

**“TRAINING AS A STRATEGY FOR CAPACITY BUILDING”**

**An Action Research**

**PSO**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Capacity building as a development methodology is constantly being broadened and influenced by the expansion of development theory and changing global priorities. Since the late 1990s, when capacity building emerged as a critical concept, it has gained increasing popularity on the assumption that strengthening organisational and community capacity will lead to more successful and sustainable development.

"Capacity building is a conscious approach to change which, if taken seriously, has very radical and far reaching implications not only for skills and behaviours, but also power dynamics within and between organizations." (James. Power & Partnership? 1)

Over the years a wide range of different strategies for capacity building such as exchange, training, coaching, advice, facilitation, mentoring, education and many others have been developed. Training, specifically, in various shapes and forms, and often combined with other learning interventions appears to form a good part of most capacity building activities globally.

Training to build capacity, however, has become so widely utilized, that training and capacity building as a practice, are often used interchangeably, and we frequently lose sight of the fact that training is just one of the many methodologies to build capacity. A lot of money is spent on it, but training is not undisputed and often raises questions about effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

The Dutch NGO capacity building association, PSO is committed to enhancing capacity within partner and member organizations, and uses training as one methodology. Training is also by far the most widely used instrument by PSO member organizations, which provide or facilitate training activities with partners.

The present action research aims at examining how effectively capacity is developed through training. We would like to emphasize here that it is important to recognize that capacity exists independent of any external capacity building effort. (James) The action research is part of a PSO Collective Learning Trajectory that explores the use of training as a strategy for capacity building and examines the assumptions that training is necessarily a successful methodology for building capacity, or that training is the only way to build capacity within NGOs (see Annex II for an overview of the trajectory).

As James and Hailey say: "To be effective in changing the lives of the poor and marginalised, we need to know what makes a difference." (Capacity building for NGOs : making it work. Rick James and John Hailey 2007 INTRAC 2)

The experiences of PSO-member organisations and of PSO itself with training are a rich and varied base for deepening understanding of the use of training. In the view of PSO, the experiences with the use of training as an instrument for capacity building should be systematized, better documented, and made more accessible.



## 2. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING WITHIN THE PSO SETTING

"Capacity building is an on-going process of helping people, organizations and societies improve and adapt to changes around them. Performance and improvements are taken in the light of the mission, objectives, context, resources and sustainability." (Power and Partnerships – James, INTRAC 3)

This research is positioned against PSO's ultimate purpose for building capacity. PSO defines Capacity Development as "a process to increase the ability of individuals, groups, organisations and institutions to solve problems, set and achieve targets and to understand own developments needs in relation to own context and act upon those in a sustainable way." (PSO Bedrijfsplan 2007-2010)

PSO focuses on civil society because it believes that "a strong(er) civil society ensures checks and balances, gives a voice to vulnerable groups, is a motor for social change and renewal/innovation and allows for diversity and pluriformity. Civil society plays a central role in structural poverty alleviation, which is the ultimate purpose of capacity development." In order to contribute to sustainable structural poverty reduction in the south, PSO's mission is to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs and civil society organisations. (PSO Strategy 2003)

Capacity building as a concept is complex and intangible, and has been defined and redefined countless times. As James and Hailey point out: "There is no tight, internationally-accepted definition of capacity building." The semantics of the difference between Capacity Building and Capacity Development has also been debated repeatedly. For the purpose of this study moreover, we will not make a difference between Capacity Building and Capacity Development.

"The term capacity building has little meaning to those outside the narrow confines of the aid world. Even within development circles it is rarely translated into any other language, including French and Spanish. And even to English-speakers, the term capacity building conceals as much as it reveals. Few of us are sure that we know what capacity building really means. Nor are we certain that other people mean the same thing as we do. All we do know for sure is that capacity building is unquestionably a 'good thing'. After all, aid strategies are constructed around capacity building and millions of euros, pounds and dollars are invested in it. But we are left curiously dissatisfied, wondering whether capacity building is all it is made out to be." (Capacity building for NGOs : making it work. Rick James and John Hailey 2007 INTRAC pg 1)

"The message is that:

1. Capacity building is an internal process of change (an 'endogenous' process): the role of outsiders is to create favourable conditions and provide appropriate inputs.
2. Capacity building is a human process, profoundly affected by peoples' values and agendas. It is therefore complex, relational and political and must address human issues of motivation and interests.
3. Generic principles of good practice do exist in capacity building, but they need to be applied differently in different contexts.
4. International agencies are not doing enough to put into practice what they know.
5. We face resource and skill constraints in capacity building, but, ultimately, it is our attitudes that hold us back.
6. The way forward is to reflect on our own underlying attitudes and to have the humility, honesty, determination and courage to collaborate with others." (Capacity building for NGOs : making it work. Rick James and John Hailey 2007 INTRAC Pg 3).



Capacity itself is a self-strengthening process. This research acknowledges that any training would contribute to only one aspect of a capacity building process, since the development of capacity itself is an on-going process and training usually occurs within a finite timeframe. The challenge for PSO, and its Member Organisations (MOs) and Partners is to understand that the “success” or effectiveness of any training program could contribute only to a part of any capacity building process.

Training as a strategy for building capacity will automatically have power implications and may affect power relations between and within stakeholders such as civil society, the government, donors and partners. Since partnership itself comes in different shapes and sizes, it does not ensure equal power, and the whole setting for training and capacity building takes place within a complex power structure of many stakeholders.

On the other hand, some argue that training can reinforce the status quo, so any argument for or against, needs to be perceived within the specific context of the capacity building process. Since the partner organisations in this study are from very different parts of the world, it is important to continuously keep the geo-political context in mind and how it reflects in any capacity development.

Any stakeholder who sets the agenda for any capacity building process, whether member organisations, or the partners themselves, will have some influence on the power dynamics. This influence need not be negative, and in this study, we look at an analysis of how this manipulates capacities and empowerment. In regard to training as a strategy, we ask whether the people responsible for delivering and funding the training unintentionally influence the power dynamic.

PSO, in its role as a donor or as a learning facilitator, can also never be ‘power neutral’. How does this power play out within the aid chain between the community, the partners, the members and PSO itself. Most importantly, does this power affect capacity in any way, whether negatively or positively? Could this power dynamic be disempowering to partners and eventually to the community?

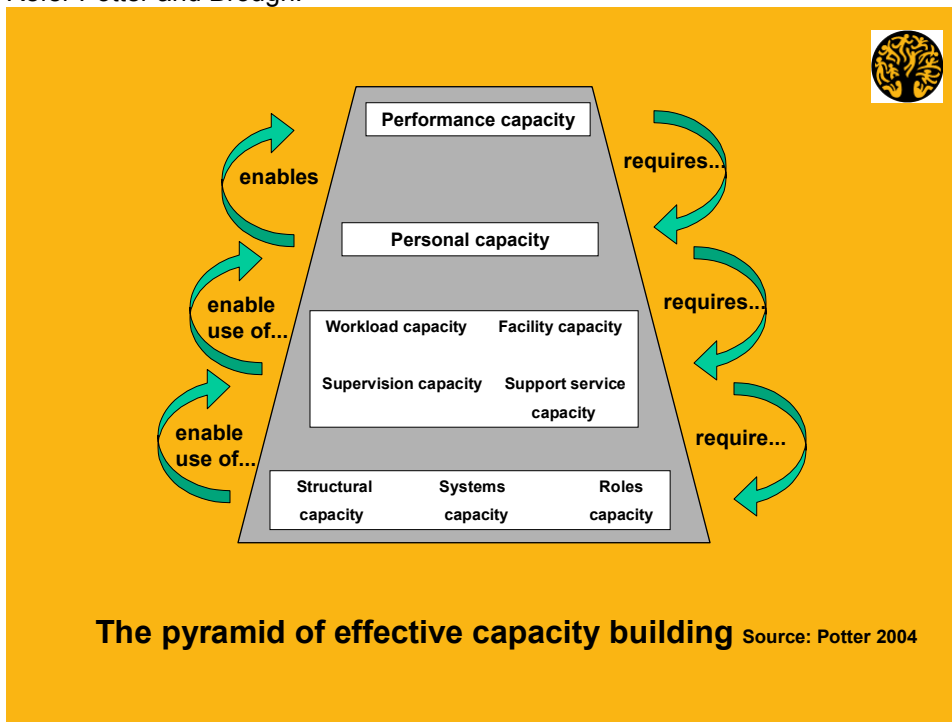
The dilemma for PSO and its members is that it is complicated to concretely trace the impact of any training strategy, because capacity building is, or should be an empowering process, and the more ‘empowered’ an organisation or community, the more divers its network and funding sources will be and the less likely the ‘capacity’ development can be traced back to one specific donor.

### **3. TRAINING AS A CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY**

Training has for several decades been equated with capacity building by most organisations involved with development. A lot of Technical Assistance was delivered through training in various shapes and forms, often with little attention being paid to effectiveness and longer-term impact. In recent years, however, the quest for comprehensive capacity building has been expanded significantly to include several other factors, increasingly emphasising aspects of organisational analysis and institutional development.



Refer Potter and Brough:



This expanded focus was already fully embraced by PSO in 2003 notably in the document: Financing of Capacity Building – Conceptual and Methodological Framework. This document distinguishes capacity building at three levels: Human Resource Development, Organisation Development and Institutional Development. Using this systemic perspective, effective capacity building is seen as taking place at multiple levels. The framework document mentions several strategies to achieve capacity building, of which Training is but one.

Training more often than not tends to be presented in a rather conventional way, and funding by donors is often limited to the training package itself rather than the intangible aspects of capacity building. In addition to this, evaluation methodology of training is often reduced to tangible, quantifiable 'happy sheets' which reflect the success of the presentation of training, rather than the learning that should continue to take place long after the training course is actually complete. Attributing the development of capacities to a specific training in-put can be ambiguous.

The researchers view training as an approach or strategy that may take place at several levels simultaneously and as part of an incremental approach to capacity building at individual, team, organisational or institutional level. Much training, however, fails to deliver on its promise to build capacity and often becomes an activity more or less isolated from wider organisational or institutional goals or foci. Too much training is being assessed against whether it was "interesting" or "new," and much less against whether it actually led to or contributed to the desired long-term capacity development or change envisaged at organisational or institutional levels.

Another problem is that organisational analysis is not carried out first so that training is not tailored towards changing organisational weaknesses. It is usually supply led by what someone outside identified as a need.

Building capacity whether or not through training, is not an overtly visible process, and can be unpredictable. This planned initiative of PSO has created the reflective space necessary to explore the complexities of building capacity using training as a methodology. Training providers can offer the same training to two different organisations, both with the same needs, but how the training is received internally within the organisations depends on a number of factors relating to



why one organisation is perceived to be a better learning organisation than another. Training can also be short term and ad-hoc, which poses an immediate dichotomy for the long-term process oriented nature of building capacity. Training providers often develop off-the-shelf, slick training packages, which are not sensitively tailored to the reality of NGOs, and which therefore cannot be attributed to potential development in the capacities of organisations and their staff.

The three experienced organisations who have participated as action researchers, all regard training as an essential means to contribute to capacity building at organisational and institutional level. However, the challenge for the researchers, active within the field of training, has remained to assess under which circumstances training provided to individuals or groups is actually leading to a measurable increase in (or quality of) the desired capacity over the long term for the organisation.

From another not less important perspective, it is vital to ensure that the present action research assignment in itself becomes a learning experience for all relevant actors or participants associated with PSO, including trainees, members, partners and PSO.

At policy level PSO has developed criteria for what it considers capacity building and thus what it is prepared to fund, as per its Financing of Capacity Building by PSO from 2003 – Conceptual and Methodological Framework. The research team will revisit to which degree these criteria are seen as supportive of applying training as a strategy for capacity building when viewed from a field perspective.

We have attempted to establish a clear link between PSO policy guidelines and field reality, when planning and conducting this research. It is hoped that this will help inform future policy development relevant to capacity building, and in particular the role of training, and which aspects of training shows most potential.

