



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

BUILDING CAPACITY, CHANGING NORMS: RAPID RESULTS IN MADAGASCAR, 2005 – 2009

SYNOPSIS

Madagascar president Marc Ravalomanana won office under the slogan “rapid and sustainable development,” but by 2004, two years into his presidency, progress had been frustratingly slow. The government’s risk-averse and weakly coordinated administrative culture was hindering implementation of the president’s reform agenda. His chief of staff, Henri Roger Ranaivoson, led a pilot project, called Rapid Results, to increase rice production in four of the country’s 22 administrative regions in response to a steep drop in production that year, which, coupled with the rising global price of rice, threatened the livelihoods of millions of Malagasy. The pilot project produced some impressive and previously elusive benefits, increasing production by 60% in one critical region. Enthusiastic about the gains and intrigued by the ways the fast-paced project had challenged administrative norms, Ranaivoson, with the president’s backing, introduced the project management tool in central ministries and other regions as well as across a variety of sectors, including family planning, local tax collection and birth registration. Although a 2009 coup d’état cut off efforts to institutionalize Rapid Results, a cadre of civil servants and partnering nongovernmental organizations continued to use elements of the approach into 2012.

Jonathan Friedman drafted this case study based on interviews conducted in Antananarivo and Fort Dauphin, Madagascar, during May 2012. Case published August 2012.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2004, Cyclone Gafilo carved a path of destruction across Madagascar from the northeastern city of Antahala to the western regional capital of Mahajanga. It was the strongest storm on record to strike the island nation.¹ Most of the houses in Antahala were destroyed, and 172 people were killed and hundreds more injured in the storm’s wake. Gafilo’s high winds and flooding, combined with the effects of Cyclone Elita two months earlier, affected nearly a third of

Madagascar’s rice-producing fields and wiped out an estimated 10% of national production.

Millions of Malagasy depended on rice. At the time the storm hit, the cereal grain was the primary agricultural product of the largely rural country of 17 million, although cassava and manioc were supreme in the drier south, where rice cultivation was difficult, and other cash crops predominated in the east. A staple of the Malagasy diet, rice accounted for nearly half of the average person’s caloric intake. Normally,

commercial traders would easily make up for a 10% drop in production by increasing imports, primarily from South Asia. However, the rising global price of rice, coupled with a plunge in the exchange rate for Madagascar's currency, then the franc (the ariary as of 2005), blocked this recourse. By the end of 2004, the price of rice in the capital city of Antananarivo had doubled from the previous year.²

Recognizing the crisis at hand, President Marc Ravalomanana instructed his chief of staff, Henri Roger Ranaivoson, to take steps to augment the production and import of rice. A previous effort by the Ministry of Agriculture had failed because other ministries, locked into their own agendas and priorities, had refused to cooperate.

Ranaivoson approached Guenter Heidenhof, team leader of the World Bank's Governance and Institutional Development Project, who worked closely with Ranaivoson and the president's office on financial management, anticorruption activities and capacity building. Heidenhof suggested a project management approach that rallied government, civil society and private sector officials to achieve common goals under tight deadlines, usually in less than five months. He was familiar with the method, called Rapid Results, from discussions at the World Bank about ways to overcome some of the obstacles often encountered in public sector management reforms.

Projects often fell apart at the implementation stage, and Rapid Results was one way to bridge the gap. Schaffer Consulting (formerly Robert H. Schaffer and Associates), a U.S. management-consulting firm, had developed the approach for private sector companies and had proposed its use in the public sector as well. Several countries had started to try variants of the Schaffer model.

In a typical Rapid Results project, a coach, or facilitator, worked with a political leader, such as a cabinet minister, with direction from a national-

level steering committee, to identify priority problem areas. The political leader then assigned a strategic leader—for instance, the secretary-general of a ministry, a regional head or a mayor—to trace the sources of the problem and design a project that would address at least one important underlying cause of poor performance. Each project had to promise a tangible result, and the work had to be completed in roughly 100 to 150 days. The coach and the strategic leader next picked a project manager, who built a work team that defined tasks and allocated roles and responsibilities.

Ranaivoson was intrigued by the idea. The program emphasized concrete goals and tightly defined results within a short time frame. In place of collective responsibility, the strategy assigned specific tasks to individuals. Sharp focus, fast implementation and tangible progress took the place of ponderous planning and multiyear timelines.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2005, Madagascar was one of the least developed countries in the world, ranking 143 out of 177 on the United Nations Human Development Index. Despite its rich mineral and oil deposits and an abundance of arable land, decades of failed economic policies followed by a rocky period of economic liberalization had prevented the country from realizing its potential.

