

# COACHING FOR RESULTS:

THE KIND OF CHANGE  
RESULTS COACHES  
FACILITATE AND THE TACTICS  
THEY USE TO DO SO

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## Summary

One major problem of aid effectiveness and public sector reforms in developing countries is the disparity between the planned outcomes and the actual performance on the ground – referred to as the implementation gap. To tackle this issue, since 2005, the World Bank develops and provides political and operational leadership support to borrowing countries to reinforce their capacity to achieve concrete results. Rapid results initiatives and tailored coaching create changes which help closing the implementation gap. However, little operational research is available on results coaching. The main argument of this research is that techniques, strategies and abilities deployed by results coaches have a significant influence on behavioral and organizational change, and ultimately on project implementation and development outcomes. Researchers surveyed fourteen coaches, and using an inductive approach, identified six types of changes and the techniques employed by the coaches. We present and discuss each of these changes and show that result coaching fills an important gap in our understanding of how leaders at different levels can improve implementation.

## **Credits and Acknowledgements**

The research presented in this document was developed as a result of an applied research project led by Professor Eric Champagne (assistant director) and Moira Hart-Poliquin (Senior Fellow) at the University of Ottawa's Centre on Governance along with Benjamina Randrianarivelo and Kay Winning (governance and leadership specialists) at the World Bank. Savera Hayat, researcher at the Centre on Governance at the time and currently manager of International Development Programs at the University of Calgary, was the lead consultant on this project. Aaida Mamuji, Ph.D. student in public administration at the time and recently appointed professor at York University was the research assistant in the initial phase of this project.

The research team wishes to thank Monique Aubé (professional coach) who played an important role as an external advisor on coaching and who participated in several interviews with coaches. Cristina Ling and Hirut M'cleod both from the World Bank who provided useful guidance to the research team. Hilary Kemsley who provided editing support. Finally, a very special thanks to the results coaches who participated in the research and gave their time, insights and valuable inputs through the interviews.

## Introduction

Since 2005, the World Bank develops and provides political and operational leadership support to borrowing countries to reinforce their capacity to achieve concrete results. These initiatives have been known under the label: Leadership for Results. The focus of these leadership initiatives is to provide leadership tools and approaches to sensitizing and empowering political leaders by connecting them with the operational machinery of government. By staging a real time, time-bound pilot exercise aligned with high national priorities and service delivery commitments, space is created for getting better outcomes. Once stakeholders see the outcomes, confidence for scale up is created and capacity is built for problem solving more generally – both at the operational and leadership level. These World Bank leadership programs were designed and delivered in many countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. It is a highly adaptive, multidisciplinary and structured approach that draws upon and packages insights and tools from the fields of leadership, change management, coaching, political economy and communications.

One key tool used in leadership programs to support implementation is the Rapid Results Approach (RRA). The RRA was originally developed by Boston-based firm Schaffer Consulting for private sector companies in the United States to enable them to quickly tackle and overcome hurdles towards attaining a project goal (Schaffer and Ashkenas, 2005). It is a methodology anchored on project management techniques, and it implements Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) - “small projects designed to quickly deliver mini-versions of the big project’s end results” (Matta and Ashkenas, 2003) in around 100 days – to work towards achieving the broad, overarching end goal. The RRA was more recently adopted by the Rapid Results Institute to support development projects of developing country governments in overcoming constraints to project implementation.<sup>1</sup> These Initiatives have introduced a “Results Coaching” approach as a central methodology component. Results coaches are low profile, high impact facilitators who operate within the network of stakeholders involved in project implementation in a given country. They can be internal but they generally tend to be external to that network and trained

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<sup>1</sup> Rapid Results Institute website: <http://www.rapidresults.org/>

as group coaching specialists. Working with reform teams at the country level, results coaches are recruited to increase chances of RRI team to succeed by influencing behavioral and organizational changes within individuals, leaders and teams which in turn can result in long-term sustainable changes leading to achievement of development outcomes.

Observations from the field tell us that these leadership initiatives utilizing RRIs and Results Coaching as a key component, make a significant difference in the success of World Bank project implementation (World Bank Institute, 2008), particularly in difficult contexts (Campos and al., 2013). What is critically important but not totally obvious is the role of results coaches in that process. So far, no empirical studies have specifically focused on the coaching component of these initiatives. Researches jointly undertaken by the World Bank and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, led by Professor Matt Andrews, tested a general framework for factors enabling or constraining achievement of results (Andrews, McConnell and Wescott, 2010). Previous empirical works conducted by monitoring and evaluation specialists were instrumental to better understand the significance of leadership and leaders on development and project implementation.<sup>2</sup> The work undertaken by the Rapid Results Institute has been influential in developing the principles behind the Rapid Results Approach as applied to World Bank projects. Anecdotal evidence from personal experiences is documented in various reports and testimonials. Yet, till date, no data has been analyzed that will allow to codify, observe, and share knowledge on how coaches affect behavior and how change processes in different contexts have been facilitated.

Developed by the Centre on Governance (CoG) at the University of Ottawa and the World Bank, this document is a result of a collaborative action-research project based on a series of interviews with a selected sample of Results Coaches.<sup>3</sup> The general research question that guides that research project is the following: What types of organizational change do coaches effect that leads to positive development results, and what techniques do they deploy to

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<sup>2</sup> The authors would like to acknowledge the important work done by Dorte Kabell of Kabell Consulting who conducted several evaluations on Leadership for Results programs and Rapid Results Initiatives.

<sup>3</sup> The Centre on Governance put a specific emphasis on action research methods – *in situ* observation and reflection of leaders and teams involved in governance reform. Action-research methods, originally founded by Kurt Lewin in the 1950s, are often used in change management initiatives. It offers a range of field research techniques that draw information from the experiences of social groups or people working in organizations.

achieve those changes? Explicitly, the research focuses on understanding the specific contribution of results coaches within the implementation of World Bank's Leadership for Results programs. This research is a unique opportunity to tackle both operational issues and academic contributions in the fields of international development and aid effectiveness.

