

Monitoring and Evaluating Partner Capacity Building: A Practical Tool

Purpose of this tool:

This tool is designed to help practitioners plan how they will monitor and evaluate the partner capacity building work they are implementing.

How the tool is structured:

Each section of the tool refers to a different aspect of phase of the work as follows:

1. Initial design of the overall programme of capacity building work
2. The identification of the specific capacity building needs of the partners participating in the programme
3. Production of a capacity building plan (for individual partners or for groups/all participating partners)
4. Identification of inputs and resources necessary to implement the plan
5. Implementing the activities
6. The immediate outputs
7. The short-term outcomes (capacity changes)
8. Longer term outcomes (capacity changes and changes in mission delivery/programme effectiveness)
9. Impact

Each section starts with a brief description of what that specific phase covers, and then presents a table with 'prompt' questions related to the monitoring and evaluating of that phase. The table aims to help the identification of what needs to be in place for effective monitoring of the work at this level; what kind of issues related to this phase that you may wish to explore during an evaluation; and what possible methods may be appropriate to use for this. It also presents a few points for consideration.

Initial design of the overall programme of capacity building work

The work may be a 'stand-alone' capacity building programme or may be one element of a broader thematic or sector programme. The initial design refers to the identification of the purpose and broad objectives for this work, which may be expressed by a visual 'pathway of change' illustrating the linkages between capacity building activities and the ultimate programme goal/s. When thinking about this phase, the kinds of questions that we need to consider include:

- Why do we want to invest in strengthening the capacity of our partners?
- What does the answer to the first question tell us about the kind of capacities we wish to strengthen?
- What are the different levels in which we might expect to see changes? How are these interconnected (from changes in individual partner staff/member competencies¹ through to changes at the level of the mission or programme goals, or ultimate vision)?
- What kind of capacity approaches and methods might be most effective and appropriate (still at a very broad level)?
- What level and type of resources will be needed to manage and implement this work? (again, at a 'broad sweep' level)

¹ The term 'competencies' is used to refer to the set of skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that any one individual holds

Stage in the capacity building process	Monitoring questions (the questions to help effective monitoring during the lifespan of the work)	Evaluation questions (questions to help assess achievement of objectives of the CB work)	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
1. Overall design of the CB work	<p>Is the information we are gathering on our activities and outputs going to be sufficient to help us review our progress towards our ultimate goal?</p> <p>Do we need to revise our assumptions about how our CB activities are contributing to our ultimate goal?</p> <p>Are we assigning sufficient and appropriate resources for the delivery of the CB work?</p>	<p>How relevant and appropriate was the original design?</p> <p>How realistic was the original design?</p> <p>To what degree did the assumptions about how organisational capacity change contributes to programme goals or organisational strategy stand up in reality?</p> <p>How effectively and efficiently was the CB work managed?</p>	<p>Review of original design or Theory of Change</p> <p>Interviews and group discussions to test assumptions</p>	<p>Requires clarity of overall programme strategy</p> <p>Would benefit from simple 'change pathways' or Theory of Change for the CB work, with clearly expressed assumptions and realistic expectations of what the capacity building activities can achieve.</p> <p>Outcome mapping may be appropriate method to use in original design work.</p>

Identification of the specific capacity building needs of the partners participating in the programme

This is the phase where decisions are taken about the initial assessment or 'diagnosis' of existing capacity – the scope, methods and specific tools to be used. It also includes the development and implementation of these diagnostic methods and tools. This diagnosis will facilitate the identification of things such as the existing capacity strengths and challenges within participating organisations; between them; with other actors and within the external environment within which they are acting. When working in this phase, the kinds of questions that we may wish to consider include:

- What are the strengths of existing partner capacity in the areas of interest to this programme?

- What are the weaker areas?
- What are the capacity strengths and challenges in how the partners are relating to each other and to other key stakeholders within this programme?
- What is there, in the external environment, which may enhance or debilitate the capacity of the partners?
- What are the most appropriate instruments and processes to use in order to assess these?
- Who should be involved in the assessment?

