame culture that is prevalent in the Cambodian context. The community conversations promoted trust, dialogue across differences and social harmonisation. The community conversation was also a tool for promoting social accountability – as community members were able to express their concerns and hopes for the future, and NGOs and local Government authorities showed they will respond.

A Commune Councillor summed up (in 2011):

"... I acknowledge that the missing point from the local government so far has been that we haven't enough information ... citizens missed opportunity to participate in commune council meetings and join in activities with NGOs ... From now, I commit to work with citizens better than before by giving information to them in time."

A NGO worker told us about how he experienced a change in his work:

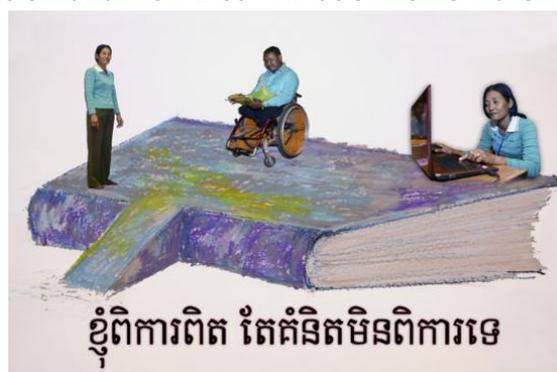
"... I learned that it is important to 'read other people's mind' and to understand people's feeling. I applied this in my meetings with members of the community forestry group and the villagers. In so doing, I can find better ways to communicate with them. Now, they trust me and approach me often to share and discuss about forestry issues in the community."

Other participants, who were trainers in their own work, reported that they were struggling to adapt the action-oriented and participatory learning approach that they experienced during the community conversation. They observed that the approach is effective, but also time consuming. Two Police master trainers summarised their experience:

"We are aware about the amount of contents we can grasp for one day and how the participatory method helped participants learn both hard and soft skills. We therefore decided to cut some of our technical contents to accommodate the participatory process we now apply in our trainings. But most of the time we found it difficult to decide which content we need to cut out."

As we are aware that change and effects are not so typical within one year after the community conversation, we already initiated our first assessment of the 2012 community conversation, which focused on "Promoting Inclusion and Non-Discrimination for Children with Disabilities in Schools".

The conversation provided a space for communities to demonstrate willingness to speak up on behalf of children with disabilities and to include them in community networks. The participants worked to identifying factors that promote inclusive education and to producing key messages. Later, with support from the VBNK facilitators and photographers from On Photography Cambodia, the key messages were turned into visual images (IEC materials) related to inclusion and discrimination and the rights of PWDs.



Our follow-up on the application of learning included visiting selected participants in the provinces of Siem Reap and Preah Sihanouk. VBK facilitators found that two female participants in Siem Reap (together with the director of a primary school and staff of the Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation) already organised a meeting in the community with 50 students' parents. During the meeting they used the IEC material to help the community visualise the situation of people with disability (PWD). They encouraged the community to bring children with disability to school, especially for the re-opening school year of 2012 – 2013.

We also identified two participants in Preah Sihanouk province who included disability issues on the agenda of their community meeting. They discussed the critical blocks and factors that prevent or encourage PWD to go to school. They posted the IEC material (they brought from the conference) on the commune information board and at the school.

All participants reported about positive response from the community. They said that after the meetings the communities have shown willingness to encourage and support children with disability to go to school as well as to engage with other activities in the community. This is a positive result, however in future we need to gather further evidence about the effect and change for people with disability.

CASE STUDY 6: Capacity Building Programme for Domestic Private Service Providers (DPSPs)

In Cambodia entrepreneurs are operating over 300 water supply networks. Excluding Phnom Penh, they comprise 60% of the total connections. A World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) provided an opportunity for VBANK to contribute to a tailored capacity building programme that led to measurable, positive business results of domestic private service providers (DPSPs).

