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Practitioner's Guide:

Capacity Building for Democratic Local Governance

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wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung



FRCS
Food Security, Regional
Cooperation & Security
(Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)

Capacity Building for Democratic Local Governance

Brief Description



Democratic governance is a multi-faceted concept encompassing all aspects of the exercise of authority through formal and informal institutions in the management of the resource endowment of a state. The quality of governance is thus determined by the impact of this exercise of power on the quality of life enjoyed by its citizens. Sustainable development requires professionals with adequate knowledge and competence, well functioning organisations and a conducive legal and institutional framework. Capacity building is a core method to achieve the overall goal of sustainable development.

With the current commitment of many governments for democracy and decentralisation, the framework conditions for good governance at the local level are improving. Democratic decentralisation offers opportunities for popular participation, improved accountability, responsiveness and transparency of local leaders, increased effectiveness and efficiency of government services. It can contribute to the poverty reduction efforts of the respective countries as it provides chances for empowerment, resource mobilisation and the provision of those basic services which are to alleviate many of the causes of poverty.

Effective local governance based on democratic and good governance standards, however, requires not only improvements in performance of local governments, but also their effective interplay with civil society, the private sector and national government institutions. The capacity building approach as described here comprises of a broad set of interventions which promotes the development of competent, responsive and accountable (local self-) government institutions, the establishment of mechanisms by which different population groups can equally participate in local decision-making processes and the evolution of civil society players and organisations. These in turn lobby and advocate in the interests of citizens, empower disadvantaged groups of society, as well as develop and apply the necessary checks and balances towards their elected representatives. It targets individuals, organisations, the interplay of organisations and the overall institutional framework based on a comprehensive contextual analysis.

Photo1: Basic capacity building training



Photo 2: Capacity building training



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Proposed Main Users

Governmental and non-governmental development agencies, line ministries in charge of decentralisation reforms, along with training institutions.



Purpose of the Method



Good local governance builds on institutions, mechanisms and processes, through which citizens and their groups can voice their needs and interests, perform their stipulated rights and responsibilities. It requires local government institutions equipped with sufficient authority and resources capable to perform their functions in a responsive and accountable manner. It demands an active civil society able to identify and channel their concerns to their elected representatives.

The capacity building programme intends to improve upon local democracy, accountability, inclusiveness and responsiveness and thereby on the improved delivery of services. It is to enable and qualify the local population and their organisations, local self-governments and government administrations to perform their rights and responsibilities with increasing quality, ultimately improving upon their co-operation and co-ordination in development management and governance.

In particular the set of interventions is set out to:

- ▶ build the capacity of local self-governments to perform stipulated roles and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner, particularly to become more citizens-oriented, responsive and accountable in the performance of their functions;
- ▶ enable intermediate government institutions to perform their advisory, support and co-ordination functions and to improve upon their responsiveness to local concerns;
- ▶ build the capacity of civil society representatives and organisations in order to play an active role in local governance and development processes;
- ▶ improve upon the bargaining power and networking skills of local stakeholders;
- ▶ support the establishment and enforcement of mechanisms and processes promoting good governance standards and effective co-operation of development efforts;
- ▶ improve upon the efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services.

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Advantages



- ▶ Increases local capacity building resources by qualifying local organisations and establishing facilitator teams who are able to provide sustainable advisory services on local governance issues.
- ▶ Promotes a systemic approach by targeting the entire system of governance including: local self-governments, government players, civil society representatives, citizens and the media and improves the dynamics of development management by strengthening the capacities of the supply side of the service providers and improving upon the bargaining power on the demand side.
- ▶ Applies a broad and flexible range of capacity building tools according to the needs of participants and the challenges posed by the governance environment.
- ▶ Promotes gender equality by mainstreaming gender issues throughout all programme interventions and by providing specific support e.g. to women in public office and women's organisations.
- ▶ Commences from the core responsibilities in development management, such as planning and implementation, financial management, bidding and procurement procedures.
- ▶ Leads to tangible results in terms of improved quality in the delivery of public services.

