Delivery #1

The concept of the institutional capacity building of CSOs representing the target in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova
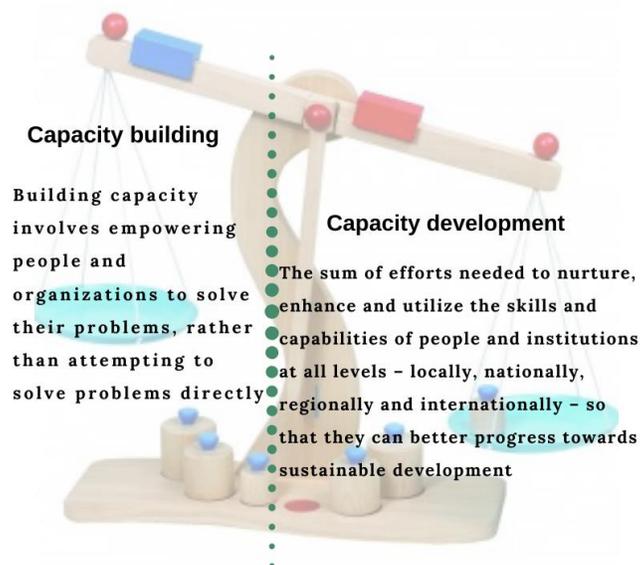
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The concept emphasizes the steps to be taken in the process of capacity development. In order to develop the concept under which NGOs, members of the Sustainable (Community) Development Platform (SCDP) will be assessed and strengthened in terms of capacities, it is necessary to analyze existing approaches in this area, including from the perspective of the Human Rights Based Approach. Thus, the concept includes a desk review of approaches to organizational capacity assessment and capacity development. The analysis of these approaches will systematize the existing information and experience in the field of organizational capacity assessment and capacity development. At the same time, it will serve as the basis for selecting the tools which will be applied and to be described in a detailed way in the methodology for organizational assessment and capacity development.

Capacity building vs. capacity development

Designing and further implementing the process depends on the term that will be accepted for the description of this process. From here a clarification is required: what distinguishes capacity building from capacity development? What term shall we use in achieving the Programme's goal in working with NGOs from Transnistria.

Capacity is not something that can be built through a series of carefully planned and executed activities that follow a clear and detailed plan or blueprint with specific timeframes and strict budgets. *It is an organic process of growth and development* involving experimentation and learning as it proceeds. Therefore, many people now speak of **capacity development** rather than capacity building, to emphasize that it is a process rather than a blueprint[1].

Figure 1 *Capacity building vs. capacity development*

Capacity building

Building capacity involves empowering people and organizations to solve their problems, rather than attempting to solve problems directly

Capacity development

The sum of efforts needed to nurture, enhance and utilize the skills and capabilities of people and institutions at all levels – locally, nationally, regionally and internationally – so that they can better progress towards sustainable development

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[1] Capacity Needs Assessment – Methodology and Process (Melvyn Kay, IPTRID consultant, Tom Franks, Chairperson of WG-CBTE and Sonia Tato, IPTRID), http://www.fao.org/3/y5899e03.htm

It should be mentioned that in time HRBA has become a mandatory component in the capacity development process. Clearly the HRBA envisaged in the Common Understanding relies a lot on "capacity development". The term emerged in the 1980s, replacing such concepts as institution building, human resource development, and institutional strengthening. Capacity development had become a dominant strategy in development co-operation already in the 1990s.[2] A consensus has now emerged that in almost all instances development agencies are addressing situations in which considerable capacity already exists; the challenge, then, is to further strengthen and develop capacities rather than "building" something new. Hence the term 'capacity development,' rather capacity building, should be used.[3] In a research paper from 2016 the authors Bertha Vallejo and Uta When pointed that the capacity development approach suggests enhancing and strengthening existing capacities, not building them from scratch. Capacity development is a broader term and starts from existing skills instead of building something new. In conclusion, in developing and applying the methodology we will use the term of capacity development.

