

# **Inter-Ministerial Cooperation An Effective Model for Capacity Development?**

Part 2

Case studies from Zambia and Nepal



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INTER-MINISTERIAL COOPERATION

# **An Effective Model for Capacity Development?**

Part 2  
Case studies  
from Zambia and Nepal

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# Acronyms

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ADEA   | Association for the Development of Education in Africa   |
| AWB    | Annual Work Plan and Budget                              |
| BESSIP | Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (Zambia) |
| BPEP   | Basic and Primary Education Programme (Nepal)            |
| CERID  | Centre for Educational Research and Development (Nepal)  |
| DEB    | District Education Board (Zambia)                        |
| DEO    | District Education Office                                |
| DOE    | Department of Education (Nepal)                          |
| EFA    | Education for All  |
| FRAG   | Formative Research Advisory Group (Nepal)                |
| FRP    | Formative Research Project (Nepal)                       |
| FTA    | Foreign Technical Adviser                                |
| GRZ    | Government of the Republic of Zambia                     |
| HRD    | Human Resource Development                               |
| IMC    | Inter-Ministerial Cooperation                            |
| JASZ   | Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia                     |
| MDGs   | Millennium Development Goals                             |
| MFA    | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Norway)                     |
| MOER   | Ministry of Education and Research (Norway)              |
| MOES   | Ministry of Education and Sports (Nepal)                 |
| MOEZ   | Ministry of Education (Zambia)                           |
| MoU    | Memorandum of Understanding                              |
| NEPAD  | New Economic Partnership for African Development         |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organisation                            |
| OVC    | Orphans and Vulnerable Children                          |
| PEMC   | Provincial Education Management Committee                |
| PEMFA  | Public Expenditure Management and Financial Accounting   |
| PEO    | Provincial Education Officer                             |
| PIP    | Project Implementation Plan                              |
| PS     | Permanent Secretary                                      |
| PSRP   | Public Service Reform Programme                          |
| PTA    | Parent-Teachers' Association                             |
| RC     | Resource Centre  |
| SMC    | School Management Committee                              |
| SP     | Southern Province (Zambia)                               |
| SWAP   | Sector-Wide Approach                                     |
| TA     | Technical Assistance                                     |
| TSAG   | Technical Support Advisory Group (Nepal)                 |

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# SECTION I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background and Purpose

### Zambia

In 2000 the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (MOER) established a ministry-to-ministry cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MOEZ) in Zambia. It was based on the assumption that such collaboration represented a new and effective model for capacity development. The approach included sharing of experience between colleagues, application of lessons learned from educational reforms in Norway and support to sector reform programmes, i.e. “Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme” (BESSIP 1999-2003) followed by “Ministry of Education Sector Plan” (MOESP 2003-2007).

In Zambia, the cooperation was initiated by Norad and the Norwegian Embassy. A Letter of Intent was signed in May 2000 to start a Pilot Project 2000 – 2002, which was directly linked to the “Basic Education Sub Sector Investment Programme” (BESSIP). Based on the experience from the pilot phase a long-term agreement was signed by the two Education Ministers in April 2003. Southern Province was selected by MOEZ as a pilot for the Cooperation.

The areas of cooperation were:

Theme 1: Capacity building on policy and reform management.

Theme 2: Multi-grade teaching and general teaching and learning methods.

Theme 3: Information systems.

Theme 4: Decentralisation and implementation of reforms.

Theme 5: Twinning of schools (not a central activity of the cooperation).

Theme 6: HIV/AIDS in education (included in the cooperation as requested by Norad).

The MOEZ had the overall responsibility for implementation, and MOER was providing specialised support for the areas of activities mentioned above. Sub-agreements were made for providing technical assistance on themes 2, 3, 4 and 6 from Norwegian University Colleges.

The financial framework of the cooperation on the Norwegian TA side has been between 1.7 – 1.9 m. NOK annually. The MOER-MOEZ Cooperation (including activities on the Zambian side) has been drawn from support from external sources of funding to the Sector plan.

### Nepal

In Nepal, preparations for cooperation on formative research connected to the second phase of the Basic Primary Education Programme (BPEP II) started in 1998/99. With an aim to facilitate effective implementation of the sector programme, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), Nepal and the Ministry of Education and Research (MOER) Norway entered into an agreement to jointly undertake a “Formative Research Project” (FRP) with technical assistance from Norway – not linked to a formal ministry-to-ministry model of cooperation.

Formative research was first introduced in Norway linked to the process of reform in secondary education in 1994 – 1998. Based on the experience in Norway, the concept of FRP was introduced in Nepal. The first phase of the formative research project started in March 2001 and was completed in 2004.

The main purpose was to generate information on planning, implementation and management of BPEP II which would provide insights regarding the problems faced during implementa-

tion of the sector programme, and as reference for regular monitoring of implementation. The formative research project should focus on topics of strategic importance to MoES and Department of Education (DOE) to ensure successful implementation of BPEP II.

Major activities undertaken during the formative research project were:

- **Research Studies:** Three types of research studies were undertaken – a longitudinal study on system indicators; case studies; and stocktaking.
- **Training and Orientation** were conducted to orient the researchers for undertaking the case studies, prepare field researchers, etc.
- **Workshops and seminars** were conducted for the generation of key issues and research questions.
- **Regular Forum** were organised to interact with professionals and government personnel on the concepts and modalities of FRP.
- **Consultations and study visits** to Norway were carried out in order to strengthen FRP activities through high level consultation, technical/professional exchanges.
- **Publications and dissemination of reports and findings.**

During phase I of the formative research project (1999-2004) a total of 30 research studies were completed by the Centre for Educational Research (CERID). The financial frame was 13.7 Million NOK. About two thirds of the funds were allocated to research in Nepal and one third to MOER Norway for providing technical assistance.

In 2004 it was decided to continue the formative research project and a new institutional collaboration and development component was added. An agreement was signed between Nepal and Norway regarding Education for All (EFA) 2004 – 2009. A contract was also signed between MOES and CERID for formative research in the context of EFA.

The purpose of the new project is to enable the Ministry of Education and Sports in Nepal to utilise research more effectively. This is to be achieved by providing technical support to MOES for improved strategic research on policy implementation and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Ministry. The more specific objectives of the new project are:

- To generate research-based information and critical understanding of the process of implementation of EFA.
- To assist the capacity building of MOES for the utilisation of FR as an instrument for programme monitoring and adjustment.
- To assist a process-based institutional development of MOES and underlying agencies based on working experience and available knowledge and skills.

## 1.2. Purpose and Questions

The main purpose of the evaluation is to provide insights into new forms of institutional development and assess to what extent 'Inter-Ministerial Cooperation' (IMC) has provided effective technical assistance and been an effective model for capacity development.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation should also provide inputs to further planning of the collaboration with the two countries.

In other words, this is primarily a thematic evaluation assessing to what extent inter-ministerial cooperation has been appropriate, relevant, effective and innovative. It will also analyse the efficiency and effectiveness of certain activities, but this has not been a project evaluation as such – leaving out a number of questions usually covered in such evaluations. The purpose of covering two countries has been to compare experiences and achievements in two different settings.

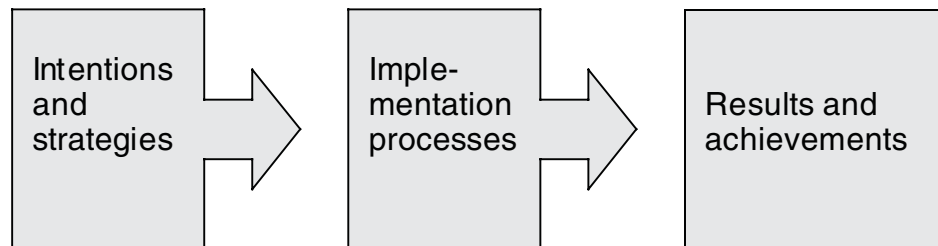
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<sup>1</sup> See Synthesis Part 1 Annex 1: Terms of Reference.

Terms of reference covers three types of questions:

- The understanding of and intentions with Inter-Ministerial Cooperation and capacity development,
- the process of implementation,
- and finally results and achievements.

The evaluation will assess to what extent key concepts, objectives and strategies are clear and relevant, implementation arrangements sound and efficient and achievements satisfactory and effective.



All the evaluation questions were subsumed under the following headings:

- Background and planning process
- Intentions and objectives
- Roles and responsibilities
- Expertise and capacity
- Implementation processes
- Relevance, results and sustainability
- Cost effectiveness and accountability
- The Inter-Ministerial Cooperation experience

For each group of questions a number of hypotheses were prepared. They were meant as assumptions about what we expected to find in the two country studies. The evaluation process was then used to discuss to what extent the hypotheses could be confirmed or should be modified or changed. All the evaluation questions and hypotheses are presented in Annex 1. Such an approach has facilitated a comparative perspective and analysis of similarities and differences between the two countries.

### 1.3. Methods

The evaluation was organized in three phases consisting of the following activities:

(a) Preparatory work in Norway:

- Collecting and reviewing all documents and reports covering the preparation and implementation of IMC in the two countries.
- Preparing an Inception Report with a design, questions and hypotheses for the evaluation.
- Interviewing key stakeholders in Norad and MOER.<sup>2</sup>
- Reviewing existing literature and best practices for capacity development and institutional cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

A key part of the preparatory work was to review background materials and prepare the Inception Report. There were two key terms in the evaluation: inter-ministerial cooperation and capacity development – both broad and diffuse concepts in need of clarification. An analytical framework was required to help answering the overall evaluation question: Is IMC an effective tool for capacity development? Three interpretations of IMC were suggested and

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<sup>2</sup> The list of people interviewed is included as Annex 2 in Part II of the evaluation – the country studies.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 3: References



two approaches to capacity development. They were meant as heuristic tools to be used in the evaluation.

A number of questions were also identified under the headings listed in chapter 1.2. and two questionnaires – one for interviews in Norway and another for the country studies.

For each category of questions a number of hypotheses were prepared – assumptions about what we expected to find. They were not used during the interviews, but in the analysis of country experiences and in the comparative assessment. To ease the reading and reduce text, the hypotheses have not been so much referred to in the synthesis report, but they have structured the presentation.

The interviews covered informants from MOER, Norad and MFA currently or previously involved with inter-ministerial cooperation with Nepal or Zambia. A few external observers were also interviewed. Most interviews lasted from 45 minutes to an hour and were semi-structured by the questionnaire.

There is a rich literature on capacity development, but much less on various forms of institutional cooperation. Reports and books were identified from relevant databases. The literature review benefited also from the analytical work of Boesen and Therkeldsen (2004) and their bibliographic references.

(b) Country visits:

- As from late November 2005, the team collected information in Zambia for a period of two weeks. This involved interviews with former and present senior staff of the MOEZ, and one donor agency in Lusaka. Furthermore, four days were spent in the Southern Province, holding interviews with senior staff at provincial and district level: Livingstone, Kazungula and Kalomo. Field visits were made to some schools in Livingstone and Kazungula, as well as to David Livingstone College of Education. Debriefing sessions were held at the Provincial Headquarters in Livingstone and at MOEZ headquarters.
- In January 2006, the team collected information in Nepal for a period of two weeks – interviewing senior staff of MOES, CERID and Department of Education, representatives from various donor agencies and other informants. A visit to one district, Kavrepalanchok, was organized including interviews with teachers at two schools and representatives of the District Education Office and the Municipal administration. A debriefing session was held with staff from CERID and representatives from MOES and the Norwegian Embassy.

At country level interviews were conducted with representatives from the Ministries of Education, other relevant institutions involved in the IMC and donors. Independent observers were also interviewed. Time was limited for site visits, but three different areas were selected in Southern Province in Zambia (with varying length of involvement in the cooperation). Due to security restrictions in Nepal the team could only visit one neighbouring district to Kathmandu. Most interviews were semi-structured guided by the questionnaire and hypotheses. In visits to schools interviews were mostly informal.

(c) Analysis and synthesis:

- Based on interviews in Norway, review of reports and field visits, two country case studies were prepared. Drafts were shared with major stakeholders for them to comment on factual errors and omissions before being finalized.
- The two lead consultants prepared a synthesis report based on the two country studies and a literature review. The draft was presented and discussed in a meeting with representatives from the two embassies, MOER, Norad and all consultants and then finalized. All stake-

holders were requested to submit written comments to the team. Responses from stakeholders are summarized in the last chapter of this report with final remarks from the evaluation team.

The evaluation questions and hypotheses were used to structure the chapters and the analysis and discussion in each chapter. In an earlier version of the country reports all the hypotheses were listed in each chapter and the discussion referred explicitly to each hypothesis. Such an approach led to repetition and duplication. The presentation was more methodologically consistent and sound, but less reader friendly. In the synthesis report we opted for reader friendliness – based on a belief that most of the readers are more interested in the arguments and not how they were developed.

There is not much statistical information in the reports – except for basic figures and facts about the two programmes. The evaluation has primarily used qualitative methods. Empirical evidence is collected with the use of interviews, documents and to some extent observations. Such methods are used – not for any dogmatic reason, but because they are most appropriate and useful for answering the broad complex questions in the terms of reference. Evaluation is often defined as the systematic assessment of quality and utility. Data and information were collected systematically with the use of structured questionnaires and checklists – and in the team’s discussion of hypotheses.

#### **1.4. Limitations**

In both countries, there were limitations in the extent to which information about the actual implementation of formative research in Nepal and cooperation in Southern Province of Zambia could be collected. As the number of research reports were large and activities very diverse, insufficient justice could be done to the richness of their content as well as outcomes. Time constraints also prevented us from visiting more districts in both countries.

In both IMCs, there were limited data and information available on outcomes – in particular about the utilization of research reports in Nepal and about the thematic areas in Zambia. The evaluation design could only to some extent compensate for gaps in data about change. There is still a need to examine more critically the outcomes and impact of formative research and the collaboration in Zambia.

At the same time, given the Terms of Reference, the team has focused on strategic dimensions of the cooperation in both countries. This is not a project evaluation, but first of all a study of the potential benefits of Inter-Ministerial Cooperation as a means for technical assistance and capacity development.

Qualitative methods are used in this evaluation – mostly interviews and document review and to some extent observations. The empirical evidence comes from semi-structured interviews and project reports, systematized by team members and written down in two country reports. It is often difficult to document and present systematically evidence from interviews. In this evaluation it would have been of no use to count how many people expressed the same opinion. We were mainly concerned with how different stakeholders understood IMC and how they assessed its value and relevance. Through a large number of interviews patterns and variations emerged which led to findings and conclusions. Since time was limited and this is not a research exercise, the process from data collection to conclusions is not always well documented.

#### **1.5. Structure of the Report**

Originally, two separate country reports were prepared with similar outlines. The two reports have later been merged and presented as Part 2. Following a common introduction, the Zambia experience is first presented followed by the formative research project in Nepal. The fact that the two country reports are prepared by different consultants have lead to some differences in the presentations of the two country cases.

## SECTION II: ZAMBIA

### 1. The Twinning Model and Experience

#### 1.1. Background and Planning

##### *Facilitation of the cooperation*

An initial hypothesis was that the Inter-Ministerial Cooperation (IMC) was largely a Norwegian initiative driven by Norwegian concerns about technical assistance and by interests in projecting Norwegian expertise in developing countries. While such concerns and interests were present in both the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Education and Research (MOER), it is also apparent that there was a favourable disposition on the Zambian side to explore a new form of collaboration using a different source of expertise.

The triggering occurred at the highest level when in 1999 the Norwegian Minister of Education met his Zambian counterpart during the ADEA Biennale which that year took place in Johannesburg. This positive interaction received a follow-up in 2000, when a Norwegian delegation led by a new Minister of Education visited Zambia. This visit produced a Letter of Intent for co-operation signed by both ministers in May 2000. After a follow-up technical visit by a Zambian delegation to Norway, a first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in Lusaka in June 2001.

MFA/Norad, which had developed its own interest in IMC and its application in the Zambian context, offered to serve as the ‘midwife’ in establishing the relationship, partly by facilitating initial contacts, partly by sponsoring consultation visits.

Thus, the impetus for Norway and Zambia to cooperate came from the political level, in the context of which the essential focus and some key modalities of the cooperation was specified. In both countries senior management was strongly involved and exercised influence over the specification of focus in terms of themes and geographical location. Once this focus was laid down in a first MOU, the latter constituted the frame within which the further operationalisation through work plans, logistics and budgets took place on both sides.

##### *Contrasts in supporting frameworks*

The foundation for such cooperation, in terms of conceptual thinking, policy frames and administrative provisions was stronger in Norway than in Zambia. Although the Zambian authorities showed immediately interest in the initiative, they were in a weaker position in that (a) overall capacity for strategic thinking in the MOEZ was limited; b) there had been no prior experience with *inter-ministry* collaboration (in contrast to *institutional* linkages involving individual education institutions); and (c) there were no specific policy, administrative or budgetary provisions in place related to such collaboration.

By contrast, the Norwegian foundation for such inter-ministerial collaboration was fairly well established. Though this was not articulated in a formal document, staff in the Norwegian MOER involved with the IMC expressed a set of strategic considerations as to why the Ministry was interested in pursuing such ‘ministry-to-ministry’ cooperation with selected developing countries. Moreover, MOER had already developed some experience in Nepal.

At the same time, it appeared that MOER was grappling with the actual nature and implications of a ‘ministry-to-ministry’ relationship. While on the one hand it liked to regard this as ‘one of its own kind’, on the other hand MOER saw its own contribution to developing countries as closely associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Norad and its development assistance programmes. As a result its involvement in the cooperation was not reflected in corresponding budgetary provisions.

In the course of the preparation for the IMC programme, no conscious efforts appeared to have been made on either side to initiate systematic reflections on the exact nature and appropriate principles and methodologies for such form of cooperation. Thus, the unequal starting points and the relevance of supporting frames on both sides were not addressed. As a result, different understandings of the relationship continued to linger over the years and have not been resolved to-date.

Both parties were keen to keep a flexible and open mind as to what the IMC programme was going to be all about. The Norwegian MOER, in cooperation with the Norwegian Embassy in Lusaka and Norad, went at great lengths to stress that the demand had to come from the Zambian side. Thus, whereas the Norwegians had expected the focus to be more on the education system as a whole, and the dynamics and complexities of reform processes, they accepted a Zambian interest in specific substantive themes around which technical assistance could be constructed.

As a consequence, the IMC came to be established as a ‘donor-recipient’ relationship where Norway was expected to provide funds and technical assistance as a contribution to Norwegian development cooperation without having to declare its own interest in the deal, other than ‘helping Zambian educational reform’.

#### *The process of preparation*

It was on this basis that MOER engaged selected institutions in Norway and both ministries arranged for technical preparatory visits to take place. These looked at modalities for the cooperation, the nature of the Norwegian contributions, suggestions for types of activities, and the production of a first work plan, so that the cooperation could commence as a pilot in 2002. This preparatory work was facilitated by the Zambia Coordinator in Oslo and by the BESSIP coordinator (later PS) in MOEZ as well as the Director of Planning and the PEO Southern Province. Once brought into the process, the various Foreign Technical Advisors (FTAs) allocated to the themes became active in working out the details for their themes in collaboration with counterparts in the Southern Province.

The identification of the themes, and later the elaboration of the work to be done in the context of the themes, was not the result of a single major needs-assessment effort. Rather, they were the successive outcomes of mutual consultations at political and senior technical level, and later at operational level in the province and selected districts. They appear to represent the best judgement of what Zambia could learn from Norway in the context of the then BESSIP programme. As separate ‘projects’ under the BESSIP umbrella, they were in the administrative sense only loosely connected with the rest of the programme. Both parties (at senior level) regarded them as a ‘place to start’, in anticipation of a long-term agreement at the end of the pilot.

This open-ended, almost ‘informal’ approach to the IMC is perhaps also the reason why no official ‘programme document’ – essential in any conventional development cooperation initiative – has been produced. The key source documents remained the ‘Letter of Intent (2000), the MOU (2001), the Cooperation Agreement (2003), the Agreed Minutes of the Annual Meetings and the annual Work Plans.

## 1.2. Perspectives and Objectives

*Perspectives among different partners: Norway*

The three partners involved in the IMC, i.e. MFA/Norad, MOER, and MOEZ had diverging perspectives as to the nature and purpose, and underlying motivation for the cooperation.

Norad and the Norwegian Embassy shared a growing scepticism about the effectiveness of the conventional forms of technical assistance provided in increasing volumes to sector programmes. Not only were there misgivings about the manner in which TA was offered by donors and deployed by receiving ministries, there was also concern about the *type* of TA provided, who tended to be technical personnel, often with little practical experience in ministry contexts. It was felt that some inputs from ‘peers’, that is civil servants in ‘sister ministries’, who were more familiar with the complexities of change and the importance of balancing technical and political demands, could help.

The consideration of involving MOER had been stimulated by the latter offering its competence to Norad dealing with educational reform. On this basis, NORAD concluded a frame agreement with MOER for providing general technical advice to Norad - supported education programmes.

When the opportunity for MFA/Norad arose to introduce TA support in Zambia – being the first country in which Norway provided very substantive programme support to education sector reform – this interest was flagged in Zambia by the Embassy. Thus the IMC with Zambia came to be regarded as a ‘test case’ for whether ‘twinning’ could be a valuable alternative form of technical assistance for capacity development in ‘sister ministries’.

Staff in the Norwegian MOER had articulated a vision as regards the importance of collaborating with ministries of education outside the OECD region. The dominant line of thinking has been that the ‘Norwegian experience’ could be of relevance to ministries in the South because:

- (a) Norway is a small country that over the last century grew rapidly from being a poor country in the margins of Europe to become a full-fledged modern society.
- (b) Over time Norway has become a model for democratic development and the establishment of a participatory education system, involving communities, local associations and union.
- (c) During the last ten years Norway has gone through a series of extensive educational reforms, affecting the entire education system, thus providing lessons to be shared with other countries in rapid transition.

The wish to share experiences also stemmed from a growing interest at government level to further enhance the country’s international standing. Education was a key sector, both for internal growth and development, and for exchange with other countries. These would include non-OECD countries. However, since there was no budget in MOER for autonomous interaction with developing countries, the ministry would have to rely on close collaboration with MFA/Norad.

Background documents in Norway suggested that the learning could be in both directions. While developing countries could benefit from Norway’s experiences with reform, the MOER would become more familiar with situations elsewhere and benefit from different practices in those countries. It was felt that this mutuality would become clearer over time, once a relationship had gone some way. However, there is little evidence that efforts were made in later years to articulate and specify a potential benefit for Norwegian education.

At senior level in MOER the expectation was that the cooperation would be quite selective and focus on system’s dimensions of educational reform, and less on content than on process

aspects, for example organisational development and strategies to improve competencies at various levels.

Like MFA/Norad the Norwegian MOE has perceived and defined the institutional cooperation with the sister Ministry in Zambia as technical cooperation, but as a different type of technical cooperation, that moreover was believed to provide a more effective form of technical assistance: “*The idea of working together as colleagues in a long term perspective provides the opportunity to develop a sustainable technical support system with mutual understanding of the problems. This is of a different nature than the traditional consultancies offered by various donors, where the outcome of transferring knowledge and capacity has been questioned. The work should be carried out by the Zambians themselves, and roles and responsibilities should be discussed in dialogue between the partners*”. (Internal memo 13/5-2004)

The technical assistance consisted of Norwegian education personnel acting as foreign technical advisors (FTAs) in Zambia, and receiving Zambian counterparts in Norway for the purpose of study visits and attachments. They would take part in the organisation and conducting of seminars and workshops, develop methodologies and materials and facilitate learning from the exchange experiences.

#### *Perspectives among different partners: Zambia*

The Zambian MOE shared the interest of its Norwegian counterpart in focusing the collaboration on Norway providing assistance to Zambia’s education reform effort. The initial Letter of Intent also suggested that both parties anticipated a bias towards the systemic and organizational dimensions of reform – such as the organizational infrastructure for implementation, the utilization of resources, and school and district development: i.e. institutional capacity development across the system (Letter of Intent, 2000).

However, it appears that subsequently MOEZ, using its freedom to operationalise the intentions, emphasized *content* elements more than the *process* ones. While three themes (Information Systems, Decentralisation and School Twinning) leaned towards the latter, two other themes (which become major ones in the implementation: i.e. Multi-grade Teaching and HIV/AIDS) leaned much more towards the former. One of these areas (Multi-grade Teaching) is a major feature of the Norwegian education system. Moreover, MOEZ preferred an initial emphasis on lower levels of the system by way of selecting two districts in the Southern Province (MOU, June 2001). The initialisation of a sixth theme (Capacity Building at Central/HQ level) was postponed because of impending restructuring of the MOEZ.

In the context of BESSIP, each theme became like a project, separately costed and with TA, study visits and related seminars and workshops as the major inputs. Since the ‘holistic approach’ to education sector development was still being worked out, it was assumed that these ‘projects’ would gradually be integrated in a future sector programme. Indeed, when the Sector Plan came on stream (2003) the various themes seemed to sit well with the programmes articulated in this plan, and administrative and budgetary integration was fully pursued by the Ministry.

While MOEZ shared with MFA/Norad and MOER the acceptance of Norwegian technical assistance support as the core of the cooperation, in the Zambian understanding this role was meant to be explicitly facilitative, ensuring that the actual learning was to take place between the counterparts: school-to-school, district-to-district, ministry-to-ministry. This notion of ‘peer dialogue’ has been accepted by all parties, even though the term ‘TA support’ has remained the common term being used.

Several reasons have been referred to as regards why the collaboration started in the Southern Province:

- (a) Two Norwegian NGOs (Save the Children Norway and Norwegian Church Aid) were already involved in the Province.
- (b) For learning and piloting purposes: *“It is good to establish a pilot project for one year, to get some experiences and create a better and more sustainable main programme”*. (Internal memo 25/5-2001). *“It is now agreed that the collaboration should start with a pilot project in order to establish a base of experience before a cooperation agreement is entered”*. (Internal memo 12/06-2001)
- (c) For pragmatic reasons: in a summary report from the first Norwegian Coordinator, it is stated that *“From the beginning the main intention was to strengthen the Ministry in Zambia through sharing of experiences with colleagues in Norway. However, it was necessary to reorganize the Ministry in Lusaka first and Theme 1 could not start until 2003”*. (Feldberg 2003).
- (d) For reasons of decentralisation: *“The intention was to support the decentralisation of the education system”*. (Feldberg, 2003).

The consequence of focussing on the Southern Province was that the cooperation mainly engaged the MOE authorities at the level of a province and selected districts, while having only a minimal presence at the central (HQ) level. This made that the ‘ownership’ of the programme, and thus of the ‘Norwegian support’, gravitated towards the Southern Province. The overall implication of this development was that while the Inter-Ministerial Cooperation was initiated at the political level as above all a (Central) Ministry-to-(Central) Ministry institutional collaboration, it actually became a source of additional funding and of TA for implementing activities in the Southern Province.

While the programme started as a ‘pilot’, by the time the cooperation was to be consolidated in a long-term ‘Cooperation Agreement’ in 2003, only a limited and informal effort was made to review the experiences and lessons learned. No extensive formative evaluation was carried out prior to the signing of this new agreement. The Cooperation Agreement presents and defines the cooperation between the two Ministries in terms of Norway providing *technical assistance* to Zambia. Thus any idea of ‘partnership’ or ‘mutuality’ was subservient to the central purpose of development supports:

- The Agreement invites MOER *“to provide support to the MOEZ Sector Plan”*. *“The Cooperation will mainly focus on aspects related to the implementation of reforms and programmes in the sector plan”*.
- Under Scope of the Cooperation there are six objectives – all related to the Norwegian MOER building the capacity of MOEZ top management, strengthen in-service provision, consolidate multi-grade teaching, etc.
- The MOER should provide “specialised support” through the use of a group of FTAs and not a group of colleagues.

