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### News and Events

- Ω The Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF), based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, has launched e-NewsForum, a free electronic newsletter. Since its inception in March 1995, DPMF has sought to consolidate democracy and good governance in sub-Saharan Africa. DPMF's principal objective is to enhance the institutional capacity of the policy management process in African countries by initiating a dialogue between policy-makers, civil-society leaders and researchers. More recently, DPMF's mission has been extended to cover the area of conflicts - their management, resolution and the process of post-conflict reconstruction. More on: [www.dpmf.org](http://www.dpmf.org)
  
- Ω The European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) issues a quarterly e-Newsletter with information and news on the EADI and its members. The education and training section includes up-to-date information on summer schools, training and other education opportunities. The EADI is an active network of 170 organisations with 14 working groups addressing key issues in development research, training and information. More on: [www.eadi.org](http://www.eadi.org)

(More News and Events on:  
<http://www.capacity.org/events.html>)

## ***Advancing the policy and practice of capacity building in international development cooperation***

### ***Capturing Southern Feedback on Aid***

As poverty spreads and civil strife grows increasingly prevalent in many developing countries, many commentators have begun to call not only for a closer monitoring of the achievements of development cooperation, but also for Southern partners play an active part in assessing the performance of their Northern partners. Such calls are reflected, for example, in the findings of the OECD/DAC study on *Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability* (2001), which reviews some of the current practices in aid evaluation. Whilst the majority of the critics are agreed that Southern partners and stakeholders should be more intensively involved, the number of cases in which this principle of partnership has been transformed into concrete action remain few and far between.

In this issue of *Capacity.org*, we shall be looking at various examples of Southern participation in aid evaluation. We have included a number of articles as well as a list of resources highlighting innovative approaches that seek to go beyond conventional Northern-led feedback mechanisms. The first contribution, from Tanzania, is an interesting tale of aid relationships and donor performance monitoring, as documented in a recently published book by Sam Wangwe entitled *NEPAD at Country Level, Changing aid relationships in Tanzania*. It describes the steps taken to improve the relationship between the government of Tanzania and the donor community, and explains how a series of events led to the creation of an independent, national-led and institutionalised system for monitoring aid effectiveness.

The second article summarises the experiences with the evaluation of the Norwegian Development Education Programme, as executed by a Norwegian NGO known as the ROGD Network. This network commissioned three consultants from the South to evaluate its work in the field of development education. The contribution, written by one of the Southern evaluators, Stiaan van der Merwe, describes the evaluation process and reflects critically on the insights and lessons that can be gained from such initiatives.

The third contribution is a review of a new approach to NGO capacity development presented in an INTRAC book written by Rick James, entitled *People and Change. Exploring Capacity-Building in NGOs* (2002). The new publication is scrutinised by an expert from the South, Dominique Hounkonnou, who finds a great deal of merit in the way Southern NGO capacity development is interpreted and conceptualised by James.

This edition of *Capacity.org* also marks the fourth consecutive year in which we have published our quarterly newsletter in both electronic and hard-copy formats. Hence the final section, which provides an overview of the 15 issues published since *Capacity.org* was launched in April 1999. We hope you will find this archive a valuable capacity development database and resource in relation to the topical issues we have dealt with over the past four years.

# Issue 16

January 2003

## ***Donor Performance Monitoring: Feedback from Aid Recipients***

As the situation in most developing countries worsens and public views on development assistance become increasingly critical, those involved in the debate on how to improve the effectiveness of aid have been calling for radical changes. One recent suggestion has been to invest more money in participatory monitoring and the evaluation of development efforts at both a micro level (i.e. individual projects) and a country programme level.<sup>1</sup> The idea is for monitoring and evaluation to be guided by the partnership principle, which logically requires a review of both sides' performance, i.e. aid recipients as well as donor agencies and non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs).

