Report

International Symposium
on
Capacity Development and Aid Effectiveness

Manila, Philippines

January 14-16, 2003

http://www.undp.org/ capacity/symposium

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Executive Summary

The International Symposium on Capacity Development was held in Manila, Philippines, 14 - 16 January 2003. It was organised jointly by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank Institute (WBI) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The symposium's main objective was to facilitate the exchange of views among donors, recipient countries and other development practitioners on capacity development, as well as on new development cooperation approaches. More than 120 participants (see Annex-1) from government, civil society, academic institutions and recipient countries attended the symposium to share good practices and their views in the ongoing efforts for capacity development. Participating countries include: Bolivia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Philippines and Vietnam.

Participants agreed that capacity development is at the core of socio-economic progress and is a long-term process that requires the utilisation of existing national capacities (national expertise and national institutions). This executive summary provides highlights of salient issues and conclusions emanating from the symposium.

Accountability to beneficiaries is essential and therefore development cooperation approaches need stakeholders participation and endorsement at all stages. Participants agreed that the project and programme approaches complement each other. The one-sized "best" practices are rarely transferable.

The notion of capacity is normally associated with individual, organisational and societal "capabilities" to perform functions, however willingness or motivation need to be recognised as equally important since they hold the key to effective utilisation of competencies. Distinguishing between ability on the one hand, and willingness on the other, highlights the centrality of ownership to capacity development and the influence of incentives and motives on transforming capacity into performance. It helps understanding that capacity development is far more than a technical intervention but a process of transformative change. In addition to ownership, making capacity development operational inherently requires the recognition of external agencies that their role as being a catalyst in support of local change processes, one that is focused on achieving capacity development outcomes. Yet faced with difficult conditions in an increasing number of countries in difficult circumstances have required donor agencies to strike a balance between support for short term targeted interventions and maintaining a longer term programmatic vision.

Strong leadership was identified to be among the most fundamental attributes for assuring a locally driven process, which can be easily eroded where the role of donors becomes too prominent. The concept of national ownership is complex. It involves balancing the exercise of power and leadership through accountability of leaders to their constituencies and the degree of political legitimacy. While requiring strong determination and vision leadership equally requires consensus building skills as well as a willingness to listen to and account to the wider population. The role of civil society in holding government to account should be seen as a legitimate function that complements parliamentary oversight and the ballot box. Mechanisms for participation will vary from country to country depending on local situations.

Incentives play an important part in mobilising and making use of existing capacities. Moreover, the absence of appropriate incentives, can result in "brain-drain" – the loss of the most capable in the developing world to developed economies, or simply to a loss of determination and will to perform. This is an issue that deserves urgent attention particularly for smaller countries such as the Lebanon and Jamaica known for considerable emigration. The lack of monetary and non-monetary forms of incentives contributes to brain drain and willingness to perform. An enabling environment plays a key role in ensuring that effective

capacity is translated into good performance of individuals, organisations and societies. Transparency, accountability, the rule of law and security also constitute important incentives to effective performance, an issue that is now receiving considerable attention.

Key to successful capacity development is the way in which development problems are analysed. Analytical work needs to look at specific problems in their wider context taking account of factors at the individual, organisational and societal levels. It also requires engaging in dialogue with different development partners, including other donors, to ensure that a more complete view of the situation is obtained. Crucially, projects and programmes need to be designed in terms of achieving capacity development outcomes, rather than necessarily short term results. Thinking in holistic terms does not mean that interventions need to be all embracing.

Projects have been criticised for undermining capacity development and national ownership especially in instances where they are not consistent with sector policies, or parallel structures are established to expedite implementation. Once closed down, there was no follow up to project activities and little institutional memory left in place. Project management systems and procedures, often developed for implementing infrastructure activities, are also considered ill suited for the purposes of institutional development as they are not sufficiently flexible.

Some donors are moving towards programme-based approaches and providing budget support to avoid some of the shortcomings of projects. Programme based approaches (PBAs) provide opportunities for donors to co-ordinate efforts and harmonise procedures around nationally defined policies and institutions, and in so doing to respond to a locally driven agenda. PBAs allow donors the opportunity to practice capacity development and while creating space for local partners to exercise leadership. However the jury is out as to whether PBAs necessarily offer the way forward in all circumstances. PBAs assume a reasonable level of government accountability and administrative competence, and require a certain degree of macro-economic stability - in many countries this is not the case. They can also be burdensome and can incur high transaction costs. PBAs may be less suited for testing out innovative practices, and for providing capacity development support. They also risk contributing to cutting off funding to civil society organisations.

Cases presented during the course of the workshop demonstrated that projects can respect capacity development principles and achieve significant results. Projects remain effective both for translating programmatic plans into action, as well as providing a testing ground for eventually scaling up promising innovations. They can also provide a conducive environment for building strong partnerships between local actors and external providers.

The debate on the project versus programme based approaches should not focus on whether one is better than the other; rather to consider the conditions under which project or programme approaches are more suited in addressing capacity development.

There was general agreement on the need for donors to align their policies and programmes around national priorities and processes, and the work that is being done currently by the DAC to harmonise procedures was noted. It was also recognised that the general trend towards programme based approaches aims in part to align external interventions around nationally driven policies and programmes. The ultimate responsibility for creating the conditions for harmonisation and alignment however, rests with the recipient country.

Country practitioners noted that there seemed to be a gap between the new capacity development vision and what donors on the ground practice. This raised the question as to whether donors are able and willing to make the changes that are needed to support a capacity development approach.

Experiences from PRSPs were highlighted as capacity development in practice. While PRSPs are intended to reflect national priorities and allow donors support to be aligned with national vision, the experiences shared in the symposium have been mixed. It is encouraging to note that in some countries an outcome of the PRSP process has been the promulgation of legislation mandating participatory processes.

Increasingly the definition of knowledge in the context of capacity development is moving from a concept of knowledge transfer to one of knowledge acquisition. Fundamental to this change of concept is the acknowledgement that expertise resides within developing countries and that the challenge that countries face is to identify knowledge that can be adapted to address the challenges faced by developing countries. ICT has made it possible to move from a supply driven transfer of knowledge from the North to the South, to a demand driven process of acquisition based on interactive learning. "Explicit" knowledge such as information contained in books, and learning that takes place in the classroom may be facilitated by ICT, however, it is less amenable to "tacit" knowledge (ideas and information that is imparted through experiential learning and through exposure to different values and working systems). This type of knowledge can best be provided through technical co-operation.

