

Institutional cooperation for statistical development: the case of twinning in Mozambique – a model for other countries?

Hans Erik Altvall¹ and Ms. Destina Uinge²

Summary

Donor support to statistical development has different designs. Donors with different approaches can be involved in projects to the same statistical bureau in the same country. This often creates problems in coordination with implications for a consistent, systematic and sustainable statistical development.

The ongoing Scandinavian project to strengthen the National Statistical System (SEN) in Mozambique attempts to avoid these risks by joining the three Scandinavian donors in co-financing one and the same institutional cooperation and under a common project set-up.

The cooperation is based on a twinning arrangement between the National Statistical Institute (INE) and a consortium of three Scandinavian national statistical bureaus. INE has the overall responsibility for the organization, management and administration of the project and to initiate, control, run, implement and review project supported activities. Project activities are integrated with INE's regular plans and reports.

Key Words

Integration; umbrella; cooperation; synergy; harmonization

Résumé

L'assistance de donateurs en matière de développement de la statistique s'opère de différentes façons. Des donateurs ayant des approches différentes peuvent se retrouver engagés dans des projets au sein d'un même institut de statistique dans un même pays. Ceci crée des problèmes de coordination qui ont un impact sur la cohérence, la régularité et la durabilité du développement statistique.

1: Hans Erik Altvall, Team Leader, Scandinavian Program, 01-05; Statistics Sweden. hanserik.altvall@scb.se

2: Destina Uinge, Project Director, Scandinavian Program, National Statistical Institute (INE), P. O. Box 493, Maputo, Mozambique. destina.uinge@ine.gov.mz

Le projet scandinave de renforcement des capacités du Système Statistique National en cours au Mozambique vise à éviter ces risques en s'associant à trois bailleurs de fonds scandinaves pour co-financer une et même coopération institutionnelle dans le cadre d'une mise en œuvre commune.

La coopération se base sur un jumelage de l'Institut National de Statistique (INE) à un consortium de trois instituts nationaux scandinaves de statistique. L'INE a la responsabilité générale de l'organisation, la gestion et l'administration du projet et initie, contrôle, dirige, met en œuvre et passe en revue les activités du projet. Les activités du projet sont intégrées dans le programme et le reporting régulier de l'INE.

Mots clés

Intégration; Parapluie; Coopération; Synergie; Harmonisation

1. Introduction

Various modalities are practiced in donor-supported activities for statistical development. For many years, the main modality was technical assistance to a specific project such as a labor force survey with little if any allowance for related support to formal training activities or to activities of crucial importance for institutional development, for instance management, accounting or organizational issues.

Although nowadays there is more of combined support, it is still rather frequent that one donor or a small donor group supports one or a couple of specific projects in a national statistical bureau. One example is that a country receives donor support to cover the various requirements that are necessary to carry out one specific survey. Procedures for the survey are created without considering that these should be seen as an integrated part of other activities within the same national statistical bureau and hence with the institutional development of the agency.

Different donors may support the same bureau. This means that several donors are involved in the statistical development in the same country. The recipient institution may have to deal with different partners with different working practices, work processes and methodologies with an evident risk for disharmony and inconsistency in the institutional development.

In order to achieve improved harmonization and consistency in the supporting activities and to reduce the need for support from many donors, the concept of institu-

tional cooperation based on a twinning arrangement was created. This means a direct cooperation between two institutions, which is opened for any area or activity of importance for statistical development, subject matter areas as well as issues on management, administration and procedures for budget and accounting. It also im-

plies that technical assistance is integrated with capital assistance and with support to formal long and shortterm training.

2. The Philosophy of Institutional Cooperation

The principle idea behind institutional cooperation is to make use of relevant parts of the competence, methodology and institutional arrangements, work processes, etc. in a developed institution to support another institution in its development. The support should focus on activities that can be sustained and be further developed after the end of the cooperation.

The two institutions have in general similar professional references and areas of responsibility with similar demands on knowledge and competence. This promotes a good and natural climate from start. The lessons learnt in achieving and maintaining institutional competence at the more developed institution can be used to assist in developing human resources of the other institution.

