CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
– FROM CONCEPT TO OPERATION:
LESSONS LEARNED FROM A GLOBAL STUDY ON
EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL COOPERATION
FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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Summary: This paper aims to examine how to make technical cooperation (TC) effective for capacity development (CD). The experience of 11 developing countries in sector/thematic CD and TC shows that CD and TC are more effective when a clear policy framework and a coordination mechanism are in place, and when CD and TC are conducted in a way to support the change process by developing capacity of all the stakeholders, ensuring a system for incentives, and promoting systematic learning. For effective CD, it is essential to understand the policy and institutional context as well as the mechanism of change and to take a wider framework of action, of which TC is a part.

Key words: Asia, Africa, country-led strategy, change management, leadership, incentive

1.   Capacity Development and Technical Cooperation: Why Do They Matter?

Capacity development (CD) has been attached increased importance toward the achievement of development results. The issue of CD has been on the development agenda for decades, but due to the recent movement in development emphasizing the achievement of development results and country ownership, CD has attracted even greater attention. That is because adequate country capacity to manage development is essential to ensure country ownership in the development process and to achieve development results. However, in practice, capacity constraints are a serious obstacle to the current development efforts. In addition, the development of sustainable country capacity has been one of the least responsive targets in the efforts. Against such background, the need for CD was highlighted in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The Declaration also underlined that CD was the responsibility of developing countries, with donors playing a supporting role and called for the former to position CD as an explicit objective of their national development strategies and for the latter to enhance support by aligning with the developing countries' strategies, making use of existing capacities, and harmonizing their assistance. This has provided an impetus to the CD efforts by developing countries as a part of the follow-up to the Paris Declaration.

Improvement of technical cooperation (TC) has become one of the critical issues in such CD efforts. While many aid instruments are used to support CD, TC still constitutes a major instrument for supporting CD, representing around 20% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA). It is also recognized by both developing countries and donors that TC plays an important role in assisting knowledge acquisition, transforming people's attitudes and behaviors, and facilitating change processes. These days, the role of TC is attached importance from the viewpoint of the complementarity with other aid modalities (ADB 2007, DFID 2006a, Land 2007, Lopes 2003). However, its mixed performance record is acknowledged and TC has been the target of various criticisms. Such criticisms include that it is donor-driven and fragmented, transfers external knowledge and models without sufficient consideration of the country context, creates a parallel system and erodes country ownership, and has limited impacts on sustainable CD (Berg 1993, Fukuda-Parr et al. 2002, Morgan 2002, World Bank 2005). Because of the important role of TC as mentioned as well as the controversy surrounding its performance at the same time, it is considered essential to improve TC for more effective CD.

There are many studies on TC. These studies examine, as the directions for improving TC, country-led TC planning and management, more flexible and responsive TC design and implementation, and more coordinated provision of TC with various forms of CD support. The studies also stress the significance of the political and institutional context and leadership as the factors influencing the effectiveness of TC and suggest the importance of examining TC and its contribution to CD from wider perspectives, within a broader context and efforts toward CD (ADB 2007, DFID 2006a and 2006b, Land 2007, Morgan et al. 2005, World Bank 2005). These suggestions, in general, are well accepted. However, the empirical evidence on when and how these suggestions work is still very limited. Also, many existing studies focus on individual TC activities; they do not much examine TC and its contribution from wider perspectives. As such, a global study on effective TC for CD has been conducted to fill this gap.

2. The Overall Framework of a Global Study on Effective Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development

A global study has been carried out since March 2007 as a 1.5 year study, on the initiative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and including the participation of 11 developing countries and 7 donors. The donor members are: Asian Development Bank (ADB), Department for International Development (DFID), German Ministry of Economic Cooperation (BMZ), German Technical Cooperation Company (GTZ), JICA, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and World Bank. The developing countries are from Asia and Africa, and include: Cambodia, Ghana, Kenya, Lao PDR, Malawi, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam, and Zambia.