### **1.3. Major Components and Strategies**

#### *Management and coordination of the programme*

The IMC programme, as it was implemented in Zambia, consisted of five (later six) themes, which were operational at the level of the Southern Province and its districts. They were drawn from the general focal areas as described under the 2003 Agreement:

- (a) Building capacity of MOEZ senior management in policy reform and management.
- (b) Strengthening in-service provision through the development of Resource Centre (RC) network as centres of learning and establishing closer RC/Teachers’ College linkages.
- (c) Consolidating the Multi-grade teaching as an in-service programme administered through the RC network.
- (d) Building capacity of Education Board/PTA members.
- (e) Twinning of schools as a school-based activity and sustained by schools themselves instead of being a central activity of the Cooperation.

- (f) Building capacity of schools in data handling, analysis/interpretation, application and quality control.
- (g) Producing HIV/AIDS materials, equipping students with community mobilisation techniques and development of a competence centre.

In practice, the themes were consolidated as:

1. Capacity building on policy and reform management (only preparation by 2004).
2. Multi-grade teaching and general teaching and learning methods.
3. Information systems.
4. Decentralisation and implementation of reform.
5. Twinning of Schools.
6. HIV/AIDS.

There have been several efforts made to expand the scope of the cooperation beyond what is listed here. The following have been on the agenda of the Coordinating Committee and/or the (joint) Annual Meetings: in-service teacher development through the RC network (not realised); entrepreneurship and life skills (realised by incorporation into the Twinning of Schools theme); secondary school education (not realised); vocational skills development (not realised except to some extent through the entrepreneurship activities); and the development of a formative research programme, possibly through a to-be-established 'Policy and Research Unit' in MOEZ (not realised, but still under discussion). There are indications that the above proposals represented concerns both on the side of the Norwegian MOE and the Coordination Committee in the Southern Province (Report of the Study Tour to Norway, April 2003; Meeting UFD-LINS, April 2003; Refocus Meeting, Choma, May 2005).

The Annual Meeting has had a role not only in decision-making as regards the scope of the programme but also in making adjustments to its implementation. Moreover, it facilitated harmonisation of IMC activities with programmes in the Sector Plan (HIV/AIDS) or their integration into national programme structures (Multi-grade). Thus, the mechanisms for coordination and for making course corrections in the IMC have been functional – even if they have not been able to prevent delays in implementation (Theme 1) or to create space for more fundamental re-thinks about central aspects of the Cooperation.

#### *Implementation arrangements*

The major participants in the IMC on the Zambian side have been the Provincial Office, District Education Boards and schools. At provincial level a Provincial Education Management Committee (PEMC) was formed, charged with the overall responsibility to oversee the management and implementation of the cooperation. At school level, Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) formed part of the implementation structures and were beneficiaries of the decentralisation theme.

We found that the programme was adequately anchored in provincial and district structures. A consequence, however, was that districts were identified for inclusion into the programme not on the basis of a needs assessment, but of the very fact of their being part of the province. The province appears to be preoccupied more with expanding geographical coverage than with the strengthening of the content and process aspects of the programme. It is anticipated that by 2007 the entire Southern Province will be 'covered'.

The PEMC, which met quarterly, made key decisions on the programmes including approving of annual budgets. In line with the role of provinces in a decentralised system, each of the IMC themes was allocated a Focal Point person in order to ensure coordination with districts and possibly feed into policy development and programming.

As the themes came to be more closely embedded in the district and provincial structures, and to some extent (Multi-grade Teaching and Decentralisation) at the national level, the



group or network of persons looking after the themes tended to grow bigger. For example, the Multi-grade theme is now taken care of by a network of extension officers at the District level and by a Multi-grade Task Team at national level, while for HIV/AIDS core teams have been established and trained in each of the districts, whose work is linked to the HIV/AIDS Teams at provincial and national levels.

In the early years of the pilot (2002-04), the planning and reporting on activities has been separate from the district and provincial administration. In 2003, following the inauguration of the Strategic Sector Plan this work has come to be integrated in Ministry structures, even though the planning for the Cooperation programme is still done separately before it is integrated into the consolidated district and provincial plans. Supervision and coordination has passed from the (separate) Coordination Committee to the PEMC. The (joint) Annual Meeting has remained the highest coordinating body linking the two ministries.

#### *Approaches and strategies*

The unfolding of activities and ways of working within the themes has varied. This has been due to the nature of the theme, but also to the personalities of the Norwegian FTAs involved. At core, however, in spite of divergent specific objectives for the individual themes, there have been similarities in the general approach taken to the implementation of the themes. This particularly relates to the three main ones: Multi-grade Teaching, Decentralisation and HIV/AIDS.

This approach can be characterised as a '*facilitation and uptake of new ideas or methods*', related in each case to ideas and methods that were already known in the Zambian system or had been formally adopted for implementation. In each theme, however, such ideas and methods needed 're-interpretation' within the local context and further operationalisation for the purpose of effective dissemination.

The components of this approach have generally been a sequence of:

- Orientation / fact finding / sensitisation
- Training of key personnel
- Teacher / school support materials
- Monitoring of dissemination
- Continued guidance and support
- Synthesis of substance and methodologies in manuals.

Most of the support, technical as well as financial, went into activities reflecting the above components. They included: study visits to Norway; needs assessment / mapping activities; local seminars and workshops starting with key persons followed by cascading; monitoring visits; developing/gathering of learner/teacher support materials; planning and review meetings.

Already, at the commencement of the Cooperation joint efforts were made across the themes to work out a rough annual cycle for such series of activities, to be reflected in the work planning. In the 2002 Annual Report this cycle was described as follows:

- (1) Preparation periods in Zambia (all themes)
- (2) Needs assessment activities (Multi-grade, Info.Systems, Decentralization, HIV/AIDS)
- (3) Study Tour Norway (Multi-grade and Decentralisation)
- (4) Visits by colleagues from Norway to Zambia (Info. Systems)
- (5) Workshops with participation of colleagues from Norway (Multi-grade, Decentralisation, HIV/AIDS)
- (6) Follow-up activities in Zambia (all themes).

The above sequencing also had relevance for joint planning and logistics. It was intended to give a structure to the learning and development work, by linking visits to Norway and follow-up

visits to Zambia by FTAs to ongoing work on the Zambian side. In later years, however, this also showed its drawbacks, as at the district level the visiting FTAs sometimes needed the same people for seminars or workshops. As a result, there have been peak periods in which a substantive number of Zambian officers were ‘busy with the Norwegians’, which according to some informers has had consequences for their routine work in the ministry. This is at odds with the official position of the IMC activities being within the sector programme.

Another significant dimension of the above cycle has been that each subsequent year it was applied to other districts. Each theme had found a way of applying such cycle (or parts of it) to successive series of districts, sometimes focussing each year on a different component of the approach (as outlined above). For example, in the decentralisation theme the FTA took successive districts on an annual basis through another component of a four-step cycle: sensitisation, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation. This meant that generally districts only received one ‘chance’ to absorb what was on offer.

Combining the above findings with those in the beginning of the Chapter on the desires regarding the scope of the programme, one may conclude that the IMC has been very ambitious – perhaps even over-ambitious - in its aim to support reform implementation in Zambia. It appears that both the Norwegian ministry and the Zambian ministry, at least at the level of the Southern Province, have been keen to extend the coverage of the programme. The Norwegian FTAs made a serious effort to think through the approaches and strategies needed for effective bottom-up diffusion of change and to devise systematic cycles that ensured efficient use of resources and effort. But it remains questionable whether MOER had a good estimate of what it would take to bring about change given Zambian conditions, and whether the activities once implemented would have sufficient impact on the system to make the changes sustainable.

#### *Extent of involvement*

The above raises another issue: what should be the extent of a ‘sister ministry’s’ involvement with the policy reform process in another country? Our investigations show that, whereas the Cooperation was conceived as an instrument for engaging the other ministry in ‘peer dialogue’ and exchanges of experiences with the help of Norwegian advisors, in reality the involvement reached much further to the extent that the programme supported the actual outreach of taking new ideas and methods into the classrooms and communities. An example is the funds supplied to individual (pilot) schools to assist in the setting up of small income-generating projects to support AIDS orphans – in the context of the HIV/AIDS agenda.

This outreach work was made possible by the presence of the advisors and by the availability of substantive financial means. We suggest that the latter enabled the programme to become heavily involved with implementation. Furthermore, it enabled the involvement to be extended over time, producing what can be labelled ‘*programme drift*’. In order to place this it is helpful to distinguish between three levels of ‘involvement’ when it comes to a twinning arrangement like the Zambian one:

- (1) Dialogue / direct exchanges between two ministries.
- (2) Facilitation of re-interpretation and operationalisation of new ideas and methods (see above).
- (3) The insertion of the ‘new ways and practices’ into the actual work environment.

The third level can be seen as constituting ‘implementation’, which could extend from selective ‘demonstration’ all the way to full implementation across the system. A question for the IMC is how far ‘implementation’ would have to go (even at provincial level) in order to arrive at a replicable output that could be implemented on a wider scale. This would depend in part on the clarity of the programme goals, partly on the resources available.

It can be noted that while the 'peer dialogue' is crucial under level (1), the use of FTA becomes crucial at level (2), while at level (3) the funds are the dominant factor, with FTA playing a lesser role. It is at level 3 that 'programme drift' can easily take place, especially when types and levels of outcomes have not been specified and agreed upon at higher levels. The Zambian programme encompasses all three levels, and practices of complementing IMC funds with government funds differ across themes.

While the rationale was provided by the financial needs in the districts (which were substantive indeed), the 'drift' may also have been encouraged by the lack of agreement at what point further activities would have to be covered from government (or donor pool) funds, or from other sources. It was further stimulated by the evident conviction in the province that the IMC was in fact a donor assistance programme, specifically for the Southern Province, that 'obviously' it had to take what it started to its fullest completion (Refocus Meeting report, Choma, May 2005).

These developments also seem to imply that programme integration may have been limited to a nominal *administrative* integration, with only slow attention being given to *strategic* integration of the new ideas and methods that were clearly of relevance to plan implementation. We know that in 2005 the use of 'pool funding' began to be discussed in relation to further implementation of the Multi-grade and the HIV/AIDS activities. But we also understand that this is still a contentious issue, as the province does not like to lose its special funding (Minutes PEMC Meeting, April 2005).

#### *Coherence across the themes*

It is also relevant to consider linkages across the themes. One may assume that 'themes' are merely ways to introduce new ideas and that boundaries would become blurred as the ideas are taken up and become mainstreamed. However, in this IMC programme this does not seem to have happened, in spite of the fact that all themes in one way or another addressed capacity related to decentralisation from an administrative/management point of view or a pedagogical one. Moreover, we noted above that the themes also shared common perceptions about the approaches to be used and types of activities.

The evaluation found that to-date by and large at none of the levels of involvement outlined above have synergies across themes actually emerged or have they led to joint activities. This has not (yet) happened even where at the conceptual level clear linkages had been identified, such as between the Twinning of Schools and Multi-grade Teaching (in which twinning of schools was seen as a 'methodology' for promoting multi-grade classrooms) and between HIV/AIDS and Twinning of Schools (both of which initiated income-generating activities in pilot schools, but with separate purposes involving different personnel at school and district level).

By contrast, the obvious relationship between the Information Systems and Decentralisation themes has been discussed at length. But as opinions about the merger of these two themes have been divided, a decision in 2004 to bring them together was rescinded during 2005.

The themes have remained separate in leadership, planning, implementation and funding more by default than by design. They were established as sub-projects, each with their own personnel, plans and budgets, which the Zambian ministry bureaucracy accepted and maintained, even when some pilot schools who benefited from two related themes had difficulties in keeping them separate. It appears that both ministries may have assumed that, since the emphasis was on integration in the Sector Plan, the progressive implementation of decentralisation as a major component of this Plan would help ensure that a closer relationship between the IMC activities would also take place.

Clearly this has not yet happened, and it may well be that a more pro-active joint supervision and coordination of the IMC projects could have produced some success in this regard. This

issue will need some attention as the activities could have benefited from greater synergies, not only in terms of their separate effectiveness, but also in terms of developing a coherent set of strategies that could become models for replication.

#### **1.4. Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships**

##### *The role of the Norwegian MOE*

A starting assumption of this report has been that a ministry-to-ministry collaboration involves at least some partnership between two sister ministries at central and possibly local levels. This was to be exemplified by ministry staff at different levels participating in peer dialogue and exchanges of ideas and experiences.

The original idea was also to establish such a dialogue between Ministry headquarters in Oslo and Lusaka, to be reflected in Theme 1 on Capacity building on policy and reform management. Collaboration at this level, however, was postponed as the MOEZ was going through a far-reaching restructuring exercise. It also suffered as a result of the transfer, respectively retirement, of the entire top management level of MOEZ in 2004/2005.

Though Theme 1 should have started in 2003, initial discussions only materialized in 2004, leading to an agreement about a programme to be started in 2006. The agreement was endorsed by a meeting of the two ministers in Paris, October 2005.

Since the Cooperation programme started with five other themes in the Southern Province, the Norwegian Ministry has not been directly involved in the implementation. Instead, it delegated these responsibilities to university colleges in Norway. Only in the Decentralisation theme a senior staff member of MOER, i.e. a former County Director became directly involved.

- The Department for Teacher Education at the University College in Sogn and Fjordane became responsible for the Multi-grade theme because of its experience with multi-grade schooling. A Norwegian “Foreign Technical Adviser” (FTA) was selected as the focal person for the work.
- Collaboration between the MOER and the University College in Oslo/LINS had started already before the Ministry twinning was established. When the Cooperation was being prepared, this theme was for practical reasons incorporated in the Agreement between the two Ministries. An adviser from LINS became the FTA for the HIV/AIDS theme.
- As the focal point in Norway for studying decentralization and implementation of reforms at local level MOER selected the State County Director of Sør Trøndelag as the FTA. For the Theme Information systems two consultants, provided by the Primary Education Department, were involved.

The above means that effectively the Norwegian Ministry sub-contracted Colleges to take full responsibility for the preparation and implementation of some of the themes, notably the most substantive ones. The evaluation found that the actual Terms of Reference for the Colleges concerned were not specified, which according to MOER was deliberate, as the programme would have to respond to Zambian demands as agreed upon in the Annual Meetings and reflected in the annual work plans and budgets for the Cooperation. The Colleges were bound to ensure that the work of the FTAs was within the limits of the Annual Work plan and budget.

The Agreement between LINS and MOER is a letter (signed 20/8-2002) referring to the MOU stating that “*UFD [MOER] has given the responsibility to LINS to handle theme 5, HIV/AIDS*”. It is specified that LINS and MOER will keep each other informed and that LINS will send progress reports to MOER on its activities.

LINS became fully responsible for all aspects of the work. MOER has not had any supervisory, technical or quality assurance roles vis-à-vis LINS and has no such roles according to the agreement. The same pattern was followed with regard to the other themes: each College selected advisors from their own staff without any open advertisement, and the FTAs organized their own work. The quality of work has primarily depended on the performance of the individual advisors. The central coordinator in MOER maintains the links with Zambia and is responsible for the overall planning and reporting from the various themes – based on inputs from each theme.

The FTAs have been meeting from time to time in Norway when called together by the Norwegian coordinator in MOER. Reportedly, though some effort was made to consider relationships between the themes, this has not been very successful. As noted before, since such relationships were not yet emerging in the context of progressive decentralisation, they may have required a more pro-active type of joint supervision that could perhaps have counteracted the tendency of the FTAs to focus on their own project.

#### *Norwegian coordination*

Interactions on the Norwegian side between the MOER on the one hand and MFA/Norad and the Norwegian Embassy in Lusaka have been intermittent and were guided by respect for division of roles. As noted, after its initial brokerage role MFA/Norad was no longer directly involved with programme implementation. In its view even the deposit of annual grants to the Zambian sector pool fund was not linked to the IMC.

The Norwegian Embassy has played a low-key role vis-à-vis the IMC in the Southern Province. They meet with and are informed by representatives from MOER and at times facilitate meetings and consultations. The Embassy became concerned when the Ministry and other donors refer to twinning as hidden ‘tied aid’ and to Norwegian ‘ring-fencing’ of financial resources – since money has to be designated for the collaboration in the Southern Province. Norway has a reputation of providing untied sector support and not designated funds to any particular project or province. Hence, the criticism of a concealed ring fencing, contradicting and to some extent undermining the principles of a sector programme, is a concern for the Embassy.

The Embassy declared itself very interested in the IMC and in the issues concerning the actual relationships between the Cooperation and Norway’s support to the SWAP and education sector programme. It was acutely aware of outstanding issues, such as to what extent the IMC functioned as part of the SWAP and was used effectively to make its own kind of contribution. How, as a complementary instrument, does it add value to the overall support to education? While the Embassy had a good dialogue with MOER it felt that the potential of the IMC was not yet fully realised.

#### *The role of the Zambian MOE*

In spite of Norwegian assertions and encouragements the Zambian Ministry has had some difficulties in seeing itself as the ‘owner’ of the IMC programme. Only in the last few years has the MOE moved to integrate the themes into the education sector plan, i.e. ensure inclusion of IMC activities into the district annual work plans and budgets, as well as into the periodic reporting. Moreover, efforts were made to align the theme activities more closely to national strategies for plan implementation.

In spite of these moves, the evaluation team found that in the MOEZ there is still a perception of the IMC constituting a Norwegian ‘programme’, on the one hand part of the sector policy and plan, but on the other hand funded through Norwegian designated funds. From this perspective the MOEZ has not (yet) been a ‘partner’, but of a recipient of aid, which tries to use what was on offer as best as it can manage. In this role, it finds itself not just on the receiving end of TA, but also of having to pay for it by dispatching funds to another country.

The selection of themes has contributed to the “projectisation” of the Cooperation. Although the themes are not typical projects (mainly because they are not so clearly defined), they have many of the hallmarks of projects – such as dedicated staff, a coordinating structure, designated funds, a separate budget, and a variety of activities that are all linked to Norway. These are perceived as projects, all coming together under the ‘Norwegian programme’.

All this is of lesser concern to the Southern Province, where the education authorities have embraced the Norwegian programme as their ‘own programme’, which adds up to 50% of their own government budget and brings in welcome technical assistance.

Ironically, this programme, in view of its links with the sector programme and its embeddedness in MOE structures, can be regarded as a fairly successful programme in relation to the donor cooperation principles of the 1990s. However, in the current context of SWAPs, it is regarded in Zambia as an anomaly as it seems to reintroduce projects in a sector programme.

#### *The role of the FTAs*

Within the context of the actual programme the FTAs appear to have done their best to work with their counterparts in implementing theme activities. They have all received much acclaim – at all levels of the system - for their methods and quality of working.

The general approach, as outlined in the previous Chapter, has enabled them generally to work as facilitators, playing an active teaching part in the beginning, but gradually moving back into a supportive role of being ‘advisers’, ‘critical friends’, or as one Zambian stated: “*they have been acting as colleagues to us, rather than as consultants*”. They have not fallen into the common trap of TA, i.e. of becoming ‘gap fillers’.

It appears that FTAs, notwithstanding the Annual work plans and their interactions with the district and provincial authorities, have in practice had a good deal of discretion to plan and implement their work. As a result, they have probably taken more responsibilities for getting on with the work than should have been the case. Having to negotiate their own roles and responsibilities, they most likely contributed to what was earlier referred to as ‘programme drift’. But, at the same time, they seem to have succeeded in pursuing the idea of ‘peer-dialogue’ and thus in giving meaning to what ‘ministry-to-ministry’ collaboration can look like on the ground.

During the last year there has been much debate among the stakeholders of the IMC about the value of continued FTA involvement in the programme. Opinions have varied from a position that the FTAs have done their work by showing the way and that henceforth the Zambians should take full responsibility, to the position that FTA involvement is reduced and not terminated. Some involvement is deemed to be essential in order to help orientate ‘new districts’ and also to maintain the momentum.

The above positions are closely related to the issue whether further study visits to Norway are useful. There is a strong view that funds for both study visits and FTAs can better be used to expand the programme on the ground. But there is also a view that the visits are essential in order for each district to see and understand how new ideas work in a different system (“*seeing is believing*”).

This debate raises at least two further questions:

- (a) If the physical interaction with Norway would be dropped from the IMC programme (as appears to be technically possible), to what extent would this programme still qualify as an ‘inter-ministerial twinning’?
- (b) To what extent have the FTAs become so crucial for the innovative approaches that their presence is essential to secure legitimacy, if not protection, for their dissemination?

Given the different perceptions and expectations, and the sometimes divergent roles of actors, no ‘model’ has as yet been established for ‘inter-ministerial cooperation’. Thus, after

five years the collaboration has not yet explored its full potential, particularly as regards building on and utilising the comparative advantages of the two ministries involved.

#### *The position of the donors*

Due to unavailability the team was only able to interview one other bilateral donor (Netherlands Embassy) on the donor perspectives concerning the Norwegian IMC. It appeared that donors in general were not much aware of the details of the IMC. Nor were they clear on the relationship between the activities under the IMC and the framework set by the sector plan. There was a strong impression among donors that the IMC functioned outside the SWAP. This was not in the least stimulated by the apparent ‘ring fencing’ of pool funds for the purpose of the IMC – which was considered not acceptable.

As donors and MOEZ were also making progress towards establishing a ‘TA pool’, it was felt that procedures as regards the identification and recruitment of all TA personnel, thus including Norwegian FTAs working under the IMC, would have to be revisited. Since, however, the deployment of such FTAs is a core feature of the IMC, these developments in ‘donor coordination’ will require a major effort of MOEZ (and the Norwegian Embassy) to ‘explain’ the uniqueness of an IMC in the context of the SWAP and thus the importance of elaborating ‘adjusted’ procedures. A more explicit and visible participation of MOER in the SWAP processes in Zambia is likely to help clarify the situation.

### **1.5. Expertise and Capacity**

#### *Capacity in the Norwegian MOER*

In the MOER, there is an inadequate capacity for directing its Cooperation with Zambia. The initiative to build up such capacity was taken at the time that the cooperation with Zambia was still being discussed. In 2000, as part of a wider re-structuring of the MOER, a Department for Analysis and International Affairs (AI) was established. More recently, this Department was extended to become the Department of Analysis, International Affairs and Lifelong Learning (AIK), with a total of 40 staff. Within the Department there are groups and networks according to areas of work, as well as links with other departments.

This Department was given the mandate to oversee the Ministry’s relationships with other countries, including the EU, OECD, and countries in Eastern Europe, and to coordinate technical assistance to be provided to countries in the developing world. After Nepal, Zambia was the second country with which an agreement for technical support was concluded. As observed earlier in this report MOER had a growing interest in pursuing the latter types of relationships. Yet, it does not appear to have added up to being a ‘policy’ as the purposes, modalities and expected benefits have not been clearly articulated.

The Section for International Cooperation has been small, consisting of a head and three staff, all but one of whom have some experience in developing countries. Two of them had prior experience with ministry-to-ministry relationships (Nepal). One person has been given the responsibility as coordinator of the Zambia relationship. The present incumbent, who is involved with the Cooperation on a part-time basis, has held this position since 2003. This person has adequate knowledge on Zambia and could draw from her own experiences in the country. There is no formally constituted internal or external advisory/reference group to provide policy or technical guidance.

As noted earlier the expertise to be used in the Cooperation was largely drawn from outside the MOER. Given that the MOER itself had intended the Cooperation to focus on (central) ministry-to- (central) ministry collaboration, one would have expected a more direct participation of MOER staff at different levels of the ministry. As it happened headquarters staff were only involved through meetings and workshops, while at lower levels one County Director became a FTA. Hence, MOER’s own internal technical expertise thus far has only sparingly been used.

A problematic issue is that Norwegian FTAs, while they were highly experienced in their own technical field, have lacked expertise in organisational change or in change management. They were well prepared on how to effectively use their expertise in facilitating ‘cross-fertilisation’ between two very different systems and dialogues that could stimulate self-directed learning.

Even though the FTAs operated quite well in difficult situations, the development of such expertise would be important for a ministry that is keen to extend its engagement in ‘peer dialogue’. Thus, one would have expected a willingness to work more closely with professional personnel in MFA/Norad so as to ensure closer embedding of ‘technical’ expertise in ‘development’ conditions. This would also have helped to address questions as to what is there to share from Norway’s experience with educational reform and how can this experience become relevant in a very different context. As it happened, MOER has not gone far in conceptually articulating the IMC’s added value in relation to ‘development cooperation’.

#### *Capacity in the Zambian MOE*

If the Norwegian capacity has been limited, the capacity on the Zambian side has been weaker. We have noted that Zambia did not have any supportive frameworks in place, in terms of policy, methodologies or special budget; but it was especially weak in terms of organisational infrastructure and coordination. A staff policy support unit, that could assist the top leadership in thinking through the potential significance of ministry-to-ministry collaboration, was foreseen in the Institutional Development sub-programme of the sector plan, but has yet to materialise.

Formally, the coordination of the IMC had become the responsibility of the Director of Planning and Information, who delegated this to one of his senior planning officers. The high rate of turnover in the Directorate has made such delegation problematic.

At the same time it is necessary to understand what makes the capacity of such ministry limited. Four historical factors can be mentioned:

- MOEZ has traditionally been centralised; hence a myriad of administrative decisions are taken at national level, usually involving the Planning Directorate.
- In the last two years there has been a major turn-over of the top management in the MOEZ.
- Presently, since the MOE is still in the final stages of its restructuring process there are many officers new in their jobs, working to different job descriptions and trying to get adjusted to a new work regime.
- In spite of the emergence of the SWAP, the MOEZ still faces the consequences of a strong involvement of technical and funding agencies in the policy and planning process, and at the level of implementation. While some streamlining has occurred, several major donor partners have opted for staying outside the MOU, thus complicating efforts to coordinate MOEZ–donor interactions.

The net result is that MOEZ, in spite of some important recent developments, still finds itself in a crisis-mode, reacting to its environment rather than pro-actively engaging with it. It also means that there is little time and opportunity for top management to reflect on its longer-term visions, policy directions and strategies. It has also left little space to think about a relatively small programme with a respected donor country that has not been a difficult partner to deal with.

At the operational level, to-date insufficient effort has been made to capitalise on the conceptual links between IMC activities and approaches and implementation strategies as articulated in the Sector Plan. At the structural level, even the inconsistencies in the relationship have not created an urgency to revisit the programme. It could be stated that as a result the IMC has not yet been fully exploited for the benefit of reform implementation.

It can also be stated that none of the above would have prevented top management of MOEZ to vigorously pursue this potentially significant relationship with a sister-ministry, and turn it



in to something that could have strategic benefits – if there would have been a clearer understanding as to what those benefits could be.

## **1.6. Relevance, Results and Sustainability**

### *General results*

The main thrust of the themes appears to have been ‘the facilitation or uptake of new ideas or methods’. As such, this thrust has been in line with what the IMC intended. In the Southern Province, the team found many signs that new ideas and methods related to Multi-grade Teaching, HIV/AIDS, the functioning of District Education Boards, the benefits of School Twinning, and the relevance of entrepreneurship activities have been taken up. This seemed to be the case with regard to understanding the nature and value of new ideas or practices, as well as people’s ability to work with them. It applies to senior officers at school, district and provincial level, and to the local College of Education.

