Evaluating Capacity Development

Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World

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Citation:
D. Horton, A. Alexaki, S. Bennett-Lartey, K.N. Brice, D. Campilan, F. Carden, J. de Souza Silva, L. T. Duong, I. Khadar, A. Maestrey Boza, I. Kayes Muniruzzaman, J. Perez, M. Somarriba Chang, R. Vernooy, and J. Watts. 2003. Evaluating capacity development: experiences from research and development organizations around the world. The Netherlands: International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR); Canada: International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Netherlands: ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA).

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Foreword

Michael Quinn Patton
Author, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*

The perspective that informs this important book is that *every evaluation of a capacity development effort should itself contribute to the capacity development effort and ultimately to the organization's performance.* This is a revolutionary idea in evaluation. With the idea have come the questions: Can it be done? And, if it is done, what will be the consequences?

This book elucidates and deepens the idea, shows it can be done, and examines the consequences, both intended and unintended, of engaging in capacity development evaluation.

The Culture of Evaluation

Let's start with the idea. Historically and academically, evaluation adapted social science research methods to examine questions of program and organizational effectiveness. The product of an evaluation was a report judging the merit or worth of the program. The impact of the evaluation, if it had an impact, came from the use of the evaluation's findings.

But in studying evaluation use, we began to observe that the processes involved in certain kinds of evaluations had an impact quite apart from the findings. In approaches to evaluation that involve participatory processes, those involved often experience changes in thought and behavior as a result of learning that occurs during the evaluation process. Changes in program or organizational procedures and culture can also be manifestations of an evaluation's impacts. These observations about the 'process use'[1] of evaluation led to a more direct focus on the potential of evaluation to contribute to organizational capacity development.

One way of thinking about process use is to recognize that evaluation constitutes a culture, of sorts. We, as evaluators, have our own values, our own ways of thinking, our own language, our own hierarchy, and our own reward system. When we engage other people in the evaluation process, we are providing them with a cross-cultural experience. The interactions between evaluators and people in programs and organizations involve yet another layer of cross-cultural interactions. In the international and cross-cultural contexts within which the work in this book takes place, an appreciation of the cross-cultural dimensions of evaluation interactions can shed light on the complexities and challenges of this enterprise.

Those new to the evaluation culture may need help and facilitation in coming to view the experience as valuable. This culture of evaluation, that we as evaluators take for granted in our own way of thinking, is quite alien to many of the people with whom we work in organizations. Examples of the values of evaluation include clarity, specificity, and focusing; being systematic and making assumptions explicit; operationalizing program concepts, ideas, and goals; distinguishing inputs and processes from outcomes; valuing empirical evidence; and separating statements of fact from interpretations and judgments.

These values constitute ways of thinking that are not natural to some people and that are quite alien to many. When we take people through a process of evaluation—at least in any kind of

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[1] This term is defined and discussed in Patton (1997).

stakeholder involvement or participatory process—they are, in fact, learning things about evaluation culture and often learning how to think in these ways. The learning that occurs as a result of these processes is twofold:

1. the evaluation can yield specific insights and findings that can change practices and be used to build capacity, and

2. those who participate in the inquiry learn to think more systematically about their capacity for further learning and improvement.

Learning to Think Evaluatively

'Process use' refers to using evaluation logic and processes to help people in programs and organizations learn to think evaluatively. This is distinct from using the substantive findings in an evaluation report. It's equivalent to the difference between learning how to learn versus learning substantive knowledge about something. Learning how to think evaluatively is learning how to learn. As this book shows, developing an organization's capacity to think evaluatively opens up new possibilities for how evaluations can contribute and be used. It is an experience that the leadership in organizations is coming to value because the capacity to engage in evaluative thinking has more enduring value than a delimited set of findings, especially for organizations interested in ongoing learning and improvement. Findings have a very short 'half life'—to use a physical science metaphor. They deteriorate very quickly as the world changes rapidly. Specific findings typically have a small window of relevance. In contrast, learning to think and act evaluatively can have an ongoing impact, especially where evaluation is built into ongoing organizational development. The experience of being involved in an evaluation, then, for those stakeholders actually involved, can have a lasting impact on how they think, on their openness to reality-testing, and on how they view the things they do. For example, I've worked with a number of programs and organizations where the very process of taking people through goals clarification is a change-inducing experience for those involved. As a result, the program is changed. Values are the foundations of goals. By providing a mechanism and process for clarifying values and goals, evaluation has an impact even before data are collected. Likewise, the process of designing an evaluation often raises questions that have an immediate impact on program implementation. Such effects can be quite pronounced, as when the process of clarifying the program's logic model or theory-of-action leads to changes in delivery well before any evaluative data are ever collected.

This book has that kind of impact by forcing serious examination of what it means to develop organizational capacity and providing concrete examples of variations, possibilities, and results.

Evaluation as an Intervention

Evaluation as a capacity development, intentional intervention in support of increased organizational effectiveness is controversial among some evaluation theorists, because it challenges the research principle that the measurement of something should be independent of the thing measured. Of course, researchers have long observed that measuring a phenomenon can affect the phenomenon. The classic example is the way that taking a pre-test can affect performance on a post-test. Viewing evaluation as an intervention turns the table on this classic threat to validity and looks at how the collection of data can be built into program processes in ways that enhance program and organizational outcomes. This can make evaluation more cost beneficial to a significant extent. For example, an evaluation interview or survey that asks about various objectives of a program can affect awareness of

what the objectives or intended outcomes of the program are. In that sense, the evaluation is an intervention in that it can reinforce what the program is trying to do.

Another kind of evaluation impact involves introducing the discipline of evaluation as a mechanism for helping to keep a program or organization on track by maintaining attention to priorities, often under the banner of accountability. The mantra of performance measurement—'What gets measured gets done'—encapsulates one aspect of evaluation's process impact. What we choose to measure has an impact on how people behave. If staff or programs, for example, get rewarded (or punished) for those things that are measured, then those things take on added importance. This focusing effect of evaluation adds responsibility to the evaluation process because measuring the wrong thing, measuring it inappropriately, or using what is measured inappropriately increases the likelihood that the 'wrong' thing will get done.

Organizational Capacity Development

The ideas and examples in this book move the evaluation field forward significantly. As noted in opening this foreword, the contributors have taken seriously the idea that *every evaluation of a capacity development effort should itself contribute to the capacity development effort and ultimately to the organization's performance.* That's a high standard to meet, but especially in the developing world, where resources are so scarce, aiming at multiple levels and kinds of impacts is crucial. Evaluation is too valuable and scarce a resource to be wasted just producing reports. This book shows that a greater impact and broader vision is both needed in theory and possible in practice.

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a collaborative effort involving many individuals in research and development organizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. First and foremost, it reflects the experience and views of those individuals who carried out six evaluation studies under the umbrella of the 'Evaluating Capacity Development' (ECD) Project. This book is based in large part on these studies, authored by the following individuals.

Study title	Authors
Exploring capacity development in a rural development nongovernmental organization in Bangladesh	Marise B. Espineli, Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Victoria Bautista, Julian Gonsalves, Scott Killough, and Snehalata Saha
Towards strategic management in a Cuban agricultural research institute	Albina Maestrey Boza, Maria Adriana Mato, Carmen Maria Mederos, José Antonio González, Adriana Ballester, Jorge Luis Piloto, José de Souza Silva, and Juan Cheaz
Understanding capacity development in a plant genetic resources center in Ghana	Samuel Bennett-Lartey, Raymond Vodouhe, and Jamie Watts
Assessing organizational change in an agricultural faculty in Nicaragua	Matilde Somarriba Chang, Esther Carballo Madrigal, Javier López, Edmundo Umaña, and Francisco Reyes

Strengthening participatory research capacities in a Philippines root crops research center	Dindo Campilan, Jocelyn Perez, Jovita Sim, and Raul Boncodin
Expanding capacities in a rural development institute in Viet Nam	Le Thanh Duong, Nguyen Quang Tuyen, and Ronnie Vernooy

About the Book

Who Should Read This Book, and Why?

- Are you managing a research or development organization, and do you wonder what you could, or should, do to strengthen your organization?

- Are you unsure of your organization's 'capacities' and how to build them?

- Has your organization received training or other types of support for capacity development, yet seen few improvements in its performance?

- Are you having difficulties responding to pressures to improve your organization's performance within a declining budget?

- Have you been charged with organizing or managing a capacity development program or with evaluating one?

- Are you working for a donor agency and looking for more effective ways of supporting capacity development?

If you have responded positively to any of these questions, this book is for you.

There is a vast literature on the evaluation of research and development programs, but very little has been written on how capacity development efforts that aim to strengthen research or development efforts can be evaluated. This book begins to fill that void.

This book has been written for managers and evaluators in research and development organizations as well as in the agencies that support them—international development

agencies, management development institutes, and educational institutions. It is based on the knowledge and experiences of a group of managers and evaluators from 12 national and international organizations who carried out a set of evaluation studies in Bangladesh, Cuba, Ghana, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. The authors are from national and local organizations that are working to develop their own capacity, international organizations that support capacity development in the South, and donor agencies that provide resources for organizational capacity development.

The evaluations were carried out between 2000 and 2002 under the umbrella of the ECD Project, coordinated by ISNAR. The project was launched to improve understanding of how capacity development takes place and how to evaluate it. The project was an exercise in action-learning, in which participants developed their own evaluation capacity while they evaluated capacity development processes and results.

Although capacity development is demanding a great deal of attention and considerable sums are being spent in its name, few capacity development efforts have been systematically evaluated to test their underlying theories and assumptions, to document their results, or to draw lessons for improving future programs.

What we have learned from the evaluation studies confirms that we need to move away from looking at capacity development as something that is designed and implemented by donors or development agencies who offer a well-defined and standardized set of products and services to receptive 'clients' and 'beneficiaries'. Capacity development cannot be delivered to 'adopters' or 'users' who play a passive role in the capacity development process. Instead, capacities develop within individuals and organizations, through learning processes and the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. For that reason, the results of capacity development efforts are best gauged through observing changes in the behavior and performance of people and organizations, not through studies of the 'impacts' of external interventions.

Participation in this project enabled us to experience, understand, and appreciate how the use of evaluation can be a capacity development process in itself. Through involvement in the design, execution, and use of our evaluations, we learned more about the process of capacity development; about how to motivate managers, staff, and stakeholders to participate in shaping our organizations' future; and how to improve partnerships for capacity development. By sharing the experiences from our evaluation studies, we invite managers and evaluators of development and research organizations to explore means to foster and improve the development of their own capacities and those of their organizations, and to make better use of evaluation to improve overall performance.

Preparation of the Book

This book represents one of the main outputs of the ECD Project. It presents insights and conclusions drawn from studies that were carried out, first and foremost, to answer questions of local interest. As the circumstances and concerns differed from

place to place, so did the questions addressed in the evaluations and the methods employed.

Preparation of the book has been a process of social construction of knowledge from beginning to end. The main ideas that are presented in the book were developed through interaction in team-based activities and workshops over nearly three years. The ECD Project group had several opportunities to discuss concepts, frameworks, and ideas around capacity development and evaluation that have since been further developed and refined.

The group was also able to exchange experiences and results from their individual evaluation studies, and drew up lists of main conclusions. The chapters of the book were drafted in a writing workshop, which gave the participants an opportunity to formulate and document collective responses to the Project's guiding questions based on a review of all the evaluation reports and of their own personal experiences.

Organization of the Book

The book is organized into seven main chapters and an annex.

Chapter 1 provides essential background information on the project that gave rise to the book, the ECD Project. It introduces the six evaluation studies that formed the core of the ECD Project, and on whose insights this book is based.

Chapter 2 discusses basic concepts of organizational capacity, capacity development, and evaluation. It introduces a simple model for organizational assessment and identifies the various types of capacities that organizations need to learn and adapt to changes in their environment. It also explains how monitoring and evaluation can contribute to organizational capacity development.

Chapter 3 addresses two fundamental issues: why managers should be concerned with organizational capacity development and why they should evaluate capacity development efforts. The dramatic acceleration of technological, environmental, economic, and institutional change currently taking place in the world make capacity development more and more essential in research and development organizations. Some broad implications for designing capacity development efforts and for using evaluation as a tool to strengthen an organization's capacity and improve its performance are discussed.

Chapter 4 discusses issues related to the 'how' of capacity development. It summarizes what the ECD Project team learned about how organizations develop capacities and how managers can facilitate and advance capacity development processes in their organizations. We note the limitations of traditional approaches and present an alternative holistic approach to developing organizational capacities.

 Chapter 5 discusses partnerships for capacity development. We deal with a number of issues—at times thorny ones—relating to the potential roles and limitations of local organizations and external agents in capacity development processes. Ways to negotiate sound partnerships for capacity development are introduced, and their implications are discussed.

Chapter 6 outlines approaches and methods for evaluating organizational capacity development. It discusses the importance of evaluation principles as well as issues related to the preparation and the carrying out of evaluations. Guidelines are presented for dealing with these issues.

Chapter 7 discusses how to utilize evaluation processes and results to advance capacity development and performance in an organization. We identify utilization as the 'Achilles heel' of most evaluations. Potential users and uses of evaluation are identified and some strategies for enhancing use are provided.

The ideas and information presented in these chapters are based on six evaluation studies carried out by participants in the ECD Project. Summaries of these studies are presented in the Annex.

The book has a number of special features. Each of the seven main chapters begins with an *Abstract*. This presents readers with advance information on what they can expect to find in

the text. Quotes from interviews conducted with the ECD Project participants are presented throughout the book. They serve to highlight important points made in each chapter. In addition to examples from individual studies, a more detailed country-specific vignette is presented in each chapter. These illustrate how an organization addressed the particular issues elaborated on in each chapter. We include a brief closing section at the end of each chapter entitled *Take-Home Messages*, which summarizes the main points of each chapter. A *Guide to Further Reading* presents authoritative references and resources that enthusiastic readers may find useful in exploring further the ideas presented in this book. Following the main chapters and the summaries of the six evaluation studies on which the book is based, we include brief biosketches for each of the book's authors, a glossary of key terms, and a complete list of bibliographic references cited in the book.

Acronyms

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
BSU	Benguet State University (the Philippines)
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management, a program initiative of the International Development Research Centre
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture (Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical) (Colombia)
CIP	International Potato Center (Centro Internacional de la Papa) (Peru)
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (Ghana)
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (the Netherlands)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECD	Evaluating Capacity Development
FARENA	Faculty of Natural Resources and the Environment (Facultad de Recursos Naturales y del Ambiente) (Nicaragua)
FSRNET	Farming Systems Research Network (Viet Nam)
GPA	Global Plan for Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
GRENEWECA	Genetic Resources Network for West and Central Africa
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IIP	Swine Research Institute (Instituto de Investigaciones Porcinas) (Cuba)
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (the Philippines)
IPGRI	International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (Italy)
ISNAR	International Service for National Agricultural Research (the Netherlands)
NAREMNET	Natural Resource Management Network (Viet Nam)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OSI	Open Society Institute

RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (Bangladesh)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIAS	Institute of Agricultural Science of South Viet Nam
SINCITA	National System for Agricultural Science, Innovation, and Technology (Sistema Nacional de Ciencia e Innovación Tecnológica Agraria) (Cuba)
UNA	National Agrarian University (Universidad Nacional Agraria) (Nicaragua)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPWARD	Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development (CIP network)

1. The Evaluating Capacity Development Project: an Experiment in Evaluating Capacity Development

This chapter provides essential background information on the project that gave rise to this book—the Evaluating Capacity Development (ECD) Project. It identifies some of the unique features of this project and the key issues it addressed—formulated as the project's 'guiding questions'. It then goes on to introduce the six evaluation studies that formed the core of the ECD Project, and on whose insights this book is based.

The ECD Project

The initial idea to develop a project on the evaluation of capacity development in research and development organizations emerged in 1999 during discussions between Fred Carden of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Julian Gonsalves of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), and Doug Horton of the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) on the need for better understanding of how capacity development takes place and how its results can be evaluated. For several years, IDRC's Evaluation Unit had been working with Universalia Management Group to develop and apply frameworks and methods for organizational assessment. ISNAR had applied some of these frameworks and methods in evaluating its efforts to strengthen planning, monitoring, and evaluation capacity in agricultural research organizations. IIRR had recently been challenged to document the impacts of its rural development work, and was eager to learn about methods to do so.

As a result of these discussions, an action-learning project was formulated to explore issues of capacity development and its evaluation with a group of people who were working to strengthen capacity in research and development organizations and who were interested in evaluating their efforts. To stimulate learning from a range of diverse experiences, people from various countries, regions, and types of organizations were involved. To put some limits on the types of participating individuals and organizations, it was decided to involve managers and evaluation practitioners in research and development organizations who were concerned with agricultural or rural development (see Figure 1).
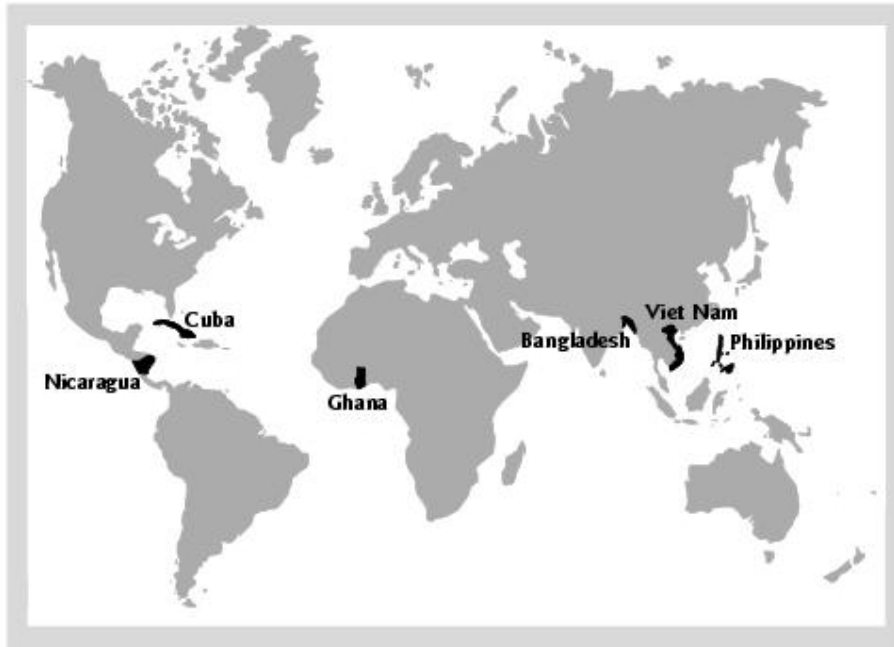
Figure 1. The six evaluation studies

Exploring capacity development in a rural development NGO in Bangladesh towards strategic management in a Cuban agricultural research institute understanding capacity development in a plant genetic resources center in Ghana assessing organizational change in an agricultural faculty in Nicaragua strengthening participatory research capacities in a Philippines root crops research center expanding capacities in a rural development institute in Viet Nam.

Past evaluations of capacity development, including those of ISNAR, IDRC, and IIRR, had often focused on measuring the results or impacts of international programs on the capacity or performance of national or local organizations. While organizations in the South have carried out some evaluations, the field is still dominated by international organizations and reflects their perspectives and interests. To mitigate this type of 'northern' or 'international' bias, it was decided to involve professionals from 'recipient' national and local organizations in planning and implementing the ECD Project and to focus on the evaluation work from their perspectives.

A project document prepared in early 2000 served as a basis for negotiating the support of donors as well as the participation of international and national organizations in the project. The basic objective of the ECD Project was to improve capacity development efforts in research and development organizations through the use of evaluation.

The Project's specific objectives were to

- strengthen participants' capacity to carry out their own evaluations;
- conduct a set of evaluation studies on capacity development;
- draw conclusions from the studies that could be useful in designing, implementing, and evaluating future capacity development efforts;
- compile and disseminate frameworks and methods for evaluating capacity development.

The initial phase of the ECD Project involved problem definition, planning, and the design of a set of evaluation studies to be carried out by independent evaluation teams made up of members of the participating organizations. In the next phase, six evaluation studies were carried out, with modest technical and financial support from the ECD coordination team and consultants. Later, the teams came together to discuss their experiences, synthesize their findings, and prepare this book.

Hundreds—perhaps thousands—of evaluations are carried out in research or development organizations each year. Most of these evaluations assess the progress or results of projects or programs and are carried out to meet the external accountability requirements of funding bodies that support research and development activities. Very few evaluations have been carried out to assess the capacity of organizations to conduct research or development activities, the capacity development processes themselves, or the extent to which capacity development leads to an improvement in the organization's performance.

To begin filling this void and to promote discussion and understanding of how organizations' capacities develop and contribute to performance, the project focused on the development of the capacity of organizations, rather than on the delivery of inputs, products or services, or the transfer of technology. It focused on organizational capacity rather than individual or project-level capacity. An attempt was made to understand and reflect the different perspectives of different groups involved in capacity development and in its evaluation. A utilization-focused approach to evaluation was adopted to promote the use of evaluation to improve future capacity development and organizational performance. The project was designed and implemented with managers and evaluators in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America.

The ECD Project's strategy was to involve professionals from 'pairs' of organizations in a set of evaluations of their own capacity development efforts. Each pair of organizations consisted of a national organization that was working to develop its own capacity and an international organization that was supporting the capacity development effort. One or more individuals from each of these paired organizations formed an evaluation team.

The ECD Project was designed with the intention that, as teams carried out their evaluations, they would learn about capacity development as well as its evaluation. As the team members represented different organizations, they brought different perspectives to the evaluation effort. It is important to bear in mind that all organizations interact with many other organizations in networks of relationships. So there are, in fact, more than just two relevant perspectives.

Each team focused their evaluation study on questions of immediate interest to their own organizations. The teams engaged key members of their organizations in the evaluation process (more or less successfully, as outlined over the next several chapters), to ensure their support and commitment to implementing the results. The goals of each study, and the methods employed, were all negotiated and decided on jointly by the team members.

Features of the ECD Project

- Focus on capacity development rather than input delivery or transfer of technology.

- Focus on organizations rather than individuals or national institutions.

- Recognition of the multiple perspectives of those involved in capacity development and its evaluation.

- Utilization-focused evaluation approach to encourage the use of evaluation results.

- Design and implementation of the project with managers and evaluators in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America.

A preparatory workshop for the ECD Project was held at ISNAR in the Netherlands in May 2000. It involved people from research and development organizations in Canada, the Netherlands, the Philippines, North America, the UK, and Viet Nam, who had expressed interest in participating in the project. During this workshop, discussions focused on sharpening the objectives and approaches of the ECD Project, on the meaning of 'organizational capacity development', and on ways to evaluate it.

Over the next three months, potential participants in international organizations were contacted and invited to take part in the project, along with the colleagues from national organizations with whom they were working. The support and involvement of five donor organizations—the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), IDRC, and the Swiss Agency For Development and Cooperation (SDC)—was also negotiated during this period.

In September 2000 a planning workshop for the evaluation studies was held at IIRR in the Philippines. This event included a mini training course on evaluating capacity development and group work to develop plans for the proposed evaluation studies.

Between September 2000 and May 2001, six of the seven planned studies were carried out. The seventh study, planned in Zimbabwe, was aborted due to political instability and delays in the capacity development effort.

In each of the six evaluation studies actually carried out, substantial changes were made in the study design after the planning workshop. When the teams prepared their initial plans at IIRR they generally overestimated the time and resources available, and they prepared relatively complex plans. Most of the teams expected to collect information for their studies through formal questionnaire surveys. When they returned to their home organizations, participants found it necessary to simplify their study designs and to negotiate them with the senior managers and staff members on whom they relied for information and support. Visits from members of the ECD Project's coordination team and project consultants helped get the studies underway, sharpen their objectives, decide on evaluation methods, and negotiate political support for the evaluations.

In 2001, five of the six study teams met for a mid-term review and synthesis workshop at the International Agricultural Center in Wageningen, the Netherlands. At this event, each team presented its study and results, and cross-cutting issues and preliminary conclusions were drawn from group work and discussions. Over the next several months, the individual teams finalized their evaluation studies, with modest support from members of the ECD Project coordination team.

In July 2002, the authors of this book met for a writing workshop at ISNAR's headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. They decided on the book's audience, format, and outline, and prepared drafts for each of the core chapters. A publication committee, comprising three of the authors (Fred Carden, Matilde Somarriba Chang, and Jamie Watts), was established to work with the ECD Project coordination team (Douglas Horton and Nancy Alexaki) in completing and publishing the book.

After the writing workshop, the ECD Project's coordinating team worked with a professional writer (Kim Brice) and with the publications units of ISNAR, IDRC, and CTA to revise and polish the chapters, summarize the evaluation study reports, and prepare the references and glossary. In December 2002, ISNAR and IDRC had the book externally peer reviewed. After

the peer review in January 2003, the Publications Committee met at ISNAR to incorporate suggestions and make final plans for the publication.

The ECD Project's Guiding Questions

Each of the evaluation studies was designed to respond to questions of direct interest to decision-makers in the organizations involved. Each evaluation team also reflected on five 'guiding questions' that were formulated by participants in the project's planning workshop.

The ECD Project's five guiding questions

1. What are the key capacities that need to be developed in research and development organizations?
2. How can managers foster organizational capacity development?
3. How should partnerships for organizational capacity development be built?
4. How should organizational capacity development efforts be evaluated?
5. How can evaluation be used to strengthen capacity and improve an organization's performance?

1. What are the key capacities that need to be developed in research and development organizations?

Only recently have efforts begun to focus on assessing the current capacities of organizations and on pinpointing gaps and priorities. Based on studies of capacity development in different organizational settings, the ECD Project sought to uncover patterns and principles that managers could use for identifying their own organization's capacity needs and priorities.

2. How can managers foster organizational capacity development?

To break the all-too-common haphazard and supply-driven approaches to capacity development, the ECD Project sought to provide guidance to aid managers in managing capacity development processes for their own organizations.

3. How should partnerships for organizational capacity development be built?

Agendas for capacity development more often than not reflect the views and priorities of external agencies rather than those of the organization that is supposedly being developed. In this project, we have attempted to identify the areas in which external agencies can, in fact, contribute constructively to the development of an organization's capacities and to identify the roles that the organization itself must play if partnership is to function and produce results.

4. How should organizational capacity development efforts be evaluated?

Evaluation is a new field for many managers, and few evaluation practitioners in the South have benefited from systematic training in this area. The ECD Project participants developed guidelines based on conclusions from the studies to help managers and evaluators answer key questions that arise in preparing for an evaluation.

5. How can evaluation be used to strengthen capacity and improve an organization's performance?

In a book about evaluating capacity development, this is the most important question of all. In the ECD Project participants' view, every evaluation of a capacity development effort should itself contribute to the capacity development effort and ultimately to the organization's performance. However, we know that, in practice, few evaluations are used to

achieve these ends. The project participants tried to identify how to make evaluations more useful in an organization's efforts to improve its capacity and performance.

The Evaluation Studies

The core of the ECD Project's activities was a set of six evaluations carried out by a group of professionals from 12 organizations, including national and international agricultural research and development organizations, university departments, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They evaluated their own efforts and, in the process, field-tested several different evaluation methods that may be suitable for use on a broader scale.

In the evaluation studies, we have drawn on concepts and methods employed in previous work carried out by ISNAR, IDRC, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and others. An organizational assessment framework developed by Universalia Management Group and IDRC was used to help orient the studies. (This model is presented in Chapter 2.)

Six evaluation studies and the organizations that carried them out

Exploring capacity development in a rural development NGO in Bangladesh
The Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service in Bangladesh
The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction with headquarters in the Philippines

Towards strategic management in a Cuban agricultural research institute
The Directorate of Science and Technology, the Swine Research Institute, and the Ministry of Agriculture of Cuba
ISNAR's New Paradigm Project based in Costa Rica

Understanding capacity development in a plant genetic resource center in Ghana
The Plant Genetic Resources Center in Ghana
The Genetic Resources Network for West and Central Africa based in Benin
The Evaluation Unit of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute with headquarters in Italy

Assessing organizational change in an agricultural faculty in Nicaragua
The Faculty of Natural Resources and the Environment in the National Agrarian University of Nicaragua

Strengthening participatory research capacities in a Philippines root crops research center
The Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center in Benguet State University
The Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development network of the International Potato Center based in the Philippines

Expanding capacities in a rural development institute in Viet Nam
The Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development Institute of Can Tho University in Viet Nam
The Community-Based Natural Resource Management Program initiative based at the International Development Research Centre with headquarters in Canada

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Synopses of the Evaluation Reports

This section introduces the six evaluation studies on which this book is based. A more detailed summary of each evaluation report is presented in the Annex.

Exploring capacity development in a rural development NGO in Bangladesh

This evaluation study was carried out by two non-profit NGOs, the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) and the Philippines-based IIRR. RDRS began to prioritize capacity development when it changed its status from an international NGO, managed by expatriates, to a local NGO, managed by local staff.

Common values and a shared development philosophy served as an important basis for the five-year relationship between RDRS and IIRR. At least 20% of RDRS's management staff attended IIRR training programs in participatory approaches to rural development. IIRR's courses helped RDRS develop its ability to innovate and change, to manage itself strategically, to use participatory management methodologies, and to mobilize resources.

These capacities helped RDRS make the successful transition from being a field program of an international charity to a strong, respected, self-administered national NGO. Despite these positive outcomes, RDRS's informal follow-up procedures and its narrow focus on individual capacity development led to unequal results. Very often knowledge was gained by a staff member and applied to his/her work but never spread to the broader organizational level.

The evaluation study revolved around three major objectives:

1. to determine the relevance of IIRR training courses to RDRS's capacity needs;

2. to examine the strengths and weaknesses of acquiring needed capacities through IIRR training;

3. to provide recommendations to improve capacity development in both organizations.

The study was guided by three fundamental principles:

1. a focus on information that would be useful to both organizations;

2. receptiveness to reflection and ideas from various levels of staff in each organization;

3. the use of participatory self-assessment.

The evaluation exercise used several methods to obtain data from a variety of sources including small group discussions, RDRS and IIRR self-assessment workshops, surveys among randomly selected IIRR alumni in RDRS and their supervisors, documentation review, and key informant interviews.

The joint evaluation process assisted both RDRS and IIRR in examining organizational capacity development through a negotiated lens, which enabled each organization to have a stake in its outcome. The participatory process fostered greater knowledge and understanding about capacity development and its evaluation among the evaluation participants and led to a greater commitment to addressing organizational capacity development in each organization in the longer term.

Following the study, RDRS and IIRR committed to conducting action plans aimed at improving their respective capacity development initiatives. RDRS planned an organizational assessment where results of the evaluation study would be extensively used as input to the future strengthening of RDRS. RDRS committed to link staff training more systematically to organizational capacity development. IIRR, on the other hand, committed to improving its international training courses by focusing, not just on the development of individual competencies, but also on organizational capacities.

The evaluation convinced both organizations to think more comprehensively about capacity development. Following the evaluation, RDRS introduced a monitoring system of trained staff that will be incorporated into a personnel management information system. RDRS will

be rethinking and negotiating partnerships for organizational capacity development in several new areas such as advocacy, networking, and alternative research. The evaluation also inspired RDRS and IIRR to consider their capacity development relationship more creatively in line with their organizational mandates and emerging opportunities. Finally, the evaluation study results were shared widely within both organizations to broaden understanding and foster greater commitment to capacity development and its evaluation.

Towards strategic management in a Cuban agricultural research institute

Since 1996, ISNAR's New Paradigm Project and the Directorate of Science and Technology of Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture have collaborated in an evolving set of activities aimed at developing a National System for Agricultural Science, Innovation, and Technology (SINCITA) and strengthening strategic management capacities within that system.

Their collaboration came about as a response to the profound and rapid changes that were taking place in Cuba's economy due to the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, its main trading partner, and an ongoing United States trade embargo. Cuba recognized that there was an urgent need for major changes in its agricultural research institutions, and, subsequently, a need to evaluate both the process by which that change had taken place and its results.

Initially, the study intended to cover the entire institutional change process in SINCITA. However, subsequent discussions led to the conclusion that it would not be possible to complete such a complex study within the timeframe of the ECD Project and with the resources available. Consequently, the team decided to study a single capacity development effort in a single institute, and focused on agrifood chain analysis in the Swine Research Institute (IIP), one of the 17 institutes that make up SINCITA.

Between 1998 and 2000, IIP staff attended a number of regional and national workshops on agrifood chain analysis organized by the New Paradigm Project, which exposed them to useful new concepts. Most of IIP's capacity was subsequently developed through 'learning by doing'. With support from the Ministry of Agriculture, IIP, professionals from partner and client organizations, and other stakeholders organized a series of participatory workshops and studies to gather and analyze information on the pork meat chain. On the basis of this work, they reached consensus on the nature of the chain, its key links and segments, its critical factors, and the implications of their findings for research and development activities.

The work on agrifood chains has been of great value to IIP for three main reasons. First, it helped IIP to understand the changes that were taking place in the swine sector and to define priority areas for its work. Second, as participants prepared the agrifood chain study and set priorities for their research and development work, they gained a new sense of knowledge and direction, which made them more confident in their negotiations with other organizations. Third, the multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional emphasis of the food chain analysis helped participants understand how their individual work related to the overall organization and the interconnections between various technical and institutional factors at different points along the food chain.

The evaluation study focused on the development of capacity for food chain analysis in IIP. It was designed and carried out with the New Paradigm Project to reach consensus on (a) the importance and relevance of the capacity development effort; (b) the key moments in the capacity development process and the principle factors driving and constraining it; (c) the results of the capacity development process within and outside IIP; and (d) the merits of the self-assessment methodology employed.

The study included eight major steps: a preparatory meeting, internal workshops for SINCITA's facilitation group, an IIP preparatory workshop, document reviews, individual

interviews, a self-assessment workshop, a report on the workshop, and the drafting of the evaluation report.

Participants generally felt that the self-assessment approach of the evaluation had a number of advantages over conventional external evaluation methodologies. It brought internal and external actors together to discuss and assess their work, the guiding questions and facilitation stimulated collective reflection and analysis, and the process led to a commitment to the results. The action-oriented, participatory approach to the evaluation helped stimulate organizational learning and negotiation among the partners.

Based on the positive results of this self-assessment exercise, IIP has introduced self-assessment into its annual work plan and has included resources for this in its budget. SINCITA organized a subsequent self-assessment exercise with another institute. Based on the promising results of these two cases, the Vice Minister of Agriculture requested that SINCITA's facilitation team organize a system-wide self-assessment to appraise the change process and its results, and to recommend measures to improve the Ministry of Agriculture's future work in organizational development and change.

Understanding capacity development in a plant genetic resource center in Ghana

The Plant Genetic Resources Center (the Plant Genetic Center) coordinates plant genetic resources-related activities in Ghana. Its activities are fundamental to improving quality of life in Ghana because plant genetic resources are the basis of the food supply and are essential to improving agriculture without threatening the environment. This is especially important given the fact that 70% of Ghana's population live in rural areas and depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.

Two external actors, the Rome-based International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the Cotonou-based Genetic Resources Network for West and Central Africa (GRENEWECA), have played an important role in the Center's capacity development. These organizations came together because of their common interest in plant genetic resources conservation and use and the implementation of an international agreement on plant genetic resources.

The partnership has spanned 20 years and evolved to meet each organization's changing needs and priorities. Over that time, IPGRI and GRENEWECA's training, technical, and information support helped the Center develop its infrastructure, strengthen its administrative and technical staff, improve its research methodologies, and increase its engagement with national and international stakeholders. This helped the Center diversify its services and products, which, in turn, has helped attract more financial resources. Greater autonomy from the government has also freed the Center to carry out its mandate and manage its own budgetary resources more effectively.

The purpose of the evaluation was to analyze the development of the Center's capacity to conserve, evaluate, and utilize plant genetic resources; to learn from Ghana's capacity development experiences to help develop IPGRI and GRENEWECA's other national programs in Africa and elsewhere; and to promote the use of evaluation for capacity development and to build skills in conducting these analyses within the three participating organizations.

The evaluation study emphasized the use of self-assessment methodologies. This approach helped the study team examine the complex interactions and processes within their collaboration, explore and address organizational change issues, and analyze their respective organization's operating environments. The use of participatory approaches in the evaluation study helped build the evaluation team's capacity to conduct evaluations and to improve their

and other participants' understanding of capacity development concepts and issues. This approach also encouraged them to better understand, value, use, and implement the findings of the evaluation.

The study concluded that the Center's capacity could be further improved if activities were more centered around its needs and priorities, if management and strategic skills were considered, and a stronger monitoring and evaluation system was put in place. IPGRI and GRENEWECA also need to develop their capacities to perform their goals as capacity development agents more effectively.