Ravalomanana, former mayor of Antananarivo and one of Madagascar's most successful entrepreneurs (as founder of an agribusiness firm called Tiko), took office in mid-2002, six months after a disputed election and political stalemate that had slashed economic output by pitting against each other certain political leaders and denizens of the country's capital and main seaport, Toamasina. He campaigned under the slogan "rapid and sustainable development," seeking to draw a contrast with the perceived slow pace of

development under his predecessors. However, after taking office, he quickly recognized that his deputies were struggling to translate his development policies into tangible gains, and his government's ineffectiveness in managing the rice crisis highlighted those weaknesses. An administrative culture that discouraged personal initiative in favor of groupthink, poor interministerial and cross-sectoral coordination, and low capacity and inexperience at local levels inhibited progress.

At the central level, ministries' inability to coordinate activities undermined priority programs such as the initial attempt to address the rice crisis. When the Ministry of Agriculture tried to increase imports of rice and accelerate distribution, the effort bogged down because customs, transport and security officials failed to do their parts.

Ministries had a silo mentality, developing and implementing policies without adequate consideration of the needs of other ministries and interested parties. Moreover, risk-averse officials found safety in collective responsibility. The system encouraged groupthink over personal initiative. And important programs would stall when unforeseen obstacles caused confusion and distraction across multiple levels of government.

The government's administrative culture, too, impeded progress in other ways. Although Ravalomanana's campaign slogan had called for "rapid" action, civil servants were accustomed to working *mora mora*, or "at a relaxed pace." They were comfortable with wide-ranging policy discussions but less familiar with setting concrete goals and taking specific steps to achieve their aims quickly.

At lower levels of government, confusion and uncertainty presented another challenge. In 2004, Ravalomanana decentralized many government functions in an attempt to bolster authority and responsibility at the regional and local levels, where most of the direct services were provided.

However, the move stretched budgets and disoriented officials, many of whom had little training or experience to prepare them for their new roles.

The decentralization plan included the creation of 22 administrative regions—with regional heads appointed by the president and regional representatives of central ministries—to replace the previous six provincial administrative units. The regions were divided into 119 districts administered by centrally appointed officials. The main service providers were at the levels of the village (called *fokotany*, of which there were 17,485) and the 1,579 communes (clusters of villages that made up districts). Elected officials led the villages and communes—heads in the case of villages and mayors in the case of communes.

Regional and local leaders had trouble navigating their new contexts. They were required to coordinate activities with new partners, some elected and some appointed and with whom they typically had had no prior relationship. Regional heads held newly created positions and had to learn their roles. Village heads and commune mayors had new responsibilities for service delivery, yet in many cases had had little preparation and were unaware of recently enacted laws.

Funding posed an additional challenge for locally run projects. Local leaders did not receive from the central government the block grants that would be adequate to the tasks they had to carry out. A 2004 law empowered regions to levy production taxes, and communes to collect land and house taxes to support their new responsibilities. However, knowing that new taxes would prove unpopular with their constituents, local officials refrained from exercising those powers for more than two years, and budgets dwindled.

The president's office needed a capacity-building program that would facilitate coordination between the levels of government

and train local leaders in basic project management skills so the leaders could execute their new responsibilities.

FRAMING A RESPONSE

Ranaivoson and others at the president's office saw Rapid Results' potential to challenge embedded norms, empower local leaders with project management skills, and facilitate coordination across levels and sectors of government. Ranaivoson wanted to use the rice pilot project as a way to begin a discussion with the country's leaders.

In late 2004, Ranaivoson convened a meeting of officials from the agriculture, customs, transport and security sectors, including representatives from the offices of the prime minister and deputy prime minister. Via videoconference, the participants spoke with Schaffer consultant Nadim Matta about the rice crisis and set the parameters for a pilot project to increase rice production. Even though different regions had varying needs, goals typically included expansion of the area under cultivation and the application of new techniques to increase yields.

The program began in February 2005 in four regions and by May had achieved impressive results in some areas. For example, in Boeny region, one of the hardest hit by Cyclone Gafilo, local government officials, rice producers and farmers associations collaborated to increase the area under cultivation, spread more than a thousand tons of fertilizer, and introduce new farming equipment. As a result, rice production increased from 2.5 tons per hectare to 4 tons. Though the pilot program was just one of several interventions that addressed the rice crisis, Heidenhof said with the results of the pilot in hand, "The administration showed it could really do things."

In May 2005, at the end of pilot phase, the president's office and the World Bank devoted a Cabinet retreat in Antananarivo to present and

promote Rapid Results to other government leaders. The president labeled the approach *angaredona* (meaning "together" in Malagasy), and the program was indeed referred to as "Rapid Results–Angaredona." The gathering was one of several organized under the World Bank's governance project, part of a set of capacity-building initiatives for top leaders that included a twinning project with the Canadian government through the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, a series of leadership retreats, and a coaching project supported by Harvard University's Center for Public Leadership. During the two-day session, the 22 regional heads, ministers and the prime minister watched as Matta and officials from the World Bank Institute presented the results of the pilot program and the earlier successful application of Rapid Results in Nicaragua and Sierra Leone.