The above suggests that the IMC, in terms of its approaches, strategies and activities, has been successful in operationalising these and enabling key personnel to adopt and apply them creatively in their work practices.

The team’s view is, however, rather impressionistic and not related to any systematic monitoring or research on programme outcomes. We found that in the IMC programme only basic monitoring has been done, i.e. in terms of keeping track of implementation of activities and of immediate results, such as in terms of people trained, schools taking up activities, etc.

By contrast, insufficient progress has been made with regard to monitoring and evaluating actual outcomes, notably:

- (a) The *impact of the new ideas and methods at the institutional level*, that is both in terms of organisational arrangements (learning organisation, school functioning, DEB operations) and in terms of effectiveness (learning achievement, changing behaviours, conditions of aids orphans (OVCs).
- (b) The *establishment of strategies for the management of change*: whether at school level (in terms of learning organisation or of community extension work) or at district level (in terms of helping schools to change, or of enabling DEBs to make effective contributions to policy implementation).

### *Significant results*

The Mission found that at different levels interesting work is done to address the above challenges. In the HIV/AIDS theme the experiences gained in two pilot districts to develop strategies for addressing HIV/AIDS at school and community level is now bearing fruit in the development of a ‘district application manual’. The reference point used has been the (existing) national HIV/AIDS strategy.

In the David Livingstone College of Education, it was found that the College’s participation in the Multi-grade Teaching and the HIV/AIDS themes has spurred strong interest in broader pedagogical questions related to improving quality and relevance in the curriculum. In addition, interest has grown in the very modalities with which schools respond to the needs of different categories of children in difficult circumstances. As one contribution from its side the College had started a small community school within its own premises.

In the context of decentralisation the HQ-based Chief Education Officer for Education Boards Services has developed an Education Boards Performance Profile that is now in use as a national instrument to provide an objective and quantifiable assessment of the performance of Boards over a given period. The continued close contact between the IMC theme on decentralisation and the national level enabled the FTA to contribute to the improvement of national guidelines for the DEBs and the revision of a national manual (especially in terms of

the link between management and governance issues). The 2005 edition of the assessment of DEBs in the Southern Province showed that the districts in which the IMC was active had improved their scores remarkably over 2003.

Under the Multi-grade Teaching theme the IMC experiences in Southern Province made a major contribution to the thinking on pedagogical aspects of multi-grade classrooms, their relationships with the community environment, and the widening of the concept to cover differentiated and participatory learning across all classrooms, rural as well as urban. These developments have now found reflection in a new national Multi-grade Teaching Manual.

### *The challenges*

The Mission acknowledges that the above constitute significant achievements of the IMC programme. Yet it also expresses its reservations with regard to how far this work contributes to achieving the two types of outcomes listed above: i.e. establishing the impact at institutional level, and establishing strategies for the management of change.

As regards the institutional impact, while the contribution to manuals has been very significant, there is a need to understand how activities have been taken up at institutional level (school, district), have changed the ways in which the institutions function, and have affected their outputs.

For example, the development of ‘entrepreneurship’ and/or income-generating activities in schools may well be very relevant, not only for the learners themselves but also as a way to provide supportive services to aids orphans. But before this is reflected in a handbook, one wishes to understand on what basis such activities are feasible and sustainable, how schools can absorb such work, how the communities can be involved, and what outcomes are achievable? Such insights are required as a basis for replication or up-scaling across the sector.

The second outcomes relates to the strategies for the management of change. Relevant questions here are: what have the activity cycles under the IMC yielded in terms of methodologies for initiating and sustaining change at the level of schools, communities and districts? Given that many problems have existed for some time, what provides the trigger for the State or for local stakeholders to undertake action? Once there is a momentum, how can this be sustained? If no study visit to Norway or Norwegian FTA were available, what would be the alternative?

### *Revisiting other expectations*

We have noted that the initial conceptions of the Cooperation were less focused on the establishment of a specific local support programme than on the sharing of educational reform experiences at the system’s level. Although never expressed officially on paper there was a sense that systems could learn something from each other that otherwise – without opportunities for open and frank collegial contact – could not happen.

It has been difficult for the team to put its finger on that ‘un-definable’ part of learning through inter-ministerial cooperation. Since we have raised this question with senior members of both ministries, we can establish some sense of what this learning can be. It has been described as: “*understanding how another ministry has struggled*” (Zambia); “*learning about methods to deal with system’s complexities*” (Norway); “*the idea was to have collaboration as equals: school-to-school; teacher-to-teacher; official-to-official*” (Zambia); “*strengthening self-confidence in another ministry to deal more effectively with donor agencies and to become clearer in their own ideas*” (Norway); “*it is all about the relationship: the very idea of going into another ministry and recognising similar issues is an empowering experience*” (Zambia). Significant is that this type of learning, and the kinds of mutual benefits it implies, belongs to a domain other than that of ‘development cooperation’. Rather than with the transfers of skills, knowledge and technology, this domain is pre-occupied with dialogue and joint reflection on the nature of policies and practices, and the dynamics and direction of system’s change. This is about the ‘upstream’ tasks of exploring and conceptualising change, for which an MOE senior management usually has little time. It thus points to interactions and

joint activities of the type that are not part of the usual ‘development cooperation’, but rather complementary to it.

To what extent has the IMC become this kind of empowering experience? Though there were some signs of this at the district level, it is probably too early to draw conclusions.

### **1.7. Funding, Cost Effectiveness and Accountability**

#### *The problematic funding of the IMC*

As already observed several times in this report, the funding of the IMC has been problematic. Several aspects have been causing concern:

- (a) The entire IMC is paid for with funds taken out of the ‘Direct Sector Support Fund’, i.e. the donor pool in Zambia. This has implied the need for MOEZ to earmark funds in a pool that was intended to be unrestricted.
- (b) The Norwegian Government contributes approx. 100 Mill. NOK annually to the sector pool. A total of approx. 6 Mill. NOK (US \$ 900 000) is spent on institutional cooperation. While officially this contribution is unrestricted, the Zambian MOE sees a clear link between the Norwegian contribution and the IMC. This gives the IMC the appearance of being a form of tied aid.
- (c) The funds are used to cover not only Zambian costs, but also Norwegian costs, including those of the MOER coordination. Although the IMC started as a form of ‘ministry-to-ministry collaboration’ MOER does not make any contribution from its own budget.
- (d) While in the Southern Province the IMC activities have been integrated into the Sector Plan and MOEZ structures and the budget is part of the Annual Work plan and Budget (AWB), the IMC is still treated as a separate project.

There are conflicting views between the two Ministries on what constitutes the basis for the collaboration: the Norwegian Ministry of Education perceives the collaboration with the sister Ministry in Zambia as a direct relationship between the two Ministries based on a request for providing certain services. MOER maintains that it is working for the Zambians – not for Norway as a donor or as an integral part of Norwegian development cooperation with Zambia. In other words, the twinning is not seen as tied or linked to Norwegian support to the sector programme. It is argued that the Zambian Ministry is free to terminate the contract and choose another partner at any time (as stipulated in the Cooperation Agreement).

While the IMC is presented as a partnership the Zambian Ministry pays for all expenses, even those of the Norwegian Ministry. MOER has a contract agreement with MOEZ and operates to a large extent as a consultant:

- (a) MOER is paid by hours/days for the coordinator as well as the advisors – using almost regular Norwegian consultancy rates (in real terms more since their overhead expenses are already covered).
- (b) The work is regulated by a contract specifying that MOER provide concrete services to Zambia.
- (c) MOER is primarily sub-contracting services from Norwegian University colleges.

On the other hand, MOER is not defined as a consulting agency and has avoided common rules and regulations followed in technical cooperation. For example, there has been no tendering process as a result of which the Norwegian ministry was selected based on merit. Advisors are selected by MOER without any application procedures and screening. Since IMC is seen as something “different” from technical cooperation standard rules for TC are set aside. This ‘difference’ is that the technical support comes from a ‘sister ministry’ and that thus its deployment should be based on ‘trust’.

On the Zambian side many officials, however, regard the IMC as directly linked to Norwegian funding of the sector programme. At the central level, the IMC is seen as a *de facto* designated project using ring-fenced money from the sector pool. This would seem to restrict the possibility for Zambia to re-allocate the funds to an alternative supplier, or to another purpose altogether. Several partners in the Southern Province thought that funds came directly from the Norwegian Government earmarked for their province.

MOEZ has acknowledged that Norway is welcome to earmark funds provided for sector support. This would imply, however, that IMC funds are put into the account specifically used for 'Designated Support Funds' and also under the control of MOEZ management. This is regarded as one way to resolve the inconsistency. It would require MFA/Norad to accept that some funds would be earmarked for the IMC.

*Policy accountability at the district and provincial level*

We noted that until very recently the IMC activities were planned, budgeted for and reported on separately from the overall provincial and district plans. Planning for IMC activities has been rather top-down and was not based on articulated needs. Its reference points were: (a) the broad national implementation framework, (b) annual budget ceilings, (c) IMC activities carried out in the past by old districts, and (d) directions by PEMC. It was observed in one District that planning was also driven by the notion of 'gaps' left by implementation efforts of the previous year.

It was noted in respect of Kazungula District that for 2004 separate plans and budgets existed for activities under the Sector Plan and those under the IMC. This gave the impression that IMC activities were additional to district plans and that they were *distracting people* from doing their core business. However, as the need for integrated reporting was emphasised, most recent plans and budgets, notably 2005, showed that IMC activities were integrated into the district and provincial Annual Work plan and Budget (AWB). This has been demonstrated in the Livingstone District Education Board's (DEB) AWB.

An analysis of the Livingstone DEB shows that about 16 % of the district budget is from the IMC. There is no matching budget from the district as can be seen from the table below:

| Livingstone District     | 2005                     | Budget Kwacha '000 |        |          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------|----------|
|                          |                          | ODB                | IMC    | % of ODB |
| MOEZ-SP Program          | IMC Theme                |                    |        |          |
|                          |                          |                    | Budget |          |
|                          |                          |                    |        | % of ODB |
| Planning and Information | Decentralisation         |                    | 65,982 | 42.16    |
|                          | Information and Planning | 156,496            | 37,704 | 24.09    |
| Special Issues           | HIV/AIDS                 | 153,976            | 46,870 | 30.44    |
| Teacher Education        | Multi-grade teaching     | 201,459            | 26,510 | 13.16    |
|                          | School Twinning          | 00                 | 29,456 | 0%       |

ODB = Overall District Budget

IMC = Inter-ministerial Cooperation

I NOK = 620 Kwacha or 65 982 000 Kwacha = approx. NOK 106 000

On reporting, while IMC activities were integrated into the overall report DEBs also produce separate reports covering all IMC activities. This is considered necessary for accountability purposes as that the IMC focused on one part of the larger system and on specific areas of interventions using a strategy in which the MOE has little experience. Moreover, the Province wishes to track the extent of expenditures for the IMC.

While the integration of IMC into the Provincial plans and budget constitutes progress, the direct relationship between IMC activities, as listed in the District and Provincial work plans, and the Sector Programme Goals and Sub-Sector Goals are not made explicit in the planning

documents (as is expected by the Plan Implementation Framework). Reporting focuses on activity implementation rather than on the extent to which (sub-) Programme Goals or Sub-Sector Goals are being achieved. As a result, it appears that activity implementation as per plan and budget has continued to be the main concern at the district level and that the IMC contributions remain insufficiently recognised.

*Cost effectiveness of IMC and resource tracking*

It is difficult to assess the cost effectiveness of the IMC since the outputs and outcomes are unclear and not systematically documented. The following seeks to track the allocation of resources in order to clarify aspects of cost effectiveness:

| <b>Total budget and expenditure Institutional Collaboration UFD - MOEZ 2001 - 2005 (US \$)</b> |                 |                  |                  |                  |        |                  |                  |                  |        |         |
|--|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------|---------|
|  | 2001            | 2002             |                  | 2003             |        | 2004             |                  | 2005             |        | Total   |
| Budget   | Norway<br>75700 | Norway<br>294176 | Zambia<br>232655 | Norway<br>222461 | Zambia | Norway<br>241731 | Zambia<br>660161 | Norway<br>271571 | Zambia | 1998455 |
| Actual expenditure   | 54710           | 149032           |                  | 173689           |        | 253701           |                  | 242869           |        | 874001  |
| % Implementation   | 72 %            | 50 %             |                  | 78 %             |        | 105 %            |                  | 89 %             |        |         |

Since there is no programme document for the collaboration, we have not found any overall budget figures for the entire period. It also seems that budget figures have been determined on an annual basis. It has not been possible to identify all figures and track total expenditure and allocation of resources for the two countries and the themes. For the first two years the Norwegian and Zambian budgets were merged. In the next years separate budgets for activities in Zambia and travel to Norway were prepared. We have not seen actual expenditure overviews for the Zambian component.

The table above reveals the following:

- The total IMC budget for the five years (2001-2005) has been US \$ 1,998,455 – or nearly two million US \$. This constitutes a small fraction of the total education programme in Zambia.
- The actual expenditure has only been US\$ 874,000 or 44% of total budget, but this figure is misleading since the Zambian expenditure is not included for 2004. On the other hand most activities under theme 1 have not been implemented and there has been under-implementation in some of the thematic areas. A more accurate figure for rate of implementation is approx. 80% (an average for all the five years).
- We have not been able to determine resources allocated to the Zambia and Norway respectively, but in 2004 the Norwegian component absorbed 36% of the total budget.

The following table provides an overview of resources utilized in each thematic area:

| <b>Expenditure for specific themes (in US \$)</b> |       |        |       |        |     |        |     |        |     |        |     |
|---|-------|--------|-------|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|
|   | 2001  | 2002   | %     | 2003   | %   | 2004   | %   | 2005   | %   | TOTAL  | %   |
| 1. MOE Capacity Development                       |       |        |       |        |     | 16983  | 7   | 23699  | 10  | 40682  | 5   |
| 2. Multi-grade teaching                           |       | 29958  | 21    | 27934  | 15  | 101725 | 40  | 78307  | 33  | 237924 | 29  |
| 3. Information systems                            |       | 27523  | 19    | 17454  | 9   | 0      | 0   | 1673   | 1   | 46650  | 6   |
| 4. Decentralization                               |       | 29958  | 21    | 44910  | 24  | 47360  | 19  | 31192  | 13  | 153420 | 19  |
| 5. Twinning                                       |       | 0      | 0     | 0      | 0   | 0      | 0   | 0      | 0   | 0      | 0   |
| 6. HIV/AIDS                                       |       | 43365  | 30    | 44910  | 24  | 56485  | 22  | 48960  | 21  | 193720 | 23  |
| Administration                                    |       | 13588  | 9     | 50421  | 28  | 31148  | 12  | 50798  | 22  | 145955 | 18  |
| Total   | 54710 | 144392 | 100 % | 185629 | 100 | 253701 | 100 | 234629 | 100 | 818351 | 100 |

The most significant findings are:

- Multi-grade teaching has absorbed the largest share of the resources – partly because of the production of the National Manual on Multi-grade Teaching.
- HIV/AIDS and decentralisation are the second and third largest.
- Information systems and national level capacity building have absorbed only 5 % each, but some of the costs for theme 3 (information systems) have been included under decentralisation.
- According to this table twinning of schools – or theme 5 - has not spent any funds. This is not correct, as some funds have been utilized.
- The total administration costs have been relatively high – close to 20%.
- Budgetary allocations confirm the trend observed in Chapter 2 that the IMC has had a focus on *content* aspects of education than on its *process* aspects (in the above table these aspects received 52% (2+6) and 30% (1+3+4+5) respectively).

If we look at the allocation of resources to various activities in 2004, the following picture emerges. It should be kept in mind that we are using *budget* figures and that figures for the entire period are missing.

*Allocation of resources on activities 2004 (in US\$)*

| Budget activities     | Norway |     | Zambia |     | Total  |     |
|-----------------------|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|
|                       | Total  | %   | Total  | %   | Total  | %   |
| All travel & per diem | 62780  | 26  | 114620 | 17  | 177400 | 20  |
| Adviser fees          | 139691 | 58  |        |     | 139691 | 16  |
| Activities in Zambia  |        |     | 490333 | 74  | 490333 | 54  |
| Administration        | 39260  | 16  | 55208  | 9   | 94468  | 10  |
| Total                 | 241731 | 100 | 660161 | 100 | 901892 | 100 |

The table shows the following:

- More than 50% is budgeted for activities in Zambia – mostly in Southern Province.
- 20% of the budget is set aside for international travel.
- The Norwegian Advisors (mainly three people) account for 16% of the budget.
- The average cost of administration is set to 10%.

Comparing actual costs with what has been achieved it would appear that the IMC's performance has been reasonably good. Plan implementation and budget utilization has proceeded well. In the views of most stakeholders the funds have been used in a highly meaningful way on activities that were considered valuable.

While the cost of the FTAs was substantial, it can also be noted that the costs of equivalent TA working as international consultants most likely would have been higher. In addition, on the Zambian side the benefit of this form of TA has been rated higher than would have been the case if ordinary 'consultants' had been involved.

### **1.8. Inter-Ministerial Cooperation Revisited**

In this final Chapter, the attention will shift from the nature, modalities and outcomes of the Inter-Ministerial Cooperation as it has been implemented between Norway and Zambia, to the actual relevance of the concept of 'inter-ministry cooperation' as exemplified by the cooperation with Zambia. In particular we need to assess its value 'as an effective model for technical assistance, and thus for institutional capacity building.

*Problem of common understanding*

Our first major observation is that evidently there has not been a coherent common understanding among key parties concerned as to what the collaboration between the two ministries was all

about. It started with shared notions about Norway supporting system's development and educational reform in Zambia through exchanging ideas and experiences, peer-dialogue among education personnel, and perhaps some degree of mutual learning. These exchanges subsequently took place within a context of providing 'development assistance', complementary to the contributions of donor agencies. At the same time, however, the cooperation has often been described as Norway basically providing 'technical assistance' to Zambia.

The Cooperation took on different meanings for different parties: a consultancy arrangement for the Norwegian MOER; a support programme using what to some appeared to be 'tied aid' and sitting uncomfortably within current SWAP developments, for the MOE Zambia (and for some of the other bilateral donors); a mechanism for foreign travel, selective technical assistance, and above all for mobilising funds, for the education authorities in the Southern Province; and an opportunity for an open-ended sharing of ideas for the Norwegian FTAs.

Meanings also seemed to vary from one level of the system to the other. Cooperation at ministry headquarters' level was largely confined to the diplomatic and administrative spheres, with occasional opportunities for communications on policy and work practices. For the Zambian Southern Province the cooperation was all about programme support to selected themes. The idea of exchanges and peer dialogue came out best at the district, college and school levels, where the IMC facilitated direct and a degree of sustained interaction between actors in Norway and Zambia.

#### *IMC and institutional capacity-building*

The most significant benefit of the IMC has been that the IMC has served as an umbrella under which Norwegian resources – i.e. experiences, practices, education professionals and funds – have become available to enhance the development of new approaches, practices and methodologies in important areas of educational reform in Zambia. To the extent that the current programme can still achieve the institutional embedding of this work and its further replication elsewhere in the country this benefit could amount to 'institutional capacity building'.

We have observed that the use of 'colleagues' as facilitators and intermediaries appears to be a crucial element in this mix of resources, which makes for a significantly different kind of learning experience. The similarities in professional identity (more than of institutional mandates), coupled with the respect and un-pretentiousness associated with 'being colleagues', and the eagerness to participate in the work, seem to have enhanced the credibility of the FTAs and helped in their acceptance. This suggests that the 'exchange and dialogue' dimension of the IMC may well have been the most successful part of the collaboration between the two countries.

Probably it cannot be argued that such benefit can only be gained through a long-term partnership of the IMC type. If the Zambian MOE would wish to use 'peer dialogue' for the development of innovative approaches and methodologies to enhance quality in specific parts of the system, it could well undertake some 'targeted shopping' across different countries and obtain the same mix of resources as a time-bound programme under contract from a selected ministry of education, international organisation of other intermediary.

Yet, in practice such open market with endless choices does not exist. Zambia has worked with Norway because of the latter's favourable reputation as a 'partner'. The interests, intentions and agreements have to a large part been based on trust. This is also applicable to Norway's acceptance of Zambia's preferences, and for Zambia's acceptance of Norwegian FTAs. Thus, arguably there is an essential quality that underscores a partnership between countries and provides the basis for an IMC. Arguably also, this means that an IMC is not just about 'development assistance by a sister ministry' or about 'technical assistance'. It is also about a longer-term mutual trust relationship.

### *Disentangling ministry-to-ministry collaboration*

It is thus that we contend that this IMC has been problematic because in its development three interpretations of Inter-Ministerial Cooperation have come to be merged with one another whose properties and distinctive qualities have not been sufficiently appreciated and which have frequently been at odds with each other.

The three interpretations are: (1) IMC as a form of ‘programme support’; (2) IMC as a form of ‘technical assistance’ and (3) IMC as ‘ministry-to-ministry’ cooperation. The Norway-Zambia IMC has in practice contained elements of all three. We think that their clarification can assist in understanding the problems that have emerged in the past and in planning for a more productive configuration of the IMC in the future.

The table underneath offers sets of key characteristics that we have come to associate with each of the above interpretations. We do not see this table as normative, but rather as a heuristic tool that can assist in a retrospective analysis.

*Figure 1 Interpretations of IMC*

| <b>Dimension</b>         | <b>IMC as Programme Support</b>                                      | <b>IMC for Technical Assistance</b>                                 | <b>IMC as Ministry to Ministry Cooperation</b>   |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Level</b>             | Anywhere in the system (P2)  | Anywhere in the system (P2)   | Central Ministry (P1 & P2)   |
| <b>Focus</b>             | Contribution of resources to programme or pilot in P2                | Provision of expertise to P2 as per demand for HRD and OD           | Exchange of ideas + experiences/mutual learning /joint initiatives (P1 & P2)               |
| <b>Relationship</b>      | Partnership in SWAP with MOE & donors in P2/ FTAs vs. ‘counterparts’ | Consultancy relationship with client (P2)/‘experts’ vs ‘recipients’ | Equal partnership/reciprocal activities/collaboration as colleagues                        |
| <b>Process</b>           | Situation analysis/ programme plan & agreement/M&E (P2)              | Tendering process/delivery of agreed inputs (P1 to P2)              | Flexible/open-ended/follows political agenda/annual reviews (P1 & P2)                      |
| <b>Modalities</b>        | Study-visits/collegial advice/facilitation (P1 to P2)                | TA support as agreed/ transfer of competences/HRD                   | Systems, policy dialogue/ study-visits/attachments/ collegial advice/R&D work (P1 & P2)    |
| <b>Expected outcomes</b> | Achievement of programme goals/up-scaling/replication (P2)           | Competencies as agreed/ systems in place (P2)                       | Better understanding of own system, policies/empowerment/models of good practice (P1 & P2) |
| <b>Decision-making</b>   | MOE as P2/JAR  | MOE as P2   | Central levels/joint (P1 & P2)   |
| <b>Funding</b>           | Joint donors/pool (P2)   | Joint donors/pool (P2)  | Contributions by both ministries (P1 & P2)   |

We suggest that the first column represents the IMC interpretation that probably comes closest to what both countries might have wished to see happening – if a joint policy document on the IMC would have been worked out. However, not all of these characteristics have been in evidence and the reality in several respects has been more like the second column.

The practice of the IMC in Zambia has, however, also demonstrated characteristics that are derived from the second and third column. In our view these can be associated with an effort to strive towards a more equal relationship in which there is space for direct cooperation and dialogue at all levels, including (especially) ministry headquarters). Interestingly, our findings indicate that at lower levels in the system this is where the collaboration has been most successful.



Applying the above overview to the IMC as it has operated in Zambia we can identify the following inconsistencies:

- The IMC was initiated as a *ministry-to-ministry cooperation*. Yet, it missed a focus on the central ministry; did not develop the idea of mutual learning; ignored the unequal starting points for the relationship; did not re-visit the agenda as priorities changed; did not lead to systems' dialogue and thus a better understanding of one's own system; and was not co-funded by both sides.
- The IMC *de facto* became a *support programme* for the Southern Province. Yet, it did not lead to MOER participating in the SWAP; there was no situation analysis or programme document; no up-scaling or replication was discussed under the SWAP; and there was no agreed funding by the joint donors and MOEZ from the pool.
- In many ways the IMC operated as a *consultancy arrangement*. Yet, there was no tendering process or screening of TAs; and there was no agreement on outputs that could be verified by the client.

Thus, there has been a degree of incompatibility of features of the IMC as it has been operating between Norway and Zambia. As a result the programme has not functioned in an optimal manner and much of its potential has not (yet) been realised. At best the Zambia IMC can be seen as an attempt to start a ministry-to-ministry cooperation, which subsequently operated largely as a 'programme support' with a strong element of 'technical assistance'. The latter, however, became the 'tail that wagged the dog', making the ministry-to-ministry cooperation subservient to the needs of the programme, instead of the latter serving the purposes of the former.

The evaluation team is of the view is that the third interpretation, that of IMC as 'ministry-to-ministry' cooperation, represents a valuable longer-term goal for the collaboration between two sector ministries as this appears to contain approaches and practices that have much potential for future institutional capacity development.. This starts from the premise that in principle the two ministries are equal partners, with a common interest in learning from one another and using this learning to mutual benefit. It would recognise that initial mutual perceptions may need to be understood and that the unequal starting points may need to be addressed, with a view of establishing a methodology for open and frank dialogue, for joint decision-making and for developing initiatives for mutual advantage.

This form is not automatically about the 'more developed partner' helping the 'less developed partner'; but assumes that each partner has strengths and weaknesses that are worthy of joint reflection and possibly joint follow-up action. The investigation of strengths in the other partner's system can stimulate the re-visiting of aspects of one's own system and lead to the reciprocation of intellectual and practical inputs. For this reason it may be questioned whether such relationship still falls within the ambit of 'development cooperation', since the latter tends to be inherently a-symmetric and uni-directional. Thus it would appear to point more towards a 'post-development' relationship.

We do not think that the three interpretations are mutually exclusive, as there may well be a case for all three. The other two interpretations could serve as complementary instruments for collaboration: i.e. programme and/or technical support may well have a legitimate place under the wider umbrella of the ministry-to-ministry cooperation. But it would be difficult to regard interpretation 1 and 2 as substitutes for the third, as such special programmes may need to derive their legitimacy, their rationale and value from the wider dialogue that is maintained at the highest level in the two ministries. This dialogue would also need to provide the framework that would inform consistency and coherence across different components of an IMC.

Hence, a major step forward would be to review the entire relationship so that both ministries not only identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the IMC but also assess the merits and

de-merits of the different types of inter-ministerial relationships they can have. This re-appraisal would need to start with the revitalisation of the IMC itself, and through this, of the relative value of any activity that has come to operate under its wings. On this basis new political decisions can be taken about the future.

## **2. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this part of the report we shall summarise the main findings from the evaluation, offer some conclusions and a set of recommendations to assist in future decision-making. We shall identify major points from the various chapters, but also reach back to the observations about the administrative and policy environment within which the IMC has been implemented.

