

## TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The paper considers the overwhelming role of capacity building towards sustainable development. Attempt was made in this research paper to review the relationship between capacity building and sustainability, it was concluded that without effective capacity building programmes, there can be no meaningful sustainability. The research also reveals that the concept of capacity building goes beyond training, it also involve global awareness campaign, provision and gathering of quality information and infrastructural availability. The paper also highlights the need for capacity building, the pillars that is the clients of capacity building and the various strategies towards ensuring an effective capacity building programmes such as provision of effective learning curriculum, building a virile science and research unit, global awareness campaign among others. Also highlighted are the factors militating against an effective capacity building programmes coupled with the contributions of local and central government in ensuring that this mitigating factors are properly addressed. Although the content of this paper is not completely exhaustive on this subject matter, but it provides a bird eye information to the role of capacity building to sustainability.

**Key words:** Capacity Building, Sustainable Development, Course content development, Global Awareness and Research Development.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development is often an over-used word, but goes to the heart of tackling a number of inter-related global issues such as poverty, inequality, hunger and environmental degradation. In theory, development that is sustainable and not damaging to the planet is very possible <sup>(1)</sup>. Of course though, in reality there are a lot of obstacles, politics and challenges. The idea of sustainable development grew from numerous environmental movements in earlier decades. Summits such as the Earth Summit in Rio, Brazil, 1992, were major international meetings to bring sustainable development to the mainstream. However, the record on moving towards sustainability so far appears to have been quite poor. The concept of sustainability means many different things to different people, and a large part of humanity around the world still live without access to basic necessities <sup>(2)</sup>. Sustainable development is maintaining a delicate balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend <sup>(2)</sup> [Fig 1]. The guiding rules are that people must share with each other and care for the Earth. Humanity must take no more from nature than nature can replenish. This in turn means adopting lifestyles and development paths that respect and work within nature's limits <sup>(3)</sup>. It can be done without rejecting the many benefits that modern technology has brought, provided that technology also works within those limits. According to the WCED, this is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable development implies economic growth together with the protection of environmental quality, each reinforcing the other. The essence of this form of development is a stable relationship between human activities and the natural world, which does not diminish the prospects for future generations to enjoy a quality of life at least as good as our own. Many observers believe that participatory democracy, undominated by vested interests, is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development <sup>(3)</sup>. Specifically, capacity building encompasses the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environmental potentials, limits and of needs perceived by the people of the country concerned.

### 2.0 THE LINK BETWEEN CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Effective capacity building brings about sustainability in development. It protects the natural environment from destruction and empowers the people on how to manage their limited natural resources, it help individuals identify key sustainability indicators that measure the direction and extent of impact from economic and social activities on natural and human systems; providing feedback to allow for corrections in ongoing work toward sustainability. It enlightens the people and teaches them the way forward. Measures have to be introduced to improve the standard of living for the poor <sup>(4)</sup>. In other words, a strategy has to be worked out to accommodate the basic needs of people within a local authority area. With a notion of people's participation as a means to development, there is a tendency that strategies are formulated by central decision-makers on behalf of the poor, who are merely drawn into the process afterwards to support the

implementation. This also implies that the basic needs of the poor are defined by people other than themselves due to their lack of mobilization, power and capacity. In many instances these are major impediments to sustainable development. In contrast to this approach, the development-by-people approach regards popular participation as a goal in itself, and as the process through which other development goals must be defined. Here the notion of development will be accomplished if increased capacity is shifted from the national level downwards to the local level - and from the authorities to the citizens themselves. Effective capacity building will lead to development that is highly sustainable; it will empower the people economically, teach them how to manage their available resources without destroying the natural and ecological balance of nature<sup>[6]</sup>.

### 3.0 THE ROLE OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Capacity building involves a complex combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and approaches, organizational structures and systems. Capacity building could therefore be conceptualized as implying a continuous improvement in the ability of individuals and society to control the forces of nature and to harness them for their benefit. It has to do with developing the skills and knowledge base of the society to enable it to improve the material conditions of its citizens. Thus, capacity is an amalgam of a society's stock of managerial, scientific, technological, entrepreneurial and institutional capabilities. In this context, capacity building entails continuous upgrading of these capabilities so that the society can actualize its ideals to enable its members to enjoy productive and fulfilled lives. The incremental skills and knowledge gained in problem-solving will lead to self-confidence and self-reliance in tackling complex socio-economic problems. Thus, the overriding goal of capacity building is to improve the ability of a society to cater for the needs of its members and to enhance their quality of life.

