

Capacity Development BRIEFS

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND LESSONS LEARNED

THE NEED FOR A CONCEPTUAL AND RESULTS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: DISCUSSION OF A NEW APPROACH

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Efforts to develop capacity are being hindered by disparate methodologies, insufficient focus on outcomes and indicators, and a lack of concrete results to show improved capacity. The authors examine the need for a new resource to guide, capture, and communicate capacity development efforts. They outline a results-driven and systematic framework—based on rigorous needs assessment, innovative change process logic, and participatory implementation—that is driven by local ownership, adaptive management, and measurable results. This resource could fill a critical gap in capacity development design and reporting, as well as fuel further discussion in the development community.

In Kenya, a capacity development project to mitigate the adverse impact of HIV/AIDS as part of a multisectoral response has been deemed a success. The project team, which consisted mainly of international consultants, created a social support network for people living with HIV/AIDS and trained more than 300 network members as counselors to distribute educational materials and provide support to infected persons and their families.

However, the implementation reveals underlying capacity constraints that were not properly assessed and addressed by project design. The team disregarded stigma-related issues that prevent people from seeking counseling. Other challenges included the low commitment of local HIV/AIDS service providers and community leaders to support the initiative, unaddressed links between psychosocial and other HIV/AIDS-related support needs, and limited stakeholder ownership and motivation to sustain or further develop the network. Moreover, the team did not collect evidence on key outcomes, such as on the creation of the network, participation of stakeholders in the network, use of skills built through training, delivery of counseling services, and changes in the behavior of community members.

As the team prepares to depart, it sees its efforts unraveling while community requests for continued resources increase. They also realize their report to the donor agency contains only basic outputs from their

work, such as the number of people trained and anecdotal information, rather than the tangible evidence required to demonstrate whether the program reduced the adverse impact of HIV/AIDS.

As the demand for capacity development programs increases around the globe, examples such as this hypothetical case could proliferate. To orient capacity development toward successful promotion of local ownership and measurable results, continuing dialogue is needed.

Consequences of Poor Design and Measurement

Capacity development has revolutionized the business of international assistance with its paradigm shift to accelerating development by unleashing the potential that is already available within countries rather than simply resource transfer from abroad. Donors now spend more than \$20 billion a year on a range of capacity development activities.

However, results have not met expectations, leading some policymakers and development practitioners to question the merit of such efforts. Why have expectations not been met?

Evaluations, critical reviews, and working groups note a failure of current practice to build a more analytic and rigorous approach to needs assessments,



program design, and the definition and measurement of results.¹ The problem begins with a lack of consensus on the meaning of capacity development and the results that can be expected from such programs. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to evaluate outcomes, understand impact, and determine accountability.

Capacity development operations frequently lack a conceptual framework. Programs tend to adopt a technical approach without understanding local knowledge and practice and the sociopolitical, policy, and organizational factors that affect capacity. Strategically important questions are also often overlooked: How will activities create impact and thereby contribute to a development goal? How will the program engage local partners and stakeholders to drive the change process needed to improve capacity? Are local stakeholders committed to allocating resources (time, energy, and enthusiasm) to a development goal?

Such challenges are compounded by a poorly articulated results chain, that is, weak links among needs assessments, capacity development activities, outcomes, and impact toward development goals. As a result, programs regularly fail to capture capacity impact within monitoring and evaluation systems. The lack of evidence of what changes actually take place in different contexts means that potentially inappropriate interventions persist.

These issues present far-reaching consequences:

- **Results:** Current capacity development analysis tends to focus on the immediate outputs of activities—such as the number of people trained—with little information about outcomes or impact and lack of accountability to stakeholders. How then can anyone convince clients, donors, and colleagues of the viability of these approaches, much less build their own confidence in capacity development efforts?
- **Comparability:** The absence of consistent results frameworks and performance indicators makes it difficult to compare capacity development activities and identify best practices. How then can one avoid falling into the pitfalls of previous programs?
- **Sustainability:** Sustainable development requires a genuine partnership, with a mutual understanding of the change process and evaluation terms. Without an underlying framework for the capacity development process, how can one inclusively consider goals, strategy, and results with partners?
- **Learning:** The potential for learning among development practitioners is not being fully realized because of a lack of common terminology and mechanisms for exchange. How then can one establish a global knowledge architecture around

capacity development and support a community of practice?