The purpose of the study is to advance the current CD efforts by providing empirical evidence on how to implement effective TC as a part of the overall drive towards country-led CD. The study especially aims at providing input in the discussions at the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008, held as a follow-up to the Paris Declaration. For this purpose, the study, through country studies and a synthesis study, examines actual TC practices and its contribution to CD within the overall CD efforts in specific sector/thematic areas; analyzes contributing and

impeding factors that influence the results of TC, including the context; extracts lessons learned, identifies benchmarks, and formulates the recommendations.

The analysis is specifically made, taking up six key issues related to effective TC for CD and investigates how, when, and why they work. The six issues, which are set according to the main syggestions of the previous studies, are: country-led planning, coordination and complementarity with other CD support instruments; flexible and responsive design and implementation; country-led management; integration of TC with the organizational change management; and integration of TC with the organizational learning process.

The study includes a couple of distinctive features in its approach. First, TC and its contribution are analyzed within a broader context. The target of the analysis is not at the individual TC project/program level but at the sector/thematic level; and the context such as the overall CD strategies, sector strategies, and institutional settings are also examined. The sector/thematic areas of each country study, selected by the respective country are as shown in Table 1. Secondly, the study takes a country-led approach. While it is developing countries that have the primary responsibility in CD, the existing studies have mainly been conducted by donors or researchers in donor countries. Participation of developing countries and the reflection of their views are still limited. Under the country-led approach, developing countries participate in the study by self-selecting; the country case studies are managed by the respective countries from the planning through implementation up to the report making; and the overall study is jointly managed by developing countries and donors. Finally, the study emphasizes mutual learning among developing countries. This reflects many recent studies on CD and TC which highlight the importance of knowledge and stress the usefulness of promoting knowledge flow from South to South. Mutual learning is incorporated into the study process through the organization of regional workshops, establishment of the study website and so on.

3. Country Experience in Sector/Thematic Capacity Development and Technical Cooperation: Major Findings from the Country Studies

As of July 2008, the country studies have been completed, but the synthesis study is still ongoing. In this section, the author summarizes the major findings of the study, based upon the results of the country studies[1].

3.1. Landscape of Technical Cooperation

The volume and share of TC as a proportion of ODA vary by country; however, it occupies an important position in terms of volume and share in many countries. According to the statistics of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), OECD, total ODA has increased from US$65 billion in 2002 to US$130 billion in 2006. Similarly, TC has increased from US$16 billion to US$24 billion over the same year, while its share in total ODA has declined slightly from 25 to 19%[2]. A similar trend has been observed in many countries. For example, total ODA and TC in Ghana more than doubled from US$3.1 billion in 1997-2001 to US$6.4 billion in 2002-2006 for the former and from US$2.6 billion to US$5.5 billion for the latter. In Ghana, TC represents as high as 86% of total ODA in 2002-2006. In Lao PDR, total ODA has tripled to around US$284 million in the last five years; TC represents around 48% of total ODA.

The share of TC in Cambodia is around 45%, close to that of Lao PDR. It is less in Tanzania and Zambia, representing one-third and one-quarter of total ODA respectively; further, in Pakistan, TC represents 10%.

With regard to TC data, several countries such as Cambodia, Tanzania, and Zambia point out the difficulty in obtaining adequate TC data. One of the reasons is that TC is often provided as a part of a project/program which combines TC with other instruments such as financial assistance and often it is difficult to separate TC embedded in ODA. Further, TC involves many organizations in the country as well as various donors, including NGOs. This also makes it difficult to capture the overall picture of TC and its data and information. Thus, concrete data concerning TC volume, not to mention disaggregated data and information by type and distribution, is not readily available. For example, Zambia recently introduced an ODA information management system, Zambia Development and Assistance Database (ZDAD); however, due to problems as mentioned above, separate and disaggregated TC data and information are difficult to obtain. These problems with TC data and information can lead to problems in the planning and management of TC.

