




ACCESS Phase II

Continuous Learning Strategy

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ACCESS

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACCESS	Australian Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening Scheme
ANTARA	Australia-Nusa Tenggara Assistance for Regional Autonomy
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
Bappenas	Ministry of National Development Planning
CB	Capacity Building
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CDST	Community Development Snapshot Tool
DCEP	District Citizen Engagement Plan
DSC	District Stakeholder Committee
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRG	Monitoring Review Group
MSC	Most Significant Change
MIS	Management Information System
PAMELS	Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System
PCC	Program Coordination Committee
STO	Senior Technical Officer

1 Introduction

The core purpose for ACCESS is “*Citizens and their organisations are empowered to engage with local governments on improving local development impacts in 16 districts in Eastern Indonesia*”. It is well established that the quality and equity of local development impacts relies to a large extent on fair, just and sustainable governance practices. The basic premise of the Program is that to bring about societal transformation depends on a deeper engagement amongst those concerned with developing solutions and a willingness and trust to work together.

In a world that is marked by rapid and often unanticipated change (the current global financial crisis is a case in point), there is a high level of complexity that is difficult to predict and solutions emerge as situations unfold. The use of a systems model in ACCESS Phase II addresses this uncertainty by focusing on changes in human activity systems, taking into account the interrelationships among the parts and the functioning of the system as whole. Processes of social change are more to do with these interrelationships than simple linear cause and effects chains.

Understanding these processes of change requires continual deep learning, that is “*all our efforts to absorb, understand and respond to the world around us*” (Deprez, 2008¹) and learning organizations in which “*people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together*” (Senge, 1990²).

This document sets out the Continuous Learning approach and framework to guide the ACCESS Phase II team in becoming more reflective and learning-oriented and in encouraging our Partners to do likewise. This will not only improve the overall efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness of the Program and Partners but hopefully engender innovation and creation of new knowledge for the development sector.

2 Continuous Learning Approach

The motivation to learn comes from people seeing its value, deriving some benefit (intrinsic or extrinsic), enjoying the experience and having sufficient time and resources to learn. Essentially it is concerned with *behaviour change* – doing things differently to improve results based on new insights. Since ACCESS Phase II outcomes are focused on behaviour changes among partners and their beneficiaries, learning is a keystone of the Program.

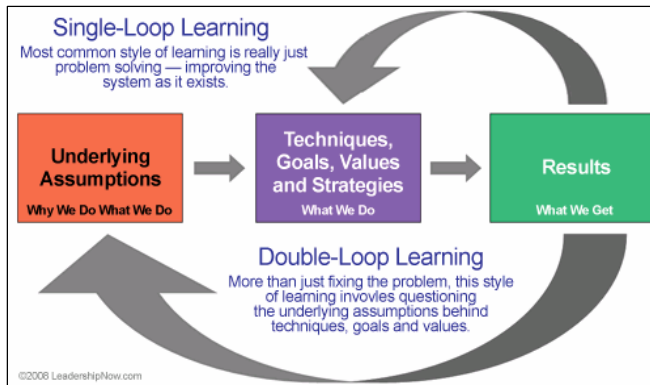
A Continuous Learning approach revolves around “action-reflection-adaptation-action”, supported by a range of capacity building interventions. People are encouraged to try something, reflect on the experience to make sense of it, think about how to improve and then revise their actions accordingly. Through seeing patterns and interrelationships, people gain new insights that increase the range of options for action. As the cycle continues, new data is generated which in turn triggers another learning round.

¹ Deprez, S (2008), **Participatory Learning and Accountability**, draft thesis, p23.

² Senge, P.M. (1990), **The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization**, London: Random House. p3.

This analysis goes beyond examining the gaps between what was supposed to happen and what actually happened by using “*double loop learning*”³. This encourages people to examine both whether they are doing things right and whether they are doing the right things as shown in Figure 1 below. It involves asking questions about why things are happening (or not), what makes people think that their strategies will work and what beliefs cause them to value a particular intended outcome rather than any alternatives. It also begs the question of how to address the individual and institutional forces that facilitate or constrain their ability to apply new learning.

Figure 1: Single and double loop learning⁴



This can open up a broader range of options for action that can be nuanced to match different sets of circumstances, and supports innovation. It can possibly trigger substantial changes to Program strategies and organizational structures and culture.

Structured learning events provide the vehicle for this

process. Some are concerned with analyzing and discussing results from field experiences (see Appendix 1) whilst other forms of learning include community-based action research, formal capacity building and ‘learning experiments’ (i.e. through Innovative grants).

3 Continuous Learning Strategy

The Continuous Learning Strategy aims to share learning and influence a range of stakeholders including Boundary Partners and Strategic Partners⁵, national and local governments, AusAID programs and other donor programs. They in turn will influence the Program’s ultimate beneficiaries including citizens, particularly women, poor and marginalized, their organizations and local governments in the sixteen target districts⁶.

