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# **Cross-sector Policy and Practice at the Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK and Nepal<sup>1</sup>**

**Catherine Bovill**

## **Abstract**

Within international development, global agreement around the goals of poverty elimination and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has led to renewed emphasis on ‘joined-up working’, partnership, and cross-sectoral approaches. This emphasis has been motivated by concerns to ensure coherent policy and practice between the plurality of actors in an increasingly complex global arena. The realisation that previous sectoral approaches to development have often failed to impact beneficially on poor people, has added to the calls for more cross-sectoral approaches that better reflect poor people’s cross-sectoral lives.

This paper is based on research into cross-sector policy and practice at the UK Government Department for International Development (DFID), in the UK and Nepal. Definitions and concepts of cross-sector policy and practice are explored including a ‘cross-sector continuum’ model representing different levels of collaboration. Visual diagramming and other participatory methods were utilised as techniques for exploring and representing cross-sectoral processes and relationships.

DFID have made some significant structural changes and have engaged in discussion to improve cross-sectorality. There are examples of varying levels of cross-sectoral engagement throughout the organisation, but these were strongest at country and project levels. Gender, sustainable livelihoods and HIV, along with individuals that have a particular commitment to collaborative approaches, can act as catalysts for institutional change in cross-sector policy and practice. Other factors that facilitate cross-sectoral approaches were also identified. However, the research found that collaborative rhetoric within DFID documentation is not matched by the same level of commitment to operationalising cross-sectoral approaches. DFID face some major barriers to adopting cross-sectoral approaches including: a disjuncture between its role as a government bureaucracy and its role as a development organisation; a primary focus on product rather than processes; and the current pursuit of central level and sectoral approaches thought by some to be incompatible with cross-sectorality. The challenge is exacerbated by ‘disciplinarity’ and ‘territoriality’ within DFID, particularly involving the health sector.

Although this study focused on DFID, the findings and some of the participatory methods used in this research offer lessons about cross-sectoral and broader collaborative working to a much wider audience.

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## **1. Calls for Collaboration**

There is currently consensus among international development organisations to focus on the elimination of extreme poverty. To this end, these organisations are collaborating to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a series of concrete, measurable targets agreed by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000 (UNDP 2003). The MDGs highlight the interdependent nature of development issues contributing to the elimination of global poverty. Indeed, achieving or failing to achieve one goal is likely to impact on progress towards other goals (Abu-Ghaida & Klasen 2004; Delamonica et al 2004; Fustukian et al 2003; UNDP 2003). The cross-sectoral nature of the poverty elimination target and the MDGs requires a coherent approach across all the sectors and advocates traditionally sectoral development organisations and government ministries adopt more cross-sectoral approaches (DFID 2003a; Fustukian & McDonald 2003; OECD 2003; Upadhyaya et al 2002).

Many recent documents emphasise broad development collaboration, including calls for policy coherence, joined-up working, partnership and cross-sectoral approaches (Bullock et al 2001; Cabinet Office 2000; 1999; Carney 1998; Carney et al 1999; DFID 2004a; 2000; 1997; Forster & Stokke 1999a; Mkandawire 2001; Moser 1993; OECD 2001a; 2001b). Calls for collaboration are frequently motivated by concerns to ensure consistent and effective policy and practice within and between the plurality of actors in an increasingly complex international development arena (Forster & Stokke 1999b). This is reflected in recent changes within international aid relationships emphasising partnership with recipient governments through initiatives such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) rather than previously favoured project-based development models (Hinton & Groves 2004; World Bank 1998).

Influenced by both international and domestic emphasis on collaboration, DFID utilise partnership, integration, joining-up, co-ordination, co-operation and cross-sector terminology within most of their documents. DFID has also made a strong commitment to poverty elimination and the MDGs by integrating these cross-sectoral goals into their own departmental goals (DFID 2002; 2000; 1997).

