Preface

Participatory Capacity Building is a practical toolbox for internal or external facilitators of capacity building of NGOs. The tools can be used to assess an organisation’s capacity and plan for strategic and innovative directions for organisational improvement.

Dangers of the Toolbox
As with all facilitation methods the methodology presented in this toolbox should be used with care, as it must be adapted to every situation to use in. As much as we have tried to be specific and detailed on the facilitation steps, this Toolbox should not be taken as a blueprint for facilitation. Facilitating Participatory Capacity Building needs a lot of creativity, courage and involvement both from the facilitator and the participating organisation(s). We hope it provides a meaningful vehicle for sustainable improvement of NGO capacity.

Skilled Facilitators
We want to encourage all practitioners to build their facilitation skills. Especially courses in Group Facilitation Methods and Participatory Strategic Planning, offered by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) all over the world, will provide helpful skills and knowledge to facilitate Participatory Capacity Building processes. See Section 1.4 for more information.

Acknowledgements
Participatory Capacity Building uses the Participatory Organisational Assessment Tool (POET), developed by UNDP and is based on Technology of Participation® (ToP®) Methods developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), as they apply to capacity building situations. We owe special gratitude to the developers of POET and ToP®. We also want to thank co-financing organisations ICCO-PSa and PSO for their support to the NANGO Capacity Building Program, which laid the foundation for this toolbox.

Use of the materials
We want to encourage everyone to apply the processes from this toolbox using all available materials. Please feel free to photocopy or print what you need from the toolbox or cd-rom and distribute the information widely, if the original text is properly acknowledged and the objective is not for profit or gain. The toolbox and cd-rom were designed for facilitation purposes only. Large-scale reproduction, widespread distribution, or inclusion of any materials in publications for sale or third party training is prohibited without prior written permission of the publisher. Please send requests to:

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## Contents

### 1. Introduction to the Process
1.1 Introduction 3
1.2 Capacity Building for Non Governmental Organisations 4
1.3 What is the Participatory Organisational Evaluation Tool? 10
1.4 What is Technology of Participation? 13
1.5 The Facilitator 15
1.6 Field Experiences: the NANGO Case 18

### 2. Participatory Capacity Assessment
2.1 Introduction 23
2.2 Preparations 24
2.3 Participatory Capacity Assessment 25
   2.3.1 Introduction to Participatory Capacity Assessment 26
   2.3.2 Capacity Assessment 1 29
   2.3.3 Capacity Assessments 2-4 30
   2.3.4 Presentation of First Assessment Results 31
   2.3.5 Capacity Assessments 5-7 32
   2.3.6 Presentation of Second Assessment Results 33
   2.3.7 Next Steps and Closing Reflection 34

### 3. Analysing and Reporting PCA Scores
3.1 Introduction 37
3.2 PCA Calculator 38
3.3 PCA Report 42
3.4 PCA Cohort Calculator 48

### 4. Feedback and Capacity Planning Workshop
4.1 Introduction 57
4.2 Preparations and Program Overview 58
4.3 Overview: Feedback and Capacity Planning Workshop 60
   4.3.1 Introduction and Objectives 61
   4.3.2 Presentation and Interpretation of PCA Scores 63
   4.3.3 Practical Vision: Envisioning the Future Capacity 67
   4.3.4 Underlying Contradictions: Determining the Blocks 69
   4.3.5 Strategic Directions: New Avenues for Capacity Building 73
   4.3.6 Next Steps and Closing Reflection 77

### 5. Implementation Planning Workshop
5.1 Introduction 81
5.2 Preparations 82
5.3 Overview: Implementation Planning Workshop 83

### 6. NGO Capacity Building Co-ordination Workshop
6.1 Introduction 91
6.2 Preparations and Program Overview 92
6.3 Overview: NGO Co-ordination Workshop 94
   6.3.1 Introduction 95
   6.3.2 Reflection on Participatory Capacity Building Process 96
   6.3.3 Synthesising the Capacity Building Directions 97
   6.3.4 Developing a Joint Capacity Building Program 99
   6.3.5 Discussing Program Management 100

### 7. Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Building
7.1 Introduction 103
7.2 Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation System 104
7.3 Tracking Progress: Follow-up Meetings 106
7.4 Qualitative Monitoring and Evaluation 108
7.5 PCB Impact Assessment Workshop 111
   7.5.1 Introduction to Impact Assessment 113
   7.5.2 Impact Assessment of Capacity Areas 115
   7.5.3 Planning Ways Forward in Capacity Building 117
   7.5.4 Closing Reflection 118
   7.5.5 Calculating Impact Assessment Scores 119

### Appendices
A. Introduction to NGO Assessment 123
B. PCA Facilitator’s Questionnaire 126
C. PCA Member’s Questionnaire 137
D. Individual PCA Score Sheet 145
E. Manual PCA Worksheets 146
F. PCA Report Introduction 154
G. Overview of PCA Scores 156
H. PCA Report Example 165
I. Instructions to FPW presentations 181
J. Organisational Questionnaire 182
K. PBC Impact Assess. Questionnaire 183
L. Individual PCB Impact Score Sheet 191
M. About the Toolbox and the Author 192
N. Who is ICA-Zimbabwe? 193
1. Introduction to the Process
1.1 Introduction to the Toolbox

In this first Chapter we introduce the process of Participatory Capacity Building starting off with a paper on Capacity Building for NGOs, which puts this Toolbox in a broader perspective. Then two ‘methodologies’ will be introduced: Participatory Organisational Evaluation Tool (POET) and Technology of Participation® (ToP)®. This Toolbox builds on both of them. This introduction continues with a section on the role of the facilitator in Participatory Capacity Building. Finally we share experiences with this toolbox as it was developed for and applied with NGOs in Zimbabwe.