Consequently, the Strategy has three objectives:

1. To strengthen the capacity of Boundary Partners and ACCESS Phase II as learning organizations to improve their effectiveness, innovation and efficiency; and
2. To strengthen the capacity of Boundary Partners and the ACCESS Phase II team to engage a broader range of stakeholders including communities, local

³ Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978) **Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective**, Reading, Mass.

⁴ Taken from www.leadershipnow.com

⁵ Boundary Partners are local civil society organizations receiving funding and other support to promote demand for local democratic governance while Strategic Partners are organizations delivering technical services to support Program implementation.

⁶ This framework corresponds with the Outcome Mapping approach used in ACCESS Phase II as explained in **Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PAMELS)** available on ACCESS website www.access-indo.or.id

and national governments, AusAID and other donors, in acquiring and sharing lessons learnt and generating new knowledge.

3. To provide a range of mechanisms for sharing learning with national governments as well as AusAID and other donors and their programs to influence their approaches for local development

A range of interventions will be used to create more conducive learning environments, according to the following categories:

1. *Causal* interventions – to produce a direct output, such as scholarships, training funds or a Program website to share learning;
2. *Persuasive* interventions – to change people’s way of thinking and acting through access to new knowledge and skills such as direct capacity building/training;
3. *Supportive* interventions – to provide ongoing assistance and informal learning opportunities such as mentoring, coaching, technical assistance and access to networks and associations.

These learning opportunities will occur at the internal and environmental levels:

- Internal level –strategies which are directly aimed at the specific individuals, groups or organizations among the Boundary Partners; and
- Environmental level – strategies aiming to indirectly influence individuals, groups and organizations in the broader environment in which the Boundary Partners operate.

Boundary Partners will assess their learning needs and current learning practices as the basis for their learning and capacity building programs linked to their Progress Markers that are jointly monitored on a quarterly basis⁷ (as part of their agreements with ACCESS Phase II). They will be encouraged to use existing learning assets in their organizations and localities or establish new ones (e.g. local learning centres).

The Program through its staff and Strategic Partners will provide ongoing coaching and formal training including such activities as: building and maintaining networks, strengthening capacity for community training and mentoring, community economic development, natural resources management, public service delivery, monitoring of development activities, advocacy and so on. They will also conduct structured learning events which include the Partners’ beneficiaries. Incentives will be explored such as training scholarships and other forms of reward as well as linking learning outcomes to continued partner funding. The support mechanisms are described in Table 1.

⁷ These are an agreed set of changes that the Boundary Partner will seek to make in their actions and interactions in implementing their activities as part of the outcomes of the Program.

Table 1: Strategic Interventions for Boundary Partners

	Causal	Persuasive	Supportive
Individual or group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives and rewards for learning (e.g. awards, prizes, training scholarships) • Provide analysis from M&E data for Partner use • Conduct Annual Stakeholder Reviews and Capacity Building Reviews • Provide grants for program implementation • Require grant funded programs to specify organizational and beneficiary learning outcomes and strategies • Require Partner quarterly and completion reports to identify lessons learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Building assessments based on current learning practices • Structure project implementation as h action learning framework • Provide capacity building for Partners on participatory planning, implementation and MEL processes and tools; • Strengthen CSO capacity for community mentoring and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help Partners to identify and use existing assets (e.g. local experts and resource people, learning materials) • Provide ongoing technical assistance for internalization of forma learning • Provide quarterly mentoring and reflection events for Partners • Create ‘learning labs’ among groups of Partners
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require grant funded programs to specify organizational and beneficiary learning outcomes and strategies • Support establishment of district learning centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support development of self- based learning modules for participatory M&E (e.g. Outcome Mapping, MSC, CDSTs) • Annual review and reflection exercises with stakeholders • Support activities which share lessons learned with government and other CSOs • Conduct Civil Society Index⁸ • Promote and support development of local service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up exchange visits for local champions, • Strengthen information flows between Program and Partners • Support to strengthen CSO networks and associations • Encourage and support Communities of Practice on specific governance themes

For its staff, ACCESS management will promote and monitor a culture of learning through structured staff learning events; delegated authority, formal and informal capacity building opportunities, interdisciplinary work groups⁹, open dialogue and experimentation and recognition of learning commitment. It will also develop the skills of staff for networking, developing strategies, advocacy, presentation, writing case studies and change stories and writing reports and publications. These are set out in Table 2.

⁸ For more information on Civil Society Index, see ACCESS website

⁹ For example, HIV Mainstreaming Strategy was developed by a team comprising the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Adviser, Capacity Building Senior Technical Officer and a Provincial Coordinator.