Capacity assessment

Broadly capacity development starts with capacity assessment. The assessment whether carried out at the organization or individual level will include a *diagnosis of existing capacities, gap analysis and needs assessments*. Thus, in the effort to develop organizational capacities, capacity assessment is the first important step.

Traditionally capacity development and organizational strengthening focused almost entirely on human resources, processes and organizational structuring. Nevertheless, this tends to be too narrow a focus and additional dimensions need to be assessed including mission and strategy, culture, structure and competencies, processes (both internal and external), human resources, financial resources, information resources and infrastructure.[4]

In capacity assessment the concept will focus on:

- o Approaches and models in capacity assessment elaborated and followed by international
  organizations, aid agencies, donors and research centers;
- o Capacity assessment tools for organizations and particularly for NGOs;
- o Capacity assessment and development in the context of HRBA.

When it comes to models and approaches it worthwhile mentioning a very complex and comprehensive work done in this regard within UNDP. The main research papers in the field of capacity assessment and development refer first of all to UNDP Capacity Assessment Methodology User's Guide. According to UNDP User's Guide capacity assessment is one out of the five steps of the UNDP capacity development process.[5] On the same note, based on the UNDP methodology, the purpose of the capacity assessment is to

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[2] A human rights-based approach to development and development programming based on capacity development, pg.9, https://hd-ca.org › Jonsson
[3] Idem
[4] Capacity Needs Assessment – Methodology and Process (Melvyn Kay, IPTRID consultant, Tom Franks, Chairperson of WG-CBTE and Sonia Tato, IPTRID), http://www.fao.org/3/y5899e03.htm
[5] UNDP Capacity Assessment Methodology User's Guide (2008), pg.5
https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/undp-capacity-assessment-methodology.html

identifying the *existing key capacities* and what are *the needed additional capacities* to reach objectives. A capacity assessment is an analysis of desired capacities against existing capacities.[6]

In order to carry out a capacity assessment exercise the UNDP methodology provides: i) capacity assessment Framework; ii) the process for conducting assessment and iii) supporting tools.

When applying the UNDP Framework, we have to select an *entry point* (organizational level), to address *4 core issues* and to assess *functional and technical capacities*.

Figure 2. *The UNDP Capacity Assessment Framework*[7]
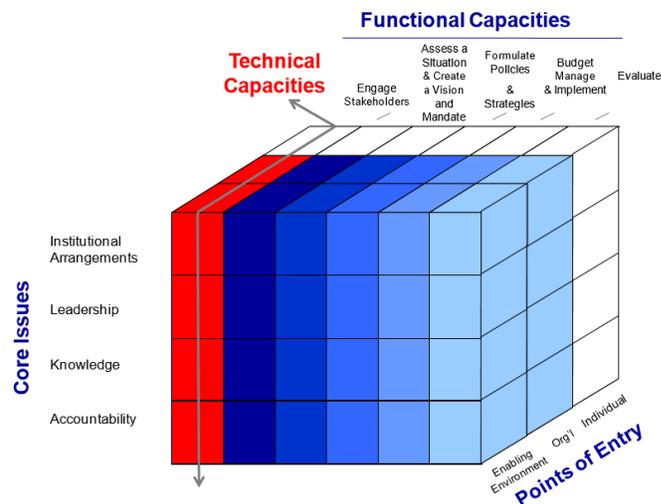
Another approach to take into consideration is of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. DFID Organizational sourcebook (DFID 2003) provides several approaches to assessing organizational capacity:

• open system model, which considers the strategic and institutional environment, the organizations input and resources, its strategy, culture, human resource management policies, systems, structure, outputs and performance;

• the 7-S model – strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style and staff; and the

• organizational elements model covering inputs, processes, products, outputs, and outcomes.

