

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

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This annex presents background information and suggestions on how to craft a successful implementation strategy for capacity assessment/ development initiatives. Whether such initiatives are for complex, multi-year national capacity initiatives, or for local, more narrowly focussed initiatives, practical and pragmatic strategies are needed to close the identified capacity gaps using available resources, which in most cases are limited. Four important considerations are covered here, which experience shows us are common to most capacity initiatives.

## 1.0 ESSENTIAL CAPACITY IMPLEMENTATION DESIGN FEATURES

### Essential Implementation Design Features

- ▲ **Integrated and Comprehensive**
- ▲ **Incremental and Modular**
- ▲ **Feasible and Desirable**
- ▲ **Utilise Existing Capacities**

Many capacity development initiatives are complex, with many inter-related elements. If most dimensions of capacity are to be addressed at the systems, entity and individual levels, then great care must be taken to develop a design that works. Successful implementations, where sustainable results can be produced, are: integrated and comprehensive; incremental and modular; feasible and desirable; and utilisation of existing capacities.

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

### 1.1 Integrated and Comprehensive

The implementation strategy for a capacity development initiative (and for most other programmes and projects), including subcomponents of the strategy, must be vertically and horizontally integrated. In many initiatives it is important to establish hierarchies of objectives that describe a general framework for the integration of implementation strategies vertically—from the systems to individual levels.<sup>1</sup> Each implementation action within a strategy would need to relate to a specific objective of the strategy. Vertical integration also extends internally to entities where there may exist hierarchical structures. Horizontal integration refers to the need to ensure consistency across the various dimensions of capacity. For example, plans and activities to build human resources capacities within an entity (say, training) must be logically related to those dealing with processes for which the human resources would be trained. This will ensure that there are no overlaps or duplication. Each is part of the whole.

The development of capacities must be comprehensive. It is important to address all dimensions of capacity at all levels within the overall system. Once all dimensions of capacity and needed changes are determined, resources can be directed to development of capacities that are based on their relative importance and priority. All too often attention is focussed on one or two dimensions of capacity (e.g., personnel) without

<sup>1</sup>Part III of the guidelines illustrates how such a hierarchy might be applied in a UNDP programme context.

addressing the impacts that potential changes will have on other dimensions (e.g., processes, infrastructure, information).

### **1.2 Incremental and Modular**

Achieving any future envisaged by the capacity development initiative would necessitate implementation on an incremental basis: step-by-step. There are no major capacity initiatives which can be implemented in one fell swoop, or through a single, major initiative. Indeed, the more successful initiatives begin with small, achievable components which build success and credibility. A corollary is that capacity development at each level should be modular, where each is linked to the other to form the whole. This is a building block approach. It allows for greater control over the process as well as greater flexibility. Adjustments can be made more easily when changes at the systems level occur.

### **1.3 Feasible and Desirable**

The capacity initiative must be feasible from a financial, technological and human resource point of view. Implementation analysis, cost-benefit analyses, business case and the like can determine the degree to which the implementation is feasible and what the associated risks are that are attached to it. It makes no sense to pursue a capacity initiative demanding high levels of resources where there is no likelihood of securing these resources.

The envisaged capacity initiatives must be *desirable* from the individual perspective. There must be a critical mass of understanding, acceptance and commitment for the initiative and all associated elements of change in order to proceed into development and implementation, and for the component capacities to be built. People must “want” to proceed with the implementation of the envisaged changes. Desirability can be built with such supporting activities as communications, public relations, education and awareness, resistance mitigation, and like measures.

### **1.4 Utilise Existing Capacities**

Feasibility is enhanced considerably when implementation strategies utilise and build on existing capacities. In most cases, there will be an existing base of capacities, some existing resources and a history. What has gone on in the past may be useful in building towards a future, rather than “re-inventing” an entire system or entity. Care should be taken to not ignore or discount what may be “hidden strengths” at any of the three levels. This aspect is considered further under the subsection dealing with management of resistance.

