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News and Events

The Africa Policy Information Center (APIC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) invite participation in an electronic roundtable to discuss what policy perspectives and understandings of African reality should shape international engagement with Africa. The event runs from January 8 to May 8, 2000 and focuses around questions relating to 'economy and development', 'democracy and human rights', 'peace and security' and 'education and culture'.
(<http://www.africapolicy.org/rtable>)

From 25-27 November 1999, the Harare-based Municipal Development Programme (MDP), Towns & Development (an international network of local authorities, NGOs, and community groups) and ECDPM organised a workshop on Joint Action for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development in Mombasa, Kenya. A major aim of the event was to exchange operational experiences, and to identify capacity needs in relation to joint action partnerships between local authorities and civil society in Eastern and Southern Africa. Issue #5 of Capacity.org (April 2000) will have a report from this event.

(More info on www.capacity.org)

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

Informing the Capacity Debate: Operational Experiences

We welcome the new millennium by returning to the wider debate on capacity building. Today, the questions raised in our Launch issue are revisited from an empirical base, informed by research and the viewpoints of practitioners.

In October 1999, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), ECDPM and the DAC Informal Network on Institutional and Capacity Development organised a Workshop on Operational Approaches to Institutional and Capacity Development. Presentations and work group sessions dealt with questions such as: How have interventions been conceived; and how has capacity development been understood? What intervention strategies and instruments have been employed? How did the design and implementation of programmes work out; who participated in the process; and how have interventions and processes been monitored and evaluated?

This issue draws on some of the documents prepared for this event and reviews some of the lessons learned. The workshop was attended by 70 participants representing national policy research institutes from Africa together with members of the DAC Informal Network.

We present here summaries of four of the cases in our guest contributions section, reflecting experiences from quite different types of capacity building interventions in Africa and Asia. Oforbuike Nwobodo and Matthias Schmale provide insights into capacity development at the organisational level of the Nigerian Red Cross. Their focus is on creating credible governance structures within the framework of the "well-functioning national society" concept of the International Red Cross, and on the difficult task of change agents when guiding organisational transformation processes.

This focus on the internal functioning of individual and formal organisations is contrasted by Graham Teskey's review of capacity development from a system-wide perspective. He looks at the Public Service Reform Programme in Tanzania and at the Education Development Sector Programme in Uganda.

Niloy Banerjee's contribution takes us to the other end of the definitional spectrum where capacity development becomes almost synonymous with development itself. Stressing that capacity development has to take greater notice of the complexities underlying poverty, he reflects on the broader notion of the concept with a critical examination of micro-credit programmes in Bangladesh

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Organisational capacity building: An example from the Nigerian Red Cross

Definition and approach to capacity building

With a membership of 176 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is uniquely placed to mobilise experiences and resources for capacity building as well as to define and monitor capacity building standards and approaches for a global network of humanitarian organisations. While primary responsibility for capacity building rests with each National Red Cross or Crescent Society, capacity building support is a priority for the IFRC. Such support is guided by the Federation's "Characteristics of a Well Functioning Society", which were defined in the mid 90s as an attempt to set universal performance standards. More specifically, Federation support is offered in the areas of strategic planning, revising statutes, more classical organisational development (changes in structures, systems, corporate identity), improved governance and management leadership as well as human, material and financial resource development.

This case of the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) illustrates capacity development at the organisational level in response to both internal and external pressures for change.

The Nigerian Red Cross Society

In 1993 the Nigerian Red Cross Society realised the need to embark on an organisational change process. The NRCS lacked adequate means or capacity to cope with increasing human agonies in the country. It relied almost entirely on outside support. The need to put

the NRCS in a stronger position was strongly expressed within the National Society as well as among its international Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.

A 1994 evaluation identified the obstacles for further development of the NRCS and made a number of recommendations including some for far-reaching changes to the organisational structure. Following intense internal consultation, the NRCS started work on the key recommendations, including a constitutional review, streamlining the governance structure, assigning functions to all elected officials and limiting their terms of office, as well as developing a national accounting and reporting system.

