

ICED Evidence Library

Best Practices in Infrastructure TA Programming



Tags: Economic Development, Programme Design, Infrastructure

In 2016 ICED undertook an extensive review of best practices found across DFID and other donors programmes which utilise technical assistance to improve investment in, and delivery of infrastructure in developing countries. The review undertook case studies of 10 high performing technical assistance programmes which had achieved significant outcomes in infrastructure delivery, finding a number of key success factors in programme design from flexibility, to awareness of political economy and a need to take a more nuanced approach to theories of change. These findings are set out here, and further details can be found in the 10 full case studies, also held in the ICED Evidence Library. For more information please consult iced.programming@uk.pwc.com, follow @icedfacility on twitter, or consult our [medium blog](https://medium.com/iced-facility) <https://medium.com/iced-facility>.

Case Studies and Programmes Reviewed	
Power Reform: Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility	<i>NIAF / DFID</i>
Scaling Solar: Zambia Country Programme	<i>IFC</i>
Coc San Viability Gap Funding	<i>PIDG</i>
Centre for Inclusive Growth: Nepal (CIG)	<i>DFID</i>
Philippines PPP Centre (PPPC)	<i>ADB</i>
Uganda Country Programme	<i>Cities Alliance / Slum Dwellers International</i>
Cities Creditworthiness Initiatives (Tanzania/Uganda)	<i>World Bank Group</i>
Dakar Municipal Bond	<i>PPIAK / SNTA</i>
Real Equity for All (REALL)	<i>CLIFF / SDI / DFID</i>
Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing	<i>WIEGO</i>

Key success factors in technical assistance programming

Successful programmes among those reviewed are characterised by several common elements in the structure of their design and delivery. These key success factors are set out below:

Flexibility in programme design and delivery: Recognising the dynamic nature of infrastructure and urban development in developing countries, programmes that can respond to changing client demands and emerging political economy challenges and opportunities were likely to be more successful (NIAF, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal, Scaling Solar (SS), PPPC, Dakar). Programmes should be clear about the interdependencies and network effects required to achieve outcomes. There is often friction between static donor targets prescribed in logframes for demand driven programs - and the need to build local ownership by moving at the pace of clients influenced by the political economy where the intervention is operating (TSUPU, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal). In uncertain and risky operating environments (where enabling environment infrastructure and urban programs operate) planning and monitoring tools (logframes) need to be adapted flexibly and when needed as programs' scope, approach and outputs evolve (NIAF, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal). All programmes understand that a Theory of Change (ToC) is an outcomes-based approach, which applies critical thinking to design a set of interventions to achieve an Output, incorporating key constraints and drivers to success. But the depth of analysis of the ToC varies greatly among interventions

Strong awareness of political economy: Both policy reform and supporting large investment transactions to reach financial close are highly conditioned by the political economy environment. Projects that are based on in-depth political economy analysis are therefore more likely to succeed. Reform is most successful when aligned with national policies and/or government agenda (NIAF, TSUPU). Political economy considerations need to be carefully assessed and managed during programme implementation for instance, identifying/communicating with political champions, building coalitions for change across the political spectrum; enabling consensus among the different political parties even if risks can seldom be reduced to zero (NIAF, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal, Dakar). Programmes that follow a holistic 'systems' approach that take into account the interdependence of factors and engage a variety of stakeholders have more promise to be transformative and at scale (REALL, TSUPU); Full/Semi Embedded advisers (pros and cons) can help build trust and understanding with key decision-makers and mobilise scarce skills from members of the diaspora [NIAF, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal]. Interventions should be appropriate and not seek to

Active partnerships and stakeholder engagement: Traditional TA providers (MDBs, bilateral donors) are increasingly partnering with range of private foundations, NGOs, CBOs, CDEs, especially in the urban development space/informal economy (Dakar, REALL, WIEGO, REALL) to leverage their program impacts. Partnerships use a range of organisation structures, including experimentation with “federal” structures, combining centralised mobilization of resources, decentralised advocacy and implementation, leveraging local networks [CCI, WIEGO, REALL, CA]. Partnering locally based groups with an international platform can fast-track policy reform (WIEGO). In some cases, it is too soon to assess effectiveness of models, but they should be tracked as assessed. Recent WB led platforms are involving WBG interagency co-operation, support of non-traditional donors and are based on looser organizational structures than traditional institutionalized Facilities supported by MDTF [CCI, SS, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Initiative].

