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## *Inside the Black Box of Capacity Development*

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In recent development discussions, capacity development (CD) has emerged as a central issue. The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), adopted in 2008 at the third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, emphasizes CD even more strongly than does the Paris Declaration, which incorporates CD as a key crosscutting theme in aid effectiveness. The outcome document of the UN summit on its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2010 repeatedly asserts the importance of capacity and CD; and the global initiative on management for development results identifies the development of statistical capacity as a top agenda item.

Underlying this trend is a growing recognition among donor organizations as well as the governments of donors and partner countries that lack of capacity has been and will likely remain a major obstacle in translating policy into development results.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the challenges for off-track countries of attaining and sustaining development outcomes, particularly those in fragile situations, are formidable. The difficulty of their path ahead is compounded by emerging global challenges such as climate change and the increasingly volatile economic environment exemplified by the recent global financial crisis.

1. The launch of the Management for Development Results initiative within the global MDG campaign reflects the global development community's commitment to a stronger results orientation, both in development and in aid.

We are of the view that there is a compelling need to continue efforts at deepening our understanding of the CD process itself and the potential roles to be filled by external actors firmly grounded in real-world practice. This chapter identifies key factors in the CD process through a literature review and then applies a working analytical framework to selected case studies. This exercise can contribute to a better understanding of CD and to better CD practices, which can inform the fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011. We focus first on perspectives that are important for improving understanding of the CD process and support to CD, presented through a brief review of key discussions and findings from previous CD studies.<sup>2</sup> Second, we apply CD factors to three case studies. The final sections suggest the policy implications of the case studies and discuss the way forward.

## Overview and Key Issues of Capacity Development

We begin by reviewing the body of CD literature by researchers, consultants, and practitioners that has developed since the mid-1990s.<sup>3</sup>

### *Definitions*

According to the widely cited definition from OECD/DAC, *capacity* is the ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully; *capacity development* is the process by which people, organizations, and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time.<sup>4</sup> Folded into these definitions are several important features fundamental to an understanding of CD.

First, capacity development is a long-term endogenous process.<sup>5</sup> Second, CD is a holistic process encompassing multiple, interlinked layers of capacities. DAC, for example, builds on the basic capacity to set three analytical layers: individual, organizational, and the enabling environment.

Third, capacity embodies not only specific technical elements, such as specific health care or road construction skills, but also so-called core capacities. These include generic and crosscutting competencies and the ability to commit and engage, to identify needs and key issues, to plan, budget, execute, and monitor actions, and to acquire knowledge and skills.<sup>6</sup> The challenge is how to enhance

2. By capacity development studies we mean the body of research that specifically uses the current broad CD framework, both for conceptual discussions and for case studies.

3. UNDP (1995, 1998); Qualman and Bolger (1996); Lusthaus and others (1999); OECD/DAC (2006); ECDPM (2008).

4. OECD/DAC (2006). The position paper on capacity development by the UN Development Group employs this definition by DAC.

5. UNDP (2002a); Lavergne and Saxby (2001); GTZ (2003); GOVNET/DAC (2005); JICA (2006a). The UNDP (2002a) played a crucial role in raising CD discussion to the international level.

6. UNDP (1998); ECDPM (2008); JICA (2006a, 2008b).

effectively such crosscutting core capacities.<sup>7</sup> Various learning theories suggest that actual engagement and real-world practice in addressing specific issues in areas relevant to core capacities may be the most promising approach. Fourth, external actors cannot create capacity but can only provide support to the local CD processes.<sup>8</sup>

### *Current Discussions*

In the following we discuss the latest perspectives including systems thinking, knowledge and learning in capacity development and also the relationship of capacity development to the question, Capacity for what, for whom, and in what context?

**SYSTEMS THINKING.** Recent CD studies, including one from the European Centre for Development Policy Management, have begun employing “complex adaptive systems,” or a systemic perspective, to derive analytical frameworks.<sup>9</sup> The wider acceptance of systems thinking in the current CD discussions is based on the assumption that it can better capture and explain complexities of multi-layered transformative processes in a constantly changing external (that is, development) environment.<sup>10</sup> Insights from systems thinking suggest that interventions will likely fail if they are fixed too rigidly in advance, whereas incremental or emergent intervention models show more promise for dealing with usually ill-defined development issues, because they allow a greater scope for an endogenous process of learning by doing.

**KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING.** Closely connected with systems thinking, knowledge and learning in a CD process has increasingly been a feature of recent discussions.<sup>11</sup> Peter Clarke and Katy Oswald argue that mutual learning per se might even be considered to be CD.<sup>12</sup> CD perceived as a mutual learning process demands that we shift our idea of what knowledge is and how it can be generated away from the traditional transfer-of-knowledge model toward a co-creation-of-knowledge model.

Traditional discourse on knowledge transfer treats knowledge as a material that can be passed through planning and programs from one who teaches to one who

7. JICA (2008b).

8. Within the broad and commonly accepted framework of capacity development are variations in emphasis. One strand of studies, including the World Bank’s CD strategy document for sub-Saharan Africa, puts greater focus on the macroperspective of state building. The World Bank document sets out a strategy for Africa with the “dual objectives of building effective states and forging engaged societies.” World Bank (2005, p. 2). A study by ECDPM focuses more on capacity development at the level of the individual organization (ECDPM 2008).

9. ECDPM (2008).

10. The benefits of bringing systems thinking into the capacity development debate are that they highlight a focus on processes, on the interrelationships between actors, structures, and ideas, on emergence as a way to change human systems, and on an “in-built tendency towards self-organization” (ibid.).