The evaluation study was utilized by all participating organizations. In particular, the study report fed into other reviews of IPGRI's activities in Africa and the findings were incorporated into the development of IPGRI's new five-year strategic plan for its capacity development activities.

By disseminating the study report to various interested parties in Ghana and elsewhere, the Center was able to raise support to implement the recommendations of the study and to conduct a strategic planning exercise. The study results were also presented at several international conferences, and the final report is being published for distribution to the Center's stakeholders. This wide dissemination is expected to increase awareness of the importance of the evaluation process and its outcomes.

Assessing organizational change in an agricultural faculty in Nicaragua

Nicaragua's continuing high levels of poverty have been attributed by some to a lack of use of appropriate frameworks and methods in the environmental and agricultural sectors. Nicaragua's National Agrarian University (UNA) Faculty of Natural Resources and the Environment (FARENA), which was the focus of this evaluation study, is trying to address this issue by providing an education that is both relevant and practical to the country's agricultural and forestry sectors. FARENA's mission is to create professionals who can contribute to Nicaragua's development by generating appropriate technologies for natural resource management.

Originally, the purpose of the evaluation study was to evaluate the contribution of one of its partners, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), to the development of the Faculty's capacity for integrated natural resources management. During the course of the study, the focus shifted away from the contribution of the international partner to an overall assessment of the Faculty's capacity to achieve its mission during a four-year period in which critical organizational change took place within the UNA and the Faculty.

During that period, FARENA's approach to capacity development had focused narrowly on upgrading the department's teaching, research, and extension skills. The development of enthusiastic leadership, professional staff, appropriate, flexible, and functioning organizational structures, and strong alliances with a variety of national, regional, and international organizations was achieved during that time and had a positive impact on FARENA's performance.

These improvements were achieved through collaborative projects with several international governmental organizations and NGOs that provided technical support in similar areas of interest and concern (such as CIAT; the Program for Sustainable Agriculture on the Hillsides of Central America; Forest, Trees, and People; the Swedish International Development Agency; and Texas A& M University). The capacity development efforts included joint research, technological and financial support, institutional capacity development, and information exchange.

The study's specific objectives were (a) to identify the processes by which FARENA accomplished its mission; (b) to analyze the recent changes in the context, motivation, capacity, and performance of FARENA and how these impacted on the organization's capacity to accomplish its mission; (c) to identify the contributions of external organizations in the organizational development of FARENA and how this impacted on its ability to accomplish its mission; and (d) to identify the capacities FARENA needs to accomplish its mission.

The evaluation study was conducted through a series of participatory and self-assessment workshops with participants from FARENA, other University departments, students, and external partner organizations. Information was cross-checked through a review of relevant documentation available from the Faculty's archives.

The evaluation study helped FARENA understand how an organizational, rather than a technical, approach to its restructuring and curricula reform processes might have helped it improve its overall performance. Throughout the restructuring process, key organizational capacity issues were neglected. For example, poor strategic planning made it difficult for the Faculty to prioritize what activities to undertake and when. Its three main functions—teaching, research, and extension—all carried the same weight. A deliberate strategy was also needed to raise the standards of its physical (infrastructure and equipment) and financial resources. The participants of the study now understand that a more holistic approach to capacity development would have been more useful and is required in the future.

The evaluation team concluded that the study helped FARENA understand its capacity development processes and address its organizational performance issues. They made recommendations for action by FARENA and by the University, and suggested how to improve collaboration with external partners.

This study is expected to serve as a reference for other organizations in Nicaragua that work in education, research, and extension and that wish to carry out an evaluation of capacity development efforts. The study was used to prepare FARENA's subsequent work plan and to design a training program for its academic personnel. The study was also shared with a UNA evaluation team that is conducting an evaluation and accreditation process for a regional project supported by the Inter-American Development Bank.

FARENA proposes to carry out another evaluation in the next two years to evaluate the progress made on the recommendations from this report. The evaluation will also serve to identify improvements in FARENA's performance and how these have benefited the organization.

Strengthening participatory research capacities in a Philippines root crops research center

The Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center (the Root Crops Center) is an autonomous public-sector organization, operationally attached to Benguet State University (BSU), mandated to spearhead research, training, and extension on root crops in the northern Philippines. In the late 1980s, the Center began collaborative activities with the Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD) network. This is an Asia-wide network of research and development professionals seeking to apply participatory research methods to enhance the contribution of root crops to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, and to help individuals and organizations introduce a participatory dimension to their agricultural research activities.

The Root Crops Center and UPWARD began to collaborate through a research project on sweetpotato-based home gardens in Baguio City. Over the last 12 years, the network has supported capacity development in participatory research in the Root Crops Center through

collaborative projects, training, information services, and facilitating exchanges of expertise. These inputs helped develop a variety of types of capacities spanning the entire process of research planning and implementation, and extending beyond the research realm, by enabling the Center's staff to teach on university courses and organize training sessions.

Environmental factors (such as the policy and funding environment, organizational autonomy, and natural disasters) and motivational factors (such as organizational change and reorganization, staff homogeneity, and external recognition) influenced the Center's capacity development and performance in participatory research in both positive and negative ways. Research conducted on home gardens helped the Center contribute significantly to the public- and private-sector response to food shortages in Baguio City resulting from the 1991 earthquake.

The Root Crops Center and UPWARD participated in the ECD Project primarily because of a common interest in evaluation and learning that had arisen from their 12-year partnership. With declining levels of funding and a need to redefine its niche within the country's broader root crops research system, the Center also intended to use this evaluation to contribute to its internal review and planning processes. UPWARD saw a need to systematically review how its decade-long capacity development efforts have contributed to the organizational development of its partner organizations.

The evaluation primarily used a self-assessment methodology involving Center staff and stakeholders in the design of the evaluation, data collection, and final analysis. The evaluation involved several phases, which included secondary data collection, a planning workshop (to discuss concepts, practices, and issues in capacity development and the ECD Project), key informant interviews, and a summative workshop to present and analyze the data collected. Conclusions were drawn up and limitations of the evaluation were identified. The evaluation report was drafted and finalized through workshops involving evaluation stakeholders.

The evaluation has had a variety of uses and benefits for participating organizations and other stakeholders. The BSU's administration responded positively to this study by re-affirming its stake in the process and outcomes of the evaluation. In response to a suggestion by the University administration to share the evaluation more widely, the evaluation team organized a series of seminars and workshops aimed at various constituents of the University. This also allowed the team to clarify the nature and purpose of the evaluation in light of various erroneous interpretations of the evaluation's agenda.

Parallel evaluations have been carried out with other UPWARD partners, drawing from the initial experience of the evaluation with the Root Crops Center. Findings from this study, especially regarding new training needs identified by Center staff, served as inputs to the development and design of an UPWARD international course on participatory research and development.

Expanding capacities in a rural development institute in Viet Nam

This evaluation focused on Can Tho University's Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development (R&D) Institute, which was established to enhance sustainable agriculture and rural development inside and outside Viet Nam's Mekong Delta region. This study also analyzed the capacity development efforts of two Institute-coordinated networks—the Farming Systems Research Network (FSRNET) and the Natural Resource Management Network (NAREMNET). These networks bring together a number of Vietnamese organizations with the objective of developing their professional capabilities in participatory research and community-based natural resource management.

The IDRC Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program supported both the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute and the networks. In Viet Nam's transition economy, organizational capacities and academic skills in social sciences are particularly limited. As a result, capacity development has been a continuing priority of IDRC's programs in Viet Nam, which are organized through a mix of networking and research support activities, training workshops, and grants. Together, the Institute and the CBNRM program have tried to encourage the use of methodologies that give a voice to producers in setting agricultural research and development agendas to reverse the country's predominantly top-down approach to rural development.

CBNRM's support has helped the Institute develop a set of important organizational capacities that allow it to function as a major research and development organization in Viet Nam. Its strategic leadership, the use and dissemination of innovative research approaches and methodologies, strong personnel management, funding, infrastructure, programs and projects, and networking, both nationally and internationally, have all improved.

The evaluation study aimed to improve, through action research, the understanding of individual and organizational capacity development efforts within the Institute. The study also provided an opportunity to design and try out a variety of tools for monitoring and evaluating these efforts and their results.

The research methodologies included a review of program and project documents and relevant studies, key informant interviews, questionnaires, and a number of participatory tools including self-assessment workshops and participatory workshops. A variety of stakeholders took part in the study, including researchers, extension workers, government officials, and farmers. A small sub-case study was added on to the main evaluation and focused on the impact of the networks on one of its members, the Institute of Agricultural Science of South Viet Nam (SIAS) in Ho Chi Minh.

This study is only a preliminary step in a wider process of follow-up activities that will allow the Institute to achieve a more precise evaluation of its organizational capacity development efforts by using participatory approaches. The idea is to use the evaluation results to formulate an organizational action plan for the Institute.

The results from this evaluation are to be disseminated to various individuals and organizations inside and outside Can Tho University. The results and findings of the study will be shared and discussed at IDRC, which will continue to collaborate with the Institute on its action planning. After a mid-term review workshop, the Institute's staff will practice the project approach and methods and use them to identify how to improve capacity development efforts in the future, at both project and organization level.

Guide to Further Reading

This chapter is based on material available on the ECD Project website (www.isnar.cgiar.org/ecd). The site includes the original project document, various workshop reports and progress reports. The website also contains a reference list with links to many references listed in this book, and links to other websites concerned with capacity development and its evaluation.

The website 'Resource papers in action research' introduces and compares action research and action learning (www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/actlearne.html). The websites of the organizations participating in the ECD Project are listed in the Annex.

2. The Basics of Capacity, Organizational Capacity Development, and Evaluation

This chapter discusses the basic concepts of organizational capacity, capacity development, and evaluation. We begin by introducing a simple model for organizational assessment that views organizational performance as being influenced by the organization's capacity, the external environment in which it operates, and its internal environment. The discussion is grounded in experiences and observations in the organizations that participated in the ECD Project. We identify the various types of capacities that organizations need to carry out their day-to-day activities. We then discuss those special capacities needed by organizations for them to learn and adapt to changes in markets, politics, technology, and other features of their external and internal environments. We continue by discussing how the meaning of the term 'capacity development' has evolved over time. We introduce the concept of 'organizational capacity development' as a process led by an organization that may be supported by external agents and resources. We close the chapter by discussing how monitoring and evaluation can contribute to organizational capacity development.

Developing Capacity for Improved Performance

In simple terms, an organization's capacity is its potential to perform—its ability to successfully apply its skills and resources to accomplish its goals and satisfy its stakeholders' expectations. The aim of capacity development is to improve the potential performance of the organization as reflected in its resources and its management. A theoretical framework for assessing an organization's performance, developed by Universalia Management Group and IDRC in Canada, was used by the ECD Project to clarify the project team's understanding of capacity in relation to an organization's performance (see Figure 2).

Performance is the ability of an organization to meet its goals and achieve its overall mission. All of the organizations that participated in the ECD Project have missions that focus on agricultural or rural development. Most carry out agricultural research as a tool for development. One focuses on rural development more broadly, without a research focus. One is a university faculty, and several have training or extension missions.
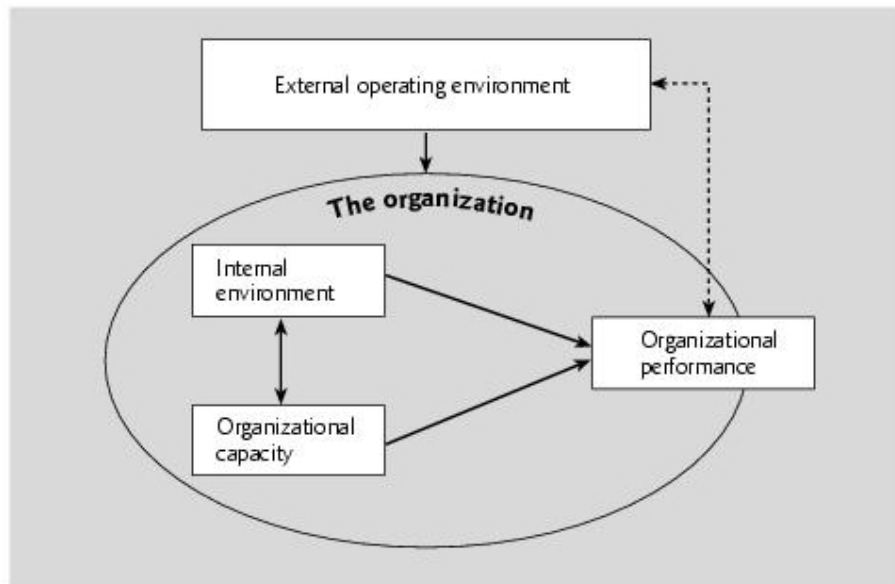
Figure 2. Framework for organizational assessment

An organization's performance is influenced by its capacity, by its internal environment, and by the external environment in which it operates.
Based on Lusthaus, Anderson, and Murphy (1995) and Lusthaus et al. (2002).

An organization's performance can be expressed in terms of four key indicators: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and financial sustainability (see box). All of the organizations involved in the ECD Project were concerned with performance issues in one or more of these four categories. IIP in Cuba was interested in becoming more relevant to its key stakeholders in the face of changing market and economic structures. FARENA in Nicaragua wanted to prepare its graduates to address the challenges of managing integrated agricultural systems. The Plant Genetic Center in Ghana needed to develop more sustainable financing to address the need to generate income and the need to ensure continuing relevance by addressing emerging areas of interest. The future financial viability and sustainability of the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute was threatened by recent changes in the policy environment. The Root Crops Center in the Philippines was facing successive budget reductions and was concerned about its financial viability. At the same time, it needed to reexamine its relevance and possibly reorient itself in light of the major natural disasters and subsequent economic problems faced by its client population. RDRS in Bangladesh had decentralized many of its operations to the local level and was having to ensure that staff were trained to carry out their functions effectively in this new organizational environment.

Elements of the organizational assessment framework

Organizational performance refers to the ability of an organization to meet its goals and achieve its mission. Performance can be gauged in terms of four key indicators:

- effectiveness: the degree to which the organization achieves its objectives;
- efficiency: the degree to which it generates its products using a minimum of inputs;
- relevance: the degree to which the organization's objectives and activities reflect the necessities and priorities of key stakeholders;
- financial sustainability: the conditions to make an organization financially viable.

Organizational capacity refers to the resources, knowledge, and processes employed by the organization. For example:

- staffing;
- infrastructure, technology, and financial resources;
- strategic leadership;
- program and process management;
- networks and linkages with other organizations and groups.

External operating environment refers to the external environment in which the organization carries out its activities. For example:

- the administrative and legal systems in which the organization operates;
- the policies and political environment that influences the organization;
- the social and cultural milieu;
- the technology available;
- economic trends.

Internal environment refers to internal factors that influence the direction of the organization and the energy displayed in its activities. For example:

- incentive and rewards systems;
- the organizational 'climate' or 'culture';
- the history and traditions of the organization;
- leadership and management style;
- clarity and acceptance of the organization's mission;
- extent of shared norms and values promoting teamwork and pursuit of organizational goals;
- organizational structure.

Adapted from Lusthaus, Anderson, and Murphy (1995) and Lusthaus et al. (2002)

The IDRC/Universalia model suggests that a high-performing organization is one that employs its capacities effectively in the pursuit of clear goals and the fulfilment of stakeholder needs. In addition to being affected by its capacities, the organization's performance is influenced by forces in the external environment in which it operates and the internal environment of the organization, which is related to its culture, rewards and incentives, and the management style.

Factors influencing organizational performance

The organization's capacity. The first dimension that influences organizational performance, and which is the focus of this book, is capacity. As detailed in the next section on organizations, capacity includes the resources, knowledge, and processes employed by the organization to achieve its goals. These comprise the staffing, physical infrastructure, technology, and financial resources; strategic leadership, program and process management; and networks and linkages with other organizations and groups. An organization's personnel, facilities, technology, and funding constitute its resource base. The organization's procedures and processes for managing its resources and programs as well as its external relationships

make up its management capacity. Together, these resources and management capacities make up the overall capacity of the organization.

The external operating environment. The external environment in which the organization operates also has a strong influence on its performance. The external operating environment includes such things as the administrative and legal systems that govern the organization, the political environment, and the social and cultural context in which the organization operates. For example, legal systems include the policy, laws, and regulations of the organization. The political environment could include factors such as general political stability in a country or political support that

"Not all capacity development necessarily improves performance. If you don't interpret and respond to your context and internal situation well, it may even undermine your performance."

José de Souza Silva[1] exists for the organization and its mission. Economic trends and conditions affect the ability of an organization to perform, for example by improving or worsening the general economic well-being of its clients or beneficiaries. The technological options available could be critically important to the performance of research and development organizations.

The internal environment. The internal environment of an organization influences the extent to which the organization uses its capacities to achieve its goals and perform at a high level. The internal environment refers to factors inside the organization that make up what might be called the organization's 'personality', and influence the organization's cohesiveness and the energy it displays in pursuing its goals. Sometimes an organization's motivation can be so strong that it compensates for difficulties in the external environment and for weaknesses in its capacity. But in other cases, the internal environment can inhibit the effective use of an organization's capacity and limit its performance. Factors that make up the internal environment include the organization's culture, performance-related incentive and rewards, the institutional 'climate' in general, the history and traditions of the organization, leadership and management style, the existence of a generally recognized and accepted mission statement, organizational structure (division of labor and definition of roles, responsibilities, and authority), and shared norms and values that promote teamwork in the pursuit of the organization's goals.

The basic types of organizational capacity: resources and management

The different elements of capacity introduced in the previous section can be classified broadly into two types of capacity that all organizations need to perform well: resources and management (see Figure 3).

Resources. Resources include things that are traditionally thought of as 'hard' capacities, such as infrastructure, technology, finances, and staffing. An organization's resources include the personnel, facilities, vehicles, equipment, and funding that are at its disposal. Our studies found that there is a great need for the development of such resources in many organizations. The Plant Genetic Center in Ghana provides one of the more extreme examples as it lacks the reliable electrical power and telephone services it needs to accomplish its day-to-day activities. Training remains a high priority for most of the organizations involved in the studies, as does increasing financial resources.

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[1] Quotes throughout the book are recorded comments from a variety of ECD Project workshops that took place between 2000 and 2002.

Management. Management is concerned with creating the conditions under which appropriate objectives are set and achieved. Managerial activities include planning,
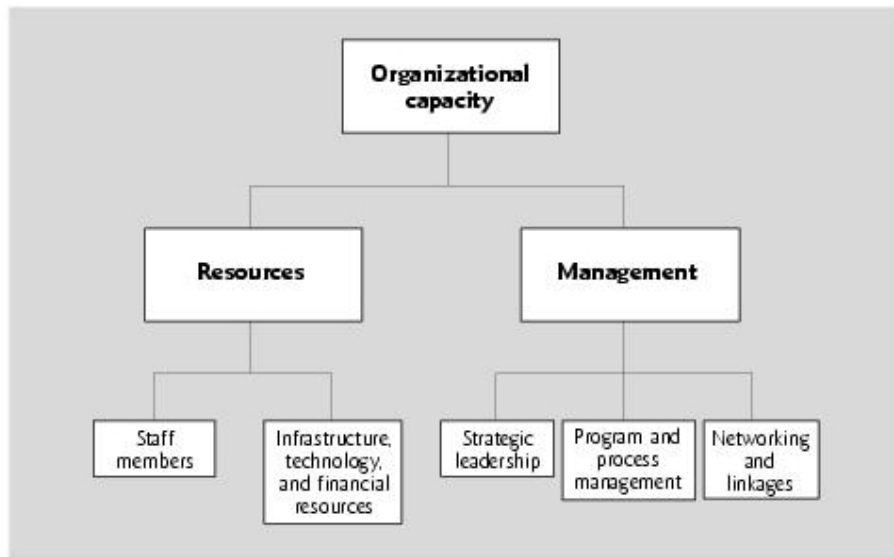
Figure 3. Types of organizational capacity

An organization's overall capacity depends upon its resources (human, physical, financial, and technological) and its management (leadership, program and process management, and networking and linkages).

goal setting, determining responsibilities, leading, allocating resources, motivating and supervising staff members, and maintaining relations with stakeholders. These various activities can be grouped under three headings: strategic leadership, program and process management, and networking and linkages.

Strategic leadership is the capacity to assess and interpret needs and opportunities outside the organization, to establish direction, to influence and align others towards a common aim, to motivate them and commit them to action, and to make them responsible for their performance. Over the last two decades, many research and development organizations have recognized the critical importance of strategic leadership, and our studies confirmed this importance. The quality of an organization's leadership has a powerful influence over its direction, its staff motivation, and its overall performance. Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture and ISNAR's New Paradigm Project have prioritized strategic management and leadership for institutional change, because these factors have a strong influence over all other capacities and the overall performance of organizations.

Program management is concerned directly with the production and delivery of services for clients or target groups. For this reason, program management decisions have a direct impact on the organization's performance. Program management skills and procedures, such as project-cycle management, program formulation, and technical reviews, emerged as crucial capacities in all our studies along with more general management skills. In recent years, for example, FARENA has sought to align its curricula more closely with the new challenges and opportunities presented by the changing economy and market conditions.

Process management concerns the management of resources and internal processes that support research and development programs, rather than the direct production of outputs per

se. These include staffing and staff development, fund raising, financial management, and management of facilities. While often considered to be of secondary importance, adequate management of resources and internal processes were identified as key areas for capacity development in many organizations, because they are essential to the effective delivery of program objectives. For example, in the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute, the evaluation study highlighted the need for changes in infrastructure management, personnel management, and coordination with donors.

Networking and linkages are becoming more important as organizations are increasingly operating within complex, evolving networks of relationships. In the past, there was a tendency for individuals to work alone or in small units within their own organizations. But nowadays, organizations and their staff are often closely linked to other organizations and individuals. Increasingly diverse stakeholders and partners are pressing organizations to involve them in all aspects of their work, ranging from priority setting and fundraising to the delivery of programs and the evaluation of results. Management must increasingly become concerned with networking and linkages.

To perform well, all organizations require adequate resources as well as competent and dedicated leadership and management. However, different organizations will have different capacity needs depending upon their missions, their operating environments, and their strengths and weaknesses in the different capacity areas. While the importance of developing physical, financial, and professional resources in an organization should not be underestimated, our studies highlighted the critically important, but frequently unrecognized, need for developing leadership and management capacities. Unless attention is paid to these 'soft' capacities, investments in the 'hard' capacities seldom lead to improvements in overall organizational performance.

Operational and adaptive capacities

Another way to think about an organization's capacities is to distinguish between the capacities that an organization needs to carry out its day-to-day activities (operational capacities) and the capacities needed for the organization to learn and change in response to changing circumstances (adaptive capacities). The Evaluation Unit of IDRC has emphasized this distinction in its work with 'outcome mapping'. Table 1 provides an overview of operational and adaptive capacities illustrated by examples from our studies.

Each of the basic types of organizational capacities discussed here—ranging from physical infrastructure to strategic leadership—have operational and adaptive aspects to them. Professional resources, for example, refer to such things as recruitment procedures and the number and skills of staff members. Personnel capacities in successful organizations go beyond this to include the ability of staff to stay current in their fields, and tolerance and opportunities for staff reflection and learning. In Viet Nam, the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute focused on building the capacity of its staff to implement new concepts and methods of participatory research and community-based natural resource management, to introduce a more effective way of addressing the country's rural development needs.

Operational infrastructure refers to such things as the amount, type, and quality of buildings, vehicles, and supplies needed for the operation of the organization. However, managers must also consider future infrastructure needs and seek support and resources to obtain these. They also have to think about adapting infrastructure to meet site-specific conditions or emerging needs. In Ghana, the Plant Genetic Center assessed its infrastructure needs in the context of

an emerging opportunity to become a training and meeting center for the Ghanaian scientific community. A large plenary hall was constructed to meet this emerging opportunity.

Management capacities also have both operational and adaptive dimensions. Strategic leaders need to ensure that management systems and structures are in place for the organization to meet current goals through its day-to-day operations. Monitoring and evaluation may be carried out to assess the extent to which the organization achieves its goals effectively and efficiently. Evaluation can also be used for more in-depth learning by reassessing the organization's basic objectives and strategies.

Our studies all found that inadequate attention was being paid to periodic monitoring and evaluations aimed at organizational improvement. The ECD Project provided team members with experience in the design and use of evaluation for organizational and institutional learning, and many organizations made progress in applying evaluation results to their future work.

This is illustrated in the Bangladesh study involving RDRS and IIRR. Following the evaluation carried out under the umbrella of the ECD Project, RDRS introduced a training and monitoring system that will be incorporated into the personnel management information system. Both RDRS and IIRR are also addressing strategic issues. RDRS is now working to link staff training with organizational needs. IIRR is seeking to increase its training portfolio to include organizational development courses in addition to technical training for individuals.

Individual, group, and organizational capacities

A third way to group capacities is to distinguish individual capacities from those of groups or teams and of the organization as a whole. Individuals possess capacities in the form of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Individual staff members make these capacities available to their organization but, when they leave, their capacities often go out of the door with them.

When individuals share their knowledge, skills, and attitudes with others and when these capacities become imbedded in group activities and processes, it can be said that they become part of the group's capacity. And when individual and group capacities are widely shared among the organization's members and become incorporated into the organization's culture, strategies, structures, management systems, and operating procedures, they become truly organizational capacities.

An organization is strong to the extent that it taps the capacities of its individual members, shares them with others, assimilates them, and institutionalizes them. Such organizations can withstand high rates of staff turnover much more effectively than weaker organizations that fail to internalize and institutionalize their members' capacities.

What is Organizational Capacity Development?

The term 'capacity development' as used today has its origins in the fields of technical assistance and development cooperation. During the 1950s and 1960s, financial and physical resources and skills were transferred to poor countries in a 'supply-driven' model of capacity development. The focus was on the supply of inputs and the transfer of technology from industrial countries to less developed areas. The assumption at the time was that these forms of capital and technologies would trigger sustained economic growth.

Later, this focus on delivery of inputs and resources shifted towards experimentation with a more 'demand-driven' approach. The focus was now on the acquisition of knowledge and skills in developing countries, on changing attitudes and on increasing the ability of

individuals to work collectively. Here, emphasis was placed on meeting needs and managing processes rather than on supplying inputs.

Table 1. Examples of Operational and Adaptive Capacities in the Evaluation Studies

Capacity area	Operational capacities	Adaptive capacities	Example
Personnel	• Staffing levels • Staff training • Recruiting and hiring procedures • Performance appraisal systems	• Staff development planning that assesses and responds to emerging issues • Staff staying current in their fields of expertise • Ability of staff to reflect, learn, and innovate	In Bangladesh's RDRS, training staff in the use of community development approaches was a crucial capacity development strategy for nearly two decades. The training of its development practitioners focused on an array of key human capacities including: how to manage the process of change using participatory approaches, tools, and techniques; developing attitudes and behavioral skills needed to improve stakeholder participation in projects and programs; and managing organizations as well as addressing emerging development issues.
Infrastructure, technology, and financial resources	• Financial resources • Accounting and financial controls • Facilities and maintenance systems • Availability of technology • Planning and management of facilities, technology, and finances	• Seeking new funding sources • Assessing and redesigning systems to adapt to weak infrastructure • Obtaining support from higher authorities for infrastructure, technology, and financial resources	The Plant Genetic Center in Ghana continues to emphasize the importance of infrastructural and technological capacities. The Center is not able to achieve an important aspect of its mandate, which is to conserve Ghana's plant genetic resources, without a back-up generator, since power cuts hinder the Center's ability to preserve germplasm, which requires cold storage. Improved telecommunications is another priority for the Center, since poor telephone lines at the Center's headquarters make it difficult for the Center to effectively communicate with its partners and access much needed research-related information.
Strategic leadership	• Strategic planning • Performance-oriented policies and procedures • Clear division of roles, responsibilities, and authority	• Strategic management • Leading organizational learning • Seeking new ideas, opportunities, and resources	IIP in Cuba undertook a major initiative to build skills in strategic and network management in response to disruptions in the economic environment and markets. Staff had to acquire new skills in assessing changes in the agriculture/ food chain and stakeholder needs. Capacities were built through a series of self-assessment workshops that engaged

Capacity area	Operational capacities	Adaptive capacities	Example (continued)
Strategic leadership (continued)	• Governance structures • Guidelines and incentives for performance in relation to organizational objectives	• Scanning and monitoring the external environment • Managing change	staff and interest groups in discussions and consensus building as to needs and new directions. Leadership was demonstrated throughout this process by the commitment and active involvement of the management of IIP and the Directorate of Science and Technology of the Ministry of Agriculture.
Program and process management	• Project cycle management • Program planning and formulation • Monitoring and evaluation • Reporting • Communications	• Assessing and redesigning policies, systems, and procedures • Learning from both successes and mistakes • Obtaining support from higher authorities • Changing processes to respond to new needs and opportunities	FARENA in Nicaragua needed to reformulate the orientation of its curricula and staffing to enable the university to respond to the need for graduates with more knowledge and skills in integrated agricultural systems. The Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute faced change and uncertainty in terms of its status as an institute and in centralization of its funding. This sparked changes in its structures and processes that affected its performance.
Networking and linking to other organizations and stakeholders	• Assessing potential partners • Establishing viable partnerships • Outsourcing • Negotiating	• Involving stakeholders in planning and review activities to get their inputs in decision-making • Finding common ground between the organization's goals and those of others • Developing links with new groups to address changing needs and opportunities	The Root Crops Center in the Philippines used to do most of its work on its own. But today, most of its projects involve external research or development jointly carried out with community-based organizations or national and regional organizations.

More recently, the focus has moved towards strengthening the national economic and legal institutions that foster the development of private enterprise. The shift in emphasis from the micro level (on the individual) to the macro level (on national institutions) has left the meso level (organizations—especially public service delivery organizations) neglected and thus vulnerable. This current model generally assumes that if you train people and get the legal and market rules and regulations right, organizations will take care of themselves. Figure 4 illustrates these levels where capacity development can take place.

"Capacity development is an emerging property. It comes from a process of interaction to decide what it means in our context."

Albina Maestrey Boza

Today it is widely recognized that past approaches were too limited in their view of development requirements and processes. In addition, past capacity development efforts often paid too little attention to the essential capacities needed for public organizations and NGOs to play their roles and orient their research and development activities toward some of this century's key development goals, such as alleviating poverty and protecting the environment.
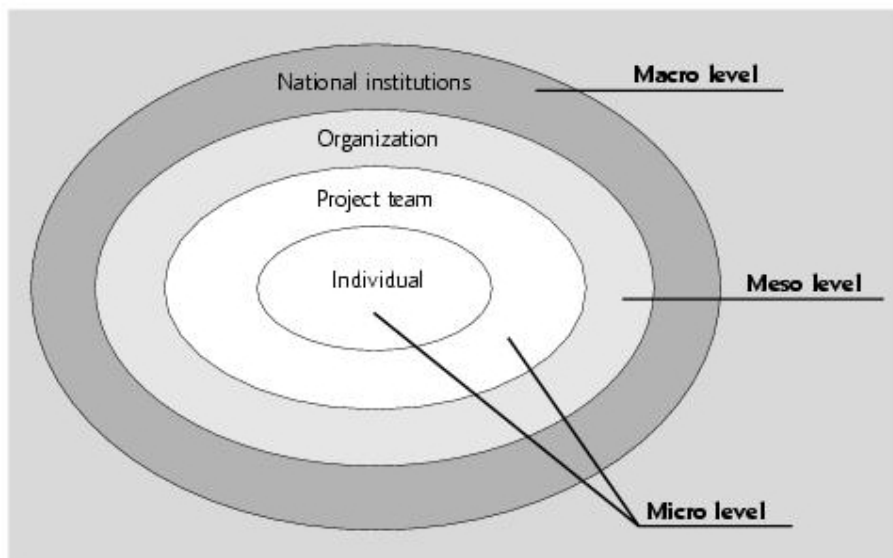
Figure 4. Levels at which capacity development can take place

Capacity development can take place at the micro level of individuals and project teams, at the meso level of organizations, and at the macro level of national economic and legal institutions.

Currently, the UNDP defines capacity development as an ongoing process to increase the abilities of an individual or an organization to perform core functions, solve problems, and define and achieve objectives. UNDP includes in its definition the notion that capacity development processes must improve the ability to assess and react to future needs and thus maintain relevance and effectiveness over time.

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society defines capacity development as a systematic approach of continuous learning to improve an organization's ability to make the most effective and efficient use of the available personnel and financial resources to achieve the humanitarian purposes of the Society in a sustainable way.

These and many other definitions of capacity development have common features including the following:

- capacity development is an ongoing process;
- capacity development aims to increase the ability of an organization to carry out its functions and achieve its objectives;
- capacity development increases the ability of an organization to learn and solve problems;
- capacity development includes creating the ability to deal with the issues of today and also to remain relevant in the future.

Through the studies undertaken in the ECD Project and the discussion and analysis in which the project team has engaged over the past three years, we have evolved our own definition of organizational capacity development that builds upon the experiences of the past, as well as our own.

Organizational capacity development

Organizational capacity development is an ongoing process by which an organization increases its ability to formulate and achieve relevant objectives. It involves strengthening both its operational and adaptive capacities. Organizational capacity development is undertaken by an organization through its own volition. It is carried out through the application of the organization's own resources, which may be supplemented with external resources and assistance. External support for organizational capacity development can take different forms, including provision of financial resources, technical expertise, training, information, political negotiation, and facilitation of capacity development processes.

Organizations often develop their capacities in unplanned, spontaneous ways in response to external opportunities and threats or individual initiatives within the organization. For example, a research organization may take advantage of training offered by an international agency, and have staff members trained in a variety of areas without really deciding what type of training is most likely to improve the performance of the organization. In cases like this, capacity development is supply-driven, and may not really meet the needs of the organization. As a result, capacity development is often viewed as a program implemented by technical assistance agencies to achieve their development goals, rather than a strategy used by research organizations to achieve their own goals.

As we learned from the evaluation studies and the reflection and learning process employed by the ECD Project, organizational capacity development is a highly complex process of learning and improvement that takes place within organizations. In all of our cases, it included support from partner organizations. One of our primary conclusions is that while external resources may be used to support capacity development, organizations themselves must take ultimate responsibility for developing their own capacities. Without organizational will to dedicate resources (time and energy of management for example) to capacity development and without an organizational culture that is open to learning and change, organizational capacity development efforts will be of limited value.

Monitoring and Evaluating Capacity Development

Our studies found that monitoring and evaluating organizational capacity development is of critical importance to ensuring that capacity development initiatives actually lead to improved performance. Because it aims to improve performance, any capacity development effort may be considered to be an inherently good investment, no matter how it is

approached. But poorly conceived or implemented capacity development initiatives can fail to improve, and can even worsen, performance by diverting the overall attention and resources of the organization from high-priority to low-priority capacities. For example, researchers may be trained in state-of-the-art scientific techniques that cannot be used back home because the organization does not have sophisticated equipment. Another way to reduce performance is to direct time and energy towards preparing plans that have little chance of being implemented. In these and other similar cases, misguided capacity development efforts can actually reduce overall performance of the organization.

"At first we thought capacity development meant training and technical missions. A self-assessment process allowed us to interact with a variety of stakeholders, which gave us many more insights."

José de Souza Silva

Because of these potential problems, capacity development efforts need to be carefully planned to clarify objectives and to be monitored and evaluated along the way. Monitoring involves continuous, systematic observation and checking on activities and their results while work is still in progress. The purpose is to ensure that activities are proceeding according to plan, to provide a record of how inputs are used, and to warn of deviations from initial goals and expected outcomes.

Evaluation is an assessment at a point in time, often after the fact, that determines the worth, value, or quality of an activity, project, program, or policy. Monitoring and evaluation depend upon good planning to elaborate capacity development goals and the means to achieve them. Logic models, such as a logical framework and indicators, can be useful tools at the planning stage to help articulate goals and objectives, as well as interim outcomes and activities that are expected to lead to the accomplishment of goals and objectives.

Our studies highlighted the value of a self-assessment approach to evaluating organizational capacity development. Self-assessment involves an organization's managers, staff, and stakeholders in the evaluation process, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and then applying findings to setting new directions. The process can be contrasted with the external evaluation approach, where experts come from outside an organization and design and implement the evaluation relatively independently from the organization's staff and management. Staff, management, and stakeholders are consulted, the information from these consultations is incorporated into a review report, and the report and recommendations are presented to the organization's management.

