



# Critical success factors in capacity development support

An exploration in the context of  
international cooperation

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Project Report



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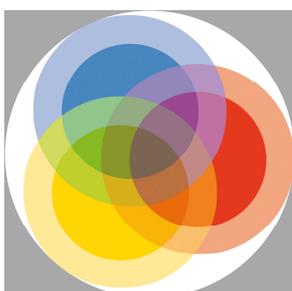
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Project BO-10-001-131 – Capacity development evaluation  
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**BO-09  
Cluster: Knowledge**



**Ministry of Economic Affairs,  
Agriculture and Innovation**

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## **Project Report**

January 2011

Project codes: 8140013600; 8140014400; 8140005400

Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation

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This report focuses on conditions that provide opportunities for success in capacity development support efforts in the context of international cooperation. A conceptual overview provides a basis regarding aspects of capacity development dynamics. Building on this outline and on experiences and discussions from literature on capacity development, seven key success factors in the process of providing support to such dynamics are discussed. These factors are further explored in the context of six international cooperation projects. A number of recommendations are proposed, which deal with the strengthening of processes of preparing for and positioning of capacity development support efforts.

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# Preface

Capacity development is at the heart of improving quality of life. Over the past few decades, international cooperation has aimed for this in many different ways and through many different approaches. The essential idea about the need for capacity development, however, did not really change that much. What did change is the way in which we understand what is involved in capacity development and particularly how we think support to capacity development should be done. The focus used to be more on technical and technological capacities. This was gradually broadened to include institutional capacities. Recently, perspectives on complex dynamics have further expanded our understanding, which means we seem to be getting more to terms with the complex realities that many of us face in capacity development support efforts. With the experience of many organizations engaging in (support to) capacity development over the past few decades and the enhanced conceptual understanding, there is now a good basis for assessing what is involved in successful capacity development support.

Though we would love to have recipes for achieving success, experience has taught us that each situation requires a sufficient amount of tailor-making. There are just too many variables that play out differently in different situations. At the same time, if we want to develop policy guidance in the field of capacity development support, we need to have some concrete ideas about what can be seen as general conditions that enhance opportunities for success. This study has taken up this challenge of trying to reconcile the need for tailor-making with the need for clear ideas on what breeds success in capacity development support efforts.

While much has been written on capacity development, there are not many studies that focus on the issue of preparedness of those who provide support to capacity development processes. This study concludes that such preparedness involves an active role of both commissioners and providers of support to capacity development. This means that policy makers will need to consider their own role in shaping conditions for success as well. We hope that the policy recommendations with which the report concludes, will be further explored and elaborated towards supportive policy frameworks regarding the commissioning of capacity development support in international cooperation.



Dr. A.J. Woodhill  
Director Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation

# Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by the former Ministry of Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality, now part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I). It is a follow-up on and elaboration of a discussion paper presented on the occasion of the formal farewell of the Dutch Chief Veterinary Officer in January 2010 (Wigboldus et al., 2010). The work on this report has been made possible through support from the BO<sup>1</sup>-09, BO-10 and KB<sup>2</sup>7 programmes, which are funded by EL&I. A companion study<sup>3</sup> has been done in the BO-09<sup>4</sup> programme, which focused on knowledge arrangements. It compares an analytical framework on knowledge arrangements with the seven succes factors discussed in this report.

We would like to thank Dr. Patricia Wagenmakers, Drs. Niek Schelling, Dr. Martijn Weijtens, and Drs. Mehmet Cevikoglu of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture & Innovation. They have asked us to move beyond the reality of capacity building that require situation-specific approaches and to come up with some concrete and generic recommendations that provide guidance in the variety of situations encountered. We hope this report will provide some good 'meat' to chew on. We also express our gratitude to ir. Wim Andriesse of Wageningen International who commissioned an earlier study on experiences with capacity development support in the context of a partnership between the Dutch Directorate General International Cooperation (DGIS) and the Wageningen University and Research centre. This study (Wigboldus, 2010) provided part of the foundation for this report, as these two studies were initially planned to be part of one exercise.

We have enjoyed hearing from the project leaders about their policy-support oriented projects, which were taken as a testing ground for the initial ideas on success factors that we had. Unfortunately these had to be very brief explorations. However, they did provide a remarkably consistent picture. Thank you Dr. Petra Spliethof, Dr. Arend-Jan Nell, Dr. Arij Everaarts, Dr. Gideon Kruseman, Dr. Eefje den Belder and Dr. Catharien Terwischa van Scheltinga for your kind cooperation! We also thank Mrs. Heather Baser who commented on an earlier draft and urged us to trim down an earlier more elaborate version of the report. Dr. Jan Brouwers provided valuable thoughts regarding the link between this study and other (ongoing) studies on capacity development support.

This report does not capture all of their comments and the authors are therefore responsible for remaining weaknesses in this report. Also, we realize that we have taken on a quite extensive subject area and have dealt with many issues at a surface level only. However, we hope this will wet the appetite for getting to terms with what is involved in being successful in capacity development support.

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<sup>1</sup> Beleidsondersteunend onderzoek (policy supporting research). BO-09 relates to the thematic area of knowledge and BO-10 to international cooperation (<http://www.kennisonline.wur.nl/kennisonline/projecten2010/Geldstroom.aspx?id=1>).

<sup>2</sup> Kennisbasis (knowledge base). This KB-7 programme relates to transition processes.

<sup>3</sup> Tentative title: **Knowledge arrangements that make a difference.** *The case of capacity development in the Dutch Agri-Food Knowledge System*, by Hendrik Kupper.

<sup>4</sup> The BO thematic area of Knowledge focuses on knowledge arrangements in which key actors and parties (education, research, government, entrepreneurs and citizens) participate together. Working together on circulation, exchange and co-creation of knowledge aims to lead to a dynamic knowledge system having a high potential for innovation, which can provide answers to the quest for sustainability and the ever changing challenges in society.

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## Executive summary

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The concept of capacity development is high on the agenda of many actors involved in international cooperation. Over the years, practice in relation to this concept has changed from what used to be known as mere technical assistance to a more comprehensive approach. Such an approach incorporates non-technical perspectives on how change of capacity happens while expressly acknowledging complexities involved in terms of e.g. multi-stakeholder processes and the need for (local) ownership. Expressions such as ‘capacitating’ and other words that refer to an external engineering of local capacity have therefore largely been abandoned. There is a widespread realisation that external support of capacity development needs to engage with complex dynamics and is essentially dependent on local realities (e.g. ownership, commitment, motivation and other conditions), which cannot be changed easily.

At the same time, in many situations there seems to be no lack of good ideas on what capacity change would need to take place. Excellent reports have been written, spelling out what capacities would need to change in order to move towards an aspired future. This report, therefore, does not focus on what capacities would need to change in what kind of situations (e.g. organisations, sectors, countries) in relation to what kind of goals (e.g. better phytosanitary support services, improved functioning of value chains). Rather, we focus on what in general will contribute towards making a difference in providing support to such capacity development processes. The key question for this report has therefore been: ‘what general conditions need to be taken into account while commissioning and providing capacity development support?’

The first step taken in answering this question relates to a clarification of our understanding about capacity development dynamics. This concerns aspects of capacity development processes and factors that need to be considered in defining a strategic approach to how an effective contribution can be made. Key aspects of the capacity development dynamic are: assets (and their distribution), persuasions (and related values), emotions (and the resulting attitudes), (cultural, organisational and political) institutions & styles, and functions (and their performance). These aspects, together and interactively, will determine outcomes in terms of quality of life. Those providing support to these dynamics tend to focus mainly on changing assets (such as skills, knowledge, equipment and infrastructure). This report asserts that adopting a broader perspective provides more of a handle on how to position capacity development support effectively.

Based on this outline of aspects of capacity development and on the work of a range of practitioners whose experiences have been documented over the past decades, seven success factors have been defined in relation to capacity development support:

1. Clarify the overall approach to the provision of support;
2. Comprehend the context in which support will be provided;
3. Cultivate commitment and ownership of (local) stakeholders and change agents;
4. Customize the envisaged contribution in relation to situation specifics;
5. Cause is kept clear by capturing change through appropriate monitoring and evaluation;
6. Connect to complexity imperatives through adaptive management;
7. Create competent support conditions to sustain efficacy.

These success factors indicate areas to be covered in designing and managing support processes. Taking these areas into account will strengthen preparedness of both support commissioner and provider, thereby enhancing chances of success in their efforts. A brief exploration of six EL&I<sup>1</sup>-funded, international

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, at the time known as the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

projects provided additional and complementing insights into creating conditions for success in Capacity development support.

Something that has stood out in this analysis is the crucial role of individuals, even when dealing with large-scale (e.g. sector-wide) change processes. Both on the side of support provider and on the side of support client, individual's attitudes, values, styles and resulting priorities and actions (or inertia) are often a breaking or making point. Hence the emphasis put in this report on the importance of cultivating commitment at all relevant levels of support clients, and on strategic competencies and social skills on the side of the support provider (and commissioner).

Key recommendations include the following:

- Be realistic about what can be expected through (external) support to capacity development, especially when it involves a need for change in relation to institutions and (individual's) attitudes;
- Ask support providers to be explicit about relevant conditions for change from the start and ask them to monitor and report on how support efforts relate to these conditions;
- Ask support providers to be clear about how non-technical and less tangible aspects of capacity development will be addressed in design and management of a support contribution;
- Use the indicated seven success factors as a reference framework when assigning and evaluating commissioned support efforts; ask (would-be) support providers to indicate how their efforts are designed for and are faring in relation to the seven success factors;
- Anticipated results and the way in which they will be monitored and evaluated will need to be appropriately defined in view of situation specifics. There are strategic alternatives for only working with predefined results;
- Individuals will make the difference – or not in capacity development support. Their strategic competencies, skills and attitudes, both on the side of the commissioner and the support provider, should not be assumed, but strengthened on a programmatic basis;
- Actively consider own role as commissioner in creating conditions for successful support of capacity development.

A number of suggested outlines are provided, which could be adapted and used as checklists in assessing (planned) efforts in support of capacity development.

This report concludes that EL&I has in many cases been a good commissioner of capacity development support in terms of providing flexibility and support. Sustaining such good commissioning practice will require more of a shared understanding within EL&I regarding factors that play a role in being successful in this field of work.

## List of abbreviations and acronyms

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BO	Beleidsondersteunend onderzoek (policy supporting research)
CD	Capacity Development
CDI	Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation
CDS	Capacity Development Support
EL&I	Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (formerly known as LNV)
EU	European Union
KB	Kennisbasis onderzoek (knowledge base research)
LNV	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (presently known as EL&I)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
WUR	Wageningen University & Research centre

# 1 Introduction

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This report, as the title suggests, aims to contribute towards understanding ‘what breeds success’ in capacity development support. We purposefully distinguish between capacity development (as an endogenous<sup>1</sup> dynamic) and support to such processes. However, in order to know how the two relate, we feel obliged to first clarify our conceptual understanding of capacity development. By doing so, we think it will be easier to clarify what we consider to relate to **support** to capacity development. At the same time, we do not want to get lost in the conceptual effort. The reason for focusing on **support** to capacity development, is that we consider this to relate to a dynamic that is often not sufficiently acknowledged. The problem is assumed to exist in the capacities of those who will be supported: ‘How can we fix their problem?’. However, we need to more carefully consider how we get involved. Not only because it relates to potential success, but because inappropriate support could also destroy capacity and obstruct endogenous capacity development. The fact that there is a budget and actors willing to sign a contract is insufficient basis for starting a support process. There are risks involved. Dependency may be created. Wrong motives may be rewarded. Conflict may be induced. Corruption may be enhanced.

The task we set out to do in this report is not to provide in-depth and new understanding about capacity development. Many good books and articles have already been published on that subject. Recently, some very helpful contributions have become available, which expand our views on capacity development, most notably the study done by ECDPM (Baser & Morgan, 2008). This report intends to contribute 1) in the field of summarizing the essential subjects that need to be taken into account when engaging in capacity development, and 2) in the field of summarizing, systematizing and illustrating what breeds success in capacity development *support*.

There is a lot of understanding from experience available in literature on capacity development. We have tried to build on this and have taken tentative frameworks emerging from this exercise and assessed those in relation to a number of LNV<sup>2</sup>-funded international capacity development support projects. This assessment lead to a further fine-tuning of findings towards policy recommendations for design and implementation of support to international capacity development.

Though our focus is on capacity development *support*, we start by locating such support in wider capacity development processes. In this way, it becomes clear what we do and don't mean by capacity development support, what it includes and what it doesn't include, and most of all, how it is thought to connect to endogenous processes of capacity development. In doing so, we try to incorporate ideas from the sustainable livelihood model (SLA)<sup>3</sup> because it brings in the perspective of different types of assets, which is often not explicitly identified in literature on capacity development.

Key issues we will be discussing in this report relate to the following questions:

- How can we make sense of concepts and approaches in relation to capacity development?
- What are essential processes involved in capacity development?
- What differentiation needs to be made in relation to different contexts/levels of capacity development?
- What could be considered as critical factors of success in capacity development support?
- How could knowledge on such factors be made operational in processes of design and implementation of capacity development in specific settings?

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<sup>1</sup> *Endogenous* means ‘emerging from within’. However, we do not understand this as an exclusively internal dynamic. We mean to distinguish between ongoing (local) dynamics and external interventions.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality, since October 2010 part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation.

<sup>3</sup> There are many versions. Two interesting versions can be found at <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/dossiers/livelihoods-connect/what-are-livelihoods-approaches>, and <http://www.ifad.org/sla/framework/index.htm>.

- How could knowledge of such factors be translated into the practice of capacity development support in specific settings?

This report relates to the context of projects and programmes that involve external (often international) intervention for the purpose of what is labeled as 'capacity building' or 'capacity development' in one or another way.

Chapter two discusses some prevalent ideas on capacity and capacity development, to serve as a backdrop for the next chapters. It also attempts to provide an integrated outlook on capacity development and related support processes. Chapter three is about what actually started off this study, which is the quest for 'what breeds success in capacity development support?' We have identified seven key areas that need to be appropriately addressed. It is not a complete 'how to' chapter, but more of a checklist chapter. It also discusses some potential implications for policy development and implementation. Finally, we have taken a quick look at six projects involved in international support to capacity development to see whether the seven success factors make sense in relation to project processes as experienced in reality. Chapter four pulls together findings to answer the research questions for this study and provide a number of recommendations for strategy and policy development in relation to capacity development support.

Although we have been looking for universal principles, there is no way of getting around such tailoring of such principles to specific conditions and circumstances. Hence we will be emphasizing the role of individual actors (commissioners and direct support providers).

While discussing principles of good practice and success factors, we will not deal with the details of methods and methodologies such as planning, monitoring & evaluation, multi-stakeholder processes, change management, conflict transformation, etc. Our focus will be on what to take into account in order to create an overview and feed strategic thinking and action. Methods and methodologies are important, but we think there is enough literature available on these subjects. There is more of a need for a sense-making framework that allows for working from an integrative approach in the application of specific methods and methodologies.

## 2 Making sense of capacity development

### 2.1 General background

Capacity development has become one of those buzzwords in international development circles that is supposedly a good thing to be involved in, whatever actual practice may refer to (Cornwall and Eade, 2010). Ubels et al (2010) write that “capacity development is one of the defining ideas within contemporary international development”. It relates to a basic idea that other and more capacities are needed to reach an aspired future. Building capacity, therefore, must be good, or so it is assumed and saying you are active in this field helps to access donors’ pockets.

Digging a bit deeper into what is being labeled as ‘building capacity’, ‘contributing to capacity development’, or simply ‘capacity development’, reveals a range of different practices. It is hard to believe that the concept is still useful if there is such varied understanding of it. What may be behind such differences is a lack of or serious difference in conceptual understanding. This may be why we have seen a surge over the last five years in literature on the subject commissioned by many different government and non-government organisations. As we will be discussing later, we can see that many organisations are getting more to terms with the less tangible (and therefore often largely ignored) aspects of (support to) capacity (development) and the relevant complexities beyond mere technical dimensions.

#### A bit of history

Though still a modern concept in international development, capacity development as such is not a new idea. We can trace back different ways of approaching this right back to the 1950s. This does raise the relevant question of the extent to which we have seen a mere change in labeling practice over the years and to what extent there has been a real change in practice itself.

Term	Decade	Capacity development approach
Institution building	1950s and 1960s	Provide public sector institutions Focus on and design individual functioning organisations Models transplanted from the North Training in Northern universities
Institutional strengthening and development	1960s and 1970s	Shift to strengthening rather than establishing Provide tools to improve performance Focus still on individual organisations and training in the North
Development management and administration	1970s	Reach target groups previously neglected Focus on improving delivery systems and public programmes to reach target groups
Human resource development	1970s and 1980s	Development is about people; emergence of people-centred development Key sectors to target are: education, health and population
New institutionalism	1980s and 1990s	Capacity building broadened to sector level (government, NGO and private) Focus on networks and external environment Attention to shaping national economic behaviour Emergence of issues of sustainability and move away from focus on projects
Capacity development	Late 1980s and 1990s	Reassessment of the notion of technical cooperation (TC) Stressed importance of local ownership and process Participatory approaches as the key Seen as ‘the way to do development’

Term	Decade	Capacity development approach
Capacity development/ knowledge networks	2000s	Increased participation in capacity building Emphasis on continuous learning and adaptation Balancing results-based management and long-term sustainability Systems approach and emerging talk of complex systems Emphasis on needs assessment/analysis Spread of ICT-based knowledge networks Increased donor coordination
PPP-focused capacity development	2010 -	Perhaps focus on good governance prerequisites. Perhaps PPP-focused (people-planet-profit, and public private partnerships) capacity development support with an increased role for the private sector and civil society, focusing on cross-border/global challenges (such as climate change, disease control, value chains, etc.)