The president's support proved compelling in Madagascar's centralized system, where ministers and their staff closely followed directives from above. Ministers and regional heads agreed to adopt Rapid Results on a larger scale. As presidential appointees, regional heads had little choice but to agree. However, Benjamina Randrianarivelo, a Malagasy consultant who had helped administer Rapid Results beginning with the pilot project, said many in attendance were sincerely intrigued by the method's potential to help them in their own work. "Governors [regional heads] were appointed to achieve results with good salaries and incentives but did not know how to deliver," he said. "This was a way for them to deliver on the expectations of the president."

Winning the support of elected officials posed different challenges. Mayors and village heads—those on the front lines of service delivery—would have to work with the regional presidential appointees to implement Rapid Results projects. As elected officials, however, they had to be persuaded that the method would

benefit their constituencies. Recognizing that, Ranaivoson initiated a public communications campaign, with support from the World Bank's governance project, to publicize the successes of Rapid Results projects and to build demand among local electorates. He met with media representatives in 2005 to present the results of the pilot project and continually encouraged radio and newspaper outlets to interview strategic leaders and others responsible for successful outcomes in the following months and years.

To oversee the Rapid Results project on the central and local levels, officials involved in the pilot program set up an interministerial steering committee. Ranaivoson led the committee initially; later, the president's director of good governance, Henri Rabesahala, took charge. Solohery Rakotova, economic adviser to the deputy prime minister and general coordinator of the World Bank's governance project, served as secretary-general of the committee. The secretaries-general (the top civil servants) of key ministries, including Agriculture, Health and Finance, joined as members. Schaffer consultant Matta, who had introduced Rapid Results techniques in Nicaragua, Eritrea and Sierra Leone, provided technical advice. Because Matta was based outside Madagascar, the committee hired a local consultant, Randrianarivelo, who had previously assisted the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and the U.S. government, to work with Matta. Randrianarivelo and Matta were in constant communication; Randrianarivelo prepared logistics on Matta's behalf and discussed with him Madagascar's political context and administrative culture.

The committee had to answer critical questions about expanding the program, such as when, where and how. The group identified priority sectors based on the country's national development strategy—encapsulated in Madagascar Naturellement, the country's national

development plan, and fleshed out in its successor, the Madagascar Action Plan for 2007 to 2012—and served as the link between developments in the field and the president's office. Its members decided how to overcome major bottlenecks, and they managed communications to highlight successful individuals and programs—a step that was important for shaping the incentives to participate.

As national consultant for Rapid Results, Randrianarivelo monitored the progress and outcome of each project, advised the steering committee along with Matta, and managed and supported the coaches in the field. The committee recruited coaches as short-term consultants and assigned coaches to specific ministries and regions based on such factors as sector expertise and the coach's home region. Initially, both Matta and Randrianarivelo trained coaches in the Rapid Results methodology; after 2006, Randrianarivelo alone conducted the training.

The World Bank paid coaches' wages—at US\$2,000 per month, often higher than the wages received by strategic and team leaders—through its governance program but did not provide funding for projects. Rapid Results management tools were intended to help government officials maximize results with the resources already available to them.

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

While the steering committee provided guidance and monitored progress in the field, coaches worked with civil servants and elected officials to move Rapid Results projects forward on the central and local levels. Ranaivoson launched in 12 regions and in multiple central ministries a second round of Rapid Results projects focused on rice production, tourism and the registration of gold miners.

The projects proceeded in coordinated waves, beginning in June 2005, and by the fourth wave, from July to December 2006, Ranaivoson had

initiated activity in all 22 administrative regions and in the central ministries of health, interior, agriculture, justice and others. Beginning in 2007, as Rapid Results grew in scope and popularity, the steering committee took steps to institutionalize the method by extending training to hundreds of civil servants and integrating it with the country's national development plan.

Identifying goals, enlisting support and aid

At the central level, the steering committee led by Ranaivoson and including the secretaries-general of key line ministries identified priorities for Rapid Results projects, starting with the first

wave. Rakotovao said the committee used economic and social impacts as the main criteria. The production, import and distribution of rice still occupied high spots on the agenda. However, the committee members expanded the program to other areas covered by the health, interior and mining ministries.

In the health sector, Minister Jean Louis Robinson proposed to use Rapid Results projects to (1) encourage pregnant women to give birth in hospitals, (2) promote family planning and (3) increase the rate of immunization (see Box 1). The Ministry of Interior planned a campaign to register births and administer identification cards

Box 1: Ministry of Health Contraceptive Initiative

Minister of Health and Family Planning Jean Louis Robinson had set a goal to raise the contraceptive prevalence rate by three percentage points nationwide. Across Madagascar, the rate of usage of contraceptives was low, and the number of births per woman was high. However, the ministry had achieved only a slight increase in contraceptive use in the previous 15 years. Intrigued by presentations at the May 2005 World Bank leadership conference, Minister Robinson and his top advisers met with the Rapid Results steering committee to see whether they could work together.

