

CAPACITY BUILDING OF SOUTHERN NGOs

LESSONS FROM INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON CAPACITY BUILDING (IFCB)



Compiled by

**Rajesh Tandon
and
Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay**



P R I A

42, Tuglakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi - 110 062
Ph.: 26081908, 26089559, 26060931 / 32 / 33
Fax : 91-11-26080183
E-mail : info@pria.org
Web : www.pria.org

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This report endeavours to capture the wealth of knowledge that has been emerging through numerous initiatives taken up by the International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB) during the last three years. Many thanks go to many people and institutions whose active support successfully enabled IFCB to bring the issues of capacity building in the forefront of development discourse. It is almost impossible to mention each and every name who has extended their overwhelming support to initiate, carry forward and sustain the debate on capacity building at various levels – national, regional and global. However, acknowledgement of a few names is absolutely imperative.

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The recent years have witnessed dramatic changes in the social, political and economic arrangements throughout the world. These changes have been characterized by an emerging consensus towards:

- (a) Democratic, decentralized and accountable governance of our societies;
- (b) Enabling private enterprise and initiative to accelerate equitable economic development;
- (c) Recognition of the centrality of citizen participation and civil society in promoting social development.

In addition, the new information technology and global capital flows have further fuelled the process of globalisation in economic, social and political terms. The destinies of currencies, markets, governments, and indeed entire humanity, are increasingly inter-linked.

This new compact is being translated into reality in varying forms and ways in different societies and countries of the world. Its ultimate benchmark is to be analyzed in relation to the impact on poverty alleviation, overcoming social exclusion and enhancing just and sustainable development of our societies.

These changes have inevitably prompted introspection and re-examination of relevance and roles of different institutions and actors in the societies. The hegemony of a centralized state and all-powerful omniscient government is being questioned. New emphasis is being laid on transparent, accountable, flexible, and enabling government functioning. The role of international development agencies, the United Nations Systems, the Multilateral Development Banks, and other donors are sought to be redefined in this changing context.

In a significant and overwhelming way, similar reflection and re-examination is being undertaken by development NGOs in different regions and countries of the world. Southern NGOs are being challenged to redefine their roles and linkages with respect to local communities, other civil society actors, governments, media, private sector, etc. Northern NGOs are facing a similar period of introspection and review in terms of their relations within their countries in the North and their relations with Southern NGOs and other actors in countries of the South.

These shifts in roles, functions and expectations are necessitating renewed and comprehensive attention toward strengthening capacities of all these categories of actors to prepare themselves to be relevant and effective in the coming decades.

This recognition is rather intensely experienced by many Southern NGOs who are finding their existing capacities inadequate and depleting in the face of these challenges. Hence, it has become crucial and urgent for Southern NGOs to identify priority areas of future capacity building and to evolve innovative ways to address them holistically.

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The overall purpose of IFCB is to build a multistakeholder forum in which Southern NGOs engage Northern NGOs and donors in debate and innovation, which shape conceptual approaches, policies and practices for future capacity building interventions.

- ❖ IFCB in its first phase (May 1998 to May 2001) paid special attention to enhance the outreach of the Forum through information dissemination as well as involving different actors and institutions in dialogues and consultations. More than one thousand Southern NGOs were part of the process. As a result Southern NGOs are now more serious, aware and sensitized about the issues and needs of capacity building than ever before. The issues were not stated so openly for small and medium sized Southern NGOs before IFCB began its processes. More attention is being paid to the needs of the Southern NGOs than ever before.
- ❖ The IFCB processes at the national, sub-regional and regional level have generated new knowledge, approaches and initiatives towards capacity building. The process has been so far towards empowerment and has instilled confidence to the Southern NGOs. The traditional notion and practice of donor–recipient relationship has been challenged. This has also generated a lot of expectations. The future challenge is to balance the expectations and dealing with pressures for supporting follow-up activities. The in-country processes highlighted that there is need to involve the national and regional offices of the donor agencies, Northern NGOs and other academic institutions.
- ❖ Out of five priority themes, IFCB has largely been able to address the two priority themes namely, building civil society coalition, alliances and networks and financial sustainability in terms of generating new knowledge through capturing the best practices from different regions. There is a need to address the other three themes namely, leadership development, information access, storage and dissemination and policy research and advocacy. The national and sub-regional/regional dialogues have also identified other themes, notably governance and decentralisation with special emphasis on local governance,

Accomplishment of IFCB: Highlights

1. Information Dissemination and Participation

- ❑ Publishing reports
- ❑ Translation of reports and documents in local languages
- ❑ Dissemination of knowledge by using information technology (website, email etc.)

2. Updating and Documentation

- ❑ Donor surveys
- ❑ Survey on demands and providers of capacity building
- ❑ Innovative exemplars on coalitions, alliances and networks (CAN) and financial sustainability
- ❑ Synthesis reports of multistakeholder dialogues, donor surveys, and case exemplars on coalitions, alliances and networks

3. Multistakeholder Dialogue and Consultations

- ❑ Sub-national, national and sub-regional level dialogues
- ❑ Regional conference
- ❑ Global conference
- ❑ Steering committee planning meetings

engaging and partnering with private sector and government. There is a need to address the issues of capacity building in relation to these themes.

- ❖ IFCB has been able to act as a reference point for debate and discourse on capacity building issues of Southern NGOs. Establishment of national level platform or forum through the IFCB processes has led to increased coordination among different stakeholder groups, including the donors. Engaging and encouraging the multistakeholder process itself could be seen as a contribution as well as an empowering process.
- ❖ There has been increased visibility and understanding of capacity building as an issue among the Northern NGOs. The process has opened up opportunities for evaluation to focus on the achievements of Northern NGOs rather than focusing only on the achievements of Southern NGOs. The process has also led to form new alliances among Northern NGOs. However, there is a felt need for greater involvement of Northern NGOs in the country and sub-regional/regional processes.
- ❖ The process has generated several new lessons. The documentation done through the IFCB processes has generated a large body of knowledge. However, synthesis of those documents, deeper analysis of lessons and process documentation of different perspectives of different stakeholders should be seen as critical and essential in the future courses.
- ❖ The multistakeholder process, which formed the hub of IFCB activities, has emerged as an important methodology to address the issue of capacity building. The process has highlighted that there is need to build capacity of different actors to work in multistakeholder environment. There was an emphasis on having to have more focused dialogues and discussion involving the Northern NGO, donors, academia and existing networks.

*International Forum on Capacity Building emerged as a Forum to address issues and concerns about the new capacity building requirements of Southern NGOs and quality response towards their capacity building. In October 1996, Southern NGOs of the NGO Working Group on the World Bank proposed the formation of an Inter Agency Group on Southern NGO Capacity Building. The NGO Working Group on the World Bank and the NGO Unit in the World Bank then collaborated with USAID Office of the Private and Voluntary Cooperation to undertake a survey of Northern donor experiences in Southern NGO capacity building. More than 35 donors (bilaterals, multilaterals and foundations), Southern NGOs and Northern NGOs participated in an exploratory meeting convened in May 1997 in Washington DC. The participants reviewed the current practices in Southern NGO capacity building and discussed the issues and priorities of capacity building. It was then decided to set up an interim process to further plan for future formation of an **International Working Group on Capacity Building (IWGCB)**. An Interim Steering Committee was formed to facilitate the process.*

Between July 1997 and April 1998 widespread surveys and consultations were undertaken with a variety of different stakeholders. These included reports prepared on Northern NGOs, donors, and Southern NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific. The results of the surveys and consultations were achieved by consulting a wide range of organisations including over 350 Southern NGOs, 100 Northern NGOs, and 20 donors. The interim results were disseminated and officially launched at the International Conference on Future Capacity Building of Southern NGOs held at the European Commission in Brussels from May 6-8 1998.

The International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB) of Southern NGOs was launched in Brussels on 8 May 1998. The focus of the activities both at global and regional level consisted of:

- ❑ documentation (of exemplars, consultation outcomes, etc.) and dissemination,*
- ❑ facilitation of national multistakeholder dialogues,*
- ❑ supporting regional and global conferences on capacity building, and*
- ❑ promoting inter-regional exchange on the above-mentioned issues.*

The Forum has focused on capacity building priorities of Southern NGOs with a view to enhance their contributions towards addressing issues of poverty, marginalisation, democratisation, strengthening civil society, human rights, and sustainable human development.

The Forum recognized that the new global context requires redefinition of roles and relationships between different development actors. Future capacity building efforts need to respond to these challenges.

