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Exploring local leadership in Lao-based INGOs

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to understand how local leadership development is operationalised in the INGO sector in the social context of Laos. Until recently, leadership has been studied academically from a psychological paradigm. This paradigm sees leadership from the Western individual attribute perspective. A growing body of research addresses the sociocultural context of leadership. The sociocultural view is derived from a container model-a Nation-state perspective- which pays limited attention to the external social forces that come with globalisation. In practice, organisational research shows that leadership development initiatives often take the form of “fill-the-gap” approach emphasising mechanical fixes for intra-personal competency deficits through the provision of training. This study transcends the individual attribute approach. The focus of this study is to explore local leadership development in INGOs from a glocalisation perspective: seeing the social context of leadership from a combination of domestic and international guiding norms.

Informed by a bricolage approach, this study adopts the epistemological perspective of social constructionism, which sees social reality as relative and contextually constructed (Crotty 1998). The bricolage suggests researchers use the tools at hands to generate data about social reality which involves using multiple methods and logic to understand that social world. Therefore, this study combines multiple data-collection methods to ensure greater depth and validity. The four mutually reinforcing methods selected included: in-depth interview, informal conversational interview, participant observation and document analysis. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Vientiane, Lao PDR for seven months in 2011. INGO staff and some international organisation staff were recruited for interviews. They were divided into three groups: local staff member, local senior staff member and expatriate staff.

At a macro level, the study found that local leaders work in the middle of two social worlds. On the one hand, they worked with INGOs who represent the mainstream Western worldviews, working in those the systems and common organisational culture. On the other hand, they work with government partners who represent the domestic power dynamics, cultural and social norms and ways of doing things which often brought them into conflict with their international equivalences. Using the concept of glocalisation, the research explains how domestic and international social norms and guiding principles form

the social context for local leadership in the Lao INGO sector. The study found that while the (potential) local leaders comply with these norms and principles, they also attempt to change them.

At a micro level, the research found how (potential) local leaders developed a set of leadership characteristics and competencies so that they would be seen as legitimate leaders in INGO leadership roles. Using Max Weber's concept of legitimacy, the study found that relational skill competencies such as social networking, building trust and utilising social network were seen as more important by research participants when working with government partners, but less important when working with the INGO staff including expats. In contrast, possession of technical skills and an ability to get the job done were seen as more important by the majority of the three groups of participants when working with the international staff and concerned stakeholders.

Furthermore, an analysis of local leadership development initiatives implemented by Lao INGOs revealed that the practices were not based upon the sociocultural background of the staff and the political context of INGOs. Leadership development training initiatives have been carried out which was short-term, focused on producing quantity or the number of trainees rather than quality of the training and over-focused on technical skills rather than building relational skills.

This research expands the personal attribute focus in the organisational leadership literature by using an approach based on Weberian sociology, Institutional theory of leadership and Institutional entrepreneurship to link leadership to the legitimating principles and norms of the social context in which leadership occurs. This research extends an understanding of the legitimating principles and norms of leadership from a traditional perspective, which is limited within the national boundary to adopt a glocalisation approach. A glocalisation approach sees social context of local leadership as an emerging social space where international and local social principles and norms intersect.

This study was tightly focused on exploring leadership as described and observed by the senior personnel, local members of staff and expatriate staff of INGOs. The research does not consider the perspectives of other stakeholders-such as government officials, donors and INGO headquarters in developed countries, all of whom may have different views and understandings of leadership development in Laos.

The current study explored local leadership development from a hybrid perspective therefore its focus was placed on the interface between the mainstream leadership and the indigenous leadership. Future research could focus on how to understand local leadership development from an indigenous leadership perspective. In addition, further research could also explore in more detail the nature and style of local indigenous leadership.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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No publications.

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Keywords

international non-government organisations, local leadership development, social networks, institutions, entrepreneurship, development, capacity development

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my deceased grandmother whose life was full of struggles; she never stopped fighting with life and poverty.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents. They valued education and encouraged me to do well in school. Although my mother is illiterate and never went to school, she encouraged me and her six other children to pursue education as furthermost as possible.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCL	Centre for Creative Leadership
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GNI	Gross National Income
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LLD	Local Leadership Development
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPA	Non-profit Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Paris Declaration
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VD	Vientiane Declaration
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Research background

This research aims to examine the processes of Local Leadership Development (hereafter, LLD) in the Lao International Nongovernment Organisation (hereafter, INGO) sector. The research sits within the context of attempts at localising INGO management in Laos which was based on the premise within the INGO community that you: "give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish you feed him for the lifetime". This infers that INGOs do not intend to remain in Laos forever; but aim to help build local capacity such that Lao people can become the "agents of their own development". To this end, one aspect of INGO work is the development of local leadership capacity and this work is the focus of this research study.

Recently many INGOs, particularly those operating in developing countries, claim to embrace "localisation" - a concept that implies the process of INGOs transferring management and leadership roles from expatriates in their country offices to local national personnel. This study focuses on the key dimensions of this process by exploring the social-cultural and political environments that might foster or hinder the LLD process in Laos. It also aims to examine how these contexts affect: 1) INGO capacity development initiatives and 2) the individuals involved in INGO work and their LLD efforts.

The interest in the topic has emerged from three key trends in the development industry. The first is the emergence of contemporary global discourses that places an emphasis on measuring development by its effectiveness with a premium on the condition that local development actors are actively engaged in their own development process. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[1] paved the way for this change by introducing key

1 According to the Development Assistance Committee, the Paris Declaration lays out a practical, action-oriented roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. The Paris Declaration outlines the following five fundamental principles for making aid more effective:

1. Ownership: Developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption
2. Alignment: Donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems

principles such as national ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability (OECD 2005). In 2006 the Government of Laos attempted to localise the Paris Declaration (PD) through the Vientiane Declaration (VD), to fit with the Lao development context. These two Declarations place "localisation" at the very centre of debates about "development effectiveness". In addition, they recognise the significant role of civil society organisations (CSOs)[2] in shaping development policy and practice and determining the effectiveness of aid at the country level.

The second trend has come from a change in the development discourse that affects the way in which academic and practitioner communities think about development. The corner stone of this change is the assertion that a bottom-up approach can be an alternative to address the limitations apparent in the top-down approach to development. The bottom-up approach is articulated through key concepts such as: *a) empowerment*: a process of giving "power to another, to provide the means of exerting or asserting power as a behaviour practiced by individuals" (Pigg 2002); *b) ownership*: the exercise of control commanded over development activities (Edgren 2003, Lopes and Theisohn 2003) and *c) people-centred*: a process of participatory, rights based or transformative development (Eade and Rowlands 2003, Lowe, Murdoch et al. 1995). These key concepts go hand in hand with the changing donor approach for the following reasons. Both academic and donor communities to a certain extent discuss and adopt the bottom-up approach to development. For example, donors engage local civil society actors as they go about operating development assistance in developing countries. This means the donors endorse the grass-root participation in their development effort. Moreover, while donors endorse the national ownership of development policy with inclusion of CSOs, academics promote rights-based and people-centred development, which prioritises a humane approach characterised by social justice, gender equality and inclusion. It is important therefore to examine how this plays out in the development sector in the context of the Lao society where these bottom-up concepts are unfamiliar.

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3. Harmonisation: Donor countries coordinate, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication
4. Results: Developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and results get measured
5. Mutual accountability: Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

[2] CSOs are the third sector organizations that do not belong to the state or the market. In this study, they include International non-government organizations (INGOs), Nongovernment organizations (NGOs), Nonprofit Associations (NPAs), Church-based organizations, and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) Lewis, D. (2006). The management of non-governmental development organizations, Taylor & Francis.

The final trend is the increasing scrutiny on the INGOs over their use of donor money. INGO constituents such as donors and national governments demand INGOs reduce their organisational running cost (Hailey 1993) and implement strategies demonstrating that they are able to spend money effectively. One strategy to maximise greater accountability has seen INGOs transferring more responsibility to local personnel who are cheaper than their international counterparts.

In response to such discursive trends, the INGO community has adopted the concept of "localisation". Within this context, localisation refers to "international organisations transferring management positions from Western expatriates to local mangers" (McWha 2011). The underlining assumption is that by allowing greater involvement of local personnel in management/leadership, INGOs move closer to and are more responsive towards the people who their development projects will affect. They are also able to cut down on administrative cost thus enabling more funding to be directed towards development activities.

1.2 Research context

In Lao People's Democratic Republic or Lao PDR (hereafter Laos)[3], the development sector's response to the above mentioned changes is problematic and challenging. A key challenge is the government's lack of capacity to manage and deliver on its development priorities. Since the "opening" of the economy in the late 1980s, Laos has gradually increased its level of co-operation with international donors and INGOs. As a result, a significant portion of the Gross National Income (GNI) coming from foreign aid and donor transfers was significantly high, at 14 percent of GNI (World Bank, 2013). Importantly, most of the income from this source was spent on governance and human development while foreign direct investment (FDI) and loans were used in the infrastructure and industry sectors. Therefore, due to the government's own lack of local financial resources to spend on governance and human development, foreign aid has become most important in this area. It follows that international development partners including INGOs continue to dominate the development scene and the principle of national ownership seems less practicable to attain.

[3] Laos is the country's French name while Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is the country's official name. Lao people call themselves and their country Lao without an "s" sound.

The problem is enhanced by the absence of domestic Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Until 2009, CSOs such as NGOs, Non-profit Associations[4] (NPAs) and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) were banned by the central government (Decree on INGOs). This prohibition has cultivated an uneasy political environment for the sector. Recently, a Decree on local Non-profit Associations (NPAs) has been approved by the Government such that NPAs can now operate legally in Laos. However, the sector continues to face a number of complicated practical problems. One of the problems is that these NPAs still lack the international recognition required to attract adequate funding without which they cannot run development activities. Another problem is that the government agencies assigned by the decree to govern NPAs still lack the capacity to perform their roles. These roles include facilitating the registration, monitoring and management of NPAs. As a result, the role of NPAs in development in Laos remains less significant compared with INGOs operating in the country.

Development resources and donor-sponsored projects in Laos are delivered primarily by international consulting firms and INGOs, with government agencies acting in a secondary or partner role.[5] The heavy saturation of INGOs in Laos, coupled with widespread poverty, has led to a high level of dependency on donor aid and INGO infrastructure. This infrastructure continues to be dominated by expatriates and foreign experts while local development professionals are understood to have inadequate capacity to run development projects and activities according to international industry standards (Mukasa 1999, Owen 2010).

1.3 Brief country profile

Laos is the only landlocked country in South East Asia and is one of the poorest countries in the region. Its Human Development Index (HDI) rank was 138 out of 187 countries, classifying it as least developed country (LDC). Although in recent years sustained economic growth, based largely upon natural resource extraction, has led to improvements across a range of indicators, the Laosremains a LDC with a GDP per capita of 1,534 USD in 2013 (UNDP 2014) Laos has only achieved one Millennium Development Goal (MDG), MDG4 (Reduce Child Mortality), whilst progress has been made on other MDGs, they are

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[4] NPAs are local organisations (umbrella NGOs) mobilised and supported by INGOs. They operated mainly in rural areas with strong focus on poverty reduction.
[5] INGO-government partnership is a condition of entry for development agencies operating in Laos Curly, M. (2004). The Role of the Non-Profit Sector in Transitional Asian Economies: Cambodia Ten Years After UNTAC. Canberra, Australia.

unlikely to be achieved by 2015 (UNDP 2014). Although the proportion of people living in poverty is steadily declining, around a quarter of the population still live below the poverty line. Poverty within the Lao PDR is substantively influenced by rural and ethnic dimensions with half of the rural poor continuing to live in remote and relatively inaccessible regions (World Bank 2013).

The current big-push development paradigm and its strategies and policies, focused on enclosure and extraction of natural energy flows and resources by mostly foreign-investment capital (Fullbrook 2010), exhibit growing contradictions, partly arising from measuring progress through growth. Extraction of resources generates revenues for financing public spending but also imposes great social costs on the environment, livelihoods and economy. The cost is loss of land or reduction in fertility for producing food, clearing diverse rich forests that provide food, and obstruction of fish migration and breeding. These costs undermine national resilience and security (Fullbrook 2010). The ultimate benefits of much of the resource extraction accrue to foreign investors and societies. They leave many of the costs in Laos for Lao citizens to suffer. The cumulative effects of resource development at such scale and speed, in excess of government capacity to plan and regulate, could be assessed, managed and mitigated to preserve environmental security. Without such action the resource curse is a threat to development in Laos (Fullbrook 2010).

Governance capacity is exceeded by demands from investors, the rapid evolution of laws, regulations and rules, insufficient budgets for training and capacity development. There is friction, anger and violence between citizens, investors and officials (Barney 2010; Shi 2008; Thongmanivong, et al. 2010). Development is not significantly improving well-being despite impressive GDP growth. Human and ecological vulnerabilities are not broadly decreasing. Poverty and food insecurity remain stubbornly high. There are indications people are exchanging one form of poverty for another (Chamberlain 2007). A negative feedback is created by the imposition of resources development in excess of what can be absorbed by the environment, forcing citizens' food needs to squeeze into less and less land. Responsible resources development can provide substantial revenues to finance development and expand well-being security. The speed and scale of resources development in excess of the capacity of the environment and of the Government to plan, regulate and enforce conditions on investment is a concern. The multiplying costs and damage risk creating long-term burdens which may only be rectified by absorbing a substantial portion of the revenues from resources extraction (Barney 2010).

In conclusion, the Lao country context shows that human resource development is ranked low in priority in terms of funding from the state budget perspective. There are some justified and unjustified rationales for this to happen. The government with external influences invests heavily in infrastructure networks, the natural resources extraction and hydropower projects. On the one hand, this policy direction aims to build foundation for development of other aspects of the Lao society such as education and health. On the other hand, it simply occurs this way because infrastructure projects create a lot of loopholes for bribery and corruptions (Fullbrook 2010).

The INGO sector is facing a challenging situation. If the sector attempts to tackle corruption they can make the government unhappy. When the government is unhappy they can make the INGO work difficult. This can happen because Laos legislation requires INGOs to work in partnerships with government departments (I will discussion more on this in Chapter Two).

Finally, with such difficult conditions as uneven distribution of benefits from economic growth, weak governance and a lack of human resources, INGOs are bearing huge pressure to produce outcomes and impacts to show to the donors. Thus efforts are more directed towards activities on the ground rather than capacity building which is hard to produce tangible outcomes. This is particularly difficult for the capacity development that takes a lot of time, energy and resources (I will discussion in depth in the findings Chapters).

1.4 Research problem

Despite localisation being tied to concepts such as national ownership, empowerment and local control, neither the Paris Declaration nor Vientiane Declaration have produced statements about the role of leadership outside the government in guiding the development process. Equally, the academic literature, in examining the capacity of local development actors, has directed its attention toward either improving stakeholder participation within the overall scheme of service delivery, or building the capacity of local government personnel through various forms of training provided by international consultants or partnerships with INGOs. Additionally, the NGO literature has a narrow focus on the sector’s technical work in the field such as poverty reduction, microfinance, gender equality and so forth, with limited attention paid to organisational settings such as managerial and leadership issues.

Thus, “localisation” of development in Laos has not been examined widely in its own right and the working of local leadership within the development sector remains un-researched both within the Lao and global contexts.

1.5 Research aims

The aim of this study is to understand how LLD is operationalised by the INGO sector in the social context of Laos. This aim will be achieved by addressing the following four objectives:

1. To understand the social and political contexts of INGO work;
2. To explore how the social, cultural and political context of INGO work impacts on the process of LLD;
3. To investigate the experiences of INGOs in LLD initiatives with emphasis on the overall approaches, strategies, methodology and techniques;
4. To understand the “local” individual capacity for LLD by investigating the influence of human capital (i.e. knowledge, skills, competencies) and social capital (i.e. social networks, personal contacts, kinship system) on the development of leadership.

1.6 Research questions

The primary research question is: What social and political contexts affect the process of LLD within the INGO sector in Lao PDR?

This question will be operationalised using the following three secondary questions:

1. What are the social, cultural and political contexts of INGO work that impact on the process of LLD?
2. What are the experiences of INGOs in LLD initiatives?
3. What are the capitals, resources and competencies that enable leadership success for local individuals?

1.7 Rationale for the research

The rationale for the research is threefold. First, the proposed research will address a major gap in development scholarship. While the international discourse continues to emphasise the importance of “localisation” or “nationalisation” of donor supported programmes, very limited research exists on whether or not this has occurred, or how the process has been managed or operationalised. The growing body of NGO research has focused on the role of NGOs and the impact they have made (Korten 1987, Opoku-Mensah, Lewis et al. 2007). Otherwise, development literature has pursued an understanding of the broad elements of NGO works such as rural development, human rights or gender equality (Ahmad 2002, Opoku-Mensah, Lewis et al. 2007). Research focused on NGO management and leadership has been confined to describing leaders’ attributes, their performance or relationships with donors, with very limited interest in a systematic examination of LLD (see Ebrahim 2007, Hulme and Edwards 1997, Smillie and Hailey 2001, Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade 2001).

Second, this study responds to a paucity of a systematic empirical analysis of Lao-based INGO work, particularly in relation to the leadership capacity development among the local INGO personnel. The proposed study will be one of a few, if any, independent academic studies ever conducted in the country by a Lao national in the social sciences. With the exception of Mawer (1997) and Owen (2010), no other studies have examined the INGO context in the Lao setting. However, these studies have been confined to providing a first-hand account of “knowledge transfer” as a capacity building effort (see Mawer 1997); or how localisation “actually” occurs within organisational settings (see Owen 2010). Although Owen’s (2010) work is the most recent piece of published work concerned with localisation processes, the question of LLD was not a feature of the study.

Third, from a methodological perspective, much of the research in the past decade has been based on the works of either practitioner reflections on their long serving experiences or consultancy work of academics on assessing the impact of the INGO work (Tvedt 1998). The current research is an independent systematic study concerned with the process of LLD within INGOs and their working settings.

1.8 Significance

The research has four areas of significance. First, it offers insights into the experiences of local leadership development initiatives and the context within which these initiatives take place. The research findings will help policy makers and practitioners deal with human resource development more effectively. Consequently, INGOs will be able to address the criticisms of “ineffectiveness” and “irrelevance” of their leadership capacity development programmes offered by many development scholars (Edwards and Fowler 2002, Hailey and James 2004, Smillie and Hailey 2001).

Second, the findings aim to contribute to the development of a meaningful framework of LLD. While the development effectiveness agenda emphasises national/local ownership of development, with the inclusion of CSOs, this is only meaningful in countries where CSOs are effective and actively engaged in the process. Within the Lao context, however, this is not the case due to the absence of effective local CSOs. The findings of this research will encourage the development community to revisit its civil society capacity building agenda.

Third, as the development industry continues to face funding pressures, with an increased emphasis of delivering “efficient” services, saving on administrative costs is a priority for INGOs. Localising organisational management is a strategic move of INGOs towards reducing administrative costs. The reason is that national personnel are generally quicker to progress initiatives, because they know the history, culture, language and political context better than outsiders (Smillie 2009) while their wage is cheaper. A shift to hiring local personnel can reduce salary costs by as much as 90 per cent (Owen 2010). Additionally, an increasing turnover rate of expatriate personnel will not only increase recruitment costs but also disrupt the development process as incoming expatriates take time to adapt to the settings.

Finally, research findings emerging from the fieldwork from this study will be of direct benefit to the development sector operating in the Lao PDR. This research project is focused on understanding how international trends are playing out in the Lao context, with considerations of the interaction, resistance or embracing of these trends by local development practitioners. This will better conceptualise how the international and local trends cooperate and compete with each other since the participating organisations also operate internationally: results may be of interest to a broader audience.

1.9 The outline of the thesis

The next chapter, Chapter Two, is the review of extant literature, which addresses the theories of and research into leadership both more broadly and specifically in relation to the INGO sector. This chapter also reviews the development literature to outline the roles of INGOs in the development sector and developing countries and to point out the common agendas pursued by INGOs and the development community. The chapter then continues to examine a body of research concerning how leadership development practices have been carried out by INGOs. The chapter ends with the outline of the key conceptual and practical gaps in the literature.

Chapter Three outlines the conceptual framework for understanding the experiences of LLD within the INGO sector in the Lao social context. The conceptual framework consists of three theoretical components. The first component draws on the concept of “legitimacy”. This concept is based on the *Weberian* sociology that links leadership to legitimating principles and norms of a social structure in which leadership occurs. The second component draws on the concept of “institutional entrepreneurship”. According to institutional theorists, entrepreneurs are able to take the purposive actions if they can mobilise necessary resources and power. Intrinsically linked to the first component, these actions by a leader must be seen as legitimate in their institutional environment. The third component draws on the concept of “glocalisation”. This concept is based on the critics of the sociological concept of the “container model” (Beck 1997) that sees a society as bound within a nation state. The concept of glocalisation proposes a new terrain of the social context of leadership which is shaped by both domestic and international social factors.

Chapter four explains how the study was conducted and also justifies the adopted methodological approach and the theoretical considerations underpinning it. The chapter elaborates on the *bricolage* approach which is located within a qualitative research paradigm. Based on this research approach, the chapter explains how the four data collection methods were used. These methods include document analysis, participant observation, in-depth interview and conversational interviews. The chapter then continues to outline how the data analysis was conducted and the issues of reliability and trustworthiness are also discussed.

Chapter five, six and seven present the data and findings. Specific quotations and statements from participant and field notes from the researcher are presented as they relate to the key leadership themes of the study. Although the broader themes in each chapter are closely linked, they are presented separately to show the depth and nuances in relation to each major theme. In Chapter five, the social and political contexts that are considered enabling/disabling factors of local leadership are presented. The contexts are considered based upon the concepts of “legitimacy” and “glocalisation” and the ideas pertinent to them. In Chapter six, the experiences of individuals attempting to mobilise resources and power in pursuit of leadership success are presented. These resources and power are considered through the development and accumulation of local leaders’ intra-personnel and inter-personal capacities. The discussions in this chapter are mainly informed by the concept of “institutional entrepreneurship”. In Chapter seven, the experiences of INGOs in pursuing their local leadership capacity development agenda are presented. The discussions in chapter seven intend to link the broader context to individual development by examining the LLD initiatives carried out by INGOs.

Chapter eight provides the conclusion of the thesis. The chapter summarises the key findings and then discusses the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of the research findings. The research limitations and recommendations for further research are also presented.

Chapter 2
Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the body of literature pertinent to the topic of INGO leadership. It aims to identify gaps in the knowledge about the topic of local leadership within INGOs operating in the developing countries. The knowledge gaps constitute a foundational basis for the problem examined in this research and the study's theoretic/conceptual framework. The review covers relevant literature including development, NGO, leadership and organisational literature. The review critically examines the main bodies of literature that have been developed by sociological, psychological and political economy scholars.

This chapter is organised as follows. The following section surveys the body of leadership literature used to establish the working definition of leadership for this study before the theories and evaluation of the leadership field is chronologically presented to understand the development of the subject. Then the review is narrowed down to the topic of leadership within the NGO sector. In this section, Section 2.4, research related to INGOs and development literature is specifically investigated. Section 2.5 goes on to review the development literature documenting leadership development with special attention paid to the concepts of capacity building, partnership and networking. The final section examines development literature that highlights the role of NGO in the broader development context including INGO involvement in the aid industry. The final section also discusses the concept of civil society in the age of globalisation and a brief survey of grey literature around civil society in Laos.

2.2 Definition of leadership

The concept of leadership is applicable to many areas of life, including business, community, governance, family life and others. Arguably, a working definition of leadership is made meaningful by the context in which it is applied. Generally speaking, defining leadership has never been easy because several academic disciplines contribute to leadership scholarship. The main contribution to the field comes from three subject/discipline areas, namely: sociology (see for example, Burt 1997, Guillén 1994, Khurana 2002, Parsons and Shils 1951, Weber 1947), psychology (Graeff 1983, Fiedler and Garcia 1987, Hogg 2001, Lord and Hall 2003) and organisational studies (see Bass and Bass 2008, McCauley and Van Velsor 2004, Northouse and Northouse 2009). Given this diversity of approaches, there is no single or commonly agreed definition of leadership. Yukl (2002) and Hailey (2005) have provided a summary of leadership characteristics as presented below.

Figure 1: Definition of leaders and leadership

Leadership is …

- *'the art of mobilising others'*
- *'the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because s/he wants to do it'*
- *'getting things done through other people, willingly'*

Leaders …

- *'empower others'*
- *'articulate visions, embody values and create an environment within which things can be achieved'*
- *'shape and share a vision which gives point to the work of others'*
- *'with the best of leaders, when the work is done, the project completed, the people will say "we did it ourselves"'*

Adapted from Hailey (2005) and Yukl (2002)

Notwithstanding the diversity of what constitutes leadership and what leaders do, in this study, I adopt the following working definition: "leadership is an on-going process whereby an individual influences a group and social system in a given societal context in an attempt to articulating and achieving a shared goal" (Northhouse, 2009, p. 4). I also draw on Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo and Fowler's (2010) *Capacity Development in Practice* to arrive at the following notion of leadership development. Leadership development is a support process collaboratively developed by parties concerned who aim to trigger the endogenous leadership capacity to grow and sustain. Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo and Fowler (2010) emphasise that leadership capability is not static but an on-going process of change and growth; its development involves not only a change in the individual's qualities but also in the societal system in which leadership is to take place and the development, therefore, takes into account an endogenous process of interaction between actors and the environment they find themselves in. The next section explores the theoretical history and evolution of the subject of leadership.

2.3 Leadership theories

It is fair to argue that NGO leadership is a relatively new phenomenon. Most of the attempts to understand leadership in this sector draw on its corporate and public sectors counterpart. In these sectors, writing about leadership started to gain serious consideration from the 1930s and 1940s (see for example, Stogdill 1948). Over the past 70 years, leadership literature concentrates on an evolving series of “schools of thought” about leadership and leadership development from “Great Man” theory to “Transformational” leadership (see Bass and Bass 2009, Northouse 2012). This section will trace back the historical development of thoughts on leadership.

Early organisational theorists (1960s-70s) tended to theorise leadership based upon the individual characteristics and behaviours of successful leaders (McGregor 1960, Stogdill 1974). The thinking behind this approach was the belief that because some individuals were born with certain leadership traits they were likely to be effective leaders. Researchers then became interested in trying to identify the personality and charisma associated with “heroic leaders” (Burns 1978, p. 22). They started to identify a definitive list of “heroic” leadership traits (Stogdill 1974). The hope was that individuals who matched the list of traits would be able to be located and made effective leaders, although there is little evidence that this has been successful (Stogdill 1974). This approach has been criticised for not having paid enough attention to the influence of external contextual factors on leadership. There was concern that the focus on the individual was at the cost of an understanding of the impact of distinct organisational cultures on the way different leadership styles evolved and developed (Hailey 2005, Northouse and Northouse 2009).

In the 1970s, researchers therefore began to focus their attention on what leaders did in practice and how organisations shaped different leadership styles, rather than attempting to identify, or measure leaders’ underlying personal characteristics or traits. In particular, researchers were interested in the way leaders adapted their public persona and leadership style to suit the situation they found themselves in or the people with whom they were involved (Hersey, Blanchard et al. 1988, Mintzberg 1998). Later leadership theorists turned their focus to examining the role of followers or associates and the contextual environment of leadership (Bass and Avolio 1990, Bass and Bass 2008, Hersey, Blanchard et al. 1988). Each of these traditional ways of thinking about leadership takes an individualistic approach to understanding leadership.

In the 1980s, there was renewed interest in those leaders who actively promoted organisational change. They were known as transformational leaders. Arguably, such transformational leaders enabled ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results (Bass 1985, Bass and Bass 2009, Peters and Waterman 1982). In some ways this was a return to the trait-based analysis of the 'heroic leader' but with a focus on a leader's ability to communicate and inspire, or act as a catalyst for inspiring organisational change. Interestingly in the late 1990s, there was a reaction against this approach (Glynn and DeJordy 2010). One of the reasons for this reaction is that only a few transformational leaders achieved sustainable-long term success. Another reason is that as organisations became flatter, more decentralised and less bureaucratic; their leaders needed a new skill-set based around networking, negotiation, delegation and team building skills. This reaction is reflected in recent research that endorses the value of "quieter", humbler, less charismatic leaders, who are keen to be seen to be part of a broader management team and actively encourage others to succeed (Bennis & Nanus 2004).

In a similar vein, Mintzberg (2006), drawing on his work with local leaders in enterprise development agencies in West Africa, argues that the future lies with 'fostering' a new generation of leaders who can practice what he refers to as 'engaging management'. Such leaders have the ability to engage with or inspire others through their thoughtfulness and humility.

A more recent school of thought gaining increasing recognition is that of "dispersed" leadership. Central to dispersed leadership are key concepts such as "Superleadership" (Manz and Simms, 1991), "Self-Leadership" (Kirkman & Rosen 1999; Kouzes & Posner 1993; Uhl-Bien & Graen 1998; Williams 1997), "Leadership as a Process" (Hosldng 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1992) and "Distributed Leadership" (Senge 1999). This approach, with its foundations in sociology, psychology and politics rather than management science, views leadership as a process that is diffuse throughout an organisation rather than lying solely with a formally designated "leader". The emphasis thus shifts from developing "leaders" to developing "leaderful" organisations with a collective responsibility for leadership (Day 2001, Drucker 2003).

Of particular relevance to this present research, several studies emphasise cultural diversity and cultural competency for managers working abroad (see for example, Dowling, Festing et al. 2008, Wu, Martinez et al. 2006, Storey 2007). This body of research focuses on how to develop managers who are culturally competent as they plan for “foreign ventures” and their employers who strive to select and transfer employees whose capability includes fitting into new societies (Storey 2007). This approach to leader development cannot be taken for granted when it comes to LLD.

The common threads embedded within the literature around cultural diversity are as follows. first, these theories were based on publications reporting on empirical data or systematic conceptualisation of leadership grounded in Western society, particularly the United States (Blunt and Jones 1997). Secondly, the domination by these different groups of theories is not clear-cut; they overlap and co-exist (Glynn & DeJordy 2010). Moreover, there has been a significant evolution of leadership thinking from an approach that focuses on personality toward the one that integrates social and contextual setting into the study of leadership (Guillen 2010).

The current study is not based exclusively on any particular theory, but rather builds on a number of key theoretical elements that can help make sense of local leadership within the INGO sector in Laos. It also moves beyond the psychological focus by taking a broader perspective that sees leadership within the contextual environment. Now that I have presented an overview of the traditional theoretical ideas of leadership, in the next section I shall examine leadership within the NGO[6] sector.

2.4 NGO leadership

Publication on the issues related to NGO leadership in the academic literature is very limited. The majority of the material cited by development scholars comes from a range of sources in addition to peer reviewed research, such as taken directly from grey literature derived from the practice domain, influential think tanks, government agencies and funding organizations. Therefore, a review on NGO leadership in this study inevitably draws on a wide range of academic and non-academic sources and materials.

[6] In the literature, the term “NGOs” is used to refer to nongovernment organisations in general sense. The term “INGOs” are referred to a similar type of organisations but operate internationally. In this review, both terms are used to mean as such. At some points where the two share the same meaning, the terms NGOs will be used.

2.4.1 Describing NGOs and NGOs' leadership

Meaning of NGOs

Development scholars admit that it is difficult to explain the structure and place of NGOs in society, because there are wide variations among the countries they operate in and in the structure of NGOs (Bagci 2003,Edwards & Hulme 1989). First, according to Bagci (2003) each country has NGOs that function within their own legal structures. Therefore, NGOs can be defined in terms of their functions in the social system. According to Siegel and Yancey (cited in Judge 1995, p.3), the functions and services of NGOs can be referred to as "expressing and addressing the complex needs of society"; "motivating the individuals to act as citizens"; "promoting pluralism and diversity" and "creating an alternative to the centralised state". NGOs committed to any or all of these causes will need to adapt their organisational structure to the country context.

Furthermore, some scholars define NGOs as "community based voluntary organisations that help themselves and serve others at the local, national and international levels" (OECD 2012, p. 81). Still others define them as vehicles for democratisation and essential components of civil society development, which in turn are seen as essential to the success of the economic development agenda (see for example, Moore 2012). As such, they emerge when a group of people organise themselves into a social unit that is established with the explicit objective of achieving certain ends and formulating rules to govern the relations among the members of the organisation and the duties of each other (Diani & Donati 1999).

Within the field of international cooperation, it is hard to find a simple definition that is precise and commonly applied to the term "NGO". According to Martens (2002), the term "nongovernmental organization" (NGO) is a post-World War II expression, which was initially coined by the United Nations (UN). When the UN Charter was adopted in 1945, it was specified in Article 71 that NGOs could be accredited to the UN for consulting purposes. Thus, scholars applied the term NGOs mainly when referring to those societal actors, which are international bodies and engage within the UN context. Since the 1980s, the term NGO has become widespread for societal actors engaged outside the UN framework, both internationally and nationally and the term has been gradually accepted by academics and societal actors more broadly.

According to the Steffek and Hahn (2010) for an organisation to be accepted as an NGO in the true sense, it should fulfil the following criteria: first, it should be autonomous, neither depending substantially on the state for its funds -though it may, and often does, receive a proportion of its funds from public sources, nor should it beholden to Government in the pursuit of its objective; secondly, it should be non-profit making; and thirdly, the major part of its funds should come from voluntary contributions.

The World Bank's Operational Directive on NGOs (No.1470 August 1970) defines the term "NGOs" as: The groups and institutions that is entirely or largely independent of governmental and characterised primarily by humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial objectives (World Bank cited in Korten 1980, p. 21).

One of the dilemmas in defining the term "NGO" is its local meaning. Every government has its own classification of local organisational structures. For example, the concept of "civil society" in many countries, has been used interchangeably to NGOs (Lewis 2006, Martens 2002). According to Lewis (2006a), however, their objectives are differentiated; some NGOs direct their action toward clearly defined problems of society, while others act in society with much broader agendas. Some have objectives which are solely charitable, while others shape their efforts in a more political fashion, working with other groups in pursuit of a common goal. There are those NGOs which act to minimise the perverse effects of certain processes of economic growth and there are those, which try to redirect these same processes (Frantz 1987).

In Laos, according the decree on INGOs, the term "NGO" refers to international nongovernment organisations. There is no local/domestic legal recognition of "NGO". The organisation operating similar to NGO is a non-profit association (NPA). NPAs have been allowed to operate since 2009 after the promulgation of the decree on NPAs (Prime Minister's Decree 115/PM, on Association, dated 29 April 2009). The only legislation that appears to govern INGOs is the decree on INGOs (the government and legal framework of NGO in Laos will be discussed in depth in section 2.6.4). Even though the Lao constitution provides clauses on freedom of expression and association the classification of organisations such as INGOs and/or NPAs, their role in the Lao society and their relationship with the private and public sector remain unclear (ADB 2009). In turn, the process of local leadership development must address these contextual conditions in order to produce meaningful results for local INGO staff.

NGOs' leadership

NGO literature dose not differentiate leadership from management as the sector is still reconfiguring its leadership uniqueness (Hailey 2005). While the terms “leadership” and “management” are commonly used interchangeably, many theorists distinguish between them. “Leaders” are expected to provide strategic direction and inspiration, initiate change, encourage new learning and develop a distinct organisational culture while “managers” are seen to plan, implement and monitor on a more operational and administrative level (Adair 2002, Northouse and Northouse 2009, Yukl and Yukl 2002). As a consequence, there is a perception that management is concerned with resolving specific issues and day-to-day challenges, while leadership is about the big picture and promoting change. The Praxis Paper 10: NGO Leadership Development by Hailey (2006) states that the reality is that those people with responsibility to ensure that plans are implemented, systems are effective and personnel motivated are both leaders and managers. This overlap of roles is particularly apparent in smaller organisations where one person often has to play both roles simultaneously. In practice, leadership and management are integral parts of the same job. Both these activities need to be balanced and matched to the demands of the situation.

According to Hailey (2006), leadership is not just restricted to top management: leadership skills are needed at a departmental and team level. Middle managers are commonly team or project leaders and as such are crucial to the successful implementation of new strategies. Consequently any analysis that makes a clear distinction between managers and leaders can be misleading. Effective leaders have to demonstrate some managerial skills and good managers display leadership qualities. In practice, it depends on the judgement of the individual involved and the context in which they find themselves (Hailey, 2005). In conclusion, INGO leadership is under-theorised. Understanding INGO leadership in its social and political dynamics is even furthered limited. In this section, I have presented the ideas related to NGO and its leadership in general. The following section turns the attention to local NGO leaders. These people in many ways will be similar to the targeted sampling of this study.

2.4.2 The nature of NGO work, leaders and leadership

There are many conceptual and empirical studies documenting challenges and the complexity of NGO[7] management and leadership (Dalton 2005, Edwards and Fowler 2002, James 2003, 2005, James and Onen 2005, Hailey 2006, Smillie and Hailey 2001, Smillie 2009). These studies acknowledge that NGO management and leadership are demanding and distinctive from its corporate or public counterparts. For example, Hailey (2006) argues that NGO leaders are often faced with astonishing challenges at a personal as well as an organisational level. They work long hours with limited resources in uncertain and volatile political and economic contexts while their mission is to help the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in the society. Recently, Fowler and Malunga's edited volume: "NGO management: the Earthscan companion" (2010) provides a major reflection on NGO management and leadership. Some of the key messages from the volume have been the authors' emphasis on civil-driven change, downward accountability and knowledge management and learning. For example, the chapter on "civic driven change and developmental democracy" by Boyte (2010), re-engages the notion of agency in development by recalling Ramphele's famous express "development can't be done to people. People have to become the agents of their own development" (Ramphele 2008, cited in Boyte 2010). The volume provides the recent landscape of ideas and thoughts in development which is most important for NGO leaders.

Providing such a working context, NGO scholars observe that NGO leadership features social relations, participation, democracy and may be non-hierarchical in nature (Arrow, McGrath et al. 2000, Hailey 2006, Lussier and Achua 2004). The reason why these leadership styles fit in the NGO sector is because NGO leaders need the ability to work with and balance agendas of various stakeholders which are often volatile depending on political, economic and social circumstances (Edwards and Hulme 1995, Smillie and Hailey 2001, Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo et al. 2010). Scholars claim that in many countries, NGO leaders need strong personal relationships with the government and donors to be able to run an NGO (Buxton and Abraliev 2007). The leaders need a degree of willingness to make personal sacrifice and take risks (Hilhorst 2003, Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade 2001). Although using different terms and within different timeframes many NOG scholars employed a personality characterisation to describe NGO leaders.

[7] The term NGO is used interchangeably in the literature. There is no clear distinction made between NGO and INGO management.

It has been argued that NGO management and leadership are characterised by strong personalities (Hailey 2006, Hailey and James 2004, Hilhorst 2003, Smillie and Hailey 2001). During the 1990s boom period of the NGO world, Ekins (1992) looks into NGO's leaders and describes them as "fairly unusual human being[s]" who are willing to work long hours with little incentive (Ekins, 1992 cited in Hilhorst 2003). In the early 2000s, NGO leaders are seen as "charismatic autocrat" (Smillie and Hailey 2001). Smillie and Hailey (2001), in their research into "successful" South Asian NGO founders - which I will examine in more depth at the later stage – summarise NGO leadership style as "value-driven, knowledge-base and responsive"(Smillie and Hailey 2001). Staying on the personality of NGO leaders but adding social analysis into the perspective, Hilhorst (2003) describes NGO leaders as "brokers of meaning" (Hilhorst 2003, p. 56).

Because of the predomination of personality and charisma associated with NGO leaders in developing countries, greater attention is being paid to the issues of accountability and transparency. In South Asia, NGO leaders, while being described as charismatic "founder-leaders," have also been alleged of staying in the position for too long and benefiting from a traditional Asian deference to authority in order to dominate and control the organisation (Smillie 2009, Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade 2001). Researchers found similar challenges in Africa where NGO leaders are described as developmental activists with autocratic tendencies (Dalton 2005, James 2005). Although with limited generalisation researchers have tried to investigate in depth into NGO leaders and their leadership styles. Below I examine closely some seminal works in this area.

NGO leadership sometimes is categorised by types. In a review of leadership studies, Hailey (2001) describes a typology of NGO leadership as follows: "paternalistic leaders" who typically demonstrate a patriarchal or matriarchal style of leadership; "activist leaders" who actively engage in advocacy and lobbying work; "managerialist leaders"' who mainly manage routine administrative tasks and "catalytic leaders" who typically act as strategic catalysts within the NGO context and have the ability to promote and implement change. While Hailey's research is based in the South Asian context, the typology is applicable to understand NGO leadership elsewhere. James' (2008) study of African NGO leaders concluded that these leaders were catalytic, managerialist and activist, but the paternalistic aspect was less obvious among African leaders. James (2008) concludes that although there are some minor variations in the style of NGO leaders in developing countries they share most of these characteristics.

There is limited empirical work on NGO leaders and leadership. A few empirical studies have been done in relation to NGOs and their leadership. The following four seminal studies are reviewed chronologically. The first is the work by Smillie and Hailey (2001) on South Asian NGOs entitled: Managing for Change Leadership, Strategy and Management in Asian NGOs. This seminal work draws heavily on the findings of a major study of nine “successful” South Asian NGOs including: Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Sadguru, PROSHIKA, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programmes (AKRSP) in India and Pakistan, the International Union for the conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Pakistan, the Sarhad Rural Support Corporation (SRSC) and Sungi. One of the major conclusions from the study was that the success of these NGOs was in part attributable to their willingness to embrace new learning and invest in developing their capacity as “learning NGOs”. Another conclusion related to leadership was that “the influence of context and culture” and “balancing formality and informality” as key characteristics of successful NGOs. Given the social hierarchy existing in these societies, one would assume that such social order would permeate into NGOs and hinder decentralisation or participatory management. In contrast, this study suggests that the social hierarchy is not a problem but teamwork, learning and decentralisation is. The authors also conclude that changed social, economic and political environment across the globe in the first decade of the 21st century has made financial survival of NGOs difficult. The study suggests that these development leaders are “marked by an ability to balance – and to balance very carefully – five things: value, ambition, technical competency, the capacity to inspire and judgement” (Smillie and Hailey 2001).

