CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity Building
For Sustainable Development
Partnerships

A Template for Stakeholders, Governments, and Agencies

By Minu Hemmati & Robert Whitfield
Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future

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Note: Annex's are available in the online version only at: www.earthsummit2002.org

INTRODUCTION

Partnerships for sustainable development are not new but have been brought to the fore within the Johannesburg Summit process. They require an enabling environment of good governance and adequate financing mechanisms. They also require effective communication and collaboration among different stakeholders and sectors. The present paper is focusing on the latter.

In order to be designed and implemented successfully, interested parties and those facilitating partnership initiatives often need to expand their knowledge and skills, and establish a common base of working together, among them being:

- Knowledge about the integrative concept of sustainable development, existing agreements and processes;
- Understanding the notion of stakeholders in sustainable development;
- Understanding communication and collaboration in highly diverse groups;
- Management, finance, and administration skills.

This paper aims to suggest goals, components, and methodologies for capacity building programmes that aim to enable stakeholders, governments, and agencies to successfully engage in partnerships for sustainable development. The principle goal of such programmes is to increase implementation of sustainable development in a range of areas, through the following aims:

Such programmes are meant to:

- Increase capacities of all stakeholders to effectively design, initiate and implement partnerships for sustainable development;
- Increase the effectiveness of existing partnerships for sustainable development;
- Improve networks and knowledge building among organisations engaged in partnerships;
- Improve the quality of policy decisions through increased capacity of stakeholders to feed their knowledge into decision-making.

The programme outlined below is a suggested template that can be used to develop capacity-building programmes for partnerships. It offers a possible scope of relevant components and methodologies, rather than a large, prescriptive set to be addressed. Goals (2.), content (3.) and methodologies (4.) will need to be adapted to the respective contexts and needs of potential participants. Therefore, we are suggesting a consultative process to be used when designing the capacity-building programme (5.). For the purpose of illustration, we have also included an example (6.).

Annexes I-III provide background material on partnerships and the principles and strategies of multi-stakeholder processes.

GOALS

Capacity building for sustainable development partnerships aims to contribute to the achievement of the following goals:

- Enable all stakeholders to successfully initiate, design and implement partnerships for sustainable development;
- Enable all stakeholders to effectively monitor and evaluate their partnership efforts, and learn from their experiences;
- Enable all stakeholders to effectively feed their experience and expertise into policy making;
- Strengthen the stakeholder community as a whole and those engaged in partnerships by increasing professionalism and effectiveness; and
- Enable "trained" stakeholders to carry out similar capacity building programmes among their constituencies.

through:

- Building necessary background knowledge of sustainable development and relevant decision-making processes at the international, regional, sub-regional, national and local levels;
- Addressing the intellectual, practical and personal challenges of a partnership approach to sustainable development;
- Learning about tools and techniques for designing and implementing partnerships; and
- Learning about the processes used to design, implement and evaluate the capacity-building programme itself.

Looking at the knowledge and skills that help to create successful multi-stakeholder partnerships leads to defining the following components for capacity building programmes:

CONTENT

Sustainable development

Rationale: The concept of sustainable development is complex and so are the political, social and economic processes related to its realisation. Potential partners should have a solid knowledge of the concept, its three pillars, it's analytical differentiation into sectoral and cross-sectoral issues and the importance of good governance and enabling environments.

Partnerships for sustainable development should aim to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development agreements, the most prominent recent ones being the Millennium Development Goals and the goals and targets set at the Johannesburg Summit. In order to do that, potential partners need to be well aware of the priorities set in those agreements and the continuing policy and review processes relating to them, at the various levels. Potential partners also need to gain an understanding of existing and planned implementation programmes as well as partnerships – and how to get that information - so as to be able to identify the specific contribution any potential partnership can make.

