

Capacity building- Is this a conscious approach to change?

Role of Support Organisation in Capacity building.



Shakeel Abro

SPO Strengthening Participatory Organisation

This research paper explores the concept of the “Capacity building”, examining its contours and its potential in enabling organizations (grassroots level voluntary organizations) to meet the challenges of the demanding milieu in which they now operate.

Researcher:

Researcher Mr. Shakeel Abro is working in SPO Strengthening Participatory Organisation Pakistan as senior coordinator Projects. He did his Masters in Business Administration-MBA with specialization in Marketing and Masters in Economics. He is doing his M. Phil in Development Studies from Sindh Development Studies Center. He has completed a year long training course in Managing People and Organizations from LUMS under LUMS-McGill (Canada) NGO Management Program for Pakistan. Institute of International Education Development-IIED San Francisco under Leadership Development Mechanism (LDM) awarded him a fellowship for undertaking an International development course on Management of Community Based Services from Nairobi-Kenya. He has an extensive field and office experience in Community Development, Administration and Management. He has his internship experience with Pakistan National Shipping Corporation-PNSC Karachi. He is affiliated with International Association for Community Development-IACD U.K. He got appreciation from World Bank Washington for Pakistan Country Assistance Strategy-CAS assessment visits. Commonwealth Foundation-UK granted him sponsorship for

organizing a series of training seminars at Commonwealth Peoples Festival Oct2001, at Brisbane-Australia.

Parallel to this experience he invested his valuable time by participating in various seminars, workshops, training program's and exposure visits like Grameen Bank Bangladesh, BRAC and Proshika. In the IT field he has command over MS-Office includes MS-Word, Excell, PowerPoint and MS-Project2000 package and Epiinfo software. He is using frequently Internet and online computer use. He is good at report writing and has written regular progress reports and Research Papers.

He initiated his career by a joining an NGO working in Primary Health Care, Micro Enterprise, Quality Education, Water and Sanitation, Community Organization with their capacity building. He established NGO's first office in a very sensitive area and successfully led a 34 professional team. He has a special interest in Human Resource Development both at organizational and grass root level. At present he is working with a Multi Donor Supported National Organization engaged in providing technical support in trainings and project designing to NGOs. Priority areas are Health, Education, Agriculture and Environment.

Introduction/Abstract:

This paper has emerged from the research undertaken by the researcher in the field area of NGO where he works. A partner CBO was selected to study and to better understand how capacity building is implemented in practice, what actually happens, what works and why. The need of this research is realized in wake of the situation that despite 50 years of development assistance and investment, there remains an unacceptable level of poverty and inequality in the world and specifically in Pakistan. It will be argued that local communities, their institutions, networks and governments need to be strengthened so that the people themselves can play an effective role in identifying their own problems and lead development in their own context. Capacity building in this regard, particularly from its holistic perspective, is considered to be the best approach to strengthening capacities at individual, organizational and societal levels and to bringing a balance between micro-and-macro development initiatives. Many development professionals believe "capacity building" is a very useful tool, and the international aid community is placing growing emphasis on it as a key to reducing poverty and hunger.

This paper revolves around the critical assessment of the capacity development efforts undertaken by the Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), a national support NGO in Pakistan, and more specifically how SPO's approach can contribute to achieve the rights-based development objectives.

This paper reveals the results of a CBO, which was selected and was assessed at two levels. Before training and after training. Assessment tool in practice was Capacity building Indicators-CBIs through Learning Information System LIS . The background of this research is the term 'capacity-building' which has become almost synonymous with 'development' in many aid circles. Almost all the donors, The World Bank, international NGOs, and some local NGOs are prioritizing capacity building. It is therefore critical to analyze carefully the practice of capacity building to ensure that we learn from others' experience and avoid the danger that the term 'capacity-building' becomes merely a cosmetic

and meaningless addition to all proposals and policies. Capacity building is a conscious approach to change which, if taken seriously, has very radical and far-reaching implications not only for skills and behaviours, but also power dynamics within and between organizations.

This paper seeks to contribute to our understanding of capacity-building by analyzing a number of specific capacity-building interventions, drawing out the issues and insights from practice. It also highlights the consequent implications, particularly for NGOs involved in developing strategies for capacity-building. It is aimed at all development professionals engaged in capacity-building, but has particular relevance to NGOs, and capacity-building providers.