Despite all the rhetoric, however, there have been very few instances in which such new approaches have actually been used in practice. One of them is the very interesting story of aid relationships and donor performance monitoring in Tanzania, which is documented in a new book by Professor Sam Wangwe, the former Director of the Economic and Social Research Foundation in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (see box). The book describes the steps taken to improve the aid relationship between the government of Tanzania and the donor community between 1995 and 2000, and explains how a series of events led to the creation of an institutionalised system for monitoring the relationship between the two parties.

The whole process was set in motion when the aid relationship began to deteriorate in 1993-94. The donor community mistrusted the Tanzanian government, perceiving it as corrupt, weak in terms of democratic processes, and run by a poorly performing and financially mismanaged public administration. The Tanzanian government, through the provocative words of the then Minister of Finance, Malima, placed the blame for Tanzania's poor performance on the shoulders of the donor agencies. They were accused of being incapable of delivering on promises, pushy and

interfering, and inappropriately demanding. This situation led to an unprecedented degree of mutual irritation.

### ***Book on Aid Relationships in Tanzania:***

**Wangwe, S. 2002. *NEPAD at Country Level. Changing aid relationships in Tanzania*. Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers (distributed in Europe as of January 2003 by the African Book Collective, and in the USA by the University of Michigan, East Lansing).**

With the assistance of the Danish government, the Tanzanian government and the donors agreed to appoint an independent team of experts to study the situation and to advise on how to improve the relationship between the two parties. In 1994, a team of five experts led by Professor Gerry Helleiner of the University of Toronto, Canada, was appointed and began its work. The team presented its report to the Tanzanian government and the donors in 1995. It recommended that the Tanzanian government take the lead and prioritise its development efforts based on long-term strategies and objectives. For their part, the donors were asked to introduce substantial changes in their working procedures in order to narrow the gap between the rhetoric about local ownership and the reality on the ground.

This report, followed by a series of exchanges between the Tanzanian government and the Nordic countries, provided the foundations for a substantial improvement in relations as of 1997, when the Tanzanian government and all the various donors met to discuss what was described as a 'new way of doing business'. During a workshop in January of that year, both sides agreed on 16 monitorable ways of improving relations between donors and the Tanzanian government.

These points were intended to improve Tanzania's ownership of aid, promote accountability and transparency on both

sides, and make aid more effective. It is in this context that the process has been likened to what NEPAD is trying to do, but at a country level.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, both the Tanzanian government and the donors agreed that the implementation of the 16-point plan would be monitored periodically, notably at every consultative group (CG) meeting. Professor Gerry Helleiner was appointed to produce regular progress reports on the implementation of the plan. His first progress report was discussed at the CG meeting in December 1997, the second in March 1999 and the third in May 2000.

At the CG meeting in 2000, it was decided that this practice should be institutionalised and become a permanent aspect of the independent monitoring of the aid relationship. The Tanzanian government compiled a document known as the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS) to guide its ongoing relationship with the aid community and to define how donor performance monitoring should be shaped. After intensive discussions, the donors and the Tanzanian government agreed to appoint an independent monitoring team, consisting of three non-governmental professionals from Tanzania, one non-Tanzanian African, and three professionals from donor countries who were not employed by their governments. The Economic and Social Research Foundation, which was known as an independent research and policy institute, was accepted as an 'honest broker' by both sides and appointed to coordinate the process.

The negotiations on the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the monitoring group were protracted, as certain donors (i.e. Japan, the U.S., Germany and France) sought to focus more on the concept of aid effectiveness instead of on the original issue of the transfer of ownership. Once the focus had shifted to aid effectiveness, the ToR no longer included a set of donor performance indicators. Instead, its scope was limited to

monitoring five broadly agreed objectives of increasing aid effectiveness:

- Ω promoting local ownership;
- Ω reducing the transaction cost of aid delivery;
- Ω enhancing the predictability of aid flows;
- Ω consolidating accountability requirements and results orientation; and
- Ω making technical assistance more supportive of local capacity-building needs.

This agreement was a move away from the original framework, which had placed a strong emphasis on donor performance monitoring based on indicators. Nonetheless, although the Tanzanians were forced to make concessions, the agreement formed the start of an ongoing review and assessment process that was capable of generating critical inputs for forthcoming CG meetings. The fact that the monitoring group is independent and respected ensures that both sides are held to account.