VBANK's role was to build the financial and business integrity of the DPSPs and to develop and implement a software package that allowed the DPSPs to efficiently manage their businesses while at the same time providing processes for monitoring project results.

The WSP pilot project (though limited in scale) has clearly shown that a tailored capacity building programmes can be designed to drive such improvements. The results clearly show the intervention has led to measurable, positive effects on key business indicators (cost savings and efficiencies) and increased the supply of affordable, safe water in rural and remote communities.

Developing partnerships with the private sector to achieve social development goals is an important aspect of VBANK's work.¹⁰ Global research shows that private sector partnerships are able to bring about gains in safe water supply that exceed the gains achieved working only with state owned enterprises (e.g. more residential connections, more reduction in water losses and increased hours of supply).

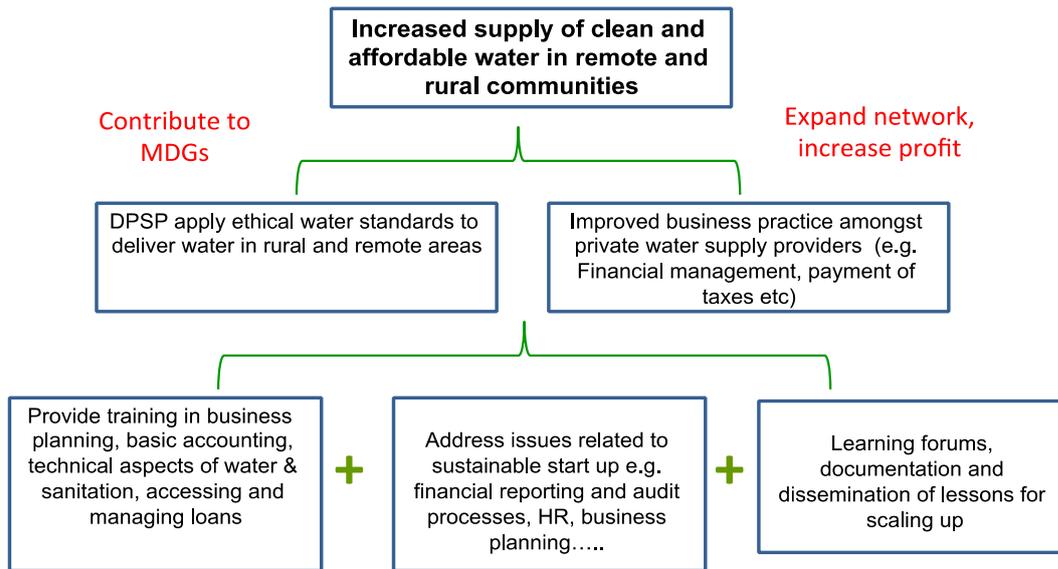
The World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) contracted VBANK for the design and delivery of the Capacity Building Programme for Small Scale Domestic Private Service Providers (DPSPs), who supply clean and affordable water in remote and rural communities. Nine DPSPs were selected for the project duration from April 2009 to June 2012. The project was co-implemented by VBANK and GRET, to provide capacity building interventions to all nine DPSPs in three areas—business management, financial management, and technical competency.

VBANK's role was to build the financial and business integrity of the DPSPs and to develop a software package that allowed the DPSPs to efficiently manage their businesses while at the same time providing processes for monitoring project results.

We constructed the theory of change.