After the introduction to the process the Toolbox continues with 6 Chapters containing the actual tools for Participatory Capacity Building:

2. Participatory Capacity Assessment: the process to facilitate self-assessment of NGO Capacity;
3. Analysing and Reporting Participatory Capacity Assessment Scores: the frameworks to reflect on the assessment results;
4. Feedback and Capacity Planning Workshop: the process to facilitate reflection on results and strategic capacity planning;
5. Implementation Planning: tools for putting wheels under the capacity building plan;
6. NGO Capacity Building Co-ordination Workshop: the processes for collaborative action of NGOs;
7. Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Building: the frameworks and processes to keep track of progress of capacity building efforts.
1.2 Capacity Building for Non Governmental Organisations

Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged that insufficient capacity of development organisations hinders sustainable development. This problem however cannot simply be defined in terms of gaps in human resources, financial resources or training. The issue is a function of several aspects: limited sense of local ownership of the development processes; excessive dependency on external resources and technical assistance; inadequate considerations of broader environmental or systems factors; and poor integration and co-ordination of multiple development initiatives.

In the past decade there has been much debate and research on the efficacy of technical co-operation and the issue of capacity building. It led to better understanding of development processes and the changes necessary to make development initiatives more successful and sustainable.

This paper will introduce the concept of capacity building for Non Governmental Organisations focusing on an approach that capacitates organisations from within, rather than from the outside. Just as we want to create sustainable change from within the community, capacity building should start from where organisations are, creating change from within.

Introduction to Capacity Building

Capacity is defined as the ability of individuals and organisations to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. Capacity is the power of something (a system, an organisation, a person) to perform or to produce.

To clarify capacity in its context it is necessary to answer the question: capacity for what? Here we narrow down capacity as the ability to solve a problem, to achieve or sustain a mission, to reach a set of objectives. Non governmental organisations need capacity to achieve their planned objectives, to have an impact and to fulfil their organisational purpose.

Capacity building is broader than organisational development, since it includes the overall system, environment or context in which individuals, organisations and societies operate and interact. It is the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to: (1) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and (2) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner.

Capacity building is closely linked to the concept of learning organisations. A learning organisation is one that constantly changes and experiments by using feedback of its results to change its form and processes in ways that make it more successful. Capacity building can be seen as transforming the culture and structural designs of organisations to become real learning organisations.

Capacity building is a continuous and reciprocal process of adjusting people’s attitudes, values and organisational practises while building up appropriate knowledge and skills among various stakeholders in a partnership – to strengthen each partner’s ability to make effective decisions about their own lives and to take full responsibility of the consequences of such decisions.
Dimensions of Capacity in a systems context
Capacity issues can be analysed at three levels (figure 1). Often capacity building is only addressed at the individual and organisational level. However, capacity should be understood at the systems level as well. The system is a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole. All three levels must be included when assessing and planning capacity to create meaningful change.

1. The System
The highest level of capacity is the broader system or enabling environment level. For some national NGOs this level covers the entire country or region they work in and all the sub-components that are involved. For other NGOs that work more sectoral (eg. health) the system would only include those relevant components.

The systems level includes both formal and informal organisations. Only the key organisations or stakeholder within the context of the NGO are relevant, looking at the nature of the relationships between the entities. (See figure 2)

Levels of Capacity – within a systems context

Level 1: The Broader System
Level 2: The Entity
Level 3: The individual

Figure 1

1. The System
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The systems level includes both formal and informal organisations. Only the key organisations or stakeholder within the context of the NGO are relevant, looking at the nature of the relationships between the entities. (See figure 2)

1. Introduction to the Process
Dimensions of capacity at the Systems Level:
- Policy Dimension: systems have a purpose to meet certain needs in society, including value systems.
- Legal/Regulatory Dimension: includes rules, laws, norms, standards which govern the system, and which sets boundaries for an NGO.
- Management or Accountability Dimension: defines who ‘manages’ the system, or who is responsible for potential design, management and implementation, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation etc. of development initiatives in the system of the NGO.
- Resource Dimension: (human, financial, information) that may be available within the system to develop and implement the NGO initiatives.
- Process Dimension: the inter-relationships, interdependencies and interactions amongst the entities, including flow of resources and information, formal and informal networks of people and supporting communications infrastructures.

2. The Entity or Organisation
There are typical dimensions that need to be assessed and developed at the organisational level. (see figure 3)
Unlike traditional capacity development and organisational strengthening which focuses on human resources, processes and organisational structures, a more comprehensive approach examines all dimensions of capacity at entity level, including its interactions within the system.

This also applies to organisational sub-units within the entity, such as project teams, work-groups etc.