The second seminal work to be reviewed in detail is the study by Hilhorst (2004) entitled: *The Real World of NGOs: Discourses, Diversity and Development*. The book is based on her ethnographic field work from 1993 to 1996 on one local NGO, which is concerned with indigenous women and development in the Philippines. During her research, Hilhorst travelled with NGO staff to villages, conferences and donor meetings. She shared work and family life with the locals as she participated and observed. Hilhorst (2003) provides an empirically rooted and theoretically innovative painting of the “real” internal workings, organizational practices and discursive repertoires of NGOs. According to Hilhorst, NGOs as an organisation in the Filipino context was not as clear-cut, but often characterised with several different faces, fragmented and consisting of social networks whose organizing practices remain instable. Reinforcing the notions of NGO leaders as a "fairly unusual human being" (Ekins 1992) and a "charismatic autocrat" (Smillie and Hailey 2001), Hilhorst chooses to use the terms " brokers of meaning" (Hilhorst 2003). Hilhorst introduces the de-centred view to how leadership is studied. She argues that NGO leaders drew on "the multitiered networks and relationships in the organisation and ambiguities resulting from multiplicity of discourses and cultural repertoires" (Hilhorst 2003).

The third empirical study related to NGO leadership is the work by James (2005a). Drawing partly on the work by Smillie and Hailey (2001), James (2005a) conducted research into 45 "well-respected, experienced and diverse" NGO leaders in Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. The research revealed that in all three countries leaders' behaviour is significantly influenced and to a strong degree constrained, by five major factors, which are explored in more detail in this section:

1. There are many diverse perceptions of leadership and the role it plays;
2. Concepts of leadership are influenced by sometimes conflicting models of how a leader is supposed to behave, including: traditional cultural perspectives; political role models and Western management theory;
3. Leaders lead very congested lives, striving to juggle the different organisational and personal demands;
4. Women face distinct and often additional leadership challenges which are greatly affected by gender roles and expectations; and
5. The impacts of HIV/AIDS are exacerbating the pressures faced by leaders in all three countries, although the constraints faced are rarely discussed openly.

The study highlights the way in which the leaders operate simultaneously in three different worlds: the global aid world, the urban context in which they live and work and the rural village setting where many of their extended family members still live (James, 2005a). James' research reveals how NGO leaders have to adapt to new leadership roles, the stresses arising from pressure of work and the demands of organisational crises – commonly in the region of financial shortfalls, internal conflicts or tensions between the staff and the Board. In all three countries civil society operates in a context of severe poverty, with HIV exacerbating existing economic and social problems at organisational and individual levels. Most CSOs are operating hand to mouth at a subsistence level, making them highly risk averse. They are facing problems of credibility: that they are neither living up to their own values, nor delivering the development they promised in funding proposals.

The most striking and obvious finding from the James study was that 70 per cent of respondents decided that the most significant shift they had made as a leader was to a more empowering style of leadership. The research shows that the majority of respondents felt that they had improved as leaders most when they had increased the level of worker involvement. This important finding lends weight to the belief that an empowering leadership style is not simply a Western blueprint, but is very relevant in African cultures too. This finding is mirrored by Smillie and Hailey's (2001, p. 156) study of successful South Asian NGO leaders who found that "certain aspects of leadership style are culturally determined". Therefore, there is a growing cadre of development leaders with similar competencies and outlooks that transcend cultural boundaries.

The final work is by Ronalds (2012), executive coordinator of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australia – who offers a cogent, cross-disciplinary analysis of how large aid and development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) adapt to rapid international changes brought about by globalization. Ronalds' work is different from the previous three studies reviewed above, as he focuses on INGO specifically detailing several key organizational changes necessary for continued INGO effectiveness. He positions his work well within a growing NGO literature, to address the different strands of previous work on civil society and non-profits while explaining how his focus on large instead of grassroots organizations best highlights the changes afoot today. Ronalds' work includes three key sections. The first employs a distinctively constructivist approach, arguing globalization as shaped by ideas, norms and culture is encouraging a growing awareness of extreme poverty and international peace and security interests. He details the recent growth and influence of NGOs while offering a short history on their role in such campaigns as human rights. The second section of the work outlines key challenges created by this new international environment. He then turns inward, outlining the organizational problems presented by increasing size and influence. In the final section, Ronalds offers NGO managers practical guidance on how to implement the radical changes necessary for continued effectiveness in a globalised and complex world.

From the above studies a few observations can be made. First, NGO leaders in developing countries learn leadership from their expatriate precedents. After all, the emergence of NGOs in these countries was the products of the INGOs' work (Mercer 2002) and whether voluntarily or by indirect coercion the leadership style will have been influenced by the INGOs. Secondly, the development context is also the framework for the dominant leadership style of NGO leaders to emerge. The development community who supports these leaders conceptually and financially work on certain agendas such as social change, democratic building or human rights protection (Clarke 1998, Gray 1999). Certainly, to achieve these agendas, leaders need to not only accomplish management of organisational operation, but also make sacrifices and take risks which could upset the government.

The above observations were made bearing in mind the political context of the societies where there are certain elements of "liberal democracy" and the space for expression of opinions and freedom of association. In Laos, these characteristics of the society are unclear. How local NGO leaders adopt the agendas and turn them into practical operations will be critical to their leadership development. The following section reviews the context of NGO work. There is little understanding on how these leaders navigate through such a critical and volatile organisational environment. Equally important is that there has been limited understanding about which type of leaders the sector should develop, or what type of leaders would fit into the social and political context such as Laos.

2.4.3 Locating leadership development in the NGO sector

The increasing role and significance of the NGO sector in the international arena means that leaders within the sector face increasingly complex managerial problems (Eade, Hewitt et al. 2000, Edwards 1999, Fowler and Malunga 2010, Hailey 2000, Lewis 2001, Smillie 1995, , ,). However, leadership development within the NGO sector has been under-theorised. Current leadership theories have focused predominantly on the role and character of leaders in the for-profit sector and most studies are based in developed countries of the North, with a particular focus on the individualistic nature of the Western society (Adair 2002, Kotter 1995, Smillie and Hailey 2001). As a result, much of the current leadership research is not relevant to the different political and cultural contexts in which Lao NGO leaders work (Edwards and Fowler 2002, Smillie and Hailey 2001, Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo et al. 2010).

In practice, leadership development is one element of the wider capacity building world of NGOs (Dalton 2005, Dia and Eggink 2010). The extensive review of the publications of development organisations such as the World Bank and United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) found that these organisations have developed frameworks to support leadership development programmes (see Lopes and Theisohn 2003, WorldBank 2008). However, these frameworks have been developed based on the “conventional” Westernised leadership theories. Additionally, there is no consistent understanding of leadership amongst the parties concerned. For example, the donor and NGO communities attribute the terms “organisational development” to “leadership development” (Buxton and Abraliev 2007). The consequence is a lack of cohesion and continuity in support of leadership development programmes (Bebbington and Bebbington 2001, Dia and Eggink 2010).

In the INGO setting, most leadership programmes are one-off events or a series of events within specific agendas of funding organisations (Dia and Eggink 2010). Most overemphasise technical know-how at the expense of strategic and visionary savvy (Buxton and Abraliev 2007). Gradually, process-based approaches have been introduced to leadership development. Partnerships and on-the-job mentoring between local and expatriate personnel are examples of these emerging approaches to transferring knowledge and skills (Fowler and Malunga 2010, Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo et al. 2010). However, it has been observed that such transfer does not always happen because partners do not work alongside one another and expatriates working on a management basis means that they retain overall control, rarely devolving it to the locals (Owen 2010, Riddell 2007). Furthermore, the results of these initiatives rest on a few factors including the willingness of the expatriates to act as the capacity builders, the systematic leadership development strategies in place and the long-term support from donors and other stakeholders (McWha 2011). The following discussion will examine practices that could contribute to leadership capacity development in NGOs.

2.4.4 Trends in NGO leadership development

Recently, the context and leaders’ constituencies have been taken into consideration so that novice leaders can exercise effective leadership. In the context of NGO leadership, Fowler and Edwards (2002) highlights the important relationship between training programs and development activities: “in the short term, fostering succession calls for less reliance on training and more on extended process that give structured reflection on experience allied to mentoring and personal guidance.” The reliability of this statement will be one significant issue to look at for international NGOs. Furthermore, to nurture NGO leaders in the long term, Fowler (2000) suggests we should “get young people interested in the values NGOs hold and the agendas they aspire to”. Greater interaction with schools and opportunities for the placement of volunteers within INGOs would help.

Development scholars argue that currently there is greater recognition of the importance of personal change, individual empowerment, experiential learning and face-to-face support when thinking about leadership development (Hailey and James 2004, Hailey 2009, James 2008, Storey 2004,). Recent evidence suggests that Leadership Development Programmes (LDPs) have evolved over time from formal, structured, one-off training courses to more process-based, experiential programmes with an emphasis on personal development and self-directed learning (Hailey 2009). Hailey (2009) argues that this shift echoes frustration with the limited impact of traditional one-off training courses with little real follow-up and a greater appreciation the more holistic, self-learning programmes spread over time are better able to develop personal confidence and new leadership competencies.

Several studies have revealed that some NGOs have focused attention on mechanisms to develop a new generation of NGO leaders (Hailey & James, 2004, James, 2005a Lewis, 2001; Lewis, 2008; Smillie & Hailey, 2001). Hailey (2009) provides a comprehensive list of approaches developed by INGOs as they attempt to develop new leaders for the sector. These are: Save the Children Fund identified core leadership competencies for its senior personnel and has developed in-house leadership development courses. Similarly the Organisation Development Department of the International Federation of the Red Cross has introduced a series of leadership development workshops for the senior personnel and Board members of different Red Cross societies (Hailey 2006). CARE are developing a virtual INGO university (LINGO – Learning for International NGOs) whose initial programmes will focus on INGO leadership development (Hailey 2006). In sum, there is a growing awareness amongst some INGOs of the importance of developing the role and skills of NGO local indigenous leaders. The evidence gained from the literature review suggests that appropriate and relevant LDPs would consist of an integrated package of training, mentoring and coaching, peer support networks, site visits, work experiences and sabbaticals. These would not just develop participants' skills and knowledge-base, but also allow space for reflection, help individuals to challenge the status quo and develop solutions, as well as provide facilitated support, feedback and follow-up. Such programmes would use a mix of approaches intended to generate greater self-awareness, explore personal values and identify coping strategies to handle the demands and pressures commonly faced by NGO leaders.

In reviewing the materials (INGO training manuals) designed for development of a new generation of NGO leaders, some opportunities and limitations can be identified. First, theorists have conceptually moved from leader to contextual and relational focuses. This is a potential for broadening the understanding and scope of INGO leadership. Yet there is no comprehensive theoretical and conceptual basis for such a move. Particularly, in today's global society where culture and social norms are no longer confined to the Nation-state; culture and social norms do in fact reshape and reconfigure global influences (Giddens 1999). In Laos, the society is also changing due to influences derived from globalisation (Rehbein 2007). The Nation-state model would not be adequate on its own to understand contemporary INGO leadership context (this will be discussed in greater details in the next chapter).

Secondly, the concepts for development of a new generation of NGO leaders were drawn upon the increasing popularity of the concepts within organisational scholarship such as "emotional intelligence" as well as "team-based or collective leadership", "collaboration and networking" (Day 2001)**.** While these concepts can be helpful for the new generation of leaders they were aimed at building social and cultural competencies of leaders "going global". This observation is consistent with some organisational scholars who have critical views of the "going global" skill-set within development thinking. To fix this a paradigm shift might be needed. Some note there is a need for a shift from Western grounded leadership theorising to indigenous leadership thinking (Chhokar, Brodbeck et al. 2012, Pellegrini and Scandura 2008,). This study does not entirely adopt this paradigm shift but takes the "middle" path to studying local leadership. With consideration of the influence of both globalisation and local social context over leadership, this study not only investigates the international expectation but also the impacts of local social and political context on the local leadership and LLD. Moreover, it examines how an intersection of the two leadership contexts impacts on the LLD process undertaken by the INGO sector in Laos. In sum, these trends in NGO leadership are important for the discussion in the next chapter. The following section adds the development context into the concept of leadership development. If leadership is to be taken more seriously in the development agenda, leadership development in the development sector must be located much more seriously than it has been to date.

2.5 Leadership development in the development sector

This section examines NGO and development literature to understand how local leadership development is treated in the NGO sector. Literature documenting the role of leaders and the function of leadership unique to the sector is reviewed. By understanding this uniqueness of NGO leadership, limitations to the existing literature are drawn out.

2.5.1 Capacity development and leadership development

An extensive examination of grey literature from major donors such as the World Bank (2009), Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2007) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2005) reveals that the concepts of capacity building, partnership and networking were frequently cited as mechanisms for local capacity development. The ADB's (2009) *Capacity Development Medium-Term Framework and Action Plan* focus on mainstreaming capacity development into country programmes and operations, as well as in its own internal support systems. Three dimensions identified in the framework seen as cornerstone to capacity development are as follows:

- Institutional development (legal and regulatory frameworks, poverty reduction strategies, key features of the public administration, etc.);
- organizational development, including human resources; and
- Networks and partnerships.

To continue the above discussion on capacity building, this sub-section looks closely at the concept. The terms "Capacity Building" (CB) is defined as the process of "strengthening people's capacity to determine their own value and priorities and to organise themselves to act on these" (Eade and Williams 1995). Several authors argue capacity building implies a promise of growing self-reliance, national ownership and sustainability (Clarke & Oswald, 2010). In practice, CB is believed to be one of "the most effective ways of fostering sustainable human development"; it is a means of achieving global development outcomes, such as the Millennium Development Goals; it is also a pillar for economic and social development and a pre-requisite for aid effectiveness (UNDG, 2009, p. 9). The World Bank (2009, p. 18) emphasises capacity development as comprising “local ownership, effectiveness and efficiency of resource use”. By the above definitions, it can be seen that scholar as well as development institutions (i.e. World Bank) emphasise capacity building as a process owned by local people, or the targeted group whose capacity needs are developed. This notion of capacity building as a process is described by Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell (1994) -as any activities that enable people and societies to develop themselves with or without assistance from outside agents .

However, approaches to CB are contested from exogenous and endogenous perspectives. The former implies a “fill-the-gap” approach with CB initiatives emphasising mechanical fixes for technical deficits to local leadership needs involving applying predetermined inputs through training, organisational development or institutional reform (Bezanson 2008).This is done with little attention to systematic contextual assessment of capacity needs, or drawing on valuable knowledge associated with wider subject disciplines such as history, political science and cultural studies (Lewis 2002). Moreover, theoretical understandings of how social change happens are rarely articulated (James 2002). The endogenous approach has recently become a prominent approach to CB emphasising changes for an emancipated society (Clarke & Oswald 2010). This recognises the un-neutral nature of social change, addressing power imbalance, complexity and long-term process (Pettit 2010) involved in capacity development. Leadership capacity development, therefore, must not only take on the exogenous approach but also an endogenous one.

The implications capacity building has for developing leadership capacity are less convincing. Personal capacity building has mostly taken the form of in-house training, that is, the training or skills upgrading of particular member of personnel that are taking place on site and informal in nature. This is comparable to leadership coaching or mentoring (Hobson 2003) or Leader-Member Exchange empowerment (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) where a systematic arrangement is organised. In contrast, local personnel learn from colleagues or from expatriate INGO personnel but often this approach lacks a systematic strategy. For instance, expatriates have been involved in training their local counterparts in the area of finance, book keeping and accountancy. Ironically enough, those providing training may not have the necessary skills to impart this knowledge (Riddell 2007). More frustration occurs when local personnel are in charge of donor-funded projects but lack adequate capacity to run appraisal, monitoring and evaluation tasks in a timely manner. Therefore their expatriate counterparts have to do this work for them, which causes the local leadership capacity to remain weak and even worse when more skilled personnel of Southern NGOs cannot stand the situation they often leave (Riddell 2007).

Another aspect of the failure of leadership capacity development programme is due to the funding conditions. It is argued that often donor-funded programmes lack continuity of commitment to capacity building; the level of commitment varies from donor to donor, which adds complexity and complication to NGO development of leadership capacity and most donors want their money to be spent on activities with measureable outcomes rather than on (leadership) capacity building. This therefore gives rise to difficulties in progressing capacity development programmes.

2.5.2 Partnership and leadership development

Within the development sector, it has been argued that the term "partnership" has become a standardised and needed concept in the NGO and development world (Fowler 1998). Particularly relevant to this study is the "North-South partnership". This is the concept by which Northern organizations partner with Southern organizations for purposes such as education, access to resources, culture, etc. (Ashman 2001). Usually it is understood that the North is the giver and the South is the receiver and forming partnerships is seen as a way to help redress these imbalances and inequalities between the north and south (Lipson & Warren 2006). However, equitable relations or true partnership are farfetched (Fowler 1998).

In the NGO sector, partnership between Northern NGOs and local NGOs also manifests power disparity of the partners. Ahmad (2006), in his research into "partnership" between a Northern NGO, Save the Children (UK) and a local NGOs in Bangladesh, points out that the financial constraints of the Northern (donor) NGOs drive the relationship between the partners, rather than "any intention to build partnership... In other words it is *donorship* rather than *partnership*"[italic added] (Ahmad 2006). In this political rhetoric driven development sector, it cannot be assumed therefore that transferring of knowledge and capacities will just take place. Given this characteristic of the development sector, this study will further investigate how transferring or developing of leadership knowledge and capacities occur in the INGO organisational life in such country as Laos.

Another form of partnership is the expatriate-local personnel partnership. This form of partnership also implies sharing and transferring of knowledge and skills (MS, 1992). However, this is not always the case because partners do not work alongside one another. Expats work on a management basis, which means in practice that they retain overall leadership control, rarely devolving it to locals. Also, they are anxious to create a good impression with their employer (Northern donor organisation), in the short time they have abroad and because they work on short-term project basis, this leaves less room for sharing knowledge with emerging local leaders (MS, 1992).

Like North-South organisational partnership, personnel level partnerships also comprise unequal power relations (Suzuki, 1998). Comparing the two sets of personnel involved, Suzuki (1998) notes that the relations are characterised by employer - employee terms. Expatriates have overall control of the programmes; they are involved in the hiring and firing of local personnel, but not vice versa. This inequality is seen most clearly in emergency and disaster situations, when expatriates are flown out but local project personnel are not. Leadership and management are reserved for senior expat managers. In Bangladesh, for most NGOs, field workers are rarely consulted when it comes to policies because this task belongs to their senior managers (Ahmad 2003). Therefore, in another study, Ahmed (2002) argues that the potential contributions that the fieldworkers of Southern NGOs can make in relation to development activities within their organisation “have been largely unexplored and undervalued”. Ahmad (2002) also finds that NGO fieldworkers face professional problems including training, promotion and transfer. It can be said that these factors hinder their advancement in their leadership career trajectory.

In comparison to the leadership literature, a relevant question to be asked is whether or not partnerships are comparable to transformation or Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theories. Transformative leadership “is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders” (Lane & Hill 2003, p. 56). According to Bass (1990) transformational leadership involves expanding a follower’s set of needs, transforming a follower’s self-interest, increasing their confidence, elevating followers’ expectations, encouraging their behavioural changes and motivating others to achieve higher levels of personal achievement.

2.5.3 Networking and leadership development

In the field of leadership, networking has become a “buzz” word. Perhaps this is because conceptually the term promises potential outcomes of networking, particularly for a leader of an organisation. Several studies have been devoted to examining the operation and outcomes of inter-organisational (Benini 1999, Borgatti and Foster 2003, Hartley and Allison 2002, Knoben, Oerlemans et al. 2006) and intra-organisational (Johanson 2001, Cousins and Spekman 2003) networks. Some of the most commonly cited benefits for network members are: increased access to information; expertise and financial resources; increased efficiency; a multiplier effect, which increases the reach and impact; solidarity and support; and increased visibility of issues, best practices and underrepresented groups (Liebler and Ferri , Liebler and Ferri 2004). With recent advances in information and communication technologies, an increasingly connected INGO community is finding considerable scope for networking and information sharing at multiple levels (Madon 1999).

However, many authors note some critical aspects of NGO networking. First, it is likely that certain information will be shared (Barrett and Konsynski 1982, Jarvenpaa and Ives 1994), but whether operational or programmatic, this type of information does not necessarily have to create an impasse (Jarvenpaa and Ives 1994). Second, competition for international funding is perhaps the greatest roadblock to cooperation through networks (Knoben, Oerlemans et al. 2006). Nonetheless, very little has been written about the relations between organisational networking and leadership development. Instead the intra-organisational networking has received more attention on leadership development.

2.6 NGO and its development context

This section aims to review literature that would help locate NGO and INGO within the broader development sector. By doing so, it can shed some light on how NGO and INGO might carry out their local leadership development. Nowadays, many people in the development sector tend to believe that NGOs have been a positive force in domestic and international affairs, working to alleviate poverty, protect human rights, preserve the environment and provide relief worldwide. Few, therefore, have felt the need to take a critical look at the effectiveness and accountability of these organizations (McGann and Johnstone 2006). However, there are many other people who are critical of the roles of

INGOs in international development (See for example, Nancy and Yontcheva 2006, Nunnenkamp, Weingarth et al. 2009). Moreover, apart from the work of Mendelson and Glenn (2002) which looks at the role of NGOs in the context of former communist countries, analysis of the role of NGO in former communist society context is very limited. This section reviews the literature describing NGOs, their roles in development and the current presence of INGO and civil society organisations in Laos.

2.6.1 INGO's involvement in the aid industry

The role of INGOs within the aid industry matters significantly to the leadership and development because INGO are the organisations and leaders operate within this context. One the one hand, the aid context provides INGOs with intellectual and ideological space to either promote or hinder local leadership development. Participating in the intellectual and ideological community of aid in a meaningful way will define the smooth operation of INGOs and hopefully meaningful engagement in local leadership development. On the other hand, the aid context also acts as a major source of funding for INGO's activities. Navigating through this context is important for INGO financial survival. At the same time, the development community has acknowledged the impact INGOs could bring to development. Development scholars argue that in the field of international development, a renewed interest in INGOs as a key development player has arisen in response to the perceived failure of state-led development approaches, which were common during the 1970s and 1980s (Edwards and Hulme 1996, Fowler 1998, Tvedt 2006). In the 1990s, the so-called "new policy agenda" which combines neo-liberal economic policy prescriptions with a stated commitment to "good governance" has projected INGOs as efficient and responsive alternatives to the state and as organizational actors with the potential to strengthen democratic processes (Edwards and Hulme 1996). At later stage in the thesis, I will discuss in more depth the notion of INGOs as alternative to the state and their role as democratic development driver.

In addition, INGOs have also been highly visible in responses by Western citizens and governments to crises in the developing world, such as the famine in Ethiopia or the ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia (Mitlin, Hickey et al. 2007). The increased profile of NGOs has also therefore reflected the post-Cold War policy context in which international NGOs have been brought into centre stage in dealing with relief and emergency efforts (Fowler and Biekart 2013). Expectations about NGO roles in support of material improvement and democratisation in post-Soviet countries tried to combine these twin processes of adjustment with new conditions of former communist societies (Clayton, 1994; 1996).

For many, the key roles of INGOs also include their increasing influence over social, economic and political worlds in developed and developing countries. First, it has been argued that INGOs/NGOs, see the neoliberal economy as creating a “crisis of efficiency” (Soros 2006). This concept refers to problems created by the current market economy that cannot be adequately managed by the state– including major environmental issues, such as global warming, regulation of financial markets, or counterterrorism intelligence (Nye Jr and Donahue 2000, Soros 2006). Therefore, part of the NGO community’s task is to address these issues instead of governments.

Second, INGOs see the globalised world as facing a “crisis of legitimacy”. The crisis of legitimacy refers to political representation based on democracy in the nation-state, which has become simply a “vote of confidence” on the ability of the nation-state to manage the interests of the nation in the global web of policy making. Election to office no longer denotes a specific mandate to governments, given the variable geometry of policy making and the unpredictability of the issues that must be dealt with and thus, increasing distance and opacity between citizens and their representatives (Dalton 2005). This crisis of legitimacy is deepened by the practice of global media politics and the politics of scandal, while image-making increasingly substitutes for issue deliberation as the privileged mechanism to access power (Thompson 2000).

Thirdly, the NGO community sees that the globalised world is also facing a “crisis of national identity”. As people see their nation and their culture increasingly disjointed from the mechanisms of political decision making in a global, multinational networked world, their claims of autonomy take the form of resistance identity and cultural identity as opposed to their political identity as citizens (Barber, 1995; Castells, 2004b; Lull, 2007). Finally, the NGO community sees that the world is facing a “crisis of equity” through which the process of globalisation led by market forces in the framework of deregulation increases inequality between countries and between social groups within countries (Held and Kaya 2006). This set of perceived crises by the NGO community represents the international context in which, to a certain extent regardless of where they are located, all NGOs work. In other words, the implicit mandate for NGOs is to fall into the “crisis” framework. In short, these roles of NGOs have become foundational principles for NGO operations and activities.

Some development analysts have taken a more critical stance about NGOs, pointing out the contradictions between the conceptual options. With increasing NGO dependence on official donor aid, observers also questioned a willingness to make hard choices between options under dominant conditions of neo-liberalism (Eade 2000; Howell and Pearce 2001). Over some twenty years, a civil society narrative has not fulfilled its potential to discussing NGO impact on the state. According to Fowler and Biekart (2013), conceptual confusion in selectivity in donor thinking, in policies towards civil society and in the growth-driven political economy are among the reasons. Solutions, they continue, could be sought through a focus on rights, citizenship and leadership that show valuable focused progress (Fowler and Biekart 2013). Development scholars suggested that this emphasis on “aid effectiveness” has implications for the role of civil society in the development process (Van Rooy 1998). According to Van Rooy (1998) civil society is now seen to have an important role in helping build country ownership of aid policies by being engaged in discussions and dialogue about those policies and also an important role in holding governments to account and ensuring that policy commitments are met.

The relationships between state and citizens, however, remain conceptually complicated. In the literature emanating from major donors such as the World Bank, the United Nation (UN) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), there is much less emphasis on a critical understanding of civil society (Van Rooy 1998; p.7). The result is that some elements of the international donor community have come to the conclusion that if local NGOs and other grassroots organizations are supported, civil society will be strengthened, eventually forcing the state to become more accountable (Gray 1999). One inference is that NGOs are engaged in some sort of subversive, democratic-building work. In countries such as Laos, this is a very politically sensitive mandate for INGOs since the term democracy can have different meaning in this country given its communist ideological roots.

In summary, it can be seen from the above discussion that the roles play by the NGO sector globally is enormous. The development partners are both local and international. This provides the context for this study in that INGO personnel are expected to work with all players. They are going to have different resources and power to use in the negotiation process for the stake in development. For example, donors can have an implicit objective of advancing the civil society sector in Laos with financial resources to be used; but the government has the political power as their main resource. Thus, the political power of the government can overwhelm the financial power of donors and INGOs in Laos. This study will explore how the two -financial and political - interact and how this interaction impacts on local leadership development. As the Lao government insists on keeping a firm control over development and the political system (currently not a liberal democratic system), the ideas of seeing INGOs as alternatives to the state and a catalyst of liberal democracy would of course cause tension with the government. The following section reviews concepts and understandings of NGO and civil society in the age of globalisation.

2.6.2 NGO, civil society and globalisation

Nowadays, both academic and donor literature discuss non-state public sphere activity– including development-oriented NGOs–as manifestations of civil society. Unfortunately, the term “civil society” is used by virtually everyone without a clear definition. A brief review of the literature reveals that understandings of civil society depends on wider theoretical influences. This follows from the fact that the founding fathers of social science and contemporary political theory – Hegel, de Tocqueville, Marx and Gramsci – all understood the term in different ways (Gray 1999). But while the literature on civil society is varied enough that generalisation is difficult, there are clearly two main streams of thought to be considered.

The first draws heavily on Alexis de Tocqueville’s view of the “roots of democracy” as described in his 1831 work “Democracy in America” (Gray 1999). For de Tocqueville, the civic associations that constitute civil society are an important means for citizens to moderate the power of the state and assert their own interests. Drawing on this work, civil society is often understood as a realm that is autonomous from the state and actively opposed to state hegemony. Secondly, there is a concept of civil society grounded on Antonio Gramsci’s work. Antonio Gramsci, who wrote that civil society, was a social sphere or a public “space” where political thought is transformed into action (Gramsci 1971). As such, this sphere is hotly contested by all components of society, including state agents. Indeed, given its coercive powers, civil society is most often dominated by the state. To use Gramscian language, civil society is where the ideas of the ruling strata are propagated to the masses and given legitimacy they might not otherwise acquire (Gramsci 1971).

Another feature associated with civil society is the concept of “global civil society”. The past twenty years has seen the rise of and increasing acceptance of “global civil society” amongst academics (Brysk 2013, Kaldor, Anheier et al. 2003). The term features transnational civil society structures or alliances which exist to consult, advocate or campaign at regional and international levels (Fowler and Malunga 2010, Scholte 2000,). Analysis of global civil society is still developing, alongside debates about global governance. Several authors argue that the end of the cold war and the intensification of globalisation have enabled increasing possibilities for the development of the global rule of law, international justice and enhanced forms of citizen involvement (Pieterse 1994, Sassen 1999). Thus, the concept of civil society is no longer confined to the borders of the territorial state and the term “global civil society” has now found acceptance as a term to describe the current burgeoning of cross-border partnerships and international networks of civil society groups, who lobby and campaign in the international arena (Kaldor 2003, Scholte 2007).

Indisputably, several scholars claim that we live in a world manifested in almost all aspects of life by globalisation (Giddens 2002, Held et al. 1999; Held & McGrew 2007, Morley & Robinson 2013). According to these scholars globalisation is the process that constitutes a social system with the capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale in real time. According to Held and McGrew (2007), these global activities include global financial markets, global production and distribution of goods and services, international trade and global networks of science and technology. The globalised activities also feature a global skilled labour force, selective global integration of labour markets by migration of labour, direct foreign investment, global media, global interactive networks of communication, (primarily the Internet) and global cultures associated with the growth of diverse global cultural industries (Giddens 2002, Morley and Robins 2013, Saczuk 2013).

There has been, however, recognition that “not everyone is globalised”. Scholars also argue that networks connect and disconnect at the same time (Beck 2000; Price 2002). The line of arguments that networks connect everything that is valuable or which could become valuable, according to the values programmed in the networks. However, networks also bypass and exclude anything or anyone that does not add value to the network and/or disorganizes the efficient processing of the network's programs (Grewal 2008). The social, economic and cultural geography of our world follows the variable geometry of the global networks that embody the logic of multidimensional globalisation. Local leadership and its development in the emerging society of globalisation remain limited and much needs to be researched about the topic. The next section will examine closely the concepts of civil society and INGOs as it plays out in the Lao government and legal context.

2.6.3 Civil society and INGOs in Laos

Influenced by the force of globalisation, Laos has developed its legal intuitions to allow NGOs[8] to operate in the country. The regulatory context of the INGO sector and civil society sector in general has recently been developed. The government promulgated the constitution for the first time in 1991 and there are now two key Decrees that regulate civil society activity in the Laos. The Decree on Associations (Prime Minister's Decree 115/PM, on Association, dated 29 April 2009), promulgated in 2009, is a sign of a policy change from the government indicating that local civil society has a place in the development process, where this was not previously officially acknowledged. The INGO Decree (Prime Minister's Decree 13/PM On the Administration of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Lao PDR dated 8 January 2010, hereafter "the INGO Decree") is a revision of its previous version, first made in1998. The revision signals a change in attitude by the government. This development reflects the adoption by the Government of Lao PDR, of fundamental democratic values and principles, which are common in other democratic societies.

Analysis of the documentary data reveals that the conditions for INGOs to emerge and operate in Laos are found in two laws: the Constitution of Laos and the Decree on INGOs. These two laws are analysed as follows. The Constitution proscribes the fundamental principles of democracy and liberal values regardless of the country being described as a socialist or communist state. Some of these principles and values are individual rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and association. The extract from the constitution below shows these principles and values.

[8] In Laos, only international NGOs are allowed to operate. Therefore, the terms INGOs will be used for refer to NGO in general sense.

Figure 2: Extract of articles from Constitution

Article 30 Lao citizens have the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religions. **Article 31** Lao citizens have freedom of speech, press and assembly; of associations and of demonstrations, which are not contrary to the law. **Article 32** Lao citizens have freedom to conduct research, to apply advanced sciences, techniques and technologies; to create artistic and literary works and to engage in cultural activities which are not contrary to the law. Source: the constitution of Lao PDR, 15 August 1991, amended for the first time on 6 May 2003.

The extracts of the Constitution suggest that it is grounded in the principles of individual rights, freedom and creativity. However, this interpretation should be viewed cautiously, because the Constitution also proscribes that individuals' activities must not be contrary to the law. What constitutes illegal activities is, however, not clear. One observation is that some of the terms used for describing a "democratic" society in the mainstream literature are also used in the Lao Constitution. For example, in his book: *An Introduction* to *Democratic Theory*, Mayo wrote that a democratic society ensures that its citizens enjoy individual rights and freedom (Mayo 1960). Similarly Robert Dahl (2000) outlines the main functions of democracy are to protect basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic and cultural life of society. All three articles in the extract from the Constitution above contain the term "freedom" suggesting that the Lao Constitution guarantees basic human rights, protection and opportunity for all citizens similar to that of other democratic societies.

The Decree on INGOs defines the rules and regulations with which the operations of all NGOs must comply. In reviewing this Decree it was found that the government of Laos shares the vision of the development community in seeing the INGO sector as contributors to socio-economic development and poverty reduction. As article one of the decrees states:

> …with a view to enabling them [INGOs] to carry out their operations more effectively, thus contributing to the implementation of the socio-economic development plan and poverty eradication in the Lao PDR. (Article 1)

This indicates that an objective of the Decree is to facilitate INGOs so that they contribute to the implementation of government plans and development priorities. It is true that the government plans and priorities were shaped with international assistance that comes with development aid. However, it cannot be taken for granted that INGOs will agree with those plans and priorities. Furthermore, even though INGOs may agree with the plans, they do not necessarily follow the same methods to achieve them.

> Similar to the Constitution, the Decree on INGOs reflects conventional government perspectives of the INGO sector. The decree defines INGO as:
> An international or foreign non-profit organization having a legal status, which desires to provide development assistance and humanitarian aides without any pursuit of profit (Article 2).

This Article says that INGOs can do either or both development and humanitarian work. By definition, the former implies work relating to people empowerment and capacity development while the latter suggests provision of basic services such as disaster relief or distribution of bed nets. Again, however the meaning of development-oriented activities remains contentious and open to interpretation. Another point of interest in the Decree on NGOs is the criteria outlined for project approval. It states that a project to be granted approval "should have a clear objective, concrete activities and be in line with the Lao Government's development strategy" (Article 7, para. 7.3). This presents challenges whereby the government's development strategy can be quite broad and at times change quickly, without any forewarning to INGOs.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter identifies important gaps in the literature concerning leadership development. First, leadership literature has documented understanding of and research on leadership based on theories developed from a Western context. These theories echo the dominant view of leadership which has focused on personal traits such as being extravert, articulate and well presenting. At times, literature on leadership pays some attention toward the need for quiet and humble leaders, who also work within the context of teams. The most important observation is that some recent scholars tend to agree that leadership is contextual but that understanding leadership in its context has been under-theorised. Furthermore, leadership development theories often draw upon the social context of “liberal, democratic” societies with limited research into socialist society or a society in transition.

Secondly, leadership development was located within capacity building. Research has shown that capacity development in the form of “quick fix approach” does not account for the capacity of the trainees. In practice, capacity building by training, partnership and networking were found to have limited impacts because they fail to address the social context and power dynamics within a development context. The practice of a participatory training approach needs to consider the trainee’s educational background. Otherwise studies on capacity development focus mainly on the programme level or micro level; overlooking the mesa – organisational and macro – institutional level.

Thirdly, research into the impact of leadership and culture usually focuses on “going overseas managers”. Leadership studies concerned with culture tend to study cultural aspects of nations mainly Western countries to build a body of knowledge about those cultures in relation to leadership. Expatriate leaders referred to as “going overseas managers” need to be equipped with this knowledge so that they become culturally competent in an overseas context. This research aims to understand cultural diversity that comes into local leaders through globalisation and international organisations. This understanding is important for local managers and people working with them to be culturally competent so that they can work together effectively particularly in their attempt to develop local leadership capacity.

Finally, the role of INGO in developing countries has been more significant and challenging. Their agendas such as social change and democratic development cannot be guaranteed as universal values therefore different interpretations of these terms can lead to conflicts, particularly with the host governments of INGOs. This represents to some extent the main preconditions INGO leadership must deal with. The challenges are even more important for local people who are in leadership positions. This will be examined closely in this study. In a place, such as Laos which has a communist led government, INGO work related to democracy and social change can upset the well-established government elites. The need to work on the INGO mandate and the potential resistance to change can offer the critical social space for local leadership to work in. the legal and government policy frameworks to facilitate the INGO sector exist, yet implementing those plan remain challenging. This study will explore this power dynamics in relation to the leadership development of the local INGO personnel.

Chapter 3
Conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework for understanding the process of LLD within the INGO sector in Laos. According to Maxwell (2004), a conceptual framework consists of key conceptual dimensions including theories, concepts and assumptions that support and inform the study. In addition, the framework explains the relationships between these concepts and theoretical dimensions (Miles and Huberman 1994). In this study, the conceptual framework was used to develop the data collection and fieldwork phase of the research as well as illuminate the results of the study.

It has been argued that most leadership theories have been rooted in a psychological paradigm that treats leadership primarily as an individual attribute, although within it some situational conditions are considered as activating or constraining factors (Bendix 1956, Biggart and Hamilton 1987, Guillen 2010). In contrast, the conceptual framework used in this study is inspired by the institutional school of organisational analysis (Biggart and Hamilton 1987). The conceptual framework consists of three theoretical components. The first component draws on the concept of "legitimacy". This concept is based on the *Weberian* sociology that links leadership to legitimating principles and norms of a social structure in which leadership occurs (Biggart and Hamilton 1987) .

The second is an approach based on an emerging concept of "institutional entrepreneurship" within leadership literature. This concept refers to the recursive relationship between institutions and actions whereby the focus is on "the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence, Suddaby et al. 2009). Intrinsically linked to the first component, these actions by an entrepreneurial leader must be seen as legitimate in their institutional environment. The framework seeks to link action learning theory with the entrepreneurs' actions as an on-going process of learning, practicing and reflecting which is taking place within the "new terrain" of the institutional context. The third component draws on the concept of "glocalisation" to articulate the new terrain or Lao social context. This concept is based on the critics of the sociological concept of the "container model" (Beck 1997) that sees a society as bound within a nation state. The concept of glocalisation proposes a new terrain of the social context of leadership, which is shaped by both domestic and international social factors.

This chapter is structured into four main sections. The following section, Section 3.2, discusses the theoretical foundation of the institutional school of leadership study. It reviews research and the theories related to understanding leadership from the institutional perspective. It focuses on two major propositions within this camp including the *Weberian* sociology of legitimacy and domination and institutional entrepreneurship. Section 3.3 applies this theoretical foundation to the study of LLD within the INGO sector in Laos. Drawing upon the counterargument of the “container model”, the new terrain of institution of local leadership is proposed. Section 3.4 explores the practical domain of LLD as informed by the theory of action learning (Revans 1982). In this context LLD is seen as the on-going process of learning, practicing and reflecting. The final section, Section 3.5, summarises the chapter.

3.2 Theoretical foundations of the conceptual framework

This section examines the research and theories associated with understanding leadership within its institutional context. It draws mainly on the institutional theories of organised social groups because the leadership phenomenon is thought to occur within this kind of social setting.

3.2.1 The institutional school of organisational analysis

Definitions of institutions vary in the literature. Scott (2007) describes institutions as consisting of cultured-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that provide stability and meaning to social life. He argues that institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artefacts; they function at various levels of influence. The regulation and human cognition aspects of institutions are echoed by Fligstein (2001) who defines institutions as “rules and shared meanings … that define social relationships, help define who occupies what position in those relationships and guide interaction by giving actors cognitive frames or sets of meanings to interpret the behaviour of others”.

The institutional school of thought deals with large-scale patterns of meaning that have been taken for granted in a society and that undermine every day action in organised settings. These patterns of meaning are cultural assumptions and “understood” ideas about the suitable conduct of arranging relations among individuals (DiMaggio 1988, Meyer and Scott 1983, Scott 1994). This school of thought is also rooted in the phenomenological sociology that argues social order is being created by the people who interact with one another and assign meanings to their interaction (Schütz 1967, Silverman 2011). In Organisational Studies, the institutional school thinkers are concerned with subjectivity, patterns and interpretations of meaning and how these influence relations among actors (Sanders 1982, Strati 2000). For the purpose of this study, the institutional approach to organisational analysis is used to guide the understanding of the patterns of meaning INGO personnel make of the Lao society context and how these influence their work and development. The Lao society context pertinent to INGOs and their personnel will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is generally agreed within the institutional literature that institutional theorists have been focusing on explaining the stability and persistence of institutions as well as “isomorphic”’ change in fields (Lawrence et al. 2009, p. 34). More recently, however, there has been an increased interest in how non-isomorphic change can be explained using an institutional lens (Dacin, Goodstein et al. 2002), as well as describing the nature of the “institutional work” that is needed to create, maintain, transform or disrupt institutions (Hardy and Maguire 2008, Lawrence, Suddaby et al. 2009). Associated with this has been an emphasis on the processes of contestation and struggle within and over institutional fields (Garud and Rappa 1994, Maguire and Hardy 2006), which are viewed as political arenas in which power relations are maintained or transformed (Clemens and Cook 1999, Lounsbury, Ventresca et al. 2003).