A few months later, in November, Robinson launched a Rapid Results project in Analamanga, the central region that included the capital city of Antananarivo. The goal was to increase the contraceptive prevalence rate from 7% to 10% in 100 days. Robinson, political leader for the project, tapped Norolaolao Rakotondrafara, a medical doctor who served as director of health in Analamanga, as strategic leader. The Rapid Results steering committee assigned Lalanirina Andriamiarisoa, who had worked for years in the health sector, as coach for the ministry.

Rakotondrafara and Andriamiarisoa reached out to a combination of health center staff, private sector representatives, community workers, traditional doctors, association leaders and others to attend a workshop. Together, they formed eight Rapid Results teams, each led by a community volunteer trained by USAID. At the launch workshop, these community volunteers and professionals made a simple plan: to assign all members specific territories in their communities to canvass by going house to house to discuss the merits and techniques of family planning.

By the 50-day mark, community health centers reported that the rate of contraceptive usage had reached 11%—exceeding the goal for the 100-day period. Rakotondrafara collected the data from the health centers weekly and reported up the ranks to the central ministry.

In 2006, Robinson launched Rapid Results projects across all 22 administrative regions not only in family planning but also in nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and immunization. Andriamiarisoa said the project helped “to build trust between the actors, bring transparency to the level of results, and create a ‘results culture.’”

To effectively scale up the use of Rapid Results, the ministry trained two internal coaches at the central level and 22 coaches at the regional level. To sustain the use of Rapid Results, the ministry incorporated the tool into its work plan and evaluation framework as the basic method of service delivery on the local level, a precursor to government-wide Integrated National System for Monitoring and Evaluation, the evaluation framework for the country's national development plan adopted in 2007.

more quickly. The Minister of Mines and Energy sought to register the country's gold miners as a first step toward ensuring that gold-mining businesses paid their fair share of taxes in exchange for the government services they used.

At local levels, regional heads and mayors deliberated with coaches to identify specific sectors and goals. Rakotovoao said the steering committee allowed local leaders to determine sectors and goals based on the leaders' assessments of local priorities and sensitivities. This step was important to ensure that the sector selected would attract enough interest and commitment from local leaders and interested parties to make projects work.

To maximize impact, regional heads and mayors usually selected sectors where they already had programs and financial sponsors in place, such as birth registration (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]), local tax collection (German Technical Cooperation; later, German Agency for International Cooperation) and family planning (United States Agency for International Development [USAID]). Strategic leaders wrote framing notes that described the context, goals, opportunities and risks for each project.

The Boeny region's decision-making process was fairly typical. Andy Rakotomavo, one of the first coaches recruited, recalled that in 2005, the president's office instructed Boeny's regional head to set a top priority on boosting rice production. Using the techniques mentioned earlier, the region achieved its goals by December, after only two Rapid Results cycles. Next, the regional head, free to choose a new sector, decided to focus on local tax collection, a politically sensitive but highly important area. "This was a brave decision," said Rakotomavo. "No regional head had tried this before."

The regional head encouraged mayors to begin to collect land taxes and house taxes in Boeny, and Rakotomavo provided coaching to help them do so. The regional head persuaded

some mayors that the political risk of collecting new taxes was outweighed by the potential in collecting taxes and providing better services for their constituents. "This was very unpopular, and mayors and village chiefs risked losing their next elections," Rakotomavo said. "But with the little money they received from the center it was the only way."

With the sector and goal defined, the strategic leader and the coach identified a team leader and helped draw into the process other potential participants, including financial sponsors. The ideal team leader, said Rakotovoao, was the official, regardless of rank, who had the greatest professional and personal stakes in achieving the stated goal of the project. "The people involved should be the main actors in the sector, people involved in the daily life of the sector," he said. The coach reached out initially to potential donors and stakeholders, introduced them to Rapid Results, and discussed the logistics of a reform team and launch workshop, but it was primarily up to the strategic leader to secure participation by these groups.

People's willingness to join was in part tied to the sensitivity or popularity of the goal. With rice in Boeny, Rakotomavo recalled, it was not difficult to entice producers and heads of local farmers associations to participate because of the urgency and obvious need to improve food security. Later, projects to augment local tax collection met resistance, and the regional head had to work more diligently to persuade village heads of the projects' benefits.

Formulating and implementing a work plan

With the Rapid Results team—the team leader and other interested parties—on board, the coach organized a one- to two-day workshop to develop a work plan. Typically, the strategic leader would offer opening remarks to motivate the team, stress the importance of the project, and commit to support its efforts. The coach oversaw

breakout discussion groups and team-building activities. Communication was crucial during this phase.

The team leader took the lead in developing the work plan. First, the team leader discussed milestones—major points to reach along the way to achievement of the final results. Second, the team discussed who would be responsible for reaching each milestone. The plans contained only broad mentions of activities, because the primary goal of the workshop was not to spell out each activity in detail but to agree on benchmarks and create links between team members. For example, with the Rapid Results project in Boeny that aimed to double rice production, one of the milestones was provision of fertilizer for the associations of rice producers; another was establishment of the specific amounts to be provided. “We don’t say how many or how much; that’s for the technical people later on,” said Rakotomavo. “The most important thing is that it’s clear who is doing the action and with a clear deadline.”