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#### **4. THE COLLECTIVE LEARNING TRAJECTORY AND THE PLACE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH**

*Quick scan.*

Consolidate a gross inventory of training efforts within Capacity Building program plans made by PSO member organisations from 2005

- inventory used to identify PSO Member Organisations (MOs), who have used training towards a capacity building initiative
- MOs invited to participate in the research process and thus investigate how they can increase the effectiveness of their own training efforts for building capacity

*Kick-off Workshop March 07*

- Share results from the quick scan
- Set up the action research
- To promote analysis and to design experiments to enhance training effectiveness.
- Create a participatory design of action research guide
- formulate research questions for deeper investigation
- Case studies selected for further, in-depth research.
- Organise possibilities for peer-to-peer assistance and support in the action research process

*Action research planning workshop – cases June 07*





- Sharing on planned cases for action research in order to take stock
- Peer feedback and support from other MOs and the Consortium to improve case preparation
- Clear plan and process for how to conduct the action research case studies, including support needs from researchers

*Action research case presentation September 07*

- Results of action research cases are presented
- Successes and gaps are identified from field work to feed into forthcoming paper on Good Practice
- Identify potential MOs which may be interested in field testing Good Practice, including organisations who may not yet have taken part in the action research
- discuss the opportunities and bottlenecks in their action research process
- exploration of good practice that will also hold value for other organisations that support capacity building

*Paper on good practice December 07*

- Good Practice paper based on inputs from September workshop, data and interviews from the case studies, as well as other experiences from the Consortium on how training leads to capacity building

*Action research paper presented before wider audience January 08:*

- Good practice paper will outline a structure or process to guide and inspire potential MOs to test out good practices in their field subsequently
- plan field experiments with interested MOs

*Field testing of good practice September 08*

- Consortium confirms interested MOs which are willing to test out good practices
- MOs carry out field testing of good practices to see if effectiveness of training as strategy for capacity building increases as a result, supported by researchers
- MOs can access funding from PSO to cover field testing, in as long as it is relevant to ongoing work

*Field testing feedback workshop of MOs and partners November 08*

- Organisations and partners reflect on outcome of their experiments with applying concepts of good practice paper
- Inputs are collated by Consortium to feed into final document, see below

*Final documentation*

- Final document with overall findings and lessons learned on PSO trajectory: Effectiveness of Training as strategy for capacity building

*Dissemination*

- A key consideration will be how best to capture the learning and disseminate it so that all stakeholders feel ownership. In Phase Four, PSO suggests a third and final conference as a method of drawing conclusions from the experiments. This will be useful for internal learning and for participants to be involved in drawing conclusions.
- Participants : partners; MOs, researchers & PSO



## 5. ACTION RESEARCH: DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

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The Collective Learning Trajectory, of which the action research is an integrated part, consists of several phases, and began with a 'quick scan' to identify PSO funded Capacity Building programs that incorporate a training element. This was followed by workshops to identify member organisations (MOs) who would volunteer to help collect data with their partners, and also to formulate research questions for the data collection.

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Action research can be a tool for building capacity as well as for planning capacity building, especially since it involves multiple stakeholders, rather than the single perspective of an external funder, or of a single external capacity building intervention. In addition to this, the involvement of local organisations participating as 'live' case studies will ensure a bottom-up approach, while developing capacity at different levels.

Critically reviewing the state of practice of the various partners participating in this research, gives us an opportunity to observe how training has contributed to the design, management and evaluation of capacity building within organisations.

The "action" part of this study comprises 'field experiments' which will hopefully take the learning from the data collection and analysis phases and implement them into the capacity building programs that are being planned<sup>1</sup>.

As the ultimate aim of capacity building strategies for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is to enable the NGOs to work more effectively in actively representing and working for their community, the view of the partners is vital, and lends a bottom-up perspective to the study. It also enhances our understanding of the effect of training as a capacity building strategy from the perspective of those for whom it matters most.

The action research approach is reliant on the active participation of all stakeholders. We hope that, through their active involvement, the stakeholders' understanding will be broadened and in this way the investigation itself will build the capacity of all those involved. Through the active engagement of all stakeholders, the action research methodology is therefore a learning process for all involved. The case studies and field experiments provide a basis for investigating training as a capacity building strategy from different perspectives: PSO bureau, members, partners and community.

This piece of action research - this "live" study - will hopefully expose the multiple dynamics of capacity building from a contextual and human perspective. The present socio-political, cultural and economic context within which the training and therefore the capacity building is taking place, and human dynamics are key variables that cannot be assumed or ignored in capacity building initiatives. The cross case analysis in the research design will facilitate the contextual exploration for the lessons learned, which will be significant for dissemination and transferring the knowledge gained through this particular piece of research.

The learning from this action research has occurred on two levels. The case studies, contributed by the member organisations of PSO have generated data, leading to analysis and conclusions described in paragraph 6. On a second level, the member organisations who have participated in the action research have gained knowledge about capacity building and about training during the process of the research itself, through reflecting on the complexities of building capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> Findings from the field experiments will be included in the next version of this paper.



A third potential level of learning is on the level of the donor and facilitator of this piece of research which is PSO. The researchers have built in an interview session with a few PSO staff to specifically look at how PSO institutionalizes the learning that occurs in the field. The explicit questions posed to PSO were:

- How would you ensure that you as PSO learn from this trajectory and can apply lessons in your work with MOs?
- Explore ways in which learning from other learning trajectories can or has been ensured for PSO and MOs

## 6. ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

- The MOs were to share their case study with the research team through email, in order to get support from the team. This methodology, however, was not realistic. Given that collecting data from the selected case study was additional to the already heavy workload of each of the MOs involved, it was difficult for them to prioritize this request. The only way to get around this was for the research team to re-assess the methodology and to schedule interviews for the MOs in face to face individual meetings. This resulted in the data that the researchers are working with being much thinner than expected
- PSO had initially envisioned data collected from about 20 MOs, which would have substantiated conclusions and the analysis. However, in the end only five MOs could commit their time to this learning trajectory. This naturally limits the findings and conclusions of the study.
- The role of the researchers has been one of remote support for collection of data, with the MOs collecting the data from their partners. This has made it more difficult for the researchers to access the data.
- The researchers initially had hoped that in addition to looking at the case studies of 'highly effective training activities for building capacity', we also should have looked at case studies which have fallen significantly short of success, as these would have exposed different lessons to be learned. However, we were, unfortunately not able to identify a representation of a case study from PSO that did not go as planned
- The Quick-Scan was supposed to feed into this trajectory from the beginning. Ideally some project plans from prior to 2005 should have been included in this scan for the case studies to be useful in order to look at the results of a long term capacity building process, and for the effect of any training strategy to be experienced. Unfortunately, it was not possible to include information from before 2005. The Quick-Scan therefore was not able to contribute historical data to this trajectory which could have been useful to create an overview over potential MOs early on. The Quick-Scan also was unable to establish some early criteria with which the Consortium could have initiated case selection.
- The Consortium had originally hoped that case studies for this trajectory could be chosen according to a range of criteria to ensure a representative sample. Factors for consideration were to include the location of the organisations (geographical representation); the size of the organisations (large and small organisations to be represented); organisations with varied missions; and organisations working in different contexts. Key variables were to be explicitly discussed and recorded. In reality though, we did not have a range of cases to 'choose' from, and we had to work with only the five cases which were available.
- We had also planned to organise possibilities for peer-to-peer assistance and support in the action research process. However, the number of cases was too few for the organisations to have adequate peer to peer assistance. If this had been possible, the learning from the MOs would have been more substantial from the peer process
- There are key variables in any training situation which influence the training and means that no two trainings are ever identical and nor do they lead to the same outcomes. The



key variables that this piece of Action Research intended to consider were: the context, the trainer, the subject matter, the participants, preferred learning styles and training methodology. In practise it was impossible to organise data around these variables with the diverse range of results.

- Any lessons learned from the cross-case analysis will be fed into the ‘field experiments.’ Exploring whether training effectiveness can be enhanced by the findings may only be apparent much later, given that capacity building is a longer term process. However, the Consortium will certainly be able to capture lessons learned so far in the process, with some useful pointers toward what may be accomplished further down the line by MOs applying lessons learned and good practices relevant for using training as a strategy for capacity building.

In general, this action research model worked well for the very few MOs who supported it, though it was not ideal for the researchers.

## 7. THE STORIES FROM THE FIELD

“It (training) must catalyse on-going processes that enable continued learning and growth rather than narrow, content-defined outcomes that encourage one-shot ‘fixes’. Training individuals is an important component of what could be a much broader concept that includes a wide variety of interventions that can strengthen Southern NGO roles in development – from team-building with key leadership groups, to organization design and development consultations, to network building and support programmes, to enhancing legal frameworks and tax policies that foster or inhibit the development of NGOs as a sector.” (26 Power & Partnership, R. James)

This research has looked at WHAT contributes to effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in regard to training, using ‘stories’ of training designs used to build capacity. All the stories were of training programs that were successful and were from the following member organisations and their partners:

- TIE Netherlands with TIE Mexico and Morocco
- Milieukontakt Oost – Europa with Eden in Albania
- VSO with VSO Malawi
- War Child with Sierra Leone and Sudan

### Transferring learning from Mexico to Morocco

#### **The story of TIE**

In Morocco, women factory workers are planning on organising themselves around employment issues and employee rights. The TIE network (Transnational Information Exchange) steps in to try to empower and to build the capacity of the Moroccan women employees to claim their labour rights.

This Capacity Building venture takes place through an innovative cross-continent peer training program. The Moroccan women factory workers are being trained by a Mexican women’s free trade union, to be able to engage in a ‘mapping’ process which would help the women investigating the productive system they work with, and identify problems caused by the organisation of the production process.

The focus of TIE is the workers at the grass roots, and collective empowerment with existent groups. These free trade unions are part of a network or family of women’s free trade unions started in the Netherlands by the Transnational Institute (TNI).\*



\*They include TIE Latin American group (TLA): TIE Brazil, TIE Chile, TEL Argentina and CJM Mexico  
TIE in Western Europe: TIE Germany; TIE Iberico' in Spain; England (black labour movement for Justice), France (Sud) – working in Senegal  
TIE in Central & Eastern Europe: Russia, Belarus, Hungary, Ukraine  
TIE: Morocco  
(this is not a comprehensive list)

The Mexican group is particularly strong and therefore well suited for the training in which they build capacity in different parts of the world for other TIE members of women's free trade unions. Mexico has many independent trade unions, and therefore has lots of experience. The training comprises exchanging methodologies about the importance of collective power and organisation, and about good indicators of work.

The Mexican women workers, four women and one man who act as trainers, have journeyed to Northern Morocco to share their experience between the two groups, and to train their Moroccan contemporaries in the construction of collective knowledge, which will be systematized and analysed by the workers themselves. They learn to draw a map of the factory, create a map of the production process and identify where the main problems for the workers are found.

This knowledge will then be used in 'comparative mapping', which charts the same factories both in Mexico and in Morocco, mapping the production system from the point of view of the workers and comparing the mappings between different sections, sectors, and countries. The comparison reveals the constantly changing reality through a comparative analysis of the tasks of work and the production process, work load and speed, and forms of organization and how the production is managed, and creates an 'alternative benchmark' for the workers which they have arrived at themselves.

The understanding is that when the data, which is based on the concrete experiences of the workers, is applied together, it creates extremely favourable conditions for the strengthening of workers organisations and their power to struggle. The joining up between the TIE network, aims to share learning and experiences and build capacity to eventually start to unionize.

### **The Member Organisation**

TIE was started in Netherlands, by Transnational Institute (TNI). Ineke Jansen, Franny Parren met us at the TIE-Netherlands office, at lunch time with a table full of lunch, to tell us about the Mexican – Moroccan exchange.

TIE Netherlands facilitated and coordinated the exchange between Morocco and Mexico. Netherlands has a large number of Moroccan migrant workers, and TIE is interested in organising them here, which gives them an added stake in the Moroccan-Mexican exchange. TIE Netherlands and TIE Iberico (Spain) talked with the trade unions in Morocco, and floated the idea of an exchange. The free trade unions in Morocco were very interested in learning from Mexico.

TIE Netherlands' role is one of support through sharing only methodology and technique, or through direct participation as peer facilitators to improve the methods of CB and training. In Netherlands, they work with the 'cadre leden' who are the workers, and not the leaders. At the moment, TIE Netherlands is being trained themselves on indicators for measuring, which they will roll out in the future in Latin America.



The relationships between the TIE groups differ. There are some funding relationships, but mostly information sharing and support. TIE Iberico Spain is working in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. TIE Chile is known as a 'success story' and free trade unions around the world approach them for help.

The focus of TIE is:

- The workers at the grass roots.
- Empowerment in a collective way
- Working with existent groups

Researcher: "How has the Mexican-Moroccan experience influenced how you think about 'training'?"

Ineke: "I feel the training has really empowered the Moroccan women"

### The Learning from the TIE Case Study about Training as a Strategy for Building Capacity

- The lateral links for capacity building, in which a Moroccan women's free trade unions is being empowered and trained by Mexican women's free trade unions on how to form a free trade union, has different power dynamics than capacity building offered by an international NGO. The exchange of experiences during the training, engendered by peer learning is less hierarchical than learning from experts, takes place on an equal basis with other trade unions, and is therefore more grounded in reality, leading to more ownership of the capacity building process.

e.g. In Russia or Belarus the TIE groups are also sharing information on a lateral level.