This conceptual framework reflects both institutional perspectives - emphasising the stable and persistent aspects of social structures and considering contestation, struggle and change within the field, as pertinent to LLD. This is because leadership capacity is not viewed in this study as confined to individual attributes; rather it renders its approval from the societal context in which leadership occurs. Therefore, a theoretical model to understand local leadership and its development must link together these two aspects of institutional theories as leadership development is illustrated through capacity building initiatives by INGOs. Finally the model has to account for individual efforts as purposive actions by actors in the field, such as, INGO personnel.

3.2.2 The *Weberian* sociology of domination: the conformative perspective

Sociological perspectives on institutional theory emphasise how institutional arrangements confer legitimacy, which is “a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman 1995). As a result, some actions within a particular institutional field come to be seen as legitimate (Meyer and Rowan 1977) and may even be “prescribed”, making it difficult for actors to deviate from them. This is the conformation perspective.

The theoretical bases of the institutional school originate partly in the work of the sociologist Max Weber. For the purpose of this conceptual framework this section draws on Weber’s sociology of domination, his study of large-scale structures of social control (1978). This seminal work presents the renowned typology of bureaucracy in which Weber argues that social structures rest upon “legitimating principles” or conventional ideas as to the appropriate ways of arranging social affairs. Although Weber was largely concerned with legitimating principles, typically in Western societies, his formulation is also useful for studying patterns of interaction and is also useful in non-western societies. For example, organisational theorists use Weber’s ideas to understand power relations among individuals (see For example, Bendix 1956, Burton and Beckman 2007, Guillén 1994). This study draws on Weber’s work to understand the relations between INGO personnel and the people they work with and how the power of legitimacy influences leadership behaviour and development within the INGO sector in Laos.

An exploration of Scott’s (1994) work is useful to facilitate an understanding of what constitutes “the context” of INGO work. Scott (1994) argues that organisations exist in an environment of institutions that exert some degree of pressure on them. Institutional environments are “characterised by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organisations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy” (Scott 1994; p.132). Institutions constrain behaviour through processes associated with three institutional pillars: the regulative, which guides action through coercion and threat of formal sanction; the normative, which guides action through norms of acceptability, morality and ethics; and the cognitive, which guides action through the very categories and frames by which actors know and interpret their world (Scott 1995).

From this perspective, leadership performance must aim at meeting society's expectations both formally and normatively. For example, by compliance with the government laws and regulations, INGOs are allowed to operate in a given society; but it is by conforming to the socio-cultural norms and expectations, they can ensure smooth and efficient operations. This is relevant to a certain degrees and resonates well with contextual leadership theory. For example, Schein (1996) and House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfma and Gupta (2004) argue that leaders initially conform to the existing culture of the organisation but that, providing that they have resources, leaders will also exert influence on a culture if they see it is no longer relevant to the changing society. The contextual leadership theory implies that leaders simultaneously conform with and transform the context they find themselves in. For these reasons, this conceptual framework considers both conformative and transformative perspectives. The following section addresses the transformational orientation within institutional theory.

3.2.3 Action orientated institution theory: the transformation perspective

Although the traditional emphasis of institutional approaches to organisational analysis has been on the clarification of organisational resemblance (conforming) based on institutional settings, there has emerged a new emphasis in institutional scholarship on understanding the role of social actors in effecting, transforming and maintaining institutions. The key concept within this emerging thinking is "institutional entrepreneurship". "Institutional entrepreneurship" as a concept has emerged in institutional theory to examine the role of social actors in creating new institutions and transforming existing ones (Eisenstadt 1980, DiMaggio 1988). Firstly, institutional entrepreneurs are thought to be central to institutional processes. DiMaggio (1988) argues that "new institutions arise when organised actors with sufficient resources …see in them an opportunity to realise interests that they value highly." The concept of institutional entrepreneurship focuses attention on the ways in which interested social actors work to influence their institutional contexts via such strategies as technical and market leadership, lobbying for regulatory change and discursive action (Fligstein 1997, Hoffman 1999, Garud, Jain et al. 2002, Suchman 1995,). The key point of relevance to this study is that it is often assumed that local leaders lack sufficient resources - human, material and knowledge. This means that they do not have what is needed to provide the stimulus for change. Therefore, the study will seek to explore how social actors acquire the resources to exercise leadership and stimulate change.

Secondly, the role of social actors in the transformation of existing institutions has risen in prominence within institutional research. Institutional studies have increasingly documented the ability of social actors, particularly those with some key strategic resources or other forms of power, to have significant impacts on the evolution of institutions (Holm 1995, Oakes, Townley et al. 1998). This includes both institutional transformation and deinstitutionalisation (Oliver 1997, Ahmadjian and Robinson 2001). To do this intentionally (or not), local leaders as entrepreneurs need to be equipped with "fitted" qualifications – this key concept will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

From a sociological perspective, change associated with entrepreneurship implies deviations from some norm (Garud and Karnøe 2003). To this end, it is unlikely that entrepreneurial outcomes and processes will be readily embraced by social actors committed to the existing ways of doing things. To be successful, therefore, entrepreneurial leadership efforts have to gain legitimacy. This will be more difficult if more social groups with varied interests are involved (Aldrich and Fiol 1994, Lounsbury and Glynn 2001). However, as new outcomes from entrepreneurial efforts spread, more diverse social groups will be affected and possibly mobilised in the process and new legitimacy will emerge (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001).

The concept of action oriented institutions also draws on a sociological perspective in the tradition of the sociology of practice (Bourdieu 1977, Giddens 1984, Lave and Wenger 1991) and is also relevant to this study. This tradition understands practices as "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (Schatzki 2001). Leadership scholars focus their attention that established structures and systems often create incredible obstacles to adapting to changing contexts (Dimmock and Walker 2002, Hargrove and Owens 2003). Similarly, Grint (2002) suggests current organisational culture is not the place for "analytic models and rational plans" then scientific management is counterproductive in contemporary organizational contexts where innovation can take place. Thus, studies of practice focus on the situated actions of individuals and groups as they cope with and attempt to respond to the demands of their everyday lives (Lave and Wenger 1991). In this study, practice theory is used to provide an understanding of the intelligent activities of individuals and organisations that are working to affect those changes and achieve that outcome.

In summary, a significant part of the thinking about entrepreneurship is an acknowledgement that the emergence of novelty is not an easy or predictable process because it is coupled with politics and on-going negotiations. As Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) point out, what may appear to be new and valuable to one social group may seem threatening to another. Thus, as with institutional theory, the literature on entrepreneurship has had to come to grips with issues of agency, interests and power, but it has approached these from the perspective of change rather than continuity. In this study, the concept of action orientated institutions follows in the practice tradition. It sees institutional actions as intelligent, situated institutional actions. This does not mean that the study reverts to an understanding of actors as independent, autonomous agents capable of fully realising their interests through strategic action. Instead, the practice perspective that is used highlights the creative and knowledgeable work of actors who may or may not achieve the desired ends; and who interact with existing social and technological structures. Drawing on the above theoretical discussion, the following section turns the focus towards how I conceptualise a contextually articulated understanding of LLD.

3.3 A Contextually articulated concept of LLD

This section discusses the contextually articulated conception of LLD study which draws on the above theoretical discussion. This model consists of three key components: the first is the articulated context: contextual factors coming from domestic and international spheres of politic, social and cultural condition; the second is concerned with the individual competency: human capital and social capital; and the third discusses the action learning process: learn, act and reflect. The diagram below provides a visual illustration of the conceptual framework and the functions and relations of its components.

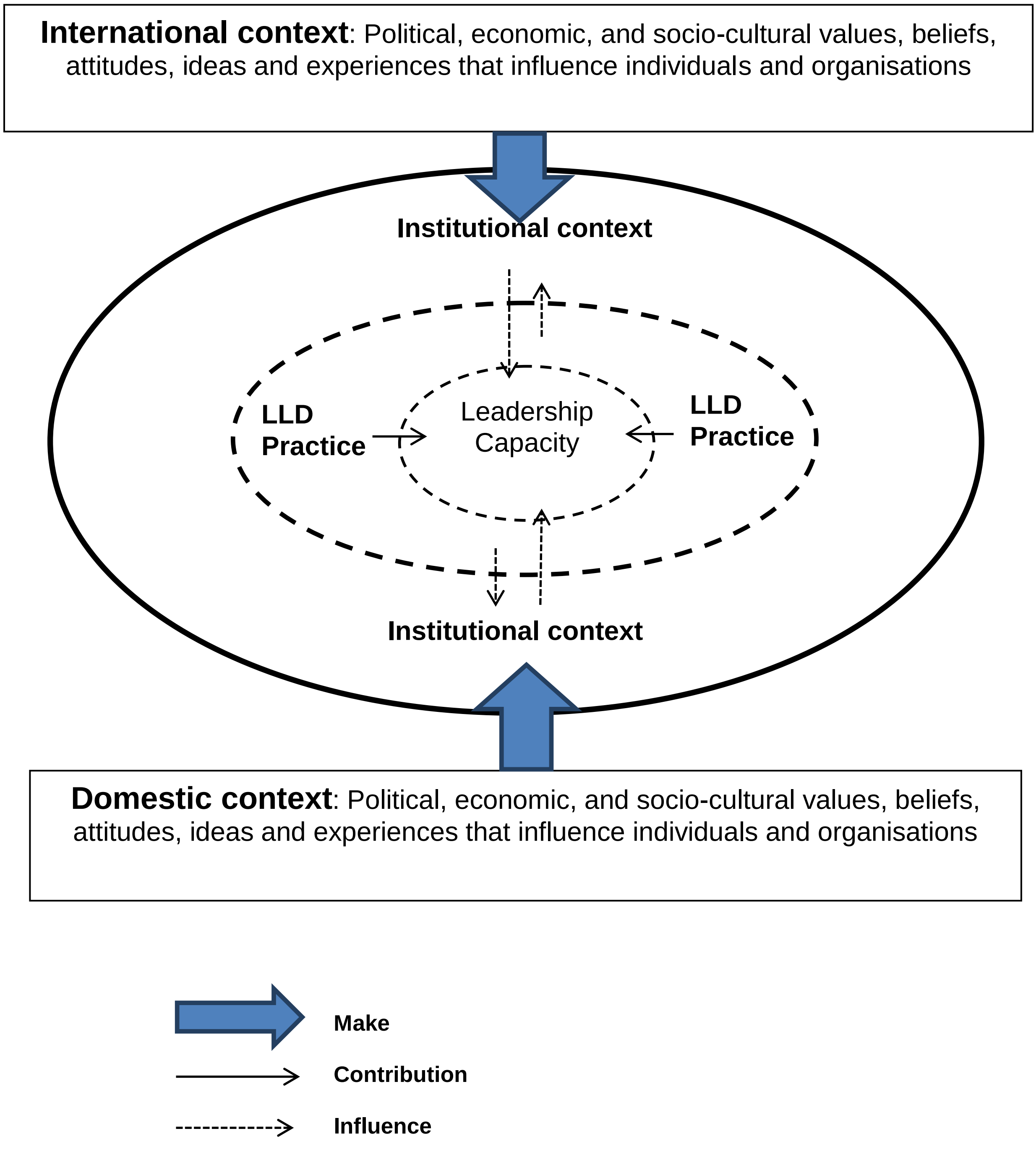
3.3.1 The conceptual diagram

The diagram below shows three elements of the framework: the institutional, personal capacity and practical domains (see the diagram below). Firstly, the institutional domain is made of the contextual landscape of INGO work which can include: political, economic and socio-cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas and experiences that come from domestic and international sources. As shown in the diagram, the outside layer of the circle represents the social context which provides the space in which action takes place. From an institutional perspective, these contextual factors affect the efforts at shaping institutions by, for example, contesting or mobilising them (Garud, Hardy et al. 2007). Hence, the idea of good local leadership and effective local leaders are by these contextual factors.

Secondly, the personal capacity domain represents the social actor's competencies, the utilisation of which affects leadership development. Understanding these competencies is informed by the concepts of social and human capital. Implicitly, these two forms of capital are mutually reinforcing. From the institutional entrepreneurship point of view, the actor must be knowledgeable and skilful (Perkmann and Spicer 2007) and can draw on existing cultural and linguistic materials to narrate and theorise change in ways that give other social groups reasons to cooperate (Colomy 1998, Greenwood, Hinings et al. 2002, Suddaby and Greenwood 2005, Child, Lu et al. 2007). Thus, entrepreneurs are conceptualised as leaders and use the two forms of capital to affect the institutional context.

Thirdly, the practical domain represents the attempt by individuals and organisations to shape LLD. The process is iterative and on-going; this process influences and is influenced by the institutional domain and at the same time, contributes to and is contributed to by human social capitals. The following subsections discuss this in greater depth.

Figure 3: Conceptual diagram: Integrating contexts, individuals and process



3.3.2 Institutional context and leadership

It is desirable that leadership is able to remain effective amid changing contexts and be able to shift successfully into different contexts. Researchers have indicated that there is a close relationship between context and leadership. Some empirical findings also indicate that leadership has an adaptive or environmentally determined component to it (Osborn and Hunt 1975). Moreover, Perrow (1970) found that “leadership style is a dependent variable which depends on something else. In the same vein, Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (2002), according to their multiple influence model, suggested that, leadership is embedded within the organizational setting. There is no doubt that leadership is contextually dependent. The key point lies on the question of what constitute the context.

Even though the context is important for understanding leadership, theorists in the field still search for common understanding as to what constitutes it. Pawar and Eastman (1997) adopted a set of structural or organisational variables to characterise the organisational context that interacts with leadership in order to determine employee behaviours in organisations. Other researchers studying the organisational context have adopted study specific sets of contextual factors. For example, Inkson, Pugh and Hickson (1970) adopted a set of structural parameters and contextual variables to specify their framework of organisational behaviour. Similarly, Perrow (1967), formulated a conceptual scheme for organisational analysis by selecting four contextual factors and indicated that the choice of factors had been based on his assessment of their importance. Recently, Garside (1998) adopted eight organisational variables acknowledging that these variables were originally selected on an *ad hoc* basis and suggested a theoretical basis for four of them.

Furthermore, leadership study has involved societal culture into the leadership context. In the study of leadership and cultural context, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project identified seven culturally contingent leadership factors. These factors were identified from a survey of 17,000 managers in sixty-two societies across the world (House, Javidan et al. 2002). However, these studies have given little explicit or systematic justification for their selection of factors. Although some authors indicated that the structural parameters were based on a literature review, they did not provide any justification for the set of contextual factors. After reviewing the inclusion of environment- or context-related variables in some of the leadership studies, Smith and Peterson (1988) note that “what is more striking about the restricted range of variables selected by these researchers is its arbitrariness when viewed from a broader perspective” and they conclude that creativity and change are essential to study of local context.

It appears, therefore, that there is no generally accepted set of contextual factors available for the study of leadership and on this basis the context for this study is based on a container model of understanding social structure drawn from sociological theory (Beck 1997). Sociologists claim that conventional analysis of social relations has been in the form of a container model (Beck 1997). Building on Ulrich Beck's (1997) container model, Boike Rehbein (2007) asserts that various sub-disciplines of sociology are explicitly focused on the limited boundaries of the nation state. Both agree that the container model perceives society as a closed entity with a clear-cut, stratified social structure within the state. The context for INGO work transcends this thinking by proposing that INGOs work under a broader social context encompassing domestic and international social settings. This study draws on these characteristics of society to postulate that the institutional foundation for INGOs and their personnel is both based on domestic and international socio-cultural values and beliefs. The modernised characteristics of society are embedded in the INGO organisational culture and international personnel but INGOs must also work within the local cultural setting and with local personnel. This convergence can be explained and explored through the concept of "glocalisation".

The term, "glocalisation", combines the words globalisation and localisation to describe individual, group, organization, product or service that reflects both global and local standards (Robertson 1995, Smith 2013). In this study, the concept of glocalisation helps guide the understanding of the combination of local and international standards, values and expectations which form the legitimacy milieu for local leadership. The next section discusses the resources the institutional entrepreneurs need to bring about so that they are seen legitimate in leadership role. These resources are conceptualised as human capital and social capital.

3.3.3 Human capital and leadership

Human capital is conceptualised as one of the two elements of individual competencies that can influence local leadership. Human capital development are the main reasons that organisations invest in training and other forms of employee development (Lepak and Snell 1999). Regarding leadership, human capital development is associated with leadership development where the emphasis typically is on individual-based knowledge, skills and abilities required for formal leadership roles. According to Coleman (1988), these acquired capabilities enable people to think and act in new ways. The primary strategy is to build the intrapersonal competence needed to form an accurate model of one-self (Gardner 1993, p. 9), to engage in healthy attitude and identity development (Hall &

Seibert 1992) and to use that self-model to perform effectively in any number of organisational roles.

There are no significant disagreements in defining human capital, yet the emphasis varies according to the disciplines and institutions that use the term. In the policy sphere, human capital is defined as “the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (Keeley 2007). This definition is endorsed, for example, by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In the academic field, human capital represents knowledge, skills and capabilities of individuals, reflected by the person’s education, experience and specific identifiable skills (Coleman 1988). In the corporate domain, it is referred to as “the knowledge, skills, personality and behavioural styles” of individuals (Brass 2001, p. 132). Additionally, human capital is increasingly valued as the intangible assets of an organisation and are likely to be worth considerably more than the measured tangible assets (Mayo 2000). From the human resource management perspective, human capital, in the form of individual qualification and skills, increases income by helping individual get a well-paid job, maintain it or get promotions (Becker 1975, 2002).

Moreover, human capital is understood to increase labour productivity (WoBmann 2004). Additionally, human capital conceived in the form of intrapersonal competencies includes self-awareness: emotional awareness and self-confidence; self-regulation: self-control and trustworthiness, adaptability; and self-motivation: commitment, initiative and optimism (McCauley 2000, Neck & Manz 1996). These capabilities contribute to enhanced individual knowledge, trust and personal power, which have been proposed as the fundamental leadership imperatives (Zand 1997). While human capital is important for a person to become a leader. The competencies are intrapersonal orientated. An effective leader would need relational capacity what help a leader work well with others. The following section explores the concept of social capital in relation to leadership.

3.3.4 Social capital and leadership

In addition to being a function of human capital, social resources are embedded in work relationships that take the form of social capital (Brass & Krackhardt 1999; Burt 1992). Unlike human capital, in which the focus is on developing individual knowledge, skills and abilities, the emphasis with social capital is on building networked relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation and resource exchange in creating organizational value (Bouty 2000; Tsai & Ghoshal 1998).

Social capital scholars broadly agree that social capital can potentially confer benefits to an individual member of a group and in turn to the group that the individual is located within (see Bourdieu 1979, 1980, Burt 1997, Coleman 1988, Fukuyama 1995, Loury 1977, 1981 & Putnam 1995) but a number of definitions have been proposed. Bourdieu, for example, defines social capital as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition (Bourdieu 1985). Coleman (1988), a key figure in the development of classical social capital theory, defines social capital by its function, as a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures and they facilitate certain action of actors whether persons or corporate actors within the structure. Baker sees the concept as a resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests; it is created by changes in the relationship among actors (Baker 1990). More broadly, Schiff defines the term as the set of elements of the social structures that affect relations among people and are inputs or arguments of the production and/or utility function (Schiff 1992) and Burt sees it as friends, colleagues and more general contacts through which you receive opportunities to use your financial and human capital (Burt 1997).

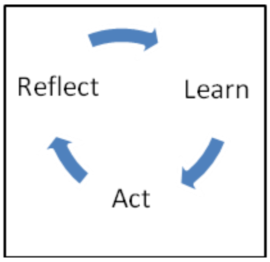
Although social capital inherently confers positive meaning there are downsides that have not been seriously explored in the literature. One of these is the negative relationships by which a negative affective judgment of particular member by other member/s can lead to an opportunity cost (Labianca and Brass 2006). For example, this means that employee’s negative relationships with others in an organisation might prevent them from getting a promotion if those others withhold critical information or provide bad references. The systematic analyses of relations between members of social groups include Granovetter (1973), for example, who identified two types of relationship, strong and weak ties. Strong ties according to Granovetter, are characterized as friendships, while weak ties are understood to link acquaintances. Strong ties are usually the more accredited source of valuable information likely to be shared by close friends than acquaintances (Krackhardt 1999) Weak ties, on the other hand, are characterized by infrequent interaction (Granovetter 1973) and although not having the function of transmitting valuable information, the importance of weak ties lies in the fact that they still provide links between groups. As such, these weak relationships often are key sources of novel, divergent, non-redundant information or resources (Granovetter 1973).

With reference to social capital, the primary emphasis in leadership development is on building and using interpersonal competence and, building networked relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation and resource exchange in creating organizational value (Bouty 2000, Tsai & Ghoshal 1998). Gardner (1993) defines interpersonal intelligence in terms of the ability to understand people a basic concern in building trust, respect and ultimately, commitments. Key components of interpersonal competence include social awareness: empathy, service orientation and developing others; and social skills: collaboration and cooperation, building bond and conflict management (Coleman 1995, McCauley 2000). In sum, relational skills are as important as technical ones. Besides, both forms of capital are mutually reinforcing. The next section will discuss the practical domain conceptualised as the process of on-going learning, doing and reflecting that can lead to leadership development.

3.4 The practical domain

This section draws on the theory of action learning to conceptualise leadership development as an iterative process of learning, practicing and reflection. As shown in Figure 4 below, there are three elements constituting the process; one element acts as the basis for the other to build upon. This process does not necessarily begin with "learning" but for the purpose of elaboration learning will be discussed first.

Figure 4: Action learning process



3.4.1 Learning

This section proposes that leadership development is a "learning" process that is taking place under the contextual dynamics of the INGO sector. There are diverse theories about the nature of learning. Cognitivism emphasises the acquisition and retention of knowledge offering limited insights into real-world activity and Bandura's theory of social cognition (1986, p. 165) considers learning as "largely an information-processing activity". The action learning approach developed by Revans (1980) applies learning to solve practical problems for which there are no "textbook" answers. This approach uses a five-stage inquiry process and by stimulating "questioning insight" through the structuring of experience within an action learning group. This widely used method helps to demonstrate three important principles in learning:

- The opportunity or challenge presented by real-life problems stimulates purposive learning;
- Learning is a social as well as individual process; and
- New learning generates ideas, possibilities and theories from existing knowledge.

Although entrepreneurship connotes the notion of exploiting opportunities, this process can be learned and learning can be assessed. This is demonstrated as follows. Learning can be understood as the ability to act differently comprising the three dimensions of knowing, doing and understanding (Taylor and Thorpe 2004). Taylor and Thorpe (2004) argue that learning involves a change which causes or enables the individual to do things differently. People may know cognitively, but if their actions do not change they have not learned. According to Cope (2005) learning is a discursive, sense-making process in which people create new reality, by talking and doing, as they learn. Entrepreneurial learning is therefore concerned with how people construct new meaning in the process of recognising and acting on opportunities and of organising and managing ventures.

3.4.2 Acting

As Einstein (1879-1955) wrote: "Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it". This section links practical experience to leadership development. Bennis and Thomas (2002) resonate with this wisdom by arguing that exposure to life changing experiences often holds the key to the development of a great leader, but, experiences have a lasting impact only if people are prepared to learn from them.

In similar vein, McCall (2004) proclaims that while experience matters, it is what and how people learn from experience that is probably more important. Extracting insight from experience or abstracting a principle from a critical event is a competence that not many are blessed with (McCall 2004, Thomas 2008). Therefore, stimulation must come in play to encourage people to be prepared for experiences and engage in the most intensive learning when experiences actually happen. It has been argued that leadership development that prospective leaders have to get out and about; they must Act. Leaders need to be given the opportunity to try out new skills, behaviours and thinking. Action learning is learning based on critical reflection on concrete experiences (Reynolds 1998); their actions.

3.4.3 Reflecting

Flowing from practice is the concept of reflection. Leadership development is about action and reflection and both are necessary in order to develop critical skills such as analysis, strategic planning and critical consciousness. Without space for reflection: “What did you learn from that experience?”; “In hindsight, what could you have done differently?”— one’s ability to lead will not evolve (Reynolds 1998). Leadership development is also about encouragement, recognizing that people frequently carry enormous insecurities about being good enough, having enough experience, or having anything worthwhile to say and doubting that others think they’re capable enough. To do so, organisations need to give prospective leaders real business problems and challenges to solve within their daily work contexts (Dotlich 1998, Schwandt and Marquardt 2002). These authors maintain that reflection takes place through group discussion, trial and error, discovery and learning from and with each other. It is a process by which groups of people address actual workplace issues and problems in complex situations and different conditions. Focusing only on the development of individual leaders precludes the complex interface of people and the social settings and the role of reciprocal relationships in these contexts where leadership occurs.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a discussion of the theoretical bases for this study. It mainly draws on the institutional theories of organised social groups and a theoretical foundation of the institutional school of organisational analysis, which was originally concerned with explaining the constraints that institutions imposed on individuals (Scott 2007). This perspective is adopted because some institutional constraints are still relevant in social organising. However, the institutional school of organisational analysis has evolved and a new focus emerged in which actors do not passively operate under the constraints of institutions but rather actively engage in actions that transform them (Lawrence, Suddaby et al. 2009). This study also adopts this proposition in the context that actors with sufficient resources can affect institutions and amend them purposively. The theoretical discussion links these two propositions to form the duality perspective through which institutions or structures not only constrain actors but function as the platform by which actions occurs. Prominent scholars in this practice tradition include Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984). This study undertakes this practice tradition on the basis that a leader is an entrepreneur in nature and leadership development involves purposive actions that transform actors and structure into its favour. I conceptualise INGOs' local staff as social actors who are interacting with social and political structures-the institutions. These structures are social-cultural that by nature are difficult to change. Therefore, local staff and their supporters aiming to change these to their favour invariably face challenges.

In the third section, the discussion focused on the theoretical basis for the study and the application of those theories to help understand the process of LLD. Informed by the discussion in the previous section, this section postulated the constitution of the institutions treated in this study as the context whereby leadership development takes place. Informed by the rejection of the container model as theorised by Beck (1997) the discussion proposes that context transcends the institutional terrain and goes beyond national boundaries to create a landscape as shaped by domestic and international sources. This dynamic contextual landscape is then linked with two key concepts: social capital and human capital; the former referring to the leadership competencies that are relational and social contingent and the latter referring to the development of intrapersonal competencies important for getting the technicality done. It is argued that the two concepts are mutually reinforcing.

In the fourth section, the theory of action learning is discussed.   Action learning theory is used to conceptualise leadership development as an iterative process of learn, practice, reflect and learn. The section argues that learning is part of leadership development that can happen individually or organisationally. Learning leadership would not be meaningful without practicing it. So the section argues that leadership learning needs to be put to the test by the concept of acting. Action is the part of action learning that links learning to practice and reflecting. The final concept is reflecting which is argued to be part of the iterative process of action learning.

In conclusion, the LLD process is conceptualised as the social process whereby individuals or groups purposively organise their actions in at least two directions. One direction is towards themselves. Actions to this direction aims at empowering themselves by nurturing their human capacity while the actions in another direction challenges the structure and alter it. I see that capacity development activities for local staff must go along with fighting with policies and attitudes towards them, the social and political context within which they operate. Moreover, the actions must be iterative, the action-learning process. Social-culture and political contexts are difficult to change. The change must be conceptualised as a process that will take times, efforts, and trials and errors. Although I adopt the action and change position when discussing the institutional context of leadership I believe that not all structure must be changed. Rather I believe that an element that is not compatible will be challenged and refuted while the elements that are deemed suitable remain and develop.

Chapter 4
Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to explain how the study was conducted and also justify the suitability of the adopted methodological approach which includes the theoretical consideration underpinning it. The chapter elaborates on the main methodology: the *bricolage* approach. This approach sits within a qualitative research paradigm which is fundamentally interpretive and focuses on a social phenomenon and its context (Marshall and Rossman 2010). Following Rossman and Rallis (2003), my view is that a qualitative researcher views social phenomenon holistically, uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted and iterative and is sensitive to his or her personal biography. Additionally, the qualitative research approach used in this study is flexible and emergent (Willis, Jost et al. 2007). The aim of the present study is to understand how “localisation” plays out in the context of Laos. It focuses on the process of LLD within the INGO sector in relation to the organisational, political and social settings of Laos. These settings are complex, multifaceted and inter-related with less exposure to the research community both inside and outside the country. A *bricolage* approach was adopted to explore and make sense of this multiplicity and complexity. Methods selected from this approach included document analysis, participant observation, in-depth interviews and ethnographic interviews. The following subsections spells out the research context and the considerations that led me to choose this particular approach. Later in the chapter I describe the methods selected and explain how they were applied in the field. The following section provides the context of the study.

4.2 Research context

This section considers the research context that is methodologically relevant to the study. This context relates to the political history of the Lao society that has implications for how comfortable people feel about sharing thoughts, beliefs and opinions. Going back to a period of uncertainty in the post-war era, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union and many socialist states in Eastern Europe at that time, the leadership of the young socialist country of Laos felt a lot of anxiety and fear. There was fear of the resistance and prodemocracy movements as well as for the re-colonisation of the socialist states like Laos by the Western powers (Gunn 1991). This resulted in a tightly government controlled communist society. Evans (2002) writes that one of the controlling mechanisms has been tight control over the mass media and political activity. He also notes that the new government, after gaining independence in 1975, launched a political indoctrination campaign across the country and all levels of the government. The indoctrination sessions instructed people on the “beauty” of socialism but did not ask their opinion. The people’s voices were “only required to either praise the leadership or to denounce imperialists and traitors” (Evans 2002). Moreover the treatment of the former Royal Lao government officials[9] who opted to stay in the country and other people who expressed their un-acceptance of the new regime, through prolonged retention in the harsh and unpleasant conditions of re-education camps reminded people to be cautious about expressing opinions (Stuart-Fox 1997). This political legacy has undermined the way public discussion is shaped and occurs in contemporary Lao society. In this study, this political inheritance was taken into account and addressed in this study.

Methodologically, there are some necessary considerations to be accounted for when conducting research in this context. The first is the possibility that individuals working in INGOs might be less open in answering questions. It has long been thought by many government officials that INGOs are not the true friends of the Lao government. INGOs are aware of this. Therefore, interviewing them was approached and conducted in an appropriate manner (explained more in the sections to follow). Moreover, in recent years, INGOs have been highly scrutinised over their transparency and accountability (Edwards, Hulme et al. 1996). This high level of scrutiny by the public on INGOs could contribute to the fear of INGO personnel being exposed to outsiders. Additionally, INGO personnel might have a hectic work schedule that makes them too busy to reflect on what they are doing. It is well known that INGO personnel are overworked by the nature of their work setting as having to deal with many constituencies, too much paper work to complete and deadline to meet (Smillie and Hailey 2001). These conditions were taken into consideration when conducting interviews with them.

The second consideration was that Lao society has been living in isolation from the outside world (Evans 1990). Even though it has been over a decade since the country was

[9] These officials were opposition to the communist during the war and most of them fled to the United States after having been defeated.

opened up to the outside world, the people of Laos are unaccustomed to publicly expressing opinions. Their reluctance to express opinion can be even greater when communicating with researchers. Under the socialism of Laos, during the post-war period from 1975 onward, freedom of expression has been confined to issues that do not oppose the government's policies (Stuart-Fox 1996). Public discussion, particularly in the form of formal interviews, has been very rare. There are various possible explanations for this: perhaps it is due to the culture of oppression and obedience; in family or community arenas Lao people "just do it" without having to ask questions; and the concept of interviewing is not very familiar or relevant. In contrast, Western society, according to Fontana (2001) can be viewed as an "interview society" in which interviewing is no longer reserved to researchers and investigators; it has become a part of everyday life. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) and Fontana (2001) claim that members of society devote much of their time to asking questions, being asked questions or to watching television shows about various kinds of people being asked questions. It is as if interviewing has become common practice, with no need for instruction. In contrast, members of the Lao society, including INGO personnel, have been living in a "non-interview" society. They are not familiar with interviewing. This might be because they are shy or nervous about being put in the spotlight. I was aware when conceptualising and conducting this study that interviewing people about topics sensitive to their career or their life would be challenging. In the sections below I explain how I approached and addressed these challenges.

4.3 Epistemology and Inquiry strategy

The study adopted the epistemological perspective of social constructionism which argues that reality is relative and socially constructed. According to Crotty (1998), knowledge and meaningful reality are constantly being constructed out of human's interaction within themselves and the world around them. In addition, sharing and communicating these meanings of the world occurs within a given social context that plays an instrumental role in how the meaning is understood (Nightingale and Cromby 1999).

As the field work site for this study has less exposure to the research community both inside and outside the country, the strategy of the study is informed by the *bricolage* approach (Brent 2009, Kincheloe and Berry 2004, Levi-Strauss 1966,). This methodology builds on the common usage of the concept whereby the French word *bricolage* describes a handyman or handywomen who "make use of the tools available to complete a task"

(Kincheloe and Berry 2004). As argued in the literature review section, LLD is complex and multifaceted, this coupled with the “quiet” society of Laos, requires studying leadership through holistic thinking from multiple perspectives. Various researchers suggest that the *bricolage* methodology has been developed advocating a multi-logic/method and multi-discipline research design to knowledge production and addressing social, cultural, psychological and educational context of science (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Kincheloe 2005). Informed by this approach I employ the ethnographic methods of participant observation and ethnographic interview which highlight the use of direct interaction with the people and the context being studied in an informal manner (Brewer 2000, Silverman 2006, Taylor 2002). The ethnographic approach is appropriate in this context because it allows the researcher to approach the site informally, spend times to develop trust and build a good rapport with the research participants (Wolcott 2008). I also adopt the qualitative methods of document analysis and in-depth interview. In the following section I will demonstrate how multiple theoretical concepts are used to inform the framing of the main questions and how multiple methods are employed to address each main question.

4.4 Research Design

The research design was concerned with the complexity of the leadership topic and the difficult setting in which the investigation took place. The design was guided by four conceptual components of local leadership (see figure below). Taking a holistic approach, the study sought to explore the institutional context, both formal such as regulations and policies and informal such as attitudes and beliefs about NGOs in the Lao society. It then adopted a sociological perspective to examine how human and social capital play roles in LLD and how these two intersect. Finally the study considered how the elements of the international and the local intersect within the setting of INGOs. The analysis sought to overcome a mono-perspective on viewing leadership development (Kouzes and Posner 2003). In this present study, four conceptual theories were considered.

From these four concepts the study asked the following research questions:

The primary research question is: What social and political contexts affect the process of LLD within the INGO sector in Lao PDR?
This question will be operationalised using the following three secondary questions:

1. What are the social, cultural and political contexts of INGO work that impact on the process of LLD?
2. What are the experiences of INGOs in LLD initiatives?

What are the capitals, resources and competencies that enable leadership success for local individuals?

To address these questions, secondary questions were formulated. Table below shows the guiding concepts, primary and secondary questions, the methods to address them and the sample size for each method.

Table 1: Research questions and methods

Primary and secondary questions	Methods conducted	Sample size
What are the social and political contexts that might foster or hinder INGO work and the process of LLD? • What are the regulatory institutions that can enhance or hinder LLD? • What are the socio-cultural institutions that can affect LLD?	Document analysis In-depth interview Ethnographic interview	10 documents 6 31 (15 National and 16 expat)
What have the experiences of INGOs in LLD initiatives? • What are the initiatives put in place to facilitate LLD? • What are the factors that undermine the results of such initiatives? • How important is human capital to the local personnel and their career? • How important is social capital to the local personnel and their career? • How local personnel form, maintain and exploit their social capital?	Document analysis In-depth interview Ethnographic interview Participant observation	10 documents N/A 6 31 (15 National and 16 expat) 3 sites

What are the characteristics of local leadership within the INGO sector? • What is good leadership? • What is the function of local leadership in INGOs?	In-depth interview Ethnographic interview Participant observation	6 31 (15 National and 16 expat) 3 sites

This research design was carefully developed through a combination of in-depth literature review and fieldwork preparation. This included thinking about the research instruments, the questions and how they would be phrased and translated into the local language. To overcome the issue of working in a "non-interview society" the design framed interviews into a series of engagements aiming to build trust as the fieldwork progressed. The depth of insights at each phase of engagement varied from shallow to deep (from general to personal and specific as explained in the next section). The interview schedule was drafted and refined as each question was translated to make it contextually sensible. The final preparation was the piloting of interviews with former INGO personnel in Brisbane, Australia.

Data generated from the use of different methods had two purposes. The first was to make sense of pertinent dimensions of LLD; for example, participant observations focus on the informality of how things work - "perspectives in action" whereby naturally occurring conversations/actions amongst people observed were "deliberately and consciously" listened to (Parsell 2010). Secondly, each method generated data that complemented the findings and use of other methods. As each method was conducted in a series of engagements, the initial findings of the first engagement provided input for the next round of engagement. The application of each method is discussed in turn, below.

4.5 Research methods

The context of LLD is complex and multifaceted as explained in the previous chapter (Literature Review). A single method would provide limited depth and understanding of this complexity. Therefore, this study combined multiple data-collection methods to ensure greater depth and validity. In order to apply these methods effectively, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Vientiane, Laos for seven months in 2011. Moreover, I followed Chambers' suggestion that researchers should take an "optimal ignorance" approach which is grounded with the RRA tradition. This approach attempts to learn about rural conditions in a cost effective way by avoiding the “traps of quick and dirty or long and dirty methods and using instead methods that are more cost effective” (Chambers 1981; p. 97). To do this means ignoring inappropriate professional standards and instead applying a new rigour based on the two principles of optimal ignorance: knowing what it is not worth knowing and proportionate accuracy (recognising the degree of accuracy required)(Chambers 1981). In this research, this approach allowed me to apply four different methods with flexibility as explained below.

4.5.1 In-depth Interviews

The in-depth interviews were used as the primary method in this study. This is as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation (Bryman 2008). Interviewing was the initial method used to collect primary data and to lead the use of secondary methods, namely the ethnographic interview and participant observation, for exploring and testing themes both identified and not identified in the initial interviews. Therefore interviewing needed to be effectively implemented. The effectiveness of conducting interviews relied heavily on establishing good rapport and trust between the me and the participants (Heyl 2001, Madison 2011).

As suggested by Sorrell and Redmond (1995), the questions should become more and more specific. This study decomposed interviewing into themes and the themes move from simple, publicly based to sophisticated, personalised ones as the interviewing progressed. The premise behind this is that as rapport and relationship between the researcher and participants However, in reality, only one participant completed five themes with five interviews. Some people wanted to finish it off at once because of the time limitation. After negotiation and re-scheduling, most participants engaged in three or four interviews.

A total of six local INGO personnel were recruited. Interviews were scheduled into five phases.

1. The first phase of interviewing was an introductory interview aimed at introducing the nature of the study to the participants. It also facilitated the establishment of a

rapport (Bogdan and Biklen 1982). This was an imperative because Lao is a "non-interview" society and leadership is an unfamiliar and potentially taboo subject in Laos. Therefore, a good rapport was needed to ensure that people openly shared their insights. Moreover, the introductory interviews were used to gain a general impression and emerging ideas about the topic to inform the next interview.

2. The second phase explored the theme of the institutional context. At this stage, the interview was more in-depth (Legard, Keegan et al. 2003). For this round of interviews, participants were encouraged and prompted to talk in-depth about: a) formal regulation, policy, direction and strategy related to LLD and INGOs in general; and b) informal practices and cultural norms that exist within development organisations (donors, the government, INGOs). Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000), an extensive list of questions was not used, but the discussion was kept around the major themes of the institutional context.
3. The third interview phase examined the theme of INGO initiatives concerning LLD. The interview explored the approach, strategies and techniques employed in the LLD initiatives as well as the advantages and disadvantages of such initiatives for local personnel development. It also explored how the institutional conditions affect these initiatives.
4. The fourth phase explored the theme of individual capacity. At this stage the interview emphasis was on the individuals' human capital and social capital, with a specific focus on how individuals form, maintain and utilise their capital throughout their career pathway.
5. The last phase examined the theme of the characteristics of local leadership. It was assumed that the control over decision-making was a key characteristic of local leadership.

Applying a flexible approach, the interview process was adjusted to respondents' preferences and availability in the field. As such, in some cases, the required data was obtained with fewer than five interviews or with interviews structured in a manner more responsive to the respondent's preference and situation. In other cases more than interviews were conducted.

Most interviews were audio recorded. Only two interviews were not recorded at the request of the respondents who felt it to be too sensitive and that it was risky to have their voices recorded. In these cases detailed notes were taken instead. All audio recordings

were transcribed during and after the fieldwork was finished. Interviews that were conducted in Lao language were transcribed into Lao before they were translated into English. Preliminary analysis was undertaken so that the results could be used to inform subsequent interviewing, for example, direct questioning toward emerging themes. Throughout the interviewing, attention was paid to the “Lao” conversation style, such as the use of “indirect” responses to questions. If the responses were not satisfactory, i.e. participants did not respond to the point being asked, the same question was repeated with different wording or revisited at another time. An “indigenous typology” of language and concept, as proposed by Patton (2002) was also used. This involved thinking about the different ways in which leadership is described in the local language and avoiding overriding the local vocabulary with the “translated from English” version of words.
In-depth interviewing with key participants did not always go according to the plan and this was not unexpected. One of the key participants promised four interviews but committed to only two.

4.5.2 Ethnographic interviews (informal interviews)

Ethnographic interviews were conducted to crosscheck and complement the findings of the in-depth interviews. The ethnographic interview is described by Spradley (1979) as “friendly conversations” guided by a specific research agenda. A similar type of “conversation” is found in the development literature which is one of the techniques of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). Chambers (2008) describes the RRA approach as an appropriate informal means of acquiring quick, relevant and timely strategic information.
As suggested by Atkinson (2007) and Heyl (2001), the ethnographic interviewing approach in this study was conducted on-site during a seven months in the field with the researcher establishing respectful, on-going relationships with research participants. Apart from verifying the findings of the in-depth interviews, the ethnographic interviews helped delve deeper into areas that were too complex or sensitive for in-depth interviews. For instance, ethnographic interviews, because they were less formal and were used to discuss the negative utilisation of social networks. To ensure the quality and utility of data collected, the researcher followed Wolcott’s (2008) suggestion, which is to engage in the natural environment - the community where the culture is embedded and the organisations where the phenomenon being studied takes place. In other words, observing and describing the day-to-day life of the INGO organisations which provided the empirical materials for the study.

