

MLD 102: 2014

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Problems: Windows to see into contexts and vehicles to enter

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So far

- We have gaps in many development interventions
 - We have many strategies/tools to close these gaps
 - Both policies and management mechanisms
- But the gaps fester, despite the tools
 - Often because new policies/reforms are introduced on paper to appear good but do not reach functionality
- PDIA offers an approach to address this
 - Especially for complex challenges; where context matters
- How do we address contextual difficulties?

First: Some heuristic about what typically matters in a context

- Four factors to look at, emphasized in theory and research:
 - What is there already? (incumbent policies or systems)
 - How embedded is it? (does it take all the capacity, drive behavior and considerations of ‘what is appropriate’?)
 - What alternatives exist? (and what are they...maybe not the external solution you first imagined?)
 - How legitimate are they? (does anyone know if they work and has anyone developed the capacities needed to make them work?)
 - What are the agency alignments?
 - Do you have any support for a change? How does this support differ to the support for the status quo?
 - What ‘disruptions’ exist to make change necessary?
 - Are there any conditions evident that could push people to change?

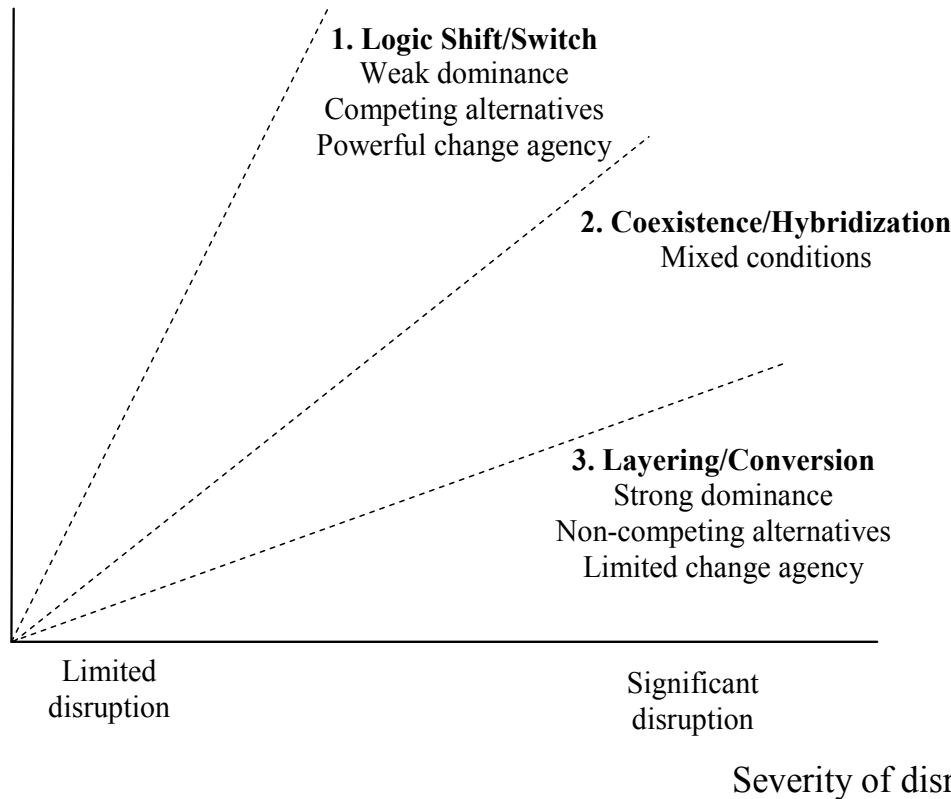
Second: Basic rules to consider

- The more disruption, the greater the scope for change
- The weaker incumbents, the greater scope for change
- The more legitimate new alternatives, the greater the scope for change
- The more power and agency is aligned behind the new alternatives, the greater the scope for change

Notice that all four factors are *variables* in your finding and fitting strategy: It matters what you find when you start in a context, but it also matters how you *work with these factors* to create space for change