Components:

- Sustainable development and its components: environmental, social and economic pillars and their inter-linkages
- Good governance and sustainable development; the multi-stakeholder approach and questions of democracy (legitimacy; participation);
- Knowledge about the relevant international agreements, primarily the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;
- Knowledge about relevant institutions and processes that operate in support of partnerships for sustainable development, eg UN and other bodies;
- The international, regional and national political roadmaps for the next five years with a particular focus on the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the Johannesburg outcomes; and
- Existing implementation programmes and partnerships for sustainable development. Scoping what is going on will enable the prospective partners to identify their possible contribution as well as necessary linkages and potential additional partners;

Stakeholders and multi-stakeholder collaborative action

Rationale: It has been agreed that sustainable development, although established as an overarching concept in intergovernmental processes, is not something that governments and agencies can achieve on their own. It takes the contribution of all stakeholders and their individual and collective actions to bring about the changes required. Innovative solutions to complex problems can be created

when diverse stakeholders are able to share their knowledge, learn together and develop a collective approach. In successful multi-stakeholder partnerships, partners share risks, pool resources and talents and deliver mutual benefits for each partner. As such, they develop collective commitment and capacity to turn ideas and plans into action.

Potential partners should have a solid understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, including governmental and intergovernmental bodies, in sustainable development. This will enable them to develop a better understanding of the perspectives, interests, cultures and behaviour of representatives of different stakeholder groups. It will also enable them to identify more effectively their own tasks and other potential partners for their efforts and the barriers they might encounter. Understanding stakeholders and the concept of partnerships will also help people to identify if setting up a partnership is indeed the appropriate approach for a particular problem. Partnerships that take on tasks that they cannot or should not aim to deliver cannot be successful or run the risk of making a detrimental contribution in the medium and long term.

Components:

- Understanding the notion of stakeholders in sustainable development and the general concept of multi-stakeholder approaches;

- Knowledge about the respective roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in achieving the MDGs and Johannesburg Summit outcomes;

- Skills of analysing the issues at hand vis-à-vis the potential contributions and interests of stakeholders so as to identify the relevant stakeholder groups and potential partner organisations;

- Thorough reflection of every potential partner's interests and capacities;

- Understanding the role of partnerships for sustainable development as one component of the array of mechanisms that need to be put in place (and/or scaled up) to deliver the sustainable development agreements;

- Understanding possible processes and mechanisms of developing and implementing a partnership: from identifying issues, relevant stakeholders and an appropriate size of the group; to developing a shared vision, goals and objectives; to identifying the optimal division of roles and sharing of risks; to possible governance structures for the partnership (see Annex III for a checklist of key points to address when developing a partnership); and

- Understanding the possible societal value of partnerships, ie improved communication and collaboration between diverse people and groups, and the unity-building power of successful joint action.

Communication and collaboration in diverse groups

Rationale: Multi-stakeholder partnerships by their very nature require people of different backgrounds, perspectives, interests, and cultures to communicate and work together. This is a difficult task for anybody, and will be even more so when addressing issues and tasks of high complexity such as sustainable development. Developing a better understanding of the effects of such diversity, including power dynamics and power gaps, can help to improve communication and collaboration and to avoid process failures over communication barriers. Successful multi-stakeholder processes develop collective commitment and capacity to turn ideas and plans into action.

Components:

- Understanding communication, group processes (power dynamics, leadership, ownership, commitment, etc) within a context of high diversity of backgrounds, values, and interests;

- Developing skills relating to effective communication, networking and negotiation that build trust and clarity among participants;

- Understanding of the value of facilitators (honest brokers) in a multi-stakeholder setting;

- Developing facilitation skills that help to run effective meetings, identify partners' respective interests and contributions, creating shared visions,

- Understanding one's personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to a multi-stakeholder setting, challenges of leadership and team work; skills of active listening and constructive dialogue; summarising and feedback; and

- Advocacy skills to effectively relate to decision-making fora, feeding experiences and knowledge gained into official policy-making.

Realising the components from the paragraphs addressing Sustainable Development and Stakeholders & Multi-Stakeholder collaborative action above should be done using concrete examples of issues and problems that potential partnerships could address. Such issues should be identified when developing the capacity building programme so that exercises will address what is relevant to participants (see below).