*"It's important that the workers teach each other, and not learn from bureaucracy. Not top-down".*

- The TIE group, since they work across countries, is very aware of how much geo-political and cultural context influences the program. Tie starts very slowly, and identifies the entry points for a new exchange (e.g. Morocco and Mexico).

*"When the Mexicans, came to northern Morocco, they started the dialogue by looking at the difference between the cultures. This approach was started in Barcelona, by workers organised by TIE Iberico. This led to discussion about the Arab women in Morocco."*

- They also identify obstacles to change, before starting a new exchange process between trade union 'A' and trade Union 'B', undertaking thorough research of the training group and their environment.

The methodology used by TIE is to offer training to all the workers in a collective manner.

*"If you train 'representatives', then they go back to their workplace, and they don't have entry points to introduce what they have learnt. i.e. the organisation is not ready for what the newly trained person wants to share. No room back in the workplace to share newly learned knowledge."*

*"It is important to give training to the same neighbourhood or the same trade unions, because the process has to be taken forward en masse."*

- TIE believes in training that is specifically tailored.



*“ If the training is to different people, it will be more general, and not practical. “*

- TIE starts with interviews with colleagues, in order to convince them of the importance of organising themselves and of collective power.
- The workers being trained get “lots of homework”.
- Since the capacity building process is on-going, the learning cultivates new knowledge. For instance, TIE morocco and TIE Brazil, have developed a more formal methodology of assessment which includes outsider. This removes the ambiguity in needs assessments which solely use ‘mapping of production’, because “the people will only tell you what they know....but an external person has a broader view.”
- The TIE group only contact ‘experts’ for specific activities, such as learning to frame indicators to measure the success, otherwise, depending on peer training.
- TIE stressed during the interview, that they recognise that the democratic process takes a long time, and you need to invest in this.

### **The Birth of Eden in Tirana**

#### **The story of Milieukontakt**

Milieukontakt Oost-Europa supports ecological sustainability in Europe and Asia. Based on a conviction of the importance of environmental protection within the overall context of social and economic development they maintain a network of over a thousand NGOs. They offer direct support through trainings, workshops, advice and funding, and they also organise ‘twinning’ between NGOs in different countries. ([www.milieukontakt.nl](http://www.milieukontakt.nl))

Chris van de Sanden, from Milieukontakt (MK), described to us how Eden (Environment Education and Networking), in Tirana, was created as a partner organisation, after Milieukontakt had been in Albania since 2000. Working with a group of trainers MK selected they provided training for trainers, and offered different capacity building interventions. A few years down the line, however, Milieukontakt felt they needed to withdraw from the country with the aim to make the trainers sustainable.

As a result, they decided to develop their own trainers organisation for building capacity, which is when Eden was born. Legally, formed in March 2004, and operationalised in Jan 2005, Eden has an executive board, and 4.5 staff members who are in charge of capacity building and environment. Their Executive Director is Mrs. Merita Mansaku-Meksi, who made a presentation on Eden as a case study at the PSO workshop in January when the finding of this report were presented in The Hague.

Eden is a vibrant organisation with multiple environmental development programs which are led by 35 volunteers and a group of eight free-lance trainers and other regional resource persons. They offer Capacity Building through training, public information and participation, and waste management mostly in the capital, and are regarded as an environmental education pillar in the region.

The capacity building interventions also include advice and counselling, developing web sites, news magazines and publications, information and communication technology. They have exchange visits in the Netherlands, and regional, national, international (EC) skills share and study tours.



Eden networks with 30 environmental NGOs in Albania, which cover separate communities and different geographical areas. Eden is not a funder, but may provide seed money to local NGOs. They coordinate national environmental NGO meetings and have creative initiatives such as developing a group of Young Nature Guides at school level. The Young Nature Guides take students out into nature, letting them explore and experiment, and then add theory to that. They have 15 nature guides at the moment.

During the process of this action research, the penny seemed to have dropped for Chris van de Sanden, when he observed that MK used to use only training as a strategy for Capacity building. He only recently realised that “there is a missing link of connecting training to the actual reality. Training is part of the mind-set. People feel that there is a need for training, and only now Chris understands that the need is for CB and not for training, and CB is broader and involves training, but training itself on its own does not build capacity.”

### **The Methodology that has led to the Success of Eden’s Training Programs as a Strategy for Building Capacity**

Merita, Executive Director of Eden, in her presentation of Eden as a case study was unequivocal that the most decisive trainings for Eden were one in 2006 on financial management and one on strategic planning. The main reasons why these trainings were considered successful in raising capacities, is because they were both planned as a process, which eventually led to concrete outcomes. The Financial Management training led to the establishment of financial systems within the organisation, and to the hiring of a professional financial officer for Eden.

In response to the Strategic Planning training, Eden’s strategic plan was reviewed and is now a unified plan. The plan led to a more well-defined structure of Eden, which is now recognised as a solid, stable structure. This is of high value in Albania, where many NGOs are a one person show. Eden has good partnerships with their trainers, and is perceived as a ‘real’ partner by recipients of the training. Strategic Planning Training has now become a service Eden offers to other NGOs.

Both training courses were a timely injection for wider Capacity Building for Eden.

Successful aspects:

- The training was planned as a **process**, and not as a one-off event
- The trainings were well planned
- The Financial Management training was a request from Eden itself, and a felt need, which contributed to how well it was received
- Eden felt the need for Strategic Planning in order to “first get an overview of ourselves before making bigger plans and advising other organisations.”
- MK had given them a budget without strings. As a result, they could develop the training to fit their needs very well; and they developed their own strategic plan, and as a follow up, they used the strategic plan that they had developed.
- When they offer the Strategic Planning training, the participating NGO **defines their own learning needs** as an organisation, and **works on their own strategic plan**
- In Albania where Eden did the strategic planning training, when the participants grasped that they ‘owned’ it and grasped that they called the shots, it shifted the momentum to becoming sustainable and energetic.
- ‘owned’ it and grasped that they called the shots, it shifted the momentum to becoming sustainable and energetic.
- Eden offers on-the-job training and coaching
- They mix CB tools which take traditional training one step further
- training is part of a whole
- Nature Guides, for example, if there is enough funding, take the participants out to nature and USE the training, and practice it themselves





- Eden offers one-on-one 'e-coaching' to follow-up on traditional training.
- Training Needs assessment is a **participatory process**, includes everyone.
- Eden seeks to avoid short-term, one-off trainings, but instead develops long term relationships, with training of trainers for local NGOs.
- They use local trainers, local knowledge, in a very participatory manner
- The training in which the participants did their own training needs assessments were the most successful.
- The criteria used to choose participant NGOs were how visible the NGOs are, whether they raise awareness in the environment, and whether they support the capacity to play greater role in society
- Both training courses were delivered by local trainers on wishes of Eden. The local trainers were coached by Eden to ensure that it was tailor made for Albanian conditions. If it was in accordance with Albanian tax rules for example.
- After training Eden kept contact with trainers and are still tapping into their capacities
- Eden starts with the partner perspective, asking what training they would like. Often partners do not know what is available or possible, and therefore cannot articulate it. For example, Team Building, which nobody really wanted, is now more popular after its value was demonstrated by Eden.
- In Eden's experience, local trainers can be better than international experts, because local training allows for follow-up, thereby establishing long term relations. It has also proven to be more cost effective, with lower overheads
- The flip side to this is that an international trainer may make the training more accepted as important and worthwhile, with more prestige

The least valuable training for Eden in Merita's opinion, was:

- An event to which she was 'invited' to participate in
- With no actual follow up of the event
- No influence on the needs assessment
- No influence in designing the event
- Only some influence on the implementation

### **Training for Capacity Building in Malawi: Case "Resource Mobilization"**

#### **The story of VSO Nederland – VSO Malawi**

Marijn Plug, from VSO Nederland, shared with us the Case study of capacity building for "Resource Mobilization" in Malawi with one of their partners. VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries by building the capacity of local organizations. In Malawi, VSO builds capacity through:

- Developing longer term partnerships
- Volunteer placements
  - Working with(in) partner organization
  - Activities: train, coach, facilitate, etc.
- Training and workshops
- Knowledge sharing between partner organizations
  - Study tours
  - National/regional exchanges and conferences
- Small grant funds for innovative activities



Chitipa district is one of the border districts in the far north of Malawi. The District AIDS Coordinating Committee in Chitipa District, called **Chitipa DACC** coordinates Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in the district.

VSO RAISA (Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa) has supported 5 CBOs under Chitipa DACC in order to instil a sense of self-reliance and to build capacity. This support has been through the VSO volunteer who has been working closely with the CBOs, providing them with training in **Resource Mobilization**. This training was initiated in order to provide CBO's with skills and knowledge on how to access locally available resources, not only financial, but also natural and human, and to be more self-sustaining, instead of relying on donors.

The results of the training were so successful in building capacity, that CBO staff and individual members started mobilizing resources within community:

- 2 of 5 CBO's have built their own office
- All 5 CBO's have set up communal gardens
- 1 cattle kraal has been constructed to start a cow-to-cow project
- 1 CBO set up a Poultry-project: mobilized members to provide 30 chickens, members learnt to keep poultry in own homes

The capacity that was enhanced, could be observed through the change in mindset; increased knowledge and skills of the participants (CBO members), and because participants started sharing within organisations, and between organizations and started mobilizing each other to raise their own resources. Before this training, CBO members were waiting for donor money - "we should be financially supported by a donor". Now, they have realized that their environment and community have many resources to offer – and they have raised their own resources such as bricks, timber, land, grass and labor

### **The Methodology that has led to the Success of VSO RAISA's Training Program as a Strategy for Building Capacity**

- VSO volunteers working within organization:
  - Are able to build trust
  - Know the organization and its needs
  - are able to carry out follow-ups
- they do not have seating allowances and they only invite representatives of CBOs, not particular persons
- Before the training:
  - They carry out needs assessments to identify needs and formulate goals and objectives
  - They choose different Capacity Building tools to help achieve their goals
- At the start of training they check for needs
- At the end of the training:
  - They check the quality of training and make adaptations
  - They emphasize the need for sharing with colleagues
  - They develop action plans
- After the training the volunteer carries out a follow up as a rule
- They always evaluation the training
  - 5 CBO's trained on different days: after each training evaluation/feedback to adapt training
  - Partnership review: evaluation of CB process, including training, VSO volunteer and other tools



- Development of partnerships:
  - Increases trust and transparency with staff of CBO's
- Multiplier effect:
  - Before: inviting right staff member
  - During: emphasis on sharing and action plan
  - After: sharing, follow-up (by volunteer)
- Longer-term trajectory and part of larger CB process:
  - Partnership + needs assessment
  - VSO volunteer: training, follow-up
  - Exchange visits between CBO's
  - Additional small grants

## War Child in Sierra Leone and in Sudan

War Child International is a network of independent organisations, working across the world to help children affected by war, and they aim to alleviate the suffering of children by bringing material aid into war zones; to support those children who have been evacuated into refugee camps; to initiate rehabilitation programmes. [www.warchild.org/](http://www.warchild.org/) Sabine Stapel from War Child Netherlands shared with us her story.

### The Goal of the Training

War Child decided to develop a standard training package and manual for training in management skills and a supervision course tailored specifically for War Child organisations. We decided to do this with an external consultant. For most of the countries an additional goal was to improve the team dynamics within the programme team and work relations with the staff of the local partners (ministries, local NGOs).

Per country some specific “main messages” were formulated which differed a bit from one another. In general, however, the main objective was to build the capacity of the staff in elements of management styles, visions and ways of working together that embody core values of War Child. This, War Child would also like to see translated to the local context and to local values.

### Background

The package and manual were developed in close collaboration with the HR Manager of War Child. The plan was to offer this training package to all local staff working for War Child who have management and supervision tasks in all the countries we work in. The consultant would train two HQ staff members as trainers, by giving this training together with them in Sudan and in Sierra Leone. These HQ staff members would then roll out this training in the other countries, which are DRC, Uganda and Afghanistan. Next year we also want to offer this training package in countries where we work with local partners and where we do not have War Child staff.

In order to eventually transfer the programme to a fully local run organisation, War Child needed to build the capacity of the middle management layer. Up until now there has been a focus on training and capacity building of our trainers, workshop leaders, etc. People who do the core business of War Child; psychosocial activities using creative methods. Although this focus will always be needed, the emphasis should also be on capacity building of the staff to be able to have a well functioning organisation which in the end can fully rely on local capacity instead of expatriates.