The book essentially records these developments, beginning with the Helleiner Report in 1995, the discussions at the workshop in January 1997 and the formulation of the 16-point plan, as well as the three progress reports published in 1997, 1999 and 2000. It is an extremely interesting publication that opens up all sorts of ways of applying parts of the process to other aid settings. Although Professor Helleiner has already described the process in several articles, it is not very well known among the wider development community. This new book will help to close this gap.

- 1 See e.g. OECD/DA. 2001. Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability. Paris. <http://webnet1.oecd.org/pdf/M00021000/M00021485.pdf>
- 2 The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a step towards African ownership of development programmes. The most important element in the NEPAD is the fact that it

originates from Africans themselves, rather than from donors. The NEPAD document (<http://www.un.org/esa/africa/NEPAD.htm>) acknowledges the central importance of improved internal governance, and accepts African responsibility for addressing domestic problems and conflicts.

See also:

Helleiner, G. 2001. *Local Ownership and donor performance monitoring: New aid relationships in Tanzania?* <http://www.sti.ch/pdfs/swap143.pdf>

Helleiner, G. *Towards Balance in Aid Relationships: Donor Performance Monitoring in Low-Income Developing Countries*, in: Cooperation South (UNDP) 2000, No. 2

[http://63.241.184.166/tcdweb/coop\\_south\\_journal/2000\\_dec/02-Helleiner-article.pdf](http://63.241.184.166/tcdweb/coop_south_journal/2000_dec/02-Helleiner-article.pdf)

By Volker A. Hauck, Senior Programme Officer, ECDPM, [vh@ecdpm.org](mailto:vh@ecdpm.org)

## ***A Southern Perspective on Development Education: evaluating the RORG Network in Norway***

In recent years, agencies working on development-related issues in the South and North have experimented with new forms of exchange and relationships between their own organisations and their partners and experts in the South. This desire for change has sprung primarily from the public demand for development agencies to improve their performance. One of the areas in which agencies have sought to promote exchange is the evaluation of projects and programmes. Today, a growing number of evaluations are performed with the aid of experts from the South. Evaluations performed entirely by a team of reviewers from the South are less common, however. One such case involved the evaluation of a network of Norwegian development education NGOs, known as the RORG Network. This process started in the beginning of 2002 and should be completed by March 2003. This article attempts to shed some light on the preliminary outcomes of the evaluation and discusses some of the experiences gained from the process so far.

### **Getting the ToR right**

The RORG is a network of NGOs working in Norway to enhance public awareness and knowledge of sustainable development. It has been operating for the past ten years with an increasing focus on advocacy and monitoring the Norwegian government's development policy. Despite obtaining funding from NORAD, the

government aid agency, the NGOs have managed to retain their independence and to make clear that development education is not primarily an effort aimed at increasing public support for official development assistance. Building awareness of the wider issues of development and international solidarity has become a major aspect of their work.

The RORG has 26 members and a staff of one, who is employed as a coordinator. It meets once a year at a meeting in which policy matters are discussed and a board is elected. Guided by a common desire to improve global education, the network members agreed to a proposal that the RORG should be evaluated by 'the South'. A South African consultancy called VDM was invited to conduct this review. It commissioned two external evaluators, one from the Philippines and one from Nicaragua. The RORG coordinator joined the review team on an ex-officio basis.

The two parties began by discussing their differing expectations and understandings of the evaluation. The concept of development education itself needed to be clarified, as this was a term that was new to the consultants from the South, and their strong suspicions had to be allayed. The evaluators were also keen to find out whether the evaluation was a genuine attempt to improve development education, or whether it was simply designed to

legitimise the existence and agenda of the RORG as a Northern organisation.

