# Lessons from donor support to technical assistance programmes

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## Question

*(a) Identify sources, key findings and learning on the effectiveness and impact of donor support for technical assistance programmes.*

*(b) Identify contacts from donors, think tanks etc, with deep experience of monitoring, evaluating and learning on the effectiveness and impact of donor supported TA programmes.*

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[1] Roz Price, Institute of Development Studies, undertook mapping of organisations with expertise in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning of technical assistance programmes, which is found in the Annex to this report.

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# 1. Overview

Since the 1990s, technical assistance has gradually been replaced as the foremost approach to international development programming. *Capacity building* now dominates discourse and practice (Lucas, 2013: p.1; Pearson, 2011: p.10). Capacity is defined as "the ability of people organisations and society to manage their affairs successfully" and capacity building aims to support its development in the Global South (OECD Development Assistance Committee [DAC], 2006: p.12). Technical assistance and capacity building differ in emphasis. While the former focuses on improving individuals' knowledge and skills, usually through training or technical consultation, the latter seeks to enhance multiple capabilities at the individual, organisational and system levels usually employing a diverse range of activities (Pearson, 2011: pp. 2-4). Capacity building also places greater emphasis on recognising and strengthening existing country capacities, prioritising local ownership and ensuring sustainable change (Lucas, 2013: p.2). Table 1 summarises the approaches' different assumptions and characteristics.

**Table 1: Approaches to development assistance**

| Development approach | Assumptions | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| *Technical Assistance (1960s – 1990s):* Foreign experts come in to operate their own projects, which they expect to yield similar results to those seen in developed countries<br><br>- and -<br><br>*Technical Cooperation (1960s - 1990s):* Greater emphasis on training, transferring knowledge, based on national policies and priorities | • Developing countries should just model themselves after the developed ones<br>• Few or no resources available locally<br>• Developing countries should partner with developed ones | • Projects launched, but disconnected from local goals or priorities<br>• Dependence on foreign experts<br>• Expertise not always transferred from foreigners to locals<br>• The externally driven models often ignore local realities<br>• Idea of 'assistance' highlights unequal relationship between developed and developing countries<br>• Local expertise enhanced<br>• Projects somewhat more in line with local priorities and goals<br>• Driven by outside forces, opportunities missed to develop local institutions and strengthen local capacities<br>• Expensive |
| *Capacity Development (1990s – present):* A focus on empowering and strengthening endogenous capabilities | • Developing countries should own, design, direct, implement and sustain the process themselves | • Makes the most of local resources – people, skills, technologies, institutions – and builds on these<br>• Favours sustainable change<br>• Takes an inclusive approach in addressing issues of power inequality in relations between rich and poor, mainstream and marginalized (countries, groups and individuals)<br>• Emphasizes deep, lasting transformations through policy and institutional reforms<br>• Values 'best fit' for the context over 'best practice'; as one size does not fit all |

*Source: Adapted from Pearson, 2011: pp.11-12*

Reflecting the paradigmatic shift in emphasis, recent literature discusses aid effectiveness and impact in relation to capacity building programmes, rather than technical assistance. To ensure coverage of the latest evidence and learning, this rapid review adopts the same approach. It finds that there is a dearth of rigorous evaluations of capacity building interventions. This is due to a lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the field, conceptual confusion in the literature

and a tendency to view capacity building as an "end in itself" rather than a "means to an end". Nevertheless, there is a large literature documenting good practice for effective capacity building. These practices have been identified through (i) practitioners' experiences of implementing and funding capacity building interventions and lessons learned (ii) theoretical and empirical research on "what capacity is and how it develops", which has been used to generate implications for capacity building activities and (iii) recent evaluations of capacity building that have emerged to fill the evidence gap. This review discusses five best practices where there is strong consensus in the literature:

- Ensuring country *ownership;*
- Recognising and responding to *complexity;*
- Improving delivery of *technical assistance;*
- Involving *different levels of government,* as well as *non-state actors;*
- Focusing on *results.*

The selected key sources in Section 4 provide further evidence and learning on capacity building effectiveness and impact.

## Definitions

**Technical assistance/ cooperation:** The provision of advice and/or skills, in the form of specialist personnel, training and scholarship, grants for research and associated costs (DFID, 2013).