Third: Realize that the context shapes how much (and what) you can do

Degree of institutional change
Significant Change (Foundations of the iceberg)
Limited change (Tip of the iceberg)



If lots of space for change:

Exploit the readiness: Weaken and push out incumbents; formalize and routinize alternatives; support agents; Use disruption

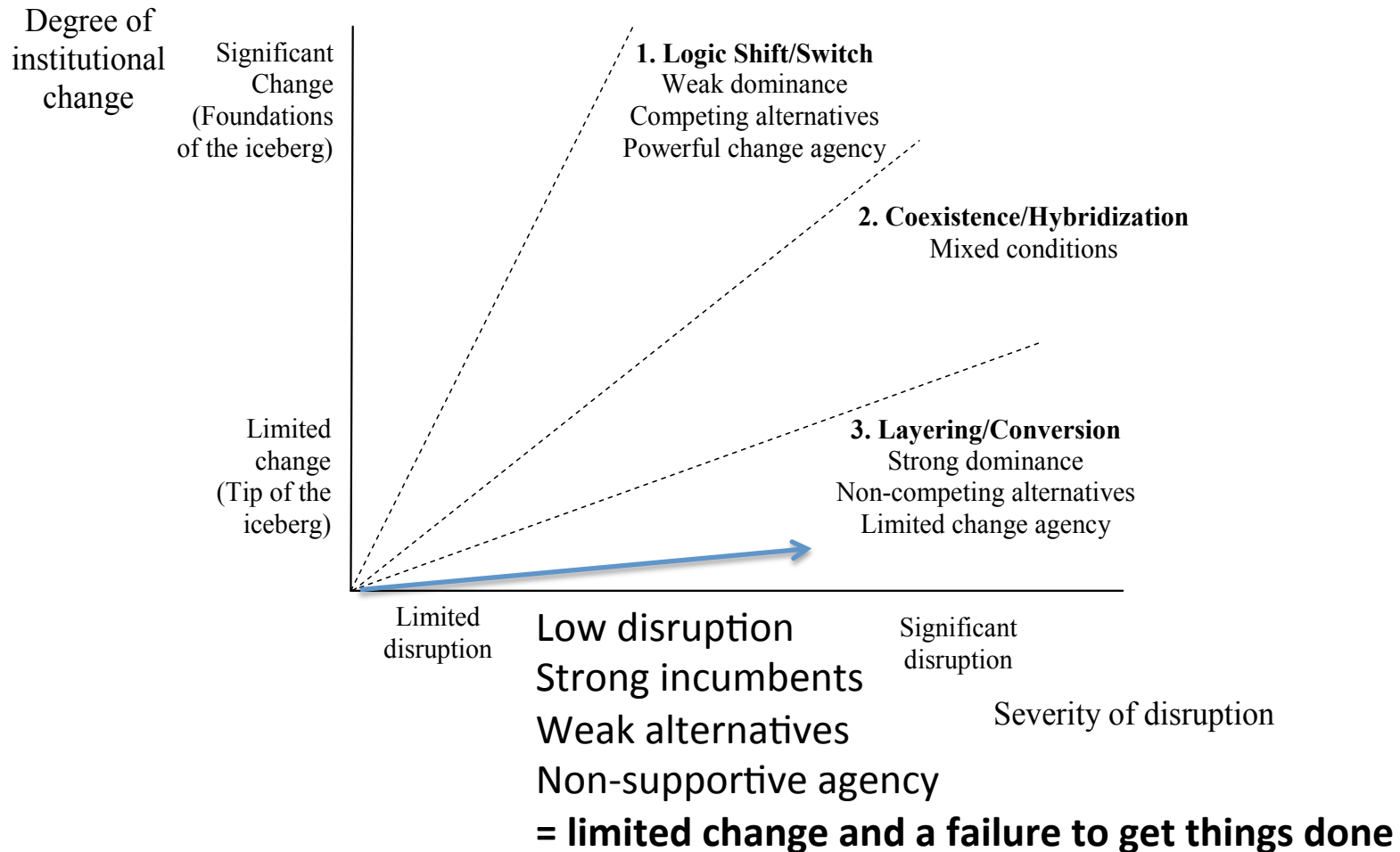
If limited space for change:

Make the context ready: Challenge incumbents; introduce alternatives; mobilize agents; Point to disruption

But how do we know how much space for change we have?

