



# DFID's Education Sector Technical Assistance Programme in India

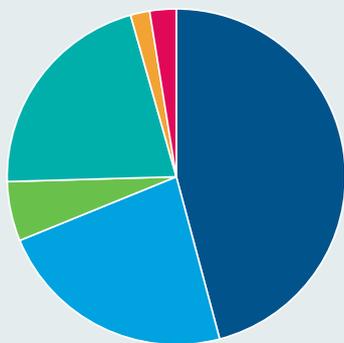
## What Has Worked? What Has Not Worked?

### Introduction

A programme to support education in India was implemented between April 2013 and March 2016 consisting of the following components:

- **RMSA-TCA;** capacity building to accelerate implementation of the national secondary education reform programme and improve programme outcomes.
- **Teacher Education Through School Based Support;** harnesses ICT to deliver practical, high quality classroom materials in core subjects to over 1 million teachers.
- **The Odisha Girls Incentive Programme;** has established systems to provide conditional cash transfers to marginalised castes and tribal children.
- **The Madhya Pradesh School Quality Assurance Framework Programme;** has built inspector's capacity and designed an evaluation tool to assess school performance.
- **The Bihar Language Initiative in Secondary Schools;** is developing a sustainable model for English language teacher development.
- **Support to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs;** for system reform; capacity building; and learning from global good practice.

Total DFID Funding: £43.6 million



■ RMSA-TA   ■ TESS   ■ MoTA  
 ■ Odisha   ■ MO-SQAF   ■ BLISS

### What are the Typical Characteristics of Successful Technical Assistance?

There is no single form of technical assistance, but evidence suggests successful TA has common characteristics:

- Focus on behaviour change by individuals, groups and organisations
- Convincing narrative of change
- A TA team needs to build trust and have strong soft skills; and be technically specialised
- Focus on developing and sustaining relationships with stakeholders
- TA contributes to development outcomes but does not control them. The activities of endogenous actors are also vital.
- Catalytic in nature, often followed by replication or scale up.

### Wider Learning

**Purely technical solutions are not enough.** The administrative and cultural context in which TA operates needs to be taken into account. Capacity building is an integral part of technical system development and should be explicitly planned for and monitored.

**Value for Money indicators should be based on research evidence.** Value for Money means different things in different contexts, indicators should be flexible and, if necessary, use proxies as evidence.

**Proof of concept should be demonstrated before scaling up or replication is attempted.** TA should work effectively in a typical range of conditions with no more external assistance than can be sustained after the expiry of the project. It is a stage in the process, requiring further work by local stakeholders.

**Sustainability is about more than finance.** Sustainability is achieved when systems or behaviours are firmly established and owned by key stakeholders and benefits are equitably distributed.

**The Theory of Change is a tool well suited to TA.** It can be used to illustrate processes and outcomes. It allows for alternative pathways, descriptions of the changes, and can

## How Well are DFID Tools and Management Systems Adapted to Technical Assistance?

The impact of technical assistance does not fit with linear cause and effect, and results are hard to define. DFID tools and management systems need to be adapted to reflect the complex characteristics of technical assistance.

**The logical frameworks** were used as living planning tools, but failed to adequately capture the many activities related to the exercise of soft skills.

More detailed **Theories of Change** would have uncovered implicit planning assumptions, clarified expectations and enabled planning to be adjusted as assumptions were tested. More emphasis on designing Theories of Change would make monitoring and evaluation more effective.

**Results based management** was an uneasy fit with technical assistance. There was a tension between the characteristics of TA and what is required by DFID for traditional project accountability. This tension could be mitigated by stronger theories of change and understanding of soft skill activities. A 'How To' note on designing Theories of Change in the context of technical assistance would be useful.

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include the 'soft' activities of TA. It should be developed iteratively in conjunction with a formative monitoring and evaluation system to test the underlying assumptions.

**Technical assistance agencies** should prioritise soft skills to successfully manage the specific characteristics of technical assistance. Agencies should also be able to demonstrate their capacity to develop Theories of Change and formative monitoring and evaluation systems to guide planning processes.

**Economising on technical advice does not lead to successful projects.** The quality of advice played a considerable part in defining the programme and contributed to shifting long term government strategies. A less experienced adviser would lack credibility and key knowledge.

## What Worked Well

**Iterative approaches** in which implementation was developed in close consultation with stakeholders, based on initial technical needs analysis. This required building relationships with key stakeholders.

**Policy dialogue** which generated successful debate was based on a framework which defined the areas of operation, without pre-specifying the products or outcomes. Initial research by TA agencies established credibility and provided data on which subsequent policy dialogue could take place. Formal mechanisms were crucial in creating both space and opportunities for dialogue. Policy briefs were also a useful tool.

**Targeted interventions** were successful in reaching some of the most marginalized families and enhancing school enrolments.

## What Did Not Work So Well

Formative monitoring and evaluation was generally weak, generating little useful data to test underlying assumptions, provide information for DFID reviews, or demonstrate the utility of interventions in different contexts.

TA projects need long timeframes. Time is required to establish credibility and relationships, and research is needed to define the development problem. Insufficient time was allowed to effect institutional change and to enable changed behaviours to become routinised. These are generic problems of TA implementation – longer timeframes are needed to create engagement and change.

## Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation team adopted a mixed method approach, including

- Desk based review of documents and secondary data
- Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key respondents
- Small sample survey
- Field visits to agency and DFID offices and key institutional recipients
- Seminar with technical assistance agency to explore their views on DFID tools and management systems

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### Disclaimer:

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