**Capacity:** The ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully (OECD DAC, 2006: p.12).[2] International development is frequently concerned with **organisational capacity.** Organisational capacity comprises multiple inter-related elements (Datta, Shaxson & Pellini, 2012: p.2; Denney, Mallet, Pratt & Tucker, 2014: p.6). For example, Datta et al. (2012) describe organisational capacity as comprising: context and conceptual framework, vision, strategy, culture, structures and systems, skills and material resources. The former four elements are largely invisible, while the latter three are more tangible.

**Capacity development:** A process whereby people, organisations or society as a whole create, unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time (OECD DAC, 2006: p.12).[3]

**Capacity building:** A purposeful, external intervention to support capacity development (OECD DAC, 2006: p.12).

**Effectiveness:** A measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its outcome objectives (OECD DAC, n.d.). In the context of capacity building, effectiveness is defined as the extent to which aid activities achieve change in the capacity of an individual, organisation and/or society (Simister & Smith, 2010: p.9).

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[2] While definitions of capacity are multiple in international development discourse, Clarke & Oswald's (2010: pp.2-3) review of the literature on capacity development argues that OECD DAC's has gained general acceptance.

[3] Again, multiple definitions of capacity development exist, but OECD DAC's is perhaps the most widely recognised with many agencies, including EuropaAid, GIZ and ADB, adopting this definition (Pearson, 2011: p.9)

**Impact:** The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention on local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators (OECD DAC, n.d.). The impacts of a capacity building intervention include the changes that occur as a result of improved individual or organisational capacity, and may include more accountable and/or effective governance, economic growth, improved livelihoods or empowered civil society.

## 2. Effectiveness of capacity building: evidence & learning

DFID's (2013) *How to note: Capacity Development* provides an overview of the overall evidence base for capacity building effectiveness. It finds that the evidence is "fragmented and patchy" with few rigorous evaluations explicitly of capacity building interventions (p.4). Five years later, ODI's Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) finds that the extent to which dominant capacity building approaches are "fit for purpose" remains a "major evidence gap" (Denney, Mallet & Benson, 2017: p.i). The literature provides three explanations for this paucity of rigorous evidence on capacity building effectiveness:

i. *A lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E).* Simister and Smith (2010) find that "the monitoring and evaluation of capacity building is as much a challenge now as it was two decades ago" (p.3). While some organisations are attempting to measure the effectiveness of their capacity building work, efforts are "patchy and inconsistent, which makes it hard to draw overall conclusions" (p.23). Reasons for this include the inherent challenges of monitoring and evaluating capacity building (see "Focus on results" below), a lack of resources and low prioritisation of M&E, particularly among INGOs. Additionally, the paper speculates that organisations are dissuaded from rigorous M&E because "So much time, effort and money has been put into capacity building that there is a genuine fear of what might be found if we look too closely. There are concerns that investments in capacity building have not brought about desired changes [in individuals'/ organisations' capacity]" (pp.24-25).

ii. *Conceptual confusion.* DFID (2013) argues that because capacity building "covers a wide range of concepts… and practical applications", few studies explicitly attempt to measure its effectiveness. Indeed, Denney and Valters' (2015) evidence synthesis on the relationship between capacity building and improved organisational capacity in the security sector finds that the literature's "limited articulation of, and engagement with, the concept of capacity building [and] its components" is a major limitation when researching capacity building effectiveness (p.iii). Studies either conflate capacity building with other intervention activities or discuss capacity building in broad terms without disaggregating it into its component parts (e.g. training, technical assistance etc). This makes it difficult to compare and aggregate findings across studies.

iii. *The view that capacity building is "an end in itself".* Clarke and Oswald (2010) find that there are at least two perspectives on capacity building. The predominant "technical" perspective sees capacity building as a *means* to achieving various development objectives. This is the perspective adopted by the Learning Network on Capacity Development (LenCD), which summarises the latest thinking and learning on capacity building. It says, "The starting point for thinking about capacity development is… 'Capacity for what?' [This] should be answered in terms of a development result, so that it is clear why the capacity is needed" (LenCD, n.d.). However, the "emancipatory" perspective sees capacity building not as a means to an end but as an *end in itself*. Under this perspective, the effectiveness of capacity building in terms of achieving

individual/ organisational change is less important than its merits as an approach to development assistance. These merits include participation, empowerment and social justice during aid delivery.