### **2.1. Main Findings**

- (1) The cooperation was initiated by Norad and the Norwegian Embassy. In the beginning the impetus for the IMC between Norway and Zambia came from the political level, in the context of which also the essential focus and some key modalities for the Cooperation were specified. The initiative was in no small way inspired by the good relations and positive mutual image between the two countries.
- (2) The foundation for such cooperation, in terms of ideas, capacity, experience, and supportive frameworks, has been stronger in Norway than in Zambia. As no conscious efforts were made towards systematic joint reflections on the nature, principles and methodologies governing this Cooperation, some inconsistencies in the nature and the operations of the IMC have remained.
- (3) Due to the close association of the IMC with ‘development cooperation’ the relationship turned into a programme of support focussing more on ‘*content*’ than on ‘*process*’ aspects of the system, with a strong TA component provided by the Norwegian MOER to its Zambian counterpart.
- (4) Because of the open-ended and informal nature of the original ‘ministry-to-ministry’ initiative, the programme was not based on a comprehensive needs assessment, nor did it have a source document guiding its focus, targets, modalities, TA inputs, and financial requirements, serving as a basis for effective monitoring and evaluation.
- (5) There are diverging views between the two ministries as to what constitutes the basis for the Cooperation. While for the Norwegian ministry this is the direct request from Zambia for providing specific services which became part of an integrated sector programme, for the MOEZ the IMC is a designated programme, drawing from Norwegian funding intended for the sector programme. Whereas for MOER the agreement could be cancelled any time, for the MOEZ this was felt not to be an option as it was seen as a Norwegian funded programme. For Zambia, it has been rather difficult to make a clear distinction in roles and responsibilities between MOER and Norad.
- (6) The mechanisms for coordination and decision-making have worked reasonably well as regards the management of the programme and its modalities as these were initially designed. They have, however, not functioned well with respect to political and strategic reviews of the nature and direction of the Cooperation. Moreover, the mechanisms seem not to have helped to achieve useful synergies among the themes or to facilitate the programme’s effective contribution to system’s development.
- (7) At the level of the Southern Province the IMC activities, which in principle were much in line with the goals and strategies of the Sector Plan, were gradually integrated *administratively* into the Plan and within MOE structures. In practice, however, the components continued to be planned and implemented separately. As a result their

contribution to Sector Plan implementation has been insufficiently recognised for its *strategic* potential.

- (8) The IMC programme has been successful in developing an effective approach to the facilitation and uptake of new ideas or methods in the various themes, particularly those that were already known or had been formally adopted for implementation. The most valuable part of the IMC contribution consisted of the re-interpretation, operationalisation and facilitation for the purpose of creative application.
- (9) The cycles for implementation of the theme activities were well-structured to ensure efficient use of resources and effort. But they were also relatively short, adding to the impression that the IMC has been rather ambitious in its coverage and may have underestimated what it takes to bring about sustainable systemic change.
- (10) The extent of the IMC programme reached much further than may have been expected from an Inter-Ministerial Cooperation programme. While there has been much emphasis on peer dialogue, problem analysis, programme planning and demonstration of methodologies, some of the support has extended into the actual insertion of new practices in the work situation. The latter may have taken the programme rather much into full-fledged implementation itself. This '*programme drift*' was, however, made possible by the absence of strategic goals and limitations for the Cooperation, as well as the availability of generous funding.
- (11) The relationship between the MFA/Norad and MOER on the Norwegian side in the context of the IMC has been cordial but not optimal. The Norwegian Embassy felt it could have been more helpful in exploring and facilitating the complementarity between the IMC and the sector support as parts of the overall Norwegian support to education in Zambia – if the opportunity had been there. In attempting to maintain a clear distinction between itself and Norad, MOER may not have avoided creating misunderstandings both with MOEZ and with the Embassy.
- (12) Although, by intention under the Cooperation the drawing up of a programme document and of terms of reference for the sub-contracted colleges in Norway was replaced by the provisions of agreed annual plans for the themes, it appears that in reality the FTAs have received insufficient direction and guidance in their work. It is to their credit that they have functioned well, and that in the process they managed to demonstrate the value of 'collegial' collaboration and 'peer dialogue' at the district level. From a structural point of view, however, the issue of strategic coordination of IMC activities needs to be revisited.
- (13) The capacity for carrying such inter-ministerial collaboration has been weak in both the Norwegian and Zambian ministries. The FTAs could have benefited from professional support to embed their technical contributions more effectively within a development context. The MOEZ, in spite of the conducive climate of civil service reform, the drive towards decentralisation, and the progress in moving towards a SWAP, is still in a precarious position in terms of the management of implementing these reforms. The lack of sufficient grip on the potential of an IMC prevented the MOEZ from using it more strategically.
- (14) There are several positive results and achievements from the five-year collaboration in the Southern Province. However, such results are not well documented and it is impossible to disentangle the net results of the Norwegian contributions. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to believe that the IMC has contributed to:
  - (a) Improved performance of the Education Boards in SP (clearer understanding of roles and functions, better planning and reporting, etc.)

- (b) Multi-grade teaching is introduced, improved and consolidated in teacher training colleges and a large number of schools, as well as in a Teaching Manual.
  - (c) Interactive learning methodology has been successfully introduced in the fight against HIV/AIDS. There has been an increased focus on the situation of aids-orphans.
  - (d) There is evidence that information databases have been established in schools and information management has improved.
- (15) The IMC has, however, not yet been able to establish the impact of its facilitative work at the institutional level (e.g. schools and districts), both in terms of organisational arrangements and in terms of effectiveness; nor has it finalised its effort to produce replicable strategies for the management of change at school level or at district level.. Thus the IMC still has to achieve success in systematically contributing to institutional capacity building.
- (16) In Zambia the IMC has contributed extensively to key issues in Norwegian development assistance, notably the combating of HIV/Aids (separate thematic programme) and the attention to the situation of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) (same programme) and of poor rural children (School Twinning programme). In each of these programmes girl children were given special attention. Although there was no evidence of a specific gender analysis, at the provincial level the IMC operated with an explicit focus on educational participation for the disadvantaged and marginalised. There were no activities especially for disabled children.
- (17) The funding of the IMC has been a major problem for the Zambian MOE – as well as for some of the bilateral donors. This has largely been due to the lack of clarity as to the relationship between the Norad support to the Sector Plan and the IMC. Although MOEZ had expressed its unhappiness about the apparent Norwegian ‘earmarking’ of pool funds, the ministry is now adamant that the ‘earmarking’ is a Zambian decision to take funds from its own budget – as pool and government funds have been merged.
- (18) Another problematic aspect of the cooperation has been the situation that Zambia transfers funds to Norway to cover the Norwegian costs of the IMC programme whereas MOER – emphasising its special relation with MOEZ – does not make any contribution from its own budget. While this situation is in line with a technical cooperation arrangement, it does not sit well with the notion of a ‘ministry-to-ministry’ partnership in which both ministries have a stake, which has been the intention of MOER.
- (19) Comparing actual costs of the IMC with the overall achievements of the programme the IMC’s performance in relative terms has been reasonably good. Plan implementation and budget utilisation has proceeded rather well, while funds appear to have been used in a highly meaningful way on a range of activities considered valuable by participants and beneficiaries.
- (20) In hindsight the IMC has been problematic because three interpretations of IMCs seem to have been merged with one another whose distinctive and sometimes contradictory qualities have not been sufficiently appreciated. These are: (1) IMC as ‘programme support’; (2) IMC as ‘technical assistance’ and (3) IMC as ‘ministry-to-ministry’ cooperation. Each of these interpretations has quite diverse implications for focus, modalities, outcomes and funding. As a result of their mixing a variety of inconsistencies has emerged, undermining the quality of the relationship. Findings have shown that elements that can be associated with a more equal and reciprocal relation between the two ministries have been the most successful ones in promoting institutional capacity building.

## 2.2. Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Main conclusions*

Our main conclusion is that the IMC has been a significant initiative that has already made some valuable contributions to educational development in Zambia. It has also demonstrated that some of the principles of an IMC (such as ‘peer dialogue’) can actually work.

However, it is still far from reaching its full potential, partly because its own distinct identity - separate from conventional donor-recipient relationships - has not yet been explored by both ministries, partly because the relationship became side-tracked into a wide variety of project activities which, though by themselves very productive, were not well-used to serve strategic goals of the Cooperation.

Thus we posit that the IMC still has to come into its own through the further strengthening of the HQ ministry-to-ministry relationship; the articulation of a coherent and consistent identity of the IMC; the elaboration of strategic goals and scope of the relationship; and through the re-visiting of current activities, supervision and support structures, and funding modalities. With the above we also contend that the IMC between Norway and Zambia, while it has to be reformed, also deserves to be continued, as there is a basic interest to do so in the MOEZ and there are many signals pointing to benefits, at least at lower levels of the system. However, by reducing its scope it can gain in strategic value, allowing also aspects of mutuality and reciprocity to be explored.

In this way, by focussing more on the longer-term goal of elaborating a full ministry-to-ministry relationship and by developing programme activities that are consistent with such relationship, an IMC can become a distinct form of international cooperation, while at the same time making modest but strategic contributions to educational reforms in (perhaps) both countries.

### *Issues and recommendations*

From the above conclusions we derive the following key issues and recommendations to be addressed by the two ministries when reviewing the IMC. These are:

#### **1. The nature of the inter-ministerial relationship**

The report has demonstrated that the key issue to be addressed is the very nature and orientation of the inter-ministerial relationship itself. Essentially this requires a joint reflection at senior level in the two ministries as to (a) what have been the strengths and weaknesses of the current relationship as it has been functioning to-date; and (b) what is considered to be the desired direction for this relationship?

This report has indicated that there are various options, even though the report’s contention is that any meaningful, longer-term relationship will have to be driven by the top management on both sides. We have also indicated that the third type of IMC i.e. the ‘ministry-to-ministry relationship’ has the potential to grow into an instrument for dialogue about policies and practices across systems as a whole, that enables joint learning to take place and mutual benefits to be achieved. Specific initiatives, facilities, programme or TA support may benefit much from this top-level dialogue and policy supervision.

#### **Recommendations as regards the nature of the IMC:**

- (a) A high-level meeting should take place to review the original intentions and decide on the special nature, future purpose and direction of the IMC, including the future of current programme activities.
- (b) Preference should be given to making interpretation 3 the foundation for the IMC, enabling forms of interpretations 1 and 2, to the extent desired, to function under the umbrella of 3.

- (c) If interpretation 3 would be selected as the core of the IMC, it will be important for the ministry-to-ministry cooperation to be closely linked to the Sector Plan in Zambia; the nature of such link will need to be decided.

## **2. The foundation for the relationship**

A major problem in the current IMC has been the lack of common understanding as to what the relationship was all about and how the relationship would deal with the differences between the two ministries and systems, in terms of history, policies, cultures, human and material resources, and technologies.

It has been suggested that these differences, together with the commonalities, strengths and weaknesses need to be explored and that principles are developed that enable such differences not to be obfuscated, but to be recognised and taken as points of departure for the collaboration. The methodologies and principles to be developed will need to be in line with the central type of relationship the two ministries wish to pursue.

### **Recommendations as regards the foundation for the IMC:**

- (a) A joint team of specialists (both internal and external to the MOEs), with diverse interests and national/international experiences, should be convened with the task to explore the foundation, vision and principles for the IMC, and to draw up a guiding framework and methodology which should be discussed and approved by a meeting of the two ministries.
- (b) Part of this framework should focus on expectations of mutual benefits and principles for joint learning and reciprocity.

## **3. Planning the relationship**

A better articulated cooperation agreement, together with a guiding framework that gives coherence and direction to the cooperation will be a better basis for planning specific initiatives to be pursued under this umbrella.

These initiatives can be of different types: such as a series of systematic policy dialogues at system's level; research and development work to be undertaken across the two countries; initiatives for peer-dialogue and experience-exchange in selected thematic areas; carefully developed programmes for institutional capacity building; and peer-exchanges at different levels of the system.

### **Recommendations as regards the planning of the Cooperation:**

- (a) All initiatives under the IMC should remain small, restricting themselves to joint exploration, idea/methods development on a small scale, and limited facilitation for the purpose of demonstrating what can be done rather than moving towards full-scale implementation.
- (b) Aims and objectives, targets and indicators need to be clearly worked out as a guide for implementation, funding needs, and for monitoring and evaluation.
- (c) IMC initiatives should be managed by appropriate institutions or bodies (one in each country) who take joint responsibility for the work.
- (d) Currently ongoing or planned activities for (human and organisational) capacity building should be jointly examined and implemented in a modest and focused manner, so as to demonstrate the IMCs value-added contribution to institutional capacity development.

- (e) Activities under the remaining themes can be phased out from the IMC and continued by the MOEZ in line with Sector Plan strategies– with appropriate funding from the pool.
- (g) Given the political nature of an IMC, a degree of open-endedness, flexibility and continuous re-prioritisation will need to be adhered to.

#### **4. The supportive capacity**

The capacity for handling the IMC has been found wanting in both ministries. Thus a minimally effective level of capacity would have to be worked out for each ministry. The team found that capacity has been particularly weak in strategic coordination and overall decision-making.

##### **Recommendations as regards the required supportive capacity:**

- (a) Each ministry should appoint a full-time coordinator at the level of senior planning officer, who will be responsible for administrative as well as professional coordination.
- (b) The Annual Meeting of ministries can remain the highest body for the IMC. It is important that representation is substantive and at high-level, and that both the ministry-to-ministry core relation and all activities under its umbrella are reviewed.
- (c) It is important for the Ministers to also meet from time to time, alternatively in each country, for the purpose of high-level political support and strategic direction.
- (d) The approaches and modalities used for providing guidance and supervision to programme implementation should be revisited for the purpose of strengthening them.
- (e) It is suggested that in each country a broad-based advisory committee will be set up for the IMC, consisting of several prominent educationists, diplomats and senior civil servants with appropriate experience in international education and international relations. For Norway its mandate can cover all IMCs with non-OECD countries.
- (f) Some funds need to be set aside for the coordination, advisory services, as well as for the teams managing individual initiatives to meet and do their work.

#### **5. Monitoring and evaluating the relationship**

A main weakness of the present IMC is the insufficient monitoring at the levels beyond activity implementation. With more systematic attention to the specification of aims and objectives, as well as outcomes and indicators, there will be greater possibilities for continuous monitoring, formative research, and evaluation. In this way there are opportunities for the initiatives to become more efficient and effective.

##### **Recommendations for monitoring and evaluation are:**

- (a) M&E needs to become an integral part of the planning of new initiatives under the IMC.
- (b) The Annual Meeting of the two ministries should be responsible for coordinating M&E and for ensuring that monitoring and/or evaluation is done on an annual basis, with reports to be submitted to the meeting of ministers.
- (c) An initiative should be undertaken to introduce a Formative Research Programme, focussing on continuous assessment of appropriateness of policies and plans, as well as their implementation.

## 6. Funding the relationship

The current funding arrangement is clearly not satisfactory and needs to be adjusted. The source, scope and channel of funding need to follow the choice of IMC models and the nature of their possible combination. The recruitment of TA should also be addressed.

### **Recommendations as regards funding and resourcing the IMC:**

- (a) Rather than exclusively using funds from MFA/NORAD, with its particular procedures, it would be recommendable that each partner-ministry in principle sources its own funds, with their own associated procedures; this is in line with a more equal ministry-to-ministry relationship. Such principle does not preclude the southern ministry to use donor funds.
- (b) At the level of the ministry-to-ministry relationship, the activities related to the coordination, decision-making structures and visits of ministers should be paid for from special budgets directly at the disposal of top management in each ministry.
- (b) For the purpose of IMCs MOER Norway should secure a special budget line, possible through access to the MFA/NORAD budget line for Technical Collaboration.
- (c) At the level of specific IMC initiatives decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis as to what source and channel for funding will be used – depending on their nature, location and purpose. Sources may include NORAD and the Sector Pool – to be decided by the relevant ministry.
- (d) Given the special nature of an IMC, TA is only meaningful if it is sourced from either country only. But it should meet explicit criteria and be obtained using a transparent selection process in which both countries participate.
- (e) In order to protect the nature of a ministry-to-ministry relationship and the special deployment of FTA, MOER should not present itself as a consultancy agency
- (f) MOER should be prepared to involve more staff located in strategic positions in the Ministry, apart from using personnel from elsewhere in the system.
- (g) Accountability for funds should be to the respective sources of the funds. While each management team will be responsible for their ‘project’ funds, the overall coordinators will account for top management funds used for the running of the partnership.



## SECTION III: NEPAL

### 3. The Formative Research Experience

#### 3.1. Background and Planning Process

*BPEP II (1999-2004)*<sup>4</sup>

The Basic and Primary Education Programme phase II (BPEP II) was launched in 1998. Norad had earlier the same year taken part in a joint donor appraisal of BPEP II. This mission had mentioned the need for formative research as a basis for monitoring and adjusting the implementation of BPEP II. During the discussions, the Norwegian delegation suggested the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research as a possible institution for technical cooperation in the field of formative research because of its previous experience in Norway with similar kind of research on the implementation of educational reforms.

Through the Norwegian Embassy, it was agreed that representatives from MOER should come to Nepal in January 1999. A team came and developed a concept paper describing the need for formative research within the new sector programme and outlined some possible areas of work.

Subsequently, the Formative Research Project was agreed upon as technical assistance from Norway to Nepal for the period 1999-2004. A Memorandum of Understanding between the then Ministry of Education Nepal (MOE) – later Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) – and the Ministry of Education and Research (MOER) Norway was signed in April 2000 in Kathmandu.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding, the goal of the formative research project was to bring forth information relevant to MOES Nepal on the process of implementing BPEP II while the objective was to carry out formative research in connection with key questions to be formulated by the Ministry of Education. The research activities should be anchored in a research institution in Nepal.

Funding of the project would be through an earmarked grant from the Norwegian Government. The Grant should not exceed NOK 13,7 Mill. for the period of the agreement.

Responsibility for realizing the activities were to be divided between the parties according to the following principles:

- MOES Nepal would have the overall responsibility for all activities connected with the project.
- Centre for Educational Research and International Development (CERID) would be coordinating all research activities in Nepal.
- MOER Norway would act as a consultant to the Ministry of Education in Nepal.
- MOER Norway would report on all its activities to MOES Nepal.
- MOES Nepal would be responsible for the presentation to Norad of the work plan and budget for approval and prepare a progress report and a statement of accounts by November each year to MOES.

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<sup>4</sup> More in depth information about the programme and sector context is provided in Annex 4.

The MoU for the formative research project was part of the more comprehensive agreement between the two governments signed on 15 December 1999 regarding BPEP II. In an Annex to this MoU, it was stated that:

*“Research based studies and formative research are planned to be an integral part of the programme to provide information and insight on the process during the implementation. The Ministry of Education is expected to enter into contact with the relevant institutions, e.g. the Ministry of Education and Research for technical cooperation on follow up in the field of formative research to be funded by the Norwegian Government under the TA component”.*

#### *Education for All (2004-2009)*

Following the completion of BPEP II in 2004, the Government launched a new programme – Education for All 2004-2009. Since formative research was found useful by MOES, particularly in building a model for research based monitoring<sup>5</sup>, it was agreed with MOER to extend FRP for a second phase and to add an institutional component focusing on strengthening the Ministry’s ability to utilize research findings, build a stronger culture of research and follow up the actions steps.

An agreement between Norway and Nepal regarding Education for All 2004-2009 was signed September 2004. Subsequently, a MOU between MOER and MOES on formative research was agreed November 2004. An Annual Meeting was held in Oslo in November the same year and a new contract with CERID regarding an extension of the formative research project was finalized December 2004.

The total Norwegian contribution to EFA was 175 Mill. NOK with 13.7 Mill. earmarked for technical assistance: CERID with 10,0 Mill. NOK and MOER with 3.7 Mill.

According to the MoU the objectives for the new phase of the FRP are:

- To generate research based information and critical understanding of the process of implementation of the programme EFA 2004-2009.
- To assist capacity building of MOES for utilization of formative research as an instrument for programme monitoring and adjustment.
- To assist a process based institutional development of MOES and underlying agencies on working experience and available knowledge and skills.

MOER Norway would also in this phase act as a consultant to MOES on formative research mainly on activities connected to planning, implementation and monitoring, as well as provide necessary support for capacity building to MOES through institutional collaboration. It was acknowledged that the first phase of FRP had not sufficiently addressed issues of utilization and follow up of recommendations within the Ministry itself. Hence, the last objective opens up a new area of capacity building in the Ministry of Education and Sports in Nepal – not directly linked to formative research. On the other hand, it is of relevance to formative research since it aims to create a more conducive environment for utilization of research outcomes.

A team of three people from MOER visited Nepal in April 2005 for further planning of the new institutional component. The following outcomes were specified:

- A culture for utilization and development of internal competencies through teamwork and shared responsibilities building on the already established practice of cross divisional and cross agency groups.
- An internal development of MOES and its underlying agencies based on the existing change management set up.

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<sup>5</sup> See Project outline for Formative Research 2004-2009 para 1 (2004).

- The scope for delegation of authority fully utilized and decisions taken at lowest relevant level within the line of management.
- A culture of knowledge based management developed in MOES and underlying institutions for school education.

Two workshops were organized in Nepal in July and August 2005 to prioritize areas suggested by the FRP studies and for piloting suggested action steps as part of a capacity building process.

It was agreed that the project would have the following features:

- Periodic monitoring on policy making, planning and implementation process, as well as outcomes.
- Strategic feedback and professional support to streamline the flow-through of the programme.
- Enhancement of analytical capacity among the key persons and researchers (individual capacity development of the people involved).
- Enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

The provision of Norwegian TA should be at two levels:

- Advice on research methodology from a Norwegian Research Adviser to CERID.
- Institutional cooperation between the two Ministries regarding the use of formative research for educational development.

As part of the activity plan for 2005-2006 four focus areas for capacity building were identified: (a) decentralization, (b) communication and sharing of information, (c) local capacity building and (d) child centered education.

Long-term institutional cooperation was seen as the instrument for providing technical assistance. The entry point for such collaboration would be the formative research experience, but the two Ministries aimed to continue and expand their relationships to cover also other aspects of institutional development.

In the collaboration, MOER Norway should act as a “critical friend” and not as a consultant. The two ministries were to share experiences of success and failure and jointly identify, plan and implement activities to promote the objectives and expected results.

### **Findings relating to background and planning**

1. The formative research model was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Research in Norway during the 1990s particularly when implementing the Second Education Reform 1994-1998. The approach was found useful for progress monitoring and providing information on policy and programme development. This experience formed the background for suggesting a similar approach in Nepal.
2. MOER Norway had experienced that other types of evaluation often were of limited value for implementers since they were not effectively utilized. By contrast, the formative approach seeks to involve the Ministry from the start to encourage utilization.
3. The need for research based information for assessing the implementation of the sector programme was initially identified in 1998 by external donors. This was followed up by Norad rather than by the Nepali Ministry of Education. The Norwegian Ministry of Education was invited by Norad to introduce the model of formative research to the Ministry of Education in Nepal. During preparation, MOER Norway, with financial and moral support from Norad, constituted the driving force, while the Norwegian Embassy was interested in involving MOER in a long-term institutional collaboration with its sister ministry in Nepal.

4. Though there was no resistance towards the new initiative, MOES Nepal took its time to adopt the formative research project and to prepare for its implementation. This produced nearly a year's delay in the actual start of the project. The delay was mainly explained by the fact that senior management took time to understand the formative research model, by delays in preparing contracts with CERID, by legal hurdles concerning budget transfer from MOER to MOES and CERID, and by other constraints.
5. Gradually MOER developed its coordination capability when formative research was anchored in the M&E section under the Planning Division of MOES. The team found that formative research had been recognized and gained support by senior management (of the Planning Division mainly). It was seen as a useful tool for providing data and information on sector programme implementation.
6. The initial planning process cannot be characterized as participatory and the formative research project would not have been operational without the active role of MOER Norway – and a few key individuals within the Norwegian Ministry with a background from and experience with formative research in Norway. Over time their efforts led to a more active and positive response also on the Nepali side.
7. The planning of the new phase (EFA 2004-2009) was more participatory – with several meetings and consultations being held between the two Ministries. However, also this time MOER Norway seemed to be in the driving seat. Formative research in both phases would most likely not have occurred without MOER's motivation and efforts.
8. The formative research project emerged from the appraisal of BPEP II, but there was no separate and systematic assessment of the needs for such a project within the sector programme and the overall framework of technical assistance to BPEP II. As will be discussed later, external technical assistance was mainly organized through separate and weakly coordinated bilateral agreements. Also the formative research was only weakly linked to the implementation of the sector programme.

### **3.2. Intentions and Objectives**

This chapter presents the concepts and rationale for formative research and inter-ministerial cooperation. This is followed by a discussion of their characteristics and the extent to which intentions and objectives were clear and reflected a shared understanding between Norway and Nepal. The analysis draws on the previous chapter describing the planning process, intentions and objectives.

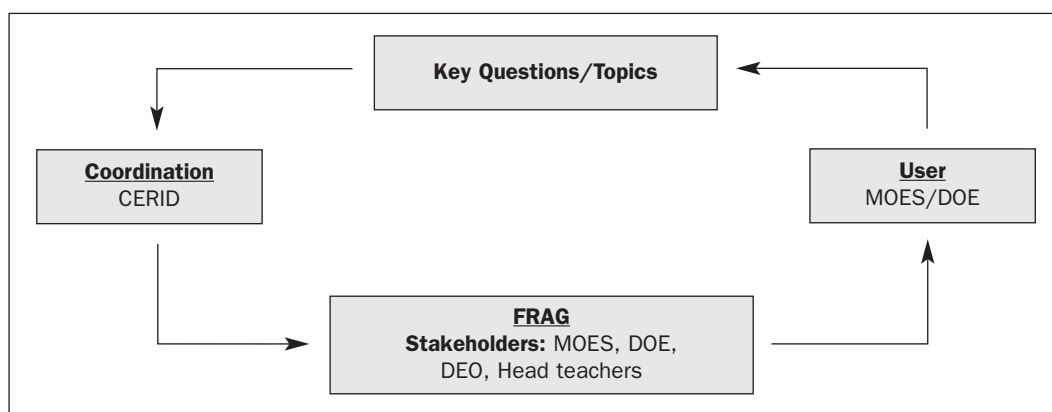
#### **The Model for Formative Research**

The formative research model<sup>6</sup> departs from an expressed wish to relate social research to practical interests. It is intended to produce data and advice for monitoring the implementation of a reform, as well as to evaluate results and impact. It is said to be well suited for development cooperation within the frame of a sector wide approach because:

- (a) It involves the stakeholders.
- (b) It has a process focus, and
- (c) It assumes national ownership of the research process.

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6 The description is based on Tornes (2004) and CERID (2004). What is called formative research is quite similar to what the evaluation researcher Michael Q. Patton has named "Utilization Focused Evaluation".



The formative research process consists of the following steps:

1. Formulation of research topics and key questions by MOES.
2. Recruitment of a research coordinating institution – CERID to manage the research including recruitment of researchers for the various studies.
3. Call for proposals from researchers based on topics and questions defined by the Ministry.
4. Selection of researchers and finalisation of research questions and research methods.
5. Collection of data and data processing by the selected researchers.
6. Analysis and writing of research reports including recommendations.
7. Researchers presenting findings and suggestions to CERID and the advisory group (FRAG).
8. CERID and FRAG formulating action steps based on research findings and recommendations to be presented to the Ministry of Education.
9. Dissemination of study findings and recommendations to stakeholders at regional level. Dissemination at central level to planning and policy division and sections of MOES and DOE.
10. The Ministry to discuss recommendations and actions steps made by FRAG and CERID pertaining to implementation of the sector programme and reformulation of strategies.
11. The Ministry formulating new research topics and key questions for the next fiscal year.