11. Learning has increasingly been mainstreamed into various academic disciplines, including adult education and management science. Woodhill (2010); Fisher (2010).

12. Clarke and Oswald (2010).

learns. In such a model it is necessary first to identify a deficiency (a need) and then to fill it by bringing knowledge from some external source. In development assistance, debates have tended to view knowledge in terms of the transfer of technical content with little or limited consideration for context specificity, a view that reflects a simplistic understanding of knowledge generation.<sup>13</sup>

An emerging alternative view, by contrast, sees knowledge as a product of continuous human interaction within specific contexts. According to this view, knowledge is co-created through a mutual learning process and acquired through practical experiences.<sup>14</sup> The application of such a view to CD analysis helps us to capture the multilayered process of CD more effectively than the traditional and more static “capacity gap” thinking, which tends to overlook evolving interactions.<sup>15</sup> This alternative view also implicitly informs us that approaches and instruments to support CD can be more varied than those applied within the traditional package of technical assistance.

CAPACITY FOR WHAT, FOR WHOM, AND IN WHAT CONTEXT? According to AAA, “developing countries will systematically identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels—national, subnational, sectoral, and thematic—and design strategies to address them.”<sup>16</sup> While a holistic understanding of the dynamic process of CD is important, it poses the challenge to both partner country and external actors of how to translate such a comprehensive view into concrete practices. For this reason, it is necessary to begin by asking, Capacity for what and for whom and in what context? Answering these questions will help to clarify intervention goals.<sup>17</sup> To do this, we have capacity assessment tools and guidelines, developed by international donors and NGOs, that have been tested and used at various levels to better understand stakeholder needs and context.<sup>18</sup>

### *Framework*

We identify five factors, both concrete and abstract, to help in analyzing the CD process: stakeholder ownership, specific drivers, mutual learning, pathways to scaling up, and external actors. These factors are not applicable equally to all CD efforts in every context, because the CD process is much more than a simple

13. UNDP (2002b).

14. Nonaka, Toyama, and Hirata (2008) defines such knowledge as *phronesis*, a term coined by Aristotle, meaning the ability to determine and undertake best and collective actions in certain settings through reference to appropriate theories and technologies, as necessary.

15. Learning is not free from power relationships. Harvey and Langdon (2010) point out that when a small organization interacts with larger and more powerful institutions, its members encounter other values and rules not necessarily consistent with their own. The authors argue that more powerful institutions can influence and shape individuals’ subjectivities, which sometimes results in disempowerment through learning.

16. OECD (2008).

17. OECD/DAC (2006).

18. ADB (2008); JICA (2008b); Otoo, Agapitova, and Behrens (2009); UNDP (2008).

manipulation of key factors.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the factors are not mutually exclusive; rather, in many cases they are mutually reinforcing and interdependent.<sup>20</sup>

**STAKEHOLDER OWNERSHIP.** Major CD studies highlight the importance of ownership; that is, the awareness, commitment, motivation, and self-determination of people and groups whose capacity is to be improved.<sup>21</sup> Ownership has become central, especially in the context of the global trend toward decentralization and participatory development. Experience shows that a lack of ownership, or excessive control by external actors, tends to negatively affect the sustainability of development interventions. Thus ownership is the foundation of any endogenous CD process.

**SPECIFIC DRIVERS.** Researchers and practitioners recognize and increasingly agree that CD is not a straightforward process but rather is a nonlinear, dynamic process.<sup>22</sup> Progress may be incremental at one stage and then may plateau. What generates sudden transformations in capacity or other breakthroughs likely differs from one case to another but may be a result of leadership, management system, incentive mechanisms, or organizational culture.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, a change in social, political, or economic context might also bring momentum for change and open up windows of opportunity for an enhanced CD process.

Among the potential CD drivers exemplified above, leadership has been identified by many observers as one of the most influential elements. Thus leadership, informed by theories of management, now constitutes part of the standard menu for any CD analysis.<sup>24</sup> Leadership is important not only for organizations but for other entities as well. Strong political leadership can help promote policy changes conducive to CD and allow the time and space for testing innovative policies. In another setting, an effective community leader can enhance cohesiveness, provide vision, and give a sense of direction to his followers. Thus in various forms and at various levels, leadership is a CD catalyst.

A management system with adequate incentive mechanisms is also highlighted in a number of CD studies. This is the type of institutional factor that is critical to sustaining and scaling up innovative practices.<sup>25</sup>

**MUTUAL LEARNING.** Mutual learning is central to the endogenous CD process and for the creation of innovative solutions that address the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Peter Clarke and Katy Oswald caution, however, that in most cases the learning process does not occur automatically, because individuals and groups are usually preoccupied with the pressure they are under from their

19. Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010).

20. ECDPM (2008).

21. For example, see ECDPM (2008); DAC (2006).

22. ECDPM (2008).

23. UNDP (2003); ECDPM (2008); Clarke and Oswald (2010).

24. UNDP (2003); OECD/DAC (2006); JICA (2006a); ECDPM (2008).

25. JICA (2006a); ECDPM (2008).

daily routine.<sup>26</sup> Under these conditions, time and space for learning must be consciously made and maintained through the values, leadership, and enabling environment that underpin and sustain mutual learning.

Ikujiro Nonaka, Ryoko Toyama, and Toru Hirata denote the time and space for learning by the Japanese word *Ba*, which they define as the essential enabling context for deep business relationships and for the creation of knowledge and value.<sup>27</sup> *Ba* is important both within and between organizations and can be created by both local and external actors, including donors. This has relevance to the fifth issue we examine here, the role of external actors. Learning is not limited to partner country representatives but applies also to external donors who provide CD support. The traditional assumption that external donors can fill knowledge gaps through one-way technology transfers no longer prevails. In the CD process, knowledge is an outcome of mutual learning that involves external donors acquiring local knowledge and discovering latent local capacity.