The document is structured around four sections. The first section presents the key concepts and the context in which Leadership for Results programs and Rapid Results have been implemented. But most important, it describes the role of Results Coaching, and explains how coaching influences behavioral and organizational changes. The second section presents a theoretical framework incorporating theories on adaptive leadership and Results Coaching applied to international development work. The third section presents the methodology that was used to carry out this original research. The fourth section presents the results and provides an explanation for how results coaches influence behavioral and organizational change in the context of Leadership for Results programs.

## **1. The Context: World Bank's Leadership Initiatives**

Many approaches and tools have emerged to tackle performance management and the challenge of the 'implementation gap'.<sup>4</sup> What often stymies donors' efforts to support governments to achieve results is the right balance between accountability and commitment by the political leadership on one hand; while on the other hand, it is the integrity and efficacy of the implementation processes by the machinery of government. One innovative approach introduced by the World Bank through lending programs is called Leadership for Results. It is not simply a leadership learning event per se but rather full "action learning" process which engages political leaders on one side and implementing teams on the other side.

Leadership for Results programs help governments understand the complexities of implementation and pinpoint the weak links in the chain from the highest to the lowest level. Furthermore, it brings focus to the incremental changes needed for success in broader

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<sup>4</sup> For instance: results-based management, performance management and measurement, performance budgeting, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, enhancing open and transparent governments, etc.

governance and policy reforms. The approach involves a process of translating national reform priorities into operational targets that are meaningful to a well-defined set of stakeholders, and those required to actually undertake the execution of activities towards those targets.

Such a process invariably improves consensus and eases the planning and execution of short-term measurable actions to support the long-term reform goals as a strong focus is placed upon facilitating dialogue between stakeholder, leaders and implementers. In order to introduce the concept and then support the operational follow-through of decision-making by the leaders, Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) constitute a performance management strategy whereby leaders and teams of implementers are accompanied by results coaches in piloting short-term action plans to reach targeted outcomes. They serve to rally, organize, innovate and drive change (Schaffer and Ashkenas, 2005; Matta and Ashkenas, 2003; Matta and Murphy, 2005; Nair & al., 2007; Campos and al., 2013). The ingenuity of an RRI is that of setting an ambitious measurable goal that leaders and beneficiaries care about, and that needs to be achieved in a short span of time (ex. 30, 60 and 100 days). A key dimension of the Rapid Results Approach is the Results Coach who facilitates the positioning, selection and learning from the actions taken by different stakeholders pursuing the same objective.

***What does Leadership for Results programs looks like?***

Leadership for Results programs begins with an expressed concern by a leader with the status quo in the delivery of a public service or policy reform, and the commitment to engage and support a better result. The next step is identification of a coach and then the creation of ad hoc, multi-stakeholder operational teams to deliver on the Rapid Results Initiative. The ultimate goal is to facilitate the realization of larger reform goals through the successful achievement of smaller, measurable results.

The process harnesses cumulative political will at the leadership level supported by Rapid Results Initiatives and Results Coaching at the operational level. The combination of these elements supports the effective execution of selected priority outcomes. Political will is harnessed by handpicking national reform priorities and translating them into operational targets meaningful to constituencies. The interactive adaptive process focused on achieving specific results depending on politicians to deliver on removing systemic constraints. The approach has three components:

1. **High-level leadership retreats:** High-level governments leaders build consensus and commitment towards specific goals and priorities; they also start developing a performance measurement framework to set very specific targets;
2. **Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs):** Practical hands-on initiatives applying the principles and techniques of the Rapid Results Approach (RRA) over a short span of time (ex. 60, 90 and 120 days).
3. **Results Coaching interventions:** Embedded into performance management strategy and RRIs. These comprise not only coaching of teams for rapid results, but a needs-assessment on context-setting, leadership coaching to elicit ownership, broader coalition-building to help overcome resistance, and skills-building in basic project management techniques to enhance the capacity of project teams to deliver results.

### ***High-Level retreats***

In preparation for retreats, goals and priorities are identified in a sector where there is existing political support. At high-level retreats, leaders are invited to select operational results that are within their prevailing national development plan. As well Implementers of successful pilot RRIs debrief leaders on connections, roles and responsibilities, strategies and lessons leading to good results. To consolidate their commitment, governments are exposed and agree to a performance management strategy to support the implementation of goals, priorities and expected results from leaders and decision makers at the operational level.

### ***Rapid Results Initiatives***

The Rapid Results Approach (RRA) is utilized as a methodology for jump-starting and accelerating project implementation through the staging and monitoring of time-bound and geographically limited initiatives. These are called Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) and constitute a real-time adaptive learning process which calls for breaking the large-scale and challenging reform process into manageable pieces. The process begins by launching pilot RRIs and usually various teams are involved in tackling the reform from different angles. Each team establishes and works toward approximately 100-day goals with support of a seasoned coach. If successful, these pilot RRIs enhance confidence in the achievability of steps towards effective reform. As subsequent cycles of RRIs are launched after the initial 100 days, leaders, implementers and stakeholders see that results build on results. Momentum and confidence grows from observing that it is possible to achieve targets well above current levels. Over the long-term, these

methodologies introduce a culture of results through these RRIs, and communicates to the implementing agencies that this is a departure from business as usual.

Leadership for Results, as a process, engages and strengthens leadership at multiple levels. In addition to top-level actors, successful outcomes rely on the leadership within project implementation teams that actually carry out the work to achieve results. Based on Thornton (2010) work, we define an “implementation team” as a clearly delineated group of people who have been assigned to a specific task or project and who are collectively accountable for the implementation of specific development goals identified by decision-makers in a high-level retreat. This group of people is interdependent with respect to information, resources and skills. They must combine their efforts to achieve a common goal. They share responsibility for the success or failure of a task or a project (Thornton, 2010).

The RRIs have been popular because of their short lead-time in kick-starting implementation, and desire amongst leadership to produce evidence of results for their electorate. The element of coaching support leveraged to guide RRI teams has proven to be a cornerstone to the achievement of results. They possess a multifaceted hybrid set of skills and capabilities combining project management, individual and team coaching capacities.