Based on 6 weeks capacity and vulnerability assessments in each branch, the NRCS in early 1997 redefined its mission statement as well as the broad goals and objectives for a 3-year strategic plan (1997 to 2000). Key activities since have include the recruitment of staff at headquarters and branches, training for people elected to governing bodies at all levels, production of a branch development manual as well as training (mostly on the job) in areas such as planning, reporting and disaster preparedness.

The change process was designed to be participatory from the onset and attempts were made to involve "internal stakeholders" from all levels of the National Society. The NRCS branch level leadership has had a major say in shaping the direction of the change process in particular through the strategic planning exercise, and has benefited from the various training activities, such as the course on governance.

In 1997, an IFRC initiative to prove to its donors its competence in the area of capacity building led to a tripartite project with three pilot projects (in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Guatemala) as well as a project to strengthen the Federation's internal capacity for institutional development work. Within this two-year project, funds were made available to the NRCS for its institutional and resource development, disaster preparedness and response, as well as for community based health programmes.

Overall, the Federation has played a significant catalytic role in the NRCS change process. However, it is felt by some NRCS leaders that the Federation could play a more aggressive leading role, which should not be seen as interference in the internal affairs of a National Society. Minimum performance standards related to areas such as good governance and effective and relevant services and programmes should be more vigorously monitored and ensured.

There was some resistance to change in the NRCS, linked to fears of losing positions and subsequent intrigues to derail the process. Some people were uneasy with foreigners being involved in the

More definitions

"National [Red Cross and Red Crescent] Society capacity building is a systematic approach of continuous learning to improve the ability and capacity of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to make the most effective and efficient use of their available human and financial resources to achieve the humanitarian purposes of the Movement in a sustainable way"

IFRC 1998. Framework for National Society Capacity Building. Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

"Institutional development is a process aiming to strengthen the capacity of societies. Institutional development does not only focus on (project)organisations, but also on the political, social, economic, legal and cultural structure determining the functioning of organisations. Institutional development does not only concern government, but also private sector and civil society"

Netherlands Development Assistance (NEDA). Beleidsnotitie Institutionele Ontwikkeling. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands.

(More on www.capacity.org)

determination of the future of an independent National Society. The resistance to change was eventually overcome through widespread discussion and a fully democratic process. A weak element in the process has been the slow progress in local financial resource mobilisation and resulting continuing over-reliance on external financial support.

The main achievements of the NRCS capacity building process to date include recruitment of key staff, improvement in the general management systems leading to better run activities, revitalised governing leadership, more functional branches with full time branch secretaries, more focus on service oriented programmes than on ceremonial functions, as well as an improved public and government understanding and support of the Society's activities.

Lessons learned

Some major lessons from the NRCS and other Federation-supported change processes include:

Key stakeholders must be involved to ensure common ownership and commitment to agreed goals.

Organisational statutes should at all times address positively the overall aims and objectives of the National Society.

Clear division of responsibilities between governing and managing leadership should be ensured. Flexibility in leadership

and respect for democratic procedures as well as the organisation's common ideals and principles is of great essence in a change process.

Staff positions/performance must always be monitored and appropriately rewarded.

Use of independent or external auditors/evaluators in an organisational change process can yield objective and productive results.

Practical cooperation with other parts of the international Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement is extremely useful in the improvement of services and programmes as well as for the further development of governance and management leadership.

Financial resource development is a critical component of any organisational change process.

In conclusion, we would like to note that change agents must be ready to face opposition and even blackmail by those who might see them as "radicals" or "rebels". Change agents should strive for a measure of objectivity, integrity, transparency, and respect for different views and opinions. The overall interest of the organisation or group must supersede any sectional or personal interest.