An ideal twinning arrangement covers all areas of work and does not leave any area or any staff outside. It is especially important to include horizontal functions, such as management, systematic quality work, accounting, etc. since these are crucial for the institutional work and development.

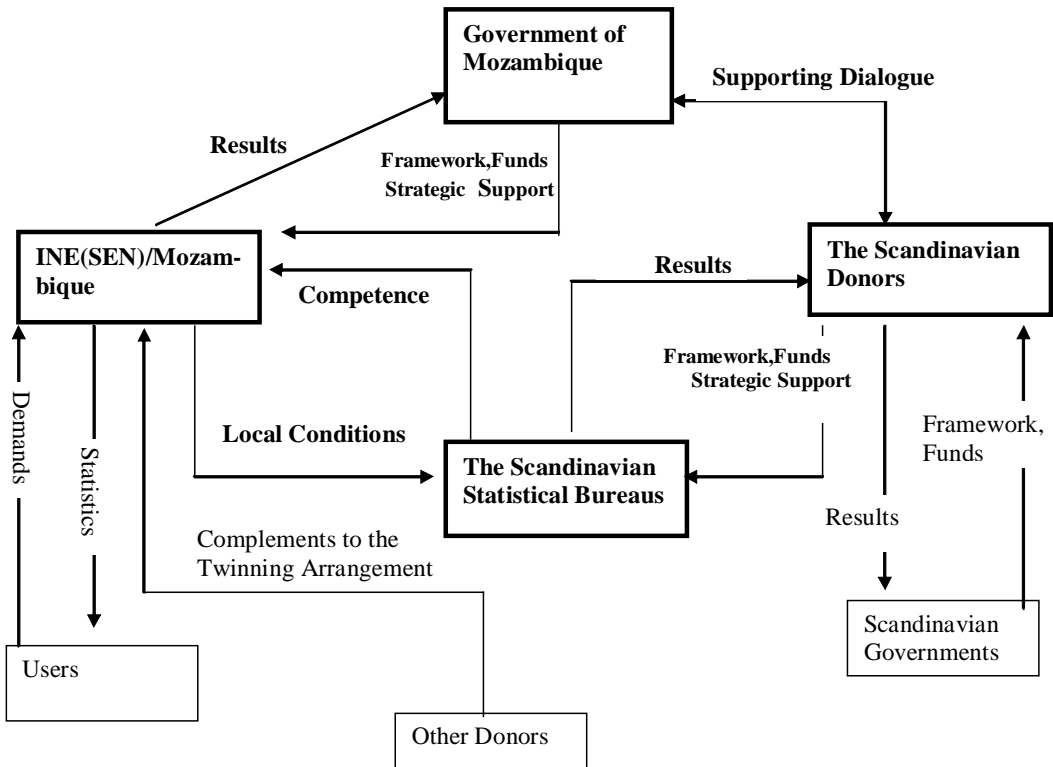
The donor support to this kind of cooperation must be of a long-term nature to enable the two partners to thoroughly and systematically plan for lengthy activities and reduce the need for ad hoc crisis intervention. It provides an important sense of security in the long-term plans and reduces the risk for involving other donors and other technical assistance with different working practices, methodology and work processes.

Long-lasting trusting relationships between the respective staff can be created for the promotion of long distance contacts, which can easily continue after the termination of formal cooperation.

3. The Actors in an Institutional Cooperation

A twinning arrangement has, apart from the two participating institutions, two other major actors, all with evident and heavy responsibilities for a successful cooperations can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Actors in the Institutional cooperation between INE (SEN) / Mozambique and the three Scandinavian Statistical Bureaus



One major actor is the Government of the supported institution. The Government sets the objectives, designs the framework and decides the plan for the development of the institution. This warrants that the development strategy is consistent with strategies for related institutions and for the country.

The Government also provides the local input for the institution in its development. It must recognize that the cooperation constitutes a process during which the insti-

tution develops a new and dynamic role with increased efficiency and expectations, which generates new development. This development normally implies an increase in the national budget and a change of authority and institutional arrangements.

The same Government has a key role in particular during the phasing out and termination of the donor support to ensure that there is sufficient local input to maintain the achieved sustainability for further institutional development.