Why capacity building?

Many contributors to the debate now suggest a greater emphasis on people in organizations as ;

'Companies realize that in order to remain competitive they must utilize their human resources more efficiently' (Morgan A. 1996:24).

In the introduction to his book *Imaginization* (Morgan 1993), Garreth Morgan reminds us that;

'an organization has no presence beyond that of the people who bring it to life'.

This concurs with Egan's (1988:46) view that,

'people make things happen in companies and institutions'

while Handy (1994:152) counsels that,

'we must make people our assets'.

Fisher & Torbert (1995) and Harvey-Jones (1994) stress that

unless people in an organization are transformed, the impact of change is limited.

Therefore it seems that if organizations are to respond successfully to rapidly changing circumstances, this process is dependent on the people in the organization to forge the new path to progress.

It comes from experiences of many development organizations that one way of facilitating this process is to create a learning process where people can learn from their own experiences. Many scholars also suggest that

***'people are continually learning how to learn together'* (Senge 1993:3).**

In fact McKergon (1994:16) reports that

'learning, both by individuals and in organisations, is proving to be one of the key business topics of the 1990s'.

One convincing reason for this focus on learning is that it is seen as a means of gaining competitive advantage. As Mayo (1995:14) reports'

'the pace of change needed in today's world makes flexibility and rapid effective learning key competitive advantages',

For creating a learning organization we need to view capacity building from a holistic perspective, rather than addressing human, societal and institutional development issues in parts. Studying different parts and hoping thereby to capture the whole, it is argued that we need to generate a picture of the whole through exploring the relationships between the

various parts, because it is through these relationships that the complexity of the whole emerges.

Capacity building at best promises a process whereby individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner. It makes local communities, organizations, and governments of developing countries key actors and places them in the center for their own development.

Development Context

Development in Pakistan

Pakistan has started the new millennium with more hope. Starting from a position of extreme vulnerability at the end of 1990s- a financial crisis, domestic tensions and external isolation- it has achieved a remarkable turn around. A major factor behind this is strong leadership in the country with internal cohesion and a clear sense of direction. The government is engaged in fundamental political, institutional, economic, social and gender transformation of Pakistan's transition towards a modern Islamic state.

Social Sector Development in Pakistan

Pakistan inherited an agrarian economy with poor physical and social infrastructure. At the time of independence, only 13.2% of the total adult population was literate (8.6% of the adult female population). There were only 8,413 primary schools, 2,190 middle schools, 408 high schools, two universities and no professional colleges in the country. The health situation was even bleaker, with only 13,769 hospital beds and fewer than 1,500 registered doctors.

Development policy during the first decade was characterised by three features: First, the emphasis was on the establishment of import-substituting industries. Although consumer goods were being substituted by domestic production, all the machinery needed for the capital intensive industrialisation had to be imported. Second, the agriculture sector suffered seriously from official neglect in resource allocation with the result that the overall economic performance was hampered by stagnation in this sector in the 1950s. Finally, miserly allocations for education and health established a pattern of neglect in the provision of social services, particularly for the poor.

The early 1960s were again a period of substantial economic growth. Similar high priority was accorded to industrial development and the infrastructure base was strengthened through investments in transport, water and power which was supplemented by foreign aid. The 1965 war led to the first in a series of disruptions of the aid flow.

Aid resumption in the latter part of the 1960s was accompanied by a further change in focus. Agriculture now became the primary recipient of aid as the impact of the Green Revolution began to be felt. This also gave the wrong signal to the policy makers that there was no need to worry about population growth - Pakistan could feed itself. As a consequence, the government was able to delay hard policy choices.

The most significant economic development was during the late 1970s and 1980's due to the dramatic growth in remittances from the Middle East. These were however accompanied by accumulating structural imbalances in the economy. It was during the 1980s that the natural consequences of the gross neglect of the social infrastructure also began to appear. The quality of existing public education and health facilities deteriorated while the unmet demand for primary education and health set the agenda for increased and more efficient use of resources in the social sectors. To suggest that the government began to accord high priority to the social sectors would be an exaggeration. However, resource allocations towards the end of the decade do represent an increase from the low base that had plagued human development in Pakistan throughout its previous history.

