

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE



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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AHWU	Adolescent Health and Wellness Unit, Ministry of Health of Guyana	LMIS	logistics management information system
AMDD	Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program at Columbia University	MDG	Millennium Development Goals
APRO	Asia and the Pacific Regional Office	M&E	monitoring and evaluation
ARO	Africa Regional Office	MHTF	Maternal Health Thematic Fund
CARMMA	Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa	MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
CCA	Common Country Assessment	MISP	Minimal Initial Service Package
CCH	Country Compact for Health of Nigeria	MoH	ministry of health
CIES-UNAN	Center for Research and Health Studies at the University of Nicaragua	MOVE	Men Opposed to Violence Against Women Everywhere
CMA	country midwife adviser	NAP	National Action Plan
CNRSR	National Reproductive Health Referral Center	NGO	non-governmental organization
COAR	Country Office Annual Report	NSHDP	National Strategic Health Development Plan, Nigeria
COESPO	State Population Council of Mexico	PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
CONAPO	National Population Council of Mexico	RHCS	reproductive health commodity security
DRF	Development Results Framework	ROs	regional offices
ECSACON	East, Central and Southern African College of Nursing	SCR	Security Council resolution
EmONC	emergency obstetric and newborn care	SDP	service delivery points
FASFACO	Federation of Midwives Associations of Central and West Africa	SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely
FC	female condom	SPRINT	Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations
FGM	female genital mutilation	SRH	sexual and reproductive health
FHOK	Family Health Options of Kenya	STI	sexually transmitted infections
GBV	gender-based violence	SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach
GPRHCS	Global Programme to Enhance Reproductive Health Commodity Security	TWG	technical working group
HHA	Harmonization for Health in Africa	UN	United Nations
HQ	headquarters	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
IANWGE	Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
IATT/CCP	Inter-Agency Task Team on Comprehensive Condom Programming	UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives	UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IEC	information, education and communication	UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
IHP+	International Health Partnerships and related initiatives	VAW	violence against women
KAP	knowledge, attitudes and practices	WACN	West Africa College of Nursing
LACRO	Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office	WHO	World Health Organization

“ Capacity development is not only about supporting people and organizations to become more efficient and effective but also about helping them to flourish – building on their own strength, knowledge, values and motivation. This creates lasting wealth and is at the core of sustainable development. ”

—Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin,
Executive Director of UNFPA





INTRODUCTION

Building national capacities so that countries can advance the ICPD agenda has been hailed as the core UNFPA development strategy. However, all said and done, many of us find it hard to define capacity development and to apply the approaches that work. We need to “unpack” and “demystify” capacity development as we continue to strengthen our efforts and learn from our experiences and each other’s work. This booklet is our booklet: the case studies furnished by UNFPA country offices have served to strengthen our evidence-base and pinpoint what capacity development means in national settings and how we can effectively adopt various approaches. “No size fits all” is the message that transpires from our joint experiences. This booklet is an invitation to look “behind the façade,” reflect on what we support and, if needed, make changes.

We must embrace capacity development as a process of change and transformation that is at the core of every national programme. Over the years, UNFPA has been moving away from delivering “things” in favor of delivering “thinking.”¹ UNFPA’s updated strategic plan emphasizes that strengthening capacities at country-level is not just one more strategy, but should be the agency’s main strategy. Furthermore, at the core of capacity development is the realization that, as responsible partners and together with our counterparts, we build upon existing capacities as part of broad national-led processes.²

This booklet is a practical guide on what capacity development is and how we are applying it in UNFPA. The first chapter provides an overview of capacity development and some basic definitions; the second highlights examples of practice in action from the field; and the third consists of a series of tools and resources that we have considered useful when developing and implementing capacity development programmes. This guide is primarily meant for UNFPA technical and programme staff but may also serve other United Nations (UN) agencies, partner organizations and Member States.

“Capacity development is about enabling positive and lasting change.”



THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT LENS:

AN OVERVIEW

What is capacity development?

Capacity development is “*the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.*”³ Capacity development is the central thrust of UNFPA programmes. It is not solely a means to an end, but the goal in itself. Experience shows that national ownership is at the core of effective capacity development strategies that have a long-lasting impact. In this sense, the role of UNFPA is to nurture national capacity by providing or facilitating technical assistance at the individual, organizational and systemic (or enabling) levels.