Introduction

The main objective of the International Symposium on Capacity Development that was held in Manila, Philippines on 14-16 January 2003 was to exchange views among donors, recipient countries and other development practitioners on capacity development and new development cooperation approaches to support it. The gathering brought together more than 120 participants (see Annex-1) from government, civil society, academic institutions and recipient countries. They shared good practices and their latest thinking on ongoing efforts for capacity development.

The event was organized jointly by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank Institute (WBI) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Representatives from Bolivia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Philippines, and Vietnam presented their national experiences in capacity development.

The Symposium took place over three days. After formal opening addresses, *Day 1* was devoted to presentations by the sponsoring agencies on their perspectives and experiences of supporting capacity development. *Day 2* provided an opportunity for participants to learn of country experiences of capacity development, and to contrast these with the presentations of the first day. On *day 3*, participants worked in groups to address a selection of key issues [1] that had arisen over the first two days. Each group reported its findings to the final plenary session. The meeting closed with a representative from each of the sponsors giving their reactions to the symposium and some indications of the way forward for their organizations.

This Report

This report provides a summary of the issues discussed during the three-day symposium.

Following this brief introduction, Part 1 provides an overview of all presentations and highlights the key messages contained in the different presentations made over the three days. Wherever possible, hyperlinks are made to supporting documentation so that interested readers can gain further insights into the individual presentations[2].

Part 2 then provides a synthesis of key issues arising from the plenary discussions and working group sessions. Issues are presented under thematic headings that attempt to capture the main dimensions of capacity development.

This report provides just one source of information on the Symposium. Additional information can be found on the Symposium web-site: www.undp.org/capacity/symposium/. Here, one can find further documentation, video clips of interviews with selected participants, the list of participants, and the Symposium agenda.

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[1] Participants discussed the following issues: National Ownership and Donor Exit Strategy; Knowledge and Capacity Development; Donor Practices, Accountability and the Role of Civil Society; Labour Markets, Brain Drain and Incentives; Results-Based Management, Projects and Programme Approaches; Capacity Development in Fragile Situations.

[2] Hyperlinks are not available for all presentations. For hard copy version please go to endnotes to access links.

Part 1
Overview of Presentations

1.1. Opening Statements

The symposium was opened with welcoming speeches by the Ambassador of Japan to the Philippines, representatives of the other three sponsoring agencies and of the Philippines, the host government.

The Ambassador of Japan to the Philippines, Kojiro Takano[i], described the new thinking as "capacity development based on national ownership." He said that Japan recognized the importance of an ownership-based approach to development, as it had been the basis of Japan's own development experience. He mentioned that there were crucial lessons from the development experience of East Asian countries: As the capacity development process of each country differs from the others, one should respect the diversity of approaches to support its development. He also made the point that if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, capacity development is essential.

Shoji Nishimoto[ii], Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau for Development Policy of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) told the Forum that aid programmes must be tailored to the priorities of the recipient countries, with locals running them. "Ultimately, it is the countries themselves, with government in tune with civil society, that need to chart and pursue their own development course," said Mr. Nishimoto.

Réal Lavergne[iii], Senior Analyst in the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) indicated that capacity development was a major thrust of CIDA programming. However, there is a "limited understanding of how well we are doing." He argued that donors need to move beyond the "gap filling" approach to capacity building, by supporting more holistic approaches that address the needs of society as a whole.

"Donors are genuinely agonizing over what are good projects,' said Michael Sarris[iv], Director of Regional Knowledge and Learning, the World Bank Institute WBI. He urged the Symposium participants to focus on "what it will take to complement good policies and good projects to make sure that we achieve results…that is where this elusive concept of capacity, individual knowledge of collective and institutional ability to achieve results comes in."

Secretary Boncodin[v] of the Philippines Government welcomed participants to Manila, and thanked the organizers for choosing the Philippines as the venue for the Symposium. She emphasised the importance of the subject, noting that the area of capacity building and assistance yields the most enduring benefits. "…the lasting impact of capacity developing efforts in many developing countries cannot be overlooked. We see them in the efficiency of systems and procedures the effectiveness as institutions, even in the quality of personnel themselves" said Secretary Boncodin. However, she noted that it was also an area responsible for painful blunders no matter how originally well meaning. The hosting of this international symposium, by the donor community however was a welcome sign of the donors' sensitivity to the changing needs of the developing world in the area of capacity development.

1.2. Presentations by Sponsoring Agencies

The first day of the symposium afforded an opportunity to the event sponsors; the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank Institute (WBI) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to present their perspectives on and experiences of supporting capacity

development. The day concluded with reflections on the day by four attendees drawn from the developing countries represented at the conference.

The presentations by the UNDP and CIDA dealt with the overall multi-level conceptual approach to capacity building. The presentation of the World Bank examined the sorts of capacities needed to implement Poverty Reductions Strategies in low-income countries. The presentation by JICA covered questions of ownership and knowledge acquisition and included as an example the presentation of the science and maths teacher training project in Kenya.

UNDP's[vi] presentation on the emerging conceptual framework for capacity development as the process by which individuals, institutions and societies develop abilities (individually and collectively) to perform functions, solve problems as well as set and achieve goals, noting that it is now considered a fundamental underpinning of technical cooperation for development assistance. The presentation highlighted that key to the notion of capacity development is that it is an endogenous process, and that in that regard external assistance must be understood to play a supporting role to local processes. Equally important to the notion are principles of national ownership, of participation, and of adopting flexible and long-term support strategies. Partnerships between a range of sectors and groups are also necessary. The capacity development approach would work best if there was a "clear enunciation of development strategy by the government," and this strategy was formulated and carried out in a transparent and participatory way.

This conceptual framework is still being refined and one of the inputs to this process of refinement is the Reforming Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development[3] initiative that has involved an intensive process of research and consultation around the world, from which two major publications have so far been produced and a third is nearing completion.

