

EDITED BY: SAKIKO FUKUDA-PARR • CARLOS LOPES • KHALID MALIK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

***NEW SOLUTIONS
TO OLD PROBLEMS***

EARTHSCAN



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EARTHSCAN

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“Scan globally, reinvent locally” (Joseph E. Stiglitz)

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foreword

Developing capacity has been a fundamental component of international development assistance since the Marshall Plan. The huge success of that far-sighted programme, however, inadvertently generated an overly simplistic and optimistic view of what worked: Simply transfer capital and know-how to other countries, the thinking went, and swift economic growth will follow.

As we have learned over the past few decades, however, this view ignored—or at least underestimated—the importance of local knowledge, institutions, and social capital in the process of economic and social development. And for most of the Cold War, the problem was exacerbated by the phenomenon of aid driven by politics rather than results. Despite some significant achievements, successful and sustainable capacity development has remained an elusive goal.

Over the past decade, there have been several attempts to tackle these problems directly, most notably in the Conference on Technical Cooperation co-sponsored by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank in June 1994. That has in turn helped generate a welcome new emphasis on the need for development to be “locally owned”: to ensure that development cooperation does not seek to do things for developing countries and their people, but with them.

There have been some notable successes in trying to make these principles work in practice but overall progress has so far been uneven.

If capacity development initiatives are to have a pivotal role in helping developing countries meet the challenge of the 21st century, in particular the Millennium


Development Goals, we now need to take this process a step further, looking more closely at the underlying assumptions about:

- the nature of development as a process of societal transformation, and the fundamental importance of indigenous capacity for this transformation;
- the nature of capacity and capacity development, including individual skills, institutions and societal capacities;
- the nature of knowledge, where it is located and how it can or cannot be transferred and shared; and
- the nature of the aid-recipient relationship, which has profound consequences for success and failure in developing lasting capacities.

The United Nations system was a pioneer in the field of technical cooperation, and capacity development is its central mandate. UNDP has long played an important leadership role, both as a source of technical cooperation funds and advisory services, and as the home of innovative intellectual research and analysis on these questions. This book, which is part of a broader research effort that UNDP is carrying out with the support of the Government of the Netherlands, is aimed squarely at helping stimulate discussion around this important issue. As such it should be seen as the beginning of a process of debate and dialogue around the broader issue of improving effective capacity development.

The book contains a range of views from practitioners, academics and policy-makers about what has gone right with technical cooperation in recent years, what has gone wrong, and how to do it better and perhaps very differently. In so doing, it focuses on the questions of indigenous capacity, ownership, civic engagement and new possibilities for knowledge-sharing, for which the revolution in information and communications technologies offers ample opportunities. The book draws from the operational experience, policy analysis and intellectual work of UNDP, brought to bear through the three lead authors from the Evaluation Office, the Bureau for Development Policy and the Human Development Report Office.

Not everything in the book is new. Taken together, however, its conclusions may help point the way to a genuinely new vision of capacity development that is firmly founded on genuine ownership by the ultimate beneficiaries of development efforts: the governments and citizens of developing countries.



MARK MALLOCH BROWN

Administrator

United Nations Development Programme

overview

INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

SAKIKO FUKUDA-PARR, CARLOS LOPES, KHALID MALIK¹

The world at the beginning of the 21st century offers sights, sounds and experiences that continue to astonish anyone born even a few decades ago. Space and time have been shrunk by a multitude of communications devices. Geneticists decode and tinker with the alphabet of life. And millions of people each year casually soar across continents in search of work, pleasure and new experiences. Billions of people have the capacity to know and do things of which their parents or grandparents could scarcely dream.

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