SI. No.	Activities	REGIONS		
		Asia Pacific	Africa	Latin America and Caribbean
1.	Information Dissemination and Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing Reports (more than 25) Translation in local languages Using information technology (website, email etc.) 			
2.	Updating and Documentation			
2A.	Donor Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Japanese Donor Survey AUSAID New Zealand ODA Asian Development Bank 		
2B.	Survey on Demands and Providers of Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey on Providers of Capacity Building in Asia Pacific Study on NGOs in Cambodia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers of Capacity Building in Ethiopia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostics on Offers and Demands of Capacity Building in Latin America and the Caribbean
2C.	Innovative Exemplars on Coalitions, Alliances and Networks (CAN) and Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movement for Free and Fair Elections, Sri Lanka People's Campaign for Agrarian Reforms, Philippines Women's Coalition for Women's Citizenship Rights, Fiji 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Women's National Movement for Peace and National Unity, Mali Financial Sustainability, Burkina Faso Building Coalition for Developing Code of Conduct for NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil Society Alliances to respond to Hurricane Mitch and Reconstruction Alliances and Coordination of Local Development Civil Society Alliances for the Rights of Children and Youth Financial Sustainability Strategy of NGOs in Central America Participation of NGOs in MERCOSUR

SI. No.	Activities	REGIONS		
		Asia Pacific	Africa	Latin America and Caribbean
2D.	Synthesis Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of Multistakeholder Dialogues in Asia Pacific • Synthesis of Donor Survey • Synthesis of Case Exemplars on Coalitions, Alliances and Networks (CAN) • Synthesis of Multistakeholder Dialogues and Processes 		
3.	Multistakeholder Dialogue and Consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melanesian • Polynesia • Philippines • Cambodia • India (states of Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh and New Delhi) • Nepal • Bangladesh • South Asian Workshop on Development Support Organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethiopia • Uganda • Benin • Mali • Strategic Reflection on the Future of Resource Management in Eastern and Southern Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caribbean Islands • Brazil • Peru • Central America • National NGOs Associations and Networks Meeting
4.	Regional Conference	Organized in all three regions (Asia Pacific – Manila, Philippines; Latin America and the Caribbean – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Africa – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)		
5.	Global Conference	Washington D.C., United States of America		
6.	Steering Committee Planning	Six Steering Committee meetings have been organized		
7.	NNGO Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO Conference, Birmingham • Strengthening Capacities for Change: Interaction Forum, 2000 • Biannual Conference of International Society of Third Sector Research, Dublin, 2001 		

SOUTHERN NGO PERSPECTIVES

African Perspective

The history and background of the present African continent is characterized by the escalation of abject poverty, cycles of famine, growing gender inequalities and further marginalisation of other deprived sections of the society. The incidence and extent of conflicts and wars have reached an alarming situation. As civil society organisations take on the challenges of playing an expanded role in the transformation from stagnation to sustainable development, the democratisation process across the continent has led to the opening up of political space for non-state actors.

It is against the background of these challenges that any current capacity building intervention and future efforts for Southern NGOs must be shaped in the most appropriate and creative manner. The need for creativity and constant innovation is central to any sustainable capacity building effort. Although the relationship between the state and the civil society remains an issue of concern, new horizons are beginning to emerge. The improving relations can no doubt be enhanced if the capacity to collaborate, network and manage cross-sectoral relationships is addressed appropriately and adequately.

Aren't Africans entitled to have say in what gets onto their capacity building agenda? With their experience and knowledge of local conditions and aspirations, aren't they better placed to determine relevant capacities that would make the most significant contribution to their work?

The relationship between the state and the civil society can no doubt be enhanced and improved if the capacity to collaborate, network and manage cross-sectoral relationships is addressed appropriately and adequately. There is a need for civic engagement in public policy to advocate desirable future partnership for development work with the state.

The African development context has been influenced by the global shift in donor community, and by the emerging consensus among the NGOs, the state and the private sector. There has been a demand from the NGOs to be involved in policy making and influencing the content of resources of the global development institutions. The NGOs are willing to take the responsibility for their own capacity building. All these global as well as regional shifts are in response to understanding that the previous systems have not worked. Therefore, the ability to respond to this context

is very important. The NGO capacity building must be examined in terms of sustainability as well as in engagement with government. The NGOs at present are confronted with the question of diversity. Last decades have seen much diversification, but not many sustainable institutions. In this present context the NGOs should assume at least five functions viz. research, advocacy, resource mobilisation, community mobilisation, and cost effective service delivery. However, in this context connectivity with the use of new information technology is very important. Experience shows that the African capacity building suppliers have not been so successful. Therefore, the question should be raised – do we need to create new

suppliers or strengthen and revitalize the older ones? We should be able to find answer to the issue about why organisations are not being able to grow, why there are so few African leaders, why the capacities are not multiplying and proliferating. The African NGOs have to find answer to all these questions.

The question of institutional effectiveness, accountability and responsible governance are major issues for African NGOs. In some cases the state is even weaker than the NGOs. This helps neither the NGOs nor the government. There is a need for civic engagement in public policy to advocate desirable future partnership for development work with the state. There are challenges in relation to leadership, strategic management, and maintaining connectivity. This could change the concept of North-South relationships but will make difference between fastest and slowest growing NGOs.

There should be reliable measurable data on the flow of resources used for capacity building. It should be measurable what proportion of resource is being used for capacity building and what portion goes to African NGO sector? Do we want this proportion to change over the next decade? If indeed it is their capacities that are being strengthened, are Africans not entitled to have say in what gets onto their capacity building agenda? With their experience and knowledge of local conditions and aspirations, are they not better placed to determine relevant capacities that would make the most significant contribution to their work? This is political but also practical question.

In the present context, NGOs should assume at least five functions: research, advocacy, resource mobilisation, community mobilisation, and cost-effective service delivery. However, in this context connectivity with the use of new information technology is very important. The question of institutional effectiveness, accountability and responsible governance are major issues for African NGOs. The need for creativity and constant innovation is central to any sustainable capacity building effort.

Latin American and the Caribbean Perspective

One of the effects of globalisation is being perceived that the gaps between local, national and regional are diminishing in the societal context. On the other hand, the process of globalisation is also alienating the decision-making mechanism in relation to citizen and people. There is need for redefining the roles of market in the society. There has been so far predominance of

It is not desirable to undervaluing analytic ability and the knowledge generated by citizen groups. The role of NGOs is to support systematisation and aggregation of this knowledge through building networks, alliances and coalitions. The capacity building should include a systemic perspective relating NGOs to other social agents.

large corporate interests. The NGOs are being confronted with the ability to analyze globalisation process and its implications for the people of their countries and communities. To interpret social change, it is not desirable to undervaluing analytic ability and the knowledge generated by citizen groups. The role of NGOs is to support systematisation and aggregation of this knowledge. Building networks, alliances and coalition contribute to generate knowledge for social change, fostering appropriate decision-making process

and challenging the globalisation process that is becoming more and more distant from citizens groups.

The primary element of capacity is the ability to analyze and identifying opportunities for social change. There is need to focus on specific approaches of NGOs to respond to the reality in relation to the social change and also recognizing NGOs as legitimate agents for social change.

The perspective on capacity building includes that it should take a systemic perspective relating NGOs to other social agents. Social change would require creating opportunities where human development should occupy the central theme. The emphasis should be on the process to be adopted in building capacity.

Some guidelines for building capacity of Southern NGOs are to be fostered. First, there is a need to increase the visibility of NGOs for influencing public opinion, which itself is a process of intervention related to social change. NGOs must understand themselves as agents of social change and should concentrate for gaining social legitimacy. They should facilitate to get recognition from the society about their roles and responsibilities at local, national, regional and global levels. Second, is to strengthen analytical capacity of NGOs. NGOs are not just instruments or implementers but also promoters of social change. Generating knowledge is means to approach the social change process. There is a need to accumulate knowledge, confront other agents and strengthen ability to produce change. Third, there is a need to build coalitions, alliances and networks at the local, national, regional and global levels to establish legitimacy. The NGOs should be able to link with the citizen groups and community people with similar interests. They should also be able to build coalitions and relationships with other agents that are pursuing different goals than the NGOs. The NGOs must identify common interest and common spheres of goal and activities with such actors. This is not just wishful thinking; it will require constructive dialogue and NGOs have to take a proactive role. Fourth, there is a need to address the issues about organisational development, management of resources, monitoring and evaluation to improve capacity for change, to forge alliances, to impact on decision-making process.

The primary element of capacity is the ability to analyze and identifying opportunities for social change. There is a need to increase the visibility of NGOs for influencing public opinion, which itself is a process of intervention related to social change. NGOs must understand themselves as social change agents and should concentrate for gaining social legitimacy. There is also a need to address the issues about organisational development, management of resources, monitoring and evaluation to improve capacity for change, to forge alliances, to impact on decision-making process.

There is need to bring changes in the policies and practices on capacity building. It is essential to promote a systemic vision and to assume policy advocacy roles by Southern NGOs to enable Northern NGOs, foundations, multilaterals and bilaterals to respond to this initiative in non-traditional ways. There is a necessity to improve methodological proposals, resources

for capacity building for NGOs at all levels and ensuring access to means for establishing contacts and solidarity.

Asia Pacific Perspective

The Asia Pacific region has the highest population density in the world. This concentration is causing serious implications for poverty. Nearly every one out of three Asians is poor. Following these problems the major development actors are responding positively. The NGOs are also playing particular role in the development process. In this context capacity building for NGOs, therefore, is extremely important, especially for poverty reduction. Capacity building for NGOs in this region is a priority to facilitate empowering communities and civil societies, particularly where countries are de-centralizing their powers. A large number of Southern NGOs are engaged in community organizing and empowering civil societies in this region. The NGO programmes have received a fair amount of appreciation from the donors helped by them. However, there has also been a growing demand that all the development actors to show accountability and in this context an enabling environment recognized as crucial.

