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### ***News and Events***

Windhoek, Namibia will host the 2nd Africities summit from 15-20 May 2000 bringing together many municipal decision-makers and practitioners from across the continent. The theme is Financing African Local Governments to Strengthen Democracy and Sustainable Development. ([www.africities.org](http://www.africities.org))

As of 3 April 2000, Capacity.org hosts a three-week on-line discussion on the theme "Joint Action between Local Government and Civil Society". The overall aim of the discussion is to deepen understanding of how "joint action" can work, and to review what institutional and individual capacities are needed to make them successful. ([www.capacity.org/forum.htm](http://www.capacity.org/forum.htm))

From 13 to 17 March 2000, INA (Instituto Nacional da Administracao) organised a workshop in Lisbon on capacity building in African lusophone countries. This was the third World Bank co-financed workshop directed at capacity building in Africa, following a similar workshop in Maastricht in 1998, and one in Paris in 1999 directed at francophone Africa. ([www.ina.pt](http://www.ina.pt))

(More info on [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org))

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

### ***Local Action through Joint Action***

This issue features the challenges of joint action between local government, civil society and the private sector. It draws attention to a subject of growing interest to policy makers, aid practitioners, and donor representatives. Partnership between these development actors is seen as a possible avenue to support decentralisation policies at the local level, mobilise resources and capacities, strengthen local governance, attack poverty and improve service delivery. But how to do this in practice? How best to bring the different actors to work together around common development goals? What institutional arrangements work best, and what capacities are needed?

To feed the wider discussion, this issue presents case studies and viewpoints on joint action experiences from Eastern and Southern Africa as well as a list of web-sites dealing with decentralisation and local development issues. Drawing from experiences in Uganda, George Kasumba reflects on sustainability issues asking how a culture of cooperation can be realised which encourages different actors to value one another and to seek to work together. In a similar light, Fred Lerise shows how the Local Government Reform Programme of Tanzania has created space for civil society to take a more active role in local development planning. The full-text case studies from the two countries plus a case study from Nakuru, Kenya, which provides insights on how joint action has been used within the framework of Local Agenda 21, can be downloaded from [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org).

The cases show that the question of accountability needs further attention. This is highlighted by Gunther Hilliges and Jan Jademaker who look at financial accountability and performance monitoring from a local partnership perspective. While recognising the demands to account upwards towards central administrations and funding agencies, they emphasise that "equitable" partnerships require that all partners are accounted to.

In addition to these studies and viewpoints, we have included two interviews. One with Odiambo Anacleto, displaying the wisdom of a retired OXFAM representative and local practitioner from the South. The second is with Guido Ast from GTZ, reflecting his agency's experience and point of view on local joint action in Kenya. All materials originate from a regional consultative workshop on "Joint Action for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development" held in Mombasa in November last year, co-organised by the Municipal Development Programme (Harare), Towns & Development and ECDPM. A book drawing lessons of experience from the workshop will be published shortly.

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## ***Effective Joint Action at the Local Level - Beyond the Provision of Opportunities***

In Uganda, the decentralisation process has realised double-sided results. While local agents have received powers and autonomy to manage their own affairs, which has raised expectations for service delivery from the wider population, financial resources and capacities are inadequate to the task at hand.

The resultant challenges of decentralisation have made it crucial that all players are mobilised to generate the needed energies to keep the process going. The Rakai District Development Program (RDDP) is an attempt by the government in Uganda (assisted by Danida) to carry out this mobilisation. Local government, together with NGO's/CBOs and the private sector have been encouraged to jointly implement programmes in a more substantial way than probably anywhere else in the country. Although this has gone on for close to eight years now, the question being asked is whether the interaction has been real and effective. Building on an earlier case study, this paper analyses the question of effectiveness. How is effectiveness rated? A number of parameters can be used, based on the original arguments to adopt a participatory approach to programme implementation and coordination. Thus joint action is considered successful if:

It leads to the development of respective organisational specialisations and capacities, enhances comparative advantage and hence facilitates prudent use of meagre local resources.