The other major actor is the donor (and it's Government). This sets another framework for the cooperation in terms of objectives and length of the support and the scope of the finances. A donor that supports a twinning arrangement must in its contacts with other donors be in the front-line for the coordination of donors so as to promote that other support, if any, complements and not create disharmony in the twinning arrangement.

4. The Case of Mozambique

In 2002 a project started on Scandinavian assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of The National Institute of Statistics in Mozambique (INE). The project is a continuation of previous support from Scandinavian countries to INE's institutional development, though using a rather different modality. The new project joins the three Scandinavian donors and the three national statistical bureaus in these countries in the same project that forms an umbrella for all donor support to INE.

The project seeks to strengthen the National Statistical System (SEN) in Mozambique through support to INE and its provincial branches so that it will efficiently generate reliable, relevant and timely statistical information. The development objectives are to support the implementation of SENs 5-year plan 2003-07 – guided by a strategic plan for the same period-and thus enable government, private sector, researchers, donors and the general public able to monitor social and economic development in the country. One specific focus is the implementation of the strategy of Mozambique for reducing poverty.

The High Council for Statistics that is chaired by the Prime Minister decides both the strategic and the operational plans.

The project budget for 2003–07 is 10 680 000 EURO that corresponds to about 50% of INEs total budget for the same period. Forty one percent of the Scandina-

vian support is for long and short-term technical assistance, 47% for surveys, operational activities and equipment and 12% for formal and in-house training courses.

The project is based on a twinning arrangement between INE and all the three Scandinavian national statistical bureaus. A consortium of the three bureaus is supporting INE in implementing the project with Statistics Denmark as the lead partner.

The project seeks to have a set-up which puts special emphasis on:

- Donor coordination
- A Twinning arrangement with three national statistical bureaus
- INEs role as fully responsible for the project activities
- Integration of project activities with INEs regular plans and reports
- Implementation of a comprehensive human resource development plan 2003-07

5. Donor Cooperation

INE is supported by a fairly large number of donors with an evident risk for lack of harmonization and coordination in the support that may jeopardize a systematic institutional development of INE. In order to reduce these risks, to achieve synergy and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their support, the three Scandinavian donors – DANIDA, NORAD and SIDA - agreed to co-finance a single project. This is by far the largest and most important support project to INE and serves as the umbrella for all donors to INE so as to avoid cross-purposing support.

The three donors have a joint responsibility for their total support and each provides about one third of the funds. They all have their own coordinated bilateral agreements with Mozambique on their respective contributions. DANIDA retains its part in Denmark to cater for the costs of technical assistance. The other two donors transfer their contributions to INE to support a number of subprojects that are outlined (together with appropriate budgets) in the Project Document.

DANIDA is the lead donor and ensures regular contacts and coordination between the three donors, with INE and with the Consortium. This implies that INE can conduct all its business through one Scandinavian donor without needing to spend time and resources to discuss with the individual donors. This has proved to be of a significant advantage from the viewpoints of both INE and the Consortium.

DANIDA in particular should also have a key role in contacts with other INE donors so as to promote the Scandinavian support to INE and the umbrella concept. It is difficult to conclude if this has had any specific advantage so far.

On the other hand it is of course INE itself that has the overall responsibility for all support and to ensure necessary coordination under the umbrella of the Scandinavian support. It is the responsibility of INE to ensure transparency in all matters connected with the Scandinavian Program and to keep all partners informed about other donor initiatives.

One activity at an overall level in this direction is that the major donors attend meetings with two Steering Committees, one for the Scandinavian Program and one for the Italian Program. The Italian program, covering the period 2004-05, is designed to complement the support from the Scandinavian Program to all INEs offices in the Provinces. The transparency for day-to-day activities is improved by an efficient use of Intranet.

Discussions during the preparatory stage amongst the various partners regarding the format for the contract and the modalities for the execution of the project were extensive and very time consuming.

6. Twinning Arrangement with 3 National Statistical bureaus in a Consortium.

The three Scandinavian bureaus have very similar statistical systems, which is the foundation for the Twinning arrangement in the project. The three bureaus have formed a consortium that provides technical assistance and support to INE to implement project activities.