### ***Results Coaching Interventions***

Results coaches have a direct impact on individual and team skills to deliver results, and drive behavior change. Behavior change can be observed when individuals or teams working on a development projects have been exposed to and apply new perspectives learned through their experience of new practices to improve public services. Organizational change refers to an organization institutionalizing new structures, systems or processes in the achievement of a specific goal or objective. These are replicable in other parts of the organization or transferable to other goals or outcomes.

At its core, Results Coaching helps teams unbundle results chains, assign accountability, monitor and analyze progress regularly. Through process analysis, collaborative problem-solving and action-learning, the results coaches support teams and leaders to identify constraints, fill capacity gaps and identify innovative solutions to implementation problems. This process enhances performance incrementally within each RRI, building capacity to enhance performance system wide.

Results coaches underscore for leaders the importance of creating a safe space for innovation and learning. Within this safe environment, coaches help leaders to engage tools and processes for facilitating their own accountable tangible outcomes. They stimulate operational teams to experiment with non-traditional stakeholders – beneficiaries, civil society or the private sector. Another unique aspect of results coaches are in the unique position to liaise between the operational and political level – and vice versa. Improved communication enhances trust between leaders and operators, gives leaders the opportunity to intervene when political and systemic obstacles that impede progress towards a goal. Their unique level of access allows them to facilitate cooperation and collaboration at the highest levels.

## **2. Adaptive Leadership and Team Coaching**

In the context of Leadership for Results programs, Results Coaching is fundamentally an adaptive approach. We developed the theoretical framework of this project around two concepts from the theories of organizational development: Adaptive Leadership and Group Coaching.

### ***Adaptive Leadership***

*Adaptive Leadership* introduces leaders to alternative approaches by constantly adjusting to new situations, solving problems and managing implementation, in pursuit of measurable goals (Heifetz, 1998; Heifetz and Linsky, 2002; Heifetz and Linsky, 2009). Heifetz and his colleagues contend that to confront complex situations, adaptive approaches are more appropriate than technical approaches.

Development theories have often been approached through technical experts with technical expertise and technical solutions. In this perspective, the role of leadership and the complexity of the real world are often underestimated. The technical/expert approach to development can only go so far. Building a bridge, for example, may seem technical, but that approach doesn't take into consideration the social, cultural and structural factors that play a role in the success or failure of the project implementation process.

It is increasingly recognized that social organizations and political systems are complex and they need a sensitive understanding of the context and dynamics in order to steer them. Given the

level of complexity and the unstable and challenging environment in developing countries, adaptive approaches are required. Development project implementation is an adaptive challenge, and we need new implementation models that leave more room for experimentation. One such model is emerging from the current literature on development that talks about the “science of delivery” (Wessal and al., 2013; Friedman, 2013). This approach is taking into consideration the specific implementation capabilities of countries and local environments. It also acknowledges the importance of political support to tackle change. This perspective emphasizes the importance of leadership engagement at multiple levels and the use of adaptive approaches.

What follows are a few elements from that model which are relevant to the successful implementation of development projects. One critical element that Heifetz et al. make is the distinction between ‘authority’ and ‘leadership’. The term leadership is understood as the capacity to take a step back from action in order to better analyze and read the situation. First of all, the leader should have the ability to diagnose the environment, the system, the adaptive challenges along with the political landscape. Heifetz et al. use the metaphor of “getting off the dance floor and onto the balcony” to better respond to what is really happening in the environment from a macro-level standpoint. From that analysis, the leader should be able to identify the priority targets of an organization.

Another element is that leadership is also important to create a new public administration and service delivery culture. Leadership has to set the objectives and the expected results and maintain a disciplined attention on important outcomes. In this context, the flow of multidirectional information is paramount. Communicating new information between levels and across sectors is important.

The model talks about leaders as those who are empowering others: to ‘give the work back’ to those who must actually do it. The leader must provide a safe space for experimentation and customized processes. Leadership is thus about facilitating the work of implementers and allowing them take initiatives and risks. For Heifetz et al., achieving results is a shared responsibility between the leaders and the implementers.

Another important idea that we associate with adaptive leadership is the “politics of implementation”. This means understanding the interests across stakeholders and engaging all actors (those who hold official power and those who hold informal power) so that political will,

in addition to all other sources of influence and operational resources can converge around the same outcome. This is where Results Coaching can make a difference and contribute to adaptive leadership on the ground.

### ***Team Coaching***

In the context of leadership initiatives, Results Coaching support leaders at multiple levels by creating opportunities for them to practice adaptive leadership behaviors with the stakeholders that are in charge of implementing the desired outcomes right on the ground. Results coaches demonstrates a specific subset of the skills and tools described under “coaching” and “team coaching” whereby coaches work closely with stakeholders using the Rapid Results Approach to implement a highly adaptive process.

The International Coaches Federation, ICF, a worldwide recognized organization for professional coaches, defines coaching as follows: “Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. It is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organizations.”<sup>5</sup> According to ICF’s core competencies repertory, coaching is about co-creating a relationship with the team, establishing trust, intimacy and a presence that is open, flexible and trustful. Results Coaching is about communicating effectively by listening and understanding people’s concerns, values, beliefs, suggestions and asking the right questions to understand people’s perspectives. More specifically, it enhances the achievement of results by (i) facilitating setting and sticking with goals; (ii) providing the right information and knowledge in a timely fashion; (iii) identifying the right set of actions to deliver results; and (iv) holding attention on priorities. Underpinning the process is a commitment to monitoring progress, and creating discipline and accountability towards results.

