Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society

Learning Synthesis III: Tracking Capacity Change

March 2016

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

Capacity development is at the heart of how most Danish CSOs believe they make a difference in their work with Southern CSOs. Yet, despite its importance, successive evaluations and reviews have commented on the need to improve how the changes brought about by capacity development are monitored and communicated. There are signs that Danish CSOs are making progress in this area but there is still room for improvement. This learning synthesis will draw upon the experience of Danish CSOs, and the sector more broadly, to explore:

1. How Danish CSOs approach capacity development as a pathway to change.
2. Key challenges and considerations for monitoring and evaluating capacity development
3. Considerations when tracking change
4. Approaches and tools for looking at capacity outcomes at different levels
5. Examples of indicators
6. Top tips

2 Capacity Development: A pathway to change

2.1   Building or developing capacity?

Capacity development is a key 'pathway to change' in the results chains/ theories of change of most Danish CSOs. The Civil Society Policy restricts itself to the term 'capacity development' but the terms *capacity development* and *capacity building* are both used by Danish CSOs. The two concepts are closely related but variously interpreted. INTRAC makes the following distinctions:

> *Capacity development* is an internally-driven process of developing existing skills and capabilities. It is not brought in by outsiders but can be enhanced or catalysed through diverse means.

> *Capacity building* is one such 'catalyst' being the purposeful, conscious effort to bring about capacity development. Capacity building is a structured process that has a clear purpose and set of specific objectives.

Some people feel that use of the term 'building' continues to suggest too much agency on the part of outsiders and to imply that all the knowledge and skills rest with them. For example, CARE in their "Capacity Development Mini Guide"[1] refer instead to a process of cultivating capacity; while ActionAid highlights the importance of seeing capacity development within partnership as 'a two way street' in which ActionAid's own capacity is also being developed not just that of the partner.

ActionAid's definition of capacity development

"We prefer the term "capacity development" to "capacity-building", as "development" signals the existence of capacity that can be developed further, and that the individual or organisational "capacity owner" is at the helm while ActionAid supports and facilitates the process. Put simply, for ActionAid, capacity development is an ongoing process by which people and organisations enhance their abilities to achieve strategic change in a sustainable way. In our partnership policy we recognise that capacity development is part and parcel of any partnership. While some partners may initially be heavily dependent on ActionAid (financially or technically), we are committed to reducing that dependency. Capacity development is key to achieving this. We recognise that capacity development is always a two-way street – ActionAid is also developing its own capacity through the partnership process"

People's Action in Practice

For the purposes of this paper we will use the term capacity development. However, it is important to maintain a focus on what the deliberate interventions are that Danish CSOs are engaging in to enhance or support capacity development. It is the effectiveness of these interventions and processes that are the focus of M&E.

---

[1] 1 Examples of resources from Danish CSOs as well as other documents on capacity development can be found on the evaluation website http://paths4change.info

2.2   Capacity development as part of a rights-based theory of change

Capacity development is increasingly recognised as a complex, multi-layered process that involves a wide range of actors and influences. Many capacity development models look at capacity through three interlinked and interdependent levels:

> *The individual level* e.g. the development of individual skills and expertise.

> *The organisational level* e.g. the development of an organisation's capacity in terms of its procedures, systems, policies and culture and its ability to relate and act. This also includes its organisational sustainability.

> *The systemic/societal level* e.g. changes in societal values, customs, laws, policies and system of governance. This level is sometimes equated with the development of an enabling environment for civil society or the wider development of the civil society sector.

Danish CSOs' support to capacity development efforts often try to work at all of these levels, i.e. support to individuals within partner organisations, the development of the organisations themselves, and their ability to interact with and influence their wider environment. The basic hypothesis of many Danish CSO theories of change is that capacity development of Southern CSOs contributes to the Southern CSO's internal effectiveness, and that this in turn contributes to the effectiveness of their efforts to support poor and marginalised groups to claim their rights, and influence duty bearers and decision makers. This model reflects the fact that "support to civil society is at the heart of the human rights-based approach to development cooperation".[2]

2.3   Capacity development: a diversity of methods

Although there remains a strong emphasis on training, Danish CSOs employ a wide range of methods to support capacity development, ranging from the informal to the more formal. Key among these are:

Accompaniment coaching and mentoring	This can range from the informal engagement and day to day work of programme staff to more conscious coaching or mentoring
Expert technical assistance	This includes secondments or internships of specialist personnel
Training	The development of individual skills and knowledge remains a key aspect of many capacity development efforts
Peer learning	Workshops, seminars, peer support groups which provide opportunities for CSOs to get together, share experiences and develop their understanding of best practice approaches

---

[2] Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society, Foreword

	and ways of dealing with challenges. This includes south-south exchanges
Brokering or supporting new relationships	This may include supporting CSOs to engage with other CSOs, government or other types of stakeholders through workshops, seminars or direct engagement
Facilitating access to knowledge	This includes supporting CSOs to access relevant or new knowledge e.g. on human rights instruments
Equipment and logistical support	This could include the provision of equipment or the funding or facilitation of travel
Funding	Funding in itself is often a support to the development of capacity

As we will see, the diversity of these methods means that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to the M&E of capacity development. Each method presents its own challenges.

3 M&E of Capacity Development – Challenges and Considerations

Changes in capacity are easier to monitor and evaluate if the capacity development approach is comparatively focused and technically specialised e.g. health. The challenge is greater if the CSO has a larger, more complex portfolio of capacity development, combining a range of methods and is focused within a more general programme e.g. governance. Yet, there are also some challenges that are particular or more acute for capacity development interventions. For example:

Many capacity results are *soft skills* that are 'social, relational, intangible'[3] such as leadership, political skills, values, the ability to build consensus or to learn and adapt. These are by their nature quite hard to measure and open to subjective interpretation.