It guarantees timely delivery of services. All partners are answerable to the civic community. All players participate as equal partners.

It guarantees the maintenance and sustainability of the development process.

### **Achieving joint decision-making and consultative dialogue**

The differences in the origin, set-up, focus and orientation of the different local actors are so deep-rooted that they require deliberate interventions to be overcome. Therefore while joint action can be facilitated by putting opportunities in place for cooperation between the actors (eg: joint programming and participatory annual reviews), this is just the starting point. Opportunities should be followed by further incentives, mind-setting programmes to mobilise desired behavioural changes, and an institutional framework to enable the implementation of new innovations. To do this, a number of pre-conditions have to be met:

Mutual respect for the decision-making structures of each actor in the partnership.

A strong culture of transparency and accountability to the civic community by all partners.

An integrated planning and budgeting system which encourages the incorporation of NGO activities in local government budgets under mutually acceptable terms.

The development of an institutional framework to facilitate joint decision making which should develop out of the spontaneous efforts by the actors themselves. But external motivation will be needed to initiate the development of such a framework.

Support to the emerging self-motivations and efforts (like those presently occurring in different countries).

An intensive advocacy programme for the required policy changes.

The prime challenge to the process is to mainstream these initiatives into a formalised institutional set-up and official working practices. Other challenges include:

Protecting the respective autonomy of the actors while promoting closer collaboration.

Avoiding unnecessary political bias especially from the side of local government.

Avoiding use of different and inflexible formats for budgeting and programming.

Dealing with corrupt behaviours and practices of the actors, especially the local government partners.

Closed working practices on all sides but especially by NGO's.

Bureaucracy in decision making, especially by the local government partners.

### **Sharing responsibility for financial management**

Most of the pre-conditions mentioned for effective decision making are the same as those necessary to build a sense of shared responsibility for financial management. There are however some specific ones that should be emphasised.

Financial decentralisation means giving both local governments and NGO's some degree of autonomy in the management of programme finance. The key words here are "trust", "accountability", "transparency", and "capacity building". Especially for the donors and central governments, learning to trust local agents and having the will to let the control of financial resources go is crucial. The call for transparency and accountability is once again a universal requirement for all actors. Accountability must be to the civic community and not to one of the partners. All partners must be equally responsible and accountable to the population. Unfortunately, the population itself is "too weak" to put serious pressure for accountability on the partners. Ignorance of their rights and lack of independent information dissemination media seem to be the main handicaps. Hence, building a strong civic community by empowering it to exercise effective control is part of the critical capacity required. Capacity building has also got another dimension. This relates to offering the crucial institutional support to all decentralised actors to improve their financial management capacity. This may take various forms.

### Joint participation in monitoring and evaluation

Through the RDDP, an attempt to build joint monitoring practices has been undertaken. This has been built on the foundation of joint work-planning and reporting procedures where both the District Departments and the participating NGO's have agreed on a procedure of monthly financial reporting and quarterly physical performance reporting to the District Council. The monitoring reports are prepared in agreed formats based on a set of agreed performance indicators. A guiding principle in the selection of the formats has been to respect the unique needs of each organisation, and to use already established and familiar procedures. In most cases, NGO's have several sources of funding, each with different reporting requirements which puts excessive pressures to adequately respond to each different requirement. Therefore the RDDP uses existing NGO formats to monitor the selected programme indicators (sometimes with minor adjustments).

However this is not the desired outcome of participatory monitoring and evaluation. There is no reciprocity in these procedures and the flow of information is one-way i.e. from the NGO's to the District Council and not vice versa. Secondly, the motivation for this monitoring system on both sides is still to fulfil the requirements of the project. It has not been adopted as a system to meet the mutual needs of the two parties.