After decades of top down, north led policies and projects, the Asian development community has realized the importance to articulate its needs so that the donors hear it. It is essential to build capacities related to a south based, south articulated and south originated capacity for critical reflection, learning, documentation and dissemination. There is a need to develop one's own systems, define capacity building needs by assessing the present and future. The Southern NGOs know and understand their constituency and their needs better than any one else. South and East Asia are going through process of economic, social and political changes. In this light, it is essential to initiate a dialogue with the community with whom they work on its need for specific programmes. Capacity building initiatives should be looked at in this context and related to the work they are involved in.

- ***Capacity building for NGOs is a priority for poverty reduction and to facilitate empowering communities and civil societies, particularly where countries are de-centralizing their powers.***
- ***It is essential to build capacities related to a south based, south articulated and south originated capacity for critical reflection, learning, documentation and dissemination. There is a need to develop one's own systems, define capacity building needs by assessing the present and future. Capacity building has to be in relation to a search for relevance, identity, clarity of roles and perspective building.***
- ***Capacity building through external intervention is a facilitative process, which builds new or additional capacities on top of the existing ones. Therefore, it is essential to analyze and assess these to decide the capacity building inputs required.***
- ***The capacities of providers of capacity building need to be continuously updated. They need to grow with the changing social environment.***

Capacity building has to be in relation to a search for relevance, identity, clarity of roles and perspective building. We need to look at NGO identity and the work it is doing. NGOs are not contractors or apolitical agents of civil society but they are agents of social change.

It must be accepted that no capacity building inputs begin from scratch. Each organisation has some inherent strengths and weaknesses. Capacity building through external intervention is a facilitative process, which builds new or additional capacities on top of the existing ones. Therefore, it is essential to analyze and assess these to decide the capacity building inputs required.

While appreciating the trend of southern organisations questioning the delivery of capacity building, one also needs to think of how to address these questions and identify what kind of institutional support the grassroots organisations will need when they ask for specific capacity building inputs.

NORTHERN NGO PERSPECTIVE

It appears that Northern NGOs are increasingly recognizing the importance of organisational issues in capacity building. They are appreciating the complexities of organisations and the need to address a wide variety of organisational issues with a wide variety of capacity building mechanisms and adapting tailor making each programme to the particular organisation involved. There is also increasing importance given to dealing with core issue of Southern NGO identity. While capacity building still places importance on project management issues and there is still a tendency for Northern NGO to identify Southern NGO needs from Northern perspective and to find the solutions from within their own skill base, this pattern does appear to be shifting. Capacity building is seen as a way of increasing both the quality and quantity of development work of Northern NGOs as well as reflecting more self-centered concerns for their own funding support. Issue identified such as shared values and development perspectives and a more holistic and long-term organisation development approaches and an increased use of local intermediary capacity development NGOs lead Northern NGOs to this conclusion. It seems like critical issues of NGO identity are also being given greater priority. Furthermore, the considerable emphasis given to south south networking in capacity building is exciting as it reflects positive approach to the development of local institutional capacity and independence.

While recognizing the importance of longer-term approaches to capacity building, many Northern NGOs still feel caught in a trap of a very limited donor time-scale. It is not clear how unchangeable this perception is. Official donors themselves are recognizing the long time scale involved and some are becoming less rigid in their funding, provided they have the confidence that the Northern NGOs have the capacity to manage this flexibility well. While official procedure do obviously impose constraints, it may be that some Northern NGOs have not been prepared to enter into meaningful relationships and dialogue with their own donors as they feel they are in a very dependent and vulnerable position and are frightened of losing out to the competition.

There is little evidence that Northern NGOs understand the radical implication of this capacity building process. In order to build capacity they will have to give up some of their power and

really allow Southern NGOs to be more in control, this at a time when their own donors are demanding more accountability. Good capacity building has to be about changing the power differentials.

Capacity building follows some normative approaches: (1) respect the institutional autonomy of partners; (2) consultative style of decisions making; and (3) transparent and accountable to all stakeholders. There are ofcourse some dilemmas to these normative approaches. Some European NGOs run against the current of development cooperation because they fund one organisation for a long time. They are principle funders for core funding. It is very difficult to maintain the principle of having a long-term perspective. Some of the European NGOs poses problems to the partner, but does not become involved in the problem solving. It is extremely difficult to contribute to empowerment and learning and not intervene in organisation development processes of partners. It is challenging to be a development advocate and a foreign donor. It is difficult to avoid the power of money that Northern NGOs wield.

Some of the US NGOs believe that they share the same values as Southern NGOs. They try to make changes in their programmes, which will reduce perception of “northern dominance”. They seek to increase the extent of sharing and control of local partner organisations. Capacity Building is seen as service delivery. The US NGOs are starting to look for new approaches to capacity building such as, advocacy, rights based approaches, governance, and finding broader roles for grass roots organisation.

Capacity building still tends to be compartmentalized in a narrow way, as a need of Southern NGOs. However, it seems that Northern NGOs need to recognize and address their own weaknesses, otherwise their attempts at supporting the capacity building of others will be superficial and largely ineffective.

DONOR PERSPECTIVE

The meaning of the term capacity building for Southern NGO among the donors ranged from a very broad definition in which any activity with a Southern NGO, which contributes to organisation strengthening to very narrow definitions that demand strategically focussed activities aiming at a Southern NGO capacity building needs. Some donor agencies see capacity

- ***The Northern NGOs are increasingly recognizing the importance of organisational issues in capacity building. They are appreciating the complexities of organisations and the need to address a wide variety of organisational issues with a wide variety of capacity building mechanisms.***
- ***The considerable emphasis given to NGO identity and south – south networking in capacity building is exciting as it reflects positive approach to the development of local institutional capacity and independence.***
- ***In order to build capacity the Northern NGO will have to give up some of their power and really allow Southern NGOs to be more in control. Good capacity building has to be about changing the power differentials. The normative approaches to capacity building should include: (1) respect the institutional autonomy of partners; (2) consultative style of decisions making; and (3) maintaining transparency and accountability to all stakeholders.***

building as a legitimate objective of development assistance, especially for community based organisations. Others see capacity building as a means to achieve other objectives related to improving social and economic welfare.

Bilateral donors, multilateral donors and foundations show important differences in the way they approach and implement Southern NGO capacity building. These differences are due, in part, to their different sources of funding, aspects of accountability, modes of operation, and organisational history and culture.

Donor agencies are increasingly accepting that Southern NGOs can play an important role in enhancing social and economic welfare in developing countries and are expanding their collaboration with them. An obvious reason for supporting capacity building is to improve the donors ability to accomplish their objectives by strengthening the local organisations they collaborate with for programme implementation. A second reason for strengthening Southern NGOs is to enhance the capacity of these organisations to achieve their own mission. A third and broader reason, is that by building the capacity of specific Southern NGOs, a donor can strengthen the NGO sector in given country or region and contribute to a more vigorous civil society. However, donor organisations tend not to track funds allocated to strengthening Southern NGOs, an activity that is often a small part of a large project.

Training and technical assistance have been the most common mechanisms for Southern NGO capacity building, but increasingly donors are adopting other mechanisms, such as policy dialogue, networking, and support to local intermediaries.

It is a recent realisation by the bilateral donors that there has to be an authentic partnership between local and Northern NGOs. A partnership approach is required in all of the projects. It is much more complicated than just an agreement and requires new approaches of working together. It also requires changes in understanding of roles and responsibilities. There has been growing importance of measuring of capacity building results. It is easier to measure the service delivery end, than to measure the impact of partnership, policy dialogue and coalition building. It is a challenge how do we measure these activities?

Various factors including different sources of funding, aspects of accountability, modes of operation, and organisational history and culture contribute to the varied meaning of capacity building.

The meaning of capacity building for Southern NGOs among the donors varies as follows:

- ❖ any activity with a Southern NGO, which contribute to organisation strengthening***
- ❖ strategically focussed activities aiming at Southern NGO capacity building needs***

The reasons for supporting capacity building lie on the fact that:

- it will improve the donors ability to accomplish their objectives by strengthening local organisations for programme implementation***
- it will enhance the capacity of these organisations to achieve their own mission***
- it will strengthen the NGO sector in given country or region and contribute to a more vigorous civil society***

USAID's future plan clearly articulate the need for developing an authentic partnership with the NGO community as follows:

- Facilitate strategic partnerships between NGOs and corporate sector through dialogues between the private sector and the NGO community.
- Supporting existing institutions and helping to build new coalitions.
- NGO advocacy expertise.
- Working more closely with USAID missions on helping them to support NGO communities in their countries.

Civic engagement is becoming a key concern. The World Bank's concern is building and sustaining partnership as well as building the capacity of the World Bank and its partnerships. It requires moving from contractual relationships to a real partnership. Therefore, multistakeholder approach is important. Bank has learned the perspectives of its partners. There is a mismatch of needs and priorities of capacity building. There is saturation in some areas of capacity building. The suppliers have expertise in limited areas. There is lack of accountability to the "receivers of capacity building".

Similarly, UNDP is beginning to change the language from capacity building to capacity development. There are three reasons for this change:

Change of paradigms: UNDP recognizes that capacity already exists. It is important to develop a capacity that already exists. Capacity development is a permanent, ongoing and continuous process. It is a partnership between the North and the South. UNDP's activities are focusing increasingly on supporting stakeholder dialogues. There are many ongoing processes where partner countries must take decisions on key policy issues. UNDP wants to create space for the participation of civil society organisations.

Build analytical capacities of southern institutions: A growing significance and importance has been attached to the southern institutions, developing their own capacities to develop their own options.