The study made a distinction between ethnographic and in-depth interviewing according to the nature of the engagement and the purposeful usage of each method. The ethnographic interviews were conducted in a more informal and relaxed manner. Following Marshall and Rossman's (2010) suggestion, notes or audio recording were not taken during the interaction with participants to ensure the ethnographic interviews complied with the setting and participants" sensitivity in which note taking or audio recording could compromise the depth of the conversations. Instead, accompanying notes were made for each conversation right after the interview ended. The data was then incorporated into fieldwork diaries for further analysis. Over the course of seven months in the field, ethnographic interviews were conducted with 15 National and 16 expat participants, some of whom were interviewed more than once, resulting in 69 ethnographic interviews in total (see Table 2 for more details).

The interviews, although guided by the pre-determined themes, were open and flexible. They could start with very general topics depending on the interest of participants - for example, the conversation might start with the controversial dam project in the North of Laos, before returning to the themes pertinent to the study. People were drawn back to the research topic whenever appropriate. Sometimes the first meeting was only able to establish a "good relationship" and obtain contact details. At this time a general sense of how cooperative a person was likely to be was assessed to decide if further meetings should be requested or not. In the end, almost half of 31 ethnographic participants had been engaged twice or more. In general, it was found that the second or third meetings were more informative and useful than a one off encounter.

The other purpose of using ethnographic interviews was to gain insights into the informal elements of the INGO leadership phenomena such as processes behind the scene, cultural norms, informal practices or, as Scott (2008) describes it, the cognitive institutional environment. Additionally, initial findings exposed emerging themes to be used to inform the next phases of data collection as the fieldwork progressed.

4.5.3 Participant Observations

Participant observation was conducted in order to gain further insights on processes of leadership development. Participant observation is defined as a researcher taking part in the interactions and events of a group of people as a means of learning (Emerson, Fretz et al. 2001, DeWalt 2002). Observation was structured around topics pertinent to the research aims, however, as O'Leary (2005) suggests, the topics were not limited to a pre-determined schedule.

I had originally planned that INGO network meetings and organisational settings would be observed. In reality, observation of the former did not proceed according to plan as the INGO network was undergoing a restructure during my time in the field. With the latter, observation of the day-to-day workings of INGOs were conducted. Through these observations, empirical data relevant to group interactions and internal behaviour were elicited. The internal group interactions, such as organisational meetings and workshops were also documented. Links and networks that were developed during the fieldwork and via thesis supervisor's networks were utilised to access the organisations to be observed. Over the course of the seven months in the field, three key observation activities were engaged. The first activity was a consultancy assignment related to capacity development for a non-profit organisation. The second participation was a consultancy assignment conducting a "knowledge, attitudes and practices" survey about childhood advisability. The last activity I was involved in was a voluntary job helping non-profit organisations with strategic planning and proposal writing.

Participation in the capacity development assignment gave me the opportunity to meet different sets of personnel including government officials, INGO local personnel and expatriates (international technical advisers). This proved to be a very effective method of getting access to a number of people who were willing to share their opinions and experiences. However, voluntary participation was strictly maintained. In conducting this assignment, together with a local consultant, I had developed a training manual on a farmer association capacity development. Having finished the manual we had conducted five training workshops with two farmer associations over the course of five months. Over the assignment period, we worked closely with a team made up of two local consultants (including myself), two international advisers, one senior local INGO personnel and one senior government officer. The setting was a combination suitable for my research purposes and methods, allowing me to observe and participate in the team's interaction. The second assignment, on the childhood disability, provided a similar research setting to the first. This team is made up of myself, one local consultant, one international consultant, two expatriate INGO personnel and one local INGO personnel. The assignment lasted for

28 working days, divided into two phases. I was involved in the whole process from recruitment to final report completion, including survey design, sampling, conducting focus groups and developing questionnaires, survey, data analysis and report writing.

The last observation setting was of non-profit associations (NPAs) in which I worked with two central level NPAs mostly on strategic planning and grant proposal writing. This setting is made up solely of local professionals, both former government officials. In the process of grant seeking we joined several meetings with funding representatives, usually from INGOs, bi-lateral and multi-lateral organisations based in Vientiane and their government counterparts. This gave me the opportunity to observe the workings of this area of development activity.

The detailed observations and data from the three settings were recorded in the form of notes and a fieldwork journal. Through initial analysis, emerging themes from observations were used to inform the next phase of engagement. It must be emphasised that while observations were structured around pre-determined key themes following the observation schedule, the focus became more refined and to the extent directed by, unforeseen themes that emerged from the close engagement (O'Leary, 2005).

As a local ethnographic researcher, I had to be mindful of two central aspects to ethnographic fieldwork. These included being an "insider" versus an "outsider" (Hodkinson 2005) and a "covert" versus "overt" researcher. Hodkinson (2005) points out that an outsider - an external expert, researcher, observer and stranger to the local context provides an *etic* perspective to the research. An insider, a local participant researcher, is comfortable and familiar with the socio-cultural context, informing the research process with an insider's view and knowledge supporting the *emic* worldview (Hodkinson 2005, Wolcott 2008).

The term "insider research" is used to describe projects where the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research setting (Robson 2002). Such research contrasts with traditional notions of scientifically sound research in which the researcher is an "objective outsider" studying subjects external to his/herself (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Insider research could also be extended to include cases where the researcher is partisan to the emotional, political, sexual affiliations of the participants, for example, feminist research carried out by feminists (Devault 2004).

Some argue that insiders have a wealth of knowledge which the outsider is not privy to (Tedlock 2005) and that interviewees may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly if familiar with the researcher (Tierney 1994). Wolcott (2008) has made the case for the importance of using local knowledge to understand the data and a culture or a society from the inside. Reflecting upon ethnographic and in-depth interviews, I became aware that the words “we” and “us,” were used when referring to the local personnel and “they” and “them” were used to refer to expatriate personnel, signifying the extent to which research participants viewed me as being from the inside. This made participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

However, each of these advantages also has a disadvantage. For example, greater familiarity (being an insider) can lead to a loss of “objectivity”, particularly in terms of inadvertently making erroneous assumptions based on the researcher’s prior knowledge and/or experience (DeLyser 2001, DeLyser and Starrs 2001, Asselin 2003). This can also distort or exacerbate biased opinions against expatriate leadership and favour of locals. However, the trusted relationships and the iterative engagement were employed to crosscheck and complement data elicited from key participants.

Additionally, since the core issue of the study is local leadership, explaining the concept often needed a context to make the point clearer. This contextual explanation often involved comparison of two sets of personnel: local and expatriate. On a reflection, coupled with the fact that I used to work in the INGO sector, I realised that I sometimes shared my experiences, opinions and perspectives with my participants. However, this was done only to confirm the points made by participants or to signpost the ending of the issue being discussed and to move on.

On the other hand, even though I am a Lao national, the outsider aspect still applies, when thinking about my role in the field, for two reasons. The first consideration is related to the fact that I am a researcher coming from a Western university, outside the sector being studied, researching everyday organisational life. The second is that I am from Lao sub-culture different from the capital city of Vientiane, where most of the people being studied are from. Therefore I agree with Asselin (2003) who suggested that it is best for the insider researcher to gather data with her or his “eyes open” but also assuming that she or he knows nothing about the phenomenon being studied. Asselin argues that “although the researcher might be part of the culture under study, he or she might not understand the subculture, which points to the need for bracketing assumptions" (Asselin 2003).

Precautions were always undertaken about the two contrasting perspectives of insider-outsider researcher. Objectifying the manner in which interviews was undertaken by making questions or probing impersonal. For example, phrases such as "I read from the literature that ..." and then framed questions as "what do you make of this", or "I heard other people the other day talking about....." and then asked for their take on that issue. My role as a participant observer varied according to the nature of the two settings. One was as an overt observer applicable when I worked with the two consultancy teams. Within this setting, I clearly introduced myself and the purpose of my presence to the team and obtained informed consent from all team members.   The other role as a covert observer functioned when I was in the team but working with external partners.

Critics have continually questioned the necessity and usefulness of researchers disguising their identities and concealing their research agendas (Erikson, 1995; Herrera, 1999). Shils (1982), for example, argues that covert methods were inexcusable forms of civil betrayal that violated the individual's right not to be studied. In contrast, others argue that the knowledge gained through covert research justifies the use of deception (Denzin & Erikson, 1982; Goode, 2001; Miller, 2001). Many authors have recognized that there is not a clear divide between overt and covert research (Agar, 1996; Gomm, 2004; Herrera, 1999).

As an overt researcher I was able to work with the team while keeping in mind the patterns of behaviour pertinent to the themes of the study. Whenever I had spare time I would reflect on what we had done together as a team and elicited some data from that. For example, I would ask my local colleagues, "why you kept quiet when we discussed ....", or my expat colleague, "do you think our counterpart appreciate your comment for its own sake". As a covert observer I did not have open discussion with external partners as I did with the members of the team. I would play a detached observer role "peripheral" to those participating in the event in which I was involved (Adler and Adler 1987). When we had meetings with external counterparts I did have space to introduce my topic and not as an observer who interacts with research participant, but maintains a distance as to be considered "moderate participant" (Spradley 1980).

4.5.4 Document analysis

To complement the literature review and provide contextual framing of the research environment, document analysis was employed. Types of documents reviewed are grey literature. Grey literature is generally not assumed to be representative or complete (Gummesson, 2007; Mays & Pope 1995). It was therefore used in this study with careful consideration. In another sense, because Lao society is generally under researched grey literature provide a useful source of background information. Rigg (2005), having conducted research in Laos, points out the fact that there is large volume of grey literature in the form of “midterm evaluations, feasibility studies, briefing papers, think pieces, inception papers, working paper...” that exist in the government department, offices of international organisations. In this study, grey literature such as INGO, donor and the government internal documents on the topics related to leadership, nationalisation/localisation and capacity building were collected and analysis of these documents offered an account of how local leadership, capacity building and localisation have been discussed and diffused organisationally. Two channels were used. One was a search for relevant information from online network document depositories including INGO networks, LaoFab and LaoLink. The other was a search within the individual organisation publications which most of the well-established INGOs have made publically available. The focus of the analysis was on examining the various strategic and professional frameworks used in developing capacity and leadership among local personnel.

4.6 Sampling

For the purpose of interviews, three sets of participants were sampled. One set was called key participants and were engaged by in-depth interviews. These participants were all local personnel of INGOs. The other set was called community participants made up of local and expatriate personnel. They were drawn from the whole development industry, INGOs, local NPAs, bilateral and multilateral organisations.

4.6.1 Key participants for the in-depth interviews

To identify participants in the in-depth interviews, a purposeful non-stratified sampling approach was adopted. As Patton (2002) points out this sampling strategy does randomise within a small selected sample size. Arcury and Quandt (1999) explain that purposeful sampling involves making strategic choices about whom, where and how participants are selected. In this study six key participants were purposively selected from five different INGOs and one former senior manager from the UNPD Laos. The INGOs were selected based on the intensity of funding allocated towards internal capacity building programmes and policies for “localisation”, as will be described later. From these INGOs five senior local personnel were selected based on the seniority of their position in the organisation. The small number of participants reflected the limited numbers of Lao INGO personnel working in leadership roles such as high level managers or directors of the organisation. In fact, out of 69 INGOs, there were only two Lao personnel holding country representative positions and three country directors (Directory 2012). Due to the limited number of Country Directors/Representatives, personnel from senior team leaders through to national representatives were recruited.

4.6.2 Inclusion criteria

Key-participants needed to meet specific criteria. They had to be national personnel working for INGOs for at least five years in the management/leadership area. The national personnel were assumed to represent local personnel who had experienced or witnessed management/leadership practices over the years. For the purposes of this study, a senior member of personnel was defined as:

1. Having a job title and job description which indicates seniority within the organisation;
2. Is a person who currently, or routinely negotiates on behalf of the organisation;
3. Having responsibility for several projects and project personnel – each at “coordination level” and above; and
4. Is a person recognised by colleagues as having seniority and leadership functions within the organisation and or sector?

Key participants also had to come from established INGOs that had an espoused commitment to building capacity of local managers/leaders. Commitment to building capacity of local managers/leaders was assessed by means of reviewing the organisation’s human resources policies available publicly from their website. The established INGOs are defined by the criteria as follows.

1. Has operated in Laos PDR for a period greater than five years;
2. The INGO operates in at least one other country; or is partnered with an organisation which operates in multiple countries;
3. A significant number of projects are donor funded;
4. Has a minimum of five project personnel; not including the country director, housekeepers, drivers and so forth; and
5. Participates in INGO network forums – specifically monthly meetings.

4.6.3 Exclusion criteria

Key participants excluded expatriate managers/leaders because this study intended to focus on the experience and perceptions of locals. However, expatriates were recruited as community participants. This was in line with the main assumption of this research which is to base the manner by which knowledge is constructed on the local political, social and cultural context. It also excluded local leaders who ran other local CSOs such as NPAs. However this latter group provided valuable insights through ethnographic interviews.

4.6.4 Participants for ethnographic interviews

The participants for ethnographic interviews were found through a snow balling technique. This approach to sampling, as described by Bryman (2008), uses a type of purposive sampling of participants with whom contact has already been made to identify and refer to the researcher other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study via their social networks . In this study, participants were drawn from the personal network of known personnel in INGOs, NPAs, international organisations and relevant government agencies. Community participants were drawn from the sector without specific criteria, however, their participation was determined by their level of cooperation and availability.

4.7 Participant recruitment

4.7.1 Key participants

Originally, six key participants were to be recruited based on the criteria such as being senior personnel within INGOs, with each one of them engaged in five thematic based interviews. In-depth interviewing was conducted with key participants who were local personnel from INGOs located in Vientiane, Laos. With one exception key participants were drawn from personnel currently employed in identified leadership positions within INGOs.

The recruitment process was conducted as follow. The initial contact was first made via email to establish the possibility of participation by the organisation and their personnel in the study. Then, a letter of introduction, Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (in both English and Lao) were sent to relevant organisations and agencies inviting them to participate in the research project. Many INGOs did not publicly list specific workers. Therefore, the researcher approached organisations for permission to engage interested members of personnel and for organisations to circulate the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (in both English and Lao) among personnel inviting them to participate in the study. Interested personnel then proceeded to contact the researcher directly or visa-versa. Once an individual had expressed an interest in participating in the study, the researcher requested that they signed the Consent Form as an indication of their interest in participation. When an expression of interest had been received, contact was made via email or telephone to arrange interviews.

Where necessary replacements for the key participants were sought and found by using the networks and relationships built prior to and during the fieldwork. While this scenario did not exactly fit with the original design and had a shortcoming in that that the time remaining for interviews was less, resulting in the narrower intervals between interviews. Replacement participants were also not as senior as originally intended. But they represent the most senior local staff member in their organisations. Beside, this does not significantly affect the data because they can still play leadership “role”[10] in the organisation. The positive side of this was that they were drawn from people with whom I already built strong relationships, requiring less time for rapport building. Moreover, some of the themes had already been discussed via informal meetings with them.

4.7.2 Participants for ethnographic interview

[10] Leadership role can be performed by staff members at any position regardless of the formal position in the organisation hierarchy.

For the ethnographic interviews, a “hang in there” approach was used. The researcher went around from organisation to organisation meeting with people through the network of former colleagues and people who formally responded to recruiting emails for the in depth interviews. For instance, when finishing a meeting with one person I always asked him or her to introduce me to their colleagues either through a face-to-face meetings or email exchanges. As shown in Table 2 below, I recruited 6 key participants and a total of 19 in-depth-interviews were conducted with them. Fifteen national and 16 expat participants were also recruited for the ethnographic interview (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: A breakdown of participants by type and a number of interviews

	Key participant	National participant for ethnographic interview	Expat participant for ethnographic interview	Total
No of participant	6	15	16	37
No of interview	19	26	24	69

These participants were drawn from various backgrounds within the Lao development community. The majority were from the INGO sector and four were from the NPA community (see Table 3 below for more details).

Table 3: A breakdown of participants by organisation and gender

	INGO	NPAs	Int”l Organisation	Freelance	Total
Men	16	3	1	3	23
Women	9	1	2	2	14
Total	25	4	3	5	37

4.8 Participant Profile

4.8.1 Key participants

Key informants, as Patton (2002) describes, are those with first-hand knowledge about the community, its resident and issues or problems you are trying to investigate. Key participants in this study were drawn from the INGO community who had experience related to the topic which was local leadership. Five key participants were from INGO senior positions: one country director, two programme coordinators and two provincial team leaders. The other key participant was from UNDP, a former senior manager at a UN women's programme. All key participants were former government officials at their mid-forties. Two of them were educated in the former Soviet Union during the 1980s. Most were originally from Vientiane except one from Savannakhet. All of them had been in the INGO sector no less than 10 years.

4.8.2 Participants for ethnographic interview

Ethnographic participants were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Half of the local participants had been in the sector for more than ten years while a few people have been around since the inception of the sector in Laos in the early 1990s. Most of the senior personnel were former government officials and claimed they were better at coordinating with government departments and INGOs needed them. The other half was younger generation equipped with computer and language skills. They have overseas education background which is also in demand from INGOs. Local participants mostly knew each other as they often suggest their friend about the study, even though they moved from one place to another. Many participants considered spending the rest of their career with INGOs because there was no way for them to return to the public sector based on a belief that they would simply be denied employment opportunity by the government. In this regard, it is important that I take precaution position about their opinions about the government. Some participants retired from INGOs to join the consultancy community and this seemed to be an accustomed pattern.

Expat participants were drawn from a variety of backgrounds. They can be categorised into two major groups: temporary employment seekers and long-term professionals. The former were enthusiastic to join the study in order to share and to learn. They simply revealed this as conversation progressed. This group was keen to compare their experiences elsewhere with what they were facing in Lao. The other group were senior member of the sector and the majority were the technical advisers and consultants. They have established long-term careers and families in Laos. Some even considered themselves a local.

4.9 Data Management and Analysis

All empirical materials were analysed thematically (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) with the aid of a computer software, Nvivo9. Empirical materials made up of the fieldwork journal which comprises the Ethnographic interviews and Observations notes and the in-depth interview transcripts. The analytical process of these materials occurred in two phases. First, consistent with the qualitative and ethnographic literature (Miles and Huberman 1994, Gobo 2008), data analysis occurred, often implicitly, throughout the data collection process. As noted, data analysis was an iterative and on-going process. This iterative analytical process was recorded, together with a log of data collection, including dates, names, times and places where, when and with whom data were gathered (Marshall and Rossman 2010).

Secondly, post data collection analysis dealt with all empirical materials including fieldwork journal, ethnographic interview notes and key participant interview transcripts. These materials were imported into Nvivo9 for coding. While this initial stage was referred to as data management, this also represented an important aspect of the broader analytical process (Wolcott 2008).

An open coding method was conducted using Nvivo9 to assist in the analysis of data in terms of identifying patterns, categories and themes. Then axial coding was conducted to connect patterns and themes to one another or relate to the pre-concepts and look for the relationship between them (Bryman 2008) and interpretation – attaching meaning and significance to empirical data (Brewer 2000). This process could be considered as “moving up a step on the abstraction ladder” (Huberman and Miles 1994), or inductive reasoning (Wolcott 1994). The steps within this process ranged from identifying initial themes or concepts; through to labelling or tagging data by theme or concept; to identifying elements or dimensions; and to developing explanation (Marshall and Rossman 2010, Spencer, Ritchie et al. 2003,). As Ritchie et al. (2003) suggest, the themes and categories that emerged out of the data were displayed in a matrix in the form of descriptive accounts which facilitate tracing back to “raw data” without losing sight of original sources (Ritchie, Spencer et al. 2003). This also helped with the process of audit trail and member checking to enhance reliability.

4.10 Data concentration by themes

Data concentration was utilised to filter out themes with a low rates of response. This was part of the initial analysis where themes with too few responses were excluded from further analysis. This was performed to maintain the reliability and rigour of the findings. A number of responses were counted by sub-themes some of which were refined according to the emerged data from the fieldwork. (For more details about data concentration, see Appendices 1-3).

4.11 Reflexivity

The fact that I am local and have a background of working for an INGO and an experience working as local personnel under an expatriate supervisor for over three years prior to my research has a direct implications in relation to the methodology of this study. This would be problematic from a positivistic social science perspective in which objectivity is strived for and in which personal experience and values are to be excluded as far as possible. However, other schools of thought have challenged this perspective and assert that the experiences of the “self” constitute legitimate data and can provide added value in the knowledge-building process (Harris 2001).

Within this school of thought the concept of reflexivity is considered of importance to the task of analysing empirical materials. Reflexivity is defined as “a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (Davies 2008). It is self-awareness, a self-consciousness that is utilised at all levels of the research process “from initial selection of topic to reporting of results” (Davies 2008). Reflexivity is considered an essential feature of ethnographic fieldwork specifically participant observation (Brewer 2000). It is asserted that through reflection researchers may become aware of what allows them to see, as well as what may inhibit their seeing. This entails careful consideration of the phenomenon under study, as well as the ways a researcher’s own assumptions and behaviour may be impacting the study. Although convincing on a theoretical level, as a new researcher I had little idea what this meant in concrete terms (Madison 2011).

I was not either a complete insider or outsider to the development community under study. I have had over three year working experience in the INGO sector. In this sense I possess some familiarity with the sector and the people within it. This puts me in an advantageous position to access the network of former colleagues. From this access I can expand my connections to the wider community. Being part of the community provided me with additional insights.

As part of my fieldwork, I decided to put reflexivity into practice by keeping a research journal. In the journal I outlined my tasks and thought processes throughout the fieldwork phase. I also recorded the decisions taken during the course of the fieldwork, my evolving understanding of the complexities of the issues around local leadership, its surrounding politics and cultural context. I also recorded the issues and tensions which arose and the ways I dealt with these as a new researcher. The journal entries have helped me make sense of other empirical materials as they are associated with one another.

4.12 Reliability and trustworthiness

As mentioned earlier, this study is partially insider research. Hence for some the concept of validity may become increasingly problematic because of my involvement with the participants and the settings of this study. It could be argued by positivists that my involvement could result in the findings are not “objective” and the final results may be skewed (Kvale 1995). On the other hand, neo-positivists and anti-positivists argue that complete objectivity is impossible. Therefore many claim the advantages of insider research of having a wealth of knowledge which the outsider is not privy to (Tedlock 2005). It is argued that interviewees may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly if familiar with the researcher (Tierney 1994). Promoters of anti-positivism and anti-positivist qualitative research claim that arguments against insider research are applicable to all research. For example, one can never guarantee the honesty and openness of subjects and our research is always coloured by our subjectivities. Complete objectivity is thus impossible (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). The task is to minimise the impact of biases on the research process, to carry out research in consciousness of its socially situated character and to make the researcher’s position vis-à-vis the research process transparent (Hammersley 2000). By making the research process transparent and honest, it is argued that readers can construct their own perspectives which are equally as valid as our own (Cohen et al. 2000, p.106).

In fact, scholars across social science disciplines are still struggling to establish a consensus on what constitutes a good, valid and trustworthy qualitative study (Rubin 2000,

Rolfe 2006). Nevertheless, I employed four strategies for obtaining rigour that are widely accepted within the qualitative paradigm. These include: “multiplicity” (Kincheloe and Berry 2004), “audit trails” (Koch 2006, Rodgers and Cowles 1993), “member checks” (Cooper, Hedges et al. 2009) and “researcher journaling” (Stake 1995).
The first approach to support the reliability of the study is the concept of “multiplicity” (Kincheloe and Berry 2004). This is enabled by the research design which includes “extended experience in the environment” embedded in the fieldwork (Willis, Jost et al. 2007) and engagement with participants and the research context through a series of interviews and observations. Rigour is enhanced by using multiple methods to elicit qualitative data in order to cross-check reliability of findings (Chambers 2008, Johnson 1997) and answer the same question using different techniques to elicit the same findings (Richardson 2003, Flick 2009).

Secondly, I employed Rodgers and Cowles” (1993) concept of “audit trials”. I illustrated clearly how I have come to reach an interpretation or propositions and supply adequate evidence (Mays and Pope 1995, Seale 1999, Meadows and Morse 2001, Snape and Spencer 2003). The Framework Matrix developed for data analysis provided an account of how the findings and interpretations were developed. Indeed, Framework provides the means for the entire analytical process to be subject to scrutiny.

Thirdly, trustworthiness was enhanced by “peer review” (Creswell and Miller 2000, Snape and Spencer 2003) and “member checks” (Cooper, Hedges et al. 2009). I kept the emerging conclusions in check with research colleagues and the advisory team as well as the research participants on an ongoing basis. Finally, I maintained the “researcher journal” to record my thinking as data collection and analysis progressed in the field (Stake 1995). I kept in check the impact of being an “inside” researcher perspective (that I am a Lao National); people might be reluctance to share their “truth” as well as the impact of an “outside” researcher (I am not part of the Vientiane elite which people can tell from my accent and I am also a student from Western University).

4.13 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with the ethical standards of the University’s Ethics Committee. Ethical issues associated with the present study included “privacy and safety”, “anonymity and confidentiality” and “informed consent” (Fine, Weis et al. 2000). I considered these ethical principles in the light of three contextual considerations: non-interview society, inferred identification and the impact of a patronage-client society.

The first ethical consideration was the issue of privacy and safety of respondents. In the Lao non-interview society where interviewing is unfamiliar, people are reluctant to share their opinion with strangers. Leadership is often treated as a sensitive and taboo topic. To facilitate a communicative environment, the respondents were enabled to determine the interview exchange, for example, when and where it occurred and how it was structured (Bogdan and Biklen 1982). Attention was paid to the issue of spatial privacy. In the Lao high-contact culture, privacy boundaries are not clear. For example, expecting neighbours to respect privacy conversations/interviews in someone's home is unrealistic. They might even be keen to join the conversation. In this case, I checked with the respondent if the interview needed to be rescheduled or temporarily suspended.

Secondly, inferred identification (Berg 2001) is a particular ethical concern because the INGO community is small. Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality in this context is difficult. To address this, in addition to referring to participants with pseudonyms (Baez 2002, Berg 2001), I am cognisant to present any findings from the study in a manner to ensure their identity is not disclosed by their role or what I am attributing to them. Moreover, all data was secured in the locked cabinets of the School of Social Work and Human Services. The researchers" notebook used to store data during the fieldwork was protected with passwords.

Equally important is to ensure that participation in the research is based on informed (Fine, Weis et al. 2000) and voluntary consent (Berg 2001). Obtaining informed and voluntarily consent in a patron-client society (Kenny 1987) like in Lao is challenging. If potential research participants are given approval by their employer to participate in the study, it will, for example, be difficult for them to refuse to participate. They may interpret approval as a requirement. I needed to ensure potential research participants that participation is voluntary and emphasise to them that refusing to participate will have no bearing whatsoever on their relationship with their employer. I provided potential participants with "information sheets" and "consent forms" which spell out the nature of the study and summary of expectations as well as participants" rights. Accessible local language was used in both documents to ensure full informed consent. This was double checked with a NAATI level III interpreter. Additional emphasis was given to the understanding of voluntary participation as “qualified participants” and not as “authorised representative” of the organisations they work within.

4.14 Conclusion

This chapter had explained the methodological approach adopted in this study. It provided the research context relevant to the research design which was concerned with the nature of society where research and interviewing was not common to the public. It has demonstrated the theoretical underpinnings the strategic design of the research that addressed the nature of the context where the study took place. The *bricolage* approach was adopted which explained appropriately how to deal with complexity of the study setting. Consequently, four methods were adopted and discussed. The composition of the samples and how they were recruited were also explained. Data analysis and management were also demonstrated to build the foundation for the greater validity and trustworthiness of the findings. And finally, ethical considerations were presented.

An innovative application of the in-depth interview was carefully articulated. Because of both the non-interview society and the complex nature of local leadership, in-depth interviews were structured into a five phase process. Earlier stages of interviewing built rapport with the participants and developed an initial basis of knowledge that was gradually extended as subsequent interviews probed in more depth. Further, to support the progress through these phases, the ethnographic interviews were conducted with participants drawn from the INGO sector. Ethnographic interviews helped illuminate leadership and the INGO sector from different perspectives. Data generated from the ethnographic interviewing was helpful to inform and enable a greater understanding of in-depth interviewing.

Chapter 5
Institutional Context of INGO Work and Local Leadership

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology employed in this study. It introduced four data collection methods and three categories of participants and provided the rationales for their usage. This chapter is the first of three data analysis and discussion chapters on the results of the study. It presents an analysis of the legal and government framework and the participants' views on the social context of their work and by doing so sets the stage for the following chapters. Two domains of the organisation context are explored in this chapter: the legal and government policy environment and the socio-cultural context pertinent to INGO work and local leadership in Laos. The chapter addresses primary research question one: What is the social context of the LLD process? As noted in Chapter One, this research question was developed on the basis of the paucity of existing research examining and outlining what constitute the social context of leadership and how it influences leadership development and *vice versa*.

The influence that these contextual factors have on the process of LLD will be discussed in light of the institutional theory of leadership (as discussed in Chapter Three). The discussion is further informed by the sociological concept of "glocalisation" which was explained in the conceptual framework chapter. But at risk of repeating, the term, "glocalisation", combines the words globalisation and localisation to describe individual, group, organisation, product or service that reflects both global and local standards (Robertson 1995, Smith 2013). In this study, the concept of "glocalisation" is used to help guide the understanding of the combination of the domestic and international guiding norms which form the legitimacy milieu for local leadership in INGOs.

The legal and government framework and sociocultural norms are the two key themes that are discussed. They form the legitimacy milieu of local leadership in different ways, while at the same time being intertwined. On the one hand, the regulatory framework is the state's instrumental tool to govern a sector and it is under this governance process that the actions of INGO leaders are monitored. On the other hand, sociocultural norms are embedded in development practitioners. Their cooperation with and approval of, local leaders affect leadership success among the local INGO personnel.

The chapter is structured into four main sections. The first section, Section 5.2, presents an analysis of the regulatory framework of the INGO sector. It sets the stage for the following sections by presenting the regulatory and political contexts which define the role of the sector within the Lao society. Section 5.3 examines the collaborative mechanisms by discussing two relational arrangements common in the INGO sector, namely “the compulsory partnership” and “the steering committee”. Section 5.4 explores the national socio-cultural context through the three areas of social hierarchy social pressure and corruption and nepotism. The final section presents the impacts of cultural diversity on local leadership by looking at prejudices against local leaders.

5.2 The regulatory context of INGO work and local leadership

As discussed in Chapter Two, the regulatory context of the INGO sector and civil society sector in general has recently been developed. The government promulgated the constitution for the first time in 1991 and there are now two key Decrees that regulate civil society activity in Laos. The Decree on Associations (Prime Minister’s Decree 115/PM, on Association, dated 29 April 2009), promulgated in 2009, is a sign of a policy change from the government indicating that local civil society has a place in the development process, where this was not previously officially acknowledged. The INGO Decree (Prime Minister’s Decree 13/PM on the Administration of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Lao PDR, dated 8 January 2010), hereafter “the INGO Decree”, is a revision of its previous version, first made in1998. The revision also signals a change in attitude by the government. This change reflects the adoption by the Government of Lao PDR of fundamental democratic values and principles which are common in other democratic societies. The key findings that are discussed in the following two sections consider the adoption of these mainstream institutional principles that make the Laos legal framework similar to that of other democratic countries. Participants saw that the implementation of this framework remained slippage which in turn made the work of INGO leaders difficult.

5.2.1 The participants' perspectives on the governmental regulatory framework

This section first reviews the key democratic principles as seen from the mainstream perspective, followed by a discussion on the participants' views on how these principles are played out in practice. A comparison of the formal policy, as expressed in the regulatory framework with the participants' views recorded during the study, found that implementation is the weak connection between a policy's conception and in realising its goals. The study participants' view on the regulatory framework and the way it plays out in practice is inconsistent with the intention of it as is discussed above. For example, five senior staff and five expatriate participants suggested that the democratic principles in the constitution are not practiced. Instead they suggest that their INGO operations are governed and controlled by government ad hoc policy. As a result they do not believe that they experience the freedom that is officially proscribed in the Constitution. The quotation below, from an expatriate participant, illustrates this point:

> The government policy towards the INGOs is somewhat in a constant state of flux; it is changing all the time. Whatever the official policy, the practice lately has made work in Laos more difficult for many international organizations. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2012)
>
> We have seen some colleagues get expelled from the countries or visa extension application declined. We assumed there must be something wrong. But we don't know what that something is. (Informal conversation, 05 November 2011)

The statements above reflect a view that the policy upon which the relationship between INGOs and government is based keeps changing. Regardless of the official policy of the government toward INGOs, the practice is determined by the government decision at a particular point in time. In the first statement, the phrase "the practice lately" refers to an incident where the government expelled a country director of an INGO from Laos[11]. The director was believed to have publically criticised the government over its policy on the role of INGOs in shaping development in the country. After the incident, the remaining expatriates were shocked and felt a great deal of uncertainty about their ability to stay in

[11] Another incident shortly followed was the disappearance of a high profile and well-respected local development practitioner. It was believed that the government abducted him that the claim which the government denied.

the country and carry out development activities. The situation in the INGO sector since has entered a gloomy period in which most development professionals are uncertain about the role of the INGO sector in the development of the country.

The issue of the inconsistency between the laws and practices was supported by all six key participants. For example, one participant said, “we cannot rely on the laws, we only learn from experience” (Pah, 05 Oct 2011). These findings suggest that the problem lies in the application of the law and not in the legal framework itself. Even though the laws are well-developed and resonate well with those from developed societies (albeit there are problems also in these so-called developed societies), putting them into practice is undermined by informal institutions including sociocultural norms and practices.

In the same vein, three key participants and two expatriate participants claimed that the Decree on INGOs was revised to make it more generic. In practice, they said the details were controlled through a Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) between the central government and its departments. According to the participants, the use of MoUs leaves room for negotiation and restricts INGO autonomy because every activity is closely supervised by the relevant government departments. The statements below demonstrate this view:

> We can’t just rely on the Decree but our MoUs with [our government] counterparts, this [MoUs’ details] still depends on negotiation. (Gob, 10 August 2011)
>
> Everything we do must be in the MoUs. And the MoUs must be in line with the government development policies and priorities. (Kiat, 20 July 2011)
>
> We develop concept notes with help from concerned departments. Then develop a clear MoU for any particular project, get it through ministry lines from local through central… nothing beyond this. (Nok, 03 August 2011)

The first account above implies that the Decree provides a general description of what the sector can do, but lacks substantive details that allow the sector to operate autonomously. Rather, the sector must rely on on-going negotiation with the government. It can be interpreted from this that the government assumes that they always hold a superior position when undertaking negotiation. Therefore, they make the Decree generic to increase their level of engagement with INGO activities. Furthermore, research participants saw that the vagueness of the Decree leads to the government's use of MoUs as a controlling mechanism. For example, in the last statement, above, the respondent said this document must be drafted in collaboration with the concerned Laos authorities before submitting to the government for approval.

5.2.2 The implications of the legal and governmental regulatory framework on the roles of INGOs

The above discussion shows that the discrepancy between the laws and their implementation leads to INGOs being governed by MoUs which the research participants viewed as strictly controlling. This section discusses the restrictions on the roles of INGOs through the use of MoUs and other informal methods. According to the participants, the key INGO's roles that were restricted by the government include "representing social groups", "monitoring or criticising the public or private sectors" and "running advocacy or policy lobbying". Although these roles represent the mainstream "conventional" notion of the INGO roles, the government confines the INGOs from performing these conventional roles fully and freely.

In this context, the research participants believed that they could not effectively represent disadvantaged groups that were affected by government supported projects. All six key participants and the majority of expatriate participants shared the view that INGOs are supposed to represent the interest of disadvantaged or marginalised groups by way of raising their voices or facilitating their voice to be heard. The accounts from one key participant and one expatriate participant demonstrate this point:

> We cannot act [effectively] on behalf of disadvantaged groups, for example, those affected by dams [hydro power project]. ….raise their voice, help them with advice, legal advice so that they understand their rights and are able to claim their rights. (Pah, 5August 2011).

> A sense of community here is different from what I understood it to be. I learned that there can be community of need, say people with the same need or interest. They might form a community/interest group. Say a religious group. The government is very critical of this thing. Can INGOs represent the group, no [they cannot]. (Informal conversation, 22July 2011)

The statements above show that INGOs lack the autonomy to choose whom they work with, which location they access and what issues they address. For example, the first statement implies that hydropower projects cause negative impacts on certain groups and INGOs want to voice their troubles. Despite an identified issue to be addressed, the participant expressed the view that it was impossible to work effectively with the disadvantaged groups. One interpretation is that doing so would upset the government. The second statement denotes the fundamental difference in what is understood to be a community. This expatriate participant formed the view that there can be a community of interest; however, the notion is not recognised by the government.

My personal observations about INGO's capacity to represent the interest groups varies depending on the nature of the disadvantaged groups. If, for example, the group become disadvantaged because of government supported projects, INGOs were restricted from representing them. However, if the groups become disadvantaged for other reasons, INGOs were not limited in providing support. In some cases, they were, in fact, encouraged to do so. For example, INGOs were encouraged to represent disabled people who suffered injury from the unexploded ordinances left over from the Vietnam War. Two expatriate participants shared this view, as one said:

> The government wants us to raise the issue of disabled people who suffered from UXO [unexploded ordnance] for the outside world. (Informal conversation, 26September 2011)

Interestingly, earlier in this section the participants claimed that the government does not allow them to represent the interested groups such as those affected by the hydropower projects.

The above statement claimed that they were encouraged to represent the groups affected by UXO. One interpretation is that the government supports the hydropower projects and does not want to be criticised. At the same time, victims of the exploded ordnance were caused by the United States (US) and the government wants the US to be criticised. Therefore, INGO leaders have to bear in mind that the government might consider who the disadvantaged groups are differently. Furthermore, this shows the slippage in implementing the legal framework for the INGO sector. As discussed earlier, the

Constitution provides some core liberal and democratic principles such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and protection of human rights. These ideals are not realised when it comes to practices on the ground. The full range of disadvantaged groups does not have freedom to express their problems and INGOs are not free in advocating for all groups, only some disadvantaged groups. For example, there was a large area of land in Saravanh province being acquired by a private company. Oxfam Belgium was involved in organising and preparing the disadvantaged farmers to negotiate with the company. This involvement by Oxfam came to an end when senior personnel from the government intimidated and threatened the safety of Oxfam personal and the sustainability of the organisation [fieldnote, 21 September 2011]

The second finding is that while it may generally be seen as a role of INGOs to monitor or criticise the government and business sectors, they cannot actually do so because of government restrictions. All six key participants and most expatriate participants were of the view that INGOs should be able to scrutinise the public and private sectors, however they do not have the capacity to perform this role due to strict government control over what activities they are allowed to do. This is particularly so as the legal framework is not properly implemented. Three expatriate participants spoke about the implementation of the legal framework being overridden by the government *ad hoc* policy. The consequence, they said, is that they were uncertain about how to formulate activities particularly in relation to an advocacy role. As the expatriate participant explained:

> They [the government] are not comfortable with international development organisations helping poor Lao people, small people who are not part of the government, to ask questions about government decisions. This is probably the most important role, but it is also the most difficult for us to engage in. I am always worried not for my own position, but that I will get a Lao person in trouble because I encourage him or her to speak up, to ask questions, to try to correct bad government decisions. This is so essential to equitable development in Laos, but it also means questioning authority which is not currently allowed in Laos. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

This expatriate refers to the situation in the country where the government had just taken a hard line on INGOs' autonomy. In the context of the perceived lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the government, the participants suggested that INGOs worked to improve government accountability. Despite these concerted efforts, the participant said that INGOs were unable to enhance government processes in this area. This proposition is supported by all key participants. For example one key participant explained:

> Our country is different from others. For example, in Thailand you will see NGOs work with the community and poor farmers; [they] motivate them to go against the government and [be] anti-government. But [in] Laos if you do that you will face.... in our country everything must be under the government approval, the government's power is high! (Pah, 5 October 2011)

This account reinforces the previous statement by comparing the role of INGOs or NGOs to that of INGOs in the neighbouring country of Thailand. The participant also mentioned the government power and control of the country and hinted at severe punishment if INGOs failed to conform. This finding is consistent with other research conducted in Vietnam (Gray 1999, Sinh 2003) and China (Ma 2002, Schwartz 2004) which found that the autonomy of the NGOs remains limited after a decade of development of the sector. In these countries, NGO activities are also limited to basic needs provision. This similarity is understandable as Laos and these neighbouring countries share many political and historical values. All of them employ the centrally controlled market economy where the state maintains its close oversight of the economy (Szamosszegi and Kyle 2011). Politically, these countries adopt a single party system that lacks opposition representation in the parliament. This leads to speculation that the governments are afraid of NGOs or INGOs in the case of Laos who may act as the political opposition, which the government is not comfortable with.

The third finding is that it is almost impossible for INGOs to undertake an advocacy or policy lobbying role. Participants saw that the most important role INGOs should play is working on structural change. According to Hilhorst (2003), Lohmann (1993) and Clarke (1998), in other Southeast Asia countries, such as in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, the important political roles played by NGOs have amounted to an 'associational revolution'. In the Philippines, Silliman and Noble (1998) suggest that "NGOs . . . enhance democracy by expanding the number and range of voices addressing government". In Laos, however, all six senior staff participants and most local staff member participants reported that INGOs' work in this domain remains limited or even impossible. For example participants explain:

> [INGOs] started to operate in 1992. [They were] strong people. Newly opened country, Lao personnel were excited with the new opportunity. Now the system doesn't absorb it. All the people with good intention [had] gone and bad people come. Only hope to create jobs for themselves. It operates like business. (Nok, 10 October 2011)

> I think NGOs are like a watch-dog of the government, other want to advocate against human rights abuse, etc. all these are impossible here. (Gob, 25 August 2011)

> Even going against the private sector is impossible because they acquired government permission to do so. (Informal conversation, 29 July 2011)

The first statement implies that development practitioners, both local and international, joined the development field when the sector commenced in the early 1990s. As the sector developed, it could not advance development causes due to the government restrictions on their activities. This led to committed development practitioners leaving the field. The statement also suggests that people in the sector today dropped most of the development ambitions such as advocating for structural change and rather worked as if to create employment for themselves in a comfort-zone. The second and third statements suggest similar points citing that INGOs should act as a watch-dog of the government and business, but again it is impossible to do so.

