

capacity development BRIEFS

May 2010

Catalyzing Collective Capacity for Change: Ten Points for a New Operational Approach to Capacity Development

Sanjay Pradhan, Vice President, World Bank Institute

Capacity development programs are typically defined in terms of training and technical assistance activities, and are often criticized for lacking a strategic focus and effective approaches for addressing the broader institutional constraints that country stakeholders face in achieving their development goals. Limited attention is given to defining and measuring results, which in turn weakens local ownership and undermines learning about which initiatives support change and results on the ground.

This brief describes ten key points in WBI's new operational approach to capacity development, which seeks to address these deficiencies. It is an approach that focuses on capacity development as a locally driven and results-oriented process of catalytic and transformational change.

1: Shift to a Broader Paradigm—Catalyzing Collective Stakeholder Capacity for Sustainable Institutional Change

We define capacity as the ability of leaders, organizations, coalitions and society at large to catalyze institutional change to achieve development goals. We therefore view capacity development as fundamentally a country-led and country-owned process of change. Given the massive challenges of development, especially in Africa, this work requires solutions from all segments of society—public sector, business community and civil society. Thus,

Summary: Capacity development for too long has endured the stereotypical characterization of “just training and technical assistance” that has undermined its broader legitimacy. We need to shift to a new and bolder vision of capacity development, one that seeks to catalyze domestic collective capacity for change by inspiring, connecting and empowering transformative leaders and coalitions for change. WBI proposes ten fundamental points in a new operational approach to capacity development that development practitioners can adopt in different country and regional circumstances.

a principal focus must be to work with and support collective capacity on the ground. Doing so signifies a shift to a broader paradigm for capacity development, to help build and catalyze capacity for change from three key societal pillars: capable and accountable state; competitive and responsible private sector; and engaged and empowered society.

We emphasize *collective capacity* because complementary partnership is required among these actors to solve development problems, whether through public-private partnerships in the provision of infrastructure, health and education; Civil Society Organization (CSO)-generated citizen report cards to improve public service delivery; or social entrepreneurs delivering public services. Support for multi-stakeholder coalition building is one of the most

important frontiers for capacity development. For example, WBI helps advance governance of extractive industries by supporting coalitions of government, civil society and private sector in Ghana, Liberia and elsewhere.

Equally important in this paradigm is the emphasis on *institutional change* instead of a passive focus on training, technical assistance and systems development. 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. In the Philippines, alliances were forged between reformers in government and parliament and a civic society Procurement Watch was established to pressure for reform against powerful vested interests.

2: Diagnose and Unpack—Capacity for What, for Whom, How

Capacity development is often seen as vague and amorphous. To devise an operational approach, country practitioners must specifically identify what is the problem that capacity development needs to address—is this a problem related to the broader institutional environment or one of technical skills or lack of resources, and how can the drivers of change be supported given political economy configurations.

To understand the problem it is crucial to understand the stakeholders, their interests, and the implications for how to forge consensus and coalitions. It is also imperative to shift to country-led participatory diagnostics with domestic stakeholders—they know their problems and understand best their political economy constraints. Diagnostic toolkits can be combined and mobilized for these purposes, such as WBI's governance diagnostics and diagnostic of institutional capacity factors, and the political economy diagnostics developed by other parts of the World Bank.

Diagnostics could reveal that the principal problem lies in the institutional environment that conditions how resources are mobilized, retained and used, and which may therefore need to be tackled first before skills or other resources of agencies or individuals are

strengthened. Capacity development would then shift to building consensus and coalitions to help change the *institutional environment to be supportive of a development goal*.

3: Measure, Monitor and Manage Institutional Reforms to Support Development Results

For too long, little attention has been paid to understanding how capacity development drives the process that leads to institutional change and concrete results. Many evaluations raise questions about the effectiveness of the billions spent each year on capacity development. Key challenges include the lack of country-owned change strategies for capacity development and inadequate efforts to monitor and measure results. Without a shared understanding of capacity development results and evidence of what takes place in different contexts, bad practices persist and good practices are not captured and disseminated.

WBI's Capacity Development and Results Framework (CDRF) clarifies how capacity development can support locally driven institutional change. The framework can be used to assess the degree to which capacity development can strengthen stakeholder ownership dimensions, improve efficiency of policy instruments in guiding stakeholder behavior, and increase the effectiveness of organizational arrangements in planning and implementation. It provides a flexible guide for collaborative and participatory capacity development work in countries, including stakeholder engagement for strategic planning; institutional diagnostics; design of results-oriented programs and projects; adaptive management of project implementation and the change process; and evaluation of efforts.