Despite the lack of rigorous evaluation, there is a surprising degree of consensus on good practice in capacity building provision. These practices have been identified through (i) practitioners' experiences of implementing and funding capacity building interventions and lessons learned (e.g. Leigh, 2013; Datta et al., 2012) (ii) theoretical and empirical research on "what capacity is and how it develops", which has been used to generate implications for capacity building activities (e.g. European Centre for Development Policy Management [ECDPM], 2008) and (iii) recent evaluations of capacity building that have emerged to fill the evidence gap (e.g. OECD, 2012). Selected key examples of each of these types of literature are provided in Section 4, while a summary of their main findings is provided below.

## Key findings

### Ensure partner *ownership*

There is strong consensus in the literature that capacity building activities must be partner-owned to be effective and sustainable. The rationale is two-fold. First, capacity development is an inherently political process: it occurs when influential actors in an organisation or system build a "coalition for change" (Datta et al., 2012: p.3). Experience demonstrates that outsiders can shape incentives for change, but cannot form and lead change coalitions (Datta et al., 2012: p.3). Second, it is a reasonable assumption that local partners are best placed to identify "what capacity they need, how… it can best be developed in their context, and what support they need from development partners to achieve it" (Lucas, 2013: p.8). This is because many elements of organisational capacity are intangible or invisible (see Section 1), and can only be identified through long-term immersion (Datta et al., 2012: pp.3-4).

The OECD's (2012) evidence synthesis based on 19 "peer reviews" of donor capacity building activities suggests that ownership can be achieved by ensuring partners play the lead role in (pp.11-12):

- Identifying capacity gaps and priorities for external support;
- Planning how best to respond to capacity needs and designing programmes, particularly how external support may be helpful and over what period of time;
- Contracting and managing technical services, including in drawing up terms of reference for providers of services and the procurement and decision-making process;
- Implementing programmes and reviewing progress. This requires that partners commit resources, particularly senior human resources and time to the capacity development process.

Additionally, strengthening and using local capacity development expertise, such as consultants or technology providers, can increase country ownership (Lucas, 2013: p.8).

However, despite the strong consensus on this point, the OECD report (2012) and Lucas (2013) find that operationalising country ownership remains a challenge. Funders' domestic accountability requirements and internal procedures create incentives to deliver specific, short-

term results. Consequently, capacity building is frequently influenced by donor priorities and perceptions instead of local demand (Lucas, 2013: p.8; OECD, 2012: p.11).

**Recognise and respond to *complexity***

As discussed in Section 1, organisational capacity is theorised to consist of several inter-related elements. Moreover, these elements are continuously affected by both internal factors (such as individuals and their relationships/ interactions) and the external environment, as well as by each other, such that capacity is in a constant state of change. The literature argues that practitioners should respond to this complexity by taking "a holistic and system-responsive" approach to organisational capacity building, employing numerous types of activity (Datta et al., 2012, p.5). Table 2 summarises potential activities.

Table 2: Examples of capacity building activities

| Conventional | Advanced |
|---|---|
| • Training and related workshop forms;<br>• Technical advice (often focused on specific systems and/or procedures);<br>• Support to project management;<br>• Support to lobby and advocacy work. | • Action research and action learning, including pilots and laboratories;<br>• Knowledge brokering and networking;<br>• Various kinds of multi-stakeholder processes;<br>• Stimulating mutual and public accountability mechanisms;<br>• Coaching and mentoring;<br>• Change and process facilitation;<br>• Leadership development;<br>• Value chain development;<br>• Knowledge networking. |

*Source: Ubels et al. (2010) in Datta et al. (2012)*

The LenCD learning package (n.d.) provides advice on selecting intervention activities in its *How to design the overall capacity development approach…* webpage:

"The more complex the need and context, the bigger the need for a range of responses working simultaneously and consecutively over time.  This can be called the 'best fit' selection. A range of responses are needed to address the hard and soft capacity needs at all levels, because it would be very unusual for any capacity need to be fully met by a single intervention. It is not wise to choose the interventions for the whole long-term process in detail at the start: it is better to adopt an iterative, step by step, approach that is flexible and responsive to emerging capacity and identified priorities for the next steps in the overall process.  There are many different tools that can be considered for the various needs in different parts of the system." [4]

Again, while there is consensus that holistic, adaptive approaches to capacity building are more effective, operationalisation lags behind. Research by ODI's SLRC examining the activities of capacity building projects in the field finds that "in practice, there is often a strong reliance on a narrow selection of tools, most notably training and the supply of equipment or resources" (Denney et al, 2017: p.10). These approaches tend to focus on developing the more tangible,

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[4] LenCD defines hard capacities as "capacities that are generally considered to be technical, functional, tangible and visible" and soft capacities as "capacities that are generally considered to be social, relational, intangible and invisible". The former largely correspond to the bottom elements of Kaplan's hierarchy, the latter to the top elements (see Section 1).

visible aspects of organisational capacity, i.e. knowledge/ skills and resources, and thus are based on a "limited conceptualisation of how [capacity] change happens" (Denney et al., 2017: p.10).