Coaching; we try to incorporate this already in the management style of our key field staff (Country Directors, Field Location Managers, Programme Development Managers and



Programme Development Advisors). In most countries the senior management strives to be at least a role module, but also to coach their staff in management skills.

We chose to develop a training ourselves together with an external expert to have a tailor made training, to be able to meet the specific needs of War Child context and the different country programmes. To be able to also refine the standard training programme to the specific training needs of the group of participants and the different contexts.

During the training, the participants filled out an evaluation form every day at the end of the day, but also at the end of the training on the last day they filled out an evaluation form about the training in a whole. Every day the participants were also asked to fill out a “reflection” form in which they should write down for themselves what they learned and what they would do with it during and after the training.

6 weeks after the training all participants received a evaluation form with questions more on the level of effect measurement; what did they do with what they learned.

The training development in total has been evaluated at HQ through a report written about the training given in Sierra Leone and Sudan and discussed in a meeting with the trainers, the consultant who developed the training and the assigner at HQ, the HR manager).

The Supervision training uses participatory method in which most of the time the participants are talking and working in sub groups on cases or simulations.

After the training we focussed on the follow up to. We encouraged all the managers from the participants to follow up on the training in their bila’s and team meetings and to look back at some topics from the module on regularly basis. Should we monitor/support this better?

In general during the training the team dynamics improved already. If this change is real or short term is hard to say, considering it has not yet been so long ago (May 2007).

Furthermore, we did receive positive feedback from one of the Country Directors about the way they now cooperate in the team, how team meetings are held and how decisions are being made. In Individual level, the evaluations after 6 weeks show a positive result; they themselves evaluate the training positive and the they say they learned a lot. It is difficult to assess if it is a real change, we did not do an effect study. Community or society; not researched and difficult to assess.

## **Learning points for War Child**

### Internal

1. Developing a standard training for all programmes and countries we work in is not possible. The training needs differ too much and also the context is different (working with translators or not for example).
2. To train two internal HQ staff members takes up much more time and investment to enable them to do a good job. Only accompanying the external consultant was not enough, but no Money or time available to invest more training for them.
3. To give the responsibility of giving this training to somebody with already a full job is impossible. This is not something you just do on the side. Especially when you are inexperienced.
4. The time needed to develop a training package and manual takes up a lot of time from the HR Manager, the HQ staff members, external consultant and the Country Directors.
5. The training is not focussed on participants who are staff from local organisations. This was originally the assignment for the external consultant to take into account. In the next training courses this will be a challenge and we will see how this works out.
6. In advance we did not take into account programmes in which not all participants would understand English (Afghanistan and DRC). A lot of work and time has been spent to translate the course documents and to find a French speaking trainer and a translator for Afghanistan.



7. In a late stage we paid attention to the follow up process of the training course. In the end we did manage to come up with a useful process, but more time could be spend by the trainers to follow the course up directly with the participants.
8. War Child also works in countries in which we only work with local partners. Next year we also want to offer them a similar training. We do not have enough insight in how much adjustments need to be made to the standard package.
9. The training manual and package does give a good base to start from and to make a programme suitable for each programme's training needs.
10. Practical point: the maintenance of the digital folder of the training manual has been a nightmare. To be able to use the standard documents and to adjust them for each training and than keeping it nice and ordered is very difficult. Maybe a handy system exists?
11. The goal to have two HQ staff trained to give this training to enable them to do the rest of the countries only partly worked out. Only the training in Afghanistan will be given by one of the HQ staff. The one in Uganda will be given by the external consultant considering the level of those participants was much higher then the other countries and two separate trainings were needed. DR Congo will be given by an external trainer who speaks French (something we could have anticipated in an earlier stage of course).
12. Furthermore, the HQ staff members do not feel comfortable giving this training by themselves. Just co-facilitating once is not enough. Therefore it is uncertain if the training in Afghanistan will be a success.
13. Possibilities for looking into option to send the staff to an external training institute were not sufficiently considered.
14. The training manual is a very precise described manual, which is written by the external consultant. To be able to give this training yourself you need to make the manual your own by also adjusting the manual documents which takes up a lot of time!
15. All the coordination and preparation (training material, training needs assessment) etc lays with one person at HQ. The amount of work this takes up was underestimated.

#### Training programma itself

1. The programme, the modules, the method of training (very participatory) has been evaluated in both Sudan and Sierra Leone as very good.
2. Also the Country Directors have reported very positive results/ effects of the training.
3. Next to very positive results on individual level, also positive effects on team spirit and cooperation have been reported.
4. The process of making the training manual and package was good. Taking in account a moment to evaluate the first two trainings and then adjusting the manual accordingly is very advisable.
5. To involve the Country Directors with the set up of the training specifically for their country has worked out to be very useful and necessary. Also involving them in the start and the end of the training course has made the follow up process much more fruitful.

## **8. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH**

The findings and observations outlined below contribute a theoretical framework for examining training as a strategy for building capacity. A clear link must be established between policy guidelines and field reality, when applying the findings of this research. This will help inform future policy development relevant to capacity building, and in particular the role of training, and which aspects of training shows most potential for support by PSO. They also have significant implications for the power dynamics of conventional relationships between international and northern NGOs and donors working with southern partners.

In this research, we carried out a retrospective research scan in order to substantiate our findings with theory. Though there is a lot of material on capacity building, and material on training, finding



theory linking training specifically to capacity building is relatively rare, and confirms the findings of this piece of action research.

The most significant finding of this action research so far has been that the success of training for capacity building depends on the quality of the partnerships: the absence of hierarchy in relationships, a more equitable power balance between stakeholders, and an emphasis on learning from each other while working together, and intense participation.

- Lateral linking and a lack of the 'aid-chain' hierarchy
- Partnerships and Relationships and Power dynamics
- Training is separate from Capacity Building
- Training can take many forms, and is a process
- Contextualising Cultural differences when training
- Broader based training with multiple representatives from the same environment/organisation
- Training is most successful if it is followed up
- The process needs to be democratic
- The participating organisation/s need to be involved in the design and needs an element of 'ownership'
- Training cannot be isolated from the larger capacity building picture

#### Lateral linking and a lack of the 'aid-chain' hierarchy

Member organisations such as TIE–Netherlands, use lateral links from partner to partner, which discards any hierarchy such as may exist between donor and NGO, or between International (or Northern) NGO and their Southern partner. Women factory workers in Morocco are being trained and empowered by a Mexican women's free trade union on how to form a free trade union.

TIE Netherlands' role is one of support only, and not of direct intervention with training, techniques, or direct participation e.g. in Russia or Belarus TIE groups are sharing information laterally between each other

TIE Netherlands don't work directly with Capacity Building. They facilitate, and participate in the annual meeting of Argentina PLA for example, and work together to improve the methods of CBand training.

VSO (Malawi) trains a volunteer as a trainer to ensure the local sustainability. Besides training, "the volunteer also facilitates within and after the training. This is an advantage compared to a hired trainer: he/she will leave after the training, but the volunteer stays and can facilitate in the further process. "

VSO also ensure that the volunteer does a follow-up after the training, by personally contacting participants.

The different case studies used in this action research, illustrate that learning can be very effective using different methodologies for the transfer of expertise. TIE uses cross-cultural, and trans-continental trainers extremely effectively, which in Malawi, Raisa concentrates on enhancing local capacities by training local trainers, as does War Child in Sierra Leone and in the Sudan. There is much to be said for the strength of using local capacity providers, but we also need to acknowledge that external expertise opens up a different perspective on change and creativity.

#### Partnerships and Relationships and Power dynamics

The common thread through every case study in this research with a 'success story' of using training for building capacity, is that of strong and sound partnerships between the stakeholders, and a stress on equality of roles, and local ownership.



In order to differentiate the levels at which sound relationships are established, we need to look at both relationships at the organisational levels and at the individual levels. Organisations, who work together over a long period of time, develop deeper and more meaningful relationships. This might increase the trust, mutual transparency, and equitable power balance. That this would lead to healthy and sustainable realisation of an organisation's mission should not be underestimated.

What we do take for granted, or maybe not recognise sufficiently, is that organisational relationships also include relationships on an individual level within member organisations and partners. We firmly believe that a healthy relationship at the organisational level is also dependent on a certain degree of commitment, respect and dedication on the part of individuals who are working together at the core. This was apparent through the non-hierarchical manner and enthusiasm with which each of the individuals from the member organisations that the researchers interviewed and worked with. We would like to stress that this is an essential element when building capacity, which is often overlooked. Capacity cannot be enhanced if the relationship within which it is taking place is a disempowering one, since capacity itself is part of the process of empowerment.

It is evident that the nature of relationships and the dynamics of equality between MOs and partners contribute positively to more successful capacity building.

We also need to differentiate between the ROLE of an NGO and the RELATIONSHIP. For example when an international NGO is aiming for an "equitable" relationship with a southern partner, the 'Equitable' can never occur within the role, since the INGO often plays a funding role. The southern NGO intervenes directly in the development process at the field level, which is beyond the reach of the INGO. There can never be equity within these roles for either the INGO or the Southern partner.

However, there can be equity in how partners RELATE, interact and with how much respect they deal with each other.

"If capacity building initiatives embody and reinforce Northern dominance and Southern dependence or punish instances of Southern NGO autonomy and initiative, programme impacts in terms of capacity building and sustainability are likely to be counter productive. It is easy for donors, seen by recipients as very powerful in their ability to control essential resources, to remain unaware of how much communications can be distorted by real or perceived power asymmetries. Potential beneficiaries of capacity building programmes may be reluctant to explain what kind of programmes are really needed for fear they will be perceived as unworthy of future support. It may be necessary to explicitly design programmes to protect recipients from perceived risks of being honest about their deficiencies or challenging donor assumptions and behaviour that creates problems.

Power differences are inevitable among stakeholders in many capacity building programs. But the perverse effects of those differences and politics that undermine the creation of relevant and sustainable capacities can be better understood and managed if the stakeholders recognize potential problems and define programs to deal with them. " (p28)

"Most of these SNGOs were concerned with the relationships to Northern NGOs that provided financial resources, and resource transfer issues shaped and coloured all aspects of the relationship. The issue of establishing mutual trust and respect is seen as very important here as well." (Power and Partnerships, James. INTRAC 2001 p15)

In their book Knowledge, Power and Development Agendas, : NGOs North and South, Mawdsley, Townsend, Porter and Oakley argue that Northern NGOs have far more influence on the developmental agendas than their Southern counterparts, and "Northern NGOs dominate the knowledge economy of development NGOs and use this dominance to influence the shape and direction of development policy." We agree that this is true on a macro level, but there are small



examples of how more equitable relationships can exist, as we have seen in most of these case studies.

#### Training is separate from Capacity Building

One of the main revelations for the member organisations was the differentiation between training and capacity building. Training is often seen as synonymous with capacity building. During the process of this research, it became clear to some of the member organisations that training is only one strategy for building capacity, and that capacity can be built in ways other than by training.

The ambiguity of training and capacity building being separate was clarified for several of the MOs during the action research process, and the practice in the field proved that training can take many forms, traditional, and unconventional, all of which are both valid and influential. In addition to this an important lesson that has been confirmed is that capacity building is a process, and cannot occur with a one-off training intervention.

In Milieukontakt's experience in Albania, training "is part of the mind-set." (Chris van den Sanden). People's need for "capacity building" was often translated into a need for "training." During this research however, the difference became clear to the participating member organisations, that capacity building is broader than training. Though capacity building might involve training, training itself on its own, does not necessarily build capacity. Training used to be used by Milieukontakt as a sole strategy for building capacity. Through their work with EDEN however, they realised that there is a missing link of connecting training to the actual reality on the ground.

#### Training can take many forms, and is a process

EDEN and Milieukontakt also concluded that training is a process, and that capacity cannot necessarily be enhanced with a one-off, single training intervention.

For this research, we did not attempt to define training, mostly because it would have forced the field reality to limit itself to the researchers' definition. The training methodologies used globally by TIE, and also by EDEN in Albania, are varied and creative. EDEN and Milieukontakt use Nature Guides, who take the participants out into the natural habitat. The latter put their knowledge to use in practice. They also use e-coaching and really stress the participatory aspect of defining their own learning needs, and participating in their own needs assessments. On-the-job training and coaching is a valuable tool for EDEN.

This was an important finding for Milieukontakt, because in central and Eastern Europe, high emphasis and value is placed on didactic training, which these methodologies moved away from.