The advantage of the self-assessment approach is that the people responsible for the organization's management and operations, and stakeholders with a strong knowledge and interest in the organization, gain an in-depth understanding of what works well and why, and where improvements are needed. With this knowledge, they are extremely well prepared to address the necessary changes in practical ways. Since this book focuses on capacity development and its evaluation, this topic will be addressed throughout the book, particularly in Chapter 7.

Take-Home Messages

The objective of organizational capacity development is to help improve organizational performance to address known issues and react to emerging issues that arise in today's rapidly changing world.

An organization's capacities include both its resources (such as personnel, infrastructure, technology, and financial resources) and its management capacities (such as strategic leadership, program and process management, and networking and linkages).

All organizations need to establish and maintain operational capacities, including accounting systems, recruitment procedures, and physical facilities, which allow them also to carry out their day-to-day activities efficiently. Increasingly, organizations need to develop adaptive capacities that help them learn and change in response to changing circumstances. Crucial adaptive capacities include strategic planning, organizational learning, and management of change.

While external agents may provide support for capacity development, organizations must take ultimate responsibility for developing their own capacities.

Monitoring and evaluation can play crucial roles in an organizational capacity development process by fostering learning from experience and helping to ensure that capacity development meets its intended objectives.

A self-assessment approach to monitoring and evaluation of capacity development can help engage managers, staff, and external stakeholders in assessing an organization's capacity and its capacity development needs. It also builds their understanding of organizational strengths and weaknesses as a basis for developing commitment to implementing organizational changes where needed.

Guide to Further Reading

The field of 'capacity development' or 'capacity building' has its origins in the realm of practice, not in an academic discipline. As a result, much of the analysis and writing on this subject has been done by individuals associated with development assistance or technical cooperation agencies.

The website www.capacity.org and the accompanying magazine produced by the European Centre for Development Policy Management provide the best single gateway into the broad field of capacity development in the context of international cooperation and development. This site provides links to a range of resources on capacity development.

Many ideas on capacity development have originated in the work of NGOs. The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) is a major source of information and support for capacity development. Numerous useful publications on capacity development and evaluation can be found on the INTRAC website (www.intrac.org). Readers are also referred to the book *Capacity Building* by Eade (1997).

The recent book on *Capacity for Development* edited by Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, and Malik (2002) is an important first output of a review of technical cooperation for capacity development undertaken by UNDP. It includes thought-provoking essays on strategies for institutional capacity development; power, ideology, and networks; integrating local and global knowledge; and many other topics. An earlier UNDP publication (1998) on capacity assessment and development in the context of strategic management is also useful. However, these publications emphasize capacity development at the societal and national levels, rather than at the level of organizations, which is the focus of the present book. Uphoff's 1994 book, *Puzzles of Productivity in Public Organizations*, emphasizes the importance of strengthening the organizations responsible for producing and delivering public services.

UNDP has recently begun to publish the *Development Policy Journal*, which can be found on the website www.undp.org/capacity21/docs/BDP_Policy_Journal_Vol_1.pdf. Volume 1 is a special issue on 'capacity for sustainable development'.

Morgan has produced some of the most insightful work on capacity development with an emphasis on organizational strengthening. Two papers commissioned by CIDA (1998, 1999) are particularly useful. Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger (1999a) of Universalia Management Group in Montreal present a useful discussion of definitions, issues, and implications for planning, monitoring, and evaluating capacity development.

The framework for assessing organizational capacity and performance presented in this book is based on *Institutional Assessment* by Lusthaus, Anderson, and Murphy (1995) and recently updated by Lusthaus, Adrien, Anderson, Carden, and Montalvan (2002). Horton and colleagues (2000) applied this framework in evaluating a regional capacity development program in Latin America. Implications of the Latin American study for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of capacity development efforts are presented by Horton (2002), Mackay and Horton (2002, 2003), and Mackay et al. (2002).

There are many different classifications of organizational capacities. One of the most basic ones, including physical, financial, personnel, and organizational capacities, is elaborated in *Organizational Economics: Understanding the Relationship between Organizations and Economic Analysis* by Barney and Hesterly (1996). The article "Demonstrated Benefits from Social Capital: The Productivity of Farmer Organizations in Gal Oya, Sri Lanka" by Uphoff and Wijayaratna (2000), discusses organizational capacities as forms of social capital.

In their 1995 publication, *Institutional Assessment*, Lusthaus, Andersen, and Murphy identify eight types of organizational capacity: strategic leadership, organizational structure, human resources, financial management, infrastructure, program and service management, process management, and inter-organizational linkages.

The basic classification of capacities presented in this book is based on the one presented by Lusthaus et al. (2002). The notion of operational and adaptive capacities is based on work on outcome mapping outlined in a publication by Earl, Carden, and Smutylo (2001).

The Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank has a major initiative on evaluating capacity development. Information on this initiative is available on the website www.worldbank.org/oed/ecd/. The art, craft, and science of evaluating capacity building are discussed in a recent issue of *New Directions for Evaluation,* edited by Compton, Baizerman, and Hueftle Stockdill (2002).

A number of issues related to capacity development for participatory research and development are discussed in a recent CIP-UPWARD publication *Capacity Development for Participatory Research* (2002).

3. Why Managers should be Concerned with Organizational Capacity Development and its Evaluation

This chapter addresses two fundamental questions: 'Why should managers be concerned with organizational capacity development?' and 'Why should they evaluate capacity development efforts?' We begin by noting the dramatic technological, economic, environmental, and institutional changes that are driving interest in capacity development. We describe the changes that most affect research and development organizations today and discuss some of the broad implications for managers in designing capacity development efforts. We then outline why managers should be concerned with evaluation and how evaluation can be used as a tool to strengthen an organization's capacity and improve its performance.

Why Managers should be Concerned with Organizational Capacity Development

Challenges for managers of research and development organizations

Today's development landscape is changing at a dizzying pace. The emergence of new technologies, environmental and economic turmoil, market integration, and social and political instability pose both opportunities and threats for research and development organizations. The traditional rules that once governed research and development organizations and their relations with stakeholders are becoming obsolete.

New information and communication technologies are dramatically increasing the speed and power of communication and lowering its costs. Genetic engineering and biotechnologies present many new opportunities and challenges for agricultural research. The integration of markets is eroding the power of national policies, and transnational regulations increasingly govern global markets. Various groups are calling attention to growing economic inequality, threats to the environment, and other social, environmental, and ethical dimensions of development.

In such a dynamic environment, research and development organizations not only need to operate efficiently and effectively, they need to learn to adapt and change if they are to survive and prosper. Organizational capacity development is essential for organizations to be successful in this era of change.

Each of the organizations participating in the ECD Project has been grappling with how to respond to their rapidly changing external environments. The past few years have seen tremendous advances in the field of genetics, for example, with new technologies such as molecular mapping expanding the possibilities for characterizing genes and understanding their role in plant breeding and diversity. To remain current in this field, organizations like the Plant Genetic Center in Ghana need to constantly update the technical knowledge and skills of their personnel and to upgrade their physical facilities. Keeping up-to-date in times of rapid change also requires research and development organizations to review their basic objectives, strategies, and structures periodically.

Governmental bodies and donors from industrialized countries no longer guarantee funding for public research and development. Many organizations are seeing their budgets slashed and their personnel reduced, and in some cases they are even being closed down. Stakeholder groups, including development agencies, governments, and advocacy and interest groups are pressing for research and development organizations to address broader concerns of environmental degradation, food safety, and poverty—often with reduced budgets. And where research was previously judged solely on the basis of its scientific quality, consumer and advocacy groups are now questioning the usefulness of research in solving environmental problems and reducing poverty.

In the Philippines, for example, the Root Crops Center has sought to involve farmers, processors, and consumer groups in its research and development work. This is seen as a way to focus activities on problems of importance to stakeholders and to improve feedback on the value of the information and technologies it is developing. In Nicaragua, FARENA found it necessary to build managerial capacity to review its curricula and reorient academic programs to the needs of a rapidly changing agricultural economy.

As managers of research and development organizations, we often find it difficult to understand the changes occurring around our organizations and how we should respond. We may recognize the declining relevance of our traditional activities, but we do not see clearly

what to do. In the case of Cuba, the drastic economic changes that took place in the 1990s disrupted the activities of the country's state farms and agricultural research institutes. As the crisis unfolded, managers saw the need to reorient their organizations to meet the needs of shifting markets. As the Cuban evaluation study shows, this required developing capacity in strategic relevance and planning, food chain analysis, and management of change.

In times of rapid change when there is a need to maintain or reestablish an organization's legitimacy, the studies suggest that 'incremental' changes, such as restructuring the organization, reducing its costs, or cutting its workforce, are seldom sufficient. There is a need to make 'transformational' changes, which means changing the way we approach and respond to issues. In times of turbulence and crisis, managers need to focus first on the organizations' basic mission, objectives, and strategies and only then concern themselves with the structure of the organization and the way it provides services.

Developing strategic management capacities in Cuba's Swine Research Institute

In the early 1990s, IIP realized it had to adapt the way it was working to cope with the drastic economic changes and difficulties associated with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Cuba's main trading partner, and the continuing United States trade blockade. These changes disrupted the activities of state farms and agricultural research and development organizations, temporarily reducing their output and performance. Until then, Cuba's agricultural institutes had well-established facilities and world-class scientists. They had high-quality research programs in place, and their management procedures ensured that their research served the needs of their primary clients: the state farms.

As the crisis unfolded, managers of IIP and Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture saw the need to build the Institute's strategic and network management skills because its relevance to the emerging needs of the swine sector was waning. A process of capacity development for organizational change was initiated to generate and maintain IIP's internal coherence and its correspondence with, or relevance to, stakeholders' needs. Various capacities were developed, among them the Institute's ability to understand and respond to its changing context by means of agrifood chain analysis.

Agrifood chain analysis gave IIP a new perspective on the needs of the swine sector. The methodology helped managers to understand the changes that were taking place within their sector and to better define priority areas for their work in supporting the sector. In turn, Institute staff could set new priorities for their research and development work, which gave them more direction and built their confidence in negotiating with other organizations. By using the agrifood chain analysis, IIP was able to contribute to the formulation of national agricultural policies more effectively, to share and transfer its capacity to its partners, and to enhance its credibility and relevance to the swine sector. Since developing its capacity in agrifood chain analysis, IIP has secured greater political, financial, and internal support for its work.

The evaluation study employed a multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional design. This helped participants understand how their individual work related to the overall organization and to appreciate the relationship between various technical and organizational factors at different points along the food chain. Through this process, the Institute realized the importance of developing its network management skills.

The experience in Nicaragua illustrates this point. To provide useful solutions to environmental problems, FARENA decided to change to a more integrated approach to natural resource management. This required significant changes within its Faculty and its staffing. The Faculty realized that rather than recruiting specialists with narrow expertise to

work in isolation, generalists with abilities to work within multi-disciplinary teams would be more appropriate to help the organization meet the needs of its various stakeholders.

"We need a new paradigm in our thinking and in our way of doing things because our current way of working is too bureaucratic. We need to be more concerned with what we are doing and how we are doing it if we want to survive."

Samuel Bennett-Lartey

The evaluation studies show that managers are seldom aware of the capacities needed to initiate and sustain transformational change processes in their organizations. This chapter attempts to provide some guidance in this area.

Priorities for Capacity Development

Each organization must assess its own needs and identify its own priorities for capacity development. But the studies carried out within the ECD Project point to some general trends in capacity development that can help managers focus their organizational capacity development activities.

From individual to organizational capacities

In the past, there has been a fragmented approach to capacity development, which focused on individuals rather than the organization as a whole. This is perhaps most clearly reflected in the emphasis of traditional capacity development efforts on individual training. However, organizations do not necessarily change and grow stronger when individuals learn and develop their capacities in isolation.

Individual knowledge, skills, and attitudes are of course important, but they are not sufficient to develop organizational knowledge and promote change. Capacity development efforts must also include team building and the development of the organizational procedures and systems that channel human abilities towards achieving the organization's goals.

As a result of the evaluation study, Bangladesh's RDRS realized that the investments they had made in training individuals over a four-year period had reaped limited dividends at the organizational level. The study team realized the difference between skill acquisition through training and organizational capacity development. To ensure that training has an impact beyond the individual, procedures are needed to employ and share individuals' knowledge, attitude, and skills within teams and with the organization as a whole.

A strategy used in the Philippines and Cuba is to provide on-the-job training through group work. Knowledge and skills are shared and consolidated through dialog and application. In Cuba, such group work involved the preparation of a comprehensive study of the pork-meat food chain. In the Philippines, group work involved the planning of participatory research. In these cases, steps were also taken to 'institutionalize' the use of newly acquired skills and knowledge in organizational procedures.

In Cuba, for example, research proposals are now reviewed for their relevance to constraints identified in the pork meat chain. In the Philippines' Root Crops Center, applied research proposals are screened to ensure that stakeholder groups are adequately involved.

"Building individual capacity is not enough. Collective craftsmanship is what is needed. This means people working together to deliver what they say they want to deliver."

Jamie Watts

From hard to soft capacities

There has been a shift in emphasis over time from developing 'hard' capacities to developing 'soft' ones. Early attempts to build capacity in research and development organizations generally focused on constructing facilities and providing equipment—the classical hard capacities. Later, emphasis shifted to providing technical education for program staff and, more recently, to improving management knowledge and skills through short-term training programs. Efforts have also gone into developing management systems, such as project-based budgeting, accounting, and reporting.

In some more recent cases, there have been attempts to develop the social expertise and skills that are essential for leadership, management, and more effective networking—for example skills in environmental scanning, self-assessment, facilitation, team-building, and communication.

This trend reflects a growing awareness that facilities, resources, and inputs alone will not lead to lasting improvements in an organization's performance. Crucial capacities reside in its management practices and systems, which allow the organization to acquire resources and use them effectively.

In the case of Viet Nam, the evaluation study revealed that some of the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute's capacity development efforts had emphasized 'hard' capacities, such as infrastructure development and fund raising. But much of the capacity development that had taken place over the last ten years with the support of the IDRC-CBNRM had focused on 'soft' capacities, including strategic leadership, the use and dissemination of innovative research approaches and methodologies, and personnel management.

Maintaining relevance in changing times

In stable times, the basic relevance of organizations, their goals, and their programs is seldom questioned. In such cases, capacity development efforts can safely focus on issues of effectiveness (goal attainment) and efficiency (cost effectiveness). For this reason, in the past, capacity development efforts often focused on 'how'. How to improve the use of financial resources? How to recruit and manage staff? How to manage projects?

Now, as society's concerns and expectations are changing, the pressure on managers is shifting beyond efficiency and effectiveness to relevance. Organizations need to achieve their goals and to operate efficiently, within increasingly tight budgets. But, more importantly, they need to provide services that meet rapidly changing needs.

Growing concern for relevance means that research and development organizations need to develop new capacities for management, including capacities for monitoring their operating environment, identifying the implications for the organization, and rapidly implementing needed changes. Figure 5 illustrates what organizational capacities need to be developed to achieve greater relevance and/or efficiency.

In the case of Nicaragua, FARENA was restructured and its curricula revised following the results of a national survey and university analysis of the demand for professionals in the country. As previously mentioned, prior to the survey, capacity development efforts were geared to developing the academic staff's technical capacities. With the increasing need to compete with other universities to raise funds and to collaborate more extensively with stakeholders, the evaluation study helped the Faculty realize that it needed to strengthen its management skills and systems in the areas of leadership, governance, strategic planning, and internal and external communication.

From operational to strategic management

A decade ago, management development efforts generally focused on program and process management, which was primarily concerned with efficiency issues. Over the
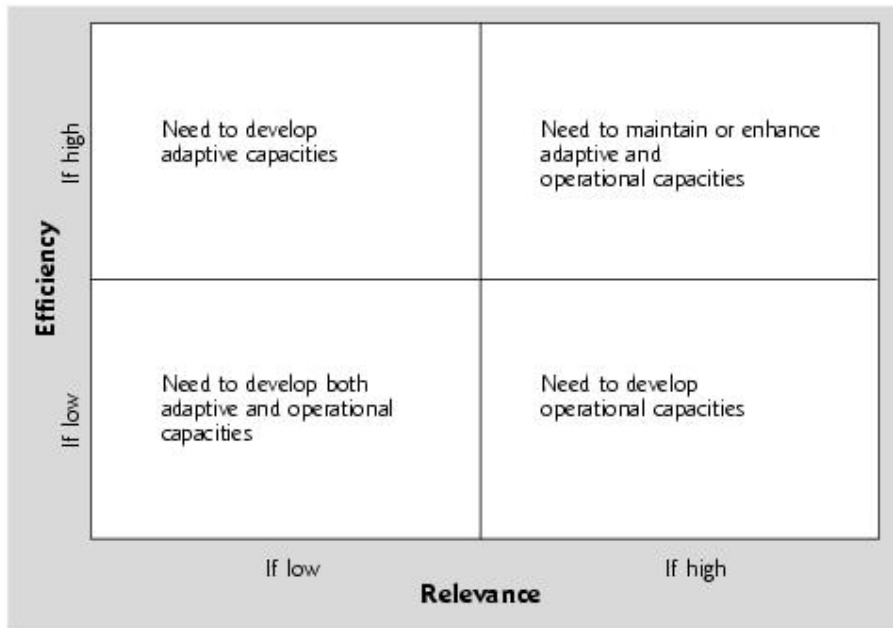
Figure 5. Capacities needed to improve efficiency and relevance

Operational management capacities contribute to an organization's efficiency and internal coherence. Adaptive management capacities contribute to an organization's relevance in relation to the interests and concerns of its external stakeholders.

last decade, an increasing number of research and development organizations have sought to develop their capacity for strategic planning and management. What we are realizing today is the need to go beyond managing an organization as an isolated entity to managing complex programs, partnerships, alliances, and networks of individuals in several organizations. These complex organizational forms are increasingly diverse and ever changing in nature. This challenges managers to operate more flexibly and creatively.

All of the participating organizations in the ECD Project work in partnership with other national and international organizations to achieve their goals. Three of the studies involved evaluations of capacity development efforts with networks. In Ghana, GRENEWECA supported the Plant Genetic Center's capacity development. In the

Philippines, the UPWARD network supported the Root Crops Center's capacity development. In Viet Nam, the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute coordinated the establishment of the country's first farming systems network, FSRNET, followed by NAREMNET. The studies revealed that little attention had been given to building capacities that relate specifically to networking, such as communications, public awareness raising, policy development, and negotiation skills.

"These new insights into capacity development highlight that adding some core competencies within an organization is a strategic issue. It is now easier to distinguish when capacity development is a strategic or an operational choice."

Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman

As a result of the studies, IDRC-CBNRM and IPGRI realized the importance of supporting the development of networking skills (such as advocacy, negotiation, and participatory methods for planning and evaluation) to help strengthen their partners' overall performance.

Need for continuous learning and change

The final trend that we should highlight concerns the increasing emphasis being placed on the capacity of people and organizations to learn from experience and to change in ways that will enhance their performance. In an era of increasingly rapid technological, economic, social and political change, people and organizations need to learn and adapt to changing conditions. Those that do not successfully innovate and develop new institutions and ways of working risk rapid obsolescence.

To cope with the drastic changes that are taking place in Cuba, IIP and other research institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture have begun to conduct periodic self-assessment exercises. These aim to reflect goals, strategies, and activities and will draw lessons from experience and identify areas for improvement. IPGRI has also adopted an organizational learning approach to evaluation.

Why Evaluate Organizational Capacity Development Efforts?

Traditionally, monitoring and evaluation have been carried out to meet external accountability requirements. Governmental authorities and donors require information on how organizations use their resources and what results are being obtained. These external accountability requirements make it necessary for organizations to prepare periodic progress reports, mid-term reviews, and end-of-project evaluations. Managers and staff justifiably view this type of monitoring and evaluation as a 'necessary evil' that has little direct value for the organization.

Through our involvement with the ECD Project, we learned how monitoring and evaluation can be made useful for an organization's managers and staff and how it can be used to strengthen capacity development efforts.

Capacity development efforts usually involve considerable experimentation and 'learning by doing'. For this reason, periodic reflection and analysis is required to keep an organization's capacity development efforts on track and to learn from successes and failures to improve the capacity development process.

The study teams reported that their capacity development efforts had seldom been designed on the basis of a systematic and detailed review of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, and capacity needs. Better diagnostic work should be done prior to implementing a capacity development program. This could also provide a baseline against which to measure progress and results over time.

For several years, CIAT has worked in Nicaragua to disseminate the application of its tools to support community decision making for natural resource management. This has involved several forms of collaboration with national institutions, including FARENA, which has been an important partner in research and training activities. CIAT's capacity development efforts focused on developing FARENA's staff expertise in technical fields, and didn't take into account FARENA's weakness in managing these activities. As a result, CIAT's research and training activities helped improve FARENA's technical capacities to deal with issues of natural resource management. But the evaluation revealed numerous gaps in FARENA's managerial skills and procedures, including priority setting, planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

The evaluation studies helped managers and staff in participating organizations increase their knowledge and skills and change their attitudes about what capacity development is and what successful capacity development involves. This was true, not only for national organizations, but also for their international partners. The Ghana case illustrates that a capacity development effort that targets Ghana's national program needs to address a wide range of areas, including administration, policy, fund raising, and management. These areas are outside the traditional mandate or area of expertise of a technical institute such as IPGRI. Other partners therefore need to be involved to improve the impact expected for IPGRI's actions.

The evaluation studies motivated managers and staff to discuss the performance and future of their organizations. In group work they were encouraged to express their ideas and opinions freely, even when there were disagreements. In many cases this was a new experience, especially for junior staff members who were not usually involved in management discussions.

Through a participatory, self-assessment approach, monitoring and periodic evaluations can be used to check progress in line with goals and expectations, and to test the assumptions underlying a capacity development effort. When used for these purposes, monitoring and evaluation can provide valuable information that managers and program operators in research and development organizations can use to improve their ongoing work as well as their future planning. Table 2, based on the initial study proposals for the ECD Project, illustrates the different motives of national and international organizations for carrying out the evaluation studies.

The evaluation methods used in the studies involved members and external stakeholders of all participating organizations. By involving key actors, such as national and local organizations and their partners (international organizations and donor agencies) in self-assessment exercises, the evaluation teams were able to begin to assess capacity development contributions through multiple perspectives rather than through the single viewpoint of an external agency funding and directing a capacity development intervention. This multiple perspective helped the teams understand how to improve relationships, especially with organizations that provide support or services for capacity development. For instance, the authors of the Viet Nam study reported the development of a common approach and agenda with other national research organizations through networking efforts. They also reported improved coordination and cooperation with donors.

The evaluation teams also learned that carrying out an evaluation can be a capacity development process in itself. The 'learning by doing' process of evaluation enabled them to develop a better understanding of evaluation and its procedures, tools, and mechanisms.

Take-Home Messages

In this era of dramatic technological, environmental, and economic turmoil, and social and political instability, research and development organizations need to learn to adapt and change to remain relevant to their stakeholders' concerns and expectations.

If organizations are to become more aware of the capacities needed to initiate change processes, they need a broader approach. Instead of developing individual knowledge, skills, and attitudes, they need to develop organizational culture and procedures and systems that channel the use of the organization's resources towards relevant goals.

Because most organizations today work on the basis of partnerships with other national and international organizations, specific capacities are needed, including negotiation techniques and participatory approaches to planning and development.

Participatory, learning-oriented self-assessment processes are indispensable for managing and improving organizational capacity development. They help managers and staff learn from their successes and failures and they strengthen capacity development efforts by improving planning and implementation, by gaining commitment from stakeholders to strengthening the organization, by increasing knowledge and skills, and by creating more positive attitudes toward organizational capacity development and toward evaluation.

Table 2. Reasons for Conducting the Evaluation Studies in the ECD Project

Evaluation studies	Motivation to do the evaluation of organization capacity development	
	National organization	**International organization**
Exploring capacity development in a rural development NGO in Bangladesh	RDRS viewed the study as an opportunity to reexamine its rationale for staff capacity development through participation in IIRR training courses. Results of the study could be used as inputs for future RDRS staff development policies and strategic plans.	IIRR expected the study to be a significant input into its education and training program development.
Towards strategic management in a Cuban agricultural research institute	IIP proposed the evaluation to provide information for the continuous improvement of its institutional change and capacity development efforts, and also to serve as an accountability mechanism for key stakeholders, including donors.	ISNAR wished to draw lessons from the Cuban case that could be applied by other members of the New Paradigm Project network.
Understanding capacity development in a plant genetic resource center in Ghana	For the Plant Genetic Center, the study was seen as a means of evaluating its overall performance and identifying weaknesses. It was also viewed as an opportunity to increase awareness among stakeholders and upper level managers about the Center and to engage them in problem solving and priority setting.	IPGRI and GRENEWECA were interested in understanding better how their organizational capacity development efforts could be more effective. This evaluation was an opportunity to take an in-depth look at their experiences with one national program and to extend what they learned to others.
Assessing organizational change in an agricultural faculty in Nicaragua	Since 1999, UNA has implemented a curricula reform and reorganized its faculties. FARENA was interested to participate in this evaluation because it wanted to know if the new curricula and structure were adequate.	CIAT wished to obtain information on the results of its activities, to strengthen FARENA's capacity, and to disseminate decision-support tools for natural resource management.
Strengthening participatory research capacities in a Philippines root crops research center	Both the Root Crops Center and UPWARD wished to assess their own organizational capacities and improve their mechanisms for capacity development. The evaluation would provide them with an opportunity to jointly review the respective capacity development mechanisms employed and to strengthen their partnership.	
Expanding capacities in a rural development institute in Viet Nam	The Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute wished to look at capacity development at the organizational level. Past evaluations by the IDRC-CBNRM program had focused mostly on the capacity development of individual researchers.	IDRC-CBNRM wanted to understand their contribution to individual and organizational capacity development efforts in the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute, FSRNET, and NAREMNET.

Guide to Further Reading

A great deal is being written about the large-scale changes currently occurring in technology, politics, economics, institutions, and other spheres of life. *The Postmodern Adventure* by Best and Kellner (2001) provides a good introduction to these issues. The set of three books by Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), *The Power of Identity* (1997), and *End of Millennium* (1998), analyze in detail the global changes taking place and their implications for social organization. *The New Production of Knowledge* by Gibbons and colleagues (1994) explains how knowledge production is shifting away from the 'ivory tower' of traditional universities to a broadening array of research and development laboratories, think tanks, project teams, and other organizational forms—public, private, or mixed in nature.

A special issue of the *British Journal of Management* (December 2001) discusses the implications of the global changes and of Gibbons' work for management science. *Organization Theory* by Hatch (1997) includes a useful discussion of postmodern perspectives on organization theory and the implications for organizational change and learning—topics of growing importance for managers everywhere.

In his popular book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), Senge championed the idea of organizational learning based on the notion that human minds in interaction are capable of transcending individual limitations. Since then, many organizational specialists, including Baird and Henderson (2001), Collinson and Parcell (2001), and Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne, and Araujo (1999) have emphasized the importance of strengthening the 'soft' side of organizational capacity, including negotiation, communication, knowledge management, organizational learning, and empowerment.

The book by Hage and Finsterbusch, *Organizational Change as a Development Strategy* (1987), presents models and tactics for improving organizations. The book *Organizations Evolving* by Aldrich (1999) discusses the processes by which new organizational forms emerge, and uses an evolutionary approach that cuts across disciplines.

4. Towards a Holistic Approach to Organizational Capacity Development

This chapter summarizes what the ECD Project team has learned about how organizations develop capacities and how managers can facilitate and advance capacity development processes in their organizations. Organizational capacity development efforts are seldom systematically planned and managed. Traditionally, capacity development programs were led by external agencies and focused on developing the capacities of individuals, projects, or units within the organization. The evaluation studies pointed to several limitations of this traditional, piecemeal approach and helped the project participants outline an alternative, holistic approach to developing an organization's capacities. We present a number of principles on which this approach is based, and identify steps that an organization can take to develop its own capacity and benefit from external sources of support. Examples from our evaluation studies highlight the value of working towards a more holistic approach to organizational capacity development.

Trends in Capacity Development

The evaluation studies confirmed the observation that capacity development in research and development organizations is seldom systematically planned or managed. Capacities are usually built up over time as staff members are trained and gain experience and as formal

procedures are established. Where concerted efforts have been made to develop capacity, they have often been externally motivated and led.

Development agencies and donors have used numerous mechanisms to deliver capacity development programs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, early attempts often focused on 'hardware', such as the construction of facilities and the provision of basic equipment. Technical advisors from the North were often sent to lead capacity development programs in the South. Later on, capacity development efforts shifted to focus on 'software', including staff knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Major investments were made in personnel development through the provision of university-level education for developing country nationals in industrialized nations.

Formal education was later replaced with an emphasis on short-term technical training. Workshops were frequently organized to plan, undertake, or review capacity development efforts. This resulted in the proliferation of a 'workshop culture' among research and development organizations, which increases dependency on external resources (including funds) to convene these meetings and moderators to help plan and facilitate them. External agencies have also supported the dissemination of technical information to professionals in the South through scientific publications and, more recently, access to the Internet.

With increasing frequency, collaborative research and networking projects are being used as capacity development strategies. For example, FSRNET in Viet Nam seeks to build capacity in farming systems research and natural resource management by providing a mechanism for sharing experiences. Multi-disciplinary scientists from various research institutes and universities share their experiences through research, training, workshops, and extension.

In the past, many collaborative projects were based on the assumption that Southern researchers or development workers—the 'recipients'—would learn from their counterparts in the North—the 'providers'—and hence, strengthen their scientific and technical capacities while working on the job. More recently, collaborative projects have tended to emphasize joint learning and sharing of experiences. Networks employing various mixes of face-to-face interaction and Internet exchange are greatly expanding possibilities for information exchange and learning within and between the South and the North.

Development agencies—including those who participated in the ECD Project—have employed a variety of these delivery mechanisms in attempts to strengthen the capacities of research and development organizations in the South. However, both client and provider have often been disappointed by the results. The reason for this frustration, and an alternative approach, are presented in the following section.

Moving from a Traditional to a More Holistic Approach to Capacity Development

The traditional approach

Individual and project-level capacities still need to be strengthened in many organizations through the traditional means well known to managers. However, our evaluation studies make it clear that organizational capacities are not developed through training individuals, delivering information, or participating in collaborative projects alone. These can be important components of a capacity development strategy, but only when they address organizational priorities.

A new approach to organizational change in a Nicaraguan agricultural faculty

Despite its abundant natural resources, Nicaragua continues to experience high levels of poverty. This is partly because local organizations lack the vision and commitment needed

for effective natural resource management. It may also reflect a lack of appropriate frameworks and methods among professionals working in the environmental and agricultural sectors. In an attempt to address these weaknesses, UNA carried out a national assessment of the professional needs of the agricultural sector, which resulted in a reorganization of FARENA and a revision of its curricula.

In line with the assessment, FARENA put considerable effort into building the capacity of its staff members in teaching, research, and extension. This enabled the Faculty to develop a core group of future professionals and to provide much needed technical and scientific information and services to Nicaraguan society. The emphasis was on building the Faculty's capacities at the individual and project levels. The evaluation study helped FARENA management and staff realize that due to the limited attention placed on its organizational capacity development needs, staff required training in important management, planning, evaluation, and fundraising skills.

Over time, FARENA had developed its capacities through joint research projects, training, and information exchange programs with an array of international and national governmental organizations, NGOs, and private firms. While many of these capacity development efforts had a positive impact on FARENA's performance, in retrospect most failed to address its priority organizational needs. Training may not be the most effective means of building organizational capacity. What's more, the University's administrative system did not always provide a conducive environment for FARENA's staff to carry out agreed-to plans.

The evaluation study helped those involved to better understand the value of examining external threats and opportunities, and of conducting periodic strategic reviews and capacity needs assessments to promote organizational capacity development. Faculty management and staff will now seek an active role in shaping and deciding the terms of capacity development support with external partners through negotiation so that future initiatives support FARENA's strategic plans. The team also understand that if individual projects are linked to the overall goals of the organization and a monitoring and evaluation system are put into place, the Faculty's and, in turn, the University's performance could greatly improve.

The process most frequently used in the past to develop an organization's capacity began with assessing, or sometimes even assuming, the needs of individual staff members or the needs of individual projects or units. Once these needs were identified, individuals were trained and capacities developed within the project or unit. These capacity development activities at the individual or project level were assumed to contribute to improved capacity and performance of the organization. Figure 6 illustrates this traditional linear approach.
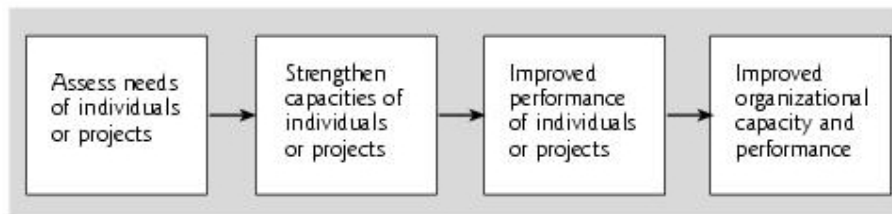
Figure 6. Underlying logic of the traditional approach to capacity development

The traditional, linear approach to capacity development assumes that the development of individual and project-level capacities will lead to improved organizational capacity and performance.

Bangladesh's RDRS evaluation study showed that the Service generally used informal procedures to identify the capacity development needs of its staff and had tended to focus on

management-level staff (especially women who had no previous training). The capacity development program of RDRS provided formal training in institutes outside of Bangladesh, self-managed distance education, study-oriented field visits, and in-house training conducted by external trainers, which was subsequently replicated by RDRS staff. Capacity development focused on staff training, the improvement of internal organizational systems and procedures, the upgrading of facilities, and the introduction of new technologies.

The traditional approach adopted by RDRS was similar to that of many organizations, where managers believe that upgrading the capacity of the individual will lead to better individual performance, and that this will automatically lead to better performance of the organization as a whole. Our evaluation studies helped us understand that this is not necessarily the case.

Weaknesses of the traditional approach

While training and project support are important, the evaluation studies revealed that they are inadequate for organizational capacity development for several reasons.

Individual staff or project-focused support seldom addresses the organization's priority needs. Our studies showed that the limited capacity of an individual or of a specific project is seldom the main constraint to an organization's effectiveness and efficiency. Focusing capacity development on an individual or a project can thus drain resources from high priority areas to lower priority ones.

In the case of the Plant Genetic Center in Ghana, individual training or project-directed capacity development interventions did not always focus on the Center's highest priority areas of need. Although a high priority was given to staff training and ex situ germplasm conservation (which accounted for 71% of outside technical assistance received by the Center), more important and emerging needs, such as strategic management, germplasm use, and information management, were given a lower emphasis.

A focus on individuals or projects misses the 'big-picture' issues facing the organization. Unless they are addressed, these 'big-picture' issues will threaten the continuing relevance of research and development organizations and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of their key stakeholders.

For example, after a broad assessment of the needs of the agricultural sector, UNA, Nicaragua asked its traditional departments of soil, water, and forestry to develop an integrated faculty of natural resources management with a watershed focus. The evaluation study revealed that providing staff members with highly specialized technical education abroad was not necessarily giving them the perspective and approaches they needed to improve the management of Nicaragua's natural resources.

Trained individuals may not find an environment conducive to the use of their new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Training may not be the most effective means of building organizational capacities. Individuals who have been trained in specialized technical skills or learned new approaches to their work often return to their home organization to find that the equipment needed to use their new skills is missing, or that their managers do not understand or, even worse, do not agree with, their new thinking and approach. They may also find that the newly acquired, highly specialized disciplinary skills or knowledge are of limited use in addressing the most important problems in their home environment.

Returning to the case of Nicaragua, many University professionals were educated overseas. When they returned home, they found that much of their knowledge could not be applied because they lacked essential equipment. Moreover, addressing the country's environmental problems called for multidisciplinary teamwork rather than individual scientific

contributions. The training provided did not prepare the University's academics for group work.

"We need to change capacity development—from support that allows individuals to do their work to support that is focused more on the outcome of their work."

Ibrahim Khadar

In other cases, returning trainees might not even stay with their organization, as they become more 'marketable' and mobile. In Bangladesh, the ability of RDRS to make use of the new skills acquired by their staff through training at IIRR was limited for a variety of reasons. According to the evaluation study, between 30 and 40% of RDRS staff were lured away by higher paying jobs as a result of acquiring new skills. In other cases, changes in staff roles and responsibilities made jobs less attractive and individual staff members or their supervisors were unable or unmotivated to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills to their peers.