SCALING UP. Scaling up good practices is central to achieving development outcomes.<sup>28</sup> Several studies on both CD and scaling up suggest that there are diverse pathways to achieving results. One study differentiates three types of approaches: planned, incremental, and emergent.<sup>29</sup>

As there is no rigid line dividing initial experimental CD practice and the scaling-up process, most of the CD elements discussed above—drivers and the learning process—are equally relevant to scaling up.<sup>30</sup> Context, including commitment to the policy or program in question at a political level, matters in ensuring sufficient incentives and space for scaling up. Institutionalization of good practice by the enactment of laws or introduction of policies can become a contextual driver for the CD process. The engagement of recipient stakeholders from the outset is likely to strengthen their ownership of capacity building programs and thus enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of scaling up. Nevertheless, there is a potential risk in scaling up good practices too rapidly, without taking into account differences in local conditions. Scaling up should not be a matter of simply “filling the gap,” irrespective of capacity.

DONOR AS AN EXTERNAL ACTOR. The early engagement of the broad stakeholder community, including at the national level, will increase understanding and enhance ownership. In this process, the donor as an external actor should function as a catalyst. As we note above, the role of external partners in CD is to

26. Clark and Oswald (2010).

27. Nonaka, Toyama, and Hirata (2008).

28. Hartmann and Linn (2008). These authors rightly point out that “many innovations may not be suitable for scaling up. It is precisely the experimental nature of the innovation process that needs to be recognized as important in its own right.” Also see chapter 9, this volume.

29. ECDPM (2008).

30. For instance, recent literature puts strong emphasis on learning. This seems to suggest that the pathways of capacity development and scaling up have much in common and usually are continuous processes. ECDPM (2008); Hartmann and Linn (2008).

provide effective support to the locally driven process rather than to lead or control it.<sup>31</sup> In recent years, discussion about the role of external partners has increasingly stressed the need for humility on their part. As Derik Brinkerhoff and Peter Morgan conclude—based on their analysis of multiple case studies—“outsiders’ ability to influence CD is highly circumscribed.”<sup>32</sup> They also caution on the linkage between a single act of CD support and consequent CD improvements: “The growth of capacity may not necessarily be apparent within the timeframe of a single CD intervention.”<sup>33</sup>

Several studies, as well as dialogues in multistakeholder forums, explore possible CD roles for external partners in greater detail.<sup>34</sup> At the 2004 Tokyo International Symposium on CD, in which researchers and practitioners from donor as well as partner countries participated, a list of potential catalytic roles for external partners was compiled. The roles included providers of financial resources, suppliers of knowledge, and protectors of social space for policy dialogue and civic engagement. Summarizing the discussion, the forum participants came to a consensus that the major role for external partners in CD was to serve as a catalyst.

The diversity of roles also implies that external actors can play different roles at different stages of the CD process. To facilitate mutual learning, for example, they can create a space, or *Ba*, for stakeholder interactions. They can facilitate the sensitizing of stakeholder awareness, something that can be a strong driver for a sustained CD process. They can also facilitate CD scaling up.

The question arises, then, of how to start the support. A practical approach in most cases is to find a strategic entry point by employing a broad systemic perspective to identify key stakeholders. Among the possible entry points, those constituting the core of the CD process are public institutions such as local governments, specialized public service agencies, and the clientele of these agencies, including local communities. Depending on local conditions, other stakeholders, such as NGOs, might also be important. Using this multilayered approach, societal CD may be gradually realized and long-term CD optimized.

## Case Studies in Capacity Development

We selected three CD case studies—South Sulawesi Province in Indonesia and the nations of Niger and Bangladesh—in which the local process of change bolstered by external support resulted in enhanced stakeholder capacities and, moreover, in

31. External partners can be traditional donors and also emerging donors, international NGOs, and foundations. One study urges the international community to play its part by providing support in ways that encourage, strengthen, and do not displace the initiatives of leaders and managers in partner countries. OECD/DAC (2006).

32. Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010, p. 9).

33. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

34. UNDP (2002a); JICA (2004); Baser (2004).

which the processes were scaled up or are being scaled up. We intentionally focus on cases of public service delivery, as improved capacity in translating national and sectoral policies into public service delivery, especially at the level of frontline services, is one of the most pressing issues for meeting and sustaining the MDGs. For reasons of information accessibility, we selected cases in which the programs and projects of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) played a central part.

### *South Sulawesi Province*

The case of South Sulawesi Province in Indonesia involves a pilot initiative to establish and strengthen participatory rural development mechanisms at the regency (district) level and below, engaging a broad array of stakeholders during the drastic Indonesian decentralization of the late 1990s.

Decentralization was implemented in Indonesia over an extremely short time period following the demise of the Suharto regime. After this big change, local governments (regencies), which were given broad political and administrative authority, faced a lengthy transition, best characterized as trial and error by all stakeholders—including central and local governments and communities—as they tried to come to terms with their changed roles in the new order.<sup>35</sup>

During the transition, the Indonesian government, with the support of JICA, undertook a pilot program aimed at improving the abilities of both government authorities and communities to plan and administer participatory rural development programs. The actual collaboration began in 1997 in four pilot villages of Takalar Regency in South Sulawesi Province. The first two years of the pilot phase were devoted to “social learning,” wherein stakeholders, including local communities, government officials, and NGOs, engaged in extensive dialogue and joint activities. This mutual learning process culminated in a decision by the Takalar Regency to institutionalize an innovative, community-driven, rural development practice through regulatory enactment under a system called SISDUK (rural development support system).<sup>36</sup> Through this system local community groups, sensitized and equipped with the necessary skills through training, were able to access matching funds for their own projects. All through the planning, executing, and monitoring of these projects, SISDUK field officers served as catalysts, interfacing between community groups and local government administration.