Dimensions of Capacity at the Entity Level:
- **Human Resource Management**: the most valuable of the entity’s resources and upon which change, capacity and development primarily depend.
- **Financial Resource Management**: both operating and capital, required for the efficient and effective functioning of the NGO, including fund-raising.
- **Equitable Participation**: involvement of local knowledge and stakeholders related to project access and project benefit.
- **Sustainability of Program Benefits**: impact of the NGOs work looking at different aspects like environmental, economic, political, institutional and cultural factors.
- **Partnering**: collaboration with other NGOs, donors, policy makers, and private sector entities.
- **Organisational Learning**: teamwork, information-sharing and capacity for generating information that leads to improvement of current practice.
- **Strategic Management / Governance**: board practices, planning, commitment to goals, mission and philosophy or culture.

3. **The Individual**
The individual level is a major dimension of capacity – people, including small interpersonal networks of individuals. The individual level includes the involved management, professionals, support staff but also those who are beneficiaries or are otherwise impacted by the NGOs work (specific client groups, segments of society, etc.).

This level addresses the individual’s capacity to function efficiently and effectively within the entity and within the broader system.

Often, capacity building focuses on individual skills and knowledge needed to perform job descriptions or positions. Increasingly, the dimensions of accountability, performance, values and ethics, incentives and security are becoming more important at this level.

**Capacity Building Processes**
Capacity building must be regarded as an organisation-wide process, involving many dimensions of the organisation and its environment. Human Resource development is critical within this process, but it is not just limited to skills and knowledge development (e.g. through training). The process of ‘skilling-up’ involves expressing thoughts and voicing opinions – the essence of meaningful contributions to capacity building from within.

There are some stages to define in capacity building:
1. Setting the stage and formulating the ‘entry point’ of the process
2. Capacity assessment
3. Strategic capacity planning and benchmarking
4. Implementing capacity building strategies  
5. Sustaining capacity by ongoing monitoring and benchmarking

It should be noted that on beforehand nothing has been decided about the choice of capacity building strategies. In principle, everything is possible, from Appreciative Inquiry to Total Quality Management, from Organisational Learning to Advanced Information Technology. Choice of the capacity building approach will depend on the capacity assessment and the strategic capacity planning exercises.

**Capacity Building Entry Point**

Start of any capacity building exercise should be assessing the need for capacity building in the first place. This can be done by introducing the topic of capacity building to the senior management of an NGO and by assessing the actual level of knowledge and experience of capacity building within the organisation.

Capacity building may also be a tool brought in by an external partner (donor, government, client, consultant) assuming it is needed for by a particular NGO. In a way an outsider has hijacked the capacity issue from the NGO, which might cause lack of ownership at a later stage.

Before launching the assessment process, the organisation’s senior management needs to determine its specific objectives in relation to the self-assessment. Options range from benchmarking capacity and monitoring change over time to using the tool to initiate a comprehensive organisational development program.

The following steps must be taken before entering a capacity assessment:

- Gain a commitment to the entire process (including follow-up) from senior management.
- Determine a reasonable and adequate amount of time that the assessment team can devote to the exercise.
- Advocate the benefits of completing such an assessment.
- Discuss ways in which the organisation can create a "safe environment" for those participating in the self-assessment. This could include: off-site assessment, discussion ground rules that emphasise mutual respect, and the use of an external facilitator.

Most common entry point for the capacity assessment of NGOs is the entity level, or the individual level. Capacity assessment of the organisation may for example be combined with a training needs assessment at individual level to ensure motivation to embark the process.

**Participatory Capacity Assessment**

The most appropriate method for Capacity Assessment of NGOs is self-assessment or participatory assessment. This is a process whereby an assessment team with representatives of the organisations goes through an assessment exercise that provides information about the capacity of their organisation. Self-assessment has the advantage of organisational learning and building of ownership of the capacity building process.

The Participatory Capacity Assessment (PCA) presented in this toolbox uses the Participatory Organisational Evaluation Tool (POET), developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). POET is a method that uses the “critical incident” technique to focus group discussions about organisational capacity. An assessment team is lead through a number of questions referring to incidents that have happened to their organisation in relation to capacity dimensions. Each member of the assessment team then “scores” the level of capacity, based on discussions and their own views and experiences.

Typical Capacity Dimensions used by PCA are Human Resource Management, Financial Resource Management, Equitable Participation, Partnering, Organisational Learning, Strategic Management / Governance. Other dimensions might be added when appropriate.
PCA outcomes include an objective measurement of the organisation’s capacities and the degree of consensus about this level of capacity (graphically illustrated in figure 4).

PCA outcomes also provide a method for benchmarking of NGO capacities. When assessing the capacity of a number of similar NGOs (a cohort), for instance from one NGO sector or region, an overview of the capacity levels of these NGOs will be created in order for NGOs to compare their capacities.

Within the whole process anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed by using coded participants names and organisations pseudonyms.

PCA can be used as a tool for monitoring capacity, when applying it on a regular (yearly) basis, but also encourages organisational reflection and learning.

**Steps of PCA:**
- Introducing the methodology and building the assessment team;
- Conducting a PCA session (5-6 hours), preferably by an outside facilitator (see Chapter 2.);
- Analysing and reporting PCA Scores (see Chapter 3.);

### Strategic Capacity Planning and benchmarking

Next step in the capacity building process is to plan strategies based on the assessment. First the NGO must prioritise the capacity dimensions using the results of the PCA. The NGO might choose capacities that are relatively low, focusing on ‘weaknesses’. On the other hand the NGO might also want to build on existing strengths in its capacity.