## **2.0 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

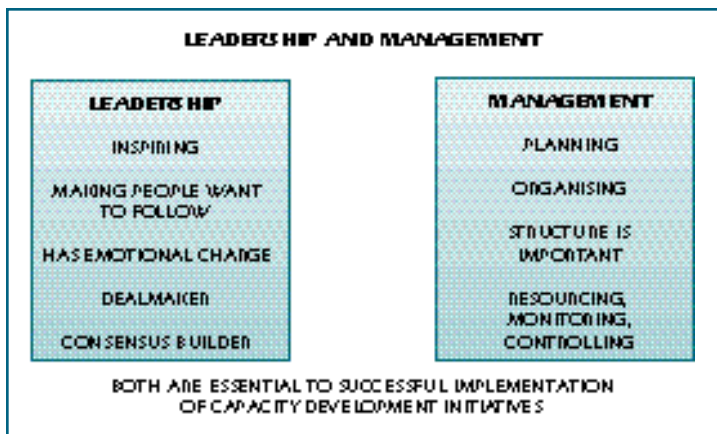
Both leadership and management are required to implement the envisaged initiative and to achieve the capacity development and strengthening objectives. Leadership and management capacities themselves are key (a core strategic management capacity, as described in **Part I**). One school of thought has it that leadership is a part of management. Another

might have it the other way around. For the purposes of a capacity initiative where transformational or major change (and hence, major investments in capacity) are required, there is an important distinction between the two. Much has been written and is available on management and leadership. Some important points on how to lead and manage capacity initiatives successfully are made below.

## 2.1 Leadership

Leadership rests typically with an individual (although certain organisations or groups can also effect such leadership, but still with a person behind it). Whether a capacity programme initiative is truly national in scope, or focuses at a particular sector or theme, success will depend to a very large extent on **inspirational** aspects. Leadership is a softer quality, and helps focus effort and attention on what needs to be done, on the setting of longer term objectives and priorities according to a set **vision**. True leadership helps create a situation where everyone wants to do their best and is hence a highly motivating and motivational task. This means making people enthusiastic (about the initiative) and inherent capacity changes, and keeping them enthusiastic. A good leader facilitates and rewards good performance.

## 2.2 Management



Management on the other hand focuses on the **practical** aspects. Good management (on the part of a person, a management team, an entity) ensures that the right **processes** are put in place and work toward the desired outcome. The right **resources** are brought together and are deployed efficiently and effectively, and performance/ results/ outputs are monitored and evaluated. Management also ensures implementation

**plans** are developed and maintained and that communications flows (vertical and horizontal, internal and external) work properly.

## 3.0 MANAGING RESISTANCE

An often overlooked aspect of capacity and the ability of a capacity development initiative to succeed is resistance—resistance to change. There must exist capacities within organisations responsible for the initiative to anticipate resistance, and then to identify and measure its extent. Resistance can come from any or all entities within the system (although the system itself does not resist except through built in inertia), but primarily it comes from the individual. Let's look at resistance to change and the measures which can be used to mitigate this resistance.

A special note is then made on workforce adjustment, which is typically a major impact and source of resistance to many capacity initiatives.

### 3.1 Resistance to Change

There are many sources and types of resistance that are common to both capacity development and other types of initiatives involving major change. Resistance can arise simply from the power of the status quo. It can arise from the fear of the unknown (where the future has not been adequately explained or described, to the point where people understand and accept it). Often, individuals do not see the need for change envisaged in the initiative: **Why fix it if it isn't broken?** Some initiatives may require substantial effort and time to achieve, and there is a human unwillingness to put in so much effort over a long period of time.

In these cases, there is no sense of ownership or personal gain, or there is a fear of loss. Other human characteristics, often magnified in bureaucratic settings, include general apathy, skepticism and even cynicism. Cynicism can grow to a point where there is overt and covert undermining of the initiative, including sabotage and violence. At a higher level, existing legislation and unions may serve as major sources of resistance to envisaged capacity changes. What is key in all of this is to anticipate that there will be resistance, and to develop internal capacities to be able to identify, measure and then mitigate this resistance.

### 3.2 Managing Resistance

There is much experience internationally to help organisations develop capacities to identify and manage resistance at all levels. Common sub-programmes are often developed to mitigate resistance. These comprise education and awareness subprogrammes for the programme as a whole, specially targeted to those individuals, groups, communities that are felt to be specially resistant. Fostering win-win scenarios, with some early and visible successes and examples also help to break down resistance. Active participation in capacity development and related implementation processes of those who resist often result in producing champions for the initiative. Other resistance management initiatives include providing support to those who need it, negotiations, co-opting, finding champions and innovators. In worst case scenarios, some stronger measures may be required (enforcement, discipline) although in most cases these are avoidable.