**Improve delivery of *TA***

The literature recognises that TA, defined as the delivery of expertise and/ or training, will remain a key activity in most capacity building interventions (Lucas 2013, pp. 9-10; OECD, 2012: p.15). It makes a number of recommendations for improving TA effectiveness in delivering sustainable capacity change. First, TA should resist the temptation to simply fill gaps or "get the job done". Even when TA has the short-term objective of supporting partners to complete particular tasks, it should ensure that it delivers skills, systems and structures that outlast the intervention. Second, TA should avoid establishing parallel management and delivery systems, since this can undermine local systems, diffuse consultant accountability (which should unambiguously be to the partner) and distort public-sector salaries (Lucas, 2009: p.2). Instead, it should use partner country systems wherever possible, including partner budgets for aid delivery and local procurement processes for TA service delivery. Finally, TA (like other capacity building activities) should be responsive to partner demand rather than directional, understand the local context and demonstrate value for money (OECD, 2012: p. 15). The following recent approaches to TA provision are promising in this regard:

- *Twinning and peer-to-peer approaches.* These models pair similar public agencies or departments in different countries to foster the long-term exchange of knowledge, learning and expertise. They emphasise collaboration and equal partnership.
- *Capacity building for local TA providers.* Some donors are developing local or regional TA service markets to increase the availability of context-specific, value-for-money TA and give partner countries more options when seeking support for capacity development.
- *South-south and triangular co-operation.* Under these approaches, developing countries and emerging economies share their experiences, knowledge, expertise and learning. Financial backing or network development can be effective ways for Western donors to support demand-driven, South-south approaches to TA provision.

More details of these approaches and their emerging evidence base is provided in Rao (2013) *New thinking on technical assistance to resolve knowledge and capacity gaps* (GSDRC Helpdesk Report).

**Involve different levels of government, as well as non-state actors**

Donor capacity building efforts have tended to focus on national government ministries (particularly Ministries of Finance), while the centre-of-government (e.g. presidents'/ prime ministers' offices and cabinet functions) and sub-national governments (e.g. provincial or district authorities) have received less attention (Denney et al., 2017: p.20; Leigh, 2013: p.205). Moreover, non-state actors are frequently overlooked, particularly when an intervention's intended objective is improved governance (OECD, 2012: p.23; Denney: 2017; p.19). The literature argues that involving a broader range of actors as partners/ beneficiaries during capacity building interventions can improve effectiveness and impact. For example, based on her observations in the field, Leigh (2013) argues that capacity building for governance projects are more effective when they work with centre of government as well as line ministries (p.209): "Central institutions… provide the necessary coordination and influence to get the rest of the

government pulling in the same direction." Meanwhile, ODI's SLRC research project finds that building capacity for service provision achieves better results when district- or provincial-level authorities are considered since this is "where [policy] implementation actually happens" (Denney et al., 2017: p.20). Building the capacity of non-state actors can also contribute to better governance and other development outcomes. For example, a strengthened civil society is central to improving government accountability, while supporting non-state authorities, such as religious organisations or tribal chiefs, can contribute to improved public services in some contexts (OECD, 2012: p.23; Denney et al., 2017: p.19).

The LenCD learning package (n.d.) provides guidance on how to identify actors to engage during a capacity building intervention: "Taking the time to do a good stakeholder analysis… can help to identify key change champions and partners and help surface issues and challenges related to the broader context. Additionally, the stakeholder analysis can help inform an assessment of existing capacity and needs." However, in practice, decisions about which actors to engage are influenced by political factors or donors own risk management procedures rather than where capacity is most needed. This has resulted in the persistent national government bias in external capacity building support (OECD, 2012: p.23).

**Focus on results**

Monitoring and communicating capacity building outcomes is a pre-requisite to ensuring intervention effectiveness. First, it supports clarity of purpose and therefore supports planning and management. Second, it allows for better performance monitoring and course correction. Third, it supports rigorous evidence and learning of what does and doesn't work, which can inform future programming. Fourth, it ensures accountability of implementers to donors, and donors to partners (OECD, 2012: p.29; Lucas, 2014: p.6).