After prioritisation specific objectives must be set with regards to the capacities that have the highest priority. These objectives should be designed in a consensus workshop with internal staff, and must be as realistic as possible.

Examples of capacity objectives include:
- Improvement of the PCA results in absolute terms; e.g. increased score for financial resource management from 58 to 70, within 3 years.
- Improvement of PCA results in relation to other NGO’s scores (benchmarking); e.g. scoring higher than the cohort mean score in at least 5 of the 7 capacity dimensions.
- Improvement of consensus on organisations capacity; e.g. increased average score on consensus from 56 to 70, within 1 year.
- Decrease of dependency on external funding; e.g. decreased percentage of external funding from 99% to 80% in 2 years. Minimum of 2 new local income sources generated.
- Decreased staff turnover, etc.

After establishing the capacity objectives strategies can be drawn up. These may include examples like:
- Organisational Change methodologies, like Appreciative Inquiry, Total Quality Management, Coaching for Breakthroughs, Organisational Learning, Systems Transformation, Advanced Information Technology, the Problem Solving Method etc. These methods can be applied by training management in new management tools, or by consultations of external experts;
- Staff improvement: On-the-job training of staff, staff exchange with other NGOs, regular training programmes;
- Enhancing staff recruitment, staff incentives, and staff career plans;
Advanced networking with other NGO’s, government agencies, etc.;
Improving information technology and communication, etc.

Some strategies require additional resources that need to be mobilised. Other strategies may be implemented within the regular program and with existing means. NGOs can also work on collaborative actions in capacity building by developing joint strategies and plans.

Tools for this part of capacity building are the Feedback and Capacity Planning Workshop (see Chapter 4.) and the Collaboration Seminar for NGOs (see Chapter 5.).

Implementing and Sustaining Capacity Building
Implementation of Capacity Building strategies may be done by a special capacity team within the NGO or may be managed by one capacity manager. The human resource manager or executive director typically does this; however, a growth and development manager might do it.

Keeping track of capacity building activities is very important, in particular when ‘non tangible’ strategies are chosen like change management tools. One way to do this is to keep NGO staff informed about the things that are happening, for instance in a frequent capacity newsletter.

Other ways of tracking the capacity are follow-up meetings, regular PCB Impact assessments and doing an evaluating POET exercise with the NGO and NGOs in a ‘cohort’ to compare the results of capacity building activities.

Methods for this part described in this toolbox are Implementation Planning Workshops (see Chapter 6.) and Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Building (see Chapter 7.).

References:
- Capacity.org, 2002, a gateway to capacity development, http://www.capacity.org
- Mbullu, Patrick, 1999: Capacity Building North and South: Links and Lessons, ICA:UK: internal paper
1.3 What is the Participatory Organisational Evaluation Tool (POET)?

Participatory Capacity Building uses POET in its process. This section is to introduce this methodology and its origins.

What is POET?
POET is an acronym that stands for Participatory Organisational Evaluation Tool. It's also two concepts rolled into one: a tool, and a process. As an organisational capacity assessment tool, CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) and their partners use POET to measure and profile organisational capacities and consensus levels in seven critical areas, and assess, over time, the impact of these activities on organisational capacity (benchmarking). As an organisational development process, CSOs and their partners use POET to build capacity by bringing staff together in cross-functional, cross-hierarchical groups for open exchange; to identify divergent viewpoints to foster growth; to create consensus around future organisational capacity development activities; and, to select, implement and track organisational change and development strategies.

POET was developed in 1998 by Beryl Levinger of Education Development Center and Evan Bloom of Pact with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme and numerous CSO colleagues. Based on a methodology called PROSE (Participatory, Results-Oriented Self-Evaluation), POET focuses on the needs of a very specific user population, Southern CSOs and their partners.

What is PROSE, the methodology behind POET?
PROSE stands for Participatory, Results-Oriented, Self-Evaluation, a new methodology for assessing and enhancing organisational capacities. PROSE is designed for use by service organisations, schools, and government units committed to dramatically improving their ability to promote significant, positive, and lasting change. PROSE is suitable for assessing capacity and catalyzing organisational change in relation to such concerns as: practices related to exceeding customer expectations, organisational effectiveness in achieving mission, community participation, equity, decentralisation, and managerial effectiveness.

The following steps outline the PROSE methodology:
- Critical organisational capacities are identified in relation to a potential user population
- Items are created to measure the critical capacities
- Facilitators are trained
- The tool is applied
- Scores are tabulated
- Scores are reported
- Capacity-building efforts are launched

Using the PROSE methodology, POET is designed to:
- Promote organisational learning and capacity-building among CSOs
- Assist CSOs in strengthening their local partners
- Enable UNDP to track the impact of its support to CSOs
- Facilitate communication and information-sharing about capacity-building within the CSO community

The Role of the Cohort in PROSE
A cohort is composed of organisations that want to improve performance, want to engage in deep organisational learning, and are open to change. Although most cohorts are comprised of organisations in related fields, what's most important is that cohort members agree, a priori, in general terms what issues they intend to focus on (e.g., quality of customer service; operational efficiency; the quality of linkages and partnerships with other institutions). Additionally, the cohort concept enables PROSE users to benchmark their organisation's performance against a wider group of like entities in order to accelerate progress toward goal achievement. A cohort data manager and member organisations may choose to employ internet technologies to maintain anonymity, report results or facilitate communication among cohort members.
members in different geographical areas. Cohort creation is intended to foster a network of innovative organisations that can lend support to one another as they pursue their individual change efforts.