VSO also admits that though training is the 'right instrument' to achieve certain goals, it cannot be used "on its own, other strategies were also contributing to the achievement of the goal. People were trained in resource mobilization. The other CBOs visited them and learned from it. The training was the start of the process towards the goal, and these exchange visits also contributed."

TIE's bag of training methodologies include mapping, learning about the environment, and different techniques of investigation. In Morocco, the TIE group has started mapping all the same factories both in Morocco and in Mexico, and they have started joining up in order to share learning and experiences. Peer support to build capacity, with the training led by peer groups (TIE and Both Ends), has proven most successful.

Talking and exchange between the 'trainer' group of workers, and the 'trainee' group of workers is considered very important to begin with. This sharing of information is the foundation on which they build their dissemination of knowledge, since it allows a finely-tuned tailoring of information for each context.





War Child incorporates coaching in the management style of their key field staff, such as Country Directors, Field Location Managers and Program Managers and Advisors. They even emphasise coaching skills when recruiting these staff.

War Child uses simulations which their participants work with in sub-groups. They view the most important change as being when people can learn to reflect on themselves, and to be able to do so with professional guidance.

Training is a successful strategy for building capacity if it is combined with other strategies. On its own, the effectiveness of training for capacity building can be limited.

“Historically capacity building has often been equated with short-term, individual-centered content-focused training designed to enhance the capacities of individuals. Capacity building must often be focused on long-term rather than short-term development of capabilities, if it is to have sustainable impact.” (Power and Partnerships INTRAC 2001p26)

#### Contextualising Cultural differences when training

“When capacity building is done well it makes a significant difference. It can make organisations more effective in achieving their mission to change lives. Good quality capacity building takes place using a variety of approaches tailored to different contexts. Good practice capacity building therefore starts with a thorough understanding of the context and how this might affect individual and organisational behaviour. It should respect local forms of knowledge; and explore what capacity building means in the particular culture. This analysis should influence the choice of capacity building methods.” (Capacity building for NGOs: making it work Rick James and John Hailey 2007 INTRAC )

NGOs in different parts of the world differ so vastly, influenced not only by the political environment they operate in, but also by how developed the civil society is in that particular country.

Merita, from ‘Eden’ in Albania, explained to us that many NGOs comprised just one individual. Governing boards are not common either, and accountability is not necessarily a concept that is strongly adhered to. These types of differences makes it vital to understand the context in which training and capacity building occurs, making ‘tailoring’ any training intervention much more significant.

She also explained that the need for knowledge differs culturally. E.g. in Central and Eastern Europe and in Central Asia, the participants expect didactic training, in which the trainer is the ‘expert’ and imparts knowledge in a unilateral manner, and the methodology is not participative, nor facilitative

Since the TIE group works with pairing up different countries across continents, they start very slowly in order to identify entry points for any new exchange such as the one with Mexico and Morocco.

TIE has discovered that it is vital to identify obstacles to change before starting a new exchange process between two countries.

In Albania, Milieukontakt solved the cultural context problems by training local trainers and setting up a local training NGO. This has also turned out to be much more sustainable locally.

VSO uses local volunteers, who stay in the community and ensure continuity.

War Child delivers a supervision course in order to be able to eventually transfer the program to a fully local run organisation. They also resist developing a standard training manual respecting the enormous cultural differences between different regions, and they only work in countries where they can work with local partners.

The more successful capacity building interventions through training are usually strategically conscious of accounting for and responding to the cultural differences within an environment.



James discusses this aspect in detail: "To a large extent it has been changes in the context that has created the need for capacity –building. It is obvious that the success of many capacity building interventions is highly dependent on the context." (p5)

"Many discussions focused on past experiences with capacity building as a 'supply-driven' service offered by outside actors, rather than a 'demand-driven' service oriented to the concerns and priorities of recipients. Many capacity building programs are rooted in experience and are implemented by organisations and staff that are distant from the experience of the Southern NGOs. To become effective and appropriate to local circumstances, programs may have to be extensively 'contextualised' to fit the cultural expectations, political contexts, economic circumstances and historical development of Southern civil societies and NGO communities. More specifically, capacity building initiatives may have to be tailored to the identities and strategies, programmatic focus and stages of development of individual NGOs.

"Even when programs are initially tailored to fit local needs, the capacity to continuously redesign and adapt capacity building initiatives becomes critically important when NGOs are operating in contexts that are undergoing rapid political, economic and social change.

"the challenges of contextualizing capacity building to fit a wide range of local circumstances are very complex." (Power & Partnership. James, INTRAC p28)

#### Broader based training with multiple representatives from the same environment/organisation

The widespread problem that training providers continuously encounter is that participants who return to their workplace after the training, find it difficult to identify entry points to disseminate their learning more widely within their workplace. There is no room back in the workplace to share newly learned knowledge, and the organisation is not ready for what the newly trained person wants to share. This reinforces the problem that much training doesn't link to an organisational analysis, and therefore may not contribute to developing capacity.

It is therefore important to offer the training to a wider number of participants from the same environment. For example, TIE always offers its training to the same neighbourhood or to the same trade unions so that the process can be taken forward en masse. When the training is offered to different participants, it will have to be more general and not so practical.

VSO (Malawi) requires that the participants of the training have to brief the rest of the staff on their learning from the training. They feel that this "is one of the ways to sustain a multiplier effect." VSO also emphasises the need for 'multiplying' even before the training begins. They also feel that it is very important to "address the issue of sharing also during the training."

#### Ownership

The participating organisation/s need to be involved in the design and needs an element of 'ownership' In his book *Power & Partnership?*, James writes that "Recipient response to capacity-building programs is greatly affected by their perception of its relevance to their own values and goals. When capacity is seen as essential, individual, groups and organisations often invest much time and energy and talent to build it. The same actors may prove very slow learners if the capacities are perceived to be imposed in response to someone else's agenda." (26)

In the action research, this point of success tied to ownership has been repeatedly proven, as in the case of Albania, when Eden had clearly expressed its own need; had a large say in design, used the implementation to write their own strategic plan, which was actually used, the training was considered a successful capacity building venture for the organisation. In TIE, too, the Moroccan women were interested in learning from the Mexican free trade unions, and were very much part of coordinating the training, contributing to its success.

In 'Southern NGO Capacity Building: Issues and Priorities' Rick James points out that "SNGOs from the Horn thought that Issues of North-South partnership were fundamental to capacity building since most capacity building programs are carried out by Northern intermediaries. Southern NGOs valued the mutual learning and increasing programme and organizational



capacity possible from such cooperation, but they were acutely aware of their problems of organisational dependence and the difficulties of establishing mutual trust and respect. (14) NGO representatives of six countries of Eastern and Southern Africa participating in an international forum of southern NGOs, criticized "pre-packaged' capacity building programmes that did not involved recipients in program design and were not responsive to SNGO concerns or lifecycles."

James and Hailey refer to 'ensuring client responsibility for change'. All of the case studies in this research neatly fitted this concept, as the 'change' was being directed by them.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

"no single definition of the concept of capacity building is widely shared" (James Power & Partnership15)

Training is an often over-used strategy for building capacity, but it remains an effective strategy under certain conditions such as if it is used in combination with other capacity building interventions and if it an on-going process with planned follow-up. The more equitable and lateral the terms of dissemination, with relationships of mutual trust and respect, and the more 'ownership' on the part of the community or organisation involved in the training process, the more successful training seems to be in relation to building capacity.

"In the past training has been the preferred mode of capacity building. ....While training is still a very important capacity building method, it should not be the only one." )James & Hailey p 45)

The following conclusions were derived both from the case studies in the action research, and from the feedback from about 35 representatives of Dutch NGOs, when the above findings were presented in Den Haag, January 2008.

### **The likelihood that training will lead to effective capacity building increases when:**

- a proper and participatory training Needs Assessment is carried out before designing the training, in order to ensure that it serves the intended purpose
- the right people are chosen to participate, who will in fact apply training knowledge in practice, and when there is no seating allowance
- The request originates from the participants or from the organisations themselves, following reflection on their own organisational needs
- trainers can become part of an organisation's network or resource base, and there is continuity with follow-up.
- the purpose of the training is clear and when training is considered the better Capacity Building alternative
- training is linked to ongoing plans and activities of the organisation, e.g. strategic plan
- there is support from senior management before, during and after the training
- training forms part of performance appraisal processes
- training builds on participants' own practical realities with participant case material which can be used to illustrate the use of practical tools – creating increased interest and interaction
- participants can apply their learning, using action plans, and being able to follow up on what they actually did



- training is tailor-made to address a specific context, if required, including reflecting on different or even conflicting learning cultures
- it responds to existing, often external pressures for staff development of additional/new skills in the form of threats or opportunities
- training is integrated with or supported by other Capacity Building activities
- it serves an imminent need articulated by participants individually and as a collective, e.g. sense of urgency, stakeholder ownership
- if it is conducted in a highly interactive, participatory manner which invites participants to take centre stage whenever possible, with the trainer becoming a facilitator of a learning process and not only an instructor
- a personal commitment is made by participants to the mission or change process of their organisation, which may have necessitated the training in first place
- training is not imposed by more powerful actors or donors, but is the result of a joint negotiation between providers or donors and beneficiaries, e.g. Member Organisations vs. Partner Organisations
- training is based on trust within a reciprocal, long term partnership
- training is monitored subsequently with additional support to participants if required, e.g. coaching, follow-up, refresher etc.
- training makes it possible to experiment with new concepts and to reflect in a safe environment
- space is created by the organisation for further reflection after the training
- it is being kept flexible enough to suit complex realities, different modes of training and timing
- it is based on the adult learning cycle: Experience – reflection – generalisation – application
- peer-to-peer training through Training of Trainers programs, which facilitates participants to become trainers and a source of new knowledge for their peers
- training is offered to several colleagues from the same organisation or network, thereby creating a critical mass for reflection and collective application

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that though funding and resources still originate predominantly from the North, new 'development' occurs in the field, and the field is predominantly in the south. When challenging whether training leads to sustainable capacity building, we have stumbled on discrete cases in the field, through the action research, which point very clearly to the observable fact that training and mutually trusting and respectful relationships are inextricably dependent, and that without the relationship aspect, training will not necessarily enhance capacity.

Another very important conclusion is that it is vital that the Northern NGOs and Northern donors create a structured space through which this learning sort of learning from the field can be disseminated from the South to the North, and that the International NGOs re-think how individual staff members internalize that with respect and trust is such an important part of any capacity development.

This learning trajectory is a good channel for dissemination. PSO might consider creating more structures through which this learning is fed back from the south and disseminated so it can influence policy and practice within PSO and other Dutch NGOs. Organisations such as the ones



who have taken part in this study, have gained a lot of learning from working closely with their partners on an equal basis.

Peer learning is a more democratic process. Such a process develops at its own pace, and needs to be allowed to do so, therefore taking a longer time than one that is imposed. Donors and international NGOs need to recognise this and invest in it and trust in the process, whether or not the outcomes are what were initially projected.

## **8. THE NEXT STEP: FIELD EXPERIMENTS - LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ENHANCE EFFECTIVENESS**

The field experiments for this action research will be designed to specifically involve the perspectives of staff in organisations who are trainees. The purpose of the field experiments is to be able to feed the learning from the data collection, into a capacity building venture, which has a training component.

Key stakeholders engaged in the field experiments will be encouraged to document the process, and these experiences could be summarised and published as a series of learnings which would be a useful tool to a range of stakeholders both within and beyond the PSO “chain”.

During the field experiments, it is possible that a methodology for local partners to disseminate their learning-experience will be developed as part of the strategy to capture the learning process for a wider audience within the PSO “chain” and also to reach external audiences engaged with similar dilemmas.

The views of relevant PSO staff will also be given high priority as they could be a key factor in the success or otherwise, of training as a strategy for capacity building, especially the relationship between the Programme Department and the member organisation. PSO will ultimately learn a great deal from the research project in terms of assessing and mentoring trainings to best meet the needs of its members and partners. From the research, PSO should be able to develop a system of learning from the research process. The learning process should be a dynamic one that feeds back into PSO’s work, thereby supporting PSO in developing its own capacity. A final outcome should be awareness from PSO as how, at which entry point, they can best support their members in developing their own approaches, strategies and best practices. This research supports this process.

Both Ends will carry out a case study for the field experiment, which is part of strengthening civil society networks to address dryland degradation and poverty issues in the context of strategic development frameworks. We might also have another case study from The Netherlands in central Asia, on peer capacity building between free trade unions.