A focus on individuals and projects may even undermine the organization's capacity. From our evaluation studies we learned that discrete or sporadic capacity development activities focused on individuals or projects usually contributes little to the overall capacity of the organization. An excessive focus on projects may even undermine the organization's capacity and performance. In BSU in the Philippines and UNA in Nicaragua, for example, personnel have sometimes been so heavily involved in externally funded projects and activities that they have been diverted away from the basic teaching and research activities they should be doing to fulfill their university's missions.

Principles of a holistic approach to capacity development

The evaluation studies helped the Project participants identify a number of principles that should be taken into consideration when shaping a process towards adopting a more holistic approach to organizational capacity development.

Lead your own capacity development initiative. Positive local capacity development requires local initiative. An external agency can provide information, training, or other services, but there are no two ways about it: each organization must ultimately take the responsibility for developing its own capacities to meet its own needs. In our organizations, the more successful capacity development efforts were driven by our own managers, and supplemented or supported in various ways by external agencies.

When Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture was beginning to undertake its reorganization and reorientation of agrarian science and technology institutes, it also initiated a meeting with ISNAR's New Paradigm Project. The capacity development interventions were designed and prioritized through a negotiated process in which the Cuban partners had the power to influence the content, methodology, and rationale.

Focus on the needs and priorities of the organization as a whole. The capacity of an organization as a whole is greater than the sum of the capacities of its individuals and parts. For this reason, discrete capacity development initiatives that address specific gaps at the level of individuals or projects can be expected to produce fewer results than a more coherent capacity development effort that identifies and addresses the needs of the organization as a whole. Once priorities of the organization have been established, individual or project-based needs that coincide with the latter can be focused on. Hence, the focus is on the holistic development of the organization, which provides a home for its members and their projects.

"Since this evaluation study, we might now include things like facilitation in our proposals. Perhaps half of our donors will be open to this idea and others will simply not understand or accept it."

Le Thanh Duong

The evaluation study helped RDRS in Bangladesh to realize that it needs to put mechanisms into place to systematically encourage and facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills, and changed attitudes acquired by individuals through training to others within the organization. In the past, such a mechanism did not exist and therefore investments in training rarely translated into change or improvement at the organizational level.

Pay attention to the processes of capacity development. Up to this point, we have emphasized the need to focus capacity development on key constraints or opportunities for im proving the organization's performance. But the processes employed to develop capacities are just as important as the goals, and these need to be mastered and managed.

Principles of a holistic approach to organizational capacity development

- Take ownership of your organization's capacity development initiative.
- Focus on the needs and priorities of the organization as a whole.
- Management of capacity development processes is crucial for success.
- Prepare for monitoring and evaluation at the outset of a capacity development initiative.
- Capacity development is more than a one-off event.
- Engage stakeholders in the capacity development process.
- Cultivate political support.
- Preserve your autonomy.
- Establish an environment conducive to learning and change.

Several of our evaluation studies highlighted the benefits of actively involving staff members and external stakeholders in capacity development processes. In Cuba and the Philippines, it was clear that participatory training events designed to promote self-learning, critical thinking, team-building, and action planning led to greater changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes than traditional courses in which instructors delivered standard texts to individuals. In the participatory events, trainees became better prepared to use the knowledge and skills acquired, because they gained experience in thinking through ways to adapt and apply the training to their own organizations.

Team-based training—bringing together team members rather than individuals for training events—also helped build support for implementing change in trainees' home organizations. The Root Crops Center attributed the development of its participatory research capacities to the use of a highly informal and inter-personal working environment. This environment promoted expertise sharing and mentoring among staff and introduced a mechanism for regular research review by its local partner, BSU, and a regional consortium.

Build in monitoring and evaluation from the outset. In capacity development, as in most other development activities, there is a tendency to focus resources and attention first on planning and then on implementation of discrete activities. Monitoring and evaluation become concerns only when the work is well under way, and perhaps nearing completion.

However, it is useful to think about, and plan for, monitoring and evaluation at the beginning of a capacity development initiative. Developing a plan for monitoring and evaluation—deciding what questions to ask, what data to collect, how to analyze and synthesize it, and how to interpret and present the findings—can help managers sharpen their objectives and become more aware of their assumptions. It helps managers to improve their planning and will also indicate what types of data need to be collected at different points in time to monitor progress and evaluate the overall capacity development process and its results.

View capacity development as more than a one-off event. The development of an organization's capacity is more than a one-off event, it is a process that evolves over a number of years and it requires resources. For this reason, the development and maintenance of good working relationships between the various parties involved in a capacity development effort is crucial to its overall success. In Ghana, for example, the 'client' and the 'provider' invested time and resources in developing good personal and working relationships over a 20-year period. This paid off handsomely over time.

Engage stakeholders in the capacity development process. In our experience, stakeholder involvement was an essential part of the success of our capacity development efforts. Stakeholder involvement is important for identifying appropriate new directions and building commitment for change. National stakeholders should be involved in assessing the organization's needs and setting its priorities. They can also be important sources of resources or partners for accomplishing the organization's objectives.

Some of the evaluation studies identified stakeholders at the national, regional, and international levels. In some cases, the relationships with stakeholders extended to actually building the capacity of stakeholder organizations. RDRS in Bangladesh strengthened the capacities of the community-based groups they worked with, and this worked towards achieving the organization's mission, which is to empower the rural poor politically, socially, and economically.

Viet Nam's Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute also pointed to stakeholder engagement as a key element of its capacity development process. This included building relationships with its clients and being increasingly responsive to their needs, developing a common approach and agenda with other national research organizations through networking efforts, and improving cooperation and coordination with its international donors.

Cultivate adequate political support and preserve your autonomy. Political support and autonomy are important interrelated factors. In public organizations, any significant capacity development effort, which involves such things as strategic planning, restructuring, or training abroad, will require the support of decision-makers in high-level positions such as ministers of agriculture, environment, or finance.

In Cuba, all key decisions taken during strategic planning for the country's agricultural research were taken with the involvement and support of the Vice Minister of Agriculture. The development of capacity in agrifood chain analysis within IIP was driven by support from the Institute's Director. Similarly, in FARENA in Nicaragua, the major decisions on curricula, structure, and training abroad required the approval of the parent university, UNA.

The degree of autonomy of the organization strongly influences the management's room for maneuver in capacity development. The more autonomous the organization, the greater the control managers have over capacity development processes. For example, Ghana's Plant Genetic Center has been able to make greater advances in capacity development since it became semi-autonomous. In particular, this has resulted in a direct funding allocation to the

Center from the Government, and the Center now has greater control over its budgetary resources.

"We need to make distinctions between what capacities we can and cannot develop. We cannot do everything at the same time and need to make choices."

Ibrahim Khadar

While autonomy gives managers the budgetary and hierarchical authority they need to make decisions, it can have another connotation. It allows the organization to carry out its own analyses, to chart its own direction and, in turn, to pursue its goals.

In this sense, autonomy not only enables capacity development to take place and but also impacts on its process.

Establish an environment that is conducive to learning and change. Disruptive changes in the external environment can pose serious problems for organizations. But our evaluation studies show that major disruptions can also create positive change. Because of a series of natural disasters in the Philippines in the 1990s, root crops became an important source of food security, and the Root Crops Center was able to demonstrate the relevance of its research activities.

On the internal front, a manager who wishes to promote capacity development should make every effort to foster openness when discussing learning, strengths and weaknesses, and when redirecting efforts. RDRS in Bangladesh encourages and facilitates returnees from training courses to share their new learning with fellow colleagues. Senior managers, for example, are encouraged to organize and conduct similar training for their colleagues back home. This practice encourages the staff to transfer their learning to others. However, the process depends largely on incentives provided by the organization and the personal commitment and motivation of managers.

Steps to Promote a Holistic Approach in the Development of Organizational Capacity

There is no single recipe or blueprint for developing an organization's capacity. Capacity development involves learning and experimentation and what works well in one place may fail in another. For example, the participatory strategies employed jointly by Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture and the New Paradigm Project for strategic planning and capacity development were attempted in other countries in the region. In some cases the results were disappointing, due in large part to the frequent turnover of managers and the discontinuity of national policies.

Keeping in mind the futility of searching for universal formulas, our experiences and reflections from the evaluation studies suggest the value of going through the steps listed below. Given the nature of capacity development processes, and the frequent changes that organizations are exposed to today, managers should not expect to implement these steps in a neat sequence as presented. Nevertheless, our experience suggests there is some logic in the order presented, which is mirrored in recent research on organizational strategy and development in a wide variety of organizations and settings. Figure 7 illustrates the six steps we propose to foster a more holistic approach to capacity development.
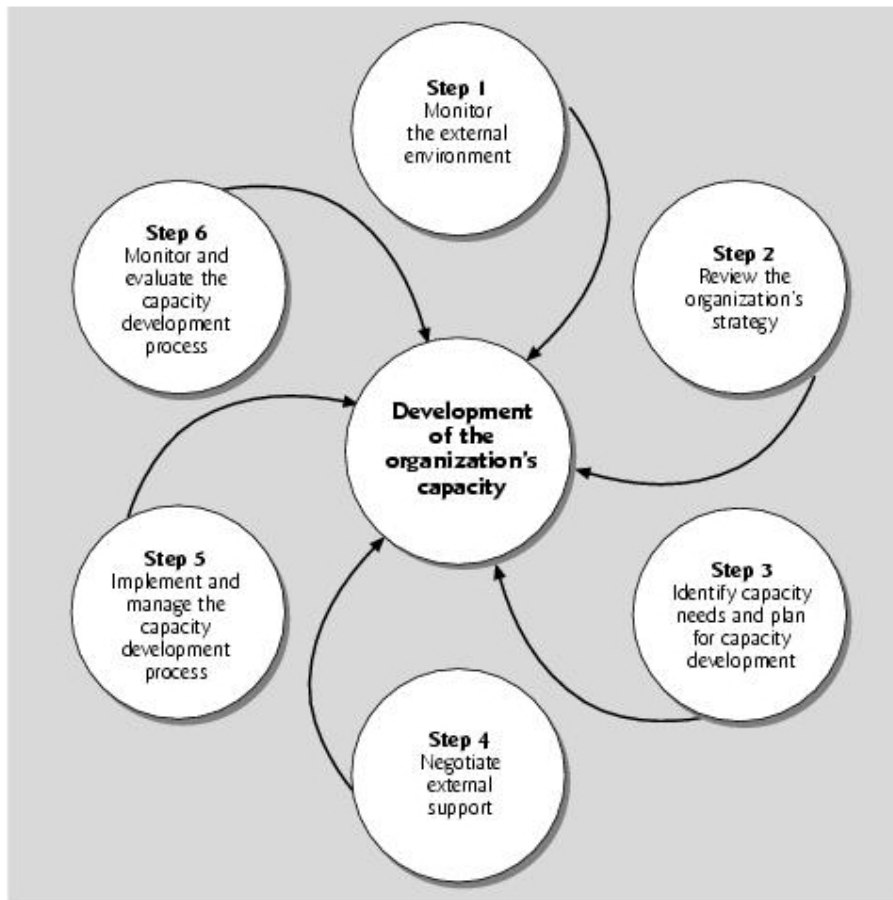
Figure 7. Steps in a holistic approach to capacity development

The steps are presented in an ideal sequence. In practice, however, capacity development efforts often begin at different points in the sequence, skip steps, or cycle back and forth between steps.

Step 1. Monitor the external environment to identify needs and opportunities for organizational change

Political, social, technological, or economic changes may drastically alter the organization's goals, focus, and processes for capacity development. As highlighted in the previous chapter, entry into the global marketplace, collapse of traditional markets and partnerships, decentralization of the national government, and reduction in external funding support were some of the drastic changes experienced by our organizations. In today's turbulent times, it is essential that organizations monitor external trends and develop strategies for coping with changing opportunities and threats.

In the late 1990s, the New Paradigm Project organized a national training workshop in Cuba to share technology foresight methodologies for identifying current and emerging technological demands in agrifood chains. The knowledge gained allowed participants to begin studying some agrifood chains in the country. The study carried out by IIP provided crucial information for refocusing the Institute's research. As a result of the study, the Institute increased its focus on appropriate technology for the emerging small farm sector and on new swine rations based on locally available inputs.

Step 2. Review the organization's strategy

Capacity development needs are best identified within the framework of the organization's strategy. As the organization monitors its external environment, it will need to reassess its mission, objectives, strategies, and programs periodically. All the study teams found that it had, or would have, been useful to carry out a strategic planning exercise *before* embarking on strengthening particular capacities.

In Cuba, the Directorate of Science and Technology of the Ministry of Agriculture coordinated a strategic planning process for all the country's research institutes. This provided a solid basis for planning specific capacity development initiatives.

In the other countries, where such exercises were not carried out, the project team felt that an organizational assessment should have been undertaken before embarking on future capacity development initiatives. This would have helped the participating organizations target capacities that were essential for achieving their objectives.

Step 3. Identify capacity needs and plan for capacity development

As already mentioned, plans for capacity development are ideally based on an understanding of the external environment and a well-formulated strategy for the organization. Developing a monitoring and evaluation system as part of a capacity development plan will help managers assess how capacity development contributes to the organization's short- or long-term plans. In this way, capacity development can support the organization's strategy. In fact, few of the participating organizations have well-developed mechanisms for monitoring the external environment or for strategic planning and management.

Our studies revealed these to be crucial areas of managerial capacity requiring further strengthening. Nevertheless, most of our organizations did some sort of needs assessment. For example, RDRS in Bangladesh routinely assesses its training needs. Ghana's Plant Genetic Center bases its priorities for capacity development on an informal needs assessment carried out with a partner organization, GRENEWECA. During the initial planning phase of a capacity development effort, it is important to plan for subsequent monitoring and evaluation. Thinking through how the capacity development effort can be monitored and evaluated can help planners sharpen their goals and clarify and assess their assumptions. This kind of 'ex ante' analysis can help improve the plans as well as indicating what types of data need to be collected to permit adequate monitoring and evaluation later on.

Step 4. Negotiate external support

Even with the best planning, an organization may not have sufficient resources of its own to build up its capacities as quickly as might be desired. Some external support for training, workshops, collaborative projects, or basic equipment was provided to all the national organizations participating in this project. In most cases, national organizations drew on many different sources of external support for capacity development. It is important to note that external support was provided not only by foreign 'donors' but also by a variety of national or local entities. Ghana's Plant Genetic Center was largely supported by the Government of Ghana, while the Root Crops Center in the Philippines was supported by BSU.

Regardless of the source, organizations need to negotiate the terms of support to ensure that capacity development efforts are, in fact, directed towards meeting the organization's priorities. Planning and review missions involving both national and international partners can improve the targeting of capacity development interventions, especially where there has been no formal strategic planning exercise.

Step 5. Implement and manage the capacity development process

Nothing can be quite so demoralizing and harmful to an organization's performance as a thorough planning exercise that is not followed by serious implementation. All the studies concluded that effective management is essential for organizational capacity development. Developing organizational capacities involves organizational change processes that need to be effectively managed to keep them on track and moving forward. If effective management does not exist in an organization, management development should be a component of the capacity development strategy.

Step 6. Monitor and evaluate the capacity development process

Organizational strategies must remain dynamic and flexible since an organization's needs and priorities can change. For example, the priorities of the Root Crops Center in the Philippines changed several times while the Center was working with the UPWARD network to develop its capacity in participatory research.

Monitoring and periodic evaluation of the capacity development process in the light of changing organizational priorities is a key source of information that can help managers readjust their activities. Monitoring and evaluation can also ensure that capacity development is actually contributing to the organization's capacity and performance, and not draining resources from higher priority areas. Monitoring provides assurance that efforts to develop organizational capacity are tracked, successes and weaknesses are identified, and efforts redirected as needed.

In most of the study organizations, monitoring of capacity development and change and communicating the results promoted capacity development by motivating management, staff, and external stakeholders to support the effort and by identifying areas needing greater attention. Documenting and sharing results helped inform people within the organization of progress and promoted staff and stakeholder involvement in the change process.

In Viet Nam, the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute used self-assessment workshops in its evaluation process. This approach helped develop a shared understanding of the evaluation process and goals with participants. The process also helped gain commitment from Institute staff to the evaluation and its results, and stimulated enthusiasm to participate in planning for the organization's future. The Institute's management has decided to follow up the study with a number of other self-assessment activities.

Take-Home Messages

Managers should move toward a more holistic approach to capacity development, based on a number of important principles. An organization should lead its own capacity development efforts so that it meets its own needs. Capacity development should target the needs of the organization as a whole. Once the priorities of the organization have been established, individual or project-based needs can be focused on. The processes used to develop capacities are as important as its goals. They therefore need to be mastered and well managed.

A holistic approach to capacity development requires a comprehensive, continuous, and logical process that begins with strategic planning and is followed by assessment of capacity needs, then planning for capacity development interventions (including such activities as training, acquisition of equipment, and collaborative research projects), and finally, periodic monitoring and evaluation. Managers will need to cultivate support among the organization's stakeholders to carry this process through. Senior managers and political authorities are especially important because they usually sanction major changes that may take place within an organization.

Developing organizational capacity requires financial and other resources, which may need to come from governmental agencies, donor agencies, networks, or other national level stakeholders. The terms of support should be negotiated in such a way that the activities truly meet the organization's needs rather than the interests of the external agencies. External agencies should be willing to encourage and support their partners in implementing this holistic approach to capacity development.

'Learning by doing' is fundamental to capacity development. Therefore, managers who wish to develop their organizations' capacities should seek to create an environment that is open to self-criticism, reflection, and improvement. Likewise, external agencies that wish to support capacity development efforts should be flexible enough to allow for plans and procedures to be modified in response to changing conditions and accumulated knowledge.

Guide to Further Reading

Much has been written on the inadequacies of past capacity development approaches and, more broadly, past approaches to technical assistance. Much less has been written on what has worked well. Much of what has been written on capacity development strategies is in the 'gray literature' of papers prepared for international development agencies. The CIDA, UNDP, and the Evaluation Unit of IDRC have done particularly interesting work in this area.

A paper by Lusthaus, Adrien, and Perstinger, *Capacity Development: definitions, issues and implications for planning, monitoring and evaluation* (1999a) identifies a series of development approaches, beginning in the 1950s, that have preceded the emergence of capacity development as a central issue in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The paper by Qualman and Bolger, *Capacity development: a holistic approach to sustainable development* (1996) summarizes frameworks and strategies for capacity development that emphasize the value of holistic approaches. Guidelines published by UNDP in 1998 present an approach to capacity assessment and development in a systems and strategic management context. A paper on the current conceptualization of capacity development and the implications for practice, prepared in 1999 by Joy for UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund, discusses issues for planning and monitoring capacity development. A 1998 paper by Morgan on capacity and capacity development discusses seven strategies for capacity development.

The steps to promote the development of organizational capacity that are presented in this chapter are consistent with contemporary approaches to strategic planning and analysis and organizational development. Grant's book *Contemporary strategy analysis: concepts, techniques, applications* (1995) outlines a strategic approach for developing an organization's capabilities. This approach has been further elaborated by Mabey, Salaman, and Storey (1998).

Useful frameworks for strategic planning are presented by Bryson (1995) and by Blackerby and Blackerby (1994). A 1999 article by Patton on organizational development and evaluation discusses how evaluation can be used to promote organizational development and leadership development.

Several useful frameworks and tools for organizational assessment are presented on the website www.reflect-learn.org. More detailed frameworks are presented in the books by Harrison (1994) and Lusthaus and colleagues (2002) in *Organizational assessment: a framework for improving performance.*

Those concerned with organizational capacity development can learn a great deal from experiences with evaluation, organizational learning, and change. Interested readers are

referred to the ISNAR Discussion Paper on this subject by Horton, Galleno, and Mackay (2003).

5. Towards Partnership in Organizational Capacity Development

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This chapter summarizes what we have learned about partnerships between national and international organizations involved in organizational capacity development. 'Partnership' is a very popular term in the international development community nowadays. However, many different types of relationships pass for what is called partnership. Many capacity development efforts are supply-driven, and the so-called partners may not share common goals, strategies, values, or expectations. What is clear, however, is that the basis of many relationships is shifting from a donor-driven, supply model, to more collaborative, mutually beneficial partnership models. Experiences from the ECD Project allow us to describe some of the types of relationships that national and international organizations establish for their capacity development work, and we identify some key issues that need to be addressed when working closely with other organizations. We present a number of elements that positively influenced our relationships with others in organizational capacity development.

Moving Beyond Donor–Recipient Relationships

All of the organizations participating in the ECD Project are facing an expanding array of demands and challenges. They no longer have simple and stable goals and strategies for serving their clients. All of the organizations are becoming multi-faceted, all are working in increasingly complex national and international settings, and all are linking with more and more external groups.

When two or more organizations work together, the need for interaction, mutual understanding, and common purpose creates challenges. The needs and priorities of the individual organizations may be forgotten or ignored in the excitement and complication of addressing a common challenge. In such cases, the organization may work towards the short-term agenda of the partnership and, at the end, the partners may need to rethink who they are and what they should be doing.

"Most donor organizations do not come at a project from an organizational development perspective—they tend to focus on outputs or a specific issue. By taking evaluation out of the project and into the organization, dialog about change can take place between project partners."

Fred Carden

Despite the difficulties of working together, organizations increasingly seek to build their capacities through collaboration. The organizations that participated in the ECD Project all lack the resources or abilities to achieve their objectives on their own, and they recognize the importance of collaborating with others that have complementary resources and management capacities.

The ECD Project brought together a number of national and international research and development organizations and evaluated how they have been working together to strengthen their capacities. Through our involvement, we have become aware of some of the challenges of partnering for capacity development. For example, the goals, strategies, or values of the organizations working together seldom coincide. The nature and purpose of partnerships are seldom clearly defined. The roles of the different organizations involved are seldom

negotiated and clarified. Capacity development efforts are often supply-driven, reflecting the views and priorities of external agencies rather than those of the organization whose capacity is supposedly being developed. Finally, capacity development efforts are often focused on specific, individual projects rather than strengthening the organization's capacity to achieve its goals.

Seeking partnership for capacity development in Bangladesh

When RDRS shifted from being a field office of an international NGO to being a local NGO, its managers recognized that it needed to build its own capacity in several areas. As a result, staff development was given a large budget and much of it was invested in training programs offered by IIRR.

Initially, the relationship between RDRS and IIRR was based on a commonality of mission: rural development and poverty eradication through participatory development approaches. IIRR's standard training programs neatly fit RDRS's mandate, and, over a five-year period, the two organizations developed a stable and dependable 'service provision' relationship. RDRS paid for IIRR courses that it chose from a menu of yearly offerings.

Following the evaluation, the organizations came to understand how the service provision nature of their relationship, which often characterizes purely commercial relationships, and the focus on individual training, could limit the development of RDRS's organizational capacity. Although the two organizations had a long-standing relationship, IIRR's involvement in capacity development at RDRS was through discrete training events. Once IIRR completed a training course, its concern for capacity development in RDRS ended. IIRR was not involved in assessing how skills acquired through its courses were being utilized in its partner organizations.

Discord between the visions of RDRS and IIRR regarding the purpose and intent of the capacity development effort complicated the evaluation study. The evaluation results raised questions about whether RDRS's organizational capacities could have been better addressed through IIRR's training courses if the partnership had gone beyond a service–provider relationship. Had roles and responsibilities been clearer and negotiation and flexibility stronger, IIRR's contribution to RDRS's capacity development could perhaps have been much broader.

The evaluations highlight the need to create relationships that develop the organization as a whole. Thus, whether we are talking about discrete training events, technical support, mentoring, or other forms of capacity development, the activity should support the creation of a stronger organization, not just build the capacity of the individuals or groups involved. Below we present an analysis of the relationships that can exist between two organizations, we look at their strengths and weaknesses, and we describe some key elements that make for more positive and successful partnerships in organizational capacity development.

Characterizing Partnerships and Implications for Capacity Development

Partnerships are negotiated relationships between two or more entities that have voluntarily entered into a legal or moral contract. All of the evaluation studies involved partnerships between national and international research and development organizations. In some cases, regional organizations or networks were also involved. The relationship varied depending on their purpose, nature, and intensity. We use examples from our evaluation studies to elucidate the varying characteristics that partnerships can have over time, as needs and expectations change.

Relationships involving international donors have started to change fundamentally, although this change is by no means complete and is not shared among all agencies. The shift being made is from a donor–recipient relationship to a partnership with mutual benefits. In the donor–recipient relationship, the donor holds the power and the authority over what is done and how it is done. In this scenario, the recipient is a relatively passive receiver of support. The underlying concept is one of transfer (of resources, knowledge, technology, or ideas) from the one who possesses or controls the resources to a recipient who will thereby benefit or improve in some way.

"We should think about how a project is enhancing both organizations and not consider a project as an independent entity."

Fred Carden

More and more frequently, it is recognized that both parties to a relationship have something to offer and something to gain. The increasing complexity of our operating environment suggests that all organizations can gain from working with others who have complementary resources and management capacities. The shift is towards a partnership model in which it is recognized that there is a need for dialog, where partners seek mutual benefits, and where the capacities of different organizations can be joined or shared to achieve common objectives.

A key challenge is how to develop viable and productive partnerships. In a donor–recipient relationship, the donor has greater power and transfers resources, knowledge, and technologies to the recipient, who has relatively little power and generally poor access to these resources. In capacity development, there is a strong case for greater equality in the relationship. However, it should be noted that *equality* is not equivalent to *sameness*. Each party brings different issues and strengths to the partnership and each party should take something different away from it, in support of their organization's mission. What this highlights, however, is the need for mutual respect as well as clarity in the nature and purpose of the relationship.

Whatever the nature, a partnership strives to respect the demands, needs, and expectations of all the parties involved. Partnership is characterized by common goals, mutual respect, collegiality, shared values, and agreed on principles for reaching decisions and for sharing the costs and benefits of the partnership. A partnership may grow out of another type of relationship if two or more organizations identify a common cause in the course of working together. These partnerships may be short-, medium-, or long-term. How long they last depends on the nature and complexity of the issues being addressed and on external factors such as funding availability.

Below we present broad types of partnerships that emerged from the organizations participating in the ECD Project. These are 'pure' or 'ideal' types, and specific partnerships may not fit precisely within one category. Many of the cases could be described in terms of different types of partnership at different stages. As a set, they provide a mechanism for negotiating the purpose of a partnership and for clarifying the nature of the primary relationships.

Focusing on specific capacity needs

In one case the primary objective of the partnership was capacity development. RDRS worked with IIRR because it wanted to use the training courses developed by IIRR to build the capacity of its staff. The relationship was built over several years and centered on the course schedule outlined by IIRR. The parties usually did not define the training agenda together, but worked from a set of menu possibilities. Assessment of performance was made

in terms of the individual courses and the abilities imparted to the RDRS staff. This approach to capacity development closely resembles the traditional technical transfer model.

RDRS managers and staff had thought that training was the main element of capacity development. In conducting the evaluation, they realized that, while training was important, there were many other elements of capacity development, and these were not being addressed. Training was necessary but not sufficient. They then began to look at the partnership and how it could contribute to other capacity development needs.

A limitation of this type of relationship is that the 'clients' or beneficiaries have to conform to the priorities and service delivery format of the 'provider'. Providers (either donors or training institutions) often try to meet the requirements of different stakeholders by offering a generic program that addresses a wide range of needs. In this case, clients are expected to select from a menu of options made available by the provider. Where there is a clear training need and an expertise that can provide that service, the partnership is especially beneficial.

While service providers can offer useful training and technical assistance that contributes to the development of an organization's capacity, their contribution tends to be limited. In that sense, it is often a short-term relationship. But in terms of addressing complex issues, it cannot move the organization forward in ways that a more comprehensive partnership could. The other implication is that unless the purpose and intent of the relationship is negotiated and clarified from the start, unrealistic expectations and dissonance can develop, which can ultimately harm the capacity development effort.

Partners with a common mission

Ghana's Plant Genetic Center and IPGRI have a common cause centered around the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA). Both organizations are committed to fulfilling the agreement, which requires coordinated action at the local and international level. The conservation and use of plant genetic resources has multiple dimensions and capacity development emerged as a major priority in the course of the study. The critical elements of a mission-based partnership would seem to be that the parties have a common and largely overlapping mission, both have a role to play or an interest in the issue, both see merit in working together, and both see the potential to learn from the partnership.

The partnership between IPGRI and the Plant Genetic Center has lasted for 20 years, and they have been working with GRENEWECA since 1998. All three organizations are motivated to collaborate because they share a common mission. IPGRI and GRENEWECA were created to promote conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources at the global and regional level. However, neither of them actually control any germplasm. Therefore, to accomplish their own missions, they must work with, and strengthen, national organizations like the Plant Genetic Center. Similarly, the Plant Genetic Center benefits from working with IPGRI and GRENEWECA through access to resources (specialized equipment, information, etc.) and through building up its technical and managerial capacities.

Focusing on a common problem

Many organizations do not have common missions, but have overlapping interests in a problem area. In the case of Viet Nam, there was a confluence of interests; the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute has a mandate to enhance sustainable agriculture and rural development to embrace the challenges of globalization in a time of major governmental reform. The IDRC-CBNRM program has a mandate to foster research and research capacity in the local management of natural resources. Amidst transitions in Viet Nam's economy,

there is a need to conduct research on natural resource management and also to develop the Institute's managerial capacities.

A similar issue affected Cuba. The Ministry of Agriculture and IIP were eager to strengthen their managerial capacities to cope with changes in the economy. ISNAR's New Paradigm Project was working on similar issues on a regional scale. IIP saw that it could benefit from the knowledge and expertise available in the New Paradigm Project and the Project saw that its members could all learn and benefit from the experiences in Cuba. One of the more important elements of the relationship was the mutual commitment to a philosophy of collaboration that respects and recognizes the autonomy, perspectives, and knowledge of local professionals. In both Cuba and Viet Nam, the issues and the capacity development efforts are central to the partner-ship, which may last over the medium or the long term.

Networking

In a network relationship, many different parties are involved in capacity development in a nonhierarchical fashion. Each party links to others in the network because they feel the exchange of information, experiences, or other resources are mutually beneficial. Network members may have common missions or address common problems. Networks involve a complex web of relationships involving many individu als and organizations. In our studies, we realized that our organizations are more and more extensively networked with others with similar interests and complementary resources.

An evolving partnership for capacity development in Ghana

IPGRI has been working with Ghana's Plant Genetic Center for over 20 years. Although other external parties have contributed to the Center's capacity development, IPGRI has provided the Center with the most support over the longest period of time. Since their relationship is based on a commonality of mission and strategies, and the responsibility and authority for plant genetic resources rests with local organizations, the two have worked closely together to help build the Center's capacity for plant genetic resources conservation and management.

The results of the evaluation study showed that the nature of IPGRI's contribution to the Center's capacity development evolved over time and responded to its changing circumstances and needs. The evaluation team realized, however, that despite the relevance of previous capacity development efforts, there was still a need for IPGRI to further target its capacity development efforts more directly to the Center's needs. Although IPGRI's capacity development support has been flexible, it has been disproportionately focused on a limited number of areas and topics, such as ex situ conservation. The evaluation study showed that the Center would have greatly benefited from support in the development of its operational and strategic management capacities in administration, general management, and policy reform, for example.

These management-related issues lie outside the traditional mandate or area of expertise of a technical institute such as IPGRI. The Institute may therefore not be the best-suited organization to respond to building skills in strategic management. IPGRI could, however, help the Center and other national programs to identify and monitor their needs, to identify potential partner organizations that could offer the required expertise, and to help raise funds and other resources to bring in the appropriate assistance. Monitoring and evaluation are especially important for organizations like IPGRI who have a capacity development mandate, because it will allow them to understand the real needs of the organizations they seek to support.

The study convinced some IPGRI staff to recommend putting financial resources aside and creating staff positions specifically for organizational capacity development support. Since nearly all IPGRI staff members have some responsibility for capacity development, their skills and knowledge about capacity development need to be strengthened so that the overall organization can improve its contribution to its partners' organizational capacity development.

Some networks have capacity development as their goals. Governments in West and Central Africa responded to the need to conserve germplasm by creating GRENEWECA, because the issue was of regional, as well as national, importance. It was recognized that joint efforts were essential to address the requirements of germplasm conservation. The network became an important addition to the partner-ship between the Plant Genetic Center and IPGRI, and capacity development is an important goal of the network. In 2002, ISNAR's New Paradigm Project evolved into a regional network aimed at strengthening capacities in research and development organizations to address emerging development issues in Latin America.

Elements of Successful Partnerships in Capacity Development

The evaluation studies have helped identify a number of elements that seem to characterize the more successful partnerships for capacity development, whatever the partnership type. These are discussed below and summarized in Figure 8 and Table 3. The success of partnerships depends largely on the extent to which ownership, power, and commitment are shared. Ethics and principles play an important role in shaping a partnership, because they enhance the degree to which that ownership, power, and commitment are respected and shared.

Link to the organizations' missions, strategies, and values

One overarching factor in developing a successful partnership is to link the capacity development effort to the missions, strategies, and values of the organizations involved. One of the reasons for looking at organizational capacity development in the ECD Project was that organizations are often encouraged to take on projects because they are strong and are likely to implement the project well. However, if the project is not well-linked to the organization's mission, both the project and the organization may suffer.

In our studies, we found that partnerships were strongest and most productive when the various parties were all committed to the capacity development effort and felt joint ownership of it. If a relationship is to be successful, both the international and national organizations' needs must be addressed. Collaboration takes place when the needs converge. Ownership is promoted when activities contribute to the missions and strategies of the organizations involved. The partners valued working together because they were working towards similar long-term goals in similar ways. Of course, a link to the organization's mission and strategy is not enough. True feelings of ownership and commitment also require direct involvement in the design and execution of capacity development activities.

Ghana's Plant Genetic Center and IPGRI have complementary objectives because they both seek to implement the GPA. Neither party could achieve this goal alone because it requires both local and international action.

In the case of Bangladesh, RDRS sought IIRR's services because the two organizations shared a similar mission—promoting rural empowerment and development.
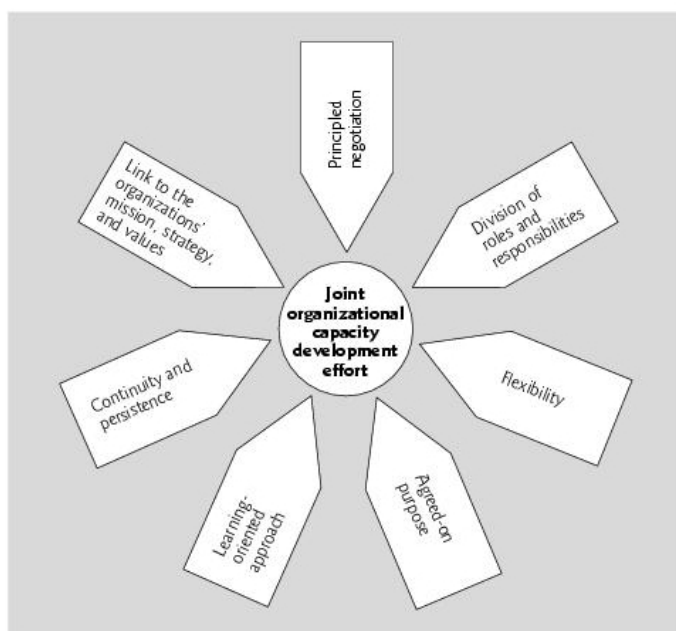
Figure 8. Elements of successful partnerships for capacity development

Table 3. Elements of Successful Partnerships for Capacity Development

Link to organizations' mission, strategy, and values	A partnership should contribute to each organization's mission and be consistent with its strategies and values.
Clear purpose and intent	Each organization should determine why the partnership is useful to the achievement of its goals. Discussing the purpose up front is important, as incorrect assumptions may lead to later disagreements and conflicts.
Clear division of roles and responsibilities	Each organization needs to take responsibility for its own development. In capacity development, the partners need to play different roles and perform different tasks. Power imbalances in international partnerships make it especially important to negotiate and define roles and responsibilities.
Principled negotiation and joint decision-making	Principles should be established for the relationship prior to action. Ownership is promoted when all parties are actively involved in decision making.
Openness to learning and change	Learning is at the heart of capacity development, and it needs to take place in all participating organizations, not just in the 'beneficiary' organization. In an environment of mutual trust, monitoring and evaluation can promote learning.
Continuity and persistence	Capacity development is a process which requires time, resources, and persistence. While persistence does not guarantee progress, it has a high payoff in most capacity development efforts.
Flexibility	Relationships need to change over time as conditions and issues evolve. All partnerships end at some point and plans for phasing out should be anticipated.