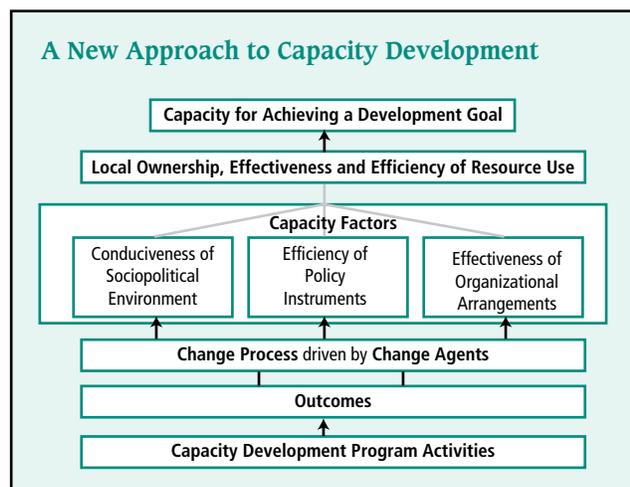
- **Evidence of aid-effectiveness:** A central part of the capacity development program—monitoring and evaluation—has been largely neglected. How then can one resolve weaknesses in program design and better deploy capacity resources?

Laying the Groundwork for a New Approach

The World Bank Institute designed the Capacity for Development Results Framework to respond to these issues, by bringing together existing thinking and practice into a results-oriented resource that can guide capacity development efforts. Development practitioners can iteratively adapt its elements to specific contexts to improve the design, implementation, and evaluation of capacity development programs from the needs assessment stage to the adaptive management of results to the sharing of lessons learned.

According to the framework, capacity development is a locally driven process by which change agents affect sociopolitical, policy, and organizational factors to achieve a development goal. The framework describes the elements of a capacity development program (see diagram), as follows:

- A specified development goal that has stakeholder ownership and motivates the capacity development effort in that local context
- Sociopolitical, policy, and organizational capacity factors that can be used to assess capacity needs, inform design, and measure impact



¹ See, for example, OECD (2005, 2006), Taylor and Clarke (2008), and World Bank (2005, 2006).



- A change process through which capacity factors are made more favorable to achieving a development goal
- The role of change agents, that is, influential individuals or groups
- Measurable outcomes for capacity development activities (in particular, technical assistance, knowledge exchange, and structured learning)

How the above elements fit within the framework is further described below:

Capacity impact: Local ownership and the efficiency and effectiveness with which countries pursue development goals are determined by three factors: (1) conduciveness of the sociopolitical environment, (2) efficiency of the policy instruments used by government and other sectors, and (3) effectiveness of the organizational arrangements. Development practitioners can use these factors to design a capacity development program that addresses targeted development challenges and brings about measurable change in these factors.

Change process: The framework can help to identify how capacity development activities can lead to gains toward development goals by linking activities and outcomes from these activities to their impact on capacity factors. This link creates a change process logic that is based on building blocks amenable to the development of indicators and measurement of results. Although change processes can occur through many channels, the framework focuses on adaptation on the part of people or organizations within a given institutional context in response to new information, redefinition of institutional rules and structures, and shifts in belief systems, power balances and relations. Such changes can be fostered and accelerated through interventions that enhance the use of knowledge and information, rather than through resource inputs (human, financial capital, technology, and so on).

Change agents: The framework casts individuals in terms of change agents who can initiate or lead the capacity development process. Thus, development practitioners should concentrate on the potential role of local individuals or groups in bringing about favorable change in capacity factors to achieve development goals.

Capacity development activities and outcomes: The framework provides a typology of outcomes to guide the design of capacity development programs and capture their results. Outcomes may refer to the effects of changes that occur in an individual, including changes in awareness and skills. Outcomes may also refer to altered processes and new products and thus the broader organizational or social environment,

for example, changes in consensus building, coalitions and networks, and the formation and implementation of policy and strategy instruments.

Targeting the Needs of Development Practice

This innovative framework emerged from analysis of capacity development practice and consideration for the current needs of the development community. The framework was designed to be the following:

- **Practical:** The framework is a user-friendly resource applicable in different contexts. Various materials to support its application are being continuously refined based on feedback from pilot teams and stakeholder consultations.
- **Flexible:** The framework is not a blueprint to control processes; rather, it is a set of recommendations compatible with a range of situations and change management methods. Its components can be applied across sectors and programs, promoting a “learn as you go” mentality for a more adaptive approach to interventions.
- **Results driven:** The framework facilitates benchmarking and the harmonization of monitoring and evaluation practices. This continuous and careful attention to results helps one to deliver quantitative and qualitative proof of the value and efficacy of programs.
- **Collaborative:** The framework encourages candid discussion of sociopolitical forces and incentives. By promoting a voice for all stakeholders and anchoring the development effort in a specific goal, the framework helps to further local commitment and country ownership.