The findings above do not support other research where it is argued that the longer NGOs operate in a country the more independent they become from government and thus the more influence they can exert over government's policies (Doh and Teegen 2003, Mathews 1997). From the perspective of stakeholders in Laos the longer the INGOs existed, the more disillusioned people committed to development objectives for autonomy and empowerment felt and as a consequence, they left the sector.

However, many participants do not rule out the long-term approach with a learning process and political manoeuvre to advocacy and change. Two expat and three national ethnographic participants asserted that change does not take place overnight. Rather they expressed the view that change will take time and effort. For example, one expatriate explained as follow:

> It will take times for sure. If we all go out because we can't do what we want to do then we miss out on helping the poor. We miss out on small things we can do but I would say having big impacts…. One example is our community radio programme. It gives people' space…they can complain about bad implementation of road construction project close to their home…(Informal conversation 22 July 2011)

The above assertion implies a belief and hope in future change. It is non-confrontational but at least they can still access the poor and work with them. Many of the activities such as the one cited above were not banned. The impact of these types of programs cannot be underestimated; participants believed that even small scale projects where change will only occur over the long term nevertheless have the capacity to empower the poor.

Furthermore, it is evident that successful implementation of the legal framework or policy requires sustained change in the day-to-day attitude of people involved in the implementation of those frameworks or policies. The implementation of democratic laws in Laos has been undermined by local cultural/political beliefs held by the government officials who make change difficult. In other words, cultural change does not necessarily follow change in the formal legal framework. This echoes the concept of "isomorphic mimicry" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Isomorphic mimicry refers to adopting the camouflage of organisational forms that are successful elsewhere to hide their actual dysfunction. Building on this concept, Pritchett, Woolcock and Andrews (2013) argue that agents of development inadvertently often promote and solidify isomorphic mimicry by rewarding organisations that adopt modernised or best practice even when these are not followed up by actual functional performance for actual capability for policy implementation.

5.2.3 Discussion

From the glocalisation perspective, I understand that the local leaders sit in the middle of two sets of standards and expectations. On the one hand, the mainstream expectations demand that they work towards democracy-building. For example, it is expected that INGOs have autonomy and functioning to empower the poor. According to this notion, INGOs are capable of organising citizens to participate in social and public affairs and to influence policy, simultaneously creating great economic value (Coleman 2005, Doh and Teegen 2003, Ebrahim 2005, Hilhorst 2003, Silliman and Noble 1998, ,). On the other hand, local expectations, particularly those working in government, want to strictly control INGOs.

It is my argument that a tension arises from the different expectations from the two spheres and that this provides a difficult setting for local leaders to operate. This setting exemplifies the institutional factors that influence effectiveness and legitimacy of the local leadership. On the one hand, leadership effectiveness means the capacity to get the job done in an efficient manner. The local leaders would be able to achieve this with the cooperation of the public sector given they are the 'compulsory partners'. This is explored in the next chapter. On the other hand, local leadership legitimacy would be achieved through conforming to the international expectations – the need for democratic building work. Therefore, a local leader would find difficulty in leading according to the international expectations for empowering the poor and influencing structural change while at the same time coping with government requirements.

5.3 Collaborative mechanisms and their impact on local leadership

This section continues to explore the contextual enabling and disabling factors of the LLD process. Relying on the analysis of legal documents as well as participants' views on those documents, this section presents the findings under the theme of "collaborative mechanisms". Within this key theme, two mechanisms were identified. These are: a compulsory partnership and a steering committee.

5.3.1 Compulsory partnership

The review of the Decree on INGOs reveals that an INGO-government partnership is compulsory. The decree requires that INGOs must run development programmes/projects in partnership with concerned government departments, Specifically, in the section on INGOs' obligations, the decree states: INGOs must "jointly carry out activities with the concerned Lao authorities in the target area as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding approved by the Government" (Article 17, paragraph 2.2).

The compulsory partnership was reported by all six senior staff participants who claimed that they partner with government agencies at various levels. For example, one participant suggested:

> Of course, everything must go through the MOFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] and everything is carried out jointly with our government counterparts at the central, provincial and local authorities. (Gob, 10 August 2011)

Both benefits and drawbacks from the partnership approach were observed. A couple of participants recognised the benefits of working with the government departments. These benefits included additional human resources and local knowledge. For example:

> [Government] officials know a lot about their locality; they work with us and provide us local insights. (Nok, 03 August 2011)

The statement acknowledges the added value of the local officials when they joined INGOs. However, the majority of research participants pointed out downsides of the partnership citing power imbalance in the relationship which leads to lack of innovation, multiple demands of multiple stakeholders and vested interests. For example,

> It is like you can't just access the community in need, think conceptually and come up with excellent projects. You have to get all the stakeholders on boards. What a process! (Pa, 23/07/11)

> Some area of our work is limited. Sometimes gender training was designed but under the criteria of the Lao Women Union framework. But [we] never [go] over the line. If we go over the line they will get feedbacks to us. (Gai, 14 August 2011)

> We can't decide which government departments to work with. …If we run HIV/AIDs campaigns we should work with health or education departments. But we are advised to work with someone else which doesn't make sense. (Kiat, 20/07/2011)

In the first statement the participant spoke about the difficulty accessing and working with areas experiencing stark poverty that they were supposed to work with. However, the local politics influenced the process with the outcome being that the organisation worked in the areas as directed by the local authorities. The second statement suggests that the department's control over the design of the training, which the participant saw as inappropriate. The last statement implies the politics of vested interest amongst departments over who assumes control over projects from INGOs. This is a key issue for the departments because it provides an opportunity to earn some extra income. When this politics of interest plays out excessively it overrides the professional rationale on which the partnership should be based.

The working of the partnership also leads to abuse of power by some authorities. All six senior staff participants and many expatriates spoke about how power misuse plays out. The statement below was captured from a conversation with the expatriate participant:

> If you organise training or seminars you have to go through all appropriate levels of authority. ... The same event, if led by the officials or through their approval [there is] no problem. In contrast, if you do it yourself you got into trouble. (Informal conversation, 25 January 2012)

Going through the necessary government prescribed processes was seen by participants as important. When probed, the reasons behind the narrative were clear. If you do not follow the process it can mean the INGOs cannot continue their operation. If you are an expatriate, it can mean your visa extension request is denied. The local authority is powerful enough to report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who have the ultimate right over the "legitimacy" of the INGO and its staff. In other words, the Ministry has the right to expel expatriate personnel or terminate the operational license of INGOs. These findings resonate with a long-term statement about the impact of INGOs that says INGOs do not always successfully pressure local elites or local governments (Hirschman 1987, Sanyal 1996). The local authorities are more likely to try to maintain the status quo than to change it (Chazan 1992, Fisher 1997, Lister 1999).

Another drawback of the partnership approach may be that the government authorities, from central to local level, lack coordination among themselves. Many research participants including expatriates reported that sometimes the central authority granted an approval for the mission but the local authority denied it.

> We work on the agreed MOUs [approved by ministry concerned] but local authorities don't understand that and disrupt our work. Perhaps because they don't

> understand INGO at all… Our personnel were wearing a hat that has EU logo on it. They said why do you wear an American flag? (Informal conversation, 26 December 2011)

> Sometimes they thought that we are spying for the US. They send undercover police to oversee us. (Nok, 26 August 2011)

The two statements above not only suggest the authorities' lack of coordination but also their lack of basic knowledge of the INGOs and the outside world. The officials at a local level have less exposure to the outside world. This limited exposure coupled with the recent colonial history means that they are suspicious of foreigners particularly those from the West. Another way of interpreting these statements is that there are power struggles between central and local authorities whereby the latter is involved in challenging the former.

5.3.2 Steering committee

According to the Decree on INGOs, strict control and monitoring are in place at all levels from the central to local. Article 19 spells out the management and coordination of INGOs. The article designates that the government establishes a Committee on Management and Coordination of INGOs at the central level with its Secretariat. Similar committees are also set up at provincial and district levels. The composition of the central committee is quite comprehensive including representatives from seven ministries and five other mass social organisations. The important point about these committees is that they not only have influence in the designing the project proposals but they also monitor compliance by INGOs with all other laws and regulations.

An analysis of the interview data revealed the power and strong influence of the steering committees. The lengthy statements below are worth presenting to demonstrate the extent to which the steering committees can exert their power.

> Their job is to support the operation in the field like asking for community cooperation and offering advices throughout the implementation of a project…. This is okay but their other job quite implicitly is monitoring our personnel. [They monitor] attitudes towards the government and approaches one has taken when dealing with

> the government departments. If someone is thought to be uncooperative or insists on a way of working unwanted by [government] officials. The end will be that guy gone. (Nok, 03 August 2011)

> You know that steering committees are powerful, I think on every level, central or local. At district level, they can report to the province then to MOFA. It is about serious stuff. You could lose jobs. (Kiat, 20 July 2011)

The statements imply that the role of the committee is to control the sector and its operation. It can be inferred therefore that INGOs are more obliged to account to the government rather than other constituencies such as local communities. Local leaders thus need to seek legitimacy in the eyes of officials more so than other stakeholders. However, a leader of INGOs must also be seen as and seek legitimacy in the eyes of INGO locals, expatriates, regional and head quarter personnel.

In this section, the key theme is the mechanism for collaboration between the government and INGOs. From the institutional perspective, the steering committee exemplified the mechanism for the allocation and maintenance of power and resources (Dacin, Goodstein et al. 2002, Lawrence and Suddaby 2006, Scott 2007). It can be said that the government employs the mechanism to maintain its control thus its power, but it needs the expertise, funding and material resources that come with INGOs. In addition, INGOs and their local leaders can use the power they hold through control over their material resources to bargain for changes: including respect for local leaders, more democratic space, or transparency.

5.3.3 Discussion

From the above findings it can be argued that the form of governance supported by the domestic or international guiding principles and norms appear to be counteracting one another. One way to better understand this encountering is by locating it within the bigger debate in development which is the debate between the autocracy and democracy camps (Collier 2008, Green 2008, Krugman and Venables 1995). For the former, the rise of China through strong economic growth indicates the effectiveness of autocratic governance in comparison with the stagnation of the economy of India, a developing country where democracy is more advanced. It follows that a good number of development commentators praise China for lifting millions out of poverty (Ikenberry 2008) and from this it could be argued that if Laos follows the Chinese path and adopted the Chinese autocratic style, poverty could be addressed. As such it can be difficult to convince local people about the value of democratic change.

Within the development field, the autocratic approach can lead to what is known in development as “legitimacy crisis”. The issue of a “crisis of legitimacy” (Bebbington 1997) refers to the situation where many NGOs are losing their links with grassroots constituencies. Less transparent operations, where accountability flows upwards to the donor rather than downwards to rural constituencies and the exclusion of grassroots organisations from policy dialogue leads to legitimacy diminished (Farrington, Lewis et al. 1993, Bebbington 1997, Fowler and Malunga 2010). Considering local leadership from the perspective of “legitimacy” (Weber 1978), local leaders must conform to the government expectations and requirements as well as striking a balance with the different interests within development donors - the international expectations. Additionally, they must consider the expectations of communities whose life is affected by their activity.

If we take a wider view of the context of INGO work, there has been a common recognition that the ability of (I)NGOs to accomplish their democratic role vis-à-vis civil society is increasingly circumscribed by the forces of political and economic neoliberalism which is mediated through international financial institutions, states and donors (Bebbington, Farrington et al. 1993, Edwards and Hulme 1995, Hulme and Edwards 1997, Robinson 1995). For INGOs in Laos, this role is even more restricted than generally understood because the rule of law is not effectively implemented. For example, participants described their day-to-day practices of working with and in INGOs, as different from what the official legislation prescribes. The local leaders, therefore, are likely to be forced towards the autocratic end of the spectrum unless the wider development community develop strategies that help create conditions for a movement towards democracy.

5.4 The national culture’s impacts on local leadership

As indicated in the review of the literature, the development sector has long argued that well established institutions are needed in developing countries if they want to be economically prosperous (Collier 2008, Green 2008, North 1990, Shirley 2005). While these studies note the importance of informal institutions, they focus on formal institutions and in practice efforts have concentrated on setting up formal institutions. There is little understanding so far about how informal institutions such as culture and beliefs undermine the working of those newly established formal institutions. The findings in this section suggest that the national culture contributes to the undermining of the operation of INGOs and their leadership.

The following sections discuss the findings under the key theme the “national culture”. The three sub-themes derived from both senior staff interviews and staff member conversational interviews are “social hierarchy,” “social pressure” and “corruption and nepotism”. These concepts were captured from participants’ accounts about difficulties and challenges they faced working in the Lao society in general. From the glocalisation perspective, the national culture forms the basis of local values and expectations. These are institutional parameters that which if local leaders are not compliant with, they will be seen as deviant or even illegitimate. This is the dilemma for the locals who have adopted international standards as part of their attempt to be seen as suitable or legitimate for the leadership jobs in INGOs. The legitimacy rubric works in reverse where INGO personnel see these aspects of national culture as inappropriate or inappropriate for leadership.

5.4.1 Social hierarchy

Social hierarchy negatively impacts on local leadership as it undermines the robust exchange of ideas at work. All six senior staff participants spoke about unequal social relations using the terms such as “*kiad”, “losing face”, “respects”* and *“divide”* to describe a status consciousness among the officials. One finding was the officials’ preference to be highly regarded – or be given *kiad* - a concept of being highly regarded. Most participants found this to be unhealthy because it compromises the ability to freely and fairly challenge or disagree at work. The following statements demonstrate the views:

> *Kiad* is the most important thing. We have to offer *Kiad* all the time. (Nok, 03 August 2011)
>
> The concept of “losing face” is dangerous and it is difficult to avoid it. Sometimes one idea is accepted over the other and the accepted one is yours, the other one is

theirs it can mean making someone lose face. (Informal conversation, 05 September 2011)

You have to respect their opinions too, which is not reasonable. Sometimes working together everyone needs to listen to one other. But it does not work like that. If we want to put our argument forward they would think that we are against them. … junior against senior, younger against older, lower ranking against higher ranking. (Pah, 22 September 2011)

Bosses are in one table and employees are in other table. It went that way automatically. Don’t know if they divide us or vice versa. But getting in the place you see the two sets of tables and two sets of people. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

When asked how to appropriately approach officials most participants suggested an investment in time, initial (sometimes on-going) patience and pretending or acting according to a particular situation. As the second statement implies, the government officials seem to create their own class where everyone else has to respect them. But in the work environment, showing respect must not hinder a constructive exchange of ideas and experiences. They also spoke of the importance of the ability to diagnose the official’s personality type focusing on whether the person likes to be praised (childish praising). The following statements demonstrate some of the senior staff participants’ comments:

Show respect for their status. You have to act like you are begging for help. You are the lowest in rank all the time. (Nok, 26 August 2011)

If they don’t like the way you speak, you interact inappropriately, you will get nothing. Even if what you want is easy …if they don’t like you they will simply ignore it. (Gob, 25 August 2011)

You need to get over the feeling for yourself. Able to meet whatever they prefer whenever they like. If they break promises you cannot blame them. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

The statements above pointed out the importance of social and cultural expectations. These expectations are from the official counterparts of local INGO personnel. There are similarities between social expectations demanded of INGO personnel in this study and the concept of deference to power or power distance described by the GLOBE[12] study (see, House, Javidan et al. 1998). The GLOBE study found that the level of deference to power was very high in Asian cultures, for example, India and China. What is interesting is that the INGO personnel seem to be conscious of this power disparity and come up with strategies to cope with it. The local personnel also appear to hold the opposite value, the egalitarian one. They appear to dislike this social hierarchy status. It can be argued that this difference between public and INGO sectors demonstrates emerging social classes whose values are diverse. However, they work with it strategically. They have been able to find a compromise when the public sector has political power at their disposal and the INGO sector has expertise and financial capacity to support their negotiation. One explanation for this might be that the local personnel were so pressed for results, to get things done and that their power in the partnership is inferior (discussed earlier), therefore they have to adopt the inferior status positions. From the glocalisation model, the social hierarchy exemplifies one of the important domestic expectations found in this study. It is part of the institutional setting facing local leaders.

5.4.2 Social pressure

The concept of social pressure emerged from three in-depth interviews when the participants spoke about the influence of social norms on their day-to-day work. The concept was then explored through informal conversations with the local staff member participants who overwhelmingly agreed that they also experienced the same pressure. It was generally acknowledged that this pressure occurred when the participants found themselves caught in the tension between the need to comply with the organisation's accountability standard and the need to conform to social norms that are not compatible with organisational rules. The accounts below demonstrate this tension.

> I go into the field alone with a brand new Land Cruiser, a friend of mine asks for a lift as he is going to the same place. I can't do the favour as this is not allowed by NGO rules. So they think that I'm not down to earth like before. (Kiat, 20 July 2011)

12 The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Project (GLOBE) is an international group of social scientists and management scholars who study cross-cultural leadership.

My friends often told me that I work too much, don't have time for them and family, they said I was enslaved by foreigners. (Pah, 02 November 2011)

As the first statement suggests, in Laos many people feel badly if they cannot extend favours to close friends or family when they had a chance to do so. But as the quote says when they work for INGOs they cannot afford to break the rules. This mounts pressure on locals, particularly those in higher positions where they have a chance to share the luxurious lifestyle of INGO world. The second statement above illustrates that people find it difficult to make a clear separation between their professional and social life. These findings are consistent with those of other studies and suggest that committed NGO professionals often find themselves socially isolated because of their demanding jobs (Hailey 2009, Hailey and James 2004, Smillie and Hailey 2001,). This argument also resonates with the accounts above and thus local professionals were stressed because the Lao culture is one that places relations and caring for family and community as a high priority above other obligations (Rehbein 2007).

5.4.3 Corruption and Nepotism

One of the national cultural practices that affect INGO work is corruption. The research participants spoke about the fact that the Lao society is becoming more tolerant of nepotism and corruption. They reported that these phenomena have almost been accepted as contemporary social norms as far as the general public is concerned. This is because, they claimed, the public appears to accept the phenomenon without even questioning it. The most important thing is that the phenomenon is crossing over from the government and business to the INGO sector. For example, one participant spoke about her experience being convinced to be involved in corruption by the officials:

[You are] stupid, a fool. You are fooled working like this. Money [is taken] out already why take it back in. (Gob, 24 December 2011).

In the statement, the participant recalled being called a fool by her official colleague because she refused to fraudulently complete the receipt and take the money. When there is a chance to do corrupt things and one might not do it, other people will think of the person as stupid. The widespread nature of corruption was commonly cited by almost all participants who were asked to talk about it. For example,

> Corruption is everywhere. If I make photocopies in a stationery shop they returned me some money. Or if I am collecting statements when planning a purchase they will ask me, “how much do other retailers give you” and they will propose to give me more (Informal conversation, 26 December 2011).

Some participants considered the low levels of salary as the root cause of corruption. They thought that some people might not want to do it but they need to. As the statements below show:

> They are making so little on their salary so it’s important they take opportunities to make money themselves. You know elsewhere people take chance to maximise their self-interest sometimes by corruption etc. We have to put ourselves in their shoes. (Kiat, 20 July 2011)

> Frankly, foreigners don’t commit corruption. Perhaps their remuneration is higher and enough and sometimes we don’t have that. Perhaps it’s part of their culture. (Nok, 10 October 2011)

The first statement provides one explanation of corruption pointing to the officials’ low income. It also suggests that a huge gap in income among those officials who commit corruption and those who do not leads to a breakdown of morality. I argue that this distorts the notion of collective sacrifice that all officials have to make. In Laos, it is a widely held common moral value that officials must work hard for the common good of the country. People who commit to the notion of becoming a public servant become demoralised. The second statement compares the expatriate staff of INGOs with officials to cite the possible cause of corruption. It suggests that high income and culture contribute to the expatriates not committing corruption.

In contrast, at least two senior staff participants spoke about their expatriate boss adopting a compromised position when it comes to corruption. For example, one senior staff participant said:

> But sometimes the boss knows that Lao take some money but they sign it [fault receipts]. They know that this is flying bills. They pay. They know that but they want to get the job done. [They would say] "I get the money from the government to do this. I have to maintain my job. I have to secure this". (Gai, 14 August 2011)

This statement reinforces suggestion that corruption is crossing over into INGOs because the practice of corruption is so widespread in the country. This suggestion is understandable when we link the practice of corruption with the Laotian context in which INGO-government partnership is compulsory. The officials thus play an important part in getting the job done. At the same time, the INGOs are rushing for results. The INGO personnel must meet the scheduled datelines demanded of them by the donors. In order to complete the tasks it could be possible that some people in INGOs took the compromised position.

Another national cultural practice that affects local leaders is nepotism. Some participants claimed that even expatriates have now learned nepotism from the locals[13]:

> In Lao PDR, patron-client relationships are extremely important as is membership of the Party or elite groups by conversely the level of education and the role of law is low. In addition, there is a very complex system of class and it is not possible for one individual to challenge traditional systems of recruitment often based on cronyism or nepotism (Informal conversation, 27 October 2011).

> The management team had recruited the daughter of the DLWU (district Lao women union) to do the accounting work but she does not have education on accounting and no work experience at all as she just complete her bachelor degree on business administration. (Pah, 11 October 2011)

The first two statements indicate that nepotism occurs in the complexity of class and an elite system. This makes the practice deeply rooted and difficult to break. This system cannot fully operate alongside the merit base system. Research participants argued that the INGO sector works on the basis of the latter. The problem is they have to partner with the public sector where an elite based system dominates. This class structure I would argue hinders local people's ability to reach their full potentials. The second statement

[13] The locals here refer to both local members of staff and local senior members of staff of INGOs

shows that the local INGO personnel try to build relationships with local elites so that they can secure smooth cooperation. This is problematic because the relationship building that involved nepotism is unacceptable in the INGO context even though it is implicitly sanctioned in the government sector. It can be argued that the activities of INGO staff trying to build informal relationship with their government counterparts are a product of the requirement of INGOs to form and build partnerships with the government. Research participants suggested that without the official requirement INGOs would be reluctant to develop partnerships with government authorities.

5.4.4 Discussion

It has been established that the shared meaning that results from the dominant cultural values, beliefs, assumptions and implicit motives results in common implicit leadership theories and implicit organisation theories held by members of a culture (House, Wright et al. 1997, House, Javidan et al. 2002, Lord and Maher 1991,). By this theory, local leaders are supposed to embody the national culture. Furthermore, according to Scott (2007), the local leaders function as a carrier of local social institutions such as norms and cultural practices. From Scott's point of view, the local leader would be viewed as ascribing to social hierarchy, social norms and cultural practices. Thus, expatriate staff may view the local leaders as prone to social and political pressure thus they cannot represent the position and the goal of INGOs. In turn this view could influence whether or not the expat will endorse local leadership. In addition, corruption and nepotism are even more critical issues that could hinder trust in the local leaders. Therefore, the confidence the expats have on the local leaders' ability to resist the corruption and nepotism practices are essential for their support of the local leadership.

In addition, working in the context where social hierarchy exists in one sphere (local sphere) but not so in the other (international sphere), the local leaders must display an appropriate set of characteristics in accordance with different norms and expectations. They show respects, act modestly and pay lip services to their government counterparts; with their expatriate counterparts, these characteristics are not emphasised. In the same vein, local leaders must handle and negotiate social pressures which consume time and energy. There are social pressures to attend, for example, house warming parties, funerals and other rituals. Expats, on the other hand, spend more time engaging in reading or doing extra work for the organisation on their own. As a consequence of these different roles, the performances of locals and expatriates differ. Local leaders emphasised the challenges they faced negotiating the social pressures and norms that come with being Laotian.

There are, however, findings that suggest local leaders' adopt the espoused internationally dominant values from INGOs – that is, participation, inclusion, openness and transparency. They also hold the local norms and cultures. Therefore, the local leaders find themselves in a contested space. On the one hand, the local leaders are the carrier of local norms and the findings suggested that they acknowledged that they could be seen that way. One the other hand, the local leaders were also quick to adopt new cultural practices that come with expat staff of INGOs. From the institutionalist perspective, these local leaders can be regarded as institutional entrepreneurs who are quick to capture the new opportunity as it comes. At this point, I would argue that a conflict occurs when local leaders strive for international standards, such as transparency and at the same time they work within a society within which corruption is inherent. The ability to handle the conflict and navigate through the two worlds of the international and domestic standards and expectations are the competencies needed for local leaders.

5.5 Cultural practices and impacts on local leadership

Section 5.4 showed that the INGO sector must work under a regulatory framework where inconsistencies exist between formal principles and informal practices. The INGO sector must also form a compulsory partnership with the public sector. These partnership relations are facilitated by mechanisms such as the steering committees referred to previously. It shows that cultural practices have more negative than positive influences on local leadership.

5.5.1 Impacts of the sectorial-cultural divide on local leadership

Section 5.4.1 has shown that forming partnerships with the government are an obligation for all INGOs. In the partnership, local leaders often take on the leadership role (this leadership role will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). This section focuses on the cultural issues that affect local leadership. The findings in this section draw upon data from senior staff participants who exemplified local leaders or would-be leaders and expatriate participants who have experiences coordinating with the government. Therefore, the findings represent both local and international perspectives.

The key findings related to the cultural divide between the two sectors are "decision-making hierarchy", "pay structure", "professional integrity" and "working hours".

In reference to the first issue – "decision-making hierarchy" – this statement below demonstrates that the lower pace in the decision making process on the government side often delays INGOs' progress whose pace is more rapid:

> I am many times frustrated with our partners, we race against time but they don't. It takes too long for decisions to be made and that decisions define if we go ahead or not….sometimes we have to wait for comments on MoU, on projects. Maybe they don't care about working with us. Maybe it is difficult for them to make decisions as politics and interests involved when it comes to working with INGOs… they thought it is a chance to make extra money. (Nok, 03 August 2011)

The account above is from the senior staff participant who expressed frustration over the government approach. The comment suggests that the reason why the long decision-making process persists within the government is because officials bargain between themselves for financial benefits from involvement with INGOs. This leads to the next issue which is about the money-struggle. The statement below is consistent with my observation while following one of the senior staff participants to the field in the Northern Province of Xiengkuang:

> We all want to save some money and we do this by staying at cheaper hotels, or staying with relatives instead of hotels when possible. We contribute to the family for the food, or we bought them something. (Pah, 02 September 2011)

The situation one participant was involved in was that they, including INGO personnel and officials, discussed where to stay. The result was that some left the group to stay with relatives, some preferred cheaper guesthouse and some needed to stay in quite expensive hotel because of the need for internet connection [fieldnote, 25August 2011]. The following account introduces how the local leaders manage the team on the ground. Again, this issue is consistent with my observation made from the following senior staff participant and consistent with my experience working with an INGO about eight years ago. The problem is that INGO personnel want to compensate the rural community for provision of services while the officials prefer not to pay.

> Sometimes when we work in communities, officials don't want to pay for their food or accommodation [provided by communities]. But we have to pay as it is our organisation's rule as well as our belief not to create burden for them. You know this creates tensions. Officials will say, "you guys can pay because you earn more; but you create expectation amongst villagers. Next time around when we come for our own work we don't have much food allowance how can we survive!" (Nok, 03August 2011)

While this account provides insights about how work on the ground is done, it also presents one of the potential problems that local leaders have to handle. On the one hand, it is expected that the local leaders comply with the organisational rules; on the other hand, they also want to appease officials. Furthermore, maintaining the partnership is an obligation by law. Having a problem with officials would undermine their ability to get the job done. Therefore, we can see that the local leaders are facing a contestation between obeying formal institutional rules and meeting informal social norms.

Another finding is the difference in working hours and being punctual for work. Several participants, both locals and expatriates, shared a similar view that INGO people tend to work longer hours than their government counterparts. According to research participants, officials were used to leaving office early in the afternoon and want to continue doing so while joining the INGO team. For example:

> They come to office late; leave early. Turning up for meetings is another problem. It is normal to show up 30 min late for a meeting… You know they have a lunch break from 12 to 2pm and leave at 3 o'clock, how much time do they spend working? I am not saying they are all like this but many are. (Pah, 02 September 2011)

> Sometimes we have to work in the evening because farmers return home from work at that time, but our official colleagues don't like it. They don't feel that it is their job and they don't commit to accomplishing it. I have to explain, convince and beg for their cooperation. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

The first statement implies a mismatch in expectations over work hours between the two sectors. It appears that the time committed to work (work day and working week) is shorter from the official than their INGO counterparts. It is understandable thus that the mismatch can cause some problems when they jointly carry out activities. The second statement reinforces the timing issue and commitment to work. It can be said that the local leaders are faced with clashes in competing work practices and experience difficulty convincing the officials to accept the INGO way of working in joint operations.

> The ways of working of the officials are also highlighted by the lack of a clear plan, a failure to strictly implement the plan and the unfamiliarity with the working system of planning, implementing and evaluation. As the following statements demonstrate: You know Lao people have “paen lah” (plain plan) plan without putting it into practice…. For example, people like to take money from here to spend there, which is not in the plan. This is mal-discipline. We are too flexible. ... Too much flexibility will only lead us to nowhere. (Nok, 10 October 2011)

> Some Lao spoke to me that working for NGOs is too much stress. You have to write proposal, you have to write reports, everything is scheduled. Working for business is easier (Informal conversation, 2 September 2011)

The first statement above illustrates the culture within the government departments where they have a work plan but they do not really implement it. The statement represents the common story about the working system of the government department where the budget lines are not strictly kept. The budget for one activity is used for another. Similarly, the second statement indicates that the officials prefer to work with businesses than INGOs because the former needs less paper and planning system. In other words, they are uncomfortable with accountability and openness by keeping clear accounting system or working with a clear plan. Working in partnership with the officials, the local leaders, having adopted the INGO system of working, must keep their government counterparts accountable and ensure their counterparts work according to the plan.

5.5.2 Cultural prejudices against local leaders from local source

Senior staff participants conceded that they had some advantages for being local regarding their understanding of the cultural and political context. However, they also bore an unfavourable low status because they are locals such as being undervalued and being perceived to have a narrow cultural prescription of behaviour.

Most participants shared the view that the officials underestimated their capacity and significance at the organisational level. As the example statements below show:

> When I approach departments I noticed that they are not keen to meet with me as much as they are with expats. The perception is that they are foreigners with lots of money; they are experts; they know everything; they come to help us. (Nok, 03 August 2011)

> It is hard to introduce new ideas. They said that I remember from my foreign bosses. (Pah, 02 November 2011)

> The statements imply that the government counterparts do not appreciate the skills and expertise of local participants the same way they do expatriates. This finding is consistent with a study of INGOs in Africa where it is found that locals workers were undervalued by their local colleagues (local INGO members of staff and government officials) and their capacity was underestimated by the expatriate counterparts (Mukasa 1999).

Another disadvantage for local leaders is that they face cultural expectations of their behaviour while their expatriate counterparts do not. This issue was raised by female participants who claimed that they are likely to face scrutiny of their behaviour by their local colleagues. For example, one explained:

> I've found difficulties behaving myself. I work on gender equality. I don't follow the custom such as serving beer; I dress a bit like my boss but I get warning from the [government] officials that I'm not respecting cultures and places. (Kai, 14 August 2011)

The statement introduces one of the key issue facing local leaders, particularly female leaders. The research participants indicated that the Lao social context does not support women in terms of taking on leadership. They are instead expected to be subsidiary to men. However, it was argued that strong women with great confidence can make their way up. They require strength to pursue their professional and leadership development despite the negative comments they receive, including the negative comments from other local women. The negative comments are motivated by a perception that the women pursuing professional careers are deviating from expected norms.

5.5.3 Cultural prejudices against local leaders from international source

Local participants spoke about how they suffered disadvantages as the wider INGO and donor communities see them as Lao with the associated image of incapable, untrustworthy and too flexible. The statements below are representative:

> We are in the back scenes. I write the reports and boss just edit it and put his name on it and it became acceptable. I write proposals my bosses edit them and put name on them, acceptable. Honestly I think the name is more important than the content. (Nok, 26 August 2011).Sometimes someone might have experience in Vietnam or China before. For example, European people might think that Vietnamese and Lao are similar in the characteristics and mindsets because we are in the same political system, close to each other. They thought that what can be done in Vietnam, so can we here. In fact, this is wrong. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

The first statement implies that even though the locals are not seen as officially performing a leadership role, they carry out the function in the absence of public awareness or recognition. The above statement also indicates that the locals experience disadvantages in terms of their language ability. Limited proficiency in oral and written English, thus, constitutes an important barrier for locals to advance in formal leadership roles within their organisations.

The Expatriates also make some sweeping generalisations about Asian people as indicated by the second statement. In this statement, the participant referred to the situation where expatriate boss expects the documentation to get through the government department the same way they used to get in Vietnam [Field note 30 August 2011]. The participants claimed that in Lao the system was slower than that in Vietnam. The issues around the perceived competencies of the local staff are expanded with the following statements:

> It is about attitudes to Asian people they thought that they are superior….you are inferior, you have to listen to me. (Gai, 14 August 2011)

> They [expats] picture many weaknesses and incompetence of the locals (I guess it is probably the locals stereo type), which may include language skill, analytical skill, management skill, etc. In many cases, they underestimate the locals. The locals also face an increased workload because the expats cannot perform as they are supposed to. (Nok, 10 October 2011)

> Our country image is not good. They might take precarious thinking. They take it that our people is not good = corruption. They might have to take risk. Everywhere there is corruption. Some of us have made not so good record that makes them think of us that way. (Pah, 17 December 2011)

The statements above indicate that the participants believe that they were underestimated by the expatriates. The statements also indicate that local leaders suffered from the overall image of the region and particularly the Lao society that is full of negativity particularly corruption and the lack of capacity. This perception of the expats may undermine their trust in their local counterparts. The empirical material generated in this research illustrates how the level of trust and confidence that expats hold toward locals influences the career advancement of the latter. The perceptions held by expats that couple Lao society and locals with corruption, weak governance, and incompetence subvert the opportunities of locals to access formal leadership roles. Participants emphasised that locals must actively confront and work toward challenging perceptions of local leaders as deficient and operating within a deficient social and cultural society. In the context of these held perceptions, local leaders are required to prove themselves as different. They must prove themselves as being capable leaders' vis-à-vis assumptions of Laos society and Laos people.

5.5.4 Discussion

The findings in this section can be related to literature in the field of organisation management. In the past, international management literature emphasises an understanding of cultural diversity and cultural competence for managers going abroad (see for example, Dowling, Festing et al. 2008, Storey 2007, Wu, Martinez et al. 2006). This body of research focused on planning for “foreign venture, employers strive to select and transfer the employee whose capability includes fitting into new societies”(Storey 2007). While the same logic might be applied to local leaders within the INGO context, the elements of local/domestic cultural prejudices impacting on the image of the local leaders has not been discussed extensively.

In the era of an increasing globalising world both socially and economically, scholars have started to think about the intersection between the mainstream societal values or the global cosmopolitan society as Giddens and Pierson (1998) put it and the traditional ways of life within the local society. Similar to the concept of glocalisation, the concept of global cosmopolitan postulates that the modern and traditional ways of doing things can be harmonised and mutually reinforcing for the wellbeing of human beings. In this study, the intersecting between modernity embedded in the development agenda pursued by INGOs and donors and local tradition embodiment within the government officials and some INGO local staff members, emerged as a critical work space for local leaders. While scholars such as Giddens perceive harmonisation between the two, local leaders are navigating through the complex encounters between modernised and traditional worlds.

5.6 Conclusion

The chapter began by showing the regulatory and political contexts which inhibit the functioning of the sector. The participants formed the views that INGOs should perform multiple functions including welfare provider as well as development catalyst whereby they encourage the poor to speak up for themselves. This view was consistent with the mainstream notion of INGOs as manifestation of the civil society organisation. According to this notion, INGOs can organise citizens to participate in social and political affairs and influence the government (, Coleman 2005, Doh and Teegen 2003, Ebrahim 2005, Hilhorst 2003, Silliman and Noble 1998). By contrast, they saw that INGOs’ functions, as allowed by the government, were restricted to basic needs delivery activities that were closely monitored by the government. I argued that the different functions of the INGOs exemplified on one the one hand, the domestic expectation of INGOs found in the autocratic nature of the Lao government and the international expectations grounded on democracy and liberal society on the other. These two sorts of expectations form a tension that provides local leaders and INGOs with a challenging environment to work in.

Collaborative mechanisms were further explored to unpack the instruments that facilitate the INGO-government relationship. The two key instruments identified by research participants including working within a compulsory partnership and the steering committees. The compulsory partnership was perceived to be the source of leadership tensions over abuse of power and conflict of interest among officials. The steering committees were viewed as intentionally causing delays in cooperation and restrictions on the attitudes and behaviours of INGOs. All of these occurred under the management/control of the government.

The national cultural context was also presented. This section discussed the impacts of social norms at a national level on local leadership. It had three key components, namely social hierarchy, social pressure and corruption and nepotism. First, social hierarchy affected local leaders by way of causing delay or unnecessary respect and credit offered to their official counterparts. Second, social pressure resulted from the fact that local leaders had strong connection with local people including family and friends. They were pressured to join social events or do favours that were not consistent with the organisation’s rules. Third, corruption and nepotism were widespread and crossed over to INGOs, which compromises the ability to maintain transparency and INGO standards.
The last finding in this chapter was concerned with the negative impacts of culture on local leadership. Cultural differences exist between officials and INGO personnel regarding their working styles. Another difference existed between those who followed the working plan strictly (INGO personnel) versus those who follow other rationales such as personal interest (officials). While research participants described themselves as working systematically to achieve set goals, they had to cope with vested interests from mainly government partners. Sectoral cultural challenges derived from participants’ struggles at work as they come from two key sectors of public and INGO. First of all, they faced a situation where they were in between the government and the INGOs. Therefore, they had to cultivate and adopt a “flexibility” mode by which they were flexible and adjust to particular situations. Then participants also reported that they were the victims of misconceptions. They thought that people saw them as a proxy of ideas – other locals mainly the government officials did not appreciate local personnel of INGOs the same way they did to expats. They also claimed that they were facing disadvantages due to a bad image based on the actions of other locals who might have done bad things in the past.

In summary, this chapter has reported on the context of INGO work and local leadership which covered such key areas as regulatory environment and the important social norms that dictate the way the sector works. This context demonstrates the challenging environment for INGO personnel and local leadership in particular. This social, cultural and political environment, I argue, is dynamic and changing. How this affects local leaders is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6
Individual capacities for leadership success: the entrepreneurship perspective

6.1 Introduction

This chapter turns attention towards the individual level analysis by examining individual capacities with regard to the potential of LLD. The chapter discusses the individuals' intra-personal (human capital) and inter-personal (social capital) capacities in relation to domestic and international sets of expectations. As articulated in Chapter Three, the institutional theorists postulate that actors mobilise sufficient resources to create new institutions or transform existing ones (DiMaggio 1988, Eisenstadt 1980). In this study, the INGO personnel are seen as institutional entrepreneurs who mobilise the resources or develop the two forms of capacities in order to: 1) be seen as qualified for and legitimate in the leadership roles; and, 2) use the resources or capacities to affect the creation or transformation of social institutions. These two activities are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. By examining the individual capacities the chapter addresses the second research question: "What are the individual capacities that lead them to leadership success?"

This chapter is organised into three main sections. Next, section 6.2 compares the participants' accounts of what they conceive as good leadership with their description of the "current" local leadership. The views of the three groups of research participants are also compared when they responded to the same questions or the same issues. Section 6.3 provides a discussion on the theme of "intra-personal" capacities as they influence on LLD. Participants' view was that the locals were lacking in skills and competencies, including English language, critical/logical thinking, taking initiatives and self-confidence. Section 6.4 illustrates the "inter-personal" capacities and their influence on LLD. The findings show that social networking is one of the needed skills. Networking with the government officials needed specific skills. The possession, or lack thereof, of key social networks was seen as having benefits and drawbacks. The chapter ends by summarising the key findings and linking them to the aim of the research.

6.2 Local leadership style in INGOs

In this section, research participants' views on what constitute legitimate styles of local leadership are examined. As constructed in Chapter Three, domestic and international guiding norms form the legitimacy conditions of local leadership. The domestic norms can come into play when the local leaders work with his/her local colleagues (local INGO members of staff and the government officials). Similarly, the international norms come into play when they work with their expatriate colleagues and other international stakeholders (that is donors). From this perspective, the section examines local leadership in two respects: the perceived characteristics of good local leadership and perceptions of existing abilities of local leadership.

The examination is also informed by the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg 2001). This theory proposes that the extent to which a leader is selected or accepted by a particular group depends on how "prototypical" he or she is to that group. Hogg (2001) defines prototypicality as, "a fuzzy set of features that captures in-group similarities and intergroup differences regarding beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and feelings." The following sections discuss the research participants' perceptions of the characteristics of what is considered good local leadership and their perceptions of existing skills and the level of local leadership.

6.2.1 The "perceived" good leadership

In interviews participants were encouraged to talk about their perception of what constitutes good leadership for the sector. A wide range of views was found on what was considered good leadership. Research participants described good leadership as someone who possesses people-oriented characteristics: "participatory," "un-authoritarian," "rational," and "patient"; and task-oriented: "initiative", "knowledge" and "performance". The following statements represent the common views of senior staff participants:

> Participation and voice. We have to get everyone on board. If we impose our ideas on other people if things go wrong we cannot take all the responsibility. (Nok, 3 August 2011)

> Working with staff members must not give order, un-authoritarian. You have to command some authority but with techniques and legitimate mechanisms. Make them know that their job is important. Talk their role up. (Pah, 17 December 2011)

> You have to be flexible, not meaning that you to have a fixed style; but four to five styles that can be applied in different situations right! Because different styles fit different situations - right! (Gob, 23 October 2011)

The first statement implies that good leadership is participatory and inclusive. It indicates that shared decision-making helps lead to collective actions and responsibilities which are important values for INGOs. The participant was concerned about the risks associated with sensitive elements of their work. Throughout the course of the fieldwork I observed that participants employed the collective method, which is characterised by shared decision making and responsibility, to deal with sensitive issues. They explained that the method gives them a sense of security. For example, sometimes INGOs get into very sensitive and policy related activities that can upset the government. If the government takes actions against them it is going to be too much for any single person to handle. So they share the responsibility amongst their colleagues.