**Using PROSE without a Cohort**

PROSE may be used to address the needs of a cohort, but it is also designed to assess and enhance the capacity building of a single organisation. Organisations that are not part of a cohort will not be able to study their scores in comparison with peer organisations for benchmarking purposes. However, individual organisations can still engage in the analysis of absolute and relative scores generated through the PROSE methodology and utilise companion tools.

**How POET works**

During a POET capacity-assessment session, team members alternate between group discussion and individual reflection as follows:

- The facilitator leads the assessment team through a set of two to four discussion questions about "critical incidents."
- Team members reflect independently on the discussion by responding anonymously to statements that can be answered using Likert-type scales ("strongly agree-strongly disagree").
- This sequence of group discussion and individual reflection is repeated until the group completes all 100 POET questions which usually takes five to six hours.

After the POET capacity-assessment session:

- Results are scored and profiled using a variety of reporting formats and POET companion tools.
- Additional capacity- and consensus-building work is planned based on POET results.

**How POET is unique**

POET was designed as a robust, easy-to-use assessment process that efficiently and effectively assists CSOs and their CSO partners in achieving meaningful, lasting change. POET differs from other organisational capacity assessment tools in several ways. It:

- uses a "critical incident" technique to focus group discussion on common data which bolsters reliability and validity.
- includes a consensus dimension that measures diversity of opinion among team members to enrich organisational analysis and encourage capacity-building through the analysis of divergent viewpoints.
- offers companion tools that help participants to apply their POET results to the design of change initiatives that are firmly rooted in organisational realities.
- employs advanced statistical techniques to ensure construct validity and reliability.
- is easy to administer (relatively little facilitator training is necessary for effective results).
- models of sound organisational learning processes that serve as a springboard for capacity building (i.e., POET is simultaneously a tool for measuring and building capacity).

In addition, when used with a cohort of peer organisations, POET:

- enables users to benchmark individual organisational results against a cohort of peer organisations.
- uses the Internet where appropriate to foster communication among CSOs concerning POET findings and results as well as capacity-building efforts within the CSO community.

**What POET measures**

POET produces two kinds of measures, a capacity score, which indicates how an organisation perceives its strengths and weaknesses with respect to the capacity areas, and a consensus score, which indicates the degree to which assessment team members agree on their assessment of organisational capacity. These two scores reflect the key concept underlying POET: meaningful organisational development occurs at the intersection of two processes--identifying perceived
organisational strengths and weaknesses and exploring differences of opinion regarding these perceptions.

The seven capacity areas measured by POET are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Area</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Human Resource Management</td>
<td>staff development, recruitment, compensation (salary and benefits), personnel evaluation, and grievance and conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Financial Resource Management</td>
<td>budgeting, forecasting, fund-raising, and cash management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Equitable Participation</td>
<td>field-based program practices related to project access and project benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sustainability of Program Benefits</td>
<td>the impact of environmental, economic, political, institutional, and cultural factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Partnering</td>
<td>collaboration with other CSOS, donors policy makers, and private sector entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Organisational Learning</td>
<td>teamwork, information-sharing and capacity for generating information that leads to improvement of current practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Strategic Management/Governance</td>
<td>Board practices; planning practices; and, commitment to goals, mission and philosophy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1.4 What is Technology of Participation® (ToP®)?

Participatory Capacity Building uses ToP® in some of its processes. This section is to introduce the background and origins of these methods.

Introduction
Technology of Participation® is a world of methods that provide practical tools for enabling highly energised, productive inclusive and meaningful participation. All groups and organisations rely on how well leadership is able to inspire, catalyse, and sustain shared learnings and decision making in projects, programs, management and operational work. Structured participation enables deeper levels of commitment, greater capacity for sharing wisdom, and owning decisions arrived at collectively. ToP® methods enable groups to be more responsive to change and more creative in implementation. The methods encourage and develop broad-based initiative and responsibility. When used effectively and consistently, ToP® methods give groups a sense of both inner and outer well-being.

In 2003 ICA is present in 33 countries spread across six continents. The ICA office in each nation is autonomous. ICA International, headquarter in Brussels, acts as a clearinghouse for information and a co-ordination centre for national ICAs. Hallmark of the work of ICA is its use of participatory methods which help people plan together, reflect on their experience, and motivate them to action. ToP® methods have been invented, tested and refined in some four decades of working with communities and organisations around the world.

Variety of methods
Technology of Participation® consists of a large number of different tools and techniques that are interrelated. These include basic group facilitation methods and advanced tools for organisational development. Some of the ToP® methods are:

- Focused Conversation method
- Consensus Workshop method
- Action Planning process
- Participatory Strategic Planning process
- Participatory Project Management process

Within this participatory capacity building process ToP® methods are used in different ways. The Focused Conversation method is used in the ‘critical incidence’ method of Participatory Capacity Assessment. Parts of the Participatory Strategic Planning process are used in the Feedback and Capacity Planning workshop and in Implementation Workshops. Furthermore the philosophy and underlying principles of ToP® are leading threads throughout the Participatory Capacity Building process.