Currently SISDUK remains a local mechanism of the Takalar Regency. Lessons learned from Takalar, however, are being disseminated through local CD

35. The big bang decentralization initiative of the Indonesia government under President Habibbi has been widely reported and analyzed in a number of reports. See Hofman and Kaiser (2002); Suharyo (2003); World Bank (2003).

36. In the 1990s as well, some donors began testing approaches for engaging multiple stakeholders at various levels, such as UNDP's Capacity 21 initiative. In Indonesia the SISDUK initiative was one of the earliest multilayered and multistakeholder initiatives for decentralized rural development.



service providers. One such provider is the PLSD Indonesia Institute, a local think tank that provides training in participatory local social development, including approaches developed through the SISDUK initiative. Another provider is Hasanuddin University located in Makassar, the regional capital of South Sulawesi region, where a master's program in local social development has been established with support from JICA. These local organizations are providing support to various local CD efforts including an ongoing initiative to strengthen participatory local planning that involves both the government and local community groups in six Sulawesi regions.<sup>37</sup>

### *Niger*

The case of Niger concerns an innovative effort on the part of the government of Niger to introduce, operationalize, and nationally scale up a school-based management (SBM) initiative for primary schools, with support from multiple donors, including JICA.<sup>38</sup>

Niger is one of the world's poorest countries. It has very low human development indicators, including one of the lowest enrollment and literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa. President Mamadou Tandja was elected in a historic multiparty election in 1999 and reelected in 2004.<sup>39</sup> In 2004 his government embarked on a sectorwide education reform program, with education decentralization as the core strategy. The program, titled PDDE (Programme Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation au Niger), was prepared by the Niger government in part to meet requirements for accessing the Education-for-All Fast-Track Initiative (EFA-FTI).<sup>40</sup>

One of the core PDDE strategies was the introduction of SBM, then a growing global trend. With donor support, the government embarked on a series of pilot SBM programs centered on the establishment and operationalization of COGES (Comités de Gestion des Établissements Scolaires), which is a local equivalent of a school management committee. Among several COGES initiatives, the government eventually adopted an approach developed through an initiative titled *École Pour Tous* (School for All), with a view to its replicability and sustainability. The strength of the COGES model is in what is called the COGES minimum package, consisting of several key policy instruments, including the following:

- The democratic election of COGES members by secret ballot.
- Participatory formulation and execution of school action plans.

37. JICA (2010a).

38. Following the success of this initiative in Niger, the Niger SBM model is being replicated in neighboring West African countries.

39. In February 2010 President Tandja was ousted in a coup. A presidential election is expected to be held in early 2011.

40. TFP Niger (2002). The ministry in charge was Ministère de l'Éducation de Base et de l'Alphabétisation.

—A monitoring mechanism for COGES activities including the establishment of a COGES federation at the commune level.<sup>41</sup>

After a joint appraisal of the first PDDE action plan confirmed the effectiveness and replicability of the initial pilots in the Tahoua and Zinder regions, the government decided to adopt the minimum package as its core policy instrument for the second PDDE action plan.<sup>42</sup>

With additional funding from other external sources, including that from the World Bank, Niger's SBM program has now been scaled up nationwide. COGES now function as the core multistakeholder participatory mechanism for school management.<sup>43</sup> Coupled with other education interventions, such as the construction of new classrooms and the provision of textbooks and education materials, COGES has contributed tangible results, including increased enrollment of girls.<sup>44</sup>

### *Bangladesh*

The case study in Bangladesh deals with the successful capacity development of a central government department, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). This department is under the Bangladesh Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives (MLGRD&C) and specializes in local infrastructure development, with support from multiple donors.

The development and maintenance of rural infrastructure is a priority of the Bangladesh government. This is stated in its National Rural Development Policy (2001) and in its first (2005) and second (2008) poverty reduction strategy papers. The LGED of MLGRD&C evolved through a series of organizational changes from the Rural Works Program, which had inherited the infrastructure components of the famous Comilla model of the 1960s.<sup>45</sup>

The LGED has displayed remarkable progress in organizational development through a combination of effective management and donor assistance.<sup>46</sup> Its effective management—epitomized by the outstanding leadership and successful practices of its founding chief executive and his close associates—is characterized by the following: efficient communication with offices and staff, quick decision-making, strong work ethic, teamwork, adoption of new technologies, emphasis on staff training, and decentralized organizational structure.<sup>47</sup> The management

41. Fédération Communale des COGES. "Communes" in Niger denotes the third level administrative subdivision of the country.

42. Projet EPT (2007).

43. In spite of the ensuing political turmoil in Niger, activities of most COGES are ongoing. Projet EPT (2010).

44. JICA (2009).

45. Wilbur Smith Associates (2008); Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan (2006).

46. Fujita (2011).

47. ISO and others (1998); Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan (2006). The chief executive of LGED holds the title of chief engineer.

tactically shielded the organization from the inefficient bureaucratic practices and culture rampant within the Bangladeshi government.