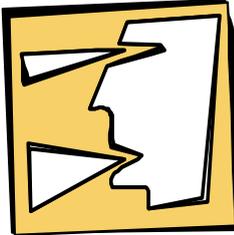
Limitations



- ▶ The capacity of local NGOs, training and/or consultancy organisations to facilitate and moderate change processes in support of good local governance can be extremely limited, thereby requiring intensive supporting programme resources.
- ▶ Institutionalisation of proven approaches often poses a particular challenge and may require extensive efforts and resources.
- ▶ Decision-makers often do not budget for hiring consultancy services, thus rendering the newly created services redundant.
- ▶ Capacity building is a comprehensive instrument. Particularly in challenging environments with low development indicators whereby greater returns can only be expected on a longer-term perspective.
- ▶ Fiscal reform processes are often inappropriate in terms of providing local self-governments with sufficient authority and resources, thereby carrying the risk that local self-governments cannot deliver without external support.
- ▶ Limited commitment or even resistance of national and local powerbrokers can jeopardise capacity building efforts.
- ▶ Its full impact is often constrained due to incompleteness, contradictions and/or continuous changes in the legal and regulatory framework.

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Some basic principles of capacity building

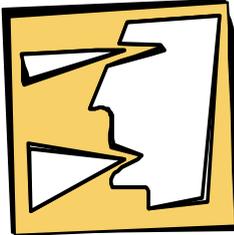
Capacity building is a comprehensive instrument and a long-term process. A variety of inter-connected instruments and interventions need to be undertaken, including:

- ▶ **Training within functional groups** based on principles of adult and experimental learning, designed to assist target groups to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes for change.
- ▶ **Coaching and process-oriented advisory services** used to assist individual stakeholders to improve their performance and efficiency in excising their day-to-day responsibilities. It is also used to strengthen the self-learning capacities particularly with regard to acquiring and applying problem-solving skills within a changing governance framework.
- ▶ **Inter-organisational forums** designed to bring together stakeholders from different institutions. The forums provide an opportunity to share experiences on issues such as roles and responsibilities, modes of partnerships, or even to mediate when difference of interests occurs.
- ▶ **Organisational development support** designed to assist members and staff of non-governmental organisations, networks and local government associations during the elaboration of effective internal structures and processes. This support is also intended for the development of a vision, setting concrete and realistic objectives with corresponding strategies.
- ▶ **Knowledge Management** ensures that “good practices” and “lessons learnt” are systematically documented and disseminated during meetings or networks and consultations.
- ▶ **Provision of financing facilities** for NGOs, networks and/or associations; firstly as a form of “start-up assistance” for the implementation of specific/innovative local governance activities and secondly, as a learning process for the application of good governance standards.

Capacity building needs to be augmented through other developmental instruments. For individual local councils, the bargaining power is often limited. Forming groups or associations significantly increases the bargaining power. A methodological approach how such unions or associations can be created has been described in the methods “**Strengthening local Governance through Community Unions**”. A further instrument that has proved very effective is the use of development and social funds. The method “**Development and Social Funds**” describes the value of these funds and also provides examples of operational manuals. Potential conflict mitigation has also proved effective as an instrument. Here the method “do-no-harm” and “**Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment - PCIA**” are proven instruments that help further support the capacity for good local self-governance. All of these related methods can be found at www.methodfinder.net.

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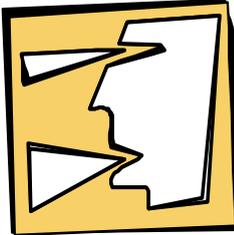
Stakeholders targeted by capacity building and the focus of the interventions