Technology of Participation® Methods are developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). Since the 1960’s ICA has been a presence in adult and child education, community projects around the world, in organising development, and in researching and testing the intellectual tools and social methods needed by people participating in social change.
Advantages of ToP® methods

1. Top® methods apply a *structure to group process*, preventing a group from drifting aimlessly.

2. Top® methods are *extremely versatile*, which means they work as well with groups of strangers as with long-term colleagues. They work well with groups that may never be together again and with well-established groups. They work with people of mixed backgrounds and ages, and with homogeneous groups.

3. Top® methods provide *excellent ways to focus* people on a topic long enough to determine what direction is needed and to provide an effective way for a group of people involved in implementing a decision to think through issues or actions together.

4. Top® methods provide room for *real listening*. People don't have to raise their voices or fight for the floor to be heard. Nor do they have to repeat previously stated positions for emphasis or to indicate agreement or support.

5. Top® methods have a way of *eliminating politicking and power plays*. They encourage understanding rather than criticism. They are helpful when bringing different information or perspectives together in order to create a commonly held comprehensive or “bigger” picture of an issue or objective.

6. Top® methods *help to discourage negative thinking*. Each person’s comments are received, and none are disqualified or struck from the record.

7. Top® methods *draw out both the rational and emotional responses* and experiences of the participants.

8. Top® methods *enable honesty*: people who know that their responses will be accepted like everybody else’s feel free to say what they really think and feel. The experience of such honesty is often releasing, surprising, and refreshing.

ToP® and the ToP® symbol are registered trademarks of the Institute of Cultural Affairs.

References:
- The Institute of Cultural Affairs at large: http://www.icaworld.org
1.5 The Facilitator

Introduction
Use of participatory techniques for development purposes are widely accepted. This introduction focuses on different aspects of participation and facilitation in Participatory Capacity Building. Why do we want participation? What is the needed leadership style and what are the main tasks and qualities of the facilitator?

Participation
As its title indicates, Participatory Capacity Building wants to achieve maximum participation during the process. There are several advantages of participation in capacity building:

- **Consensus and ownership** will be reached to get capacity building plans implemented
- **Quality assessments** and plans can be made since they will use comprehensive input of available knowledge
- **Learning and growth** is established by information sharing and innovative approaches to enhance knowledge and skills within the organisation

Of course there are also misconceptions, pitfalls and disadvantages of participation and facilitation:

- **Participation is not easier**. Usually participation in capacity building does not come easy. Inviting broad participation in this process risks creation of unnecessary frustrations, especially when expectations are not met. It needs clear structures, guidelines and methods that, almost paradoxically, allow for creativity and innovation to surface.

- **Facilitation is not consulting, informing or training**. Very often participation or facilitation is used as a cover term for a ‘top-down’ approach of advisory or consultative meetings. This is something different where outsiders come in to give advice or analyse problems. In the group facilitation we present in Participatory Capacity Building, we use tools and techniques to help members of a group share their expertise and insights and to collectively arrive at decisions they can uphold, own and implement. When the facilitator does not trust the group or when he has a second agenda, genuine participation will not be evoked.

- **Subjectivity in assessment and planning**. A real threat to the quality of the Participatory Capacity Building process may be the subjectivity or “narrowness” of the group. The process has a build-in comprehensive approach, but can never prevent subjectivity to prevail. However, it is the reality of the group that will create ownership and commitment to the process.

For inclusive participation to be successful, effective facilitation skills and methods are needed. Without methods, “participation” simply becomes a situation where anyone and everyone can say and do whatever they individually want to do. This often means that little of a capacity building plan is accomplished, and many involved feel their precious time, money and energy have been wasted. Effective methods make it possible for inclusive participation to happen as a creative, productive and even empowering experience.
Leadership Styles

The Participatory Capacity Building process needs a strong facilitator. This facilitator may be an outsider, e.g. someone from a supporting organisation, a governmental agency or a private consultant. However, an insider, e.g. a staff member or board member, may also facilitate the process.

The leader of a Participatory Capacity Building process moves away from the authority of hierarchical leadership and toward a dynamic and empowering style embodied by the facilitative leader. Though the facilitator must be sensitive to the hierarchical structures of the organisation, he seeks ways of going beyond the limits set by structure and helps to bring out the best in individuals and groups. Adopting the style of the facilitator in the Capacity Building process means accessing the power of a group’s diverse perspectives in assessing the capacity and analysing the current reality while maintaining respect and integrity within the group.

The facilitator is concerned with productive, inclusive and meaningful participation and knows methods how to engage people in the assessment and planning of the organisation’s capacity. The facilitator does not tell the group what is best for them, but is able to guide the process of the group to find out what is best for them.

In as much as the facilitator wants to arrive at the “right” decision for the group, he seeks and is open to analysis and decisions that will be owned and implemented by members of the organisation.

Rather than depending upon the charismatic abilities and influencing skills of one individual, the facilitator relies on and trusts in the wisdom and ability of the group, receives input without judgement and works toward an experience of success for the whole group.

