



Delta Newsletter: No.6 October 2010
Welcome!

Welcome to the 6th edition of Delta News! After a hiatus caused by office moves, new people, new processes and just too much work, we are very pleased to say that we'll be getting our regular schedule of quarterly newsletters back on track. Rather than simply report on what we have been doing, we want to use our newsletters to let you know what we're thinking and to stimulate discussions. Many of our projects throw our associates together in different combinations, and we have enjoyed seeing how much you have enjoyed working with each other. It's not always easy to keep a network together but we hope that our newsletters will provide a sense of Delta's personality, and a set of common ideas around which we can all develop and learn. So we hope you find them focused, interesting, and thoughtful; and let us know if there is anything you would like to see us cover in future editions. Please send any comments to Hannah@deltapartnership.com

- In this edition...**
- Our new website: how redesigning it helped refine our corporate offerings
 - Assignment update: who's doing what where
 - Horizon scanning: we've been thinking about the future
 - Our codes of conduct and corporate policies

Our new website

Delta was ten years old on 4th August 2010: Mike remembers being on the road when he got a phone call saying that Delta had been incorporated. We thought the anniversary was a good excuse to redesign our website to reflect how Delta has grown in the past ten years and how it will continue to enable better public services.

We hope you have all visited our new website at www.deltapartnership.com. Designing it has been a fascinating process: we worked with two of our close associates who brought skills in strategic planning and teamwork (Fiona Coffey) and in marketing (Vandi Hill) – even consultants need outside help sometimes! Both Vandi and Fiona challenged us to go back to first principles, asking probing questions about the real value Delta directors and associates create and how that could form the basis of a sustainable organisation. Both strands of work reinforced each other and you can see the results on our new website.

We haven't changed what we do, but we have refined how we conceive of the services we offer. They fall into four areas: governance and accountability, evidence-informed policy and strategy, performance management and improvement, and sector and organisational reform. As we were pondering how they fit together we found we had unintentionally recreated the Delta logo:



Each service is equally important in its own right, but put together they make up our core offering: sector and organisational reform to enable better public services. Clearly there are other important aspects of policymaking and strategy processes such as monitoring and evaluation, gender and social inclusion, foresight and risk analysis but we don't intend to try to develop expertise in those areas. Instead, we will continue to partner with other organisations who can deliver these – we pride ourselves that what we really bring to our clients is a depth of knowledge about how to



synthesise different specialist inputs and focus them on key questions of concern to the public sector all around the world.

In future newsletters we will explore each of these areas in depth, starting with evidence-informed policy and strategy in our December edition. In June and July Louise worked with Ben Clench to refine what 'evidence-informed' really means and how to implement such an approach, synthesising the most up-to-date knowledge from the UK and international arenas.

So please let us know what you think about our service offerings and our website – whether it reflects your understanding of what we do, and how we could improve it. Hannah in London will be working with Wahome in Nairobi to drive Delta forwards, keep our website updated and respond to any comments and suggestions you may have. Contact them at Hannah@deltapartnership.com or wahome@deltapartnership.com.

Horizon scanning

As part of our strategy development process, we decided we needed to be more methodical about analysing future growth potential for Delta. In particular, we decided we need to improve our ability to anticipate what might be over the horizon – to pick up signals about how and where the market for Delta-type services is changing so that we can consider, systematically, how we might respond. It doesn't only affect how we are able to keep our associates in stimulating and rewarding work: it also helps us think about whether we ought to consider offering different services, changing the balance of what we offer, or building alliances with new strategic partners.

We would like to share our thoughts with you and find out what you think we ought to be keeping an eye on. If you have a spare few minutes of creative thinking time, we would appreciate your thoughts on our analysis – is it roughly right / are there big holes / is it mainly wrong? It's not an exhaustive list, nor are we going to turn it into how Delta defines the world – it's the beginning of a conversation with our associates and clients about how we can be smart in preparing for the future. This is only a rapid 5-10 year scan rather than a fully-blown horizon scanning exercise, but it raises some interesting points.

You may ask why we're putting these questions online: they clearly relate to our corporate strategy, so why be so open? For a start, we are committed to sharing knowledge of best practice: in order to do that we need to know what people think. The wider the variety of people, the broader our knowledge. But we also believe that no-one has the right answer

to any questions about the complex, emergent issues faced by the public sector all over the world. Complexity theory suggests that hoarding information is a short-term strategy¹ - knowledge is thrown up in surprising and unexpected ways, and it's impossible to predict where the next insight will spring from. We interpret that to mean that being open about our own knowledge is the best way to improve it.

So please take some time to think about these questions and either send us a quick email, call, or have a chat next time we meet. We're all interested, but Louise is the one collating responses (louise@deltapartnership.com). She'll write a short piece to reflect on them in a future newsletter.

Assignment update:

Delta is working for the Embassy of Denmark on Gender Strategy and Communication in **Kenya**. *Aileen Lyon* has already completed guidance on overall principles in delivering gender equality and this month worked on the Terms of Reference and the communication strategy for the Gender Team in the Embassy.