A frank and open exchange of views helped to overcome gaps in understanding and dispel suspicions, thereby paving the way for the formulation of the review team's terms of reference (ToR). These constituted a clear attempt to secure an authentic voice from the South on the implementation of development education and on North-South relationships. The objectives of the review team as spelled out in the ToR were:

- Ω to assess the current work of the RORG network from a Southern perspective, and
- Ω to provide guidance and advice on how to proceed in the light of the Millennium Development Goals<sup>1</sup>.

It was agreed that the review team's evaluation report would be presented to the RORG's Steering Committee and Secretariat. A Southern Reference Group was to be appointed to act as a sounding board, to provide advice on the process and to articulate a Southern standpoint on development education.

### Process and outcome

The evaluation was based on a process approach. Questionnaires were first sent to the RORG members. The members of the review team then undertook a field mission to Norway, where they discussed the responses to the questionnaires with individual organisations. The tentative conclusions drawn from the completed questionnaires were presented at a round-table meeting and discussed in a wider group.

The review team made a number of critical observations, highlighting the following points:

- Ω the lack of a clear definition of the concept of development education in the North;
- Ω the absence of a proper and explicit teaching methodology for development education;
- Ω the lack of involvement - let alone the sustained presence - of the South in planning, implementing and evaluating development education;
- Ω only marginal reference to the Millennium Development Goals and the absence of any indication as to how development education could help achieve them;
- Ω doubts as to whether development education is a genuine initiative promoting awareness or change, or whether it merely serves to lend legitimacy to the government's development policy.

This process led to heated discussions among the network organisations during the round-table meeting, who took this opportunity to debate and reflect on their own operation in more depth. This exchange was continued in a series of follow-up discussions between the review team and individual organisations. Another outcome was the formulation and presentation of a

statement on global education by a group of representatives from the South during the Europe-wide Global Education Congress, held in Maastricht, the Netherlands, in November 2002.<sup>2</sup> The members of the review team attended this conference, where, informed by the results of the RORG evaluation, they criticised the concept of global education for not carrying a sufficiently Southern perspective. It was agreed that the concept would need to be developed further in partnership with the South.

### Initial comments about the process

Initial comments received from the evaluators and the RORG Network indicate that the process has been a challenging and worthwhile undertaking:

- Ω The lessons learned suggest that Southern evaluations should become a regular exercise for improving development education in Norway, and possibly in other Northern countries as well. This type of involvement provides opportunities for overcoming communication gaps, building global networks of understanding and ensuring that Southern actors can inform and monitor discussions on development policies in the North.
- Ω Allowing the Southerners to scrutinise the RORG network, individual member organisations and even the work of individuals in a frank and open way has helped to create new insights, views and dynamics for institutional learning and for improved North-South cooperation between the organisations concerned in the future.
- Ω The discussions between the evaluators and those responsible for commissioning the study to clarify the ToR before the contract was signed were of vital importance. They introduced a participatory element into the process and helped to avoid the common practice of simply hiring a commercial consultant to get the job done.
- Ω Although this evaluation was undertaken by people who knew Norway from visits, they had never worked either there or in any other country in the North. In order to eliminate uncertainties and to make the evaluation process more effective, more thorough preparation and orientation will be required in the future.
- Ω In the context of such an exercise, the Southerners' own stereotypes of themselves in relation to the North need to be addressed. This became evident to the evaluators when a comment was made at the round-table meeting to the effect that the Southerners were academically better qualified than the participants from the RORG.

1 See <http://www.developmentgoals.org/>

2 See <http://www.globaleducationeurope.net>

Further reading: <http://www.solidaritetshuset.org/rorg/RORG/deanor.htm>

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## **Book Review: Changing Ourselves by Remaining Humble a New Look at NGO Capacity-Building**

James, R. 2002. *People and Change. Exploring Capacity-Building in NGOs* (INTRAC NGO Management and Policy Series, 15). Oxford: INTRAC.