## ANNEX I

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR ACTION RESEARCH PHASE I

#### Questions

- Why was training was chosen as the most appropriate capacity building intervention;
- Was the Training used as a stand-alone instrument for capacity building?
- Was the Training was used in combination with a wider range of capacity building instruments?
- Was the Training provided on a short-term basis or was the Training provided in a longer-term trajectory?
- Was the Training directly focused on receivers in organisations?
- Were Cascading and train-the-trainers models and approaches used?
- Was the Training delivered in pre-packaged modules by external consultants (fly-in, fly-out)?
- Was the Training delivered tailor-made and with involvement of local training capacity?
- Was the Capacity building maybe multi-faceted?
- How long term was the training and Capacity building intervention? Was this a programmatic approach or a project approach?
- Was the training and Capacity building based upon proper use of locally available expertise?
- Is there any awareness either with the MOs or with the partner organisation, of power dynamics between them, and how this influences both the work and also the 'empowering' process?
- What exactly is and what is not considered training?
- Can we 'isolate' training from other capacity building strategies?

#### Interviews:

- Interviewing the leader of organisation;
- Interviewing and convening a focus group with organisation staff;
- Interviewing and convening a focus group with beneficiaries and other local stake holders;
- Interviewing relevant PSO staff (Finance Department, desk officer/coordinator, any local PSO representative);
- Interviewing trainer; and interviewing local leaders/local government officials.



## ANNEX 2

### Milieukontakt

1. *Why was training was chosen as the most appropriate capacity building intervention;*  
It was only one of the CB interventions that we used:  
The other ones were:
  1. Training and consulting
  2. Study tours
  3. Implementation of information and communication technology
  4. Publications
  5. Thematic working groups
  6. National environmental NGOs meetings
  7. Volunteering development
  8. Small grants
  9. Networking
  
2. *Was the Training used as a stand-alone instrument for capacity building?*  
In fact it wasn't a stand alone instrument, see the answer above at 1.
  
3. *Was the Training used in combination with a wider range of capacity building instruments?*  
Yes it was, see 1.
  
4. *Was the Training provided on a short-term basis or was the Training provided in a longer-term trajectory?*  
In a long-term trajectory. We started support on environmental NGOs in Albania in januari 2000. Trainings of trainers were used as intervention instrument from the very start. Those trainers later on developed into the organisation EDEN.
  
5. *Was the Training directly focused on receivers in organisations?*  
A bit of both; The training on Strategic planning directly focused on the trainers organisation EDEN. (Indirectly and to a lesser extent this training also focused on those NGOs/individuals that would later-on be trained by EDEN trainers.
  
6. *Were Cascading and train-the-trainers models and approaches used?*  
Yes, see 5.
  
7. *Was the Training delivered in pre-packaged modules by external consultants (fly-in, fly-out)?*  
  
No, although i was not present myself at this particular training the normal way of working is that there is extensive consultation going on between trainer and EDEN to develop and fine-tune the training.  
Furthermore, the trainers in this strategic planning were from Albania themselves.
  
8. *Was the Training delivered tailor-made and with involvement of local training capacity?*  
Yes, see 7.
  
9. *Was the Capacity building multi-faceted?*  
Probably it was (although i don't have a clue what is meant with the terminology...)



10. *How long term was the training and Capacity building intervention? Was this a programmatic approach or a project approach?*

We have executed 3 consecutive country projects in Albania, starting in January 2000 and ending in March 2007. ToTs to the trainers that later on established EDEN trainers organisation was there from the very start, so yes, quite long-term. The three consecutive projects were part of an overall CB strategy, focusing on development of an environmental movement in Albania, a program that in our estimation would take about 10 years to put into practice.

11. *Was the training and Capacity building based upon proper use of locally available expertise?*  
In the case of the training on Strategic Planning it certainly was. PSO funding to EDEN was used for assessing the need that EDEN trainers themselves felt. Local (Albanian) trainers were used to develop, fine-tune and execute the training.

12. *Is there any awareness either with the MOs or with the partner organisation, of power dynamics between them, and how this influences both the work and also the “empowering” process?*

The awareness is there. Gradually in our work with the Albanian trainers (that later on developed into the NGO EDEN) the input of EDEN trainers themselves became bigger. First the trainings were developed and scheduled by Milieukontakt. Gradually the EDEN trainers were more involved in development of the content of the training. With the PSO funded training on Strategic Planning the initiative, ownership and format of the whole training were virtually totally placed in Albania and managed by EDEN.

13. *What exactly is and what is not considered training?*

Roughly speaking, we use the term training for the situation whereby the trainee's gather in a specific venue for a well-defined and previously elaborated programme that should result in approved skills, knowledge and attitude of the trainees.

14. *Can we ‘isolate’ training from other capacity building strategies?*

For certain purposes we can and do (for planning, budgetting, and evaluation purposes etc). However when the overall impact of the whole project/program is evaluated it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the effect of the trainings from the other CB activities.

## TIE – NETHERLANDS

1. Why was training was chosen as the most appropriate capacity building intervention;  
Training is considered the first “trickle”/ instrument to facilitate individual empowerment/ individual consciousness building. Through training the participants are able to practice and gain skills and self-confidence in a close space before entering into actions in their working place.
2. Was the Training used as a stand-alone instrument for capacity building?  
No, training is related to organizing and exercises for organizing colleagues at the working place are built into the training method.
3. Was the Training used in combination with a wider range of capacity building instruments?  
Yes, organizing, exchange of knowledge and experiences, collective negotiations.





4. Was the Training provided on a short-term basis or was the Training provided in a longer-term trajectory?  
The training was part of a larger proces. It was a start and shall be built on in further training/exchanges. Aim of the trajectory is to stimulate cooperation between workers in free trade zones in Mexico and Morocco.
5. Was the Training directly focused on receivers in organisations?  
Yes, women from different associations in Tanger.
6. Were Cascading and train-the-trainers models and approaches used?  
We do not know the concept of Cascading...?  
Train-the-trainer approoches were not yet used in the specific training dealt with in the action research. However, the aim is in the follow-up of the programme to built in train the trainer approaches (long term goal).
7. Was the Training delivered in pre-packaged modules by external consultants (fly-in, fly-out)?  
No, the content of the training was based on experiences of the participants, only facilitated by an external expert.
8. Was the Training delivered tailor-made and with involvement of local training capacity?  
Yes, the training was adapted to the specific target group and the dynamics of communication between women from different regions in the world (cultural difference).
9. Was the Capacity building multi-faceted?  
Yes, training is combined with methods of organzing, exchange of knowledge and experiences and collective negotiations.
10. How long term was the training and Capacity building intervention? Was this a programmatic approach or a project approach?  
It is a programme approach. The specific training was a first step of a capacity building process in which one comes from individual strenghtening/empowerment to collective empowerment and collective actions (also cooperation between women working in free trade zones in different regions of the world).
11. Was the training and Capacity building based upon proper use of locally available expertise?  
The training was a first exploration of the knowledge and experiences of the local organziations in Morocco. Now there is more insight into the expertise available at the local level.
12. Are there any awareness either with the MOs or with the partner organisation, of power dynamics between them, and how this influences both the work and also the 'empowering' process?  
The target group of the training consisted of female workers from Mexico, one male worker from Mexico, a Mexican coordinator of a network of maquilla workers organizers (woman), Moroccan women working in the free trade zone, a coordinator of the organization Attawasul (male), coordinator TIE Netherlands (female), coordinators CERID (two female) and facilitator (Brazilian male). There were different power dimensions: cultural, gender, class. There were differences between the Mexicans (male, female, coordinator-workers), between the Moroccians (male, female), and between the Mexicans and Morrocians. The coordinators of TIE Netherlands and CERID were aware of the power differences in the sense that they tried to play a minimalistic role, to stay as observers/facilitators.
13. What exactly is and what is not considered training?



14. Can we 'isolate' training from other capacity building strategies?

No, training should always be combined with another capacity building strategy and can not stand alone. The final goal should be to translate what has been learned in the training into actions for change at the working place.

PSO training for capacity building

VSO Interview with Safari Mbewe – RAISA country coordinator

**Case study: Chitipa DACC – volunteer Joshua – training in Resource Mobilization**

1. Measurement of effectiveness:

a. *How to stay self-sustaining on knowledge/skills level (how to prevent brain drain)?*

There are two ways to stay self-sustaining:

- ✘ Encourage the trained people to share with other members. This training was for a selected group of the partner organization.
- ✘ The training made the participants more skilled, so there is a risk of people leaving to earn money somewhere with their newly acquired skills. Not all people can/will leave at the same time, so if you make sure that they are sharing the information you will secure the knowledge.

VSO (Malawi) has some requirements of a training. After the training, before the implementation, the participants have to brief the rest of the staff on the training they participated in. This is one of the ways to sustain, a multiplier effect, to brief the other members of the organization is the first step to stay self-sustaining. The CBO's under the DACC (...) are part of forums and this is also a way to share the new knowledge even further. They visit each other and see what has changed. In this case study very visible things changed like the building of an office, a poultry project and a communal garden.

b. *How do you measure the effectiveness of training for CB on different levels: output, outcome, effect, impact?*

VSO Malawi is not measuring effectiveness of training on all these levels. Output is measured, because that is very visible. If a training is conducted and nothing is following from it/nothing is coming out it can be concluded that the training was not effective. After a training you want to know how effective a training was (input level-but little bit misleading). By means of an evaluation form participants are asked to give their view on the effectiveness of the training. This however says nothing about what they eventually will do with the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

The level of measurement of effectiveness depends on the type of training/the aim of the training. When the training is focused on changing mindset, you will not measure on output level.

How do you measure effect and impact in this case study? The output is very visible. The impact and effects can only be measured after some time. The impact should be seen among the people living with HIV&AIDS and the orphans (beneficiaries) who should in the end benefit from for example the communal garden and the fact that the organization has an office. Time is an important factor: if the output for example is a poultry project, you can predict that people will benefit from it, but time will tell.

Also, this case study is quite practical, so it is easier to measure. For other trainings (for example a leadership management training) it could be more difficult to measure the impact on the beneficiaries.

c. *Has there been an evaluation? And how have the results been used to adapt the capacity building and training approach?*

The CBO's were trained on different days. After the first training feedback was collected and the training was evaluated. This helped to adapt the training.

Joshua, the VSO volunteer, was the trainer and he is part of the CB process.



- d. Do we expect all 'trained people' to be good facilitators on the trained subject?  
For a training of trainers you expect the trained people to be good facilitators, but then it is the aim of the training. But when VSO trains people to do something we do not expect them to be good facilitators. However, they should be able to share the knowledge with others.
- e. *Did participants multiply their knowledge/skills? Within the organization, region, sector?*  
From the trainers point of view you expect it to be multiplied. It depends on the values of the person that is being trained. VSO sends out invitations for a training in which they invite a representative of the organizations, instead of someone in specific. VSO believes that this contributes to the sharing: the organization will send a staff member for whom the training is most applicable and which makes it even more likely that this staff member will share. So even before the training VSO emphasizes the need for multiplying. After the training there is always the risk that participants do not see the value of sharing. Therefore it is very important to address the issue of sharing also during the training. The last part of VSO's trainings is the development of an action plan. But even after this you are still dependent on the individual and his values.
- f. *No seating allowances?*  
The policy of VSO is: no seating allowances. VSO (Malawi) has very well managed to deal with the issue of allowances. VSO Malawi is even known for its policy, people know that they will not receive any allowances but they are still coming to trainings. By not providing any allowances VSO also tries to get the right people to the trainings. The invitations are often addressed to the Executive Directors, for example for a M&E training. Without allowances it is not very likely that he or she will come, so there is an opportunity for the M&E officer to come, who is very likely to share the newly acquired knowledge within the organization.

2. The role of values and attitudes:

3. What should a Needs assessment necessitate?:

- a. *Is training the 'right' instrument to achieve the case-study goals?*  
Yes it is, but not on its own, other strategies were also contributing to the achievement of the goal. People were trained in resource mobilization. The other CBO's visited them and learned from it. The training was the start of the process towards the goal, and these exchange visits were also contributing. Furthermore, besides training the volunteer also facilitates within and after the training. This is an advantage compared to a hired trainer: he/she will leave after the training, but the volunteer stays and can facilitate in the further process.
- b. *How do you ensure implementation of the acquired skills/knowledge in the training?*  
By the development of an action plan for every participating organization. After the training you need to follow-up. During the training you need to tell them the goal of the training, emphasize the action plan and find out what assistance they need in the follow-up of this action plan. The follow-up is done by the trainer, in this case the volunteer, and can start with a phone call (at what stage of implementation are you, etc.) and needs to be followed by a physical meeting.  
  