As described by the stakeholder's involved formative research is different from summative evaluation – measuring outcomes and impact. The aim of formative research sets out to determine strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of an ongoing programme where the researchers study the planning, implementation and impacts of specific reform efforts and processes. A permanent research team follows the reform process over a longer period of time, collecting and analysing their own data. This process is accompanied by dialogues with and feedback of results to the different stakeholders involved in the programme process. As such it is very close to what is called formative evaluation.

Unlike action research, there is no assumption in formative research that practice must be redefined in line with the findings and that researchers would play an active role in working with research results and initiating new practice. In the model introduced by Norway the research topics depart from the practical interests of the policy makers/implementers who commission the researchers to produce research-based information for them. Formative research represents a way of collecting and systematizing information needed by a specific group of policy makers or practitioners at a particular time.

### **Findings relating to intentions and objectives**

1. The formative research model is now broadly accepted. It is to a large extent understood and seen as a valuable contribution by MOES and other stakeholders in Nepal. However, this was not the case from the beginning. There are still several interpretations and some unresolved issues in the model itself – though more in its application and use.

2. The difference between formative research and action research is not always clear to MOES and DOE – and to some extent the difference is seen as artificial and undesirable. In formative research, the responsibility of the researchers ends when the report is produced and the recommendations and action steps are formulated. The researchers have no role in follow up and testing the action steps. This responsibility is with the Ministry. The researchers are only hired for the period they are doing research. There are no budgets for them to be involved in follow up. The MOES and CERID did not have a clear understanding of what should ideally happen after the researchers had submitted their reports. Significantly, both on the side of the MOES/DOE and the researchers themselves there is an expressed interest in rethinking the lines between formative and action research.
3. While the relevance of formative research is, at least in part, determined by the quality of research, this also depends on the selection of strategic issues and questions to be included in the research.
4. The formative research model, as introduced by Norway, refers to and seems to focus on *processes of implementation* – addressing programmatic and technical issues more than the actual *policies and strategies* of the sector programme. The utility of formative research thus seems to be confined to solving short-term, largely operational problems. In our view formative research could have played a stronger role at a more strategic level as well, for example as a tool for policy analysis and for programme and institutional improvement at sector level.
5. According to the formative research model, it is the Ministry that defines research issues and questions. Researchers are commissioned to carry out the studies. Such an approach helps to ensure involvement and user focus and to avoid a situation in which researchers suggest questions of marginal interest and relevance to the Ministry. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that the most strategic and relevant issues and questions are identified and prioritized by a Ministry. There is a risk that several difficult and sensitive issues will be avoided.<sup>7</sup>
6. There is no formal mechanism between the Ministry and external stakeholders to discuss what should be priority areas for formative research. The formative research advisory group (FRAG) could have been such a forum, but according to their terms of reference they come more in at the end of the research process – for discussing reports, recommendations and action steps.
7. A longitudinal approach is a key characteristic in formative research, but CERID has found it difficult to maintain such an approach in several research projects – except for the study on system indicators. The development of FRP has seen increasingly short time spans for researchers to do their fieldwork – sometimes not more than a month. Combined with the fact that new topics are being introduced every year from the MOES/DOE without continuing the original questions, the researchers have not had the mandate to follow up on their studies in a longitudinal manner. This has gradually moved the formative project away from the original focus and made it into a project for collecting information on what are seen as urgent policy matters by MOES/DOE (Kristin Tornes 2005).

### 3.3. Quality of the Research Process and Products

This chapter deals with the quality of implementing the formative research project and in particular the research processes and products. Roles, responsibilities and organizational issues will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> Initially, MOES defined only the research issues. Based on such issues, CERID and the researchers prepared the questions. The Ministry, however, viewed this part as duplication of resources and time as this process involved often several rounds of consultations by CERID, the researchers and FRAG members with MOES (DOE) for approval of questions and methods. From 2002/2003, MOES defined also the research questions. MOES and DOE representatives were involved in the research management process - mainly approving the selection of researchers and methods. The researchers experienced limited freedom to adjust the research questions. FRAG members were called upon in the "screening" of the research proposals that the researchers submitted and also to guide in development of research questions and methods.

Quality related to the research processes and products can be looked at in terms of several dimensions:

- (1) Quality of the problem analysis.
- (2) Quality of the design.
- (3) Quality of field work.
- (4) Quality of the data analysis and report writing.
- (5) Quality of the recommendations.
- (6) Quality of the action steps.

The notion of 'quality' in the context of the FRP is problematic, as there is a standard derived from the framework agreed between the MOER and MOES regarding the nature and purpose of the FRP, and a standard derived from a general understanding by the researchers as to what constitutes 'quality research'.

The distinctive characteristics of the FRP as applied in Nepal included not only that the research was 'formative' in the sense of focussing on 'how to improve an ongoing process', but also that it was to be applied to the generation of information on the direction and effects of the BPEP II programme process. Thus, it was meant to address largely the progress of programme implementation and its results, and only to some extent the nature of the policy framework itself. Moreover, the topics and key questions were formulated by the MOES/DOE.

The researchers were also told "*to be careful not to 'overstretch' their focus, in the sense of including what they may find of interest in throwing light on the problem in question. They should limit their data collection to those aspects of the problem, which the ministry/agency in question is able to do something about.*" (Tornes, A Model for Formative Research, 2003, p. 5).

The direct link between the research and the implementation of successive sector programmes seems to have imposed some constraints on the research. It appears that topics that are not featuring prominently in the EFA plan receive little or no attention in the FRP. Examples of these include: the massive dropout rate in the system, the relevance of education for large categories of the population, the practice of segregated education for different categories of children, the relationship between schooling and poverty, and that between economic or cultural marginalisation and learning achievement. Moreover, in terms of disadvantage, emphasis is on gender and disability much more than on religion and culture. In the light of apparent need one would have expected more attention to these issues.

The reduction of quality to mainly what is of immediate utility to decision-makers is at variance with what educational researchers generally consider as their standard of quality, which tends to be precisely to look beyond the immediate confines of 'the problem' and explore the context and background that produces the problem and explains its manifestations. Moreover, researchers generally prefer to have some discretion in the formulation of actual research questions and of the scope of their work.

It is to be noted, however, that the role of the research vis-à-vis the policy process has not been fully clear. The 'Model Document', cited above, also acknowledges that formative research is different from 'action research' as there is "*.... no assumption that [...] practice must be redefined in line with research findings...*" and that "*...in the model the research topics depart from the practical interests of the policy makers /implementers... [as it]...represents a way of collecting and systematising information needed by a specific group of policy makers or practitioners at a particular time*" (Tornes, A Model..., 2005, p. 5. This suggests that there is space for a less narrow interpretation of utility and thus for the 'own responsibility' of the researchers.

In practice, as regards each of the dimensions listed above, there is space for debate about ‘quality’ among the researchers and the immediate stakeholders, including the MOES and other researchers. Most interaction takes place in the context of the FRAG. Researchers have raised the issue of ‘quality’ and the perceived need for a greater amount of discretion. But, while over time there has been increased flexibility, by and large the ‘immediate utility’ criterion as defined by the MOES/DOE appears to have dominated the process.

### **Quality in the preparatory process**

The focus is on how quality has been affected in the problem analysis and design stages of the research. The team found that in general the preparatory process for the studies had been very carefully handled, in the sense that all steps – the setting of topics and questions by the MOES/DOE, discussions in the FRAG, external consultations, research design by research team, technical inputs, and final decision-making - were conscientiously followed. Also, the quality of the research design, as it appears in the research reports, has generally been good with due attention given to the essential components.

The team has, however, certain reservations about the preparatory process:

- The title and key questions as put forward by MOES/DOE are generally of a pragmatic and technical nature, and they tend to be taken at face value by the researchers.
- The FRAG appears to have only a limited role in discussing the topics and questions; there is not much debate to interrogate and contextualise the issues, and by so doing sharpen the actual research questions.
- There is insufficient effort to problematize proposals in the context of current systems and processes, the policy frame and plans for policy implementation.
- There is some indication that in the design process there may be disproportionate attention to procedures and logistics, at the cost of problem analysis and key issues for the research.
- Perhaps due to the narrow ‘utility frame’ (see above) the research questions posed appear to have remained very close to the original MOES/DOE key questions.
- The scope and amount of information about the research design varies across the study reports.

A review of seven selected research reports, all focussing on the social context of schooling, i.e. topics associated with girls, disadvantaged and minority children, and alternative education<sup>8</sup>, revealed the following as regards quality in the preparatory phase:

In 4 out of 7 studies some of the research questions were such that they could lead to further explorations about policies and strategies related to the topic.

In most of the reports (5 out of 7) the significance of the study for the sector plan was explicitly indicated at the outset.

In 4 out of 7 reports the relationship of the study with existing research was discussed, though in some cases only in relation to FRP research.

The methodology used was fully outlined in all reports.

The above seems to suggest that even within a limiting frame for the FRP there is space for improving quality aspects of the study proposals and their implications for the research.

### **Quality in the research implementation process**

Here the quality issues relate to the nature and scope of the fieldwork and to the processing of the research findings.

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8 The seven research reports are the following: Access to Education for Disadvantaged Group, 2002; Effectiveness of Incentive/Scholarship Programmes for Girls and Disadvantaged Children, 2003; Access of Muslim Children to Education, 2003; Access of Muslim Children to Education II, 2004; Monitoring & Supervision of Alternative Schooling Program, 2004; Access of Disadvantaged Children to Education, 2005; Meeting Learning Needs of Children of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities, 2005.



In terms of the fieldwork, all indications are that the researchers tend to have a strong commitment to their work and go at great length to pursue their investigations in the selected locations. Researchers hold workshops at district level to inform stakeholders about the research. They give direct feedback on their findings, and sometimes end up providing material support to some of the schools. The methodologies are a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Researchers also have access to technical support while in the field.

Significant efforts are made to tabulate findings for easy understanding. Reports tend to be well written, easy to read and very informative, making them a valuable source of information about the state of education practice in the country.

Three aspects are noteworthy:

- The samples of districts and schools/centres tend to be small, as a result of which the research results are more significant for the degree to which they illuminate *context-specific experiences* rather than offer *national aggregate* findings.
- The length of time researchers can devote to the research has tended to decrease over time: from about 9 months in 2003 (including preparation, fieldwork and feedback) to about 3 months at present. Given the time required for consultations and workshops this leads to serious time constraints, affecting the quality of the research work.
- There has been some difficulty for researchers to take the processing of the research findings beyond the level of description and simple interpretation to that of analysis, synthesis and assessment. The reports reflect:
  - little analysis of findings in terms of wider significance for educational development;
  - generally no analysis of findings in relation to the policy and plan implementation processes;
  - at the same time there are indications that attention to the policy dimension of research questions sometimes increases in the course of the research process;
  - generally no overall conclusions of the research – other than a summary of main findings;
  - generally no efforts to assess (albeit tentatively) the extent to which in a particular component of the sector plan expected policy outcomes are being achieved.

As a result the wealth of information often remains at the surface level and is not sufficiently synthesised to create knowledge about performance and deficiencies of the system in relation to the purposes of educational reform.

The team's review of the same seven selected research reports yield the following in terms of the quality of the research process:

- The number of sites per research project has varied from 5 to 20 schools/centres and from 1 to 7 districts (out of a total of 75 districts).
- While different geographical and development regions tend to be represented, the number of sites makes it unlikely that the findings are representative for the country as a whole; this is different where the focus is on specific population groups.
- In most studies in-depth interviews with parents and communities, and other non-school stakeholders were part of the research; this reflects a keen interest to contextualise school based investigations.
- As regards analysis and conclusions (in terms of overall synthesis) only 1 of 7 reports contains a section taking the discussion to a higher level of analysis (Meeting Learning Needs of Children of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities).
- Although research reports spanning four years of research were examined, there have been no significant changes in the process over time; there also seems insufficient basis to conclude that quality of the research has changed.

### **Quality as regards the research outputs**

Apart from reporting about the research there are two specific products that are intended to speak to the policy and plan implementation process: the sets of recommendations outlined in the same reports and the action steps which are listed separately and constitute the final step of the entire research process.

It is acknowledged that the real significance of these products is the formulation of recommendations as such. This compels the researchers to focus not simply on knowledge production per se, but to also concentrate on the relevance of findings for the policy process. This effort to communicate directly to policy makers and practitioners in terms of useful follow-up actions is the main characteristic that makes formative research stand out from other educational research.

Communication, however, is a two-way process and the effectiveness of a response depends at least in part on the degree of clarity, precision and perceived appropriateness of the messages. Thus, in terms of quality, we can look here at how the researchers construct their suggested follow-up.

There are several findings that are likely to have a bearing on the uptake of the messages by the MOES/DOE and other stakeholders:

- There is a common practice to produce recommendations that directly relate to individual findings, rather than foremost to overall conclusions.
- At the same time the nature of the recommendations is often not justified by the actual findings.
- In line with the nature of the original questions the recommendations tend to remain at the operational level, focussing on administrative/ organisational adjustments to implementation arrangements.
- There tends to be a high volume of recommendations in each report; even after summarising action steps over a one-year period, a large quantity remains: for 2004 a total of 232 recommended action steps were listed (this number appears to be much down from what it was before).
- There is mostly no categorisation of recommendations aimed at structuring follow-up action, such as: national vs. local, policy vs. plan implementation, system's level vs. practical/operational, immediate vs. longer-term; this is also not the case for the annual 'synthesis' of action steps.
- There also tends to be no effort at prioritisation, in relation to urgency or strategic importance or viability.
- The relationship between the recommendations and action steps related to the same topics is not clear.
- Recommendations are often not well articulated, so that there is lack of clarity as to what is really meant. From the last year (2005), however, efforts were made to formulate action steps in such a way that they were more understandable and usable for policy makers through the direct involvement of FRAG members.
- The recommendations and action steps are rarely formulated in such way that they speak directly to the policy or planning process, highlighting the steps or options that may be followed in the context of existing frames.
- One furthermore detects an underlying and erroneous assumption that the research evidence is sufficient in securing immediate action.
- The closer relationship envisaged between the longitudinal research work and the case studies – producing a valuable complementarity between statistical data and qualitative case-study findings - is still to mature and yield benefits.

A consequence of the above is that even a very strong ministry would have grave difficulties in handling what is being put on its plate. There is a risk that due to poor and unsystematic presentation strategic recommendations are not understood, appreciated or given their due

attention; and that operational recommendations do not reach the field personnel that could work with these. Moreover, the multitude of ‘one-on-one’ relationship between findings and recommendations may fragment and trivialise the true significance of the research effort. The absence of analysis and synthesis clearly affects the quantity and quality of the recommendations.

At the local level there are some difficulties also. As regards the longitudinal and some short-term research the local /community stakeholders (school teachers, DEO staff and others) teachers are unclear of the objectives of the research and how the information will be used.

The review of the seven selected research reports, as referred to above, shows the following results in relation to quality of the research outputs:

- The volume of recommendations in these reports varied from 12 to 30 in all; this amounts to an average of 17 per report.
- Only 2 out of 7 reports show effort to separate recommendations related to policy from those related to implementation issues; others display a categorisation by theme.
- 4 out of 7 reports have recommendations that relate to the policy frame guiding programme implementation; in 3 of these reports did this involve suggestions that clearly went beyond the existing policies towards alternatives strategies or additional policy actions.

The above seems to point out that the constraints emanating from the framework set for formative research – in terms of focus, scope, boundaries and time - may well be a relevant factor influencing researchers’ approach to the issue of quality. However, we conclude that another factor may play a greater role: this is the level of competency of researchers in designing and conducting policy-related research, and translating its outcomes into appropriate recommendations for policy action. Thus, while quality is circumscribed by the frame of the FRP, there is space for significant improvement in the quality of the processes and products of the research, and thus its value for the educational reform process.

We have not been able to assess the relevance of the research reports to the cultural and socio-economic situation in Nepal, but the following text box is discussing a few examples.

#### **Relevance of research outputs**

The study on decentralising education through District Education Plans (DEP) in BPEP II was implemented as a pilot in five districts, and then rolled into nine other districts along with School Improvement Plan (SIP) development. The resource centre support to the teachers was reduced with consequences for the quality of the education services provided. The recommendations of the study findings were not taken up by the DOE. The DEOs did not adjust the DEP and SIP preparations – which focused heavily on data collection and reporting to DOE for planning purposes.

The resource centre and resource person concept in the EFA 2004-2009 is yet to be finalised. The study mentioned above suggested developing the capacity of the SIP and DEP planners who have been given greater responsibility in rolling out DEP/SIP in other districts. However, the action steps suggested to deal with the issues are very general.

The study on access to education for disadvantaged groups is highly relevant, as it is the first step in identification of the disadvantaged children and finding ways of providing access to education. The study identified gaps existing between policy and programme implementation.

The comprehensive breakdown of the ethnic groups and the situation analysis of the target groups are relevant to understand the situation of the disabled children. However, the recommendations and suggestions do not offer mechanisms for dealing with the issues. Also, an effective solution on how to include the disabled children in education is missing as it fails to recommend the relevance of education to the parents. However, from the study further research on special needs education and inclusive education are suggested. It is, however, limited in its socio-cultural analysis. As Nepal is a diverse country suggestions pertaining to one ethnic group or disabled group do not necessarily match the need of other disadvantaged groups.

Considering the ongoing conflict affecting the schools' functioning and education, studies that identify coping mechanism or policies to reduce effect of conflict in the education sector would be an area for FR.

### 3.4. Roles and Responsibilities

This chapter discusses roles and responsibilities pertaining to the planning and implementation of the formative research project. The following groups have played a central role in the FRP:

- The Ministry of Education and Sports in Nepal.
- The Department of Education in Nepal.
- The Ministry of Education and Research in Norway.
- CERID as the research institution coordinating FR activities.
- Research coordinator and researchers at CERID.
- The Formative Research Advisory Group (FRAG) consisting of researchers, administrators from various levels and other stakeholders.
- The Research advisor from MOER in Norway.
- Other external donors.

#### The Coordinating Role of MOES Nepal

The main roles of the Ministry have been to (a) commission and define the focus of the research through a set of core topics and key questions, (b) decide what research institution should play the coordinating role and (c) decide what follow up actions should be taken once the research findings are presented and the advice for further action has been formulated by an advisory committee.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Section in MOES was the focal point for FRP working closely with CERID – in particular the Director and the research coordinator. The same section became also the main link to MOER Norway while the Norwegian research coordinator has mainly worked directly with CERID.

The team has tried to understand what systems were established and what procedures were followed by MOES in order to identify research topics and also to review reports and recommendations and decide on action steps for follow up. There is clearly not one system that has been followed and no uniform procedures. For many of the research projects there were consultations between sections and individuals in MOES and with the Department of Education. Seminars and workshops were organized to present and discuss several of the reports, but initiative and coordination have to a large extent been dependent on the person in charge of the Monitoring and Planning Section.

We have not been able to identify a structure or system consisting of a committee in MOES with representatives from various sections of the Ministry to guide the process and assist the Planning Division and the Monitoring Section. There is a weak practice in MOES for having such cross cutting committees. In the new EFA phase of formative research project more

emphasis will be placed on (a) the identification of research topics and questions and (b) the process of selecting what action steps to accept and follow up. The emphasis is also planned to shift from CERID to MOES –from research to implementation and follow up of research findings – which is closely related to the management of the policy development processes within the Ministry itself.

In brief, MOES has not been able to play a proactive role vis-à-vis the formative research project. The Under Secretary for the Monitoring and Evaluation Section allocates approx. 25% of his time to FRP issues. He is the only officer with a direct responsibility for the project.

MOES seems more to have taken the role of controller vis-à-vis CERID including its recruitment policies, work plans as well as financial matters. Due to delays in endorsement from MOES of annual work plans, budgets and formulation of questions, none of the annual budgets have been spent as foreseen. In addition to having a negative effect on the quality of research, it has also implied that activities at CERID came to a standstill while waiting for acceptance from the ministry (Tornes 2005).

### **Department of Education (DOE)**

DOE has played an active role and is increasingly involved in identifying topics and formulating action steps. However, the team could not identify clear mechanisms for coordination between MOES and DOE and process of engaging other technical agencies in DOE. The collaboration appears more ad hoc and depending on individuals.

The team noted that the Department of Education has gradually become more involved in interacting with the researchers, both during and after the research work. Different sections of the DOE try to use the results for their work on coordinating policy implementation. At the same time the DOE also commissions other strategic research work, and is in the process of rapidly improving its statistical information system (with the technical assistance of UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok).

### **MOER Norway**

After the first active promotion of the formative research model, the Norwegian Ministry took a step back and concentrated on being an advisor – as reported by the Norwegian research advisor (Tornes 2005). From an initial agreement on having two meetings between MOES and MOER per year, it was decided after a year that one annual meeting was sufficient. MOER staff were involved in the planning and budgeting of the project.

The question of what role the Norwegian Ministry was to play in the following-up of the action steps was raised at various occasions. MOES saw such decisions as an internal affair of the Ministry – and not part of the collaboration between the two ministries. MOER perceived its role more as a consultant to MOES on technical aspects of implementing formative research. As mentioned previously, MOER sub- contracted a research advisor for the research capacity building in CERID. The Norwegian Ministry was mainly engaged in annual meetings and provided also some technical inputs.

### **CERID**

CERID was selected jointly by MOER and MOES as the most appropriate and qualified institute and was charged with the responsibility to hire researchers, prepare research proposals, collect data and information and develop the reports – including recommendations and action steps. There was no open competitive tender preceding the selection of CERID. The research coordinator was hired in 2001 and his first assignment was to hire and train researchers. After a round of announcements in the national press asking for research proposals based on key questions decided by MOES/DOE, researchers were selected based on proposals, interviews and CVs. The actual research process did not start until late 2001.

MOES Nepal has not considered capacity building in formative research as part of its contract with CERID. This could have helped to ensure that researchers who qualified for formative research stayed on and were available for new rounds of formative research. Such capacity building has, however, been a concern for MOER Norway and has focused on supporting the institute to build-up its research capacity and to ensure continuity in their work.

The team noted that the CERID staff itself was also very keen to further develop its research competencies. The absence of attention for the development and protection of staff – combined with the lack of adjustment of salaries - has led some very qualified researchers to leave CERID – as they could not afford waiting for new short term assignments from the Ministry without receiving salary in the interim period (Tornes 2005).

### **The Formative Research Advisory Group (FRAG)**

FRAG was set up to represent a link between the researchers and the MOES/DOE with the purpose of giving policy relevant advice based on research findings. According to the mandate, FRAG was to consist of 14 members, three senior staff from MOES, three senior staff from DOE, two District Education officers, three independent researchers, the FRP research coordinator and one independent principal.

The objectives of FRAG were identified as:

- To provide advice for FRP research activities based on the issues and core topics defined by the Government as well as for the policy and programme interventions to be undertaken by the Government.
- Provide guidelines for the formulation of key issues to be addressed within each of the areas concerned.
- Assess the progress of the FRP and advise the contracting entity of any deviations.
- Participate in meetings with the FRP.
- Review FRP reports.
- Recommend measures/recommendations on the basis of research findings.

As already mentioned, FRAG was not given any mandate in the identification of research topics and questions. Its main role was to review reports and recommendations. The team believe it is a missed opportunity not to use FRAG – a group of resource persons from the Government and research backgrounds – to discuss and select what should become research issues and questions. The experience during BPEP II was for FRAG to see itself more as controllers of the focus and quality of research reports rather than providing strategic advice on research issues. It should be considered to form a small technical working committee under FRAG to prepare for and follow up the few annual FRAG meetings and maintain the link between CERID and the Ministry.

There is also the issue of the status of the FRAG vis-à-vis the MOE/DOE. Although the FRAG is an ‘advisory committee’, it has several members who ex officio represent the MOE/DOE. This creates a situation in which these members may either decide to give personal views in FRAG meetings and make MOE/DOE assessments at a later stage or they may put forward a formal (MOES) position in the FRAG meetings. In the latter case this may pre-empt follow-up consultations within the MOE/DOE and thus a transparent process of decision-making. The team noted that FRAG members have some difficulties with this ‘dual hat’ situation. Hence the team feels that for the sake of an effective advisory role the independent status of the FRAG must be secured.

### **The Norwegian Research Advisor**

The advisor has been working with all the parties involved in FRP, but her main contact has been with CERID. Relations with MOES took place mainly through meetings with the head of the M&E Section. During BPEP II she visited Nepal three to four times a year – basically

for research capacity building – lecturing at workshops and seminars, providing technical support to individual researchers – making sure that the model of formative research was understood and offering quality control of research reports. According to CERID, her frequent visits helped to speed up and discipline the research process. CERID expressed satisfaction with her inputs and performance, which were considered critical for the success of the project. The system with frequent visits enabled a high level of continuity in support, without negatively affecting CERID’s ownership of and responsibility for FRP – which is often the case with resident technical advisors.

### **The Norwegian Embassy**

The Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu represented the Government of Norway in the group of donor countries during BPEP II and now under EFA. The Embassy played an important role when the FRP was initiated and designed. Its current role is mainly as a financier. At times the Embassy has functioned as an advisor to CERID in relation to work plans and budgets. Embassy staff have also facilitated the contact between CERID/FRP and the donor group.

Informal consultations and meetings have taken place between the Embassy and representatives from MOER Norway, but there have been no formal or regular mechanisms for sharing of information. The Embassy would have preferred to be better informed about the new formative project – in particular issues pertaining to twinning and plans for capacity building in MOES. The Norwegian Embassy represents the entire Norwegian government in Nepal and plays an important role in sector policy dialogue with the Nepali government and other international donors. The Embassy would also have preferred a more active role in the triangular cooperation between MOES, CERID and MOER.

### **Technical assistance and other external donors**

From the start of BPEP II, the idea was to coordinate the various technical assistance components in order to avoid duplication. In the original agreement, the Norwegian TA was to be coordinated by a broad-based Technical Support Advisory Group (TSAG). However, this group gradually came to lose its function as donors wished to maintain the overall responsibility for their own technical assistance.<sup>9</sup>

The Joint evaluation of BPEP II (2004) assessed the role and functions of external technical assistance to Nepal and concluded that:

- Direct funding arrangements permitted donors to provide financial assistance to HMG/N approved pilots without being constrained by flows through national accounts.
- HMG/N does not keep track of the rate of implementation and financial implications of direct funded projects.
- Direct funding diminishes transparency and accountability, and enhances the risk of duplicating activities funded by different donors.
- There has been no unified framework for coordinating technical assistance.

Some of the external donors, such as Danida/ESAT, ADB and World Bank, UNESCO and Save the Children Norway have had very limited contact with CERID and MOES on formative research and were unaware of most of the research. Few donors seem to have received the publications from CERID. It is, however, not clear whether this is due to non-accessibility of the information or to a basic lack of interest. Some external partners clearly expressed that they could not see much value in the formative research project. Reports were found to have inadequate information and analysis of the issue and recommendations were too specific or they were limited to the districts where the study was carried out. The dissemination of reports was said to be insufficient. The action steps were many and the reports did not provide sufficient basis to help policymakers to choose.

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<sup>9</sup> Another explanation is that TSAG was seen as a remnant of the previous project approach and a rival to the new Department of Education and that most donors – also those not offering TA – supported the abolishment of TSAG in order to normalise the situation for DOE.