The second and third statements illustrate the art of engagement as typical of good leadership. For example, the second emphasises a vigilant use of power by communicating tasks to followers in a friendly manner as opposed to an order delivering approach. From these findings it can be interpreted that the local leaders adapt their leadership style to accommodate the international expatriates' expectations. However, they face a dilemma. On the one hand, they do not want to be seen as authoritarian by giving orders to co-workers. On the other hand, they face a situation where some staff members need to be told what to do.

Similarly, a number of people-oriented characteristics were raised by local staff member participants as important to good leadership. The following three statements represent the common views where *medta*, care, polite and humble behaviours were seen as important. The concept of *medta* – sympathy and care for the staff members' welfare and professional development – was commonly mentioned among local staff member participants.

> Another thing is that [good leader] must have *medta* for staff members" (Informal conversation, 8 September 2011).

> Know how to talk with staff members lower than you. When they have any problems one should look after them…. Otherwise, if you can't win heart and mind of them they will reduce productivity at work. They will become corrupt. So if the staff members love you they won't dare to commit corruption or at least not the big one. They will care for your face. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

The local staff member participants spoke about good leadership as characterised by people-oriented qualities such as *medta*: personal concerns and the right manners. In Laos, the well-off people can give *medta* to others; or people with higher social or organisational status can give *medta* to others. If a leader gives *medta* to team members – he or she is regarded as a good person. This domestic value resonates with the idea of managers' individual concern showing to workers within the mainstream leadership literature. For example, Bass and Riggio (2005) note that a transformative leader is concerned with the welfare and career development of their individual workers. The second participants cited above noted that the possession of social skills are emphasised in the context relating to staff members and officials. This shows that giving priority to staff's needs is preferred to allocating tasks or giving orders. These findings are consistent with the conventional thought on people skills. In leadership literature, leaders need to be technically competent in their area of expertise, but technical knowledge is not enough. Successful leaders also need people's skills (Mersino 2013). It can be understood that local leaders must be well engaged with people in order to get the tasks completed. This is particularly significant in Laos because people usually take personality as more important than technical qualification.

In contrast, expatriate participants appeared to draw their perception of the characteristics of local leadership from the observations of the behaviour of the government officials in the public sector. In this sector, the leaders become disengaged and elevated themselves above everyone else. The following statement demonstrates that the officials' leadership style in Laos is rooted from the individual-centred notion of governance that sees a leader as commanding from the top. The participant saw this system as ineffective:

> Leadership here has roots in what Grant Evans called, the Mandala state system, which recognises individual leaders as the centre of 'governance'. ….Communism theoretically supplanted this and recently was a more merit-based system. But here and elsewhere, we know how ineffective that was. So we have communist leaders who are taught to separate themselves from the masses and elevate themselves above everyone else. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

As the above statement makes clear, the local leadership inherited the top-down commanding style of individual leaders who direct the group from above. This finding demonstrates the divergence in leadership styles found in the public and INGO sectors. As discussed earlier, INGO local leadership style tends to be participatory as oppose to that of the public sector, which tends to be directive.

In the same vein, six expatriate participants and one senior staff participant saw good leadership arising from a "task-oriented" perspective which was a very different view to that expressed by the majority of the participants in the study. They spoke about their concern over the local INGO leaders' ability to perform tasks, knowledge about the field and the ability to take initiatives and get the job done. The following statements illustrate this:

> The ability to take the initiative and work with little supervision [is important], rather than waiting to be told what to do before doing anything. [I'm] not sure if that is related to experience or to education though. (Informal conversation, 25 December 2011)

> Performance. Good leaders have the ability to get the job done - that is what matters. Locals are having problems managing themselves and tasks. (Informal conversation, 16, December 2011)

The first statement is from an expatriate participant talking about local colleagues who often hesitate to take control of the tasks. The last statement emphasises task completion and technical knowledge about the tasks. These findings are consistent with a task-oriented approach to leadership. Task-oriented leadership is a behavioural approach in which the leader focuses on the tasks to be performed in order to meet a shared goal or to accomplish an expected level of performance (Bass and Bass 2009, Bass and Riggio 2005). Overall, these comments show that participants expect local leaders to be proactive and take risks when necessary. In sum, the perceptions on good leadership are quite conventional. The perceptions are also subject to different emphases: local participants focused more on people skills and needs, while expatriates focused on task oriented styles or attributes.

6.2.2 The “current” local leadership

In this section, the focus turns to the “current” style or traits associated with local leadership. Following the social identity theory of leadership, the closer a leader is to meeting the “perceived” characteristics of a ‘good leader’ the more likely the individual will be seen as qualified or legitimate in leadership roles.

As expected, views on the “current” nature of local leadership styles varied slightly with different groups of participants having different emphases. Most senior staff participants spoke about the need for harmony and searching for common ground. Expatriate participants were concerned with local capacity to handle social pressure and secure funding. Surprisingly, local staff member participants wanted to see their local leaders imitating the expatriates. These views are presented in turn.

Four senior staff participants describe themselves or the local personnel in senior positions as being rational, fair and transparent, as the following statement demonstrates:

> I am a rationale person and based in reality. Must be fair and give full reasons. Don’t rush to make premature judgement, know how to negotiate, stay neutral, transparent. For example, if the government wants to change something in the plan, ask the reasons. Consult the team. Ask other people; do not work alone on this. (Pah, 17 December 2011)

This statement provides key leadership principles which are similar to features of the participatory leadership style on the model. For example, Kezar (2001, p. 88) argues that participatory or inclusive leadership is “centremost within more collaborative, team-oriented approaches”. In practice, however, the participatory approach is not always the most effective approach; rather leaders apply either directive or participative styles depending on the circumstances (Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994). One explanation for why participatory is preferred by the senior staff participants is that the circumstance for INGO leadership suits the participatory leadership approach. As discussed in Chapter Five, government departments are the key partners who play key roles in implementing INGO tasks. In this government dominated context INGOs' influence is minimal. Thus the local leaders relied on being clear, providing reasons and allowing participation of workers for their leadership effectiveness.

Other characteristics of the current local leadership included being diplomatic and non-confrontational. Four senior staff participants share this view of leadership citing that confrontation diminishes cooperation and creates an unhealthy environment which can result in tasks not being accomplished. As the statement below demonstrates:

> I am diplomatic and non-confrontational. Always provide reasons. For example, if the counterparts propose something that we cannot provide I will say, okay let's take this into consideration. And later provide reasons. Never refuse it right away. If they hate you and never give cooperation. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

The above statement reinforces the need for reasons to be given for actions on requests as well as indicating the importance of diplomacy as an instrument for working successfully with differences. As discussed in Chapter Five, officials were seen as key players in getting jobs done and possessed political power. The descriptions of "good" leadership style were based on senior staff participants' assessment that a confrontational leadership style would be counterproductive.

Five senior staff participants also spoke about locals as being too humble and under-valuing themselves, as the following statement illustrates:

> You have to get up there and show your confidence. I think many times expats look at us and ask themselves: "is anyone here capable of leading the organisation?" So that they can localise some positions even Country Director like this [organisation]. (Gob, 5January 2012)

The cultural norms of unspoken, humility and fear of losing face associated with Lao people might reduce the confidence on the local leaders amongst the expatriate who can endorse local leaders' potential advancement to leadership roles. If this is the case, the question therefore is, “how is the local style of leadership perceived by expatriates?” Currently, selection or promotion of locals to senior role in INGOs is the matter that needs expatriate supports [fieldnote, 15July11]. Therefore, it is unlikely that they will offer the support if they see that the locals lack confidence and are perceived to be incapable of getting the job done.

Five of the local staff member participants described local senior personnel or the local leaders as different from their expatriate counterparts. Similarly, the five participants explained that they would like to see the locals develop the skills possessed by expatriates. This statement is an example:

> I think they shouldn’t be much different from expats in their characters and [leadership] style. We have to have skills in networking, marketing, be able to manage internal resources, adapt to the new situation or manage change according to new situations or the future situation that you have envisioned. (Informal conversation, 16 December 2011)

The above statement implies that what is understood as the expatriate style is preferred to what is considered to be the local style of leadership. This view represents the tendency to embrace the international style of leadership given the work context that demands networking skills, marketing and fundraising tasks currently carried out by the expatriates.

In contrast, three local staff participants expressed a different view. They argued that the Lao and expatriate styles of leadership are different and should remain so. For example, people often refer to Lao style as modest and expatriate as assertive. Six local staff participants suggested that local leaders should have both Lao and Western traits. They expressed this analysis in the following ways:

> I think it needs to be a combination of the Western and Lao thinking but not too much on one side or the other. If it is too much on the Western side you can’t go to the field yet if things are too Lao-ish we can’t deal with Westerners. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

> This is problematic. Lao people might be too flexible. We have the culture of *keuakoun*. We like to override the rules in favour of our friends or family. We have

> known this as *keuakoun* for a long time. And this is something that exists in the NGO sector though it is not as prevalent as in the government sector. (Informal conversation, 25 January 2012)

The first statement is the second most common view held by staff members. This view indicates the need to work with and adapt to both domestic and international guiding norms of leadership. Another concern associated with the Lao style is the idea of flexibility. Senior participants also mentioned this term frequently when they explained their approach to staff members and officials. However, local staff member participants saw it as problematic citing it can lead to *keuakoun*-the concept that denotes the idea of blending rules to favour certain individuals or groups. Today, *keuakoun* has almost become a taboo word because it implies the habit of traditional and is considered to be incompatible with the working of modern organisational management. In modern management rules are followed. For example, a merit-based system is in place as opposed to the blended system that favours certain individuals. In other words, the local staff members saw a hybrid international-indigenous form of local leadership.

Throughout the course of the fieldwork I observed that the term flexibility was used frequently and the meaning was considerably close to *keaukoun* [fieldnote 20Oct11]. While flexibility is important to get the job done, it does not fit well in modern management. By the local standard, flexibility is taken for granted and would not cause problems. However, by the international standard, bending the rules to favour certain groups can be seen as bribery or corruption. Therefore the local leaders are faced with the question of what is the right thing to do. Superficially most people would strike the balance between the two sets of standards.

Moving onto some other leadership traits, three expatriates participants described their local counterparts' characteristics as: not having the habit of planning, being irresponsible, authoritative and having a "saving face" culture. As the following statements illustrate:

> I think Lao people don't plan their work well. Foreigners have the habit of making really concrete plans, in a list form. It's good this way because we know what completed what is not so that it helps you reflect at the end of the day. (Informal conversation, 20 January 2012)

> Lao like to transfer responsibility to others when things go wrong. Lao people don't have conviction to stand for values. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

> People are too ready to let someone else take responsibility or not to get something done. Even simple things like putting more soap in the bathroom: if the boss doesn't tell someone to do it, no one does it. This is perhaps instructive of the difference between leadership and management. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

As the local staff member participant asserts in the first statement, simple rigorous planning for undertaking daily tasks is not part of the local work habit. In the same vein, the second statement saw the local INGO personnel as irresponsible which is one of the most important traits mentioned by participants. The third statement raised the common view that the local INGO personnel lacked the courage to take action without guidance. The above characteristics are inconsistent with those found in some "international" mainstream management ideas. In some mainstream management texts-the Anglo-American management and leadership, the key principles of leadership include command and control, instrumentalism and strong financial focus (Greenberg and Colquitt 2013). For example, mainstream management theory postulates that a chain of command facilitates the distribution of tasks, responsibilities and decision making power hence increases efficacy and performance (see for example, Wood 1999, Erramilli, Crovella et al. 2008). It can be argued that the above views from the expatriate participants' leadership styles represent the mainstream management ideas. In other words, the locals were assessed against the mainstream ideas or international guiding norms.

6.2.3 Discussion

Three key observations can be made from the findings in this section. First, local personnel, including senior staff and local staff member participants, emphasise participatory/inclusive leadership both in the perception of leadership and current leadership practice. This finding is consistent with Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1995) who assert that the values and beliefs held by members of cultures influence the degree to which the behaviours of individuals, groups and institutions within cultures are enacted and the degree to which they are viewed as legitimate, acceptable and effective. For the senior staff participants in this study, their values and beliefs in participation and inclusion can be interpreted in two ways. One is that participation and inclusion give them security given that the political environment of the sector is uncertain. The second interpretation is that participation and inclusion are core values in development in general. The local leaders adopt these values in order to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the international development community. As articulated in the review of literature, participation and inclusion are part of the development key values ascribed to by most of INGOs and their donors. Therefore, the local leaders' adoption of these values is important for their leadership success.

Secondly, expatriate participants' perception was concerned that local leadership was becoming similar to that of the public sector where the leader becomes disengaged and isolated from the masses. In fact, the notion of participation and inclusion was first introduced to the INGOs' personnel by the expatriates. Most INGOs' personnel were former officials who would otherwise value isolation and disengagement. Furthermore, expatriates were more concerned with the ability or inability of the current local leadership over the capability to complete the task than with the style of leadership.

Finally, two somewhat divergent propositions emerged as for the future direction of evaluation of local leadership. One proposition is that participants want to see local leadership develop more into the expatriated led style because the current local leadership style looks incompetent and too flexible. The second proposition is the view that local leadership needs to combine the local or indigenous and the international or universal styles because the constituents are from both types of social and political backgrounds. This proposition makes sense from the cultural change perspective. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) argue that even when culture adapts to external, global influences, the changes are often only cosmetic. They compare the various expressions of culture to the layers of an onion. According to Hofstede *at al* (2005), even though the outer layers such as symbols, heroes and rituals are fairly easily peeled away, the values that comprise a culture's core remain virtually intact and unassailable. Practically, both expatriates and local workers would be exposed to the outer layers than the core.

6.3 Personal capacities: a human capital perspective

As noted in the last chapter, sociocultural and political factors (the institutional context) in many ways hinder the process of LLD. In particular, it was evident that the locals had not been seen as "qualified" or "legitimate" for their leadership roles in terms of both domestic and international guiding norms. This section discusses the capacities that are needed by the locals in order to be seen as qualified or legitimate leaders. The following sections discuss responses to the question: "What capacities have been missing from the local personnel that make them unable to advance to leadership roles?"

The responses are analysed in relation to the concepts of "human capital" and "social capital". Human capital refers to knowledge, skills and capabilities of individuals reflected by the person's education, experience and specific skills (Coleman, 1988); social capital, networked relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation, resource exchange (Bouty, 2000; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998) and trust, respect and commitments (Garner, 1993). The participants' views on the "missing" capacities were common among three groups of research participants. The key missing capacities include: "language abilities", "critical/logical thinking skills", "taking initiative" and "self-confidence". These are now discussed in turn.

6.3.1 Language abilities

English is the most used language in the development industry as a mean for communication. The English language ability was raised among senior staff and expatriate participants as one of the essential skills for the position of leadership. Five out of six senior staff participants attributed the mastery of English to one of the obstacles for local leadership regardless of their abilities in other areas. The Western structure and style of writing was particularly seen as the most needed set of skills. As the following statements illustrate:

> Language is one of the missing skills- many Lao personnel have excellent and great experience and qualifications … but possess very minimum and limited knowledge of English. This blocks their growth to the senior positions in the organisation. (Gai, 15 September 2011)

> Writing skills are important. It doesn't mean just plain English but the way ideas are articulated. We, Western people, could not make sense of what is written. I'm working with my Lao colleagues here too. Sometimes I heard them discuss some very good ideas. Okay, then I asked them to write it down. Then it turns out to be

> less convincing. I don't know what they are talking about. (Informal conversation, 29 July 2011)

The difficulties associated with communication through English, particularly writing, are well acknowledged by both local and expatriate personnel. The senior staff participant's view in the first statement indicates that some local personnel possess strong background in other skill areas, but their English lets them down. One interpretation is that for those with a strong background in other areas, but who want to progress up the leadership hierarchy, the focus of development work must be on English. The second statement indicates that among four aspects of English ability: listening, speaking, reading and writing, writing is the most important aspect. Unfortunately, writing competency is the weakest among the locals. As the above quote demonstrates, they have good ideas, but they are unable to demonstrate them in the written form. It implies also that ideas had been lost in process of writing in English and the power and importance of the idea is unable to be successfully conveyed. In comparison with their expatriate counterparts, the expats believed that the locals were much behind in terms of an effective use of English. The research participants attributed this gap to the Lao education system. Four senior participants and four expatriates shared the view that the Lao education system did not teach Lao people to be active and self-confident. As a result, they look passive, laid-back and lack motivation. As the following statement says:

> I think that they have English and they are competent. They speak a lot and write well. For example, they see something very little but they can write a lot about that little thing. I think that they have fundamental skills. They accumulated those skills from kindergarten. I can say this because I experienced this myself. When I went to study in Oz [Australia] I took with me my kid. Three years old. She joined kindergarten at UQ St Lucia. Every morning kids were asked to tell a story. They were encouraged to speak. They were asked questions. They were not afraid to answer. I understood that similar learning style go all the way through in their education system. (Gob, 23 October 2011)

This statement, reflecting on early year education issues, provides an analysis of what they felt the local personnel lack the ability to articulate ideas orally and communicate them well in writing. The statement also attributes the locals' lack of such skills to be due to the Lao education system, which discourages children from developing active learning skills and becoming well-articulated. By contrast, expatriates were seen as better in articulating and communicating ideas as they had grown up in an education system that encourages their active learning in these skills. This finding is consistent with Owen's (2010) study which found that, in comparison with Vietnamese, Cambodian and Thai people, Lao people were seen as the slowest in the region. This issue will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter when the cultural influences exerted over leadership development are addressed.

6.3.2 Critical/logical thinking and reasoning skills

As discussed in Chapter Two, development scholars noted that in the rapidly changing world, INGO leaders are faced with many uncertainties and challenges (Eade, Hewitt et al. 2000, Edwards 1999, Fowler and Malunga 2010,Hailey 2000, Lewis 2001, Smillie 1995). To survive, they argued, the leaders must navigate through the development environment characterised by a diversity of stakeholders and interest groups. In such an environment, the leaders need to be equipped with critical thinking and logical reasoning skills.

In this study, all six senior staff participants shared the above view. Unfortunately, they saw that the locals lacked this critical thinking and reasoning skills which thereby subverted their capacities to advance to take on leadership positions. Again they attributed the lacking to the Lao education system. For example, one senior staff participant said:

> [in] some cases this goes right back to some critical thinking skills and logic and maybe because of the education level or the type of education that they have received. I think that I find often lacking in many people the ability to think critically and problem solving skills, you know, reasoning skills. (Nok, 20 January 2012)

The participant's view indicates that the type of education and level of education has not contributed to development of critical and logical thinking skills for the locals. It is widely accepted that the Lao education system has been once driven by a passive style characterised by features such as teachers telling students facts and students memorising them (Sultan, 2006). Therefore, critical thinking is not stimulated. The question therefore is whether the skills can be developed at work. The common view was that development of these skills rarely occurred because the locals tend to avoid difficult tasks: that is, thinking and planning. As the following statement illustrates this:

> Unfortunately they don’t like a job that involves a lot of thinking, envisioning, planning or budgeting. You know work that involves using logical and rational thinking. The weakness is that not only do we not like making plan but we also don’t follow plans. (Pah, 30 November 2011)

The statement illustrates two significant perceptions. First the locals do not have the habit of planning and thinking through the task. Therefore, critical/logical thinking skills rarely develop over the course of their career. The second point is that the locals do not have the habit of following a work plan. As discussed earlier, being “too flexible” was associated with not following the budget lines therefore, not seen as complying with transparency and accountability standards within INGOs. Being seen as lacking this habit could mean that local personnel are incompetent for the INGO leadership, particularly from the international/modern management perspective.

6.3.3 Taking initiatives

In leadership literature, an ability to take initiative is thought of as one of the most important leadership competencies. For example, Brake (1997) argues that taking initiative denotes a sense of optimism and the can-do attitude-important for leaders working under complex circumstances. Likewise, taking initiative implies acquisitiveness: seeking feedback, new information and new ways of doing things; these are important for leader’s performance and continuous development (Gregersen and Morrison 1998).

Endorsing the above proposition, six senior staff and four expatriate participants strongly believed that the locals lacked the capacity to take initiatives. The view among the expatriates was that their Lao colleagues were not ready to take responsibility for getting something done without supervision. The following statements demonstrate this point:

> Local colleagues are used to doing what their boss tells them to do. They like standardised procedures or systems. Don’t like to get out of their comfort zone. Need pointers. (Informal conversation, 18 January 2012)

> Many Lao personnel are not comfortable to leave their comfort zones: they don't like asking questions, they don't like to confront and they don't like to read much (Gai, 15 September 2011)

Both expatriate and senior staff participants shared the view that the locals lack the courage or are unwilling to take initiative rather they like to stay within their comfort zone. When the expatriates see their local colleagues this way, it is unlikely that they will endorse the local colleagues in taking on leadership roles. This endorsement is essential for the local personnel to earn trust (or legitimacy) from the wider international development community, particularly INGO headquarters and donors. If the expatriates are not confident in locals to perform in leadership roles it is a barrier for external constituents such as donors and headquarters to see local leadership as legitimate to assume leadership roles.

6.3.4 Self-confidence

In many Anglo-Saxon societies it is a convention that an extravert personality is viewed as an important leadership trait. Extroverts tend to be enthusiastic, talkative, assertive and sociable and enjoy human interactions (Bono and Judge 2004, Herrmann and Nadkarni 2013, Stogdill 1948). In contrast, in the Lao society a composed, quiet and humble leader is highly valued. In other words, leaders are introverts. Both local and expatriate participants saw that the local personnel resonated with the Lao personality of introvert, unassertive and humble. They claimed that the local staff must develop the traits of extravagance, assertiveness and confidence if they want to progress to the leadership roles. As the following statements demonstrate:

> More assertive: now they like being in the background. They can speak and give ideas at the back sense not the front. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

> More service takers. Able to speak up and rise to the challenge at the workplace you know sometimes you are too humbled, look passive and incompetent. They don’t speak about what they can or cannot do. Or what they want to do, what they want to challenge themselves on. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

> [Local personnel] look foolish sometimes. When I want to allocate tasks I have to wonder if this person will be able to do this or that. But at the end of the day, they can. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

> People avoid taking risks; they don't dare to touch on politically sensitive issues or raising voices. They need institutional and expatriate supports (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

A common theme emerging from the statements above is that the locals were seen as introverts rather than extraverts which was seen as ineffective leadership traits of the sector. Furthermore, the last statement mentions risk taking ability as lacking in the local personnel. This finding suggests that without risk taking ability, the local personnel needed support from their expatriate counterparts to do their job. This is problematic for the local personnel because if they were to be leaders they will need to work independently.

An observation made by some local participants was that people with introvert personality traits were not necessarily incompetent and incapable of completing tasks or engaging in complex discussion. In contrast, they claimed that the opposite was true:

> I observed that young people in my organisation look incapable of doing a particular job but in fact, they do. In contrast, foreigners are very active. They present themselves, rise to the challenges. They will say yes I will do this and I will do it this way (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011).

> Sometimes, in INGO meetings they ask the Lao personnel to meet separately. Sometimes they [expatriates] wonder why Lao people don't like to speak. Perhaps our language is not strong. We see expats say *brah brah*… and look like they are experts. And we Lao don't speak. And we often ask ourselves why. What are we scared of? Sometimes expats ask this question and they ask us to talk by ourselves. (Gob, 25 August 2011)

The two statements above imply that the local personnel may look incompetent from a Western viewpoint but are in fact more than capable of completing the tasks. They just express their competencies in different ways. One interpretation is that the locals avoid uncertainty and risks. As noted in Chapter Five, one feature of the Lao culture is one which values saving face for oneself and for others. The statements above echo the manifestation of this aspect of the culture. For instance, the local do not want to overtly express themselves. This way they can feel safe from losing face or making other people lose face. The last statement above, for example, indicates that the locals speak a lot among themselves. They do not like to express their ideas in a setting that involves expatriates. Perhaps, they perceived that expatriates are the “experts” and know best therefore they think that the expatriates already know what they are going to say.

6.3.5 Discussion

As discussed in Chapter Two, human capital is “generally understood to consist of the individual’s capabilities, knowledge, skills and experience of the organisation’s members of staff and managers, as they are relevant to the task at hand, as well as the capacity to add to this reservoir of knowledge, skills and experience through individual learning” (Dess & Picken 2001; p. 8). From this definition, it becomes clear that human capital is broader in scope than human resource which is more familiar when discussing capacity building work. But the emphasis on knowledge in the concept of human capital is important. On the one hand, human capital is similar to human resource as they both emphasise an individual level of knowledge and competency. On the other hand, the human capital literature has moved beyond the individual to also embrace the idea that knowledge can be shared among groups and institutionalised within organisational processes and routines (Wright et al. 2001). In Lao society, the latter seems to play out strongly and defines the outcomes at an organisational level. As reported widely by participants in this study, mutual support by sharing information and knowledge within groups lead to a timelier outcome than otherwise.

This section discusses four key individual traits and skill competencies thought to have been missing from the skill set of the local leaders. The so-called “missing” local personality traits are consistent with those endorsed in leadership literature. For example, articulation is seen as one of the key leadership traits, particularly in transformative leadership (Conger and Kanungo 1987, Piccolo and Colquitt 2006). Vroom and Yetton (1973) assert that successful leaders should be willing to take responsibility for their actions, take calculated risks and adapt their values to make decisions that will prove beneficial for their organisation. These personality traits are perceived as missing from the local personnel. However, these interpretations need to be viewed critically because the mainstream leadership literature is Western-based. For example, some senior staff participants pointed out that the locals expressed (articulated) their ideas better in places where the expatriates are excluded; or they can write reports with the quality close to that of expatriates only their Lao name means the report is not viewed as having equal value of quality.

Initial writing on human capital flowed from economists of education such as Becker (1964, 1976); Mincer (1974), Schultz (1971), and (the Nobel Laureates for their work in this subject) focusing on the economic benefits from investments in both general and firm-specific training. This work, based on detailed empirical analysis, redresses the prevailing assumption that the growth of physical capital is paramount in economic success. In reality, physical capital "'explains only a relatively small part of the growth of income in most countries"' (Becker, 1964, p. 1). My ethnographic fieldwork in Laos found that INGOs have little interest in investing in human capital development, despite the evidence demonstrating the benefits of human capital development. Moreover, the education sector has not been able to produce qualified personnel to meet the demand in the country in general or in the development sector in particular. The lack of donor interest in supporting training for INGO staff and the high turnover rate among local staff within the INGO sector hinder INGOs investment in developing their staff capacity. These issues will be further examined and discussed in the next Chapter.

6.4 Inter-personal capacities: a social capital perspective

Inter-personal capacities emerged from the discussion based upon the profound dominance of the sociocultural context in the INGO sector, discussed in the last chapter. The context of INGO work was characterised by the government's strict control and complex relationship with government counterparts under the government-INGO partnership framework. Within such an environment, this section examines: "How do the inter-personal capacities play out in the day to day work of INGO personnel and how do these capacities affect LLD?"

A wide range of themes were distilled from the responses to this question. These themes are: “social networking skills”, “building trusted relationships”, “social qualification”, “networking with officials” and “over-networking and networking management”. These are now presented in turn.

6.4.1 Social networking skills

The idea of social networking was captured first from the senior staff participant interviews. The concept was then explored with informal conversations with local and expatriate participants. Experiences in social networking were diverse and rich with nuances amongst all the participants. Participants used terms such as: “set goals”, “offer help”, “initiate conversation”, “just make friends” and “*jai yai*” to describe their ways of networking. *Jai yai* literally means big heart. In Laos, it is associated with being patient, compromising and staying cool. One of the accounts is as follows:

> I think one must set ambition and goals for oneself. For example, if you go to one meeting you want to meet new people. Going to a party you have to set a target. Okay I want to meet with at least a few senior people. Alongside this is the need for listening skills and some knowledge about current affairs to keep the conversation going. (Gob, 23 October 2011)

The above statement implies that social networking must be taken seriously. It indicates that people really need to plan and act accordingly, not just let networking occur automatically. The observation is that the quality of the networks or the people you know need to be strategically controlled. It can be interpreted that the participant wanted to know the senior people because they could add credentials and useful connections to him or herself.

The following statements describe the participants’ experiences and techniques in social networking. Some of the key ideas important for building networks include: covering work for one another, offering mental support, participating in social events, looking for common interests and creating mutual helping relationships. These ideas can be found in the following statements:

> I have to build good relationships with colleagues too. Help them with little things. … If they have too much work to do and I'm available, I offer help. This creates empathy and mutual help. Later I get help back from others. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

> Take initiative. … You have to learn to speak well. People want to hear good words. Praise their outfits, their cars, later you will invite them for coffee, for beers, join their birthday party, go to temple together, etc. (Nok, 26 August 2011)

> Spend some time to talk to people. We should have interest in other people within and outside our organisation. Try to find some common interest and exchange ideas sooner or later we will need some help from people we know. You know well that in Lao it's easier to ask for help from people you know than strangers. By the same token, you feel good to help with you know too right! (Pah, 17 December 2011)

> Jai yai [big heart], be open-minded, take compromise approach. We maintain relationships by a non-confrontation principle. If we lost the relationship it will be gone forever. (Kiat, 30 August 2011)

These statements show some of the skills the participants used in social networking. The first statement emphasises offering help and creating mutual helping relationships. The second highlights initiative taking and use of social skills. The final statement suggests that knowing each other leads to helping each other. These findings resonate with most of the ideas associated with the concept of "inter-personal competency". According to this concept, interpersonal competence includes social awareness: empathy, service orientation and developing others and social skills: collaboration and cooperation, building bonds and conflict management (Goleman 1995; McCauley 2000).

These findings need to be interpreted with caution though because not all participants were naturally socially oriented as appears to be the case for the participant of the second statement. The reported techniques are also contextually dependent. For example, not everybody likes to be praised. These findings are drawn from the people from the INGO sector who must work in partnership with the government officials who are holding higher political power as discussed in section 5.3.1. These findings suggested therefore that the participants are in dependent position if they are to get cooperation from their government counterparts.

6.4.2 Building a trusted team

The idea of building a trusted team emerged from interviews as the participants were encouraged to talk about how they go about day-to-day work. All three groups of the research participants spoke about trusted relationships with reference to colleagues within their own organisation rather than across the INGO sector or the government. The three groups of participants spoke about building trusted relationships by: being fair and transparent and building close relationships with all members regardless of formal positions:

> Another thing is trust. Make team members believe that what you asked them to do is good for the organisation, themselves and their career. Tell the truth; be fair in terms of rewarding and punishment. Be fair in terms of distributing opportunity for career development. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

> Take care of team members respectfully and similarly from cleaners to drivers. My boss cares about the personal welfare of all members. When someone has a birthday, she gives them a gift. Every now and then she pays for us where we have lunch together. For example when someone has financial problem she lends them money. And then when team members want to leave they can't because they are in debt not only financially but morally. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

The first statement indicates that leaders have to earn trust from the team members. They do so by inspiring the members to see the significant contribution they make to the organisation and their own career development. Leaders also build trusted relationships by maintaining the principle of justice on reward and punishment. The second statement emphasises social aspects of organisational leaders. For example, leaders pay for meals or lend the team member money. These findings are similar to those of the GLOBE study on Chinese culture and leadership (Fu, Wu & Yang 2007). Fu and colleagues found that good leaders are described as Conficius men – whereby the terms indicate benevolence or kindness. This kindness was shown through leaders' willingness to offer help beyond formal duties and responsibilities. They concluded that this approach cannot be found in the mainstream texts provided in current Western based texts (Fu, Wu & Yang 2007; p. 899). In many respects, the local personnel in Laos are similar to the Chinese leaders who have individual concerns for their staff members. Even though this individual concern and personal help are seen as positive attitude in Laos and China, the expatriates might see differently. Besides, this personal relationship between leaders and workers might be seen as “too close relationship”. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, when the relationship become very close, it can lead to people helping each other committing corruption. Therefore, what is important is whether or not the relationship will influence their view about the trustworthiness of the local personnel.

The idea of building a trusted team is also associated with personality and family-like relationship. Three senior staff participants and five local staff member participants spoke about their organisation like a family and the personnel treated each other like family members. While they said this type of relationship is necessary in the context of a hectic work schedule of INGOs, it compromises the transparency and commitment of the team members. The following statement illustrates this:

> We treat one another like a family member. Maybe it is difficult for leaders get the most out of the team members. But for some team members, being too good can spoil them. This culture can be good and bad because someone might be lazy because the leader is taking a soft line on them. But this is like I am lazy because I have this family environment. They always have reasons or excuses for not getting the job done. (Informal conversation, 25 January 2012)

As the above statement makes clear the local leaders face a dilemma. One the one hand, they need to build trust and earn the team members’ commitment to the organisation. On the other hand, having too-close relationship, that is, a family-like relationship, increases the chances of under-performance by some members. While acknowledging this dilemma, five local staff member participants shared the following view. They saw that a family-like relationship motivated the team members to work hard and to be loyal to the leaders.

> We have the culture of treating each other like family. I have learned that if the boss is good we can work overtime for nothing. We don’t dare to bring troubles to the boss. For example, if team member like their boss they won’t commit corruptions or

> briberies or if they do, they do it at a minimal scale. If all team members are like that it will make all other things easy. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

The above statement indicates that good leaders build close relationship with the team members so that they are motivated to work hard and honestly. The statement implies that the team members are committed to the leader rather than the organisation. This finding indicates that the domestic cultural values prevail for local leaders in the INGOs.

One interpretation of these findings is that the leaders combine traditional values with modern management practice. They maintain fairness and avoid corruption while at the same time build a kind of patron-client relationship. In patron-client relationship, “the patrons grants their clients services and favours in exchange for loyalty and personal services” (Ooi 2004). The leaders as the patrons build the patron-client relationship by having personal concern and building the family-like bonding with their staff. In return, they receive personal commitment, loyalty and honesty from the team members.

Another interpretation is that the family-like relationship ties the team together. In the leadership field, team or group cohesiveness is the degree to which members are attracted to a group and motivated to remain part of it (Ooi 2004); it thereby refers to both forces that attract members to the group as well as to the incentives to remain within the group (Ahmadjian & Robinson 2001). The local leaders know that by tying the staff members to them rather than organisations it can lead to improved performance at both individual and team levels. This proposition was supported by previous studies (see for example, Child & Tsai 2007).

6.4.3 Social qualification

An idea of social qualification was first raised by one senior staff participant. The idea was then explored with five other senior staff participants and five local staff member participants. Eight out of ten agreed that the idea is mainly relevant in the context involving interactions between local personnel and officials. Views on what constitute the notion of the social qualification were subject to a degree of variation. Four senior staff participants and one local staff member participant emphasised “respect’ as a key element in acquiring this qualification. Some participants used the Lao term *phen* to refer to officials; the term conveys the sense of a superior social status:

> *Phen* consider the senior-junior difference. We juniors cannot coordinate with the seniors. They consider rude. But if you *phen* and *phen* recognise you. The strict consideration is lifted; but you still have to respect *phen* a lot. (Kiat, 5 October 2011)

> Things they don't like the most is that when INGO people come and act like I'm the best and don't care about them. Officials will go like fine but I won't sign your documents. Like our projects, not only sending them document but invite them and their families to come and see for themselves what we are doing; explain how things work. When we organise trainings we bring them along so that they understand. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

> Usually have to respect them. Praise them. 'Create them faces'. They always want to get involve. Give them respects. We have to bow to them even though they do nothing for us. Acknowledge all the time. Every event of the organisation has to invite them. Show them how we work. Then if they see the project and understand how things go they will compromise to us. (Informal conversation, 27 January 2012)

There are traditional values that need to be understood and practiced when it comes to engaging with government officials. As the first statement implies, the rule of hierarchy between senior and junior applies very strictly. One example is giving appropriate respect to government officials according to seniority. Seniority is dependent on formal positions and ages. When considering this more generally, this type of relationship has negative implication for a new generation who are competent and have high qualification. They could face a situation where they want to exchange thoughts or ideas, but are reluctant to do so because they believe expressing (contrary) views to their senior colleagues may be interpreted as disrespectful. As the second statement illustrates, showing respect can be done in different ways. It can include giving "privilege" by inviting them to give the opening speech at training seminars. The common theme all statement share is that the government officials like to be kept informed, given privilege and being involved.

Another way of acquiring the social qualification helps to cultivate relationships is by giving gifts, presents, paying for meals and *haek sieu* [making friend]. The following statements demonstrate:

> On important occasions, such as *PiMai Lao* [Lao new year], *Phen*'s children birthday, we give some presents. If you do this often *Phen* will recognise you, things go much quicker in your way. …They don't care if you distance yourself from this, no problem. They don't care, but you want their cooperation. (Gob, 05 January 2012)
>
> Have lunch or dinner with them, pay for them if you see fit. …It's not so much about paying but, doing so means giving respect and prestige. Suppose you go by the American share, split bill, for example. They might not refuse right away; but this creates bad impression. This applies to all levels from ministries to departments to offices… Honestly, *Phen* should pay us because *Phen* has a nice car, nice dress and the like. (Kiat, 20 July 2011)
>
> Carefully handle the incentive matter [per diem, travel allowance and accommodation fee]. It's quite a shame when at the end of meetings or trainings; people often propose their ideas a little bit about technical stuff but much more on the money or per diem stuff. We need to see this from their standpoint. Their salary is very little, it is quite normal if they are concerned about this, but also have to follow rules. (Kiat, 5 October 2011)
>
> Many NGO people *Haek Siuo* [make friends] with officials. They eat together, drink together and play *Petong* together after work. At the level of technical personnel there are many people exchange experiences and learn from one other. They can take this opportunity to talk about work and fine tune toward one another. How about senior people, how can you change them. We don't know how to approach them. They might not have time to talk to us. (Nok, 26 August 2011)

The statements above illustrate ways of acquiring the social qualification and the consequences of having or not having it. As per ways of acquiring it, traditional practice of gift giving is still followed together with giving small presents on occasion such as birthday. As a consequence, acquiring the qualification leads to better cooperation. It can be interpreted that the qualification is like an image. INGO personnel have to create a good image for themselves in the eyes of the government officials. By doing so they can ensure smooth cooperation that is required to get the job done. In the last statement, *Haek sieu* is another way to acquire the qualification. A *Sieu* [a trusted friend] conveys the meaning of the close, trusted and special friend who is the last resource of help and the first sources of opportunity. Friends shared mutual obligations of protections and sacrifices. Within the working context, *sieu* can be the most helpful person. However, the concept of *sieu* is limited within the context of organisation life because *sieu* relationship tends to occur only between people of the same sex, age and social status. It can be hard and even impossible for *sieu* relationship to occur between the locals and expatriates due to status differences.

It is well documented in the literature that relational theory of leadership such as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) or the dyadic leadership style is useful in several different cultures (Avolio and Yammarino 2013, Bass and Bass 2009, Northouse 2012,). Furthermore, applying the Western-grounded theory of leadership such as LMX in other cultures need to be done cognisant of the local cultural context (Hofstede 1993). In the Lao society, *sieu* and family-like relationships are different to LMX. The difference is that the latter is more deterministic because people have to have a work relationship even when they do not like their leaders. For *sieu* or family-like relationships, people can choose who they want to build such relationships with. Therefore, relationships can be extended outside one's organisation such as the public sector. It can be argued that locally, *sieu* relationship and the practices accompanying it-such as people give their *sieu* a priority in cooperation or resource allocation is seen as entirely legitimate. However, the expatriates do not agree because the local norms associated with *sieu* are not resonated with their own guiding Western based norms. Therefore, the locals face a difficult situation. For example, on the one hand, they attempt to be seen as legitimate by local standards such as acquiring the social qualification by respecting officials, giving gifts and building *sieu* relationships. On the other hand, they need to be seen as "legitimate" by expatriates and other international constituents by compliance with the international expectations and standards such as ensuring that rules are followed. The locals, I argue, therefore, must strike a balance between the two sets of guiding norms to earn their leadership roles.

6.4.4 Social networks with officials: benefits and drawbacks

Unsurprisingly there are benefits and drawbacks to social networks reported by senior staff participants. The majority of the participants saw that social networks bring about benefits to their day-to-day work while others raised some drawbacks. In this section only senior staff participants' views are presented because their role directly involves coordinating with government officials. Three key benefits distilled from interviews are “smooth cooperation”, “room for negotiation” and “political backups”. First, all six senior staff participants saw that having social relationship with officials earn them smooth cooperation from their official counterpart. Without the social relationship they said the government officials can manipulate work making what should be easy more difficult. As the statement below demonstrate:

> A good relationship smooths cooperation. For example, if you established a good relationship with your counterpart, shortcuts can be taken. Work that we require from our counterparts is not always difficult or the government does allow us to do. But people make it difficult most of the time. Having personal relations beyond organisational ties, you know like the director communicating with the project coordinator, helps ease any preconditions which are not exactly conditions, but people intentionally make it up. (Gob, 5 January 2012)

The above statement indicates that social relationship -the tie beyond a formal relationship - based on working settings brings about the special treatment to those who have it. It also implies that without this relationship people will still get special treatment but in the opposite direction, like a difficult process instead of an easy one.

The second area of benefits arising from having social relationships with the government officials is “room for negotiation”. Four senior staff participants used the terms “room for negotiation” to refer to the social space where they have a discussion about work informally outside office settings. The discussion, they said, enabled difficult issues to be discussed informally - for example, politically sensitive issues, such as change in minimum wage or financial issues such as per diem. As the following statement demonstrates:

> What we want to do sometimes is out of the government’s comfort zone. And the real tension arises here, for example, intervening in minimum wage paid by garment factories. Again personal relations give us some room for negotiation. It means we can be honest to them about our agenda be it our ideas, project concepts, the DSA [per diem, travel allowances] conditions, funding regulations and etc.(Kiat, 5 October 2011)

This statement shows one of the most important elements of relations. Without social relationships, INGOs can get into trouble by being seen to criticise the government as discussed in Chapter Five.