A set of capacity development principles was also proposed that helps define the conceptual framework, and which embrace such ideas as: "establish positive incentives for capacity development"; "Be accountable to ultimate beneficiaries"; "Integrate external inputs into national priorities, processes and systems".

CIDA's[vii] presentation[4] noted the considerable similarities between CIDA's own conceptual framework for capacity development and that of UNDP. This suggested that there is growing convergence among development agencies around a common set of concepts and principles. Indeed it was suggested that some of the common notions about capacity development e.g. ownership and participation had by now become well accepted in the development community. However, the translation of concepts into practice remains a challenge, because capacity development requires a very flexible, long-term, approach that challenges the bureaucratic tendencies of large aid organizations.

It was noted that the critique of the project approach coincides with growing concern for development outcomes and impact. It is no longer satisfactory to look at the immediate results that projects can achieve but to look beyond, to outcomes and impacts. However outcomes and impacts are rarely the work of a single donor or project. By focusing on outcomes and impacts, development partners have therefore come to realize the need to work together to ensure results. Furthermore, donors have also come to realize the folly of supporting projects that are "islands of excellence in a sea of failure" as can happen when projects bypass, rather than reinforce local institutional procedures and structures. The solution is to engage in programme-based approaches, under national leadership. However, this approach will only

[3] http://www.undp.org/capacity
[4] For the French version and power point presentation go to http://www.undp.org/capacity/symposium/highlights.html

work if substantial efforts are made to reinforce the capacity of local institutions to design, implement, and monitor development programmes.

Ultimately, even this is insufficient. The capacity problem cannot be solved by filling gaps in an ad hoc fashion, even under a programme-based approach. What is required is a more strategic and holistic approach to capacity development, in which an enabling environment is created for all elements of society to develop their capacities on an ongoing basis. The challenge is to create, in this way, a learning, innovative, and progressive society.

The World Bank Institute's[viii] presentation examined capacity development issues from the perspective of the experiences of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process over recent years in different country settings. To date most of that experience relates to the strategy formulation process but in coming years there will be opportunities to monitor the implementation process too. It was noted that the World Bank's own conceptual framework for capacity development now shared much in common with that of the two previous presentations; namely the notion of an endogenous process, the centrality of participation and the concept of looking at capacity issues at multiple levels.

It was argued that the PRSP process provides an opportunity to test out these shared concepts of capacity development. In so doing it will be possible to monitor the extent to which development partners are able and willing to adhere to some of the key principles that underlie capacity development and to which they now formally subscribe. More significantly, capacity development is now accepted to be the central challenge facing countries if they genuinely want to tackle poverty in a sustainable way. Capacity development and poverty reduction are therefore inseparable. It was also suggested that the PRSP process provides an opportunity for countries to assert a national driven process and to align donors within that national framework.

The final presentation of the day was given by JICA, and was divided into two parts. In the first part, the overall JICA[ix] concept of capacity development was presented. In principle, JICA subscribes to the concepts that had been raised in the foregoing presentations recognising the centrality of capacity development to the overall development process, and the centrality of ownership to successful capacity development.

Whilst generally endorsing this emerging conceptual consensus, there are elements where JICA takes a different view. First, JICA argues that the project approach, or more precisely, technical cooperation through projects, can achieve capacity development results. Second, that technical cooperation and through it, the imparting of what was referred to as tacit knowledge through shared learning and working together is an integral element of Japanese cooperation policy and is believed to play a positive part in developing capacities of partners.

The second part of the presentation consisted of a case study of a JICA supported project in Kenya, the SMASSE[x] project that began in 1998 to strengthen maths and science education through an in-service training initiative. The project began with an intensive start-up phase that was used to build consensus among technical assistants and local staff over the project's purpose and to broaden local ownership of the initiative. It was recognised that neither side had all the answers to the problems being addressed and that the key to success lay in drawing on the respective expertise and experiences of local personnel as well as of technical assistants.

1.3. Reflections on Agency Presentations

Each presentation was followed by lively debate from the floor. To close the day's proceedings, participants from Bolivia, Lebanon, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan were invited to

present their impressions of the first day and to try to sum up what in their view had been the critical issues arising. Some of these are reproduced here:

- Implementing the new capacity development "paradigm" requires that donors themselves engage in an internal process of change so that they are able to develop the necessary capacities to support a capacity development approach. Otherwise, capacity development will remain stuck at the conceptual level.

- While seeking conceptual clarity and indeed consensus around notions of capacity development, there is a need to recognise the virtues of applying diverse approaches when operationalising the concept.

- A priority in capacity development work must be to identify and mobilise existing local capacities, and especially mobilise the latent intellectual capital of societies that is so often by-passed.

- Whilst seeking to encourage donor coordination and alignment of actions around national driven processes, room should be left to accommodate the notion of promoting competition among donors for the provision of capacity development services.

The following questions were raised:

- How to reconcile the project and programme approach in such a way that they can complement one another, since it is not clear how to distinguish between these two approaches?

- To what extent does that PRSP process provide an organising principle for undertaking capacity development work?

- What role can and should donors play in countries where the basic preconditions for engaging in capacity development work are not present e.g. where government's remain unaccountable?

- What kind of a balance should partners seek to strike between sharing or acquiring knowledge and seeking to share or acquire values?

1.4. Country Presentations

The second day of the symposium offered an opportunity for participants to learn about country experiences of capacity development, and to compare and contrast these with the conceptual models that had been discussed on the first day. There were eight country presentations from: the Philippines, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Vietnam, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, the Lebanon and Ghana. The day concluded with reflections on the day's presentations by representatives from the sponsoring agencies.

The representative of the Philippines National Economic Development Agency (NEDA)[xi] kicked off the proceedings with a general reflection on the record of aid in the Philippines, and cited a number of lessons learned. In so doing he noted the lack of sustainability of initiatives often linked to problems of weak ownership, and donors being too much in the driver's seat. Such problems are today being addressed by ensuring " explicit handholding between foreign and local expertise" and by adopting a more results-based approach to planning and programming.