Therefore, once again the main challenge to participatory monitoring and evaluation seems to hinge on overcoming the inferiority/superiority feelings between the two parties. The "superior" partner i.e. the District Council, has not perceived the need to exchange information with NGO's. The desired approach can only be achieved if the original foundations of the partnership are re-configured. An institutional structure that permits a feeling of equal responsibility and obligations among the partners is the most desirable input at this stage. Another cornerstone to building an effective participatory monitoring system is to determine the right target objectives for a system. If the system is designed to ensure accountability and transparency to the general public rather than to the District Executives, then all partners will have equal obligations to it. However such an innovation cannot be expected to simply happen. Deliberate interventions need to be made. Mobilising the minds of all actors towards this and facilitating the process are some of the key requirements.

One general conclusion of the RDDP experience is that all the above needed changes in attitudes, behaviour and practices cannot just flow. There has got to be some deliberate effort made to stimulate, maintain and sustain the needed innovations. This can only be done by offering support to the emerging self-motivated initiatives in each situation. The approach therefore has got to vary from country to country and case to case.

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### Sites on Local Development

**www.bestpractices.org** - This searchable database, run by UNCHS (Habitat) and Dubai municipality, contains over 650 proven solutions to the common social, economic and environmental problems of an urbanising world.

**www.iclei.org/iclei/laz1.htm** - The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is an association of local governments dedicated to the prevention and solution of local, regional, and global environmental problems through local action. It also supports local Agenda 21 initiatives.

**www.ihs.hl** - The web-site of the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies. The aim of HIS is to strengthen local capacities in housing, urban management and urban environmental management, with the overall objective to improve urban quality and reduce urban poverty.

**www.iula.org** - The web-site of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). IULA aims to promote and unite democratic local government world-wide. The web-site offers an index to facilitate navigation and includes a specific section on capacity building activities.

**www.locgovinfo.co.zw** - The SADC Information Centre launched in January 1997 is a collaborative effort between the Municipal Development Programme (MDP), Africa Union of Local Authorities (AULA) and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF). The Information Centre takes the lead in information management of local government issues within the SADC region.

**www.sdnhq.undp.org/ppp** - UNDP's Public-Private Partnerships for the Urban Environment (PPPUE) programme helps bring together government, private business and civil society to pool their resources and skills to address the urban environmental challenges of the 21st century.

**www.unchs.org** - The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was established in 1978, two years after the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver, Canada. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, UNCHS (Habitat) is the lead agency within the UN system for coordinating activities in the field of human settlements.

**www.unchs.org/llm/manual.htm** - This site provides interesting UNCHS training materials in different languages on urban governance capacity-building, local leadership, local government and urban management.

**www.wsp.org** - The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) is an international partnership to promote innovative solutions tailored to local needs and conditions. It provides examples of WSP activities aimed at promoting local partnerships for managing community water and sanitation.

(More on [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org))

# Joint Action: Views from a Support Agency

## Interview with Mr. Guido Ast, Nairobi

"As a GTZ team leader and project advisor, I am presently responsible for the German contribution to the "Small Towns Development Project" (STDP) within the Ministry of the Local Government, Urban Development Department, Kenya. My assignment is to ensure that this project is implemented according to agreed roles and responsibilities. I worked before as a senior lecturer at the University of Nairobi's Department of Architecture Design Development. Otherwise I had long term experiences in housing and urban planning in four countries: Algeria (5 years), Yemen (4 years), Haiti and Dominican Republic (4 years) and Kenya (10 years). I also worked in Germany with consulting firms, with GTZ and other agencies."

### Personal considerations concerning Joint Action (JA)

JA is another term for "community participation" or partnership approach. Apparently JA is a result of the Local Agenda 21 conference. JA is not only focused on environment and sustainable development but also on poverty alleviation. JA is expected to come from the North and the South and, within the South, from various partners, and to stop environmental degradation caused by poverty and leading to unsustainable development. Joint Action is an acclamation to a noble human motive, assuming that joint undertakings will serve collective objectives better than individual action, driven by personal interests. GTZ emphasizes the need for community participation in development. In practice, we observe that the levels of partners' commitments vary in interests and motivations, in particular over long timeframes. What can we really expect from the various actors?