Cross-sectoral approaches are also advocated within gender discourse and Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) literature. Moser (1993) argues women's multiple roles and needs are not met through sectoral approaches and that "because of the necessity to balance their triple roles, women require integrative strategies which cut across sectoral lines" (Moser 1993:54). While others, including DFID, argue that in order to address the cross-sectoral nature of people's livelihoods, approaches are needed that respond to this cross-sectorality (Carney 1998; Carney et al 1999; DFID 2001). The SL framework emphasises the multiple inter-related impacts of development on the inter-

connected nature of people's lives and places people at the centre of development (Ashley & Carney 1999; DFID 2001). Moser, Carney and others, argue that many previous sectoral development approaches have had poor outcomes as a result of their failure to acknowledge the cross-sectoral nature of people's lives (Chambers 1997; Kabeer 1994; Moser 1993; Werner & Sanders 1997).

Despite the recent surge of support for collaborative approaches few documents have defined the collaborative terms used or outlined strategies for operationalising these processes.

## **2. Defining Cross-sectorality and The Cross-sector Continuum**

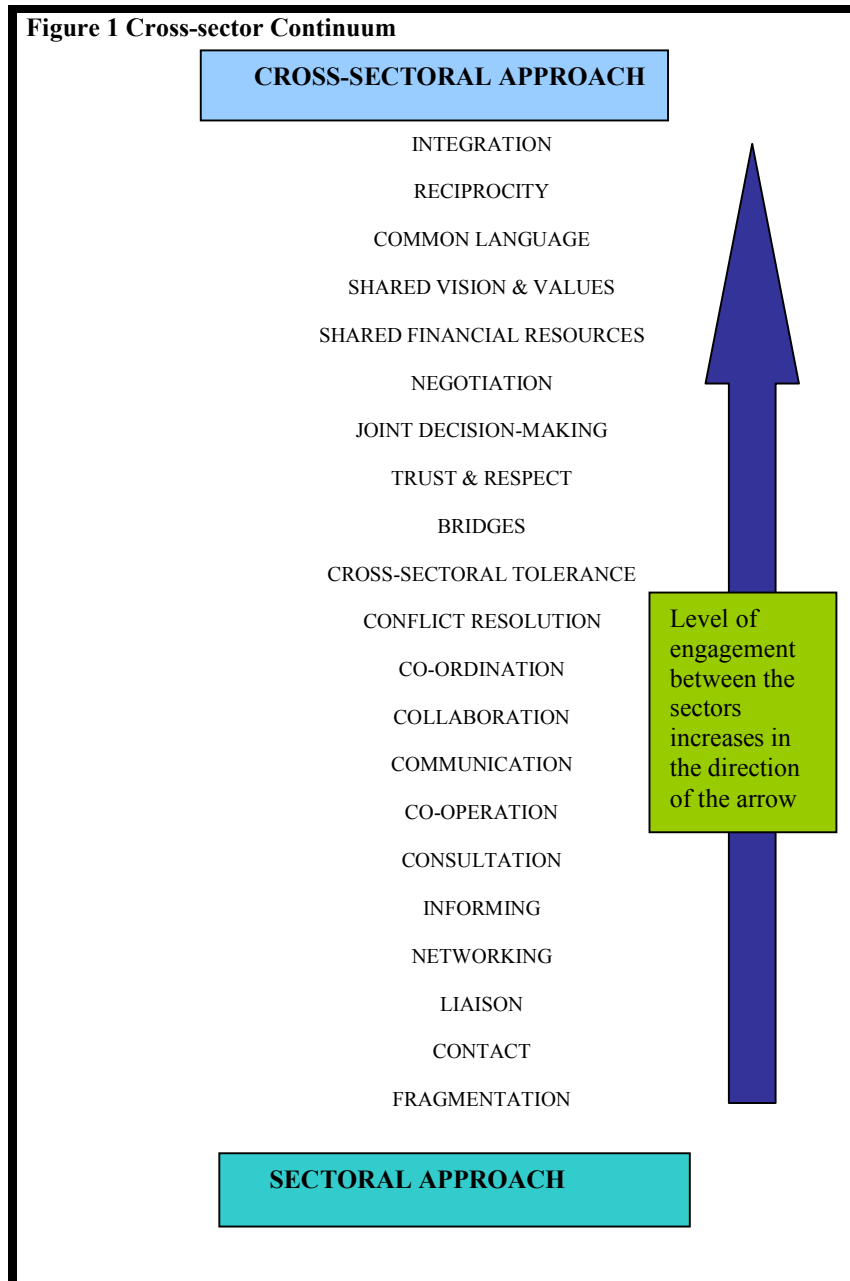
Within research literature there is often confusion over collaborative definitions and terms are frequently interchanged (Dean 2001; Kanbur 2002; King & McGrath 2004; ODI 2001). In the absence of an agreed definition, cross-sector policy and practice is defined variously. In this research dictionary definitions of 'cross' and 'sector' have been utilised to arrive at a working definition of 'cross-sector' as