The second presentation from the Philippines provided insights into the way in which some of the concepts discussed on day 1 had informed the design of a capacity development programme for local governance and decentralisation that is currently working in 7 regions and with over 200 local government units. The Philippines-Canada Local Government Support Programme (LGSP)[xii] had for instance identified the need to work at the individual, organisational and societal levels in order to bring about lasting capacity, and to link the development of capacities to clearly defined performance outcomes. It was noted that the programme has been progressing through four sequential stages that focus on consensus building, capacity enhancement, capacity utilisation (application) and institutionalisation. An unexpected benefit of the programme methodologies is its being applied to indigenous communities in the Yukon in Canada.

From Ethiopia[xiii] participants learned of the steps that the government has recently taken to develop a five-year national capacity development strategy that is designed to accompany the implementation of the country's PRSP. Focusing on human resources development, systems development and organisational strengthening, the strategy provides a framework that avoids fragmentation and duplication of effort, particularly with respect to donor support to the priority areas of civil service reform, agriculture and rural development, private sector development, education, and civil society. It was noted that perhaps uniquely, a Ministry for Capacity Building had been established to guide this national strategy.

A second presentation from Ethiopia focused on the experience of civic participation[xiv] in the preparation of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). It noted that the PRSP had provided an opportunity for donors and the Ethiopian government to re-build a relationship of trust around a shared agenda, after a number of years of disengagement as a result of the Ethiopian war. Whilst the Government made significant efforts to engage civil society in the process, albeit after initial hesitation, and although the overall PRSP can be said to be owned by local stakeholders, there remained some concern with the level of donor involvement in the policy development process, which had risked to undermine local ownership both of the process and of eventual policy recommendations. The point was made that policy authorship must be an intrinsic element of policy ownership.

The two presenters from Jamaica reflected on the evolution of a nationally driven programme to promote sustainable development that embraces capacity development as a fundamental strategy for achieving programme goals. An extensive consultative process driven by the Government ensured broad-based stakeholder support for the overall notion of sustainable development whilst an institutionalised process of corporate strategic planning within the public sector, meant that it was easier for external partners to link their support to nationally-driven plans. Within this context, and inspired by agenda 21 and OECD/DAC principles, the ENACT programme[xv] had been developed with outside partners to strengthen the capacity of key institutions - both within the public sector as well as among stakeholders in the private sector and civil society - to support the implementation of a sustainable development vision. The programme works at three capacity levels; addressing the enabling environment, strengthening organisations and building skills, and has successfully adopted a long-term and flexible approach to overall programme implementation.

Noting the important part played by the international community in facilitating social and economic progress, the Vietnamese presentation[xvi] reflected on the experiences of reforming the legal and judicial sector, and of the role played by the international community in supporting that process. The record of achievement was generally positive although it was acknowledged that Government capacities in aid management had in general been inadequate and had affected the quality of programme design and implementation. This was now being addressed at multiple levels from enhancing democratic principles at the grassroots level, improving the overall transparency of government operations as well as strengthening project

management skills. It was recognised that capacity development has to be driven by a local agenda, and could not simply be transferred from outside. However the role of external assistance in providing expertise in critical areas to support local processes of reform, and to reinforce local expertise was considered crucial, and could be usefully absorbed provided the initiative was locally driven and that the laws were written by Vietnamese. This had indeed been the case with respect to adapting the legal system to support a more market-oriented economy and WTO accession for which there was little in-country experience available.

The first of two presentations from Bolivia[xvii] looked at the issue of how national ownership is generated, in that it is derived from consensus that is built up among different stakeholders, and that capacity is needed to achieve this. It must also take account of the politics of a country. National dialogue has been used to define for instance the priorities for the fight against poverty, and it was noted that such dialogue has now been institutionalised by law enabling civil society a role in defining development policy. A new relationship framework for cooperation with external partners was also being proposed that consists of a set of principles and actions.

The second Bolivian[xviii] presentation considered why it was that despite having adopted a host of recommended political, institutional and economic reforms, the country had not "taken off" and the development record remained poor. In part, it has to do with donors continuing to *deliver* assistance rather than *facilitating* the identification and support of local capacities. In part, it is due to difficulties in clearly articulating what capacities are needed to manage the development process. A crucial factor, it was noted, was having energy and the will to succeed and to grasp development opportunities. This is, however, not something that can be learned; rather it seems to be a quality that is either present or not, and it seems that a historical turning point may be what unleashes such qualities within a society. Leadership skills are fundamental to help a county make up its collective mind, as are the capacities to make astute use and management of donor assistance.

A first presentation from Kazakhstan[xix] reflected on the country's overall experience of development cooperation and on the contribution it had made to capacity development. Overall, external aid had played a key role in the first stages of the development of Kazakhstan. The presenter considered factors that can affect project success, particularly in relation to the use of technical assistance. The responsibility for project outcomes is a shared one between donor and recipient; however projects have generally succeeded where government commitment has been strong. Yet such commitment can easily be eroded where the donor takes over the process both during the formulation stage but especially in implementation. Blueprint approaches that fail to take account of local contextual realities were criticised, as was the tendency to use international consultants when local experts are available to do the job. It should remain the responsibility of the government to determine the extent of donor involvement in any programme, and to do this, the government must ask itself what added value the donor brings to the local process both in terms of finance and technical assistance. Experience in Kazakhstan shows that it is easier to get commitments from recipients for simple projects such as construction of buildings or in-kind contribution to a project for it to end up being successful.

A second presentation provided an overview of a civil society capacity development programme that operates at the regional level providing support to civil society across the central Asia region. It was explained that the Counterpart Consortium[xx] programme enjoys funding from several major donors and had been developing a regional network of civil society support organisations since 1995. Now in its third phase, the programme has shifted from a focus on promoting the role that NGOs can play in supporting national development processes, towards developing their capacities to take up service delivery functions as a partner of government, as well as to promote and manage local partnerships. In a comparatively short time period, the programme has managed to transfer responsibility for

carrying out capacity work to members of the network and in so doing to reduce reliance on external technical assistance. The level of support offered by national governments has varied from country to country with some more openly embracing the participation of civil society than others, in particular in relation to the PRSP process. This has implications for the long-term sustainability of the sector particularly in terms of finances, where in some instances, the national constitution prohibits the financing of NGOs.