Both hierarchical and facilitative leadership may be appropriate to different situations. For Participatory Capacity Building we propose the latter one that will build on the group’s reality rather than creating a new ‘outsiders’ perspective.
Tasks of the Facilitator
The facilitator's first task is that of enabling the group to succeed in the Capacity Building process. Finishing a process is empowering and motivating for the participants. The facilitator uses as much precision as possible as a tool for success. This results in the group creating the capacity building plan.

Team building is the second task of the facilitator. Team building is expanding, increasing and deepening the existing relationships within the group. The facilitator uses his or her own compassion for the group as a tool toward this end. The result of team building is a consensus.

Creating group resolve is the third task of the facilitator. Creating resolve in a group is aligning its collective will in the same direction and encouraging its decision to act. The facilitator uses indirection of ideas and comments so that the group comes to their own decisions. The result is action.

Enlarging the operating context of the group is the final task of the facilitator. Enlarging the context of a group is to extend the time frame and increasing the operating world in which it works. The facilitator uses objectivity and distance from the group as tools to enlarge the group's context. The result is motivation. The danger of being too objective and distant by the facilitator is a shallow group plan.

Qualities of a facilitator
Effective facilitation is an art requiring discipline about the method, in the use of time, and in one's own relationship to the group. Facilitating capacity building requires discipline about the use of time and being able to help the group move quicker or knowing when to shorten a step. Facilitation requires rigor in pursuing the intent of the session. It is demanding as much depth of ideas from the group as they are willing to share. Facilitating is finally the discipline of respecting and honouring the group.

Effective facilitation is the art of knowing what to change when. Facilitating a capacity building process requires flexibility in style and method based on the specific group you are dealing with. Facilitating it requires that the facilitator responds to the specific situation of the session, the ideas that come up, the needs of the participants, the room, etc. and not his or her own needs. It is recognising that there is never an ideal session yet every one can be a good session. Facilitating capacity building means being flexible about following the specific procedures of the method.

Effective facilitation is being fully engaged in the process by being fully responsible for its outcome. An effective facilitator is willing to risk himself in seeing that the group succeeds. The facilitator is willing to do whatever necessary for the process to produce the products intended. Effective facilitation requires preparation: both intellectual and emotional. The facilitator is engaged with the group.

At the same time, effective facilitation requires detachment. An effective facilitator is detached from his or her own insights and ideas because it is the group's decision that has the higher priority in the capacity building process. A facilitator is detached from his or her own accomplishments; more important are the successes of the group. It is being detached from one's own emotional involvement in the process and people. The facilitator is detached from the group enough to enable it to become productive.

References:
1.6 Field Experiences: the NANGO Case

Facilitating sustainable change from within NGOs in Zimbabwe

Introduction

Capacity Building is a buzzword commonly encountered in the work of Non governmental Organisations (NGOs). Unfortunately Capacity Building might easily be misinterpreted as training or staff development. In Zimbabwe NANGO (National Association for NGOs) together with an external consultant developed a method for participatory capacity assessment and planning. Facilitated by NANGO organisations took charge of a process of self-diagnoses, analysis and strategic capacity planning. This brought together NGOs from one sector to identify their similarities and to find ways to assist each other in building sustainable capacity.

NANGO

The National Association of NGOs in Zimbabwe (NANGO) is the recognised national umbrella organisation for the NGO sector in Zimbabwe with a membership of about 250 NGOs. Since its foundation in 1962 NANGO developed into a service oriented organisation. It promotes, co-ordinates and organises the participation and contributions of NGOs in Zimbabwe in social, economic and political development of the people in Zimbabwe. Key areas of NANGO's work are information sharing between members and other stakeholders, advocacy and lobbying on NGO-issues and capacity building of NGOs.

From Training to Capacity Building

Traditionally NANGO would carryout training needs assessments and actually conduct the training for identified courses. This mainly focused on entrepreneurial and vocational skills for income generation projects. More recently NANGO shifted this role into the direction of co-ordinating and facilitating training by training needs assessments and information sharing of available courses of other NGOs. So far, NANGO has regarded capacity building mainly as Human Capacity Building, focusing on training. It has now become clear that this perspective should be broadened and should include other than only the human capacities of organisations. Even when human resource capacity of NGOs have been improved, there is still need for a conducive environment to effectively make use of these human resources. The general capacity both at the organisational level and in its institutional context may very well be blocking the human resources to be effective. However, in most instances a clear picture about the NGOs capacity at different levels and taking it from different perspectives is not available. Consequently NANGO would find it difficult to effectively plan and implement capacity building exercises for them. Therefore NANGO decided to build its own capacity in NGO capacity assessment and capacity building. In 2002 NANGO contacted ICCO, a co-financing agency in the Netherlands, to assist in this exercise by giving technical assistance to the process.