M&E of capacity development is inherently challenging. The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTAC) provides a summary of key issues (INTAC, 2016: p.7):

- Many capacity building results are social, relational and intangible (e.g. soft skills, values, the ability to learn), which by their nature are hard to measure.
- Capacity development is not a linear process, and it can be difficult to separate out purposeful, intended changes from those that evolve in response to changing internal and external environments. This makes the challenge of attribution particularly acute.
- Capacity building can take time to deliver outcomes, including enhanced capacity and changed ways of working.
- Many common M&E approaches (notably the logical framework) are predictive, requiring outputs, outcomes, indicators and targets to be defined ex-ante. These fail to allow for complexity or emergent change and often discourage flexibility and adaptation.

Nevertheless, promising approaches to rigorous M&E of capacity building are emerging, including outcome mapping, stories of change, ECDPM's five capabilities framework and others. Details of these approaches and their potential for supporting M&E of capacity building are provided in INTRAC, 2016: pp.10-21; Lucas, 2013: pp.5-6 and Simister & Smith, 2010: pp.14-18.

# 3. Impact of capacity building: evidence & learning

Simister & Smith's (2010: p.20) review of the evidence base for capacity building interventions finds that evidence of impact is absent: "we simply don't know… whether or not the improved capacity of Southern-based organisations leads to improved lives, and how." In addition to the reasons outlined in Section 2, this evidence gap is due to:

- *Diverse understandings of impact.* Capacity building interventions support a diverse set of impact goals and collect data against widely different development indicators. This makes it difficult to synthesise evidence across different interventions.

- *Inherent challenges of assessing impact:* As in other areas of development, measuring impact is inhibited by the long timeframes required, attribution challenges and the difficulty of identifying valid impact indicators.

The literature identifies a number of solutions for building the evidence base linking improved capacity to improved impact. These include:

- *Illustration.* Simister & Smith (2010: pp. 8-9) argue that though it may be difficult or even impossible to measure wider changes resulting from capacity building activities, it is still usually possible to illustrate at least some of the changes that have occurred, highlighting specific examples. "Illustrating change does not mean relying on anecdotal evidence. For example, a long-term change resulting from improved capacity could be thoroughly analysed using appropriate research methodologies. This analysis might contribute significantly to learning and improved practice."

- *Break up the causal chain:* While a direct causal link between a capacity building activity and a development impact is difficult to demonstrate, it is sometimes possible to provide evidence that a specific capacity building outcome (e.g. public sector reform) has a causal effect on a development impact (e.g. economic growth). This evidence may be generated through primary of secondary research. Rao (2012) takes this approach to generate evidence that TA provision to governments in the Middle East can contribute to inclusive growth, demonstrating first that TA has been proven to facilitate public sector reform under certain conditions, and second that public sector reform has been linked to improved economic governance and growth.

# 4. Selected key sources

**Datta, A., Shaxson, L. & Pellini, A. (2012).** *Capacity, complexity and consulting: Lessons from managing capacity development projects* **(Working Paper 334). London, U.K.: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).**
https://www.odi.org/publications/6348-capacity-complexity-and-consulting-lessons-managing-capacity-development-projects

This paper synthesises learning on effective approaches to managing and funding capacity building interventions. Evidence is drawn from the grey and academic literature through a "light-touch" review, as well as from ODI's Research and Policy Development programme (RAPID) which provides capacity building services to public and private institutions and organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Evidence from RAPID includes project staff observations, project reports and after action reviews collected over ten years. The executive summary provides four

best practice recommendations for consultants implementing capacity building projects and six recommendations for donors funding capacity building projects. These are elaborated further in the main body of the report.

**Denney, L., Mallet, R. & Benson, M.S. (2017).** *Service delivery and state capacity: findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research* **Consortium. London, U.K.: ODI.**
https://www.odi.org/publications/10840-service-delivery-and-state-capacity-findings-secure-livelihoods-research-consortium

The report's research question is "How do external actors attempt to develop the capacities of states in fragile and conflict-affected situations to deliver better services- and how fit for purpose are the dominant approaches?" (p.i). The report synthesises the findings of 14 primary studies on the effectiveness of capacity building drawn from eight countries. It finds that "results are frequently disappointing" due to four issues with how capacity building is operationalised in the field. First, training remains the default tool of capacity building; second, capacity development is often treated as a technical process and practitioners fail to support the political drivers of change; third, capacity building activities frequently target formal government and overlook other state actors that are critical for service provision; and fourth, capacity building tends to focus on individuals and organisations rather than taking a "systemic" approach.