The first of Lebanon's two presentations focused on recent experiences of reforming the country's customs administration[xxi], which has been considered an overall success and offers a number of lessons for capacity development. The overall objective of the reforms was to enhance Lebanese trade competitiveness by in particular reducing the time and costs of clearance procedures, through the introduction of an automated system for customs data. A model for presenting the roles and relationships between the actors involved in a cooperation, referred to in the presentation as a "Capacity development square" can help to identify the formal and informal lines of communication and relationships that develop between the different actors, and which can have an intentional or unintentional bearing on issues of ownership and commitment.

The second Lebanese presentation noted the comparative rarity of positive reform experiences particularly with respect to the public sector in the country. Since the end of the conflict, the public sector had swollen in size but performance had declined. Efforts at improving public sector performance had meanwhile focused on improving infrastructure and technology whilst investments in human resources development and policy management where by and large neglected. Over time the system had become increasingly politicised, and the most capable had left for greener pastures. The result was a lacklustre public sector that has not been able to keep pace with the dynamism of the commercial sector and civil society. With regard to external support to public service reform, it was noted that too often this had been driven by parallel structures such as project implementation units (PIUs) that were unable to build ownership within the internal body of the civil service. There had been excessive reliance on consultants to produce a myriad of reports, often repeating earlier studies, the recommendations of which were rarely implemented. Rapid turn over of staff and the isolation of PIUs has meant that there is little institutional memory of previous initiatives, and this has tended to encourage a donor driven agenda.

A case study illustrating the role that project approaches can play in promoting capacity development was the focus of Ghana's first presentation[xxii], which looked at an education programme supported by JICA that aimed at improving the quality of maths and science teaching. It was argued that at a time where there was a general shift towards sector wide approaches and budget support, project approaches or technical cooperation through projects continues to play an important and complementary role. It was suggested that project approaches allow for the testing of innovative practices, and provide a framework for one-to-one learning between technical assistants and local professionals. On the basis of project experiences, lessons can be drawn that can inform wider policy whilst successful initiatives can eventually evolve into broader programmes.

Ghana's second presentation[xxiii] also pleaded for a flexible approach and for combining programme based approaches with project approaches. The main concern here is that programme based approaches risk marginalizing civil society and cutting access to funding. Direct funding of civil society outside the framework of sector wide approaches for example is important in terms of promoting broader based participation and of facilitating capacity development of non-state actors, and can complement sector funding through the national budget. Whilst sector wide approaches have clear merits, their application assumes that there is transparent and accountable government, that oversight institutions are in place to provide checks and balances on government performance and that the policy of government

necessarily reflects the will of the population. If these assumptions prove unfounded, then the SWAP approach can undermine participatory development.

1.5. Reflections on the Country Presentations

To wrap up the day, four participants from the "north" were invited to reflect on the day's presentations and discussions. Among the reflections made were the following:

- Given the centrality of capacity development to any type of performance improvement, it is perhaps time to consider capacity development not merely as means towards achieving other development objectives, but also as a legitimate development objective in its own right.

- Capacity remains something of a "black box". Whilst our concepts are getting sharper, there remains a lot to be understood about how capacities are developed and about the factors that give life and energy to capacities so that they can generate real performance.

- The role of donors must be less on delivering imported practices but more on identifying and supporting local capacities – this requires a change in attitudes among donors and a willingness to engage in their own internal reform.

- South-South Cooperation has an important role to play, particularly with respect to the transfer and sharing of tacit knowledge, including values, among peoples who have encountered similar development challenges and circumstances.

- Harmonisation of donor practices is necessary to avoid overburdening of weak administrative capacities; however there are also clear advantages to encouraging diversity and choice, and this should not be undermined by attempts at harmonisation.

- National dialogue processes that promote participation of all development stakeholders can strengthen national ownership, and requires that capacity development efforts address civil society in addition to public sector institutions.

- There is a continuum between projects and programme-based approaches and the choice as to which to use depends on local contextual factors. What is essential is to determine the minimum criteria for engaging in project based / sector wide approaches; for instance, having a strategic framework in place to guide sector programmes combined with a medium term expenditure framework.

1.6. Additional Presentations/Documents

A lunch presentation was made by the Asian Development Bank[xxiv] (ADB) and other documents were circulated by the International Development Consultants [xxv] (Uganda), JICA[xxvi], the UN[xxvii] and UNICEF[xxviii].

1.7. Closing Remarks

The closing remarks of the representative of the World Bank Institute stressed that the contributions from the developing countries were most valuable in that they made the conceptual approaches laid out on the first day more concrete. The examples also rendered the often-drawn distinction between projects and programmes rather meaningless. The successful projects had clearly paid attention to how they fit into the overall strategies in their respective sectors, commitment of the key actors, the incentive structure within which the

projects operated and the implications for the sorts of capacities that will be needed (and developed) to make the project a success. When viewed from that angle, the projects effectively had the characteristics of programmes. Disappointment was expressed that the discussions had slipped too easily into concepts rather than pushing the envelope on what can be done concretely to replicate and scale up the examples presented at the symposium. The presenter expressed the commitment to contribute to incorporating the best insights from successful projects into the World Bank's policies and practices.

CIDA's representative stated that he had found the symposium most timely. He noted that CIDA is currently doing stocktaking of its approach to capacity development. A stratified sample of CIDA-supported projects is being analysed and will be compared to a sample of "model projects" that incorporate features similar to those identified by the symposium. A parallel exercise is looking at how CIDA officers see the challenge of capacity development and will assess the human resources available to CIDA for engaging in capacity development.

In his concluding remarks, UNDP's representative mentioned that many insights and concrete examples of capacity development successes had been presented at the conference. The outcomes of the symposium provide a series of concrete entry points for UNDP including the newly formed Capacity Development Group and the forthcoming book on capacity development. Change was not going to take place overnight and coming up with practical propositions was difficult in a global meeting as country contexts differ widely and blueprints are likely not to work. It was therefore all the more important to pursue the dialogue at country level where for all involved it would be easier to come to an agreement on concrete action. While perhaps perceived by some like opening floodgates it was essential to broaden and deepen the dialogue with other stakeholders in civil society to hold all partners accountable and encouraged vision to go beyond the status quo, stating that "The constraints of today are not the constraints of tomorrow."