By Oforbuike Nwobodo, Nigerian Red Cross and Matthias Schmale, IFRC Geneva. e-mail: schmale@ifrc.org

Conclusions from the Harare workshop on operational approaches

" Capacity Building is a risky, murky, messy business with unpredictable and unquantifiable outcomes, uncertain methodologies, contested objectives, many unintended consequences, little credit to its champions and long time lags. When thinking about capacity issues, the narrow clarity of the 1980s has slowly given way to a more sophisticated but less certain perspective in the 1990s." (Maconick, R., and P. Morgan (eds.). 1999. Capacity-building supported by the United Nations: some evaluations and some lessons. New York: United Nations).

The case studies prepared for the workshop and which are reviewed in the overview paper confirm the validity of this quotation. From both conceptual and operational perspectives, capacity building remains a "slippery" term. The range of cases clearly underlines the fact that the narrow clarity of the 1980s must give way to a more sophisticated but less certain perspective in the new millennium.

Empirical research on operational experiences can make a useful contribution to our understanding of capacity issues, and in so doing to enhance our abilities to address capacity challenges. In this regard, the case studies prepared for the workshop have all told different stories and raise different issues, some of which are common to all, others where comparisons and contrasts can be drawn. The overview paper prepared for the workshop has attempted to distill these, in particular in terms of what can be learnt about:

- Our understanding of capacity and capacity building;
- How we go about building, developing and mobilising capacities;
- How we use evaluation in capacity development programmes and processes.

Readers who are interested in the case studies or other related issues on institutional and capacity development are encouraged to access the capacity.org web-site, and the web-site of the DAC Informal I/CD network.

The overview paper will be published as an ECDPM Discussion Paper in March 2000.

System-wide capacity building:

Civil service reform in Tanzania and sector investment in education in Uganda

These two case studies aimed to analyse the impact of sector and system-wide capacity building. The Tanzania Civil Service Reform study focused on building capacity for effective policy making and for functioning personal, financial and information systems across the whole of the public sector. One of the ways it sought to do this was by attempting to change the formal and informal institutional environment - the "rules of the game". As such, it was moving away from the more traditional - and limited - interpretation of capacity building as training and re-tooling. The sector-wide approach to education planning in Uganda represents a coherent approach to improving policy making, systems and service delivery within the confines of one sector.

Both cases show that system-wide capacity building is by itself insufficient. Unless the wider environment (in this case the rules, norms, values and pay structures of the public sector) is changed, "capacity" is unlikely to be built. Or more strictly, that the gains in individual skill levels, and improvements in organisational systems

and structures are unlikely to be sustained unless the wider institutional environment is improved. The lesson from the two case studies is that "turning individual competence into organisational capacity requires institutional change".

The Tanzanian Civil Service Reform Programme

Implementation of the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSR) in Tanzania commenced in 1993. Programme documentation did not actually use the term "capacity building", so no definition or conceptualisation was articulated. However, there was a relatively minor capacity building component within the programme with the following goals:

development of leadership skills and capacity needed to manage change; and to develop capacity to ensure that the Government will in future effectively manage its role and functions.

Until late 1997, "capacity building" equated to training, with a

Pre-conditions for capacity building interventions

The articles and workshop summary of issue #4 captured many features that make capacity building (CB) a complicated, messy undertaking. The CB experience of non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) exhibits many similarities and parallels. Increasingly, NGDO experience of CB for themselves and of communities they work with shows the importance of getting the preconditions right. Four preconditions for success stand out.

First, is real clarity and honesty about the purpose, i.e., establishing a shared understanding of capacity building for what? The Tanzania case study shows the effects of purpose on subsequent commitment and behaviour. When framed as 'ends' i.e., capacity to increase performance, rather than 'means' such as staff retrenchment, acceptance and commitment increased. Lack of rigour in being clear about 'for what', as vague or long term as this may be, fosters confusion and multiple interpretations that often lead to deflection of effort. This is why - illustrated by the Red Cross case - early, balanced negotiation between relevant stakeholders is so vital.