Stage	Monitoring questions	Evaluation questions	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
2. Identifying Capacity Building needs	<p>Is the plan for the mapping and diagnosis process proving to be appropriate and realistic?</p> <p>Are we assessing the right things?</p> <p>Are we considering the external environment sufficiently?</p> <p>Are we achieving the level of engagement we hoped for?</p> <p>Are our communications about this process clear and timely?</p> <p>Are stakeholders' expectations being managed appropriately?</p>	<p>How effective and appropriate were the mapping and diagnosis instruments and process?</p> <p>Were all the right people involved in the mapping and diagnosis process?</p> <p>Were the outputs of this diagnosis phase relevant to the needs of the programme?</p> <p>Was the management of this mapping and diagnosis process effective, efficient and appropriate?</p> <p>Did the process <i>in itself</i>, contribute in any way to strengthening capacity?</p>	<p>Review of mapping or diagnosis instruments and process</p> <p>Review of mapping or diagnosis reports</p> <p>Interviews and group discussions with stakeholders</p>	<p>Requires expertise to design a diagnosis instrument and process that is relevant to the programme and local/national contexts and culture.</p> <p>Assumes that necessary resources are allocated to ensure an effective implementation of the diagnosis process.</p>

Production of a capacity building plan (for individual partners or for groups/all participating partners)

This phase of the work is dedicated to producing relevant, realistic, and quality capacity building plans – for individual partners and/or for groups of organisations. The plans may also include work focused on the external environment. When working in this phase, the kinds of questions that we may wish to consider include:

- Is the capacity building plan to be tailored to individual partners' needs?
- Alternatively (or additionally), will there be capacity building activities shaped around collective needs of groups of partners, or of networks, coalitions etc?
- Is there clarity about how the support needs will be prioritised and phased?
- Is there scope to include a strengths-based dimension?
- Is there clarity about who is involved in decisions about the plan?
- Is there a template which provides space to indicate:
 - A clear timeframe?
 - A menu of potential capacity building methods and activities to choose from?
 - Sources and costs of capacity building support?
 - Milestone indicators if relevant
 - How the work will be monitored?

Stage	Monitoring questions	Evaluation questions	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
3. Capacity Building plan	<p>Does the plan² reflect needs identified in the original diagnosis?</p> <p>Is the plan flexible and responsive to newly emerging support needs?</p> <p>To what extent is the plan facilitating a strengths-based dimension?</p> <p>Are the objectives clear?</p> <p>Are the plans sufficiently realistic and appropriate to each partner's level of 'maturity' and context?</p> <p>Is the timescale and phasing of activities providing to be realistic?</p> <p>Is the plan 'owned' and understood adequately in the partner organisation?</p> <p>How could the plan be improved?</p>	<p>Did the plan cover the right areas?</p> <p>How flexible and responsive was the plan?</p> <p>Were the objectives clear?</p> <p>How effectively did the plan address partners' capacity building needs?</p> <p>Was the plan realistic and appropriate given the level of organisation's 'maturity' and its context?</p> <p>Was the plan realistic in terms of resource requirements and timescale?</p> <p>Was the plan 'owned' and understood adequately in the partner organisation?</p> <p>Does the plan reflect current understanding of good practice in partner capacity building?</p>	<p>Review of original planning documents, and process records</p> <p>Exploration of 'ownership' via interviews and group discussions</p>	<p>The plan should reflect the earlier work on the overall design.</p> <p>It should reflect the Theory or Pathways of Change for the CB work, if this was produced in the original design.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to working with the 'emergent' and non-linear nature of capacity change.</p>

² This is written in singular form, but can be applied to a group of plans produced for the CB work with diverse partners within a programme as well as to the PME of an overall CB plan for a programme.

Identification of inputs and resources necessary to implement the plan

This phase is about the identification of the inputs and resources necessary to implement the plan. When working in this phase, the kinds of questions that we may wish to consider include:

- Are there sources of support from peer organisations? How can we tap into the strengths of some partners to help the others?
- Is there a ‘map’ or ‘scoping study’ of potential sources of support for partner organisations?
- Have we identified a realistic budget for the CB work?
- Are we assigning dedicated staff to accompany the implementation of the CB work? If not, are there clear staff responsibilities for this work?
- Have the partners also identified who will be leading on this work?