The framework embodies the key elements of WBI's new operational approach to capacity development, emphasizing collective capacity and providing a logical structure for application of knowledge exchange, innovation, structured learning, and leadership and coalition-building platforms to catalyze and advance institutional change initiatives. Examples of CDRF applications include stakeholder engagement and strategic planning for a conflict prevention program in East Africa and for a national multi-

stakeholder learning platform on aid effectiveness in Columbia; institutional capacity diagnostics for corporate financial reporting reform in South East Europe; design of results-oriented learning programs for provincial finance bureaus in China; adaptive management of public financial management reform projects in Bangladesh; and evaluation of institution-building efforts for regulatory reform in Serbia and parliamentary oversight in Ghana.

4: Tailor Reforms to Different Settings—Fragile States, Regional Public Goods and Local Governance

By pinpointing problems and priorities, diagnostics help to produce a focused and sequenced plan suited to different settings. For example, the operational approach in a *fragile and post-conflict state* might focus on building consensus and trust between state and society and among conflict groups around scarce resources; helping new leadership teams prioritize to achieve a few results, such as through the rapid results and leadership initiatives that WBI supports in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia; building skills in public finance management and procurement through on-the-job learning and rebuilding professional associations; and empowering youth and female leaders as agents of change.

Many problems call for different capacity development solutions beyond the nation state. Several problems call for *regional solutions*, not only in trade but also in infrastructure, health

and security, or cross-border issues in fragile states. These solutions require collective action at the regional level, working with regional institutions. Similarly, problems pertaining to public service delivery often require *sub-national and local capacity solutions*. For instance, programs that support youth leaders to provide community feedback and oversight of community-driven development programs.

5: Inspire and Innovate—Capacity Development through South-South Exchange and Innovation Platforms

A more dynamic and transformational approach to capacity development must inspire and galvanize practitioners to action. Practitioners often become inspired when they see how their peers have solved comparable development problems. This is a major opportunity for South-South exchange—connecting practitioners to other practitioners who have addressed development problems, in essence learning from peers rather than World Bank staff or recycled expatriate technical assistance.

Accordingly WBI has made South-South learning and experience exchange a key platform, offering to support South-South initiatives in three roles: (1) serving as a knowledge broker to connect demand to supply using our knowledge of where the practitioners are who have solved problems, what pitfalls need to be kept in mind, and how exchanges should be structured; (2) providing financing mechanisms—the multi-donor South-South

Ten Points for a New Operational Approach to Capacity Development

1. Shift to a Broader Paradigm—Catalyzing Collective Stakeholder Capacity for Sustainable Institutional Change
2. Diagnose and Unpack—Capacity for What, for Whom, How
3. Measure, Monitor and Manage Institutional Reforms to Support Development Results
4. Tailor Reforms to Different Settings—Fragile States, Regional Public Goods and Local Governance
5. Inspire and Innovate—Capacity Development through South-South Exchange and Innovation Platforms
6. Build Capacity and Networks of Demand-side Institutions
7. Empower Citizens through Technology and Information
8. Emphasize Connective Leadership
9. Build Capacity to Build Capacity—Scale Up Skill Building through Regional/Partner Institutions and Technology
10. A Paradigm Shift for Donor Support—Support for Country-led Processes and Coalitions for Change

Experience Exchange Trust Fund for low-income countries, to be complemented by a separate window for Middle Income Countries (MIC)/ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) exchanges; and (3) codifying and disseminating lessons from South-South exchanges, building on the case studies generated through the Colombia process and collaborating with partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others.

WBI is going further by fostering peer and practitioner networks such as the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning (PEM-PAL) network and the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI), which link budget officials. The Global Distance Learning Network (GDLN), whose secretariat resides in WBI, provides a powerful network of 130 knowledge hubs globally connected through video and distance learning to facilitate South-South exchanges. We are also now going beyond simply exchanging practitioner experiences to proactively scanning, incubating and scaling-up innovations that tackle development challenges, for instance through global competitions such as the Development Marketplace.

6: Build Capacity and Networks of Demand-side Institutions

Another frontier for capacity development is to strengthen demand-side institutions that can hold the state to account, to balance the vast resources that are invested in state institutions. Networks of social accountability can constitute a lasting contribution to capacity development that strengthens domestic accountability.