Second, is to check how the anticipated level of intervention 'nests' within others. An example, as many cases show, is the extent to which the overall incentive structure creates positive or negative pre-conditions for more narrow reforms. Failure to factor in and deal with higher and lower conditions reaps its own reward of frustration and resistance to change. Taking a system view of CB is one way of understanding and mapping linkages to important features surrounding the intervention. The skill is knowing how far to look and what to do in order to create an enabling framework.

A third precondition is learning from the 'trigger' for change. Crudely, is it internal or external? In the latter situation, far more attention must be paid to issues of ownership, commitment and empowerment of those who are ultimately responsible for making change occur and endure. This is always the organisation that is undergoing change. Funders can help, but in the last analysis the responsibility for change is not theirs. The CIDA case in Ethiopia shows that the funder's responsibility is to reflect on and apply the changes they need to make in

their own behaviour to better enable change in others.

Finally, the Uganda case indicates that a pre-condition for success (in any development intervention) is knowing and agreeing from the outset how withdrawal will take place. The art of 'letting go' is as important as the art of engaging. This is perhaps one of the least explored facets of good practice.

Preconditions are often shaped by prior processes, (relational) experiences affecting trust and deep factors of convention (implicit rules of the game) and culture. They are seldom amenable to easy or short-term improvement. Hence they may be recognised but are then discounted or placed in the assumptions column of project log frames. Institutional interests, pressure to act and to disburse add to the relative inattention to getting the preconditions right. A common penalty of not taking pre-conditions seriously enough is gaining superficial change that does not become embedded and enduring. In sum, pre-conditions matter.

By Alan Fowler, Addis Ababa
alanfowler@compuserve.com

limited amount of basic "retooling" i.e. provision of office equipment, computers etc. Training was concentrated on key groups of managers responsible for implementing the CSRP. The CSRP implementation report of December 1997 identified two key problems with the capacity building component:

since inception of the CSRP, capacity building activities were undertaken on an ad hoc basis, without an overall strategic perspective; and
inadequate resources were allocated to support capacity building initiatives.

The same report identified a range of capacity building activities which would be needed for a more strategic approach: strengthening Government's strategic planning and policy coordination processes; implementation of merit-based promotion systems; development of a core professional and managerial cadre through pay reform, contract based recruitment and "fast track" promotion; retooling to meet priority IT and telecommunications requirements; developing skills and organisations for regulating divested activities; and strengthened leadership and governance. Although these activities were identified and some, such as pay reform, were already included under other components, a broader capacity building strategy was not developed under the CSRP.

In 1998, the CSRP was replaced by the new Public Service Reform Programme. Now, "capacity building" was understood in a wider sense, recognising that individual competencies will only be turned into organisational capacity if system wide incentives are in place, and the wider institutional environment is conducive. The focus was on building the capacity of systems, through pay reform, meritocratic recruitment and promotion, delegated management and performance improvement, rather than on individuals through training.

The Education Strategic Investment Programme in Uganda (ESIP).

Sector-wide approaches suggest that donors, in return for a coherent "sector" policy, agree to provide time-slice financing for a proportion of the total sector programme, rather than funding specific categories of expenditure. There are three key processes which enable the sector approach to function; first, **budgeting**, the process by which the annual budget is put together; second is the **flow of funds**, the mechanisms by which funds are disbursed; and third, the **reporting and accounting process**, ie reporting for financial expenditure, physical progress and developmental impact.

Strengthening the planning and management of education was the smallest by far of the five ESIP components in Uganda. Experience demonstrates [1] that the success of social sector interventions depends more on the quality of the policy and institutional environment than on the absolute amount of money spent. The capacity building interventions planned under ESIP were: strengthening the management of ESIP, including development of

an education management information system; education policy development; organisational development of Ministry of Education and Sports; and local government and school level education management development.