Results Coaching also borrow from the notion of “team coaching”. According to Hackman (2002:166-167), team coaching derives from this preceding definition of coaching, builds on the same skills, but “team coaching” is specifically about group processes:

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<sup>5</sup> ICF website: [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org)

“[Team coaching] involves direct interaction with a team that is intended to help members use their collective resources well in accomplishing work. [...] [Team] coaching can address any aspect of team interaction that is impeding members’ ability to work well together or that show promise of strengthening team functioning. [...] Research has identified three aspects of group interactions that have special leverage in shaping team effectiveness: the amount of effort members apply to their collective work, the appropriateness to the task and situation of the performance strategies they employ in carrying out the work, and the level of knowledge and skill they apply to the work.” (p. 166-167)

Thornton (2010) provides a more comprehensive definition of team coaching:

“Team coaching is coaching a team to achieve a common goal, paying attention both to individual performance and to group collaboration and performance. [...] Rather than one specific method, group coaching is the application of principles of group dynamics to a variety of methods, in order to increase the effectiveness and reach of the results. The interaction between participants is a key element. [...] Coaching does not happen in one meeting. All coaching relationships, Individual or group, imply some longevity of engagement – the learning takes place over time, and so involves meeting on a number of occasions, with the opportunity to sustain and build on previous learning through repeated reflection. What is distinctive about group coaching is that the relationship is multiple. Each member of the group can relate to the coach, to each other member and to the group as a whole, with the added learning choices and possibilities implied.” (p. 122, 9, 10)

Results coaches provide a unique service to leaders and teams helping them strengthen their collaborative capacities to achieve better outcomes through a fundamental adaptive process. How they do this is a complex process of combining knowledge, research, analysis, interpersonal and organizational skills and ongoing learning from clients and other coaches. It is not one simple recipe but a combination of factors happening simultaneously. Coaching for results is based on the principle that performance is unlikely to improve just by working harder. Working

differently means that change is required and the role of results coaches is to facilitate this process.

Apart from the technical aspects of assessing the status quo, introducing accompanying teams, and assuring the necessary monitoring – the coach’s job is a much more fluid one of engaging the political level, sustaining the strategic leadership interest, and ensuring momentum and participation at the operational level. Genuine engagement and visible strategic support from leadership combined with the platform and structure of Rapid Results Initiatives and Results Coaching are to reinforce and sustain commitment to and belief in capacity to change. The convergence of operational and innovative capacities on a single target leads to incremental successes in the short run. In the long run, learning and momentum combined with increased confidence for continue use of the approach and for broader change building into a system.

Results coaches use Rapid Results Initiatives to enhance political and operational leadership by providing a protected space for piloting and learning from 100-day initiatives targeting priority measurable results. They provide facilitation throughout this process to help leaders engage, monitor and demonstrate accountability for the actual chain of results leading to tangible outcomes. They stimulate operational teams to experiment with improved collaboration, nontraditional stakeholders, communication and innovation. If and when obstacles arise that cannot be resolved at the operational level, coaches brief leaders and create opportunities for them to intervene in order to address constraints at the policy and political level, and achieve breakthrough results. Coaches also help leaders organize high-level retreats where leaders across government can share lessons learned from pilots that can be translated into systemic and policy changes to affect organization-wide results in sustainable way.

### **3. Methodology**

The provision of results coaches within multiple teams has, over the experiences, proven to be largely successful. However, the mechanics of why and how this approach works is not yet clear. In fact, very little research has been done on that topic. In this research project, we deliberately turn our attention to Results Coaching. This research aims to provide a way to systematically capture and report on the organizational and behavioral changes taking place within governments as a result of placing coaches. Thus, the general question asked by this research

project is: What is it that results coaches deploy that lead to positive development results and to organizational and behavior change? We begin this research with the hypothesis that techniques, strategies and abilities deployed by results coaches to carry out activities have a significant influence on behavioral and organizational change of teams, and ultimately on project implementation and development outcomes.

This research is specifically looking at the influence of result coaching on behavioral and organizational changes during the application of the Leadership for Results programs and Rapid Results Initiatives. Our conceptual framework relies on two dependent variables: behavioral change and organizational change.

**Behavioral Change** refers to an individual or a team within an organization that adopts different approaches or techniques leading to new types of actions or attitudes to better coordinate, manage, communicate, and solve problems. Examples of behavioral changes include:

- Improved confidence;
- Improved motivation;
- Improved attitude;
- Greater acceptance of new people, new ideas, new ways of doing things;
- Improved understanding.

**Organizational Change** refers to changes taking place within an organization where it is institutionalizing new structures, systems or processes in the achievement of a specific goal or objective. These new structures, system or processes are replicable in other parts of the organization or transferable to other goals and outcomes. Examples of organizational changes include:

- New systems in place to improve service delivery processes;
- Job descriptions introduced to improve effectiveness and efficiency of a department.

In light of these definitions and in order to understand these changes, the research focused on asking the following two research questions:

1. How Results Coaching influences behavioral and organizational change? By applying Results Coaching strategies and personal abilities, the Coach carries out activities that can result in a number of behavioral changes necessary for organizational and sustainable development outcomes.
2. What are these changes? A wide variety of behavioral and organizational changes within teams and beyond teams and immediate stakeholders.

In order to test the hypothesis stated above and answer the research questions, an action research protocol was developed. Action research methods are often used in change management initiatives. They offer a range of field research techniques that draw information from the experiences of social groups or people working in organizations. These techniques are based on the idea that in the context of experimentation, research and action may be unified into a single activity. The specificity of action research is often related to the role of stakeholders (here, the Results Coaches) who are directly involved in the definition of the research problem, and take part in the research in a collaborative manner with the researchers.

In action learning, the knowledge is often produced by the interaction between the researchers and the stakeholders. For instance, in the context of this research, the results coaches have been involved in the testing of the proposed interview guide and they worked collaboratively with the researchers to identify which interventions make the greatest impact on sustaining organizational and behavior change. This method is particularly appropriate at the beginning of a research program when the context of the research is more qualitative and exploratory, as this work is.

The first step in the development of the research protocol was to constitute a group of results coaches who would agree to participate in the research. The World Bank collaborators were responsible for the selection of coaches and initiated the first contacts between potential participants and the research team. All the coaches who were contacted were free to participate to the research or not but they all accepted the invitation. A cohort of fourteen coaches was selected to participate in the research.