Capacity development is messy and iterative, so trying to track the impact of enhanced capacity through different levels, individual, organisational, to wider systems is difficult. For example, how does training some individuals in an organisation help to support change in the behaviour of the organisation and its capacity? Equally, how does change in the capacity and behaviour of an organisation affect wider societal change? The further you get away from the intervention the harder it is to show clearly that a particular change is the result of the capacity intervention.[4] Although this is true for other types of programming, the range of influences at play on organisations, on their external action and on the relational nature of capacity development, makes the challenge of attribution particularly acute.

Figure 1 - Capacity development levels

Several commentators point to the contradictions that the desire to identify and measure results may set up with the capacity development process itself.[5] The demand for accountability to

---

[3] H Basher (2011) Managing for Capacity Results: A paper for Cairo Workshop on Capacity Development. Development Cooperation Directorate OECD/Len CD; B Lucas (2013) Current thinking on capacity development. Helpdesk Research Report. GSDRC. All available on Evaluation website http://paths4change.info

[4] See Ripple Model R James: Practical guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building. INTRAC Occasional Papers series, (2001)

[5] N Simister and Smith R. (2010) Monitoring and Evaluating Capacity Building: Is it really that Difficult? Praxis Paper

external actors can often undermine ownership of the capacity development process; both the definition of desired outcomes and the learning and reflection processes that are often best suited to support it.

M&E of capacity development: Summary of the challenges

Capacity is an intangible and sometimes contested concept.

Capacity development is not a linear process. It can be difficult to separate out purposeful, intended changes from those that evolve in response to changing internal and external environments.

Capacity development support can take time to result in enhanced capacity and changed ways of working.

Given the number of different stakeholders involved in organisations it is difficult to attribute changes to one actor or one intervention.

Most methodologies for monitoring and evaluating capacity development require some level of self-evaluation but honesty may be inhibited if it implies criticism of colleagues or linked to funding decisions.

3.1   Developing a theory of change

In order to construct a narrative of how capacity development contributes to change it is important to clarify what the expected changes are; to whom they are directed; and how they will be brought about. This amounts to developing a simple theory of change for capacity development support that answers the following types of question:

> Why is the capacity development work being done, and why now?
> Who is supposed to benefit?
> What type of capacity development support is proposed?
> How is the capacity change expected to occur and over what time frame?
> How is individual or organisational change expected to contribute to wider change?
> How will this fit in with the work of others?
> What are the key assumptions behind this work?

Once you have a theory of change then it is possible to either track change forwards from the capacity development support or backwards from the capacity change outcomes or a combination of the two. These options are outlined in Figure 2 and further explained in the next section.

3.2   Options for tracking change

Options for tracking change can involve both *predictive* and *non-predictive* approaches. Predictive approaches define outputs and outcomes at the start of the work and set indicators of the desired changes at each level. This is more obviously useful for technical types of capacity

---

23, INTRAC; B Lucas (2013); H Basher (2011).

development support. Non-predictive approaches can either trace changes going forward from an intervention without relying on predicted changes or seek to identify changes that have occurred and to explore what led to them. Some commentators suggest that organisational or systemic capacity development is more suited to non-predictive approaches which allow for complexity and emergent change.[6]

Figure 2 – Pathways for tracking change
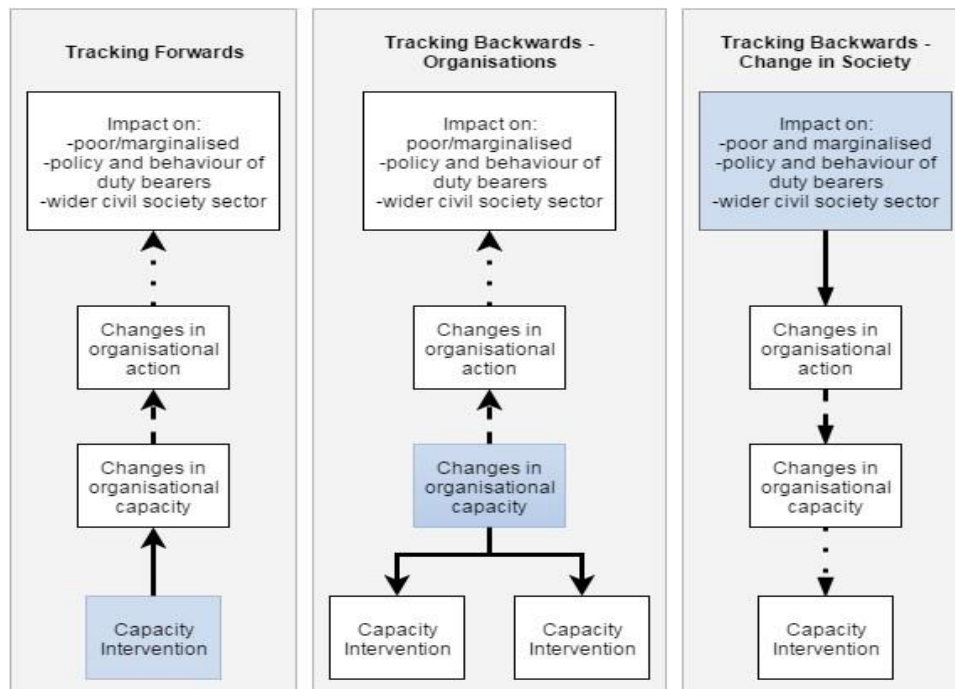
Tracking change forwards

This involves starting from the support provided and trying to trace the changes forward. It is like starting from the pebble thrown into a pond and tracking the ripples as they spread outwards. M&E can be used over a period of time to assess:

What capacity development support was provided and to whom?

How well was it organised and carried out?

How was it initially received?

What changes can be seen in the way individuals behave (if relevant)?

What changes have there been at organisational level?

What are (or might be) the ultimate effects of these changes on the organisation or wider population?

What has been learned that might be of use when carrying out future capacity development support?

---

[6] H Basher (2011) ibid.

Tracking change forwards has some advantages:

> It is easier to assess attribution since M&E is focused on the results arising from a specific capacity development intervention or combination of interventions.
>
> It helps ensure that the quality of the capacity development itself is included within M&E.
>
> It is useful when the intervention is small compared to the overall context or system.