Table 2: Strategic Interventions for ACCESS Staff

	Causal	Persuasive	Supportive
Individual or group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff development fund Create incentives and rewards for learning among staff (e.g. public recognition, exchange visits) Regularly update electronic library Disseminate reports and materials from other programs “Open door” management policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on writing reports, case studies and most significant change stories Training on documenting good practice Training on participatory M&E Set challenging tasks for staff members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and use staff skill set data base Utilise interdisciplinary work groups Management team, Advisers, STOs and provincial coordinators provide regular mentoring to their staff Encourage and support staff to undertake research activities and provide staff training in areas of expertise
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection sessions routinely integrated into team meetings Lessons learnt data base established All staff reports require identification of lessons learnt Incorporate learning objectives into staff performance assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to relevant resources and materials from other programs (national and international) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Communities of Practice and e-groups Provide exchange visits for staff to other Program districts Strengthen information flows between Provincial offices and Bali Office Identify opportunities for staff collaboration with other programs

For other stakeholders including national and local governments, AusAID, other donors and donor programs, the learning agenda is somewhat different. It is concerned with generating and sharing lessons learnt which will stem from engaging others in ACCESS implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning activities and research supported by the Program.

Other interventions include the Program participating in other government and donor-initiated activities and conducting strategic advocacy and presenting the results of ACCESS Phase II activities through workshops, seminars and print and electronic media. This will include promoting the processes and results of the Learning Strategy itself. These are described in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategic Interventions for Government and Donor Stakeholders

	Causal	Persuasive	Supportive
Individual or group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make ACCESS lessons learnt data base accessible to public through Website • Offer scholarships for local training to selected district champions • Conduct at least one applied research activity per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access for non CSO partners, government agencies and other donor program staff to participate in ACCESS Phase II capacity building activities (as appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer opportunities for national and provincial government and other donor programs to participate in ACCESS MEL activities • Enable local champions to make presentations on achievements to broader audiences
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide learning resources and lessons learnt through ACCESS Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an annual program of publications and other media tailored to different audiences (including case studies and significant change stories) on lessons learnt and achievements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide exchange visits for CSOs, government and community champions to share information and see 'results on the ground' • Strengthen information flows between ACCESS and national and donor stakeholders • Develop associations with donor programs and national and international research institutes • Collaborate on AusAID key policies such as poverty alleviation, community driven development, gender equity and HIV mainstreaming

4 M&E and Learning

4.1 Data Collection

Data is collected systematically and routinely through the Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System (PAMELS)¹⁰. PAMELS contributes to the learning process through use of participatory data collection and structured learning events.

This data includes:

- Learning and CB Assessment
- Output and outcome data from grant activities
- Field visits by ACCESS staff
- Partner Progress Marker reviews
- Civil Society Index results
- Case studies and significant change stories
- Community Development Snapshots (from Partner M&E)
- Action research (including ad-hoc assessments)

¹⁰ Information on PAMELS can be found on the ACCESS Website.

- Case studies and most significant change stories

In addition, complementary data will be sourced from reports from other government, CSO or donor programs, seminars and workshops and research reports.

4.2 Structured Learning Events

A range of structured events have been developed for Partners and for staff to allow critical reflection and analysis of data and field experiences as described in Appendix 1.

For Boundary and Strategic Partners this includes:

- Annual DCEP Review and Planning workshops
- Annual Strategic Partner Review meetings
- Quarterly Partner Progress Review meetings
- Regular informal mentoring of partner organizations by ACCESS team

For staff this includes:

- Monthly individual provincial and Bali team meetings
- Bi-monthly management meetings
- Ad-hoc staff workshops (on demand driven topics)
- Annual Planning workshop
- Annual Staff Appraisals

For other stakeholders this includes:

- Ad-hoc presentations and seminars (local, national and international)
- Presentations for PCC and MRG (six monthly)

In addition, Partners will be encouraged and supported to set up their own structured learning events through forums and networks, including meetings of the District Stakeholders Committee, and to incorporate learning activities with their beneficiaries into their action plans.

5 Resourcing

Responsibility for implementation of the Continuous Learning Strategy has been integrated with other institutional arrangements, giving all management and technical staff a substantive role (see Appendix 1).

The following additional resources have been allocated in support of the Strategy.

- Funding for short term assistance: Website designer, MIS Advisor
- Funding for provincial and district capacity building and learning events with partners and stakeholders will be through Partner Grant Agreements.
- Funding for program implementation through Grant Agreements
- Funding for publications (including translators) through Grant Agreements
- Funding for research through Grant Agreements and by leveraging funds through collaborations with national and international agencies (including research institutes).

6 Monitoring and Evaluation of Continuous Learning

Learning is not an end in itself but a means to improving performance and results. The Continuous Learning Strategy is expected to produce better learning systems, instruments, tools and capacities to achieve this. The expected results also include partner and stakeholder satisfaction with the learning approaches as well as increased scope of their use beyond the Program.