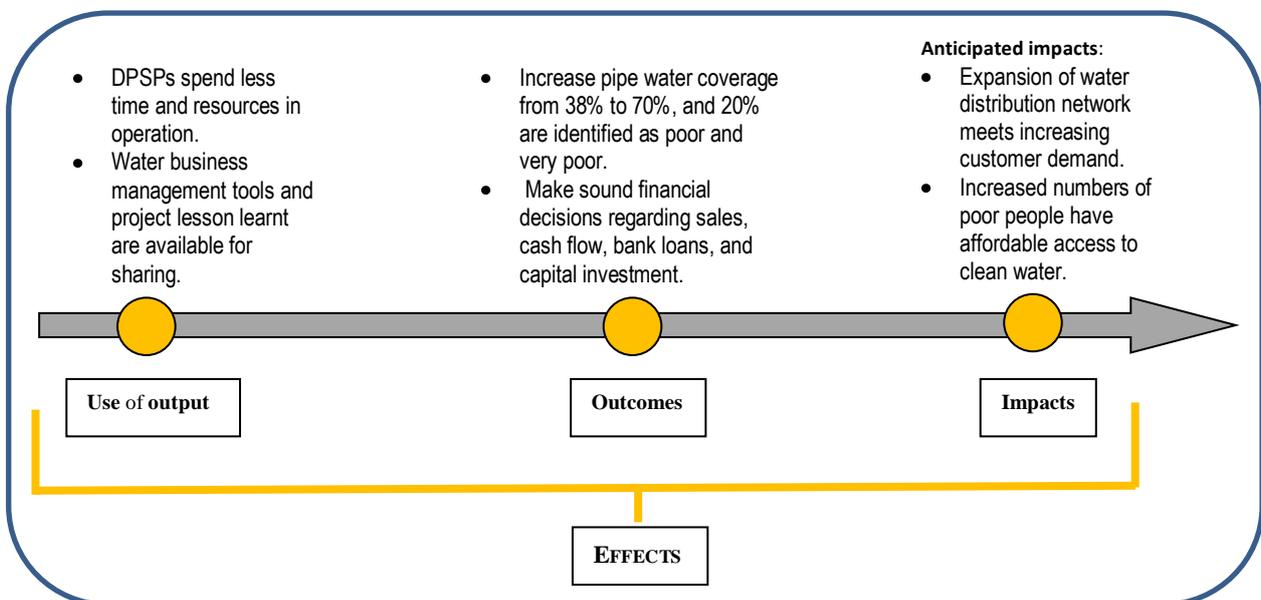
¹⁰ For several years, VBANK has been contributing to capacity building programmes addressing the living and working conditions of a female workforce in the garment sector, while also focusing on key business indicators e.g. reduced absenteeism and staff turnover, enhanced work relations between the workforce and management and increased productivity.

Figure 3: The theory of change



Through the implementation of activities, VBANK achieved the outputs planned to support business and financial management. The monitoring of work indicated that the DPSPs have applied these outputs (e.g. knowledge about quality of water, managing staff, using the manual). Consequently, there have been effects (outcomes), and there are already indications that there have been contributions to socio-economic improvements. For example, DPSPs spend less time and resources in operation. Moreover, there is increased pipe water coverage from 38% to 70%, and 20% are identified as poor and very poor.

Figure 4: The results-chain



The WSP pilot project (though limited in scale) has clearly shown that tailored capacity building programmes can be designed to drive improvements. The results indicate that the intervention has led to measurable, positive effects on key business indicators (cost savings and efficiencies) and increased the supply of affordable, safe water in rural and remote communities.

This programme continues with some interesting innovations in building business strength amongst the domestic water supply providers (DPSPs). What does it take for engaging the private sector to ensure sustainable, quality water services for all?

The value proposition is:

<p>Providing DPSPs with access to capacity building services and encouraging them to adopt modern business practices and tools</p>	<p>Business results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded customer base ▪ Improved service and performance ▪ Profits reinvested (expanded network) ▪ Credible track record ▪ Access to financial services <p>Social development results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased number of households in remote and rural areas able to access reliable and affordable supplies of safe water
<p>Ensuring linkages to the public sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environment enhanced for business investment ▪ Compliance with minimum water standards linked to MDGs ▪ Improved sector performance

2. Analysis of Results and Effects

We believe that we have a system in place for managing for results. This system begins with our attention to design and laying out the objectives and identifying the methodology. In results chain logic, these actions comprise *'inputs, activities and outputs'*, all of which require that we exercise close control to achieve the desired results. We also recognise that our efforts towards achieving results require communication with clients and participants and building and maintaining relationships.