However, tracking change forward is less useful for evaluating the cumulative effects of different types of interventions spread over time. It is also less well suited to dealing with complexity – for example, if an organisation has received capacity support from a number of different stakeholders in the same area of its work. Additionally, the method makes no attempt to measure the overall capacity of an organisation; it focuses only on those areas of capacity that are being supported.

Tracking change backwards

Tracking change backwards can be useful to assess capacity development support over different timescales, and, for example, when several different organisations or individuals are providing capacity development support to the same partner. This can be done at all levels. In the case of organisational development, it often done by using an organisational assessment tool (see Section 3.2.). Once changes in organisational capacity are identified, M&E tools can be used to look backwards to investigate what might have caused them. This can be useful as a way of testing assumptions as well as encouraging a more open discussion with partners about what makes the most difference to their capacity development.

A disadvantage is that there is no guarantee that any particular capacity development support e.g. a training workshop, will be mentioned as a contributory factor to any organisational change. This may make it difficult to assess the results of a particular intervention, although the lack of acknowledgement might be significant in itself.

Tracking change backwards can also be used to measure the extent to which the organisation has contributed to wider changes in society (see Section 3.3.). This is arguably easier if the mission of the CSO is focused and/or the capacity development support quite technical in nature. For example, an evaluation of capacity development support to traditional birth attendants, might start with changes in maternal mortality rates and then trace these back to investigate whether improved practices of TBAs have contributed and, if so, what might have helped to bring about those improved practices. It is harder to track change back in relation to broader societal changes such as changes in government or private sector policies and practices or the enabling environment for civil society, which are likely to be affected by a large number of potential influences.

Tracking change forwards and backwards is not mutually exclusive. Ideally, Danish CSOs should monitor and evaluate capacity development support by tracing changes forward. At the same time, partners could be supported to track changes backwards in their capacity (to see what caused those changes) and forwards (to see what wider effects they might have had). However,

where there are limited resources in terms of personnel, funding and time, organisations need to choose the approach that best suits their purpose.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the M&E of capacity development is support to the intended recipients to participate in and define their own criteria and measurements of success to ensure their ownership of the M&E process and its results.

4 Approaches and Tools for Demonstrating Change

Capacity development can be effectively monitored and evaluated with an appropriate blend of methodologies. There are a number of different tools and approaches to enable us to demonstrate how capacity development support has brought about change at different levels. It may be appropriate to use different tools or methodologies with different stakeholders to monitor change at different levels. The challenge is often not so much how to conduct appropriate M&E from a technical point of view, but more about how to keep M&E systems light and flexible so that they do not impose unnecessary burdens on providers or recipients of capacity development support. In essence, the more that M&E can be built into a project or programme as a vehicle for capacity development itself, the more organisations will find it easier to justify the time and expense.

4.1 Individual capacity

Capacity development support offered by Danish CSOs is often directed at changes in the knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviour of individuals or groups of individuals. Training continues to be an important component of most approaches, although they can also involve other methodologies such as peer learning, South-South exchanges, and the secondment of experts who provide accompaniment.

Kirkpatrick - a framework for evaluating learning and behaviour change

A common framework for monitoring evaluating training that has been used since the 1950's is the Kirkpatrick Model. This includes four levels for evaluation: reaction, learning, behaviour and impact. ActionAid Denmark uses the model as the basis for evaluation of its training programmes.

ActionAid Denmark: Evaluation of training impact

AAADK keeps a record of basic data on participants and on the training e.g. organisations the participants come from, number of participants, thematic focus etc. It then evaluates the different levels using the following methods:

Level 1:   Reaction - this is undertaken through a questionnaire at the end of the training.

Level 2:   Learning - this is monitored continuously through the training by the trainer (this can also be assessed through assignments or applied work).

Level 3/4: Behaviour and Impact – this is assessed through an electronic survey which is sent to participants and their managers 3-6 months after the training. The evaluation questions focus on: participant's use of the skill and knowledge acquired, how they have applied them, what actions they have taken and how this has benefited their organisation.

In addition, AADK conducts periodic external evaluations of its overall training programme.

In practice, the M&E of training impact often stops at level 2 and does not sufficiently explore outcomes at levels 3 & 4. The additional resource implications is a factor in this. The model has been adapted to take into account the importance of training planning and context and the need to engage stakeholders. Identifying the different levels of change is a useful prompt to think beyond the training intervention to the link between individual and organisational change.

Tracer studies can also be used to track how participants have gone on to develop or to use their skills. These are sometimes referred to as follow-up studies because they trace individuals sometime after an event has taken place, and follow up on what has happened in their lives since then. This highlights the importance of retaining contact details of training participants.

The evaluation survey of Danish partners in Ghana highlighted that one-off trainings can be less effective at embedding learning than other approaches. Respondents expressed a strong preference for longer term approaches which allow for coaching and follow up and can be more tailored to their organisation. INTRAC, for example, combines training with coaching and group and individual assignments. This allows for application of the knowledge directly to work problems during the training. A more blended approach offers the possibility for trainers to check participants learning through assignments and applied work.

Stakeholder perceptions of change

Gathering the perceptions of different stakeholders can be used to assess change at an individual, organisational or systemic level (see Partner Feedback under Section 4.2.). This can be done through traditional methods such as surveys, semi structured interviews or focus-group discussions, or through more participant led processes such as learning journals.

The use of surveys can be used to gather the perceptions of individuals that have received capacity development support (e.g. after training courses, workshops or exchanges) to assess immediate reactions or later to assess how learning has been applied. However, it needs to be noted that the increasing use of surveys has led to a degree of 'survey fatigue' and response rates may be low. This may still provide useful insights for further testing but the results cannot be treated as representative. It is important to take steps to ensure survey response rates are high if CSOs, for example, want to use surveys to assess change in a more systematic manner.

Semi–structured interviews using a questionnaire or guidelines can often provide richer information than a simple survey as they allow for clarification of responses, probing and follow up. This can be useful when trying to explore links between individual and organisational impact. However these tend to be more costly in terms of resources, both time and money, to administer and therefore use smaller sample sizes.