In the last few years, after several decades in which development aid has had only a minimal impact, we have witnessed the emergence of a number of local development organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that endeavour to support them. Unfortunately, this process has not been accompanied by the necessary capacity-building. Such capacity-building programmes as do exist are fairly superficial, owing to a failure to appreciate certain essential dimensions. Among these are the personal, human nature of organisational change, the importance of organisational culture and overall context, and the need for the process of change to be truly 'owned' by local actors and beneficiaries. These are the main issues discussed in James' book *People and Change. Exploring Capacity-Building in NGOs* (2002). The author's analysis is based on his personal experience in Southern and East Africa, but appears equally applicable to other regions, including West Africa. This new book will therefore undoubtedly prove an excellent reference work for all those involved in capacity-building, whether as service-providers, beneficiaries or cooperation and donor agencies.

The book is divided into three main parts. In the first part, the author explains the importance of the personal factor in the capacity-building process and stresses the need for this process to be 'owned' by the actors, whose emotions and fears must be taken into account together with their wishes. This contrasts with classic approaches based on 'rationality', which all too often provoke unmanageable responses in the form of resistance, frustration and even aggression. James believes that the main task of change agents is to look at reality as it is perceived by local people and

to try and understand the hopes and fears that motivate their behaviour. The remarkable revival of the Tabangwe Red Cross Society<sup>1</sup> after a lengthy crisis is a fine illustration of the relevance of this approach. It is also in line with that recommended in a study of local development organisations in rural areas of Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana that was carried out between 1997 and 2001. The main conclusion of the study was that sustainable change will depend on our ability to 'rediscover and "listen" to local development dynamics, and then help them to develop their own activities' (Hounkonnou, 2001).<sup>2</sup>

The second part of the book analyses the influence of organisations' culture and overall context, as well as the power system. A chapter on leadership development, written together with Chiku Malunga, breaks away from the usual fatalistic approach to illustrate the crucial importance of leadership development in difficult cultural contexts. With specific reference to Malawi, the authors emphasise the need for leaders to develop sufficient self-confidence to build up the capacities of the people in their organisations. This will allow them to gradually shake off their fears and genuinely shoulder their responsibilities, through 'participative leadership'. In the final chapter, Rick James and Max Lawson analyse the power of donors. As they make clear, donors are often aware that the power they wield as sources of funding interferes with beneficiaries' capacity-building efforts. Unfortunately, this does not make them inclined to change the way they work. The authors therefore call for a more transparent form of cooperation in which the true intentions and goals of both donors and local actors are quite clearly displayed, and in which everyone participates in the capacity-building process on an equal footing. The aforementioned study of local dynamics in West Africa reaches the same conclusions, pointing out

that not all relationships between development actors can be described as partnerships.

The last part of the book deals with the adaptation of monitoring and evaluation systems, as an essential condition for improving the (learning-based) approaches that underpin organisations' capacity-building programmes. While stressing the need for a sound conceptual framework, the author suggests, citing a number of specific examples, some guidelines for effective monitoring and evaluation of organisations' capacity-building activities.

James' book has numerous merits. It re-emphasises the close links between individual change and capacity-building in organisations. At the same time, it points out how essential it is to base capacity-building programmes on a clear understanding of the way in which people and organisations change, so as to avoid setting up programmes that are superficial and ineffective. The fact that the examples are drawn directly from the author's own professional experience makes the analysis all the more telling. Moreover, James is candid enough to draw the reader's attention to mistakes he himself has made in the past - a highly effective way of convincing and inspiring others.

The informed reader may, however, be disappointed by a number of unclear or apparently contradictory passages in the book, and by the failure to place sufficient emphasis on certain other essential aspects. For example, the author's statement in the first chapter that managers are the main change agents appears to contradict his analysis which makes it clear that the main catalyst for change has often been pressure from workers (or local actors). Similarly, there is too little emphasis on what is one of the key factors in change, namely the time factor, although it is hinted at in places (for example, when describing the lengthy

consultation procedures required in order to gain the support of local actors). Furthermore, just as capacity-building approaches are a response to the inadequacies of training-based approaches, the author suggests - but does not emphasise - joint learning as a response to the limitations of capacity-building programmes.