A number of donors provided technical and financial resources to LGED for investment in and maintenance of rural infrastructure and for organizational development. Nordic countries (particularly Sweden) helped LGED's organizational development, particularly in the initial stage. In the late 1990s the Asian Development Bank assisted in the drawing up of a long-term organizational strategy (management capacity strengthening study, or MANCAPS), which remains the basis of the LGED's organizational architecture. Following MANCAPS' recommendations, the World Bank provided CD assistance, focusing on management issues (financial management, audit, procurement), while JICA supported technical aspects (development of geographic information systems, design of rural roads, training of staff).

During the last few decades a highly decentralized LGED established a reputation for professionalism and excellence in rural infrastructure provision and maintenance.<sup>48</sup> In addition, LGED is playing a growing role in the capacity development of local government and local community groups in the context of decentralization of central government functions.

### *Comparative Analysis*

The following analysis is based on five factors: stakeholder ownership, specific drivers, mutual learning, pathways for scaling up, and external actors.

**STAKEHOLDER OWNERSHIP.** Our three cases show that a strong understanding by stakeholders of their own issues, a sense of accountability and responsibility, and their determination to act have been the driving forces behind sustained CD. In South Sulawesi and Niger the fact that many communities had already taken action to address some of their issues even before the start of external interventions is a clear sign of ownership of their issues by the local population.<sup>49</sup> In the former case, SISDUK empowered community groups by according them public recognition and by providing opportunities for sensitization, skills training programs, and access to financial support.

In the latter case, the demand for better schools was evident from interviews that revealed that, for some schools, parents and communities had already made voluntary contributions and undertaken school renovation and improvement on their own.<sup>50</sup> With this demand as a backdrop, improved transparency in school management committees through the introduction of democratic elections helped enhance school management practices. The pursuit of more effective rural infrastructure by Bangladesh's LGED also benefited from the people's strong

48. World Bank (2009).

49. Land (2004).

50. JICA (2002).

demand for rural development. A key driver, along with the creation of an efficient executing organization, was the ownership of the founding chief engineer and his associates and their strong commitment to rural infrastructure. They understood the importance of all-weather physical infrastructure in their flood-prone country and also that the elimination of bureaucratic procedures inherited from the colonial era would enable fast construction.<sup>51</sup>

**SPECIFIC DRIVERS.** Our three cases illustrate well that the capacities of stakeholders—community members, teachers, NGOs, and government—have been enhanced and sustained at various points by diverse triggers and drivers. The window of opportunity for creating momentum behind the CD process depends on the political, historical, and social context.

In the initial phase of the South Sulawesi case, the drastic decentralization policy and the democratic transition of the Habibi government were instrumental in widening the operating space for voluntary community groups to build on existing rural development activities. The policy change was also instrumental in providing strong motivation for local governments to undertake pilot community-driven, rural development initiatives.

In Niger the central government demonstrated a clear commitment to introducing participatory school management in conjunction with educational decentralization.<sup>52</sup> Such a degree of commitment at the highest political level was instrumental in creating the time and space to experiment and to develop locally suited SBM models without resistance or excessive political interference. The successes of the two general elections of 1999 and in 2004 as well as the local election of 2004 could produce an environment favorable to the introduction of democratic elections to select COGES members.

In Bangladesh rural development has consistently been one of the pillars of the country's economic growth and poverty reduction strategy. It has been realized against the backdrop of a large rural populace, which accounts for some three-quarters or more of the total population.<sup>53</sup> Similarly for donors, rural development has been one of the priority sectors for assistance to Bangladesh. These priorities have helped LGED gain resources for its CD and investment in rural infrastructure.

In addition to the specific drivers related to context as discussed above, we also observed other factors at work in our cases that promoted overall CD processes. In the case of South Sulawesi, CD efforts benefited from the availability of various training programs and timely financial support through the SISDUK system. In

51. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan (2006); Fujita (2011).

52. Hamani Harouna, then minister of Basic Education and Literacy, commented in an interview in January 2006 that "we have found that the government cannot manage the schools alone. We thought it necessary to create a system that would allow collective management and sharing of responsibilities. We thought we should involve the residents and parents in running our schools." JICA (2006b).

53. Gaining the support of rural people has been an important policy objective for political leaders.

Niger the successful introduction of elected membership and the improved transparency that resulted were critical in activating COGES, while joint planning and more judicious execution of school activity plans further empowered the COGES members and other stakeholders, while strengthening trust among them.<sup>54</sup>

In the Bangladesh LGED case, several driving factors were instrumental in enhancing organizational capacity. The most important among them was the founding chief engineer, Q. I. Siddique, who established a strong base for LGED's subsequent organizational development. With his exceptional leadership and vast knowledge and experience in rural infrastructure, he was central to the overall design of the organization. His vision helped create its corporate culture. Siddique's ability to mobilize and make full use of external support further enhanced LGED's capacity. His vision and management style passed down to his associates and LGED staff after he retired.

**MUTUAL LEARNING.** Analysis of the three cases in this study confirms that enhanced and sustained CD is normally underpinned by a virtuous cycle of mutual learning that occurs through strengthened interactions among stakeholders, especially between public institutions and their beneficiaries.

In the South Sulawesi case, in which villagers were encouraged to participate actively in creating development initiatives, we find a clear illustration of this point. As part of the program, local stakeholders—villagers, government officials, and foreign experts—held discussions and, with encouragement from foreign experts, agreed to organize a “master-hand contest.” Through this contest, villagers began to appreciate the value of their local knowledge, knowledge that officials and even some villagers had considered inferior to externally sourced knowledge. The event was an eye-opener for local officials and foreign experts, who found a greater store of local capacity than they had expected.<sup>55</sup> This mutual learning process led to the establishment by the Takalar government of SISDUK; foreign experts played only a supportive role.<sup>56</sup> Such co-creation through mutual learning of innovative solutions based on local knowledge should be at the heart of any sustained CD process.