In previous impact assessment reports we devoted significant attention to assessing our competencies and behaviours towards effectively designing and implementing programmes. In our analysis we consistently pointed out where there were strengths and where there were priorities for improvement.

We did not include much description about the above when writing the case studies in this volume. Our reason was to tell the story about what is beyond *'outputs'*, namely the effects we observed and documented. All of the case studies described changes. In presenting the case studies we often pointed out that some of the results and effects have been evident only after a two-three year time period.

Our impact assessment focused attention on application of learning and relevant organisational practice. In results chain logic we refer to *'use of outputs'* and *'outcomes'*. Following on our analysis of reported results and effects are measured by the eight indicators we set for our 3-year strategic plan (2010-2012).

2.1 Increasing opportunities for women and men, youth and elders, to be involved in decisions that affect their families and communities

Three of our case studies described situations where there were changes in taking responsibility for decisions. We reported the women who completed the Women's Progressive Leadership in Elections (Case Study #1) displayed "dramatic" increases in confidence related to working together as part of a team, presenting ideas and speaking in public, planning and managing an event, resolving disputes through negotiation, and participating in interviews. An outcome for the 173 of 196 women was successfully applying for a job with the Polling Station Commission.

The creative approaches facilitated by VBNK while providing skills training (Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement programme, Case Study #2) encouraged young women to build good relationships with each other through sharing their own stories. This transferred across to the workplace.

In the PACE programme and the Community Conversations, there was evidence that the participants trusted in their own strengths, spoke about their own situation, and made decisions on matters that have an affect on them.

The community conversation (Case Study #5) helped participants move away from blame, to making requests of one another and to thus reach new agreements. Citizens, for example, asked the Commune Councillors to give advance notice of meetings and to select more suitable times. A group of NGOs invited public service providers to take part in a training that they were offering to the community.

2.2 Increasing evidence that service delivery has led to empowering women and men to overcome blocks to learning and change

VBNK has developed several approaches for the empowerment of women in their places of work AND in their personal lives. VBNK's approaches developed women's management and life-skills AND confidence to use these skills.

The reflective approach integrated with the female factory workers skills training (Case Study #2) encouraged the young women to try out what was discussed and practiced in the classroom. The participatory approach helped the participants increase willingness to change their patterns of conflict solving, for example, using skills and increased confidence to identify own problem, analyse the causes and make a plan to address the issue.

We learned that we have to maintain a balanced role towards achieving the training objectives and advocating for empowerment. For example, at the end of the training participants on time management explained if they can manage time well, then they will get benefits in terms of having more time to do what they want, improving their productivity, reducing stress, staying healthy and having time to build relationship with friends, family etc. We recognised that time is valuable, and that relaxation is essential for their mental and physical health and that relaxation time needs to be considered in time management.

The participants in the Leadership Development Programme (Case Study #4) reported that the learning approach pushed them to think deeper and to be more self-aware. One participant exclaimed, *"Previously I would follow other people's ideas, so that I would not be wrong. But now I have my own vision and my own values!"*

We observed that over the course of five modules (Case Study #4) participants' communication became more authentic and genuine and they confronted learning obstacles. They allowed themselves to surface the issues and decide on an action to address the problems identified.

The community conversation approach (Case Study #5) created a safe space for community members and other civil society actors and authorities to meet and engage in constructive dialogue around issues that they identify and to co-create solutions. The community conversation encouraged people of diverse backgrounds (such as ability, age, gender, class and ethnicity) to have confidence in their own value and desires, and transcend traditional obstacles to full participation. Participants, who never before felt able to make their issues heard, spoke up in a public forum. Community members developed the skills and confidence to overcome obstacles that have traditionally limited their involvement in community social life.

2.3 Improved quality and effectiveness of management practice within development organisations

There was evidence that in situations where senior management demonstrated ownership and leadership for the change, there were achievements (Case Study #3).