### 3.3 Note on Workforce Adjustment

Many capacity development initiatives result from some other major change or reform initiative. And such initiatives usually have an impact on the existing human resource base. Impacts take the form of redeployment, reutilisation, and downsizing. Such impacts on the human resource base can be managed in the context of "workforce adjustment." Workforce adjustment almost invariably generates some resistance from those who are directly impacted. There are inevitably human, financial and organisational issues which must be anticipated. Among the more significant ones are cost and affordability, impacts on the remaining

workforce (survivor syndrome), impacts on organisational structure and stability, reduced productivity, morale problems, service to the public, employee communications, counselling, marketing and placement and the effects of reduced external recruitment.

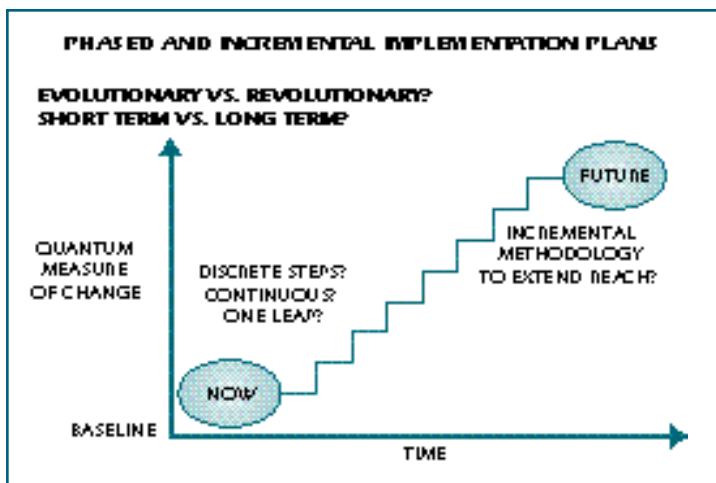
Regardless of the practices ultimately adopted by several countries and jurisdictions, there remains a common set of lessons learned that can serve as a starting point in the consideration of workforce adjustment options. Such options look at utilizing the existing human resources base to the maximum extent possible, and secondly how to best address the needs of those that are displaced. In both situations, there is likely to be resistance and the workforce adjustment approaches that can be applied are meant in large part to mitigate this resistance. These include: employment adjustment; designation of surplus position(s); establishment of priority status; counselling; exposure of options; marketing, placement and clearance; reasonable job offer; retraining; financial incentives; early retirement incentive; and job trading.

#### **4.0 SETTING THE RIGHT TIME HORIZONS**

The time needed to implement a capacity development initiative to achieve its objectives and meet targets is more often a lot longer than managers and planners initially think. The time required is directly related to the complexity of the system within which the initiative is to operate, the magnitude of the envisaged changes, and correspondingly the magnitude of capacity development and the resources that are available. Smaller, more focussed capacity development initiatives can be implemented in a relatively short time frame. However, initiatives of transformational change where people and organisations are key typically take one to two generations to complete (15 to 30 years), and thereafter evolve into initiatives of continuous or gradual change.

It is unlikely that any individual or organisation would support a capacity development initiative if the implementation were to take an inordinate amount of time. Even for implementation horizons that may extend over a number of years, acceptability and success will depend on the delivery of early successes. Hence, the more successful initiatives build in capacities to produce early results, to mount fast-track or accelerated subprojects. This helps maintain momentum and support, and early successes (and failures) generate valuable lessons which can be fed-back into the planning and redesign cycles.

This gets back to the notion of developing implementation plans which are incremental, which build capacities on a step-by-step basis, and which are based on clear-cut priorities (usually high, medium and low corresponding to the timeframe which may be broken out over the near, medium and longer term. The diagram graphically illustrates an implementation initiative which may be mounted over an extended period of time (horizontal axis). The vertical axis shows the incremental improvements (or magnitude of capacity) made in developing capacities and achieving other changes. Getting from "Now" to the "Future" can be achieved in a series of steps, rather than in one fell-swoop. Each step would be logically linked to the next.



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An example might be a decentralisation initiative (e.g., decentralising health services delivery to local administrations). Actual implementation of this could proceed incrementally, starting with a pilot in one administration. As experience is gained over time, additional pilots could be added each year, until full coverage has been achieved.