The next step consisted in developing a questionnaire as a standardized data collection tool. The research team developed a first version of the questionnaire that was designed to be administered in two ways. The questionnaire could be self-administered or could be administered through an interview. The questionnaire had been pretested with the help of two coaches drawn from the selected group, and adapted to better reflect the reality and understanding of coaches. The first version was developed in English and the final version of the questionnaire was translated into French.

From there, the questionnaire was sent to the fourteen selected coaches to be self-administered in a first phase. In a second phase, most of them had a one hour interview with members of the research team through Skype or phone to review their responses and ensure

responses were clearly understood and interpreted by the research team. In order to analyze the data collected, the research team then developed an analytical grid to capture the impact of Results Coaching interventions on behavioral and organizational change.

#### **4. Role of Results Coaching on Behavioral and Organizational Change**

This part of the study aggregates responses from results coaches on types of changes they observed in their work and the strategies they employed. Results coaches consistently reported that six areas of changes emerged as the most important:

- 1. *Belief, Commitment and Acceptance.*** Invariably, the first challenge coaches faced was to foster among leaders and teams a belief in: (i) the need for change; (ii) the role and usefulness of the coach; and (iii) the RRA methodology. This involves building confidence in leaders and staff to challenge the status quo, to believe in the power of people to change, to commit to applying RRA in teams with a coach, and to an ambitious result.
- 2. *Results Focus in Formulating and Implementing Projects.*** The Leadership for Results programs and the Rapid Results Approach are both concentrated on strengthening capacity at both the leadership and operational levels, using results-based tools and thinking. Leadership for Results encourages leaders to focus on results in the formulation of policy or projects. Rapid Results Approach encourages coaches and teams to focus on results in the implementation of policies or projects. Coaches engaged leaders facing stuck reforms and enabled them to transform open-ended processes into time-bound actions leading to measurable outcomes. A focus on results helped expand the range of stakeholders engaged in producing when the result made a difference in people's lives, and these individuals realized that leaders were paying attention.
- 3. *Communication, Coordination and Cohesion.*** Communication is a key factor to improve coordination and cohesion. The role of coaches was critical in connecting leaders at different levels. Coaches introduced leaders to tools to facilitate the monitoring of implementation by teams, and using that data to adjust and improve processes or accelerate outcomes. Communication was a fundamental ingredient for change in behavior. Maintaining the flow of information and ensuring its availability to the right level at the right time contributed to the ability of individuals and groups to work differently to achieve better outcomes.
- 4. *Consensus Building, Team Work and Participation.*** Coaches modeled behaviors and introduced RRA tools to facilitate consensus around setting targets and during implementation. The RRA tools prompted teams and organizations to partner beyond their traditional circles in order to eliminate constraints, innovate, and achieve breakthroughs.

5. ***Innovation and Creativity.*** Coaches created opportunities for engaging strategic and political leaders to give them a clear sense of the ‘nitty-gritty’ of steps and obstacles embedded in the results chains. Coaches encouraged leaders to create a safe space for operational teams to be creative and innovative to break logjams, recognize those who contribute and not punish those who try but may not succeed.
6. ***Confidence and Empowerment.*** Clients taking on more and more of the coach’s role reflected that learning had taken place through the action. Confidence was built with each new success – however small. The impact of learning, combined with the experience of functioning where the space for change had been expanded, thus empowered clients to replicate, scale up and apply new approaches to different types of problems in other sectors and environments using the same methodology.

The list above is, by no means, exhaustive. Multiple strategies were in play at any one time, and each RRI reflect the unique needs of any specific situation. The coaches perpetually scan the space for change to help identify the most appropriate strategy to relieve constraints emerging from leadership and at the implementation level. Responses point to an adaptive, iterative, nonlinear process of action learning: start with the action; ask questions; gather feedback; build skills; take risks; and try new strategies when one is not working. In every case, a mixture of constraints and strategies existed that coaches responded to with different approaches. Following is a more detailed analysis of each of these dimensions. The presentation of this analysis is descriptive and somewhat normative. Our research goal is to present a reality that is reflective of the coaches’ contribution to development outcomes and ultimately help them identify the factors that contribute to their professional skills. This perspective is coherent with an action learning approach.

### ***Belief, Commitment and Acceptance***

In the Leadership for Results Program, accepting and providing support to change is the most challenging dimension as it requires broad stakeholder ownership and engagement. One important change that results coaches are able to facilitate with individuals, teams and, perhaps most importantly, with leaders is the commitment to change. A number of respondents indicate that the biggest challenges they face in implementing the RRIs or providing coaching is related to the notion of acceptance.

Establishing coach’s credibility with political and strategic leadership is a key aspect of acceptance. Credibility developed at the technical level by demonstrating successful experiences in tackling similar challenges is important. With higher-level authorities and politicians, a more

complex set of tactics can be utilized. Prior to engagement at the highest level, coaches analyze the stakeholder landscape, identify their allies and detractors, pinpoint soft spots and bottlenecks, and develop a storyline with two objectives:

- Objective #1: to convince leaders of the benefits of the RRI approach despite their rapid but limited gain.
- Objective #2: to gain the leaders' commitment to actively endorse the program (set of goals and expected results), and intervene in removing bottlenecks when necessary and as often as possible.

Once key stakeholders accept the coach, the challenge is to transform the political and operational will for change into a Rapid Results Initiative endorsed and monitored by leaders and implemented by project teams. Resistance could arise from all levels and at all stages in the form of (i) mistrust of a coach perceived as a highly paid consultant who does not understand the context; (ii) fear of the use of unfamiliar planning and reporting tools; (iii) discomfort with previous taboo upward and external communication flows; (iv) reticence to share concerns openly; (v) fear that in case of project failure, their jobs might be at risk.