Triangulating information between different stakeholders and through different methods can be an important part of building up a picture of the link between individual changes and wider impact. For example, AADK through its People4Change (P4C) programme places Inspirators

and Advisors with local offices and partners as a method of strengthening capacities. These are evaluated at the end of their placement through a questionnaire that is sent both to Inspirators/Advisors and to hosting organisations. In 2014 and 2015 P4C also carried out impact assessments in two countries, where interviews were done with Inspirators/Advisors, hosting organisations and community representatives.

Stakeholder perceptions of change

It is important to consider what extent M&E itself helps to enhance capacity. There are a number of approaches which emphasise participants' own processes of learning and reflection. Two examples of this include:

> Journaling/Diaries – participants of a capacity development intervention can be asked to keep a learning journal where they note what they are learning and how they might apply it. This is most realistically used during an intervention although could be encouraged as an on-going practice.

> Action learning sets – these support individuals to explore an issue or challenge through a process of enquiry that is catalysed through questions from the group. The emphasis is on supporting people to reflect and learn but then also to take action. Action learning has been shown to be very effective as a method to support capacity development but can also be used to support people to reflect and learn on the capacity development process itself.

4.2 Organisational capacity

There are two ways to measure changes in organisational capacity:

> Directly, by measuring changes, usually in specific competencies or capacities, and

> Indirectly, by measuring the results of improved capacity. For example, it is easier to measure whether a CSO is successfully fundraising than it is to assess its capacity to do so, although the issue of attribution/ contribution needs to be addressed.

There are a number of different tools and methodologies available to measure changes in organisational capacity in this section we will look at the use of:

- Organisational Capacity Assessment Tools
- Scorecards
- Outcome mapping
- Stories for change
- User feedback

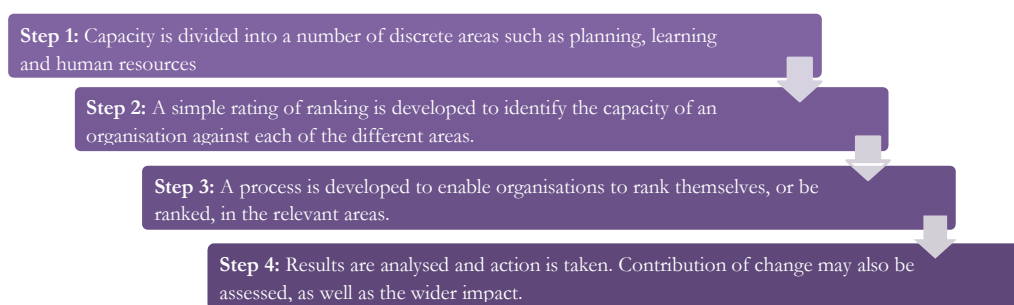**Organisational Capacity Assessment Tools**

Organisational Capacity Assessment Tools (OCATs) can be used for M&E in two ways:

> To develop and monitor an action plan with objectives and indicators in the form of a logical framework or similar results framework.

> By repeating them at discrete intervals to show through changes in scores how organisational capacity has changed. If necessary, these changes can be further investigated to assess to what extent they are the result of a particular capacity development intervention.

There are many different types of OCATs but most are based on a similar pattern of steps:

Figure 3

Step 1: Capacity is divided into a number of discrete areas such as planning, learning and human resources

Step 2: A simple rating of ranking is developed to identify the capacity of an organisation against each of the different areas.

Step 3: A process is developed to enable organisations to rank themselves, or be ranked, in the relevant areas.

Step 4: Results are analysed and action is taken. Contribution of change may also be assessed, as well as the wider impact.

A concern sometimes expressed about the use of OCATs is that they can reflect a blueprint approach and expect Southern CSOs to conform to the standards of an idealised CSO. Different Danish CSOs have developed capacity assessment tools. Many of these include interesting areas that are not always included in OCAT tools e.g. organisational legitimacy (CARE Tanzania) or political sustainability (LOFTF).

In its Guide to Capacity Development, CARE Denmark describes a range of tools from fixed tools to tailor made ones that can adjust to the realities and preferences of the partner organisation.

CARE Denmark approaches to OCATs for partner organisations		
Fixed tools	**Fixed but flexible**	**Tailor made**
Assessment areas and indicators fixed	Assessment areas fixed/ indicators open	No fixed areas or indicators

◄───►
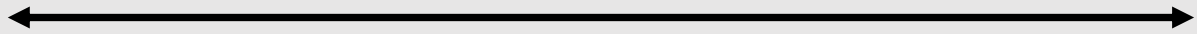
"The line shows the spectrum from completely fixed tools on the left with fixed assessment areas and indicators to the far right where tools are completely tailor made. In the middle we have tools that have some fixed elements, e.g. "internal organisation", "external linkages" and "programme performance" with flexibility to design indicators and sub-assessment areas. Often this will be the most practical, as it gives some structure and compatibility but allows for tailoring based on the type of partner.

CARE Nepal and Uganda use fixed tools, CARE Tanzania and Vietnam fixed but flexible tools and CARE Laos has emerging experiences with tailored tools. A tailored tool can for example be designed by developing an organizational vision and progress markers and then grouping the progress markers into categories (e.g. 'financial sustainability' or 'team spirit'). The categories can then be plotted into the corners of a spidergram to show status and developments in related progress markers."

Capacity Mini Guide CARE DK

Many Danish CSOs using some form of fixed tool with categories related to the areas of organisational capacity that they are helping to develop e.g. advocacy. This is valid way of establishing a baseline and monitoring and evaluating a specific organisational capacity. From an organisational development perspective, however, real ownership would be better achieved by supporting organisations to identify and develop their own vision, categories and indicators of success. In addition, if an organisation is receiving funding from multiple sources it would be better to look for ways to jointly support a more holistic assessment.

Finally, care should be taken with the timing of OCATS. The use of OCATs as part of due diligence assessments and/or funding decisions can distort the assessment as organisations do not feel able to be honest about weaknesses. It is better, therefore, to do them after funding decisions have been taken.