A common feature of TC across all countries is the diversity in the modes and types of TC delivery. The modes of delivery include: free standing TC, TC provided as a sub-component of a project, TC through pooled funding, TC provided as a part of the sector/common basket funding and so on. Among these, TC delivered within a project is the most common mode of delivery; however, there seems to be a gradual shift from project TC to TC through pooled funding as well as TC as a part of the sector/common basket funding, especially in African countries. TC is further categorized by type such as long-term or short-term TC personnel (international or local), training, twinning, volunteers etc. While each mode and type has its own merit, such a variety, which requires different management styles, may prove difficult for developing countries whose management capacity is weak. Furthermore, varying procedures by donors for the different TC aggravate the problem.

Despite the difficulties as mentioned above, there is a general consensus that TC has been making a significant contribution, and playing diverse roles at various levels. It has helped to develop policies, strategies, and guidelines; to strengthen core organizational functions to plan, manage, implement, evaluate, and account for the results; to enhance staff knowledge and skills; to change people's attitudes and behavior, including leaders; to promote innovation and piloting; to promote organizational and institutional reform; and to empower and develop capacity of the civil society. However, it should also be noted that not all TC is intended for CD. There is transactional TC provided for delivering essential goods and services as well as TC for filling gap of specific skills.

3.2. Policy and Institutional Context

Policy and institutional context is critical for effective CD and TC. The country studies emphasize in common the importance of the existence of well-defined CD strategies and TC policies, appropriate institutional arrangements for the coordination of CD and TC within the country as well as between the country and donors, the linkage between CD/TC and broader public reforms, and strong political leadership.

CD strategies at the national and sector/thematic levels are essential to reinforce country efforts for CD and to promote aligned support by donors; however,

there are disparities in the existence of CD strategies. At the national level, some countries such as Lao PDR and Tanzania have well-defined national CD strategies, which are integrated into the national development strategy. The strategy of Lao PDR comprehensively covers CD needs of various sectors as well as at multiple levels, including the provincial level. Tanzania's strategy has a clear link with broader public reforms. On the contrary, in other countries, such CD strategies are not formulated. Malawi, for example, has a national development strategy placing high priority on CD; however, the national CD strategy is not formulated. The findings at the national level also apply at the sector/thematic level. While all the sectors/thematic areas taken up in the country studies have sector development strategies, less than half of the sector/thematic areas have CD strategies, including the agriculture sector in Tanzania and the water and sanitation sector in Zambia. In other areas such as the public financial management sector in Ghana and the health sector in Cambodia, CD strategies are not sufficiently articulated although specific CD needs are identified. The formulation of CD strategies is progressing with increased donor support. In the case of Malawi, a comprehensive capacity assessment is currently being undertaken to serve as a basis of the national CD strategy. Similar efforts are also being made in various sectors/thematic areas under the sector-wide approach (SWAp). However, given the importance of a policy framework for CD, the formulation of CD strategies is pressing.

A TC policy which defines the selection and management of TC is important to guide TC to the country CD priorities. Given that TC involves many organizations within the country as well as donors, a TC policy also plays a crucial role in promoting coordinated TC use by the former and support by the latter, and to maximize TC contribution to the overall CD. Further, the increased variety in the modes of TC delivery, including pooled funding and basket funding, development of a TC policy which guides the selection of different TC forms in order to optimize TC effectiveness is increasingly being recognized as necessary. However, such TC policy is not often in place. There are countries like Vietnam where details regarding the utilization and management of aid, including TC, are defined as a policy; but most countries lack well-defined TC policies. Existing partnership mechanisms such as joint assistant strategies (JAS) and TC working groups function so far in some of these countries as an institution to guide TC. However, the need for better defined TC policies is stressed by the study countries, including Ghana, Cambodia, Tanzania, and Zambia, where TC accounts for a large portion of ODA.