We can think of these levels as entry points at which capacity can be fostered. Strengthening *individual* capacities means providing the tools – skills, abilities, experience and knowledge – to improve a person’s performance. However, an individual contributes to broader development goals only to the extent that he or she is committed to those goals and is empowered to transfer knowledge to others. Thus, beyond investing in technical knowledge and skills, we are also very much interested in the multiplier effect of transformed individuals, and therefore in their leadership abilities. At the *organizational* level, developing capacities refers to improving and optimizing procedures, frameworks and management systems so that institutions can operate more effectively. The focus is on government, civil, and faith- and community-based entities that operate nationally, subnationally and locally. The

enabling environment is the broad social system regulated as much by legislation as by norms and culture within which individuals and organizations operate. To promote an inclusive and empowering environment in which all human rights are respected and which is conducive to human development, it is important to be aware of the formal systems that are the wheels of society, and through which they operate, such as national laws and policies, budgets and procedures. It is equally important to understand and work with the social traditions and power relations that grease these wheels. We tend to intuitively grasp this last point, but often fail to see how we might use them to facilitate formal processes.⁴

Factors at these three levels are critical to the success of capacity development initiatives. During programme design and implementation, we must take into account the realities of the socio-political environment and if it is conducive to our objectives, such as current political priorities and existing policy instruments; the effectiveness of organizational systems, or the rules and procedures that guide institutional actions; and individual factors, such as the availability and capacity of human resources, personal leadership and motivation, and cultural acceptability of interventions. Below are the primary capacity development strategies at each level.⁵

To foster an enabling environment:

- Supporting analysis of policy options;
- Strengthening data systems and facilitating access to data by policymakers;
- Promoting international norms and standards;
- Fostering adoption of international good practices and

UNFPA'S REGIONAL APPROACH TO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT⁷

Since regionalization, UNFPA regional offices (ROs) have established mechanisms to foster different types of capacities:

Staff development:

Soon after opening, some ROs conducted internal surveys to assess available capacity in relation to the tasks at hand. ROs developed staff learning and training plans, updated annually, which include workshops and seminars, learning afternoons and conversations. The workshops build on existing skills and capacities in managerial, programme, financial, technical and administrative issues. The learning afternoons with guest speakers serve to strengthen knowledge on different topics related to UNFPA's mandate. For example, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) invited the United Nations Environment Programme to discuss climate change as linked to population and development issues. Conversations build on existing knowledge among staff about a specific substantive UNFPA topic. For instance, LACRO hosted a conversation to discuss the global proposal on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Partner organization development:

ROs conduct an initial capacity assessment before signing an agreement with a new regional partner. If there are gaps, the office and the partner jointly develop a capacity development plan, which becomes an activity in the annual work plan. In addition, ROs map the capacities that implementing partners consider they contribute to develop. Some ROs have consolidated all capacity development activities, including whose capacities are being developed, where and by whom.

Country office development:

ROs review all capacity development activities as described in the Country Office Annual Reports (COARs) in order to assess what UNFPA is promoting, developing or strengthening at the national level. For example, the Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO) has conducted a region-wide survey on capacity development needs, including technical, programming and operations issues. APRO uses this evidence to prioritize when planning capacity development

promoting knowledge networking; and

- Encouraging participation of different societal and government actors and building strategic partnerships.

To strengthen organizations:

- Enhancing coordination and management mechanisms within and between organizations, including national entities such as central and line ministries;
- Promoting effectiveness through results-based management tools and systems;
- Providing support for the adoption of innovative practices;
- Supporting needs assessments and mapping of organizational capacities; and
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to ensure accountability for results and transparency.

To empower individuals:

- Empowering vulnerable populations and groups to demand equality and inclusion in health systems and policies;
- Maximizing the use of national and regional technical expertise in development efforts to foment sustainability;
- Promoting integration of a gender perspective and a human rights-based approach;
- Facilitating access to information so that individuals and their social networks may make knowledgeable decisions;
- Strengthening leadership, promoting grassroots level participation and building networks; and
- Developing human resources through better curricula and access to training opportunities.⁸

Capacity development and the UNFPA strategic plan

Building on the directions of the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, the UNFPA strategic plan 2008-2013⁸ incorporates capacity development as a core strategic direction. Specifically, the plan states that UNFPA will work in an inclusive manner on *national capacity development*, focusing on supporting systems and institutional development of governmental and civil society organizations. UNFPA promotes interventions⁹ that can serve as catalytic entry points to advance the ICPD Programme of Action and achieve the MDGs. The plan outlines four core development strategies:

- 1) building and using a knowledge base;
- 2) supporting advocacy and policy dialogue;
- 3) building and strengthening partnerships; and
- 4) developing systems for improved performance.

In 2011, UNFPA updated the Development Results Framework (DRF) to accompany the plan's sharpened focus for the period 2012-2013.¹⁰ The DRF articulates 18 outputs under 7 development outcomes, each with specific indicators and targets. UNFPA's principal contribution towards development goals is "its role in developing capacity."¹¹ Consequently, all outputs relate to capacity development and all have clear indicators, baselines and targets to allow UNFPA to better measure its contribution to the development of national

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