The main contract includes a specific agreement that formalizes the consortium, and outlines its obligations and role in the project; it specifies for instance how the recruitment of advisers is done.

The consortium has a coordination office in Statistics Denmark – the lead agency – that is the focal point for general backstopping and home office management of the project. The lead agency is the consortium's representative towards DANIDA (the lead donor), INE and other donors. It has regular contacts and meetings with the other two institutions in the consortium.

The consortium monitors the performance of the project through an internal project-monitoring group. The objective of the group is to ensure relevance, unity, quality, co-ordination and momentum of the project. Its task is to observe and continuously examine the quality of performed work.

There are also separate external evaluations of project achievements as well as regular external financial audits.

The consortium is represented in Mozambique through a Team Leader (TL), who coordinates the technical assistance from all the three bureaus. The TL is the spokesperson for the consortium in discussions with INE and with the donors and is also the main link between INE and all the three Scandinavian bureaus.

The TL lends strategic support to the development of INE towards a modern statistical bureau. This requires that the person is highly knowledgeable about modern statistical systems as well as institutional performance.

With three bureaus, a broader and stronger platform is provided for recruitment of long and short-term consultants than would be the case in twinning projects with only one bureau. The project has, apart from the TL, two to four consultants contracted from all the three bureaus on long-term assignments of at least 2 years.

The advisers on short-term assignments of two to three weeks are usually from the Scandinavian bureaus but may also be persons with relevant skills from outside or from other countries. Hence, the consortium and INE make efforts to establish contacts with an even broader resource base relevant to INE.

An important component in the Twinning arrangement is that the project has strategic support from the top managers and the Directors General (DG) at the three Scandinavian bureaus. The DGs have visited INE to transfer to the INE managers their experiences from Management and Strategic Planning and from International Statistical Cooperation.

Another principal component is study tours to the three Scandinavian bureaus. The tours broaden and deepen the contacts and are of specific importance for areas that are crucial for institutional development. Hence, there have been tours, for example, on systematic quality work and on strategic aspects concerning competence and information technology (IT), respectively.

The experience of the three bureaus from the set-up is positive; this is especially the case when advisors are given the necessary language training and have had an opportunity to become familiar with the new working environments and local conditions. INE's contact net has also become broader and deeper. The knowledge of and interest for statistics in Mozambique is now more spread and deepened through the web pages at the Scandinavian bureaus, the many advisors to INE and the study tours.

7. Project Setup at INE.

INE has the overall responsibility for the organization, management and administration of the project, charged with the responsibility to initiate, control, run, implement and review project supported activities.

This is a very important basis of the cooperation and the Twinning arrangement. It is also essential for integrating supported activities with INE's plans and regular activities and for supporting activities that can continue and be further developed after the termination of the project. However, it puts specific requirements on INE.

INE has a Project Director (PD) who is the Director for Integration, Coordination and External Relations, including planning, IT and dissemination. The contract between the Partners includes Terms of Reference specifically for the Project Director. The Project Director acts on behalf of the President of INE and has weekly discussions with the President on achievements and problems in the project.

The Director for Administration and Human Resources serves as Deputy Project Director. The Deputy in particular keeps an eye on issues of administration and accounting. Other key persons are a full-time senior accountant and a full-time administrative assistant both supported by the donor.

The Project Director is overall responsible for the day-to-day work assisted by the Team Leader, a Steering Committee and an internal Coordination Group.

The PD has weekly meetings with the *Project Management Group* that consists of herself, the deputy PD, the accountant, INE's training coordinator and the TL.

The Steering Committee includes the 3 top managers at INE, with the President of INE as chairman, all the three donors, the Project Director and the TL. It promotes an

efficient management and follow-up of project activities. It could be argued to have only the lead donor in the Committee to represent all the three donors. The Committee discusses achievements and accounts, can adjust planned activities and can re-allocate funds. Other major INE donors are invited to the meetings to promote donor coordination. There have been discussions to reformulate the ToR for the group to enable all main donors to attend the meetings on equal terms.