CD and TC involve various organizations at both the central and provincial levels. Thus, the policy coherence and operational coordination of CD and TC among multi-level organizations within the country are crucial. CD strategies and TC policies help, but appropriate institutional mechanisms are also necessary. However, weaknesses still remain in many countries. For example, in Zambia, CD and TC involve three key ministries (the Cabinet Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Finance and National Planning, in charge of public service management, TC, and overall aid mobilization, respectively) and the line ministries at the central government level. Due to such bureaucratic structure as well as the lack of coordination mechanisms, coordination and information-sharing are limited. Further, as a framework for CD and TC, Zambia has Joint Assistance Strategy (JASZ) and Public Service Training and Development Policy. However, the line ministries are not familiar with these; and they are not well reflected in the policies and operations of the line ministries. The Zambian experience, of which similar experiences are also seen in other countries, indicates that

an institutional mechanism in addition to a policy is necessary to ensure policy coherence and coordination, and that the clarification of roles and responsibilities among the organizations concerned facilitates coordination of CD and TC.

Finally, incentives and political leadership are critical elements that constitute the enabling environment for CD and TC. The problem of incentives is shared among almost all the study countries, including Cambodia, Tanzania, and Zambia. The poor conditions of service and uncompetitive remuneration in the public sector undermine the motivation and make retention difficult as trained personnel leave for other opportunities. The need for integrating CD with broader public reforms, especially staff and payment reform, is recognized as essential. Further, the importance of political leadership is stressed by many country studies. The awareness of senior government officials and political leaders about the importance of CD plays a critical role for integrating CD strategies into the national and sector development strategies. Their leadership and commitment are also essential to advance the policy coherence and coordination among various organizations at multiple levels, not to mention public reforms.

3.3 Conditions for Effective Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development: Examination of Six Key Issues

To obtain empirical evidence for how and when the six key issues work, several cases in sector/thematic areas are selected by each country and examined. The major conditions for the successful functioning of each issue are summarized in Table 2. The Table also lists the recommendations for actions to be taken by the countries and donors in order to realize such conditions[3].

3.3.1. Country-Led Planning

The case studies show that there are many examples where country-led planning has helped effective use of TC for sector/thematic CD through enhanced alignment of TC activities with the sector/thematic priorities of the country. One such example is the Good Financial Governance Porgramme in Ghana, which aimed at addressing the issues of equitable and effective taxation. The program was identified through dialogue among the country, the donor, and the civil society organization, and the joint capacity assessment. The Government promoted teamwork and partnership in TC use with strong political support. TC supported strengthening of capacity for equitable taxation policy and effective tax collection. It linked to organizational development at multiple levels, including internal revenue and VAT Service Agencies and governing bodies. The program produced visible results; revenue from income and corporate taxes rose by about 57%. Another example is the Support for Public Investment Programme (PIP) in Lao PDR, whose objective was to develop a firm PIP management system to achieve the targets of the National Socio Economic Development Plan and the National Growth and Poverty Eradication. The program was started based upon strong demands within the government, sectors, and provinces, and led by Government with strong support from the National Assembly. Close consultation and collaboration were made through the identification, design, and implementation process. TC helped capacity strengthening of the staff, organization, and PIP system at multiple levels, which led to an improvement in the PIP performance.

The success conditions drawn from the good practices of the country-led planning include: strong consensus on country demand and priorities; country's high commitment, linked to national leadership and vision; clear CD targets and results as well as aligned TC; and mutual trust and partnership between the country and donors.

3.3.2. Complementarity

One key finding from the case studies is that TC is more effective when it is linked to a variety of other complementary CD support such as infrastructure, equipment, and so on. Another key finding is that retaining the diversity of TC is beneficial. While many countries generally prefer pooled funding in terms of the reduction of transaction costs, they also stress that pooled funding arrangements should ensure the diversity of TC and that complementary support are maintained. What is important is to manage the diversity. The practice of complementarity suggests as success conditions: existence of a sector CD roadmap and targets which define complementarity of TC and other support; strengthening of CD coordination arrangements; and operational guidelines which present the comparative advantages of different TC modalities and donors.