(Adapted from Blagescu, 2006)

In a recent brief<sup>1</sup>, the World Bank dwells on current trends in (support to) capacity development: Approach focusing on collective capacity for change, seeking “to catalyze domestic collective capacity for change by inspiring, connecting and empowering transformative leaders and coalitions for change. This involves an emphasis on institutional change: “We are shifting from the traditional capacity development focus on individual skills and organizational systems towards higher units of aggregation – to entire leadership teams, multi-stakeholder coalitions, or broader or conflicting social groups to forge consensus for change”.

### To define or not to define

Establishing some basic common understanding about concepts may help and the following definitions by OECD are widely accepted:

#### Box 1: Definitions

**Capacity** is the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully.  
**Capacity development** is the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unlock, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.  
**Promotion of capacity development** refers to what outside partners — domestic or foreign — can do to support, facilitate or catalyse capacity development and related change processes.

(OECD, 2006)

These definitions do give a broad idea, but it is only when they are further unpacked that we understand what ‘ability’ and ‘process’ actually involves. We will try to do so in the next chapter. Another way of approaching the definition of key concepts, is to describe what is involved rather than trying to actually define it: “(...) capacity development is (...) about helping people in partner countries put in place the institutions and organizations, both formal and informal that enable them – or not – to make progress” (Morgan in Anderson, 2010).

Ubels et al (2010) provide a useful overview of various definitions, showing different angles on capacity and its development:

- Capacity in terms of concrete results and impact – capacity for what?  
Key word: RESULTS.
- Capacity as a ‘living phenomenon’ – capacity as complex dynamic system.  
Key word: COMPLEXITY.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank Institute Capacity Development Brief, May 2010.

- Capacity as relational and thus political – capacity as an interaction process .

Keyword: RELATIONSHIP/PARTNERSHIP.

The variety of approaches to capacity development will tend to focus on one of these angles. A perspective that integrates them may be more helpful.

Another complication in defining a word like “capacity”, may be that it is a word used frequently in common language. It then often relates to a mix of ability, possibility and assets. In everyday life we ask questions such as “Do they have the capacity to deal with....”; “What capacity do we have available”. Moreover, capacity development as a term cannot always be easily translated into other languages (Hailey & James, 2003).

Probably inspired by how we use the term capacity in everyday life, we tend to consider capacity as something that is there or not. However, it is more helpful to see capacity as involving a constantly changing dynamic. It is not a passive state, but part of a continuously changing state of affairs.

Whatever definition we may want to work with, the bottom-line is that “capacity is needed by all societies to make progress. Individuals, groups, and organizations need to be able to contribute, to make a difference, to perform in a way that benefits the people they serve.” (Morgan in Anderson, 2010).

Maybe we should not dwell too much on definitions and rather dig deeper to understand better what, even if this is only partially defined, motivates and guides efforts to support capacity development. This is the thinking underpinning our attempt at providing an integrative and coherent outlook on capacity development in the next chapter.

### Less obvious – not less important

Something we will try to capture specifically in this study, relates to the less tangible aspects and dynamics of capacity development. We tend to look for the obvious: skills, expertise, equipment, systems, etc. However, less tangible factors such as motivation, commitment, human energy, politics, power, culture and legitimacy are often more of the defining factors that will spell success or failure.

Table 2 Examples of more and less evident aspects of capacity	
More evident capacity aspects	Less evident capacity aspects
Infrastructure and equipment.	Attitudes and emotions, including motivation, human energy, likes and dislikes.
Formal hierarchies, mandates, procedures, rules and regulations;	Informal institutions and cultural dispositions, including habits, styles of work and unwritten rules.
Financial assets	Values and virtues
Human resources, number of employees and skills levels.	Ability to communicate effectively with internal and external audiences.

(adapted from Nepad, 2009)

### Capacity to build capacity

A question that is rarely asked is what legitimizes and justifies the role of the provider of support to capacity development other than access to financial resources and particular expert knowledge. Who is in a position to support whose capacity development? There is a tendency that those having the financial resources will tend to try to ‘build capacity’ of those who have fewer funds. In the following chapters we will be discussing whether access to financial resources and expert knowledge is sufficient basis for taking on the role of provider of support to capacity development. We will discover that the complex dynamic which is involved in capacity development requires more qualifying conditions. In practice, this will lead to the need to meaningfully involve local support providers to ensure that the aspired change is going to be institutionally embedded and sustainable.

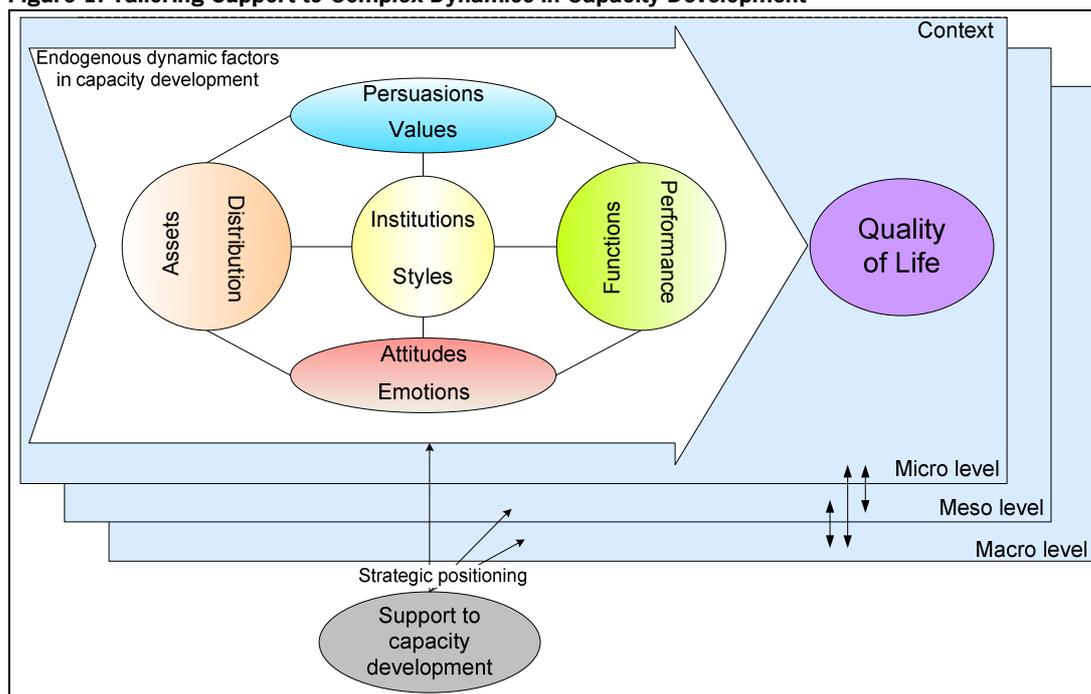
## 2.2 Understanding complex dynamics in capacity development

### 2.2.1 Aspects to be taken into account

This section is a prelude to the discussion of critical factors for success in capacity development support (chapter 3). It 'locates' capacity development support in relation to endogenous dynamics of capacity development. The model presents a generic outlook, which needs to be made specific in each actual intervention setting. As always, 'all models are wrong, but some are helpful'<sup>1</sup>. This model first of all is meant to be viewed as a visual checklist for understanding what factors and dynamics will need to be taken into account for successful capacity development support. Not all projects that are labelled as 'capacity building', 'capacity development', or 'contributing to capacity development' involve a deep engagement with all factors and dynamics represented in the model. This stems from the fact that the label is covering such a range of interpretations. On one end there are projects in which 'capacity building' relates to a straightforward provision of products (e.g. infrastructure) and services (e.g. skills training), on the other extreme are projects that seek to influence institutional arrangements in complex and volatile contexts.

Therefore, the diagram suggests what to take into consideration, but the extent to which something needs to be considered is a whole different question that needs to be answered according to the specifics of each situation. We will get back to this when discussing success factors in the next chapter.

**Figure 1: Tailoring Support to Complex Dynamics in Capacity Development**



We have not put arrowheads on most of the lines as the direction of the flow/causation is not always clear and often too complex to present in this way. The diagram suggests that capacity development involves a truly complex dynamic, as Baser and Morgan (2008) already discussed.

The story that the diagram represents goes like this: We *engage* with a certain issue because we have an ultimate *desire* in mind: a situation that we want to move to. Here this is phrased as quality of life, which can be interpreted in a broad sense as 'sustainable wellbeing'. This engaging does not only involve *doing*

<sup>1</sup> Quote ascribed to statistician George E.P. Box (1919 - ).

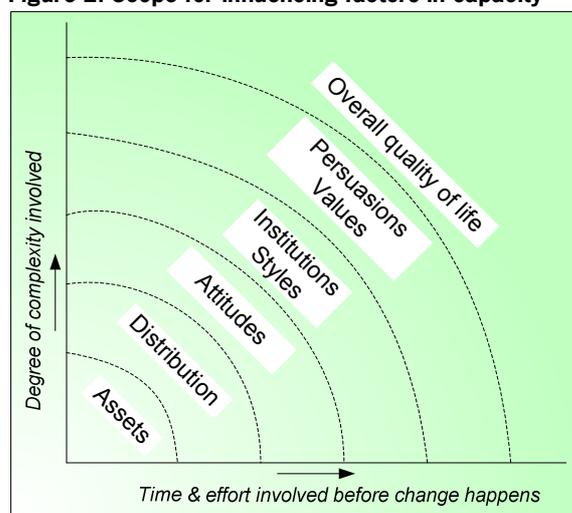
things, it is preceded by an *ability* to engage at all. In turn, such ability is influenced by various factors, which include availing of certain assets, but also an emotional (how do I *feel about*) and ethical (how do I *think about*) disposition towards the choice of whether to and if so how to engage. As 'no man is an island' all of this is set in a context of patterns of more or less fixed behaviour and organization through institutions and styles. This complex and interrelated set of factors then leads to certain *decisions* and *relationships* for the purpose of performing functions that each serves to contribute towards an aspect of the aspired quality of life. We will expand on these interrelated factors in the rest of this chapter.

Such a dynamic may be approached from an individual's perspective (as in the above), but also in relation to various forms of collective perspectives, such as functional groups (e.g. company), geographic groups (e.g. district) and cultural groups (e.g. ethnic group). We would then respectively be looking at collective assets, collective attitudes, collective values, etc.

### Intervening in ongoing dynamic

When we think about what capacity development **support** can in reality do, we often find it to be limited to the field of assets. Capacity development support tends to overstate what can be influenced from outside. We agree with the thinking that underpins the approach and methodology of Outcome Mapping<sup>1</sup>, which states that interventions can have a direct outcome, but that the real impact is created by endogenous actors. The same applies to what is labelled as 'institutional development'. Figure 2 illustrates the limitations of influencing a capacity development dynamic. It provides only a rough idea, as certain assets may be just as difficult to change as institutions.

Figure 2: Scope for influencing factors in capacity



Providing support to capacity development can therefore be compared to jumping on a moving train: the endogenous dynamic of capacity development. Making the right link requires strategic competences and careful strategic thinking that informs strategic planning (as well-known management guru Mintzberg (e.g. 1994) has been arguing since long ago). Too often, projects jump into planning and implementation while common sense teaches 'look before you leap', or 'een goed begin is het halve werk'<sup>2</sup>. Often, it will pay off to invest in understanding a situation better and establish a basis for shared efforts (being in it together), before agreeing on (tentative) plans.

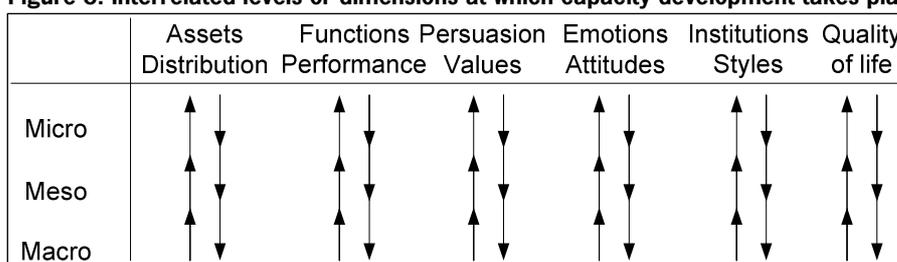
### Levels

The diagram can be interpreted at different levels. We distinguish here between micro, meso and macro, but this could mean something very different in different situations. The micro level may e.g. be a team, the meso level the organization, and the macro the sector. In another setting it may refer to district, provincial and country level. Depending on the level, the assets, attitudes, institutions, styles, functions, and quality of life will relate more to micro dimensions or more to macro dimensions. So we are talking here about assets of different orders, institutions of different orders, etc. Though of a different order, they have fundamentally similar traits. Levels are interrelated as illustrated in figure 3.

<sup>1</sup> More on Outcome Mapping at [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9330-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9330-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html).

<sup>2</sup> A Dutch saying that translates as 'a good start is half the job'.

**Figure 3: Interrelated levels or dimensions at which capacity development takes place**



The higher the level of aims of a support effort, the more factors and actors that will be involved in an envisaged change process. This also means that many actors and factors are involved in tilting the balance towards realization of the aimed-for outcome. As a result, sometimes much may be achieved without being able to tilt that balance because certain actors or factors did not change. This is the well-known metaphor of the weakest link that determines the strength of the chain. An intervention will need to define system boundaries to know what will and what will not need to be considered in situation analysis and planning. In this way it becomes clear what is to be considered focus and what as context.

### Endogenous dynamics of capacity development

This refers to ongoing capacity forming (and deforming) processes, including interaction with wider context challenges and opportunities. The dynamic configuring and reconfiguring process in relation to context factors defines the measure of resilience.

### Relation to other conceptual frameworks

Table 3 shows how the elements of capacity development as presented in figure 1 relates to common concepts in the logical framework analysis (LFA), results-based management, and project cycle management.

<b>Table 3: Interrelated components of capacity development</b>			
<b>Element</b>	<b>Program Theory Questions</b>	<b>Relation to Intervention Logic</b>	<b>Type of assessment (examples)</b>
<b>Quality of Life (aspirations)</b>	What aspect of quality of life will be contributed to? What are existing aspirations as regards QoL?	Impact	Human sustainable development index (overall QoL) or targeted at specific aspect of QoL.
<b>Vulnerability context</b>	What relevant context factors need to be taken into account?	Conditions & assumptions/ Outcomes	Context analysis
<b>Levels/scope</b>	At what level(s) does the support target interventions and how does this relate to other relevant levels?	Scale of intervention	Determines whether to use e.g. organizational or sector assessments.
<b>Endogenous dynamic</b>	What ongoing dynamic should we connect to and build on?	Conditions & assumptions	Situation/ stakeholder analysis; 5-capabilities framework
<b>Functions</b>	What performance will be the outcome of support?	Outcomes	Functional/ performance indicators
<b>Assets</b>	What exactly will your support comprise of?	Inputs & outputs	So-called capacity assessment tools, PRA, needs assessment, etc.
<b>Distribution</b>	What power issues and inequity/inequalities play a role?	Conditions & assumptions/ Outcomes	Power analysis, wealth distribution analysis, conflict analysis
<b>Persuasions and values</b>	What virtues, vices and (cultural) norms emerging from underlying persuasions and values are driving relevant attitudes and behaviour?	Conditions & assumptions	Stakeholder analysis Theories of change analysis, Conflict analysis

Element	Program Theory Questions	Relation to Intervention Logic	Type of assessment (examples)
<b>Attitudes and emotions</b>	How do (assumed) key players feel about and position themselves (inwardly) towards proposed change processes?	Conditions & assumptions/ Outcomes	Stakeholder analysis, conflict analysis, power analysis
<b>Institutions and styles</b>	What existing institutions, policies and strategies guide endogenous capacity development dynamics?	Conditions & assumptions/ Outcomes	Situation analysis (theories of change analysis, policy analysis, stakeholder analysis)
<b>Support to CD</b>	How will support be configured and implemented?	Process & activities	CDS Pyramid (see next chapter)

Annex 3 provides a short introduction to the 5-capabilities (5-C)<sup>1</sup> model. This framework has recently been used as an evaluation framework in an extensive study of Dutch contributions to capacity development between 2000 and 2009.

## 2.2.2 Introduction to aspects of capacity development

We will start the brief introduction to the various aspects with a discussion of the levels to create clarity regarding how aspects can be viewed at different scales.

### A. Context

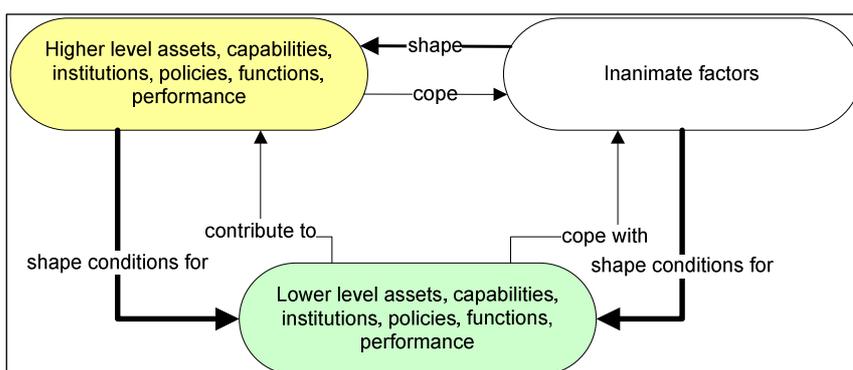
The process of endogenous capacity development takes place in a wider context. As stated earlier, one needs to be clear about system boundaries in order to know what is to be considered as context and what to consider as part of the capacity development dynamic.

We may distinguish two main aspects of the wider context (illustrated in figure 4):

- Inanimate factors, such as climate, unguided economic trends, natural hazards, war and conflict, etc.
- Assets, functions, institutions at higher level. E.g. the lower level could be a district. Assets, functions and institutions at provincial and country level will then be part of the context for the district.

Conditions include challenges as well as opportunities.

**Figure 4: Context composition and dynamics**



### B. Quality of Life

The term *quality of life* is used to evaluate the general well-being of individuals and societies. The term is used in a wide range of contexts, including international development, healthcare, and politics. Quality of

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ecdpm.org/Web\\_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/AE807798DF344457C1257442004750D6/\\$FILE/08-59B\\_Baser\\_Morgan.pdf](http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/AE807798DF344457C1257442004750D6/$FILE/08-59B_Baser_Morgan.pdf)

life should not be confused with the concept of standard of living, which is based primarily on income. Instead, standard indicators of the quality of life include not only wealth and employment, but also the constructed environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging<sup>14</sup>. The concept of well-being is often taken to a next level of 'sustainable well-being', which then incorporates amongst others ethical and ecological connotations, where in the past economic and social connotations were emphasised. We will return to this subject when discussing functions.