Progress with all these interventions is still at an early stage, as ESIP was effectively launched only in mid-1998. However, one issue identified in April 1999 was that the education sector sits within the wider public sector, and unless the incentive framework provided within the broader public sector is conducive, limited programmes of **organisational** restructuring and change are likely to have a limited impact. Unless pay is adequate (and paid in a timely manner), unless good performance is rewarded and sanctions are imposed on those performing poorly, and unless staff believe in what they are doing and have faith in management, individual competence will **not** be turned into organisational capacity.

Further reading

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Conclusions and Lessons Learned

"Institutional development" is the process by which individual competence is turned into organisational capacity. Capacity building must begin with the capabilities of individuals. This is necessary, but insufficient. Equipping staff with the skills and knowledge that enables them to discharge their official functions will, at best, only bring about individual effectiveness. It is unlikely to contribute to collective or organisational effectiveness. Individuals perform tasks, which, when strung together, constitute the processes and systems undertaken by the organisation. If matched with resources and appropriate degrees of authority, these processes will result in the organisation delivering its outputs.

"Capacity" refers to the ability of an organisation to articulate its mission, role and function; mobilise and deploy resources (cash, people, equipment, assets); deliver outputs (whatever they may be);

manage its own affairs effectively and efficiently; reflect upon its role in response to the continuously changing external environment; and respond to the needs of its partners, clients and customers.

Within a particular set of institutional arrangements in a particular sector (here we are talking about "the public sector"), organisational capacity derives from an appropriate organisational structure (with responsibility matched by authority and resources), appropriately skilled people in post, following effective business processes, and supported by functioning systems (for managing information, cash, assets, and staff). Even this is not sufficient to ensure organisational capacity. Any organisation operates within an "incentive framework" that establishes the material, cultural and social incentives to perform. There are three sets of mechanisms that will influence, if not determine individual and collective performance. Unless the following three influences are addressed within "capacity building" programmes, no amount of training or supply of computers will bring about functioning organisations:

Exit: the extent to which there are competitive pressures operating within the organisation. In the public sector these include competitive remuneration, meritocratic recruitment and promotion, performance related contracts, performance assessment and (possibly, eventually) performance pay;

Loyalty and compliance: the extent to which there is a culture of loyalty to the organisation and compliance with its rules. In the public sector: what credence is attached to the rule-based bureaucracy? How much pride is associated with working for the organisation? Are effective sanctions in place if the rules are ignored?

Voice mechanisms refer to the extent to which individuals within the organisation have some influence over the way it is run (are their views heard?); and the extent to which there is pressure from outside the organisation to perform (can clients or beneficiaries exert pressure upon the organisation to perform?).

A common problem in many donor-funded projects is that the problem is interpreted as one of failure in organisational structure, in the individuals themselves (lack of training, inadequate skills) or in the equipment available to those individuals (computers, cars). These are often called "institutional" problems, but they are not. For want of a better description, they are technological problems.

A more sophisticated and wider understanding of "capacity building" is therefore required. Three rounds of capacity will need to be built. "First round capacity" must focus on individuals through training and equipment where necessary. "Second round capacity" requires the development of functioning systems for financial management and control; the procurement of goods and services; planning, monitoring and reporting; and human resources. A "third round" of capacity building is also required - and this final round will be the most difficult to build but it will be the most important. It requires constructing, and developing, the exit, voice and loyalty mechanisms, which are central to system-wide capacity building and institutional development.

[1] See for example Dollar, D. and L. Britchett. 1998. Assessing aid: what works, what doesn't and why. (World Bank Policy Research Report). New York: Oxford University Press.

By Graham Teskey, DFID Eastern Africa, Nairobi.
e-mail: G-Teskey@dfid.gov.uk

Beyond institutional efficacy and excellence: Capacity Development through Micro-Credit in Bangladesh

The broader notion of capacity development

The discourse on capacity development increasingly revolves around one totem-pole: "Capacity development to do what and to what end?" The answer to this depends on one's vantage point. The Southern point of view, as the ultimate recipient of aid, is to use aid to acquire the means to sustainably overcome various constraints that ultimately have a bearing on poverty.