The importance of information sharing and networking: UNDP actively supports the sharing of experiences. It also focuses on information technology capacities. UNDP supports the strengthening of democratic governments. Because the existing democratic processes are weak, UNDP is skirting around them.

In order to understand the meaning of capacity building, it is imperative to understand what is meant by capacity in NGOs. Different actors have defined capacity in different ways. Most of the actors have defined capacity from their own vantage point. However, little thought has been given to define capacity from the vantage point of Southern NGOs. Our understanding suggests that capacity is a multi-dimensional and complex attribute. In a simple sense, it covers the totality of an organized effort of an organisation to fulfil its mission. Therefore, the key issue is the elaboration of the identity of the organisation. As there are diverse purposes, missions and rationales for starting up and continuation of different NGOs, universal prescriptions of desirable capacity are not relevant. The important thing is to look at capacity in relation to the mission and purpose of a Southern NGO. Experience suggests that the given changes in the development context force the Southern NGOs to acquire three types of capacity:

1. Intellectual Capacity

The critical component of capacity is the intellectual and analytical ability of a NGO. It may seem as an intangible capacity. Clarification of its **perspective**, its **vision of a desirable society**, its **moral and ethical base**, its **analysis of the given social reality**, **articulating its independent thinking and position on issues of contemporary concern** – all these constitute a significant component of such capacity. In fact, this capacity creates the ground for NGO to act independently and autonomously, to be able to pursue its mission and purposes without compromising its principles and identity. Related to above, other critical component is to look at the capacity for **self-reflection and learning**. Capacity for systematizing its own experience and drawing lessons from the same, capacity to monitor its activities and review its purpose in light of the changes taking place in the wider society, capacity to document, synthesize and articulate its own learning in the course of its on-going activities become important elements of the capacity for self-reflection and continuous learning by NGO.

2. Institutional Capacity

The second critical component is the institutional capacity, which involves the **internal and external relationships and linkages**. Each NGO operates in a locally specific context through a network of relationships with other actors, which not only provides the basis for its pursuit of purposes and mission but also provides the basis for its legitimacy. The primary arena for examining the meaning of capacity of a local NGO, therefore, is this web of relationships in its immediate social context. Its ability to function effectively in that social context provides the underlying clues about its capacity requirements and challenges.

The capacity of an NGO to manage its internal systems and procedures is crucial to foster and pursue its mission and purposes. In this context the internal capacity to relate and respond to the external environment and become adaptive and resilient is prerequisite to achieve the developmental goal of the organisation. Therefore, enhancing capacity for organisational management, organisation development, strategic planning and so on are very important for Southern NGOs.

3. Resource Capacity

Experience suggests that **material resource base** is an increasingly important element of capacity as far as Southern NGOs are concerned. This includes the **physical infrastructure, assets and resources**. It is this capacity which in fact provides a strong ground for taking an autonomous and independent political position on the issues of contemporary concern.

The term '**building**' has acquired a distorted connotation, implying that something from scratch has to be initiated. But there is hardly any situation when one has to begin from the scratch. One set of capacity that exists may require reinforcement and here the capacity actually means **augmenting the existing capacities**.

Such an approach clearly implies that capacity formation is a gradual and cumulative process; new capacity is an accumulation of previous capacity and new interventions. Therefore, interventions aimed at building the capacity of an NGO are expected to result in improved effectiveness in pursuit of its purposes and mission. In this sense, capacity for continuous organisational learning, reflection, systematisation, analyses and articulation becomes the fundamental base on which capacity building of an NGO should happen.

The long-term implications of capacity building are the requirement to visualize building of capacity without rush, hurried and immediate pressures of task completion. Following the above, capacity building of an NGO acquires a purposive and a systematic nature; it implies especially design planned and structured interventions carried out by the NGO with the assistance of others.

The understanding of capacity building leads to the expectation that it would follow certain principles. However, many of these principles are not practiced in the reality. The resulting paradoxes thus make capacity building an issue for the Southern NGOs.

1. Capacity building is continuous and ongoing process

This view implies that capacity formation in a Southern NGO is an ongoing and long-term process. Thus the meaning of capacity may change as purposes undergo re-statement and re-articulation; at different stages in the life of a Southern NGO, different types of capacity may become important. Therefore, capacity building has to be seen in relation to the pursuit of purpose and mission of the organisation. As there are different purposes and mission within the civil society, there is need to take into consideration for context specific needs of the organisations. The ongoing nature of capacity building encourages the acknowledgement of its dynamic and processual nature as opposed to mere events and structure. There are dynamics of change that need to be looked at with the growth of an organisation. Thus the needs for capacity building are different for small, medium and larger NGOs. However, this does not imply that each of these organisational divisions, i.e., small, medium and large, are watertight compartments. Any capacity building interventions must keep in mind not only the size, but also its age and the growing constituency it works with. The newer Southern NGOs could share and learn from their older counter parts.

In reality the Southern NGOs have been seen as transitory. Historically, capacity building inputs have been tied to project goals and related to service delivery. The context specific needs of different types (age, size or purpose etc.) of organisations were not paid adequate attention.

2. Capacity is self-reflecting and evolutionary learning process

The formation of capacity of a Southern NGO is an evolutionary process. It is similar to learning at the level of an individual. People learn through life itself, through their struggle to survive and deal with their environment. A lot of this learning is evolutionary, continuous and does not depend on external inducements. Likewise, formation of capacity of a Southern NGO is the process of organisational learning through which a collective actor (Southern NGO) learns as it begins to undertake activities in pursuit of its mission and purpose. Therefore, capacity building through an external intervention can only be a facilitative process, which builds new or additional capacity on top of the capacity that already exists within a Southern NGO.

Capacity building, in the southern context, is largely dependent on international funding. This influences the type of intervention provided. As a Southern NGO grows, either it realizes the need for capacity building inputs by itself or the funding agency decides what inputs the concerned organisation needs. Often, the interventions are planned by the donors and geared to meet their own requirements rather than that of the organisation. Thus, most of the inputs are related to programme planning, management and related to a particular theme or area of work of the organisation. Few, if any, inputs are provided

for long-term capacities of the organisation. Experience suggests that the pressure to disburse or utilize large chunks of money in a short time determine donors' demands or expectations for "scale-up" delivery by Southern NGOs. This very practice undermines the facilitative and learning nature of capacity building.

There is also tremendous pressure being faced by the Southern NGO for "results orientation". This distorts the delivery of capacity building, which primarily reinforced the use of training and technical assistance by experts as methods for capacity building. This also undermines the evolutionary nature of capacity building. There is need to evolve creative and innovative ways of monitoring impact of capacity building over a long term.

3. Capacity is synergistic total of individual, systems (organisation) and resources and to be pursued at different levels (individual, organisation and sector)

Capacity building means development of both individual and the collective. It is essential to focus not only on the individuals in an organisation, but also on the organisation itself as well as on the whole NGO sector. A capacity building initiative should have inherent human potential as its focus. The focus of capacity building should be a combination of skill upgradation and enhancement of potentials. Growth of individuals is key to any meaning of capacity. The relevance of the organisation to its changing context is the measure of its effectiveness. Capacity for that organisation, therefore, implies relating to the changing context in an effective and proactive manner to be able to continuously respond to emerging trends and changes. It is important for an organisation to review its functions periodically in a systematic and sustained manner. Therefore, enhancing capacity to continuously improve performance, process and structures is a critical arena of capacity building. As a development actor, building relationships with other actors, locally, nationally, regionally as well as globally, becomes important for effective functioning and sustainable impact. Alliances, partnerships, networks provide the necessary platform for sharing and learning information, experiences and ideas. Many Southern NGOs are being called upon to play regional and global roles in the present context. Building regional networks and global alliances is necessary to play these roles. Southern NGOs have also started working actively with the government to improve their linkages locally as well as to influence their policies and programmes. Therefore, advocacy capacity is a key to multiplying the impact of a development actor.

Principles of Capacity Building

- **Capacity building is continuous and ongoing process**
- **Capacity is self-reflecting and evolutionary learning process**
- **Capacity is synergistic total of individual, systems (organisation) and resources and to be pursued at different levels (individual, organisation and sector)**
- **Capacity related to Southern context is needed**
- **Capacity building needs to be futuristic in approach**
- **Capacity building requires a systemic approach**

In reality, capacity building inputs have been targeted at a chosen few individuals in an organisation. Often, these inputs are geared for the top-level leaders within an organisation. The implication of this is that when they leave, the leadership goes with them and the organisation may flounder. Many a time, the programme staff at the field do not get any capacity input in relation to the organisational management etc. on the other hand the management staff at the head quarter do not get any exposure about the programmes. This creates an internal tension within the organisation. It is essential to build capacities of all levels of professionals in an organisation to ensure continuity and smoothness in the running of an organisation. In this context, institutionalisation of capacity building needs has been over looked. Most of the capacity building inputs have been provided through training. Capacity building, in this sense, has not paid adequate attention to the multi-track approach.

4. Capacity related to Southern context is needed

After decades of top down, North led policies and projects, the Southern NGOs have realized the importance to articulate its needs so that the donors hear it. It is essential to build capacities related to a south based, south articulated and south originated capacity for critical reflection, learning, documentation and dissemination. The Southern NGOs know and understand their constituency and their needs better than any one else. Most of the Southern countries are going through process of economic, social and political changes. In this light, it is essential to initiate a dialogue with the community with whom they work on its need for specific programmes. Capacity building initiatives should be looked at in this context and related to the work they are involved in. Therefore, interventions towards building capacity of Southern NGOs should be rooted into the changing Southern context and as per requirements of Southern NGOs themselves.