The EU tools and methods for Institutional Assessment and Capacity Development provides a 5-Steps capacity assessment approach.[8] According to the authors it is strongly recommended not to start looking directly at the capacity of the organization. Traditionally, the first question asked is: what is the structure of the organization, how does the organizational chart look like? Next, questions about staffing levels, mission and development plans often follow. Valid as these questions are – at a certain stage – they often lead to a capacity assessment that never looks beyond the narrow boundaries of the organization(s). The traditional approach tends to keep the nose to the ground, and little sky and horizon is seen in that way.[9] That's why it

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[6] Ibidem

[7] Idem pg.7

[8] Institutional Assessment and Capacity Development: Why, what and how? Pg.8
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/methodology-tools-and-methods-series-institutional-assessment-capacity-development-200509_en_2.pdf

[9] Idem pg.9

is recommended instead starting with assessing what the organization produces, the context in which it produces, the impact it has on the community and only then to assess the structural chart and strategic vision of the organization.

In the process of assessing capacities are used a number of tools, developed based on quantitative and qualitative methods. These may include: self-assessment tool: word and excel based ranking scored quizzes, interview guides, focus groups, document analysis, and others. Most of the tools targets 7-8 organizational categories / areas (broken down into sub-components) which has a score for each sub-component, an average score for component and total average score. The most common organizational categories used in the individual self-assessment quizzes are as follow: Governance, Management practices, Human resources, Financial resources, External relations, Sustainability and others.

In conclusion, in capacity assessment the concept will follow mainly the UNDP approach. However, some elements described above from other approaches will be used as well. Thus, the assessment will be done through a participatory way and will include a diagnosis of existing capacities, gap analysis and needs assessments. Word and excel based scored quizzes will be used as tool for ranking the organization's capacities along with interview guides, focus groups, document analysis, and others.

Figure 3. *The concept of the capacity assessment approach*
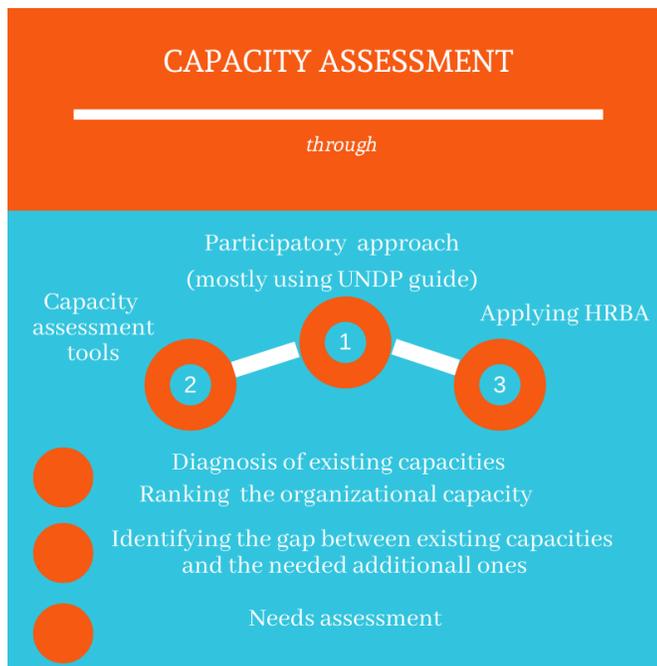
Development actions

Capacity development comes as a response to the result of the capacity assessment. The gap between existing capacities and the desirable ones constitutes the effort that must be made in this process. Although the capacity development is designed to be participatory, however it must be driven by the senior management of the organization.

a. Strategic / Action planning

To develop the concept for the development actions component, capacity development approaches of UNDP, USAID and McKinsey Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations were analyzed. At the core of all of them action planning (composed of areas of intervention) is set out.

The UNDP capacity development approach identifies four core issues representing the domains where the bulk of changes in capacity take place most frequently. These action areas under each core issue symbolize programme outputs, with indicative activities that can be supported.[10] In the same time the functional capacities identified to be strengthen following the assessment are supposed to be the central to determining the outcome of development endeavours.