Scorecards

These can be used in a similar way to assess and monitor more specific areas of organisational capacity e.g. financial management, leadership and governance, project cycle management and engaging with core constituencies. The principles are the same as those of OCATS – divide work into discrete areas, rank or rate capacity, take action on the findings and then repeat the process at intervals to show how far organisational capacity has changed. When repeating scorecards it is important to note not just the change in scores but to enquire into why things have changed.

Some initiatives also ask those involved in the programme to rank how much of a contribution they think the programme has made to the change and on what evidence (see Annex A for example).

One of the challenges of scorecards is that they can be open to bias. For example, they are dependent on who is consulted and who is in the room as part of the discussion. If they are then repeated with a different set of people they may have a very different perspective on the result.

INTRAC's experience suggests that it is important to try to ensure objectivity and consistency of approach when using scorecards for assessment across a portfolio – for example, by using a well-qualified team who are trained in the methodology to support organisations to do the assessment, as illustrated below.

Use of scorecards in the Civil Society Support Programme in Ethiopia

Initially, the CSSP scorecard system was based on CSO self-evaluation and showed significant changes in capacity across all the different scorecard areas. However, closer inspection found many of the results to be unreliable because of a lack of staff capacity to facilitate the process and a natural bias to claim improvement. CSSP, with agreement of the donors, decided to radically change the way it evaluated change in organisational capacity. A small core of dedicated staff applied the scorecards consistently across a range of different, sampled CSOs. Only now, after four years and the constant revision of the scorecards, does CSSP feel that results of the scorecard system is reliable enough to feed into management decision-making.

Some of the strengths and weaknesses of organisational assessments and scorecards can be summarised as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
They ensure that capacity development is formally monitored and evaluated	It can be hard to show how improved capacity is attributable to specific support provided
They enable organisations to identify necessary changes to help achieve their mission	They do not necessarily show how improved capacity contributes towards improved performance
They provide a rolling baseline so that progress over time can be assessed	Ranking or rating can be subjective, based on perceptions of different stakeholders
Results can sometimes be aggregated or summarised across different organisations, sectors or countries	A lower ranking score does not always indicate weak capacity – it may be an indication of enhanced awareness of limitations
They focus on the outcomes of capacity development, not just the activities carried out	

They cover the unintended as well as the intended consequences of capacity development work	A higher ranking score may be the result of over-confidence in an organisation's capacities

Outcome Mapping (OM)

Outcome Mapping is regarded as an effective method of assessing capacity development changes, particularly at an organisational level, since it:

> Requires a project or programme to identify boundary partners – individuals, groups or organisations with which it interacts directly to effect change.
>
> Encourages a spread of possible outcomes (known as progress markers) ranging from the initial changes one would expect to see to those one would like to see over the course of a project or programme. This avoids the need to predict the pace of change or rely on one indicator.
>
> Focuses on behavioural change. Progress markers are designed to describe observable changes in actions, behaviours and relationships that are (or should be) straightforward to measure.
>
> Recognises complexity, and that capacity development providers are not ultimately responsible for changes within boundary partners.

The idea of Outcome Mapping is to set a series of progress markers and then to collect and analyse information and map information onto the Outcome Map at regular intervals.

> **CARE DK: Use of Outcome Mapping to monitor organisational change**
>
> CARE DK has experimented with the use of Outcome Mapping in six countries as a way of monitoring and evaluating changes in the domains identified in their theory of change. These include partners' capacities, their ability to mobilise citizens and to influence policies and practices.
>
> Their experience was that using ladders of change with progress markers was helpful for developing change trajectories that were more detailed and went beyond the 'check box' nature of many capacity assessments: "For example, a typical capacity assessment indicator 'gender' is often 'the organisation has a gender policy' or a 'gender focal person'. A ladder of change can be used to challenge this and ask 'then what'? If having a policy and a focal person is 'expect to see' what would then be a sign of real transformation and change in the organisation; 'like to see' or 'love to see'."
>
> Using an actor focused theory of change, helped also to clarify where results or outcomes were expected and therefore who was responsible or had to own them for them to be achieved.
>
> One of the challenges of using an outcome mapping approach is that it requires significant coaching and accompaniment for partners. It also requires a significant investment of time and resources both for those keeping the outcome journals but also to analyse and synthesis the data produced.
>
> > Learning centred planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME): Lessons learned from CARE DK's experimentation with outcome mapping in 6 countries. CAREDK 2015

Stories of change

A portfolio of stories of change can be used to illustrate the work of capacity development providers and/ or capacity changes in supported organisations. A number of different methodologies can be used to help introduce more rigour into storytelling so that they cannot be dismissed as anecdotal. These include the random selection of narrative cases, the categorisation of case studies and the use of the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology[7]. In particular, two main features need to be in place if they are to withstand external scrutiny:

> The methodology for selecting the stories must be transparent.

> The stories themselves must be based on robust information that has been questioned and probed, through whatever method.

User feedback

---

[7] See previous learning synthesis "Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Summarising Results" and N Simister (2016) Case Studies and Stories of Change on http://paths4change.info

Eliciting feedback through interview, meetings or surveys is a useful way of gathering user views on the relevance and effectiveness of capacity development support. CARE Denmark, for example, includes questions on capacity development within its annual partner survey and is tracking how these scores change over the strategic period. Other organisations use annual meetings with partners to discuss capacity development priorities and to get feedback on types of support provided.

There is always the risk of bias, however, when the partner/ donor solicits the partners' views. Some Danish CSOs have used the Keystone Partnership Survey which is conducted anonymously and benchmarks NGOs against each other. This is not restricted to looking at capacity development but the use of a third party is one way of mitigating bias. Interestingly, the evaluation survey of Ghana partners suggests that partners themselves do not do any systematic evaluation of the results of capacity development interventions. This is something that should perhaps be encouraged as it could help them to base their feedback on a stronger evidence base.

Another option is to create more demand led approaches and stronger national markets of capacity development provision. For example, funders may work with organisations to identify capacity development needs but allow them to purchase these services from a range of providers. It would then be possible to monitor the quality of support by the extent of follow up work, on the assumption that if organisations come back for more support (or persuade others to do so) it must be because they valued the previous support and found it useful.