### C. Assets and distribution

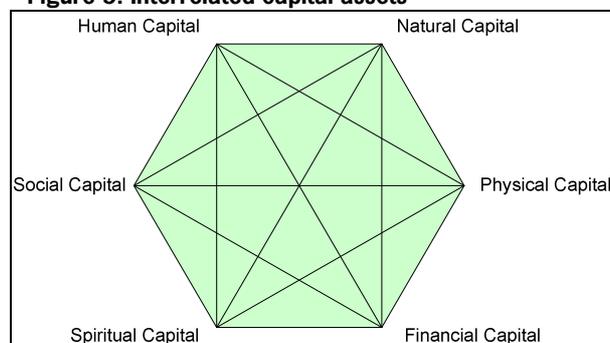
This building block borrows ideas from the sustainable livelihood analysis. We interpret assets in the broad sense of the word, not just in a financial-economic sense. Assets are not fixed and do change over time. We consider them here as being passive, holding a potential, but needing to be activated to be of use in the quest for quality of life. E.g. having certain skills only means something when those skills are being put to use for a particular purpose. This activation process is something that the 5-capability model focuses on (see annex 4). Hence, providing support to capacity development in the form of only e.g. skill training, infrastructure and equipment, may still miss its overall development goal.

Core capitals relate to the following:

Assets	What it relates to
Social capital	Networks, relationships, partnership, etc.
Human capital	Skills, knowledge, abilities, health, leadership, etc.
Physical capital	Infrastructure, tools, equipment, energy, etc.
Natural capital	Natural resources, air, climate, etc.
Financial capital	Cash, credit, convertibles, trade, etc.
Spiritual capital <sup>15</sup>	Creativity, inspiration, intuition, faith, trust, empathy, authority, etc.

Assets together form an interactive dynamic, where capitals are constantly changing, being changed and exchanged (figure 5).

**Figure 5: Interrelated capital assets**



Some would also distinguish cultural capital, but we will cover this in relation to institutions and styles. Others also distinguish political capital. Though partly overlapping with social capital, it highlights issues that may otherwise not be addressed properly. Partha Chatterjee [2000: 6] sees political capital as acting "as a gatekeeper asset, permitting or preventing the accumulation of other assets". Political capital therefore very much relates to asset distribution and participation issues in the form of e.g. political and civil rights (e.g. of association, voting, labour rights), including international treaties and conventions, rights over (natural) resources, access to press, access to decision-making processes, international resources that can be used in local and national political processes (financial resources, international conventions).

<sup>14</sup> From: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality\\_of\\_life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality_of_life)

<sup>15</sup> This may be regarded as part of human capital. However, since common renderings of livelihood models do not interpret human capital in this way and since it relates to important dimensions, we decided to bring it up as a separate asset.

The idea is not to agree on the labels, but to find a useful differentiation between different types of assets. This helps us in understanding a particular setting.

#### **D. Persuasions and Values**

Persuasions relate to core identity and motivation and how people stand in life. It relates to worldviews, beliefs and ideologies. This then translates to mindsets, paradigms and values. This provides the bearing and reference framework for people's sense making and decision making.

Values relate to views on truth & reality, on justice & equity, on accountability & responsibility, on visions & ambitions, on how change happens and particularly how it ought to happen. Values inspire (drive) change and/or consolidation. Failure to link to prevalent values in a specific setting will undermine the effectiveness of efforts.

Values will often show in what is considered to be virtue or vice. Examples of *virtues* are charity, motivation, integrity, moral discipline (the ability to do the right things at the right time for the right reasons), moral accountability, reliability, solidarity, and transparency. On the negative side of virtues, we find *vices* such as corruption, selfishness, ulterior motives, or anarchy. What is called a virtue or a vice will often be culturally determined.

Norms are the translation of values & virtues towards that which is regarded as acceptable, preferential, appropriate, etc., which can be seen as part of institutions.

#### **E. Emotions and Attitudes**

Capacity development is all about people making a difference, or not. Emotions and attitudes (dispositions) of individuals and groups interfere with these processes. We will notice this in some of the case studies below. We commonly ask 'how do you feel about...?'. E.g. a director in an organization may just not feel good about committing himself to a certain process. Without this being addressed in some way, all other efforts may be in vain. The influence of this aspect of capacity development is far greater than we often acknowledge in processes of capacity development support. Not so much because we do not recognize it as an issue, but primarily because it is difficult to control. Ignoring this issue or not letting it be part of strategic planning and manoeuvring has been a primary reason for lack of success.

Emotions and attitudes relate closely to persuasions and values in the sense that they are often derived from perceptions (e.g. about legitimacy, autonomy, what is considered to be appropriate, etc.), assumptions (e.g. about motives), relationships (e.g. hierarchies, personal experiences), personalities, etc. Examples of (negative) attitudes are apathy, disinterest, mistrust, rigidity and bureaucratic behaviour. We may say that persuasions and values relate particularly to the field of ethics and emotions & attitudes to the field of psychology.

This dimension of capacity development highlights the importance of support providers having good social skills.

#### **F. Institutions and styles**

In many cases, capacity development support is linked to an objective of 'institutional development'. Often, 'institutional' is then made roughly equivalent to 'organisational', which is a narrow understanding of the concept. For this reason we expand a bit more on this aspect of capacity development.

Institutions relate to organized and agreed ways of doing things, also referred to as 'rules of the game'. This relates decision-making, sense-making and other more or less formalized ways of organising interaction. Institutions come in many forms and shapes, from organized and formal (e.g. an organization, governance) to unorganized and informal (e.g. norms, habits, traditions, but also authority) and every possible appearance in between. An institution is any structure or mechanism of social order and cooperation governing the behaviour of a set of individuals within a given human community. Institutions

are identified with a social purpose and permanence, transcending individual human lives and intentions, and with the making and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behaviour.<sup>16</sup> We may say that there are institutions in relation to most functions that play a role in establishing and maintaining an aspired quality of life: Social institutions, economic institutions, religious institutions, legal institutions, etc. When discussing the functions, we will refer to a framework that shows the types of institutions that have been established.

The term "institutionalisation" relates to the process of embedding something (for example a concept, a social role, a particular value or mode of behaviour) within an organisation, social system, or society as a whole. It may also be used in a political sense to apply to the creation or organisation of governmental institutions or particular bodies responsible for overseeing or implementing policy, for example in welfare or development.

Styles can be viewed as institutions, but they are strongly based on (cultural and/or individual) preferences. Rather than normative, they are preferred and prioritized modes of operation. We can find personal styles and cultural styles (the way we have come to do things because it fits with who we are, with what we like, etc.). In this context, "a style of farming is that complex but integrated set of notions, norms, knowledge elements, experiences etc., held by a group of farmers in a specific region, that describes the way farming praxis should be carried out" (Hofstee, 1985)<sup>17</sup>. The emphasis in this approach is that choices made are often not merely deterministic, but actively chosen, adopted and reproduced. It also relates to the issue of (personal and/or cultural) identity.

Institutions create boundaries, defining who belongs and doesn't belong to a certain group. It is telling that Kling and Lacono (1989) defined institutions as "rigid, inflexible patterns of activity". Capacity development support aiming for institutional change better brace itself for this.

## **G. Functions and performance**

A team, an organization, a sector, a country, or any group for that matter, will be working towards the establishment and maintenance of a certain (aspect of) quality of life. Overall quality of life will require the performance of a range of functions. There is a strong tendency in (particularly Western) society to emphasise only a limited number of functions, most notably the economic and technological functions. If we link quality of life to sustainable well-being, more functions need to be appropriately addressed. The theoretical framework on aspects of reality developed by the late Dutch philosopher Dooyeweerd can serve as a checklist (see annex 2). The value of such a framework exists in the fact that any group will tend to turn one or a few functions into being absolute, forgetting about other important functions. E.g. companies may focus on just the economic and technological aspects, forgetting about social, ethical and ecological aspects. Though the company may be fundamentally focusing on technology development, it will need to appropriately take into account other aspects as well. Capacity development support will also need to adopt such integrated outlook while strategically positioning its activities.

Performance relates to the quality of performing functions, which includes the functionality of systems and mechanisms. Performance also relates to strategies and the actual operations. Organizations can also be seen as an ordered complex of functions fulfilling a purpose towards a particular aspect of quality of life.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution>

<sup>17</sup> The notion of styles (of farming) has been elaborated by Ploeg, J.D. van der (1994). Styles of farming: an introductory note on concepts and methodology. In: *Born from within. Practice and perspectives of endogenous rural development*, J.D. van der Ploeg, A. Long (eds.). Van Gorcum, Assen (1994) 7-31; and Wartena, D. (2006) *Styles of making a living*. PhD-thesis. Wageningen University.

# 3 Success factors in capacity development support

This chapter is based on the conceptual understanding as laid out in the previous chapter and a range of experiences with capacity development support as reflected in a number of key documents. Before starting a more systematic discussion on success factors, we want to start on a rather lighter note in the form of a metaphoric intermezzo.

## 3.1 Support of capacity development illustrated by a metaphor

In the following we compare support of capacity development to the business of running a restaurant. What makes a restaurant successful is more than working with good recipes. Let us explore some key success factors for a restaurant (indicating the link to capacity development between brackets). We may roughly compare the role of a commissioner of support of capacity development to being the owner of the restaurant<sup>18</sup>.

**A good location:** Good access opportunities in a nice environment will often be the first thing that attracts guests. Also, the location will often pretty much determine what kind of guests can be expected and so to whom the restaurant should plan its catering. It may also determine what cooks will and will not be interested in working there and certain (fresh) ingredients may not be readily available. [*Support needs to connect to where the client is at and not the other way around.*]



**A good atmosphere/ambiance:** The food can be good, the price attractive, but in a smoky, dark room food just doesn't taste the same, nor can the company be enjoyed as much. [*Consider support not as 'fixing a job', but pay careful attention to embedding efforts in good communication and friendly and trusting relationships*]

**Attractive prices:** Though not the only indicator, prices will have to be in line with the quality of the food and location in which it is enjoyed. [*Align support with where 'customers' are coming from and what efforts they are able to make; do not expect them to just except your offer.*]



**An appealing menu:** Serving Dutch stews in Chengdu, China is probably not going to attract many guests, even though it may be excellent food served in a beautiful location. Even if the menu is in line with guest preferences, too many items on the menu will confuse them. Too few items will make them feel like there is no real choice for them to be made. [*Tailor support services to client preferences.*]

**Type of food - Fast or slow:** Quality takes time. Going to a snack bar around the corner will get you a quick meal. But to stay healthy, you will need food that takes more time to prepare. In Western society, we have got used to instant food, but good results often take time to mature. Christmas pudding cannot be prepared in a day. [*Similarly, in support of capacity development, we want to have quick results. In many cases, success will only be achieved when the support provider can spend time during a longer period, not being in a hurry to see effects materialize. However, we will come across situations in which 'fast-food' support is the only thing that is feasible. As long as we realize its short-term focus and related limitations this may still be an option.*]



<sup>18</sup> It could be interesting to watch some of Gordon Ramsey's TV-series on improving restaurants with the idea of support to capacity development in mind: <http://www.rtl.nl/huistuinkeuken/gordonramsay/>



**Good recipes:** Good recipes are based on experience. Good recipes are important to be able to standardize what is cooked, so that guests know what to expect. But whether a 3-Michelin-star cook takes up the recipe, or your local restaurant owner around the corner, will make all the difference in what will end up on your plate. Also, it is good to leave room for specific adaptations and preferences such as 'rare', 'medium

rare' or 'well done'. *[Be able to explain your approach to support, but be open to tailor-making].*



**Good ingredients:** When the recipe says "haricots" as ingredient we still have the choice between something from a can or fresh ones. *[Do not merely use off-the-shelf products and services, but tailor support to the specifics of the situation].*



**Good kitchen equipment:** Good cooking requires good utensils, good air treatment and appropriate heating sources. Doing everything by microwave will obviously affect the quality of the meal, but no very professional cooks are likely to apply for work in a restaurant renowned for fast, micro-waved dishes. *[Readiness to provide support includes availing of the right tools, methods and techniques, to be handled by competent teams].*

**A good cook:** The cook performs the magic – or not. Now there are cooks, chefs and Michelin chefs.



There is a reason why some people are willing to spend 100 Euros or more on a meal cooked by a famous cook. It will also have to do with the type of ingredients used, but it is mainly that magic touch that people pay for. *[People make the difference. Ensure appropriate competencies for providing support].*



**Satisfied customers:** In the end, the diners decide. A cook may be very happy with what she/he served, but if the guests didn't like the food, they didn't like the food. Period. It may be because they just hate Brussels sprouts and didn't realize what would come with a certain menu. This is why waiters can play an important role in ensuring guests know what they can expect when they order. *[What is considered to be success depends on the client's evaluation, not the provider's. Have appropriate monitoring mechanisms in place to keep track of this. It is always good practice to consider whether as a support provider you would have appreciated the content and style of support if you had been the client yourself].*

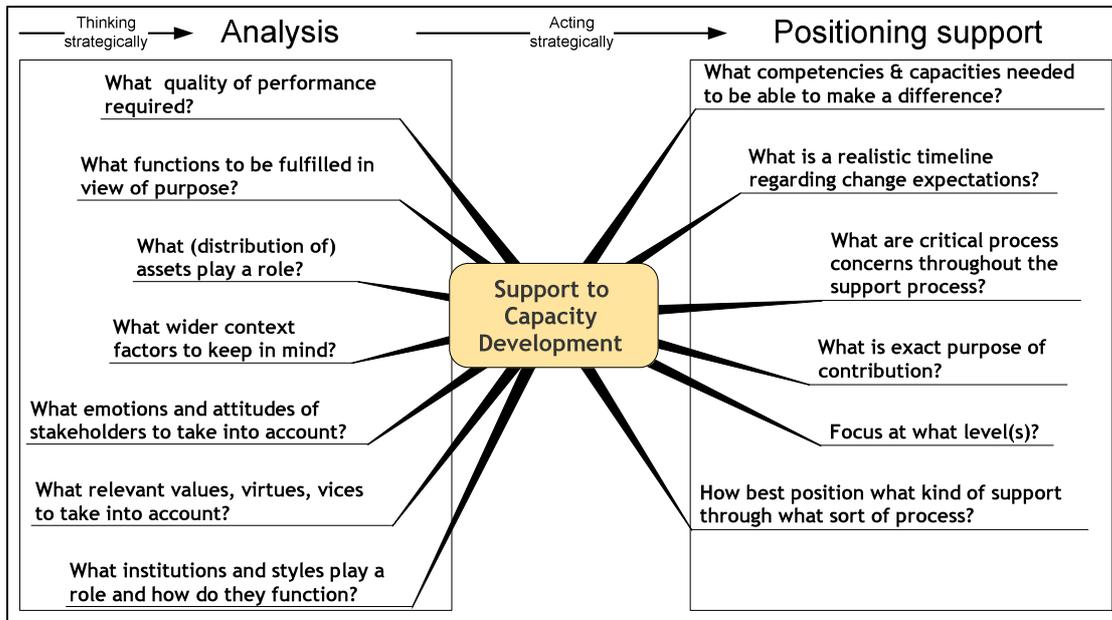


[www.CartoonStock.com](http://www.CartoonStock.com)

## 3.2 Breeding success through thinking and acting strategically

In general terms, we may consider two important elements in the quest for success in support of capacity development: Being able to understanding a particular situation well, and being able to position support efforts well in relation to situation specifics (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Acting strategically in view of situation specifics



In the following we will elaborate on these two dimensions of 'breeding' success.

## 3.3 Towards an integral approach

In elaborating on the two dimensions referred to in the above, we have incorporated our conceptual understanding as reflected in chapter two, the suggestions on principles for good practice as shared by key authors on the subjects (e.g. Land, 2009, Blagescu, 2006, Ortiz & Taylor, 2008 and Gosses, 2007), and preliminary findings from the six cases introduced in annex 1, and the application of learning from the restaurant metaphor. This has led to define seven core factors that breed success in support of capacity development:

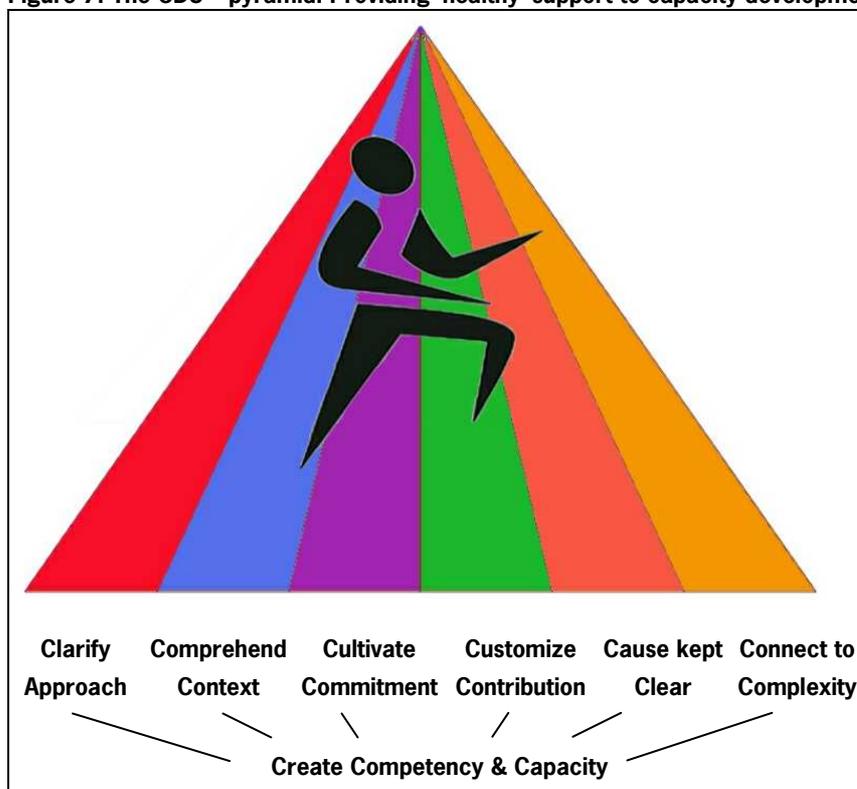
1. Clarify the overall Approach: Be clear about the approach for and setting for the support efforts.
2. Comprehend the Context specifics: Allow for positioning in relation to the specifics of a situation.
3. Cultivate Commitment: Establishing appropriate ownership and endogenous drive towards the aspired future.
4. Customize the envisaged Contribution: Tailor-make intervention in tune with specific setting imperatives.
5. Cause kept Clear: Keep track of change as it really happens (or not) to provide strategic guidance.
6. Connect to Complexity: Be ready to deal with complications flowing out of complex dynamics and allow for flexibility and appropriate adaptive management.
7. Create support Competency: Activate other success factors by creating competent and capable team efforts.