However, in reality most of the capacity building interventions is done either by the individual consultants from the Northern countries or by the Northern NGOs, who may not necessarily understand the context in which Southern NGOs function. While the Northern NGOs have contributed in improving the organisational and management capacities of Southern NGOs, in some of the areas, there is a need to reach a common understanding about primary development goals and values. This becomes essential bearing in mind the differences in the context, culture and values in Southern NGOs and Northern NGOs.

Until recently, the primary channel of Southern NGO funding by most of the bilateral agencies has been through homeland Northern NGOs. Most of the multilaterals have channeled their effort to build the Southern NGO capacity through government projects or departments. Capacity of Southern NGOs is therefore assumed to be developed by or taken care of by Northern NGOs and/or government. The effort to professionalize project management for Southern NGOs results in indiscriminate use of “for-profit” private sector consultants, consultancy firms and audit firms, who have a very little understanding and appreciation of value based functioning of Southern NGOs.

Till date, the international development agencies did not pay adequate attention towards the South based and South rooted concept of support organisations and support functions. Support organisations historically have shared the same roots and motivations that inspire other types of NGOs.

5. Capacity building needs to be futuristic in approach

Capacity building has to be in relation to a search for relevance, identity, and clarity of roles and perspective building. There is a need for it to be more futuristic in its approach. It is important to look at the sector's future needs and see how best one can use different methodologies to enhance existing capacities.

Current trends of capacity building are more towards corrective and incremental inputs based on past and present experiences. There is a market approach towards capacity building. There are 'suppliers' of capacity building and there are those who 'demand' it. This is not a satisfactory arrangement to address the issue of capacity building of Southern NGOs. Mere extrapolation of the present need may not answer the future requirement of capacities of Southern NGOs in this ever-changing development context.

Related to above, the constantly changing needs for capacity building of any organisation necessitate a growth in the capacities of the 'capacity builder'. The capacity builder needs to adapt to the evolution of their complex tasks, and they cannot adapt appropriately without commitment to continuous learning. The very assumption that capacity building is an on-going process implies that the capacity builder also has to grow with the organisation and the needs of the community. The question, therefore, that need to be addressed is related to who will enhance the capacities of the capacity builder. This becomes even more relevant in the context of the changing environment and the challenges faced by the NGOs in their respective constituencies.

6. Capacity building requires a systemic approach

The capacity building should be looked at from a systemic approach. There is a growing realisation that the Southern NGOs are only one component of set of actors involved in promoting sustainable development. There are other sets of actors whose capacities have to be enhanced to strike a balance. This would operationally mean to build effective linkages, coalitions and alliances between range of civil societies and other development actors. This would also require promoting, engaging and sustaining dialogues across all sets of actors.

In reality the systemic approaches to capacity building has not been adequately addressed. In any given point of time the needs of one actor has been addressed over looking the needs of others. For capacity building in developing countries the initial focus was with the institutions and apparatus of governments mostly through transfer of technology. However, with a changing paradigm of development it is imperative to build the capacities of local governance, civil society and other actors.

Individual Capacities

Leadership development for both existing and “second generation” leaders was a matter of interest in several regions. Many recognized that NGOs must move beyond the capacities of their charismatic founders if they are to have a wider impact on civil society development in many countries. Staff development of various kinds and gender sensitivity was seen as other important areas for future work.

Organisational Capacities

Southern NGOs generally gave high priority to the area of organisational capacity building. Both organisational renewal and development and programme design and management were accorded high priority by most regions. Planning and strategic management was another area rated as high priority by every Southern NGO region. Donors and Northern NGO rated capacity for monitoring and evaluation as a highest priority. However, donors and Northern NGO accorded less importance to other areas of organisational capacity building.

In the Founding Conference, held in Brussels in May 1998, five priority areas were identified:

- *Leadership development*
- *Policy research and advocacy*
- *Information access, use and dissemination*
- *Building alliance, coalition, networks, North South partnerships and inter-sectoral partnership*
- *Financial sustainability*

Capacity for Resource Mobilisation

Southern NGOs are understandably concerned about financial resources and seek capacities for fundraising and mobilizing local resources. Donors and Northern NGO are, not surprisingly, concerned with promoting local resource mobilisation, which will also increase the likelihood that programmes will be locally sustainable. Widespread concern with the sustainability of development services and the shrinking size of international aid resources make this area central to the future of NGOs in many regions.

External Relations Capacities

Northern NGOs and donors accorded the issue of Southern NGO capacity for external relations, especially with governments and other civil society actors. Southern NGOs also give high priority to building capacity for policy analysis and advocacy and to networking with other NGOs. On the other hand, high donor priority for promoting better intersectoral relations was only partly reciprocated by Southern NGOs, which did not rate collaborating with business as a high priority except in Latin America and the Caribbean. As Southern NGOs play increasingly important roles in development, it is virtually inevitable that the importance of their relations with external constituencies, from donors to governments to businesses, will increase.

Areas of Capacity Building	Asia Pacific	Latin America and the Caribbean	Africa	Northern NGOs	Donors
<i>Individual</i>					
Leadership Development	●		●		●
Staff Development	●	●	●		
Gender Sensitivity			●	●	●
<i>Organisational</i>					
Planning and Strategic Management	●	●	●		●
Organisational Renewal and Development	●	●		●	●
Project/Programme Design and Management	●		●	●	●
Monitoring and Evaluation		●	●	●	●
Financial Systems	●		●		
Information Access, Storage and Dissemination	●		●	●	●
Research, Documentation and Perspective Building		●			
<i>Resources</i>					
Fundraising	●	●	●		
Local Resource Mobilisation	●	●	●	●	●
<i>External Relations</i>					
Policy Research, Analysis and Advocacy	●	●	●	●	●
Networking with Other NGOs	●	●	●	●	●
Networking with Other Civil Society Organisations			●	●	●
Collaboration with Government	●	●	●	●	●
Collaboration with Business		●			●
Clarifying NGO Roles and Identities	●		●		
Improving Governance and Accountability	●				
Strengthening Public Support				●	

The Multistakeholder Dialogue was conceived as both a dynamic process and a forum aimed at building a common platform and shared understanding of capacity building among different stakeholders. The multistakeholder dialogues have occurred at global, regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national levels in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America-Caribbean.

As a process the multistakeholder dialogue consists of three major stages: **preparation**, **implementation** and **post-dialogue**.

Four key questions posed at the preparatory stage were:

- a) who will manage the multistakeholder dialogue activity?
- b) what will be the theme of the dialogue?
- c) who will be invited to participate? and
- d) what materials will be used to support the activity?

The management of the multistakeholder dialogue activity was the responsibility of the convener. As all conveners were network organisations, this made possible a wider circulation of information on the multistakeholder dialogue and facilitated recruitment of participants, and donor support. In some cases the convener alone managed the multistakeholder dialogue. In others, the management became the responsibility of the convener supported by a local steering committee that was either NGO or a multistakeholder in composition.

Two key factors influenced the selection of the theme for a specific multistakeholder dialogue: the global IFCB priorities and the local needs. The themes were either generic in nature reflecting global concerns (e.g. Capacity Building Perspectives and Priorities) or specific to the identified needs of the locality (e.g. NGO Capacity Building in Support of Local Governance). The variations on the theme and the range of topics within themes illustrated the flexibility of MSHD to different situations.

Representation and interest were the major criteria for participant selection. Representation took into account the number of participants, sectors represented and level of organisational responsibility. Interest referred to experience in the theme and willingness to participate in the dialogue.

The conduct of surveys, studies and the writing of cases were part of multistakeholder dialogue preparation. The results were used both directly (presented and discussed) and indirectly (as handout) during the dialogue. In most instances the surveys/studies influenced the choice of the dialogue theme. In others, the theme determined the material to be produced.

Different activities preceded the actual dialogue. One common activity was networking to create awareness and interest on IFCB and multistakeholder dialogue. Other conveners organized consultative meetings or caucuses by sector. The caucuses provided a venue for dialogue within the sector prior to engagement across sectors.

The second major phase of the multistakeholder process was the actual dialogue. The dialogue process had three main parts: input (talks and/or presentation of study/survey results/cases), small group discussions on issues and recommended action points, and a plenary session to consolidate output and discuss plan of action.

The post-dialogue was the final phase of the multistakeholder dialogue process. It consisted of evaluation regarding the attainment of the multistakeholder dialogue objectives, dissemination of the multistakeholder dialogue documentation, and follow-up of initiatives resulting from the dialogue. Broad follow-up actions at various levels were identified but not all multistakeholder dialogue created the corresponding structure for follow-up.

The multistakeholder dialogues while done at various levels were vertically inter-linked. Sharing and consensus building characterized the main direction of sub-national, national and sub-regional multistakeholder dialogues. Their output became input to the regional dialogues. The regional multistakeholder dialogues focused on consolidation and synthesis of national and sub-regional dialogues. In turn the output of the regional dialogues were synthesized at the global conference.