An ideal workshop was in the form of an open discussion during which team members spoke freely about expectations and potential obstacles. Lala Rakotoarimino, a coach who worked in a variety of sectors in three regions, said the intention of the workshop was to overcome the typical reluctance of employees to express their true opinions in the presence of their superiors. “When a minister or a regional head presents lower-ranked people with an idea or a plan, Malagasy people say, ‘Yes, yes, this is a great plan; it will work,’ when they are really thinking that there are many problems with the plan,” he said. “At the workshop, we tried to encourage people to talk about problems.” Usually, though, lower-level officials remained hesitant to speak up. The role of the coach was to encourage them to do so, if not at the workshop, then in the days and weeks thereafter.

Following the workshop, the team implemented the work plan over the following 100 to 150 days. (Rapid Results projects varied in duration, but 100 to 150 days was typical.) The team leader and coach monitored progress and kept in constant communication with team members. Because team members were sometimes scattered, the entire group typically met only a few times throughout the process. However, the coach spoke with team members via telephone and made in-person visits to discuss progress on a daily basis. If the coach anticipated problems or if team members expressed difficulties, the coach would signal to the team leader to intervene. The role of the coach was not to solve a member’s challenge but to connect the relevant people who could resolve the problem on their own.

Rakotomavo recalled one such instance where a lack of communication threatened to sidetrack a project: Through its Rural Development Support Project, the World Bank provided fertilizer for farmers in Boeny, and the central Ministry of Agriculture advised local officials on how much fertilizer to apply. “It seems they provided too much of it,” said Rakotomavo, “more than what was needed, according to the technicians. ... But because someone from the central ministry said, ‘You have to do it,’ they do it, even though if you put too much fertilizer on land, it will damage it.”

Rakotomavo said he could tell that the local agriculture official was uncomfortable at the workshop and was behind schedule in implementation, unlikely to meet his milestone. Rakotomavo correctly conjectured that the official was behind not because of technical obstacles but because he was not fully committed to the flawed plan. Following conversations with the regional director and the central ministry adviser, the coach managed to spur the officials to speak directly. “People on the local side don’t dare talk about problems because they don’t want to quarrel

with people [on the central level]; they are afraid for their jobs,” he said. “Your role as a coach is to make those people talk together.”

Evaluating results, promoting good practices

At the end of the implementation stage, the coach, the strategic leader, and the team members would convene to evaluate their results and discuss next steps. The evaluation served multiple purposes and could take any of a range of forms. The coach and team members discussed what had worked well and what hadn’t, including the clarity of expectations, quality of communication, and extent of strategic support provided. The coach and the strategic leader discussed whether or not to scale up, and how: whether to conduct an additional Rapid Results project in the same sector but on a larger scale, or in a different sector, or in multiple sectors at once.

Strategic leaders used the evaluation stage to display their accomplishments to their electorates and build public support for additional projects. For example, in the village of Ifotaka, at the gateway to Madagascar’s spiny forests in the southern region of Anosy, Mayor Remaninty Tompotany hosted a festival. Local dignitaries, including the regional and district heads, spoke about the commune’s achievements in boosting local tax collection, and members of one of Ifotaka’s villages prepared food and arranged other celebrations. These events were important for demonstrating the benefits of Rapid Results to both local constituents and neighboring communes. Coaches escorted mayors and prospective team members to see Rapid Results projects for themselves as a way of showing them that they too could obtain similar success.

The steering committee took advantage of the evaluation stage to promote Rapid Results and to encourage more local leaders to participate. The committee enlisted the support of newspapers and radio stations to publicize successful projects and

the individuals involved. Particularly for locally elected village and commune heads, such recognition was a significant motivator for launch of their own Rapid Results projects. “The steering committee together with IGDP [the World Bank governance project] did communications very well with videos, radio, outreach to media,” said Heidenhof. “People were listening to this; everybody could connect with this. It worked.”

Officials from the presidency down to the commune level used competitions to promote good performance. For example, the mayor of Ifotaka had set improved tax compliance as an objective. He rewarded both the first of his villages to submit its taxes and the village that collected the largest amount by returning 10% of the taxes those two had paid. (At this stage, each household paid the same amount in land taxes, so the competition did not provide incentives for village heads to overcollect.) The president’s office held a competition whereby the 10 top-performing mayors in Rapid Results won an audience at the presidential palace in Antananarivo. “[The president] met with them, chatted with them, gave them a lot of recognition,” said Heidenhof. “The president’s attention drove them, but they were also willing to make a difference for local constituencies.”

Institutionalizing Rapid Results

By 2007, Rapid Results projects existed in a number of central ministries and in every region at dozens of communes and villages. There had been five waves and more than 250 projects. The results encouraged the steering committee, but scaling up was constrained by reliance on a small number of external coaches (no more than 29 in any wave). Such reliance on short-term external consultants posed a variety of problems. The cost of training hundreds of additional coaches was prohibitive, and short-term consultants might leave at any time for work in the private sector or elsewhere in

government.