These success factors, are not meant to be understood as, ‘the more you have the better’. That is the reason why, as an illustration for these success factors, we use a diagram similar to the food pyramid<sup>19</sup>, which relates to healthy nutrition through policy and promotion interventions. In the food pyramid, a healthy balance is key. And what is a healthy balance will be different for a 90-year old lady spending most of her days on a chair, than for a teenager bursting with energy, growing 5 inches in a year. But the categories of food as well as the need for exercise, however, are relevant to both.

The same idea applies to the Capacity Development Support (CDS) pyramid. For each situation, an appropriate ‘recipe’ will need to be devised, using the core ‘ingredients’, while assigning competent ‘cooks’ to provide a ‘nutritious meal’ in a style and finishing that is in line with what the customers appreciate and can digest. The application of this metaphor to key elements of support of capacity development does not require much imagination.

The CDS pyramid suggests a certain sequence, which does not need to be applied in a strict sense and certainly is iterative. In the following we will briefly explain what the seven success factors relate to.

**Figure 7: The CDS<sup>20</sup> pyramid: Providing ‘healthy’ support to capacity development**



In the following we will briefly explain what the seven success factors relate to.

### 3.3.1 Clarify Approach

**Purpose:** Ensure clarity about the type of setting in which the project will take place (incl. historically) and what the support of capacity development will in concrete terms comprise of. Putting ‘look before you leap’ in practice.

Since we find a range of interpretations of what capacity development and related terminologies mean, it is first of all important to establish clarity about the approach adopted in a particular project or

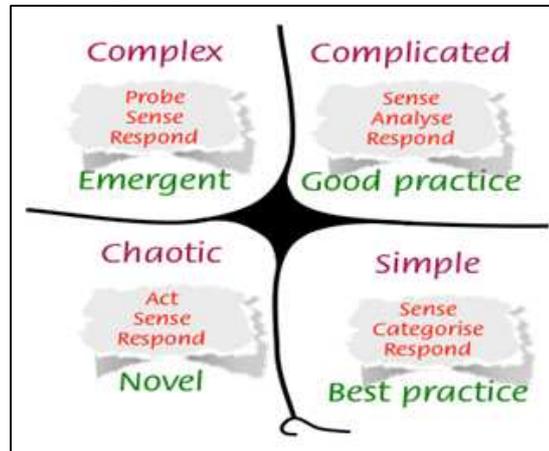
<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

<sup>20</sup> CDS = Capacity Development Support.

programme. It helps to be as concrete as possible and not lump together a number of hardly defined activities under the flag of e.g. ‘capacity building’. The more precisely defined, the clearer the implications for design and implementation will be. We also need to be clear about how the support provider is stepping into this effort as well as how this effort connects to related, other efforts. This may be compared to doing a prefeasibility study in engineering.

One of the things that needs to become clear is the levels of complexity involved in what the contribution will be targeting. More straightforward support that targets change only at the level of assets (e.g. skills, infrastructure, financial resources) will require a different approach than when e.g. institutional change is targeted. Figure 8 reflects this in the popular model developed by David Snowden<sup>21</sup>.

**Figure 8: Distinguishing between levels of complexity**



“Those engaged in development need to distinguish between the simple, complicated, complex<sup>22</sup> and chaotic, and recognize that each requires very different ways of intervening. Dealing with the complex means investing in multiple ‘experiments’ and scaling up what works – and evolutionary design approach to development intervention. By

acknowledging that it is often impossible to know ahead of time what will or won’t succeed, we take seriously the need to invest in, accept and learn from so-called ‘failure’. If investments only focus on sure bets, evolution and transformation is stifled.” (Woodhill, 2008).

Other issues to clarify right at the start in order to be able to assess implications for design and implementation include the following:

- The concrete purpose of support of capacity development and who has defined this purpose.
- The measure of self-interest (of commissioner) involved;
- Links to broader collaborative action/alignment involved;
- The measure of preparedness of the capacity development support provider;
- Moral basis, agreement, where is the energy, etc.
- The motive and motivation for change;
- Consideration of realistic time frames vis-à-vis change aspirations;
- The appropriate role of the commissioner/donor.

Such assessment will clarify limitations, concerns and critical conditions. It may in some cases lead to a cancellation of the whole effort if it becomes clear that certain conditions in relation to change aspirations cannot be met.

### 3.3.2 Comprehend context

**Purpose:** Ensure appropriate connection to on-the-ground realities by establishing sufficient understanding about relevant local conditions for capacity development.

In the world of real estate brokers, they say that ‘location is everything’, meaning that you can change

<sup>21</sup> Source: The origins of the Cynefin framework by Dave Snowden: <http://www.cognitive-edge.com/ceresources/articles/100825%20Origins%20of%20Cynefin.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> A key difference between ‘complicated’ and ‘complex’ is found in the extent to which cause-effect relationships are clear. In ‘complex’ situations, such relationships can often not be established upfront and hence require more of a probe, sense and respond approach. The following example illustrates this: Building a veterinary laboratory is simple, appropriately training veterinary staff is complicated, improving animal health conditions is complex.

much about a house except for its location (though there are rare exceptions where houses are put on trailers and transported to a different location). In the same way, much about a support process can be changed, but not the context in which it will be taking place. Whether a support project takes place in e.g. Indonesia, Ethiopia or Mauretania, makes a big difference as to the context to be taken into account. In terms of the aspects shown in figure 1, it may provide a totally different picture as to the status of assets, values, capabilities and functions to which a connection will need to be made and may determine pretty much what is feasible or not.

There are few people who have to be convinced of the use of doing a proper situation analysis. The key question is what should be included in such analysis. The less tangible aspects of capacity such as relevant values, attitudes and informal institutions may, however, easily fall outside the picture. Situation analysis will therefore need to be informed by people who have sufficient understanding about such intangible factors.

In projects with international dimensions, cultural understanding about perceptions, values, entitlements, local virtues (e.g. hospitality) and vices (corruption) will be very relevant as they may differ significantly from the (moral) reference framework of support providers.

When working at an organizational level, organisational assessment tools are commonly used to establish clarity about where an organization is at and hence what would be an appropriate focus for support of capacity development. Unless good care is taken of the way in which these tools are used, important (informal) elements may not show up. Whatever tools used in situation analysis, they should feed strategic thinking.

**Dangers/limitations of organizational assessment tools:**

1. Do not capture the dynamic and true non-linear nature of change;
2. Focus on the visible and formal and may miss what is below the surface;
3. Standardised tools do not recognise contextual differences in organisation;
4. Very easy to become tool for judgement (funding decision) and thereby undermine capacity building aim;
5. Tools often become the focus of the capacity building efforts, losing sight of the thinking behind it or the ultimate capacity building aim;
6. Difficult to simplify and keep useful;
7. Not able to describe change in relationships and power;
8. Misses out on how changing context affecting organisational change.

(Adapted from James, 2009:6)

Comprehending the context also relates to the ability to make the link to existing capacity in order to connect to and build on this. It will help to establish a sense of what could realistically be contributed to and appropriate roles to play. It will also provide clarity about questions concerning *whose* capacity is at stake and who has a stake in this. This may reveal power issues that the project will need to consider its position towards. As Lopes & Theison (2003) wrote, capacity development is often not a power-neutral process.

### 3.3.3 Cultivate Commitment

**Purpose:** Ensure appropriate motivation and positive energy of those who need to turn things towards a sustainable development result. Establishing a clear sense of being in it together.

Those who are meant to be the ones directly or indirectly benefitting from support efforts will be the ones ensuring that all the efforts are going to make a real difference. Ownership is a key word here. Though support is provided, the related change process needs to be owned 'locally'. Ownership, however, is not something that is existent or not. There are degrees of ownership just as much as there are degrees of participation. Ownership can be passive, pro-active and everything in-between. Furthermore, the location of ownership is crucial. The question is where ownership is required. Sometimes a director may 'own' a process, but those who will need to make the difference do not. Annex 4 provides an overview for distinguishing between types and levels of ownership.

Apart from ownership, commitment plays a role. This relates to a certain drive to make things happen. It relates to ownership, but is not the same. We can see situations where (at least on paper and by mouth) a

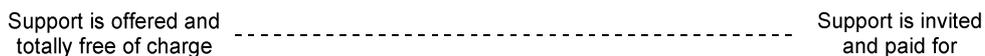
process is owned by direct stakeholders. However, this does not always mean that they will see the process through to the end to reach the objectives of a change process. This may relate to (organizational) culture as well as conflicting benefits from the process (personal benefits getting preference in focus). Principles of change management are relevant in this context.

Smith (2005) cautions that ownership should not be confused with ‘being in the driver’s seat’. “There is no point in saying that the government should be in the driving seat if it does not know how to drive. Teach it to drive first”. It is then more an issue of being in charge. The approach of co-ownership (Valk, Apthorpe & Guimarães, 2005) may be more appropriate. Cooperation assumes co-ownership. Ownership also relates to what is communicated in informal ways and through attitudes. Therefore, the issue of ownership is not something to be settled on paper (by signature), but most of all in relationships.

Ownership can be approached as something that relates to control, but also as something that relates to commitment and responsibility. In the first approach, ownership may even undermine capacity. From a power perspective, it is important to locate ownership more precisely. It relates to asking the question who owns the efforts and what does ownership mean in relation to commitment and responsibility. Commitment and ownership are culturally defined concepts. There is a good chance of different perspectives on this in cross-cultural collaboration.

The above can be applied 1:1 to the issue of demand and demand-driven support. There is a book about the myth of community, which essentially argues that communities comprise of people with different and often conflicting interests, different status, different opportunities, etc. The same applies to ownership. Ownership is a complex issue.

Ownership is often linked to a continuum of support modalities:



Usually, ownership will be strong in situations where support is invited and paid for and weak when it is offered with no requirements set. Budget support is an attempt to create situations that resemble invited and paid for support.

James & Wrigley (2007) suggest focusing there where there is demonstrable commitment to change. However, this may not be appropriate in situations where there is a lack of understanding about specific issues or where there is a commitment to change at some levels, but not others. Ownership may also be something that is actively worked towards as part of the support process. Engaging stakeholders actively and creatively will then be key in a process of boosting ownership and commitment. Oxfam America (2009) suggests that being predictable as donor (and support provider) is a key factor in strengthening local ownership.

Key question to ask: who needs to own these efforts in the sense of commitment and responsibility and what can we do to ensure such appropriate ownership?

### 3.3.4 Customize Contribution

**Purpose:** Position intervention strategically in view of existing capacity dimensions, the ongoing capacity development dynamics, and the specific context.

This is all about putting strategic thinking into action. Based on an assessment of local realities such as referred to in figure one (and put in an assessment framework in annex 6), a support project will need to be customized so as to link to that reality as good as possible. The resulting design will then spell out what the project will focus on, what it considers to be appropriate and feasible, how the project will begin to strengthen the asset base, etc. It will also indicate relevant conditions and assumptions about the envisaged change process and indicate what this means for the configuration, timing and flexibility of

support processes (see table one for indicative strategic questions). This will also take you to the issue of configuring competences.

The understanding emerging from the situation analysis will help in defining strategies and most importantly the appropriate role to play by the support provider. The role will often need to gradually change over the period of support. In the beginning the role may be more one of initiating, catalyzing and facilitating, while later on the role to play may shift more towards coaching and advice-on-demand. The role to play also relates to the envisaged role of clients, key stakeholders, including the role of the support commissioner. This points to the importance of actively considering the role to play and how this role is meant to change over time. This may have implications for changing support competencies over time as well.

It helps if a project can make its programme theory explicit (there will always be an implicit theory of change). The programme theory relates to how the support provider assumes how (aspired) change will happen and what role the support project could play in this. These assumptions will relate to the key elements as presented in figure one. Activating such process assumptions in the form of critical concerns to be monitored will help to strategically guide the project.

### 3.3.5 Cause kept Clear by Capturing Change as it happens

**Purpose:** Ensure staying appropriately informed about change processes in view of principles of good practice as well as set objectives, feeding this back to management decision making.

In order to keep a sense of direction, along the way there need to be mechanisms in place that will inform about progress and the process. Not just progress (results), but also the process in terms of how the connection to the context is working out, how the commitment is coming along, whether assumptions made are still valid, whether critical conditions are in place, etc. Learning-orientated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) will be key in this.

Core challenges in relation to monitoring and evaluation relate to (adapted from Hailey & James, 2003):

- Donor demands for quantification (which is difficult in relation to the many less tangible aspects of capacity development involved).
- Demonstrating attribution (which difficult due to the range of causal factors involved).
- Measuring intangible change (e.g. in relationships).
- Ensuring skill to measure and analyse (which may often not be available in low-budget efforts).
- The burden of measurement (which pulls away attention from establishing a good process towards a focus on accounting for results).

A number of principles for sound M&E in the context of (complex) support of capacity development include (adapted from Hailey & James, 2003):

- Stakeholder engagement in assessing change in relation to project objectives to create transparency and a shared basis for assessment, which in turn can be a key motivating factor.
- Keep M&E as light and simple as possible. Where informal processes are found to be sufficient, do not attempt to formalize this unnecessarily.
- Involve key stakeholders through self evaluation. An important purpose of M&E is to improve performance and helping those who make the difference to actively reflect will often prove to be more effective than passing external verdicts on performance.
- Triangulation of methods helps to get a better understanding of complexities involved in assessing process and progress.
- Accept plausible association in relation to effects of efforts rather than to insist on strict attribution.
- Establish a clear idea during design on how the cost/effort ratio will be assessed.

Understanding the concept of 'results' is important in designing appropriate M&E mechanisms. There are a number of key questions to be asked:

- What level of results are we talking about?

According to the logical framework analysis, we may distinguish between products and services (outputs), direct effects of access to products and services (outcomes) and then what role such access plays in view of the difference that the efforts are meant to make (impact). As stated earlier in this report, in complex dynamics, 'pathways' to outcomes and impact are found more through a process of discovery than by creating fixed plans. Assessing results in these situations require a deeper understanding about dimensions of results.

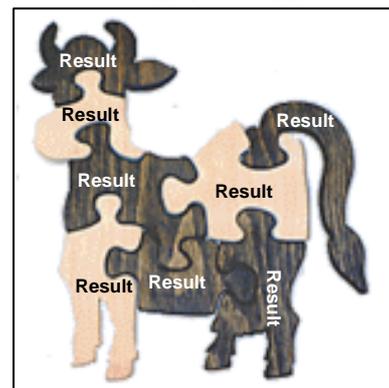
- What dimension of results are we talking about?

Going back to the dynamics pictured in figure one (page 10), we realize that assessing results should relate to more than just certain assets and performance of functions. Results may also show in the form of changed attitudes/dispositions and (informal) institutional arrangements. This often relates to less tangible factors. Though less tangible, they may be crucial in whether aspired change can be initiated and especially whether positive change can be sustained. The case studies described in annex 1 provide a number of illustrations of the fact that it can be a decisive result to establish good communication, gain moral support of key actors and cultivate their commitment to play their role. In the field of lobby & advocacy, much progress has been made in assessing this type of intermediate results<sup>23</sup>.

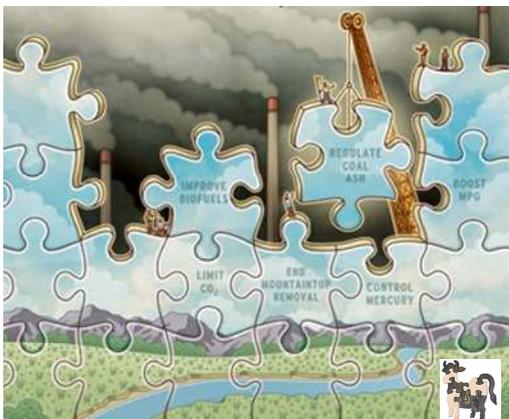
- How do results in relation to this effort contribute to an overall picture of an aspired future that others are also contributing to?

A result in and by itself may not be that revealing. We may compare this to a jigsaw puzzle. A separate piece in the jigsaw puzzle as shown in figure 9 does not mean that much. It is the connection with other pieces that combines towards a meaningful complete picture. In the same way, an account of the sense-making of how different efforts and results work together towards a common goal can be more useful than an account of progress in relation to (predefined) results. A key question to ask would be 'how is the picture coming together?', rather than asking, 'have we achieved our planned results?'. The commissioned effort will often relate to only a few 'pieces in the puzzle'.

**Figure 9: Appropriately connected results making up the bigger**



**Figure 10: The bigger picture may be even bigger**



And the puzzle may be even bigger (figure 10<sup>24</sup>). Therefore, there are more options for dealing with results-based management need to be explored than only the designing of fixed plans with pre-defined anticipated results. We may compare this to making a journey: we need to know where we are departing from (situation analysis) and what the destination (goal/vision) is. There is the option of fixing the route to the destination and reporting back home whether we are sticking to the route. Another option is to keep the destination clear while sending back travel reports as we are journeying.