Each level of multistakeholder dialogue highlighted a specific major accomplishment. The sub-national, national and sub-regional dialogues identified common platforms for action. The regional multistakeholder dialogues resulted in shared understanding of the state of the art in capacity building while the global conference provided conceptual approaches and policy directions for capacity building of Southern NGOs.

There are challenges and opportunities for growth in the multistakeholder dialogue process. IFCB has to find answers to questions related to the direction, quality control and innovations in the multistakeholder dialogue process. Mechanisms must be developed to integrate the concerns of sectoral and grassroots groups, include non-traditional partners and institutionalize participation as well as South-South exchange. Finally, resources have to be made available for follow-up and “cycles of dialogues” to reinforce stakeholders’ commitment and thus make multistakeholder dialogue truly a process and not merely an event.

Key lessons have emerged from the experience in the multistakeholder dialogue process. The following are some of them:

- ❑ ***The credibility of the convener is a major factor for getting the right stakeholders;***
- ❑ ***Clarity of theme and dialogue design results in coherent criteria for choosing stakeholders;***
- ❑ ***The quality of engagement depends not so much on the number of participants as in their capacity to contribute positively to the theme;***
- ❑ ***Consultative meetings by sector are an effective preparation for the actual dialogue;***
- ❑ ***Effective facilitation involves skills to consolidate, synthesize and provide additional perspectives to participants’ output;***
- ❑ ***Reflection on the evaluation of stakeholders is key to improving the quality of multistakeholder dialogue.***

Strengthening the capacity of Southern NGOs to build alliance, coalition, networks, North South partnerships, and intersectoral partnerships was selected as one of five priority areas for new capacity building initiatives. Subsequently, a process for identifying ‘lessons learned’ from best practices was coordinated, with a specific focus on civil society alliance, coalition, and networks (CAN).

The CAN framework noted that the terms, network, alliance and coalition (CAN), are used differently in practice, and suggested the following definitions: “*Networks* are loosely-organized groups of organisations that share values and ideologies. *Alliances* are more tightly organized groups of organisations that share common concerns and may have well-defined understandings about how they will work together. *Coalitions* are more tightly-organized groups of diverse organisations that need each other to accomplish goals beyond the capacities of individual members”.

Why were these alliances created? Did their founders intend to increase the scale of NGO impacts? Understood from an institutional perspective, most of the alliances facilitate civil society engagement with the state. Scale of impact may be achieved by taking on political systems, policies, and behaviors at national and as grassroots levels. Intentional linkages between organisations at grassroots and national levels are also noted in some cases.

Some of the alliances have advocated for and achieved policy and legal change while others have pressed for the implementation of existing laws. Still others have contributed to the reduction of political violence and raised national awareness of the need for peaceful and democratic political behavior.

A number of alliances have involved significant participation by individuals as well as organisations and federations. The individual activists may step forward when their

KEY CAPACITIES FOR BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY ALLIANCES

The capacity to build alliances encompasses capacities at individual, organisational, and alliance levels. The following suggestions comprise a partial list of capacities that focuses on the level of alliances themselves, since individual and organisational capacities may be derived from those needed by alliances.

- ❑ The capacity to initiate joint action on social issues that are meaningful within the national context:
 - *Interpret the environment and articulate visions and strategies for change.*
 - *Convene existing allies and potential new stakeholders.*
 - *Facilitate and join in collective discussions and debates.*
 - *Keep any international linkages in the backdrop of the national arena.*
- ❑ The capacity for ‘collective leadership’:
 - *Individual leaders and organisations attend to the collective good, e.g. generous, low profile, inclusive, consensus-building, open, negotiate interests, etc.*
 - *Recognize alliance leadership in participants, structures, and processes.*
 - *Translate social change visions into concrete objectives and link narrow objectives to longer-term visions of social change.*
 - *Craft emergent strategies in response to objectives, experience, & environment.*

Cont.

organisations can or will not and may lend significant personal resources to campaigns e.g. the credibility of certain individuals.

In general, these alliances relate most clearly to 'democracy and governance' or 'good governance' objectives in international agencies and policy arenas. Still, sharp boundaries with sustainable development and service delivery work cannot be imposed. In some alliances, economic development activities are included in the alliance agendas. Similarly, development and service-oriented NGOs are active, if not leading members. These support the arguments that NGO-led struggles for sustainable development and democratic self-governance are highly inter-related.

NGOs and others initiating alliances face significant challenges associated with the dynamic and complex contexts that they attempt to influence. Entrenched political forces typically have greater material and institutional resources. They may not hesitate to use violence to intimidate opponents. Natural and social disasters tend to destabilize societies, increasing levels of uncertainty and threatening public infrastructure, livelihoods, and community security. Crises can emerge on a daily basis in varying sectors and regions, making it difficult to understand and influence the situation. Groups that have interests in joining alliances may be hindered from participating by their very marginalisation and isolation from one another. Among NGOs and civil society groups, existing relationships can be fragmented, including elements of competition and mutual ignorance as well as of cooperation.

Civil society alliances are usually founded by NGOs, networks of NGOs, and activist individuals. Those who initiate alliances appear to be driven by a vision of social change and perceive opportunities or threats in their environments as calls to action. Some cases illustrate ways in which long-term activists take advantage of opportunities in their environments

- **The capacity to organize a connected and flexible alliance:**
 - *Structures tend to be loose (at least initially), representative of members, functional and effectively link the center with the bases. Structures evolve with the needs of the alliance.*
 - *Processes tend to be information sharing, consultative, and action-oriented.*
 - *Alliance members generate most of the necessary resources.*
 - *The alliance itself is connected to those experiencing the social issues.*
- **The capacity to mobilize external resources that complement and supplement alliance objectives and activities:**
 - *Identify activities that may benefit from additional funding or technical assistance.*
 - *Identify donor agencies with related programs and resources.*
 - *Members cooperate in fund-raising.*
- **Implications for donors: strengthening the capacity to provide responsive and appropriate support:**
 - *Scan national environment to be aware of effective alliances*
 - *Provide quick and responsive technical and financial support*
 - *Stay in the background and explore other means of support, including parallel advocacy, lending official legitimacy, linking alliance with wider networks, etc.*
- **The capacity to sustain social change visions, cooperative relationships, and experience-based knowledge of building alliances.**

while others illustrate alliances formed in response to perceived threats, such as natural disaster, government repression etc.

The social capital, or norms and networks that foster cooperation, is an important pre-condition linked to the formation of new alliances. At the same time, existing relationships may also carry legacies of conflict that new alliances must address. However, not all the alliances were formed on the basis of existing relationships. New alliance relationships were created in events like workshops, congresses, and conferences in some cases. These kinds of events give individuals and NGOs opportunities to discuss and debate social issues a broad forum. Some cases suggest that holding forums in national or local languages can help to build meaningful national discourse.

At the initial stage of creating alliances, the primary material and technical resources appear to come from internal sources. Resources are voluntarily committed and often of an in-kind nature, such as labor and administrative facilities. International agencies appear not to be heavily involved, if they are involved at all. However, external resources are noted to have been a minor contribution to the success of the alliance.

It is not uncommon for alliance participants and observers to note that organizing them is inherently challenging and paradoxical. Many activists continue to work in alliances only because they see that it is necessary in order to achieve the kinds of social changes needed. Leadership dilemmas include having to balance the good of the individual or organisation with the good of the alliance as a whole. The very same qualities that assist individuals to gain recognition and resources for their own NGOs can work against them when they need to throw their resources in with others, share lead positions, and work for common causes.

Equally perplexing are the organisational dilemmas of multi-organisational structures and processes. A common tension noted in policy alliances is associated with the pressures for leadership from the center and those for decentralized leadership from the bases or member organisations. Centralized leadership, usually at the national level, can be useful for directing coherent strategies and negotiating with government officials. At the same time, it is easy for leaders in the center to become distanced from issues and events driving members. Equity in decision-making and participation has to be balanced with expertise in relevant roles and functions.

Finally, most alliances confront the challenges of diversity. Large and diverse groups are useful in increasing the resources and credibility necessary to alliance causes, yet the added diversity – especially of ideology and social identity group – can lead to conflicts and politicized stalemates that hinder joint action.

The function of CAN leadership includes fostering common visions, shaping strategic directions and tactics, and creating the feeling of working together for shared ends. Some of phrased used to describe leadership practices in the alliances are “*discreet and low profile, avoids imposing*

view; facilitates others”, “inclusive, participatory, negotiates interests, consensus decision-making, democratic” “open, trust-building, relationship-building, exchange, consultation, tolerance” etc.

Some of the challenges of collective leadership are (1) the need to balance the amount of time necessary for consensus decision-making with the needs for quick action, and (2) to moderate the tendencies of high profile NGO leaders to stand out. Strategies for dealing with these issues included delegating and decentralizing decision-making and cultivating a certain generosity of spirit and ability to guide collective action by a shared vision of the collective good.

The cases also indicate other ways to promote convergence of action:

- ❑ Focusing on the common action, e.g. strategies for addressing emerging issues and mobilizing participation
- ❑ Keeping objectives narrow and de-emphasizing ideological differences
- ❑ Working within groups that are like-minded in important ways
- ❑ Building on a history of working together
- ❑ Seeing the high profile of some individuals as a resource

Alliance organisational structures and processes serve several functions: (1) focusing vision, goals, strategy, and general direction, (2) coordinating and managing joint actions, and (3) acquiring and allocating material and technical resources. Several lessons emerge with respect to effective structures and processes, managing diversity, and mobilizing resources.