The representative of JICA had also found the meeting stimulating. He felt that face-to-face contacts with representatives from developing countries gave opportunities of gaining "tacit knowledge", knowledge that is hard to codify in writing, a concept that had received considerable play at the symposium. He stated that there will be further opportunities for face-to-face interactions to help catalyse another such event before the end of this year. He also said that JICA would be re-examining its project experiences in developing countries and expected it to then adjust the capacity development aspects of JICA-supported projects accordingly.

Part 2

Synthesis of Issues

Some salient issues ran throughout the symposium. Participants agreed that capacity development is at the core of development. It is a long-term process that works best when use is made of existing capacities. This means working with national expertise as a prime option, along with strengthening existing national institutions. Rather than creating new institutions donors must learn to work through existing structures to meet local country needs. Furthermore, external assistance needs to be re-thought as to how best to facilitate the development and utilisation of local capacities rather than replacing them. It is essential to remain accountable to beneficiaries. Approaches need to be openly discussed and negotiated with all stakeholders from the outset of development initiatives and should continue throughout implementation. Participants agreed that it is less important to compare whether project or programme approaches are better than the other. It is understood that they complement each other.

Participants concluded that donors need to understand the intricacies of capacity development and the particularities of every context. One-sized "best" practices are rarely transferable. Capacity development is a long process and cannot be developed as long as individual donors propose different and sometimes incompatible forms of support, each following different timetables and goals. Donors need to understand that expatriate experts are sometimes less helpful than knowledgeable local consultants. On the recipient side, the needs for donor support should be clearly articulated, and recipients should be ready to say "no" when they perceive offers of support that are inappropriate.

Against this background, this part of the report synthesises some of the thoughts, lessons and experiences that participants shared on the different dimensions of capacity development.

2.1. Capacity - A Combination of Abilities and Willingness

The presentations made by the sponsoring agencies on the first day, raised a number of conceptual questions with regard to our understanding of capacity and capacity development. Whilst the notion of capacity is normally associated with individual, organisational and societal "capabilities" to perform functions, the notion of willingness or motivation is equally important since it holds the key to the effective utilisation of such competencies. By distinguishing between ability on the one hand, and willingness on the other, attention is drawn to the centrality of ownership to capacity development, and of the influence of incentives and motives on transforming capacity into performance.

Ownership becomes all the more significant when capacity development is associated with processes of change and transformation that challenge power relations and vested interests. It also brings to the fore the political consequences of much capacity development work. In this regard, capacity development constitutes far more than a technical intervention.

2.2. Ownership and Accountability

Understanding what ownership actually means was something that was further debated through out the meeting. It was agreed that strong leadership and political commitment provide the basis for national ownership, and is a major factor in achieving successful project outcomes. Strong leadership was identified to be among the most fundamental attributes for

assuring a locally driven process, however as noted in the case of Kazakhstan, government commitment can be easily eroded where the role of donors becomes too prominent.

It was recognised however that the concept of national ownership is more complex and involves issues to do with the way power and leadership is exercised. Issues of governance, including accountability of leaders to their constituencies, influence the degree of political legitimacy. The general view was that leadership requires strong determination and vision, but it equally requires skills in consensus building as well as a willingness to listen to and account to the wider population. This had certainly been the experience in Bolivia in recent years resulting in the adoption of a law that institutionalises multi-stakeholder dialogue in the policy process, whilst in Jamaica, a broad process of consultation with different stakeholders underwrote the implementation of the Government's sustainable development vision.

The qualities of leadership, however, remain difficult to define and it is not evident what capacity interventions can necessarily help to create leadership. Moreover, leadership is something that must be nurtured locally; donors had learned that selecting leaders to function as change agents can be counterproductive when such change agents lack local credibility and legitimacy. For external partners, the challenge is to know how to encourage change without unduly interfering in national affairs. This includes stepping back, being patient, and allowing local leaders to be pro-active. In this regard, whilst the process of formulating Ethiopia's PRSP was by and large locally driven, there were concerns that donors were assuming at times a too high a profile in proposing policy options, which risked undermining the local process. Equally, the experience of Vietnam was that whilst external expertise was a necessity in helping to reform the justice system of the country, the process of developing new legislation had to be locally driven.

To strengthen local accountability, one of the working groups urged that civil society participation in the policy process should become the rule. The role of civil society in holding government to account should be seen as a legitimate function that complements parliamentary oversight and the ballot box. Mechanisms for participation will vary from country to country depending on local situations. Examples include voice mechanisms such as public hearings, as well as the media; it can also involve forms of multi-stakeholder dialogue, and participation in budget preparation and public expenditure reviews. In the context of aid relations, civil society can participate as an observer within Consultative Group meetings as is already happening in a number of countries, such as Ghana. The challenge, especially for new countries such as Kazakhstan where civil society is just beginning to emerge remains to identify representative and accountable civil society organizations that can perform these functions.

2.3. The Role of Incentives

The issue of incentives was touched upon on various occasions during the Symposium. Incentives play an important part in mobilising and making use of existing capacities. The absence of appropriate incentives, can, moreover, result in "brain-drain" – the loss of the most capable in the developing world to developed economies, or simply to a loss of determination and will to perform. Incentives can take different forms, for instance monetary and non-monetary.

It was noted that an enabling environment plays a key role in ensuring that effective capacity is translated into good performance. This is true not only with respect to individual performance but equally to organisational and societal performance. Pay is an obvious incentive but transparency, accountability, the rule of law and security also constitute important incentives to effective performance, a point that was noted in Vietnamese presentation, and an issue that is now receiving considerable attention.

Dealing with issues of "brain drain" deserves urgent attention particularly for smaller countries such as the Lebanon and Jamaica that have experienced considerable levels of emigration. However, the issue has been seriously under-researched so that little is known about what prompts people to leave, where they go and what it will take to bring them back.

Other incentives that can generate good performance include the market place, and in particular competition. These can work as an effective stimulus for improving performance and attracting good capacity both among individuals and organisations. Motivation and peer pressure also serve to bring the most out of people and organisations. In the context of development cooperation programmes and projects, JICA emphasised the role of their technical assistants in motivating their counterparts to improve their performance without the provision of financial inducements. This was considered to have been a key factor in the achievements recorded in the SMASSE project in Kenya, where teachers were willing to meet the costs of additional training. Working together and learning by example, sharing responsibilities and working towards common goals can have a motivating effect.