¹ See, for example, Eric Beinhocker's book *The origin of wealth: evolution, complexity and the radical remaking of economics*. Harvard Business Press, 2006. ISBN 9781578517770. It looks like a heavy economics textbook but isn't: it's well-written and thought-provoking even if you don't agree with all of it.



Public sector budgets in the UK

There is clearly a big and a long-term hole in departmental finances which is likely to cause unseemly budget grabs between Departments, and a very chaotic situation for small and medium-sized consultancies. We won't know the impacts of this until the autumn spending review, and even then the effects will take a good many years to play out. But we are also picking up rumblings about the degree of central control of departmental budgets by the Treasury, and we wonder if this is likely to align with the coalition leanings towards decentralisation and big society – whatever that is. In addition, there's an ongoing debate about the extent to which Government can truly be held accountable for the final impacts of its policies (say, on obesity or the

economy) and what this means for how public services are delivered.

There is nothing specific in coalition policies to say how the private sector will step in to fill the gap in service provision, but what we might see is a greater emphasis on CSO, private sector and NGO provision of basic services, with central Government reining back and focusing its energies on policy outputs rather than policy outcomes. Will something similar happen in aid policy? How might it affect delivery of the aid budget and are there any opposing forces? How would we measure aid effectiveness in a highly decentralised world?

Flatter, cheaper communications and emerging information technology

We are all wedded to Skype: in spite of dropping calls in the middle of sentences and weird feedback noises, we use it constantly to keep the Nairobi and London offices in touch and to call each other from various parts of the world. We've tried Google Talk and other packages; and resident gadgeteer Louise sends out periodic emails with ideas for new IT products and processes culled from the pages of the Financial Times. We are LinkedIn, Facebooked and webited: we are experimenting with various online information management services using cloud computing, sharing calendars and documents in real time and beginning to understand how these emerging tools work best for us. But we still get on planes to fly out to our clients, we still send tender documents by post (with really tight deadlines, Hannah gets on the sleeper train to Scotland) and we still write project reports as if they were going to be printed out.

But what are the implications of flatter, cheaper communications and new information technology? Clearly this will only apply to a selection of the people we work with, but can we see a world where more consulting is virtual, where the technological interface between us and our clients is so good that we can (for example) run workshops remotely?

What about project reports? The advent of the paperless office hasn't changed the fact that we all continue to write reports as if they were to be printed. Will our clients change the way they want to receive information and if so, how? What's after Powerpoint? Should we be offering our clients a suite of ways in which we can communicate with them? What are they beginning to demand: should we record presentations for those who have the bandwidth? How else could we give people the information they need, and keep it current? Whatever we do, will it be the same for our northern and southern clients?

Is there any substitute for the personal approach when it comes to social networking? We do believe that Delta consultants share similar values and ideals – partly because we set great store on personal recommendations from people we already know and like. Vandi has convinced us to use it to build our networks – watch out for LinkedIn invitations from Wahome as he starts our East African network – but will cheaper, flatter communications and better IT really strengthen the ties that bind?



What's coming after the MDGs?

We all have our own ideas about the MDGs: how comprehensive they are, whether they were farsighted enough, how effectively they have been addressed and how likely we are to hit the targets. But what comes next? The world has changed considerably since they were adopted in 2000, and if any new indicators are developed what might they look like?

Two things we believe have changed considerably (and continue to change) are our understanding of the impacts of climate change, and communication/IT. Cleo Paskal's book *Global warring: how environmental, economic and political crises will redraw the world map*² raises an interesting question: what happens to basic rights if people are somehow disenfranchised by climate change? If rising sea levels inundate an island so that its people need to move to another country, what happens to the resources it currently claims under international laws? If half a population is displaced because their land becomes uninhabitable, what rights can they claim? Almost 75% of the Earth's surface is outside national boundaries and thus lies outside national laws and governance.³ Who are the policymakers for international spaces and will traditional policymaking models work? What else should we consider? Might new MDGs take a fresh look at what we mean by human rights in a changing climate, and what sorts of governments are needed to guarantee them?

How might any new MDGs reflect technological advances in communications technologies? Many southern countries have leapfrogged landlines to

² Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Another thought provoking read even if you don't agree with all of it.

³ See www.ourspace.org – the Antarctic and the deep sea being two such international spaces. The Antarctic is governed by a dedicated treaty which guarantees its use for peaceful purposes 'in the interests of all mankind'. No such treaty applies to other international spaces such as the deep sea or the sub-polar Arctic. Technological advances (eg bio-prospecting, deep-sea mining) are beginning to push the boundaries of current legislation about what is and is not acceptable.

develop a mobile network that provides things northern countries never dreamed of (cash transfers, for example). Is being connected becoming a right for some – and what happens to those who choose not to be?