In most cases, alliance structures appear to be collective, representative, and if relevant, decentralized. Collective and representative structures make it possible for members' goals and interests shape decision-making. Decentralized structures were necessary in those cases where alliances grew to the point where they involved geographically dispersed and functionally distinct activities.

In some cases, the structures were also temporary, lasting only as long as they were needed to organize joint action. Sometimes a lead NGO took on the role of providing leadership and administrative support, while members carried out their own direct lobbying actions. Nonetheless, democratic, open, and consensus-building leadership was cited as an important factor associated with success.

The organizing processes tend to be consultative, negotiating, and information sharing, yet also strategic and action-oriented. Dealing with diversity is a very important issue. The most important source of diversity in most cases is ideology. Most action-oriented groups are founded on the basis of ideologies that include common values and models of collective action. In some regions, ideology is cited as one of the main reasons why activists decide to trust each other and work together. The detrimental effect of ideological based conflict in

blocking collective action is reflected in some instances.

Keeping objectives narrow and focused is helpful in avoiding barriers of ideological conflict in some cases. Alliances are organized from within like-minded, if not explicitly ideologically consistent groups. There may be times in the evolution of cooperation in NGO sectors when it is appropriate to build broad-based coalitions that span diverse ideologies and other times when it is more effective to work in like-minded groups. It further suggests that when organisations of grassroots people gain leadership roles in alliances with NGOs, strategies may become more “grounded” in concrete actions and less polarized by ideological debates.

Alliance organisation seems to evolve from relatively loose and informal to more structured, complex, and formally organized. Loose and informal organisations tend to be action-based, held together by common visions or friendships, and they may or may not even have a name. Many a time the alliances began with common actions and formalized themselves later. As alliances evolve they take on more formalized elements, including naming themselves, registering legally, and creating secretariats and leadership bodies. At the most organized stage, they develop collective governance bodies that are representative and independent of any given individual member. These organisations tend to include groups that take responsibility for functional and regional tasks.

Finally, alliance strategy may also evolve in alliances that take on broad objectives. Key factors in changing strategic seem to include perceived successes and failures, emerging needs or threats in the environment, and the experience of leadership groups.

Virtually by definition, NGO and civil society alliances are short on material, if not technical resources. Financial resources are often scarce and may be subject to competition among NGOs participating in the same alliance. Despite intentions to act as partners, donors and NGOs can behave in ways that shift agendas and internal resources away from nationally identified goals and plans. Finally, donors may not be able to respond adequately to alliance needs, either because of the highly political nature of some alliances or because the speed required is faster than procedures permit.

The most common pattern of external support seems to be direct support to the alliances during implementation. Financial and/or technical resources are provided to the alliances. Such support appears to have been used for alliance activities, rather than for ‘core’ support, such as coordinating meetings. Objectively, the resources provided to alliances may be relatively low in monetary value, but subjectively, they may be worth quite a bit more to those involved.

There are a number of other roles carried out by international agencies in these cases. This varies from carrying out parallel or supportive advocacy to provide added legitimacy at national and international levels to serving to link alliances to other constituencies for information sharing and movement building.

It is probably more difficult to identify and attribute results to such alliances than to individual NGOs. Goals and aspirations like establishing rights for marginalized groups or peaceful political cultures are by nature broad and systemic. Advances made in one area may be accompanied by setbacks in another. Alliances are at their most successful when they have contributed to large-scale social mobilisation, but it then becomes difficult to trace the causality of various alliances and public opinion in winning particular changes. Sustainability may also be more challenging for alliances, since they often depend on voluntary resources that are difficult to sustain over long periods of time.

In general the extent to which the alliances formally monitor and evaluate their own results is not clear. At the same time, most of the cases indicate that they have established goals and objectives, assessed the impacts of their joint actions, and evolved new strategies and ways of organizing themselves in response to their experiences. In several cases, the documentation process itself seemed to have provoked a round of reflection and analysis by the alliances.

Once alliances achieve their objectives, they can either dissolve themselves, or add new goals and objectives. Perhaps sustaining alliances is valued as long as there are relevant social change objectives to be achieved. Sustaining the results of alliance activity – the policy, legal, political and social changes – is another question. A number of the cases reflect decades of organizing by NGOs, individuals, and numerous alliances to win and sustain social gains. If sectors experience ebbs and flows in alliance activity, a long-term perspective suggests that the ebbs and breaking up of alliances are normal. It may be more important to sustain the visions, relationships, and experience than the alliance formations, per se. In both the short-term alliances it was noted that the NGOs emerged with strengths valuable for future rounds of alliance building.

One approach to building capacity of the alliances is to foster reflection and understanding of ways in which leading and joining alliances may be different than working as individuals or in NGOs. The themes offered below seek to contribute to understanding alliance behavior and to identifying critical elements of alliance capacity for future capacity building.

As compared to many NGOs, alliances may seem relatively disorganized and unstable. They appear to defy neat categories, whether coalition, network, or alliance. Alliances may be composed of individuals, organisations, and federations of organisations. Boundaries between alliances and their environments are often fuzzy. NGOs create and join alliances to pursue goals relevant to their missions, but alliance agendas tend to span different sectors, like governance and service delivery, or civil society and state. Alliance agendas, structures, and activities tend to change over relatively short periods of time. Alliances seem to go through cycles of organizing and impact. In time, dormant alliances may be renewed, albeit with new names, identities, and members. Differences and conflicts seem to go with the territory when working in alliances. Perhaps if alliances are too stable they lose their effectiveness in achieving social change. The vital, dynamic, and seemingly messy characteristics of NGO alliances need to be appreciated even as better models for understanding them are developed.

1. Greater agreement on meaning of capacity and capacity building.

Different surveys, studies and consultations have reinforced that there is no agreement on the meaning of ‘capacity’ and ‘capacity building’. This results into different explanations of meaning and purposes for capacity building. It is, therefore, essential to develop a common understanding about the ‘required capacity’ and methods for ‘building capacity’.

2. In-country processes bring sectoral identity.

Most of the in-country national dialogues and processes have highlighted the necessity to focus on NGO identity. By working together in cross-thematic groups, NGOs at country level have been able clarify their larger roles in society.

3. Capacity Building for what?

There is the sense that most of the capacity building initiatives promoted by donors are done in relation to their institutional priorities and not in relation to broader goals of NGOs. There is need for greater coherence between roles of NGOs in the country context and programmes of capacity building in order to assure their relevance.

4. Donor synergy on country focal team and theme.

Many in-country dialogues and processes have resulted into the formation of country focal teams to address the future capacity building requirements of Southern NGOs. However, there is a need to develop a synergy between the donor community and the Southern NGOs to further work on the identified needs at the country level. In some countries, some important themes have been identified to take this forward.

5. Enabling policy environment and role of the government.

Until recently, most of the donor agencies have not shown adequate interest to influence the governmental policy and to create enabling environment for Southern NGOs to play greater roles in their society. There is a need for the donor community to build authentic partnership with the Southern NGOs to jointly influence the national policies and help create an enabling environment suitable for NGO action and NGO capacity building. In this context, the national governments have to be brought to the table as NGOs articulate their needs for capacity building.

6. Multi-party capacity building.

It has been reinforced by several country processes that capacity building has to be a multi-party process. While it is essential to build capacity of the Southern NGOs to build partnership and collaboration with the government, the opposite is also equally important. There is a need to build the capacity of the government to work with the NGOs. Similarly, the NGOs are being asked to build collaboration with the private sector organisations within the rubric of ‘corporate partnership’. It is therefore essential to build the capacity of the for-profit private sector organisations to build authentic partnership with the Southern NGOs. With the same coin, the Northern NGO who have assumed the role of main providers of capacity building for the Southern NGOs so far have to renew their capacity to work in the new southern context. Capacity building has to be therefore multi-party process.

1. Shifting emphasis from project identity to organisational identity.

The overwhelming concern of the Northern NGOs to accomplish projects successfully through Southern NGOs has been gradually changing. Over the decades this concern for project led to the perception that Southern NGOs as mere implementers rather than an autonomous entity for bringing social change. The Northern NGOs should work towards establishing an enabling environment where Southern NGOs can promote and sustain their identity as legitimate agents of social change. This also includes shifting Northern NGO inclination to short-term project oriented approach of capacity building toward long-term engagement with Southern NGOs to facilitate building their capacities.

2. Space for reflection on North-South power differentials.

The Northern NGOs are grappling to carve out space within their own community and organisations for a critical reflection on the radical implications for capacity building. Good practices of capacity building must enable Southern NGOs to empower themselves in taking control over of North-South relationship. There has been a realisation among the Northern NGOs that they can no more pose themselves as taking control over the needs and priorities of Southern NGOs.

3. Capacity building is finding a prominent place in Northern NGO agenda.

Until recently, capacity building of Southern NGOs was not seen as high priority for most of the Northern NGOs. This was partly due to their project oriented approach toward development. However, over period of time the Northern NGO have been realizing the limitations of this approach. They have started looking at capacity building as one of the major interventions for sustainable development in the South.

4. Capacity building for Northern NGOs themselves.

There has been an emerging consensus on the understanding of capacity building that capacity requirements change with the changing context. Over the last decade the development contexts both in the South and North have dramatically changed and further change is not beyond imagination. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that Northern NGOs as providers of capacity building must upgrade their capacities as well.