The third finding is that social relationships offer “political backups” which is related to managing potential tensions as discussed previously. Four senior staff participants shared the view that social relationships offer some sense of security because they keep track of what the government’s view of what they are doing. As the following statement demonstrates:

> You know that working with INGOs we seek to make connections with people in the government so that we keep track of how the government think about us and what we are doing. Having relationships with officials not only helps with coordinating work but provide a sense of safety. Easy to coordinate as well as some political backups. (Kiat, 15 December 2011)

While there are several benefits of social networks outlined above, some participants expressed concerns about the downside of the networks. Three senior staff participants perceived that social networks can weaken their position over development issues and there was a need to maintain this position and the value it stands for. The following statements demonstrate:

> We need to get officials to buy into the idea that they share responsibility in our work too. Not to be diluted by their demand and expectations. Our people need to be united. We need to maintain our strategies and ways of doing things. Not one person work with them transparently whiles the others pave the way for otherwise such as bribery. This will create wrong expectations from the officials again and again. (Kiat, 15 December 2011)

> Build relationship with the government personnel. But you have to have your own position. Don’t lose it. This need to be done in good proportion, some compromise because we don’t want to lose our jobs and don’t want our office closed. (Nok, 10 October 2011)

The first statement implies that having too close a relationship with government officials might weaken the position of the INGO staff. Therefore, the participants thought that they need to be united and stick to the values and purpose of the INGO sector as a way to maintain their position. In the same vein, the second statement conveys the participant’s perceived risks that can arise if they do not form social networks with the government officials. Maintaining the sector’s position and the international expectation of INGOs is important for the local leaders in order to be seen as legitimate for leadership roles. It is clear that building social networks with the government is the effort to meet the local expectation while maintaining the INGO position is to meet the international one. Balancing and compromising is critical then because too much one way or the other the local leadership will not been seen as legitimate as articulated in Chapter Five. Therefore, the trustworthiness of the locals is in the spotlight. This trade-off can contribute to the local leaders advance to the top as they can accomplish this balancing act as insiders.

6.4.5 Discussion

From the entrepreneurship perspective, it can be argued that developing networking skills, earning social qualification and building trusted relationships are exercises in mobilising “social capital”- the resources the local entrepreneurs need to change and transform social norms. They build on these resources to achieve organisational goals which in turn legitimate their leadership. As I have pointed out in this section, the trusted relationships, social qualifications and networks benefits are all grounded in the domestic guiding norms. Therefore, building social networks, gaining the social qualification and building trusted relationship are one part of the local leaders’ job. The legitimacy earned from possessing these resources and competencies is only valid before the local stakeholders. As the local leaders still have international stakeholders to be accountable to, they would need to take the international guiding norms into account when mobilising these resources.

Institutional theorists argue that, “rules prescribe individual functions within the group and thus eliminate the need of members to negotiate every new transaction with each other” (Gibbs and Bromley 1989, p.26). Moreover, anthropologists such as Douglas and Wildavsky (1983) reiterate the transaction cost minimising function. They vision the role of institutions as “problem-simplifying devices” and reason that individuals “delegate their decision- making processes to institutions”(Douglas and Wildavsky 1983). Research participants in this study were compliant with domestic and international rules and norms and exploiting the minimised transaction costs. However, at times they alter the domestic rules by mobilising social resources: using personal relationships to negotiate change for example. As Scott and Meyer argue, institutionalisation processes can occur at various structural levels – from interpersonal and intra-organisational to organisational field, to societal and even to the trans-societal level (Scott and Meyer 1994). In the same vein, senior staff participants were struggling to lead staff members legitimately, build relationships with the public sector and bridge the two sets of guiding norms.

From the social capital perspective, according to the work of Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998), "the central proposition of social capital theory is that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs…much of this capital is embedded within networks of mutual acquaintance" (1998; p. 243). Social capital, it is argued, increases the efficiency of action, and aids cooperative behaviour (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). From the empirical evidence presented in the above section, this theory of social capital has played out clearly in the development sector in Lao PDR. However, because of widespread corruption transparency is being compromised. This compromise occurs as a result of people using their social capital for personal gain. Furthermore, it has been clear that social relationships and the social capital therein, are an important influence on the development of both human and intellectual capital. At the individual level, local staff with better social capital - individuals with stronger contact networks - will achieve greater efficacy in their work. Yet it is at the organisation level that social capital is highly important. As Nahapiet and Ghoshal argue, "social capital facilitates the development of intellectual capital by affecting the conditions necessary for exchange and combination to occur" (1998; p. 250). We have seen that INGOs have facilitated some of these conditions. It's up to the individuals who will have to exploit the opportunity and make the most of that support.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the second research question about the individual resources and capacities that lead them to leadership success. Key themes distilled from responses to this question are local leadership styles, personal capacities and inter-personal capacities. In the local leadership style section, three key findings were discussed. First, local personnel participants stressed that participatory/inclusive leadership were preferable both in "perceived" and "current" leadership. Secondly, expatriate participants expressed concern about disengagement and isolation leadership style as exemplified by the public sector. Finally, local staff participants were uncertain about which style of local leadership they should develop because the expatriate-led style could upset the locals while the local style was seen as illegitimate by international standards. Underpinning the discussion was the elements of traditional versus modern societal norms. The domestic/traditional norms focused too much on the people aspect that compromised the ability to get the job done. At the same time, the international/modernised norms emphasised task completion. The local leaders are in the middle and strike for the balance.

In the second section, four key traits and competencies missing from the skill set of the locals were discussed. The “missing” local personality traits are language ability, critical/logical thinking, initiative taking and self-confidence. These personality traits are missing from the local and were thought to hinder the locals’ development to leadership roles. These findings are not homogenous though because some senior staff participants believed the local expressed their competencies differently from the conventional ways of assessment or viewpoint. For example, some participants pointed out that the locals expressed and “articulated” their ideas better in places without expatriates. The concept of human capital has played out well in the INGO setting in Laos. Analysis of human capital beyond human resource emphasises the organisational level of capacity development.

The section on inter-personal capacities found four key themes including networking skills, social qualification, trusted relationships and benefits of social networks. These were analysed in relation to the concept of “social capital”. From the institutional perspective, research participants were compliant with organisational rules and norms. At times they try to change the norms by building social capital. The concept of social capital defined by networks, ties, and relationships helped shed light on the efficacy of work within the INGO sector.

The findings throughout this chapter show the manifestation of the confluence of the two sets of norms and expectations. For example, the locals have taken for granted personal relationships and their resulting benefits. However, the expats generally saw, albeit with occasional nuanced analysis, the resulting benefits illegitimate and incompatible to mainstream management or by international normative standards. The next chapter will explore the organisational initiatives that aim to foster the process of LLD.

Chapter 7

Local Leadership Development Initiatives: the action learning perspective

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses research question number three: What have been the experiences of LLD within the INGO sector? This question responds to the lack of research into understanding the practice of LLD within the INGO sector in general and Laos in particular. In reviewing the literature, INGO work on leadership development either focuses on the successful experiences of a particular leader or capacity building initiatives that rely on the “quick fix” programmatic based approach. This research adds to the individual or programme based approaches by discussing the individual, organisational and institutional factors of LLD.

The discussion in this chapter is located within the theory of action learning (Revans 1982, McGill and Brockbank 2003). This theory suggests that adults learn through an iterative process of learning, acting and reflecting. This theory is consistent with the leadership development framework developed by the researchers from the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL). The CCL researchers, McCauley, Van Veslor and Ruderman (2010), explain a two-part model for developing leaders. The first part illustrates three elements that in combination make developmental experiences stronger: assessment, challenge and support. The second part of the model demonstrates that the leader development process involves a variety of developmental experiences and the ability to reflect and learn from them. The process is rooted in a particular leadership context which includes elements such as age, culture, economic conditions, gender of the population, organisational purpose and mission and business strategy (McCauley et al. 2010).

The chapter is structured into four main sections. The first, Section 7.2, addresses an emergent issue of capacity building including its supports, constraints and the nature of capacity building development programme. Section 7.3 discusses the core concept of this chapter, leadership development, in the form of learning, practicing and reflecting. Section 7.4 illustrates factors that influence the process of LLD including cultural source of leadership, expatriate role as trainer, learning outside work setting and INGO bureaucracies.

7.2 Capacity building programmes

The primary objective of the research is to understand the process of LLD within the INGO sector in Laos. During initial data analysis as the fieldwork progressed, it became clear that such LLD initiatives were embedded within the concept of “capacity building”. Therefore, the focus was placed on examining capacity building initiatives. In doing so, this section discusses the responses to the following question: “How do capacity building initiatives contribute to the LLD?”

Three key themes were distilled from research participants’ responses to the above question: “financial support for capacity building”; “structural constraints to capacity building” and “programmatic constraints to effective capacity building initiatives”. There is a financial support for capacity building work. However, a number of factors undermined efforts to achieve capacity building. These include: structural constraints, short-term projects coupled with a high turnover rate of staff and programmatic constraints. The work is particularly ineffective when it is considered from a leadership development perspective. Each is now reported in turn.

7.2.1 Financial supports for capacity building

Capacity building would not be possible without sufficient financial supports from INGOs and donors. Participants’ view was that in most INGOs, there are two sources of funding allocated to capacity building. First, all six local senior staff participants reported that most INGOs mobilised resources for capacity building through a pool fund with the fund contributed to by bilateral and multilateral donors without specific restriction on its usage. Second, four key participants reported that funding for capacity building activities were mobilised through a donor specific fund attached to donor-supported projects or programmes which supported leadership development initiatives. The following three statements demonstrate the views:

> As an INGO we allocate some money for capacity building ourselves. This funding comes from our headquarters. We also receive money for this work from a pool fund from multilateral donors such as UNDP or bilateral donors such as JICA, AusAID, SDC, etc. (Nok, 10 December 2011)

> It depends on donors. Different donors support capacity building differently. They will have different policy. But for this organisation, I think that donor support capacity building for locals... They [headquarter] want to support local [leadership] capacity. But the head quarter is also dependent on the donors, if the donors want to support only HIV projects we can only use their money on that particular activities and capacity building must be associated with those activities. (Gob, 25August 2011)

The common theme within the two statements above is the availability of financial support for capacity building activities. The first statement indicates that there were two sources of funding for capacity building: from their own INGO headquarters and donors. The second statement indicates the second stream of funding for capacity building. This stream of funding comes from donors' specific supports tailored to their "supported" projects. Project based supports from donors is understandable given the lack of qualified human resource in the Lao development sector. As Sultan (2006) noted, a number of qualified development professionals are limited. Therefore, donors' projects in new professional fields must be designed in conjunction with local (lack of) capacity. INGOs first have to run capacity building for INGO personnel and official counterparts so that they are able to run such projects.

These findings are consistent with other studies which found that INGOs remained committed to capacity building with considerable amount of budget allocated to the activities. For example, researchers from International NGO Training Centre (INTRAC) found that, in general, INGOs allocate 30 to 45 percent of annual budget to capacity building (Lipson & Warren, 2006). Although this study did not find evidence of a separate budget allocation to internal staff leadership development, it shows that some capacity building work is financed. However, financial support alone does not lead to effective results. According to the local senior staff and expatriate staff participants, there are some structural constraints that hinder the effectiveness of the capacity building activity.

7.2.2 Structural constraints to capacity building

In this section, structural constraints to effective capacity building within Lao-based INGOs are considered. These constraints include the "high turnover rate among local personnel" and “the short life-cycle of INGO projects”. One of the constraints raised by participants was a high turnover rate among local personnel that makes INGOs executives reluctant to invest extensively in the development of their future leadership capacity. Three expatriate participants spoke from the organisational point of view and contended that many INGOs could not afford to fund extensive capacity building activities as they could not reap the benefits due to a high staff turnover rate. As one expatriate said:

> We cannot do much in this area [capacity building]. Unfortunately, in Laos, many people move very quickly from one organisation to another. Within the government, people may stay [as] a government employee for a long time, but they are moved from one office to another. If we develop their capacity they demand a better job, better pay, etc. It seems to be a common attitude toward INGOs: employees are ready to jump to a new position at a new organisation as soon as they find one that offers a higher salary or better benefits. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

As the statement makes clear local personnel were thought to be highly mobile with low level of commitment to any particular organisations. Three key participants partially shared this view and conceded that their decision to change jobs often had cost them the opportunity for better career and skills development. As one key participant said:

> We might be a little selfish so they don’t really care about our career development. Perhaps it is true. Many people join INGOs for a money reason in the first place. In the public sector as you know well, the salary is low. The trade-off is that you work for the public sector for job security meaning you stay there forever. You don’t have that in the INGO sector. Therefore, making money is in the mind-set. .... Many people move on as they get better positions, you know payment, work place closer to home etc. In fact we should care about the development opportunity than money (Kiat, 15 December 2011)

The statement above implies that when locals access training (discussed above as capacity building), acquisition of enhanced skills leads to their desire to move on to better paid jobs. Therefore, INGOs are less likely to invest substantially in capacity development if they will lose the staff they have invested time and financial resources in. From a human resource development perspective, this constraint should not hinder INGOs from investment in their local staff capacity development. If a majority of them do invest in the capacity development they will contribute to development of a resource pool. Even if high turnover rates are perceived as leading to an immediate loss of direct investment, INGOs could expect to reap the result from the investment that other INGOs had made.

Another constraint was related to the earlier discussion in this chapter on project-based capacity building. The short life-cycle of INGO projects means that capacity building has been a one-off intervention. All six local senior staff participants reported that the short-life cycle of the INGO projects not only creates situations where people only work together for a very short period of time, it also leads to discontinuity in career development. The following two statements demonstrate this view:

> Many INGOs coming with a two to three years budget cycle - means long-term activities are impossible as their donor want to see the results. (Nok, 15 January 2012)

> Some skills take several years to train. But NGO approach to training is not in that direction. The training often takes one or two weeks. (Informal conversation, 2 September 2011)

The short life-cycle of the INGO projects appears to affect the pattern of funding for capacity building programmes. The INGOs' reluctance to invest in the human resource development was raised as an issue by most local senior staff participants. These participants suggested several reasons for this: INGOs' operations are contingent and heavily dependent on donors' funding.

The third finding is that many local personnel appear to be unhappy with the way these resources are utilised. They were unhappy with what they perceived a lack of enthusiasm on the part of higher management to utilise these resources. Some spoke about the misallocation of the resources due to abuse of power. The following statements are representative:

> In this organisation, what we get from capacity building is limited. For example, they just want to get by; they don't care about programme effectiveness. There is no weakness and no need to improve it. Capacity development is not important or not

> serious issue. In case someone should go for training, it is going to be the favourite of the boss. (Kiat, 5 October 2011)

> I think there is probably some evaluation but not so much. Depends really on the course, but yes over the last year [one of INGOs] Laos has been trying to think more about capacity and how to improve what we're doing or how can we build capacity more effectively I guess. And I'm not sure if we have really come up with the answer yet. But I know that people have been looking at that. I'm sure that some of the training that has happened may not give the desired results. But we have not conducted serious M&E I guess. (Nok, 20 January 2012)

For the above local senior participants, a current weakness in capacity building within INGOs is that there is no systematic plan for it. In the first account, the organisational politics also come in to play. The first account indicates that personnel who lack the needed skills should be offered the chance of leadership training. The participant perceived that this is not the case because the boss only offers the opportunity to staff based on personal preference rather than on everyone's professional needs. In the second statement, the concern is about taking capacity building work seriously meaning capacity building activities must include monitoring and evaluation of this work. It can be the case that the short-life cycle of the projects leads to a lack of M&E (monitoring and evaluation). The participant was concerned that this lack of M&E had resulted in ineffective capacity building activities as no one is monitoring its effectiveness either at local INGO or donor levels.

7.2.3 Programmatic constraints to effective capacity building initiatives

At the programme level, it was reported that there are many conditions that determine the effectiveness or not of capacity building. When asked what conditional factors affect capacity building programmes, issues such as "quantity-orientation", "communication difficulty" and "organisational political will" were raised. First, participants referred to an over-emphasis on quantity at the expense of quality as a cause of the capacity building programme ineffectiveness. All six local senior staff participants and five local community participants spoke about INGOs being too concerned with the number of trainees going through programmes as opposed to the quality of the training on offer. The participants were afraid that the participatory and practicality aspects of the training would be missed out if too many trainees were in the training programme. According to the participants, the need to recruit a lot of trainees also leads to trainees having little to no work background relevant to the topic of the training. The following statements illustrate this:

> I think we look to numbers and effectiveness. But, we now take a large number of trainees in. This affects time for interactions and actually doing it. What we need perhaps is practice. And give them some background information and then work with them, let them to do it themselves. And so it's more of a hands-on approach. And I think it's a better way, but whether it's enough I don't know. (Nok, 20 January 2012)
> Formal training is not designed well. Many times I have seen trainings up take too many trainees. Without having work background or interest in the trainings and some just go to get per diem. When they come back those new learned knowledge is not used. (Informal conversation, 27January 2012)

The statements stress the common theme of a practice of overemphasising the number over an interest in the quality and relevance of the trainings. This is consistent with my observation of the farmer association training. In this training, the need to meet the maximum number of participants leads to the trainees coming from vastly different areas and different level of background knowledge about the topic leading to uneven and ineffective training outcomes. The second participant's statement also implies that some trainees were sent to join the training session just to give the individuals a chance to earn the per diem. As a consequence, they have no chance to put newly learned skills into practice because they attend the training that is not relevant to their jobs. The second statement not only implies the need to meet the maximum number of participants but also the lack of a systematic approach to training.

Another finding concerning the effectiveness or not of capacity building programmes is a lack of local capacity builders which leads to international consultants being used. With use of international training consultants, the common problem around communication was noted. Five local senior participants spoke about the difficulty of finding sufficiently qualified local capacity builders and the disadvantages of using external consultants for this work. The following statements demonstrate this:

> [They bring] trainers in from outside. [They] can't follow up. Looking for local providers, [it is not available]. (Informal conversation, 2 September 2011)

> It depends on who the trainers are. Some trainers communicate well with the Lao trainees. Many times I experienced that when we have internal meeting the Lao colleagues seem to be passive and not responding. When we allocate tasks they didn't say they can do it or cannot do it or what they were thinking about. I don't know when it comes to training how is that going to affect the learning process (Informal conversation, 15 December 2011).

As the above statements make clear, there were concerns about the nature and effectiveness of communication and interaction during the trainings. This is because the participants saw that the locals' communication patterns are different from what their international trainers would expect. The expatriate participants spoke about some communication issues facing them when interacting with their local counterparts at work; they suspected the same types of issues could happen at the training. These issues include the culture of being silent, passive and irresponsive on the part of the locals. These findings echo what has been known as the communication in high and low context cultures, as per the seminal work of (Hall & Steehouder 2004). According to Hall, in the high context culture, many things are left unspoken, letting the culture speak for itself. It can be interpreted that the Lao culture falls into high context culture category where unspoken messages are common. I argue that for the effectiveness of the capacity building, the design of the training needs to take into account and accommodate the ways the domestic culture and the local communication patterns impact on the effective training of local staff.

In summary, the high turnover rate among locals, the short project life cycle and priority on tangible results over soft skills developments are factors affecting the effectiveness or not of capacity building. In other words, INGOs run the organisation similar to their corporate counterpart – looking for a return for their investment. This finding contradicts other studies which have found that INGOs or NGOs were perceived as a learning organisation where human resource development is usually systematically addressed (Edwards 1997, Madon 1999, Power, Maury et al. 2002). If they are committed to this notion of being a learning organisation they would contribute to the development of a pool of qualified local staff available and would make it a priority to increase the number of qualified local personnel.

Furthermore, the findings in this section appear to suggest that in practice capacity building work does not match up with the well-established conceptual model of capacity building. In the field of capacity building, scholars have noted the importance of systematic capacity building. For example, Honadle and Hannah (1982) developed a systematic framework for capacity building. The framework comprises of “action-oriented” dimension – training the work group does not separate out individuals but involve using real problems and applying the skills to real jobs and “enhancement” dimension - building on existing knowledge and skills not transferring what the trainers know. Furthermore, development scholars argued that capacity-building occurs over time; it should be perceived as a process as opposed to a single intervention (Allen et al. 2003, Honadle and Hannah 1982, Ogilvie). The findings in this study show that in practice capacity building work remains stuck in the “quick-fix” approach rather than a longer-term commitment on behalf of INGOs. Even when there is sufficient funding, the practice has not led to the use of the funding effectively.

7.3 On-the-job trainings as leadership development

Building on the ideas about learning by action among the local development professionals (discussed in Chapter Three), this section explores how leadership might be learned by action. In leadership development literature, training, coaching and mentoring have been noted as the most used forms of leadership development practices (Bass and Bass 2008, Day 2001, Lambert and Delchambre 2005,). Most of these activities have drawn upon adult learning theory which is part and parcel of the action learning theory (Black and Earnest 2009).

An analysis of interview data reveals two key themes in relation to learning leadership by action. These are: “leadership development potentials” and “leadership development limitations”. While there are potentials for on the job leadership development, limitations appear to outweigh them. These are reported in turn.

7.3.1 Leadership development potentials from on-the-job trainings

The analysis of local senior participant interview data reveals that a diversity of experiences can contribute to leadership learning. Two key participants and three expatriate participants shared the view that practical hands-on experiences such as selected set of skills training, exchange visit, one-on-one mentoring and systematic on-the-job support were very useful for leadership development. The statements below are representative of these views:

> I think we can support people who have potential by providing certain skills trainings such as group facilitation, participatory decision-making, etc.-along with opportunities for the learnt skills to be put in practice followed by feedbacks and encouragement. (Informal conversation, 18 July 2011)

> We have to train [provide] the missing skills. Not necessary trainings - some exchange trips are useful. At work, we often thought we've done well. But it is not the case when you see other ideas, see how others do things. Exchanges are also learning opportunity. Exchange is better because it is most hands-on than regular training, usually theoretical. I'm not saying that training is bad but has different benefits. (Nok, 20 January 2012)

> Exchange visits to overseas projects…. give them the opportunity for on-the-job improvement through exchange of good lessons learnt. (Informal conversation, 18 January 2012)

The above statements indicate that "trainings" on the missing skills are necessary. What all statements have in common is that the skills developed have to be practiced in the context of real jobs. In the first statement, facilitation and participatory decision-making were examples of new skills to be acquired in training; the statement also emphasised the learned skills needed to be put into practice and feedback should be provided. Similarly, the second and third statements indicate that on-the-job training such as exchange visits can lead to performance improvement. This finding therefore counteracts an important myth in the organisation world where change hardly occurs when things seem to be alright; but this only leads people to running head on into the problem later on– particularly true where leadership development is not done (King & Wei 2014).

Another leadership development potential derived from on-the-job trainings is to give the locals the opportunity and long-term support and mentoring. Both local senior staff and expatriate staff participants shared the view that provision of "on-the-job" supports such as "let the locals do the jobs" and the expatriates support from behind, can help to develop real leadership capacity. The following statements demonstrate this:

> In fact we run the whole project ourselves. Perhaps not totally cut off external supports, but we only need to use them for a week or two. For example, in doing research, we only need them [expatriate consultants] two weeks instead of one month or throughout a whole project. We can also set up an internet connection system to communicate for on-going support. (Pah, 30 November 2011)
>
> It seems to me [that] one-on-one mentoring with a long-term plan of what skills to build is the best…. A person doesn't become a leader overnight. Especially in a place like Laos where the education system does not encourage innovation and questioning, where people who raise their voice and encourage group action are often told to be quiet, leaders need time and lots of encouragement to develop. This is why a longer-term tenure would be very helpful to an organization—so the investment and trust they give to a person has time to pay off as they become more and more capable. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

The participants' views emphasise provision of long-term supports and one-on-one mentoring that can be done in various ways. The first account represents the emerging trend that is to let the local staff run the project and only bring in expat consultants when needed for specified period of time. One expatriate account of his experience seeing local people running the project reinforced the above mentioned trend. The second statement indicates that leadership development is going to take times and staff need a lot of encouragement over the long period of time to develop proactive behaviours that are pertinent to leadership.

The final leadership development potential seen to be acquired from on-the-job trainings is the concept of "room to grow". Seven expatriate participants shared the view that the locals need room to grow: realistically doing the job in place of expatriates and at the same time supported by experienced expatriates. The statement below demonstrates this view:

> Probably the biggest thing that we can do to support the growth of leaders is to give them room to grow! Then, when they make some small mistakes, backing them up, continuing to support them, so that they learn from the mistakes but keep building their confidence. Leaders will develop when there is space and opportunity. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

The above statement is from an expatriate participant who has been working with the locals for over ten years. Apart from suggesting a nurturing approach, the comment is consistent with the findings in the previous chapter where self-confidence was reported to be a missing quality of the locals. The participant recognised the importance of providing continuous support as a method to improve the locals' confidence. These findings resonate with previous studies. For example, Day (2001) and Dinkin and Frederick (2013) found that leadership development practice is most effective if it is carried out as an action-learning based project that incorporates feedback, coaching and mentoring and networking. The findings above confirm that leadership capacity development is best implemented as an action-learning process.

7.3.2 Limitations of on–the–job training

This section examines how the leadership development potentials outlined above can be implemented in practice. There are many limitations. Some of the limitations raised were the lack of room to grow and lack of trust in the ability of local staff. All six local senior staff participants and two expatriate participants shared the view that the locals were not given room to grow due to the lack of trust in their ability. The following statements illustrate this view.

> When I arrived up in *Khua* [one of the districts], the local team was far remote from the Vientiane office and they had been without a boss for a while. Yet, they managed themselves well. This perhaps shows that it is the international people's domination that does not support Lao personnel taking responsibility. But when they do they can do the job. Perhaps we can start to play the supporting role rather than doing the job ourselves (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

> Within international organisations, I've seen very different approaches to cultivating leadership. Some, like [one of INGOs], pretty much leave no room for national personnel to take serious responsibility because the director wouldn't trust anyone to make serious decisions and if someone made a mistake, they were put down for it. Other organisations, like CARE–International, pushed Lao nationals into taking positions of responsibility and making decisions. Some people, like [someone's name], did great. But hardly allowed taking up higher responsibility. All the people

made some mistakes, but the organizations moved forward and grew with those people as they gained real leadership experiences. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

The first statement indicates that when there are no expatriates available the locals can handle the task. However the problem is there is no time and effort for trial and error to occur and learn from one's successes or mistakes. This means that a chance for the locals to experiment with a real on-the-job situation is rarely created for them. The second statement indicates that the participants know the most effective approach to leadership development is taking the long-term approach. Interestingly, the approach has no room to play out in practice. From the above view, LLD faces a dilemma of lack of trust. On the one hand, the legitimacy and qualification of local leadership rest on the trust in the local leaders' potential and abilities. On the other hand, it is up to the locals to engineer a new paradigm of thought about what constitutes local leadership rather than simply imitating expatriates.

Another area of limitations to the leadership development is the different role played by local staff and expatriates. Regardless of their formal positions in the organisational structure, all six senior staff participants and most of the community participants reported that the locals had not occupied leadership roles. Some of the leadership roles occupied by the local INGO personnel were described as "a middle person," "a deputy/coordinator" and "a technical professional." Most senior staff participants shared this view; expressed that expatiates took precedence over them in leadership roles. The following statements demonstrate this:

> I'm a programme coordinator. Programme director is an expat. A deputy is Lao, me. The decision making within the plan is for me. But something outside the plan we need to discuss with director. (Kai, 10 November 2011)
> Mostly if donors or representatives come, expats handle them. We don't know much what they discussed. If we encounter them they just say hi, that's all. (Nok, 3 August, 2011)

It is quite clear that expatriates work with international affairs and the locals with domestic ones. This finding is important for understanding LLD. As noted in Chapter Three, leadership development involves learning, experiencing and reflecting. The local staff learn leadership by observing expatriate colleagues as suggested by adult learning theory (see for example, Mezirow 1997); however, without practicing and reflecting from observation of leadership learning about leadership is unlikely to occur. There is little chance that the locals will undertake many international related tasks such as receiving donors' representatives as this is usually a matter for expats to deal with. So there is no space for locals to learn and build confidence in exercising key executive leadership tasks. Furthermore, as they divide their tasks and roles, it is likely that they will only become specialised in their particular area of coordinating domestic matters. This can lead to the lack of the opportunity for the two parties to learn from one another.

The final area of limitation of leadership development potentials is a genuine intention from international parties to develop local leaders. If INGOs want to build capacity of local leaders it means that significant change will need to happen. It was reported that most INGOs had a vision of achieving "localisation"– transferring leadership responsibility to local staff. In practice, with a few exceptions the transferring of leadership roles only occurs at the deputy level. All six senior staff participants described their role as the second highest position in their organisation with the expatriate boss above them. The following statements illustrate this view:

> There are no succession plans or long term development of human resources. The system works like that. INGOs only recruit qualified personnel or hoping they will learn by doing but not really have in mind the intention to systematically develop their internal personnel development. (Informal conversation, 25January 2012)

> The international community will have to step back and think are they doing enough to facilitate this to happen. Expats have to really ask themselves how best to build on, develop local people to be the leader so far I think they don't. (Gob, 23 October 2011)

The common theme emerging from the above statements is that the real intention to develop local leadership capacity is lacking. According to the senior staff and local staff member participants, the international parties are reluctant to embark on significant change such as delegating some responsibilities to the locals so that they can develop leadership skills that are based on the real needs of the job they are doing.

The practical aspect of acquiring on the job leadership trainings appears to be severely limited in scope. Some of the reasons include expatriate's domination over executive positions, the rush for results and the lack of real commitment the international parties. This finding resonates with literature in development, which argues that INGOs are reluctant to put untested managers in charge because of the survival needs of the organisations (Alymkulova and Seipulnik 2005, Coleman 2005, Fowler 1992, Srinivas 2009). This is the growing 'technicisation' of development, the reliance on checklists, forms and procedures that formalise the top–down process of development interventions, particularly fiscal accountability. Popular tools include those that measure developmental outcomes such as the logical framework (Gasper, 2000; Roberts, Jones, & Frohling, 2005). Because of these technical demands and paperwork there is no space for the local to practice leadership roles. The most important observation to be made is that most of the participants from three groups understand that practicing/experiencing would lead to leadership skills improvement. Sometimes when they get the opportunity to practice (accidentally) they can do the tasks. Perhaps fear of unsuccessful change hinders these people to move from realisation to action.

7.3.3 Reflections and leadership development

As discussed in Chapter Three, this study postulates that in order for leadership development to occur the contextually based conditions must be created so that the process of learning, acting and reflecting can occur. This section examines how the INGO sector had created (or not) such conditions for reflection and practice as part of the learning process. Reflections rarely occur for systematic and individual reasons.

For the systematic reasons, the participants reported that INGOs were influenced by the culture in the development sector, which place so much emphasis on results that they did not pay much attention to staff development. All six senior staff participants, five expatriates and seven local staff member participants shared the view that the rush to achieve concrete and measurable results had meant those in the sector spent less time to reflect on what they were doing. The following statements illustrate this:

> We want to get too much done. This presents problems for the organisations and the [local] people lose the opportunity to refine and develop within a supportive environment. Some movement is good, exposing people to new ideas and places,

> but too much cuts of development of confidence and experience. There needs to be a balance and it seems like the ethic staff in Laos tends toward flexibility to move too quickly. (Informal conversation, 6 July 2011)

> But the problem is with the big organisations like this. There are always so many demands and datelines that have to be met one after the other. And we spend most of our time doing those things. And not enough time to teach other people how to do it. It needs to be done tomorrow. So the only choice is I do it myself. …the percentage of my work that's been spent on building capacity is pretty small. And it is one of the things that is quite frustrating actually. If I have more time....but it is difficult to balance that I suppose with big organisation, there so many demands. And because our org has so many projects going at the same time it is difficult to support them all and uh so definitely there is big capacity gap in terms of what their job requires and the support officers or funders/donors expect. (Informal conversation, 25 December 2011)

> Expat in my office doesn't have chance to speak with me. He has a lot of work to do, as does other staff. No time to sit down beside each other and work out say report editing together. (Nok, 15 December 2011)

It appears that there is no culture of reflection and learning about leadership development within the sector. The first statement indicates clearly that the system demands results and everyone works from that basis. In the second statement, the expatriate acknowledged that she spent most of her time on paperwork and did not have space for coaching and supporting her local colleagues. This makes sense as they work long hours and the organisation demands a lot from them. Both expatriates and local staff don't have a chance to reflect or put the lessons learned into another cycle of practice.

The above findings reflect how the system works within the development sector. According to Thomas (1999) and Fowler and Edwards (2002) the working of an INGO is as follows. An INGO comes into being around a project, however, broadly defined. In time, with success in the project and a reputation established, the INGO develops several projects, sometimes handled separately and sometimes clustered into programmes. The pursuit of these projects and programmes is largely conducted through funds received from donors of one kind or another. The funding is typically allocated for a specific project. This affects the notion of human resource development. A project has a beginning and an end date. Personnel appointments are therefore project–based, contractual and for specified time periods. The INGO sector as whole needs to ask who should be held responsible for human resource development especially for the sector.

At the individual level, the participants reported that culture plays a big part in the fact that both local and expat development practitioners rarely reflect and learn from what they do. The following statements illustrate this:

> Sometimes it is quite difficult for many Lao personnel to stop and think and learn from the experience (particularly the negative experience). It may be their capacity or relaxation or their hesitancy of the change, which prevents them from learning from the mistake, improve it and moving forward by not step in the same hole again in the future (Gai, 15 September 2011)

> No time to learn English especially women hectic workload and look after family no time to improve English as well as other skills (Informal conversation, 26 December 2011)

> In the general sense, giving and receiving feedbacks is not in our culture. We are afraid of our colleagues to lose face. It was like *pamad* [disrespect] other people. (Informal conversation, 25 January 2012)

The common theme shared in all above statements is that there is a sense of habit or lack of habit of reflection on their day-to-day tasks among the local personnel. The first statement suggests that by local culture the locals are more likely to stay with the status quo than to change. It can be argued that the culture has hold them back. Another aspect is the role of family as indicated in the second statement. Looking after family, particularly women, is a major cultural factor that hinders reflection and learning although this can occur only indirectly. Female staff must rush home after work; their responsibilities to conduct household chores reduce the time and energy they can direct toward their work, particularly ‘out-of-hours’ work. These gendered additional responsibilities represent a disadvantage in the workplace and for career progression. Furthermore, when reflection is associated with giving and receiving feedback about their ability and performance the locals face another dilemma. They are aware that Lao people are culturally sensitive to giving feedback therefore they avoid giving negative feedback or abandon giving any feedback altogether. The following section will further explore the socio-cultural dimension of how this influences the process of LLD.

7.4 The social sources of leadership development

This section discusses findings related to barriers to learning leadership through the social activities and social life outside work setting. It illustrates that attitudes and behaviours considered “good” for the Lao society are seen as hindering development of leadership attributes and competencies in the local staff participants. In addition, differences in culture and way of life between local and international colleagues hinder them from learning from one another and particularly the locals learning from the internationals. I argue that this issue of mutual learning or transferring of knowledge plays an important part in LLD, because, as discussed earlier, the organisational formal training methods have not been effective as they should have been. The following sections illustrate these findings.

7.4.1 Family and upbringing as leadership resources

This section focuses on how cultural backgrounds affect the process of LLD. All six senior staff participants talked about how social institutions such as family, school and society at large reproduce “discouraging” attitudes and behaviours that hinder the development of key leadership attributes. The following statements demonstrate the views:

> In family, when children want to talk about something we always stop them. It goes like – you are still young, you must not talk. You have to listen to parents or the elders. At school, the sole speaker is the teacher. The teacher speaks rightly or wrongly who knows but never allow any room for a challenge. In society, when there is discussion; the older people must be respected as are their opinions. Even worse, sometimes you know that what the older people said is wrong by any rationales but you never point it out. (Kiat, 5 October 2011)

> In the kindergarten [in Australia], every day I noticed kids were sitting in circle and caretakers will ask: what did you do yesterday? The kids would raise their hand and speak up. Reported everything they’ve done. In our country, teachers would say, “I told you to be silent”. We are afraid of teacher, right! Don’t even dare to ask

> questions, but them, they asked questions, they confident in speaking, expressing their ideas. I think we need to do the same. (Gob, 23 October 2011)

The statements make clear that the way the children are brought up influences their adult attitudes and behaviours. The senior staff participants saw that the way children grew up in Lao society discouraged them from being proactive and curious, important attitudes that are pertinent for developing and exercising leadership. In the first statement, the senior staff participants formed the view that children were taught to be humble, modest and respectful. This is more so with women because it is believed that women are like the “two back legs of an elephant”. This means that women should play supporting roles from behind. While leading from behind is discussed in leadership literature (Hill 2010), within the context of INGO in Laos this personality type is valued less. This view represents the local values which comprise the “good” personality. In the second statement, the participant spoke about her observation of a kindergarten in Australia where she sent her child to the facility. She made a clear distinction between the education systems of Australia and Laos. In short, the Lao system discouraged children’s individuality and creativity while the Australian system promotes it. From a human resource development perspective, this constraint should not hinder INGOs from investment

These findings need cautious interpretation though. Given the context of INGO work which is domestically and internationally determined, the above views only reflect the latter participants’ leadership expectations. As it has emerged throughout the study, the local people are more likely to ascribe to being humble and quiet leaders. The more proactive leaders are preferred in INGOs as determined by international guiding norms. However, INGO leaders work not only within the international norms but also within domestic ones.

7.4.2 Local–expatriate socialisation as leadership development sources

This section considers the locals’ exposure to international cultures and worldviews through local-expatriate socialisation and its implications for LLD. As Scott and Meyer (1994) argue, institutionalisation can occur at the interpersonal level. Following on from institutional theory, I propose that the expatriates, regardless of their formal positions and roles, can spread new values, beliefs and standards of practice to the locals.

When asked about how socialisation occurs between the local and expatriate personnel, the responses comprised a degree of variation. One of the common views was that socialisation rarely happens because they did not spend an extensive period of time together. Three senior staff participants and five local staff member participants spoke about spending time together after work that mostly happens among the locals with expatriates rarely joining in because they do not share in the way of life. The following statement demonstrates the view:

> It hardly happens. It's not easy they don't share our ways of life. They don't play *petong* [a sport popular among Lao staff] with us after work. They don't join *pig's ears* BBQ with us after work. We are also uncomfortable to go to their place and drink wine with them. You know that what their way of life is. We don't have much to share with them in conversations. So it is very difficult. Unlike Lao bosses, we can offer *lieng beer* [pay for beer], *karaoke* [pay for karaoke] *etc*. We can bring something with us for them but we can't do that with expat. So building relationships that would lead to exchange of knowledge and other skills is very difficult. (Informal conversation, 25 January 2012)

Partaking in customs and rituals as exemplified in the terms "showing the way of life" was considered important to initiate relationships with international colleagues, particularly people with higher rank in the organisation. The local staff member participant pointed out clearly the different way of life that makes them unable to access the friendship–like relationship where mutual support can happen between locals and expats. The local staff member participant indicated that the way they build and maintain relationships with local bosses cannot be universally applied to working with expats. This means, for example, that paying for meals or offering gifts might please local bosses but anger the international bosses as they would see that as bribery. As discussed in Chapter Six, the difference in local and international norms around what constitute bribery creates new institutional arena for the locals. For example, the relational aspects of leadership are thoroughly susceptible to both the process of the action learning set and the cycle of experimentation and reflection (Boud, Cressey & Docherty, 2006; Pierce & Newstrom, 2000).

The above view was also expressed by expatriate participants. Four expatriate participants shared the concern about the different ways of life, which hinders relationship building, particularly between local staff and those senior and well established expatriates. They pointed out that local-expatriate socialising was likely to happen with young and single expatriates than those senior people whose family accompanied them to Laos. As one expatriate said:

> … It depends like with some expats they don't socialise much with the Lao personnel; because they come here with family and they are not interested in that kind of thing. But people like me I guess other younger expats or people working here in [one of the provinces] closer to their locals. There is some socialisation outside of work but depends on people involve. (Informal conversation, 20 January 2012)

It is interesting to note that this participant was young and her comment was affirmative toward socialising. As the statement indicates, expatriates are very different. Some live their life mainly with themselves and their family. It is likely and this is consistent with my observation, that those socially distanced from the locals were older expats, more established in their job. In contrast, younger individuals who were close to the locals lacked positions of authority within the organisation. This means that even though the locals have access to some socialisation, exposure to diverse cultures, they are unlikely to benefit a great deal in terms of leadership experiences and insights gain from this social interaction.

The lack of local-expatriate socialisation was particularly a problem for those locals who had less exposure to foreigners. Two senior staff participants and five local community participants shared the view that the fact that they had never been to study overseas or work extensively with foreigners contributes to difficulty in participating in the local-expatriate socialisation process:

> You mean Lao socialise with foreigners? I think it is slightly different from Lao to Lao. And it is going to be very hard for someone who has never been to overseas or never work with foreigners. They simply find it uncomfortable interacting with *falang* [foreigner]. But for those who used to study in overseas or have experiences where they have encountered expats a lot will find advantages. (Gob, 23 October 2011)

The statement above shows that exposure to international experiences is important for the locals. This is because they work in the context of INGOs whereby day-to-day work involved interacting with foreigners in one way or another. While recognising the importance of interacting with foreigners, locals find it difficult to get more exposure to them in Lao society because of cultural differences between the two groups.

Another factor contributing to the difficulty in building relationships with international colleagues is their mobility. All three groups of participants share a view that a high turnover rate among INGO personnel gives rise to the difficulty in building and maintaining relationships. As one local community participant said:

> Making friends and maintaining relationship with expats is difficult because they move a lot. …. Sometimes some expats are difficult to get along or take long time to do. Sometimes by the time we become friendly, they have to go. Or we have to go. (Informal conversation, 25 August 2011)

This statement indicates that a high mobility rate among INGO personnel leads to breakdown of relationships. This finding is consistent with the discussion in Section 7.2.2 where the short-life cycle of the INGO's projects increase the personnel mobility accordingly. It can be interpreted that the mobility undermines relationships and development of trust among local staff.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented three key themes including capacity building as essential to leadership development, on-the-job training as integral to leadership development and the social sources of leadership development. By doing so it has addressed the third research question, "What have been the experiences of LLD within the INGO sector?"