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4. Inputs / Resources	<p>Are the resources being used in the way that was intended?</p> <p>Are we accessing all possible sources of support? Is the leadership behind this work?</p> <p>Is the budget proving to be sufficient for the planned CB work?</p> <p>Is the staffing of the CB work proving to be sufficient and appropriate?</p>	<p>Was the CB work suitably resourced?</p> <p>What other resources would have been useful?</p> <p>Did the partners, and the sponsoring organisation itself, have access to the support needed to implement the plans?</p> <p>Was there appropriate staffing?</p>	<p>Financial and staffing records</p> <p>Interviews and group discussions</p>	<p>Assumes knowledge of potential sources of support and other resources.</p> <p>Requires internal discussion on roles of staff vis a vis CB work.</p>

Implementing the activities

This phase focuses on the delivery of the support activities. It is concerned with the detailed work planning and implementation of the activities included in the CB plan, including a concern for ensuring the quality of the content *and* process. When working in this phase, the kinds of questions that we may ask ourselves include:

- How are we operationalising the capacity building plans? (e.g. what kind of work/activity planning will we use?)
- Do we have any kind of quality assurance methods in place?
- Are we clear on how we will decide about responding to emerging support needs during the lifetime of the CB work?

Stage	Monitoring questions	Evaluation questions	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
5. Activities / implementation	<p>What activities have been carried out in this past period and with whom?</p> <p>Were all the planned activities carried out? If not, why not? Can we /should we still do them?</p> <p>How well-organised and implemented were the activities? How can we improve?</p> <p>What were the implementation challenges and how were these overcome?</p> <p>Have we identified any new support needs in this period?</p>	<p><i>Evaluation of this area is often referred to as a 'process evaluation' – focusing on <u>how</u> capacity building happened rather than what changes resulted. Possible questions include:</i></p> <p>Were the activities that were carried out the 'right things to do'?</p> <p>Was there a match between desired capacity change and the type of intervention used?</p> <p>If certain planned activities did not occur, why was this?</p> <p>If certain unplanned activities took place, why was this?</p> <p>Did the activities delivered reflect good practice and current knowledge?</p> <p>Was there any way of reviewing the quality of the support delivered?</p>	<p>Review of CB database or documentation of activities</p> <p>Interviews and group discussions</p> <p>Examination of activity plans and resource materials used</p> <p>Observation of activities / events.</p>	<p>It may be relevant to ensure this area 'dove-tails' into the regular task planning and monitoring activities.</p> <p>Requires good quality documentation of all activities that took place.</p>

The immediate outputs

Here we are concerned with capturing and reviewing the first level of what is emerging from the capacity building interventions. That is, the immediate products such as organisational assessment reports; the number of trainings delivered and trainees in attendance; the number of consultations and technical assistance sessions, together with their associated recommendations or new systems, policies etc; the number of interactive workshops and peer-learning events or processes and the number of people participating.

This phase is also concerned with capturing the *immediate* response by those who participated in the events or used the products of technical assistance, and thus could be considered the beginning of the process of assessing what changes are emerging as a result of the capacity building work. These could be responses that express the degree of satisfaction with the quality of the output, the training event and any immediate changes in their understanding, skills etc.

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6. Outputs	<p>Are we on track with our CB products as indicated in the plan?</p> <p>Are the expected numbers of participants/individuals making use of the products?</p> <p>Are the 'users' the appropriate people to be involved? If not, how can we ensure engagement?</p> <p>What are the participants/users saying about their experience of involvement with the products?</p>	<p><i>Evaluation at this level is often focused largely on quantitative products but can also comment on the quality of the output and include immediate 'reaction' responses:</i></p> <p>What products have been delivered?</p> <p>What were the numbers and characteristics of the participants/users? Was this appropriate to the objectives of the CB work?</p> <p>Did they meet the desired quality?</p> <p>What levels of participant satisfaction were expressed?</p> <p>What did participants report as immediate changes in their understanding, skills etc?</p>	<p>Review of CB database or documentation of activities and participant details.</p> <p>Review of the outputs to assess quality, 'fit for purpose' etc.</p> <p>'Reaction level' methods e.g. post training/event evaluation forms</p>	<p>Care to be taken about the value of the evaluation findings at this level – the 'easy to measure' outputs such as number of assessments carried out, or people trained may be used as a proxy for organisational change without examining in enough detail the effects of the activity on those involved.</p> <p>Good documentation is necessary</p>

The short term outcomes (capacity changes)

This is where we examine in more depth the short-term effects of the CB work. It can be about change at the level of an individual – skills/learning/knowledge acquisition; change in attitude or emotions; change in behaviours. It can be about change at the level of organisational systems, policies, structures etc. It can also be about relational changes.