**Denney, L. and Valters, C. (2015)** *Evidence Synthesis: Security Sector Reform and Organisational Capacity Building.* **London, U.K.: Department for International Development.**
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541037/Security-sector-reform-organisational-capacity-building.pdf

This evidence synthesis examines the following research questions: "What is the evidence on the relationship between organisational capacity building interventions and (i) improved accountability; (ii) increased responsiveness; and (iii) improved capacity to deliver among public security institutions and agencies in low- and middle-income countries?" and "What factors enable or hinder these improvements?" Based on evidence drawn from 149 studies of security sector reform, the review finds that the literature "overwhelmingly" suggests a weak relationship between capacity building and governance outcomes in the security sector, though there is more evidence supporting its contribution to service delivery than accountability and responsiveness. Factors that enhance capacity building effectiveness include a recognition of the political nature of capacity development, context-tailored interventions and a willingness to build on existing local institutional forms and capacities. Additionally, "Where donors are more flexible, devolve decision-making, engage beyond the short term, work on specific security and justice problems and coordinate among themselves, [capacity building interventions] are more likely to see improvements in outcomes" (p.v).

**Hope, K. R. (2009). Capacity Development for Good Governance in Developing Countries: Some Lessons from the Field.** *International Journal of Public Administration,* **32, 728-740. DOI: 10.1080/01900690902908562**

Based on his field experience and lessons learned as Principal Economic Adviser for USAID, Hope identifies six principles for effective external support to capacity development for good governance. These include: i) ensuring capacity development initiatives are locally owned and controlled; ii) approaching capacity development as a continuous, dynamic, and long-term process; iii) ensuring that financing contributions are aligned with local capacity goals; iv) building on existing government capacities and avoiding capacity substitution; v) involving a broad-based

and participatory approach; and vi) taking a comprehensive approach that targets primary and support personnel, institutions, and communities.

**Learning Network on Capacity Development (LenCD). (n.d.)** *Learning package on capacity development.* **Retrieved from:** http://www.lencd.org/learning/learning-package-capacity-development

LenCD's *Learning package on capacity development* aims to provide a synthesis of evidence and current thinking on capacity development and is frequently cited in the literature. The package provides an overview of international best practice in supporting capacity development, as well as detailed "How-to" pages on the following topics: assess change readiness, assess existing capacity and capacity needs, formulate capacity goals, design capacity building approaches, map and influence stakeholders, work with incentives to stimulate change and develop M&E processes and measure capacity outcomes. It also maintains a catalogue of case studies and evaluations of capacity development projects, including multi-country studies. However, despite being a living document, most of the evidence included in LenCD's package is from before 2009.

**Leigh, C. (2013). Building State Effectiveness: Evolving Donor Approaches to Good Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa. In B. Everill & J. Kaplan (Eds.),** *The History and Practice of Humanitarian Intervention and Aid in Africa* **(pp.197-216). Palgrave Macmillan**.

Leigh asks whether and how donor-led capacity building interventions can improve state capacity to deliver public goods and services in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based on her observations of the capacity building activities of the Africa Governance Initiative, ODI, the Africa Capacity Building Foundation and other practitioners, she concludes that "there is a long way to go in working out how and if governments' capacity development can be accelerated by external support" (p.208).[5] Capacity building interventions avoid some of the problems associated with traditional donor activities, namely the habit of bypassing state institutions when providing services, thereby undermining government ownership and capacity. Nevertheless, they face issues of their own. These include a bias towards supporting line ministries over centre-of-government, an over-reliance on expensive training and report-writing, a tendency to support policy design over policy delivery and a failure to coordinate programmes with local priorities and processes which places a coordination burden on local officials. Leigh identifies five emerging lessons for "increasing the impact and sustainability of external capacity-development interventions": offer independent, embedded advice, work with the centre-of-government, support *delivery* of existing government strategies, demonstrate tangible results and avoid capacity substitution (pp.209-210).