One such good practice can be seen in the health sector in Tanzania, where health sector reform and decentralization have been carried out. To support the reform, the multi-donor sector basket fund was established under the SWAp to provide funds for health services. TC was provided by several donors to help strengthen management capacity of local governments who are in charge of local health services. The basket funding and TC complemented each other to strengthen capacity of the local government. The government took the lead in the overall reform process, and both the basket funding and TC were aligned to the country's strategy. The health sector in Cambodia provides another example. There, several donors provided TC, including support to the Ministry of Health for strengthening health systems, support to national centers for strengthening capacity of organizations and its staff, and support to the local NGOs involved in health services at the community level. This allowed greater support for CD across various parts of the sector and it contributed constructively to CD overall. The existence of a well-defined sector strategy and active TC working group helped alignment and coordination of TC and the management of TC diversity.

3.3.3. Flexible and Responsive Design/Implementation

Many examples indicate that flexible and responsive TC design and implementation help make TC more effective. Examples of good practices include the Distance Teacher Education Programme in Ghana and the Kafue District Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) Programme. The objective of the former was to expand access to the university education system, which was limited by the constraints of physical capacity of the universities as well as geographical disadvantage of the students. The program was started based on extensive preparatory work supported by TC. Then, the program was carried out in phases and gradually expanded across several universities over 10 years. Along with the progress of the program, TC focus has shifted from preparation for the delivery of a new education model to institutional capacity at the universities to design and provide distance education. The program provided increased access to the university education system as evidenced by the ten-fold

expansion of enrollment in 10 years, particularly of female students who represent about half of all students. The latter program aimed at strengthening community-level capacity to plan and supervise WSS initiatives. Extensive stakeholder consultations were held with the community before designing CD and TC to respond to specific local needs, and a holistic approach was applied. This made the program flexible and adaptive to any changing needs. It was also carried out by phasing and sequencing CD targets.

One key finding is that the good practices are characterized by a long-term perspective on CD, and TC support by the country and donors. Based upon the longer-term CD outcomes, TC activities are modified in a flexible and responsive manner to respond to emerging issues and needs. To do so, organizational performance and CD results are reviewed, and decisions on a new direction for the TC support are made.

3.3.4. Country-led Management

One finding is that country-led management enhances TC effectiveness. Stronger country commitment and a strengthening of country management capacity, which enables sustained CD efforts, appear to be major factors of this. An example of good practices is the VAT administration in Ghana, the objective of which was to strengthen the capacity of the VAT Service, an organization established with the introduction of the VAT in Ghana. TC focused on the design and implementation of the VAT system. Extensive preparatory work was made with the involvement of several donors; this led to a well-structured TC. With the government's leadership in introducing an adequate remuneration package to address staff and salary issues, the VAT Service was staffed with fairly stable staff who were well trained under TC. It also had a dynamic leader. This enabled the VAT Service to provide effective and efficient service.

Another example is the Essential Health Interventions Programme in Tanzania. It aimed at piloting the evidence-based approach to health planning at the district level. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare took the lead in planning and implementing the program as a whole. Local governments carried out actual evidence-based planning and managing of health services under the program. The program was supported by TC with which the program staff, including international experts, were hired by the government on a competitive basis. After the initial training, the local government staff was better able to carry out actual evidence-based planning and management. CD provided through TC helped improve the quality of health services. The program was supervised by a program steering committee, led by the Ministry and participated by local governments and donors.

The good practices examples indicate that an initial joint sector or organizational capacity assessment, which articulates CD needs and TC priorities, can help country-led management. Definition of responsibilities among the organizations concerned and their cooperation also reinforce the country-led management. Strengthening of the country capacity to manage and monitor TC performance is an essential enabling factor common to all cases.