4.3   Society/systematic capacity

Danish CSOs' principle method of working on wider social or systemic capacity is through their support for rights based approaches and incorporation of advocacy strategies within their own, and partners', programing. Most CSOs are trying to report on end impact in some form, however, the challenge is to identify more clearly how capacity development interventions (either Danish CSOs' of partners or partners' of target groups) have contributed to this.

Empowerment of rights holders

It is difficult for Danish CSOs to monitor and evaluate their eventual impact on rights holders as it is normally partners who are working on the interface with communities. However, a number of organisations are developing approaches to try to track change amongst rights holders participating in their programmes.

Data on participation

If one of the objectives of RBA approaches is to support marginalised people and to promote inclusion and diversity then one of the first steps in monitoring and evaluation should be to know who is participating and benefiting. Most Danish CSOs are trying to use their influence with partners to encourage greater diversity and inclusion of specific groups of rights holders (e.g. women, people with disabilities, children) within community structures, organisations or processes. This can be tracked through disaggregating data on participation. DCA, for example has the following strategy indicator for 2014:

"70% of all partners in all programmes have capacities to actively and systematically use disaggregated data in needs assessments, project design and monitoring and evaluation".

However, they recognise that this remains a challenge and also highlight that is often difficult to distinguish how far groups supported are organisations of poor and excluded people themselves:

"62% of programmes supported people's own organisations or networks…..In some cases it was difficult to distinguish between partner-supported groups and self-organised groups."

<div align="right">DCA report 2014 p. 53</div>

Community level monitoring

Another area that a number of Danish CSOs are exploring is community level monitoring of changes in the capacity of rights holders.[8] Danmission is considering piloting a community development monitoring with partners to build a stronger evidence base about what is being achieved at community level. It plans to use a KAP survey system to look at how community based groups are evolving and a self-assessment process combined with focus groups to look at how groups are affecting the community. IBIS is studying different approaches with regard to how partners can involve their constituencies in community-based monitoring in relation to local advocacy. DCA is also committed to improving the links between community-based documentation and advocacy activities.

User Feedback Mechanisms

Humanitarian programmes have been at the forefront of introducing mechanisms for collecting feedback from beneficiaries but these are gradually being incorporated into development programmes also. Danchurch Aid has been encouraging partners to introduce complaints handling mechanisms and reports that 50% of partners in 2014 had such mechanisms; an increase from 27% in 2012.

---

[8] The following examples are derived from "Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Summarising Results"

Oxfam Novib: World Citizens Panel

The World Citizens Panel is an impact measurement method developed by Oxfam Novib for looking at changes in the lives of participants of their programmes. It is carried out through country level studies. The studies consist of two components: a survey among participants and non-participants of Oxfam programs, and in-depth interviews with a selected number of participants to collect 'stories of change'. It may also include a separate qualitative research on the role and influence of civil society is carried out by an independent researcher. The following is an example from Cambodia of the main features of the survey.

> The survey includes a broad set of indicators, covering the major dimensions of poverty and injustice as described in Oxfam's rights-based approach.
>
> Data was collected by 11 partners in their own working areas with the help of a smart phone app, which transferred data into a central database, managed and analysed by the Oxfam Novib World Citizens Panel team in The Hague.
>
> A total of 3658 interviews were carried out. The interviewees were randomly selected and are a representative sample of the primary stakeholders (the total number of people participating in the projects) of Oxfam and partners in Cambodia and a comparable control group.
>
> Based on the outcomes of the impact survey, Oxfam and partners identified domains for more in-depth investigation through the collection of stories of change. Stories of Change were collected either on video or on paper, accompanied by pictures.
>
> Seven organizations collected a total of 81 stories on paper. Three organizations prepared one to three videos, with a compilation of various stories in each video. Stories were collected on one of the four domains identified: food security & income; access to information; gender based violence (GBV) and land rights.
>
> A reflection workshop was organized, in which Oxfam and partner organisations together analysed a selected number of stories and discussed the findings.

www.worldcitizenspanel.com

Changes amongst policy and practice of duty bearers – the link to capacity development

A key focus for Danish CSOs is support to the development of the advocacy capacity of CBOs and CSOs. This is done through a variety of methods including:

- Rights awareness training or training in RBA for target groups and duty bearers

- Influencing to ensure participation of excluded groups

- Advocacy training, strategy development and planning

- Facilitation of dialogue and engagement with duty bearers

- Supporting connections and exchange of good practice

- Engagement with the media and wider public opinion

- Support to participation in networks and coalitions

- Raising partners' awareness of international human rights and humanitarian law standards and their link to review processes.

There are numerous resources on the particular challenges of identifying outcomes in terms of advocacy impact and different approaches and methodologies to do this.[9] The challenge, however, is to link these outcomes to particular capacity development interventions.

Plausible linkages

Although some Danish CSOs are making a distinction in their results frameworks between results in terms of changes in partner capacity and wider societal changes (e.g. CARE, DCA) the link between the two is not always clear in reporting. Reporting not only on the advocacy achievement but also specifying the role and capacity development support that was provided by the Danish CSO can help establish plausible linkages that could be further tested as the following example from IBIS demonstrates.

IBIS: linking capacity development to a wider result

The IBIS 2014 Results Report provides selected case studies that describe achievements within its Democratic Governance Programme and outlines the role that IBIS played in these.

For example, 90 Rama and Kriol indigenous people have developed a joint proposal for the process of Free Prior and Informed Consent relating to the impact of the proposed Inter-Oceanic Canal in Nicaragua. This is now being used by 23 territorial leaders in their negotiation with the Nicaraguan state and to press for a real consultation among the Rama and Kriol who will be affected by the Canal. The development of the proposal came out of a training organised by IBIS partners CENIDH and GTR-K for 1,452 representatives from organisations and people on the Caribbean Coast on the content of ILO Convention 169.