**Lucas, B. (2014).** *Capacity development at the national level in fragile and conflict-affected states* **(GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, U.K.: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.** http://www.gsdrc.org/publications/capacity-development-at-the-national-level-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states/

This rapid literature review summarises best practice in capacity building for national-level government institutions in fragile and conflict-affected states. It finds that "there is a clear international consensus on desirable principles for capacity [building] in fragile states, which

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[5] The Africa Governance Initiative was founded by Tony Blair in 2008 with a mission to build capacity for governance in African states (see Annex).

include country ownership, use of country systems, improvements to technical assistance and training, adapting initiatives to local contexts, a focus on adaptive and flexible approaches, a focus on results, improved coordination, and a focus on a clear set of priority sectors" (p.1). It also presents evidence from four evaluations of government capacity building projects in Afghanistan which demonstrate their role in improving individual and organisational capacity.

**Lucas, B. (2013).** *Current thinking on capacity development* **(GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, U.K.: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.** http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/hdq960.pdf

This rapid review summarises the latest thinking on capacity development in the theoretical and empirical literature. It identifies and discusses the following key issue areas for capacity building practitioners: responding to complex problems, measuring results, selecting the level and type of intervention, promoting country ownership, shifting donor cultures, promoting professionalisation among consultants and working in fragile contexts. It also summarises "success factors" that support effective capacity development programming, as identified by the literature.

**Lucas, B. (2009).** *Changing approaches to technical assistance* **(GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, U.K.: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.** http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/hd586.pdf

This rapid review provides an overview of early evidence and learning on best practice in donor-funded TA provision, including an annotated bibliography of key synthesis reports and selected donor programme strategies and evaluations from 2005 to 2009. It finds that local ownership, increased use of local consultants and management systems and pooling TA funds were already considered best practice in 2009 and observes that donors were changing their stated approaches to TA provision accordingly, though slowly. It also notes that "Many agencies now see technical cooperation as being primarily and explicitly for the purpose of capacity building, and are designing initiatives accordingly" (p.3).

**The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2012).** *Supporting Partners to Develop their Capacity: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews.* **Paris, France: OECD Publishing.** http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/partneringwithcivilsociety.htm

This evidence synthesis draws on 19 OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer reviews in order to identify lessons for effective capacity building, including technical assistance which remains "one of the main forms of DAC members' assistance to partner countries" (p.5). DAC peer reviews assess aid effectiveness and impact for key bilateral donors, as well documenting donor experiences and good practices. The synthesis identifies 12 evidence-based lessons/ recommendations for DAC donors which are grouped under three headings: strategic framework, delivering effective support and learning and accountability. For each, it explains *why* the recommendation is important for effective capacity building and how it can be operationalised in practice. The synthesis notes that "while there is broad consensus that capacity development is important, we still struggle to support it effectively. Hence the need for this booklet…" (p. 8).

**UK Department for International Development. (2013).** *How to note: Capacity Development.* **London, U.K: Department for International Development.** https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224810/How-to-note-capacity-development.pdf

This note summarises the evidence base for capacity building and asks how external actors, including DFID, can better support capacity development. It finds that evidence of capacity building effectiveness is "fragmented and patchy" with few rigorous studies and evaluations explicitly on capacity building interventions in existence (p.4). Nevertheless, it identifies emerging lessons for capacity building practitioners, including the need to combine technical assistance with other types of interventions such as coaching, mentoring, study-tours (including South-South), change management, leadership development, partnerships (such as twinning programmes) and networking; the importance of using beneficiary country systems and supporting local leadership; and the requirement to better measure the contribution of capacity building initiatives to desired results. It also dedicates a section to the particular challenges of capacity building in fragile and conflict-affected states.

## 5. Other references

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# 6. Annex: Organisational mapping

Table 1: Organisations with expertise in monitoring, evaluation and learning from technical assistance (Please Note: many of the donor organisations have evaluation units but online profiles for individual contacts working in these are not publically available. The majority of donors also mostly contract out to consultancies.)