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. <http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/iarc/edais/pdf/Advocacy.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Source: Solving the climate puzzle, one piece at a time, (<http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200911/climate.aspx>)

The longer the journey and the more anticipated obstacles on the road (and in the vehicle), the more it will make sense to send regular travel reports rather than to fix the journey beforehand.

Agreeing on a number of key milestones on the road will then suffice to keep a sense of direction.

In short, we conclude that the terms ‘result’ and ‘results assessment’ need to be appropriately defined in realistic relation to the type of change processes that the support efforts are about. Clarifying the approach to support will help to establish what type of M&E fits the particular setting. Table 4 shows a simple outline of an M&E plan, which specifically incorporates M&E of conditions for success.

<b>Table 4 Example of simplified strategic M&amp;E outline for support of capacity development</b>					
	What to assess	How to assess	When to assess	Who will assess	What to use assessment for
<b>Related to intended results:</b>					
Description of envisaged progress milestones					
<b>Related to conditions and concerns</b>					
Description of critical conditions for success					
Description of concerns (risks) about the envisaged change process					

### 3.3.6 Connect to complexity dynamics through adaptive management

**Purpose:** Ensure appropriate and adaptive management as well as ensuring conditions that allow for flexibility. Regularly revisit assumptions about how change is expected to happen and the role of support in this.

Depending on the nature of the change objective (see 3.3.1), a support project will have to deal with more or fewer complicating factors along the way. Capacity development support processes involving institutional change (which is often the case), there is a lot of complexity that needs to be navigated. Much of the change process cannot be spelled out in much detail beforehand. Directions in terms of envisaged results will need to be indicated, but finding the road that leads to it will often involve dealing with issues on the go. First of all, the process will need allow for flexibility to be able to adjust to field realities. Secondly, management processes will need to be able to allow for appropriate strategic and/or operational adaptations. Such adaptive management links back to the need for appropriate M&E mechanisms.

Not all change is a result of actively trying to change something. It often relates to an ability to respond to emergence/providence. Working from principles of good practice is therefore in many situations that which needs to be focused on, rather than on creating detailed descriptions of envisaged outcomes and impact. Rather focus on a combination of clearly defined principles, commitment to deliverables, and tentative assessment of only direct outcomes (relates to e.g. what has been done with provided products and services). This is about creating space for change by focusing on the question of how to be strategic in the face of complexity.

Adaptive management requires a farmer-attitude: a farmer prepares the soil, sows seed, weeds, waters the plants and then waits for what is beyond control: weather, supply/demand dynamics, and other context factors. He will make assumptions about context factors and then do/plan what he can do/plan and will then deal with things beyond control as they comes up, which includes revisiting his initial assumptions and adjusting farm management as found appropriate.

### 3.3.7 Create competent and capable teams

**Purpose:** Ensure working with teams that have the right set of competences and capacities available in view of specifics/dynamics of the situation in which a commissioner intends to make a contribution.

In the end, individuals are going to make the difference. Any support process will rely heavily on people who can make things happen. Too often, providing support of capacity development is considered to be something that only requires a certain level of content matter expertise (knowledge) and/or technical skills. However, competence for capacity development support will often also ask for having abilities in place for such roles as process facilitation, guiding multi-stakeholder interaction, conflict management, adaptive management, and interdisciplinary collaboration guidance.

Though principles of good practice can be suggested, this is something different than working from a cook book on capacity development. Practical wisdom and an ability to think and act strategically in specific situations is what is going to make the difference in the end. Good practice in support of capacity development needs to include investing in such competencies.

Ubels et al (2010) have made a useful characterization of what a “CD practitioner” would need to be capable of:

1. Awareness of key theories underpinning capacity development analysis and choices.
2. Appropriate selection or combination of role to play.
3. Content matter expertise combined with change process expertise.
4. Multi-stakeholder setting facilitation skills.
5. Sensing and making sense of situation for appropriate positioning of support.
6. Good communication skills, including listening skills.
7. Brokering connections and networking abilities.
8. Creating clarity about appropriate way to track and measure results.
9. Balancing accountability and learning.
10. Tailor-making of support process.

(Adapted from Ubels et al, 2010)

As the CDS Pyramid (figure 7) shows, we consider this success factor as the one that unlocks the potential of dealing with the other success factors. Guidelines, guidance notes and other forms of advice on positioning support of capacity development are useful for providing a basic understanding about what needs to be considered as well as establishing a common outlook on this.

Strengthening competence for support to capacity development can take place when creating support teams, but also on a programmatic basis by providing regular training and education in the field of capacity development support competencies. Annex 7 gives a related introduction to the perspective of strengthening strategic competencies.

### 3.3.8 Applying principles of good practice in different settings

Though listing a range of issues to consider, we are not trying to argue that the only way to engage in support of capacity development is doing it the perfect way. We assume, however, that having a better idea about what needs to be taken into account, what questions you may ask and what complications may be encountered, will improve preparedness to better deal with challenges along the way.

Situations encountered will ask for tailor-made approaches. We know *what* needs to be considered, but *how* it will eventually be considered remains part of the on-the-ground fine-tuning process. ECDPM has done some helpful work in relation to this challenge, which provides the following (adapted) overview of a range of options in approaching support of capacity development. It is not about choosing one or the

other, but rather fine-tuning an approach to CD in a particular context, where the slide may go more towards the “planned change” side or more towards the “emergent change” side. This is where the importance of composing competent and capable teams comes into the picture again.

<b>Table 5</b>		<b>Capacity development support approaches in relation to success factors (adapted from Land et al., 2009)</b>	
	<b>CD support approach range</b>		
<b>CDS Variables</b>	Focus on plannable change in predictable environments	Focus on emergent change in complex environments	
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust problem analysis, clear definition of inputs, actions, outputs and outcomes. Focus on what is feasible and concrete. Linear view of cause and effect. Logical framework approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CD as an emergent process that is not formally designed. Emphasis on learning and iteration, without necessarily any formal design elements. Notion of evolving design.</li> </ul>	
Context analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on formal aspects of context, e.g. legal, institutional and economic, that impact directly on targeted organisation(s).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations are understood as belonging to multiple, evolving systems. Relationships are unpredictable and include informal and intangible dimensions. An historical perspective is critical.</li> </ul>	
Context match	Fits when following type of issues are important: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal incentives, rewards and sanctions</li> <li>• Skills and technical know-how</li> <li>• Formal structures and systems</li> <li>• Assets, resources and financial flows</li> <li>• Demand-side stimulation</li> </ul>	Fits when following type of issues are important: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values, meaning and moral purpose</li> <li>• Informal structures and systems</li> <li>• Relationships (internal and external)</li> <li>• Legitimacy, confidence and identity</li> </ul>	
Commitment & Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises formal authority; legal and administrative.</li> <li>• Emphasises the importance of the local partner taking ownership of CD interventions supported or funded by external partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands ownership as a function of identity, volition and motivation of different stakeholders.</li> <li>• CD is driven by local initiative and circumstance. It is a process of its own separate from external intervention.</li> </ul>	
Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervention is purposeful. Emphasis on efficient and effective mobilisation of resources (human and financial) so as to perform agreed actions within a stipulated time limit. Varies from more direct (hands-on) to indirect (process facilitation) approaches, but with emphasis on achieving pre-determined results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development emerges from the on-going learning, actions and interactions of organisational actors. It does not necessarily depend on a purposeful intervention.</li> <li>• There are no simple cause-and-effect relationships.</li> <li>• Multiple processes can stimulate different aspects of capacity.</li> </ul>	
Dealing with complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust design aims at risk mitigation, ensuring that the intervention is not undermined by extraneous factors. Focus on value for money and timely achievement of agreed results. Low tolerance of failure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk is an intrinsic part of change and CD. Outcomes are unknown and intentions can be influenced by unforeseen events. Risk of failure provides opportunity for learning and adaptation.</li> </ul>	
Cause kept clear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to compare results and outcomes with intention to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, etc.</li> <li>• Often with an accountability focus, but can also focus on improving management and design.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M&amp;E focused more on learning by participants themselves. Learning viewed as basis for self-awareness and continuous improvement.</li> </ul>	
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on content matter expertise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong inclusion of process facilitation qualities.</li> </ul>	

Table 5 Capacity development support approaches in relation to success factors (adapted from Land et al., 2009)					
	<b>CD support approach range</b>				
<b>CDS Variables</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">Focus on plannable change in predictable environments</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">Focus on emergent change in complex environments</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required competencies and capacities known at the start.</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic competencies essential as well as negotiation and social skills.</li> <li>• Team composition cannot be fixed from the start.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	Focus on plannable change in predictable environments	Focus on emergent change in complex environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required competencies and capacities known at the start.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic competencies essential as well as negotiation and social skills.</li> <li>• Team composition cannot be fixed from the start.</li> </ul>
Focus on plannable change in predictable environments	Focus on emergent change in complex environments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required competencies and capacities known at the start.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic competencies essential as well as negotiation and social skills.</li> <li>• Team composition cannot be fixed from the start.</li> </ul>				

The appropriate position of the pointer in the middle of the continuum between ‘planned’ and ‘emergent’ can be fine-tuned in a particular situation for each of the variables separately to arrive at a best-fit configuration CD support. “Best fit” will need to be defined through applying strategic competencies vested in individuals and teams providing support to capacity development.

### Activating success factors in design and assessment

The usefulness of defined success factors does not relate first of all to getting a handle on results, but rather on the process. As argued earlier in this report, our assumption is that good practice usually breeds good results. At the same time, aiming for good results in no way ensures good practice. In complex situations, which are often the case in international support of capacity development, the way to go will be to emphasize a focus on establishing, tracking and guiding good practice during design and implementation. Aimed-for results should in no way be left out of the picture, but they will often need to be treated as moving targets. Hence the need for a support process that can handle such dynamics.

Annex 6 provides an overview of suggested questions to ask when designing and assessing a particular capacity development process with an international component. We propose to use this first of all as a kind of checklist and not to turn this into a fixed format to fill out. The reason for this is that strategic thinking needs to precede and continuously guide strategic planning. The sets of questions are therefore meant to feed strategic thinking & action and not to be used as a mere tick-off list. Seeking to establish compliance with fixed formats often leads to a gaming of the system<sup>25</sup>, which may support administrative planning processes, but undermines strategic thinking & action (which is viewed here as a key determining factor in whether a difference will be made or not).

## 3.4 Exploring the CDS pyramid elements in relation to six cases

The previous sections of this report are partly based on brief assessments of a number of projects that are involved in capacity development support, while initial conceptual understanding has also been tested in these cases. Annex 1 contains a very short discussion of six policy-supporting projects that were geared towards providing support to capacity development in an international settings.

Despite great differences in thematic and geographic focus, the six projects described do show remarkable similarities in the area of process management. Many of the success factors indicated by interviewees point to the importance of personal relationships within the project teams, to taking long-term

<sup>25</sup> Gaming the system can be defined as “[using] the rules and procedures meant to protect a system in order, instead, to manipulate the system for [a] desired outcome”. From: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaming\\_the\\_system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaming_the_system). Interesting reading on the topic includes James Rieley (2001): Gaming the system is rewarding those who are recognised to be good at firefighting instead of those who ensure that a company doesn’t have fires to fight” (Rieley, 2001, xiii).

timeframes if any institutional change is aimed for, and adaptive management to respond to changing circumstances and utilization of new unexpected opportunities.

### **Common patterns in the six cases**

1. Support providers will need to bring in more than content expertise alone. To a certain extent it involves an art to balance content expertise, common sense, good communication skills, patience, frustration-tolerance, and strategic competences (finding creative ways forward).

2. LNV (EL&I) has (in most cases) been a good commissioner of capacity development support as they in general provided room for maneuver and flexibility in project planning and budgeting. By doing so it created space for change. Combined with a drive of support providers to make a difference and their strategic maneuvering some significant contributions could be made (see e.g. the case of rural development in Egypt).

3. Support of capacity development, when it relates to complex issues with international dimensions, requires a longer-term involvement. Not necessarily this requires higher budgets, but sometimes they need to be spread out over more years. Times to 'wait and see' will often be essential.

4. An active (policy) problem owner at LNV (EL&I) (in which we include agricultural attaches) enhanced opportunities for making a good contribution. This means that ownership issues do not only apply at the level of clients, but also at the level of commissioners.

5. Dispositions (attitudes) of key people play a big role. It is common to hear "this official was instrumental in getting the project moving" or "when this person was moved to another position, things got much more difficult as the replacement had other priorities". This points to the importance for having good people skills in support processes.

6. Research support in relation to capacity development needs to be understood in a broad perspective. The inclination is to focus on technological (incl. related knowledge and skills) aspects. However, social, economic and legal (to mention just a few) functions and institutions often play a prominent role in change processes. Project leaders that were interviewed all reported the necessity of adopting such inclusive outlook on research capacities.

7. Support of capacity development in complex settings involves a building of momentum through good communication, creating transparency in plans and operations, good relations (trust) and the ability to make an objective case for suggested strategies. Whether the momentum will be there, is not something that can be easily planned and requires working with a flexible timeline.

8. Ownership and commitment needs to be vested at all relevant levels, not just at (top) policy levels. Establishing ownership at (top) policy levels is only a start of the development of the required ownership base. This also implies that increasing and maintaining the ownership base is a task which goes beyond the start of projects, and requires ongoing effort for strengthening this at all relevant levels.

In the public sector, a change process that relates to strengthening capacities will often start at a policy level. A minister or top official invites support of capacity development. Commonly, those who need to carry out the envisaged change, are more on the receiving end and ownership and commitment should not be assumed but rather be taken as an important focus in terms of trying to strengthen this.

## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

By now, the feeling may have crept in that support of capacity development is all very complicated. As a result, we see a common tendency to let everyone find his/her own way in providing support to capacity development processes, leaving little guidance on establishing good practice. Much of the work then involves a focus on (capacity) assessment frameworks, which helps to understand head and tail of an effort, but loses track of what happens in the middle. This may also relate to an apparent over-focusing on results. Accountability appears to be constructed in relation to results that have often been pre-defined, though we often know that once a project hits field realities, results may not be that easily attainable<sup>26</sup>. In that sense, results can be mere expressions of good intentions. Responding to this situation, many donors have become stricter in demanding assessment of results, particularly at the level of outcomes and impact. It is questionable whether this strategy is going to improve capacity development support. So far, LNV (EL&I) appears to not have joined this tendency toward a narrow results focus. This has created room for manoeuvre and has enhanced effectiveness in commissioned support projects (see annex 1).

Though not denying the need for aiming for results, nor the need for doing appropriate assessment of results, in this report we have focused on the need for guiding good practice in support of capacity development. Our axiom would be that **good practice breeds good results**. In the metaphor of the business of running a restaurant, this would mean serving excellent food in an appealing restaurant ambiance in a good location, will result in satisfied guests. As this report is meant to serve a ministry responsible for the field of agriculture, we cannot but use an agricultural metaphor as well: We may say that planting a good cultivar of apple tree in good soil, in an appropriate climate, providing sufficient care and pruning, will usually lead to a good harvest of good apples. Or, with a different metaphor, good garden design and gardening will result in beautiful gardens. It takes time for the garden to take shape and in the beginning it will not be completely clear what the garden will look like once mature. Practicing good gardening involves having a rough idea of the outcome, but will focus on providing conditions for good and balanced growth. Usually, those providing support to capacity development, will need to adopt the same kind of attitude.

The popular saying ‘een goed begin is het halve werk<sup>27</sup>’ seems to apply very much to capacity development. Creating conditions conducive for making a positive contribution will involve spending time and effort in clarifying the dynamic in which an intervention is planned: What is the game we are in? What does the arena look like? Where are the potential connection points for making a contribution? What are drivers of change (and inertia)? What does the asset base look like? What capabilities are in place, what functions are being performed and at what standard? It would also need to pay careful attention to relationships. More than people in Western countries, peoples like the Chinese are very aware of the role or relationships in reaching results.

In short, we may summarise the identified success factors in terms of an ABC of support of capacity development:

A. Creating a fertile breeding ground for support:

1. A clear approach in relation to the background and setting of the envisaged process.
2. A good comprehension about the specific context in which support will be provided.

Seven success factors:

1. Clarify the overall approach
2. Comprehend the Context
3. Cultivate Commitment
4. Customize the envisaged Contribution
5. Cause kept Clear
6. Connect to Complexity
7. Create Competent support

<sup>26</sup> See note 24.

<sup>27</sup> Dutch for ‘a good start covers half of the work’.

3. A basis of ownership and commitment vested in relevant stakeholders.
- B. Managing a flexible, result-directed, but process-focused implementation process:
4. A customized support contribution tailored to the specific setting of these efforts.
  5. A mechanism for keeping track of change as it really happens (or not), informing management decision making.
  6. A mode of operation that allows for flexibility and adaptive management to keep connected to complex dynamics.
- C. Assigning the right (combination of) people to make the difference:
7. A composition of the right competencies and capacities for the job.

We may say that LNV (EL&I), in the six cases, has been a good commissioner of capacity development support in complex settings. This relates to the flexibility and support provided (e.g. through agricultural attaches). This may partly result from the lack of time to stay connected with project progress rather than from a conscious effort to create such supportive conditions. However, we trust that this track record can be continued and that this report may contribute to LNV (EL&I) continuing to be a well-informed commissioner of support, understanding its role in providing policy directions as well as in creating supportive conditions for aspired change.

Annex 2 provides a further outline of checklists that could be used (in an adapted format) to assess the status of the seven indicated success factors. They may be used by policy makers (support commissioners) as well as by providers of support to capacity development.

## 4.2 Recommendations

Based on the brief theoretical and empirical explorations there are a number of recommendations that we would like to put forward to EL&I. These recommendations are meant to be read from a perspective that EL&I, as commissioner of projects supporting capacity development, needs to also consider its own role in relation to creating conditions for success.