Many strategies were reported by results coaches to strengthen belief and commitment. To establish credibility with teams and leaders, coaches conduct comprehensive background research on the issue and the stakeholders, prior to engagement with the team and leaders. Coaches reported that teams place a high value on coaches being familiar and knowledgeable about the sector and the particular context. This knowledge seems to play an important role in gaining the trust of the team, so they could see the value added of coaches even before the program begins.

Gaining the trust of leaders proceed more smoothly when the coach is able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the political agenda – priorities, trade-offs, challenges and operational bottlenecks. With this background, the coach is able to relate to the leadership on the ways in which specific coaching interventions could address obstacles and leverage performance breakthroughs. Being able to translate successful results at the operational level into strategic benefits for political leaders is particularly powerful in gaining trust. Results coaches have to relate to the current challenges of leaders quickly – even in day-to-day matters. Being “just plain helpful” when an occasion arose (e.g. helping a strategic leader with his broken

down car or assisting with repair of a computer for the council) helped coaches gain leaders' confidence in them, and by extension, in the approach.

On a more substantive level, coaches kept the strategic leaders informed by encouraging participation at reviews, and identifying opportunities for periodic direct leadership involvement in breaking logjams. The ultimate goal is to have leaders assume a sense of personal responsibility for successful results. Indicators included interest in progress and offers of support from strategic leaders, and the number of measures they enacted to boost the team.

The strategies to acquire and sustain acceptance of RRI by team members and others across an organization were both similar to and different from those employed with leaders. Being knowledgeable about the client's culture, language, and local norms was a starting point followed by the coaching skills of active listening, observation and asking probing questions. These actions helped connect the coaches with teams and gain their confidence. Allocating whatever time was needed for the process of defining and aligning the targets for an initiative within the broader organizational goals is key. Coaches help clarify goals in an achievable manner, and demonstrate impact to implementers, organization and beneficiaries.

Coaches built and sustain relationships with each team member, and invite members' ideas and suggestions on solving hypothetical and real problems. Encouraging team members who were used to hiding their problems to be open, and supporting the members to accept help from the rest of the team are considered as important shifts that coaches facilitate. When team members begin to share problems and challenges, this change is considered like evidence that trust is being established. This shift, which is necessary to ensure creativity and innovation at a later stage, requires advanced diplomacy skills from the coach.

When *'the going gets tough'*, coaches have to be sensitive to possible conflicts within the team, mitigate where possible, and mediate shared solutions as necessary. In delicate cases of real intransigence, they suggest working outside the group one-on-one with concerned individuals and the team leader, as well as engaging in consensus building during group sessions.

### ***Results Focus in Formulating and Implementing Projects***

Results Coaching is a process of accompanying and guiding stakeholders along a realistic but time limited results chain for a given initiative. Coaches observed that success in the implementation of RRI could have an impact on individuals, organizations, beneficiaries and the leadership. Skills built were both technical knowledge and confidence grow at the same time. At the strategic level, Leadership for Results programs help leaders think and apply results-based approaches in designing policies and projects. At the operational level, coaches introduce principles and tools for results-based management to team members who may have always seen their job as a limited, input-output process disconnected from impact.

Leaders' engagement and support are pivotal. Coaches engage with strategic leaders to build consensus on RRIs aligned with priorities, which if successful, would generate political and professional benefits. At the political level, coaching is similar to mentoring. Coaches provide the political leader with a discrete perspective from behind the scene and underlining the political and personal returns to investing the time and political capital in worthy initiatives.

When experiencing Results Coaching, civil servants have the opportunity to learn how their work connects to a complex set of activities leading to a result. Furthermore, they begin to assume a sense of responsibility or accountability for completing their tasks, knowing that the whole chain depended on them for solid impact.

Time is also a fundamental component of results in the context of public sector service delivery. Teams, strategic leaders and political leaders can make the shift from advocating the application of abstract policies, or isolated activities to investing their energy and capital in operational work aligned with their priorities and producing measurable outcomes. Together, the civil servants are able to prioritize, and with support from coaches and leaders, achieve much more ambitious targets in much less time than in the past. The change in attitudes and actions of individuals, teams and leaders are rewarded with positive achievements which are then replicated in other sectors. Successes laid the groundwork for new ways of thinking and working.

Results coaches use different strategies for strengthening results orientation. The training for and piloting of Rapid Results Initiatives is an ongoing task of coaches. At the outset, results coaches focus on the process of developing a shared result while distinguishing between output,

outcome and results. Coaches teach, model and facilitate reflection at each step in the process of implementing initiatives. Results coaches work with teams to help them learn practical tools for simplifying complex activities, assigning responsibilities and monitoring the action.

One RRA tool – the “funnel exercise” – was highlighted in the responses as being particularly helpful in building an understanding for the concept of “Result”. Cohorts in this study found it important to emphasize that while all members shared the same objective, individuals typically had their own plans of action. Results coaches encouraged collaboration where members helped each other surpass their individual targets in order to accelerate progress to the overall result.

Coaches demonstrate a relentless focus on monitoring progress toward results. They are constantly adjusting tactics and modeling behavioral changes to reach goals. They are reviewing progress regularly with individuals, leaders and the team. Probing questions to the teams helped draw out new insights, and reminders ensure that teams were cognizant of the time factor for meeting their targets.

The use of dashboards and other monitoring tools allowed leaders to easily update on progress. These tools cultivated ownership and were an essential step in ensuring meaningful involvement of leaders in solving problems. Leaders learned experientially that beyond setting priorities and endorsing policy, they could make critical interventions that impact both implementation and the results for people. In many ways, Rapid Results Initiatives demonstrate the potential that if leaders focus on implementation even in a limited way using this framework, they could capture lessons that would help them relieve systemic constraints nationally, and hence, improve performance on a much broader scale.

### ***Communication, Coordination and Cohesion***

Almost all of the coaches interviewed report that their efforts towards improving communication play a decisive role in enabling changes needed to improve outcomes. RRIs generate new information, and coaches have the opportunity to influence the way teams disseminate it:

- Coaches are regularly channeling summary information to leaders on progress, and this empowers leaders to engage more substantively with teams, thus unblocking logjams or relationships and creating new partnerships.