How the Framework Can Be Applied

In the context of a capacity development program, one can use the framework to

- inclusively engage stakeholders in the program cycle—starting from the needs assessment stage—and ensure local ownership
- define a capacity development strategy to apply at the community, regional, or country level
- identify intermediate points along the change path for adaptive management of the change process
- build indicators into program design to monitor progress and, when necessary, adjust the program
- communicate results to donors and stakeholders
- compare programs and determine what does and does not work to improve practice.

Conclusion

Why do we need a new systematic framework for capacity development? Capacity development has become the focus of international development efforts. Enormous amounts of funding are invested every year—estimated at 25 percent of global expenditure on overseas development assistance. Yet, development practitioners still lack consensus on capacity development: what it is, what it can do, and what the steps are to attain it.

A systematic framework that permits examination of the strengths and weaknesses of capacity development programs and sharing of experiences is much desired to satisfy accountability needs and meet the need for learning as the basis for improvement. No longer is it feasible to launch programs, declare them a success, and then leave without concrete proof of the achievement of objectives and strong country ownership. Those able to show results will get the resources, which will create incentives for improved monitoring and evaluation.

The Capacity for Development Results Framework builds on such thinking for a new working definition and approach that can move development practitioners and stakeholders toward a more comprehensive understanding of capacity development. The framework also underscores evaluation as an ongoing management and learning tool, providing a flexible, yet basic, structure to improve capacity development in operation and scope.

As capacity development continues to evolve, an ongoing dialogue on fresh approaches to design and

measurement—such as the framework—can only enrich the practice for the ultimate benefit of country partners.

The authors encourage your comments via capacity4change@worldbank.org

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Different Approach, Improved Results

What would happen if the Capacity for Development Results Framework was applied throughout the hypothetical case described in the first paragraph of this *CD Brief*, starting from the needs assessment stage? The framework could improve the program by changing the design to address a more complete set of capacity constraints on the ground and reinforcing the monitoring and evaluation system.

Development Goal	Reduce adverse impact of HIV/AIDS in targeted communities
Capacity Factor	<p>Constraints in sociopolitical environment to meeting development goal identified by stakeholders through capacity needs assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited community trust, engagement, and commitment of local leaders to HIV/AIDS programs • Prejudices and stigma toward people living with HIV/AIDS that prevent them from getting tested for HIV and seeking support services
Measurable Impact	<p>Commitment of social and political leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which community leaders demonstrate support to HIV/AIDS programs <p>Compatibility with social norms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of community households that accept living with family members with HIV/AIDS • Percent change in uptake of HIV testing in targeted communities
Change Process and Change Agents	<p>Change process will be assisted through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of local leaders on benefits of an HIV/AIDS program for the community • Creation of regional action network of community leaders and service providers, with referral network to existing HIV/AIDS services in the community • Formulation of participatory plan to deliver community-based counseling and confidential HIV testing and referral services for HIV/AIDS care and support • Enhanced skills of community members to deliver counseling on HIV/AIDS to support implementation of the participatory plan <p>Change agents will be community champions who deliver community-based services and form the network core. Program will also engage local leaders, community members, and service providers.</p>
Measurable Outcomes	<p>Proportion of local leaders who report increased motivation in supporting community HIV/AIDS programs</p> <p>Proportion of community leaders and service providers involved in regional network on provision of resources to the network and monthly progress updates</p> <p>Percent of communities who developed action steps and committed resources to support the participatory plan</p> <p>Proportion of trained community members who deliver counseling</p>
Tools for Data Collection	Reports from network meeting and consultations, stakeholder interviews and surveys, reports from skills-building activities, field visit reports, testimonies from community members, and budget reports and proposals
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of structured roundtables that engage local leaders in discussions of HIV/AIDS impact on community welfare • Consultative meetings with local leaders and other stakeholders to develop network and coordination mechanism • National workshop to create and launch action network • Peer-to-peer learning on organization and delivery of community-based HIV/AIDS counseling, HIV testing, and referral services