Mutual learning is also apparent in the Niger school-based management case. COGES activities opened important opportunities for its members—including teachers, parents, and students as well as local education officials and other community members—to understand their respective roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis each other and to learn how to solve school-related problems collaboratively.<sup>57</sup>

54. JICA (2006c).

55. IDCJ/IC (2003).

56. Land (2004).

57. A school inspector at the district level commented that many teachers and education administrators were initially skeptical of COGES, as its establishment might weaken the authority they had enjoyed. But as they saw the improvement a year later, they came to accept that community participation in school management benefited them. A member of the community stated in an interview that local residents began

The LGED business model is conducive to organizational learning. Rural infrastructure, such as roads, village markets, and communal irrigation, are individually relatively small so can be implemented quickly (in one to two years) and are low risk to LGED, even if some fail. These characteristics enabled LGED to distinguish project successes and failures within a short period of time and to adopt new technologies, elements that contributed to knowledge and experience accumulation. A 1998 report on LGED's assessment exercise pointed out that "the organization has quickly adapted itself to new experiments, technologies," still is valid until now, reflecting a process of mutual learning among the agency's staff at various levels.<sup>58</sup>

Each of the three cases shows that mutual learning and trust are vital to discover locally appropriate solutions to meet the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders. The mutual learning process typically begins with a joint identification of local needs, followed by an exploration of local knowledge and resources. During the learning process, innovative solutions to local issues are identified through a combination of external and local knowledge. The three cases also show clearly that the time and space for learning, or *Ba*, is valuable in promoting the co-creation of innovative solutions to local issues. In South Sulawesi, external actors facilitated and supported the creation of *Ba* for mutual learning and trust. In Niger, the *Ba* for experimenting with an improved School for All COGES model was created through deliberate effort by the joint team of government officials, a local NGO, and donor experts.<sup>59</sup> The government's commitment to a participatory school-based management policy was clearly evident in the education sector program of the PDDE, which also ensured time and space for COGES experimentation.<sup>60</sup> In Bangladesh the LGED's enhanced institutional autonomy following the change in its organizational status, together with the presence of strong and skillful leaders, created an excellent *Ba* for the organization.

**SCALING UP.** The SISDUK system, as a model approach to capacity development, was scaled up for use in all the other villages. Having learned from early difficulties, the local government strengthened the SISDUK office through its own initiative by recruiting field officers and gradually upgrading its organizational status.

With a strong government commitment to school-based management, Niger's School for All COGES approach deliberately placed government officials at the center of the implementation process while ensuring a participatory nature for COGES, one that involved parents, students, and community members. Local

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to change their opinion due to their involvement in school management with COGES as their representatives. From a mind-set in which the government should take care of all school matters, they shifted to one in which local residents should and could contribute to school improvement. JICA (2006c, p. 223; 2009, p. 206).

58. ISO and others (1998).

59. JICA (2006c); EPT (2007).

60. PDDE (2002).

NGOs and foreign expert teams restricted themselves to catalytic and supportive roles from the very early stages.<sup>61</sup> Another feature of the initiative during the process of COGES' scaling up was the establishment of a COGES federation in each commune, for which the majority of the operational cost was borne by local contributions. Through the federation mechanism, the government and COGES officers at the district level were able to indirectly monitor large numbers of COGESs in their areas under the supervision of school inspectors and regional education offices.

In the Bangladesh case, rural infrastructure projects have now been spread nationwide. The LGED has worked closely with local stakeholders (such as governments and beneficiaries) to ensure broad participation at all stages of projects. It has also adopted labor-based technologies to create employment opportunities for the poor and uses local materials in construction and maintenance. In light of the LGED's success at CD, some donors are now considering replicating the LGED model in other GOB organizations.

**DONOR AS AN EXTERNAL ACTOR.** As described earlier, the donor as an external actor can play supportive roles in assisting local CD processes. We can draw examples from our cases to illustrate this.

All of our cases confirm that adequate assessment and identification of strategic entry points—the right time and place and the key targets for assistance, including individuals and organizations—are crucial for effective CD assistance. Assessment exercises provide external actors with information so they can decide the directions to take and the roles to play in respective CD support.<sup>62</sup> In the South Sulawesi community-driven, rural development initiative, the strategic entry points among stakeholders were communities and their members as beneficiaries, local government officials directly charged with providing public services to communities, and community facilitators responsible for interfacing between the community groups and local governments.<sup>63</sup> In Niger, in keeping with the policy of decentralized primary school management, intensive efforts to mobilize and enhance local collective practices through COGES produced tangible outcomes despite the limited financial and administrative capacity of the Education Ministry.<sup>64</sup> In Bangladesh, the LGED was a natural choice for development partners because it was already known to be a highly motivated executing organization in a sector badly needed by the rural poor.

In each of our case studies, external donors consciously respected local stakeholder ownership, although on occasion external donors proactively helped to

61. The Niger Ministry of Education and JICA jointly agreed from the onset that local education officials would be the key players in the EPT initiative. JICA (2003).

62. When they are jointly undertaken by both local stakeholders and external donors, as in our cases, such assessment exercises can become learning opportunities for local stakeholders.

63. JICA (2004).

64. JICA (2009).

nurture a sense of local ownership. In South Sulawesi, for example, external advisers provided training opportunities and relevant knowledge during the initial phase to foster awareness among local stakeholders and to ensure their commitment to community-driven rural development.