The steering committee needed to find ways to expand the program meaningfully and to sustain it. The committee opted to establish a full-time support unit, train hundreds of civil servants in Rapid Results methodology, and integrate the approach with the national development plan and results framework—called the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP), the country’s five-year national development plan that covered the years 2007 to 2012.

The steering committee set up a Rapid Results support unit to provide full-time support for coaches in the field. Previously, national consultant Randrianarivelo and Schaffer-based Matta had been the support unit’s only resources. The new support unit consisted of four staff officials: one each in charge of training, monitoring and evaluation, finance, and general administration. All four had previously worked as coaches.

The support unit helped in a variety of ways. Both Randrianarivelo and the training officer, Yves Rakotomanga, a former coach in the agriculture and justice sectors, wrote explanatory memos to coaches in the field. Rakotomanga’s notes contained advice and insights into Rapid Results methodology and were meant to complement the coaches’ initial training. Randrianarivelo’s memos covered a range of topics, from Rapid Results methodology to advice on building trust with strategic leaders, to sector-specific background notes. For example, when regional heads wanted to use the program to improve local tax collection, local leaders and coaches alike knew little about the new field. Randrianarivelo compiled an explanatory note that described recent legislation, the different types of taxes included, and how the taxes were meant to be collected. Randrianarivelo crafted performance tables and charts on which coaches could track the results of local initiatives. The monitoring and evaluation officer advised coaches

on how to fill out the charts, collected the data, and furnished summaries of performance to the steering committee and relevant donors.

To institutionalize the use of Rapid Results, the steering committee decided to train hundreds of internal coaches—civil servants embedded in ministries and in local governments—as a permanent Rapid Results cohort to extend the reach of external coaches. Their supervisors, often secretaries-general or their deputies, selected internal coaches to lead projects in the sectors in which they were responsible. Although officials received neither additional wages nor promises of promotion, selection as an internal coach was an indicator of confidence and approval from supervisors. The support unit and, in particular, training officer Rakotomanga organized the training of 400 internal coaches embedded in ministries and local governments.

The intention was not only to create an internal Rapid Results capacity but also to amplify a regional or ministry coach’s impact. For example, in the central region of Itasy, Rakotomanga trained a regional coach, Hasina Rakotozafiarisoa, together with regional and district officials in charge of land registration, nutrition and local tax collection. The local officials served as internal coaches and launched Rapid Results projects in their districts with close monitoring and support from Rakotozafiarisoa. “With internal coaches, it would be like the regional coach could be in five places at once,” said Rakotomanga.

The National Leadership Institute of Madagascar, a training program set up by the president’s office as part of the World Bank’s governance project, contributed to scaling up Rapid Results capacity by training regional appointees, mayors and village heads in adaptive leadership techniques that included a segment on Rapid Results coaching. Pastor Hubert Rakotoarivony, head of the leadership institute, said the goal was “to equip people with the basic

leadership skills to implement the MAP. ... The president wanted Rapid Results to be connected to the leadership institute so that people should be able to operate with the Rapid Results mind-set. Malagasy people are not time oriented; they are event oriented. If you tell them to achieve birth registrations in 100 days and go back and make an action plan, it requires a change of mind-set. That's why there was a close link between the leadership institute and Rapid Results."

Rakotomanga, the support unit's training head, wrote an instructional module for the leadership institute by using Rapid Results techniques, and he taught classes. Rakotomanga said the training was not comprehensive, though; it focused largely on the basics of clarifying challenges, rallying stakeholders and identifying solutions. The institute trained every regional head, mayor and village head in the country, plus 3,000 woman leaders and representatives from nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. The institute said it reached more than 22,000 people from 2007 to 2009.

To fully embed the use of Rapid Results across sectors, the Ministry of Economy, with support from the presidency, linked the program to the MAP. The steering committee thought it was possible to define 100-day goals consistent with the priorities set forth in the plan, and it envisioned Rapid Results as the primary mechanism of implementation. The Ministry of Economy divided the MAP into annual and quarterly targets suitable for Rapid Results projects and made it the basis of the Integrated National System for Monitoring and Evaluation, the MAP's evaluation framework.

"Ravalomanana wanted to accelerate the implementation of the MAP," said Moise Rambeloson, head of the committee that had crafted the MAP. "The MAP had the spirit and mentality of Rapid Results, the defined times and targets. ... He adopted Rapid Results to implement the MAP." The plan envisioned

annual performance reviews and discussions about Rapid Results and implementation techniques.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The sustainability of Rapid Results in Madagascar was tested in March 2009, when Antananarivo mayor Andry Rajoelina ousted Ravalomanana from the presidency in what the international community deemed a coup d'état. Marginalized in Ravalomanana's 2007 landslide reelection, the political opposition had criticized what it considered the president's increasingly authoritarian disposition. Protests in the capital broke out in January 2009, a month after the government ordered the closing of Rajoelina's popular television station, which aired a controversial interview with former president Didier Ratsiraka. The protests continued until Ravalomanana transferred power to military leaders on March 16. Five days later, the military leaders named Rajoelina head of a transitional government. Madagascar then entered into a political stalemate that disrupted economic activity as foreign investors and donors pulled out and that continued into 2012.

