

# NGO Capacity Building and the place of Resource Mobilisation within it

What is NGO Capacity building?

There are many attempts to define capacity building, and many variations on the theme (capacity strengthening, capacity development), but INTRAC provides us with a useful working definition:

*An explicit intervention that aims to improve an organisation's effectiveness and sustainability in relation to its mission and context.*

An examination of the terms used helps to clarify this definition:

1. Explicit: It is identified, planned, implemented, and evaluated.
2. Intervention: It usually needs outside facilitation and assistance
3. Effectiveness: It results in an organisation doing what it wants to do more effectively
4. Sustainability: It helps an organisation both to sustain itself and sustain its effectiveness
5. Mission: It helps an organisation implement its mission (if an NGO has a clear mission, then capacity building helps to implement that mission. Capacity building may, however, also be needed, to help an NGO work out or clarify its mission in the first place)
6. Context: An NGO exists in a specific environment which bounds its possibilities

The most attractive forms of capacity building are those geared to the whole organisation, not just to a project, and those which incorporate a range of interventions, not just training courses.

One of the difficulties of conceptualizing capacity building, and then making interventions to build capacity, is the lack of a clear understanding in many quarters about what a fully realised or fully "capacitated" or "healthy" NGO looks like. It is thus an essential first step to define the elements of an ideal NGO, and get agreement amongst stakeholders on this. Once this has been agreed, then the NGO's match with this ideal capacity can be assessed, and mismatches (or areas of weakness) can be identified.

One of the rarely disputed elements of an ideal NGO is that it is sustainable - organisationally, financially, in its programs and benefits, and in its resource bases. Its ability to mobilise resources for both its effectiveness and its sustainability are generally seen as a sine qua non of an effective NGO.

## How does Resource Mobilisation fit into the picture?

Disagreements will arise between NGOs, however, about the sources of these resources. Is an NGO with support from a range of foreign donor agencies sustainable and effective in the same way as an NGO which has built up a domestic resource base? The International Fund-raising Group thinks not: it believes that domestic fund-raising and fund generation are essential elements in a healthy NGO, and by inference, in a healthy NGO sector.

Let us look at the 6 elements in the definition of Capacity building mentioned above through a resource mobilisation lens.

- 1. Explicit:** It is important to be explicit that resource mobilisation capacity is a fundamentally required capacity for any competent NGO. It is important to be explicit how such capacity can be identified, measured, and measures to increase it can be planned, implemented and evaluated.
- 2. Intervention** It is expected that most NGOs have weaknesses in resource mobilisation capacities, and that therefore they need help in improving in this area. It is likely that such improvements will come from outside interventions either through peer group learning or some form of applied expertise.
- 3. Effectiveness:** The right kind of resources, mobilised in the right way at the right time are likely to enhance NGO effectiveness. Many would recognize that resources are not value free. Inappropriate resources can hinder an organisation because of the conditions and baggage they bring with them.
- 4. Sustainability:** The right kinds of resources help an organisation to be sustainable. The wrong kind can make it increasingly dependent and vulnerable to events and occurrences that it cannot control. NGOs can build their capacity to ascertain the kind of resources which are most useful to them in sustaining themselves, and how to acquire them.
- 5. Mission:** Although a Mission is often thought of as the purpose of an NGO (and this purpose can be pursued with a variety of resources), a Mission should also include the process by which the Mission is pursued, and tis may well involve the resources that need to be mobilised.
- 6. Context:** As with many other matters, the resources that can potentially be mobilised by and for an NGO depend on the context - the law, the cultural and philanthropic environment,

the posture of the government and the business sector, the entrepreneurial skills of the NGO. Capacity needs to be built so that NGOs can optimise any opportunities that exist, and press for a more supportive field in which to work.

There are many elements of NGO capacity that would get general acceptance (some possibilities are governance, management practices, human resources, financial management, service delivery, external relations, sustainability) but one that cuts across all of these is the resources that are needed to get the job done.

Resource Mobilisation capacity is a fundamental part of any NGO's strength. It is a foundation for so many aspects of its effectiveness and sustainability. We need to address both the quantity and quality of the resources mobilised in order to build the whole organisation.