Finally, the 'Remain humble' section in the author's summary is particularly interesting. In fact, James could have used it

to back up his conclusion (which is somewhat watered down amid the monitoring and evaluation systems, important though these undoubtedly are). For it is only by remaining humble that we can truly accept the idea of changing ourselves, as he so rightly recommends. It is this need to break down existing mentalities, to cast off habitual patterns of thought and behaviour, that forms the main challenge to those involved in processes of change.

1 An assumed name (as the author explains).

2 Hounkonnou, D. (2001). Listen to the cradle. Building from local dynamics for African renaissance. Case studies in rural areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana. Wageningen University. Published doctoral dissertation (<http://www.agralin.nl/wda/abstracts/ab3114.html>).

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### **Resources on Feedback from the South**

**Culture in Finnish Development Cooperation-Report of Evaluation Study 1998:1, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for International Development Cooperation. ISBN 951-724-208-5, ISSN 1235-76181-X ([http://global.finland.fi/julkaisut/evaluoinnit/eval\\_98/r98\\_1.html](http://global.finland.fi/julkaisut/evaluoinnit/eval_98/r98_1.html))**

The Finnish Department for International Development Co-operation invited experts from Ethiopia, Mozambique and Vietnam to join a Finnish evaluation team. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an independent review of the role of culture as a quality factor of Finnish development; and to provide an overall assessment of cultural aspects in selected projects and estimate whether policies attach sufficient significance to the cultural dimension of development. The review looked at the interaction between culture and development in four cultural environments, Ethiopia, Finland, Mozambique and Vietnam.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2001. Comparative study of the impacts of donor-initiated programmes on research capacity in the South. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ISBN 90-5328-294-7**

This book concerns a southern led evaluation by Lea Velho (Brazil), David Kaplan (Capetown) and Cynthia Bautista (Philippines). The initiative for this comparative study of donor-initiated capacity building on research capacity in the South emerged from a workshop organised by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS). The study was meant to obtain feedback on the implementation of DGIS policy regarding North-South collaboration in the area of science and technology.

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**True sustainability? An examination of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development by five experts from Bhutan, Benin, Costa Rica, South Africa and India. Project proposal, S.n. (find the proposal for this initiative on: [www.nsdodebat.nl/z\\_docs/ourcommonfuture.doc](http://www.nsdodebat.nl/z_docs/ourcommonfuture.doc))**

As part of the preparations for the Rio+10 UN conference on Environment and Development (2002, South Africa), the participating countries reported on the measures to be taken to promote sustainable development on a national level. The Netherlands appointed an interdepartmental workgroup that has been assigned to formulate the National Strategy for Sustainable

Development (NSDO). As part of this proposal, the NCDO (National Committee working on Development Education) proposed inviting partners from the 'South' to conduct an extensive review of the NSDO and to discuss their findings with the civil society organisations in the Netherlands.

**Krana, C., M. Gomes, R. Vora, and S. Songanbele. A Vision from the South, How wealth degrades environment: sustainability in the Netherlands. Date unknown.**

A similar initiative was taken during the run-up to the first Rio conference in 1992 (the UNCED). For more than six weeks, four experts from Brazil, India, Indonesia and India researched sustainable development and possibilities for improvement in the Netherlands, and reported their findings to a national conference in the Netherlands. The report published received a large amount of attention in the Dutch and foreign press.

[www.nsdodebat.nl/z\\_docs/visionfromthesouth.doc](http://www.nsdodebat.nl/z_docs/visionfromthesouth.doc)

**Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN) (<http://www.saprin.org/index.htm>)**

SAPRIN is a global network established to expand and legitimize the role of civil society in economic policymaking and to strengthen the organised challenge to structural adjustment programmes by citizens around the globe. The network is working with a broad range of citizens' groups in various countries on four continents to organize public processes to assess the real impact of World Bank and IMF-supported economic-reform programs and to chart a new course for the future. As part of this review, SAPRIN and its local affiliates have also engaged the World Bank and governments in eight countries -- Bangladesh, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ghana, Hungary, Mali, Uganda and Zimbabwe -- as part of the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI).