### Joint Action in Kenya

Kenya has the longest history of this region when it comes to JA. A motto was put on the national emblem of Kenya in 1963: "Harambee" meaning "let's do it

together". But when we look at the history of these 36 years of independence we get a mixed picture. On one hand Kenya has been one of the most stable countries in this region. On the other hand, we can see disturbing things such as a lack of transparency and accountability, and corruption at many levels (central governments, local governments and non governmental sectors). We wonder if this low morale and poor professional ethics cannot damage or even destroy JA.

### Joint Action within GTZ

Recently we had a workshop at the GTZ Headquarters emphasizing decentralisation and democratisation in technical cooperation projects. We are highly interested in supporting all efforts that lead to better governance, to more transparency in government systems and we are also willing to integrate other partners into these programmes. We are keen on getting involved in projects that are poverty alleviators through good governance. We insist on quality improvement and sustainability in project implementation and it is a major request from the real funders of our operations, the German taxpayers. We worked this past year on improving systems of quality control of our projects. We have to deliver yearly reports on all of our projects around the world.

Our partners in the various countries must be conscious that "time is money". While we are investing considerable amount of funds in our projects, we find that our partners' contributions amount almost to nothing in terms of financing. While we have to account for the money we spend, the partners do not act the same way with their own governments. We must convince our partners that they must produce results faster. We must prove that our target group, the poor, is reached and that the money doesn't go into the pockets of some mediators at any level.

### Community involvement

We need professional facilitators, resource persons and coordinators particularly in poorer and sometimes illiterate communities. Instead of a few bureaucrats invading our workshops, we want the target groups and their leaders actively involved both in the planning and in the implementation of our projects. Any project is planned in a workshop held at the local level. Let's take as an example the Small Town Development Project involving sixteen partner-towns, ALGAK - the national association of local authorities - and the Ministry of Local Government. Within the partner town, projects address councils, residents and market committees and other local associations involved in local development. These must be involved when planning strategies and measures targeting sustainable development.

### The Future of JA

Programmes should be demand-driven and not donor-imposed: responsibilities and control must be taken by local actors. It may be a positive sign that the African Union of Local Authorities (AULA) and National Associations of local government authorities such as ALGAK are now taking the lead in promoting joint actions, assisted by multi-lateral programmes such as ICLEI, ECDPM and IULA as well as Town & Development. GTZ does wish to increase their interest and commitment to JA. The Local Agenda 21 should now move from a pilot stage to a continental program for Africa. AULA should request all national associations of local authorities and all local government ministries to adopt this agenda in all African towns.

Interview by François Milis in Mombasa, Kenya. 25-27 November 1999.  
for Guido Ast e-mail:  
smtowns@africaonline.co.ke

## ***Joint Action in Practice - Lessons from Same District in Tanzania***

The concept of joint action as a tool to facilitate decentralised cooperation has been adopted by a number of development actors including local authorities in Tanzania. In Kilimanjaro region, in northern Tanzania, the experiences of Same District Council can help to further develop the concept and its practice.

Among the challenges and pre-conditions for effective joint action is the presence of different types of decision making and consultative structures and processes. In the Tanzanian case the structures have been created and are being improved through the Local Government Reform Programme. Local councils with elected representatives from the ward level constitute parts of the structure. In order to encourage joint action between the councils and other development actors, the Programme has created room for civil society organisations and institutions which are becoming increasingly active in local level development. Directives are in place to ensure collaboration among different development actors. Thus with more open district and local level decision-making and consultative structures, there is more room for joint action efforts to bear fruits in Tanzania than before. However, the challenge demonstrated in Same District is the strong reluctance among elected councillors to open up sufficiently. Part of their reluctance to incorporate other actors in the decision making processes, could be explained thus, since joint action practice requires administrative and financial openness and accountability, they are afraid to lose their freedom.

In most of the joint action activities carried out in Same District, sound financial management is an important pre-condition, not only for the successful completion of a particular project but also to enhance credibility among the actors and those providing the funds. Among the various ways adopted include cost sharing. In the Same case, those who make financial and other forms of contribution have interest and also mandate to ensure that project execution committees are financially accountable.