While the symptoms of poverty - income deficits, income fluctuations, consumption shortfalls etc.- are well-understood, the debate on capacity development needs to take greater cognisance of the complexities that underlie the poverty phenomenon,

especially in the 'structurally poor' South Asian context. This is necessary to put in place capacities that will ultimately allow onslaughts on poverty that are energised from within.

The characteristics of this structural poverty are, first, lack of ownership of productive, non-labour assets like land or capital among a majority within a given community. Conversely, all this is disproportionately owned by a minority within the community leading to wide disparities and skewed power relations. Ultimately this creates a "disempowered" class. The challenge, then, is not only material provisioning, but to dislodge powerful quo vested interests.

Structural poverty is also characterised by the very poor status of women defined by restrictions on mobility, non-ownership of assets, lack of decision-making power within the family and lack of 'voice' within the community. Women are almost always part of the disempowered class. While this is a characteristic of almost all poor communities, the above restrictions on women are, in some cases, also reinforced by cultural norms.

A third characteristic is poor education and health status among the disempowered class, both as a cause and as a consequence of the characteristics listed above.

In such a context, capacity development to challenge poverty must disaggregate the notion of poverty into some of its dominant characteristics such as the ones listed above and seek to address these. Here the discourse, therefore, must move from the more conventionally understood capacity development - of improvements in terms of sharpening, redefining and modifying of organisational strategies, processes, procedures and putting in place the incentives and conditions that allow change to happen - to what Peter Morgan calls "changes in the pattern of social politics, social capital or the development of healthy communities..." (<http://www.capacity.org/pubs/cida/cidaz-morgan.htm>). The endeavour needs to focus around finding tools and interventions that address these disaggregated strands of poverty. This is also a useful analytical tool because capacity development to address poverty per se, is likely to be interpreted differently in differing contexts and is complicated further by the multiplicity of definitions and academic dialogue that surround the poverty-word.

Glimpses from micro-credit in Bangladesh

If one were to accept these characteristics as deserving attention, micro-credit in the non-government sector of Bangladesh, is an interesting case study of a standalone intervention on capacity development that has shown mixed results [1]. Micro-credit seeks to create of productive assets among the 'disempowered' class referred to above. In so doing, it pushes outwards the production, income and consumption envelopes of this class, thereby creating capacities to deal with poverty. In more spectacular fashion, micro-credit has been the incentive that has lifted mobility, voice and associational constraints incident upon women and allowed them to acquire productive assets. This has also had intra-family impacts as demonstrated, for instance, by higher contraception prevalence. This is significant because in this particular context, not only are the constraints poverty-related but they are also culturally sanctioned.

Positive impacts on income and on women lead to investments in health and education at the level of the family which further augment capacities for fighting poverty and cascade the benefits on to future generations.

Unfortunately, interventions of the scale and size of the micro-credit industry in Bangladesh are subject to institutional and systemic limitations. Reasons of institutional viability lead to the exclusion of the poorest among the poor as beneficiaries. This is compounded by design-imposed limitations like social exclusion (where the credit group decides that some of its members are 'risky' borrowers), self-exclusion (where a potential borrower is not confident of his or her ability to repay a loan) and staff-determined exclusion (where directives to staff and their incentive packages are designed in a manner that precludes loaning to 'high risk' categories like the geographically remote, widows, etc.)

In systemic terms, the limitations of the overall economy limit possibilities of sustainable graduation out of poverty and there is evidence that micro-credit has shifted poverty among categories thereby 'loading on' intense poverty to the poorest of the poor. The government's inability to augment rural infrastructure also forces micro-credit to chase a limited number of economic options and its viability in generating profitable enterprise at the margin, therefore, erodes rapidly.