- ▶ **Citizens and their organisations;** better articulate their interests and concerns, guide them to relevant public and private service providers, as well as develop and apply the necessary checks and balances towards their elected representatives and improve upon the planning and implementation of community activities and projects.
- ▶ **Local self-governments;** improve upon participation, transparency, accountability, poverty-orientation and gender equity in the performance of their functions and better position them within the system of decentralised governance and development management.
- ▶ **Provincial and district authorities;** enhance their support and supervisory functions towards the local self-government structures, improve upon the co-ordination of development efforts and facilitate effective communication channels to the higher levels of government.
- ▶ **Representatives of provincial line agencies;** improve upon their responsiveness to citizens, develop performance as service providers to local self-government bodies and co-ordinate their activities at the local and intermediate levels.
- ▶ **NGOs;** better perform as multipliers/service providers on local governance related issues, represent concerns of their clients to provincial and national level stakeholders and engage in partnership activities with governmental organisations.
- ▶ **National and local capacity building organisations,** incl. staff members of NGOs, universities, private sector consultancy organisations; perform as professional facilitators within the framework of local governance processes.

In order to provide an input into the national level policy debate and to promote the institutionalisation of proven approaches, feed-back on programmes experiences is given to national level government agencies, working groups and technical committees.

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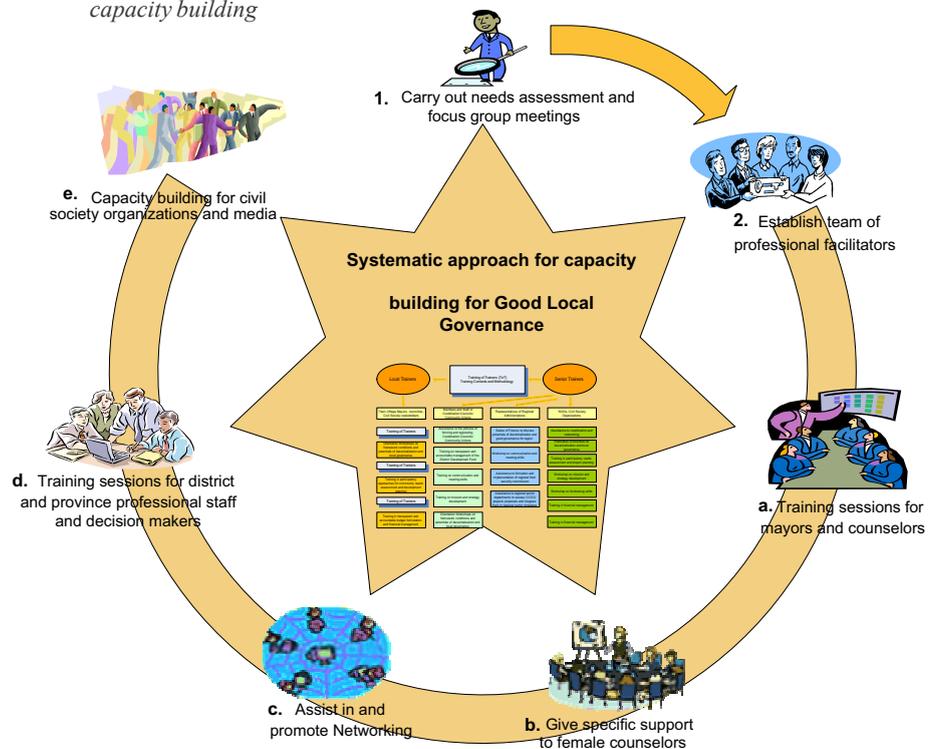


Systematic capacity building process

Practice has shown that a systematic approach for training and capacity building is important. First and foremost an analysis has to be followed by the establishment of the necessary training capacity (steps 1 and 2). Thereafter, the facilitators provide training or capacity building services for the various different groups or stakeholders (stakeholders a-e). While steps 1-2 follow each other the training and capacity building services for the stakeholders should be viewed as a modular process. It is not necessary to train or capacitate all stakeholders this will be dependent upon the local context. The process can be undertaken in parallel or step-by-step.

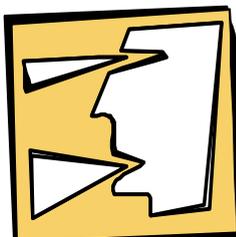
1. Undertake a contextual analysis and needs assessment.
2. Establish and capacitate a team of professional facilitators, and **undertake / provide** training and capacity building services for:
 - a. Local self-government stakeholders.
 - b. Female councillors/elected representatives.
 - c. Networks or local government associations.
 - d. Stakeholders at the intermediate provincial and district levels.
 - e. Civil society representatives.