However, when they examined their relationship at a deeper level in the evaluation study, they found that their partnership was not, in fact, contributing to the mission of both organizations. IIRR was providing valuable technical skills to RDRS, but the use of these skills was outside the scope of the partnership. The evaluation helped IIRR reexamine the assumptions on which its training strategy was based. IIRR felt that the development of RDRS's organizational capacity could have been addressed more fully had the partnership considered the learning needs of both organizations from the beginning. The study also stimulated RDRS and IIRR to negotiate the goals and terms of their relationship to contribute more directly to their missions.

Clear purpose and intent

In the course of assessing their capacity development efforts, partners came to realize the importance of clarifying the purpose and intent of the relationship between the national and international organizations. The organizations involved may have different assumptions about the purpose and intent of the relationship.

Dissonance between each organization's understanding of the capacity development effort can lead to unrealistic expectations or dissatisfaction later on.

"Technical organizations may not have a comparative advantage in facilitating the processes that we now understand are essential for capacity development. We are now considering what role we should play in facilitating capacity development processes."

Jamie Watts

To come back to Bangladesh, RDRS expected—perhaps unrealistically—that the IIRR training would automatically lead to a strengthening of the organization. Following the evaluation, RDRS realized that it needed a more comprehensive approach to support its organizational capacity.

Organizational capacity development is often a by-product of projects or relationships that have other goals. For example, in Viet Nam, IDRC (through its CBNRM program) has supported the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute with collaborative research projects on the assumption that strengthening individual capacities to conduct research will lead to a stronger research organization. As a consequence, IDRC's dominant mode of funding has been centered on research projects and training related to projects, and not on organizational capacity development per se. The IDRC-CBNRM program has learned through this study and other experiences that even when strengthening organizational capacities is not an explicit objective, attention should be paid to the context in which the funded project operates and not just to the project and the individuals carrying out the work.

Clear division of roles and responsibilities

International organizations may encourage and contribute to capacity development in a national organization by providing motivation, ideas, resources, or technical expertise, but they cannot effectively lead the process. Leadership must come from within an organization that wishes to develop its own capacity.

The ability to take the lead in capacity development is linked to the balance or imbalance of power in relationships between organizations. Power refers to the ability to act freely, to control resources, and to have authority. When capacity development efforts involve different parties, power needs to be shared. Particularly in the case of international partnerships, it is important to recognize imbalances in power relationships, which are usually due to differential control over resources, especially financial resources.

Each donor has its own set of accountability requirements, for example, control over the funds it contributes to a program or control over the program's focus. National partners also have their own accountability requirements. The issue is not to remove power imbalances but to recognize, in as open and direct a manner as possible, and negotiate mutually acceptable principles and procedures for working together. This requires transparency from both parties.

In conducting the evaluation in Viet Nam, it became clear to IDRC-CBNRM that some changes in IDRC's program priorities were not viewed positively by all the Vietnamese partners. The shift to community-based research had not been discussed in the context of its implications for the changing partnership base of the networks at the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute.

External organizations can play positive roles and influence capacity development in national organizations. A national organization may often gain legitimacy more readily for local initiatives—including capacity development efforts—if these are endorsed by international agencies. For example, although the Government of Ghana has ratified several international conventions and agreements relating to the conservation and use of plant genetic resources, it has not yet put relevant national policies into place. Ghana's Plant Genetic Center's advocacy efforts around these issues have gained greater legitimacy through its involvement with, and support from, IPGRI.

However, the roles of international organizations in capacity development efforts should not be over-emphasized. The involvement and endorsement of national agencies are often crucial. In addition to providing resources and technical expertise, they can also provide political legitimacy. In the cases of the Root Crops Center in the Philippines, the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute in Viet Nam, and FARENA in Nicaragua, support of the parent universities was essential for the success of their capacity development efforts.

Principled negotiation and joint decision-making

The success of a partnership is largely influenced by the extent to which the parties negotiate agreements on key aspects of the relationship, including its objectives and its principles for reaching decisions and for sharing costs and benefits in an ethical fashion. By this, we mean that one party does not impose its will on the other. Experience suggests that negotiating objectives is especially important. Why work together? What is the value added? Could the same ends be achieved more efficiently in some other way?

In Cuba, the partners engaged in a thoroughly negotiated process to determine the parameters of the capacity development efforts around agrifood chain analysis. Rather than embark on technical training right away, a first workshop brought research managers of local organizations together with the international partner to discuss the capacity development effort, and to develop principles for their work over the next two-year period. A declaration was signed, which recorded and symbolized the involvement and commitment of all parties to the capacity development process.

As we have already noted, many external organizations may be involved with a national organization in capacity development activities. Negotiations therefore may not be one-on-one, since each of the organizations involved will have different goals and needs, which may be inconsistent and evolve over time. For example, the Root Crops Center in the Philippines received support for the development of its participatory research capacity from four different external organizations. Three of the four, however, had broader capacity development goals and were involved in other aspects of the Center's capacity development. As the number of partners and agendas multiply, so do the possibilities of confusion and conflict.

Openness to learning and change

Our evaluation studies confirm that all parties in a relationship bring valuable knowledge, experience, and ideas to the table. Similarly, all parties have something to learn from collaborating in capacity development efforts. Learning is at the heart of capacity development, and our studies show that capacity development efforts are most successful when all parties are committed to learning from experience to improve their own work. Learning should not be left to chance. It should be fostered by periodic reflection on the goals, activities, and results of the capacity development process, through systematic monitoring and evaluation.

In all our cases, the evaluation study allowed us to improve our understanding of capacity development. In most cases, it contributed to strengthening the relationship between the national and international partners. Nearly universally, capacity development efforts supported by international organizations focus on strengthening capacity in the South. However, our studies have revealed that international organizations stand to learn just as much from their partnerships.

In some cases, individuals have taken what they learn back to their organizations for use in other situations. In the Philippines, the evaluation study helped UPWARD—the capacity 'provider' in this case—realize that it had gained substantial knowledge and experience in participatory research from its partnership with the Root Crops Center. The joint field-based projects in which UPWARD participated helped shape its program and research agendas and influenced how it worked with other partners to develop their capacity in participatory research.

Developing procedures for organizational learning is crucial for partners in capacity development. In the case of Viet Nam, the evaluation study enabled the international partner, IDRC, to examine its support for networks. The IDRC-CBNRM program learned from the evaluation study that its network support programs needed to address the organizational capacity development aspects of a network such as networking and facilitation skills. Some of the knowledge gained through the partnership with the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute in Viet Nam will be applied to an IDRC project in China. In fact, if only one of the partners learns, the two will grow apart and the relationship may disintegrate.

Continuity and persistence

As we have noted on several occasions, capacity development is not a one-off activity. Capacities are built up over time and often accrue quite slowly. Internal or external demands to produce quick results sometimes interfere with longer-term needs for capacity development. Ideally, partners should agree to sustain the partnership over a period of time to build up a sense of trust and joint ownership and to obtain concrete results. However, long-term relationships do not guarantee success. In the case of Viet Nam, for example, although IDRC and the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute had collaborated for many years, the Institute's staff felt that a number of the dimensions of the relationship suffered when IDRC's funding and programming focus changed to a community-based natural research management approach.

IPGRI and the Plant Genetic Center have been working together on genetic conservation for 20 years, building capacities for genetic conservation. IPGRI's contribution to capacity development has evolved over time to respond to changing circumstances. With the signing of the GPA in 1996, new priorities were brought forward, including the importance of in situ conservation. These new priorities have affected the nature and focus of capacity development within the partnership. This shows the importance of periodic evaluation of

capacity development initiatives to check objectives and strategies against changing conditions.

Flexibility

The more successful capacity development initiatives examined in the ECD Project have been flexible and have evolved in response to changing circumstances, incorporating new information and experience as it became available. This required the international organizations that provided support to be not overly specialized and to offer a rather broad range of services.

Negotiations between partners should not end with the clarification of purpose. They must continue throughout the life of the partnership, in response to changing conditions and new challenges. Periodic evaluations can encourage partners to reflect on their relationship and make adjustments to help them face changing conditions, needs, and opportunities.

In the case of the Philippines, the Root Crops Center–UPWARD partnership was primarily built on a shared interest in researching root crops and the use of participatory research as a means to achieve their respective organizational goals and objectives. During a 12-year relationship the focus evolved from expanding the use of sweetpotato in home gardens to snack-food enterprise development. The initial research focus reflected the Center's goal to help avert a food crisis in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake that hit the northern Philippines in 1991. The later focus (on snack-food enterprises) emerged as the Center sought to address the deteriorating economic situation of farmers in the region. Over the 12-year period, the partnership evolved through eight different phases (see Annex).

In addition to flexibility, we have learned that excessive specialization tends to limit the value of a partnership and the overall success of the capacity development effort. As change in the environments that affect our work is continuous, there is no end to the need for capacity development and for learning.

Just as partnerships evolve, they may also end. In some cases, there is nothing further the partnership can contribute and each organization needs to focus on its own activities. In other cases, the partners move in different directions and need to generate new and different partnerships to move ahead.

Take-Home Messages

A key challenge for managers is to develop viable and productive partnerships for capacity development. A number of elements characterize successful partnerships for capacity development, whatever the partnership type.

It is important to link the capacity development effort to the mission, strategy, and values of the organizations involved. This helps promote ownership of the activity among partners. Clarifying the purpose and intent of the relationship between national and international organizations is also essential. Dissonance between each organization's understanding of the capacity development effort can lead to unrealistic expectations or dissatisfaction later on.

Despite the fact that international and local organizations play positive roles and influence capacity development in national organizations, leadership must come from within an organization that wishes to develop its own capacity.

The ability to take the lead in one's own capacity development is linked to the balance or imbalance of power in relationships between organizations. Clear divisions of roles and responsibilities help address power imbalances.

Negotiation is essential to developing mutually acceptable principles and procedures. Transparency on the part of both parties is essential if they are to work together effectively.

Capacity development efforts are most successful where all parties are committed to learning from experience to improve their own work. Learning can be fostered by periodic reflection on the goals, activities, and results of the capacity development process through systematic monitoring and evaluation.

Flexibility is essential if partners are to respond to changing circumstances and incorporate new information and experiences that become available over time into their capacity development activities.

Relationships among organizations evolve over time and partnerships need to prepare for change and phasing out.

Guide to Further Reading

In recent years, there have been many critiques of technical cooperation and its implications for capacity development in developing nations. Over the last two years, UNDP has taken a fresh look at the fundamentals of capacity development and how external cooperation can best contribute to the development of lasting indigenous capacities. Its project "Reforming Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development" is intended to contribute to the ongoing debate on capacity development and the role of external partners. Progress reports on this project and results of extensive discussions can be found on the website http://capacity.undp.org/books/book1.htm

One of the first outputs of the UNDP project is the book *Capacity for Development,* edited by Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, and Malik (2002). This book discusses many of the issues dealt with in this chapter and is highly recommended for readers who would like a more in-depth treatment of the issues.

Issue 14 (July 2002) of the web-based magazine *Capacity.org* presents highlights of the UNDP initiative and related information on the policy and practice of capacity development in international development cooperation.

The December 2002 issue of the *International Journal of Technology Management and Sustainable Development,* edited by Hall, presents a collection of articles on North–South research collaboration and capacity development.

The book edited by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991), *Getting to Yes* (first published in 1981), is still the most useful single reference on principled negotiation.

Many development organizations have prepared guidelines for fostering partnerships with developing countries. The Swiss Commission for Research Partnership with Developing Countries has issued a set of guidelines that is similar to the success factors identified here. The Swiss Commission presents the following 11 principles of research partnership: decide on the objectives together, build up mutual trust, share information and develop networks, share responsibility, create transparency, monitor and evaluate the collaboration, disseminate the results, apply the results, share profits equitably, increase research capacity, and build on the achieve-ments. The principles can be found on the website www.kfpe.ch/key_activities/publications/guide- lines/guidelines_e.html.

In their book, *Organizations Working Together* (1993), Alter and Hage discuss a wide variety of inter-organizational arrangements—joint ventures, associations, networks—that are being used to coordinate activities beyond traditional organizational boundaries.

UNDP has recently issued a synthesis of lessons learned on partnership in a note entitled *Partnership for Local Governance* (2002).

The handbook *Partnering to Build and Measure Organizational Capacity,* edited by Johnson and Ludema (1997), presents lessons for organizational capacity development drawn from the experience of national development organizations working in partnership with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

The literature review by Armstrong and Whyte, *Learning Partnerships*, found on the IDRC website (www.idrc.ca/evaluation/literaturereview.htm), provides a survey of the recent literature on public-sector partnerships and discusses these in the context of the management and evaluation of the work of research centers.

6. Approaches for Evaluating Organizational Capacity Development

This chapter is intended to help the reader prepare for and successfully carry out an evaluation of a capacity development effort. Rather than propose a fixed set of steps to follow, we outline a number of issues that managers and evaluators should consider from the outset of an evaluation process. The chapter begins by setting out key issues to consider when preparing for an evaluation. We raise a number of methodological questions that should be considered when designing and undertaking an evaluation that is sound and produces useful results. We highlight several challenges that were encountered in our evaluation studies and suggest how managers and evaluators might address similar challenges in their own organizations.

Key Issues to Consider

The previous chapters have dealt mainly with issues of capacity development in research and development organizations. We have discussed the meaning of capacity and organizational capacity development, the types of capacities that organizations need and how to go about developing them, and the roles of different organizations in capacity development processes. We now turn to approaches and methods for capacity development initiatives.

Evaluations are frequently carried out by external experts and provide information for funding agencies and to meet external accountability requirements. Our purpose here is to familiarize managers and evaluators with issues, approaches, and methods that will help them prepare, execute, and improve evaluations of capacity development efforts in their own and partner organizations.

As discussed more extensively in Chapter 7, we believe that involvement in evaluation processes can produce very great benefits for an organization and its members. The benefits of direct involvement in an evaluation often exceed those arising from the use of results contained in evaluation reports. For this reason, we emphasize the use of participatory self-assessment methods that involve the organizations' members and stakeholders. Based on our studies carried out in the ECD Project, we believe that evaluations of capacity development efforts are ideally carried out in a collaborative mode, by teams composed of members from the different participating organizations.

One goal of the ECD Project was to test frameworks and methods in the field and to draw conclusions about their use. Based on our experiences and reflections, we offer approaches

for evaluating capacity development initiatives that involve potential users in all aspects of the evaluation process.

This chapter addresses three broad questions:

- How to prepare for the evaluation?
- Which evaluation principles can be used to guide the evaluation?
- How to carry out the evaluation?

We suggest some general answers to these questions, based on our experiences with evaluating capacity development in our own organizations. We also guide you to further reading on evaluation methods.

We do not present a 'cookbook' recipe that can be followed step-by-step. Instead we attempt to stimulate thinking about how to plan and carry out an evaluation of capacity development efforts. This is because no simple recipes or blueprints are suitable for evaluating the broad range of organizational capacity development efforts that take place in different organizations. In one case, the organization may wish to evaluate a capacity development initiative that is just getting under way, to sharpen its goals, and consolidate its approaches. In another case, it may want to evaluate the results of a 'mature' or completed capacity development initiative, to report on impacts and benefits to its key stakeholders. Due to budget and time limitations, the organization might need to complete the entire evaluation in a few weeks. In yet another case, an organization might have sufficient resources to systematically collect information over several months, or even years, before drawing conclusions.

Preparing for the Evaluation

If an evaluation team jumps straight into the collection of data without preparing adequately, it may soon find that it has a mountain of information that is difficult to handle and questions that are difficult to answer. Our studies suggest that six activities are essential in preparing for an evaluation:

- clarify why and for whom the evaluation is being done;
- involve intended users throughout the evaluation process;
- cultivate necessary support for the evaluation;
- mobilize adequate resources to carry out the evaluation;
- discuss possible results of the evaluation;
- agree on basic principles to guide the evaluation.

Methods and tools for evaluating capacity development in a rural development institute in Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, the evaluation focused on Can Tho University's Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute and the two networks it coordinates—FSRNET and NAREMNET. The IDRC-CBNRM program has offered various types of support to all three organizations.

The study aimed to evaluate individual and organizational capacity development efforts that took place over a ten-year period among the participating organizations and to improve their use of monitoring and evaluation tools for capacity development. Building on examples of previous organizational assessment studies and capacity development methods, the Viet Nam study team primarily used a set of qualitative and participatory monitoring and evaluation tools adapted to their evaluation's specific theme and focus. These tools were chosen to engage all staff in a frank and constructive discussion about past, current, and future capacity

development efforts. At the same time, the variety of tools served as a methodological learning experience for both the evaluation team and the staff.

Initially, a two-day self-assessment workshop was organized, carried out and facilitated by the evaluation team with the involvement of 34 Institute staff members. The workshop served as a vehicle for presenting the ECD Project and the evaluation study to staff and for receiving feedback on a variety of questions concerning capacity development. The workshop helped develop a shared understanding about the evaluation study within the Institute and a strong commitment from staff to cooperate. The workshop also provided preliminary insights into the evaluation's key questions.

Institute managers, lecturers, technicians, and administration staff were asked to complete questionnaires and participate in interviews aimed at preparing 'work stories'. The questionnaires were used to gauge the impact of capacity development efforts at both the individual and project level. The 'work stories' explored, through personal and detailed accounts, how staff perceived their contribution to the Institute's core activities, if and how their work had changed over time, if and how their own capacities had evolved, and how these capacities related to the organizational capacity development efforts of the Institute. As part of the evaluation study, a small sub-case study was added to the main evaluation. This looked at the impact of the two networks on SIAS, one of the members. A participatory workshop with SIAS and the Institute was organized to present the ECD Project and to explore how the two organizations would collaborate in the evaluation study. A month later, SIAS organized a one-day focus group meeting with their own research partners (including farmers and government staff working at the local level) to obtain more detailed answers on the study questions.

Finally, key informant interviews were held with the Director of the Institute and with IDRC-CBNRM staff who had been responsible for overseeing support to the Institute and the networks. The interviews explored how the IDRC-CBNRM program had contributed to the Institute's capacity development, identified the impact of joint research projects, the changes that occurred in Viet Nam during the period under review and what affect they had on research and development in the country, and, finally, challenges that lie ahead. Throughout the evaluation process an array of documents were reviewed by the evaluation team to obtain relevant quantitative and qualitative data and information.

Clarify why and for whom the evaluation is being done

Evaluations are conducted for many different reasons and to meet the needs of many different audiences. Lack of clarity on the purpose and audience of an evaluation can lead to confusion, frustration, and dissatisfaction. When the evaluation began in FARENA in Nicaragua, many professors assumed that it was being done to evaluate them and to apply individual sanctions for poor performance. An important first step in the evaluation process was to clarify that the focus was on the capacity of the Faculty as a whole, and that it was intended to provide information for the Faculty itself to improve its capacity and performance. Clarifying the purpose and main audience(s) of the evaluation is also essential to identify key stakeholders who should be involved in the evaluation.

"The main purpose of evaluation is to improve, reflect, and to transform what has been done in the past. It is like a snowball effect: the more you do, the more you need to reflect, and the more you understand, the more you need to do."

Albina Maestrey Boza

Involve intended users throughout the evaluation process

Over the years, evaluators have learned that the single most effective way to ensure that an evaluation produces useful results that are actually used is to involve the intended users throughout the evaluation process. In what has come to be known as 'utilization-focused evaluation', potential users are involved in discussions on the possible use and benefits of the evaluation and in collectively agreeing on the evaluation's purpose and methods, taking into account the resources and time that are available. Stakeholders should also be involved in discussions about the possible results and implications of the evaluation and potential follow-up actions that might be appropriate under different scenarios.

In each study, the evaluation team needs to decide which individuals to involve, depending on the purpose of the evaluation and the relationships that exist within the organization and with outsiders. In Cuba, since the evaluation was looking at the development of capacity for food chain analysis, stakeholders from various points in the swine production chain were involved, ranging from the Minister of Agriculture to researchers, extension workers, pig farmers, and meat processors.

In Viet Nam, an aspect of the evaluation focused on the capacity development efforts of two natural resource management networks coordinated by Can Tho University Institute, and farmers, local extension workers, government officials, and university researchers were involved. In Nicaragua, the main stakeholders were essentially FARENA staff since the Faculty was the main focus of the evaluation. External stakeholders from other branches of the university and from partner organizations were only involved when their views on the Faculty's work were needed.

Cultivate necessary support for the evaluation

Given the sensitivity of evaluation processes and results, key people need to be committed to the evaluation as early as possible. The support of managers is crucial, but others, including staff members and government officials in the case of public agencies, can also make or break an evaluation. The support of senior managers is especially important since they have the power to decide who will be part of the evaluation team. They also must authorize the use of time and resources for the evaluation. Perhaps most important, they can promote or hamper the use of the evaluation's results by deciding on follow-up actions and changes after the evaluation. We encourage evaluators to gain the commitment of other senior managers to carry out the evaluation and to act on its results, before beginning to collect information. One way to do this is to ask managers what information they would like to gain from the evaluation, and to involve them in discussing ways to collect, analyze, and interpret this information.

In each of the organizations participating in the ECD Project, internal and external support for the evaluation had to be cultivated before the work could begin in earnest. Over time, as issues arose and individuals changed positions, further negotiations were also needed.

In Ghana, the support of the Plant Genetic Center's Director was gained by involving him as co-study leader. He, in turn, gained support for the evaluation from the Director of the Center's parent organization, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Later on, when the CSIR Director retired, it was essential to negotiate the new Director's support for the evaluation.

In Cuba, the original study design was prepared by members of the Directorate of Science and Technology and the New Paradigm Project. Because aspects of the study included an assessment of organizational change within the Cuban national system, SINCITA, its design needed to be negotiated with the Director of Science and Technology, the Vice Minister of

Agriculture, and the Director of one of the institutes under review, as well as the leader of the external support organization, the New Paradigm Project.

In addition to the support of managers, we also need the active support of staff members throughout the organization(s) involved, including support staff. Our studies show that staff members are often eager to assess their own capacity and performance and that of their organizations, as long as the purpose of the evaluation is to learn and improve, not to judge and sanction. The approach of our evaluation studies helped motivate and commit staff to participate in building their organizations' futures. In the case of Viet Nam, a two-day self-assessment workshop was carried out and facilitated by the evaluation team with the participation of 34 staff members. The workshop was a vehicle for discussing and presenting the ECD Project and evaluation study to staff and receiving feedback on a variety of questions concerning capacity development. This workshop helped gain a strong commitment from staff to cooperate in the project and provided insights into the evaluation's key questions.

Mobilize adequate resources to carry out the evaluation

Time, skilled and motivated individuals, and financial resources will be necessary for the evaluation, and it is best to negotiate their availability before jumping into the work. As already noted, a utilization-focused evaluation involves intended users, and this means that substantial time and effort will be required from them. Funds for travel, for example, might also be required if the organization in question is decentralized or if two or more organizations that are geographically distant from one another are involved.

Evaluation specialists from outside of the organization can provide some guidance in designing the study and facilitating the collection or analysis of information. But, if an organization and its staff members are to learn and benefit from the evaluation, they must be deeply involved in it and feel responsible for the results. One of the main benefits of our evaluation studies proved to be the learning that took place during the implementation of the evaluation. Some previous evaluation experience will be a plus, but even without it, staff members can 'learn by doing', and those who take part in the process will obtain new insights and skills as the study progresses.

The ECD Project provided each evaluation study team with a modest amount of funding (approximately US$10,000 for each study.) However, the principle cost of carrying out a participatory evaluation is the time that managers, staff members, and external stakeholders dedicate to the evaluation process. This cost was borne by the participating organizations and their stakeholders.

In all of the studies, staff members of the organizations involved did the bulk of the work. In FARENA in Nicaragua, the evaluation leader—also the Dean of the Faculty—was so busy that a consultant was hired to facilitate the evaluation process. Nevertheless, even in this case, Faculty members did most of the work, and found that they benefited from the evaluation because of their direct involvement in the evaluation process. In other cases, external consultants to the ECD Project met with local teams for a few days to provide guidance on evaluation design and methodology.

Discuss possible results of the evaluation

Before beginning to collect information, it is useful to discuss the possible results with key potential users. This helps the potential users of the results to prepare and consider actions that might be needed. It also helps evaluators to sharpen the evaluation questions and the methods used.

Agree on basic principles to guide the evaluation

As evaluation is a very complex and potentially sensitive process, it is useful to have some basic principles to guide the work and to assist in resolving differences of opinion that may arise. This is the subject of the next section.

To conclude, our experiences have shown that the time and effort invested in preparing for an evaluation are very well spent. Rushing into data collection without securing stakeholder commitment, mobilizing the necessary resources, cultivating support, or agreeing on some basic principles, can lead to confusion and frustration later on.

Principles for Assuring the Quality and Use of the Evaluation

Various professional evaluation groups have established standards and principles for conducting evaluations. These generally emphasize the need for evaluations to be useful, feasible, fair, and accurate. Such principles can be useful for planning and implementing an evaluation as well as for assessing the evaluation after it is completed.

Evaluation standards

Utility: The evaluation should serve the information needs of intended users.
Feasibility: An evaluation should be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and cost-effective.
Propriety: An evaluation should be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.
Accuracy: An evaluation should provide sound information (i.e. defensible sources, valid and reliable information, justified conclusions, etc.) on the object of the evaluation.

Source: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994)

Based on our experience of the six evaluation studies we carried out, we propose seven guiding principles for evaluating organizational capacity development efforts. These principles reflect a utilization-focused philosophy and approach for evaluating organizational capacity development initiatives.

Utility

The evaluation should be designed and implemented so as to be useful to, and actually used by, the intended users, whether they are the managers and staff of the organizations concerned or key external stakeholders.

Sensitivity to context

As each organization operates in a particular and changing political and socioeconomic setting, external conditions should be taken into account in designing and carrying out the evaluation. Similarly, the organization's internal environment needs to be considered. Where the organizational culture promotes open and frank discussions and organizational learning and improvement, a highly participatory and openly self-critical evaluation approach can be adopted. In contrast, where the culture rewards competition and individual achievements over teamwork, an approach that protects the anonymity of individuals may be more appropriate.

Participation and negotiation

As has already been stated, both internal and external intended users of the evaluation results should be involved in the whole cycle of the evaluation—from the design to the implementation to the review of the evaluation process—to promote their use of the evaluation results. For the intended users to develop a sense of ownership for the evaluation and its results, agreements on the various steps of the evaluation should be negotiated with them, rather than imposed from above or outside.

Learning by doing

The main benefits of an evaluation of a capacity development effort can be the individual and organizational learning that takes place while undertaking it. For

this reason, it is important to involve people in their own evaluation process, rather than leave it up to 'experts'. During the evaluation process, participants can learn a great deal, not only about capacity development, but about evaluation methods as well.

Iterative approach

Cycles of reflection and analysis are at the heart of the evaluation process. The main benefits of an evaluation often come from the insights obtained during the evaluation process, rather than from the results presented in a report. Frequently, important questions and issues come to the surface during an evaluation that require adjustments to planned data collection or analysis. For this reason, it is important to have a flexible, iterative approach to implementing the evaluation.

Systematic documentation

It is important to document the main decisions taken during the evaluation, the questions asked, the sources used, and the information obtained. This will allow reflection on the evaluation process and the results. It will also allow findings and suggestions to be more easily substantiated.

Integrity and transparency

To ensure fairness and acceptance of the evaluation's procedures and results, the process needs to be open and honest and not intended to harm specific individuals or the organization as a whole. In virtually all of the studies, initial workshops involving managers and staff were used to explain the purposes of the evaluation and to develop an open approach to the study. A delicate balance needs to be established between openness and propriety, and individuals who provide sensitive information should be protected. During the evaluations, we found it important to keep individual information sources confidential. In group sessions, it was useful to establish the norm that potentially sensitive personal views and opinions would not be divulged outside the group.

The point in presenting these principles is to encourage any evaluation team to establish its own set of guiding principles for the evaluation. The Guide to Further Reading at the end of this chapter suggests other sets of evaluation standards and principles that may stimulate your thinking about how to design your organization's evaluation.

Example of guiding principles for evaluating a capacity development effort

Utility: Design and implement your evaluation so that it will be useful to its intended users.

Sensitivity to context: Take into account the environment in which your evaluation is being designed and carried out.

Participation and negotiation: Include internal and external intended users in the entire evaluation cycle.

Learning by doing: Promote learning from the evaluation process by involving people in the evaluation process.

Iterative approach: Build ongoing cycles of action and reflection into your evaluation process.

Systematic documentation: Document your findings and suggestions so they are substantiated and can be reflected on later.

Integrity and transparency: Encourage an open and honest evaluation process to ensure fairness and acceptance of the evaluation's procedures and results**.**

Getting into Action: Doing the Evaluation

Once the evaluation team is prepared and equipped with guiding principles, it needs to decide how to carry out the evaluation. We propose a dynamic learning-oriented evaluation approach that addresses the complexity of organizational capacity development efforts and their relationship to organizational performance.

We do not offer a blueprint or a recipe for designing and conducting an evaluation. Rather, based on our experiences, we propose a flexible approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods. We suggest using multiple methods and cross-checking or 'triangulating' the results. Triangulation refers to the use of different information sources, methods, types of data, or evaluators to study an issue from different perspectives and thereby arrive at more reliable findings.

Organizational capacity development is a highly complex and little understood process, the results of which are difficult to measure. For this reason, cross-checking, triangulation, and validation of evaluation results with stakeholders are especially useful.

The box opposite presents a list of methodological questions that should be answered if an evaluation of a capacity development effort is to be sound.

What questions will the evaluation seek to address?

It is important to focus an evaluation on specific questions that you will seek to answer through systematic collection of information, analysis, and interpretation. When planning an evaluation it is important to ask the right questions and to get the questions right. In other words, evaluation questions should be both relevant and well formulated. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to formulate evaluation questions hurriedly or to avoid formulating them altogether. Many of us are familiar with evaluations that had vague terms of reference with no questions at all. In other cases evaluators were expected to answer a long list of questions in an unreasonably short period of time. Both of these approaches tend to result in frustration and a lack of focus.

In our studies we found it difficult, but important, to agree on a short list of evaluation questions. This phase of our work proved to be extremely important, as the questions guided us later on in the collection and analysis of information and in the interpretation and presentation of our results. In many cases, our evaluation questions evolved over time and became more precise as our understanding of our own capacity development efforts and of evaluation methods matured.

Methodological questions that need to be answered in designing and carrying out an evaluation

- What questions will the evaluation seek to address?
- Who will use the results?
- How can a 'logic model' be used to focus the evaluation?
- What will be the unit of analysis and the scope of the evaluation?
- How can shared understanding and commitment to the evaluation be developed?
- How should the evaluation process be managed?

- What information needs to be collected?
- What tools should be used to collect and analyze information?
- How should the results be cross-checked, triangulated, and validated?
- How should the evaluation results be presented?
- How can use of the evaluation results be encouraged?

Over time, the evaluation team responsible for the Viet Nam study arrived at the following evaluation questions, which the study was designed to answer:

- What key organizational capacities has the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute developed?
- How have the organizational capacities of the Institute changed over time (since its creation)?
- How and to what extent have individual staff at the Institute contributed to the development of the organizational capacities?
- What are the future challenges for the Institute in terms of organizational capacity development?
- What has been the contribution of the IDRC-CBNRM program to the individual and organizational capacity development efforts of the Institute?

Who will use the results?

The need to consider who will use the results is just as important as formulating appropriate evaluation questions. In fact, in an evaluation, deciding on appropriate questions is directly linked to defining the audiences the evaluation will serve. Decisions on the priority audience(s) will also influence the type of analysis that is conducted and how the results should be presented. For example, if the audience of an evaluation is internal to the organization in question, it may be most effective to present the results verbally in closed-door sessions where sensitive issues can be openly discussed. In contrast, if the primary audience is an external body, it is usually necessary to present a formal report, and some of the more sensitive points might be presented separately in a confidential report or in face-to-face sessions.

How can a 'logic model' be used to focus the evaluation?

Professional evaluators recommend the development of a 'logic model' for the projects and programs they evaluate. A logic model is a simplified chain of relationships that portrays the logic and assumptions underlying a program or intervention and how it intends to achieve its expected results. It states the logic of the program, identifies the assumptions on which it is based, and outlines the logical connections between

- the activities undertaken;
- the outputs to be produced;
- the intermediate or short-term outcomes that are expected;
- the ultimate or long-term impacts the program is designed to achieve.

Many projects and programs present some sort of logic model in their proposals or work plans. These are often in the form of a 'logical framework', required by many development organizations. In the ECD Project, we attempted to develop logic models for our capacity development initiatives, but were only partially successful. Reflecting on this, we concluded

that it is difficult to develop a logic model for a capacity development intervention because the national and international partners frequently have different objectives and assumptions that have not been openly discussed and agreed on. Reaching agreement on the logic of a capacity development initiative requires considerable discussion and agreement on a plan of action. As noted in the previous chapter on partnerships for organizational capacity development, this is seldom done.

One of the contributions of an evaluation to a capacity development initiative is to encourage the participants to clarify their objectives and assumptions and document them in a logic model. As stressed in the previous chapter, we now appreciate the need to negotiate the goals, assumptions, and strategies, as well as the contractual terms of our collaborative initiatives with our partners. In future, this will facilitate the development of logic models that can be used to guide our evaluations.

What will be the unit of analysis and scope of the evaluation?

In any evaluation, it is important to define the basic unit of analysis and the scope of study. In Cuba it was originally planned to evaluate the development of capacities throughout the entire national system for agricultural science, innovation, and technology. Later on, due to limitations on time and resources, it was decided to reduce the scope of the study to an examination of the development of one type of capacity in a single research institute. In Nicaragua, on the other hand, it was originally planned to examine the development of one type of capacity resulting from collaborative work with a single international organization (CIAT), but later it was decided to broaden the study to assess the development of capacity throughout FARENA. The scope of an evaluation refers not only to the organizations and topics covered but also to the time horizon. In Ghana the evaluation covered a 20-year period, in Viet Nam it covered 10 years, and in the Philippines 12 years.

In each case, the coverage of the evaluation—either whole organization, unit within an organization, or system of organizations—the topics addressed, and the time period needed to be clearly determined to guide subsequent collection and analysis of information. Most evaluation teams had difficulty defining clear boundaries and units of analysis. Instead of focusing on departments, centers, or programs, we often coped with this difficulty by defining more comprehensible units such as individuals, teams, partnerships, projects, events, or outputs. This allowed us to gather just the right amount of information to answer the evaluation questions adequately.

How can shared understanding and commitment to the evaluation be developed?

In our organizations, evaluating capacity development proved to be a highly sensitive activity, and those leading the evaluation needed to deal with personal sensitivities and organizational politics throughout the process. Among other things, we often needed to overcome negative feelings about evaluation per se. In several cases, staff members noted that evaluations are usually carried out to judge individuals or to justify restructuring and staff cuts. Few of us had been familiar with the use of evaluation for learning and improvement in our organizations. In our studies we have found it valuable to use the following approaches to deal with sensitivities, to promote common understanding, and to gain commitment to the evaluation process.

Involve the organization's managers and staff as well as key external stakeholders in the evaluation process from the outset. We have already stressed why it is important in early interactions with evaluation participants to discuss the fundamental purpose of the evaluation, emphasizing its use for individual and organizational learning and improvement. When the evaluation study teams began their studies, they often thought that a specialized team would

carry out most of the work, and then present its results at the end of the process. However, in all our cases we came to realize the importance of involving many people in the evaluation process and of periodically informing other stakeholders about the purpose, methods, and emerging results of the work. This had the advantage of gaining broad commitment to the evaluation process while it was going on.

Openly discuss issues of organizational capacity development and its evaluation. Managers and staff tend to be wrapped up in day-to-day activities and they seldom have the opportunity to discuss broad organizational issues. Simply starting to talk about organizational capacities can be an eye-opener. Much confusion arose initially concerning basic concepts and terms in all of the participating organizations. What do we actually *mean* by capacity development? What kind of evaluation do we have in mind? Why should we bother with these things? People who do not understand and appreciate the usefulness of an evaluation cannot be expected to contribute productively to it. In the studies, we found it useful to organize initial workshops with managers, staff members, and external stakeholders, to discuss the purpose of the proposed study and its potential uses. In FARENA in Nicaragua, for example, 31 staff members and several students attended such an initial workshop. In the Philippines, 17 members of the Root Crops Center and BSU attended a similar initial workshop. These workshops stimulated interest in the studies and motivated individuals to invest their time and energy in them. They also allowed participants' views on organizational capacity development to surface, to be discussed, and to be documented.