- One option: do lots of work beforehand, and press ahead with confidence
- Reminds me of a World Bank HIV/AIDS eradication project in Pakistan (mid 2000s)
 - 33 months of preparatory work showed *potentially* high levels of HIV in key population groups, incl. young adults
 - Lots of work showed willingness of national government to address this: political will
 - Project introduced new treatment policy, through top down, highly structured management mechanism
 - But: Project was considered moderately unsatisfactory
 - Most goals were not remotely achieved
 - Perceived leadership was not realized (movement of individuals)
 - New approaches were not accepted (religious and cultural pressure)
 - Incumbent approaches were still considered acceptable
 - The 'potential' problem was not considered that severe by locals

What we see is an intervention that did not get done...because of contextual constraints



Put another way: The policy and management solution was a square peg...the context a round hole...and no one could work out the fit



Another option to the 'context' and fit dilemma

- Start by taking action and focusing on problems that people in the context care about:
 - We know that problems increase awareness of disruption, cause questioning of incumbents, foster a search for legitimate alternatives, and bring agents together in coalitions
 - In political contexts (vis and Kersbergen), bureaucracies (Cameron), and at the individual level (Levy on prospect theory)
- This is what a Global Fund project did, in Karachi and Peshawar
 - Also centered on HIV/AIDS and at the same time as the WB project
 - It started by engaging local actors—in groups—about the HIV problem
 - Some thought it was a problem, some did not
 - Many did not think it could be discussed openly because of religious/cultural issues
 - Many did not think a reform could be mounted because of religious/cultural issues

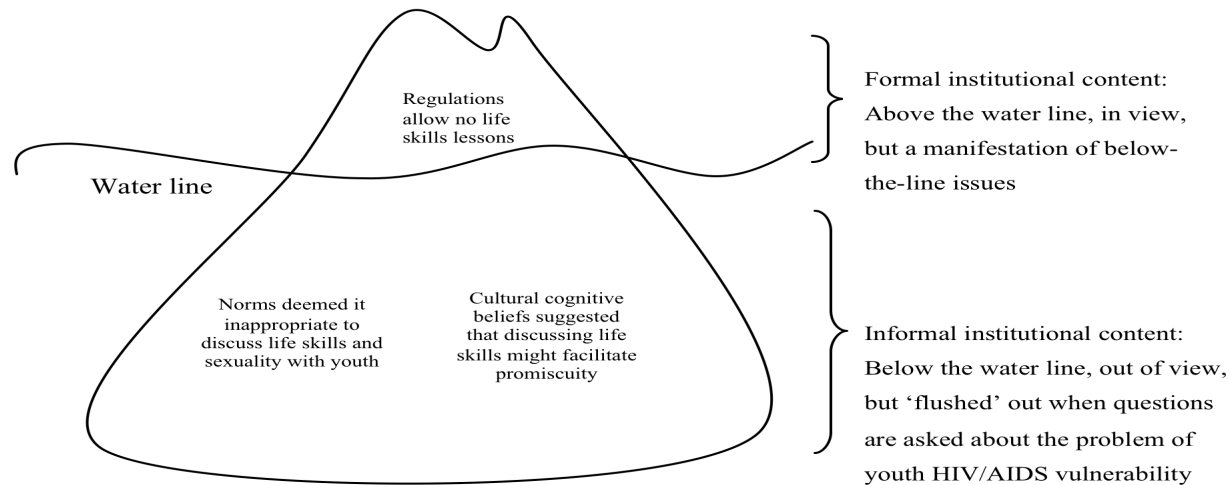
Constructing the problem as a window on the context