Results from the Annual DCEP Reviews, Strategic Partner Reviews and ACCESS Annual Planning will be analysed to determine the extent to which lessons have influenced changes within the Program and further afield. Annual Planning will identify ways of strengthening learning, taking into account changing conditions (including emerging risks as shown in Table 4) and the learning needs of Partners and stakeholders.

Table 4: Risks and Risk Mitigation for Learning

Risks	Risk Mitigation
1. Learning is carried out for its own sake rather than program effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning processes are embedded into work programs and aligned with the program and DCEP objectives and anticipated results
2. Insufficient efforts and/or learning management processes and activities are managed in a fragmented way leading to a loss of focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACCESS leadership commits itself to ensuring that management processes and learning activities are managed as one system, including allocation of adequate resources for learning outcomes.
3. Poor coordination of efforts for shared learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management regularly reviews progress (based on monitoring results) with the Continuous Learning Strategy and takes remedial action.
4. Partners and staff are unable to use the learning tools and techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and mentoring is made available to respond to capacity gaps
5. Content for learning is poor despite effective processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner style preferences are mapped and quality assurance mechanisms are used to check content.

Appendix 1: Learning Events in ACCESS Phase II

	Learning Events	Purpose And Description	Whom To Involve	Timing	Dissemination Of Results	Learning Result
Program Partners						
1	Annual DCEP Review	Review the progress and revise the strategy based on the lesson learned	ACCESS , Partners, GOI, AusAID and community members	Annually (Feb-March)	Report to GOI and GOA; printed media (e.g. ACCESS' Bulletin and on ACCESS Website)	Changes in strategy to address identified gaps
2	Partner Progress Markers reviews	Identifying and discussing lessons learnt during project implementation	Staff, Boundary Partners, beneficiaries	Quarterly during project grant implementation	Reports and follow up plans; Reports to community groups	Revisions to work plans and approaches based on learning
3	National, provincial and district presentations	To share district lessons learned to national and sub-national audiences	Boundary Partners, local champions, local government	Ongoing whenever opportunity arise	Conferences, national and local meetings, CD, TV, radio, newspapers	Requests for further information or follow up invitations to make presentations; adoption of ACCESS approaches by others
4	Community presentations and meetings	Sharing results and lessons learnt with communities	Community champions identified during phase I and II and from other projects	To be scheduled into Action Plans.	News on information board in public spaces (mosques, churches, markets, clinics), discussions in community meetings, videos etc	Adoption of different practices by community groups, particularly women and poor
5	Shared learning events amongst	Participation in existing CSO	CSOs and community members	To be identified as part of Action Plans	Minutes, use of CSO networks; ACCESS	Adoption of Program supported initiatives

	Learning Events	Purpose And Description	Whom To Involve	Timing	Dissemination Of Results	Learning Result
	CSOs	networks and events to share experiences and learning			website and Bulletin, through learning centres.	by CSOs.
ACCESS PHASE II TEAM						
1	ACCESS Management Meetings	Review progress and implementation to assess the support provided by the project	Management team	Bi-monthly	Minutes of meeting	Changes in practice to address gaps and lessons learnt
2	Staff Meetings (Support Services and Technical Advisory Teams)	Reflection on progress and lessons learnt	ACCESS Staff	Bi-monthly	Minutes of meeting	Changes in practice to address gaps and lessons learnt
3	Strategic Partner Reviews	To review the services provided to partners	Strategic partners and TAT	Annually	Workshop report	Improved service delivery
4	Annual Planning Meeting	To review progress and plan for upcoming year	All staff	Annually	Annual Plan	Planned Improvements and innovations fit with the analysis of lessons learnt.
5	Monitoring Review Group	Adjust strategies based on progress and lessons learnt.	MRG, Management and staff	6 monthly	Summary report disseminated to DSC	Revisions to Program policies and strategies
6	Mid term review	Review the result of midterm review and	Management and Staff	Mid project	Summary report disseminated to DSC	Changes to Program's policy and

	Learning Events	Purpose And Description	Whom To Involve	Timing	Dissemination Of Results	Learning Result
		adjust the strategy accordingly based on lessons learnt.				practices based on lessons learnt
7	Final Review	Use results of AusAID's Final Review to address sustainability issues and contribute to plan for future phase of ACCESS (if any).	Management and Staff	44 months after Project start up	Summary report to national and local stakeholders and donor programs	Sharing of lessons learnt, consolidation of exit strategies and increased sustainability and institutionalisation of ACCESS Phase II approaches
GOVERNMENT AND DONOR STAKEHOLDERS						
1	Engagement in national and provincial networks	Share learning with groups engaged in donor coordination and national and provincial policy making	ACCESS staff, Boundary Partners, local and national Champions	At least quarterly and as opportunities arise	Presentations, Technical reports	Influence on decision making of other groups and agencies