Finally, one of our first questions raises the issue of how far governments can be held accountable. If government responsibility for achieving outcomes is increasingly limited by the complexity of the issues they face, might any new MDGs focus more on outputs rather than outcomes? If not, how will we disentangle the multiple accountabilities for achieving them?

There are no definite answers to any of these questions – but we hope you've made you think and would like to hear back from you.

Assignment update

Peter Reed, Louise Shaxson and Julian Laite helped design and deliver a series of 16 Medium Term Sector Frameworks for Kano State, northern Nigeria for the large DFID-funded SPARC project (State Project for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capacity). Louise has since returned to Nigeria to support SPARC's Policy and Strategy workstream, helping implement a more evidence-informed approach to policy and strategy.

Delta is providing ongoing support to non-state actors in Kenya to improve their ability to coordinate, advocate and lobby on social protection issues. *Aileen Lyon and Gemma Norrington-Davies* recently shared their situation analysis in a workshop with the objective of improving the coordination of the NSAs in the forum. In the next month they hope to hand over the work to date to the Forum and help it plan any future support that may be provided.



More assignment updates

- Delta continues to provide support to the Ministry of Education in **Jamaica** as it decentralises more operational functions to 7 regional offices and strengthens policy making, planning and resourcing, monitoring and evaluation at the Centre. *John Beman* is managing the Delta inputs, supporting by *Mike Thomson, Helen O'Reilly* and local consultants from PriceWaterHouse Coopers. The next stage of the work is to finalise the new organisational structure of the Ministry, to support the transition of staff into new posts and to implement improved management processes.
- A successful annual review of the Delta-managed strategic support to civil service reform in **Ethiopia** programme has just been completed. We have two advisors, *Mark Johnston* and *Mohammed Umer*, providing day to day advice to the Minister for Capacity Building and his team. A human resource management strategy for the civil service is nearing completion, we are on track to run the first ever annual civil service awards ceremony and a civil service fast-stream programme has been designed. Delta is also coordinating a series of strategic partnerships between the UK National School of Government, the National Audit Office, HM Revenue and Customs and their Ethiopian counterpart bodies. We also helped to host a recent visit to Ethiopia for the head of the UK civil service, Sir Gus O'Donnell.
- Delta is about the start the second phase of work for the **Caribbean** Community (CARICOM), starting with the Office for Trade Negotiations. We have designed an innovative system for performance appraisal for CARICOM staff which links organisational and individual objective setting, planning, performance review and development needs. *Mark Pinder* and *Felicia Linch* are about to set sail for Barbados, Jamaica and Guyana to deliver a series of training programmes for the implementation of the new system.
- Delta is conducting the **Kenyan** Joint Assistance Strategy Update, with *Aileen Lyon* leading a team in updating the strategy and mechanisms linking the Government of Kenya and development partners. This includes building a coordination structure within the government, improving the ability to manage crises, agreeing a framework for mutual accountability and ensuring efficient division of labour across the sectors. This month we held the first meeting of the Government Coordination Group, analysed the current split of funds and work across sectors and drafted the Mutual Accountability Framework.
- Ministry of East African Cooperation: Fast Track Institution Building in **Tanzania**: Delta is leading a team to provide support to the Ministry across a range of areas including formulation of the Common Market Integration Strategy, compiling an implementation plan for the Ministry's internal strategy including a strong element on communications and Monitoring and Evaluation. This month a survey on public perceptions of integration has been conducted and work is ongoing in analysing the role and stake of all the Ministries in the Common Market.
- *Aileen Lyon* and *Steve Bertram* continue work on the Accountability in **Tanzania** project: this month we held a workshop to work through the logframe and to articulate how the logframe relates to the outcome mapping work that has been going on with most of the partners. The logframe and approach was shared with DFID who liked the result.
- In the **UK** *Louise Shaxson* worked with *Anna Novitzky* of Think-Lab on a project to review the entire research base for PSA28, the UK's high-level commitment to the natural environment. It was the first time this had happened at such a strategic level (the PSA covers the marine environment, soils, landscapes, air quality, biodiversity, people's engagement with the natural environment and water quality); and the strategic mapping process Louise developed is helping bring consistency to Defra's analysis of how to improve the evidence base for environmental policy.



Codes of conduct and corporate policies

Finally, we invite you all to read through our codes of conduct and corporate policies, which we have posted on our website at www.deltapartnership.com. They are important to us: they reflect our core values of equity, transparency and creativity; and we will try to fully reflect them in all the work we do. We expect everyone who works for Delta – directors, employees and associates – to adhere to them, so please read through them and send us any comments or suggestions.

Sign up for our newsletter

Please sign up for future editions of our newsletter using the button on our website. It will save Hannah and Wahome having to type in endless email addresses, and ensure that you are kept up to date with how we think and what we do. And please let us know what you think of our revised newsletter: the next one will come out before Christmas, giving us plenty of time to absorb your comments and suggestions.

Mike, Aileen, Louise, Hannah & Wahome.