Figure 1: Systematic process for capacity building



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Step 1: Contextual needs assessment

Without knowing exactly what is needed as far as capacity building is concerned, a programme to improve the capacity is unlikely to be properly targeted and focused. This method refers to capacity building for good local governance. The elements that make up good local governance are illustrated in figure 2.

Essentially, capacity building presents the difference between existing knowledge and the required / desired knowledge and capacity. This presumes that a strategy or vision of what exactly is expected for improved democratic local self-governance should be available. The strategy provides the framework in which capacity building has to be undertaken and presents and therefore defines the know-how and capacity needs.

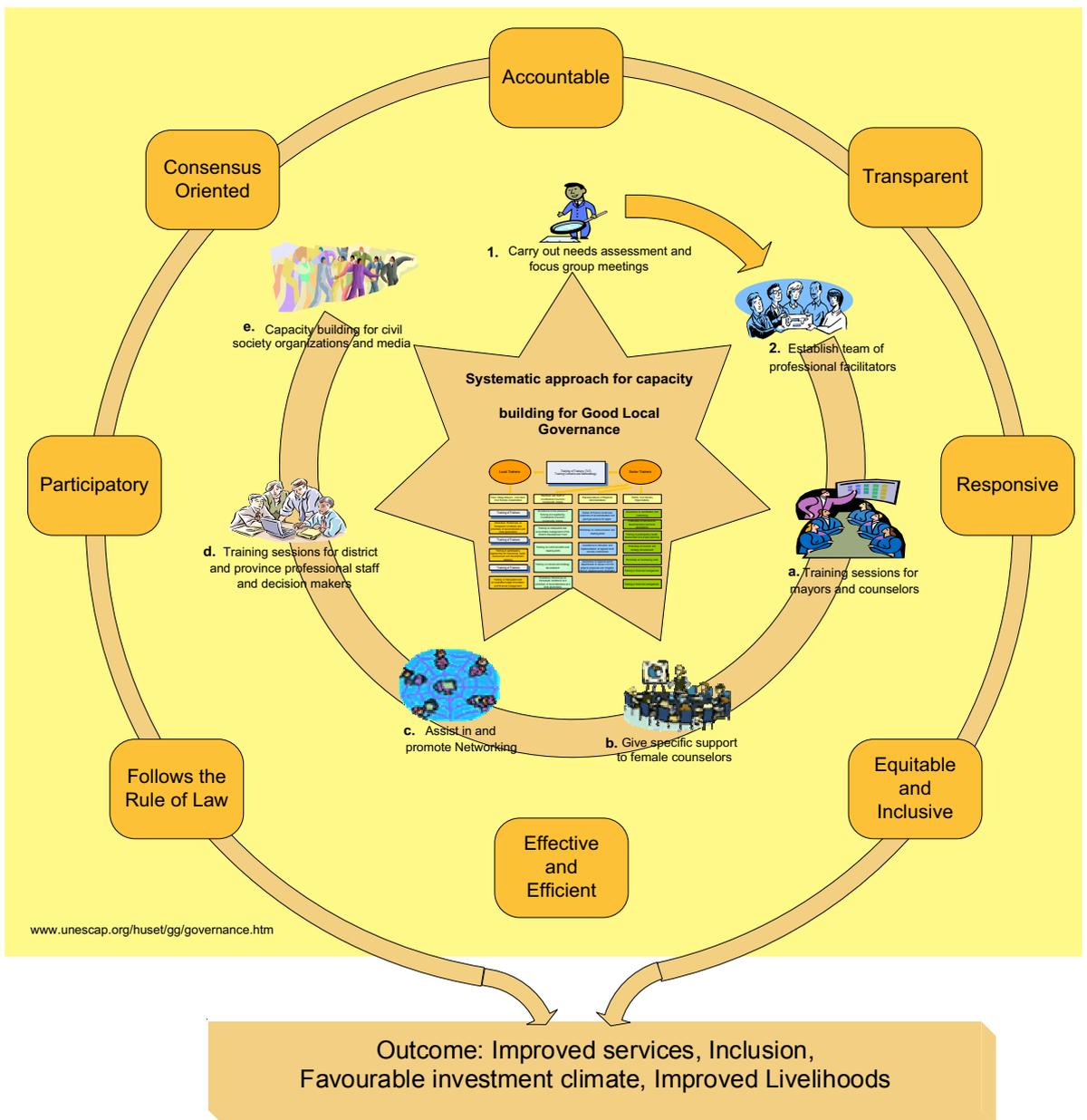
The capacity needs assessment should be context specific and should address local, social, cultural, economic and other relevant factors. This assessment should include an:

- ▶ Analysis of the legal and institutional framework conditions for democratic and good local governance;
- ▶ Assessment of the roles, responsibilities and concrete tasks of organisations and the people working therein;
- ▶ Assessment of the required processes and mechanisms within and among organisations and stakeholders to achieve anticipated results;
- ▶ The identification of required knowledge, skills and attitudes of people in order to perform well;
- ▶ Assessment of what is available, correspondingly of what is missing in reality, i.e. the identification of change requirements with regard to personal and organisational capacities, internal organisational processes and external system-wide mechanisms and processes.
- ▶ The identification and agreement with the target groups on specific capacity building interventions and objectives to be achieved.

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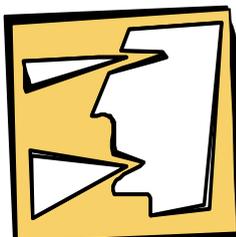
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Figure 2: How capacity building is expected to contribute to good local governance



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Step 2: Establishing team of professional facilitators

Establishing a team of professional facilitators possessing sufficient knowledge, skills and confidence to handle the challenges in promoting democratic and good local governance based on participatory and adult learning approaches forms the second step in the process. The formation of groups of professional facilitators at the local level is one way of ensuring that professional training and advisory services can continue to be offered once the development programme has ended. Such a corps of local trainers is all the more important in rural areas where professional expertise is rare. While training either professionals or trainers (through training of trainer courses), emphasis needs to be placed on building their capacities for process moderation within the context of the political reform processes. Reflection teams or small work-groups are established to exchange experience, discuss issues and monitor the progress made on assignments given by the trainers. The **conceptual approach** of the courses required for establishing a team of professional facilitators centres on:

- ▶ Transmission of knowledge on decentralisation and local governance related issues with particular reference to the country specific conditions.
- ▶ Transmission of skills on how to effectively handle the role of facilitators in the cultural setting of the respective countries.
- ▶ Practising their new skills in specialised capacity building programmes. Peer group work to complete set tasks, to reflect on their own actions and to start develop their own concepts.
- ▶ Coaching and supervising trainees between formal training sessions.

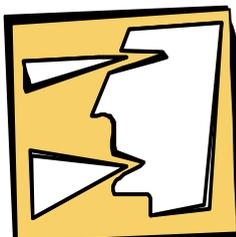
Content wise the courses focus on:

- ▶ Local governance and decentralisation concepts and strategies, including experiences made to date in the respective country.
- ▶ International good practices.
- ▶ Skills to encourage learning processes within the cultural setting including: facilitation tools, use of case studies, role plays, brain-storming.
- ▶ Skills to facilitate training on core aspects of local governance and decentralisation processes, including: project planning and implementation, financial management, cross-cutting issues of good governance. Training for local government and civil society organisations.
- ▶ Skills for local governance and decentralisation related processes including: public hearings, round-table forums, self-organisation and self-learning aspects.
- ▶ Problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.
- ▶ Strategies on how to act as multipliers within their own organizations and/or to market their services to a broader audience.

Success of the programme depends on the commitment of trainees to eventually perform as facilitators. Participants benefit personally from the training and, given the significant costs involved in providing the training, it is legitimate to require the participants to make personal commitments towards sharing the costs involved, this can be in cash or kind.