NANGO NGO Capacity Building Program

The Capacity Assessment Program of NANGO intends to strengthen, mobilise and enhance the capacity of NGO personnel and to strengthen the overall organisational effectiveness of NGOs. The technical assistance to the program would enable NANGO to operate capacity building assessments independently in the future and should lead to the development of a broader capacity building concepts within the training and capacity building department of NANGO. Target group of the program are 10-15 NGOs in the women/gender sector of Zimbabwe. This sector was prompted by the disadvantaged status of women in Zimbabwe and decreasing levels of interest in this sector. The NGOs selected for the exercise were those NANGO had already worked with in a Vocational Skills for self-employment project. Previous evaluations had also revealed that training of individual staff members was inadequate to ensure better performance. It was therefore easy to gain the confidence from the NGOs in this new approach.
**Principles of Participatory Capacity Building**

To address issues of 'lacking' capacity many organisations seek external assistance, expertise or resources. Capacity building often turns out to be externally driven: external experts define organisation's problems and bring in external solutions. Capacity building strategies will then fail due to lack of ownership and limiting internal understanding of the problems.

Participatory Capacity Building (PCB) intends to radically break with this tradition. Guiding principles are:

- **Maximum Participation**: capacity assessment is conducted by a wide variety of people involved in the organisation and is based on their realities.
- **Minimum external input**: processes may be externally facilitated but presentation and analysis of assessment results, prioritisation and decision making is done by the organisation. Capacity building strategies are mainly focused on internal solutions that do not need much external resources.
- **Comprehensiveness**: capacity assessment includes important internal and external aspects of an organisation and capacity planning is linked to all parts of the organisation. Moreover, the planning process integrates different capacity aspects when looking for underlying contradictions and strategic capacity building directions.

**Activities in the NANGO Program**

The NANGO officer in charge of capacity building, Mrs Judith Chaumba, was introduced to the participatory capacity building method by Mr Jouwert van Geene, a local consultant. From November 2002 to July 2003 activities in the program were:

- Participatory Capacity Assessments (1-day workshops) with each NGO, followed by comprehensive assessment reports.
- Feedback and Strategic Capacity Plannings (1-day workshops) with each NGO followed by NGO Capacity Action Plans implemented by NGOs themselves.
- One seminar on NGO capacity building to synthesise the efforts of all NGOs and to create a collaborative capacity building program.

The technical assistance to NANGO by Mr Van Geene consisted of demonstrating new capacity assessment and planning methodologies, coaching the NANGO training officer while conducting the workshops and contributing to the development of project proposals, operational plans and capacity planning manuals.

**Reflection on the methodology**

The experiences with Participatory Capacity Building showed several strong points in the methodology (as reflected by the participating NGOs during the co-ordination seminar):

- The participatory approach really created a lot of involvement and made NGOs aware of their own capacity to analyse and plan for themselves. The method creates a lot of energy for and ownership of capacity building.
- Groups composed of participants from all across the organisation have extensive knowledge to make a thorough analysis of their current capacity.
- PCB provides a good foundation for monitoring the capacity of the organisation, by repeating (parts) of the capacity assessment on a yearly basis.

Some challenges in the use of the tool were also discovered:

- When analysing the current capacity of organisation it was sometimes difficult to be completely honest about root causes of problems. Some causes would be very sensitive, such as hierarchical leadership, problems with the board, corruption. The method does not provide specific tools to tackle this challenge.
- During the capacity assessment some capacity areas (such as equitable participation and sustainability) might be quite difficult to understand to all participants, especially when they are not involved in the matter. Since a lot of ground must be covered during the assessment, sometimes time is short to clarify all topics. In general though, there will be sufficient knowledge available in the room to do the full assessment.
- The capacity assessment provides very detailed scores of the level of capacity and consensus in the organisation. Though the scores are based on answers from the participants after group discussions, they cannot be taken as fully objective, but they should be seen as general indicators.
The statistical analysis in the capacity assessment makes the results vulnerable to being anomalous due to some inadequately informed respondents. The fact that the assessments incorporate staff from all levels in the organisations result in a wide variety of levels of understanding. Even though there are discussions of critical incidents general support staff are less assertive so they may not make further inquiries on an unfamiliar issue and just go ahead and make an individual score. Though the questionnaire of the capacity assessment is designed to facilitate a certain depth of analysis it appears too sophisticated for CBO workers who may be of lower literacy levels. This makes the assessment sessions longer as more simplification and interpretation of terms will be necessary.

In the course of the program it became more difficult to keep organisations interested. It was clear to them that the assessments and planning sessions were very involving. It sometimes took great effort to convince them to participate, also since some organisations seemed to be afraid to be "judged" by outsiders. In the end all participating NGOs were still excited and motivated to carry on with program. To get maximum involvement throughout the process more groundwork may need to be done before the sessions. The process approach must also be adopted in the NGOs annual plans to ensure their participation.

Future plans
The program resulted in comprehensive capacity assessments and capacity building plans that have been adopted by all NGOs. It also engaged the organisations in networking and exchange with each other. In the final seminar an outline for collaboration in capacity building was formulated which will lead to a 3-year program of activities including training, exchange of staff, study tours, organisational consultations, etc. After one year all organisations will be offered to monitor the capacity using an adapted tool based on the participatory capacity assessment. This will allow organisations to keep track of their capacity.

For NANGO the program has strengthened the relationship with its members. Some participating NGOs said "this is what we have been waiting for, all these years". Without much expertise of organisational assessment it has been able to carry out very meaningful capacity assessments. It now has the capacity to expand this work to other NGO-sectors in Zimbabwe.

The NANGO Capacity Building Program Team:

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