- Problems are often messy like this
 - We don't know how to fully discuss them
 - So they fester as 'conditions' no one is happy with but we don't feel we can address (See Kingdon's work in Dorey, and Veselý)
- We need to construct them so that they draw attention and foster a conversation in the context
 - Bring evidence to show what the problem looks like
 - Data, stories, some crisis to draw attention
- Which they did in the GF initiative:
 - Asking high school students in private schools about their sexual activity, awareness of HIV/AIDS, ability to protect
 - And then discussing results with agents in the context
 - Authorizers like district politicians, headmasters, and other influencers like parents and business people
 - Showing that there is a problem and it cannot be denied (and it matters to a lot of people)
 - DISRUPTION IS REAL

Then deconstruct the problem

- Discuss-in context-the causes of the problem:
 - 5 why's; Ask 'Why is it happening?' again and again
 - Gather data about the answers, to understand what's going wrong, and to build space for action
 - This allows you to see below the iceberg

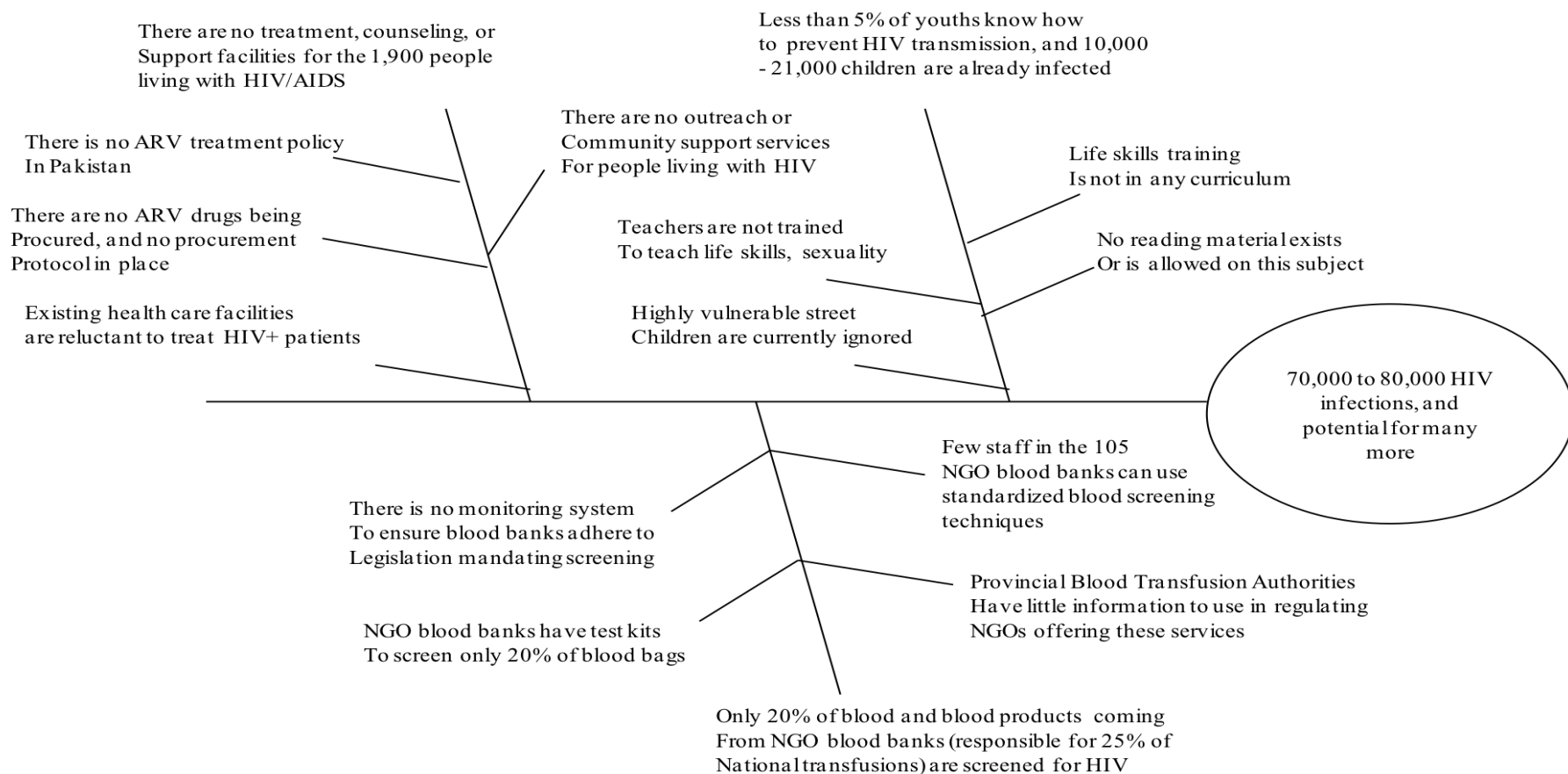
Problems allowed reformers to identify contextual challenges in Pakistan