However, the assessment proved that without sufficiently influencing individual performance it is not likely to improve on organisational effectiveness.

Organisational development for LNGOs (Case Study #3) illustrated that VBK facilitated processes that uncovered ways for the LNGOs to strengthen organisational effectiveness. The LNGOs gained four lessons learned on how they can further influence their effectiveness. They have potential if leadership determines readiness, and ensures that there is ownership and on-going critical review. The assessment identified three bands: the first was made up of 3 LNGOs (out of 11) that were robust and ready to apply for Good Practice Project (GPP) certification. The second band included 4 LNGOs that had made progress but still needed OD support. The third band was made up of 4 LNGOs with weak or lack of systems and which were struggling to survive.

The Domestic Private Service Providers (DPSPs) expanded customer base (Case Study #5), improved service performance and increased profits, and reinvested profits (expanded network). They are demonstrating a more credible track record, and for some, increasing access to financial services.

2.4 Behavioural evidence of how learning has been applied into the workplace

The changes achieved by the INGO's 11 implementing partners (Case Study #3) demonstrated the influence of willingness on making a commitment and being accountable for work performance and learning. Our OD approach encouraged ownership for the change process and allowed the LNGOs to recognise the importance of addressing both individual behavioural issues and organisational capabilities. Consequently, several of the LNGOs are benefitting from more transparent financial management practices and more responsive human resource management policy and procedures.

The female garment workers (Case Study #2) increased confidence in doing their work and problem solving. Some of the garment workers have been subsequently promoted to become line managers, which is an aim of the programme. There is acknowledgement that through the PACE programme, the garment workers increased their ability and confidence to give and receive feedback, and decide when there is a problem in the line; they dare to speak up and seek help.

Female garment workers have demonstrated that confidence in the workplace is brought about by a combination of relationship and trust and skills building.

2.5 Examples of how learning has been transferred into delivery of development processes at the community level (behaviours reported by female and male clients and community members)

Community conversations (Case Study #5) challenged the participants to think about their behaviour. Following on, when interviewed after returning home, there were examples of a shift from a dominant pattern of complaining and criticizing towards more actively joining together in problem solving. The respondents claimed that this

experience empowered them, built confidence and encouraged them to openly listen to and accept others' ideas.

Community Conversations resulted in harmonisation within teams and community groups and increasing more active participation in community development activities. We also saw signs that it promoted dialogue across difference and encouraged listening to one another.

We continually found that the creative approaches used in the Community Conversation encouraged both female and male to listen to one another, to talk about and let go of the past and to learn anew. The Community Conversation promoted trust and social cohesion.

Our data also indicated that the Community Conversation can also be a tool for promoting social accountability – if community members are able to express their concerns and hopes for the future and if NGOs and local Government authorities show they will respond.

In the leadership development programme (case Study #4), the participants demonstrated awareness of the impact of her/ his behaviour on others and committed to watch out for 'unhealthy' patterns in her/ his relationships at work and in the family.

2.6 Evidence of improved organisational governance, people management and financial management practice (based on, for example, GPP certification / donor recognition)

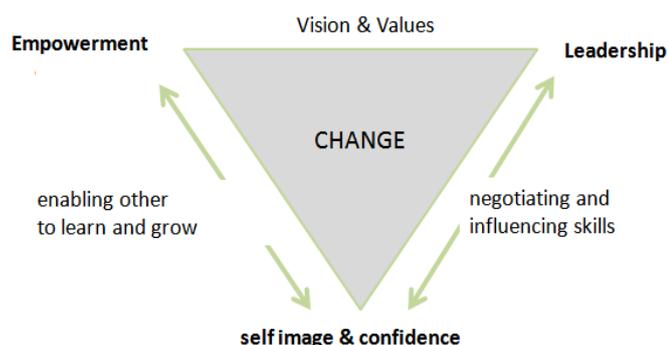
The assessment of the INGO's 11 partners (Case Study #3) identified that financially successful implementing agencies tend to share the same commitment toward implementing an integrated accounting system and comprehensive financial policies and procedures, which minimised most of potential material risks. However, the assessment also highlighted that not all INGO directors had supported the change process required and this had got in the way.