*'a dynamic process, where two or more divisions or groups reciprocally share and exchange ideas and/or actions'.*

The term most frequently confused with cross-sector is multi-sector. Multi-sector involves two or more sectors, but is less suggestive than cross-sector of engagement or reciprocity between the sectors. Indeed, the sectors may work separately with no sharing of values, without making connections and with no crossing over. The level of collaboration and understanding between sectors may therefore be limited. Cross-sector differs too from some other commonly confused collaborative terms. Equality of relationships is not implied as it is in partnerships; cross-sector does not suggest the overall oversight of co-ordination, and while it may use a subject area such as HIV as a focus around which cross-sectoral approaches can be enabled, it does not imply the involvement of all sectors as in mainstreaming.

However, the working definition above does not stipulate a particular level of engagement reflecting the view that many different levels of cross-sector engagement are possible, suggestive of a continuum model. Several writers have proposed the concept of a continuum to illustrate different conceptual levels. One of the most famous, the 'ladder of participation' presented by Arnstein in 1969 (Wilcox 1998), comprises a participation continuum illustrating different levels and agencies of power from a low rung of 'manipulation' to a top-rung of 'citizen control'. Drawing on the work of Arnstein and others, the concept of a cross-sector continuum is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Cross-sector Continuum**



The activity levels are placed in a subjective order from lower levels of engagement at the bottom to higher levels of engagement nearer the top. The arrow represents an increasing level of cross-sectorality. All of the statements could be placed further up or down the continuum, dependent upon particular circumstances. For example, networking may simply involve finding out who is working in what sector and what they are doing. However, it could become a deeper level of engagement where communication exchange and joint working were involved, or where more comprehensive and in-depth networks were formed.

The different possible levels of engagement lead to cross-sector policy and practice taking numerous forms with varying degrees of engagement and reciprocity. Engagement may include meetings, phone calls and email contact and involve consultation, discussion, sharing information, seeking advice, setting shared goals and pooling budgets. New working groups and teams may be formed with life-spans to suit work requirements.

Continuum models often lead to the expectation of movement towards deeper levels of collaboration. Indeed Arnstein's ladder of participation has been criticised for implying that all participation should move up the ladder towards a 'nirvana' of participation (Guijt & Shah 1998). However, the continuum model does not intend to suggest that the top is somehow 'better' than the bottom, but rather that different initiatives may aim for different levels of cross-sectorality to suit particular work in terms of timescale, number of sectors involved, existing relationships and context.

The continuum challenges the idea that there are only sectoral or cross-sectoral bipolar alternatives. Examples of different levels of engagement in cross-sector policy and practice at DFID are outlined below.

### **3. Cross-sector Policy and Practice at DFID**

General collaboration was frequently reported between sectors at DFID headquarters, but often the examples given were theoretical. DFID offices have made some significant efforts to promote cross-sector policy and practice. First, DFID have engaged in extensive discussion around a 'Triangle of Skills' (Chakrabarti et al 2002; Robinson & Manadhar 2001). This model envisages a balance of skill requirements for DFID teams and departments consisting of: 1) interpersonal, management, process and influencing skills, 2) specific professional expertise, and 3) knowledge of development. This model has been particularly useful for professional development within DFID human resources departments in the UK and Nepal.