**Country-led evaluations:**

Under the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Worldbank/OED Partnership, a series of country-led evaluations are planned, starting in Mozambique. Purpose will be to monitor and evaluate Capacity Development. A first announcement can be found on the Partnership page of the Worldbank site. (<http://www.worldbank.org/oed/partnerships.html>)

## The Capacity.org Archive: April 1999 - October 2002

This issue of *Capacity.org* marks four consecutive years of quarterly publication. Below follows a list of the 15 issues published since the publication's launch in April 1999. As of January 2000 all issues have been published in English and French. Each issue centres on a particular theme on which guest authors are invited to contribute articles, and lists relevant background resources. If you are interested in obtaining back issues, please contact Ms Jacquié Dias, ECDPM: E-mail: [info@ecdpm.org](mailto:info@ecdpm.org)

**Issue 1, April 1999 'Perspectives on capacity-building':** introduces *Capacity.org* as a website dedicated to advancing the policy and practice of capacity-building in international development cooperation. As a concept developed largely by Northern aid organisations, the site aims to open up the debate on capacity-building to different perspectives, and particularly to contributions from the South.

**Issue 2, July 1999 'A Spotlight on capacity and evaluation':** focuses on the relationship between evaluation and capacity-building. At first sight, the relationship seems obvious and the issues clear. Closer inspection, however, reveals important and often conflicting policy and methodological issues. Special attention is given to participatory evaluation and self-assessment, which are illustrated by practical experiences with the agricultural sector in Latin America.

**Issue 3, Sept. 1999 'Linking sector-wide approaches with capacity':** revisits the conclusions of a DAC meeting (in Ottawa) on the relationship between SWAps, capacity development and partnership in opening up the debate to a wider audience. There are guest contributions from Ghana and Uganda highlighting experiences in the health and education sectors.

**Issue 4, January 2000 'Informing the capacity debate - operational experiences':** reviews the debate on capacity development from an empirical perspective. It draws partly on a workshop on operational approaches to institutional and capacity development held in Harare, Zimbabwe. Case studies on Kenya, Nigeria and India illustrate the different types of capacity-building interventions. A 'Policy Brief' explores operational challenges faced by development assistance agencies when adopting capacity-building policies.

**Issue 5, April 2000 'Local action through joint action':** is seen as a way of decentralising policies at local level, effectively mobilising resources and capacities, strengthening local governance, combating poverty and improving service delivery. This issue draws on a regional Consultative Meeting on Joint Action held in Mombasa, Kenya, which discussed the potential of partnerships between local governments, civil-society organisations and the private sector. There are case studies and articles on joint-action experiences in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

**Issue 6, July 2000 'Partnership - an instrument for capacity-building':** looks at the concept and practice of 'twinning', i.e. institutional cooperation between Northern and Southern training, research, and public-sector organisations. The focus is on how different partners interpret partnership in different ways, and on how partnership is seen to support capacity mobilisation and capacity-building. Guest authors from Norway, Ghana and Botswana critically review the concept and their own experiences with North-South partnerships.

**Issue 7, October 2000 'Information and capacity-building':** focuses on the challenge posed to individuals and organisations by the new information and communication technology (ICT). Contributions from Guyana, Southern Africa, and the ECDPM discuss the institutional and individual capacities needed to gain access to useful information, and to make effective use of ICT capacity development efforts.

**Issue 8, December 2000 'Tools of the trade: capacity assessment':** examines the role of capacity assessment instruments in supporting capacity-building processes. As the importance of institutional and capacity development becomes increasingly widely recognised, development practitioners have started to design and use a range of conceptual frameworks and practical tools in the formulation and implementation of programmes. The issue looks at various assessment approaches and lists tools for self-assessment.

### Discussing New Approaches

From January 14 to 16, 2003, an *International Symposium on Capacity Development and Aid Effectiveness* took place in Manila, Philippines. Financed by the United Development Programme (UNDP), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the World Bank Institute (WBI), the Symposium provided an opportunity for donors, recipient countries and other development practitioners to exchange views on capacity development and to discuss new development cooperation approaches to support it. Case studies were presented from Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, the Philippines, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Bolivia and Jamaica.