VSO has a protocol for this, but you should be aware of that the participants do not get the feeling of being policed. They need to get the feeling that they get assistance. In this case study the participants are already aware of the follow-up that is coming, this is linked with the action plan.
- c. *Did the right persons (position/function in the organization) participate in the training?*



In general: sometimes not the right person that is participating. With regards to the case study it can be concluded that the right person attended the training, because the training was effective and things have changed afterwards. VSO is not inviting persons, but representatives; this contributes to the right persons participating in the trainings.

- d. *How do you do a needs assessment, up to what level? Do you do it again during the training process because people have changed during the process?*

Before and during the training a needs assessment is done. Before: training is done because this need was assessed. During: you still give the participants the option, what is it what they need? What are their expectations? These questions are part of the first session of VSO's trainings.

The challenge is that some identified needs during the training are completely different then before. As a trainer you should be able to say what needs can and cannot be addressed during the training.

4. The role and influence of donors and other stakeholders in the entire training for CB process?:

- a. *How to balance the training needs of an organization with the wishes/ideas of the donor?*

VSO Malawi did a needs assessment. But the funding is restricted so you have to make choices. The community might have specific needs, but the partner organizations have specific objectives and the donors have specific requirements: the question is which needs of the community can be covered by the objectives of the partner and can be funded by a donor?

In this case study this went well. With chitipa DACC this was not the case, needs were identified that could not be covered by the PSO funding. RAISA however has different donors, which is an advantage.

5. Organizational strategy/policy:

- a. *How to cope with absence of staff because of training?*

For VSO and its partners this is not really a problem. In general you need to give plenty of notice, so the partner organizations can plan their presence in different trainings. You also have to take into account who you are targeting with a training.

6. Training process:

- a. *How does the training intervention fit into the general CB process?*

VSO works with partnership plans, in which needs and objectives are mentioned with regards to the CB process, so you know the issues that need to be addressed. You then look at how to address the different issues. For example, you conduct a training where you think it is the best strategy to use as a CB tool. It is also complementary. In this case it is the combination of training, exchange, volunteer (facilitating) and a small grant fund.



- b. *How important are 'soft indicators' (trust, mutual understanding, communication, role models) to make a training more effective?*  
 Very important, before, during and after the training, because they can make training useless if they are not there.  
 Trust: If the (potential) participants do not trust the trainer or for example VSO they would not even come to the training. If the trainer is using examples, etc. they need to trust him/her to make sure that they are going to put the new knowledge into practice.  
 Furthermore, you are telling each other things in trust during the training. For the success of the training you need to be open.  
 Mutual understanding: important, because you then know where to start.  
 Communication: before the training, invitation in time, to the right persons, logistics, things should be clear communicated. This is crucial for the effectiveness of the training.  
 Communication is also part of the follow-up.  
 Role models: what you hear and what you see is different. You basically have more confidence in what you see. It is therefore important to show examples of best practice, show a role model (project, person, initiative) in the training.
- c. *Does the training fit in a learning – practice (and reflection) – learning – practice continuum?*  
 Yes, it does. Training is not the end but part of the continuum, a level of the learning continuum.
7. Integrating training with long-term organizational CB process - practical application:
- a. *How do you ensure that the training will be used/applied in practice?*  
 By means of the action plan, made at the end of the training and by means of the follow-up after the training (in this case done by the volunteer). The other way to ensure that the training will be used in practice is to invite a relevant representative of the partner organizations.
- b. *How did you serve your beneficiaries with your newly acquired knowledge?*
- c. *When going 'home' after the training, did you transfer your newly acquired skills to others within your organization?*
- d. *Are you able to use acquired skills/knowledge in daily work (how applicable)?*
- e. *Are people (stakeholders) able to apply their new insights and skills as a consequence of training?*



## ANNEX 3

### PSO Action Research Workshop 27 September 2007

#### Structuring the Capacity Building & Training

Questions	EDEN
1. What was the goal/objective of the training? What did you want to achieve?	Knowledge and skills on strategic planning –
2. what changes has the training created? capacity built at different levels? Individual, organisational, community/society?	-individual -organisational - community -society?
3. Was the change real change or short term change?	Real
4. Can you identify what resources were used? Broadly i.e. community, NGO, donors etc PLEASE USE EXAMPLES to illustrate	Human resources -participants -training -venue
5. What were the different approaches/working methods used other than training?	-Action plan writing -implementation
6. What do you think the target group/field partner perceives as the most important learning/capacity development?	Strategic plan for NGO developed (1&2)
7. what do the staff of the organisation, who are delivering the training/CB initiative, perceive as most important capacity development?	Empowerment (of 1&2, influencing 3)
8. has any form of decision making at any level been influenced by the CB process?	-Individual level -organisation -section -society
9. has there been any change in strategy since the training within the partners/member org?	Yes



10. has there been any new activity (resulting from CB) since the CB process started?	Yes, a lot
11. have there been any changes in attitude/dynamics/power between women and men (roles?) how can this be measured?	Women are getting more powerful
12. has the process affected any other aspects other than training objectives? e.g. partnership/relationship improvement between MOs and partners?	Yes: arriving more at partnership level
13. has the capacity of MOs changed/improved during the process?	Yes, allowed us to concentrate on other issues
14. how has the capacity of MOs changed through the process of doing action research (+ exchanging observations)?	Has questioned the automatic answer of training to all CB questions
15. how would you define real change in this context?	
<b>Questions</b>	<b>VSO</b>
1. What was the goal/objective of the training? What did you want to achieve?	Self reliance Community mobilization/resource mobilization
2. What changes has the training created? capacity built at different levels? Individual, organisational, community/society?	-Idea of representation of a local CBO-accountability Accountability of local govt. -CBO self-awareness training linked to practical reality
3. Was the change real change or short term change?	Yes, signs of real change, but still early days. Collective action is long term: CBO's started to mobilize their communities, building offices, setting up community gardens, etc.
4. Can you identify what resources were used? Broadly i.e. community, NGO, donors etc PLEASE USE EXAMPLES to illustrate	Volunteer, small grants, community contributions in kind and in labour
5. What were the different approaches/working methods used other than training?	-Training is part of long term CB plan for partnership - TNA before, during and after training - hands on follow up by volunteer



<b>6. What do you think the target group/field partner perceives as the most important learning/capacity development?</b>	The ability to take collective action and establish accountability at several levels
<b>7. What do the staff of the organisation, who are delivering the training/CB initiative, perceive as most important capacity development?</b>	Same as above
<b>8. Has any form of decision making at any level been influenced by the CB process?</b>	Yes, collective discussion and decision making is a direct result of CB process
<b>9. Has there been any change in strategy since the training within the partners/member org?</b>	Strategy becomes more long term, but also more practical
<b>10. Has there been any new activity since the CB process started?</b>	Yes, activities continue to evolve as part of CB process
<b>11. Have there been any changes in attitude/dynamics/power between women and men (roles?) How can this be measured?</b>	NA
<b>12. Has the process affected any other aspects other than training objectives? e.g. partnership/relationship improvement between MOs and partners?</b>	YES, see above examples
<b>13. has the capacity of MOs changed/improved during the process?</b>	Yes, has made the MO challenge traditional concept of stand alone activities.
<b>14. how has the capacity of MOs changed through the process of doing action research (+ exchanging observations)?</b>	Has made the MO think about good practices in their own capacity building activities. Realize that VSO has quite a comprehensive approach regarding training as capacity building.
<b>15. how would you define real change in this context?</b>	Difficult, no real change. Most important is the ability to reflect on own activities in this specific area and recognize what is going well and what still needs to be improved.





Questions	TIE
<p>1. What was the goal/objective of the training? What did you want to achieve?</p>	<p>Organize the workers on the work floor</p>
<p>2. what changes has the training created? -capacity built at different levels? Individual, organisational, community/society?</p>	<p><u>Individual</u>: learn your capacities in the collective process of organizing your work floor <u>Organisational</u>: you need each other to organize your work floor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual: inspiration, self confidence and trust. By sharing experiences the women discover their capabilities to analyse their situation</li> <li>- Resource: new networks</li> <li>- Communal: similarities in apparently different situations (cultural differences) are discovered and collective interests are explored.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Was the change real change or short term change?</p>	<p>Real change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In first instance short term but building on the experiences and first contact build aim is to strategize and to come to collective actions/ support and cooperations to press multinationals in free trade zones</li> </ul>
<p>4. Can you identify what resources were used? Broadly i.e. community, NGO, donors etc <b>PLEASE USE EXAMPLES to illustrate</b></p>	<p>Human resource Need examples to illustrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resource: their direct knowledge on the work: the content of the training was defined by the participants and drawn from practical information available to them by being part of the production system of the multinational companies</li> <li>- Facilitator of TIE Netherlands to explain the instrument of 'Mappeo de Producción'</li> <li>- Contacts with community organisations working with women in free trade zones in Morocco</li> </ul>
<p>5. What were the different approaches/working methods used other than training?</p>	<p>Exchange. E.g. Mexican union reps mentored Moroccan union members in Morocco</p>
<p>6. What do you think the target group/field partner perceives as the most important learning/capacity development?</p>	<p>Organize yourself to change the conditions of your workplace</p>



<p><b>7. what do the staff of the organisation, who are delivering the training/CB initiative, perceive as most important capacity development?</b></p>	<p>Not applicable since the CB initiative is undertaken by the unions themselves. (linear/lateral linking amongst the unions members)</p> <p>Note: this is much more sustainable and empowering as it is “capacity <b>with</b>”, rather than “capacity <b>for</b>”</p>
<p><b>8. has any form of decision making at any level been influenced by the CB process? E.g what decisions have shifted from what level to what? How have supervisors supported the supervised to anchor the change?</b></p>	<p>Yes, in Morocco</p> <p>Participants of the training shifted their view and strategies from internal level (individuals and the own group) towards collective level/ They discovered that despite the cultural differences they have similarities in interests and should start supporting each other on interregional skills. Specific methods, however, are not yet defined. For this the project is too much in the beginning (talking about Morocco Mexico project)</p>
<p><b>9. has there been any change in strategy since the training within the partners/member org?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First discovery of similar interests: start thinking of strategies in a wider frame: “globalization from below”</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Has there been any new activity since the CB process started?</b></p>	<p>New relations between TIE-NL and the associations in Morocco</p>
<p><b>11. Have there been any changes in attitude/dynamics/power between women and men (roles?) How can this be measured?</b></p>	<p>Moroccan women more empowered. The influence of the Mexican women on the Moroccan women.</p>
<p><b>12. Has the process affected any other aspects other than training objectives? e.g. partnership/relationship improvement between MOs and partners?</b></p>	<p>New relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes new contacts between TIE and Moroccan basis organisations: cooperation in future project on child labour and shrimp factories in the informal sector.</li> <li>- More insides into Moroccan reality from which TIE scope can be build</li> </ul>
<p><b>13. Has the capacity of MOs changed/improved during the process?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working in different cultural setting (as we never before did project in Africa)</li> <li>- Challenge of women from different backgrounds and cultures discussing collective interests (“de role as “cultural facilitator”)</li> </ul>



<p><b>14. How has the capacity of MOs changed through the process of doing action research (+ exchanging observations)?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Action research has given us the opportunity to clarify our specific approach. Something which was there implicit but which has been made explicit now.</li> <li>- Better ability to justify the training approach and to monitor results</li> </ul> <p>Discussion within the TIE team: strengthening of strategy of CB</p>
<p><b>15. How would you define real change in this context?</b></p>	<p>- See answers above</p>

**Case: War Child Supervision course**

**Background**

War Child chose to hire an external consultant to develop a standard training package and manual for a training in management skills; War Child Supervision Course.

After this consultant developed the package and manual in close collaboration with the HR Manager of War Child, the plan was to offer this training package to all local staff working for War Child in all the countries we work in who have management/ supervision tasks.

This consultant would train two HQ staff members in giving this training, by giving this training together with them in Sudan and in Sierra Leone. These HQ staff members would then give this training in the other countries (DRC, Uganda, Afghanistan).

Now:

The training package and manual is developed. The external consultant has given the training in Sierra Leone (local staff) with one of the HQ staff members and with the other in Sudan (local and international staff). He would give the training and the HQ staff member would do a few modules to practise.

For October the training in DR Congo, Afghanistan and Uganda will take place almost simultaneously.

DR Congo: by an external experienced trainer (local, international staff and staff from local partners)

Afghanistan: by one of the HQ staff members (local, international staff and staff from local partners)

Uganda: by the external consultant himself (local and international staff)

Next year we also want to offer this training package in countries we work with local partners and we do not have War Child staff.