Validate findings and recommendations with key stakeholders. Involving and informing people of the emerging results during the course of the evaluation helps avoid unpleasant surprises at the end. It is also important to discuss and validate the study's conclusions and recommendations with key stakeholders. A weakness of many evaluations is the gap between the information collected and analyzed and the study's conclusions and recommendations. In many cases, conclusions and recommendations are hastily tacked on to the end of an evaluation report, with little consideration of their validity or their feasibility. Involving interested parties and potential decision-makers in the formulation or validation of conclusions and recommendations can increase the extent to which these are understood and accepted, which, in turn, promotes subsequent follow-up and action. Interested parties often disagree with the conclusions and recommendations of an evaluation. If people are involved in reviewing the evidence and drawing conclusions, they are more likely to reach consensus and to accept and act on the results.

"Evaluation always had a negative connotation, something like policing. In this project, we explored the educative impact that evaluation can have. It should be an opportunity for people to learn. Only then are they able to change the way they make decisions and how they act."

José de Souza Silva

In the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute, workshops were organized to discuss the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations with the Institute's managers and staff and with key external stakeholders. Then a Vietnamese version of the evaluation report was prepared. Two important decisions were to initiate a strategic planning exercise, based on results of the evaluation, and to revise the Institute's procedures for staff performance evaluation. In Cuba, the evaluation report was discussed and validated in a series of meetings at the level of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Directorate of Science and Technology, the Swine Research Institute, and the agrifood chain team. One result was the decision, at the level of the Ministry, to carry out a system-wide assessment of capacity development in SINCITA.

How should the evaluation process be managed?

Evaluations need to be managed, and the participatory evaluation processes we advocate in this book need to be facilitated. Managing an evaluation involves defining the goals of the exercise, the roles and responsibilities of those involved, the time and resources available, and the products to be delivered. Some individual or group has to take charge of the evaluation, make the necessary decisions, and supervise the work to its successful completion.

All the six studies relied heavily on facilitation, by which we mean stimulating, motivating, and guiding the evaluation process, usually through group activities. Sound facilitation is essential to ensure fairness to all participants involved, to capture the different ideas, views, and interests of the range of people that make up the organization(s) involved, to generate collective knowledge and to allow negotiation of common understandings and agreed-upon actions.

While the evaluation teams all depended upon group work for the studies, they tended to underestimate the importance of sound facilitation. The New Paradigm Project and IIP in Cuba have probably recognized the importance of facilitation and progressed furthest in developing capacity in this area. This is because the New Paradigm Project and Cuba's Directorate of Science and Technology have a long tradition of joint work on participatory adult education. The facilitation approach and skills they developed in the mid-1990s were later successfully applied in their evaluation work.

We suggest that organizations embarking on the evaluation of capacity development dedicate time and resources to finding or developing capable facilitators who can be actively involved throughout the evaluation process. In many cases it will be necessary to invest in specialized training in facilitation skills for your staff.

What information needs to be collected?

It is sometimes assumed that in an evaluation you should collect the largest amount of information possible with the time and resources available. However, it is generally better to collect the smallest amount of information needed to answer the evaluation questions.

Formulating precise evaluation questions and determining the scope of the evaluation and the unit of analysis (in terms of organizational coverage and time horizon) is essential to cutting down the volume of information that needs to be collected. Evaluators who begin collecting information before defining their evaluation's questions and coverage often collect information that is never used. In general, the fewer and more carefully formulated the evaluation questions, the less information needs to be collected.

In broad terms, two types of information may be used in an evaluation of an organizational capacity development initiative:

- primary information that needs to be collected specifically for the evaluation;

- secondary information such as information that already exists in written organizational records, files, reports, or publications.

In organizational studies, there is a tendency to overlook secondary information and rush into collection of primary information. Our cases were no different. In retrospect, a more careful review of existing documents would have been useful.

Compiling and assessing existing information on capacity development can serve both to enter into a discussion of the topic and to gather information for the evaluation. Before beginning to collect new information, for example through interviews or surveys, it is

important to collect the information that already exists in files, reports, and publications, which can help to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation teams were often surprised to find how much information was, in fact, available. Collecting and analyzing the available information reduced the amount of new, primary information that we had to collect.

In the Plant Genetic Center in Ghana, for example, information on germplasm collection and use had already been collected. In Cuba, both IIP and the Directorate for Science and Technology had good records on the workshops and training events carried out to develop capacity for food-chain analysis. The Root Crops Center in the Philippines also had good records on the technological innovations developed that involved participatory research.

Collection of primary information tends to be more costly and time consuming than compiling and assessing existing information. In organizational assessment it is common to think first of collecting information through formal questionnaire surveys. But as shown in the next section, there are many other important ways to collect useful information for evaluating organizational capacity development initiatives.

What tools should be used to collect and analyze information?

Many tools are available for collecting and analyzing information and for interpreting the results. Some useful sources are included in the Guide to Further Reading at the end of this chapter. Tools that proved useful in the evaluation studies are briefly described in this section.

Self-assessment workshops. Self-assessment workshops were used in all of the studies, and proved to be very useful for gathering and analyzing information, for interpreting

results, for building awareness and commitment for the evaluation, and for validating and enriching information, conclusions, and recommendations. Given the importance of such workshops, facilitation skills and related tools for group analysis, synthesis of findings, and reporting of results have proven essential for evaluating organizational capacity development.

Review of documents. Documents, including archives, annual reports, budgets, and minutes of meetings, were reviewed in all of our studies. In some cases, documents were only moderately useful due to incomplete records on capacity development efforts. Nevertheless, information contained in documents often proved very useful as a starting point for discussion of capacity development issues and to focus further collection of information. In the Philippines' Root Crops Center, the study team found that efforts to develop capacity in participatory research were generally embedded in broader research and development interventions, and the elements pertaining to participatory research were seldom well documented. On the other hand, documentary evidence could be found on new technologies released by the Center, including new varieties, which had resulted from participatory research activities. Despite its limitations, the study team found the information available in documents to be very useful in stimulating workshop discussions and in cross-checking their own perceptions of capacity development processes and the results.

Key informant interviews. Key informant interviewing involves in-depth discussions with individuals who are selected because they represent certain groups of interest, or they are thought to be particularly experienced, insightful, or informative. Such interviews were carried out in all of the studies, usually face-to-face. However, in some cases, key informant interviews were conducted over the telephone or by e-mail. These interviews allowed the evaluation teams to capture the views and expectations of stakeholders (e.g. staff members, managers, outsiders) concerning capacity development efforts and changes in capacity and performance over time.

Group interviews. In some cases, information was collected through interviews with groups rather than individuals. In some ways, this technique is somewhere in the middle between a key informant interview (with an individual) and a self-assessment workshop. Group interviews structured with the help of a facilitator proved to be especially useful in capturing the consensus views of relatively homogeneous groups. They are less appropriate where groups are heterogeneous or where certain individuals dominate the conversation.

Personal histories. In a few cases, detailed personal histories were compiled from individuals who had deep and long-term knowledge of capacity development processes. In Ghana's Plant Genetic Center the perception and personal history of the Director was especially useful, since the evaluation covered a 20-year period and very little documentation was available on earlier years. The study team interviewed the Director to capture his perspectives on the history of his organization, his personal development as a scientist and manager, and to identify factors that helped or hindered the development of the Center's capacity. The team transcribed and analyzed the complete interview.

Evaluation studies. A case study is a structured and detailed investigation of an organization or group, designed to analyze the context and processes involved in capacity development as well as the results. Each of the evaluation studies can be considered a case study. However, since the questions asked and the methods used differed from case to case, the studies are not strictly comparable. Some of the teams were more systematic than others in developing a case study framework for their studies.

The Ghana team developed a systematic case study approach in which multiple methods and information sources were used to address the study questions. It had three components, one focused on each of the three organizations involved in the study. The component corresponding to the Plant Genetic Center included three self-assessment workshops to assess the Center's strengths and weaknesses, a series of interviews to capture the perceptions of high-level officials, a personal history of the Director, and a review of archives and records to assess staff changes, publications produced, infrastructure developed, and other factors that could be assessed quantitatively. The component corresponding to IPGRI included a survey of IPGRI staff involved in capacity development, interviews with five key managers, and a review of records to assess IPGRI's contributions to training, infrastructure, and research methods in Ghana. The component corresponding to GRENEWECA included a workshop to capture the perspectives of nine network members and a review of archives to assess the network's contributions to capacity development through training, collaborative research, and the supply of equipment.

Direct observations. An evaluation of capacity development can benefit from observation of the organization's activities and facilities and their use. However, management and staff may be so familiar with the organization that they no longer observe things that an outsider would see immediately. The most novel and useful observations are often made by outsiders who have sufficient knowledge of similar organizations to allow them to make insightful comparisons. This highlights the potential value of combining internal self-assessment with external expertise.

Questionnaire surveys. The questionnaire survey is probably the most frequently suggested tool for collecting information for an organizational study or evaluation. When the evaluation teams first developed their evaluation plans, they included questionnaire surveys in all of them. However, when they returned home to their organizations, they all decided to use tools that would demand less of their time and other resources. Use of a questionnaire survey requires skills for preparing the survey form, sampling, administration of the survey, management of databases for quantitative and qualitative information, statistical analysis,

research, and other tasks. Survey forms need to be administered in local languages, which may require translation of forms and processing of qualitative information in more than one language.

The evaluation team from RDRS in Bangladesh, for example, originally planned to carry out a survey in rural Bangladesh and process the information at IIRR in the Philippines. However, when they realized that the survey responses would be in Bengali, which would not be understood in the Philippines, this plan was abandoned. A scaled-down survey was carried out to obtain the views of RDRS staff members, and its results were processed and reported on in Bangladesh. The surveys helped the team identify capacities that staff had obtained from courses offered by IIRR. The study team also gained systematic information on what new skills alumni had or had not been able to apply on the job.

How should the results be cross-checked, triangulated, and validated?

Triangulation is a means to increase confidence in the results of an evaluation by assessing and cross-checking findings from multiple points of view, including using different sources of data, different methods for data collection and analysis, different evaluators, or different theoretical perspectives. Given the complex nature of capacity development efforts, the difficulty of applying experimental methods to evaluate them, the limited information on them (particularly baseline data), and the often-conflicting views on them, triangulation is particularly important in the evaluation of organizational capacity development efforts.

In this context, one important way to cross-check and build confidence in results is to use more than one information source to confirm findings. This allows the consistency of results across methods to be checked. Another important way to build confidence in an evaluation's results is to review findings with stakeholders during the evaluation process. Where participants seriously question results, the analysts can recheck the information sources as well as the methods used for analysis and interpretation. In the case of Viet Nam, the evaluation team used three different tools—a self-assessment workshop, a case study, and a feedback workshop—to provide information to answer one of its evaluation questions.

Cross-checking is not always easy and it requires time and resources. However, given the potentially controversial nature of evaluation findings, the ECD Project participants urge evaluators to build in means to cross-check their information and results wherever possible.

How should the evaluation results be presented?

Well-planned and well-executed evaluations sometimes fail to produce the expected results because they are not presented in a format that would be useful to users. Traditionally, the final product of an evaluation is a lengthy report that is only made available to a few people. Our work indicates the value of making frequent verbal presentations of the evaluation's goals, progress, results, and conclusions to interested stakeholders. In each of the evaluation studies, these sorts of presentations have been the main vehicle for people to learn about the evaluation and its results, and to gain a shared understanding and commitment to them. In presenting an evaluation's results, it is important to keep in mind how different groups may be affected by the results. Critical findings need to be handled discretely to avoid public embarrassment and possible backlashes, which may reduce the constructive use of the results.

"Now that I am convinced of the relevance of evaluation for capacity development, my challenge is to create that conviction across the hierarchy of my organization. I need to disseminate insights learned from this project throughout my organization and its stakeholders."

Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman

How can use of the evaluation results be encouraged?

Throughout this chapter we have introduced techniques to promote the utilization of evaluation results, by focusing the evaluation on the key interests of intended users and by involving them throughout the evaluation process. We expand further on these arguments in the next chapter.

Take-Home Messages

Adequate preparation is needed for an evaluation of capacity development before embarking on data collection and analysis. Inadequate preparation is the greatest weakness of most evaluations. An evaluation of a capacity development effort should be guided by a set of principles that ensures it will be useful, accurate, feasible, and sensitive to its context and to the needs of its stakeholders.

There are several key methodological considerations when designing and carrying out an evaluation, as outlined in the following points:

Evaluation questions. The evaluation should seek to answer a few key questions. These may evolve over time and become more precise as our understanding of capacity development and evaluation methods matures.

Logic model. A logic model should be developed to focus the evaluation. A logic model is a simplified chain of relationships that portrays the logic and assumptions underlying a program or intervention and how it intends to achieve its expected results. Developing a logic model encourages participants to clarify their objectives, assumptions, and overall understanding of their capacity development effort.

Scope of the evaluation and unit of analysis. The unit of analysis, the topics to be addressed, and the time period to be covered within the evaluation need to be determined to guide subsequent information collection and analysis.

Developing shared understanding and commitment to an evaluation. Involving internal and external stakeholders in the evaluation process from the outset, openly discussing issues of organizational development and evaluation to clarify concepts, and validating findings and recommendations with key stakeholders throughout the process are just some of the ways to build confidence in an evaluation.

Managing the evaluation process. The types of participatory evaluation processes that are advocated in this book require sound facilitation. This may require some investment in specialized training for staff.

Information to be collected. It is better to collect the smallest amount of information needed to answer the evaluation questions than a mass of information 'just in case'.

Tools to collect and analyze information. Tools that proved useful in our studies included self-assessment workshops, document review, key informant interviews, group interviews, personal histories, case studies, direct observations, and questionnaire surveys.

Triangulation. Triangulation is a means to increase confidence in results by assessing and cross-checking findings from multiple points, including various sources, methods, evaluators, or theoretical perspectives.

Communication. It is important to communicate frequently with interested parties. Such communication should include frequent verbal presentations of the evaluation goals, progress, results, and conclusions. Effective communication involves careful listening.

Focus on use. Methodological decisions should be taken in ways that promote use of the evaluation, while ensuring its feasibility, accuracy, and propriety.

Guide to Further Reading

Scores of textbooks and guidelines present methods for evaluating programs and projects. Two that we have found especially useful are *Utilization-Focused Evaluation,* by Michael Quinn Patton (1997), and *From the Roots Up,* by Gubbels and Koss (2000). Patton's book, probably the most widely read and most influential evaluation text in print, covers all major aspects of planning and carrying out an evaluation that will actually be used by the intended users. *From the Roots Up* is particularly strong on principles and techniques for self-assessment exercises that aim to strengthen organizational capacity.

Useful approaches and tools for assessing and enhancing organizational performance are presented by Lusthaus and colleagues in *Enhancing Organizational Performance* (1999) and in *Organizational Assessment* (2002). *Evaluating the Impact of Training and Institutional Development Programs*, by Taschereau (1998), presents a useful collaborative approach for evaluating training and institutional development programs.

The seven guiding principles for evaluating capacity development initiatives that have emerged from our studies are compatible with widely accepted evaluation principles and standards developed by professional evaluation organizations around the world. The American Evaluation Association (www.eval.org) has defined five evaluation principles: systematic inquiry, evaluator competence, integrity/honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) has identified four basic standards for sound evaluations: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The German Evaluation Society (www.degeval.de) has agreed on a similar set of basic attributes of a sound evaluation.

For a detailed explanation of the use of program logic model (or 'program theory') to focus an evaluation, readers are referred to Chapter 10 of Patton's *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* and the *Logic Model Development Guide* issued by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2001) (www.wkkf.org). The website www.reflect-learn.org/EN/ provides useful tools and resources for organizational self-reflection.

On monitoring of capacity development, readers are referred to a useful paper by Morgan, *An Update on the Performance Monitoring of Capacity Development Programs* (1999), which is available on www.capacity.org

The *Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity-Building Interventions in the Health Sector in Developing Countries* (2003), by LaFond and Brown, provides a useful framework and tools that can be applied in research and development organizations. The *Letter to a Project Manger*, by Mook (2001), provides a series of guidelines, checklists, and practical suggestions for evaluation generally.

The book *Construyendo Capacidades Colectivas,* by Carroll (2002), presents results of detailed studies of organizational capacity development in peasant federations in highland Ecuador.

7. Using and Benefiting from an Evaluation

Evaluations are generally intended to provide information for decision making, and most evaluators expect their results to influence decisions and actions. However, in our studies and more broadly, we have found numerous barriers to the direct use of evaluation results in

decision making, particularly at high levels where decisions are made concerning the allocation of resources and the future direction of programs. This chapter summarizes what we have learned about the use and benefits of evaluation. It begins by discussing some issues related to use and benefits. It then identifies key factors that influence the use of evaluation processes and results. We then identify the most common ways in which evaluations can be used, and explain the differences between 'direct', 'indirect', and 'symbolic' uses. We also distinguish between the use of evaluation results and the benefits of evaluation processes per se—this is termed 'process use'. We discuss some of the benefits of evaluating a capacity development initiative and the likelihood of unexpected outcomes, including negative ones. Finally, we identify some challenges to promoting the use and benefits of an evaluation of a capacity development initiative.

Why is Evaluation Use an Issue?

When an evaluation is conducted, it is generally assumed that someone will use the results to decide on future actions. Use of results is one of the key assumptions underpinning the entire evaluation exercise. Paradoxically, the direct use of evaluation results in policy making and management seems to be the exception rather than the rule. When we looked back and reflected on the evaluations that had been carried out in our own organizations over the years, few of them seemed to have been used directly in management decision making.

In the past, most evaluations were done for the benefit of donor agencies. In some cases, our organizations were not informed of the results. Results of most internal evaluations also tended to have a restricted circulation. Some evaluation reports were long, technical, and hard to understand. Others failed to address relevant issues. Many reports arrived too late, after decisions had already been taken. Even when evaluation reports were understandable, arrived on time, and addressed important issues, decision-makers often seemed to ignore them, and made their decisions on the basis of personal intuition, political influences, or other information.

The limited use of evaluation results has come to be viewed as the 'Achilles heel' of evaluation. Experience with evaluation in many countries and types of organizations has provided insights into the factors that limit the direct use of evaluation results in policy making and management decision making, and insights for expanding the usefulness and actual use of evaluations.

In this book, we advocate a utilization-focused approach to the evaluation of capacity development initiatives to encourage the use of the evaluation and its results by the intended users. Utilization-focused evaluation involves a number of steps throughout the evaluation process that identify potential users and engage them in the evaluation process, thereby encouraging their commitment to the evaluation and their understanding and acceptance of the results. In this chapter, we revisit some of the points already made, introduce some new ideas, and offer some additional approaches to encourage the use of the evaluation results.

Factors Influencing the Use of Evaluation Results

Four groups of factors have been found to influence the use of evaluation results. These have been termed 'the four Is' by the political scientist and evaluator, Carol Weiss. They are: Interests, Ideology, Institutions, and Information.

"The self-assessment approach is important because it is a self-guided approach. If people discover themselves what they did wrong and what they did well, then they can do better and change. Their attitude is impacted in the process."

José de Souza Silva

Interests

Decision-makers tend to promote their own causes and constituencies. Hence personal interests can have a strong influence on decisions. In many instances, executives, board members, program staff, or others attempt to put aside evaluation results that are not in accord with their personal interests. We may all know of such cases in our own organizations.

Ideologies

Ideologies are also powerful forces guiding policy-makers and managers. Policy-makers are expected to act within the ideologies embraced by their governments. Similarly, research and development organizations have their own ideologies. If, for example, an evaluation of the Asia-wide UPWARD network, which seeks the involvement of farmers and other users in the development of root crops, was to conclude that farmers should not be involved in applied agricultural research, it is unlikely that the report would be acted upon.

Using and benefiting from evaluation: An experience from the Philippines

The Root Crops Center-UPWARD evaluation study can be viewed as an example of success, as some of its conclusions and recommendations led to specific action being taken. In addition, managers, staff, and stakeholders of both organizations acquired new skills, knowledge, and attitudes about evaluation and organizational capacity development.

For example, open and frank discussions created a positive environment for evaluation, and staff of the Root Crops Center gained a new appreciation for capacity development and its evaluation. As a result, the Center's management and staff have planned to undertake similar evaluations of other key organizational capacities. External participants from BSU, to which the Center is operationally attached, have also become committed to the evaluation process and have asked if they can participate in similar studies and activities in the future. Two new evaluation proposals have been prepared by BSU and the Root Crops Center, with the aim of adapting the evaluation methodology to examine other organizational capacities.

The evaluation process and its results have also helped strengthen the relationship between the Center and UPWARD and have benefited UPWARD's program development. The study helped identify the Center's training needs and UPWARD has used these results to design a new course on participatory research and development. Lessons and insights from the 12-year partnership now serve as case materials for the course.

The study has inspired UPWARD to conduct parallel evaluations with several of its other partners and to encourage them to conduct their own evaluations. The interest of both the Center and UPWARD to engage in ongoing evaluation studies shows that the process has motivated staff from both organizations to improve their respective and joint capacity development efforts and has stimulated a commitment to planning for future work.

Constraints in the evaluation process serve as lessons for future processes. The lack of available records on capacity development, for example, was perceived as a limitation of the study. This reinforced the importance of developing mechanisms for better record keeping and the need to consolidate internal information sources to support planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The utility of the evaluation study has been complicated by several changes that have occurred at the Center since the study took place. Following the evaluation, the Center-UPWARD sweetpotato project underwent a major reorganization and the Center came under new leadership. This may result in changes in the overall priorities and strategies of the Center, which may affect how the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation will be used.

The study team also ran into some unexpected complications during the course of the evaluation study. Center management and staff were somewhat suspicious of the evaluation because it ran parallel to a sensitive external audit of the Center's finances being conducted by BSU and the government audit agency. What's more, two of the evaluation team members were also part of the audit team. Because of the timing, the evaluation study was perceived to be linked to the financial audit, and the evaluation team had to work hard to dispel this misunderstanding. Using an open, transparent, and participatory approach here was therefore vital.

This evaluation study was the only one in the ECD Project to conduct an 'evaluation of the evaluation'. This enabled the evaluation team and participants to make recommendations about how to improve the process for future activities. Both the Center and UPWARD have begun to build a culture of evaluation in their organizations, and it is likely that evaluation will become an important part of their ongoing organizational capacity development.

Factors influencing the use of evaluation results in decision making: the 'four Is'

Interests: Personal interests strongly influence individuals' decisions.

Ideology: Decision-makers are influenced by the ideologies of their organizations.

Institutions: Decisions are not taken in a vacuum, but reflect previous decisions, organizational history, culture, and norms.

Information: An evaluation is only one of many sources of information that decision-makers may take into account.

Source: Weiss (1999)

Institutions

The history and culture of organizations and their institutions—the norms that guide behavior—exert a powerful influence on what and how decisions are made. Decisions are never made in a vacuum, but depend upon successions of previous decisions. General directions are usually already established or constrained by other factors, and whole-scale changes in direction, based solely on the results of an evaluation, may not be possible.

If, for example, an evaluation recommended the separation of the Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute or the Root Crops Center from their parent universities, it is highly unlikely that such a recommendation would be implemented on its own merits, due to broader institutional forces and trends.

Information

The fourth 'I', information, is also important. But the findings of one evaluation are only one source of information among many others that are constantly pouring into decision-making processes. Advisors, colleagues, interest groups, and many others may be providing information or opinions to decision-makers, and these sources may carry more legitimacy and weight than findings from an evaluation study.

The 'bottom line' is that, given the many factors that influence decision making, the prospects that our evaluation will have a strong and direct influence on a particular decision are slim indeed. This is especially true when the decision is a major one that has potentially strong repercussions for the decision-maker or other key stakeholders.

Benefits and Uses of Evaluation

Use of evaluation results

Using evaluation results traditionally implies making decisions and taking actions based directly on the results of an evaluation. But use of evaluation results can also involve the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes that indirectly influence decisions and actions. Such uses are especially important in the evaluation of organizational capacity development. The subsequent benefits may relate to improved capacity development strategies, strengthened capacities, and ultimately to improved performance of the organization.

Direct use

It is generally assumed that use of evaluation results occurs when a decision-maker makes a decision and acts on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations contained in an evaluation report (Figure 9). This type of 'direct use' is often assumed to occur when a manager or their assistant reads an evaluation report and uses the information to draft a new policy or make a decision.

Indirect use

Recent research and our own experiences indicate that the direct use of evaluation results is rather rare. More often, management advisors will skim through an evaluation report, along with many other sources of information, to prepare a position on a topic of current importance. Advisors may also talk with evaluators and others who are considered to be knowledgeable and trustworthy. In such a process, ideas or conclusions offered by an evaluation report may be selectively incorporated into a broader view of the issue.

The personal views of the evaluator (and others) may be even more influential than the written report itself. Decision-makers generally prefer to be briefed and advised by trusted colleagues, and they often read little or nothing on the issues at hand. This can be referred to as 'indirect use' of evaluation results.

Symbolic use

The third type of evaluation use is known as 'symbolic use'. This occurs when the evaluation results are accepted on paper or in public pronouncements but are not actually used to make decisions. Organizations sometimes carry out evaluations simply to appear modern or to give the impression that managers or governing bodies are concerned with performance when, in fact, they are not. While managers might be tempted to ignore an evaluation's results, it is increasingly difficult to do so in the current environment where the public is becoming more concerned with performance and accountability.

Process use

The direct, indirect, and symbolic uses described in the preceding paragraphs refer to the use of evaluation results, i.e. conclusions or recommendations in evaluation reports. Another important type of use stems from the evaluation process itself. In all the evaluation studies, the main benefits have stemmed from the participation of managers, staff members, and other stakeholders in planning and carrying out the evaluation. Through their involvement in the evaluation process, they have acquired new knowledge, developed new skills, and changed their attitudes. These changes may subsequently influence their decisions and actions. This is what we refer to as the 'process use' of an evaluation (Figure 10).
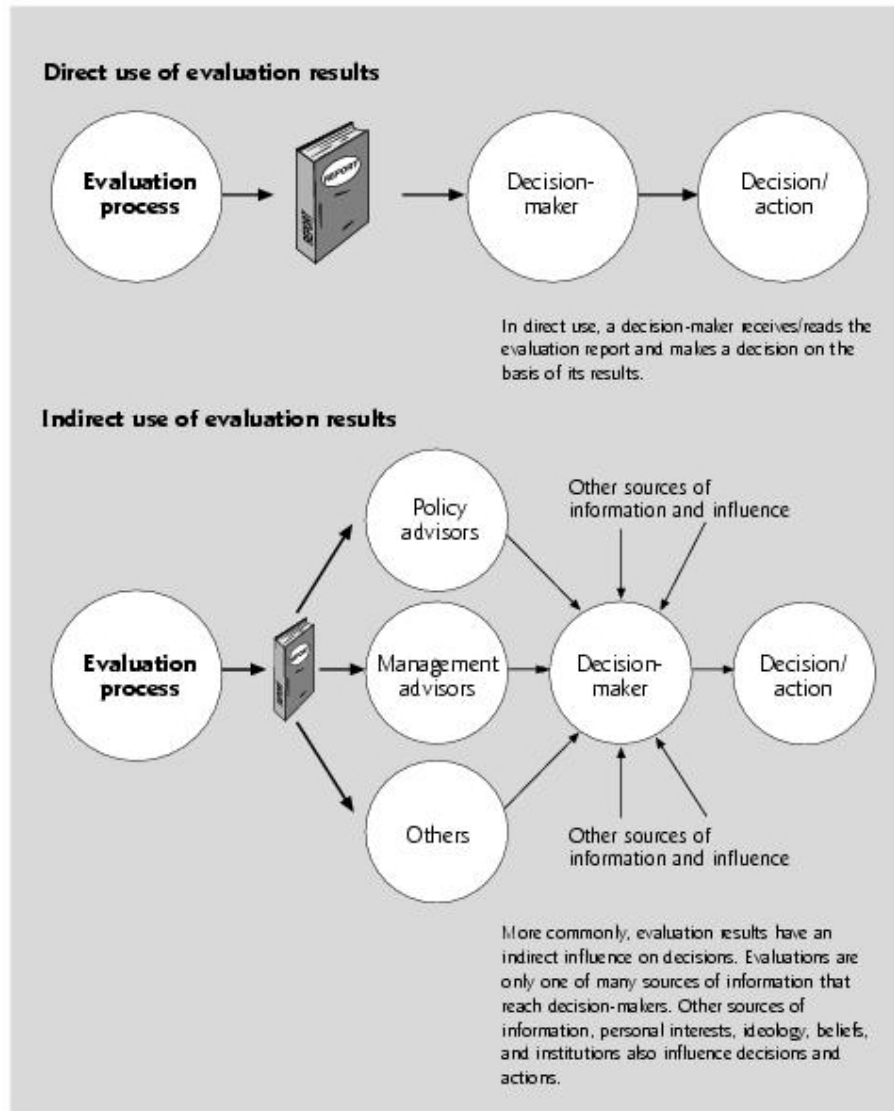
Figure 9. Direct and indirect use of evaluation results

"If organizational capacity development is important, then we should be able to evaluate it and to understand how doing it well will improve our work."

Fred Carden

Process use and subsequent benefits of the evaluations have been reported in all of the organizations participating in the ECD Project. Although process use is mediated through changes in individuals' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, it can nonetheless influence decisions and actions quite quickly, as illustrated in some of the following examples.

Enhanced understanding of, and appreciation for, capacity development and its evaluation. Participation in the evaluation studies gave managers and staff a much greater understanding of what organizational capacity development is, what it requires, and how it can be evaluated.

The two organizations involved in the Bangladesh evaluation study concluded that one of the benefits was that partners evaluated capacity development together through a 'negotiated lens' in which each organization felt they had a stake in the outcome of the process. Their

joint reflection and sharing of insights on the strengths and weaknesses of past capacity development efforts were considered positive and useful because they deepened participants' knowledge and understanding about the concept of organizational capacity development and its evaluation.

As a result, several study recommendations were implemented in both organizations. RDRS has committed to creating mechanisms to link staff training more
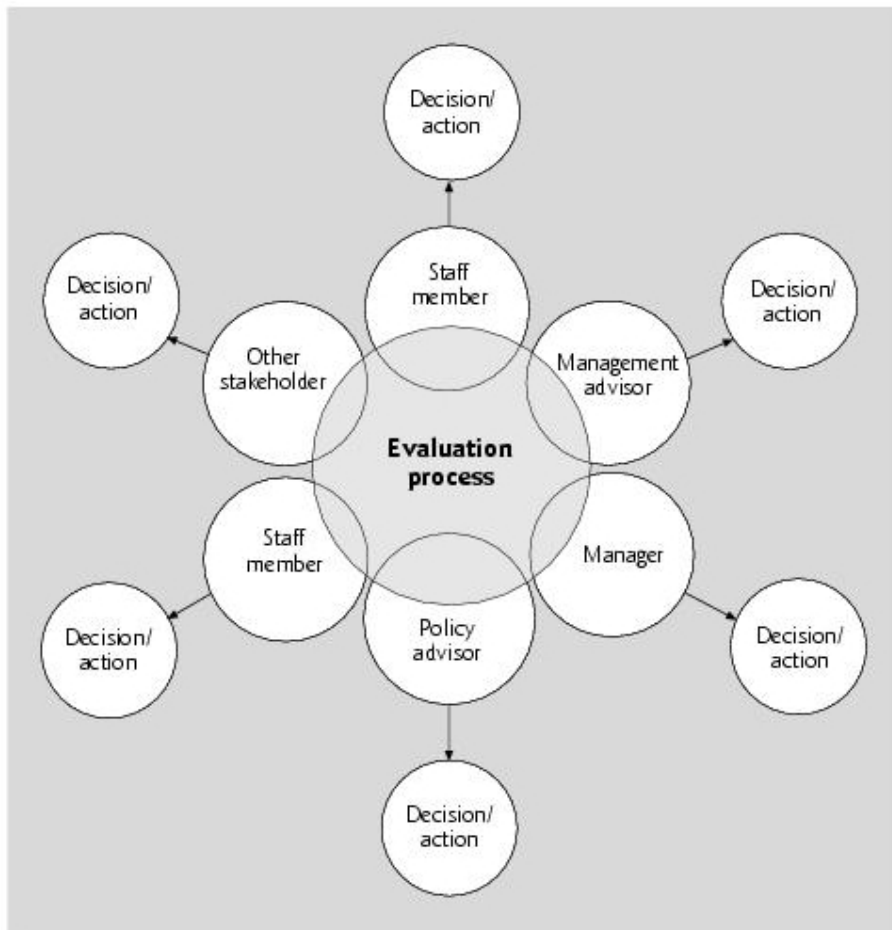
Figure 10. Process use of evaluation

Process use refers to the changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills that result from their participation in the evaluation. These changes may lead participants to make decisions and to act, even before the evaluation has been completed and a formal evaluation report has been produced.

systematically to its overall organizational capacity development efforts. IIRR has committed to improving its international courses by taking into consideration not only the development of individual competencies but also the organizational capacity development needs of its clients.

Open and frank discussions about the future of the organization. Participants were encouraged to express themselves freely and to be forthcoming with opinions and ideas. The use of participatory self-assessment methods created a positive environment where staff felt

involved and were committed to building their organization's future. In some cases, this led to almost immediate decisions and actions.

"Through our evaluation we learned and understood that responsibilities are shared in a relationship for capacity development."

Albina Maestrey Boza

In the case of Cuba, the participants of the evaluation study felt so positive about the use of a self-assessment evaluation process that they recommended it should become part of their organization's annual work plan. IIP staff suggested that they be trained in facilitating self-assessment and that this type of evaluation process should become part of a strategy to improve the organization's overall learning and development.

Benefits of involving stakeholders in evaluating organizational capacity development

- Enhanced understanding of and appreciation for capacity development and its evaluation.

- Open and frank discussions about the future of the organization, which can lead to action and results and to greater staff commitment to building that future.

- Information and motivation to improve ongoing capacity development efforts within the organization and for planning future work.

- Consolidating internal information sources to support the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of organizational capacity development.

- Development of the organization's internal capacity to evaluate itself.

- Development of methods and tools that can be used in future efforts to evaluate capacity development or other aspects of organizational development.

- Strengthened inter-personal and inter-organizational relationships with partners and other stakeholders.

- Improved knowledge and motivation in partner organizations.

Information and motivation to improve the ongoing capacity development effort. In several of the cases, the evaluation revealed shortcomings of the ongoing work, and ways to improve it were suggested and agreed on by participants. Where decision-makers were involved, decisions and follow-up actions could be taken quickly. In the work of ISNAR's New Paradigm Project, for example, it was decided to incorporate periodic self-assessment exercises into the ongoing and future capacity development work itself.

Information and motivation for planning future work. The evaluations often had implications for improving the work of one or both of the participating organizations. In FARENA in Nicaragua, the self-assessment exercise carried out by Faculty members concluded that the Faculty had relatively weak strategic management capacity, particularly in prioritizing activities based on the Faculty's goals and functions. The lack of prioritization resulted in work overloads for staff members and frequently uncompleted tasks. After participants reached consensus on this weakness, they organized a planning workshop in which curricula development was identified as the main priority for the following year.

Consolidating internal information sources to support planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The evaluation teams experienced problems of incomplete or disorganized documentation in

nearly all the studies. Consequently, one of their important tasks was to collate and consolidate organizational records to serve as a systematic information base for the evaluation. In some cases, the information pulled together has been used for other analyses or organizational reports. These problems have also served as an impetus to improve internal documentation to serve planning and evaluation purposes in the future.

"The evaluation was beneficial to both organizations because it allowed us to deal with the issue of capacity development more systematically and effectively."

Imrul Kayes Munirazzaman

In the Philippines, one of the key recommendations for improving future evaluations of capacity development included improved and systematic record keeping to avoid good ideas and important details getting lost.

Development of internal evaluation capacity. By carrying out these evaluation studies and

using a 'learning by doing' approach, individuals in the organizations involved have strengthened their own evaluation capacities. In some cases, this individual capacity has been transformed into an organizational capacity. In Cuba's IIP, for example, an organizational self-assessment exercise has been incorporated into the annual program management cycle, and the individuals who led the evaluation study are responsible for organizing the annual event.

Development of methods and tools that can be used in future efforts to evaluate capacity development or other aspects of organizational development. Through the evaluations, various methods and tools were developed and field-tested in a 'learning by doing' process. These methods have potential use in subsequent evaluations that may be carried out by our own or other organizations. In Viet Nam, the evaluation team created a guide, which provides detailed information about their experiences with participatory assessment tools, questionnaires, and secondary data collection amongst other evaluation methodologies.