IBIS identifies its contribution to this process as being helping to develop the capacity of partners on RBA, the content of ILO 169, advocacy and negotiation skills and their support for convening different stakeholders. By clearly identifying their role, IBIS has constructed a plausible narrative of how their specific capacity development support contributed to the joint proposal. This could then be further tested by gathering evidence of the importance of their contribution e.g. through feedback from Roma and Kriol representatives, and its relative importance vis-à-vis the contribution of others.

---

[9] See http://paths4change.info advocacy section under learning resources in particular J Tsui et al (2014) 'Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy' ODI Working Paper 395.

Network and collaborative capacity

Danish CSOs are often supporting partners to link to national actors or to join in alliances. It is not clear how Danish CSOs are evaluating this more relational aspect of capacity but the following are examples of methodologies that could be used:

> **Adapted OCATS** – Care Vietnam, Mozambique and Nepal have been using an adapted OCAT to assess network advocacy capability. This includes the following capacity areas: Coordination, Advocacy Planning, Authority, Communications, Engagement and M&E.[10]

> **Social Network Analysis** – this creates a visual map of linkages that exist between people in order to understand how formal and informal relationships work.[11]

> **Network Evaluation Frameworks** – there are numerous frameworks for evaluating network and coalition capacity. The following is an example that INTRAC found useful in a recent evaluation of Syrian activists

---

[10] CARE (2016) Mini Guide to Capacity Development

[11] J Tsui (2014) ibid. p. 44.

Network Evaluation Framework

1.   **NETWORK VIBRANCY** (the overall health and functioning of the network)

    How healthy is the network along multiple dimensions?

    Components
        Trust, shared values
        Structure and Governance (including accountability)
        Member capacity development
        Resilience and sustainability (including member benefits)
        Network Development
        Outreach & diversity

2.   **NETWORK CONNECTIVITY** (the internal and external flows of information and relationships)

    What is the nature of communications and relationships made internally and externally by the network?

    Components
        Internal connectivity
        External connectivity

3.   **NETWORK EFFECTS** (outputs, value added, achievements)

    What progress is the network making on identifying and achieving its outputs, outcomes and impact?

    Components
        Systemic changes, goals achieved etc.
        Importance/ influence of the network on its external environment

    Adapted from Next Generation Network Evaluation Innovations. Scaling Impact and Keystone Accountability (2010)

Changes at sector level or in wider civil society

Demonstrating change at a sectoral level is potentially more feasible for an organisation that is single issue and working within one sector for example, LOFTF and the trade union sector, DPOD and disability, DFPA and sexual and reproductive health, SAVE Denmark and child protection etc. It may be possible for them to show how their particular capacity development efforts have impacted on the wider system. For example, if they are providing support to a range of organisations working in the same sector or location then it might be possible to show how changes in the capacity of a range of different organisations are having a cumulative wider effect, such as changing perceptions in a locality, enhancing livelihoods of beneficiaries, creating a

national movement or contributing to different changes in the political, policy or legal environment. Most actors contribution, however, remain small in relation to the problem.

Multi-stakeholder learning

Systemic change in a sector or in broad areas such as governance and accountability is complex and is likely to need multiple interventions. There is a growing emphasis on the use of approaches to M&E that take into account this complexity and move away from predicative or linear models of change. This includes ideas around the importance of piloting and testing and building in fast feedback and learning loops into programmes to understand what works and what doesn't. One of the characteristics of more systemic and complexity approaches is they also emphasise the importance of multiple perspectives and joint ownership and analysis of issues between different actors. This suggests the need for much more emphasis on creating spaces and opportunities for learning alliances and for multi-stakeholder reflection.

Using multi-stakeholder spaces for evaluation and learning

Save the Children Cambodia used a multi-stakeholder group of community officials, children, youth and parents to analyse the outcomes of its project Empowering Children and Youth to participate in commune development. Reflection was focused on various aspects of the system necessary for improvement in the protection and realisation of child rights and the extent to which the project had managed to:

- Strengthen existing mechanisms at sub national level
- Address governance gaps
- Improve accountability and transparency of public expenditure
- Improve institutional capacity to respond to the needs of children

Feedback indicated that the programme had strengthened local capacity for child rights programing, had helped children and youth to know their rights and to exercise them through participation in different Councils and had improved investment in children.

In Uganda a multi-stakeholder review of the project Making Accountability and Good Governance Investment in Uganda resulted in the formulation of approaches to support the National Council for Children to develop stronger coordination mechanisms, the development of means to strengthen child friendly communities' intervention and to devise a scheme to increase investment in children. These have been incorporated into plans for 2015.

SCD Danida Framework 2014 Progress report

Longitudinal research

To assess wider issues such as the contribution of different efforts to the development of civil society and its role in broader governance issues in a country also requires multi-donor and multi- stakeholder efforts. In this case the best approach would be to do longitudinal research to

track how civil society is changing over time in a particular geographical location or sector and how different modalities or practices of support maybe supporting or hindering that process. Sadly, too few of these kinds of studies have been carried out to-date.

5 Use of indicators

Many organisations providing capacity development support are asked at some stage to develop objectives and indicators to assess progress against a portfolio of work. At the output level it is relatively straightforward to count the number of organisations or individuals supported, as well as the number of training events, access to resources etc. Some forms of capacity development support e.g. mentoring and partnership, may be harder to quantify.

Developing outcome indicators for capacity development at portfolio level is more of a challenge. Annex A offers some examples of the kind of indictors that might be developed in relation to different M&E methodologies. In these cases, rather than developing an indicator and then identifying a tool to collect it, the tool is identified first and the indicator is then developed from the tool. Most of these indicators can also be used to generate milestones and targets as well.

Many of the examples in the Annex are real-life examples. Indicators are useful for reporting to donors but do not, by themselves, provide the full story. To do this will require further exploration. An organisational assessment might highlight areas of interest that can be explored in depth. Likewise, a set of outcome maps might reveal that very few organisations identify 'expect to see' changes but many identify change at a higher level. This may be worth exploring more intensively.