2.4. Capacity for What and for Whom?

Several participants sought clarification as to where capacity development efforts should be focused. The general view was that capacity development serves as a means towards achieving development goals, some of which remain quite broad. It was, for example noted that capacities are needed within a society to embrace change and to participate on an equal footing in a globalised world. Capacity was also considered as a pre-requisite for achieving the millennium development goals – not in the sense of needing to develop a specific set of capacities to meet each of the goals but more in terms of developing more crosscutting institutional capacities to manage the overall development policy process. It was suggested by Bolivia that a general societal capacity is needed that enables a society to make use of and mobilise the capacities already present within a society. Other areas of capacity that were identified included the capacity for leadership and the capacity to manage donors and to creates visions as well as to set a course for national development.

In this regard, it was suggested that the centrality of capacity development to the overall development process was such that capacity development deserved to be treated not only as a means to achieving development outcomes but as a legitimate development goal in itself.

Others asked *whose* capacities should be developed. To answer this question it is necessary to look first of all at the development problem being addressed and only then to consider the different capacities that could be brought to bear to address the problem. Typically, different capacities of different sections of society might need to be mobilised, strengthened or built. This would normally include the public sector, but equally civil society and the private sector too, particularly if a participatory development approach is supported that recognises the complementary role of different actors in the development process. The Counterpart Consortium project for instance has worked to strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations in Central Asian Republics to take up service delivery functions and contribute to national development efforts.

2.5. Making Capacity Development Operational

Whilst accepting the need to clarify concepts, participants were anxious to reflect on the experiences of making capacity development operational. The country presentations and case studies presented on the second day went some way to address this interest. In ensuing discussions a number of related issues on applying capacity development principles in practice were raised.

Further to the discussion on ownership, the point was made that external agencies should recognise their role as being one of catalysing and supporting local change processes. Donors can function as change agents but only to the extent that they empower local processes, such as in the case of Ethiopia and Vietnam noted earlier. In this regard, it is important not to lose site of the fact that external agencies can only work at the margins even when their contribution to the overall development budget of a country might be significant.

A key to successful capacity development has to do with the way in which development problems are analysed. Analytical work needs to look at specific problems in their wider context taking account of factors at the individual, organisational and societal levels. Generally, there is need for more up-front diagnosis, which must be accompanied by a better understanding of the local policy and institutional context. Two of the projects that were presented at the Symposium, the Philippines-Canada Local Government Support Programme, and Jamaica's ENACT programme that is supported by several donors have tried to address capacity by exploring needs at the individual, organisational and societal levels. It also requires engaging in dialogue with different development partners, including other donors, to ensure that a more complete view of the situation is obtained. Crucially, projects and programmes need to be designed in terms of achieving capacity development outcomes, rather than necessarily short term results.

Thinking in holistic terms does not mean that interventions need to be all embracing. For instance, although it is advisable to examine issues from the individual, organisational and societal levels, eventual interventions will probably focus on only one of the three levels. What remains important is to understand the interplay between the three levels and to avoid designing isolated interventions that do not take account of the influence of, or their impact on the other levels. This was one of the important lessons of the Philippines and Jamaica projects noted above.

2.6. Projects versus Programmes

Participants sought some clarification with respect to the factors that distinguish projects from programmes.

Projects have been criticised for undermining capacity development and national ownership. This can happen when for instance projects are implemented that are not consistent with sector policies or where parallel structures are put in place to expedite implementation but which are not sustainable. Lebanon had had such experiences with respect to a series of public service reform initiatives where project implementation units had been established. These had failed to build broad based support for reform, and once closed down, there was no follow up, and little institutional memory left in place. Project management systems and procedures, often developed for implementing infrastructure activities, are also considered ill suited for the purposes of institutional development as they are not sufficiently flexible. And a multitude of separate projects that introduce their own rules and procedures imposes an immense burden on the administration of usually weak host institutions. Projects working in isolation tend to focus on achieving one-shot results and ignore issues of process and the achievement of sustainable capacity outcomes.

Some donors are therefore moving towards programme-based approaches and providing budget support that are expected to avoid some of the shortcomings of projects. Programme based approaches (PBAs) provide opportunities for donors to coordinate efforts and harmonise procedures around nationally defined policies and institutions, and in so doing to respond to a locally driven agenda. PBAs allow donors the opportunity to practice capacity development and while creating space for local partners to exercise leadership.

However the jury is out as to whether PBAs necessarily offer the way forward in all circumstances. PBAs assume a reasonable level of government accountability and administrative competence, and require a certain degree of macro-economic stability - in many countries this is not the case. They can also be burdensome and can incur high transaction costs. There is some concern that PBAs are less well suited for testing out innovative practices, and for providing capacity development support. They run the risk of cutting off funding to civil society organisations, a point that was raised in the context of the introduction of Sector Wide Approaches in Ghana, and of ignoring the needs of marginalized groups.

Cases presented during the course of the workshop, in particular the JICA funded science and maths education projects in Kenya and Ghana, also demonstrated that projects can respect capacity development principles and achieve significant results. Projects remain effective both for translating programmatic plans into action, as well as providing a testing ground for eventually scaling up promising innovations. They can also provide a conducive environment for building strong partnerships between local actors and external providers.

The general view is that PBAs have much to offer but that there remains an important role for projects in complementing programme based approaches. The debate should not focus on whether one is better than the other; rather to consider the conditions under which project or programme approaches are more suited in addressing capacity development. There was a plea to avoid introducing a new dogma and instead to value diversity and to provide multiple entry points.

2.7. Harmonisation and Alignment

In the context of discussing what donors needed to do to support local capacity development processes and to encourage local ownership, considerable attention was given in the working groups to the twin issues of harmonisation and alignment.

There was general agreement on the need for donors to align their policies and programmes around national priorities and processes, and the work that is being done currently by the DAC to harmonise procedures was noted. It was also recognised that the general trend towards programme based approaches aims in part to align external interventions around nationally driven policies and programmes, as for instance is the case in Bolivia and the Philippines.