### 4.0 THE NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

The issue of capacity building is critical and the scale of need is enormous, but appreciation of the problem is low. Human beings need to be empowered via training and other relevant support programmes. Some of the major reasons why capacity building becomes very important and relevant are as follows<sup>[7]</sup>:

- The link between needs and supply is weak.
- There is a lack of realistic funding.
- There is need for support for change.
- Training institutions are isolated.
- Communications are poor.
- Development of teaching materials is inefficient.

### 5.0 THE PILOTS OF CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES

Local government, communities and NGOs are the main pilots, but central government and the private commercial sector also need support<sup>[8]</sup>. Community groups, often with strong NGO support, need to improve their capacity to plan, organize and manage their neighborhoods. Departments of local government play an increasingly important role in enabling community groups to enhance their capacities and effectiveness. Local government remains a significant and vital institution in the framework of any society in the sense that it does provide a range of services and facilities which support residents from cradle to grave. It is intended to provide services to communities due to its proximity to them. It is, however, not always successful in accomplishing this objective due to insufficient revenues. This implies that local government, especially in the rural areas where the income stream is minimal, unemployment is high and population growth is uncontrolled, is faced with even more challenges than the other spheres of government. In this sense, local authorities should be seen as "enablers". Enabling is concerned with, if needs be, finding new ways of delivery through agencies other than the local authority itself. Enabling can also be defined in terms of strengthening the capacity for self-governance within a local community, using whatever resources and channels (internal or external) that may seem most appropriate to ensuring effective service delivery.<sup>[3]</sup> In South Africa for example, Local government is at the heart of the development process. Through its grassroots linkages, infrastructure investment programmes, local economic development strategies, partnerships with the private sector and integrated development plans, local government is the public service agency best able to have a direct and enduring impact on the lives of its citizens. I think other Africa countries need to follow this path. However, one of the most serious problems facing local government is that, in the event of local government being inadequately funded, it will be perceived by the majority of its citizens to be under-performing (Zybrands, 1995:9).

## 6.0 STRATEGIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING; TOWARDS AN IDEAL MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

Capacity building can be said to depend on the presence of; viable institution, good leadership, provision of financial and material resources, effective work practices including systems analysis and good procedural outline and finally manpower development <sup>[6]</sup>. If adequate priority is to be given to building capacity, it is essential to note that the human force is pivot to the entire issues on capacity building. Hence the needs, to develop relevant frame work to enhance manpower development. Some of the strategies include:

### 6.1 Effective Learning Curriculum [Course content Development]

Effective learning is as important as life is to living being. Hence it becomes very important that primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in developing countries revisit their curriculum in order to review it and add to it courses that studies will address today's realities, national development issues and global focus. Empowerment must be geared towards entrepreneurial training, equipment design and maintenance, ICT and its benefits and other programmes that will lift the individual from its present state to a level that he can contribute meaningfully to issues that affects himself and his immediate environment <sup>[7]</sup>.

### 6.2. Research and Technological Awareness Development

- Assessment of Scientific and Technological Manpower Resources
- Development of Databases Relevant to S&T
- Research Activities for Manpower Development and Planning
- Science and Technology Education Network.
- Benchmarking for the Improvement of S&T Education

This can be achieved via

- Adequate funding and research vote for Technological Institutions and faculty
- Faculty/Staff Development Program for Teaching and non teaching staffs
- Alternative Approach to Faculty Development Program (Distance Education)
- Creation of training centers and other skill acquisition units

### 6.3 Information and Communication Technology [ICT] Initiative Programmes

This program has as its broad goal to strengthen human capital across the ICT industry workforce, enhancing the skills and competencies of those entering and those already employed in the ICT industry. Initiatives will foster innovation and growth and enhance the capacity of companies and individuals to compete on a level playing field with foreign competition.