Under the transitional government, work for the MAP and central support for Rapid Results projects ceased because both were closely associated with the deposed president. The steering committee and the support unit disbanded, and many of the ministers and regional heads accustomed to Rapid Results lost their posts. However, nongovernmental organizations, private sector groups and some civil servants, persuaded through their own experiences of the value of the approach, continued to use elements of Rapid Results despite the political developments. For example, Lala Rakotoarimino, a coach who had facilitated Rapid Results projects in birth registration in the region of Anosy in March 2009, was hired by UNICEF to continue his work. UNICEF had worked with the Ministry of Interior to register children to receive birth

certificates. The joint program had struggled initially to register significant numbers of children, largely because people didn't understand the purpose of registration. Cultural taboos against naming infants when the child's survival might be in doubt—especially in the first weeks after birth—also played a role. After introducing Rapid Results projects that focused on citizen sensitization to the need for registration—to receive services from the state—the joint program increased the number of children registered. UNICEF hired four former coaches directly to continue to work in some of the more challenging regions.

Private sector groups hired former coaches as well to incorporate Rapid Results techniques into their activities. State-owned chromium ore exporter Kraoma hired Rakotomavo, the former coach from Boeny. Mining giant Rio Tinto hired training coach Rakotomanga to work with local communities to build schools and health centers with the money they received in exchange for land rights. Foreign government-sponsored projects generally weakened because the sponsoring governments did not recognize the transitional government as legitimate. However, the French region of Aquitaine, which supported decentralization reforms in Itasy through a sister program that paired French and Malagasy regions, paid the wages of coach Rakotozafiarisoa to continue his work.

A few coaches took positions advising foreign governments and international organizations in Rapid Results methodology. Madagascar became something of an exporter of Rapid Results, with coaches taking posts in Rwanda, Cameroon, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among other countries.

Although the MAP was suspended, the Ministry of Economy continued to use the framework that set short-term goals and based its evaluation on progress toward those goals.

Although there were no systematic data on the persistence of the processes put in place, anecdotal evidence showed that many of the 400 internal coaches continued to use elements of the approach, such as setting 100- to 150-day goals and crafting basic business plans.

ASSESSING RESULTS

One measure of the impact of the Rapid Results method in Madagascar was its breadth. Before the political upheaval of 2009, central ministries and local governments promoted Rapid Results on a wide scale. Nine waves of Rapid Results projects took place from February 2005 to December 2009, including hundreds of initiatives across all of the country's 22 administrative regions. Central ministries of health, justice, commerce, finance, economy, and water and forests initiated projects. A total of 882 communes participated in the seventh wave, which took place in 2008, the most in any wave, before the number declined in 2009. Projects reached a variety of sectors, including family planning, birth registration, land tenure reform, agricultural production, local tax collection, justice and registration of gold miners.

Because a variety of economic and political influences were at work in Madagascar from 2005 to 2009, attributing specific gains to Rapid Results is difficult. However, data collected by the Rapid Results support unit showed significant gains in areas where the process had been adopted. The rice project was a case in point. Regions that implemented Rapid Results increased average rice yields steadily from 3.75 tons per hectare in 2006 to 5.8 tons in 2009, compared with national average yields of 2.5 to 3 tons per hectare from 2005 to 2009.

Rapid Results data showed similar improvement in tax collection and the issuance of birth certificates. Regions that implemented Rapid Results collected 64% of expected taxes in

2007 and 88% in 2008, compared with national averages of 45% and 50% for the same years. The joint project between the Ministry of Interior and UNICEF to issue birth certificates through Rapid Results projects achieved 67% of its target in 2007 and 75% in 2008, or 64,285 and 312,436 births registered, respectively.

The Rapid Results method itself may have accounted for the perceived persistence in changing administrative norms. Rakotomavo, a coach based initially in the northwestern region of Boeny, said the short terms of Rapid Results projects and the simplicity of the approach were critical factors in focusing and sustaining attention on the objective, particularly with inexperienced local leaders. Additionally, quick and tangible results built the confidence of local leaders and made it easier to satisfy local electorates. “If they remember the basics—get results in a short time, communicate, remember the innovations, and make them sustainable—if they remember even those basic things, it’s a good outcome,” he said.

National consultant Randrianarivelo agreed that changing norms for the long term mattered most. “It’s not about getting one result; it’s about shifting behaviors and developing leaders,” he said.

REFLECTIONS

Observers offered insights into why some Rapid Results projects achieved their objectives, whereas others did not. An important factor was the selection of a suitable sector at an appropriate time. Solohery Rakotovao, former secretary-general of the Rapid Results steering committee, said the projects worked best in sectors where planners could easily define a goal, such as family planning or rice production. In such cases, teams could set easily measurable targets to visit a specific number of households for consultations or to increase rice yields to certain levels. In other areas, such as foreign affairs, the approach was

sometimes less feasible because goals were harder to define and gains were harder to measure.