Consistent implementation was hindered by lack of resources (to cover the staff benefits defined in the policies) and subjectivity of some of the processes. Staff performance appraisal was the main area of concern. Despite clear policies and procedures, staff and management found it hard to make objective judgements of work performance. In addition, most staff linked appraisal with financial reward (e.g. an increase in salary or financial benefits) and not to career advancement or capacity development.

The DPSPs (Case Study #6) were able to provide evidence for increased efficiency of their businesses after engaging in the programme. Examples included improved billing systems (from manual to computerised), customer management, stock/inventory control and staff management. They are now also using their financial data to inform financial decisions regarding sales, cash flow, bank loans, and capital investment. As a result, most DPSPs have expanded their water distribution networks and responded to increasing demands for clean water of poor families in remote areas.

2.7 Evidence of more facilitative processes (less direct management and leadership)

We tailored the leadership development programme to strengthen self-image and self-confidence and to offer skills, tools and strategies that allowed leaders to present themselves in a powerful way and to influence others.



We have been validating the conceptual framework, and consistently adapting our approach to the particular situation of the selected leadership groups.

For example, as a result from the Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement programme, there was evidence of more facilitative processes. We documented that the female garment factory workers were solving problems through their own initiative. They were less likely to wait for the supervisor to take action, the workers, especially the line manager, were taking charge of finding solutions.

The all female participants of the Women’s Progressive Leadership in Elections were applying their planning and organisational skills. They were gaining experience and confidence on how to navigate towards personal goals.

We learned from Case Study #3 that the LNGO partners who succeeded with achieving organisational improvement objectives did so through identifying priorities and leading staff to achieve the agreed on objectives.

2.8 Increased recognition of an organisation’s work (through, for example, expressed, donor confidence)

The conclusions given in our assessment on the 11 LNGOs (Case Study #3) described four possible scenarios for the INGO partners. Among the four choices, Scenario One (same, same) is not a valid option and merely postponing the slide down to Scenario Four (closure) and that the path to Scenario Three (the bright future) is a long one and can only be reached through careful change planning and via Scenario Two (the bridge).

The achievements made after the first round of the Women’s Progressive Leadership in Elections programme covering 5 provinces (2010) led to funding being made available for implementing the programme at an additional 9 provinces (completion first quarter of 2013).

