

How do you implement programmes that are politically smart and adaptive?

Our Problem Driven Iterative Adaptive (PDIA) approach to programming on Jamii Thabiti has helped us to develop and expand solutions that best fit issues and problems as they arise. It is an approach that is used on a range of Coffey-managed programmes and, taking the initiative to consolidate PDIA experiences and best practice in to briefs and learning documents, Jamii Thabiti staff convened a workshop in Nairobi in June 2017 to do just that.

The learning document is under preparation but the information below highlights the concept behind the workshop and the aims and purposes we seek to achieve through it.



Background

Increasingly, DFID-funded programmes are implemented through a Problem Driven Iterative Adaptive (PDIA) approach, which it is believed enables programmes to be more responsive to their changing context in their quest to providing local solutions to local problems.

Whilst it can be argued that the PDIA approach is not a new concept, and that programmes have always been expected to iterate to deliver results, this new framework requires implementers to be more explicit about the process they follow before changing the course of implementation. It also requires donors to re-think how they can engage with suppliers and programme implementation.

With no blue-print available, programmes have had to develop approaches that work for them. However, it is becoming evident that the challenges are the same across the board, regardless of the nature of the programme. As suppliers are increasingly expected to know best practice in PDIA, there is a need for Coffey to draw lessons from its multiple programmes to influence ongoing debates on PDIA.

Coffey's Governance, Security and Justice practice, through the Jamii Thabiti programme, is convening other Coffey programmes, implementing partners and donors, that are currently implementing the PDIA approach or aspiring to do so in the future. It is an opportunity for all stakeholders involved to look into the lessons learned

and challenges of practically implementing the PDIA approach, and to use that information to enhance programme design and implementation.

Topics of discussions

Some of the key challenges that are currently being experienced in implementing the PDIA approach include:

- **The rigidity of monitoring frameworks** – programmes are expected to be flexible and iterate as much as needed to achieve result. Yet, they are being assessed through rigid monitoring frameworks, such as logframes, which do not offer the same level of flexibility or change. How have the attending programmes managed to be flexible yet accountable to DFID? What is the impact of this on downstream partners? Are there alternative to logframes to assess impact on PDIA programmes?
- **Iteration** – with the pressure of delivering against a logframe in time for an annual review, and often unstable and uncontrollable (political) environments, how often should/can programmes iterate based on thoroughly analysed evidence, and without losing their essence? How much change is enough change – should there be a threshold of desirable change before changes become burdensome to programmes?
- **Being politically smart** – development programmes are particularly exposed to the influence of external politics – whether they are donor led or from the national government. In such context, what does being politically smart means in practice?
- **Delivery through partnerships** – some programmes are designed to be delivered through a partnership approach, which comes with its set of constraints often counter-productive to a PDIA approach. How are current programmes managing their partnerships – being able to identify partners with enough flexibility to change their workplans and/or end the partnership? Similarly, how are downstream partners responding to the PDIA approach?
- **Financial management** – set budgets are agreed at the onset of the programmes to delivery pre-identified targets. It is expected that minor PDIA changes will fit in within those budgets. However, depending on the volatility of the context within which one is operating there could be bigger changes that require bigger budget amendments. How are suppliers, downstream partners and donors flexible in re-deploying funds?

The challenges listed above are not an endless list, and participants will be encouraged to highlight other issues.

The two other Coffey managed programmes involved in the workshop are:

- **Strategic Support to the Ministry of Interior (SSMI) II** - a DFID-funded programme which has been supporting the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoIA) since 2011 and will run until 2019. Now in its second phase, SSMI-2, SSMI's goal is to improve Afghan National Police (ANP) service delivery through a more capable, accountable and responsive MoI that is able to better manage the ANP. SSMI-2 national and international advisors provide technical assistance including system and process development, and capability building to the MoIA.
- **Nigeria Policing Programme (NPP)** – an FCO funded programme that aims to increase security for men, women and children in Nigeria with a specific focus on Borno state. The programme works to support the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to improve service delivery and accountability as well as supporting security service cohesion.