Second, DFID Nepal have explored cross-sectoral approaches through the concept of 'Core Team Working'. Core Team Working involves no more than 3 staff in a team at one time, with other expertise brought into the group as and when it is necessary. Within Core Team Working the skills mix of the teams is defined by the particular work remit, but includes a balance of skills drawing on concepts from the 'Triangle of Skills' model (DFID Nepal

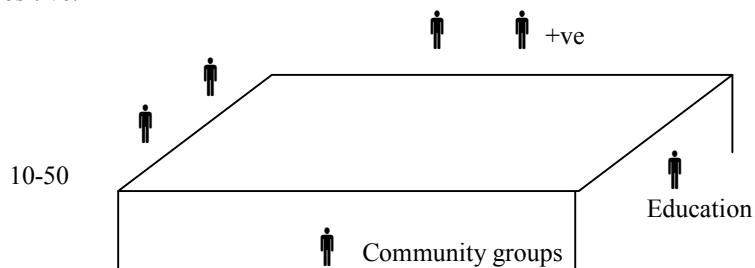
2000). This is a positive model of cross-sectoral working, but was only mentioned by one respondent and the example given was theoretical.

The third significant effort by DFID to engage in cross-sectoral approaches at office level has been the recent re-structuring of DFID's Policy Division. Policy Division at DFID London originally comprised individual sectoral departments such as health, education and social development responding to policy demands. In 2003 restructuring was undertaken in response to the needs of the Public Service Agreement (PSA) and to create stronger incentives for cross-disciplinary working (Manning 2002).

Apart from the Policy Division restructuring, more specific, non-theoretical cross-sector examples were more frequently given by respondents in Nepal. Cross-sector activity was reported to be more frequent and at deeper levels of engagement at project and district levels than within DFID offices. Most non-theoretical examples of cross-sector policy and practice presented by respondents focused on HIV. Indeed there was a perception that cross-sectoral approaches are more advanced in this area. Many of these examples were more strictly multi-sectoral, yet they remain informative. Two respondents' diagram examples illustrating cross-sectoral HIV work are presented below. Figure 2 outlines a representation of the cross-sectoral process of producing a National HIV Strategy in Nepal, in which DFID Nepal was a participating partner.

**Figure 2 Nepal National HIV Strategy Group**

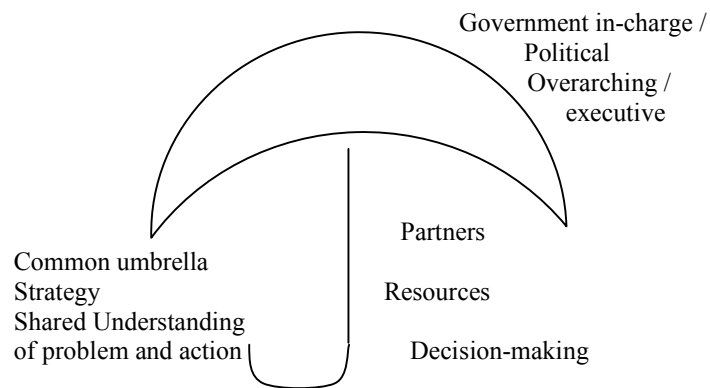
The National HIV Strategy in Nepal involved bringing together the Nepali Government and donors. Initially, some donors and government officials didn't come to meetings, but NGOs, community groups and people with HIV were well represented. The health sector was particularly well represented. The group varied in size between 10 and 50 attendees and there were theme sub-groups on specific issues such as young people and on research. Attendance dropped as time went on, particularly among doctors, although community groups' attendance rose as they gained confidence. There was the will to meet cross-sectorally on lots of different levels and the process of bringing people together and working together was seen as positive.