- Coaches facilitate engagement with beneficiaries to broaden perspectives and ownership of results.
- Coaches also spend time strengthening abilities of team leaders in communicating with strategic leaders. In addition, they advise political leaders on strategic benefits of engaging in Leadership for Results programs and on ways to capitalize on lessons learned.

The coaches informed us that improving the flow of information facilitate consensus, team members' coordination, cohesion, increase participation, and encourage trust and teamwork. When team members and leaders share information and ideas more freely within safe and respectful environments, team members feel more responsible for their tasks, and understand better the challenges that their teammates are facing. Understanding each other strengths and challenges help leverage resources, and make it possible to achieve targets in a much more efficient and effective manner. The change in the way individuals and teams communicate amongst them is much more at the behavioral level rather than at organizational or a mechanical level. They become more confident, open to listening to new ideas and are more able to take constructive criticism.

Results coaches use several strategies for strengthening abilities in communication. Using their facilitating skills, listening, observing and asking the right questions, coaches keep open communication channels, so that within teams, all members participate in meetings and communicate across the board. This behavior is modeled by the coaches who observe and develop their own understanding of group dynamics, power structures and flows of information. The coaches use principles of inclusiveness and participation to improve communication.

In cases where the situation is very tense and communication channels are blocked or when there is mistrust or conflict within teams, the coaches typically hold separate sessions with various parties to explore perceptions, fears and prejudices, and thereby identify ways to deal with the problem. Reaching outside the team, opening channels and improving the flow and ease of formal and informal communication remains a key challenge – both upward to the leaders and downward by the team leadership. Coaches report that RRA methods create a common language and platform that facilitate understanding between opposing individuals who were unable to collaborate in the past. In one case, strategic leaders who used to ignore staff when taking decisions at the strategic level altered their communication patterns to include staff in those discussions and talk about the role they would play.

Every meeting with the RRI team has a clear agenda with expected results and a fixed time to start and finish. Everyone read minutes at the meetings, all engaged in the activities which increase a sense of accountability at the end. Keeping the focus on results over time sustain the sense of accountability. Sharing information on progress that matter to people outside of the organization broadened this sense of accountability. Making information accessible on progress towards results usually generate open communication channels within the organization, and with other departments. It seems that explaining the RRA method to new actors exposed to it for the first time, is already a key step towards effective communication. Some coaches developed their own simplified communication tools to explain RRA to new departments within organizations. Others organized platforms for introducing initiatives and the approach to the community.

The coaches also realized that confidence comes with practice – for example, having the opportunity to voice opinions in front of senior officials. Encouraging strategic leaders to convene briefings with teams provide members with the opportunity to update leadership on achievements and problems. The coaches also engineer opportunities for junior team members to share their ideas, propose projects and gain confidence while practicing communications skills.

### ***Consensus, Participation and Team Work***

Major cultural and behavioral shifts are involved in moving an organization from an input-output based entity to one that added value and delivered results based on collaboration. Collaboration depends on consensus, participation and teamwork. Coaches responding to the questionnaire took care to document the process they followed to solicit full participation among stakeholders who were used to working independently. The coaches' ability to build consensus in diverse groups and facilitate the teamwork led to innovation and performance breakthroughs.

The role of a coach in helping the team articulate an ambitious goal that everyone can commit to involve strengthening agreements on a common agenda aligned to strategic and political priorities. This alignment process was fundamental to promoting synergy at the operational level which, when leveraged with political will, delivered breakthrough performance. Properly managed, the funnel exercise, briefing notes for senior and political leaders and a dashboard

with regularly updated information captured and sustained the interest of strategic, political leaders, the media and the beneficiaries.

Results coaches use various strategies for consensus, participation and team work. To manage conflicts, coaches strictly observe the consensus element in RRA which start with building agreement on goals and indicators among all stakeholders. When team members agree to the targets, specific tasks and progress indicators are assigned to individuals. In cases where progress stalls due to political rather than technical obstacles, it prove critical for coaches to use their negotiating skills and diplomacy to secure consensus at the leadership level.

Coaches try to facilitate consensus at each stage in the process by consistently bringing focus to progress on indicators, and ensuring full participation in the discussion around the analysis and identification of new strategies. One tactic for developing consensus around targets was agreement on Rules of the Game. The Rules of the Game engendered respect and trust within the team especially when there were antagonistic participants. Rules included those types of constructive group principles: never criticize the ideas of others; do not express opinions but simply ask clarifying questions or propose an alternate solution.

In certain circumstances, the practice of coaching move to a coalition-building mode by joining together different interests that share a common goal for improving performance. So sometimes, participation extends far beyond the RRI team itself to include non-traditional stakeholders – religious actors, the private sector or NGOs. These partnerships are achieved by generating new partnerships with diverse stakeholders to influence action. Coaches are also responsible for ensuring that all stakeholders have training or an understanding of RRA.

Across the board, perceived or real conflicting of interests are evoked by anticorruption strategies, challenge coaches, leaders and implementers. Some coaches noted that, resistance to a given initiative could be softened, by sharing perspectives on potential impact of the outcome. Very often, the projected effects were not necessarily incompatible. Implementers can be seeking efficiency, beneficiaries can be looking for greater effectiveness in public service delivery, and the organization can be looking for sustainable improvement in performance. When each stakeholder realizes that there is a benefit from changing the system, consensus around a plan of action generally improves. In one anticorruption initiative described by a coach, the interest of the leadership – in addition to reducing leakage and speeding up processing –

was simply to address the negative perceptions of stakeholders. By convening stakeholders and focusing on a concrete activity with a specific result, the coach was able to clarify both the points of disagreement, and facilitate the dialogue until a strategy emerged.

### ***Encouraging Creativity and Innovation***

A number of coaches confirmed the idea that RRA was not only about accomplishing something faster; it was about doing things differently. To do things differently, individuals, teams and leaders have to collaborate in unfamiliar ways. They have to consider out-of-the-box, untried alternatives; they have to experiment, monitor and in most cases, take risks with the new partners.

