

# Capacity Development Analysis Framework

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## Introduction

This paper is a brief summary of the many components of Capacity Development<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of a development effort is to influence a system to alter its trajectory and achieve a desired effect, usually in terms of increasing performance in some relevant manner. The purpose of this paper is to offer a framework that actors can use to analyze a complex environment and select appropriate points and types of interventions to achieve their objectives, and/or to assess the results of an initiative. It can be used to provide clarity in designing or assessing international development projects as well as organizational or community development activities in any environment.

Capacity Development is a multi-dimensional activity that can address a variety of components in a development initiative taking place in an environment (government, region, company, NGO, community, etc.). The following chart illustrates these various levels and dimensions, any of which can be the focus of an analysis process or intervention to increase system performance. These components are described more fully later in this paper.

Level of Activity	Dimension of Analysis or Intervention					
	Values	Structure	Skills	Resources	Operations	Performance
Context						
Organization(s)						
Sub-Unit						
Group/Team						
Individual						

Strengths in any of these dimensions or levels indicate potential areas to reinforce to improve system effectiveness and performance. Weaknesses in any of these components will negatively impact on the ability of an organization or country to address its development objectives. Both strengths and weaknesses are potential points for Capacity Development inputs.

In addition, Capacity Development inputs can be made in each stage of a development initiative. Most international development projects have the following steps:

- Initial scoping and conceptualization
- Project planning, design and approval
- Drafting requests for proposals and awarding contracts
- Project operations and management
- Project monitoring and evaluation
- Applying lessons learned and feedback for subsequent initiatives, etc.

The earlier in the cycle that Capacity Development inputs are made, the more likely the initiative will be effective in increasing performance and fostering sustainability of desired changes.

The tools used by Capacity Development practitioners – legislation and policy development, organizational analysis and restructuring, change management processes, mentoring and training, etc. – can be applied as appropriate in any of the levels or dimensions in the framework, and at the various stages in a project cycle.

### Levels and Dimensions of Capacity Development Activity

Capacity Development analysis and inputs can focus on any *level* of a system<sup>3</sup> – from the distant environment of which the system is unaware to the visible context (such as global markets, monetary policies or political structures) through to complex multi-agency administrative systems or single organizations, their sub-units, teams and individual staff, and to the unseen internal environments deep within the consciousness of the individuals populating a system.

The various *dimensions* of Capacity Development in the table above can be described as follows:

- **Values:** The beliefs, cultures, attitudes, incentives and motivations of the people in the system.
- **Structure:** The system's structure – its legislation, governance and policy frameworks and power relationships. This is sometimes called the *institutional* framework: roles and relationships and the formal and informal rules determining the interaction of a system's members.
- **Skills:** The capabilities and competencies of the system's members defined on at least three levels: cognitive (knowledge), affective (volition) and behavioral (action).
- **Resources:** The tools and assets available to the system.
- **Operations:** How a system actually works – its formal and informal leadership, decision-making and management methods, business processes, accountabilities, and other aspects of its functions.
- **Performance:** What the system actually *accomplishes* – the results of its activities.

The nature of a Capacity Development initiative will be determined by factors such as the types of influence actors can bring to bear on a system, their points of entry and impact, their relationships with members of the system, and the desired duration of the intended effect. Sustainable change in a system's trajectory requires ownership and perpetuation of the intervention by the system's members. This analysis framework is intended to help actors better understand the complex environments in which they are working and to focus their attention on areas which are most likely to bring about desired changes in these systems.

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<sup>2</sup> Capacity Development has many definitions. An example: *The process of developing competencies and capabilities in individuals, groups, organisations, sectors or countries which will lead to sustained and self-generating performance improvement.* (AusAID 2004)

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of system levels see "System Theory and Community Development" in the *Samples* section of [www.tamas.com](http://www.tamas.com). (<http://www.tamas.com/samples/samples.html>)