Strategic leaders and coaches learned that timing could be a crucial factor. For example, one local tax collection project in the region of Anosy failed to get good results because the initiative was launched before the harvest, and households did not have the money on hand to pay.

Varying degrees of commitment from strategic leaders made a difference, too. Strategic leaders played key roles in selecting sectors and goals, recruiting team members and financial sponsors, motivating teams, dealing with bottlenecks and sustaining results and best practices. Rakotovao said some of the regional heads who served as strategic leaders adopted Rapid Results merely because the president’s office endorsed the program; they lacked enthusiasm and failed to provide the necessary support. Others, such as the heads in Boeny and Anosy, played key roles in promoting the success of Rapid Results in their regions. At the central level, support from ministers and secretaries-general varied; notably, Minister of Health and Family Planning Jean Louis Robinson was supportive—even providing coaches with means of transportation and work materials from the ministry’s budget.

The Rapid Results team approach also worked against itself in an interesting way. Lala Rakotoarimino, a coach who worked in several regions, pointed out that although team members were personally accountable for meeting their milestones, no individual could claim sole credit for the overall success of projects. Some leaders and team members therefore failed to invest the necessary time and effort into projects. In one of the regions where he worked, Rakotoarimino found that “some people didn’t want Rapid Results because of the teamwork.” People would join only if they could claim responsibility and highlight their personal accomplishments, but the

whole ethos of the program lay in teamwork and collaboration.

Without formal mechanisms for sustaining the results of Rapid Results projects, it was the responsibility of strategic leaders to extend the gains and institutionalize the lessons learned in their sectors. Coaches left when the job was done. One of the first coaches, Andy Rakotomavo, said the coach's role was partly to impress upon the strategic leader the need to plan for what needed to be done after specific projects ended. "You have to get it back to the strategic leader that during this experience, the teams learned this and experienced that and produced and got results, so maybe he can institutionalize it as a way of doing day-to-day business," he said. "As a coach, you then move on to another sector or maybe even another region. It's entirely up to the strategic director. We give them something new, a new experience, and it's up to them to do something with it and to build on it."

Rakotomavo said the sustainability of results was one of the weaknesses of the program overall. "They should have done more to embed Rapid Results practices in communities, perhaps through formalizing practices in local agreements," he said.

Coaches, too, had to maintain their commitments, and that proved a challenge. Early on, coaches based in Antananarivo were assigned to work in other regions, yet some did not spend sufficient time in the regions with their Rapid Results teams. A few of them were asked to do work that was not their responsibility, essentially becoming technical assistants. Rakotomavo said this reflected the steering committee's complicated task of placing coaches with ministries and regions.

Initially the committee tried to match coaches based on their sector backgrounds. "Maybe we made a bad choice, because, for example, if you have a Rapid Results project in rice, you should not send them an agronomist, because he will be tempted to become a technical

assistant and to give lessons and criticize the policies," he said. "The coach is there to manage a process of communication, not to manage the technical issues of a sector."

Additionally, some regional heads hired coaches directly after their contracts expired—one of the risks of a model based on short-term external consultants. "Local partners, like chief of regions, when they see good performance, they hire [coaches] to become technical assistants; they recruit them. ... This is not a bad thing—a recognition of the performance of the coaches—but coaches should manage the process only," he said.

At times coaches faced difficulties fitting in at their new assignments. Although many partners were pleased to have the support, others felt as if the arrival of a coach signaled that their prior performance had not been adequate. Rakotomavo recalled skepticism from local officials: "People said, 'Why are those guys coming here? They think we don't know what we're doing here?'"

Yves Rakotomanga, a coach who advised the Committee to Safeguard Integrity in the justice sector, said members of the police were not open to external help and criticism and that Rapid Results projects in that sector struggled as a result. Additionally, Rakotomavo said some coaches were resented for the higher salaries they received as consultants.

From 2005 to 2009, the role of the president's office in promoting the application of Rapid Results was one of the drivers of the method's adoption in Madagascar. The degree of top-level support, according to Malagasy consultant Benjamina Randrianarivelo, was key to the program's success. "The commitment from the top level gave us leverage," he said.

Guenter Heidenhof, team leader of the World Bank's Governance and Institutional Development Project, said the environment in Madagascar, framed by the president, was conducive to Rapid Results. "In Madagascar, you

had an enthusiasm to do things differently,” he said. “People wanted to be part of the new

Madagascar. That was the environment, and in that, Rapid Results flourished.

Endnotes

¹ “Madagascar: Cyclone Gafilo, Final Report, Appeal 08/04.” *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*. 25 February 2005. <http://reliefweb.int/node/411687>. Accessed 4 June 2012.

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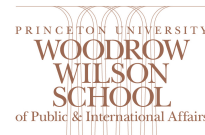
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