Tools for managing a project/partnership

Rationale: The group developing a partnership for sustainable development also needs to develop a shared understanding of their strategies, which is helped by having a number of management and research tools at their disposal. Such tools come under different names but they all aim to help develop step-by-step work programmes, identify roles and responsibilities, and identify critical steps and indicators of success and failure. Similarly, any partnership will have to be financed, by the partners themselves or by external sources of investment, grant funding, or other sources. Finally, any partnership needs to be monitored, internally and/or externally,

and it will need to report on its progress, be it to financing bodies or political processes (such as WSSD follow-up).

Components:

- Project management, risk management and similar tools for planning a project, identifying a work programme, and identifying roles and responsibilities;
- Understanding business plan development;
- Skills to help initiate investments and raise funds, including knowledge about potential sources of investment / funding;
- Effective use of information and communication technologies, including the Internet, telephone conferencing, etc; and
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools and their adaptation to a particular partnership

METHODOLOGY

Capacity Building Workshops: Actual capacity building workshops should use a variety of training methodologies, for example:

- overview presentations and panel discussions in plenaries; trainers can be sustainable development issue experts and people who are running partnerships elsewhere to share their knowledge and experience
- specific tasks in small groups, using professional facilitation;
- simulation games (eg for negotiation);
- researching relevant organisations and materials using the Internet;
- developing participants' own case studies; and
- writing scoping papers on issues, relevant stakeholders.

It is also important to create an agenda of mixed activities with sufficient time for individual and group reflection and for networking.

All components should be facilitated professionally and draw on the knowledge and skills of, ideally, a range of trainers. These should generally come from the same cultural and language background as participants; sometimes, however, it can be useful to add an outside perspective.

Facilitators and trainers should be well prepared, understanding the goals and purposes of the programme and the process by which it is being set up. It is important to include them in the programme design and draw on their expertise in terms of developing agendas, determining group sizes, etc.

It is important to have training materials available in languages and styles most accessible for participants. Using materials already developed elsewhere avoids duplicating efforts. Improving materials over time will be based on practical experience and can be improved by using appropriate evaluation tools. It should be considered to make all information about the programme, including the materials used, available to others as well, eg via a website.

Longer Term Programmes: These can benefit from an action research approach where participants engage in building partnerships through the course of the programme and use the programme to reflect, monitor, and improve their activities. They can also include parallel participation in training courses, such as management; finance; or facilitation. Linkages to appropriate university programmes should be explored; in many cases, there are scholarships available, particularly for participants from developing countries.

Evaluation: work with universities and other independent research institutions to monitor and evaluate the programme and its short- and long-term effects.

It is crucial to secure the support and active engagement of key partners (including funders) to make the capacity building programme a reality. One method is to begin working with a small group of advisors that can be developed into a Programme Advisory Group who will guide the programme from its inception to its completion.

In order to ensure engagement and commitment, all relevant stakeholders should be consulted with regard to:

▪ Areas of capacity building to be addressed - the above mentioned components can serve as a list to work from to identify the gaps that the programme shall address;

▪ Scoping existing capacity building programmes and materials that can serve the desired purposes or parts of them - there is no need to re-invent the wheel when we know what is already available;

▪ Main areas for potential stakeholder collaboration - these should be relevant issues in the respective area (eg geographical or topic area) and existing or potential partnerships and good practices to use as examples. This will help to make the programme less abstract and more immediately relevant to participants.

▪ Potential participants, including criteria for participation and outreach mechanisms - participants should constitute a diverse group of potential multipliers who will then transfer this knowledge to others;

▪ Effective trainers and facilitators, preferably to form a gender balanced group from the same region / country;

▪ Appropriate methodologies of capacity building; and

▪ Appropriate approaches to monitoring, evaluating and reporting about the programme.

Annex III provides a more detailed check-list that a group designing a programme might want to address during the preparatory phase.

EXAMPLES

Capacity Building Process for a Regional Implementation Forum

The following is an example of a capacity building programme designed to enable participants to more effectively engage in partnerships for sustainable development.