One of the lead individuals was described as dominating proceedings with a personality detrimental to cross-sectoral processes: a view reiterated by other respondents. The group was dominated by the health sector, which led to other individuals, groups and sectors being pushed to the periphery. Nonetheless, the National HIV Strategy was regarded as a focus for positive cross-sector work. Another interviewee produced an abstract representation of the same Nepal National HIV Strategy process presented in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3 Nepal National HIV Strategy**

The Nepal National HIV Strategy was described as helping to bring partners together. Before this, things were piecemeal, but now there is a national group where partners can agree a national framework. This group has managed to create a shared understanding of the problem and an overarching umbrella strategy to go forward and make collective decision-making.



These two diagrams are substantially different representations of the same process. Figure 2 describes the practical meeting arrangements and identifies an individual and a sector as barriers to the cross-sectoral process. Figure 3 describes more of an overview of the process, and the abstract diagram creates a vision of collective decision making about an overarching strategy under which partners come together.

Despite many more examples of different levels of engagement in cross-sector policy and practice at DFID given by respondents, consistently



respondents reported that cross-sector practice does not match the levels of collaborative rhetoric.

#### **4. The Gap between Rhetoric and Reality**

A gap between DFID's espoused commitment to cross-sector policy and practice and the reality of trying to operationalise these aims was continually reported by respondents. Indeed, implementing cross-sector policy and practice was viewed by many as difficult. DFID documents were silent about defining cross-sector and other collaborative terms and also about the details of practical application and operational strategy: "people talk about cross-sector working but they never go into detail of the whys and wherefores" [INT 11].<sup>2</sup> Consequently, staff at all levels reported learning about collaboration through trial and error, or through a process of osmosis: learning from others through observation, listening and attempting to make sense of terms through their everyday usage.

DFID were not thought to be sufficiently committed to cross-sectoral approaches, with one staff member commenting, "...it's on the edge of just becoming lip-service..." [INT 16]. DFID were described as viewing a statement of intent, "...as synonymous with the realisation of that intention" [INT 08] and spending too much time on policy and not enough on implementation and delivering to people.

Bridging the policy formulation-implementation gap is not a unique challenge faced by DFID, and the Nepali Government was reported to have a poor implementation record particularly in relation to their Five Year Plans (DFID Nepal 2003; DFID 2004b; HMGN 2003). Ensuring policy implementation among partners with poor track records of implementation is problematic and operationalising cross-sector policy and practice is only one of many implementation challenges. The lack of prioritisation given to cross-sectoral operationalisation at DFID translates into a lack of time allocated to implementation.

Several DFID office-based staff made clear statements that DFID has no responsibility for policy implementation, raising concerns about DFID's ability to translate policy statements into reality. Whilst DFID utilise many contractual management arrangements and often rely on other partners for policy implementation, the perception by some employees that implementation was not their responsibility contributes to lower likelihood of bridging the policy formulation-implementation gap. Poor connections between policymaking and policy implementation have been linked to poor development outcomes (McGee & Brock 2001; Walt 2000). Indeed, the lack of clear operational strategy within most documents calling for increased collaboration risks 'policy evaporation' rather than implementation (DFID 2003b; Parsons 1999).

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<sup>2</sup> [INT XX] = Interviewees

DFID face a number of significant barriers to operationalising cross-sector policy and practice outlined in the following section.

## **5. Explaining the Gap Between the Rhetoric and Reality of Cross-sector Policy and Practice at DFID**

The gap between the rhetoric and the reality of cross-sector policy and practice at DFID was attributed to many factors including: a lack of strong messages and support for cross-sectoral implementation from DFID headquarters; a concentration on a product focus over a process focus; a disjuncture between some of DFID's roles, structures and organisational culture; a focus on central-level initiatives over project-based development; the persistence of territoriality between disciplines; and a competitive culture that fails to maximise the use of some potential cross-sectoral catalysts. Each of these challenges is outlined briefly below.