Read more on <http://www.undp.org/capacity/symposium/index.html>

## The Capacity.org Archive: April 1999 - October 2002

**Issue 9, April 2001 'Capacity for dialogue on S&T':** looks at building capacity for dialogue in science and technology. It draws on a workshop in Ghana on building capacity for dialogue to develop science and technology policies that contribute to economic and social development. Five case studies shed light on experiences in Uganda, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Senegal and Ghana.

**Issue 10, July 2001 'Approaches to ICT capacity development':** produced in collaboration with the International Institute of Communication and Development (IICD), this issue presents three papers that illustrate some of the challenges in building the local capacities needed to manage and use ICT in a sustainable manner. The contributions reflect on the experiences gained during IICD-facilitated round-table processes and institutional learning exercises on ICT, as well as on methods which local partners in Jamaica have used to build their own ICT capacities.

**Issue 11, October 2001 'Civil-society structuring':** highlights different approaches to national civil-society structuring. There is growing acceptance of the need to involve non-state actors in policy dialogue, as this is expected to yield major development benefits. Guest contributions review processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Togo. The issue also includes information on EU mechanisms for enhancing civil-society participation in the framework of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

**Issue 12, January 2002 'Pooling of technical assistance':** presents the results of an ECDPM study on the pooling of funds to finance technical assistance in six countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The study was undertaken as part of an ongoing debate on the harmonisation of donor practices so as to reduce both the fragmentation of externally funded activities and the administrative burden they impose on developing country administrations.

**Issue 13, April 2002 'Capacity development for trade':** this issue spotlights the debate on how trade policy, trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building needs can be articulated in a broad development context. Among the key concerns are the importance of national ownership in developing trade capacities, the need for an appropriate institutional framework to ensure the sustainability of trade negotiation capacity, the participation of relevant actors, the sharing of regional best practices and the use of appropriate coordination mechanisms.

**Issue 14, July 2002, 'Capacity for development: insights and innovation':** published in cooperation with UNDP, this issue presents the tentative conclusions of a UNDP research and dialogue initiative on 'reforming technical cooperation for capacity development'. Among the points discussed are the emergence of new aid-reform approaches, the role technical assistance can play in capacity development, and UNDP's experiences with innovative approaches in Latin America. The issue also includes a review of a UNDP publication entitled *Capacity for Development: New Solutions to Old Problems*.

**Issue 15, October 2002, 'Capacity for Voice':** More and more people are becoming aware of the need to develop 'voice' systems by which public institutions can be held accountable by their constituencies. 'Voice' mechanisms challenge conventional (financial) audit procedures as they are designed to take account of the views of citizens, more especially the poor, for whom public services have actually been designed. Two guest articles outline the pioneering work that has resulted in a new way of assessing service delivery, known as 'social audits', and examine the relative success of citizen's report cards in India.

*Capacity.org* was set up by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) as a tool for development researchers, practitioners and decision-makers. As both a web site and a newsletter, *Capacity.org* brings together information, ideas, and viewpoints on capacity development policy and practice within international development cooperation. It acts as a platform for dialogue and provides a channel for informed review and synthesis of the complex issues faced by development practitioners and policy makers.

Focusing on both the 'why' and the 'how' of capacity building - debating policy questions and learning from practical experiences - *Capacity.org* seeks to 'unbundle' the complex of ideas and practices that we call capacity building. In doing this, the editors particularly encourage the exchange of perspectives and experiences from the South, to ensure that the discussions are rooted in reality.

Developed by ECDPM, it is our aim to make *Capacity.org* a joint effort in which all of our various capacities and expertise are mobilised and shared. Interested individuals and organisations can help make *Capacity.org* an effective communication tool for people who seek to alleviate poverty through capacity development. Join us by contributing information, lessons, ideas and opinions, and feedback. Offers to co-finance parts of the initiative or to link related initiatives are very welcome.

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