### **Creating a fertile breeding ground**

1. Be realistic regarding what can be expected through support of capacity development. Zoom in on the actual level where a contribution is made. Capacity development dynamics are often complex and require strategic navigation rather than strict planning. This should have implications for the definition of anticipated results and related budgets and timelines.
2. Keep an eye on creating conditions for success based on principles of good practice, rather than pulling out the yardstick every so often to assess achievements. Take more time to create and assess existence of conditions for success than for measuring success itself (though keeping change aspirations clear).
3. Take a broad outlook on support of capacity development, not merely putting in place economic and technological conditions. Strategically consider where drivers of change (and inertia) are located and appropriately budget for working on non-technical aspects of support (establishing good communication and motivation is essential and can be costly).
4. The level of detail in spelling out envisaged results of a support effort needs to be in line with the level of complexity involved in fulfilling the purpose of the project. In complex settings with lots of uncertainties and ambiguities involved, it may sometimes be useful to limit the results framework to a definition of a mission statement with anticipated initial milestones.

5. Ask applications for support of capacity development to be described in relation to the seven success factors, and updates on implementation to be structured in the same way.

6. Support of capacity development in the public sector and civil society will require a different approach than support in the context of private sector efforts. Expectations and design of support processes need to be in line with this reality.

Many plans for (support to) capacity development show a clear understanding about **what** needs to change. However, such understanding must be complemented by a clear idea about **how** change could happen, what conditions (at all relevant levels) could play a role in moving towards an aspired future and hence what would be an appropriate contribution. Making implicit thinking about how change is envisaged to happen more explicit, can help to test change assumptions and improve design.

### **Creating a flexible, results-directed, but conditions-focused implementation**

7. “The main benefits of capacity development are suspected to be long-term or past the point when the credit can be claimed by any current participants.” (Morgan in Anderson, 2010). This realisation is important when defining expected ‘return on investments’.

8. Establish criteria for assessing compliance with principles of good practice in support of capacity development and do not burden projects in complex settings with a need to assess higher level outcomes and impact (see e.g. annex 2).

9. Anticipated results and the way in which they will be monitored and evaluated will need to be appropriately defined in view of situation specifics. There are strategic alternatives for only working with predefined results (see 3.3.5).

10. Commission regular (e.g. every 5 years) strategic studies with the purpose of understanding the relationships between portfolio investments and change; these assessments should be carried out at the level of functions, institutions, and quality of life, while creating deeper understanding about drivers of change.

### **Assigning the right (combination of) people to make the difference**

11. Work with good teams and team leaders and provide them with appropriate room for manoeuvre in terms of adapting initial plans.

12. Success in support of capacity development is very much dependent on non-technical conditions, such as a basis of trust, good communication, individual motivation and friendly relationships. Therefore, social skills of implementers need to be specifically considered.

13. Those engaging in capacity development support in complex situations, including those who fund such efforts, need an ability to deal with ambiguity, which sometimes means accepting uncertainty and unresolved issues, without giving up on the aspired future.

14. Strengthen strategic competencies<sup>28</sup> and/or work with teams that have such competencies. Do not assume strategic competencies to exist, but seriously invest in strengthening such competencies (e.g. through training), both for those in a commissioner role and those in a support provider role (good reading in this field: Sloan, 2006 and Waddell, 2002).

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<sup>28</sup> See annex 7 for an elaboration on strategic competencies.



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# Annex 1

## Brief case studies

### 1. Avian influenza control in Indonesia

Country	Indonesia
Project code	BO-10-009-101
Start/End date	1-1-2006 till 31-12-2011
BO Objective	The project goal is to (1) strengthen the Indonesian national and local governmental veterinary infrastructure in selected areas and capacity building for institutions related to the poultry sector, to implement the national strategic work plan for the prevention and control of HPAI in animals, to (2) develop and test intervention strategies in the field based on results from experimental and epidemiological research, and (3) to establish and strengthen cooperation between Indonesian and Netherlands' public and private institutions, such as national authorities, local governments, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, rural communities, vaccine producers and knowledge institutions, aimed at the prevention and control of HPAI in the specific Indonesian situation.

#### Background and setting of the project

The project (in which the capacity development element is just one part) emerged from a request for support in controlling avian influenza in Indonesia, by the Indonesian government because of the Dutch experience with it in 2003. Internationally, the avian influenza outbreak in Indonesia attracted a lot of attention because of the fear for a pandemic. A range of international actors such as FAO, USA, Japan and Australia, got heavily involved. In fact, for Indonesia, other health hazards are much more serious. The international (external) fear for a pandemic was the key driver for attempts to control avian influenza not an internal (Indonesian) fear. This made it difficult to have Indonesia in the driver's seat of efforts and allocate resources for HPAI control programmes. The project developed a concept for strengthening the veterinary services through training trainers (in 2 provinces) to implement poultry health programmes (in this case for HPAI) through training and supporting para-veterinary fieldstaff as first line animal health and extension workers. Work is continuing to create a position of process coordinator and integrate this further with the developed infrastructure (laboratory diagnostics and database for the poultry sector). This concept can be used to increase the capacity of the veterinary services for other animal/poultry diseases (ND, Rabies, Anthrax).

#### What 'capacity building' refers to in this project

The main focus in terms of support of capacity development relates to technical and didactic capabilities and improving supporting infrastructure (diagnostic laboratories, data base for poultry sector, research capacity, quality of vaccines).. Anchoring technical competences and making the developed infrastructure more sustainable is difficult and the result remains uncertain.

#### Context

Understanding the Indonesian governance system turned out to be very important. Provinces and districts have a high level of autonomy, which means that working only at central government level is usually not going to be effective. Each district decide on its own way of implementing animal disease control and doing (livestock production) extension. Also an understanding of how universities function and what motivates researchers turned out to be important in relation to handing over responsibilities for continued avian influenza vigilance.

#### Ownership and commitment

The project was initially strongly externally driven, while also many donors are, as a result of international commitments, active in this field. Indonesian priorities are broader with regards to livestock production

and animal disease control (dairy and beef production; rabies, brucella) and as well as to human health (malaria, dengue fever, etc.). In the beginning LNV policy makers were closely involved in designing the project. Once the project was established, this became more of a bureaucratic (distant) relationship.

### **Strategy and positioning**

The strategy to work with training of trainers who would then train field staff in the implementation of core tasks has worked to a certain extent. Working with veterinarians was Indonesian choice. Questionable whether that is the only competence that you need. Understanding about processes of institutionalization, networking as well as socio-economic and socio-political understanding are important. After some time, the project started to establish relationships at provincial and district level, based on emerging understanding about the governance system. To make efforts more sustainable the projects tries to anchor knowledge by link with universities such as the veterinary faculty of the Agriculture University of Bogor.

### **Capturing change**

There has not been a formal M&E system in place. One central person provided feedback from field staff and villages, through which, e.g. the project learnt that villages were getting tired of extension on avian influenza. Evaluation showed that message had reached villages. Effects were rather visible in terms of e.g.. extension on poultry health management, laboratory capacity, trained staff at various levels, improved quality of vaccines.

### **Connecting to complexity**

There have been several attempts to refocus the project. The focus changed over time with a stronger relationship at the level of provinces. Other donors often worked more at the central government level. This involved progressive thinking. Not everything was clear from the start. There has been the need to reorient regularly. From the administrative side, the project needed to navigate certain requirements. The project was obliged to submit annual plans on the first of November, while it was in practice impossible to discuss the plans with Indonesian partners on such an early date.

Initially, the Indonesian Chief Veterinary Officer was supportive of the process and there was a good start, but frequent changes of this position resulted in less commitment. The passing away of another counterpart also proved to be a setback for the project.

### **Critical success factors in this project**

- Move from working only at central government level towards provincial/district level (e.g. more interest to work with donors and less donor competition; more continuity and commitment from counterparts; working closer to implementation level; in one province more flexibility in allocating funds);
- Long-term involvement and continuity of people involved from the Netherlands;
- Creating a core group of 'professionals' through ToT in 2 provinces;
- Flexibility of the project, planning based on advancing understanding;
- Possibility of looking a bit broader than AI, which could help to win support;
- Including Bogor Agriculture University as a partner in the project and doing scientific research;
- Language problems (lack of understanding English) causes problems in e.g.:
  - o Conducting effective participatory training at ToT level;
  - o Making efficient use of international knowledge;
  - o Reporting on sub-projects by local partners;
  - o Selection of participants for international fellowships (MSc), training, participation in conferences and workshops;
- Difficult: in country like Indonesia, government planning is slow and lacks short-term flexibility;
- Flexibility in implementation is needed. Delays in implementation which are common in Indonesia do not agree with the strict annual planning and budgeting procedures in the Netherlands.

## 2. Rural development in Egypt

Country	Egypt
Project code	BO-10-006-115
Start/End date	2007 -
BO Objective	A documented contribution to the process of reformulating the comprehensive rural development strategy in Egypt and a planning (logical) framework which provides the lay-out for installment of pilot programs.

### Background and setting of the project

Ideas for the project emerged in 2006. The Egyptian ministry of agriculture indicated after discussions with the agricultural attaché that they would like to learn from the European experience with traditional agricultural areas. Alterra (WUR) started a project and involved LEI. The tentative ideas did not seem appropriate, which meant the project was doing damage control first after which it could provide alternative approaches that seemed to fit the Egyptian context very well. This involved providing knowledge from the European experience (50 years) in rural (disadvantaged) areas. The approach of conditional incentives fitted very well in the context. Even though effects cannot be claimed yet, the National Democratic Party has even put conditional incentives as a spearhead program in their party program. Conditional incentives approach relates to making the link between incentives and clear objectives. It is a clear concept that can be applied in many different contexts because it is not specific in terms of what kind of incentives would be appropriate (relates to objectives to be determined). It can be compared to behaviour of amoeba: it will go for positive and pull away from negative. The policy of conditional incentives is to try to mimick this in relation to rural development.

The project has been geared towards supporting a process that should result in a strategy for rural development for the purpose of poverty reduction (and the wider impact of this for Egyptian society). In 2007 report was delivered and in autumn 2007 the Egyptian minister decided to call together a study group. High-level officials and advisors were involved. In January 2008 delegation went on a 3-day study tour to Brussels and The Hague and were received at high level. First very critical, but in the end decided to start new process. The director of the previous project was the facilitator of the delegation. There was already a plan for 2008, which was then adapted and a concept note written which was presented in March in Egypt (with Egyptian consultancy group). They received a green light to start with preparations for a pilot programme. EU was supportive of the plans. In this way, (limited) BOCI funds could be supplemented.

### What 'capacity building' refers to in this project

The project provided ideas, analysis and experiences from Europe on how to make effective policies for development in disadvantaged rural areas. It also consciously worked on creating a strong basis of understanding and ownership for an initial pilot project. This involved creating a basis for making informed decisions (on concepts, insights, instruments and conditions in relation to objectives), networking and facilitation of exchange/interaction, organization of workshops and presentation of analyses. All these efforts were meant to lead to a strategy for rural development aiming for poverty alleviation.

### Context

After the initial analysis, the Egyptian parties involved turned this into something they wanted to go for. There was a strong internal incentive to uplift rural areas in the development plans. If rural areas were neglected there would be serious risks for stability and security, due to a possible rise of support for the Muslim Brotherhood. This partly explains the eagerness to drive this process on behalf of the Egyptian ministry. Furthermore, the focus on conditional incentives was perceived as a viable alternative for an expensive system of subsidies.

### Ownership and commitment

From the beginning it has been attempted to put ownership strongly in the hands of Egyptians. Working with an Egyptian consultancy bureau supported these efforts. Studies in Egypt were done by Egyptian

consultants. At one point another group from the Netherlands supported the process, but this meant overlapping with expertise of Egyptian consultancy group. This was a sensitive process. The pilot programme will be funded for the larger part by EU, but 3 mln Euros will come from Egypt.

Till end of 2009 the Egyptian minister of agriculture was supportive, but did not really drive the process. When a more focused study was done that year and the findings presented, it was a turnaround point and from then on the minister became a driver of the process. In Egypt a lot has already been put in place and some negotiations with EU are still pending. There will be a continuing and substantial role in the field of capacity development support in relation to process guidance (e.g. M&E) and technical assistance. The pilot will include a focus on improving water quality and reduction of use of pesticides.

**Strategy and positioning**

In the beginning, much effort was spent on performing good diagnostics. Plans were not clear from the start but emerged as opportunities presented themselves (e.g. political support). The first step focused on shifting the focus towards the idea of conditional incentives, which was though to hold a good potential for Egyptian circumstances. The process of positioning support was therefore very much characterised by an approach of navigating uncertainties while keeping the focus on creating a platform for implementing initial pilot projects clear. The strategy appears to have paid off.

**Capturing change**

There was no formal M&E system, but from time to time project implementers would sit around the table to see what was going on and decide on course of action. It was therefore more ad-hoc organised, depending on the circumstances. Anticipated (aimed-for) milestones were kept clear though and justification of the course taken was provided.

**Connecting to complexity**

Over a period of three years a foundation was laid for required local ownership and support before a pilot project could be initiated. This required a stepwise approach where plans could not be made for longer periods. In the end EU bureaucracy delayed progress, which was largely beyond project control.

**Critical success factors in this project**

- Some people really made the difference, including the agricultural attaché.
- Link to political (Egyptian) agenda.
- Let demand form from Egyptian side
- Feed and support autonomous process
- Flexible, pro-active attitude being open for emergence
- Looking for opportunities, creating momentum
- Make use of coincidence: LFA evaluation over 30 years had just been finished and provided good connection
- Flexibility of BOCI policy instrument
- Whatever can be done from Egyptian side, was left to them (studies)

**3. Fisheries in Mauretania**

Country	Mauretania
Project code	BO-10-011-103
Start/End date	2007 -
BO Objective	The prime goal of the project is to support the development of public/ private partnerships in the fishery sector in Mauritania, through dialogues with partners involved, through pilot initiatives on demand of local partners, and through improvement of weak links in the fishery chain and improved performance of identified and relevant fish production & trade chains in Mauritania , the region and international markets.

### **Background and setting of the project**

Western Africa is an important fishing ground for the Dutch pelagic fisheries sector, which means there are important economic interests for the Netherlands. Around 2004-5 a public-private partnership process for the fisheries sector was launched in Mauritania, in cooperation with 4 Mauritanian ministers, the private sector and some local NGOs. The idea was that DGIS would fund the partnership, but the support was withdrawn as the fear was growing that this PPP may not work out well for a variety of reasons. Ultimately LNV decided to shift the PPP process towards Ghana.

The role of the current project that we are talking here about is the only part of the PPP that is being implemented and has a strong focus on strengthening the role of the civil society in fisheries. Beside regional organizations like WWF and IUCN, local CSOs are involved. The project aims to contribute towards improved social, economic and ecological conditions for fisheries by linking policy institutions with local fisheries organizations. Objectives relate to linking the market with governance, creating more transparency in the value chain and involving fishers more in value chain management. Existing EU-level policies only allow for buying and exporting fish from boats that have complied with regulations on sustainable catching. This puts requirements on improved tracking and tracing to do this, which is one of the relevant issues for the project. The role of China complicates the picture as there are no such policies in place in China and China is strongly investing in infrastructure and joint ventures to boost fish production and export.

### **What 'capacity building' refers to in this project**

This project focuses on strengthening the capacity of local NGOs and fisher's organizations in pilot research, advocacy and exploration of funding opportunities, and in making information available for actions. Essentially, the project has therefore supported capacity development in (small and big) non-government fisheries organization in Mauritania. An important activity has been the organization of workshops for NGOs and (fisheries) producer organizations. The role of project leaders was first of all a role of facilitation of processes and help to make sense of the discussions that took place: what capacity is available, what is necessary, what force-fields are at play, etc.? Subsequently, a process of action planning was facilitated. One example of a subject area is the use of cheap nets of poor quality which cause environmental damage. Questions discussed in relation to this included, 'can the importation of such nets be prohibited?', How can we work together in this? What is our relationship with the government? What support can we get? What technical capacities do we need? Etc. There has also been an important role to bring in discussions on the vision and how one can work towards it, as well as bringing in discussion on values: what is it that we (local stakeholders) consider to be important?

### **Context**

Fisheries is very important for Mauritania but the pressure on the commons is huge, as European as well as Chinese commercial fishers are scrambling the areas for fish. Civil society in Mauritania is diverse and not well organised. The process of capacity development in the Mauritanian context therefore required first of all the building of trust with the civil society to understand what role and impact these civil stakeholders would like to have and how they would like to establish relationships within the governmental institutions and international organizations

### **Ownership and commitment**

The process was in the beginning initiated from outside. Currently, four larger Mauritanian NGOs coordinate efforts, together with a regional group based in Dakar (Senegal). They are now in the driver's seat. The ideas for the PPP to start with and then the efforts to strengthen civil society. Gradually the role of local actors, particularly the four NGOs in Mauritania and the one in Senegal, became more important, to the point that currently they are managing processes with the Dutch support merely in the role of coach. Fisheries has traditionally seen a more top-down policy making process. Involving fishers in this is important both for understanding what is at stake as well as for establishing ownership for resource management and commitment to policy implementation.

### Strategy and positioning

The strategic positioning in relation to the PPP was difficult as there was a lack of buy-in from both DGIS and LNV. There was little or no attention for the potential role of civil society. So the strategic positioning of the project was not naturally supported by strategic thinking from the funding agency. Gradually the idea for how best to position the support grew from the side of the Netherlands' government and the Dutch Embassy. It also involved a process of starting up things at different levels in Mauritania including policy makers.

### Capturing change

No formal M&E system was in place as processes were of limited scale and involved little contribution from outside.

### Connecting to complexity

This project relates to a broader and long-term process, which relates to a need for a reorientation of the fisheries sector, not a mere technical arrangement. Throughout the process the role of the external group had to change from a more initiating role to more of a coaching role. Though a big change has taken place, there is still quite a road to go.

### Critical success factors in this project

- Do not have unrealistic expectations
- Need for commitment in a process: if you start support, do it well and consider different angles (strategic thinking).
- Need for room for manoeuvring.
- Participatory approach – involving fishers (organizations) in research and exploration.
- Knowledge is not always neutral – relates to values
- Knowledge is co-created and activated, rather than transferred from Netherlands to Mauritania.