**The why and how of the supervision course; what issues/problem(s) is the training meant to tackle and how/on what basis was the choice made for organising a training course (as opposed to e.g. coaching, sending staff to a standard management training etc).**

To be able to in the end transfer the programme to a fully local run organisation, we also need to look at the middle management layer. Up until now there has been a focus on training and capacity building of our trainers, workshop leaders, etc. People who do the core business of War Child; psychosocial activities using creative methods. Although this focus will always be needed, the emphasize should also be on capacity building of the staff to be able to have a well functioning organisation which in the end can fully rely on local capacity instead of expatriates.

Coaching; we try to incorporate this already in the management style of our key field staff (Country Directors, Field Location Managers, Programme Development Managers and Programme Development Advisors). When recruiting them for example we emphasize on their coaching skills. So in most countries the senior management strives to be at least a role module, but also to coach their staff in management skills. Coaching should also be done locally and on a daily basis and should be incorporated in the daily management of the programme.

We chose to develop a training ourselves together with an external expert to have a tailor made training. A tailor made training to be able to meet the specific needs of War Child context and the different country programmes. To be able to also refine the standard training programme to the specific training needs of the group of participants and the different contexts.

**Brief description of the design of the training process (from training needs assessment to evaluation)**

After the training manual and programme was finished, we send a training needs assessment questionnaire to all participants and we asked the Country Director to inform us what in his or her view would be the main issues or messages that should be incorporated in the training.

After the questionnaires had returned and the Country Director informed us with the issues at hand, we refined the programme to see where we should focus and where we could optimise the programme to be able to meet these needs and issues as much as possible.

When arriving in country, the trainers would go through the programme with the Country Director and would make agreements on how during the training the CD would be informed and when active participation from the CD would be expected.

During the training, the participants filled out an evaluation form every day at the end of the day, but also at the end of the training on the last day they filled out an evaluation form about the training in a whole. Every day the participants were also asked to fill out a "reflection" form in which they should write down for themselves what they learned and what they would do with it during and after the training.

6 weeks after the training all participants received a evaluation form with questions more on the level of effect measurement; what did they do with what they learned.

The training development in total has been evaluated at HQ through a report written about the training given in Sierra Leone and Sudan and discussed in a meeting with the trainers, the consultant who developed the training and the assigner at HQ, the HR manager).

**Description of the action research: what does your research plan look like? what bottlenecks did you experience doing the research? what was easy to do? what has it added to what you already knew (thru evaluations etc) about the effectiveness of the course**

My research plan is very basic; we developed a training which we have given now in 2 countries and I evaluated this process and the two trainings given.

Bottlenecks; it was difficult to evaluate the whole considering the lack of time to really research what we have done. Also if we would have made a plan before hand (so before we even started the decision to go and develop this training) how we would evaluate the process and measure the outcome, we would have been able to do a much better job in this research.



I think my action research gives input on a really practical level (see Learning points) rather than on effect measurement.

**What was the goal/objective of the training?**

**What did you want to achieve?**

In general the goal of setting up these training rounds in all programme countries is to improve the supervision skills of all national staff with supervision tasks, but also the staff of local partners who want to attend.

For most of the countries it also has a side goal; improving the team dynamics within the programme team and work relations with the staff of the local partners (ministries, local NGOs).

Per country some specific “main messages” were formulated which differed a bit from one another, but in general the main objective was to expose the staff to western management styles, visions and way of working together and for a professional organisation. Not that we impose that western style should be copied, but a lot of elements are also core values of War Child, which we would like to see translated to the local context and values.

**What changes has the training created?**

**-capacity built at different levels? Individual, organisational, community/society? Was the change real change or short term change?**

Differs per country and training given, but in general during the training the team dynamics improved already. If this change is real or short term is hard to say, considering it has not yet been so long ago (May 2007).

Furthermore, we did receive positive feedback from one of the Country Directors about the way they now cooperate in the team, how team meetings are held and how decisions are being made. In Individual level, the evaluations after 6 weeks show a positive result; they themselves evaluate the training positive and they say they learned a lot. It is difficult to assess if it is a real change, we did not do a effect study. Maybe we should have done this....?

So a lot of indications that on individual and organisational level some changes haven been made. Community or society; not researched and difficult to assess.

**Can you identify what resources were used?**

**Broadly i.e. community, NGO, donors etc**

**PLEASE USE EXAMPLES to illustrate**

Participants were War Child national staff up and until now. For the training in DR Congo and Afghanistan (still to be held) also staff from the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan will participate and some staff members from small local NGO's in DRC will attend the training in DRC.

**What were the different approaches/working methods used other than training?**

None, but depends on the definition of training.

The Supervision training uses participatory method in which most of the time the participants are talking and working in sub groups on cases or simulations.

After the training we focussed on the follow up to. We encouraged all the managers from the participants to follow up on the training in their bila's and team meetings and to look back at some topics from the module on regularly basis. Should we monitor/support this better?

**What do you think the target group/field partner perceives as the most important learning/capacity development?**

Depends per country/ programme team.

**What do the staff of the organisation, who are delivering the training/CB initiative, perceive as most important capacity development?**

**Has any form of decision making at any level been influenced by the CB process?**

**Has there been any change in strategy since the training within the partners/member org?**



We see some more emphasize on HRD of national staff within the new annual plans of the country programmes. The trainings also have a sort of awareness raising effect that investing in also management skills or organisation skills (next to skills necessary for our core business psychosocial programmes) is also important.

**Has there been any new activity (resulting from CB) since the CB process started?**

Improvements and internalising of the training materials & methods. To make it a real War Child training with War Child type of methods.

**Have there been any changes in attitude/dynamics/power between women and men (roles?)**

**how can this be measured?**

Not measured and if we want to measure this, we should first to a baseline before implementing the CD activities by interviewing staff and management involved and after the CD activities we should measure again with same interview questions?

**Has the process affected any other aspects other than training objectives?**

**e.g. partnership/relationship improvement between MOs and partners?**

The assigner within War Child and the people involved with the development and planning of these CB activities have learned a lot about the process of developing a training and planning this etc. See Learning points below.

More insight in the level of national staff also now on HQ level, through the training needs assessments.

**Has the capacity of MOs changed/improved during the process?**

A lot learned; see below Learning points + internally two War Child staff members have been trained to give this training. Now War Child also has a training manual which describes all modules in detail which gives a lot of guidance for future trainings to be given in management/communication skills. A sort of on the shelf training. Although, we do see that every programme/training has different main messages and focus, so it is not just copy paste, but we can use this manual to pick out methods and modules and to refine these to the specific needs.

**How has the capacity of MOs changed through the process of doing action research (+ exchanging observations)?**

The assigner within War Child and the people involved with the development and planning of these CB activities have learned a lot about the process of developing a training and planning this etc. See Learning points below.

More insight in the level of national staff also now on HQ level, through the training needs assessments.

**How would you define real change in this context?**

With CB, in my view the most important change is that people learn to reflect on themselves and also to give them room to do so with professional guidance.

A real change would be if the national staff would show that they have reflected or reflect on their own behaviour, skills etc and act upon it by taking this up with their manager or in another way.

**Learning points for War Child**

Internal

16. Developing a standard training for all programmes and countries we work in is not possible. The training needs differ too much and also the context is different (working with translators or not for example).
17. To train two internal HQ staff members takes up much more time and investment to enable them to do a good job. Only accompanying the external consultant was not enough, but no Money or time available to invest more training for them.



18. To give the responsibility of giving this training to somebody with already a full job is impossible. This is not something you just do on the side. Especially when you are inexperienced.
19. The time needed to develop a training package and manual takes up a lot of time from the HR Manager, the HQ staff members, external consultant and the Country Directors.
20. The training is not focussed on participants who are staff from local organisations. This was originally the assignment for the external consultant to take into account. In the next training courses this will be a challenge and we will see how this works out.
21. In advance we did not take into account programmes in which not all participants would understand English (Afghanistan and DRC). A lot of work and time has been spent to translate the course documents and to find a French speaking trainer and a translator for Afghanistan.
22. In a late stage we paid attention to the follow up process of the training course. In the end we did manage to come up with a useful process, but more time could be spend by the trainers to follow the course up directly with the participants.
23. War Child also works in countries in which we only work with local partners. Next year we also want to offer them a similar training. We do not have enough insight in how much adjustments need to be made to the standard package.
24. The training manual and package does give a good base to start from and to make a programme suitable for each programme's training needs.
25. Practical point: the maintenance of the digital folder of the training manual has been a nightmare. To be able to use the standard documents and to adjust them for each training and than keeping it nice and ordered is very difficult. Maybe a handy system exists?
26. The goal to have two HQ staff trained to give this training to enable them to do the rest of the countries only partly worked out. Only the training in Afghanistan will be given by one of the HQ staff. The one in Uganda will be given by the external consultant considering the level of those participants was much higher then the other countries and two separate trainings were needed. DR Congo will be given by an external trainer who speaks French (something we could have anticipated in an earlier stage of course).
27. Furthermore, the HQ staff members do not feel comfortable giving this training by themselves. Just co-facilitating once is not enough. Therefore it is uncertain if the training in Afghanistan will be a success.
28. Possibilities for looking into option to send the staff to an external training institute were not sufficiently considered.
29. The training manual is a very precise described manual, which is written by the external consultant. To be able to give this training yourself you need to make the manual your own by also adjusting the manual documents which takes up a lot of time!
30. All the coordination and preparation (training material, training needs assessment) etc lays with one person at HQ. The amount of work this takes up was underestimated.

#### Training programma itself

6. The programme, the modules, the method of training (very participatory) has been evaluated in both Sudan and Sierra Leone as very good.
7. Also the Country Directors have reported very positive results/ effects of the training.
8. Next to very positive results on individual level, also positive effects on team spirit and cooperation have been reported.
9. The process of making the training manual and package was good. Taking in account a moment to evaluate the first two trainings and then adjusting the manual accordingly is very advisable.
10. To involve the Country Directors with the set up of the training specifically for their country has worked out to be very useful and necessary. Also involving them in the start and the end of the training course has made the follow up process much more fruitful.



## ANNEX 4

### Suggestions for further reading

Capacity Building for NGOs: Making it Work by Rick James & John Hailey, Oxford INTRAC 2007

Autonomy or Dependence? Case Studies of North-South NGO Partnerships, by Vicky Mancuso Brehm with Emma Harris-Curtis, Luciano Padrão and Martin Tanner. Oxford INTRAC 2004

Striking a Balance by Alan Fowler Earthscan, 2002

People and Change: Exploring Capacity Building in African NGOs NGOMPS 15, by Rick James, Oxford INTRAC 2002

Knowledge, Power and Development Agendas: NGOs North and South NGOMPS 14, by Emma Mawdsley, Janet Townsend, Gina Porter and Peter Oakley, Oxford INTRAC 2002

Evaluating Empowerment: Reviewing the Concept and Practice NGOMPS 13, edited by Peter Oakley, Oxford INTRAC 2001

Power and Partnership? Experiences of NGO Capacity-Building NGOMPS 12, edited by Rick James, 2001; Oxford INTRAC reprinted 2004

Direct Funding from a Southern Perspective: Strengthening Civil Society? NGOMPS 8, by Oxford INTRAC, 1998

*Strengthening the capacity of Southern NGO partners: A survey of current Northern NGO approaches.* James, Rick, INTRAC Occasional paper Vol. 1, no. 5. Oxford: INTRAC

*Capacity Building Myth or Reality?* From the Community Development Resource Association's Annual Report 1994/1995, S. Africa

*The Developing Of Capacity* by Allan Kaplan, Community Development Resource Association, S. Africa 1999

*Establishing Developmental Relationships*, by James Taylor, Community Development Resource Association, S. Africa 2001

*NGOs, Civil Society and Capacity-Building: Towards the Development of Strategy*, By Allan Kaplan, Community Development Resource Association, S. Africa 1994

*Capacity Building Shifting the paradigms of practice*, by Allan Kaplan, Community Development Resource Association, S. Africa 1997

*The Poverty Of "Partnerships"*, by James Taylor, Community Development Resource Association S. Africa, 2002

*The Concept of Capacity*, by Peter Morgan, Maastricht, ECDPM, 2006

*Capacity Development: The whys and how's*, capacity.org, Issue 19, Oct. 2003

*Ways of Thinking about Capacity Issues*, by Peter Morgan, Maastricht, ECDPM, 2006





*What is Capacity? Going beyond the Conventional Wisdom*, by Peter Morgan, written for the News from the Nordic Africa Institute 2/2004

*Supporting the Capacity of Organisations at Community Level, An Exploration of Issues, Methods and Principles for Good Practice*, Katie Wright-Revolledo OPS No: 48, Oxford: INTRAC January 2007

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