The Committee convenes at least 3 times annually – in November to discuss plans for the following year, in April to discuss reports for the previous year and in September to discuss the mid term report.

The internal *Coordination Group* is chaired by the Project Director and includes all the Directors at INE – a level one step lower than top management – INE training coordinator, all Long Term Advisers (LTA) and the Project Accountant. The purpose of the group is to promote an efficient and smooth coordination and implementation of Project Activities and their integration with INE's regular activities. It usually meets once a month.

The group is also crucial for deliberations on activities that are common for all the Directorates at INE and strongly related to INE's institutional development such as IT, quality, planning, competence, etc.

The project set-up functions reasonably well. However, taking into account the scope and magnitude of the Scandinavian program, one of the major issues of concern is the workload of the Project Director. Given that the INE Director covers perhaps the most difficult area at INE, namely the major horizontal functions that are crucial for INE's institutional development, the combination of this with the responsibility of overseeing the daily activities within the Scandinavian Program, is perhaps a little too much. In fact, it was envisaged during the planning of the project that the Project Director would have to work almost full-time with the Scandinavian Program.

8. Integration with INEs Activities, Plans and Reports

INE has the responsibility to implement the activities and monitor the achievements. The activities form a natural part of INEs activities, in terms of both current and development activities. They are integrated with INEs daily activities and with various plans and reports. This means that most staff members at INE profit from the support and have a role in the institutional development of INE.

All Directors and Heads of Departments are responsible in their respective fields for the day-to-day functioning of the project, assisted by the LTAs. The LTAs provide advice in relation to the implementation of the activities and their work must be well integrated with INE's activities.

The activities are discussed at the Directorate or a Department's regular monthly meetings. The concerned long-term adviser from the Scandinavian Program is invited to attend the meetings and the minutes are circulated within the program. This procedure was agreed between the partners but is not always followed, raising serious concerns regarding the transparency within daily activities.

INE's counterparts for a short-term mission (STA) prepare terms of reference for the mission according to agreed format. Work on quality and on competence development that are essential issues for institutional development are always covered by an STA. The recommendations from an STA must be well established within INE and be feasible to implement.

The counterparts have responsibility to follow up the results of a mission and should provide explanations in cases where a recommendation is not or will not be implemented.

The Directors at INE are responsible for plans and budgets for their respective areas. They prepare activity plans with detailed annual and quarterly budgets for about 20 different subprojects according to the Project document for the cooperation (PRODOC). The plans and budgets as well as the follow up of the results and costs are focal points for the meetings with the internal coordination group. Proposals on changes of plans and reallocations of funds are presented to the Steering Committee for action.

A specific issue of major concern in INE's institutional development and in the Scandinavian project is to improve management performance and cost awareness amongst the staff at INE and in particular amongst the various Heads of Departments. For this purpose, there is ongoing work to develop a set of simple indicators that will show the annual change in relation to quality, user satisfaction, staff satisfaction, cost and competence on product level. All these annual indicators must show improvements to reflect better management.