Example 1: Increases in staff understanding and skills in developing and implementing advocacy strategies

Example 2: Improved people management policies and processes

Example 3: Increased strategic management of relationships

Stage	Monitoring questions	Evaluation questions	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
7. Short-term outcomes	What are we seeing in terms of changes in the behaviour and performance of individuals? Is this what we hoped to see? What else are we observing in the partners that we think is an effect of the CB work?	Did the CB work lead to the intended short-term changes in the partners? What unintended and unexpected changes have occurred at this level? What evidence is there that these changes can be attributed to the CB work? What other factors influenced the changes (intended and unintended) that occurred?	Review of staff development and performance records Analysis of existing policies, processes and systems Interviews, group discussions and participatory exercises	Important to consider changes in relationships and power dynamics.

Longer term outcomes

This is concerned with capacity changes over the medium to long term, and also with how these changes may be contributing towards increased 'health' and effectiveness (within the organisation, with the work they do, and the relationships they nurture). This phase is looking at the results of the previous phase, that is, how short-term changes (e.g. increased staff skills and understanding, or improved partnership management processes) are being applied and what emerges as a consequence.

Example 1: Improved quality of advocacy strategies and increased results from implementing those strategies (e.g. changes in duty bearers' policies and practices)

Example 2: Improvements in people management practices with resulting increased staff satisfaction and morale. This is seen as contributing towards strengthened organisational performance.

Example 3: Increased levels of trust between organisations. This is seen as contributing towards effective collaborative efforts.

Stage	Monitoring questions	Evaluation questions	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
8. Longer-term outcomes	<p>What are the emerging longer term organisational changes? Are these what we have hoped for? If not, what else do we need to do?</p> <p>What are the changes in how partners are relating to other actors? What else can we do to further strengthen these relational capacities?</p> <p>How are these contributing (or not) to improved quality and effectiveness of programme work?</p> <p>What other (unexpected, unintended) longer term organisational and relational changes are happening? If positive, can we build on these? What do we need to do if they are holding us back?</p>	<p>To what extent were the planned longer term organisational and relational changes achieved?</p> <p>What unintended and unexpected organisational and relational changes occurred?</p> <p>What evidence is there that these changes can be attributed to the CB work?</p> <p>What evidence is there that these changes are being sustained?</p> <p>What CB activities were particularly significant and influential?</p> <p>How, if at all, is the overall programme benefiting from these longer term organisational changes? (e.g. increases in effectiveness and efficiency in programme implementation)</p>	<p>Repeat Organisational or Capacity Assessments</p> <p>Organisational Performance Reviews, programme evaluations.</p> <p>Diverse qualitative methods can be particularly useful when gathering evidence from stakeholders of the changes they have noticed in partners' ways of working and their effectiveness.</p>	<p>Requires initial clarity on what the desired changes would look like (indicators).</p> <p>How 'long' is 'long-term'?</p> <p>Some organisational changes such as organisational culture change may take years.</p>

Impact

This is where there is a look at the degree to which the overall programme goals, or the organisational strategy, is being achieved after the capacity building work. It is about the changes in the 'world out there', in the lives of the people and

communities who are the focus of the organisation’s mission and strategies. It is the most challenging of areas for the monitoring and evaluation of capacity building.

Stage	Monitoring questions	Evaluation questions	Potential methods for data gathering	Considerations
9. Impact	<p>What evidence is emerging of achievement of the programme goals or organisational strategy (particularly in areas where the partners who received CB support are working)?</p> <p>Are there examples emerging of how increased organisational and relational capacity and programme performance are contributing to improvements in the lives of the people and communities?</p> <p>Can more be done to build on those experiences?</p>	<p>What has changed in the situation of the people and communities (or specific focus of the programme) since the beginning of the programme or organisational strategy? Is there any link with the CB work?</p> <p>What difference is there between achievement of programme goals or organisational strategy before and after the CB work? Can any direct causality be established?</p> <p>What effects did the CB work have on partners’ ability to achieve their organisational strategy or the programme goals?</p> <p>What effects have any changes in partners’ ability to achieve their strategy or programme goals had on their levels of sustainability, confidence, ambition, external profile and relationships?</p>	<p>Impact assessments</p> <p>Stories of change</p> <p>Programme evaluations and monitoring reports which capture examples of change at this level.</p> <p>Participatory exercises e.g. Impact Grid</p> <p>Outcome harvesting</p>	<p>Requires evidence of achievement of programme goals/strategy and so is dependent on an effective programme or organisation-wide M&E system.</p> <p>Given other possible intervening factors, it may not be possible to establish direct causality between the CB work and any improvement in the achievement of programme goals or organisational strategy.</p> <p>A decision may be needed about what is ‘good enough’ evidence and analysis at this level.</p>