The hierarchical and rather traditional bureaucracies in developing countries were not conducive to allow experimentation and the radical changes require to accommodate a more efficient and effective achievement of results. Results coaches report a number of teamwork and leadership strategies that aim at expanding a safe space for creativity and innovation. One of the characteristics of Leadership for Results programs is that leaders provide the administrative and the moral authority to experimentation and change. The coach is often facilitating and channeling political will to operational support and vice-versa. At the political level, a leader's endorsement ensures visibility for thoughtful innovation and hard work by teams. This recognition builds confidence in teams knowing that they would be supported and not sanctioned by their superiors.

Coaches' probing questions and sustained focus on results during team brainstorming, lead teams to continue to scan the solutions until they find the most effective approach. Coaches report that probing questions are important and effective at the leadership level when an RRI is clogged. To foster innovation and creativity, coaches played a unique role – that of, “connector”. The “connector” function of the coach with leaders is used to secure their attention in a crisis and support them to generate solutions using their networks. The connector role encompasses sharing innovations and ideas between the leadership and the people on the ground.

Coaches' connector role is also often demonstrated when RRI teams prepare briefing notes for ministers. The opportunity to submit a briefing note, which promise visibility and a hope for change to a minister constituted an incentive that enhanced the energy and chemistry within the team for innovation and creativity. The coach can sometimes develop a format for a

ministerial briefing that the team worked on. The team leader presents the briefing, and the coach can facilitate meetings so that the team can know their ideas reached the highest level.

Innovation also takes place during implementation. As stated previously, coaches are constantly getting the teams on focusing and tracking progress towards results, particularly when things get stuck. When blockages occur, coaches take the opportunity to broaden team participation and increase the scope for new ideas and resources. Finally, at the end of a RRI, coaches play an important role to ensure that the learning from innovations is communicated at the leadership level, and there is then a possibility of scaling up change.

### ***Confidence and Empowerment***

One of the most important goals of Results Coaching interventions is to build confidence in individuals, teams and leaders in their own ability to accomplish results, to solve problems, to do things differently and make sustainable change. Their skills and know-how empower them to undertake not only the RRI at hand, but to adopt the same methodology for future work. The coaches are saying that they witness these changes when individuals and teams acquire new knowledge and skills, and apply them concretely. The notion that success breeds success is key when national results are concerned. By showing at least micro-changes in specific and challenging areas, these results are important to convince the national authorities that change is possible. Actual scaling up to implementation at the national level require leadership, empowered by the micro change, to drive policy change and systemic adaptation. When this happens – confidence grows into the methodology, and this allows tackling other challenges.

Sustained support through more than one cycle of RRI revealed teams and leaders incremental ability to master and eventually utilize new techniques with less and less support. The coach with his access to the leaders was able to coach the leadership to voice their appreciation and give recognition in order to reinforce ownership of new skills and know-how developed by individuals and teams.

In order to fulfill their accountability, coaches had to ensure they sustain an advisory role while resisting the temptation to do all the work. Rather, coaches tend to restrain their role to guide the group but passing the work back to the team. This approach is laying a foundation for sustainable empowerment and ensuring that teams get the credit not the coaches. Successively,

shifting the coaching role to the teams and the leaders allow them to practice and ultimately generalize what they learn.

Because coaches are constantly engaged in documenting and reflecting with teams and leaders on achievements and obstacles – learning is inevitable. For instance, once teams and departments had experience in RRA – agents who had never understood the budget or sector policy in the past began to consult on the policy priorities. They also studied the budget to see if the activities they plan are aligned with national priorities, and if the activities are funded in the budget. Where budget adjustments are out of the question, team’s attention is shifted on problem solving, find solutions and new ways of mobilizing resources. Teams learn that every time there is an obstruction, they need to find an alternative solution.

Coaches also play a pivotal role in shaping and preparing the leadership for their participation in leadership retreats. Occasionally, coaches facilitate retreats. Typically, retreats are grafted into existing fora which brings a broad spectrum of political and civil society leaders together. The retreats are intended to consolidate and bring attention to lessons learned from several waves of rapid results.

## **Conclusion**

Problems of aid effectiveness are often related to the lack of political and administrative will and implementation of public policies and reforms. The purpose of this research is to better understand the role of a recent kind of professional work in the sphere of development practices: Results Coaching. This approach has been used by the World Bank in the context of leadership initiatives in various developing countries and has proved to be quite effective to deliver better outcomes. The main argument of this research is that techniques, strategies and abilities deployed by results coaches to carry out activities have a significant influence on behavioral and organizational change of teams, and ultimately on project implementation and development outcomes. To verify this affirmation, we conducted a research with these coaches in order to better understand what types of organizational change do coaches effect that leads to positive development results, and what techniques do they deploy to achieve those changes?

From an inductive approach, we identified six areas of organizational techniques that are used by the coaches and that lead to changes. Coaches, instigate belief, commitment and acceptance that change is needed and that the team can make a real difference. They create a results' focus environment so that both, the leadership and operational levels, are rowing in the same direction and are focused on the tasks. They provide communication, coordination and cohesion to improve the synchronization between all stakeholders and connecting leaders with operational teams. They build consensus, team work and participation to facilitate consensus on targets, tasks and responsibilities. They stimulate innovation and creativity to create a safe space for operational teams to take risks, to think out of the box and to find original solutions to implementation problems and deadlocks. And finally, they create confidence and empowerment so that the clients can build on each success and gradually assume more of the coach's role so that the reliance on the coach diminishes over time.

It is important to better understand and to assess these new professional practices. So perhaps the main contribution of this study is to have explored the world and the practices of these results coaches that are contributing, sometimes discreetly, to concrete behavioral and organizational changes in developing countries. This exploratory and inductive research is just a starting point. There are still lots of room for additional research on this topic and the more we comprehend behavioral and organizational processes the more we can contribute to understand and tackle problems related to the implementation of aid effectiveness, development and public sector reforms.

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