Three key arguments developed throughout the chapter. First, it was demonstrated that participants expressed the view that leadership development was undermined because of insufficient financial support to directly fund specific leadership capacity activities. There lacked the systematic and long–term approach that is needed for leadership development. This lack of the systematic approach to dedicating resources was the result of the fact that the sector was relied on the development sector as whole for funding. There was also some cultural diversity that had implications for the effectiveness of capacity building programmes.

Secondly, as a result of the lack of a clear well-funded leadership development strategy, the task of local leadership development was left to informal practices. However, it was illustrated that even informal practices to promote leadership development were limited because of time constraints within programmes and budgets and whether expatriates knew how to carry out such a task. It is evident that the organisational paperwork demands on the INGO staff particularly expatriates hindered them from engaging in coaching and mentoring on the job which could have contributed to leadership development. In addition, the need to get more out of less INGO time and resources also forced expatriates to perform the task themselves rather than allowing some space for “trial and errors” by the locals working under supervision of the expatriates. Furthermore, the broader community’s trust on the local leaders remains low and delegation of tasks to them rarely occurred which in turn leads to the lack of opportunity by the locals to practice leadership.

The final argument is that leadership development rarely occurs through the informal learning process due to “passive” personality of the local personnel and the nature of cultural differences between the locals and expatriates, which limit learning and sharing between the two. In interviews and informal conversations all groups of participants were asked about whether or not leadership development occurs through socialising with expats. Underlining this question is the common assumption that international workers in INGOs, in developed countries, were recruited to develop the capacity of locals, with the ultimate goal of enabling local management of the NGOs’ own affairs (Martin 2009). However, misunderstanding, lifestyle differences between the locals and expats make it hard for the two parties to interact socially.

Chapter 8
Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I will first outline a summarised overview of the major themes from this study. These themes will be discussed with reference to the research aims and research questions. I will critically reflect upon to what extent I have successfully responded to the research questions. I set out suggesting that the significance of this study is evident in the potential to better understand the experiences of LLD practice and thus be able to address the issues related to local leadership development.

The chapter is organised into four parts. The first part is a brief overview of the aim, research questions and methods. The second part provides the summary of the findings in relation to the three primary research questions and the interpretation of these findings. The third part addresses the significance of the findings and contributions to the knowledge as well as limitations.

8.1 Overview of the aims, conceptions and research questions

The study explored the experiences of LLD within the INGO sector in the Lao social context. The research viewed LLD as a process of interaction between the individual and social structure whereby leadership occurs. The study addressed both conceptual and practical gaps in the development literature. Conceptually, the contemporary leadership literature had focused heavily on the individual aspect of the leadership phenomenon. Leadership theorists present this phenomenon from a psychological paradigm that sees leadership from the individual attribute perspective (Bendix, 1956; Biggart & Hamilton, 1987; Guillen, 2010). To expand the literature, this study examined the iterating process of interactions between individuals and the social context in which they operate.

Furthermore, this research aimed to study the social context of leadership from a glocalisation perspective which analysed a society transcending national state boundaries. Until recently, there was a growing body of research addressing the sociocultural context of leadership; nonetheless, they view the social context of leadership from the container model of the sociological analysis. These studies have analysed the social context from the nation-state perspective which pays limited attention to the external social forces that come with globalisation and the intersection between these incoming factors and the existing local ones. In the present study, the external forces that were brought out by the INGOs and their working system were considered. In addition, the body of leadership studies concerning the social context appear to focus on the Westerners trying to understand other cultures and becoming culturally competent rather than the other way around or through mutual understanding (see for example, Dowling et al., 2008; Storey, 2007; Wu et al., 2006). The present study explored a mutual understanding among people with different cultural background.

In practice, leadership development is considered part of the wider capacity building work (Dia & Eggink, 2010; Hailey & James, 2004). Development literature has noted that capacity building implies the “fill-the-gap” initiatives which emphasise mechanical fixes for technical deficits and supplies predetermined inputs through training, organisational development or institutional reform (Bezanson, 2008). It has been argued that capacity building initiatives do not emphasise the un-neutral nature of social change, power imbalance, complexity and a non-static long-term process of capacity development (Oswald & Clarke, 2010; Pettit, 2010). Besides, when the initiatives emphasise leadership capacity development, they have long been focusing on the human capital aspect of capacity by undertaking training, coaching or mentoring that usually emphasise intra-personal competencies such as planning, management, or communication skills (see Green & McDade, 1991; McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Moxley, 1998). This study transcends the human capital approach to analyse the social capital aspect of capacity.

Moreover, this study aimed to bridge the missing link between capacities and the setting in which the capacities apply. In other words, the study has examined how the Lao social setting shaped and was mirrored in the nature of local leadership capacity development. In doing so, the study adopted the institutional theory of leadership to understand the interaction between individual capacity and the social context. The study was premised on the assumption that the change in the elements of the social context occur as a result of the on-going interaction between social agents who maintain, interrupt and create them. These social agents were considered the institutional entrepreneurs who at the best become local leaders.

Therefore, the research addressed the following primary research question: What social and political contexts affect the process of LLD within the INGO sector in Lao PDR? This question is operationalised through the following three secondaries questions.

1. What are the social contexts that might foster or hinder INGO work and the process of LLD?
2. What are the experiences of INGOs in LLD initiatives?
3. What are the capitals, resources and competencies that result in leadership success for local individuals?

8.2 Summary of key themes

This section provides a brief overview of key themes derived from the research.

8.2.1 Institutional context of local leadership

As I articulated in the conceptual framework, the institutional theory of leadership is grounded upon a sociological perspective that emphasises institutional arrangements conferring “legitimacy” which refers to “a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). These socially constructed norms, values and beliefs form the institutional context of LLD explored in this study. By exploring the institutional context of leadership, the study addressed the primary research question one: “What is the social context of the process of LLD?”

From the institutional perspective, the study found several challenges that the local leaders of INGOs in Laos had experienced. First of all, INGO leaders work within the regulatory context that is similar to that of other democratic societies of which INGOs and international stakeholders ascribe to and pursue by their development aid. However, in practice, power dynamics and self-interests come into play and lead to slippage in implementation of such a regulatory framework. Domestic guiding norms and worldviews play important roles in the government-INGO partnership which is the only approach to be undertaken in the implementation of INGO’s activities.

This difference becomes significant when the domestic and international worldviews clashed. For example, the participants expressed the views that INGOs should perform multiple functions including as a welfare provider as well as being a development catalyst whereby they encourage the poor to speak up for themselves. This view was consistent with the mainstream notion of INGOs roles (see for example, Coleman 2005; Doh & Teegen 2003a, Ebrahim 2005; Hilhorst 2003; Silliman & Noble 1998). Therefore, the local leaders experienced many challenges to bring about change in the face of deeply entrenched social norms, power dynamics and the ingrained ways of doing things. It was evident that the change, which is driven by international guiding norms, is unlikely to occur with the local staff members and officials. The immediate challenge is how to convince the local parties to do thing differently given that they were quicker to adapt and adopt the international guiding norms.

Another challenge the local leaders face is the uncertainty in relation to the political situation in the country. From time to time, the local leaders were frightened by informal practices imposed on them by the government as a sanction for, in the government's view, an offense. This practice ranged from an intended delay in cooperation process to abduction to artificial detention through to expulsion from the country. These practices are issued to those trying to push for change by policy lobbying and change advocacy, some of the areas of work that is expected of the local leaders from the expatriates and international stakeholders. Not being able to do this work would hinder the expatriates and international parties to support and endorse their leadership. Furthermore, INGOs are in the role of a silent partner, therefore, inhibiting any opportunity to become autonomous. In order for this power dynamic to shift, something else in the field would have to shift, such as giving power back to the governments in the form of money to implement social programs. The local leaders would be seen as opponent to the public sector in this sense.

The interface/confluence between the domestic and international guiding norms prevails over the INGO-government partnership. This is because INGO staff members tend to adapt and adopt the international norms quicker than their government counterparts. The local leaders have to take a bridging role between the two worlds. Two key instruments, including the compulsory partnership and steering committee govern this bridging exercise. The compulsory partnership was perceived to be the source of other issues such as abuse of power and conflict of interest among officials. Furthermore, the steering committees were viewed as inducing delays and restrictions on the attitudes and behaviour of INGOs.

The final challenge facing local leaders is the negative impacts of some stereotype against local leaders. As the above discussion makes clear, local leaders are also in a bridging role between the mainstream organisational culture and the local one. The cultural cognition or taken-for-granted dimension of institutions plays out at national, sectoral and individual levels.

At the national level, three key themes emerged, namely: social hierarchy, social pressure and corruption and nepotism. First, the social hierarchy affected local leaders by causing delays or demanding unnecessary respects and credits from their official counterparts. Secondly, the social pressure resulted from the fact that local leaders had strong connections with local people including family and friends. They were pressured to join social events or to do favour that were not consistent with the organisation's rules. Thirdly, corruption and nepotism were so widespread that they crossed over to INGOs, therefore, this compromises the locals' ability to maintain transparency and INGO standards.

Local leaders and expatriates do not face the same "legitimacy" criteria. The local leaders carried the image of the local situations, beliefs and world-views in the eyes of expatriate and international parties. They are seen as betrayers by their local colleagues, particularly officials. While research participants described themselves as working systematically to achieve the set goals, they had to cope with vested interests from mainly their government partners.

Sectoral cultural challenges derived from participants' struggles at work as they come from public and INGO sectors. First of all, they were faced with the situation where they were in between the government and the INGOs, therefore, they had to cultivate and adopt a "flexibility" mode by which they were flexible and able to adjust to particular situations. Participants also reported that they were the victims of misconceptions. They thought that people see them as a proxy of ideas – other local members, mainly officials, did not credit them for what they said but perceived them as representing foreign experts. They also claimed that they were facing the disadvantage of a bad image. Other locals might have done undesirable things and those people have been made example of the negative image of other local members.

Being in the middle position, local leaders faced a challenge of balancing cultural expectations from both sides. For example, they need to earn support and endorsement for leadership role by the expatriates and here is where the trust comes in to play. Furthermore, the long-term support that can earn them trust was hampered by the high turnover rate coupled with the short-life cycle of the INGO project whereby people move along with the end of projects. This context provided a challenging environment for INGO personnel and local leadership in particular. These factors can be opportunities or constraints to the process of LLD depending the locals' ability to strike a balance between the domestic and international norms. These structural factors, I have sought to demonstrate, are dynamic and changing. The process of LLD must tackle these dynamic factors ensuring the direction favours local leaders to grow and develop. In conclusion, the social context has been seen as very important factors influencing LLD initiatives and activities contributing to their outcomes. The intersection between local and international social forces increased the level of complexity. Many research participants were aware of these issues but having difficulty and lacking systematic ways to address them.

8.2.2 The individual capacities for leadership success

Individual capacities for leadership success is conceptualised as the manifestation of the entrepreneurship aptitude of the social agent. As articulated in Chapter Three, the exercise of entrepreneurship involves mobilisation of resources and utilisation of the resources for leadership gain. In exploring this area, the study addressed primary research question two: "What are the individual capacities that lead them to leadership success?"

The three key themes that emerged from responses to this question were "local leadership characteristics", "intra-personal capacities" and "inter-personal capacities". First, the local leadership characteristics were seen as one of the attributes for leadership advancement because they form qualification that make an individual look legitimate for leadership roles. The findings show that local leadership characteristics were described slightly differently by different groups of the participants. The local senior personnel or local leaders described the local leadership style as participatory/inclusive. The expatriate participants likened local leadership style to that of public sector and described it as disengaging and isolating from the members or community. The local members of staff saw that "hybrid" leadership style could be developed because they claimed the expatriate-led style of leadership could upset the locals and the officials while the local style could be seen "illegitimate" by international stakeholders.

The above findings suggest that the local leadership style was a reflection of the “new terrain” of institutional context in which leadership occurs. On the one hand, a set of structural forms such as participation/inclusion were diffusing into the local context from the international arena. The ideas and financial resource from the international stakeholders were the changing forces. On the other hand, the local structural forms such as deference to power and un-reciprocal respect also persisted and permeated into the INGO setting mediated by the existing power structure such as the compulsory partnership between the government and INGOs and the deeply entrenched local culture.

The second theme was the intra-personal capacities. Regardless of the style of leadership, the findings suggested that four key traits/competencies were missing from local leaders if they were to be seen “legitimate” for a leadership role. These missing capacities were “language ability”, “critical/logical thinking”, “initiative taking” and “self-confidence”. These personality traits and competencies were missing from the locals and were thought to hinder the locals’ development into leadership roles. However, the findings concerning self-confidence were not homogenous as some participants believed the locals expressed their competencies differently from the conventional way of assessment or viewpoint. Some participants pointed out that the locals may look lacking in self-confidence but they could handle the tasks and participated in sophisticated discussion. For example, they were able to express or articulate ideas and thoughts better in setting that excluded expatriates.

Finally, along with intra-personal capacity, inter-personal capacities were also found pertinent to leadership legitimacy. Four key themes make up inter-personal capacities including “networking skills”, “social qualification”, “trusted relationships” and “benefits of social networks”. These were analysed in relation to the concept of “social capital”. Without these competencies the personnel faced difficulty in getting the job done.

Regarding the networking skills, the findings show that the research participants were compliant with local rules and norms to build networks. This turned out to work well among local INGO personnel but not with expatriate staff. The participants reported that networking between the locals and expatriates were difficult because the expatriates lived different lifestyle and there was cultural misunderstanding. In addition, exposure to other cultures among the locals was limited. Furthermore, the concept of social qualification represented how the officials saw the INGO personnel. Conforming to expectations and norms within the public sector was the major source of this type of qualification. However, this conforming was seen to weaken the INGO personnel position by the expatriates, particularly when the weak governance and the absence of the rule of law were prominent in the public sector. Social norms and informal practices played an important part in the day-to-day cooperation between the INGO sector and the government. The prevalence of these norms and practices undermined trust and legitimacy of the local in the eyes of the expatriates who would support the locals' advancement to leadership.

Finally, trusted relationships and benefits of networking with officials were seen as important for completing the tasks internally and getting the job done when working with officials. Again, even though getting the results was important the benefits gained from networking with official were seen as undermining transparency.

8.2.3 LLD initiatives of INGOs

The theme of local leadership development initiatives emerged as the study examined the primary research question three: "What have been the experiences of LLD within the INGO sector?" Three key themes emerged from interview data analysis including capacity building as leadership development, on-the-job trainings and informal learning.

INGO initiatives concerning leadership development were found to be embedded within the notion of "capacity building". Examination into these initiative found that they were ineffective due to structural, technical and cultural constraints. The structural constraints include the high turnover rate of local staff members and the short-life cycle of INGO project. The high turnover rate among the locals that hinder INGOs from investing in their capacity development, the short-life cycle of projects that leads to unsystematic and discontinuity of the initiatives and the priority on measurable results are crucial factors affecting capacity building negatively. This finding contradicts the perceived notion that INGOs or NGOs were learning organisations where human resource development is systematically addressed (Edwards 1997, Madon 1999, Power et al. 2002).

Furthermore, the findings in this section appear to suggest that in practice capacity building work has not matched up with the well-established conceptual model of capacity building. In the field of capacity building, scholars have noted the importance of systematic capacity building. Furthermore, development scholars argued that capacity-building occurs over time; it should be perceived as a process as opposed to a single intervention (Honadle & Hannah 1982, Ogilvie et al. 2003). The findings in this study show that in practice capacity building work remain stuck in the “quick-fix” approach. Even though there is sufficient funding, practice has not managed to use the funding effectively.

The practical aspects of on-the-job trainings as leadership development appear to have important limitations. Some of the reasons include expatriate’s domination, the rush for results and real intention from the international parties. This finding resonates with literature in development which argues that INGOs are reluctant to put untested managers in charged because of the survival of the organisations (Alymkulova & Seipulnik 2005, Coleman 2005, Fowler 1992, Srinivas 2009). This reflects the growing “technicisation” of development, the reliance on checklists, forms and procedures that formalize the top-down process of development interventions, particularly fiscal accountability. Popular tools include those that measure developmental outcomes such as the logical framework (Gasper 2000, Roberts, Jones, & Frohling 2005). Because of these technical demand and paperwork there is less space for practice.

The most important observation to be made is that most participants understand that practicing/experiencing would lead to skill improvement. Sometimes when they get the opportunity to practice (accidentally) they can do the tasks. Perhaps fear of unsuccessful change hinders these people to move from realisation to action. Secondly, as a result of the lack of a leadership development strategy, the task of local leadership development was left to informal practices that were assumed to have contributed to local leadership development. However, the findings have suggested this has hardly occurred due to time constraint and whether expatriates knew how to carry out such a task. It is evident that the organisational paperwork demand of the INGO personnel particularly expatriates hinder them from engaging in coaching and mentoring on the job basis which could have contributed to leadership development. In addition, the need to get more from less time and resources also forced expatriate to perform the task by themselves rather than having some space for “trial and errors” by the locals under supervision of the expatriates. Furthermore, broader communities trust in the local leaders remains low and delegation of tasks to them hardly occurred. This in turns leads to the lack of opportunity to the local to practice leadership.

The final argument is that leadership development hardly occurs from the informal learning due to the cultural differences between the locals and expatriates which limit learning and sharing between the two. In interviews and informal conversations participants were asked about what informally occurred to enable LLD and what factors needed to be in place for it to succeed. Underlining this issue is the common assumption that international workers of INGOs were recruited to develop the capacity of locals, with the ultimate goal of enabling local management of the NGOs' own affairs (Martin 2009). However, misunderstanding of lifestyle differences make it hard for the two parties to interact in ways which would facilitate exposure of the local to the international so that they become internationally competent.

It can be said, therefore, that the ideal leadership development defined as "support processes collaboratively developed by parties concerned who aim to trigger the endogenous leadership capacity to grow and sustain" was neglected for various reasons as the above findings show. The process of leadership development in practice contradicted the concept of "an on-going process of change and growth". The findings suggested that leadership development within the INGO community in Laos focused more on a change in the individual capacity rather than a holistic approach that seeks to change the societal system where leadership takes place.

8.3 Implications

This research has identified three areas of implications. These are theoretical, methodical and practical.

8.3.1 Theoretical implications

Much of the leadership research and concepts reviewed represent leadership as originating from individually intrinsic capacities and manifest within relationship between people, irrespective of context (Biggart & Hamilton, 1987; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Research studies focusing on leadership and utilising a social constructionist perspective are limited; and few, if any, utilise a glocalisation approach. Studies within this area have focused on broader culture dynamics bound by geography or ethnicity (see for example, Busch, Unger, McMahon, May, & Wang 2013; Chhokar et al. 2012; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta 2004; Liden 2012; Schein 2006)

This research expands the above limitation by using an approach based on Weberian sociology, to link leadership to the legitimating principles and norms of the social structure in which leadership occurs. This research transcends an understanding of the legitimating principles and norms from traditionally limited within the national society to cover the new terrain of social context. This new terrain denotes an emerging social space of the "Locals meets Internationals" or glocalisation. The concept of glocolisation helps to understand the confluence of domestic and international institutional factors or guiding norms. Certainly, in the context of the INGO sector in Laos, the social setting cannot be understood by the container model but rather what is need is an understanding of the national political, social and cultural boundaries.

The institutional factors emerging from the data depicts an intense, catalysing, change-related social force described as leadership legitimacy milieu that plays a significant role in defining and constructing the leadership success. These institutional factors were partly derived from both domestic and international guiding norms. These norms were the patterned interactions embedded within the development context of Lao PDR. From both sides, domestic and international alike, power dynamics and inequality of opportunity have sustained the persistency of these norms. The research participants saw some of these norms as a hindrance to the LLD process, while some were seen as fostering factors.

The research also expands the understanding of the concept of institutional entrepreneurship in engendering institutional change and leadership success. In many ways, local leaders as the leadership entrepreneurs mobilises the social resources that affects change away from traditional, technocratic and top-down approach. Thus the model of leadership which a leader is viewed as the source of organisational vision and intelligence and the emphasis or leadership narrative is to demand performance and exert control needs to be reconsidered. Therefore, intriguing questions emerge in considering the implications of a potential shift toward a more modern approach to leadership. The modern approach can focus on a relational paradigm that inspires performance, empowers others. Leaders lead from a partnership stance rather than from a demanding stance, assigned position and command and control leadership. The shift to the modern approach would nurture leaders and leadership that is applicable to the context in which they operate.

8.3.2 Practical implications

As a result of the above theoretical implications, the findings within this study have implications for leadership development and organisational change. I see the opportunity to create change through the development of leadership initiatives that begin by illuminating the nature of what social forces are and how they shape leadership within a societal and organizational setting. Then there needs to be a process of bringing these findings forward as a point of strategic and developmental dialogue among leaders of INGOs. This research has implications for an “approach to capacity building”, “local leadership skills sets” and “cross-cultural socialisation”.

Approach to Capacity building

The research findings suggest that personnel involved in capacity building work face structural, technical and cultural challenges. One of the challenges is that even if the personnel have been trained in certain sets of skills they still experience significant challenges in practice. One of the reasons is that the personnel did not learn the skills required to nurture leadership development in trainings. The findings suggest that learning did not happen because the practical aspect is not integrated into the training programmes. This is because the training was run on the short course basis and training materials did not match with participants’ real jobs. Another reason is that learning rarely takes place in the form of on-the-job trainings. This is the working system of INGOs and the development sector that put results over positive change. In other words, there is no time for learning, implementing and reflecting.

Leadership needs both hard and soft skills or technical and relational competencies. Developing these two sets of competencies need times and delicate efforts. They cannot be separated. Capacity development as an approach to leadership development must take a comprehensive approach that takes into accounts both social institutions and individual entrepreneurship as grounded upon the “new terrain” of social context. First, political views, operational standards and expectations, values and beliefs and taken for granted ways of doing things must be analysed from the glocalisation perspective. Undermining the interaction of these are power and resources. For example, the domestic political power versus financial and knowledge power interact. This interaction provides platform for reproduction of or change to the social context. This affects how local personnel look in the face of leadership qualification.

Secondly, capacity building approaches need not underestimate the power of entrepreneurship agency. The agency of individuals can bring innovation and create new ways of doing things. For example, they can negotiate with officials through personal relations that turn what is likely to be disagreed by the government to positive cooperation. It is important that practitioners involved in capacity building work look for such innovation and seek to foster it. Furthermore, the fostering process must not be linear and predetermined.

Local leadership skill sets

There are two tenets that are critical to the argument about the practice of leadership development: leader development and leadership development. As articulated in Chapter Three, the first is the centrality of leader development typically emphasising individual-based knowledge, skills and abilities. These acquired capabilities enable people to think and act in new ways (Coleman 1988). The primary emphasis of the overarching development strategy is to build the intrapersonal competence (Gardner 1993, p. 9). The second is the emphasis on leadership development emphasising mobilisation of social resources that are embedded in work relationships (Brass & Krackhardt 1999; Burt 1992). Unlike leader development the emphasis with leadership development is on building networked relationships among individuals that enhance cooperation and resource exchange in creating organizational value (Bouty 2000, Tsai & Ghoshal 1998).

This research suggests that the local personnel of INGOs need the skills that meet the local and international expectations. These skills include first competency in English, articulation ability, logical thinking and self-confidence. These competencies are needed for internationally recognised qualification. Undoubtedly, the participants were right to report that capacity development programmes rarely successfully produced the desired results when developing these skills. Some of the reasons they attributed these unsuccessful experiences to were short course, course content, communication and trainer. Further practice should therefore address the causes as well as introduce innovative ways of addressing them. For example, the training on writing English can integrate into the course the reading session because writing is not only about following the grammar rules but also articulating ideas in the structure. Reading can help the participants learn how to express ideas in the “English” fashion not “Lao-English” fashion. The latter is the pattern of written English that is transferred from Lao to English as the process of writing rather than the pattern that is constructed from the English way of writing.

The research also found a relational aspect of skills including social networking skills, building trust and utilisation of relationship. The findings in this respect suggest that the local personnel were over-networking. They followed the current trend in the public and private sectors where social networks were very effective in getting the job done. However, over-networking is seen as time consuming and undermining transparency. In addition, the purpose of social networking were narrowly emphasised on information exchange rather than technical capacity supports such as articulating ideas or improving English competency. Practice moving forward should emphasise the mutually reinforcing benefits between the development of intra-personal competencies and inter-personal ones. For example, a foreign friend can help with English rather than just sharing information and general support. It follows though that the skills for networking with expatriate be developed because it was found in this research as one of the areas done less successfully by the local personnel.

Cross-cultural socialisation

The findings of this research suggest that cross-cultural socialisation can lead to leadership learning particularly if the locals are able to learn from the internationals. However, healthy socialisation rarely occurs between the two because of different lifestyle and cultural awareness. Expatriates could easier engage with locals as they are supposedly well equipped with cultural diversity knowledge and experiences. However, the locals face more challenges to engage with expatriates as they have less exposure to cultural diversity. Furthermore, the culture of respect and power-distance adds more to the unlikeliness that the locals will initiate the socialisation. Cultural awareness for the local staff and cultural diversity exposure should be addressed internally (within INGOs) and across to the public sector. The proliferation of mass media on the internet provides a good opportunity to turn it into a learning platform for the locals in terms of exposure to different cultures. Leadership development initiatives only need to equip people with computer and internet literacy. This could be the cheap and practical way to leadership development.

8.3.3 Methodological reflection

The methodology adopted in this study drew on the social constructionist paradigm and the *bricolage* approach to the field data collection. This has resulted in multiple methods and logics being used. Some reflections on their use are as follows. Drawing on a series of interviews was very useful in the context of a “non-interview society”. This is particularly useful in the INGO sector in Laos where freedom of expression is limited. Participants were concerned with confidentiality. This concern was addressed by arranging multiple interviews to allow rapport building. However, the experiment with a series of interviews was only partially successful. Some difficulties to be noted is that INGO’s people have dented schedules. Many participants decided to quit the interview process as they cannot commit to the subsequent meetings as there were emerging tasks they need to handle.

Moreover, opinion clarification by emails was particularly useful. Some sensitive issues that the participants rarely spoke about in the face-to-face interviews were readily expressed through email. In this study, some insights from the email clarification was not integrated into the findings but they were helpful for making sense of what is not clear from the interviews. This method can be developed into a main data collection method. In the series of interview approach, email correspondence was particularly useful after the first face-to-face meeting. One reason could be that the interview might leave out something as a result of an inexperienced researcher. The other reason could be that the participants were not used to being interviewed.

Finally, the methodological consideration derived from conducting this research is the researcher’s identity. The researcher’s identity particularly working background was critical to the research. The fact that I used to work with an INGO appears to have some effect on the interaction with participants. For example, participants tended to refer to me as part of the INGO community. Many times they used the term “us” to mean him or her and myself. The term “them” was used to mean the officials. It is important for researcher to reflect on the insider and outsider role. To ascribe to the concept of “us” too much might lead to biases in data collection and interpretation.

8.4 Research limitations

The purpose of this study was to understand the socially constructed process of LLD – understood as contextually relevant to the place of study and located within the cognitive attributions of both leaders and followers. This study was loosely bound and scoped, focusing on explicating and illustrating the social forces and processes that mediate the advancement of leadership as described and understood by the senior personnel, local members of staff and expatriate staff of INGOs operating in Lao PDR. As such, the empirical material collected reflected the subjectivities of the individual research participants and their perspectives. The participants were selected from an INGO organisational structure enunciated within the organizational chart. The process of LLD articulated within the findings represents the perspectives of these personnel. Even though the sector works in partnership with the government and is supported financially by international donors, the participants from these sectors and wider development community were excluded.   Therefore, the composite data reflects in some respects a sectorial perspective and could have been influenced by the inclusion of other participants such as officials, donor representatives and local community members who benefit from INGOs.

As expressed in Chapters One and Three, the focus of this research study has been to illuminate the nature of the contextually relevant social factors present within the Lao development context that influence perceptions and interactions which in turn affect the development of leadership capacity of the local personnel of INGOs. This Lao development context consists of the domestic context and international conditions which come with INGOs. This research approach inherently recognised the implications of accumulated knowledge and experience within the specific situation as a mediator of reality. This raises the issue of generalisability from this specific situation to the broader applicability, a larger question within most qualitatively oriented social science studies.

In recognising this implicit bias, it is important to note that the observations and representations within this study are the cumulative articulations of the participants, captured in their language within conversational interviews and interpreted by the researcher. The findings therefore are limited in terms of transferability and can be best understood as locally relevant. In many ways, the findings within this study are contextually bound within the specific place of the study. Accordingly, although certain aspects of the INGO work setting may exist as common influences or dynamics elsewhere, the process of LLD appears to remain local.

8.5 Further research

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas. First, this research only began to explore the legitimacy milieu of leadership within the INGO context. This legitimacy milieu has been confined within two key domains, the government and INGOs. Further study could be focused on a broader scope of leadership legitimating. One element could be relevant to broader leadership legitimacy as the movement toward accountability downwards. It will be important to understand how this movement produces implications on the power dynamics and leadership legitimacy within the development sector.

Another area that could be further studied is how to understand local leadership development from an indigenous leadership perspective. This study adopted the glocalisation perspective therefore its focus was placed on the interface between the mainstream leadership and the indigenous leadership. By doing so, it had touched upon the indigenous elements of local leadership superficially. To further understand local leadership an indigenous perspective could give better rich insights and nuances into local leadership. By taking the glocalisation perspective, as this study does, some competencies such as English skills and traits such as extravert were found important for local leadership in order to achieve leadership advancement. These might not be necessarily relevant if the indigenous perspective was undertaken. For example, English might not be an important skills compared to envisioning which was less mentioned by participants in this study.

The final area for further research could be around how to understand local leadership development through a regional and global integration of local human resource. This study only explored how local personnel develop in the international setting of international organisations such as INGOs. Many expatriates have had experiences and tailored themselves toward local settings. Of course this is a good start for local personnel to get exposure to international ways of doing things. However, with all the incentives and potential international competencies to be gained from international experiences, going global might be a lever to motivate local human resource development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Number of responses per sub-theme by Key participants

Introductory Interview	General Context	Leadership Dev Initiatives	HC/SC	LLS
Introducing the research project 6	Govt attitude and policy on INGOs 6	General practices on local HR dev 4	Career history/work experiences 4	Perception of leadership within INGOs 4
Function of INGOs in Laos 6	Treatment of the local & expat by the govt 6	Perception on local HR capacity 3	Meaning and type of networks 4	Good leader and good leadership in Laos 5
General trend around localisation 6	Donor policy on HR and capacity dev 6	The focus of local HR dev (what capacity) 3	SC and getting a job, advancing career 5	INGO leader vs those in the business & govt 3
The prominent role of the locals vs expats 6	INGO HQ policy on the leadership of INGOs 5	Skills transfer Expats to locals & *vice versa* 3	Networking with govt officials 4	Cultural influence on the leadership style 4
The interviewee's role in the organisation 6	Leadership space occupied by locals vs expat 4	Forms of leadership dev: training, coaching, etc. 3	Networking with expats 5	Legitimacy of the INGO leaders 5
Terminology definition 2	Informal practice in the sector 4	Capacity builders (who build capacity) 3	HC-SC intersect 5	Challenges & opportunities for local leaders 4

Appendix 2: A number of responses per theme by Community participants (expat)

Introductory Interview	General Context	Leadership Dev Initiatives	HC/SC	LLS
Introducing the research project 14	Govt attitude and policy on INGOs 4	General practices on local HR dev 4	Career history/work experiences 3	Perception of leadership within INGOs 5
Function of INGOs in Laos 7	Treatment of the local & expat by the govt 2	Perception on local HR capacity 7	Meaning and type of networks 2	Good leader and good leadership in Laos 4
General trend around localisation 4	Donor policy on HR and capacity dev 5	The focus of local HR dev (what capacity) 6	SC and getting a job, advancing career 5	INGO leader vs those in the business & govt 5
The prominent role of the locals vs expats 5	INGO HQ policy on the leadership of INGOs 6	Skills transfer Expats to locals & *vice versa* 6	Networking with govt officials 5	Cultural influence on the leadership style 7
The interviewee's role in the organisation 6	Leadership space occupied by locals vs expat 4	Forms of leadership dev: training, coaching, etc. 3	Networking with expats 4	Legitimacy of the INGO leaders 4
Terminology definition 0	Informal practice in the sector 3	Capacity builders (who build capacity) 4	HC-SC intersect 7	Challenges & opportunities for local leaders 5

Appendix 3: Number of responses per theme by Community participants (local)

Introductory Interview	General Context	Leadership Dev Initiatives	HC/SC	LLS
Introducing the research project 9	Govt attitude and policy on INGOs 5	General practices on local HR dev 4	Career history/work experiences 2	Perception of leadership within INGOs 2
Function of INGOs in Laos 2	Treatment of the local & expat by the govt 5	Perception on local HR capacity 6	Meaning and type of networks 6	Good leader and good leadership in Laos 6
General trend around localisation 3	Donor policy on HR and capacity dev 4	The focus of local HR dev (what capacity) 5	SC and getting a job, advancing career 5	INGO leader vs those in the business & govt 4
The prominent role of the locals vs expats 2	INGO HQ policy on the leadership of INGOs 4	Skills transfer Expats to locals & *vice versa* 7	Networking with govt officials 4	Cultural influence on the leadership style 5
The interviewee's role in the organisation 2	Leadership space occupied by locals vs expat 5	Forms of leadership dev: training, coaching, etc. 4	Networking with expats 4	Legitimacy of the INGO leaders 7
Terminology definition 4	Informal practice in the sector 6	Capacity builders (who build capacity) 4	HC-SC intersect 8	Challenges & opportunities for local leaders 5

Appendix 4: Method of data concentration calculation

Responses were classified into three categories including low concentration of responses (L), medium concentration (M) and high concentration (H). The grid below shows concentration of data in three categories.

<3=L 4-5=M >6=H

Introductory Interview	General Context	Leadership Dev Initiatives	HC/SC	LLS
H	H	M	M	M
H	H	L	M	M
H	H	L	M	L
H	M	L	M	M
H	M	L	M	M
L	M	L	M	M

All three classifications are integrated to conclude a whole picture of where the most concentration of data is so that sub-themes can be ranked according to the concentration of data.

HHH	HMH	MMM	MLL	MML
HHL	HHL	LHH	MLH	MMH
HML	HML	LHH	MMH	LMM
HML	HML	LHH	MMM	MHH
HHL	HHL	LLM	MMM	MMH
LLM	LLM	LMM	MHH	MMH

H=3	M=2	L=1

9	8	7	4	5
7	6	7	6	7
6	6	7	7	5
6	6	7	6	8
7	7	4	6	7
4	4	5	8	7

9-8=H 7-6=M 5-4=L

H	H	M	L	L
M	M	M	M	M
M	M	M	M	L
M	M	M	M	H
M	M	L	M	M
L	L	L	H	M

Appendix 5: Interview guide

Interview one: an introductory interview

The objectives of this first interview are

- To establish rapport
- To inform participants about the nature of the project
- To respect, value the participant's expertise
- To understand their background and general worldview

General greeting

Thanks participant

Confirm informed consent

Propose the structure of the interview and expectation including the duration of interviewing

Ask participant about his/her typical working day

Talk about the nature of the project and what is expected of him/her; check if he or she has questions; encourage exchange of thoughts

Talk about the researcher background, where I am from, education, work experiences

Ask participant for similar kind of information before move on to further questions

1. Could you tell me some basic information about yourself? E.g. where are you from? Your educational background? Work experience?
2. What are some of the general highlights within the INGO sector these days?
3. Could you talk about some of the current situations in relation to local personnel working in the INGO sector?
4. In your organisation, are there many local personnel that have management responsibility?
5. What is the history around local personnel working in the management area in your organisation?
6. What is the development/change that has happened around local personnel working in the management area in your organisation?
7. Do you think that this change is happening in other organisations?

Interview two: The institutional context

Objectives of this interview are

- To identify formal and informal policies, supports and practice from the government, donors and INGO Head Quarters regarding LLD
- To explore which of these policies, supports and practices local personnel find enhance/hinder LLD
- To document how local personnel exploit such opportunities and cope with the challenges
- To explore what local personnel want to see changed in order to make these policies and practice facilitating LLD

Recap - Last time we are talking about some change around local personnel working in the management and leadership roles. Today I would like to continue our discussion with particular interest in the trend in the policy and support from key development stakeholder such as the government, the donors as well as the INGO headquarters?

We discussed last time abut change in the trend in local human resource management, first of all, I would like to focus on the government co-operation, laws, regulation, or general supports regarding local personnel working in the INGOs.

8. What is the regulatory environment for the INGO sector like? Is there legal framework that is particular to local personnel working in your sector? Can you speak about this?
9. Do you find this environment supportive or discourage for the day-to-day working of Lao INGO personnel? How?
10. Apart from the formal regulations, policy, or supports, is there other informal practice, value or beliefs that you encounter with, can describe this? Does this affect you work? How?
11. What are some of your strategies to cope with such situations?

I would like to move our discussion towards donors. Similar to the government, I would like to explore the donor policy and support to INGOs particularly to local personnel and their development in the managerial/leadership area.

12. Could you talk about the current situation around the donor policy, conditions of funding, or other influences that are related to the working of local human resource and their development?
13. Which of those policies, supports and practices do you find supportive or discourage local personnel work and development?

14. How do you exploit such opportunities or cope with the challenges? Do you think other people in other organisations face with the same situation?
15. What are some of the un-written rule or practice that you encounter dealing with the donor agencies?
16. What do you want to see changed in order to make these policies and practice facilitating local personnel and their development?

Let’s move to the third and final area we will cover in this interview. And that is talking about your Head Quarter.

17. Could you walk me through a history of your organisation HQ HR policy?
18. What in the HR policy that is particular to local personnel development in management/leadership area?
19. How do you adapt yourself with the changing policy context? How successful? Why?
20. What are some of the un-written rule or practice that you encounter dealing with the HQ people? How do you cope with them?

Interview three: INGO’s LLD initiatives

The objectives are

- To identify general trend in local personnel development
- To describe strategies, methodologies and techniques in place to drive LLD
- To explore successful or failure experiences derived from implementation of such strategies, methodologies and techniques
- To identify enable/disable factors
- To examine how these factors can be changed

Last time we discussed the overall trend around various stakeholders and their relations to local HRD. We also talk about how local senior personnel cope with such environment. Today I would like to move our discussion forward to talk about the experiences of INGOs that have initiated local HRD particularly their management and leadership capacity development.

21. Could you speak about activities that your organisation has initiated regarding Local HRD? What are some of the successful story and what are not?
22. Have you been involved in any human resource development initiatives/programmes that intended to develop management and leadership capacity? If yes, could you briefly describe these?

23. Could you walk me through the process of how HR development programmes have been initiated, designed and implemented? Who has got involved? How?
24. What do you think are some of the key factors that would make such programmes successful or not successful?
25. What are some of the experiences and lesson learnt from implementing such programmes? If you were to design future HR development programmes, how will you do differently?
26. Do you think that these experiences are particular to your organisation or they happen in other organisation too? How?
27. What would you recommend if the programmes are to be implemented effectively?

Interview four: Local individual capacity

The objectives are

- To understand how important is social capital in INGO working context (prompts: getting a job, performing effectively at a job, advancing one's career)
- To explore how social capital is built, maintained and utilised within organisation, throughout the sector as well as cross-sector contexts.
- To explore advantages and disadvantages of social capital for local personnel working within the INGO sector.

In this interview, I would like us to turn our discussion to the issue of capacity. Of course the concept of capacity means different thing to different people. Today I want you to share your perception and experience around this word, capacity. Allow me to some following questions.

28. How do you end up working in your current position? What are the channels that people like yourself has gone through in order to be at such senior position?
29. Could you talk about the demanding capacity for local personnel working in the INGO sector in general, especially in the management and leadership area?
30. Can you talk about your professional career pathway? What are some of the opportunities and challenges your have encountered and coped with? What are some of the ups and downs experiences?
31. What is your experience working with other partners? What do you think make working with other partners effective?

32. What is your opinion about network of social relations? Is social network important for people working within your sector? How?
33. Do you think that social background like, social status, family roots are important? How?
34. How do you think people build social network, maintained and utilised it within organisation, throughout the sector as well as cross-sector contexts?
35. What do you think are advantages and disadvantages of social network for local personnel working within the INGO sector?

Interview five: Characteristics of local leadership and conclusion

The aim of this interview is

- To identify and describe the characteristics of local leadership regarding power typology and decision-making control
- To explore how local leadership is framed in relation to cultural/historical and contemporary leadership context.
- To identity opportunities and challenges associated with such emerging local leadership and its characteristics
- To explore possible ways to tackle them.

In the last meeting we discussed local personnel capacity including your own capacity. Today I would like to move the final theme and that is the characteristics of local leadership within the INGO sector in Lao PDR.

The first part of discussion today I would like us to talk about is relating to power and decision making process in your organisation if possible I would like you to comment on the issue in the more general context of the sector too.

36. Could you describe the organisational structure of the INGO you are working with? Who plays which role?
37. Do you think this pattern of working is happening in other INGOs as well?
38. Could you walk me through the process of decision making in your organisation? Are you satisfied with it? Why?

The second area to discuss is about the image of leader and your perceptions of their leadership.

39. So can you describe what a good leader is? What should be the characteristics of a good leader?
40. Who should NGO leaders be held accountable to?
41. What do you consider as effective leadership?

The last part of today discussion is relating to modelling NGO leadership? Are they different? Etc.

42. Do you think that NGO leader are different from the government and business? How?
43. Do you think that leaders today are different from leader in the past, like in the history?
44. What legitimate local leader in the eye of their constituencies such us donors, the governments, beneficiaries and general public?
45. What are the challenges local leaders face with and how they deal with those challenges?