

## Project Management in Practice



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### Quickly Building a Kindergarten through Negotiation

The idea to build a school for orphans and poor children in an African slum in 30 days was suggested as fodder for a Norwegian television “reality” show. Only 1 of the 10 Scandinavian team members recruited had any construction experience and only one, Ms. Lange, a PMP, had any project management experience. As might be expected, the challenges of climate, food, language, and especially culture shock were nearly overwhelming to the small team. The heat was sweltering to the northern Europeans and the food was tasteless—Lange had to negotiate with the hotel’s kitchen staff in order to add more spices in the food. But the cultural change was the most challenging, particularly regarding time since African time was much more casual than Scandinavian time and the team was on a limited-time schedule. For example, to help secure local buy-in, Lange engaged a local carpenter to build the desks and tables for the school. When she checked back a few days before the furniture was due, she was shocked to find that he hadn’t even started the work: “Time is unpredictable; I will call you,” he said.

Lange found that negotiation seemed to be required for everything. “Negotiation skills definitely were the most valuable of all the project management training that I have taken.” She found that she constantly needed to count to 10

in her interactions, reflect on where these people were coming from, and figure out how to create a win-win situation that would satisfy both parties. The townsfolk began to refer to her as “The Diplomat.” Impressed with the foreigners who were trying to help them, the local villagers pitched in to help on the project. Lange found that, rather than going through official channels, she made better progress personally talking with many of the women who were doing the work, which solved a lot of the problems the team encountered.

However, as the end of their time began to arrive, success appeared unlikely. As the team considered how disappointed the children and villagers would be to not have the school completed, they decided to work in shifts throughout the night. The increased commitment paid off, and the school was done by the time the “reality show” was over.

#### Questions

1. Is time unpredictable? What did the carpenter mean?
2. Did Ms. Lange use any of the principles of negotiation in this project?
3. At some point do you think the team had to think about the goals of the reality show compared to the needs of the orphan and poor African children?

Source: B. G. Yovovich, “Worlds Apart,” *PM Network*, Vol. 24.

### 4.1

## Identifying and Analyzing Stakeholders

As emphasized previously, the best approach for managing conflict is to proactively take steps to align the goals of the various stakeholders with the purpose of the project. To facilitate this, several techniques for identifying and analyzing stakeholders are discussed in this section.