

# Introducing the Capacity Assessment and Capacity Building

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## 1 What is Capacity Building?

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has defined "capacity" as "the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner."

The terms "capacity building" or "capacity development" describe the task of establishing human and institutional capacity.

Over recent years, capacity building has become inseparable from development strategies. UNDP's 2010 global conference addressed the theme "capacity is development", reflecting an interpretation of the organization's core function.

The escalating profile of capacity building in international development is also reflected in the emphasis of global crisis summits that took place through 2009 and 2010.

## 2 Why is Capacity Building important?

To illustrate the importance of capacity building, the capacity of an organization can be likened to the three legs of a stool.

A stool stands on three legs which have to be of adequate and equal height for it to support someone with ease. The three 'legs' essential to the ability of the organization to function effectively and sustainably are:

1. Internal Organisation
2. External Linkages
3. Projects

### Diagram of the organisational '3 legged stool'



Capacity building is so important as it aims to make sure that each leg of the stool is of adequate as well as of equal length so that the stool can be strong and stay standing when someone sits on it! The capacity of an organization depends on the strength of its' structures and systems, resource supplies and programming effectiveness. One without the others will not be sustainable for the organization. Any organization needs to assess and build each of these areas for growth and sustainability.

Funding capacity building is a good value proposition as it follows the motto: 'Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, feed him for a lifetime'.

The value of capacity building over direct funding provision is that it strengthens the ability of the organisation to be able to grow itself. The capacity building provides leverage for future growth of the organization by making it more effective in what it does, and at the same time more attractive to other donors to provide support.

### **3 Key Areas for Assessing and Building Capacity**

#### **3.1 Internal Organisation**

##### **Key Areas**

- Mission
- Compassion
- Strategy
- Non-discrimination
- Leadership
- Governing body
- Staff participation
- Planning
- Financial management
- Organisational structure
- Administrative systems
- Financial reporting procedures
- Human resources
- Human resource management
- Self-reflection and learning
- Christian distinctiveness

#### **3.2 External Linkages**

##### **Key Areas**

- Relationships with other organisations

- Advocacy
- Relationship with the church
- Capacity to obtain and mobilise resources

### 3.3 Projects

#### Key Areas

- Good practice
- Targeting
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Sustainability
- Beneficiary participation
- Local culture
- Achievement of objectives
- Restoration of hope and relationships
- Christian witness

In each of the areas mentioned above are key benchmarks that need to be achieved for capacity in that area to be adequate.

The capacity assessment will follow the Appreciative Enquiry approach to celebrate successes and determine where your organisation stands in relation to these benchmarks and the capacity building plan will outline how weaknesses can be addressed and strengths can be built upon. Each organization will have different levels of capacity in each area, so the plan will have various interventions to build capacity in a relevant way for each organization. As much as possible though, where there are similar needs, the organizations will be grouped for training/ mentoring so as to maximize efficiencies in the capacity building plan.

Materials on capacity assessment from Tearfund UK and International HIV/AIDS Alliance will be incorporated into the assessment of the selected organizations.

## 4 The Capacity Assessment Tool – CASA

**CASA** stands for **CA**capacity **S**elf-**A**ssessment. It is a tool developed by Tearfund for gaining an overall impression of an organisation, giving a picture of the stage of its development and providing insight into its current and potential impact.

Although CASA is modeled on other assessment tools, it aims to be specifically relevant to Christian development organisations. It is good to reflect, affirm what is good and seek God's guidance.

## **5 Capacity Building Process**

The general process of NGO capacity building has 5 stages:

1. Setting the stage and formulating the 'entry point' of the process.
2. Capacity assessment
3. Strategic Capacity planning and bench marking
4. Implementing capacity building strategies
5. Sustaining capacity by ongoing monitoring and bench marking

The Gatekeeper Foundation has invited your organisation to be part of this Capacity Building Process. We are planning to go through the capacity assessment and planning during October 2011. This will involve a number of workshops with your organisation. After that a longer (one year) program of capacity building will be offered, depending on the outcomes of the assessment and planning.

## **6 Capacity Assessment Process**

The assessment of capacity of your organisation will be carried out by Paul Anderson of Manna Consulting in collaboration with your own staff, board members.

During a 1-day workshop information on the capacity will be gathered by the assessment team. The assessment will produce a capacity score, which indicates how an organisation perceives its strengths and weaknesses to the capacity areas. These will be evaluated while also looking at levels of consensus, which addresses the degree to which assessment team members agree on their assessment. Since we will perform this exercise with 5-10 NGOs from the same sector, the assessment also provides an overview of capacities of other organisations. In this process anonymity of NGOs will of course be guaranteed.

The assessment outcomes will be shared with your organisation during and after the assessment to analyse the capacity and to focus capacity building strategies.

### **6.1 Capacity Assessment Workshop**

For this workshop we invite your organisation to form an internal assessment team. Members of the team should be staff or board members of the organisation. The team should have both junior and senior staff (support staff, technical, managerial) and should have a reasonable gender balance. The assessment team should consist of 3 to 10 people, who must be available during the whole day of the assessment.

The capacity assessment workshop leads the capacity assessment team through focused group discussions on various areas of capacity. After each discussion all team members individually will give a score to the capacity of the organization concerning the single topic. Paul Anderson will facilitate the discussions and will take the outcomes of the assessment for analysis and reporting.

## **7 Advantages of the Capacity Assessment**

Your organisation will benefit from the assessment in several ways:

- The assessment creates a clear picture of your organisations strengths and weaknesses.
- It will allow the NGO to compare with other organisations from the same sector.
- It kicks off a focused plan for capacity building
- It creates organisational learning, team building and understanding of different perspectives on topics of capacity.
- It forms the basic foundation for ongoing monitoring of your organisations capacity.