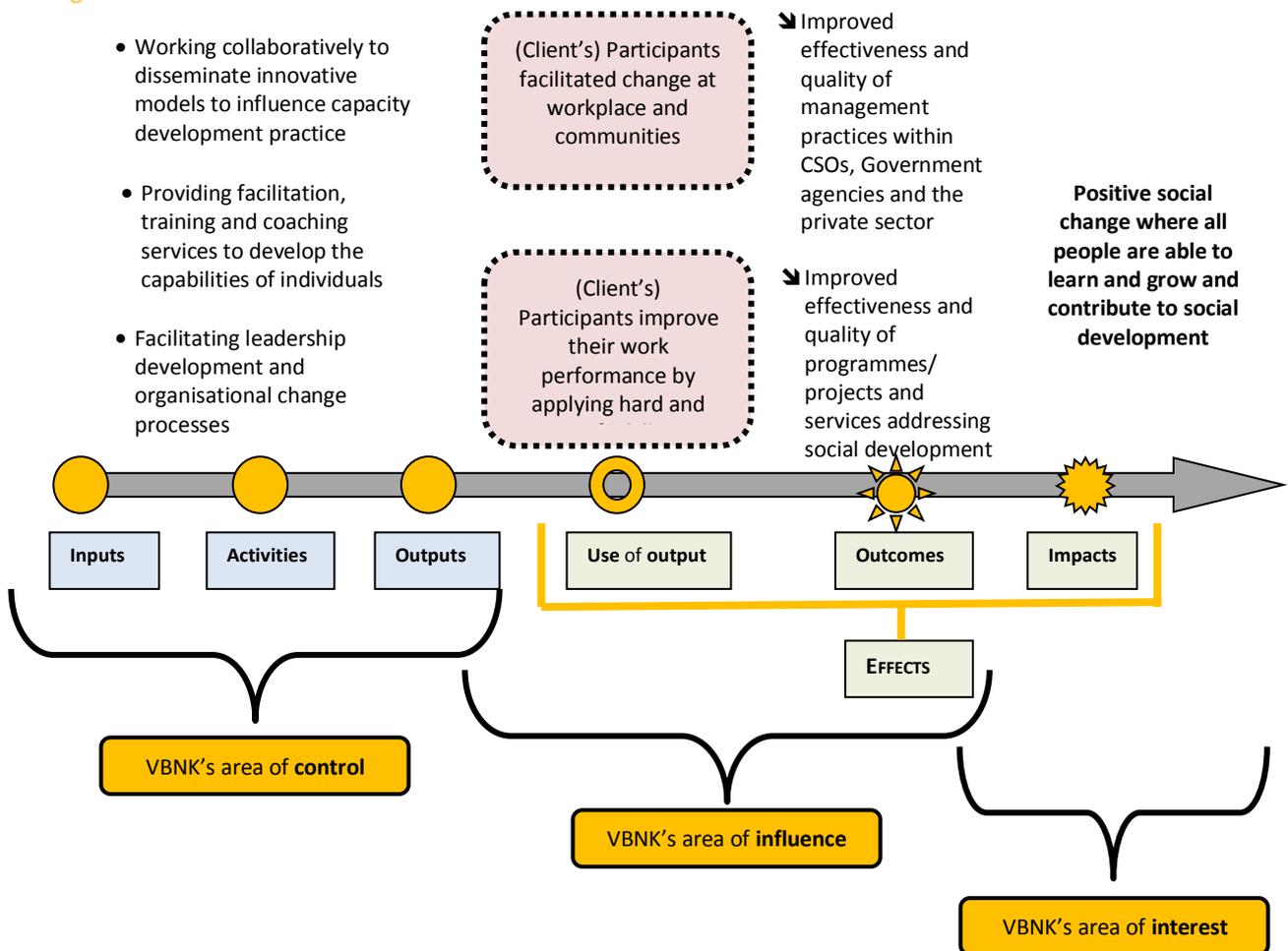
There is also new funding for the IFES initiative on civil society women leaders gaining ability to advocate with the related government institution and increase the number of women in leadership roles through strengthening the understanding and participation of women in the electoral process and community development; and enhance the credentials of women at the CSOs/NGOs level to effectively engage with elected officials at the local and national levels to further their organisations’ goals.

3. Conclusion: What does it mean for our work?

Two of the case studies presented here focused on results and effects that reflect the “outcome” level. Two other cases have evidence up to the level of “use of output”. There was insufficient evidence to claim reaching “outcome” level, and this is due to the short duration of time between the intervention and managing the change. Finally, two additional case studies describe success stories (results and effects), and here we point out the approach and methodology because we believe these cases are replicable innovations.

We have presented and analysed evidence that the social development sector is contributing to positive social change in a creative and effective manner. In doing so, we have confirmed that VBNK is exercising its sphere of control (as defined in its results chain).

Figure 5: VBNK’s Results Chain



We also have evidence demonstrating that VBNK is managing its sphere of influence. And there is evidence confirming our contributions to sustainable changes (our interest).

Impact Assessment 2012 allowed us again to test our assumptions about capacity development and how the facilitation methodology supports participants to recognise and

draw on their strengths, and to identify what is holding them back in changing their way of thinking and their behaviour.

The data point to factors that enable and block learning. We have confirmed, for example, that qualitative factors – like confidence, determination, creativity, pride and commitment – are key factors in the condition of learning and in the process of achieving capacity. We have shown that it is possible to challenge an individual's worldview so that s/he is able to learn anew. We do this with our clients through creative learning approaches that encourage peer learning and reflection.