The dissemination strategy has, however, received a good deal of attention. Regional and central level workshops to disseminate the findings were held annually. DOE - research and monitoring units have been increasingly involved in the dissemination and many of the operational issues raised have been directed to the concerned DEO or schools. The findings have been circulated in the form of published reports while Summary Reports in Nepali of the studies conducted have been distributed to Resource Centres. However, this dissemination appears to be limited to MOES/DOE structures and many of the development partners and education related I/NGOs have not been receiving the reports.

Other donors have also been commissioning their own research – similar to the formative research studies - with few links between the various initiatives. The formative research project was perceived to work in isolation.

External partners, however, were of the opinion that FR has immense scope if combined with other studies and research and if it becomes an integral part of the sector programme.

### **3.5. Expertise and Capacity**

#### **MOER Norway**

The administration of the Norwegian component of the formative research project has been handled on a part-time basis by a coordinator and one more staff member in the Department of Policy Analysis and International Affairs in MOER. The Deputy Director General in charge of international affairs was involved in the formative research project from the beginning. On two occasions researchers and implementers from MOER Norway took part in seminars and workshops as resource persons.

All staff have relevant working experience and are well qualified for the work, but have as mentioned not been directly involved in CERID's research activities. On the other hand, there have been frequent informal exchanges of experiences and views between key staff in MOES/DOE and those representing MOER in the cooperation. During study visits from Nepal MOER has also mobilized relevant staff members of the ministry and underlying institutions as resource persons without any costs to the project.

A Professor from the University College of Molde was hired to work as a research advisor to the coordinator and group of researchers at CERID. She was selected based on her experience with similar work in Norway. In other words, MOER has used external expertise for carrying out the major technical part of the formative research project. The Ministry itself took responsibility for overall coordination and management.

In the new project - with the introduction of the component of institutional capacity building - the role of the research adviser is scaled down while the contribution from the Ministry is increased. The critical question is to what extent MOER has sufficient capacity and relevant expertise for meeting the expectations in the new cooperation arrangements. There seems to be a mismatch between the relative small resources available for the capacity building component and the complex and challenging objectives as will be discussed later.

#### **Capacity and organization of MOES**

The main consideration behind the organizational model of formative research was to anchor the project activities in Nepal. The policy and planning part in MOES, the research execution in a Nepalese research institution and the advisory part in MOER Norway.

There has been a lack of capacity in MOES to direct, coordinate and utilize formative research effectively. It should be noted, however, that formative research was introduced at a time when the Ministry went through major organisational changes. During the four years of



formative research there has been a substantial improvement in MOES/DOE capacity and involvement in process – from the formulation of key questions, the research process itself and formulation of action steps, as well as the actual implementation and follow up of these steps. There is a growing national ownership of formative research. On the other hand, there is still not sufficient capacity to make effective use of the research – its recommendations and actions steps.

The main problem with regard to the follow-up of the FRP recommendations and proposed action steps seems two-fold: (1) the low capacity of individual units in MOES and DOE to deal with policy-related information that is coming to them; and (2) the inadequacy of the overall system for processing and utilising policy-related information across the MOES/DOE. There seems to be no common understanding in MOES as to how information is taken up, screened, synthesised, discussed, decided and acted upon. Information streams (including from FRP and the statistical section) do not seem to be merged so as to become a basis for policy and implementation analysis and reviews.

A major problem in information processing and its effective use for the policy/planning process is that there appears to be no *systematic* consultation with policy/implementation sections, neither before nor after data collection, and that there are no *functioning* mechanisms for higher level policy consultations, bringing various sections in the MOES/DOE and external stakeholders together, as well as for joint and transparent decision-making at the level of senior management.

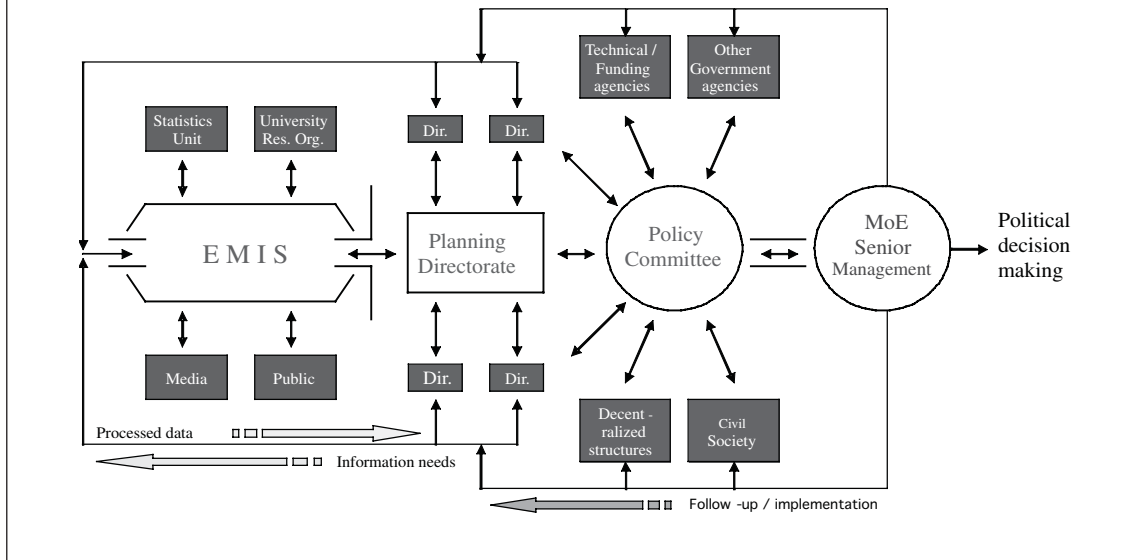
The above situation is probably related to the informal and to some extent *ad hoc* nature of passing on information and of decision-making processes themselves. Furthermore, it may also be related to the infant stage of a culture of evidence-based decision-making in the MOES/DOE, whereby awareness of need is still to be translated into more systematic, collaborative and transparent practices.

Since the uptake of FRP results is only a part of a much larger challenge of absorbing policy-relevant information from research, statistics, public opinion, and many other sources, capacity needs can be stated more generically, as follows (see also Diagram on Interface between Knowledge Generation and Policy/Planning Processes):

- Capacity for screening and analysis of all policy relevant information – from a variety of internal and external sources – in relation to the ongoing policy process (EMIS).
- Capacity for assessing progress of policy implementation in terms of policy goals, adequacy of strategies, adequacy of implementation activities, and in terms of the existing provisions and underlying values of the policies themselves.
- Capacity for facilitating and managing policy dialogue across a wider range of stakeholders in society, and absorbing contributions from various policy-focussed organisations and networks.
- Capacity in terms of mechanisms for internal (to MOES/DOE) and external consultations in relation to information / research needs, and interpretation and implications of processed data or research results.
- Capacity for transparent and accountable higher-level decision-making, acknowledging the extent to which policy relevant information has been utilised.
- Capacity for facilitating effective follow-up of decision-making towards internal policy / implementation sections and outside partner organisations.
- Capacity for monitoring and evaluation internal and external processes of information-based policy / planning processes.

### Interface between Knowledge Generation and Policy/Planning Process

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(EMIS – Educational Management Information System)

### 3.6. Results and Sustainability

There are various types of results from the formative research project – tangible outputs in the form of research reports, workshops and seminars, short-term outcomes and long-term impact. Outcomes and impact should be traced on three levels – for individuals, organizations and institutions – or the system at large. However, there is insufficient data and information to answer questions about results and least about long term impact on policies and programmes. The following starts with presenting the relatively simple outputs and seeks later to address the more complex questions.

#### Activities and level of outputs

The start up of the project was delayed which affected productivity and outputs in the first phase. Most of the delays were caused by late decisions by MOES and lack of feedback and support to CERID.

The BPEP II reform and the formative research project were also implemented in an increasingly critical situation for Nepal – including a state of emergency which led to the King setting aside democratic institutions of the country, even down to local political bodies. The unstable political situation and insurgency in several districts seems not to have affected the implementation of formative research directly – except for complicating the data collection process at district level. The indirect effects on the setting of research questions, and the utilization and follow up of recommendations are more difficult to assess. However, educational institutions including schools, teachers, students as well as the system units in the districts were in a disturbed state during most of the time.

The formative research project has managed to complete all major activities and a significant number of research reports has been produced – results controlled directly by CERID efforts. As mentioned elsewhere, the follow up of research recommendations and actions steps – in other words the utilization of research - has been much weaker as this has been the responsibility of MOES.

The following text box provided an overview of major activities accomplished during the BPEP II phase.

### **Major Activities Accomplished in Brief**

Based on the topics and key questions provided by the MOES a total of 30 research studies were successfully undertaken under the FRP.

At the end of every fiscal year research based Action Steps were developed and submitted to MOES after getting finalized by FRAG.

Follow up meetings were held for actions with concerned authorities.

Reflection session with the relevant stakeholders on utilization of suggested Action Steps were held every year.

A series of seminars were held each year on various topical issues in order to share the findings of the researches undertaken.

Every year dissemination seminars were organized at the regional level as well as at the central level. The dissemination seminars were organized jointly with the Research and Development Section of the MOES and CERID.

If we look at the physical outputs of the formative project, three types of research studies were carried out:

- a) *Stocktaking* – providing an overview of previous studies undertaken on topics related to basic and primary education in Nepal. Three stocktaking studies were conducted covering a total of 54 reports and documents.
- b) *Longitudinal study on systems indicators* – for generating periodic quantitative data on selected system indicators in order to provide strategic information for progress monitoring of BPEP II. The sample covered 62 schools from 16 districts chosen to represent the three ecological and five development regions of Nepal. The indicators were also intended to serve as the background for the case studies, which comprised the bulk of the programme.
- c) *Case studies* – for providing in-depth insights into the issues and problems faced in the implementation of BPEP II. The studies were of three to nine months duration and 25 case studies were conducted during the project.

Each case study focused on selected components of BPEP II mainly in the areas of access and retention, learning and achievements and institutional capacity.

### **Major Research Areas**

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Educational Quality -- Effective Classroom Teaching Learning

Multi Grade Teaching

School Effectiveness in Nepal

Education of Muslim Children

Education for Disadvantaged Children

Decentralized Reform in Primary Education

### **Visibility, recognition and donor response**

The formative research project is recognized and supported by the Ministry of Education and Department of Education. It has also recently become more visible among external donors and other national stakeholders (media, civil society, etc.). In the Joint Evaluation report of BPEP II from 2004 the formative research project is only mentioned briefly (in a text box on p.79) in an overview of technical assistance from various countries - illustrating a low level of knowledge about formative research at the time of this evaluation. The general view of external development

partners is still that formative research is a project supported by the Norwegians – a separate and isolated activity carried out by CERID. The recent EFA meeting of December 2005 during which the FRP was presented was for many the first “official” introduction to formative research.

### **Short-term outcomes**

There has been no systematic monitoring of FRP outcomes. However, both CERID and the Norwegian Research advisor have completed their own assessments. The team has not been able to verify all their findings, but has neither found any evidence that the project did not lead to such outcomes. In all the cases, it is difficult to assess the relative importance of the FRP contribution to the perceived change.

- Improvement in data keeping systems at school level.
- A multi-grade teaching concept and strategy was made clearer through a FRP study.
- A trainer’s and professional’s roster was prepared following a recommendation in one study.
- The relationship between the Local Self Governance Act and Education Act has been clarified as a result of analysis and recommendations from a FRP study.
- The District Education Plans have been improved.
- School Improvement Plans have been reformed.
- The roles and responsibilities of Community managed Schools have been clarified.
- Researchers pointed out that incentives were distributed without informing the Incentive Management Committee.
- In some cases student did not receive any incentives.
- The special education section in DOE – making reference to FRP reports, stressed the need to prepare annual plans and guidelines, etc.<sup>10</sup>

In the presentation to the annual review meeting December 2005, CERID presented major recommendations from nine research areas and the subsequent reform status – with the aim to illustrate the effects and relevance of formative research. For example, it referred to a recommendation of providing scholarships to disadvantaged – or dalit - children and the fact that scholarships are now being provided to all children in this group. The relevant research has most likely increased the awareness about the need for scholarships for disadvantaged children, but there is rarely any direct causal link between a recommendation and implementation of a reform – being the underlying assumption in the CERID presentation. There could be a legitimate need of CERID to market the relevance of FRP and slightly inflate its own contribution to outcomes.

However, in the team’s view it would be more important for a research institution to analyse the steps and complexities in policy reforms and in adjustments to policy implementation. Similarly, it would be helpful to trace the direct and indirect trajectories that research outcomes and recommendations can follow before being put aside or translated into actions and results, as the case may be.

The latter is important as policy research has abundantly shown that a direct relation between a policy decision and a research recommendation is a rare occurrence and only tends to be associated with short-term practical suggestions that link up with immediate operational concerns. By contrast, a relationship with research outcomes of a more strategic nature tends to be much more indirectly (through ‘percolation’)<sup>11</sup>, involving a variety of actors and processes of influencing decision-making. It is relevant for these processes and actors to be investigating so as to assist in capacity building strategies.

It is still too early to assess the long-term impact of the formative research project – and an evaluation of how and how much FRP has contributed to changes in the education sector would require another evaluation design. Based on interviews and the team’s own assessment we conclude that FRP has made important achievements in the following areas:

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<sup>10</sup> List from CERID (2004).

<sup>11</sup> See various works by authors such as Carol Weiss, Torsten Husen and Sandra Nutley

1. *FRP has been a fairly successful research capacity building project* – both for individual researchers and also for CERID as an institution. A core group of researchers have been introduced to and trained in formative research methodology. The Norwegian Advisor has through training, supervision and quality control played an important role in such capacity building. It is unfortunate that CERID has not been able to retain all qualified researchers, but a core group is still at CERID or available as associate researchers. The role of CERID as a research institution has been strengthened – including its recognition by and relevance for the Ministry and Department of Education. The formative research project brought CERID into much closer contact with the Ministry and increased the researchers chances of being relevant to and used in national policy discussion and decision-making.
2. *A tool for tracking outcomes and impact has been established.* Progress reports from the sector programme cover adequately financial data, activities and specific outputs, but not changes and improvements over time and issues of quality. Reasons are simple: tracking change requires that data are collected at intervals of time and that quality assessments can be derived from in-depth studies. FRP – with its longitudinal and in depth approach is a tool that the Government and donors need for being able to document change – or in other words short and long term results. Key donors and Ministry staff have not yet seen the potential importance of FRP in such a perspective and been able to utilize it for such a purpose.
3. *The system's effects from formative research are still to become more visible.* The awareness of research-based decision-making has improved, but the linkage between research findings and recommendations and informed decision-making in the Ministry may remain elusive for some time until the dynamics involved are better understood. For now the results can be traced at the individual and organizational level more than at the system's or sector level.

There is, however, a change under way. Senior staff in the Ministry does recognize the importance of research-based information in order to make immediate corrections of the sector programme, but also to discuss broader policy issues. The Ministry also accepts its own shortcomings in making effective use of the wealth of information from FRP reports. In other words, FRP has helped develop concerns about the importance of research in MOES – including also some District Education Officers.

4. *Awareness about selected thematic issues has been raised.* FRP has carried out several studies on marginalized groups and the recommendations have been important for raising the awareness about such groups. A systematic gender dimension is missing in the formative research project. Few female researchers have been involved and mostly as assistants to male researchers – despite a clear gender objective in the MoU. There are reports about girl's education and there is a gender dimension in selected reports reviewed. However, this dimension and that of other significant bifurcations in Nepali society have not yet been systematically pursued and integrated in the research process. There is also no evidence of CERID making special efforts to recruit and build the capacity of women researchers – even if such objectives were mentioned in the MoU.

The team is not aware of any studies discussing the link between HIV/AIDS and education. On the whole it can be observed that, whereas the studies have started providing data on the extent to which girls and disadvantaged groups do or do not participate in education, no systematic assessment of policy instruments and strategies currently deployed for assisting these groups have been undertaken.

5. *Formative research during BPEP II was placed within the context of inter-ministerial cooperation, but it is still premature to assess to what extent IMC is an effective model for capacity development and which dimensions contribute most to such outcome.* FRP was first and foremost MOER Norway providing technical assistance to CERID through financial support and Norwegian technical assistance. MOER staff were involved in the formulation

and design of the project and overall management and planning, but the FRP during BPEP II did not develop into an active ministry to ministry partnership. In other words, the BPEP II experience cannot be used to answer a key question in the evaluation: to what extent institutional development through ministry twinning is an effective model for capacity building outside CERID. The institutional component which was introduced with the EFA programme is based on a much more active involvement of the two Ministries at headquarters level, but it is premature to measure its results.

### Future sustainability

There are at least two relevant types of sustainability to be discussed – the likelihood of MOES and CERID sustaining the formative research project without Norwegian financial assistance, involvement and interest and to what extent CERID has the technical and managerial skills and capacity to continue with the formative research model without inputs from the Norwegian research advisor. The team concludes that:

1. CERID would need external financial support for continuing a formative research programme – so if not Norway – another external source of funding is required, e.g. a donor providing similar support to CERID. A preferable long-term solution would be to incorporate formative research into the sector programme and ensure that sufficient funding is available from the sector pool. The challenge is to convince MOER and donors that the sector programme needs a strong formative research component with predictable funding. Designated support from a single donor to a project like FRP can be justified during a pilot phase – for testing an innovative approach, but not as a permanent solution. The team would have expected that MOER Norway had discussed exit strategies and ways to generate other types of funding when the new programme period was negotiated. It is useful to consider how and when a programme of cooperation should come to an end. Designing an exit strategy as part of a proposal can solve much anxieties, uncertainties and disappointments later on.
2. The same Norwegian research coordinator has been linked to CERID from the start. She is also given a role during EFA, but her role is reduced in scope with and increasing involvement of staff from MOER Norway. It is somewhat surprising that an external research advisor is still required at CERID - even after five years. The continued need for such an advisor is not justified in any documents available to the team. Support to and supervision of research projects and individual researchers represent a permanent need in any research setting. The Norwegian advisor is well placed for playing such a role. On the other hand, the research process is not necessarily an integral part of ministry-to-ministry cooperation. The technical assistance from an individual advisor could for instance be transformed into a twinning arrangement with a relevant Norwegian research institution.

## 3.7. Funding, Cost Effectiveness and Accountability

### Budget and expenditure

A grant amounting to 13,7 m. NOK was earmarked for FRP for the period 1999 - 2004. It was also decided that approx 1/3 of the grant was to be used by MOER while 2/3 should cover research activities in Nepal. CERID would be paid an overhead and service charge of 25% of the approved budget.

According to data from MOER and CERID their respective budgets and expenditures were as follows:

|             | 2000                 | 2000-2001 | 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | Total     |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Budget      |                      | 937 000   | 887 000   | 965 000   | 1105000   | 575 000   | 875 000   | 5 344 000 |
| Expenditure | 537755 <sup>12</sup> | 619 380   | 637 586   | 714 241   | 978 401   | 423 726   | 423 726   | 3 911 089 |
| % implem.   |                      | 66%       | 72%       | 74%       | 88%       | 74%       |           | 73%       |

<sup>12</sup> This was preparatory costs before a contract was signed and no budget had yet been prepared.

### *MOER Norway budgets and expenditures 2000-2006 (in NOK)*

The total budget for MOER Norway was 5.344 m. NOK and slightly less than 4 m. NOK has been utilized or approximately 73%. The lowest rate of implementation was in 2000-2001 explained by the slow start of the formative research project

Budget and expenditure figures for CERID are:

### *CERID Nepal budgets and expenditures 2001-2006 (in Mill. N Rs)*

|                     | 2000-2001 | 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | Total  |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Budget              | 16 000    | 21 272    | 25 751    | 26 186    | 15 170    |           | 88 399 |
| Expenditure         | 0,52      | 6 218     | 17 144    | 24 921    | 9 578     | 2 640     | 63 039 |
| % implem.           | 3%        | 30%       | 66%       | 95%       | 63%       |           | 71%    |
| Total CERID expend. |           | 21 053    | 25 316    | 35 836    | 26 480    |           |        |
| FRP of total        |           | 30%       | 68%       | 70%       | 36%       |           |        |

The total budget for CERID amounted to 88, 4 m. NRs (or approx 8 Mill. NOK). Excluding the exceptional first year, expenditure or rate of implementation has varied significantly from as low as 30% during the first two years to 95% in 2003/2004 – with an average of 71% for the entire period. The low figures reflect the slow start up process mostly due to delays from MOES on aspects like final approval of budgets, formulating key questions in order to start new projects, accepting formats and focus of reports, the formulation of action steps, etc. The fact that FRP was not in operation from the start of BPEP II limited also the idea of surveying the implementation of policies from the start.

From 2002/2003 contacts between the two ministries increased. Annual meetings in Nepal, regular visits to Nepal from the Norwegian research adviser and various study trips to Norway including meetings the staff at MOER with experience from formative research, improved and accelerated the research process considerably.

The last two rows in the table above present the total expenditure of CERID and the shares of FRP for the respective years illustrating the relative importance of the FRP project for total CERID income. The figures show for 2001/2002 and 2003/2003 that the FRP project represented 70% of all CERID income.

FRP provided also CERID with a generous 25% overhead and even if CERID had to pay 30% of this amount to the University as an internal administrative fee, it has represented flexible funds for equipment and administrative services.

If we look at the overall picture: approx. 3 m. NOK each year for formative research – both for the Nepali and Norwegian component – a total of 13.7 m. for the entire period. This seems not to be a large budget in the context of the sector programme – as an investment in monitoring and evaluation of progress and performance. Considering the results – outputs in terms of reports produced, workshops organized and other outcomes described in a previous chapter, we are of the opinion that resources have been used effectively.

### **Modalities for disbursement**

According to the MoU for BPEP II, CERID and MOER were paid directly by the Norwegian Embassy. According to the new agreement for EFA 2004-2009, the Embassy pays to a separate bank account in MOES and the expenses of CERID and MOER are approved and covered by the Ministry in Nepal.

MOES perceives this as a significant change and commends the Norwegian Government for such a practice – being the only donor making the Ministry responsible for managing technical assistance funds.

For the Norwegian Embassy, there are still two pending issues:

There have been practical problems transferring funds to MOES. The Ministry seems to have limited capacity for managing external funds.

- Funds to the sector pool are transferred through the Ministry of Finance and appear in the so called “red book” – according to established national procedures and systems. The question is why TA funds for FRP cannot be transferred the same way – to further improve alignment to national systems.
- The team was informed that CERID accepted, but that it did not find the new system to be an improvement as it has led to several delays - up to six months in transfer of money from MOES.

MOES argues that new and more innovative TA projects should still be funded separately from the sector pool. Current national systems and procedures are still too bureaucratic and would not support effective implementation of, for instance, the formative research project. The team is not in a position to suggest other short-term solutions than an improved version of the current funding of MOES – with MOES releasing funds more efficiently. However, the long-term solution should be to incorporate formative research into the sector programme – applying similar financial rules for all funding.

#### **Formative research as tied aid**

The formative research project is an example of designated funds – or tied technical assistance within a sector programme, with pooled funding from Norway and other major donors. There are other donors who also provide designated funds to specific components of the programme, while placing all technical assistance outside the sector pool.

In the context of Nepal, the reasons for tying technical assistance are probably related largely to donor concerns and interests. Other more legitimate reasons are expressed in the Joint Evaluation of External Support to Basic Education (Evaluation Nepal 2004, p.107). In Nepal, however, there seems to be a strong need for further harmonization of technical assistance.

*“The movement to support basic education through SWAPs and other forms of programme support needs to be accompanied by an understanding of the positive role of project assistance, especially in supporting innovations and providing targeted support to marginalized groups. There is considerable evidence that project forms of support can be more effectively integrated into programme approaches with the consequent effect of strengthening the positive aspects of both modalities”.*

### **3.8. Inter-Ministerial Cooperation**

#### **The evolution of Inter-Ministerial Cooperation**

MOER Norway had a positive experience to share – a formative research model focusing on utilization and stakeholder involvement in Norway. The idea was that such a model could be introduced to Nepal by the Norwegian Ministry through a separate project.

The concept of ministry-to-ministry cooperation was not developed at that time, but there were ideas that the involvement of a sister ministry would be more successful and effective than hiring outside consultants or institutions, as two ministries would share some of the administrative experience of an educational bureaucracy.



The concept of inter-ministerial cooperation has not been clearly defined in any document. The case study from Zambia has presented three interpretations of such cooperation:

- IMC as ‘programme support’.
- IMC as ‘technical assistance’.
- IMC as ‘ministry-to-ministry’ cooperation.

In the first interpretation of an IMC as ‘programme support’ sector ministries collaborate so that various types of support can be provided by a ministry in the North to a ministry in the South for the purpose of enhancing educational reform implementation. In the second the focus is narrowed down to a Northern ministry specifically providing technical assistance for agreed on purposes on request by the ministry in the South. In the third the focus shifts to direct collaboration between the two ministries concerned at the level of ministry headquarters as well as at other levels of the system.

The first two interpretations are based on the assumption that the support is part of ‘development cooperation’, i.e. where support flows from the Northern partner to the one in the South. Moreover, they are mainly concerned with the effective provision of services to achieve development goals of the Southern partner, preferably on explicit demand from the latter. By contrast, a ministry-to-ministry’ cooperation is seen to provide a frame for longer-term collaboration between the two ministries themselves. It starts from the premise that in principle the two ministries are equal partners, with a common interest in engaging in peer dialogue on policy and practice, in learning from one another and in jointly tackling key issues and problems in the further development of their systems.

Like in the case of Zambia, in the Norwegian IMC with Nepal no explicit common understanding of the wider nature of the cooperation was developed – beyond it serving as a conduit for providing technical assistance. It was essentially a growth process in which perspectives on the possibilities of the cooperation evolved over time. In fact, in the Nepali situation the very term ‘IMC’ has only more recently been introduced.

For several years the focus of the collaboration between MOER Norway and MOES Nepal has been on the provision of technical assistance by the former to the latter. The cooperation has only marginally been about an institutional linkage between two ministries or about a twinning of research institutions in Nepal and Norway. For all practical purposes, what has been offered was technical assistance from an individual advisor sub-contracted by the Norwegian Ministry to build research capacity in CERID. It was a formative research project – initiated and supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Education. While indeed MOER at headquarters level was directly involved in the cooperation, this involvement was limited to coordination and management and did not involve sustained direct interactions on substantive issues at the level of ministry headquarters. The latter is now emerging in the context of the new formative research project under EFA.

In Nepal the dominant interpretation of IMC has been that of ‘technical assistance’ as support to a particular research project. The IMC has, therefore, *de facto* been a fairly narrow form of cooperation, which has only more recently come to explore other dimensions of the relationship between research and the policy-planning process. This may yet grow into a broader programmatic form of system’s support with, possibly, explicit elements of ministry-to-ministry cooperation (the ‘third interpretation’). This evolution into a richer, more diverse, and perhaps also more equal and reciprocal IMC may have needed this time, partly in order for the FRP to establish its legitimacy in Nepal, partly to allow for the MOES to go through a period of reform and thus acquire a stronger institutional base that could successfully carry a more comprehensive effort to improve policy management.

MOER Norway played an important role when preparing and designing the project. In particular, two staff were active through participation in annual meetings – discussing work

plans and budgets. There are also examples of staff from the Norwegian Ministry participating in training workshops in Nepal, but it is difficult to see that such involvement constitutes what the team has called ‘ministry-to-ministry’, meaning colleagues in two ministries sharing information and experience. MOER Norway was instrumental in establishing formative research, but has not taken an active part in its implementation as its role has been mostly limited to coordination and management.