But participants made the point that the ultimate responsibility for creating the conditions for harmonisation and alignment rests with the recipient country. The onus is therefore on countries to provide leadership and clearly spelled out development visions, around which external support can be rallied. An example of this was provided by the Ethiopian presentation where it noted that a capacity development strategy has been prepared which will provide the framework for considering external support for capacity development. Countries need therefore to be pro-active, to know what they want and equally to have the confidence to turn down offers of support that are inconsistent with national priorities. The issues of leadership, ownership and good governance already discussed are relevant in this context. Equally, donors need to take deliberate steps to change their ways of working so that space is left for legitimate governments to set the stage.

Complete harmonisation may neither be feasible nor desirable – indeed many participants extolled the virtues of diversity and choice while external agencies noted that their different mandates and organisational set-up meant there were limits on how far harmonisation could

be taken. As a minimum, donors need to make more of an effort to talk to one another, and to share information.

2.8. Do Donors have the Capacity to do Capacity Development work?

Several partner country practitioners noted that there seemed to be a gap between the new capacity development vision and what donors on the ground practice. This raised the question as to whether donors are able and willing to make the changes that are needed to support a capacity development approach.

It was acknowledged that it is difficult to make such changes within development organisations particularly the larger ones but that the process is certainly in motion. Constraints include competing policy agendas that the capacity development lobby must confront, as well as more practical issues that can thwart the best intentions. Problems of bureaucratic rigidities and inertia, disbursement pressures and interest in short-term tangible results, as well as rapid turn-over of staff that results in limited institutional memory can undermine efforts to improve agency capacity to work in ways that support capacity development. However, deliberate steps are being taken, for instance, by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD and the United Nations system through the United Nations Development Group to harmonise rules and procedures so as to reduce the burdens that are placed on recipient administrations.

2.9. Capacity Development in Practice – Experiences from PRSPs

The preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in a large number of the poorest developing countries provides an opportunity to examine the extent to which capacity development principles are being implemented by development partners. This is especially so with respect to the issue of participation.

Whilst PRSPs are intended to reflect national priorities, and to be based on a participatory process of dialogue and consultation, in order that donors can align themselves around a national vision, the experience has been mixed. Participants noted for instance that participation and dialogue has often remained symbolic with both governments and donors being ambivalent as to how far they are willing to bring on board civil society in a substantive way to tackle policy issues. Whilst in some instances, the experience was extremely positive to the extent that the experience had demonstrated that the capacity was in place within society to articulate its needs, - this is something that came through in the presentation of the PRSP process in Ethiopia - and in one instance had led to the creation of enabling legislation for participation (Bolivia), elsewhere, as in Ghana, civil society felt that key policy issues had not been open to debate. It was felt that such lack of openness could undermine national leadership and credibility, as well as question the sincerity of donors of encouraging national institutions to take the lead in setting the policy agenda.

Some participants wanted to know whether in instances where the experience was positive, it was possible to go to scale and institutionalise the processes in national policy making processes e.g. ensuring that gender dimensions are adequately addressed in the budget preparation process. The point was also made that it was crucial that the process of PRSP preparation was not set up as a parallel framework to existing national policy formulation processes. However, this is precisely what has happened in a number of countries.

2.10. Working in Difficult Countries

There are an increasing number of countries in difficult circumstances where conventional development interventions are not suited and where the preconditions for sustainable capacity development are absent. This poses a challenge for development agencies in terms of the kind of support they should provide. In the context of conflict prevention and reconstruction assistance, the question arises as to whether, and if so, how, longer-term capacity development objectives can be supported. This issue was discussed by one of the working groups. They drew the following conclusions.

It is difficult to generalise how to intervene in fragile situations because each case presents unique circumstances and challenges. Nevertheless, as a matter of principle, the role of external development agencies should be a catalytic/facilitative one that is focused on achieving capacity development outcomes. Yet faced with difficult conditions, it becomes all the more important to focus on achieving feasible outcomes. This suggests striving for a balance between support for short term targeted interventions and maintaining a longer term programmatic vision.

Interventions need to be based on a comprehensive diagnosis of the country situation. Donors also need to work collectively and share information among one another, and coordinate interventions based on comparative advantages. Particular attention needs to be given to understanding the political and broader governance climate, identifying potential change agents that might play a pivotal role in social transformation, and assessing the capacities of state and non-state development actors. It is equally important to identify suitable entry points and appropriate local partners to guide interventions. Emphasis should be given to building on existing capacities and processes.

2.11. Defining Knowledge in the Context of Capacity Development

The issue as to what we mean by the term "knowledge" attracted considerable attention. The interest was spurred by the notion that we are moving from a concept of knowledge transfer to one of knowledge acquisition. Fundamental to this change of concept is the acknowledgement that expertise resides within developing countries and that the challenge that countries face is to identify appropriate knowledge that can be adapted to address the challenges of faced by developing countries. The advent of ICT has provided the opportunity to move from a supply driven transfer of knowledge from the north to the south, to a demand driven process of acquisition based on interactive learning.

Whilst there was general agreement on the accuracy of this notion, an important qualification was proposed. Knowledge can be divided between "explicit" knowledge such as information contained in books, and learning that takes place in the classroom, and "tacit" knowledge; ideas and information that is imparted through experiential learning and through exposure to different values and working systems. The result can be motivation as well as a change of attitudes. Tacit knowledge is less amenable to ICT and can best be provided through technical cooperation. For agencies such as JICA, tacit knowledge plays an important role in capacity development and Japanese experts and institutions perform an important function in transferring such knowledge to partners. This is a point that was highlighted in the presentations on JICA's maths and science teaching projects in Kenya and Ghana.

The discussion also touched on the distinction between knowledge and values. It was noted that in any partnership, values play an important role in shaping the relationship and in informing policy choices. Parties are not expected to impose their values; however, they should be encouraged to explain the values that underlie their actions. This should not be seen to undermine local ownership.

The working group that explored the topic of knowledge raised some additional points. They remarked that on both sides of the partnership, attitudes and behaviours needed to change. Recipients had to view themselves both as clients for whom technical services were being provided often to address short term needs, but also as learners with the ability to assimilate knowledge from outside and make it relevant to their needs as a part of long term capacity development. Donors need to be able to stand back from doing and play a more facilitating and catalysing role, and identify their role in supporting a local process.

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Endnotes – Links to speeches and presentations

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