It is also important that the contribution made is substantial to warrant contributors' interest in the proper use of the money. Opening and running a bank account with joint signatories was also mentioned as an important mechanism to ensure proper financial management.

Financial reporting, especially to grass roots actors, was also applied in Same District. Reporting was done to district level consultative committee with members from central and local government, CBOs, NGO's, donors and others relevant actors. In addition to evaluating financial reports, the committee inspects projects and later reports to a larger meeting after which additional funds can be requested.

In the process of ensuring good financial management, project site inspections also provide opportunities for joint action partners to evaluate project results and to monitor its development. In Same District, the outcomes from joint action activities are not evaluated and monitored, particularly by the local grassroot actors, in any comprehensive manner. What is evaluated is the declared project outputs such as school buildings, improved road conditions etc.

Outcomes such as improved accessibility and better education tend not to be directly evaluated by the local actors. The reason for this include: Because of the interests of joint action actors in outputs, it has become a common practice for actors to be more active during project execution, for instance in the construction stage and least active after, say when maintenance is needed. The question of sustaining project outcomes is still new to most actors. Once the building is done there is a tendency to assume that the problem is solved. Grass roots actors seem to lack the needed capacity, skills and resources to consider projects beyond their execution phase.

In general, joint action has brought tangible improvements to people's lives particularly in receiving the spirit of working together to address common problems. That in a way is empowerment. With more efforts directed to capacity building within different institutions, it is likely that joint action practice will be perfected. People as well as their institutions will become more committed and active in organising for their own development.

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### ***The First Anniversary of Capacity.org***

With this issue, we celebrate Capacity.org's first anniversary. We would like to thank our readers for acknowledging the value of our approach taken so far, which is reflected by very positive comments from the field as well as by an increasing number of visits to the web-site and requests for this newsletter.

We value suggestions on how to improve the site and the newsletter as well as contributions and comments to ongoing discussions. Please send these by e-mail to [cb@ecdpm.org](mailto:cb@ecdpm.org), or by fax to (31)-43.350.29.02

# The Wisdom of an Old Man

## Interview with Mr. Odiambo Anacleti

"Trained as a primary school teacher and after teaching in secondary school for five years, I was transferred in 1974 to the Ministry of Culture as a researcher on "traditions and customs". In 1975 - 1976, I made a study "on the impact of the villagisation on people". In 1976, I was lecturer in Development Studies and then appointed as Director of the Research Department until '84. From '84 on, I worked for Oxfam. For four years, I was Country Representative in Tanzania. Then, I was Coordinator of a large region extending from Congo to Uganda. From '91 to '94, I was Communication Officer for Africa; from 1994 to 1996, refugee and migrant Officer for the Great Lakes region. In '96 and '97, I became Country Representative for Rwanda. Since '98, I was Policy Communication Coordinator for Africa until I retired in 1999." (Odiambo Anacleti)

### Definition and considerations on Joint Action

The concept of Joint Action (JA) was created during the Earth Conference on Environment in Rio (1992). It was thought to give an opportunity for the people of one district to act and pull together scattered resources (NGO's, civil society, local government) to create common goods. Luckily, the argument was not popularised at the local level so nobody preached this idea as his own. Most of the district officials considered that it was worth trying if somebody brought the money in. People interpret donor driven projects as donors' projects: as long as donors are giving money the project continues. It is the weakness of JA that it is still the donor's 'thing'. Pooling the resources of the district is required if you want to achieve a result. But as long as this concept is seen as coming from outside, it will fail.

### The position of the partners working in JA

The partners are practicing JA as a source of funding instead of pooling their

abilities together, so the donor becomes more important than the local resources: Local skills, money coming from different actors, local competences.