| Organisation | Type | Key Contact Name, Job title | Contact email | Examples of work and comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Australia, DFAT, The Office of Development Effectiveness, Independent Evaluation Committee** | Donor | Dr Wendy Jarvie, Independent Evaluation Committee Member, Visiting Professor, School of Business, University of NSW at Canberra | governance@dfat.gov.au | Independent Evaluation Committee<br><br>DFAT uses consultancies for Programme evaluations |
| **Global Affairs Canada, Development Evaluations Division** | Donor | David Heath, Head of Development Evaluation<br><br>Vivek Prakash, Evaluation Division | enqserv@international.gc.ca (General email for Global Affairs Canada. No individual emails are publically available online) | Synthesis Report – Summative Evaluation of Canada's Afghanistan Development Program<br><br>Canada uses consultancies for Programme evaluations |
| **Denmark Danida, Evaluation Department** | Donor | N/A | eval@um.dk (General email for the Evaluation Department of Danida)<br><br>(Mike Speirs, Programme Officer, Evaluation of the Africa Programme for Peace: mikspe@um.dk) | N/A<br><br>Danida mostly uses consultancies for Programme Evaluations e.g. NCG |
| **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH** | Donor | N/A | evaluierung@giz.de (General email for the Monitoring and Evaluation section of GIZ) | Supra-regional: Sector Project Increasing Effectiveness of German Development Cooperation |
| **Swedish International Development** | Donor | Dr Bernt Andersson, Head, Health Division | bernt.andersson@sida.se | Final Evaluation of the National |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cooperation Agency (Sida)** | | | sida@sida.se (General email for Sida) | Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) Capacity Development Project (CDP)<br><br>Sida carries out Decentralised Evaluations for Programmes |
| **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),** DAC Network on Development Evaluation | IO | Hans Lundgren, Head of the Secretariat for the Network, OECD | hans.lundgren@oecd.org | Evaluation Systems in Development Co-operation, 2016 |
| **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Independent Evaluation Office** | IO | N/A | ieo@undp.org (General email for Independent Evaluation Office) | Evaluation Resource Centre |
| **World Bank Group** | IO | Konstantin Atanesyan, Senior Evaluation Officer, Economic Management and Country Programs, Independent Evaluation Group | ieg@worldbank.org (no personal email available. Konstantin Atanesyan has a LinkedIn profile) | N/A |
| **Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT)** | Academic Research Institute, consultancy and think tank | Ella Haruna, Deputy Head of Centre | ella.haruna@wlv.ac.uk | M&E technical assistance to Public Policy Analysis and Management and Project Cycle Management training programme (Caribbean Development Bank) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Centre for Development Impact** | Academic Research Institute and think tank | Chris Barnett, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor | c.barnett@ids.ac.uk | Towards Greater Effectiveness and Accountability in Impact Investing |
| **IIED** | Think tank | Stefano D'Errico, Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning manager, Strategy and Learning Group | stefano.derrico@iied.org | Internal MEL for IIED |
| **NPC** | Charity think tank and consultancy | Anne Kazimirski, Head of Measurement and Evaluation | anne.kazimirski@thinkNPC.org | Global innovations in measurement and evaluation |
| **ODI** | Think tank | Tiina Pasanen, Research Fellow | t.pasanen@odi.org.uk | How to design a monitoring and evaluation framework for a policy research project |
| **Oxfam GB** | INGO | Claire Hutchings, Head of Programme Quality | chutchings@oxfam.org.uk | Resilience measurement – MEL Approaches in practice |
| **Cambridge Economic Policy Associates (CEPA)** | Consultancy | Paget Fulcher, Managing Consultant<br><br>Frances MacLellan, Economist | info@cepa.co.uk (this may no longer be in use, there is also an online contact form. There are no individual contact details available.) | Evaluation of the PIDG Technical Assistance Facility |
| **Coffey International** | Consultancy | Simon Griffiths, Principal, Research, monitoring and evaluation practice in Europe | Online contact form for Simon Griffiths here<br><br>+44 786 050 578 9 | Evaluating DFID's Girls' Education Challenge Fund |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Integrity Consulting** | Consultancy | Joe Savage, Head of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning | info@integrityglobal.com (no personal email available. Joe Savage also has a LinkedIn Account) | Mid-term Evaluation of the DFID Somalia Stability Fund |
| **Itad** | Consultancy specialising in M&E | Chris Perry, Principal consultant, Governance team | chris.perry@itad.com | Public Sector Accountability and Governance Programme – Pillar One, Accountable, Responsible and Capable Government |
| **Nordic Consulting Group (NCG)** | Consultancy | Anne-Lise Klausen, Board Member and Partner, Fragility, Conflict, Partnerships & Governance | alk@ncg.dk | Synthesis of Evaluations on Technical Assistance for Danida in 2007. Recent evaluations with NCG |
| **Oxford Policy Management** | Consultancy | Andrew Wyatt, Principle Consultant<br><br>Stephen Jones, Principle Consultant | andrew.wyatt@opml.co.uk<br><br>stephen.jones@opml.co.uk | Multi-Stakeholder Evaluation Public Sector Governance Reform |

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## About this report