## 4. Horticulture in Indonesia

Country	Indonesia
Project code	BO-10-010-102 (HORTIN-II)
Start/End date	2007 -
BO Objective	The goal of the project is to attain competitive and sustainable vegetables and fruits supply chains and hence contribute to local economic development through <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- collaborative applied research resulting in competitive and sustainable horticultural supply chains;</li><li>- strengthened position of participating small and medium enterprises and farmers in the supply chains; and</li><li>- capacity building with stakeholders on the co-innovation approach.</li></ul>

### Background and setting of the project

Hortin II emerged from a history of collaboration in the field of horticulture between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Eight years ago Hortin I, the predecessor project, started. At that time, longer-term projects (4 years) could still be funded by LNV for the whole period in one agreement. Hortin II benefitted from the fact that the first phase had been well-received on both the Indonesian and Dutch side. The project was intended to have (besides its strategic focus) more a practical focus than the first phase. The project was and has been very much supported by the Dutch agricultural attaché at the Embassy in Indonesia. At high level, there have historically been good ties in the field of agriculture between individuals in Indonesia and the Netherlands, including informally. The project has also been well-connected to new, related projects such as the Train the Chain project and private sector efforts (e.g. East-West Seeds Int. producing vegetable seeds and having a good reputation for its impact on out-of-doors grown vegetables). The first Hortin project was more geared towards trying to open up opportunities in Indonesia for Dutch companies

active in the horticulture sector. Hortin II, however, has had more of a support to development focus, also because there are not yet that many opportunities for Dutch companies available.

### **What 'capacity building' refers to in this project**

The main focus of 'capacity building' in the project was on transfer of knowledge and on development of expertise in the form of the introduction of new techniques and methods of (horticultural) crop production. Besides working on Indonesia's two major vegetables grown out-of-doors, the project focused on sweet pepper production. This made it possible to develop a range of innovative techniques. For this purpose, Dutch experts worked with both Indonesian horticulture scientists and growers (incl. a cooperative of sweet pepper growers). Study tours complemented collaboration in crop production improvement. The project also worked on strengthening supply chain development. However, the realisation of innovative supply chains together with marketing parties occasionally proved more difficult as envisaged, due the complexity of the situation and organisational considerations.

Though not an overt strategy, the support to CD also involved setting an example of working with growers in e.g. on-farm trials. Interestingly, though not the primary focus much seems to have been achieved in this field. Traditionally, researchers in Indonesia do desk research and research station trials, but do not work with growers directly. The project appears to have been an eye-opener to scientists who have bought in to the value of participatory research. As a result, besides a focus on producing scientific publications, scientists have become involved with growers in connection with research. To sustain this change of attitude and practice, institutional changes will need to reflect acknowledgement of the value of participatory field research. However, since the project allowed for both participatory field research and publication on the very same work, this provides opportunities for a combining practical research with academic publications.

### **Context**

The way horticultural research is traditionally done, usually does not involve working with growers of crops. The introduction of more participatory ways of horticultural research was only possible because of the long-standing relationship of Dutch and Indonesian civil servants and academics.

### **Ownership and commitment**

The project was very much supported by the Agriculture DG and Research DG. In the beginning, the initiative was more on the side of the CD support providers. The clearly changed attitude of researchers concerning their outlook on working with growers shows the adoption of ownership. Ownership differed at different levels. A policy workshop which provided a platform for interaction between growers and high-level policy makers both enhanced ownership as well as being an indicator of it.

### **Strategy and positioning**

One key strategy was to deliver good (technical) work and being reliable. There was no upfront strategy for institutional change, but institutional change imperatives were rather built in through the way in which work is carried out. Rather than making institutional change an issue, it was more convincing to let researchers experience a different way of doing research (with farmers) and let them draw their own conclusions. Another key strategy related to a facilitation of interaction with policy makers. Overall, the strategy has been to catalyse change in a number of areas, which resulted in a number of effects, which includes an increase in income of growers.

### **Capturing change**

Project leaders informed every quarter on activities, outputs and budgets. Twice a year there was a meeting with presentations on the activities and results of the project. Requirements for M&E were not strict. This created room for maneuver, but significant outcomes, which clearly apply in this project, therefore also easily go unnoticed for those not directly involved in the project.

Activities and outputs monitored. Outcomes not as well described (modest budgets per project activity, not much time for writing). However, gradually, as we were talking, it turned out that the outcomes of the project have been considerable.

The production of sweet pepper per m<sup>2</sup> rose from 6 to 19 kg., which is a big achievement. Getting this information was rewarding for researchers and much appreciated by growers of sweet pepper.

### **Connecting to complexity**

Every year a new application for funding had to be submitted where it while it was not sure whether it would be possible to continue. It cost a lot of energy to construct the new applications (in view of the amounts made available) and it created problems for building stable agreements. There were also internal problems in terms of capacity allocation, which made it difficult to connect technical issues and supply chain issues. It was not fully possible to overcome this. The risk was taken to organize a policy workshop with DG Research and DG Agriculture, which took a year to prepare, but where it was not sure how it would work out. It turned out to be a break-through.

### **Critical success factors in this project**

- The time was ripe.
- Capable and competent CD support providers:
  - o Take time to understand situation/context (Indonesian setting)
  - o Invest in good relationships
  - o Having good communication skills and appropriate language abilities.
  - o Making time (culturally sensitive)
  - o Being frustration-proof, modest, and persistent, learning from mistakes, and having a sense of reality.
- Deliver good work; do what you have promised; make achievements visible
- Inception phase very important; involve all relevant parties, listen
- Realise need for work on internal capacity of support provider.

## **5. Climate change in East Africa**

Country	Ethiopia (East Africa)
Project code	BO-10-009-003
Start/End date	2008 -
BO Objective	The goal of the project is to contribute to capacity development for climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries by identifying, and quantifying the combinations of mitigation and adaptation options and answering related questions, activated through capacity development, outreach and curriculum development for training.

### **Background and setting of the project**

The project has been a response to the emerging attention for climate change and its implications for agriculture and environment. East Africa was chosen as area focus, more particularly Ethiopia. The project started with two scoping workshops in 2008 and 2009, involving partners from the region (ASARECA, RUFORUM, IUCN). The purpose of the workshops was the development of a framework for further action. Three interrelated focus areas were established: training, knowledge development and policy support at the highest levels. The project has specifically tried to work on these three aspects in an integrated way, e.g. by linking training and knowledge development. Cases for further study were defined and a local partner was identified to host the training: HoA-REC.

### **What 'capacity building' refers to in this project**

Capacity development has been approached from the angle of training, research and policy advice. This involved working together and learning together in a process of knowledge generation, packaging and dissemination/communication.

## **Context**

The context specifics relate to both the climate change discussions that are taking place at many levels, including internationally, and the specific Ethiopian/East-African context. The idea was to involve local lecturers in courses so as to bring in relevant illustrations from the local context. This did not work out from the start (the first course), but as part of the support process, the second time, partners and local lecturers were better prepared to customize the course to the East-African context.

## **Ownership and commitment**

The project gradually evolved, which meant that the initiative was in the beginning on the side of WUR and LNV-The Hague. Currently, Ethiopia is exploring opportunities for organizing a new course where WUR/LNV will only support, not organise. The project played a catalyzing role in the beginning, but gradually, as the subject became more prominent on agendas. This also applied to the Dutch embassy in Ethiopia, leading to a stronger drive from that side (which is positive, but which also reduced room for or maneuver for the project implementers).

## **Strategy and positioning**

The project did not have a roadmap in terms of planning, but was based on broader defined areas of activity combined with a set of outputs to which the project committed itself, such as reports and course facilitation. The subject matter is comparatively new, which made it impossible to know exactly which steps to take. This meant the project had to adopt a mode of incremental planning, where regular monitoring and reflection needed to guide the project along the way. This required an attitude of researchers not as the expert, but as resource persons participating in a sense-making process. The projects was limited in its room for maneuver and what it could and could not get involved in because of the level of budgets.

## **Capturing change**

There were two main dynamics in relation monitoring: one relates to the regular intra-team exchange and reflection that was facilitated. The other was the consolidation of lessons learned in relation to the courses in a manual that could be shared with others. This did not included monitoring of outcomes of e.g. courses.

## **Connecting to complexity**

There were a number of complexities involved in this project. First of all, it relates to something that is comparatively new. This means one cannot work with readily available information and expertise. Furthermore, there the issue needs to be tackled at multiple levels (international and national policies, and locally specific solutions are required) besides also the interdisciplinary dimension.

## **Critical success factors in this project**

- Competences of all relevant stakeholders play a role, both on the support side, as well as on the client side and also on the side of the commissioner.
- Flexibility, including room for maneuver provided by commissioner.
- Development of a common language, proved to be very useful and essential. Both within the support team as well as in interaction with course participants, partner organizations and the commissioner.
- Functional interdisciplinary collaboration, which not only involves the expertise, but also the way people are able to work together effectively (requiring good communication, learning attitude, etc.).
- For these kind of support processes there is no cookbook. This requires an attitude of learning along the way and being able to deal with the complexity and accept uncertainties and need for additional specific expertise.
- An integral approach to capacity development, involving training, research and policy advice allowed for operating more strategically.
- Being clear about own role and required competences

- The process of capacity development is something about which learning needs to be consolidated and shared.
- Being able to use momentum built up through Copenhagen conference.
- Need for interested policy commissioner
- Being able to work flexibly in different settings and to change role in relation to different dynamics involved.
- No competition in support team.
- Trust, taking small steps to build trust.
- Strategic collaboration. None of the support team members could have done this alone.
- Clear outputs helped to guide a process that in other ways was rather open. This created a sense of milestones.
- Need to consider own capacity to support capacity development.
- Consolidate learning (e.g. in course guidelines), which allows for learning together.
- Regular exchange with commissioner.

## 6. Integrated Pest Management in Ethiopia

Country	Ethiopia
Project code	BO-10-010-101
Start/End date	2007 -
BO Objective	<p>The goal is to enhance institutional and marketing innovations for the purpose of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the emergence of brokers between the supply and demand side of IPM innovations or “IPM innovation intermediaries”,</li> <li>• the use of information and communication technologies to enhance IPM learning and develop testable solutions</li> <li>• the development of “new IPM professionals” through institutional change in higher education.</li> </ul>

### Background and setting of the project

This project emerged from a long-term Ethiopian-Netherlands partnership. The project is related to a larger effort in the field of reducing use of pesticides in Ethiopia. There is a clear problem of pesticides even ending up in drinking water in unacceptable quantities. In December 2006 Wageningen UR was asked to support the exploration of ways forward in the field of IPM because of the Netherlands’ core expertise and experience in this field. As a first step of involvement, an inventory was made of key pests and a focus was chosen for spider mites on roses. An experimental IPM setup was realized, where a crop was grown with IPM on one side and use of pesticides on the other side, which provided a clear chance for comparing the merits of both approaches. The project adopted a chain-approach, not only looking at the cropping system, but also the whole institutional embedding. Though there are some benefits for Dutch companies if they can provide horticultural implements, the main focus of the projects is development oriented. Currently, the project is exploring opportunities for expanding the focus to outdoors crops as well as including other crops than the rose in greenhouses.

### What ‘capacity building’ refers to in this project

The project implementers have been very much aware of the need for adopting a broad outlook on capacity development. This meant that support has been provided from both a technical and non-technical viewpoint. The core support relates to the facilitation of an analysis of use of pesticides in greenhouse horticulture and the establishment of on-farm experimental sites, providing evidence-based illustration of the effectiveness of IPM. These efforts were embedded in establishing good relationships by specifically addressing issues of communication and creating transparency.

## **Context**

The Ethiopian context spells out a number of very clear constraints for support of capacity development. The project has been well aware of this. There are political dimensions which constrain risk-taking, which means it is difficult to get people to consider something new. There are educational dimensions which constrain thinking from a systems perspective, something that is central in IPM. There is no tradition of integrated and systems thinking. Legislation is under development also constrains the approval of use of certain biological control agents. And, if these constraints were not enough challenging, pesticide producers are trying to tempt people with the classic “simple is best” motto: if there is a pest, kill it with a pesticide and the result will be immediate.

## **Ownership and commitment**

At the highest policy level in Ethiopia there is a clear ownership for the project, which shows from their invitation and commissioning of the research. However, commitment and a drive to see this through is severely constrained by the factors described in relation to the specific Ethiopian context. We may say that the issue is not so much ownership itself, but the conditions necessary for people to take ownership, which are difficult to influence from outside. This requires careful navigation in a slow moving change process.

## **Strategy and positioning**

The project has taken two main approaches in providing support to capacity development. One is to have a strong evidence-based focus, providing objectively verifiable advantages of IPM. The other is to establish good communication. The project has documented almost everything they have done and has actively sought to create transparency about the project’s plans, operations and results. Involving stakeholders (growers) who apply IPM in discussions with researchers.

## **Capturing change**

This project, of all project referred to in this paper, has the most elaborate M&E functions. This very much relates to the intention to create transparency in order to try to avoid problems in communication. Much of the project has therefore been documented.

## **Connecting to complexity**

The project has had a clear focus in terms of its contribution to the reduction of use of pesticides. The way forward (IPM) was also clear. However, the whole institutional setting, politically and in terms of research organization, meant that the technical and infrastructural aspects were only the beginning. Management of the projects has therefore often been an issue of incremental change. An active communication strategy was adopted which meant bringing in television, ministers, other media to put this on the map, as well as organising exhibitions at the hortiflora. A complicating factor is the fact that the supplier of natural enemies did not get paid for services due to complicated money transfer arrangements in Ethiopia. This issue has not been resolved yet. The project worked hard on establishing good relations and the agricultural attaché played a significant role in this. The project has been fortunate to have been able to work with a number of motivated Ethiopian counterparts.

## **Critical success factors in this project**

- Ownership at different levels;
- Trust (e.g. in public-private partnership);
- Communication (transparency);
- Evidence-based research, providing objectively verifiable information in relation to a clear baseline on the status of use of pesticides;
- Takes time to see changes along the whole chain including all relevant institutional aspects of it.

## Annex 2

### Functions in relation to aspects of reality

<b>Table A1 Aspects of reality as developed in Dooyeweerd's<sup>29</sup> theory of modal aspects (modalities)</b>		
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Examples of focus</b>	<b>Type of related functions (and institutions)</b>
15 Fiduciary	Faith, commitments	Religious, ideological
14 Ethical, Moral	Love, caring	Ethical, solidarity
13 Juridical	Justice	Legal, rights
12 Aesthetic	Beauty, appeal	Art, architecture
11 Economic	Weighing values	Economy
10 Social	Human interaction	Social
9 Lingual	Symbolic meaning	Language, communication
8 Techno- formative	Formative power according to a free design	Technology
7 Analytical	Clarifying distinction	Analysis
6 Sensitive	Feeling	Psychology
5 Biotic	Life	Biology, ecology
4 Physical	Energy	Physics, engineering
3 Kinetic	Motion	Chemistry
2 Spatial	Extension, position	Geography
1 Numeric	Discrete quantity	Mathematics

(Adapted from Aay & Van Langevelde, 2005)

All aspects are interrelated and there is a certain order of aspects. An institution or function will always have a fundamental aspect with other secondary/tertiary aspects. E.g. a company may be fundamentally an economic institution, while also having social, technological, legal and other functions.

This short account is not doing justice to the theory, which is unique in the sense of providing a kind of grand theory on interrelated aspects of reality. The following websites provide further introduction:

<http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/aspects.html>

<http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/asp.html>

<http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2003/proceedings/exploringthmeaning/Basden.pdf>

Such overview is important because of the natural tendency towards reductionism.

<sup>29</sup> The functions described are inspired by Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd's theory of aspects (of reality). As a useful introduction to the framework in the context of economic development, read Aay, H. & Langevelde, A. van (2005). A Dooyeweerd-based approach to regional economic development. In: Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie – Vol. 96, No. 2, pp. 184–198.

## Annex 3

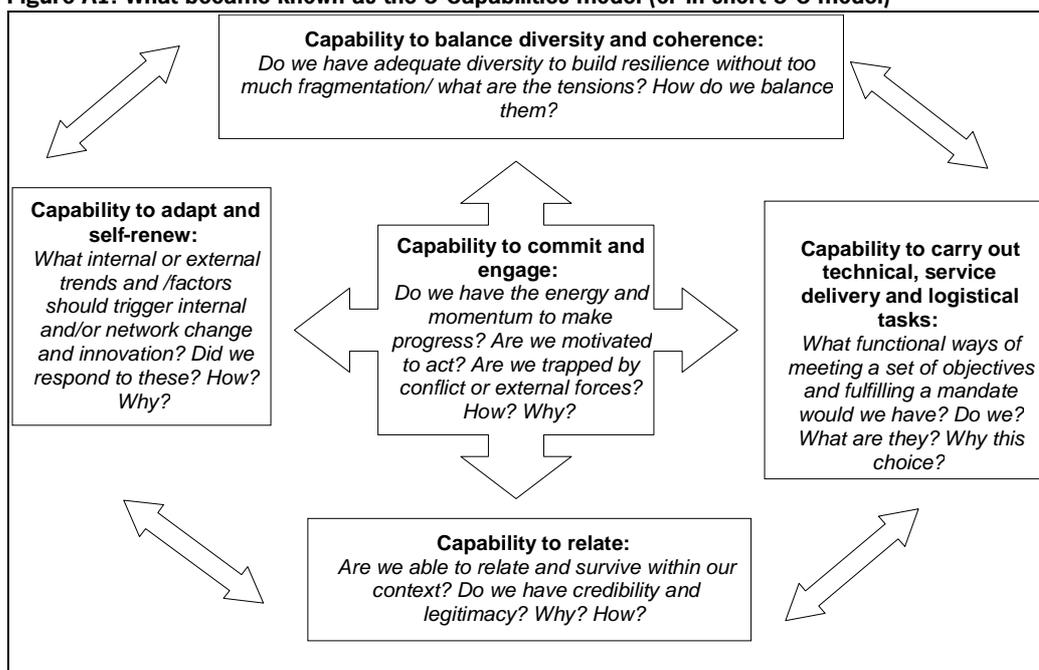
### The 5-capabilities model

The 5-capabilities assessment framework is one of the options for making an assessment of relevant capacity development dynamics in order to design support processes. The 5 different capabilities are interrelated and have emerged from an extensive studies of a large number of projects involved in capacity development support. Capabilities as understood here incorporate dimensions such as values, institutions, functions and to a lesser degree assets.