### **The IMC in action**

The two ministries should be commended for redesigning the project for EFA based on the experience from the first phase of FRP. This phase placed too much emphasis on the supply side of FRP, i.e. doing the research, and too little on the demand side, i.e. using the findings and recommendations within the MOES.

MOER Norway claimed a positive experience with using formative research in Norway. It is not clear to the team what that experience represents. Lessons learned are not summarized and presented in any documents available to the team.<sup>13</sup> During the first phase the sharing of experience was mostly limited to the technical aspects of establishing formative research at CERID. The Norwegian research advisor has also successfully helped introduce such a model.

MOER Norway had clear ideas of what it could offer, but not what it could gain from the cooperation with Nepal. The MoUs and agreements define MOER Norway clearly as a consultant to MOES Nepal. It is Norway offering technical assistance to Nepal. While Norwegian staff have gained new experiences from working in Nepal, the first phase was not designed as a collaborative partnership. The new phase represents and presents a much more collaborative model.

However, MOER Norway is still defined as a consultant. In the new agreement, all costs for MOER are paid for directly by MOER Nepal using designated funds from the Norwegian Government.<sup>14</sup>

MoUs and project agreements describe the cooperation between the two Ministries in terms of technical cooperation, but it is also seen as a reciprocal partnership of a different kind. There is a need to disentangle and more clearly define the various components of inter ministerial cooperation. There are some complex tradeoffs between partnership and capacity building – to what extent the focus is on technical assistance and capacity building or on cooperation/ partnership. The problem with the former is that it puts the Norwegian Ministry in the role of a consultancy firm in technical cooperation. The problem with the latter is that the conditions for mutual interests may not occur that easily and that the type of joint activities is different from technical cooperation.

During BPEP II the capacity building efforts was seen as transfer of knowledge and skills to individual researchers and to an organization – primarily CERID – rather than as system’s support or strengthening of the Ministry. A broader sector and system perspective is introduced in the new phase through an institutional component.

The institutional component in the new FRP project (2004-2009) has two broad objectives:

- Assist in capacity building of MOES for utilization of formative research as an instrument for programme monitoring and adjustment.
- Assist a process based institutional development of MOES and underlying agencies based on working experience and available knowledge and skills.

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13 We were later informed that approach to formative research (“forskningsbasert evaluering”) similar to the approach in Nepal was applied to a reform of upper secondary education in Norway – “Reform 94” and that findings were presented in a White Paper to the Norwegian Parliament in 1999 (St.m. nr. 32 1998-1999 Videregående oppl ring).

14 MOER states that this arrangement is based on NORADs Guide for Institutional Cooperation and that it is difficult to see alternatives that would be compatible with normal division of responsibilities between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and line ministries as reflected in the Norwegian State Budget.

Both objectives are highly relevant, but extremely complex. The approach to capacity building is not clear to the team. The notion of capacity development and building has not been sufficiently operationalized. The two objectives are different and interrelated at the same time. The first takes FRP as a point of departure and focuses on how MOES could use formative research more effectively in policy development – in other words strengthening planning and policy systems and procedures in the Ministry. The second covers almost any kind of institutional development the MOES may need – without a clear link to the first objective.

The suggested work plan for 2004 and 2005 presents the modalities for such support in the form of exchange visits between Nepal and Norway, seminars and workshops, attachments, etc. The plan would have benefited from a better articulation of the characteristics of capacity building within the context of inter-ministerial cooperation and maybe some cautionary remarks about its limitations and potential links to other capacity building initiatives in the Ministry supported by other donors. This work plan, however, covers only the first half year (December 2004-June 2005) of the project period, and further planning is supposed to be carried out jointly by the two ministries during that year.

There seems also to be a major mismatch between the objectives and the limited inputs from MOER amounting to not more than NOK 575 000 in the financial year 2004/2005 and NOK 875 000 for 2005/2006. The inputs to objectives 2 and 3 or the capacity building component is NOK 250 000 and NOK 340 000 for the same two years. The cost of exchange visits is additional. The budgets for MOES are 15,1 m. NRs (or 1,3 m. NOK) and 28,3 m. NRs (or 2,57 m. NOK)

#### **4. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this last chapter, we shall summarize the main findings, offer some conclusions and suggest a set of recommendations.

##### **4.1. Main Findings**

###### *Background and Planning*

1. Formative research was used as a tool for monitoring the implementation and planning of educational reforms in Norway in the 1990s and introduced by MOER Norway to the new sector programme in Nepal (BPEP II) on request from the Norwegian Embassy. An agreement for a formative research project to be carried out by the Centre for Educational Research and International Development (CERID) was signed for the period 2000-2004 as part of a cooperation between ministries of education in Norway and Nepal.
2. During the preparatory phase MOER was the driving force. It took time for MOES Nepal to do the necessary preparations and the project was delayed for a year. Formative research has gradually been accepted and seen by senior management in the Ministry as a useful exercise.
3. The formative research project would not have occurred without the active and effective encouragement by a few individuals in MOER and an earmarked grant from the Norwegian Government.
4. The need for formative research was identified in the appraisal of BPEP II, but no systematic and comprehensive assessment of the needs for such a project within the sector programme and the overall framework for technical assistance to BPEP II was carried out.

###### *Intentions and objectives*

5. Formative research is recognized by MOES Nepal, but the term is still used with multiple meanings. There is an unclear line between formative research and action research. Interest has been expressed for involving researchers also in implementation of recommendations and action steps.

6. The formative research has mostly addressed technical and institutional (operational) issues. It was a missed opportunity for MOES and donors that broader issues of strategic importance for the implementation of BPEP II were not included. The “practical” orientation in the selection of research issues was part of the formative research model. Research issues were also decided by the Ministry with the feedback of DEOs in the regional dissemination seminars, DOE personnel and MOES higher-level personnel, but not other external stakeholders.
7. The formative research advisory group has mostly come in at the end of the research process to review reports and recommendations – and not in setting direction and priorities.
8. Formative research reports provide useful information about a broad range of educational issues in Nepal, but there is little analysis and discussion of findings that places these explicitly in the context of the sector programme – thus making the reports less relevant for evaluating sector performance in relation to policy goals.
9. It has been difficult for CERID to maintain a longitudinal approach in the research – collecting data from similar sites over a period of time – reducing the possibility for measuring change. The development of formative research has seen increasingly short time spans for researchers to do their work – to some extent reducing formative research to short-term consultancy for the Ministry.
10. The level of interaction between the two ministries during BPEP II was limited and the cooperation was not an example of two ministries sharing experience and working in reciprocal partnership at headquarters level. FRP was primarily technical assistance from an advisor sub-contracted by MOER Norway to assist CERID in research capacity building.
11. The BPEP phase of formative research has focused on the technical aspects of capacity building. The Norwegian advisor has successfully helped introduce such a model at CERID. MOER Norway was defined as a consultant to its sister ministry in Nepal and all expenses are also covered by MOES – through a grant from the Norwegian Government. MOER Norway had a clear idea of what it could offer in the cooperation, but not what it could gain from the collaboration with Nepal
12. During BPEP II the capacity building efforts were mainly seen as transfer of knowledge and skills to individual researchers and to CERID as an organization, much less as system support to the Ministry and the sector.
13. In the new formative research project under EFA more emphasis is placed on the sector and the Ministry as a system. A capacity building component is added to the formative research – focusing on MOES ability to use research findings more effectively and on institutional development in MOES more broadly.

Both objectives are relevant, but broad and extremely complex. The approach to capacity building is not clear. There is need for a clearer articulation of the characteristics of capacity building in the context of inter-ministerial cooperation and such a process is underway.

#### *Quality of the Research Process and Products*

14. The reduction of quality to what is of immediate utility to decision makers is at variance with what educational researchers generally consider as their standard of quality – covering also the exploration of the context and background that produces the problem.
15. The preparatory process for the studies has in general been carefully handled, but CERID and FRAG had only a limited role in discussing the topics and questions.

16. The researchers have shown a strong commitment to carrying out the research. The samples of districts tend to be small – illuminating more context specific experiences rather than national aggregate findings. There has also been some difficulty for researchers to take the processing of research findings beyond the level of description and simple interpretation to synthesis and assessment. There are summaries of main findings, but analysis and overall conclusions are often missing.
17. Efforts to formulate recommendations and action steps make formative research stand out from other educational research. The recommendations have several characteristics making it difficult for the Ministry to use them effectively: there tends to be a large number of recommendations in each report; no efforts are made to prioritize in relation to strategic importance; and the recommendations are rarely formulated in such a way that they speak directly to the policy and planning process.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities*

18. MOES has not been able to play a proactive role vis-à-vis formative research during BPEP II. The capacity to coordinate and respond to formative research reports was weak, but has gradually been strengthened.
19. CERID has played the most important role in the formative research project using external and internal researchers. The institute has been able to deliver despite tight deadlines, short-term and delayed funding from the Ministry.
20. The formative research advisory group (FRAG) has not functioned effectively. The mandate should be reconsidered with the aim of involving the group at a more strategic level, e.g. in the identification of strategic research issues. In addition the group should be able to deliberate as an autonomous entity.
21. The Norwegian advisor has played an important role in building the research capacity in CERID. The system with intermittent visits has also enabled a sufficient level of continuity of support without negatively affecting CERID's ownership and responsibility.
22. The Norwegian Embassy has mainly played the roles as financier and to some extent as advisor to CERID and MOER. The Embassy would have preferred a more formalized mechanism for consultation and information sharing with MOER since the Embassy has the overall responsibility for support to the education sector on behalf of the Norwegian Government.
23. The role of MOER Norway under EFA will change significantly with much more emphasis on institutional development in the Nepalese ministry. The critical questions are to what extent MOER has sufficient and relevant capacity and expertise for meeting the demands and expectations in the new twinning arrangement and to what extent the relatively small and limited activities will make a difference in MOES given the significant constraints in and needs of institutional development in MOES.
24. External donors such as Danida/ESAT, ADB and World Bank, UNESCO and Save the Children Norway have had very limited contact with CERID and MOES on formative research and unaware of most of the research. Some external partners could not see the value in and relevance of the formative research project. Reports were found to have inadequate information and analysis and recommendations were limited to specific districts.
25. Other donors have also been commissioning their own research – similar to FRP reports with few links between the various initiatives. FRP worked and was perceived to work in isolation. External partners, however, were of the opinion that FR has immense scope if combined with other studies and research and if it becomes an integral part of the sector programme.

### *Capacity and Expertise*

26. The administration of the Norwegian component of the formative research project has been handled on part-time by a coordinator and one more staff-member in the Department of Policy Analysis and International Affairs in MOER. All staff have relevant working experience and are well qualified for the work. The critical question in the new FRP project is to what extent MOER has sufficient capacity and relevant expertise for meeting the expectations for supporting the institutional development component. There seems also to be a mismatch between the relative small resources available for the capacity building and the complex and challenging objectives.
27. During the four years of formative research there has been a substantial improvement in MOES/DOE capacity and involvement in process – from the formulation of key questions, the research process itself and formulation of action steps, as well as the actual implementation and follow up of these steps. There is a growing national ownership of formative research. On the other hand, there is still not sufficient capacity to make effective use of the research – its recommendations and actions steps.
28. The main problem with regard to the follow-up of the FRP recommendations and proposed action steps is two-fold: (a) the low capacity of individual units in MOES and DOE to deal with policy-related information that is coming to them; and (b) the inadequacy of the overall system for processing and utilising policy-related information across the MOES/DOE.

### *Relevance, results and sustainability*

29. The start of FRP was delayed, but the project has been able to complete all major activities. An impressive number of research reports have been produced of varied quality.
30. The formative research project remained invisible during the first two years and was not much known among external stakeholders. It is now recognized by MOES and found relevant for bringing forward useful data and information. External stakeholders (other donors, media, and civil society) are also more aware of the formative research project, but there are few examples of other organizations reading and using any of the reports.
31. Dissemination of reports was insufficient. However, regional and central level workshops to disseminate the findings were held annually. DOE - research and monitoring units were increasingly involved in the disseminations and many of the operational issues raised were directed to the concerned DEO or schools. Findings were circulated in form of published reports and a Summary Report in Nepali of the studies conducted was distributed to Resource Centres. This appears to be limited to MOES/DOE structure while many of the development partners and education related I/NGOs did not receive the reports.
32. There has been no systematic monitoring of FRP outcomes, but CERID refers to several short-term results – originating from the recommendations in individual reports.
33. It is still too early to assess long-term effects of the formative research project. It has been a fairly successful research capacity building project – both for individual researchers and CERID as an institution – less for MOES and the sector as a whole.
34. With formative research a powerful tool for measuring outcomes and impact of educational reforms has been established.
35. Awareness of selected thematic issues has been raised, e.g. marginalized groups, girls, etc. The gender dimension has been weak and unsystematic and the issue of HIV/AIDS and education has not been addressed. There is no evidence of CERID making special efforts to recruit and build the capacity of women researchers – even if such a requirement

was included in the MoU. No systematic assessment of policy instruments in relation to participation of disadvantaged groups based on FRP findings has as yet been carried out.

36. It is still too early to assess to what extent inter-ministerial cooperation will become an effective tool for capacity development in the new EFA programme.

#### *Funding, Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability*

37. The formative research project has been funded with earmarked support from Norway. Designated support to formative research can be justified as a short-term measure for establishing an innovative and relevant initiative within a sector programme. The long-term aim must be to fund formative research from the sector pool.
38. Technical assistance to CERID has been provided as a component of a programme for inter-ministerial cooperation. Such assistance is not necessarily an integral part of such cooperation and could later be taken over by a relevant Norwegian research institution.
39. Taking into consideration the volume of reports produced and the short- and long-term results, financial resources have been used effectively – the value for money has been satisfactory.

#### *Inter-Ministerial Cooperation*

40. In the IMC with Nepal for a long time the dominant interpretation of the IMC has been that of facilitating technical assistance to a research project. FRP was primarily technical assistance from an advisor sub-contracted by MOER Norway to assist CERID in research capacity building. Direct cooperation between the two ministries was largely limited to management and coordination. The IMC has, therefore, de facto been a fairly narrow form of cooperation, which has only more recently come to explore other dimensions of the relationship between research and the policy-planning process. It may yet grow into a broader programmatic form of system's support with, possibly, explicit elements of ministry-to-ministry cooperation (the 'third interpretation').
41. The concept of inter-ministerial cooperation is unclear. IMC needs to be defined and disentangled – differentiating between (a) IMC as 'programme support', (b) IMC as 'technical assistance' and (c) IMC as 'ministry-to-ministry' cooperation,
42. The formative research project has been an example of tied technical assistance – a dilemma in a sector programme with pooled funding – a common dilemma for technical assistance from other donors too. Technical assistance to BPEP II and EFA has been highly fragmented and in urgent need for better coordination. Norway is commended for disbursing funds directly to MOES (as the only donor providing TA funds directly to the Ministry).

## **4.2. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The main conclusion is that the formative research project has been an important new initiative in the education sector in Nepal. With the support from the Ministry of Education in Norway a new approach to research focusing on utility and feedback to decision makers has been introduced. An advisor has helped build the capacity for such research in CERID – an important educational research institute in Nepal. CERID has been brought into closer dialogue with the Ministry of Education – bridging the gap between researchers and Government officers.

A significant number of research reports have been prepared with specific recommendations and actions steps. The follow up and utilization of findings and recommendations by the Ministry of Education in Nepal are still weak, but its capacity has improved. There is still scope for improving the research process and products, but the project represents good value from a relatively small investment.

Although formative research was placed within the context of inter-ministerial cooperation, this has mainly been interpreted as a conduit for technical assistance. The Norwegian Ministry has been involved in planning and coordination, but the project has primarily been an example of individual technical assistance to CERID for research capacity building. Only recently a broader interpretation of the concept has come to be explored, involving wider programme support for system's development and, possibly, elements of 'ministry-to-ministry' collaboration. This may lead to more emphasis on the two ministries sharing experiences and working in reciprocal partnership.

The new formative research project under EFA adds an institutional development component – supported by technical assistance from the Norwegian Ministry of Education - which presupposes an active involvement of staff at headquarters level in both ministries.

Based on the above findings and conclusions we will recommend:

1. *The nature and content of inter-ministerial cooperation should be discussed and clarified further in an effort to differentiate between various types of cooperation and to understand their implications. In the same process there is also a need to specify and operationalize the concept of capacity development.* There are at least three alternatives:

- (a) A ministry-to-ministry exchange programme providing staff members from the two Ministries to meet and for exchange of experience and joint learning between colleagues. Study visits and workshops can also be included determined by the needs of the reform process in the Nepalese Ministry. Intensity will depend on the time and resources the two ministries are prepared to put into the exchange. Depending on the level of ambition, a special project organization may not be needed. Objectives are quite open ended. The Norwegian Ministry does not appear here as the expert or consultants in organizational development, but as colleagues sharing insights and experience. Such a programme is seen as something different and complementary to technical cooperation.
- (b) A formalized technical assistance programme much more targeted and focused than an exchange programme. It implies a stronger involvement from MOER Norway in problem solving activities where technical expertise from the parties works together. The consultancy role of MOER will become more pronounced and ambitions much higher. MOER will have to accept competition from other organizations offering the same services.
- (c) A third alternative could be a combination of 1 and 2. In such a format an exchange programme run by the two ministries will be combined with a capacity building programme with a separate project administration.

2. *The formative research project should continue and take the following recommendations into consideration:*

- (a) Earmarked funding from Norway should be phased out during the project period. Formative research should become an integral part of the sector programme and funded from the pool.
- (b) Norwegian technical assistance for formative research should gradually be transformed to a twinning arrangement between two research institutions and funded separately from the sector pool focusing on staff development needs at CERID.
- (c) The process for identifying research issues and questions should be broader. The formative research advisory group (FRAG) should play a more active role in selecting and discussing issues of strategic importance for the education programme.



- (d) The FRAG should become a more autonomous advisory committee. This would mean that the MOE/DOE representatives should participate on personal title, while reserving their rights as ultimate users of the research.
- (e) MOES and CERID should work towards relating the formative research and its results more closely to the policy goals and implementation strategies of EFA, so that an operational focus will more and more be complemented by a strategic focus.
- (f) MOES need to acknowledge what frame conditions CERID and researchers need pertaining to continuity and predictability – and the importance of a longitudinal perspective.
- (g) In the staff development programme for CERID researchers attention should be given to sector and policy analysis, as well as improving the understanding of the dynamics of system’s development and of the relationships between research and decision-making.
- (h) MOES should differentiate between longitudinal research and the need for urgent and short-term consultancy assignments – and consider using consultants for the latter (hired by CERID or separately).
- (i) MOES in collaboration with external donors should take the necessary steps to use formative research as a basis for regular reviews of the Strategic Plan and as a tool for the measurement of outcomes and impact.
- (j) The need for using research based information also at the local level, such as at school and at the community level should have higher priority.
- (k) More pilot projects should be considered before action steps are introduced for mainstream implementation. In such pilots researchers can be involved as resource persons – thus linking formative closer to action research.
- (l) CERID should consider within the formative research budget to conduct at least one “meta-analysis” of findings and outcomes within a particular thematic area per year, with a view to raise issues and action points regarding plan performance in relation to policy goals and principles. The outcomes of such analysis should be discussed in an annual seminar with MOES, agencies, civil society and practitioners.

# Annex 1: Questions and Hypotheses for Country Studies

## A. Background and Planning Process

### Questions

1. What were the backgrounds and contexts for initiating the formative research in Nepal?
2. What were the considerations and motivations prompting interest in this form of capacity development?
3. What was the significance of Nepal as partner?
4. What processes were followed to prepare agreements and plan of actions (identifying needs, defining objectives, strategies and activities, etc.)?
5. Who were involved at what level of the Ministries during the preparation process?
6. Were any specific institutions and/or individuals driving and dominating the process?
7. What did the parties regard as the opportunities and threats of such collaboration?

### Hypotheses about background and planning

- The concept of Ministry twinning came from and was introduced by Norwegian partners (Norad and MOER).
- The twinning idea was prompted by a policy to involve sector ministries more directly in development cooperation.
- The Norwegian Ministry of Education was more motivated for and interested in establishing a twinning arrangement than their counterpart in Nepal.
- The preparation process was participatory and the process was not dominated by any of the partners.
- There was a systematic process for analyzing needs and identifying gaps (deficiencies in capacity) before the support was decided and objectives and specific capacity building activities were formulated.
- The preparation process was driven by a few committed individuals on both sides.
- Both the model and preparation process were well anchored and supported by senior management in the Ministries of Education in Norway and Nepal.

## B. Intentions and Objectives

### Questions

1. What was understood and defined as capacity development and twinning by partners involved?
2. Was there an understanding on the Norwegian side as to choice of focus and potential benefits for Nepal?
3. Were objectives and strategies for twinning and capacity building clear, with specific targets and indicators for measuring progress, outcomes and impact?
4. Did all partners have a shared understanding of objectives and strategies?
5. To what extent were various levels of capacity development addressed: individual, organizational and institutional/systemic?
6. Were there new and innovative features in formative research compared to other models?

### Hypotheses about intentions and objectives

- The concepts of twinning and capacity development were used with multiple meanings, were unclear and difficult to measure.
- There was a clear analytical basis for the Norwegian support; thus there was an articulated understanding of the potential of a twinning approach.

- The Norwegian Ministry had a clear idea of what it was good at and could provide; but not of what it could gain.
- The twinning and capacity building efforts supported by the Norwegian Ministry have been an integral part of and well-coordinated with the education sector programme – and technical assistance provided by other partners.
- Partners have a shared understanding of objectives and strategies for capacity building.
- Capacity building was meant to be reciprocal – meaning that Nepal should also provide technical assistance to the Norwegian twinning partner.
- Capacity building was mostly understood as transfer of knowledge and skills to individuals and support to specific organizations, and much less to strengthening of organizational linkages, sector or system support.

### **C. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Questions**

1. Have roles been clearly defined:
  - Between MOER and the country partners and other collaborating institutions involved?
  - Between MOER and Norad/MFA/Embassies?
2. To what extent have responsibilities been adequately shared among collaborating partners, both at national and at international level?

#### **Hypotheses about roles and responsibilities**

- The roles of the Norwegian Ministry of Education are clearly understood by partners in the twinned institutions.
- Technical assistance provided through twinning is well coordinated with Norad and the Norwegian Embassy.
- The sharing of responsibilities among parties has been highly uneven.

### **D. Expertise and Capacity**

#### **Questions**

1. What expertise and experience has the Norwegian Ministry of Education for providing technical assistance to education sector programmes in Nepal?
2. Did the Ministries in Zambia/Nepal have sufficient capacity to handle the requirements of this kind of collaboration?
3. To what extent and in what ways has MOER been directly involved in the twinning processes?
4. To what extent is the Norwegian expertise and reform experience relevant to the needs of sector programmes in Nepal?

#### **Hypotheses about expertise and capacity**

- The Norwegian Ministry has provided a broad range of relevant services to their counterparts using their own staff.
- The Norwegian Ministry has offered a prompt and flexible response to all requests.
- In Nepal the capacity in MOE to steer the collaboration has been weak.
- Technical assistance has primarily been provided by a few individuals outside the central Ministry of Education.
- Norwegian expertise is well qualified, but with not much experience from the two countries and/or sector programmes in developing countries.
- Norwegian expertise has not been proficient in organizational change consultancy nor in facilitating complementary learning within the MOER.

### **E. Implementation Processes**

#### **Questions**

1. What mechanisms were established in Nepal for managing and facilitating the twinning arrangement?
2. What were the major components, activities and modalities in the plans of action? How were they identified, planned and implemented?

3. To what extent have agreed activities been implemented? Were deviations from the original well justified?
4. What adjustments were made to the guidelines or plans as a result of evolving experiences?

#### **Hypotheses about implementation processes**

- There has been insufficient capacity in Nepal for being active twinning partner – leading to delays in implementation.
- Some mechanisms essential for dealing flexibly with the challenges of such twinning arrangements were not in place.
- There has been sufficient leadership for driving the collaboration on all sides.
- All major activities have been implemented as planned.
- All major activities are perceived as being well implemented.

### **F. Relevance, Results and Sustainability**

#### **Questions**

1. Are agreed work plans and progress reports available?
2. Have activities, outputs and outcomes been effectively monitored and documented?
3. What approach was taken to the implementation of twinning and how does this relate to the original vision?
4. What changes in capacity in organizations can be documented? What indicators have been used?
5. Which external factors have affected changes in activities, outputs and outcomes?
6. Which capacity changes can be attributed to support from the Norwegian Ministry of Education?
7. To what extent have the supported activities been relevant and useful for the implementation of reforms in Nepal?
8. To what extent did Nepal benefit from the experience of educational reform in Norway?
9. To what extent have capacity building activities covered and had any effect on:
  - Gender related issues
  - Marginalized groups
  - HIV/AIDS
  - The disabled?
10. To what extent are results and benefits from the twinning programmes sustainable?

#### **Hypotheses about results and achievements**

- Activities, outputs and outcomes are effectively monitored and documented.
- Activities aimed at lower level concerns (e.g. improving individual skills) have achieved their short-term objectives, but results at organizational or institutional levels are not measured and unknown.
- The shape of implementation has taken a direction that differs markedly from the original vision.
- The Norwegian Ministry has raised awareness around gender, HIV/AIDS, the disabled and marginalized groups.
- Activities are well implemented, but have not influenced policy formulation and implementation at sector level.
- Twinning has a limited impact on improving organizational capacity compared to other internal and external factors.
- Institutional collaboration or twinning comes to an end when donor support discontinues.
- The sustainability of the organizational and thematic developments is likely to be low as there has been no absorption into policy.

### **G. Cost Effectiveness and Accountability**

#### **Questions**

1. What types and how much resource have been invested?
2. What measures have been taken to ensure an efficient and accountable use of resources?

3. What are the views of partners in Nepal on cost effectiveness?
4. Was there a discussion of alternative use of resources?

#### **Hypotheses about cost effectiveness and accountability**

- The twinning arrangement is seen as tied aid – in which the recipient institutions have no option of choosing an alternative use of resources.
- Providing technical assistance through twinning is less costly than comparable alternatives.
- The cost of providing technical assistance is perceived as high by the recipients.

### **H. The Formative Research Model**

#### **Questions**

1. What is the added value of formative research through twinning compared to other models for providing technical assistance and building capacity?
2. What are the views of other donors regarding the Norwegian model?
3. To what extent does the model display innovative features or break new ground in the area of capacity building?

#### **Hypotheses about the Ministry twinning model**

- There is a clear understanding of what the twinning model is good for – its strengths and weaknesses.
- Other donors are skeptical to institutional twinning since it seems not in line with principles of sector wide approaches.
- A twinning arrangement has the possibility to access broad organizational resources and thus a broad range of relevant services.
- Twinning provides stable long-term partnership as compared to short-term technical inputs.
- Similarities in professional identity and institutional mandates facilitate mutual learning and exchange of technical information among colleagues, as well as enhance credibility.
- Long-term professional commitment drives collaboration and not financial incentives.
- There is a potential for equal two-way collegial exchange of experience and learning in twinning – different from other forms of technical assistance; the realization of this potential is associated with very specific conditions.
- Twinning, rather than focusing on transferring experiences, should focus on mutual inspiration to build upon own experiences.
- Twinning is driven by the donor country rather than by demand from the recipient country institution.
- Twinning has been able to enhance knowledge and skills, create professional and international networks, but have been less successful in supporting systemic changes aimed at improving lasting capacity and in fostering leadership and accountability.