### 6.4 Effective Training Programmes

We believe ongoing capacity building is an essential element of the strengthening of any organization and the empowerment of staff. This can mean the development of an individual's knowledge and skills or building national, or even international, capacity. At the national level this involves working alongside subject specialists, government officers and in-country training providers. We appreciate training is expensive and aim to design it to be as cost effective as possible such that the financial investment brings sustainable returns in human capital, leading to improved quality and efficiency of service. Capacity Building is much more than training and includes the following

- Human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively.
- Organizational development, the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organizations but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community).

### 6.5 Strong Awareness Campaign Programmes: This may take the form of:

#### 6.5.1 Knowledge for empowerment

The lack of a domestic research based knowledge means that developing countries are badly equipped in international negotiations, which maintains a situation of dependency. Agreements within international bodies may pass without the

effects or preconditions for developing countries are analyzed. Major investments that need foreign technology may be done without sufficient knowledge to assess if the procured products meet the requirements. Domestic research has a potential for national empowerment in this respect. The development of domestic knowledge could also empower the poor through various mechanisms by the development of new procedures and products derived from research results. Also dissemination of research results through the educational system and other channels provide a general increase in knowledge that may benefit the poor <sup>[1]</sup>.

### 6.5.2 A sustainable knowledge economy

Globalization has led to an increased emphasis on knowledge as one of the major factors in international economic competition. The previous neglect of domestic research from governments and the donor community has postponed the possibilities for developing countries to enter into such competition. Most developing countries have natural resources that could be refined to high-value products with knowledge and innovation, thereby contributing to economic growth. Unfortunately, most developing countries also has harder natural conditions than developed countries which means that knowledge is needed to safeguard that exploitation of the potential products is made environmentally sustainable. <sup>[2]</sup>

### 6.5.3 Issues of Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS:

Key issues to be addressed include:

- What are the differences in gender roles,
- Access to resources, legal protection and decision-making that affect women's and men's abilities to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS?
- Do educational system interventions incorporate a gender-sensitive approach to learning about HIV/AIDS prevention at an early age?
- How do capacity building programs for public and private sectors workers and civil society participants address gender issues?

Effective capacity building programmes will seek to address the following key issues:

1. Increasing participants' understanding of gender issues in general.
2. Raising participants' awareness of how gender issues are connected to HIV/AIDS.
3. Equipping participants with tools for integrating gender into HIV/AIDS programs and training.

## 7.0 CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

1. Non-existence of adequate training policy: Most countries do not have adequate training policy. In places where a resemblance of training policy exists it isn't robust enough to ensure good human resource development.
2. Lack of common understanding of the importance of capacity building which is responsible for the non-systemic and ad-hoc training method.
3. Lack of belief in the bulk of training and education programmes been run by progressive government as they are perceived as not been relevant to the Public Service as end-user.
4. Mischief on the part of Trainees: Some Trainees see their nomination for training as a 'relaxation period'. They report late at training venue, attend class at will and do not show any sign of willingness to learn
5. Training cost: For some countries, the economy for a variety of reasons cannot absorb the training cost of most of the workforce even if they have genuine desire to train them.
6. Mismanagement of funds and corruption: Training funds are being mishandled by those saddled with its disbursement.
7. Dwindling external support for human capacity building. This arises partly due to non-transparent disbursement of training funds from Donors
8. God fatherism: In most organization, training is not job focused. Rather the two most common influences are welfare and political considerations. Hence the same sets of persons keep attending all the training programmes.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT TO EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

It is the duty of every progressive government to ensure that an enabling environment is provided to ensure effective capacity building program. Some of the role government needs to play are as follows:

1. Provision of Infrastructure
2. Provision of good road
3. Adequate power supply

4. Security of life's and properties
5. Good policies on sustainable development
6. Raw materials
7. Research facilities and equipments

#### 9.0 CONCLUSION

With effective capacity programmes, sustainability is certain. The government of every nation especially developing nations must recognize that there can be no meaningful development without capacity and manpower development. On that note, they must wake up to their responsibility and provide the enabling environment for effective capacity building programmes.

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Fig 1: The Five Concepts of Sustainability.