According to the Instructions for the USAID Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCA) *action planning* is the most important part of the capacity development process. When organizations have strong ownership of the action plans capacity development activities are more likely to bring about sustainable change.[11] The OCA addresses seven areas of organizational capacity. For each of the identified areas for improvement, the action plan designates next steps, a timeline for capacity development activities, resource requirements, and possible sources of technical assistance.

In the McKinsey' Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations, the Capacity Framework, defines nonprofit capacity in a pyramid of seven essential elements: three higher-level elements – aspirations, strategy, and organizational skills – three foundational elements – systems and infrastructure, human resources, and organizational structure – and a cultural element which serves to connect all the others.[12] Based on the research the act of resetting aspirations (organization's mission, vision, and goals) and strategy is often the first step toward a dramatic improvement of an organization's capacity. Unless an organization has a clear idea of its purpose and strategy, it will never reach its full potential.

In conclusion, action planning will stay at the core of the capacity development process. In this regard a capacity development plan for the administrative structures of SDCP and for its members, by applying HRBA will be developed.

b. Capacity development of each vulnerable group

The work in this direction will be achieved through:

Elaborating OCAT for each vulnerable group. This will be driven through developing areas of intervention. In this sense, the Service Delivery intervention area will be the basis of the assessment tool for each group. By applying the tool, we will find out what is the quality of the services provided, the relationship with the beneficiary and the extent to which the services provided cover the needs of the group and empowers the group in terms of promoting and respecting its rights. Also, workshops will be held, by gathering specific vulnerable groups into panels. The collected info and the needs will outline and complement the intervention areas for each specific vulnerable group.

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[10] Capacity development: a UNDP primer, pg. 43
https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/capacity-development-a-undp-primer/CDG_PrimerReport_final_web.pdf
[11] https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/organizational-capacity-assessment
[12] Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations, McKinsey & Company, pg. 33
http://www.midot.org.il/Sites/midot/content/File/McKinsey%20Grid.pdf

Building on the existing capacities. From the perspective of the period from which the member organizations of the Platform activate, they have different experience. There are initiative groups, there are very young organizations, which have been active for 1-2 years and there are organizations that have been active for more than 10 years. Capacity building within the groups will take this into account. At the same time, this difference between the experience of organizations does not always signal a very wide gap in experience in the specific field of vulnerability. Despite the fact that such organizations as Association "Speranta" from Caragas village or "Ot ravnogo k ravnomu" from Parcani are quite young organizations (1-2 years) their leaders have acquired extensive experience in the field of disability due to personal involvement over the time.

The local context. Human rights is still an issue on the right bank, so this issue is more present on the left bank. While developing capacities for specific vulnerable groups the local context should be taken into consideration. It creates different barriers for the groups. For instance, some of the groups are highly discriminated, while the others even face the problem of public affiliation to the group (HIV). Therefore, the local context is an important factor which need to be considered in developing capacities of the groups.

Partnership / exchange of experience. There are many NGOs representing vulnerable groups nominated for UN Human Rights Awards over the last years, while part of them were awarded for the best actions to promote and protect human rights. Although is difficult to find a one-size-fits-all solution in capacity development, some of their particular achievements could be taken over as the actions to follow for each vulnerable group.

Trainings and coaching. Reducing the gaps between existing and desirable capacities could be achieved through trainings. Following the needs assessment, the areas for intervention will be identified. Part of the training topics is set up in the Programme, the others will emerge from the needs and the local context. Some training materials in capacity development have been elaborated by East Europe Foundation and Centre "Contact" being accessible in Russian. The Platform's members will be provided of coaching in implementing capacity building plan. In this regard, NGOs will be visited on the spot by the consultant.

Figure 4. *Capacity development process*

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
5-Step Actions

1 Action planning
2 Elaborating OCAT for each vulnerable group
3 Capacity development of vulnerable groups
4 Trainings and coaching
5 Exchage visits