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Undertake training and capacity building for.....

a. Local self-government

Implementing decentralised responsibilities is a challenging task for local elected representatives given that there is often not much experience in democratic local governance to build on. This requires capacity building of local self-government stakeholders such as council/assembly members, town/village mayors. Levels of education and training are often low leaving many professionals unable to effectively and efficiently perform stipulated roles and functions within any newly decentralised system. They may be further constrained by unfavourable conditions, which may include the slow speed or frequent delays incurred while implementing the decentralisation process, or due to a weak power and financial base of local self-governments, which may in turn be aggravated a relatively unorganised civil society.

The main emphasis of the basic training provided to local self-government stakeholders is placed on qualifying them to perform defined roles and functions in an efficient and effective manner, to make administration more accessible to citizens and particularly to improve public participation in the planning and delivery of services. Civil society representatives are invited to join these sessions in an effort to promote co-operation from the start and to ensure that the know-how is also anchored within the communities.

Main focus of the basic training focuses on:

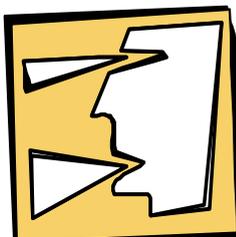
- ▶ The legal framework conditions and potentials of decentralisation and local governance in the respective country;
- ▶ Effective skills for development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- ▶ Budgeting and financial management.

A major focus is placed on cross-cutting aspects of how to strengthen local democracy and to improve citizen's participation in local self-government activities and how to promote transparency and accountability in public office and development management. An example includes support to the establishment of "public hearings" as an opportunity for local self-governments and citizens to discuss issues of local concern and to mediate possible differences of interest.

Building on the impact of this initial basic training a series of further courses provides for skills building in participatory project maintenance, bidding and procurement, the establishment of citizen's service office, the establishment of management information systems and internal administrative procedures.

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b. Women councillors / elected representatives

Specific interventions for women councillors/elected representatives are important in order to strengthen the role of women in politics and public office. Equal representation advances the process of democratisation, realisation of human rights and broad based participation. Equal opportunities for women and men in accessing and controlling resources can have a positive impact on economic growth and poverty reduction.

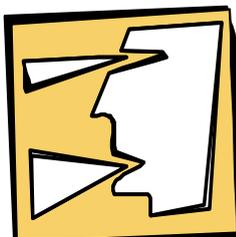
Often representation and participation of women in the decentralisation process appears to be marginal in many countries due to exclusion of women from mainstream (party) politics, societal patterns of male / women roles in society, the difficulty of combining traditional roles with official commitments, lower levels of education etc. Low representation of women in community or village councils means that council decisions are male-biased. Women face additional constraints: their marginal position, lack of experience appearing in public, open and subtle forms of discrimination by male councillors make it hard for the women to exert a meaningful influence on council policy and decisions.

Photo 3: Challenge of getting women interested in local governance at a network meeting



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Specific capacity building interventions for women members of local self-government bodies are not designed to substitute gender mainstreaming activities. Instead they are to complement these efforts and are designed to address the specific challenges women councillors face. Improving the skills of women will facilitate to increase their political visibility, make an impact on council decisions and also enable them to share their experiences through networks, informal groups and associations. Additional support should be provided through discussion forums or interviews that could be broadcasted on radio or TV. The objective would be to demonstrate that women can act as competent town or village councillors and they would also provide examples of how women can actively participate in both public and political life. Positive experiences have been made with support to the establishment of Women Councillor Forums, held on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis, which provide an opportunity for:

- ▶ Forming a network for experience sharing, providing mutual support and strengthening co-operation among the women councillors;
- ▶ Developing strategies and acquiring skills to improve their performance and to make them more visible during council proceedings;
- ▶ Developing strategies and skills to liaise with their electorate and civil society organisations;
- ▶ Developing skills on how to present themselves more effectively in public;
- ▶ Strengthening their self-confidence and leadership skills.