In the final analysis, an intervention of the scale and scope of micro-credit in Bangladesh is that it is able to develop capacity for challenging poverty by effecting social transformation. While the efforts of individual organisations has led to corresponding pockets where transformation has been witnessed, these pockets have yet to be leveraged or as a whole to impact beyond the 8 million or so beneficiaries of the micro-credit industry. An old Indian fable goes that an elephant, by virtue of its small eyes, is unable to fathom its own size and strength. The

Bangladesh behemoth clearly needs the eyes to see how its size and strengths can be leveraged to effect wider transformation in a country where nearly 60 million people live below the poverty line!

For the designers of aid interventions, it is important to be aware of this broader paradigm of capacity development, which focuses beyond institutional efficacy and excellence. The development landscape of nations in the South is replete with institutions of great refinement that have scant impact on the realities around them. This is the compelling logic of looking at capacity development through an altogether separate set of lenses.

More Sites

UNDP, Management & Governance Network:

Gives access to Technical Advisory Papers, Workshop Reports, Guidelines and other documents on capacity building and related issues. <http://magnet.undp.org/>

Universalia: UNICEF and UNDP co-sponsored capacity development project, with links to other relevant sites. <http://www.universalia.com/english/capdev/main.HTM>

OSSREA: Encouraging and promoting interest in the study of and research in the social sciences in Africa (provides links to many African research sites). <http://www.ossrea.org>

(More on www.capacity.org)

[1] The case study was commissioned by CIDA Policy Branch and Asia Branch to examine how far micro-credit in Bangladesh had built capacities within communities, organisations and the wider system for poverty alleviation. Covering 5 districts of Bangladesh, results showed that capacities are found to have been well-developed within the micro-credit institutions. Community capacities were still far from developed and the wider system of Bangladesh is not even touched by capacity development initiatives.

By Niloy Banerjee, National Foundation
for India
e-mail: niloy@nfi.ren.nic.in

News from ACBF

HARARE, February 8, 2000 - The Board of Governors of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) at its special session held recently in Harare, approved the expansion of the activities of the Foundation to include not only the building of capacity in macroeconomics policy analysis and development management, but also in key areas of the public sector, with emphasis on the interface between the public sector, the private sector and the civil society, as well as on regional integration. This expansion means a merger into the ACBF of the Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa (PACT) initiative, which was proposed by African Governors at the World Bank and recently approved by the World Bank, and which has translated into a significant increase of ACBF's available resources for capacity building in Africa. This signals the strengthening of the partnership and support for development between Africa and the international donor community as well as the recognition of the role and credibility of the African Capacity Building Foundation.

In a related development, the Executive Board of ACBF also appointed Dr. Soumana Sako as the new Executive Secretary to spearhead the Foundation's broader intervention in capacity building in Africa. Dr. Sako, a Malian national, brings to the ACBF a wealth of international and continental experience in public administration, economic and development management, as well as academic expertise in public and international affairs.

One of the challenges facing the new Executive secretary will be overseeing the integration of PACT into the existing ACBF line of business. The successful integration and implementation of this new initiative would in turn foster an effective coordination of interventions in capacity building and in the enhancement of Africa's ownership, leadership and responsibility in the capacity-building process; provide a forum for articulating issues, experiences and best practices; and help raise awareness and resources for capacity building in Africa.

ACBF was established in November 1991 with a mandate to play a leading role in the building and strengthening of human and institutional capacity in policy analysis and development management in sub-Saharan. The overall objective is to ensure that Africa will have its own nucleus of professionals in policy analysis and development management in order to reduce its reliance on external technical assistance. To date, ACBF, through direct funding, co-financing as well as networking and information exchange, has supported over 40 capacity-building projects, to the tune of some 200 million United States dollars, of which ACBF has contributed nearly 80 million United States dollars, involving the strengthening of macroeconomic policy analysis capacities, including the training of economic managers and public policy analysts.

r.ongeso@acbf.co.zw

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>

Capacity.org is compiled by Tony Land and Volker Hauck, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM),

Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21, 6211 HE Maastricht, The Netherlands

Fax: (31)-43-3502902, E-Mail: cb@ecdpm.org, <http://www.oneworld.org/ecdpm/>