We have also documented evidence that quality learning services lead to improving the capacities of individuals to contribute to work place goals. This fact is important to us since we want to consistently maintain those qualities in the service strands provided by VBNK, in particular, leadership and organisational development, complex facilitation, coaching, and action research and evaluations.

We have interest that the influential factors described in the six case studies are replicated and influence further changes, for example, service delivery led to empowering women and men to overcome blocks to learning and change.

The assessment results confirm that balancing between achieving the project objectives in the agreed timeframe and building ownership of the learning and its sustained application was a challenge for both facilitators and implementing agencies. However, the assessment also shows that taking time to build credibility and trust with the partner paved the way for subsequent dialogue about how to achieve the intended outcomes. This in turn placed us in a good standing when negotiating the need to readjust the priorities

A summary of the key learning is that to ensure that any partnership process moves along in a sustained manner, it is essential to take time up front to build understanding and buy in (commitment) to common objectives and priorities, particularly when negotiating multi-stakeholder interests and positions. This can feel slow and time consuming but it smoothens the way for subsequent work. It is important to allow the partners to clarify and negotiate expectations, to openly express their concerns and to explore alternatives together. In this way, scoping the possibilities of the partnership becomes a win-win strategy.

Finally, the description of value propositions are significant because they allow us to see the relationship between the service we provide and twofold results: business results and social development results. These facts are particularly important to display if we want to expand our profile working together with the private sector.

4. Recommendations – Key Messages

We are aware that our own understanding of what is meant by empowerment influences what we design and facilitate, monitor and evaluate, and how our selected methodologies have a direct influence on participants' capacity to learn and change. Moreover, we are certain that we must continue our learning, and our modelling behaviour, to more consistently address the issues that limit empowerment and describe what influences a breakthrough.

We stress that learning events must encourage participants to learn from each other, rather than depending solely on the inputs from the trainer/ facilitator. We also stress that the trainer/ facilitator can and should also learn from the participants. However, while there are many descriptions about what participants learned, there is less attention to describing what the trainer/ facilitator took away from the event. Our message to ourselves is that we must be more deliberate in identifying priorities for strengthening our competencies and be more diligent assessing our progress.

The evolving nature of the agenda of community conversations require flexibility and an ability to step outside one's comfort zone. This poses major challenges for the facilitator. Community conversations emphasise interactions that deepen awareness about participation and the responsibility to listen to others and to voice one's opinions. This requires participants and facilitators alike to commit to a process of co-learning. The facilitator must avoid taking on the role of the resource person (the specialist knowledge holder) and, instead, encourage participants to trust in their own strengths and create their own agenda. At the same time the facilitator must maintain credibility with the participants. When a facilitator asks questions in place of giving answers, s/he can be seen as lacking by participants who are accustomed to being told the 'right' answers.

We recognise that our design, monitoring and evaluation approach has provided us with a way to be consistent in performing our work. However, the case studies have shown where we created gaps by inconsistent application. For instance, the results chain allow for a descriptive logic on what to control and what to influence. In future, we will need to more consistently complete drawing the big picture, i.e. results chain, before undertaking new work.

Impact Assessment 2012 told us that we have not yet developed a habit of capturing qualitative data. We miss out systematically documenting the process so that there is ample evidence to support our beliefs and substantiate results and effects. This gap in our performance prevents us from adequately describing what influenced facilitating learning and change.

We expect in future too that our design, monitoring and evaluation system will more consistently and comprehensively make data available. In so doing, we will be better able to exercise influence during change management processes. Also, we will be better able to illustrate the transition through performance of selected competencies and demonstrated behaviours

As we are now planning our work for 2013, we expect that the results from this annual assessment will guide us to "adapt and self-renew". It is essential that we use our learning to improve individual and organisational learning and respond to opportunities.