Strengthened partnerships. The evaluation helped develop capacities for building and strengthening inter-organizational partnerships. In conducting the evaluations, most of the national organizations worked closely, not only with the corresponding international organization, but also with local partners. In effect, a learning partnership was established among various organizations, represented by key individuals. Several of the study teams reported that in the process of working together on the evaluation, participants improved their inter-personal and inter-organizational relations as well as their skills for networking, negotiation, and sharing benefits.

As a result of the evaluation study, the Root Crops Center in the Philippines and the UPWARD network realized how their collaborative projects had yielded important dividends for each party. The experience has inspired both organizations to move away from a 'patron–client' relationship and towards a fuller partnership, which should open up new opportunities for mutual collaboration and learning.

"The ECD Project is not over. We still need to develop our capacity for evaluation and we need to improve on what we have done to institutionalize it. It can be modified, improved, and used more than we have already done."

Jocelyn Perez

Improved knowledge and motivation in partner organizations. In the previous paragraphs we have emphasized the benefits to individuals in the national organization, to the

national organization itself, or to the capacity development initiative. However, the evaluations were also used in many ways and produced many benefits in the international organizations involved.

For example, IPGRI and ISNAR have both made use of the evaluation studies in preparing for external reviews. UPWARD used the concepts and methods learned in the Philippines study in other evaluations it has carried out since. It has also introduced material on organizational capacity development to an international course held annually.

The evaluations carried out have been of use first and foremost to the organizations directly involved in the capacity development initiative and in the evaluation work. Nevertheless, other organizations may also use the results and benefit from the studies in one way or another. In some of the studies, other organizations became motivated to carry out their own evaluations. This occurred in Cuba, where, on the basis of the successful evaluation in IIP, the National Institute of Plant Pathology also carried out a capacity development initiative— in this case a study of the development of organizational capacities for participatory technology development and management.

Unintended Consequences of Evaluation

An evaluation of a capacity development initiative, especially a highly participatory one that involves representatives of different organizations with different perspectives and interests, is a dynamic social process with somewhat unpredictable results. All evaluations should be expected to produce both positive and negative findings.

Handling positive findings is relatively straightforward and free from conflict (except when stakeholders question the legitimacy and accuracy of an evaluation that is considered too positive). Handling negative findings is a much more delicate matter. While they can be a valuable source of learning and can lead to subsequent improvement, negative findings can also be used to sanction individuals and organizations.

In virtually all of the studies, individuals were suspicious of the motives for initiating the evaluation studies, and they needed to be convinced that the purpose was to improve the organization, not to find fault with, or sanction, individuals. In some cases, the support of groups that we hoped to involve in the studies was never gained.

As mentioned earlier, in the Philippines, the Root Crops Center–UPWARD evaluation study took place at the same time as the Center was undergoing a sensitive external financial audit. This made access to data difficult and put the legitimacy of the evaluation into question. The study team had to work doubly hard to dispel negative perceptions about the study.

As some of the evaluations' preliminary findings indicated, less capacity had been developed than expected. In others, we found that external agencies had contributed less than anticipated. Carrying out the evaluations jointly posed numerous challenges for the partner organizations. In most cases, working together strengthened relations between the national and international organizations involved; but in some cases relations were weakened or strained, at least for a time.

Take-Home Messages

Use of evaluation results and processes does not come automatically. It must be planned and cultivated throughout the evaluation process. As managers and evaluators, we need to take a number of measures to improve the likelihood that our evaluations are used and produce benefits as intended.

One of the key steps in planning an evaluation of a capacity development initiative is to identify the potential users of the evaluation and involve them in the process. This will foster greater awareness of capacity development concepts and practices, as well as better understanding of the evaluation process and findings. It will also promote acceptance and internalization of the conclusions and recommendations.

The use of participatory self-assessment methods creates an environment where participants are encouraged to express themselves freely and to be forthcoming with opinions and ideas. As a result, immediate decisions and actions are more likely to take place and a feeling of greater commitment to building an organization's future is fostered.

Using a 'learning by doing' approach helps individuals in the organizations strengthen their own evaluation capacities and pass the knowledge on to others. Through such an approach, individuals learn evaluation concepts and methods that they can use in the future in their own or other organizations.

In the process of working jointly in a self-assessment evaluation process, partners can strengthen their relationships. Ideally, both participating organizations will improve their capacities as a result of the process. Finally, the results and benefits of an evaluation process can motivate other organizations to carry out their own evaluations.

Guide to Further Reading

Patton has for many years campaigned for planning and conducting evaluations in ways that encourage their use by intended users. His book, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (1997), is the definitive work on this topic and one of the leading evaluation texts available. Patton's 1999 article entitled "Organizational Development and Evaluation" applies many of the principles of utilization-focused evaluation to the field of organizational development.

The factors influencing the use of evaluation in research and development organizations are discussed in a paper by Mackay and Horton (2003). The four factors influencing the use of evaluation results in policy making and management (interests, ideology, institutions, and information) are discussed by Weiss in a 1999 article in the journal *Evaluation*. The main types of use of evaluation results (direct, indirect, and symbolic) are discussed in the book *Evaluation* by the same author (1998).

Several ways to expand the use of evaluation are discussed in the paper by Mackay and Horton cited above. The role of internal evaluation in organizational learning and change is detailed in publications by Love (1991), Russ-Eft and Preskill (2001), Sonnichesen (2000), Preskill and Torres (1999), and Horton, Galleno, and Mackay (2003).

The book *Building Effective Evaluation Capacity,* edited by Boyle and Lemaire (1999), presents several approaches for strengthening and utilizing evaluation capacity within organizations.

Annex: Summaries of the Evaluation Reports

Exploring Capacity Development in a Rural Development NGO in Bangladesh
Marise B. Espineli, Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Victoria Bautista, and Snehalata Saha

The setting

Despite recent progress, Bangladesh is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Political anarchy, public-sector corruption and nonaccountability, rising social and economic inequalities with un- and under-employment, low status of women, and high illiteracy rates are just some of the forces that hinder poverty alleviation. Recurring natural disasters such as floods and drought also continue to undermine the country's development gains. Since the mid 1970s, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as important partners to the Government of Bangladesh, international aid donors, and development agencies in their efforts to alleviate rural poverty.

The Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) and the Philippines-based International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) are two nonprofit NGOs. The organizations became acquainted with each other in the mid 1990s when one of the RDRS staff attended a training course at IIRR. This began a five-year provider–client relationship that involved an almost consistent flow of RDRS staff to IIRR training courses.

RDRS was established 30 years ago as a field program of the Geneva-based Lutheran World Federation and provided relief for war refugees returning from neighboring India. After a series of transitions, RDRS now works to improve the living conditions of the rural poor in the northwest of Bangladesh through supporting institution-building and women's development, disaster preparedness and social mobilization, and micro-finance for the organized poor, their communities, and other civil society actors.

IIRR was founded by Dr Y.C. James Yen in the 1920s in China and later established in the Philippines to spread the rural reconstruction development philosophy, which promotes a people-centered, integrated, and sustainable approach to rural development. IIRR has three programs. The learning community program works with the rural poor in the agriculture and natural resource management and community health management sectors. The education and training program develops the capacities of rural development practitioners in participatory approaches to rural development. The publications and communications program is responsible for documenting best field practices in participatory approaches to rural development.

The capacity development effort

Both RDRS and IIRR have mandates for capacity development. When RDRS changed its status from an international NGO managed by expatriates to a local NGO managed by local staff, the need to concentrate on its own capacity development became a priority.

Staff development drew significant attention and resources during 1996–2000. During this period almost 20% of RDRS staff received training from IIRR and RDRS staff constituted over 7% of all IIRR trainees. RDRS has therefore invested a great deal in IIRR training and the organization is IIRR's biggest 'client'. The coherence in mission, use of participatory

methods, and similar rural development mandates of the two organizations helped foster their relationship.

The evaluation study

Objectives. The evaluation study revolved around three major objectives: to determine the relevance of IIRR training courses to RDRS's capacity needs, to examine the strengths and weaknesses of acquiring needed capacities through IIRR training, and to provide recommendations to improve capacity development in both organizations.

Guiding principles. The study was guided by three fundamental principles: a focus on information that would be useful to both organizations, receptiveness to reflection and ideas from various levels of staff in each organization, and the use of participatory self-assessment.

Study methods. The evaluation exercise used several methods to obtain data from a variety of sources. Reflection on internal processes in organizational capacity development was the main methodology used to obtain information on the study's specific research questions. The reflection activities were conducted through small group discussions involving the assessment team and other key personnel from each organization. The results of group reflection were further cross-checked and refined by appropriate staff.

The two organizations conducted separate self-assessment workshops. RDRS's workshop included 65% of IIRR-trained senior and mid-level managers. The workshop primarily focused on issues relating to key capacities developed, the processes used, and how these capacities were institutionalized within RDRS. IIRR also conducted a self-assessment process focused on its own processes for developing, organizing, implementing, and evaluating its training courses. Following these workshops, joint reflection took place on the question of improving their capacity development processes and their partnership for capacity development.

A special survey among randomly selected IIRR alumni in RDRS and their supervisors was carried out. This helped identify the capacities that alumni obtained from the IIRR courses and provided insights into the skills they were able to apply in their work and the factors that contributed or hindered such applications.

A review of documentation included program and institutional reports, staff development plans, strategic planning documents, evaluation reports, policy papers, and staff training reports.

Key informant interviews were conducted with selected RDRS staff and managers on their understanding of the RDRS organizational capacity development efforts and expected performance of staff who had attended the IIRR training courses.

Limitations of data collection. Reliance on perceptual data from a limited number of IIRR alumni made it difficult to establish conclusions about what competencies were gained from the IIRR courses. The absence of job-specific competency requirements and appraisal tools at RDRS made it impossible to compare staff performance before and after training.

The evaluation findings

Common goals but a diffused relationship. Despite a diffused relationship, IIRR and RDRS share a common vision of development. IIRR's course offerings were therefore deemed appropriate because of their emphasis on comprehensive and participatory development. Thus, while the two organizations did not undertake direct negotiations to ensure that the course offerings and capacity needs corresponded, common values served as an important basis for the five-year relationship.

Connecting individual capacity development to organizational capacity needs. From RDRS's perspective, capacity development is interpreted both as building the capability of individual staff and building organizational capacity. On the other hand, IIRR's training program focuses mainly on the enhancement of individual abilities rather than organizational capacities. Analyzing the connection between the individual training provided by IIRR and the organizational capacity needs of RDRS proved difficult.

Key capacities developed. Despite difficulties in determining direct links between IIRR training and RDRS's organizational capacities, the evaluation provided evidence that training did contribute to the work of IIRR alumni and to the development of several core organizational capacities. These included innovation and change, strategic management and leadership, participatory program management, the mobilization of resources, and building partnerships. As a result of its capacity development efforts, RDRS made a successful transition from a field program of an international charity to a strong, respected, self-administered, national NGO.

Processes used for capacity development. While there was a growing awareness within RDRS of the strategic importance of capacity development, a review of the processes used to address capacity development showed that many were informal. This is not to say that the informal procedures had been ineffective. Managers and staff indicated that, very often, training participants and training courses had been well matched.

The study also revealed that translating capacities from an individual to an organizational level was achieved by some and not by others. Individual initiative and management style largely influenced the application and use of knowledge and skills acquired through training where clear guidelines and procedures were absent. To some extent, the absence of formally determined procedures for utilizing capacities acquired through training left room for creativity and innovation. On the other hand, relying on individual efforts meant that some of the acquired capacities may have been lost when individual innovation and initiative were weak.

Improving IIRR's and RDRS's capacity development. The study concluded that IIRR's training provision processes could be improved in three major areas: design, management, and evaluation. RDRS could optimize its capacity development efforts by improving its staff training, management procedures, and ideology. This could be achieved by better understanding of current and future needs through defining a set of indicators that are periodically reviewed for relevance to the organization. Long-term and short-term planning for capacity acquisition should also be prioritized.

RDRS's other challenge is how to transform individual abilities acquired through training into organizational capacities. The study recommends the use of action planning to address this issue and encourages supervisors and department heads to develop processes and procedures to integrate learning from training courses.

Finally, the study suggests that RDRS should systematically assess all other dimensions of organizational capacity development. Leadership, management structures, systems and procedures, physical facilities, and technology also contribute to the effective implementation of organizational capacity development.

Lessons learned about evaluating organizational capacity development

- Defining organizational capacity development in terms of training impact creates a narrow perspective on capacity development and unrealistic expectations from training courses. There is a need to differentiate training impact and organizational capacity development conceptually.

- Training as an approach to capacity development has to be supported by other processes that link individual knowledge, attitudes, and skills acquisition to organizational capacities. These linkages are important for transforming individual capacities into organizational capacities.

- Organizational capacity development requires a relationship with the external agency that encourages mutual responsibility, growth, development, and understanding.

- The framework to be used for evaluating organizational capacity development should make a cognitive link between organizational goals and the objectives of capacity development efforts.

- Given the range of elements to be considered in evaluating organizational capacity development, results can be diffuse and, at times, inconclusive.

- One should not ignore the links between individual and organizational capacities when evaluating organizational capacity development. Making an analysis of such links can help determine whether, and precisely how, training has resulted in changes at the level of individuals and the organization as a whole.

- Since capacity development is not a one-way process, optimum participation of both organizations in all phases from planning to evaluation is important.

Uses and benefits of the evaluation

This was the first time that IIRR, a capacity development service provider, and RDRS, a beneficiary, had jointly examined and evaluated their organizational capacity development. There were several advantages to this type of evaluation:

- It brought the partners together to examine organizational capacity development through a negotiated lens where each participant had a stake in its outcome.

- It contributed to organizational knowledge and understanding about capacity development and its evaluation.

- The evaluation framework, guiding questions, and facilitation from the ECD Project stimulated collective reflection and the sharing of insights.

- The processes followed, the difficulties encountered, and the results identified led to a greater commitment to addressing organizational capacity development in each organization.

- The exercise provided equal learning opportunities to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of both organizations towards capacity development.

Following the study, RDRS and IIRR committed to conducting action plans aimed at improving their respective capacity development initiatives. RDRS planned an organizational assessment where results of the evaluation study would be used extensively in the future strengthening of the organization. RDRS committed to link staff training more systematically to organizational capacity development. IIRR committed to improving its international training courses by focusing not just on the development of individual competencies but also on organizational capacities.

The evaluation convinced both organizations to think more comprehensively about capacity development. Following the evaluation, RDRS introduced a monitoring system with trained staff that will be incorporated into a personnel management information system. RDRS has also been rethinking and negotiating partnerships for organizational capacity development in several new areas such as advocacy, networking, and alternative research. The evaluation

also inspired RDRS and IIRR to consider their capacity development relationship more creatively in line with their organizational mandates and emerging opportunities. Finally, the evaluation study results were shared widely within both organizations to broaden understanding and foster greater commitment to capacity development and its evaluation.

Towards Strategic Management in a Cuban Agricultural Research Institute
Albina Maestrey Boza, Maria Adriana Mato, Carmen Maria Mederos, José Antonio González, Adriana Ballester, Jorge Luis Piloto, José de Souza Silva, and Juan Cheaz

The setting

During the 1990s, Cuba experienced profound and rapid changes in its economic situation. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union brought to an end the trading relationship upon which its economy had been based since the 1960s. An ongoing United States trade blockade resulted in a lack of food and agricultural input supplies. Together, these factors presented a major challenge to agricultural research and development in Cuba.

Previously, state-managed farms, with assured inputs from the Soviet Union and an assured market, had been able to deal directly with agricultural research organizations and laid out clear directions for research priorities. The State farms have now disappeared and agricultural research organizations need to find a way to respond to the needs of small and medium-sized producers and, with them, to plan research priorities and disseminate results. To do this, they need to look beyond what is happening at the farm level and understand the entire agrifood chain from beginning to end.

There was, therefore, an urgent need for major change in Cuba's agricultural research institutions and a subsequent need to evaluate the change process and its results. Since 1996, ISNAR's New Paradigm Project and the Directorate of Science and Technology of Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture have collaborated in an evolving set of activities aimed at developing a National System for Agricultural Science, Innovation, and Technology (SINCITA) and strengthening strategic management capacities within the system. The capacity to analyze agrifood chains has become particularly important. The evaluation study focused on a single capacity development effort, pork-meat chain analysis in the Swine Research Institute (IIP).

The capacity development effort

Given the changing political and economic context, IIP—one of the 17 institutes that make up SINCITA—saw the need to build its institutional capacity to correspond better to its changing context and to the demands of the market. Agrifood-chain analysis allowed IIP to study its context in a more systematic way, by encouraging it to identify critical factors and potential technological demands relating to farm suppliers, processors, and merchants, and the organizational and legal environment, as well as to the farms themselves. This type of analysis will allow IIP to contribute better to the formulation of national agricultural policies, to share its capacity with partner organizations, and to enhance its own credibility to secure greater political, financial, and institutional support.

Between 1998 and 2000, the New Paradigm Project led several regional- and national-level workshops focused on the development and implementation of training modules in agrifood-chain analysis. These added to IIP's capacity development efforts, however, most of the Institute's capacity development was done through 'learning by doing'. In 2000 especially, the Institute took the lead in analyzing Cuba's pork-meat agrifood chain. With support from SINCITA's facilitation unit, the IIP's Research Director and a core group organized a series of participatory workshops and studies. These aimed to gather and analyze information on the

pork-meat chain and to reach consensus on the nature of the chain, its key links and segments, its critical factors, and the implications for research and development activities in this area.

The evaluation study

Objectives. Initially, the study intended to cover the entire institutional change process in SINCITA. However, it was later decided that it would not be possible to complete such a complex study within the timeframe and with the resources available.

Consequently, the team decided to focus on a single capacity development effort in a single institute, i.e. agrifood-chain analysis in IIP.

Methodology. Evaluation is frequently viewed as a 'hide-and-seek' game in which persons being evaluated try to give the best possible impression of their work to the evaluators and hide any of their defects. As a result, the evaluators seldom believe what they are told and must try to discover the 'true' story. To avoid this deep suspicion of the evaluation process, the evaluation team opted for a self-assessment methodology, which incorporated participation, interpretation, and interaction to encourage joint learning among the participants.

The evaluation study aimed to reach consensus on the importance and relevance of the capacity development effort, the key moments in the capacity development process and the principal factors driving and constraining it, the results of the capacity development process within and outside IIP, and the merits of the self-assessment methodology employed.

The study involved eight major steps: a preparatory meeting, internal workshops for SINCITA's facilitation group, an IIP preparatory workshop, a review of documents, individual interviews, a self-assessment workshop, preparation of the workshop report, and preparation of the evaluation report.

The self-assessment workshop was structured and facilitated to elicit the views of individuals and interest groups and to make these views known to other groups. Subsequently, the groups negotiated a set of common conclusions, and divergent opinions were recorded and included in the workshop report.

The evaluation findings

Relevance and importance of the capacity development efforts. Participants in the evaluation study from IIP as well as from collaborating and client organizations concluded that the work on agrifood chains had been of great value to IIP for three main reasons. First, it helped IIP understand the changes that were taking place in the swine sector and define priority areas for its work to support the sector. Second, as participants prepared the agrifood chain study and set priorities for their research and development work, they gained a new sense of direction in their work, which made them more confident in their negotiations with other organizations. Third, the multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional emphasis of the study design helped participants understand how their individual work related to the overall organization and the interconnectedness of various technical and institutional factors at different points along the food chain.

Key events in the capacity development process. Participants in the evaluation identified several key events that led to the success of IIP's capacity development process. First, the Ministry of Agriculture's decision to consolidate SINCITA initiated a broad process of institutional change and pressed for research institutes to carry out agrifood chain studies. This was followed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's decision to fund the New Paradigm Project's work in Cuba. The sensitization efforts by the New Paradigm

Project and SINCITA developed commitment from key actors and a positive attitude on the part of participants in IIP's capacity development. Finally, the participatory workshops organized by the New Paradigm Project, SINCITA, and the IIP facilitation team stimulated commitment and motivation among participants to pursue the capacity development effort and provided a forum for sharing concepts, information, and experiences.

Factors that promoted the capacity development process. Participants in the evaluation identified several critical factors that led to the success of IIP's capacity development efforts:

- There was political leadership from the Ministry of Agriculture, managerial leadership from SINCITA and IIP, and technical leadership from the New Paradigm Project.

- IIP's capacity development effort was part and parcel of a broader, dynamic, and vigorous institutional change process within SINCITA.

- Special features of the New Paradigm Project included a focus on organizational capacity development, a respect for local autonomy and negotiation, and an emphasis on knowledge generation within the local context.

- The highly participatory method used by IIP to conduct agrifood chain analysis enhanced and legitimated the results, enriched the information base of the test study, and gained the commitment of potential users to accept the results and implement the recommendations.

Constraining factors. Time and resource limitations restricted training efforts within IIP's capacity development, so there was a greater dependence on 'learning by doing'. There were also only a limited number of actors involved in the food-chain supply study. The limited size, composition, and frequent turnover of the New Paradigm Project, SINCITA, and IIP facilitation teams jeopardized the range and amount of expertise available to support IIP's capacity development efforts and the continuity and pace of the process.

Results and benefits of the capacity development process. IIP has indeed developed its capacity to carry out useful agrifood-chain analysis. The study had a broad institutional impact. It improved working relations and teamwork both within the Institute and with its partners. IIP staff also applied training techniques learned in the New Paradigm Project-SINCITA workshops in their own training activities. The agrifood-chain study influenced the redesign of the Ministry of Agriculture's swine research and development program and the formulation of 13 new projects based on results of the agrifood chain study.

The study also led to IIP's increased institutional credibility and improved relationships with external actors. In 2000, the Ministry of Agriculture named IIP its 'outstanding research center'. In the same year, IIP's Director was named an 'outstanding manager' by the National State Council. IIP's financial support increased by 11% between 1998 and 2000, and the agrifood-chain study carried out by IIP is now considered a model for other similar studies in Cuba.

Participants in the self-assessment exercise felt that the most important—although highly intangible—results of the capacity development process were in the area of institutional motivation and culture. There has been a marked improvement in the motivation of IIP staff members, in their commitment to the institute's mission and objectives, and in the degree of connection between individual activities and projects.

Uses and benefits of the evaluation

This evaluation study allowed those involved to participate in a self-assessment exercise for the very first time. Participants generally felt that the approach had a number of advantages over conventional external evaluation methodologies. It brought internal and external actors together to discuss and assess their work. It contributed directly to the individuals' knowledge. The guiding questions and facilitation stimulated collective reflection and analysis, and the process was action-oriented, leading to a commitment to using the results. Participants valued the participatory mode of the evaluation. The evaluation process was instinctively negotiated among the partners, which allowed for organizational learning.

Participants offered several suggestions for improving evaluation in IIP:

- to institutionalize self-assessment by introducing it into its annual work plan;
- to assign financial resources for evaluation in its budget;
- to develop capacity for self-assessment as had been done with the agrifood-chain methodology;
- to promote self-assessment as a strategy for improving its overall learning and capacity development efforts.

Based on the positive results of this first self-assessment exercise, IIP has now introduced self-assessment exercises into its annual work plan and has included resources for this in its budget. In 2001, SINCITA organized a second self-assessment exercise in the Plant Protection Institute. Based on the promising results of these two cases, the Vice Minister of Agriculture has requested that SINCITA's facilitation team organize a system-wide self-assessment in 2002 to assess the change process and its results, and to recommend measures to improve the Ministry's future work in institutional development and change.

Understanding Capacity Development in a Plant Genetic Resources Center in Ghana
Samuel Bennett-Lartey, Raymond Vodouhe, and Jamie Watts

The setting

About 70% of Ghana's population live in rural areas and depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods. Agriculture accounts for approximately 70% of Ghana's exports and employs 66% of the country's workforce.

Plant genetic resources are fundamental to improving quality of life because they are the basis of food supply and they are essential to improving agriculture without threatening the environment. Some of Ghana's important plant genetic resources include cereals, roots and tubers, legumes, gourds, vegetables, fruit trees, spices, oil plants, cocoa, and coffee. The collection and conservation of plant genetic resources are necessary to protect genetic diversity, which is under threat from land degradation and other factors. The characterization, evaluation, and documentation of such plants help develop an understanding of the genetic character of the plant material conserved so that desirable traits, such as disease resistance or productivity, can be isolated and used to improve farming systems.

The Plant Genetic Resources Center is one of eight agricultural institutes of Ghana's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. It is mandated to coordinate plant genetic resources-related activities in Ghana and to collect, conserve, characterize, evaluate, and document Ghana's plant genetic resources. It also conducts research on Ghana's agricultural

biodiversity and encourages the utilization of these resources by plant breeders, other researchers, and farmers.

The main external actors in the Center's capacity development efforts have been the Government of Ghana, in providing the necessary skilled staff, infrastructure, and other facilities, and IPGRI. IPGRI is an international non-profit organization based in Rome, Italy, that has been working with the Center for approximately 20 years. Its mission is to promote the conservation and use of plant genetic resources to improve the lives of people around the world. Since the responsibility and authority for plant genetic resources rests with the countries themselves, IPGRI works very closely with national organizations and governments to help build their capacity for plant genetic resources research and management.

A more recent contributor to the Center's capacity development has been the Cotonou-based Genetic Resources Network of West and Central Africa (GRENEWECA), which was established in 1998 under the auspices of the West and Central African Agricultural Research Council for Development. GRENEWECA's goal is to contribute to sustainable agricultural development in its member countries through the conservation and use of the diversity of local plant genetic resources. The network aims to increase the effectiveness of each of its member country's plant genetic resources programs through regional collaboration.

The capacity development effort

The capacity development effort assessed in this study was not a one-off intervention, but the development of the Center's capacity over a 20-year period. Various factors contributed to the Center's development including, but not limited to, the interventions of IPGRI and GRENEWECA. IPGRI and GRENEWECA contributed to the Center's capacity development through three broad categories of support: training, technical support, and information services.

The Center, IPGRI, and GRENEWECA are motivated to collaborate in capacity development efforts because they share a common mission. Although IPGRI and GRENEWECA were created to promote conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, neither organization actually controls any germplasm. Therefore, to accomplish their own missions, they must build the capacity of organizations like the Center.

The Center works with IPGRI and GRENEWECA because they have specialized knowledge and skills in plant genetic resource conservation and use. IPGRI and GRENEWECA are also able to attract and secure resources from international official development agencies and other international organizations and foundations to help organizations like the Center accomplish their goals.

The evaluation study

Objectives. The study evaluated capacity development in the Center between 1980 and 1999, during which time major growth and change occurred. The evaluation of IPGRI's contribution included a retrospective analysis of the Institute's support to the Center with the aim of identifying how capacity development programs could be improved in the future. The focus of the evaluation for GRENEWECA was more forward looking, focusing on how to solve problems in a collaborative way among network members to plan for a more effective capacity development program in the future.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to

- analyze the development of the Center's capacity to conserve, evaluate, and utilize plant genetic resources—specifically its staff development, facilities, and methods for conservation—so that the Center can carry out its mandate more effectively;

- illustrate and learn from Ghana's capacity development experiences to help develop IPGRI and GRENEWECA's other national programs in Africa and elsewhere;
- promote the use of evaluation for capacity development and to build skills in conducting these analyses within the three participating organizations.

Motivation for the evaluation. All three participating organizations became involved in the study to learn more about capacity development processes and how to evaluate them. For the Center, the study was a means of evaluating its overall performance and identifying weaknesses. It was also an opportunity to increase awareness among its stakeholders and upper-level managers about the Center and to engage them in problem solving and priority setting.

For IPGRI and GRENEWECA, capacity development is a high priority and an important part of their core mission. They were, therefore, interested in better understanding of how their organizational capacity development efforts can be more effective. This evaluation was an opportunity for both organizations to take an in-depth look at their experience with one national program and to extend what they learned to other programs.

Evaluation design. A case-study approach was used for the evaluation with a strong emphasis on self-assessment by each of the organizations involved. This approach provided a means to evaluate the complex interactions and processes involved in organizational change.

The study was designed and implemented by a team made up of members from each of the three participating organizations, including the head of the Center. The study included three major components, each focused on one of the organizations involved in the study. In each component, self-assessment workshops, interviews with key informants including staff and stakeholders, and a review of relevant archives, records, and other documentation were used.

Once all the components of the study were concluded, evaluation team members from the three organizations met to compare and consolidate their findings and develop overall conclusions and recommendations. Drafts of the evaluation report were reviewed by key stakeholders, and revisions were made as necessary.

The evaluation findings

Capacity developed. The evaluation study concluded that the Center's capacities have grown appreciably over the 20-year period studied. Areas of improvement include infrastructure development, acquisition of key administrative staff and technical staff, improved research methodologies, and an increased engagement with national and international stakeholders. The Center has also diversified its services and products thereby increasing its financial resources.

The Government of Ghana played a substantial role in the Center's development process through provision of land, payment of salaries, and allocation of basic operating budgets. A significant improvement in the ability of the Center to carry out its mandate occurred in 1994 when the Government granted it the status of a semi-autonomous research center. This resulted in a direct funding allocation to the Center and greater control over its budgetary resources.

IPGRI's contribution. IPGRI contributed to the development of the Center's capacity through its sustained partnership over a period of approximately 20 years. In comparison with other external partners, IPGRI provided the most support over the longest period of time. IPGRI's support to the Center came in the following forms:

- increasing technical expertise by sponsoring long- and short-term training for Center staff;

- strengthening infrastructure development by providing the Center with basic conservation and research facilities;

- providing technical assistance to facilitate the introduction of new methodologies;

- providing publications, which increased Center staff access to important technical information;

- sponsoring collaborative research in innovative methodologies and technologies;

- promoting the development of a more conducive international policy environment for plant genetic resources that would hopefully impact positively on Ghanaian law and policy, which in turn would be supportive of the Center's operations;

- helping to promote improved management practices;

- increased public awareness about the importance of plant genetic resources;

- promoting inter-regional collaboration and strengthening by sponsoring the secretariat of the GRENEWECA network.

GRENEWECA'S *contribution.* Although GRENEWECA has only recently become operational, it has contributed to the development of the Center's capacity by:

- sponsoring collaborative research activities on germplasm collection and evaluation;

- training staff in documentation, project proposal writing, and plant genetic resources management;

- raising awareness among the Center's stakeholders and decision-makers on the importance of plant genetic resources for food, agriculture, health, and economic development;

- promoting collaboration within member countries by sponsoring national plant genetic resources committee meetings;

- providing a platform for the Center to actively advocate greater support for plant genetic resource development at the international level.

Improving capacity development efforts. The study indicated that the capacity development of the Center could be better achieved in the future if improvements are made in four key areas. First, to better target capacity development efforts to the needs and priorities of the Center. Second, to define capacity development more broadly and move beyond technical training to include management and strategic planning skills. Third, to better monitor and evaluate capacity development efforts, and fourth, to build the capacities of IPGRI and GRENEWECA to more effectively achieve their goals as capacity development agents.

Uses and benefits of the evaluation

The participatory approach used in the evaluation study helped build capacity for evaluation and an understanding of capacity development among the study team members and their organizations and stakeholders. Participants in the study are now more likely to understand, value, use, and implement the findings of the evaluation.

Limitations in the methodology. A good basis for the evaluation was established during the planning phase but more should have been done to develop the assumptions, indicators, and theoretical framework in a truly participatory manner. A stronger understanding and

consensus on the theoretical framework of capacity development should have been developed among team members. Managers and staff of the three participating organizations could have been more involved in the planning phase to help ensure complete understanding of the basis of the study and commitment for the uptake of recommendations.

Applications of findings. The evaluation report was used in an external review of IPGRI's sub-Saharan Africa Regional Office that took place in September 2001 and in a review of its capacity development project that took place in the spring of 2002. The study's findings were also used in the development of a new strategic plan for capacity development that will guide IPGRI's capacity development activities over the next five years.

By disseminating the study report to various interested parties in Ghana and elsewhere, the Center was able to raise support to implement the recommendations of the study and to hold a strategic planning exercise in 2002. Finally, the results of the study were presented at several international conferences, and the final report is being published for distribution to the Center's stakeholders. This information dissemination is expected to increase awareness of the importance of the evaluation process and its outcomes.

Assessing Organizational Change in an Agricultural Faculty in Nicaragua
Matilde Somarriba Chang, Esther Carballo Madrigal, Javier López, Edmundo Umaña, and Francisco Reyes

The setting

Despite its abundant natural resources, Nicaragua continues to experience high levels of poverty. This is due in part to a lack of vision and commitment by national organizations to manage natural resources. It also reflects the lack of appropriate frameworks and methods for professionals working in the environmental and agricultural sectors. It is therefore necessary to provide an education that is both relevant and practical to the agricultural and forestry sectors to move the country forward.

Nicaragua's National Agrarian University (UNA) provides a professional education to its students and tries to address the development, political, economic, social, and cultural needs of the country through its programs. UNA has four separate departments, including the Faculty of Natural Resources and the Environment (FARENA), which this evaluation study is focused on.

FARENA is responsible for preparing students for careers in forestry and agronomist engineering with a focus on soil and water, and in renewable natural resource management. Its mission is to create professionals who can contribute to the agricultural development of the country by generating appropriate technologies for natural resource management in order to contribute to the establishment of sustainable and competitive agrarian production systems.

The capacity development effort

FARENA has both academic and administrative autonomy from UNA and has sought to build its capacity through partnerships with several international governmental organizations and NGOs. These include the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT); the Program for Sustainable Agriculture on the Slopes of Central America; Forest, Trees, and People; the Swedish International Development Agency; and Texas A&M University. The capacity development efforts included joint research projects, technological and financial support, and institutional capacity development and information exchange.

The evaluation study

Motivation to conduct the evaluation study. In 1999, UNA conducted an assessment of the professional needs of Nicaragua's agricultural sector, which resulted in curricula reform and a reorganization of FARENA. When the opportunity to participate in this evaluation study arose, there was interest on the part of FARENA's management to participate in the effort since its organizational changes had been approached essentially from a technical rather than an organizational perspective.

Objectives. Originally the purpose of the study was to evaluate CIAT's contribution to the development of FARENA's capacity for integrated natural resource management with a special focus on watershed management. Thanks to the contributions of various organizations, the focus of the study shifted to an overall assessment of FARENA's capacity to achieve its mission between 1997 and 2000, a period when vast political changes took place in the country and when critical organizational changes took place in UNA and FARENA.

The study's specific objectives were (a) to identify the processes by which FARENA accomplished its mission, (b) to analyze the recent changes in the context, motivation, capacity, and performance of FARENA and how these impacted on the organization's capacity to accomplish its mission, (c) to identify the contributions of external organizations in the organizational development of FARENA and how this impacted on its ability to accomplish its mission, and (d) to identify the capacities FARENA needs to accomplish its mission.

Principles of the evaluation study. The evaluation was based on

- joint reflection on achievements, limitations, and future options in FARENA's organizational development but not on specific outcomes that had already been achieved;

- FARENA as a management unit but not individuals within the organization;

- capacity development as an integrated effort, where the main functions of the organization are addressed and where an examination of how they benefit the organization's target group takes place;

- understanding that capacity development involves multiple, interacting efforts with many external agents whose contributions are difficult to distinguish from one another.

Study methods and activities. The evaluation was conducted through a series of participatory and self-assessment workshops with participants from FARENA, other University departments, students, and external partner organizations. A sensitization workshop was held followed by a second workshop analyzing FARENA's external environment, motivation, and organizational capacities. A third workshop evaluated external agencies' contributions to FARENA's capacity development, and a fourth evaluated FARENA's capacities related to extension services. A final workshop examined the processes that led to the development of capacities in FARENA. A team of four reviewed the outcomes of each workshop and secondary information and helped compile a final report.

The evaluation findings

Processes used by FARENA to achieve its mission. The study concluded that FARENA's management, teaching, research, and extension processes contributed to delivering professional graduates and providing technical and scientific information and services related

to renewable natural resources. The study also concluded that FARENA's educational process comprises activities planned and oriented around providing an individual with knowledge, skills, and values to help develop more effective management of Nicaragua's natural resources.

Changes in the external environment. Although national politics have created a polarized environment in Nicaragua, the study concluded that there now appears to be a more favorable environment for cooperation between universities and government institutions. FARENA already has a good relationship with a number of related local governmental organizations and NGOs.