### A difficult dialogue between the hyena's (local government, NGO's; donors) and the sheep (the citizens)

The hyena's and the sheep cannot live together. Some NGO's (which I call Non Grass roots Organisations) may sometimes play a role of interface but they are often closer to the policy maker. So, usually, the donors finance what they think is good because the people are never able to express themselves. There is a clear separation between policy makers and the consumers: the policy consumers are badly informed. So, through this process, the people become sheep, and the policy makers become hyena's. Still, the JA process is made in a way that the poor are not asked how they hope to get rid of their poverty or what resources they can bring in. The ideal would be to involve the poor into the policy making process. If true JA is to appear, the poor and their representatives (religious and traditional leaders) will bring what they think should be done. But Tanzania and Kenya, for example, are now submitting to the donors documents that their citizens have not even seen. For a successful JA you need a strong will of partnership!

### Context of JA in specific countries of Africa

JA is working well in some countries of Africa. For example, Zimbabweans understand well the concept of JA but they have not succeeded in convincing the State. In some areas, JA is there without the name being used.

An important point: how to realise JA when for example NGO's have a bigger budget than the council? In my district (Tarime) Oxfam can easily collect 5.000.000 shillings from different donors (Novib, Coopibo...). This is almost half of the district's budget. So it is in the interest

of the district to cooperate with NGO's. JA will be successful if the officials consider that they have all the resources in the districts: the skills, the abilities, the money of the NGO's, the churches, the private sector, and the people. JA needs to be defined in these terms: It is about collecting the resources and using them together. But it will give a false expectation to political leaders: They will expect money from outside rather than looking at their own resources!

The problem of development in Africa is that the poor have eyes and mouths, but the hyena's have no ears! Nobody is sensitising the policy makers on what is available. We have to change the attitude of the dominating groups towards the dominated ones. We are not listening to the poor, nor respecting them, nor using their resources for alleviating poverty either. And when there is a forum it is generally the officials who explain why the poor are poor, while the other way around would be most interesting.

### What about the role of northern NGO's?

Sometimes Northern NGO's are doing a very good job, for example when they are trying to explain to Northern donors the roots of poverty. But when they come here, they turn into hyena's. When I joined OXFAM, they recruited me to go where the government was not going. Nowadays, NGO representatives come as consultants or "strategic planners" and sometimes they don't even go to the fields. You also see consultants visiting a representative of the council who gives them a list of the projects he wants to have funded. This is even done by mail or at the airport.

As an old man, I prefer the NGO's when they do go to the field.

Interview by François Millis in Mombasa, Kenya. 25-27 november 1999.  
Anacleti Odiambo, Box 194, Tarime, Tanzania, Fax : 00-255-68-690 300

## A New Understanding of Accountability

The consultative workshop on 'Joint Action for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development' held in Mombasa from November 25-27, 1999 examined a number of case studies on local joint action partnerships, including Agenda 21 initiatives. The discussions highlighted that accountability, and in particular its relation to locally designed monitoring and evaluation systems, is an issue that has not yet been worked out. This paper briefly explores some of the aspects involved.

Within the framework of development cooperation, the concept of accountability is normally understood and applied in a rather limited (one-way) and restrictive (financial) sense focusing on the relationship between receiver to donor. The (intended) final beneficiaries are not normally aware of or are involved in the procedures. However there are various aspects to accountability that should be considered, if it is to be of use to all those concerned. Moreover if well designed and implemented, accountability is a key element to support participatory processes and to give shape to partnerships on an equal footing.

### Further Reading

**De Leener, P. (et al.). 1999. *Pauvreté, décentralisation et changement social: éléments pour la reconstruction d'une société politique*. Dakar: Enda Graf Sahel.**

This book has been written in the framework of the ACRESO space (acronym standing for Accompaniment of Social Creativity). It places the issue of decentralisation in a broad perspective, regarding it as a process of social change. For those interested in the problems surrounding the mechanisms of impoverishment and in the topic of decentralisation, this original work should open up new lines of thought enabling them to view social and political change from a range of different perspectives. The book presents an interesting view of how capacities can be strengthened by mobilising and recognising expertise, knowledge and perceptions from within communities themselves.