It has been developed for the **"Implementation Conference Africa. Stakeholder Action Partnerships for Sustainable Development in Africa"** programme that is being developed by the Government of Ghana and Stakeholder Forum in collaboration with a number of regional African bodies. This programme is designed to be able to form the stakeholder part of the Regional Implementation Forum for Africa, as envisaged in the UN Secretary General's Report for CSD-11 (April 2003).

The Implementation Conference Africa programme is intended to contribute to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals and the targets set in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Objectives of the Implementation Conference Africa programme include:

▪ **Empower stakeholders** to fulfil their role in sustainable development policy making and implementation;

▪ **Strengthen the capacity of African stakeholders** to contribute through collaboration to the effective and responsive implementation of the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit and Millennium Development Goals;

▪ Bring together stakeholders from different backgrounds to develop and commit to **concrete, agreed and owned collaborative action plans** aimed at implementing a common agenda for the region's sustainable development, building on and strengthening existing initiatives and initiating new ones;

▪ Promote **exchange of information and knowledge** among stakeholders engaged in partnerships for sustainable development; and

▪ **Promote and strengthen intra-regional networking between stakeholders.**
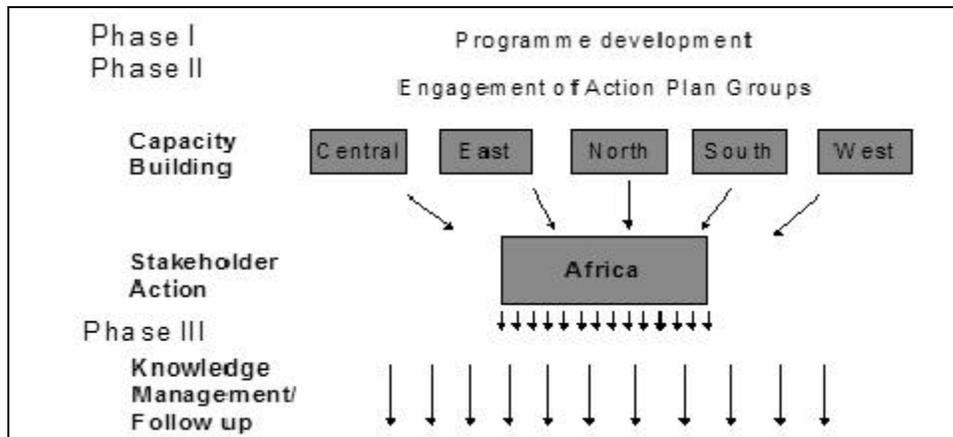
Here, "capacity building for partnerships" forms an integral part of a programme that begins with a consultative process of programme development among the partner organisations and relevant stakeholders, forming a Programme Advisory Board. This will also include jointly developing the content and methodologies of the capacity building programme, that then leads into the practice of partnership building by initiating multi-stakeholder groupings that create joint action plans. Follow-up and knowledge building forms an integral part of the exercise to continue to monitor the partnerships and help them succeed.

The issues that shall be used for the capacity building programme will be identified by combining a top-down and a bottom-up

approach: On the one hand, taking the lead from the international agreements and the priorities set in the international process (such as by CSD11), on the other hand, stakeholders identifying what is most urgently relevant in their countries and their region. In order to define concrete, specific examples, the partners will endeavour to address cross-sectoral issues such as poverty, consumption, good governance, or conflict resolution, within the sectoral issues – for example: using joint efforts addressing water problems to build peace between conflicting communities.

By using concrete examples for the capacity building programme, the capacity building will also help to lay the groundwork for the development of partnerships more effectively: identifying relevant stakeholders or existing implementation efforts, for example, as part of an exercise in the capacity building phase, can be directly used in the subsequent stakeholder action phase.

Phased Programme

S T A K E H O L D E R
F O R U M

STAKEHOLDER FORUM

CONTACT
7 Holyrood Street
London SE1 2EL
United Kingdom
Tel +44 20 7089 4300
Fax +44 20 7089 4310
email: minush@aol.com
rwhitfield@earthsummit2002.org