3.3.5. Organizational Change Management and Learning

The case studies demonstrate that TC is more effective when embedded within

an organizational change management and support organizational learning. The good practices examples include: the Morogoro Health Project in Tanzania and the Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE) in Kenya. The Morogoro Health Project aimed at strengthening the health system of a local government. The project was initiated under the strong leadership of the government to respond to health sector reform. With TC support, the project was carried out combining various activities. These included: strengthening of management capacity of the local government staff; development of a cooperation mechanism among multi-level government organizations, local research institute, and the communities; and peer-to-peer learning among the districts in Morogoro. TC was provided in a way to promote the endogenous CD process of the staff with external experts playing a catalyst role. The project produced tangible results in the improvement of health conditions in the district; this gave incentives for further change. The SMASSE project was intended to strengthen the in-service teacher training system to improve the quality of mathematics and science education. The project began with strong country leadership as a part of the education reform. The training system was designed through extensive preparation work, including close stakeholder consultations with the teachers, school principals and so on. It was implemented with wider participation of those stakeholders as well as the parents. Periodical reviews were made to evaluate the progress of the quality of education. These served as evidence of the improvement in the teachers' pedagogical quality and students' achievement and helped provide accountability to the stakeholders. The peer-to-peer learning was conducted between the pilot districts and non-pilot districts as well as between Kenya and other developing counties.

Success conditions identified from the good practices include: a clear demand for organizational change; high-level country leadership and commitment to the change; broad participation of stakeholders; synergy of organizational learning and change management; and achievement of tangible results which provides incentives for further change. Demand for change comes from various sources such as public reforms, legislative changes, and calls from citizens for better services. CD of not only the supply side of services but also the demand side is useful to promote change.

4. Conclusion: Effective Capacity Development and its Support

The success conditions for each of the six issues which make TC more effective for CD, share several common points. These points can be summarized as follows:
- country-owned CD strategy which articulates CD targets and a roadmap with a longer-term perspective
- a cooperation mechanism among the multi-level organizations concerned within the country, based upon well-defined responsibilities of each organization
- country leadership and commitment, especially including those by senior government officials and political leaders
- mutual trust, willingness, and close collaboration of the country and the donors as well as an institutional mechanism for partnership
- wider stakeholder participation and a demand for change from them
- willingness and commitment to change and the motivated efforts for change, including flexible responses to emerging issues and needs
- incentives for CD and change

- monitoring and reviews to manage and account for results

As these points show, many conditions for effective TC for CD involve policy and institutional context, going beyond specific CD/TC programs and projects. This indicates that the issues of CD and TC have to be viewed and tackled from a wider range of policy and institutional perspectives. On the other hand, as presented in the country studies, conductive policy and institutional environments are not yet in place, and strengthening of country capacity is necessary to make these conductive.

Assistance to such capacity strengthening needs comprehensive support, and TC alone is not enough. However, there are also many areas TC can support. These include support to: capacity assessment, formulation of CD strategies, reinforcement of core functions of the country to manage development, CD at multiple levels and involving wider stakeholders, including civil society which constitutes the demand side of the change, development of an institutional mechanism for cooperation among the organizations within the country as well as between the country and donors, development of leaders' capacity and so on. To effectively support these, it is crucial that TC be well embedded in a broader framework of efforts in a way to complement with other CD support instruments. A program approach, which Japan's ODA is currently promoting, will be useful from such perspective. However, Japan's programs under such a program approach, must adequately align with the country-owned country-led program. In other words, it must be Japan's program under the program-based approach (PBA).

5. Acknowledgement

Notes

[1] The data and information used in this section are based on the following country study reports (in printing):
Government of Ghana (2008) *Ghana Country Case Study*
Government of Kenya (2008) *Kenya Country Case Study*
Government of Lao PDR (2008) *Lao PDR Country Case Study*
Government of Malawi (2008) *Malawi Country Case Study*
Government of Malaysia (2008) *Malaysia Country Case Study*
Government of Pakistan (2008) *Pakistan Country Case Study*
Government of Tanzania (2008) *Tanzania Country Case Study*
Government of Vietnam (2008) *Vietnam Country Case Study*
Government of Zambia (2008) *Zambia Country Case Study*
Royal Government of Cambodia (2008) *Cambodia Country Case Study*
Royal Government of Thailand (2008) *Thailand Country Case Study*
[2] International Development Statistics (IDS) online Database, OECD/DAC
[3] Table 2 is prepared, based upon the discussions among the members of the global study. The discussions were made at an international workshop for the global study, held in April 2008 in Tokyo, participated by the representatives of the developing country members and the donor members.

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