1. Define Southern NGOs' capacity building needs and priorities.

The IFCB process has enabled the southern NGOs to reflect on, identify and articulate their capacity building needs and priorities. The southern NGOs have realized the importance of articulating their own priority corresponding their own southern contexts rather than defining capacity building needs by others on behalf of them.

2. "Ownership" of the capacity building process.

The Southern NGOs have started owning the processes of capacity building. There is sense of realisation that if capacity building is addressed to fulfill the indigenous needs and priorities of Southern NGOs, the chances for enhancing the ownership of capacity building. Any further effort to develop capacities therefore must ensure the ownership of Southern NGOs.

3. Enabling better use of existing capacity.

Many Southern NGOs are addressing the development issues for several years on their own way. A great amount of knowledge in this regard already exists in the Southern context. The utilisation of this knowledge and capacity is essential to build further knowledge and capacity. However, at this moment this knowledge is fragmented to a large extent. The major challenge before the Southern NGOs is to consolidate and synthesizing of this knowledge.

4. Promote local and in-country provision of capacity building – relationship to Support organisations and Academia.

There have been numerous examples where the Southern Support Organisations are effectively engaged in facilitating capacity building for their partner Southern NGOs. Until recently, there has been very little recognition for the Southern based support organisations and the potential they have for providing on-going support to their in-country partners. Time and again, several dialogues and consultations of Southern NGOs have explicitly articulated the need for promoting local and in-country provision of capacity building as opposed to importing knowledge and capacities from the North. In this regard, a major challenge before the Southern NGOs is to develop relationship with academia for better utilisation of the existing knowledge and capacities that reside with the later.

The IFCB processes at different levels reinforced and revalidated the original aim of IFCB with emphasis on the multistakeholder nature southern NGO leadership as the vanguard of the process.

A number of new challenges have been identified as follows:

- ❑ The Information Technology (IT) revolution and the increased connectivity of different development actors that poses the challenge of its implications for organisational sustainability shared learning processes and expanded advocacy roles.
- ❑ Decentralisation, democratisation and local development constitute a main area of activity and challenges for civil society. This poses questions on how capacity building of NGOs links to that of the actors and organisations.
- ❑ The increased demand by global and regional development actors and states to involve NGOs in the participatory design of policies.
- ❑ The crises of a significant number of states, because of civil and military conflicts, urban violence and natural disasters, which poses major challenges for NGOs and thus the question of what institutions and organisations to promote and strengthen.
- ❑ The changes in international flows of aid and cooperation or their link in some cases to geo-political considerations, pose critical problems to NGOs in different parts of the world.

Some of the common activities were identified as follows:

- Support for national multistakeholder dialogues and their follow-up;
- Support regional/sub-regional priorities through agenda setting and operational mechanisms;
- Develop regional/sub-regional dialogues on capacity building priorities;
- Act as an enabler for global and regional policy dialogues on capacity building and strategizing;
- Identify innovations on capacity building in emerging areas and bring them to the attention of the stakeholders;
- Act as an academic clearing house for conceptual and methodological approaches to capacity building;
- Foster inter and intra regional learning processes for capacity building, within a south south framework.
- Support resource mobilisation for capacity building, both at the global, regional/sub-regional and national levels;

Proposed Action Plan for Next Three Years (July 2001 to July 2004)

The action plan will be operational and coordinated at different levels viz. Sub/national, sub/regional and global. Therefore, the activities will follow the following overall framework.

I. Information Dissemination

(i) Newsletter and Website

Publication of newsletter would be used as a means for ongoing dissemination of activities and events organized. This will definitely help in exchange of information, knowledge

and lessons learned. One of the purposes of publishing this newsletter would be to enhance the outreach of IFCB and to engage people in interactive discussion, debate and discourse on best practices of capacity building.

Interactive website would be another means to enable cross regional learning and information dissemination. All the publication, new lessons, announcement etc produced and planned by the region would be available in the website.

(ii) Dissemination of Lessons from Previous Phase

The first phase of IFCB has been able to produce a wealth of information, knowledge and lessons on capacity building. For example, each country process has produced a variety of materials including experiences for multistakeholder dialogue, surveys of providers and receivers of capacity building, exemplars on best practices etc. Besides these country specific documents a host of material has been produced at the sub-regional, regional and global level including donor surveys, synthesis of multistakeholder dialogues and exemplars on building coalitions, alliances and networks. A number of synthesis documents would be published and disseminated.

II. Synthesis, Translation and Publication of Thematic Case Exemplars

During the first phase of IFCB a number of national multistakeholder dialogues were organized. In some case the theme of the dialogues followed the five priority themes, which were identified at the Founding conference of IFCB in Brussels. Besides these themes a number of new themes were found relevant in different country context. At times the national multistakeholder dialogue were either organized around such new themes while in others new themes emerged from the dialogue itself. The documentation of different thematic case exemplars would enable participants to draw comparative lessons and to deepen the understanding of the issues from the viewpoint of civil society capacity building.

IFCB has identified some relevant themes as follows:

a) Theme 1: Governance and Decentralisation

The entire Asia Pacific region is undergoing a social, political and economic transition. With this changing context the question of participatory, accountable and transparent systems of governance have become a pivotal point in eradication of poverty and marginalisation. There has been a growing realisation that active and informed participation of civil society is key to achieve good governance. However, a number of impediments have constricted the participation of civil society. Many countries of the region are also undergoing a process of devolution of power by decentralizing the governance systems and structures. In this context the NGOs are faced with the challenge to revisit their traditional roles. The strengthening of civil society is becoming central to address the question of governance in general and decentralized governance as a subset.

The region would document number of case exemplars on governance and decentralisation vis-à-vis civil society interface to understand the challenges and opportunities from the vantage point of participation of poor and marginalized.

b) Theme 2: Policy Research, Engagement and Advocacy

It has been a growing realisation that the civil society capacity to engage in autonomous and independent analysis of different public policies is crucial. This alternative policy analysis would provide the basis for engagement and advocacy with the national, regional and global development actors and policy makers from pro poor point of view. Since all these policies are affecting the lives of billions of poor and marginalized it is imperative for civil society to embark upon this role. However, the capacity to effectively engage in policy research, dialogue and advocacy is somewhat limited at present.

The region would document some case exemplars on policy research, engagement and advocacy where civil society has been successfully engaged.

A number of additional themes have also been identified as follows :

- Capacity Building in Transition Economy
- Organisation Development
- Organisational Sustainability (Resource Mobilisation)
- Networking and Communication
- Leadership Development
- Engendering Capacity Building

III. Follow-up of National Multistakeholder Dialogues

During the first phase of IFCB a number of national and sub-regional multistakeholder dialogues have been organized. In some countries sub-national dialogues preceded the national dialogue. All these national dialogues have drawn follow up action plans. In this phase of IFCB the sub/regional mechanisms will provide support to execute these follow-up action plans.

IV. New Initiative for National Multistakeholder Dialogue

Several new national dialogues have been planned in the second phase of IFCB. The following activities have been planned:

- Identification of stakeholders
- Organizing separate stakeholder group meetings
- Identification of theme and focal points
- Organizing national dialogue
- Follow-up planning

V. Policy Focused Dialogues

In the next phase several policy-focused dialogues will be organized. These dialogues will be inserted as special events with other national, sub-regional, regional or global events. These dialogues could also be focused on the emerging lessons to be drawn out of thematic documentations.

VI. Global, Regional/Sub-regional Coordination

The overall coordination would be done through decentralized sub/regional mechanisms (sub/regional coordinating committees and focal points). The global coordinating committee and the global secretariat would provide the global coordination.

Members from Latin America and the Caribbean

Chairperson and Global Secretariat

Mr. Manuel Chiriboga
ALOP
Apartado 265-1350
San Sebastian, San Jose
Costa Rica
Tel: 506-283-2122
Fax: 506-283-5898
Email: info@alop.or.cr
mchirib@uio.satnet.net

ABONG
Rua Conego Eugenio Leite 433
CEP 05414 - 010
Sao Paulo
Brazil
Tel: 55-11-853-6877
Fax: 55-11-852-5050
Email: scbava@polis.com.br
polis@ax.apc.org

Members from the Asia Pacific

Society for Participatory Research In Asia
(PRIA)
42 Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi - 110 062
Tel: 91-11-2608 1908/2606 0931, 32, 33
Fax: 91-11-2608 0183
Email: info@pria.org

ANGOC
5 B Marilag St.
U.P. Village
Diliman, Quezon City
The Philippines
Tel: 632-433-7653 to 54
Fax: 632-920-7434
Email: angoc@angoc.ngo.ph

Members from Africa

Institut Panafricain pour le Development/
Region Afrique de l'Ouest/Sahel
01 BP 1756
Ouagadougou 01
Burkina Faso
Tel: 226-300-390/301399
Fax: 226-301-296
Email: ipd_aos@cenatrin.bf

Inter Africa Group
P.O. Box 1631
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
Tel: 251-151-8790
Fax: 251-151-7554
Email: iag@telecom.net.et

MWENGO
P.O. Box HG 817
Highlands
Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel: 263-4-721-469/700090
Fax: 263-4-738-310
Email: ts@harare.iafrica.com
ts@internet.co.zw

*Representation from multilateral, bilateral donors, foundations and northern NGOs are yet to be finalized.