### **5.1 Communication of Cross-sector Messages**

In order for cross-sectoral approaches to be adopted throughout the different levels of DFID, messages outlining this as a policy priority need to be communicated throughout the organisation and supported by senior management. However, DFID were reported to have a strong culture of top-down communication and messages about the importance of cross-sector policy and practice were not being received by contracted management organisations or by DFID funded projects in Nepal. Despite this projects in Nepal were often working cross-sectorally. This was reported to be due to the necessity of working in this way in order to achieve effective development results. Indeed, several respondents reported that cross-sector policy and practice was taking place in spite of DFID rather than because of them.

### **5.2 A Focus on 'Product' over Processes**

DFID were reported to emphasise quantification and end products with less attention often given to processes:

*"...it's not a culture where process matters...what's most important is getting money dispersed. And it doesn't matter about the quality of projects because that will be someone else's problem further down the line. What matters is that you've shifted that 20 million dollars...On time. And so you don't want to hear problems, you don't want to think cross-sectorally, you don't want to engage people in the process within the country because those are not functional to get your money spent" [INT 04].*

For example, DFID's White Papers (DFID 2000; 1997) make explicit their goal of poverty elimination ends, but they are quiet as to the substantial redistributive processes and means necessary to achieve this goal (White 1998). Strong links between processes and outcomes suggests lack of attention to processes may detract from overall outcomes. The focus on quantification

also overlooks the potential for empowerment and synergy within processes and between processes and outcomes (Oakley & Marsden 1990; ODI 2001).

Cross-sectoral processes with disparate and inter-related impacts in many sectors create challenges for monitoring and evaluation. Where there is an emphasis on accountability and quantification, processes may be less attractive as ends in themselves (Marsden et al 1994). There were fears cross-sectoral processes would result in a dilution of sectoral messages, yet these were countered with fears that a quantitative approach misses many of the subtleties of beneficial development.

### **5.3 Disjuncture between DFID's Roles, Structures and Organisational Culture**

The positioning of DFID within the UK Government civil service results in a bureaucratic, hierarchical, sectoral and political structure influenced by neo-liberal ideology. DFID's stated development goals however require pro-poor, participatory, gender-equitable, livelihood-focused, people-centred and cross-sectoral approaches and stress the importance of processes. These two roles create a constant organisational, cultural tension with DFID facing two diverse sets of underpinning epistemology and objectives with the potential to jeopardise internal policy coherence. Within many levels of DFID, and particularly at DFID headquarters, the political bureaucratic role was reported to be prioritised.

The new Policy Division structure at DFID London has created another disjuncture for DFID in the form of a tension between cross-sectoral and sectoral structures. The Policy Division's old sectoral divisions have been removed and replaced with multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral teams working towards specific goals (DFID 2004a). However the structural changes have only taken place in one division so many underlying bureaucratic structures remain the same. Policy Division remains part of a strongly hierarchical, sectoral government bureaucracy and continues to work with sectoral ministries in recipient governments and with sectoral organisations in the international development community. Internal structural changes that do not match external ways of working may also make partnership working more challenging. Experience from similar organisational restructuring at the World Bank suggests cross-sectoral collaboration may increase, but new teams remain tied to old departmental identities (King & McGrath 2000).

Finally there is also an organisational culture disjuncture between DFID Nepal and their Nepali partners. Patronage systems common throughout Asia have led to desire for improved personal status over and above work effectiveness, with rewards rarely based on performance (Bista 1991; DFID 1998; Dixit 2002; Justice 1989). Patronage, the quest for status and better remuneration possibilities lead to frequent staff transfers (Collins 2001), making policy implementation difficult. Nepali organisational culture is based on 'soft management' systems that are not formally established. Time is

interpreted flexibly, rules not clearly defined but left vague and informal connections are often more important (Bista 1991; DFID 1998; Somlai 1993).

On the other hand Nepali organisations are critical of Western organisations excessive use and high payment of external consultants who are often unfamiliar with the country and unconnected with earlier stages of policy and planning processes (Justice 1989). Staff of Western organisations also face criticism for their relatively opulent lifestyles contributing to income inequalities in the country, and which do not juxtapose well with donor organisational claims to be tackling poverty inequalities (Hancock 1989; Sylvester 2004). Failure to understand these cultural and ontological differences leads many Nepali and Western staff to misunderstand, or face difficulties working in partnership with each other (Bista 1991).