External donor assistance has often served to accelerate the CD process. For example, the LGED CD process benefited from assistance from the Swedish government in the 1980s in the early stages. Then in the late 1990s, MANCAPS' technical assistance (provided by ADB) helped the LGED to formulate a long-term strategy. In the Niger case timely technical advice and support were instrumental in the formulation and experimentation of the COGES' minimum package for the school management committee.

The participation of external actors in *Ba*, or mutual learning, was also instrumental in creating effective solutions in the cases studied. In the Niger case a series of joint meetings involving not only local officials and NGO staff but also donor advisers became one such *Ba*, which led to the development of locally grounded COGES minimum packages.

The important feature in all cases was that the role of in CD was catalytic and supportive. The case of South Sulawesi is illustrative: the donor patiently waited while sharing relevant information and encouraging *Ba* for discussion until such time as the local government took the initiative to institutionalize and scale up a community-driven rural development mechanism.

## Conclusion

We have focused thus far on five factors in conducting our comparative analysis of the three case studies. In past discussions, the CD process is usually considered to be a black box. We have tried to open that black box to better understand CD's complexity and dynamics.

First, our analysis confirms the relevance of the five basic CD factors, which we identify through the literature review. Thus our analysis demonstrates that strong ownership by beneficiaries and a willingness to take the initiative to resolve them are the basis for a sustained CD process.

Second, we observed that CD processes are essentially dynamic, and in each case there are a set of drivers that serve to trigger and sustain the dynamic process. Drivers created by political, historical, and social contexts are often critical in triggering and enhancing the CD process, as indicated by the decentralization process in Indonesia and its democratic transition. The introduction of a new policy or the enactment of a new law might also be an important CD driver, as was the case with Niger's school-based management policy for primary schools. A substantive improvement in the enabling environment for CD could have a similar effect. Organizational culture, well-designed institutional mechanisms, and enlightened leadership (as in the case of the LGED in Bangladesh) can also serve



as important triggers in enhancing the organizational effectiveness for better service delivery.

Third, our analysis shows that mutual learning through interaction among stakeholders is vital for a clear understanding and identification of local needs. This enables local knowledge and resources to be identified and innovative solutions to be developed in partnership with local beneficiaries. This is exemplified, in particular, by the community-driven rural development system SISDUK in South Sulawesi.

Fourth, the pathways to scaling up a CD process are diverse, as observed across all three of our cases.

Fifth, the role of external actors in the endogenous CD process can be important. Our comparative analysis reinforces the principles that the role of external actors is to extend catalytic support to locally owned processes and that external support works best when it is furnished through mutual learning between local actors and external actors. More specifically, the nature of support will vary depending on the context, entry point, and timing. It is essential, therefore, that adequate assessments be done so that capacity for what, for whom, and in what context can be understood and appropriate entry points for effective CD support can be determined.

### *Policy Implications*

There are three policy implications involved in capacity development. One is to understand it as a dynamic process. Second is recognizing its centrality for enhancing and sustaining Millennium Development Goals. And third is building a process for supporting it.

**A DYNAMIC PROCESS.** The SISDUK system of Takalar Regency in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, adopted a genuinely community-driven approach, which put responsibility for the identification of their own priority issues on local groups and, with help from field officers, on available local resources. Such an approach, built as it is on local organization and social capital, is quite distinct from an approach geared toward speedy disbursement of cash grants to the rural poor.<sup>65</sup> The former approach is more sustainable than the latter, although it requires more time.<sup>66</sup> With regard to the School for All program in Niger, the COGES approach resulted in a highly sustainable and replicable effort to achieve basic education goals, including notable improvements in girls' primary school enrollment. These examples reinforce the point that treating CD as a dynamic process is mostly likely to lead to sustained development results.

65. JICA intentionally avoided this method. As its Evaluation Report mentions, "An approach focusing only on poverty reduction, which would achieve the goal in a short term, was not adopted." JICA (2004, p. 114).

66. We acknowledge that such relatively quick disbursement of cash grants to people in poverty and to members of vulnerable groups may be desirable, especially in postdisaster and postconflict emergency situations.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS. Our case studies suggest that focused CD efforts can enhance not only the technical capacity linked to a specific issue, but also generic capacity, which can then be mobilized to tackle other issues. Most of the MDGs—health, access to safe drinking water, education, gender equality—are interrelated, making multisectoral approaches more effective and efficient than vertical sectoral ones.<sup>67</sup> Multisectoral approaches, however, are often seen as slowing the development process, especially when there is vertical provision of services by separate sectoral ministries and public agencies, with little collaboration among them. In these cases, locally driven practices that engage multiple stakeholders can open up the dynamism of the CD process through mutual learning. If a community achieves one of the MDGs through the process of CD, this experience will render that community better able to attain other MDGs. Thus the advantages of reaching the MDGs through the CD process are multiplied.

BUILDING SUPPORT. Our analysis of the role of external partners shows that attention is urgently needed to develop and refine CD approaches, methods, and tools for more effective support. The long to-do list includes development and refinement of tools for effectively assessing country capacity at various levels and identifying appropriate support entry points. Another priority is the development of monitoring mechanisms with appropriate benchmarks and indicators to capture short-term and long-term outcomes, given the complex nature of CD. These priority actions should be jointly pursued by the development community, including partner governments, to ensure support at global and country levels.