**Fiszbein, A., and P. Lowden. 1999. *Working together for a change: Government, business, and civic partnerships for poverty reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean*. (WBI Learning Resources Series). Washington: World Bank Institute.**

The notion of collaborative action between public sector and civil society, making use of social capital and facilitated by an engaged set of public institutions, is informing the current debate. The book argues that such partnerships bring new resources to poverty-reduction initiatives, leading to both quantitative and qualitative gains in output. Based on 50 case studies, it provides a rich view on experiences gathered from EDI, UNDP and the Inter-American Foundation learning programme on partnerships for poverty reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean.

(More on [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org))

The old - and wrong - distinction between developed and underdeveloped countries is now being replaced by a 'One World' concept. All countries are 'wrongly' developed and answers for the future can only be found together. Joint action between the main stakeholders at all levels in and between North, South and East is now required.

With development cooperation now being defined in terms of partnerships (both on international and local level) there is a need to redefine and understand the concept of accountability in a wider sense and as a two-way process in the light of the principles of reciprocity and equality.

This would mean that at the international level any donor (Government/NGDO/etc.) should be able to provide a transparent picture of its activities and financial arrangements to its (Southern) partners - as an expression of mutual accountability - and to the general public. It should cover issues such as:

- the way in which criteria for (project) selection and priority setting are established;
- how evaluation criteria and measures of success are established and measured;
- how project/programme information is used and presented
- the way in which any funds raised or provided will be used and what share will go to (Northern) activities and administration;
- the way in which issues will be presented in any fundraising and information campaigns, for example appeals on solidarity, compassion, bad conscience, own long term benefits or joint responsibility

At the local level, the complex process of involving different types of stakeholders in a joint action partnership means that transparency and accountability are key issues to uphold - to maintain participation of the intended beneficiaries and to keep the stakeholder groups together. It means upward, downward and mutual accountability. Upward towards donor or national government, downward to the intended beneficiaries, and mutual accountability among the stakeholder groups themselves.

This has implications for the way the decision making process is conducted, for the provision of information, and for capacity building and training. A transparent decision making process and provision of sufficient information are key to accountability. Without (independent and) reliable information being available and presented in an accessible manner there can be no accountability. There are major implications for capacity building and training here, because information in itself is useless if people and organisations are not able to act on it because they lack skills and capacity. Moreover this approach pre-supposes that municipal staff and others involved are well versed in participatory

approaches and methods and that there are (community-based) structures in place to handle the flow of information. This however is very often not the case and appropriate training and structure building will be required. It requires involvement from all stakeholders right from the start in:

- decision making process
- allocation of finance/resources - financial management
- establishing and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems
- identifying needs for structure building/strengthening of existing organisations
- identifying needs for capacity building and training

Downward accountability is a prerequisite for true participation. It however requires an organisational structure that enables people to access, handle and assess information and relate it to priority setting and other decisions to be made and to take an active part in a monitoring and evaluation system. In terms of information to be disseminated it requires:

- clarity on available resources
- clarity on rules and procedures
- clarity on priority identification and setting
- clear agreements on roles and responsibilities
- clear agreement on expected results
- clear and simple indicators for the monitoring/evaluation system
- regular checks

Stakeholders need to be accountable to each other as well as to their constituencies. The actors involved need to work out a system of performance measurement (allocating roles and responsibilities) that is also understandable to the beneficiaries. People need to be able to keep track of priorities set, activities, achievements and use of funds.

Any donor therefore needs to be very much aware of the need for capacity building and training in this respect and to urge its partners to thoroughly assess the situation and needs and incorporate these and any required local structure building into the project design and process. They should also recognise that any monitoring and evaluation system should first and foremost aim at downward accountability and mutual accountability among the stakeholder groups and be designed by the local partners themselves.

On the other hand, local stakeholders should be fully aware of the need for upward accountability. Although partnerships should be built on trust they also entail certain responsibilities. National governments, donor agencies and NGOs are themselves accountable to taxpayers and others and should therefore be able to justify the use of funds. An open and transparent monitoring and evaluation system that has been designed and agreed to by all local partners (involving the intended beneficiaries) can be the basis for satisfying these 'external' accountability requirements and be a performance measure in itself.

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*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 building 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 building. 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.

**<http://www.capacity.org>**

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