## Annex 2: People Met

### In Norway

#### MOER:

| Name                       | Designation                |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mr Trond Fevolden          | Permanent Secretary (PS)   |
| Ms. Ida Børresen           | Deputy Permanent Secretary |
| Mr Dankert Vedeler (AIK)   | Deputy Director General    |
| Mr. Arild Thorbjørnsen     | Deputy Director General    |
| Ms. Ellen-Marie Skaflestad | Senior Advisor             |
| Mr Håkon Bjørnes (AIK)     | Special Adviser            |
| Ms Mariann Hjelle (AU)     | Adviser                    |
| Mr Knut Alfarnæs (OA)      | Deputy Director General    |

AIK – Department of policy Analysis, Lifelong Learning and International Affairs  
 AU – Department of administration and development  
 OA – Department of (primary and secondary) Education

#### Molde University College:

| Name              | Designation |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Ms Kristin Tornes | Professor   |

#### Norad/UD

| Name             | Designation      | Organisation |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Ms Marit Vedeld  | Adviser          | Norad        |
| Ms Bente Nilson  | Adviser          | Norad        |
| Ms. Sissel Volan | Adviser          | Norad        |
| Mr Jon Lomøy     | Director General | MFA          |

#### Oslo University College

| Name                   | Designation         | Organisation |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Ms Ellen Carm          | Assistant professor | LINS         |
| Ms.Karen-Brit Feldberg | Assistant professor | LINS         |

#### Sør-Trøndelag University College and Sogndal University College:

| Name          | Designation    | Organisation |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Mr Ola Moe    | Senior adviser |              |
| Ane Bergersen |                |              |

### In Zambia

| Name                    | Designation   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>MOE Headquarters</b> |   |
| Dr. Brian Chituwo       | Minister of Education                                 |
| Ms. Lilian Kapulu       | Permanent Secretary                                   |
| Mr. Nelson Nyangu       | Director –Planning and Information                    |
| Mr. Arnold Chengo       | Institutional Development Advisor                     |
| Mr. Fred Brooker        | Technical Advisor                                     |
| Mr. M.D.B Hakasenke     | Director – Teacher Education and Specialized Services |
| Mr Musonda              | Chief Accountant                                      |

Mr James Malama Acting Director – Distance Education and Open Learning  
Mr Jones Bupe Nkole Curriculum Development Specialist

**Provincial Education Office – Southern Province**

Ms. Isabel Nanja Provincial Education Officer – Southern Province  
Mr. S Muchele Acting Provincial Education Planner  
Ms. Regina Siamusiye Education Officer – TED  
Mr. Kamutumwa Muyanga Provincial Education Standard Officer  
Mr. Bornwell Sihhanga Senior Education Officer – Guidance

**Livingstone District Education Board**

Mr. Malambo T Hanguwa District Education Board Secretary  
Mr. Hartomore Namakobo Former Board Chairperson  
Rev. David Musesa Board Chairperson  
Mr. Hameja Dennis Information Focal Point Person  
Mr. George Lubinda District Resource Centre Coordinator  
Ms. Alice Manyqa Sichela Twinning Coordinator  
Grace Kabwe Banda Guidance Co-ordinator

**Linda Basic School**

Ms. Stephania Maseka Head Teacher – Linda Basic School  
Ms. Christine M. Banda Guidance Teacher  
Ms. Agnes N. Chama Teacher  
Ms. Lucia Siloka Teacher  
Ms. Christabel Akende Teacher  
Ms. Lydia Manyanina Teacher  
Mr. Brian Tembo Teacher  
Ms. Leah Mumbi Teacher  
Mr. Fredwell Mulunda Teacher

**Kazungula District Education Board**

Mr. Lackson Buleya Kazungula District Education Board Secretary  
Mr. Elvis Siyawiya District Education Planner  
Mr. Kaliba Multi-grade Focal Point Person  
Mr. Mwanashimba Twinning Focal Point Person  
Mr. Liseho Chairperson  
Mr. Siyakwasiya Vice Chairperson  
Mr. Malaki PTA Representative

**Mukuni Basic School**

Mr. P. Mulenga Head master – Mukuni Basic School  
Ms. Rose Siloka PTA Chairperson  
Ms. Mahau Teacher  
Ms. Mulenga Teacher  
Ms. Nasinda Teacher  
Mr. Silungwe Teacher  
Ms. M Siloka Church Representative  
Mr. Sichamana Teacher  
Mr. Chikome Teacher  
Mr. Mupotola Siloka Mukuni Development Trust Chairperon

**David Livingstone College of Education**

Mr. Clemence Nachibanga Multi-grade Focal Point person  
– David Livingstone College of Education  
Mr. Mike Kanini HIV/AIDS focal Point person

### Former Ministry of Education Officials

|                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ms. Barbara Chilangwa | Former Permanent Secretary – MoE |
| Dr. Lawrence Musonda  | Former Director Planning – MoE   |
| Mr. Simon Chiputa     | Former Director – TESS           |

### In Nepal

| Name                        | Designation                                    | Organisation                                   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Mr. Kikkan Haugen           | Counsellor                                     | Royal Norwegian Embassy                        |
| Ms. Elin Gjedrem            | First Secretary                                |  |
| Ms. Kamala Bisht            | Advisor  |  |
| Mr. Chuman Singh Basnet     | Secretary                                      | MOES   |
| Mr. Ram Sarobar Dubey       | Joint Secretary                                | MOES – Planning Division (FRAG)                |
| Mr. Lava Prasad Tripathi    | Joint Secretary                                | MOES - Higher Education & Mgmt Division        |
| Mr. Lawa Awasthi            | Under Secretary                                | MOES – Foreign Aid Coordination Section (FRAG) |
| Mr. Diwakar Dhungel         | Under Secretary                                | MOES - Monitoring Section (FRAG Coordinator)   |
| Mr. Lok Bilas Pant          | Under Secretary                                | MOES - Policy Analysis / Budgeting Section     |
| Mr. Janardhan Nepal         | Director General                               | DOE (FRAG)                                     |
| Mr. Soviet Ram Bista        | Deputy Director                                | Monitoring & Supervision Section - DOE         |
| Mr. Raja Ram Shrestha       | Deputy Director                                | DOE  |
| Mr. Ram Balak Sinha         | Deputy Director                                | Programme & Budget Section –DOE                |
| Mr. Man Bahadur Chettri     | Deputy Director                                | Research & Information Mgmt Section, DOE       |
| Mr. Bharat Tripathy         | Section Officer                                |  |
| Mr. Ratna Kumar Shrestha    | Deputy Director                                | Finance Section, DOE                           |
| Mr. Vidhyadhar Mallik       | Secretary                                      | Peace Secretariat (former Education Secretary) |
| Mr. Ishwor Upadhyaya        | Chairperson                                    | FRAG   |
| Mr. Naresh Man Shrestha     | Head Teacher                                   | Biswaha Niketan School (FRAG)                  |
| Ms. Sushan Acharya          |  | FOE –TU (FRAG)                                 |
| Ms. Sharada Bajracharya     | Head Teacher                                   | Shanti Nikunj School (FRAG)                    |
| Prof. Bajra Raj Shakya      |  | FRAG   |
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| Mr. Rajiv Sharma             | Advisor                               |  |
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| Mr. Bhupa Raj Khadki         | Treasurer                             |  |
| Mr. Ganesh Basnet            | Former Board member                   |  |
| Mr. Prakash Silwal           | Former Board member                   |  |
| Mr. Bel Prasad Shrestha      | Former Mayor                          |  |
| Mr. Ram Prasad Panta         | Teacher                               | } Dhulikhel Municipality,<br>Kavre District<br>Shree Pratibha Primary School,<br>Pipaldanda, Ward 2,<br>Pachkhal VDC, Kavre District |
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| Ms. Sarita Budhathoki        | Teacher                               |  |
| Ms. Basanta Luitel           | Volunteer Teacher                     |  |
| Mr. Bijay Subedi             | Executive Officer                     |  |
| Mr. Hari Adhikari            | Head teacher                          | Dhulikhel Municipality,<br>Kavre District<br>Gosaikunda Primary School,<br>Banepa Ward 11,<br>Kavre District                         |

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## Annex 4: Country and Sector Context in Nepal

### **The Education Sector Programme**

The Basic and Primary Education Programme II (1999-2004) was launched in July 1999 as the successor to the original BPEP (1993-98). The overall thrust of the programme was to improve the quality of primary education, increase access to basic and primary education, and strengthen management efficiency. Also, BPEP II was expected to enhance national ownership of the education sector, provide for more symmetrical partnerships with external agencies, and ensure the more effective and efficient use of both domestic and external resources in basic and primary education. The Norwegian Government through Norad was one of the five donors supporting the implementation of the programme.

BPEP II set out to achieve a series of specific goals:

- Enhance the capacity to enrol primary school age children in schools or in alternate schooling programmes as well as to ensure retention and completion, especially of girls and other socially disadvantaged groups.
- Improve learning achievement.
- Build and strengthen institutional capacity at the national, district and community levels to plan, monitor and improve the performance of schools.

BPEP II adopted the sector wide approach to funding. The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) sets out the total development budget at 147.4 million USD of which 111.7 million was to be provided through the Core Investment Programme (CIP) often referred to as the basket fund. Five external contributors provided basket funding: Denmark, Norway, Finland, WB and EU, with HMG/N providing counterpart funding.

### **Institutional Development in MOEs**

The education sector is administered by the Ministry of Education and Sports in Nepal. The MoES is responsible for formulating policy plans and programmes, and also responsible for their implementation. As the lead agency for the development and management of the education system, the Ministry of Education and Sports was identified as a priority institution for capacity improvement interventions.

*In order to address the requirements of the ambitious educational plans and the implications created by the emerging environmental context within which the educational goals were to be achieved, the MoES and its institutions in recent years are under pressure to redirect its strategies for pursuing the educational goals. Several strategic shifts in institutional roles, management approaches, and operational modalities are taking place, such as decentralised management of education, facilitating role, community mobilization for educational financing and management, and partnership with the civil society demand institutional capacities qualitatively different from those held in the past.*

*The Project Implementation Plan of BPEP II has outlined strategies and programmes for strengthening institutional capacity of MoES and has set a target for the preparation of a Human Resource Development plan for staff development at the national and district levels. Likewise, the Institutional Analysis study has strongly recommended for the preparation of an HRD Plan for MoES and its institutions to address their institutional and human resource capacity development needs.*

The report developed after an institutional analysis of the MOES in July 2001, has recommended the ministry to strengthen skills and expertise base, and support the Government's broader aims for decentralisation within the education sector and for basic and primary education in general. The MOES and donors have also recognised that capacity building is necessary in a wide range of areas such as educational planning, educational administration, staff development, decision-making processes and communication systems, monitoring and evaluation. In short, institutional and staff development are considered essential for promoting quality development in the education system.

MOES have technical deficiencies and substantial cultural barriers to institutional improvement. There have been fundamental impediments to capacity and institutional development within MOES. These are:

- Structures, mandates and responsibilities are far from clear.
- Staffing practices are poor.
- Barriers to effective communication.
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures are unclear, poorly co-ordinated and driven by central bodies at the expense of local ones.
- According to the Human Resource Development Plan of August 2002, prepared in line with the findings of Institutional Analysis of the MOES and various policies and sub-sectors targets, human resource capacity development is the critical requirement of the institutional development need of MOES and its institutions at the present stage. As a critical component of institutional capacity, the enhanced human resource capacity of MOES will create sustained enabling conditions for effective performance leading to the attainment of educational goals in a sustainable manner.

#### **Human Resource Development Programmes (2002 – 2006)**

The HRD Plan (2002-2006) comprises a range of specific programmes to achieve the human resource development objectives of MOES and its institutions within the five- year period. Some of the major objectives ascertained in the HRD Plan are:

- To enable the MOES to analyse, formulate, implement and evaluate policies, and provide strategic leadership in education development.
- To develop specialisation in different professional fields of education such as early childhood education, special education, teachers' education, distance education, and non-formal education.
- To develop managerial capability of the ministry to effectively manage education plan and programmes.
- To align work practices and service behaviours with professional values, service culture, result orientation and good governance.
- To enable capability of local government and district level agencies for planning and managing educational programs within the framework of community partnership and decentralization policy.
- To revitalise pedagogical support and supervision capability for school and teacher development.
- To enhance the managerial and professional (instructional) capability at the school level for developing them into self-managing institutions.
- To enhance the capacity of females and disadvantaged groups of people for increasing their participation in educational leadership and management.
- To enhance in-house capacity for managing HRD functions (including training planning, implementing, monitoring and follow-ups)
- To provide continuous learning and development opportunity within the ministry through appropriate structures and processes.
- To build HRD systems and work environment for development and utilisation of human resource and institutional capacity.

- To create supportive environment for educational development through capacity building of educational partners
- To prepare officials for adaptation to and development in their career roles at various critical stages throughout their career for both professional and personal development.

### **Initiatives taken in institutional development and capacity building by MOES**

Under BPEP II, a technical support advisory group (TSAG) has been established with a view to providing technical back-stopping to the MOES and DOE, and to help these two bodies focus on technical issues. However, the TSAG has not been able to function in the way envisaged in the PIP.

The BPEP II Programme Implementation Plan (PIP) states that one long-term programme goal is to “...*build and strengthen institutional capacity at the national, district, and community levels to plan, monitor, and improve the performance of primary schools.*” (PIP, 1999). Ten target areas were identified for capacity building improvements, including: a) organisations (e.g. DOE, NFEC, MOE), b) systems (e.g. EMIS), processes (e.g. DEPs, SIPs), and c) groups and bodies (Village Education Committees (VECs), SMCs, Headmasters).

Perhaps the most important capacity building objective of BPEP II was to create and establish the new DOE and to merge all regular programme activities into the DOE and other MOES institutions. The building of local capacity to improve school effectiveness was the second most important capacity building priority set out in the BPEP II PIP. At the district level, a focus was brought to strengthening DEOs, preparing DEPs, and strengthening of EMIS and the Programme Management Information System (PMIS).

At the central level, the evaluation (Joint Government - Donor Evaluation of Basic and Primary Education Programme II) found that there had been significant increases in capacity in the key institutions involved with BPEP II implementation, including DOE, MOES, and NCED. In addition to the establishment of DOE, improvements were noted in:

- The physical infrastructure for education planning.
- The systems and processes used to implement, manage, and monitor the delivery of primary/basic education, and the skills and abilities of staff.
- At the district level, the evaluation found that capacity had increased in a number of areas (including planning, data collection, reporting), and that programme implementation and financial budgeting/reporting functions had been strengthened. At district level, capacity building mainly took the form of training for individual District Education Office (DEO) staff, teachers and SMC members.

### **External Technical Assistance**

The total funding available within the CIP for external technical assistance and training was about \$ 11 million (\$ 6 Million DANIDA, \$ 1.5 million EU, \$ 1.5 million Norad and 1.5 million from UNICEF). JICA has contributed to the civil works component amounting to US\$ 9 million. In the case of DANIDA further direct support has been provided for the Institutional linkage programme. IDA has financed BPEP II on the basis of an Adaptable Programme Lending (APL) procedure.

TA funds are utilized for various purposes: long-term and short-term training courses, national and international advisory/consulting inputs, staff development, research and development, system design, institutional development, etc. Danida, Norad, Finida, European Union and UNICEF have been major providers of TA under BPEP II.

#### *DANIDA – Denmark*

Danish technical assistance has primarily focused on institutional development of the MOES and its constituent agencies. It has been utilized for academic and professional upgrading of MOES officials. Institutional linkage forms the core activity under Danish technical assistance

to BPEP II under which linkages are to be established amongst national, regional and international institutions to enhance the capacity of the Ministry.

To this end, a number of efforts have been initiated. For example, MOES officials are currently provided with fellowships for M.Phil./Ph.D. at national and international universities. Institutional linkages are also being established between MOES and NIEPA in India, Aga Khan University in Pakistan and IIEP in France to support the Ministry in establishing and/or improving district planning, teacher training and EMIS respectively. Danida has made available national consulting inputs in improving school mapping, EMIS, textbook distribution, communication strategy, teacher training policy, financial management system, program monitoring, etc. A number of short-term training courses are provided for MOES officials in English language, computer, and management development.

#### *European Union*

The European Commission has committed 100 person months of international/national consulting inputs for BPEP II. These inputs are to be utilized for improving resource allocations through formula funding, school development planning, school mapping/EMIS, gender and development, and sub-district level institutions. A formula funding scheme is being piloted with the aim of developing a set of transparent and equitable criteria for resource allocation to the districts and schools. The EC has also supported the undertaking of a gender audit, jointly with Unicef and Danida that seeks to analyze existing strategies and their implementation to improve girls' access and outcomes in basic education, identify strengths, constraints and weaknesses, and suggest more comprehensive strategies.

#### *Government of Finland*

The Finish TA is mainly targeted to continuous assessment and curriculum development. The government of Finland has provided one long-term international advisor in the area of continuous assessment. With the Finish TA, the concept of continuous assessment is being piloted in 5 districts.

#### *UNICEF*

UNICEF has also been a major provider of TA in the education sector; more particularly, in the primary education sub-sector. UNICEF support has mainly focused on early childhood education, girls' education, literacy, alternative schooling, teacher training, etc. The Dual Audience Interactive Radio Instruction (DAIRI) program under UNICEF assistance aims to be an innovative effort in raising the quality of teacher training. With UNICEF support, the Faculty of Education has started a distance-based Bachelor's program with specialization in early childhood education. This program is expected to contribute by producing much needed workforce in early childhood education. UNICEF activities are mainly guided by its Master Plan of Operations which is prepared in collaboration with HMG. Its working approach is based on partnership with NGOs, child protection and welfare agencies, training institutes, micro-credit groups, and private sector actors.

#### *Other TA*

The education sector receives TA from other sources as well. For example, JICA has provided technical assistance for school construction, ADB has provided TA for teacher training, World Bank<sup>15</sup> has provided for procurement planning and project planning, and DFID has provided for secondary education development. The US government has been providing Peace Corps volunteers since 1963 who work in education, health, agriculture sectors. Most volunteers who choose to work in the education sector work as school teachers to teach Mathematics, Science and English. Likewise, VSOs, JOVCs, and MS-volunteers who come from the United Kingdom, Japan, and Denmark respectively are also deployed in the education sector. A number of INGOs such as World Education, Save the Children US, Save the Children UK, Action Aid, Plan International, Save the Children Norway, and UMN are also actively involved in the education sector.

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<sup>15</sup> See Project appraisal document on a proposed credit to the Kingdom of Nepal for Basic and Primary Education Project in support of the first phase of the BPEP, 1999 for the detail financial contribution provided by the World Bank.



## **Annex 5: Public Service and Sector Context in Zambia**

This annex outlines key aspects of the environment within which the Inter-Ministerial Cooperation (IMC) has been introduced. The emphasis is on significant changes in Zambia's public administration in general, and on recent developments in policy and system's organisation for donor assistance in the Ministry of Education (MOE) in particular. These wider agendas highlight the challenges that the Zambian MOE is facing thus providing the context within which an IMC needs to find its own place.

### **1. The Civil Service Reform**

In the early 90s, the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) with support from the international community, embarked upon a bold program of civil service reforms – the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP). The overall goal of the PSRP was to improve provision of quality services to the public; increase accountability for utilisation of public finances as well as for service delivery to the people of Zambia. This was largely to be achieved through streamlining of organisational restructuring, and downsizing of the civil service. The reforms also addressed inadequacies in management systems and procedures, including public expenditure management, planning and accountability.

While organisational restructuring is a critical element in reform processes, by itself it does not necessarily lead to major improvements in productivity. Organisational reforms must be accompanied by changes in attitudes and behaviour that employees bring to their tasks. The imbalance in intervention planning and implementation has given the impression that reforms have not been effective in improving service delivery systems as the public continues to register dissatisfaction with delivery of public services.

Following the evaluation of the PSRP in 2003, the programme has been re-designed to focus on Public Service Management, Public Expenditure Management and Financial Accountability (PEMFA). During the same year the policy on National Decentralisation was launched. It is the government's intention to devolve all functions that are not strategic in nature to local authorities. The realisation of a fully decentralised system of government has implications for capacity building in local authorities. Recognising this gap, government has decided to start with de-concentrating some of its functions and powers to lower levels while capacity of local authorities is being built and relevant legislation to support implementation of decentralisation is enacted.

In 2002, GRZ, started implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) ending in December 2004 and December 2005 respectively. The two documents provided the overall framework for national planning and interventions for development and poverty reduction. The country is now preparing to launch a six-year Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) to be implemented from 2006 to 2011.

These documents will outline courses of action to be pursued towards the achievement of broad development objectives and targets in the social and economic sectors. In order to realise the goals the government is setting for itself, special attention will be paid to the development of technical and institutional capacities in all sectors of the economy, including education, so as to respond to development needs of the country.

For example, the FNDP will place emphasis on improving the quality of education as well as increasing access to education by various categories of potential learners through different modes of delivery. It is obvious that more capacity and innovation will be required for the ministry to provide leadership in the area of education delivery.

## **2. The Education Sector Environment**

In line with civil service reforms, the education sector has undergone significant reforms in the last 15 years. In 1996, the MOE had articulated an education policy in the document ‘*Educating Our Future.*’ The document has become the reference point for development programming in the education sector. Other goals and regional efforts such as New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) have also been linked to the reforms in the education sector, such as the effort to improve quality and relevance of education in relation to the world of work and to enhance national productivity. In addition, the international community, including Zambia adopted the Education For All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at improving access to all levels of education.

## **3. Strategies for policy implementation**

### *Restructuring of the Ministry of Education*

Under the PSRP, the Ministry was restructured aiming at decentralisation of education management to basic, high school and teacher education levels and streamlining functions at Headquarters. Presently, the Ministry has reached an advanced stage in its decentralisation process.

The decentralisation of education management by MOE is being implemented simultaneously with the national decentralisation. According to the national decentralisation policy, the government will decentralise to local authorities (with matching resources) (a) the coordination of decentralised structures, including Education Boards; and (b) the provision of primary and basic education. However, the relationship between the two decentralisation processes is not clear as there are no guidelines for how the two processes could complement each other.

Within the Ministry, decentralisation has meant increased involvement of education managers, teachers, pupils, and parent associations in decision making, education planning and resource mobilisation. However, new skills are required in educational planning, analysis and interpretation of policy.

### *Sector wide approach – MOE Sector Plan*

In 2003 the Ministry developed the Five Year Education Sector Plan as a follow-up to the implementation of the Basic Education Sub Sector Investment Program (BESSIP). Through the BESSIP, basic education has undergone major changes, such as the consolidation of a national in-service training infrastructure and the enhancement of education management at school level. Under the new sector plan, plans to reform the high school and teacher education sub-sectors have reached advanced stages with completion of relevant studies.

The situation analysis, on which the sector plan is based, identified increasing access and improving quality as major challenges facing the Zambian education system. As a response to these challenges, the Sector Plan has defined as its goals to address: increasing access/equity, improving quality, developing a robust financial management system, strengthening management and administration, and addressing HIV/AIDS. Delivering in these key areas of the sector plan requires effective planning and coordination of sector activities at all levels.

The achievement of sector goals also requires a significant shift from ‘business as usual’ to more innovative ways to increasing access and improving quality of education. In this light, the IMC support to Southern Province could be viewed as a strategy to accelerate sector plan implementation by providing an opportunity to ‘innovate’ and intensify activity implementation.

### *Management and implementation arrangements*

The adoption of the sector plan marked the end of the programme / project-based approach to education development and ushered in the SWAp approach. The SWAp approach entails that Government and cooperating partners, instead of supporting individual projects, take a holistic view of the sector and finance the sector as a whole on the basis of jointly identified and agreed priorities in the MOE sector plan. The new approach has implications for systems development and donor relationships.

### *Memorandum of Understanding*

In order to improve sector plan implementation and enhance coordination, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the MOE and ten cooperating partners who committed themselves to supporting the implementation of the Sector Plan through basket funding (pooling). In addition, there are cooperating partners who have preferred to remain outside the pooling arrangement, but who still play a significant role. For example, USAID is providing technical assistance to develop the Education Management Information System.

### *Funding modalities and reporting*

One key issue in the MoU, with direct implication for capacity building, is the need for integrated financial reporting based on common Financial Management System (FSM). It was noted that Southern Province has adopted the integrated financial reporting as one province where previously different funding modalities have applied. Under decentralisation, capacity building is required at school and Parent Teachers Association to budget, monitor and report on expenditure in an integrated manner.

### *Technical assistance pooling*

In line with MoU, the MEE and Signatory Partners have agreed to the concept of technical assistance pooling for both short-term and long-term TA support. The major shift from the former practice is that all TA requirements should be driven by the needs of the Ministry. The agreement further stipulates that priority shall be given to national and regional personnel before extending the search to the international market. Currently, the MEE, in conjunction with its partners, has identified a range of TA support in both technical and institutional development areas. This figure may be an indication of either inadequate human resources, in terms of numbers, or a gap in specialised skills. Many voices, also in MOE, raise fundamental questions about such volume of TA and more than ever are asking for alternative forms of providing technical assistance which is much less intrusive in a Ministry.

### *New developments - Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia*

The Zambian authorities find the education sector congested with cooperating partners at the expense of other sectors with similar needs. Hence, a Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia (JASZ) is under discussion, as a way to achieve a more balanced and a more efficient organisation of donor support across different sectors. The strategy focuses on decongesting sectors such as education by reducing the number of partners involved and by shifting support arrangements to Direct Budget Support leaving one of the latter as the 'lead donor' in the sector. This approach is intended to free cooperating partners and encourage them to support other sectors of development. This shift is, on one hand, perceived to disadvantage the education sector in the long term, while on other hand it should enhance coordination, accountability and focus.

## **4. Strategic efforts to support institutional development**

Capacity building should focus on all levels of institutions taking into account specific challenges in the environment. To succeed with the Sector Wide Approach, the Ministry would need to develop and install organisational and operational systems that will facilitate effective coordination, operational and financial management planning, performance monitoring and review, strategic leadership and support management of change.

To address these needs the MOE developed “Institutional Development” as a sub-programme in the Office of the Permanent Secretary. This program is aimed at providing an overall strategic guidance within which the Ministry would function in order to achieve sector goals. According to the initial design, the institutional development, including management of change, would be fused into Directorates to be supported by relevant people. This process requires effective support. Currently institutional development in the Ministry is being supported by AED through long-term TA. This TA is expected to be the converging point of all activities focusing on institutional development as well as the source of strategic inspiration to the Ministry leadership.

### **5. Institutional Development Challenges to MOEZ**

The MOE still continues to face challenges on how to develop comprehensive overviews of its efforts across various levels of the system and its different sub-sectors – i.e. to make effective use of a ‘system-wide’ approach:

- The understanding of the system-wide approach is not shared at all levels. Interventions in the Ministry are not well coordinated. There is also a limitation in terms of capacity to identify different avenues for institutional development.
- The organizational leadership is weakened through constant changes at strategic leadership level. This usually affects consistency and continuity of key activities. This weakness has also affected the IMC.
- There is a lack of critical management skills relevant for effectively using a variety of assessment tools, needed to gain a comprehensive picture of what is required to be done. This factor has also affected the possibility of scaling-up activities under the IMC especially at district level to other district.
- Changing the organisational and work culture still remains the biggest challenge facing the reforms in education. An IMC strategy can have the potential to educate the ministry as a whole on how these have been achieved in another system.







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