### *New Challenges, Emerging Actors, and Capacity Development*

The lessons from this chapter apply equally to emerging development issues, such as climate change. To illustrate this point, take the example of an adaptation measure for climate change. We reviewed several encouraging cases of disaster prevention initiatives in Caribbean and Central American countries.<sup>68</sup> In these cases, CD processes at both community and local government levels strengthened capacity to effectively respond to disasters that may be linked to climate change, including floods and landslides.<sup>69</sup> The governments of these countries supported integrated, community-based field trials for disaster prevention management, which created a space (or *Ba*) for stakeholders to experiment with risk communication techniques using various concrete tools, such as hazard maps, early warning systems, and disaster prevention plans.

67. The Millennium Villages Project is an example that has succeeded in attaining the positive synergies of a multisectoral approach. Buse, Ludi, and Vigneri (2008, p. 17).

68. Several Caribbean countries have embarked on a joint initiative through the regional Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency. Central American countries have been implementing the BOSAI project in coordination with the regional Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central. JICA (2010b).

69. JICA (2008a).

Parties involved in CD support are increasingly diversified, and newly emerging actors play large roles at both the country and international levels. For instance, non-OECD donors such as the Islamic Development Bank have been financing LGED's village infrastructure development project, which incorporates a local community capacity-building component for LGED staff.<sup>70</sup> Our case studies also demonstrate that local organizations are building their own capacity as local CD service providers. In the South Sulawesi case, for example, a local university and some NGOs have become important CD service providers to both local governments and communities on the basis of knowledge and experience acquired through their active involvement in donor-supported capacity development initiatives.<sup>71</sup>

Active involvement in CD support by emerging actors, especially those of the South with their fresh development experience, offers promise. However, the proliferation and diversification of CD support actors will call for better coordinating frameworks, especially at the country level.

### *Recommendations*

The Paris process and other UN forums, such as the recent UN MDG summit, confirm the centrality of CD in the aid effectiveness agenda. However, there is still a need to deepen our understanding of CD and to translate this into more informed and effective practices.

At both global and country levels, CD-relevant discussions and actions, constituting the global MDG framework, are ongoing. These include the global monitoring process of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Financing for Development and Management for Development Results initiatives of the United Nations. In order to strengthen engagement among partner countries, stakeholders, and donors, global CD networks such as the CD Alliance and the Learning Network on CD (LenCD) have been launched and are becoming increasingly active.<sup>72</sup> CD is also being discussed in a number of sectors and thematic areas at the global level. In the education sector, this includes the preparation and dissemination of EFA-FTI "Guidelines for Capacity Development."<sup>73</sup> In the health sector, issues closely linked to CD, such as health systems and human resources for health, have become central to discussions over health reform. Global CD action on public financial management and statistics capacity are also under way.

Activities at the country level that promote CD have been started in several developing countries. Joint government and donor task forces on CD have been

70. LGED (2009).

71. International NGOs assist with the capacity development of local NGOs. See PACT ([www.pactworld.org](http://www.pactworld.org)) and the international NGO training and research center, INTRAC ([www.intrac.org/pages/en/about-us.html](http://www.intrac.org/pages/en/about-us.html)).

72. The latest information on activities by the CD Alliance can be found at [www.oecd.org/document/55/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34565\\_43338103\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/55/0,3343,en_2649_34565_43338103_1_1_1_1,00.html). A dedicated LenCD Web page provides detailed information (<http://sites.google.com/site/lencdorg/>).

73. EFA (2008).

formed in Ghana and Cambodia and other countries. Some countries have even produced national CD strategy documents, though they are of varying quality.<sup>74</sup> To ensure harmonized global platforms for CD, future action should build on these ongoing networks and processes.

We are of the view, however, that still more needs to be done to mainstream CD into global, regional, and country discussions and operations.

#### GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS

—Ensure that CD is prominent in both discussions and activities pertaining to the MDGs and in coping with emerging challenges.

—Strengthen global CD networks by engaging all relevant stakeholders in CD support, including governments of partner countries, donor organizations, and NGOs.

—Conduct and compile rigorous case studies, especially those linked to sectors and themes, and make them available to general CD practitioners, researchers, and sector/theme specialists by taking advantage of information and communication technology.

—Promote joint global effort to enhance and strengthen CD methodologies, tools, benchmarks, milestones, and indicators for more effective capacity assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of practices.<sup>75</sup>

#### DONOR ACTIONS

—Promote better understanding of CD among staff, including those in leadership positions, by providing adequate learning opportunities.

—Further mainstream CD into policies, strategies, guidelines, aid delivery procedures, monitoring, and evaluation, including the development of benchmarks and indicators.<sup>76</sup>

—Promote CD understanding among the general public.

—Deploy timely and harmonized assistance including both financial and technical support instruments carefully programmed to enhance local CD.

—Consider what the most appropriate roles are for a donor as an external actor, given the local context, in order to enhance CD and produce sustainable results.

#### PARTNER COUNTRY ACTIONS

—Promote capacity assessments for identifying “capacities for what for whom and in what context.”

74. JICA (2008c).

75. Several donors, such as UNDP, the World Bank Institute, Germany’s GTZ, and JICA, have introduced capacity development assessments and related practices. Their experiences are valuable for this purpose.

76. As several organizations are already proceeding with this, opportunities for sharing such experiences are planned in conjunction with preparations for the Busan High-Level Forum.

—Take full account of the results of initial capacity assessments and map out strategies for CD, including how to scale up in conjunction with other development interventions. Whenever possible, work jointly with other stakeholders, including external actors.

—Devise adequate monitoring mechanisms—including outcome indicators and CD process milestones—which will ensure *Ba* for mutual learning among country stakeholders and external actors.

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