Need for integrated programming approaches: Successful TA interventions have typically engaged on multiple levels of the delivery chain, recognising that there are multiple barriers to successful infrastructure and urban development. Combining policy advisory with capacity building and investment facilitation within the same programme can allow for a more joined up and integrated approach, allowing for better phasing and resource allocation (NIAF, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal, Scaling Solar (SS), PPPC, Dakar). Capacity building activities are best integrated into broader scope programs rather than as stand along interventions so they are effectively directed to supporting main programs goals [CCI, Philippines, Scaling Solar]. Blended (or grant) financing instruments promoted by Donors to bridge the financial gap in infrastructure and urban projects, such as the VGF, should be complemented by substantive technical assistance (in the form of preparatory work) to mitigate risks associated with the instrument (VGF: Coc San Hydro Power Plant);

Ensuring appropriateness of interventions: The design of TA should be oriented towards the most pressing challenges faced by local beneficiaries, and not promote ready-made solutions. For example, a restrictive approach to stimulating private sector financing sources for municipal development using advanced market using sophisticated financial instruments has limited application in most LICs, and greater attention should be given to broad-based approaches to strengthening the financial sustainability (including revenue generation and financial management). [Dakar, CCI]

Critical role of evidence for influencing and advocacy: A lack of reliable data and intransigence from authorities in refusing to collect data can be a barrier to devising holistic and responsive urban development interventions [CCI]. WIEGO for example has had a clear vision on the role of statistical information in terms of its ability to change attitudes about the informal sector not adequately covered by published macro-economic sources. Evidence-based advocacy (“putting statistics in the hands of activists) can also be a powerful mechanism for change (WIEGO);

Sustainability: While many programmes have achieved good demonstration effects, sustainability is still a key issue for many program and interventions. Donor dependency and lack of knowledge transfer and/or exit strategies is prevalent (NIAF, TSUPU, Centre for Inclusive Growth Nepal). For example, the transition of the REALL housing model from donor to commercial is also not yet fully tested.

Ensuring a focus on the economic growth linkages. The linkages between infrastructure investment and growth are complex and not always clear. Project teams should ensure that they clearly map how their interventions will support economic transformation at a macro-level and should describe how individual outcomes might facilitate growth at the micro-level (geographic regions, sectors, specific social groups). Analysis should consider not only the scale of impact, but also the timing and distribution of economic growth benefits. Conclusions should be evidence-based, and further analysis should be built into project evaluation processes where the data is weak. Project teams should be clear about the potential trade-offs for growth involved with targeting other development outcomes (e.g. social inclusion, green growth) and ensure that value for money analysis captures the longer term transformational benefits where these are objectives;

Taking a proactive approach to mainstreaming: Project teams should ensure that social inclusion and climate/environment outcomes are fully integrated into project design where appropriate (including incentives and reporting). While not all projects will be expected to address and incorporate a full range of development outcomes, all should nonetheless consider the potential for integration during design. Projects should not claim to deliver development benefits where this is not the case or where assumptions on how these benefits will be delivered are implicit or depend on trickle down effects. Even within a given community or sector, different barriers may exist for different groups or technologies and these should be disaggregated and targeted with fit for purpose solutions to ensure access and adoption;

More nuanced use of theories of change and indicators to measure impact: Project teams should ensure that explicit economic growth narratives are accurately captured within theory of change and logframe models. High level outcomes and indicators should be qualified to capture the granularity of these change processes. Examples include measuring affordability or reliability of energy access, understanding the access to new jobs for specific social groups, or measuring investment mobilised for specific environmental purposes

Recommendations for Infrastructure Technical Assistance programming

The following 7 key recommendations were identified as being key to designing successful infrastructure technical assistance programmes:

1. **Promoting flexible and adaptive programming** to reflect the long-term nature of infrastructure/urban development and the influence of unforeseen factors during delivery;
2. **Adopting approaches grounded in political economy analysis** with strong communications and embedded advisory support, identifying stakeholders who can support;
3. **Working through boundary organisations** that can act as change agents, particularly when seeking to achieve transformation at scale or engaging with the informal sector;
4. **Integrating upstream (policy/capacity) and downstream** (investment facilitation, user engagement) into unified TA approaches to address multiple barriers and routes to growth;
5. **Ensuring interventions are appropriate to the challenges faced** in LICs, addressing more basic barriers (e.g. capacity) before seeking to introduce more complex solutions.
6. **Ensuring there are strong capacity and regulatory frameworks** in place before engaging with the private sector to leverage capital and expertise;
7. **Incorporating risk-taking and willingness to fail**, and pursuing programming approaches that others cannot to promote innovation and explore pathways to transformation;