## 5.0 MORE POINTS ON CAPACITY STRATEGY

Having now attended to all of the above, the capacity development strategy and its detailed implementation plans would be submitted to the appropriate authorities for approval. Upon approval resources are mobilized and allocated, a team responsible for overall implementation and coordination is set up (or altered, as the case may be), and the job of implementation gets underway. The methods and protocols for approval are designed according to local practice and custom, and would vary by the type of capacity initiative and by country. As a general rule-of-thumb, the level of formal approval should be commensurate with the level of the initiative. A cross-sectoral capacity development initiative of national (and even international significance) should receive the approval of the highest executive (Prime Minister or President) and/or legislative authority in the country. Smaller, more narrowly defined capacity initiatives may be approved at their appropriate level (e.g., Minister, Secretary)

### Some Points on Implementation

- ▲ Approvals
- ▲ Monitoring and evaluation
- ▲ Execution capacities
- ▲ Resource mobilisation
- ▲ Programme coordination
- ▲ Donor coordination
- ▲ Measuring performance

Plans are adjusted and revised as and when the need arises. Ongoing **monitoring, control and evaluation** ensures that implementation proceeds according to plan and triggers changes as and when they are required. For longer term cross-sectoral initiatives of major change, supporting activities associated with continuous research and policy analysis help ensure that the capacity development direction and objectives remain integrated to and supportive of broader national policies, objectives and priorities as they also evolve.

For certain initiatives, it may be the case that the national organisation does not have sufficient capacity to manage (i.e., execute) a capacity development initiative. In special cases such as these, a basic first step in implementation is to build **implementation/execution capacity**. The UNDP and other donors may support the building of strategic management core capacities or other capacities to help the entity get off the ground. There have been occasions where major capacity initiatives have entered implementation without evidence of adequate implementation management or execution capacity (driven, for example, by political and/or donor pressure). A proper capacity initiative would clearly identify capacity strengthening needs for programme implementation, and develop/resource actions to meet these needs.

For most development initiatives, **resource mobilisation** usually acquires a major importance for capacity development initiatives. All too often, national organisations and governments do not have sufficient resources to implement major changes. Hence, certain resources are allocated to identifying sources of funding and mobilising these resources. The UNDP, from its international and objective role, often help in resource mobilisation through coordination with other donors and close cooperation with the government. Programme and project documents often include objectives and outputs which support the development of capacities in resource mobilisation and management.

Another important area during implementation is ongoing **coordination** with other initiatives internally in the government or the country. This is especially important for capacity development initiatives that are cross-sectoral in nature. For example, a programme dealing with decentralisation might need close coordination with other national initiatives dealing with tax and legislative reform, civil service reform, and budget/financial management reform. As noted above, special coordinating mechanisms can be set up to ensure not only that such initiatives are coordinated, but that scarce financial and human resources are allocated across all initiatives in a fair and equitable manner.

In some situations, resource mobilisation and coordination are particularly important amongst the donor community and their relationships with government. Some countries look to the UNDP to ensure that proper **donor coordination** exists within the donor community (e.g., that donors are not competing or duplicating their programmes), and/or the UNDP may be the main focal point for joint donor coordination with the government (e.g., various “consultative committees”).

In all cases above where the UNDP or other donors may be involved, such involvement is best defined and deployed through process facilitation. In other words, external entities would be engaged to facilitate a process which is owned and managed by those donor organisations that may be involved in a common programme area (e.g., governance). The prime objective of all the coordinating mechanisms is to ensure that scarce internal and external (donor) resources are applied to national programme initiatives in a fair, logical and integrated manner, consistent with national development priorities, i.e., government, or national organisation, as the case may be. Separate UNDP guidelines on process facilitation go into considerable detail as to how such an arrangement would be set up and managed by the government/ national organisation and the UNDP.

Finally, there is the important question of **measuring performance** of the implementation of the capacity development initiative. Is the initiative achieving its implementation objectives and targets? Is it on track? Are the costs under control? Is the quality of implementation action outputs at the expected level (e.g., capacity development and strengthening)? Where the initiative is likely long term, and may run over a period of many years, the management of the initiative as well as all involved stakeholders will need ongoing indications that progress is being made, that achievements are being produced, and if not, why not.

The capacity initiative implementation strategy and each of its supporting action plans would normally have a series of management milestones, where performance along the way can be measured. This may be done on a routine, monitoring basis, as well as planned and periodic evaluations and assessments.