#### **5.4 Central-level Focus**

Reports that cross-sectoral activity was more frequent and in-depth at project and district levels raised concerns about DFID and the broader development community predominantly pursuing strategies of 'scaling-up' from small projects to large programmes such as SWAps and PRSPs. PRSPs should encourage a cross-sectoral approach but SWAps have been criticised as sitting uncomfortably with cross-sectoral processes (Akroyd & Duncan 1998; Ashley & Carney 1999; Carney 1998; Engel 2002). Where both PRSPs and SWAps are pursued, SWAps were reported to centralise and nationalise issues and clash with cross-sectoral PRSPs.

Small-scale projects were seen as innovative and creative by project staff and DFID partners who thought central level approaches often had a lack of impact on poor people due to being too distanced from the central level. Conversely, projects were unpopular among DFID office-based staff often due to the perceived lack of impact they have on poor people. One member of project staff claimed that DFID Nepal were finding it difficult to accept that some of their projects were successful, because this was undermining their argument for moving away from project-based development.

DFID faces criticism that these high-level initiatives expose a gap between DFID's rhetoric of working with the most socially excluded and poorest, whilst they are predominantly working with country elites at policy level. Several respondents argued that DFID risks becoming detached from the reality of their beneficiaries and those implementing their policies. Indeed in Nepal, poor delivery of basic services by donors and government, and concentration of activity within central government was thought to be fuelling discontent contributing to the escalating conflict.

#### **5.5 Territoriality Between Disciplines**

The different ideologies of different disciplines, were reported to pose a challenge to cross-sectorality. These differences were thought to contribute to territorial behaviour. One respondent stated

*“...there are big challenges...in breaking down the empires that already exist and saying well, this is an area we should both work on more than this is an issue we're working on and you can contribute to our work...so cross-sectorality can mean for certain people, simply, we'll have this topic and you can help us with it...” [INT 04].*

Some staff described themselves as too busy with their own sectoral work to spend time being distracted by what they perceived to be someone else's area of work. The basis of much of this territorial behaviour was reported to be budgetary. Budgets were thought to be proportionate to power within DFID, and this led to protective behaviour where sectors thought cross-sectoral engagement might affect their budget allocations detrimentally.

Concerns were consistently raised by respondents about domination by the health sector:

*“...anything that has more of a health flavour to it...it's normally routinely managed and delivered by health advisors...look around our country programmes, you'll see where we have HIV/AIDS education, I think in almost, in all cases the health advisor leads, even if it's in school...education” [INT 09].*

Many examples of cross-sectoral HIV work including the DFID London HIV Task Force meetings were described as being dominated by the health sector. This domination by the health sector may lead to the prioritisation of particular viewpoints and resentment by other sectors at their contributions being overlooked or marginalised in favour of health agendas.

When examining the appropriateness of cross-sectoral approaches, most respondents believed cross-sectoral approaches were appropriate for all development. However, those arguing cross-sectoral approaches were sometimes inappropriate, all came from the health sector. Examples given to justify sectoral approaches to health all referred to the clinical expertise and technical skills of doctors. These views linked to more general widespread concerns that cross-sector policy and practice should not lead to the demise of specialist expertise.

## **5.6 Failure to Maximise Catalysts of Cross-sectorality**

DFID have missed some opportunities to maximise cross-sectoral catalysts. First, despite the abundance of multi-sectoral experiences and some cross-sectoral experiences focusing on HIV, potentially valuable lesson learning was not reportedly being shared with other areas. Second, concerns were raised about a lack of serious strategic commitment at DFID to gender, diluting one of the strong rationale in the literature supporting cross-sectoral approaches. Third, DFID faced criticism for choosing to interpret sustainable livelihoods (SL) as a sector rather than as a cross-sectoral approach to all development. Finally, many individuals were successfully working cross-sectorally, particularly at project level, and yet they lacked institutional

support. Indeed there were some reports that DFID actively discouraged cross-sectoral approaches in the face of pressure to achieve sectoral targets.