The forums provided for the women councillors builds a strong self-help/ self-learning approach. Women are expected to develop their own strategies to deal with the day-to-day problems arising from their performance as women in public office. Supplementary training on communication, negotiation and leadership skills and/or decentralisation and local governance issues also should be provided.

Photo 4: Challenge of getting women interested in local governance

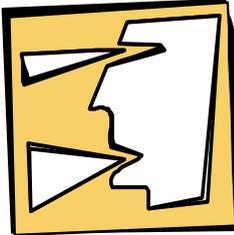


Photo 5:once interested then how to effectively interact in a male dominated council.....?



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c. Networks / associations of local self-governance

Increasing the level of confidence of local self-government to handle their new roles and responsibilities or increasing their bargaining power towards other (government) stakeholders cannot be achieved by training alone. This requires assistance to local government stakeholders to form networks/local government associations is a logical development of the capacity building process. An alternative approach to training that has proved successful in a number of countries is the formation of networks or associations. The networks and associations can take the form of informal platforms or formal local government bodies. Generally, the associations are established at the district or provincial level. Objective of the associations is to increase the representation of local self-governments in higher level political and developmental decision making processes as well as to increase their bargaining power. The impact has been that more external resources could be accessed by the associations and used directly by the local-self governments.

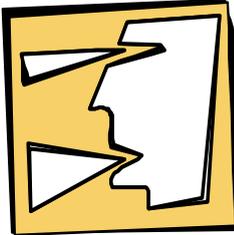
Practical considerations necessitate that only a limited number of participants are included in the training in order to ensure that an effective learning environment is created. Participants have to be representative for the different sections of the council, with special attention being accorded to female councillors. Formation of a development fund (compare Development and Social funds in www.methodfinder.net) has proved to be an important instrument for promoting and sustaining associations, networks and forums of local-self-governments. The development fund provides the necessary financial means for implementing development projects that have been prioritised by the local self-governments. The forums, networks or associations provide an effective framework to:

- ▶ Discuss common issues, mutual problems and constraints;
- ▶ Encourage exchange of experiences and lessons-learnt as well as possible responses for overcoming constraints;
- ▶ Strengthen the understanding of local self-government's roles and the opportunities within the framework of the decentralisation process;
- ▶ Provide practical approaches for responding to the demands of smaller local self-governments who do not have the capability to undertake certain activities on their own. As a group they would have a larger resource-pool to benefit from;
- ▶ Provide an opportunity to explore the benefits and opportunities for inter-commune / inter local self-governance cooperation;
- ▶ Improve their bargaining position vis-à-vis the national government.

Methods and approaches for developing the institutional capacities of the forums/associations range from: formation and registration of the associations, development of a code of conduct / rules and regulations, provision of advisory services to strengthen the self-learning and problem solving skills of association members, assistance to the formulation of a vision, mission statement and strategy, advisory services for the development of the internal organisation and administration of the association, approaches to strengthen their bargaining power for better access of external funds, developing democratic and transparent decision-making procedures for the allocation and disbursement of resources as well as training in project proposal writing.

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d. Intermediate level stakeholders (district & province)

Provincial level stakeholders, particularly when appointed by central government, often have little knowledge on the decentralisation reform process and local governance issues. In practice they often do not have the capacities to re-orient their functions in accordance with the newly established decentralisation structures; they have limited skills to solve emerging problems related to decentralisation and limited capability to co-ordinate development activities in a transparent, accountable and responsive manner.

“Decentralisation Seminars” have proven to be an effective mechanism to promote a better responsiveness of provincial level stakeholders to local level concerns and to assist in the establishment of mechanisms for improved cooperation and coordination of development initiatives. Improved skills will help enhance their theoretical knowledge on decentralisation. It also helps to develop skills needed to elaborate developmental strategies within a decentralised governance framework. One effect could be the establishment “Provincial/District Round Table Meetings” as a forum for coordination and cooperation of provincial/district level stakeholders. During the meetings issues and concerns regarding the decentralisation reform process could be discussed and solutions developed.