In fact many cases have been documented where perceived increases in capacity have led to lower capacity ratings (because of enhanced awareness of an organisation's limitations). There are also cases where capacity has increased but with no verifiable contribution from a supporting agency. It is almost always desirable to perform more in-depth and focused qualitative assessment at targeted points to dig for deeper and more meaningful findings.

6 Conclusions: INTRAC's Top Ten Tips

INTRAC has been engaged in, and writing about, the M&E of capacity development for over 20 years. These are our top tips.

1. Be clear about the purpose of capacity development. Providers need to have a clear rationale for their work, and a clear idea of what they want to achieve. This might mean developing an appropriate theory of change with partners, or at least agreed statements about how improved capacity at different levels should contribute to wider development goals.

2. Be clear about the purpose of M&E. M&E designed for accountability to donors and supporters is not necessarily the same as M&E designed to learn and improve.

3. Decide how far you intend to measure change. For some forms of technical capacity development it should be possible to measure wider changes resulting from capacity change. This may be more difficult for capacity development aimed at more general programing or complex areas such as governance.

4. Get the basics right. Do document your role and the capacity development support you have provided. These are important in order to establish plausible linkages between capacity development and impact.

5. As much as possible allow owners of capacity development to define desired outcomes and what success looks like and include their feedback on what support works or does not work.

6. Alongside supported organisations, select a blend of tools, methodologies and approaches that will help provide a picture of what is changing (or not) and why.

7. Develop M&E processes that support the capacity development building process itself (or at the very least do no harm). Support recipients to do their own evaluation of capacity development interventions and their own reflection and learning.

8. If you are working with a portfolio of organisations, try and develop a consistent approach to M&E that will allow you to monitor and evaluate outcomes (change) as well as outputs. Recognise that sometimes this may mean imposing specific tools or approaches on partners, and try and get their agreement and cooperation as far as possible.

9. If you need to develop indicators at a portfolio level than make sure these are closely linked with the M&E tools and approaches you wish to pursue. It is usually better to identify the tools and approaches first before developing the indicators.

10. Encourage a coordinated approach with other donors to the M&E of organisations and multi-stakeholder approaches to looking at systemic capacity.

Resources

Further reading and resources can be found on the evaluation website http://paths4change

Annex A Example of a scorecard from the Civil Society Programme Ethiopia

Capacity Change Scale 1

Capacity (and commitment) to work with and for the poorest women, men, girls and boys

Low capacity	1	2	3	4	5	High capacity
The organisation does not consult the people it claims to work with The organisation has very minimal understanding of the different social groups and social structures The organisation does not identify the different priorities determined by different groups of poor women, men, girls and boys Poor, very poor and the poorest people have no role in evaluating the organisation's work in the community			**Score** **(Please mark one box only)**			The organisation consults regularly with the people it claims to work with – particularly with the poorest or those hardest to reach. The organisation has good understanding of the different social groups and social structures The organisation includes poor or hard to reach people on its board. The organisation adjusts its priorities, spending and staffing based on feedback from the poorest girls and boys, women and men Consultations are arranged so different social groups (e.g. girls, people with disabilities) have separate opportunities to share their points of view The poorest people have a role in evaluating the organisation's work in the community
Supplementary questions	Evidence to explain the score (required)					
	Any planned actions or ideas to strengthen capacity or commitment in this area? (optional)					
	Any further comments (optional)					

The following section should <u>only</u> be filled in the second time the capacity change scale is completed.

Contribution of CSSP to any change in capacity	No contribution (The changes had nothing to do with CSSP)	Slight contribution (CSSP made only a slight contribution to the changes)	Some contribution (CSSP made some contribution to the changes)	Significant contribution (CSSP made a significant contribution to any changes)	Very significant contribution (Any changes would probably not have been achieved without CSSP contribution)
Score (please mark one box only)					
Supplementary questions	Reasons for any variations in scores from previous status (or factors contributing to 'no change in score')				

Annex B Capacity development indicators

Method	Possible indicators	Notes
No consistent method	# of organisations with enhanced capacity # and description of capacity changes observed # of organisations with enhanced capacity to engage with local government	These indicators are weak and can be challenged quite easily. The indicators can be made stronger by clearly outlining the areas of capacity support, as in the third indicator.
Direct measurement	# of successful funding proposals produced each year # of partner organisations integrating gender equality into their programmes # of NGOs establishing formal relationships with government bodies	If support is provided to a portfolio of organisations on the same subject (in these cases producing funding proposals, integrating gender equality or establishing formal relationships with government) then developing indicators should be easy.
Action plans based on organisational assessments	# and description of organisations showing enhanced capacity in one or more areas of their action plans # of organisations pursuing a capacity development action plan at least one year after the start	Action plans for individual organisations may all be very different so there may be little consistency in the indicators. As a result, portfolio indicators may need to be very broad, or may need to be based on pursuance of the plans themselves.
Organisational Assessment tools / scorecards	Average capacity score against areas of M&E, human resources, leadership, etc. # of organisations showing an increase in capacity score in at least one area of support	By their nature, organisational assessment (OA) tools are particularly conducive to the development of quantitative indicators. The key is more to enable a level of consistency of information collection that will make such indicators useful
Outcome mapping	% of organisations where at least 60% of expect to see markers and 30% of like to see markers are realised % of outcomes (represented by expect to see, like to see and love to see markers) realised	These examples can be used across a portfolio even if every outcome map is individually tailored to different organisations. If the outcome map itself is consistent than specific indicators such as *'% of organisations that develop gender policies'* can be used
MSC / Case studies based on approved sampling methodologies	# and description of cases where organisations have enhanced capacity to engage with their constituents # and description of cases where organisations can demonstrate cultural change	If the methodology for producing stories is transparent and valid, and stories are properly generated, then general indicators such as this can be used and justified. If MSC is used then a consistent domain can aid summarisation
Surveys / client satisfaction forms	# of agencies that have been asked to contribute to public fora in the past year Number of trained practitioners applying new skills effectively post-training # of supported organisations that are 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with support	If surveys are applied consistently then almost any question can generate specific indicators. But to be valid the response rate for the surveys must be reasonable high, and not significantly biased.