### **5.7 DFID's Policy Environment and Organisational Culture**

The word most frequently used by respondents to describe the DFID policy environment and organisational culture was 'competitive'. Competition between individuals and sectors is not perhaps the most conducive context in which to promote the sharing and reciprocity of cross-sectoral approaches. DFID were also described by many respondents as arrogant and being too sure of their own knowledge and position with which they want to influence others. DFID's attempts to influence others to adopt their viewpoint was criticised both by some respondents and within development discourse, and was viewed as antithetical to their promotion of partnership working (Maxwell & Riddell 1998).

Despite facing considerable criticism, DFID were praised for their staff capabilities, and willingness to engage in difficult issues. Respondents used words such as 'focused', 'participatory' and 'dynamic' to describe the organisational culture and policy environment, characteristics conducive to good policymaking and implementation including cross-sector policy.

This creates the context in which cross-sector policy and practice is taking place. Respondents identified a number of factors that facilitate cross-sector policy and practice: including; implementation being considered part of the policy process; top level management and political support for cross-sectoral approaches; sharing aims and values; being clear about the added value of cross-sector policy and practice; and having joint budgets. DFID have made improvements in most of these areas at some stage even if not specifically in relation to cross-sector policy and practice but there is room within the organisational context for improvements particularly if DFID are serious about operationalising their calls for cross-sectorality.

## **6. Conclusion**

Previous sections have outlined considerable barriers to implementing cross-sector policy and practice that are faced by DFID. In this context DFID should be commended for its significant attempts to improve cross-sector policy and practice – going as far as making structural changes at DFID London. Indeed some of the barriers to cross-sectoral approaches highlighted in this paper may be difficult for DFID to change, such as their strong political bureaucratic role and position within the UK Government. Nevertheless, in several cases alternatives encompassing more middle ground may be found. For example, there are more alternatives than simply: political bureaucracy or development; sectoral or cross-sectoral structures; Nepali or Western organisational cultures; product or processes; central-level or project-based development. The continuum model is useful here in highlighting the plurality of options between these bipolar perspectives.

Continua and other participatory diagramming methods utilised in this study are becoming increasingly recognised for their contribution to studying processes (Archer & Whitaker 1994; Boothroyd et al 2004; DFID 1995; Reason 1994). The use of PLA methods was not only an effective method of data collection, but enabled a concurrent exploration of the utility of these methods for increasing awareness and discussion on cross-sector policy and practice. Participation in this research was reported to have been the first opportunity many respondents had to reflect on their cross-sectoral experiences suggesting the need for DFID and other organisations to create space for learning in order to improve the likelihood of operationalising their own calls for collaboration.

Increasing sectoral self-awareness particularly in the health sector may need prioritisation through specific sectoral and cross-sectoral initiatives to contribute to tackling territorial behaviour. More widespread lack of agreement and awareness of cross-sectoral definitions, rationale and strategies for operationalisation suggests the need for cross-sectoral process to be viewed as an end in itself, at least in the short-term. Indeed, McGee & Brock (2001) argue that viewing process as an end in itself implies a focus on implementation and not simply policy formulation.

Other creative ways of making cross-sectoral operationalisation more likely might include increasing cross-sectoral research to underpin cross-sectoral approaches, clearly identifying strategies to overcome some of the barriers (Bullock et al 2001; Cabinet Office 1999), and recognising that the process of creating a cross-sector strategy for operationalisation will in itself provide lesson learning on cross-sectoral working and improve our knowledge of when and whether cross-sector policy and practice are beneficial.

If DFID are committed to implementing cross-sector policy and practice, they need to articulate this message more effectively internally and externally through incentives and support mechanisms within the organisational culture and make greater use of existing catalysts including individuals and their rich cross-sectoral experiences.

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