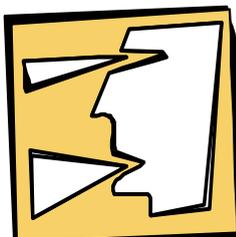
Content-wise the seminars include a theoretical section on the fundamentals of decentralisation, practical approaches for problem identification and resolution, identification of potentials and developmental opportunities. The course includes:

- ▶ Theoretical background of local governance and decentralisation in the respective country;
- ▶ Developing and re-designing roles and functions for the administration to become more responsive to the changes that result from decentralisation of governance;
- ▶ Use of case-studies to develop strategies for improved governance and more effective decentralisation;
- ▶ Elaborating upon approaches for bottom-up planning within the ambit of democratically elected local government bodies and the communities. In addition, to the courses are to develop the responsiveness of provincial/district stakeholders to participatory planning processes at the community level;
- ▶ Discussion of practical problems and possible solutions with regard to the decentralisation process.

Additional workshops can supplement the initial training. The workshops cover issues such as organisational and institutional development, improving communication and meeting skills, action planning and monitoring, constructive conflict management and so on.

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e. Civil society representatives

Active civil society participation is a precondition for democratic local governance and effective decentralisation. NGOs and CBOs can play important roles as advisers, partners in development planning and implementation, communication channels, advocates or monitoring agents for local governance. Civil society organisations can mobilise and empower communities and in particular disadvantaged groups to undertake joint activities and to articulate their needs and interests.

Active civil society participation often faces a number of constraints. The development of civil society may be only in its infancy. Legal and regulatory frameworks for decentralisation often make little provision for civil society involvement in local affairs. Perhaps there is also little historical precedence and experience with democratic systems and/or deep-seated mistrust towards government structures. Civil society organisations themselves often report on insufficient knowledge on decentralisation and local governance related issues. The confusion lies on what role to play once local self-governments are installed and lack of capacities to actively engage in local governance affairs.

A system of training and process-oriented interventions has proven successful to build the capacity of civil society organisations to play an active role in local governance. Interventions are designed to enable their members to acquire the requisite knowledge on decentralisation related issues, to provide opportunities to identify the roles they want to play and to acquire appropriate skills to perform such roles. Training on decentralisation and local governance is an important first step to build knowledge on specific aspects of the reform and to facilitate the development of attitudes and commitment to play an active role.

Photo 6: Village council meeting: typical monologues

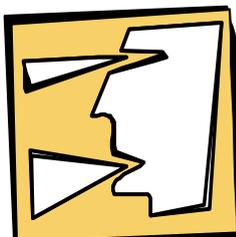


Photo 7: Men dominating meetings



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Training and discussion topics include:

- ▶ Important legal aspects guiding the reform process;
- ▶ Roles and responsibilities of local self-government stakeholders and changes in the role of district and provincial support structures;
- ▶ Principles of good governance and how they are to be reflected in the operations of local self-government councils;
- ▶ Possible new opportunities and rights to play an active role in local governance, for example in development planning and budgeting;
- ▶ Potential for lobbying and advocacy work.

In addition to the training and capacity building described earlier sections, training in the following main areas has proved useful:

- ▶ Participatory community needs assessment, project planning, implementation and maintenance;
- ▶ Formulation of project proposals;
- ▶ Communication and conflict management;
- ▶ Internal organisational development: elaboration of organisation's mission, objectives and strategy; administrative issues, including documentation and recording, financial management and accounting.

At the community level positive experiences have been made with regard to capacity building of village networks. These networks are useful in order to communicate citizens' concerns and interests to elected representatives as well as to ensure that local needs and priorities articulated by the citizens' are taken into consideration.

In order to promote the establishment of functional linkages between local self-governments and civil society organisation "encounter/ partnership workshops" have proved to be a useful methodology. Through these partnership workshops, people get to know each other, are able to clarify mutual roles and expectations, can identify potential areas in which to act in partnership as well to discuss and define modes for cooperation and collaboration.

Additional methods that augment the capacity building process include: "Strengthening local Governance through Community Unions", "Development and Social Funds", "Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment - PCIA". Descriptions of these methods and application examples can be found at www.methodfinder.net.

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