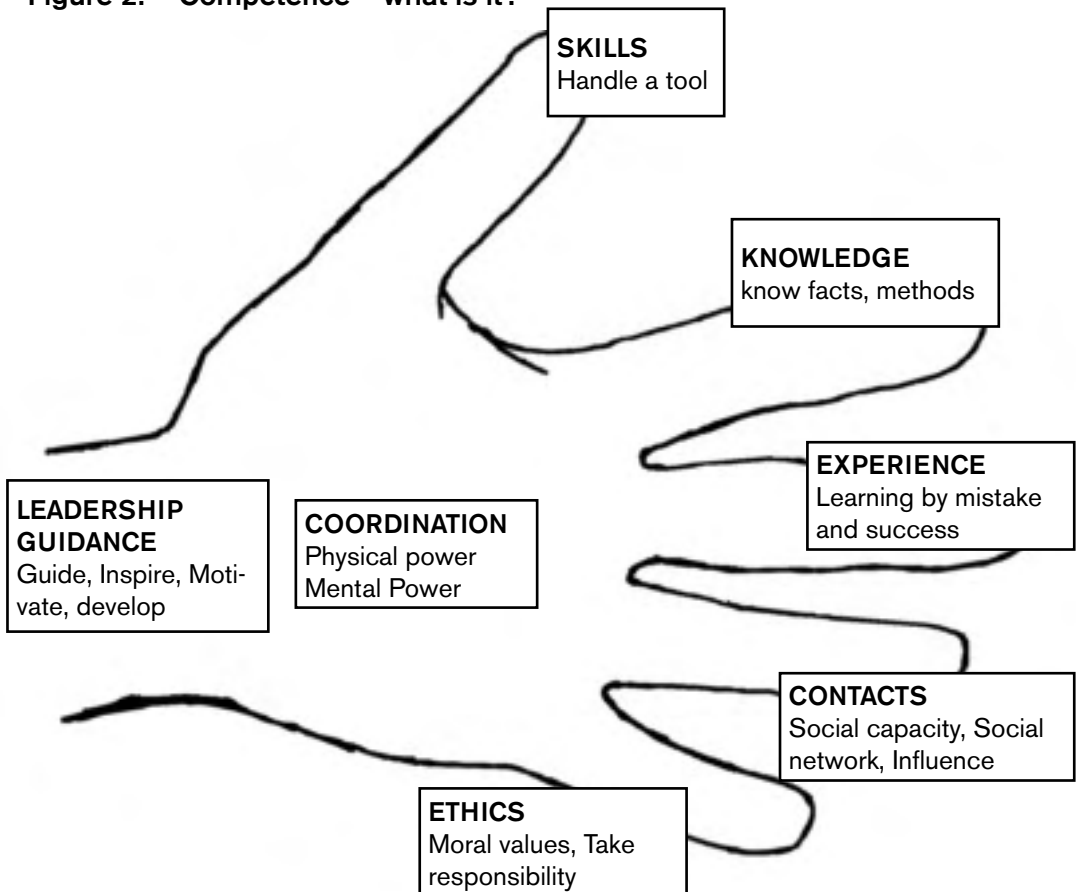
There are also specific courses for Heads of Departments in management and planning. Another issue which impacts on institutional development and institutional com-

petence concerns work on horizontal issues such as quality, in project groups that cross the line organization.

9. Competence Development Activities

The Scandinavian Program aims to transfer and develop competence at INE in order for INE, as a learning institution, to achieve a competence for self-development. The concept of competence is explained in Figure 2. This is done through various means, such as formal long and shortterm training, in-house tailor-made training, workshops, study tours, etc., and perhaps the most important means, on-the-job training with technical assistance.

Figure 2. Competence – what is it?



Source: The toolbox on Competence Development in Learning Organizations; Boliden Contech 2000; Illustration: Kerstin Keen

The competence concept covers 5 areas: Skills, Knowledge, Experience, Social Capacity and Ethics. The training places special emphasis on institutional competence and on issues that are crucial for institutional development.

The role of the consultants is to be advisers and contribute to competence development at INE. Hence, they should not be gap-fillers that do the actual work or present ready-made solutions. Instead they are competence developers that advise on methods or on procedures of problem-solving.

INE has developed a strategy for Human Resource Development (HRD) Activities to be implemented in 2003-07 with the assistance from the Scandinavian Program.

INE's training coordinator has a key role in coordinating HRD activities that are supported by the program with training activities that are supported by other donors. The role of this coordinator is also to administer assessments and evaluations of the training and to develop INE's own in-house training capacity with own trainers. One step in this direction has been to designate INE officer as assistant trainer to a consultant during an in-house training course with the aim to prepare the officer to take over the training later.

A matter of major concern is related to the vast training support to INE from several donors. This is difficult to coordinate and harmonize unless the training coordinator is consulted and has a clear mandate to co-ordinate all training activities. Experience shows that often new training activities take place on a very short notice without any information being given to the Scandinavian Program which is supposed to be the umbrella for all support.

10. A Concluding Remark

The three external reviews that have been carried out all give a relatively positive picture regarding this initiative. The latest evaluation which took place as a mid term review in April 2005 was very positive in it's report dated 17 June 2005. It highlights the main reasons for the success as capacity building, long-term engagement, assured finance and quality. 0.