And to see the full, context-specific, picture of the problem— constructed for attention and deconstructed for action

NOTE: you use this to have a positive conversation of actions to address problems (the policy solutions)...a good problem allows this positive discussion...

How the Pakistani proposal diagnoses its focal problem



This problem driven approach worked

- The Global Fund project was considered successful
 - Managed to do things considered impossible in the WB project
 - Even though the WB project had 33 months of genuine prep
- Because the problem driven approach gave them a window into the context and a way of working in context
 - To see how much space they had, to build space, and to enter in and take advantage of space
- That the traditional approach of ‘study plus solution’ does not

How problem driven learning helps reformers consider and address contextual factors

<i>Reform approach</i>	<i>Solution-driven isomorphic coercion, mimicry</i>	<i>Problem driven learning reforms</i>
<i>Contextual reality</i>	<i>Small hole conditions, conducive to low degree of change</i>	<i>Large hole conditions, conducive to high degree of change</i>
<i>Severity of disruption</i>	Disruptions moderated by external support (finance and other), decreasing severity and length, undermining the need for reflection	Disruptions constructed as problems (using data, stories, focusing events) provoke reflection on context and need for change
<i>Strength of dominant logic</i>	Incumbent structures not questioned, not made open to de-institutionalization	Awareness of problems leads to questioning of incumbent structures, opening such to de-institutionalization (revision or abandonment)
<i>Evidence of alternative logics</i>	No motivation to look for, invest in, alternatives emerging as potential solutions to problems	Problems motivate search for, investment in, alternatives already emerging as viable solutions to problems
<i>Activity of change agents</i>	Agents at organization's boundary buffer external demands, agree to 'change as signals'; reforms adopted in form but decoupled to minimize influence	Agents are broadly engaged, drawn together by shared problem, looking for new solutions; reforms adopted to effect change, improve functionality

Key tools, and next classes

- For constructing problems:
 - Data, stories, crisis events
 - Provide the narrative ('why does it matter?' 'to whom?')
 - Focus on people in context: authorizers, and other influencers, who provide access
- For deconstructing problems:
 - 5 why's ('why is it a problem?' ...gets to causes)
 - Ishikawa diagrams or problem trees
- To go from problem to action:
 - Use appreciative inquiry (not as alternative to problem analysis, but as supplement...see Luechauer)
- *Note Vesely offers a more detailed approach that goes into the process of problem identification etc.*
- Note also that next classes we will discuss practical applications:
 - Monday Michael Woolcock looking at Justice of the Poor projects
 - Wednesday I will look at work in Mozambique