Capabilities in this framework essentially relate to collective (human) competence. This is a model in development and there are also organization who have adapted it by including other core capabilities, such as e.g. the capability to balance power & love<sup>30</sup>.

Capacity defined from the perspective of capabilities to flourish (Amathya Sen). In order to flourish we need a set of interrelated capabilities that relate to such things as nutritional health, life expectancy, participation in society, etc. The 5-C model has been derived from this capability thinking and is based on what emerged as 5 core capabilities when studying evidence from field practice.

**Figure A1: What became known as the 5-Capabilities model (or in short 5-C model)<sup>31</sup>**



A key dilemma for the capabilities approach has been how to measure what people could do, as opposed to what they actually do. In 2009, IOB<sup>32</sup> launched an evaluation of Dutch Capacity development support that will result in a synthesis report based on an seven evidence-based evaluations. This evaluation has

<sup>30</sup> We may want to add to the 'standard' five capabilities here, such as a capability to balance power and love (a more ethical kind of capability), inspired by recent book by Adam Kahane, on "Power and Love - A Theory and Practice of Social Change" (2010). Rights-based approaches, corporate responsibility and so many more approaches relate to ethics-based capabilities, which may not be so well reflected in the five capabilities.

<sup>31</sup> Baser, H. (2009). An experimental approach to monitoring capacity and capacity development; an overview of findings and an assessment of the framework. The Law and Justice Sector Program (LJSP), Papua New Guinea.

<sup>32</sup> Policy Evaluations department of the Dutch department of Foreign Affairs

used the 5-C model as the general analytical assessment framework. The synthesis report is due end of 2010.

Though working with different labels and descriptions, we may find a rough overlap in focus of the five capabilities and the seven success factors:

<b>7 Success Factors</b>	<b>5 Capabilities</b>
Clarify Approach	Capability to balance diversity and coherence
Comprehend Context	Capability to relate
Cultivate Commitment	Capability to commit and engage
Customize Contribution	Capability to balance diversity and coherence
Cause kept Clear	Capability to adapt and self-renew
Connect to Complexity	Capability to relate & capability to adapt and self-renew
Create Competencies	Capability to balance diversity and coherence
We consider the capability to deliver to be the natural result of the four other capabilities.	

# Annex 4

## Levels of ownership

**Figure A2: Typology for ownership**

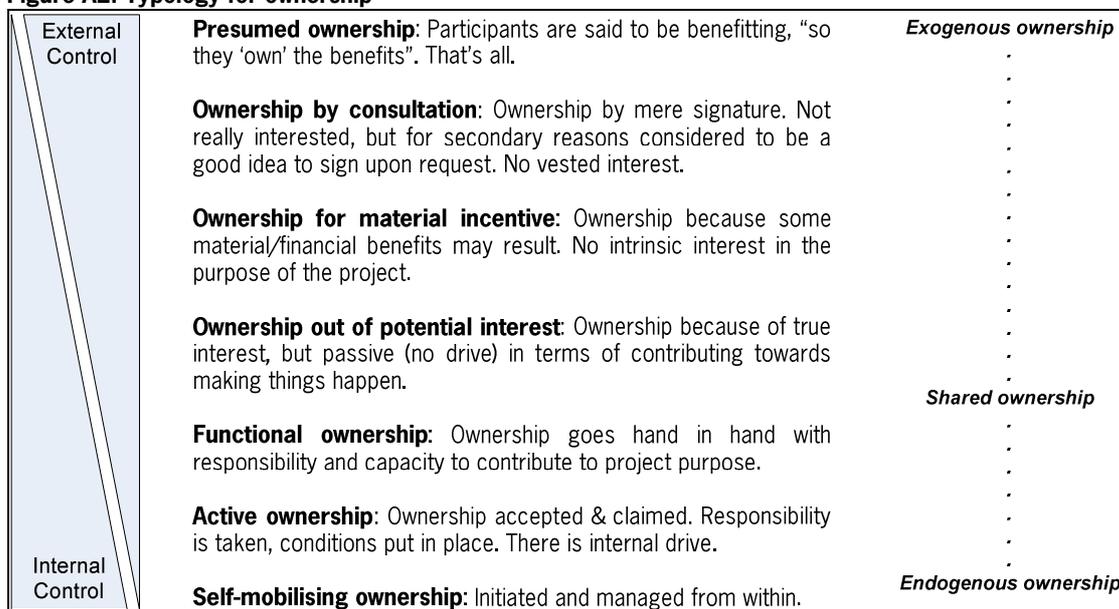


Table A2	Assessing required ownership		
	Level of ownership		
Organisational level	Passive	Active	Drives process
Political			
Senior policy makers			
Policy implementers			
Etc.			

# Annex 5

## Positioning of Capacity development support guidance

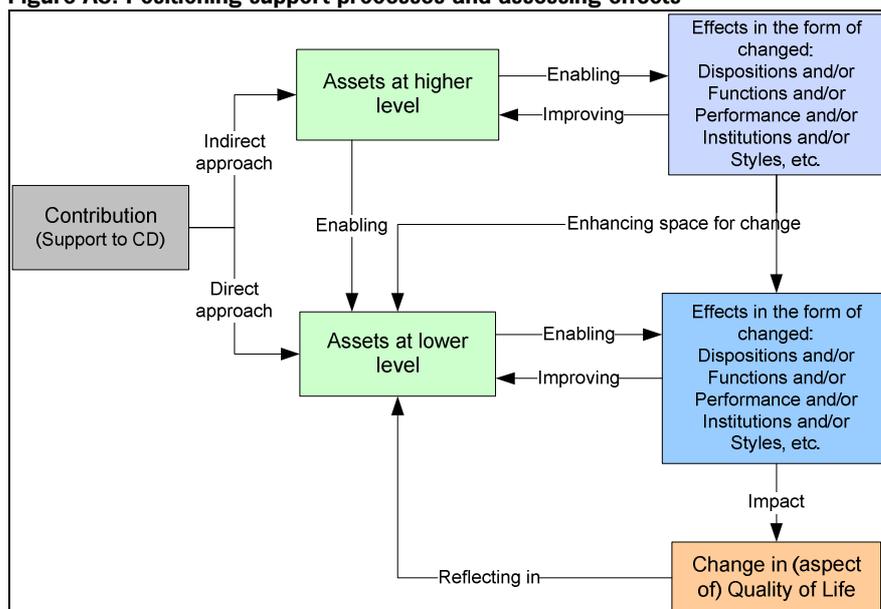
Consolidating relevant information from the situation analysis in relation to change aspirations:

<b>Table A3</b>	<b>Characterisation of aspects of capacity development in a particular situation</b>		
	Current situation	Aspired future	Hoped for/necessary change either as conditions or as objective
Focus aspect of quality of life			
Relevant status of assets			
Relevant asset distribution issues			
Relevant functions to be performed			
Relevant required levels of performance			
Relevant supportive virtues			
Relevant destructive vices			
Relevant institutions and styles that play a role			
Relevant attitudes and disposition that are an issues			

After making this kind of analysis, the question needs to be addressed as to what the support process can and cannot achieve, what is appropriate, what would be strategic, etc.

Being clear about entry points and the sphere of influence:

**Figure A3: Positioning support processes and assessing effects**



# Annex 6

## Capacity development support checklists

The following overview can be used in the process of designing as well as assessing particular efforts in Capacity development support. It can be used by support providers as well as commissioners of support, such as EL&I.

### 1 Clarify approach

- What is the purpose of the proposed activity?
- What kind of capacity (change) are you trying to influence exactly?
- What self-interest is involved (e.g. on the part of the donor)?
- Whose interests does the activity propose to support?
- What broader (collaborative) efforts does/should this connect to?
- What strategic considerations (motives) for providing support are involved?
- What idea (theory) of how envisaged change will happen is underpinning intervention?
- What are the possible implications for how to appropriately
  - \* Comprehend the specific context?
  - \* Cultivate commitment?
  - \* Customize the contribution?
  - \* Capture change?
  - \* Cope with complexity on an ongoing basis?
  - \* Compose a competent and capable team
- In what way may feasibility enhanced in terms of improving the basic approach of the project/program so as to make it be better prepared?

### 2 Comprehend context

- What is to be considered as focus and what as context (boundaries of system focus)?
- What are the most prominent context actors and factors and why?
- What are relevant conditions that this spells out for the way a contribution can or cannot be made?
- What are critical concerns about a envisaged change process in terms of required conditions for success?
- Does the project/programme relate to other ongoing activities in the country and if so, how?
- With the understanding flowing out of answering the above questions, is the project/programme feasible in that context at all (realistic to expect a certain measure of success)?

### 3 Clarify and Cultivate commitment

- What kind of ownership of stakeholders applies in this case (see typology)?
- What are the specific indicators that point to sufficient ownership/commitment?
- Is the energy and motivation available to more the project/programme along towards its objectives?
- What variation of commitment can be identified as regards different levels at which relevant actors operate? E.g. a possible difference at country and district level.
- What limitations and risks regarding ownership and commitment can be anticipated during the project?
- If ownership is low at present, why is this and what process is envisaged for a gradual adoption of ownership by the key stakeholders? What makes you think such change can happen?
- What strategy for strengthening ownership and commitment should be adopted?

#### **4 Customize Contribution**

- What is in essence the reason for assuming that the chosen type of contribution fits the context best?
- Where do we see that the strategic setup takes into account realities concerning context, ownership, commitment, etc.?
- What is in essence the idea/theory about how change in relation to this contribution will take place
- What intervention role(s) are envisioned and how will these roles be played in the project/program?
- What the core elements of the strategic framework imply in terms of assumptions and required conditions?
- Is the timeframe for the envisioned change process realistic?
- What will be critical issues (including risks) to monitor?

#### **5 Cause kept Clear**

- How will change in terms of both process (focus) and results be tracked?
- How will compliance with principles of good practice in Capacity development support be monitored, e.g. in relation to ownership, flexibility, relating to context imperatives, etc.?
- How will the process of Capacity development support be monitored in relation to issues such as legitimacy of activities, relationship and partnership functioning
- How will relevant less tangible factors such as dispositions and attitudes be monitored?
- How will the insights from the above M&E be used by whom?
- What capacities and conditions will be put in place in order to be able to establish firm M&E practice?
- What limitations of functional M&E can be anticipated?

#### **6 Connect to complexity**

- What core complexities can be anticipated?
- What M&E mechanisms are in place to register early warning signals about unanticipated developments?
- How will such M&E inform (adaptive) management decision making?
- What required flexibility for ongoing adaptation has been provided for by donor?
- What limitations for navigating complexity can be anticipated?

#### **7 Compose competent and capable teams**

- What kinds of technical skills will individuals working on the activity require: engineering, scientific, computer?
- What kinds of 'soft' skills will individuals require: process facilitation, conflict management, strategic analysis?
- What kinds of skills will be required at the group level: interdisciplinary collaboration, teamwork, intercultural communications
- Does the organization making the proposal have these skills in house or will it be obliged to seek them elsewhere?
- What limitations and risks regarding appropriate competences and capacities can be anticipated?

## Suggested assessment frameworks for critical factors of success

<b>Table A4</b>		<b>Examples of complications</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Example complications</b>	
Concept	Self-interest involved;	
Context	Many uncertainties involved; many actors & factors involved; political and institutional constraints	
Commitment & ownership	Limited level of ownership; ownership at higher levels only, not executive level	
Contribution	Strategies involve lots of uncertainties, which constrain the scope for planning	
Clear Cause	Limited budget for functional learning/M&E; lacking culture of learning/M&E	
Complexity	Plans need to be fixed at least a year ahead of time.	
Competency	Many different types of competences/capacities required	

In order to know what measure of complexity is involved in a project, an indicative score in relation to these dimensions can help a commissioner to decide on appropriate and inappropriate requirements. High scores (high level of complexity) would require an emphasis on process monitoring, while low scores would justify more of a results-focus. Very high scores will ask for a careful risk assessment as to whether the investment is justifiable in view of the plausibility of seeing any sustainable effect of the effort. Obviously, competences/capacities complications would be the most worrying dimension of complexity. A high score on the first six dimensions will naturally require a low score on the seventh as this relates to the ability to cope with complexity.

<b>Table A5</b>		<b>Indicating the measure of complexity involved</b>				
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicative score</b>					
	1	2	3	4	5	
Concept complications						
Context complications						
Commitment complications						
Contribution complications						
Clear Cause complications						
Complexity complications						
Competency complications						

Apart from the measure of complexity involved, it is important to understand how well-prepared a project is to engage with the expected measure of complexity they will encounter. In order to obtain such understanding, it will need to be decided how well a proposed plan reflects such preparedness. The following type of table could be something useful for translating the above towards policy instrument:

<b>Table A6</b>		<b>Assessing project preparedness on paper</b>			
<b>Factors</b>	<b>The extent to which a certain success factor could be relevant and whether it has been appropriately addressed</b>				
	Irrelevant	Relevant, but not sufficiently clear – ask for elaboration	Relevant, clear, but cause for concern – discuss design setup / management process	Relevant, clear, no obvious concern	
Clarity of approach					
Clarity about context					
Clarity about levels of commitment/ownership					
Clarity about what contribution comprises of					
Clarity about how monitoring will guide project strategically					
Clarity about complicating factors to take into account					
Clarity about required support competencies					

## Annex 7

### Strengthening strategic competencies

Strategic competencies equip people and organisations for taking position and acting in a highly dynamic context that poses constantly changing challenges to the realisation of their aims. Strategic competencies go beyond a “how to” approach. They can be compared to the game of chess. Winning the game involves much more than mere application of the rules of the game. There is no fixed course of action that can be planned beforehand, because of multiple uncertainties about the other player’s moves. Playing the game does involve knowing the rules of the game, but also the ability to apply relevant experience, the ability to develop and constantly adapt scenarios, and more.

Strategic competencies play a crucial role in our ability to think and act strategically. With strategic competencies in place, managers, planners and policy makers will be able to make contextualized decisions, tailored to the dynamics of a specific situation. In spite of that, strengthening strategic competencies is not a common approach in (support to) capacity development in international development. There is a tendency to strengthen compliance with external standards and train people how to do the ‘trick’. The figure illustrates the difference between these approaches<sup>33</sup>.

Strategic competencies strengthen independence, which empowers people to contextualize decision making by navigating the multifaceted specifics of the situation in which they are involved.

Strategic thinking can be considered as a kind of umbrella concept for a range of strategic competencies. Strategic thinking at the organisational level provides the context in which individual strategic thinking can occur and be led to effect the organisation. Organisations need to create the structures, processes and systems that foster ongoing strategic dialogue and take advantage of the ingenuity and creativity of every individual employee/ stakeholder.

The following simply lists a number of strategic competencies<sup>34</sup>. The overview is not meant to be complete and there is evidently overlap between different categories:

- Conceptual and visual thinking competencies
- Metacognition competencies
- Historical thinking competencies
- Hypothesis thinking competencies
- Systems thinking competencies
- Intent-focus competencies
- Intelligent opportunism competencies
- Strategic leadership & liaison competencies

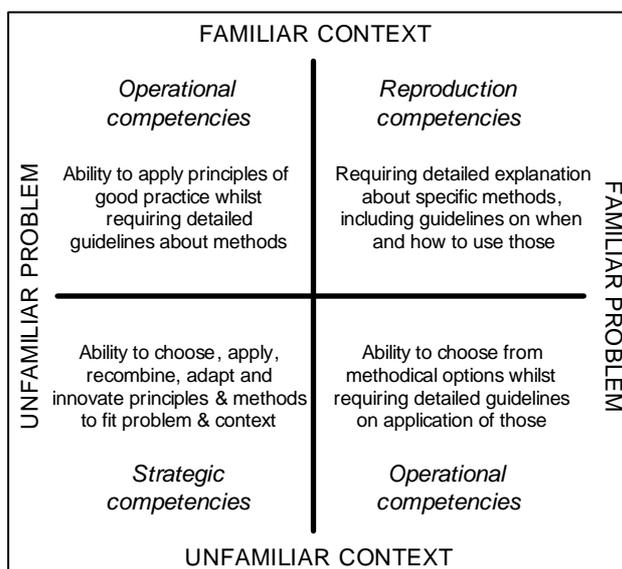
The following two webpage references provide more concrete ideas:

Strategic thinking self-assessment:

[http://harvard.wsi.com.cn/sumtotal/stdata/20081126\\_154721\\_3510/strategic\\_thinking\\_self-assessment.html](http://harvard.wsi.com.cn/sumtotal/stdata/20081126_154721_3510/strategic_thinking_self-assessment.html)

Indicative programme outline of a 2-day training on strategic thinking:

[http://www.projectauditors.com/Training/Syllabi/Syllabus\\_Strategic\\_Thinking.pdf](http://www.projectauditors.com/Training/Syllabi/Syllabus_Strategic_Thinking.pdf)



<sup>33</sup> Adapted from Stephenson, J & S. Weil (1992). Quality in Learning: A Capability Approach in Higher Education, London, Kogan Page.

<sup>34</sup> Adapted from: Liedtka (1998) Strategic thinking: can it be taught? In: Longe Range Planning. Volume 31, Number 1. Elsevier.



This report focuses on conditions that provide opportunities for success in capacity development support efforts in the context of international cooperation. A conceptual overview provides a basis regarding aspects of capacity development dynamics. Building on this outline and on experiences and discussions from literature on capacity development, seven key success factors in the process of providing support to such dynamics are discussed. These factors are further explored in the context of six international cooperation projects. A number of recommendations are proposed, which deal with the strengthening of processes of preparing for and positioning of capacity development support efforts.

**More information: [www.cdi.wur.nl](http://www.cdi.wur.nl)**

