

Workshop Messages

Brussels Workshop on Capacity Development

4th 5th July 2011

Busan HLF 4 - A real opportunity for setting Capacity Development as a priority

In the last twelve months, a series of international meetings have reaffirmed capacity as being at the heart of sustainable development. This was most recently reflected in the March 2011 Cairo Consensus on Capacity Development.

Building on that consensus, the European Commission workshop on CD, showed that efforts are being made to improve Capacity Development practice, such as the EC's Technical Cooperation reform and various approaches of EU member states to address the EU Operational Framework on Aid Effectiveness. However important policy and technical challenges remain. Looking to the future, the following points were noted:

- The international agenda on Aid and Development Effectiveness is a favourable opportunity for setting Capacity Development as a priority. The European Commission and EU Member States will support partner countries to implement their capacity development strategies when done in a spirit of partnership and when the joint effort is underwritten by mutual accountability and grounded in shared values and principles.
- Capacity Development faces several important challenges: ownership and readiness for change cannot be taken for granted; multiple stakeholders are involved that can be both providers of and recipients of Capacity Development support – the role of the private sector and civil society merit particular attention; contextual factors, including opportunities for change can have a major influence on Capacity Development outcomes.
- There is a need for pragmatic approaches, moving from rhetoric to practice: development partners' own procedures and business processes will need to be adapted in areas critical to Capacity Development. These include internal competencies including cultural sensitivity and communication skills, alignment, flexible planning, risk taking, focus on learning etc.
- A tension exists between results orientation and process support: the pressure to deliver fast measurable results is not conducive to an engagement in Capacity Development processes. In the end, Capacity Development is both a means to produce results, and a strategic priority. The tension needs to be managed.
- There is a need for an increased use of knowledge sharing and collaborative tools: Capacity Development is highly contextualised, therefore, centralised decision making should be balanced by information sharing between practitioners. The practice of Capacity Development is also still evolving. There is for example a large reservoir of knowledge that can be drawn from the private sector.

Together with Partner Countries, the Commission and EU Member States can set in motion a shared action agenda for Capacity Development aimed at changing practice in the field. By combining expertise, resources and know-how, partners can go a long way towards supporting the growing and increasingly Partner country-led agenda on Capacity Development.