Changes in organizational motivation. In terms of overall organizational development, the study concluded that change processes were put into place that served to motivate FARENA to redefine its mission, vision, and role in the area of renewable natural resource management in Nicaragua, even though FARENA was initially neither technically prepared nor organized to undergo change.

Looking at organizational culture, the study found that most members of staff were willing to work in groups on topics of common interest and that the attitude of personnel towards change was generally very positive. However, some aspects of organizational culture affected staff motivation, for example, the culture of improvisation meant that planning was often not carefully done, and plans that had been agreed to were sometimes not followed in practice.

Staff incentives and rewards were also important. Employment stability, opportunities for professional development, and competitive salaries helped maintain the commitment of FARENA personnel.

Capacities developed and to be developed by FARENA to accomplish its mission. The evaluation enabled FARENA to determine what capacities have improved or limited its overall performance. These included leadership; strategic planning; governance, structure, and organization; planning, monitoring, and evaluation; staffing issues; internal and external communication; technologies to develop teaching and research capabilities; financial resources; and facilities and infrastructure.

Changes in FARENA's performance. In this study, performance was measured according to efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and financial viability. The study suggested that FARENA could have used its professional resources more efficiently. The University's slow and centralized administrative system also had direct repercussions on the department's performance. FARENA's administration is understaffed and requires training on administrative and high-level education management techniques. FARENA also needs to put into place a mechanism to evaluate organizational performance and the effectiveness of staff members on an individual basis.

FARENA has managed to maintain its relevance by designing curricula reform based on an assessment of national demand and needs for agricultural sciences. The financial resources allocated to FARENA do not, however, allow it to undertake all of its mandated activities and FARENA will need to develop a specific strategy for fundraising in a more sustainable way.

The contribution of external agencies. The study concluded that external agencies contributed to FARENA's integrated natural resource management focus and to the development of FARENA's research and extension capacities. The appropriation of CIAT's tools for making decisions on natural resource management contributed to the Faculty's acquisition of knowledge and skills. A better understanding of the need for community participation in planning processes for appropriate natural resource management led to a change of attitude among technicians and extension personnel.

The various contributions made by external entities contributed the following achievements:

- increased collaboration and communication with a variety of national organizations and national and international networks;

- improved research capabilities through enhancing researchers', students', and graduates' capacities;

- increased training for natural resource management-related sectors;

- updated equipment and methodologies.

The evaluation also recommended new approaches to working with external agencies for the following reasons:

- to negotiate with external agencies so that FARENA decides the terms of the support so that capacity development efforts contribute to developing FARENA's strategic plans;

- to make organizational development part of the goal of specific projects;

- to improve FARENA's administrative and management capacities to fulfill the external organization's accountability requirements;

- to establish monitoring and evaluation strategies within the project and/or agreements to help make appropriate decisions.

Capacities that need to be developed. The capacities that FARENA needs to develop include improved understanding of the concepts surrounding integrated management of watersheds, environmental impact assessment, tools for monitoring natural and water resources, better understanding of the impact of its work on the country's socioeconomic development, and a mechanism for introducing fees for environ-mental services.

Uses and benefits of the evaluation

The evaluation contributed not only to FARENA's understanding of its capacity development processes but also in helping it address its organizational performance issues. The Faculty will now be able to improve on its limitations and develop the required capacities to achieve its mission. Recommendations were made regarding actions to be carried out not only by FARENA but also by the University and how to improve collaboration with external partners.

This study is expected to serve as a reference for other organizations in Nicaragua that work in education, research, and extension and that wish to carry out an evaluation of capacity development efforts. The study has been used to prioritize FARENA's 2002 workplan and to design a training program for its academic personnel. The evaluation study was shared with a UNA evaluation team that is conducting an evaluation and accreditation process for a regional project supported by the Inter-American Development Bank.

FARENA proposes to carry out another evaluation in the next two years to enable it to evaluate the progress made on the recommendations from this report. The evaluation will also serve to identify improvements in FARENA's performance and how these have benefited the organization.

Strengthening Participatory Research Capacities in a Philippines Root Crops Research Center
Dindo Campilan, Jocelyn Perez, Jovita Sim, and Raul Boncodin

The setting

Root crops play a vital role in food security and income generation among poor farmers in the Philippines. Root crops—such as sweetpotato, cassava, potato, taro, and yam—can grow in marginal areas, give good yields with little inputs or care, and offer great potential for commercial food and nonfood uses. For many Filipino farmers and families, root crops guarantee a consistent food supply and cash income.

Given their potential contribution to poverty alleviation in the Philippines, root crops were identified as a major commodity for research in the early 1970s. In 1977, a Presidential Decree created a regional research center for the northern Philippines, which is now called the Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center.

The Root Crops Center is mandated to spearhead research, training, and extension on root crops in the highlands of the northern Philippines. It was established as an autonomous public-sector organization operationally attached to Benguet State University (BSU). In the late 1980s, the Center began collaborative activities with various national and international organizations, including the Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD) network.

UPWARD is an Asia-wide network of research and development professionals seeking greater involvement from farmers and other users of agricultural technology in the research and development of root crops. Its ultimate goal is to apply participatory research methods to enhance the contribution of root crops to income generation for farmers and for individuals and organizations to introduce a participatory dimension in their agricultural research activities.

The capacity development effort

In the early 1980s, the international agricultural research community recognized the need to develop and apply new research and development approaches, particularly participatory research, to the needs of marginalized farming groups. Since root crops are often associated with resource-poor farming households in the Philippines, the Root Crops Center identified participatory research as a relevant and essential capacity for the successful implementation of its mission and objectives. The Center consequently developed its capacity to undertake participatory research by training its staff, acquiring and using publications, and employing small grant-funded projects, which enabled staff to 'learn by doing'.

The International Potato Center (CIP) has a long history of partnership with the Root Crops Center, and its major intervention for developing participatory research capacities was formalized via UPWARD. 'Learning by doing' and 'learning through sharing' are key features of UPWARD's networking strategy. The Center–UPWARD partnership, which was formally launched in 1990, was founded on a shared interest in root crops as a priority focus for research, and participatory research as a potential means to achieve the target outputs and development outcomes of root crops research.

Collaborative field projects formed an important UPWARD strategy for developing participatory research capacity among its partner organizations. The Center–UPWARD collaboration began with a research project on sweetpotato-based home gardens in Baguio City. Over the last 12 years, UPWARD has supported the Root Crops Center's capacity development efforts through collaborative projects, training, information services, and

facilitating the exchange of expertise. The eight phases of development of the partnership are as follows:

1970s–80s   (Pre-project) To determine preferences for and acceptability of sweetpotato varieties.

1990–91   To document and analyze urban home gardens.

1992–93   To develop and introduce technologies for improving urban home gardens.

1993–94   To promote home and school gardens.

1995–97   To monitor and evaluate, institutionalize and scale up home and school gardens.

1998–99   To support development of sweetpotato snackfood enterprises for home and school gardeners.

1999–2000   To strengthen production–processing–marketing systems supporting snackfood enterprises.

2000–to date To improve sweetpotato production enterprise of peri-urban households, with meta-analysis on livelihood, nutrition, and gender.

The evaluation study

Objectives. The Root Crops Center and UPWARD participated in the ISNAR-led ECD Project primarily because of their common interest to evaluate and learn from their 12-year partnership. The Center was experiencing declining levels of funding and needed to redefine its niche within the country's broader root crops research system. It also wanted to maintain its relevancy and contribution to agricultural development in the Philippines and intended to use this evaluation to contribute to its internal review and planning processes. UPWARD saw the need to systematically review how its decade-long capacity development efforts had contributed to the organizational development of its partner organizations.

The joint evaluation aimed to:

- analyze the processes and outcomes of developing the Root Crops Center's participatory research capacity;
- determine how its participatory research capacity had contributed to the effective performance of the Center as a research organization;
- examine how UPWARD had contributed to the development of the Center's participatory research capacity;
- formulate a recommendation for improving capacity development efforts at the Center.

Study methods. The evaluation primarily used a self-assessment methodology, involving Center staff and stakeholders in designing the evaluation, collecting data, and analyzing findings. The evaluation involved several phases. Secondary data collection was followed by a planning workshop to discuss concepts, practices, and issues in capacity development and the ECD Project, and key informant interviews. A summative workshop was held to present and analyze the data collected, draw conclusions, and identify the limitations of the

evaluation. The final phase involved drafting the evaluation report, which was then shared and finalized during workshops involving evaluation stakeholders.

The evaluation focused on human capabilities rather than organizational resources. The evaluation team faced major constraints in data collection due to a lack of monitoring records and difficulty in contacting key informants for the period being covered by the study. In addition, the evaluation was conducted simultaneously with an external financial audit of the Root Crops Center. This unwittingly affected stakeholders' perceptions of the purpose and use of the evaluation.

The evaluation findings

The evaluation identified environmental and motivational factors influencing capacity development and performance, examined the processes of developing participatory research capacity at the Center, and assessed the contribution of partner organizations to capacity development for participatory research.

Factors influencing capacity development. Environmental factors, such as the policy and funding environment, organizational autonomy, and natural disasters, and motivational factors, such as organizational change and reorganization, staff homogeneity, and external recognition, influenced the Center's capacity development and performance in participatory research in positive and negative ways. The research it conducted on home gardens helped the Center contribute significantly to the public- and private-sector's response to food shortages in Baguio City as a result of the 1991 earthquake.

The Root Crops Center's efforts in capacity development. The study concluded that training, information support, mentoring, and small grant projects all made a contribution to the Center's overall strategy for capacity development. Although the partnership between the Root Crops Center and UPWARD was specific to participatory research, the study concluded that it was crucial for the partner organizations to understand how a subset capacity relates to and creates synergy with the other technical, facilitative, and strategic management capacities of the organization. Designing an appropriate mix of capacities over time and space is one of the fundamental challenges facing the organization.

UPWARD's contribution. UPWARD was identified as the main external institution supporting the Center's efforts for developing participatory research capacity. Mentoring was UPWARD's primary means of support. This occurred through informal visits and consultation meetings with senior UPWARD network members and staff from the UPWARD coordinating office. Approximately half of UPWARD's investment in the Center's capacity development involved training and mentoring activities and one-third involved project grants. This suggests that the Center–UPWARD collaboration was grounded on a diverse portfolio of joint efforts for capacity development and research implementation.

Outcomes of capacity development efforts. A wider evaluation of changes in participatory research capacity through self-assessment showed that a variety of types of capacities were developed spanning the entire process of research planning and implementation. These extended even beyond the research realm by enabling Center staff to teach university courses and organize training sessions. The self-assessment showed that the Center's capacity benefited most from efforts to define a research agenda that was based on stakeholder needs. The least capacity improvement was seen in the skills acquired for undertaking fieldwork. This finding underscores the need to focus more attention on developing capacities for field-based research, especially among researchers who have been primarily involved in on-station work.

From the individual to the project level. The evaluation also examined the Center's organizational capacity on a project and institutional level. Individual capacities were successfully transformed into project-level capacities, and this was demonstrated by sustained project implementation, even when project leadership changed, expanding team membership, and the receipt of awards that recognized project-level performance.

The contribution of individual- and project-level capacities to organizational-level capacities for participatory research was also demonstrated. Participatory methods in the Center-UPWARD collaborative project were used for other projects undertaken by the Center. Co-ownership of the project was expanded among the various program divisions of the Center. Project-based publications and documents were produced and have become part of the Center's collection of information resources on participatory research.

Changes in organizational performance. Improvement in participatory research performance was demonstrated by the team's successful implementation of new participatory research activities. Positive changes in organizational performance were also seen as the project carried out its planned activities, produced the corresponding outputs, and worked toward the accomplishment of desired outcomes. The longer-term organizational performance of the project was also evaluated in terms of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability of project processes and results. The study concluded that throughout project implementation, the team continuously learned to improve its participatory research performance.

Contribution to UPWARD outputs and outcomes. The evaluation revealed that the collaborative project yielded key outputs and outcomes, not only for the Center but also for UPWARD. The field-based experiences of the project contributed to UPWARD's broader programmatic agenda in several ways. UPWARD's knowledge on concepts and practices in participatory research were improved, and the experiences contributed to the planning and implementation of CIP's root crops research agenda. In addition, the development of participatory research capacity for other UPWARD members was enhanced.

The Center–UPWARD partnership highlighted the two-way nature of capacity development. Conventional thinking would view the Center and UPWARD as service recipient and provider, respectively. However, it was clear from the evaluation that UPWARD gained as much as the Center from the partnership. All this points to the need to rethink the popular notion of partnership as a patron–client relationship.

Uses and benefits of the evaluation

The administration of BSU responded positively to this study by re-affirming its stake in the process and outcome of the evaluation. In response to the suggestion by the University administration to share the evaluation more widely, the evaluation team organized a series of seminars and workshops aimed at various constituents of the University. This also allowed the team to clarify the nature and purpose of the evaluation in light of various erroneous interpretations of the evaluation's agenda.

Parallel evaluations have been carried out with other UPWARD partners, drawing from the initial experience of the evaluation with the Root Crops Center. Findings from this study, especially on new training needs identified by Center staff, served as input to the development and design of an UPWARD international course on participatory research and development.

Guidelines for future evaluations of capacity development efforts. Some key guidelines have emerged from the evaluation that could be useful to those seeking to do evaluation of capacity development. These include the following:

- Evaluating capacity development inevitably involves collecting sensitive information and can only take place in an atmosphere of transparency and objectivity.

- Capacity development is a complex area that people in the organization need to reflect on and talk about to each other.

- It is important that everybody gains consensus on what we mean when we say 'capacity development'.

- It is important to have common, useful, visual, and conceptual frameworks to refer to when we talk about complex notions such as 'organizational performance' and 'organizational capacity'.

- It is important for all participants to talk in concrete terms (our organization, our mandate and mission, our projects, our management systems, our personnel) and not in abstract terms. Using a case project (e.g., sweetpotato enterprise development) provides concrete examples and indicators on which discussions and exercises can be based.

- Reflecting on an organization's capacity development is a complex exercise. It requires an iterative process, i.e. doing things several times before they become clear and before being able to sort out the more useful examples and indicators from the less useful.

- Systematic record keeping is important in proceeding with a capacity development project. Good ideas and important details get lost if these are not recorded systematically.

- Keeping a written record of attempts to come to grips with organizational development is also valuable.

Expanding Capacities in a Rural Development Institute in Viet Nam
Le Thanh Duong, Nguyen Quang Tuyen, and Ronnie Vernooy

The setting

Viet Nam's government has decided to join the forces of globalization and has applied for membership of the World Trade Organization and the Asian Free Trade Area. In the last decade, the government has also implemented an ambitious reform process (*doi moi*). Economic growth during most of the 1990s has been impressive, but conditions remain tough for those who lack access to good health care, job opportunities and capital, productive land, and/or adequate housing. Problems such as over-exploitation of the natural resource base, including soil erosion and ground water pollution, are ongoing or worsening. Changes in science and technology have been modest and the dominant 'top–down' approach excludes producers from setting research and development agendas. Unidisciplinary-oriented scientists continue to control these sectors. Rural areas are under-served, and few women are involved in agricultural development and research.

This evaluation focuses on Can Tho University's Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development (R&D) Institute, which was established in 1988 to enhance sustainable agriculture and rural development in Viet Nam through research, training, and extension activities inside and outside the Mekong Delta region. The study also analyzes the capacity development efforts of two Institute-coordinated networks—the Farming Systems Research Network (FSRNET) and the Natural Resource Management Network (NAREMNET). These networks bring together a number of Vietnamese organizations with the objective of developing staff capabilities in participatory research and community-based natural resource

management. The Mekong Delta Farming Systems R&D Institute and the networks have been supported by IDRC.

IDRC's purpose is to initiate, encourage, support, and conduct research into the problems of the developing world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical, and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of these regions. IDRC's mandate and objectives emphasize capacity development through a 'learning by doing' approach and the Centre supports research in three broad program areas: social and economic equity, information and communication technologies, and environment and natural resource management. The Community-Based Natural Resource Management program (CBNRM) is one of six programs and works directly with local people involved in natural resource management. The CBNRM program recognizes that these individuals may have intimate knowledge of the local resource base, may have contradictory views on resource use, and will be motivated to adopt sustainable production if they will benefit from improvements in productivity.

The capacity development effort

In a transition economy such as Viet Nam's, organizational capabilities and academic skills in social sciences are particularly limited. As a result, capacity development is a continuing priority in IDRC's programs in Viet Nam. IDRC has provided significant funding for the networks and minor funding for a number of Institute research support activities as well as for the participation of Institute staff in training workshops. IDRC program staff has made regular visits to the Institute and to network partner organizations.

The evaluation study

Objectives. The study aimed to improve, through action research, the understanding of individual and organizational capacity development efforts within the Institute. The study also provided the opportunity to design and try out a variety of tools for monitoring and evaluating these efforts and their results.

The study focused on the period between 1990 and 2000. The research methodologies included a review of program and project documents and relevant studies, key informant interviews, questionnaires, and a number of participatory tools including self-assessment workshops and participatory workshops. A variety of stakeholders took part in the study including researchers, extension workers, government officials, and farmers. Institutional and project documents produced by the Institute and IDRC and relevant studies published in the form of books about recent political and economic developments in Viet Nam were also reviewed. In addition, selected interviews were carried out with key individuals, such as the Director of the Institute and the IDRC program officer responsible for Institute support.

A small sub-case study was added to the main evaluation and focused on the impact of the networks on one of their members, the Institute of Agricultural Science of South Viet Nam (SIAS) in Ho Cho Minh City.

The evaluation findings

Changes in the Institute's organizational capacity. The study concluded that the Institute has developed a set of important organizational capacities that allow it to function as a major research and development organization in Viet Nam. The study identified key capacities as those that allow the Institute to achieve its mission. The core elements of the Institute's capacity development efforts are strategic leadership, the use and dissemination of an innovative research approach and methodologies, strong personnel management, funding,

infrastructure, programs and projects, and dynamic networking both nationally and internationally.

The study concluded that over time the Institute has grown rapidly and made a number of achievements in the field of training, research, and extension that have enabled it to play a leadership role in scientific and policy innovations in Viet Nam. Important processes that led to these changes included the following:

- development of a more holistic approach to rural development research, training, and extension that included a multi-disciplinary, participatory, and community-based natural resource management approach;

- more frequent, stronger, and more responsive relationships with other researchers and clients;

- development of a common approach and agenda with other national research organizations due to the successful efforts of the networks;

- greater effectiveness in fund raising and efficiency in the use of funds;

- improvement in coordination and cooperation with donors;

- improvement in personnel management (knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practice);

- expansion and increasing complexity of infrastructure.

Networking as a capacity development effort. The networks helped raise awareness in SIAS's target group for the role of the community in water resource management through the formation of community organizations. Members of the local organizations also improved their knowledge and application of participatory methods in management and project implementation. Local leadership sympathized with the activities and results of the project. However, important gaps prevailed:

- Collaboration between local organizations faced obstacles because of staffing and budgetary problems.

- Staff resources were limited and staff did not have clear responsibilities, making it difficult to track, reward, or punish in response to performance.

- The division of duties in irrigation system management is not locally regulated.

- The management of local associations is weak.

The Institute and SIAS staff concluded that the network projects supported by IDRC have contributed to the development of their resources and managerial capacities. The networks also gave IDRC staff an opportunity to become familiar with natural resource management problems in Viet Nam and encouraged the 'standardization' of research to a community-based natural resource management approach.

Individual staff contributions to the development of the Institute's organizational capacities. The driving forces behind the above-mentioned changes were staff motivation and staff pride to improve themselves and the organization. Strong leadership from the Institute's Director was demonstrated both internally and externally through linkages with donors, other researchers, and policy-makers.

Achieving results, applying a 'learning by doing' approach, and operating in an external environment that allows experimentation, innovation, and independence has had a positive effect on the Institute's capacity development.

Future challenges for the Institute's capacity development efforts. One major challenge identified by staff is the new policy environment that threatens the future financial viability and sustainability of the Institute. The staff also identified a number of capacities that require further strengthening, including staff development, the improvement of internal rules and regulations, the building of new partnerships to improve research capabilities, and the upgrading of facilities.

Giving and receiving: donor program delivery revisited. The study concluded that IDRC's support was critical in the early 1990s when it introduced a new, radically different approach to research for development through new research methodology, documentation, in-house training, and funding. In adopting and adapting to this new approach, the Institute became a leader in the country. The cumulative project experiences of the six organizations involved in the networks, and others doing community-based natural resource management work, became a basis for other activities and other donor support.

The evaluation concluded that at the national level, supportive policies (personnel development, science and technology, agriculture and rural development) and funding are crucial as these directly affect the organization's viability and sustainability. At the international level, the following donor factors are especially important: flexible funding, motivating for research quality, facilitating networking, promoting linkages with other donors, providing access to expertise and expert support, respecting other languages and cultures, and encouraging supportive monitoring and evaluation.

Uses and benefits of the evaluation

This study is only a preliminary step in a wider process of follow-up activities that will allow the Institute to achieve a more precise evaluation of its organizational capacity development efforts by using participatory approaches. The study was a key element in learning about the strengths and weaknesses of the organizations involved and as a means of identifying gaps and opportunities for future action to improve planning, management, policies, and practices and to increase the organization's financial viability.

The use of participatory evaluation with a strong self-assessment focus was appropriate for the types of organizations involved, since staff and partners/clients can undergo such processes on their own. The evaluation needs to consider both individual and organizational capacity development. A case study approach such as the one used in this evaluation seems adequate as it represents a comprehensive approach that makes selective use of theory and various participatory tools.

It is planned to use the evaluation results to formulate an organizational action plan for the Institute. The results from this research will be disseminated to various individuals and organizations inside and outside Can Tho University. Results and findings of the study will also be shared and discussed with IDRC. Continued collaboration with the Institute on its action planning is expected. After a mid-term review workshop, the Institute's staff will practice the approach and methods from the project to identify lessons for improving capacity development efforts in the future, whether at the project or organization level.

Further Information

Further information on the organizations taking part in the evaluation studies can be found on the following websites:

The Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service, Bangladesh: www.drik.net/memisa/html/rdrs.html

The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction: www.iirr.org

The Swine Research Institute Cuba: www.isnar.cgiar.org/shiip/cuba-capacity.htm
www.sian.info.ve/porcinos/publicaciones/viencuent/valdiviachu.htm

National System for Science and Agrarian Technological Innovation, Cuba:
www.felixvarela.org/Conf98/pp34.htm#sincita

ISNAR: www.isnar.cgiar.org

International Plant Genetic Resources Institute: www.ipgri.cgiar.org

Genetic Resources Network for West and Central Africa:
www.ipgri.cgiar.org/regions/ssa/networking/greneweca.htm

Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Ghana (parent organization of Plant Genetic
Resources Center: www.csir.org.gh

Faculty of Natural Resources and the Environment, Nicaragua: www.una.edu.ni/farena.htm

Benguet State University, the Philippines (parent organization of Root Crops Center):
www.bsu.edu.ph

Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development:
www.eseap.cipotato.org/upward

IDRC Community-Based Natural Resource Management Program: www.idrc.ca/cbnrm

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Glossary

Terms Used in the Evaluation of Organizational Capacity Development

Action learning A process in which a group of people come together, more or less regularly, to help each other learn from experience. Participants typically come from different organizations or situations, and each of them is involved in different activities.

Action planning A process usually associated with training, linking improvements or actions with what has been learned. Action planning establishes a course of actions chosen to realize the application of what was learned or decided.

Action research A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview, which is currently still emerging. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

Adaptive capacities The capacities needed for an organization to learn and change in response to changing circumstances.

Capacity The ability of individuals and organizations to perform effectively, efficiently, and in a sustainable manner. (See 'Organizational capacities'.)

Capacity development An ongoing process by which individuals, groups, organizations, and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, and understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and sustainable manner.

Case study The detailed investigation of one or more organizations, or groups within organizations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study. The phenomenon is not isolated from its context (as in laboratory research for example) but is examined in relation to its context.

Collective knowledge Collective knowledge is an outcome of organizational or institutional learning. (See 'Organizational learning' and 'Institutional learning'.)

Commitment A pledge or obligation to carry out some action or policy or to give support to a policy or person.

Direct use of evaluation results The instrumental use of evaluation results by decision-makers as the basis for a decision. Direct use occurs when information or findings are applied directly to change an action or alter a decision. (See also 'Indirect use'.)

Direct observation Gathering information about things that can be observed. For example, by visiting an organization, one can directly collect information on the physical surroundings. By observing meetings, one can observe who shows up, how people interact, and what decisions are taken.

Effectiveness The extent to which desired objectives are achieved. The extent to which an organization achieves its mission and objectives.

Efficiency The extent to which results are achieved with minimum use of resources. The degree to which an organization generates its products and services using a minimum of inputs.

Evaluation Systematic investigation of the worth, value, merit, or quality of an object. Assessment of the operation or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to its improvement. The criteria for evaluation may include relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. (See also 'Monitoring'.)

Evaluation culture An organizational culture that values evaluation and seeks solutions to problems, trying out tentative solutions, and weighing the results and consequences of actions within an endless cycle of supposition–action–evidence–revision that characterizes good science and good management.

Evaluation questions Questions formulated to help focus an evaluation on key topics or issues.

External operating environment The environment in which an organization operates. Includes such things as the administrative and legal systems that govern the organization, as well as the political, economic, technological, social, and cultural context in which the organization operates.

Financial resources The funding available to the organization to carry out its activities.

Goals The highest-level objective of an organization, project, or program.

Group interview A technique that uses a (small) number of informants to collect perceptions and opinions.

'Hard' capacities The tangible assets and resources of an organization, such as its land, buildings, facilities, personnel, and equipment.

Human capacities The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the members of an organization.

Impact Any effect, whether anticipated or unanticipated, positive or negative, brought about by a development intervention. In some cases, 'impact' refers to the long-term effects of an intervention on broad development goals. (See also 'Output' and 'Outcome'.)

Indicator Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor.

Indirect use of evaluation results Conceptual use of evaluation results in decision making. Refers to an intellectual and gradual process in which the decision-maker is led to a more adequate appreciation of the problems addressed by the policy or program. (See also 'Direct use'.)

Institution A socially sanctioned and maintained set of established practices, norms, behaviors, or relationships (i.e. trade regulations, land tenure, banking systems, and an organization's staff rules) that persist over time in support of collectively valued purposes. Institutions have both formal and informal rules and enforcement mechanisms that shape the behavior of individuals and organizations in society. (See also 'Organization'.)

Internal environment Factors inside an organization that make up the organization's 'personality', and which influence the organization's cohesiveness and the energy it displays pursuing its goals. Factors that make up the internal environment include: the organization's culture, performance-related incentive, and rewards systems, the institutional 'climate' in general, the history and traditions of the organization, leadership and management style, the existence of a generally recognized and accepted mission statement, and shared norms and values that promote teamwork in the pursuit of the organization's goals.

Institutional learning The learning that takes place among individuals in different organizations and groups, who are working together to achieve a common end and, in particular, to induce institutional change. (See also 'Organizational learning'.)

Joint evaluation An evaluation undertaken by two or more parties to achieve a mutual objective. There are various degrees of 'jointness' depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources, and combine their evaluation reporting. Joint evaluation can help overcome attribution problems in assessing the effectiveness of programs and strategies, the complementarities of efforts supported by different partners, the quality of aid coordination, etc.

Key informant interview Key informants are those 'who know', and are not necessarily representative of a population. They are chosen for their knowledge or distinctive viewpoint. The key informant interview method forms part of focused interview techniques (as distinct from sample survey interviewing) and is governed by the need to identify a wide range of different viewpoints.

Leadership The capacity to assess and interpret needs and opportunities, to establish direction, to influence and align others towards a common aim, motivating and committing them to action, and making them responsible for their performance.

Logic model A simplified chain of relationships that portrays the logic and assumptions underlying a program or intervention and how it intends to achieve its expected results. It states the logic of the program, identifies the assumptions on which it is based, and outlines the logical connections between (a) the activities undertaken, (b) the outputs to be produced, (c) the immediate or short-term outcomes that are expected, and 9d) the ultimate or long-term impacts the program is designed to achieve.

Management The classical view emphasizes the management functions of planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling—'getting the work done by the best means available'. More recently, the enabling role of managers has been emphasized, 'to create the conditions under which the work will be done, and done well'. In the context of agricultural research, management involves defining research goals, strategies, and priorities; formulating research programs; determining responsibilities; allocating resources; leading, motivating, and supervising staff members; and maintaining relations with stakeholders.

Monitoring Monitoring involves continuous, systematic observation and checking on activities and their results. The purpose is to ensure that activities are proceeding according to plan, to provide a record of how inputs are used, and to warn of deviations from initial goals and expected outcomes. (See also 'Evaluation'.)

Needs assessment A decision-aiding tool for planning and resource allocation. Involves the gathering and analyzing of information on the organization, its environment, its capacity needs and problems, and possible solutions.

Objective An expression of an effect that a program is expected to achieve if completed successfully and according to plan. Objectives are often viewed as a hierarchy, beginning with strategic goals, purposes, outputs, and activities.

Operational capacities The capacities that an organization needs to carry out its day-to-day activities.

Operating environment The context or environment in which an organization operates, including the economic, technical, socio-cultural, institutional, legal, and political factors that influence behavior and performance.

Operational management Management concerned with mobilizing, coordinating, and guiding an organization's staff and using its physical and financial resources to achieve defined objectives. Establishing a coherent set of rules (institutions) that guide behavior in the pursuit of organizational goals. (See also 'Institution'.)

Organization Formal structures with designated roles and purposes. Entities composed of people who act collectively in pursuit of shared objectives. These organizations and individuals pursue their interests within an institutional structure defined by formal rules (constitutions, laws, regulations, contracts) and informal rules (ethics, trust, religious precepts, and other implicit codes of conduct). Organizations, in turn, have internal rules (i.e. institutions) to deal with personnel, budgets, procurement, and reporting procedures, which constrain the behavior of their members.

Organizational assessment framework A theoretical construct that aids in the diagnosis of an organization's current state, to measure changes over time or to find ways to solve specific problems. This study employs a framework developed by the IDRC and Universalia that includes four analytical dimensions: the external operating environment, the internal environment, organizational capacity, and performance.

Organizational capacities The organization's potential to perform. Its ability to define and realize goals effectively, efficiently, and in a relevant and sustainable manner.

Organizational capacity development An ongoing process by which an organization increases its ability to formulate and achieve relevant objectives. It involves strengthening both its operational and adaptive capacities. (See 'Operational capacities' and 'Adaptive capacities'.)

Organizational change Alteration or variation in the character or performance of an organization. Such changes lie along a continuum from incremental change to fundamental, large-scale change or transformational change. While incremental change is less complex than fundamental change, both types involve three basic stages referred to as 'unfreezing', 'moving', and 'freezing'. Fundamental or large-scale change refers to lasting change in the character of an organization that significantly alters its performance.

Organizational culture A pattern of shared basic assumptions that an organization develops as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems.

Organizational goals Statements describing the external direction of success, ultimate achievement, or desired improvement in organizational performance. (See also 'Organizational performance'.)

Organizational learning An organization's capacity for accumulating knowledge from its own experiences, disseminating that knowledge to members throughout the organization (and not to a single individual or group within it), reflecting on it and using it as a basis on which to build planning and programming activities, to adapt and to cope with change. A learning organization is one that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself.

Organizational performance The ability of an organization to meet its goals and achieve its overall mission. Typical indicators for evaluating organizational performance are effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability.

Organizational self-assessment The assessment of an organization by those who are working in the organization. As with any organizational assessment, a self-assessment focuses on overall impact and performance, or specific aspects thereof.

Organizational values Statements describing the principles the organization wants to express as it moves in the direction described in its goals. Values that an organization regards highly and holds as its ideal. Ethical standards that guide how work is done. Values can include such things as fairness, respect, commitment, and embracing diversity. Managers are expected to serve as role models for values.

Outcome An immediate effect or short-term consequence of an action. (See also 'Output' and 'Impact'.)

Output The direct results of an intervention, a 'deliverable' for which management is responsible.

Ownership Right over, and responsibility for, a process or activity. When local players own a project, and they adopt it as their own even if outside organizations are involved.

Participatory evaluation A process of self-assessment, collective knowledge production, and cooperative action in which stakeholders in a development process participate substantially in the identification of evaluation issues, the formulation of evaluation questions, the design of the evaluation, the collection and analysis of data, and the actions taken as a result of the findings.

Partner The individual and/or organization with which one collaborates to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives.

Partnership Negotiated relationships that exist between two or more entities that have voluntarily entered into a legal or moral contract.

Physical resources The land, facilities, vehicles, and equipment used by organizations to carry out their activities.

Planning The process through which goals and objectives are set, partners identified, inputs determined, activities specified and scheduled, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms defined, so that expected outputs and outcomes might be achieved in a timely manner.

Process management Management of resources and internal processes that support research and development programs. These include staffing, human resource development, fund raising, financial management, and management of facilities.

Process use of evaluation Individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and cultures that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process.

Program management Management concerned directly with the production and delivery of services for clients or target groups. Program management skills and procedures include project cycle management, program formulation, and technical reviews, for example.

Relevance Refers to importance and practical utility. In organizational assessment, it refers to the degree of congruence between (a) the objectives and activities of an organization, and (b) the needs and expectations of key stakeholders.

Result The output, outcome, or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention.

Review of documents Systematic review of an organization's documents to obtain information for an evaluation.

Self-assessment (workshop) A workshop process organized to assess an organization's needs, capacities, a capacity development initiative, or the organization's performance, and involving the organization's management and staff and perhaps external stakeholders.

Social capital The institutions, norms, relationships, and networks that enable collective action and shape the quantity and quality of a society's social interactions.

'Soft' capacities The human and organizational capacities, or social capital of the organization, including such things as management knowledge and skills, and organizational systems and procedures (such as management information systems, and procedures for planning and evaluation.).

Stakeholders Any group within or outside an organization that has a direct or indirect stake in the organization's performance or its evaluation. Stakeholders can be people who conduct, participate in, fund, or manage a program, or who may otherwise affect or be affected by decisions about the program or the evaluation.

Strategic management Development and implementation of effective strategies to set and achieve an organization's objectives. Strategic management involves five sets of tasks, (a) developing a strategic vision and mission, (b) setting objectives, (c) crafting a strategy, (d) implementing the strategy, and (e) evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustment.

Strategic planning A process by which a future vision is developed for an organization, taking into account its political and legal circumstances, its strengths and weaknesses, and the threats and opportunities facing it. It articulates the organization's sense of mission and maps out future directions to be taken, given the organization's current state and resources.

Strategy A planned course of action undertaken with the aim of achieving the goals and objectives of an organization. The overall strategy of an organization is often known as organizational strategy, but strategy may also be developed for any aspect of an organization's activities, as, for example, environmental strategy or marketing strategy.

Sustainability The ability of an organization to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to fulfill its mission effectively and consistently over time without excessive dependence on a single funding source. Ideally, sustainable organizations have (a) the ability to scan the environment, adapt to it, and seize opportunities it offers, (b) strong leadership and management, (c) the ability to attract and retain qualified staff, (d) the ability to provide relevant benefits and services for maximum impact in communities, (e) the skills to demonstrate and communicate this impact to leverage further resources, (f) community support and involvement, and (g) commitment to building sustainable (not dependent) communities.

Survey The collection of data from a population for the purpose of analysis of a particular issue. In a '*sample survey*', data is collected from a sample of the population.

Symbolic use of evaluation results Refers to situations where evaluation results are accepted on paper or in public pronouncements, but go no further. Many evaluations are symbolic in that they are carried out simply to comply with administrative directives or to present an image of 'modernity'. (See also 'Direct use of evaluation results' and 'Indirect use of evaluation results'.)

Terms of reference Written document presenting the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the methods to be used, the standard against which performance is to be assessed or analyses are to be conducted, the resources and time allocated, and reporting requirements. Two other expressions sometimes used with the same meaning are 'scope of work' and 'evaluation mandate'.

Triangulation A process of using multiple data sources, data collection methods, evaluators, or theories to study an issue from different perspectives, validate research findings, help eliminate bias, and detect errors or anomalies in results.

Unit of analysis The class of elemental units that constitute the population and the units selected for measurement, or the class of elemental units to which measurements are generalized. In an evaluation of an organizational capacity

development effort, the unit of analysis might correspond to the individual, group, project team, department, network, partnership, or other organizational unit.

Utility The extent to which an evaluation informs relevant audiences and is beneficial for their work.

Utilization-focused evaluation Evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses.

Validation The process by which the soundness of causal relationships or the generalization of findings are established.

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