This is a key focus for WBI; only 50 percent of our work is with the Executive branch of government. For instance, we support parliamentary capacity of Public Accounts Committees (PAC) to oversee public finance management, and in Latin America we help foster a network of Supreme Court Justices for peer exchange on transparency and accountability of the judiciary. We also support private sector action against corruption through a platform for responsible business in Africa; a major forum to advance this effort will be convened with partners in Brussels in November.

Arguably our most important initiative in this area is to help build networks of CSOs by partnering with the CSO-network Affiliated Network of Social Accountability (ANSA) in Africa, East Asia and South Asia. For instance, we are working with ANSAs to build a Procurement Watch network in Africa.

7: Empower Citizens through Technology and Information

To hold the state to account, where the focus has traditionally been to strengthen demand-side institutions such as supreme audit institutions, the legislature and judiciary, we seek to empower citizens through improved access to information and new opportunities for voice. Today, mobile phones and social media provide citizenry with novel opportunities in social accountability that need to be further explored.

At WBI, for instance, we work with ANSA East Asia to empower citizenry to provide feedback on road quality, and we are looking to pilot this in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We geo-reference development projects and upload them through Google maps, allowing citizens to provide feedback through mobile technology on whether project benefits reach them. The Ushahidi project (“witness” in Swahili) collected user-generated information through mobile phones on rapes and killings in the midst of Kenya’s electoral violence to quickly map problems. In addition, we support empowerment of citizenry through right-to-information campaigns, which we recently launched in Africa with former US President Jimmy Carter and the Carter Center.

8: Emphasize Connective Leadership

Leadership is of central importance in building collective capacity. Leadership is not about the individual; it is a process of mobilizing resources, people and coalitions for achieving a desired end. The focus therefore should be on connective leadership and catalytic change.

At WBI we made leadership and coalition building a principal business line for our capacity development work. With internal partners such as the World Bank’s Africa region and external partners, we are developing a flagship Leadership for Development Impact program that offers tools for coalition building,

strategic communications, personal empowerment and implementation for results. We will offer the pilot program to emerging leaders from fragile and post-conflict states, with the goal of supporting them over time to forge collective capacity and coalitions.

WBI also focuses on personal empowerment and modeling change, including an emphasis on ethics and integrity through peer learning from inspirational leaders. We are launching a storytelling series with the Africa region and others, called “Success Despite the Odds,” which will include Nuhu Ribadu, Nigeria’s fearless anti-corruption campaigner.

9: Build Capacity to Build Capacity—Scale Up Skill Building through Regional/Partner Institutions and Technology

The traditional focus of capacity development on building skills remains important in a variety of thematic areas and country settings, including but not limited to fragile and post-conflict states. This focus can also be an important entry point for reforming the broader enabling environment, as we have seen for example in our health work. Equally important is to scale up technical skill building by supporting professional associations that can set standards and monitor and support skill building. A priority here is again to use technology for scaling up through e-learning and GDLN.

In WBI we are moving from designing and delivering training ourselves to developing content from multiple sources of knowledge and learning throughout the developing world and partnering with regional and country institutions that can shape, customize and deliver programs. For instance, in Africa we helped build and support a Francophone Africa network on health systems capacity building. We support efforts to expand GDLN centers

in fragile states, where technology can help countries overcome travel difficulties, helping them to access just-in-time, on-the-job learning, including through peer exchange.

10: A Paradigm Shift for Donor Support—Support for Country-led Processes and Coalitions for Change

All of this implies a wholly different paradigm for donor support. Donors must shift to supporting domestic leaders and coalitions for change, helping build their collective capacity to undertake catalytic reforms, and connecting them to finance to implement their priorities.

In WBI, we summarize our role as “Connect Globally, Catalyze Locally” to inspire, connect and build capacity of leadership teams and coalitions. We see our role as connectors, globally and locally, to the best sources of knowledge, to sources of finance, to donor partners, to content and delivery partners, and to agents of change. We accomplish this through extensive partnerships and our platforms for South-South, innovation, scaling up skill building and links to World Bank operations, while also serving as local enablers of leadership, social accountability and coalition building. And for all this, we are making significant investments in systematically applying our Capacity Development and Results Framework to ensure a concrete grounding for country ownership and to facilitate learning from experience to improve our practice.

We encourage your feedback to further refine and strengthen WBI’s approach to capacity development. Please share your comments via capacity4change@worldbank.org.

For more information about WBI’s capacity development initiatives, visit www.worldbank.org/wbi.