Since 1988, successive governments in Pakistan have been committed to the policy initiatives necessary to implement social sector programmes. The National Finance Commission which met in April 1991 (for the first time in 15 years) was a significant move in clarifying the respective responsibilities of the central and provincial governments in relation to human development. The impetus to social policy change and increased spending has been a result of the government's realisation that poor performance in the social sectors has not only hampered other development objectives but also affected Pakistan's image in the region and the world.

Role of NGOs as Agents of Change

The role and perspectives of NGOs in Pakistan have grown and evolved over the years. Mainly charitable and philanthropic organisations at the time of independence, NGOs have stepped increasingly into welfare-oriented roles as the state system failed to deliver. In the 1970s, they shifted towards development and community based initiatives. Over the last decade or so, organisations with the specific objective of mobilising and organising targeted communities for development activities have emerged. Most NGOs are supported by community contributions, local donors, and government funds. In recent years, support from international donors has also become available.

Among NGOs working in the area of social, agricultural and rural development, three types are significant. The first are the national level capacity building and/or funding organisations. These include SPO, SAP and the NGO Resource Centre (NGORC). The second are the more regionally focused support organisations such as Sungi and Pattan. They work directly with community based organisations to transform their orientation from being welfare oriented to participatory development and afterwards support their development projects. The third type are the Rural Support Programmes that have followed the Aga Khan Rural Support Project (AKRSP) model of forming village or community organisations and enhancing productive investment activity. Prominent among this is National Rural Support Programme (NRSP).

In a 1991 study, the UNDP and SPO compiled a list of 5,833 NGOs. In 1994, a TVO Study updated this information base and identified 8,547 NGOs. After excluding religious organisations, professional and commercial associations, employee unions, housing societies, clubs, clinics and hospitals, 4,545 organisations remained. Of these, 1,998 did not exist or could not be found. A more recent survey of 200 NGOs from the same sample showed that

more than two-thirds of the NGOs surveyed are involved in the provision of education in one form or another, whereas more than half of them are also providing health and nutritional services. Of the NGOs working in social sectors, the survey showed that twice as many are concentrated in the urban than in the rural areas.

In essence, the NGOs play an important role in the social sector development and their impact is significant. As commented by World Bank CAS 2002 that *NGO implemented program of building social and physical capital and extending micro credit schemes under the PPAF is a very successful scheme.*

SPO's Niche and Distinctiveness

Since its transformation from a bilateral project to a Pakistani NGO, SPO has carved out a distinctive niche for itself. SPO has become recognised as a leading proponent of participatory development in Pakistan and is heavily engaged in capacity building of Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Among all organisations strengthening the development capacity of rural communities SPO has a unique position and role in development with innovative capacity building strategies. SPO's partner organisations enjoy independence and a strong self-help orientation. When it comes to ownership and sovereignty, even the AZTs and WOSs which SPO has helped to form and capacitate, are never regarded as being owned or managed by SPO. From the outset, they and their communities are encouraged to value and protect their independence and legal entity.

Similarly, SPO's national presence, democratic and horizontal structures help to ensure that whilst there is a common image and pursuance of SPO's Mission, the regional centres operate in a decentralised decision making environment which is responsive to both the local needs and corporate standards. Another distinctive feature relates to the issue of gender. All of SPO's policies, procedures and programmes are regularly checked to ensure an increasing level of gender equity. The principles of gender equity are applied at all tiers of SPO management, from the composition of the general body and elections of the Board of Directors to the hiring and training of programme and administrative staff from SPO in-house practices to capacity building of partner organisations.

Furthermore, the creation of and support to Participatory Development Coalitions (PDCs) are unique to SPO. They are part of SPO's phased approach to ensuring long term support to partner CBOs. They provide a natural exit point for SPO allowing it to reduce its direct support following its contact cycle of capacity building. At the same time, through its PDCs, SPO is able to encourage the development of self-sustaining area-based capacity building organisations which respond directly to their member CBOs.

All of this has helped develop and strengthen SPO's niche as a truly national rural development support organisation which is attracting national and international recognition, in its own right.

How SPO builds the capacity /SPO Programming

Contact Cycle for Capacity Building

The CBO Capacity Building Contact Cycle is the focal point of SPO's approach to social development. A typical cycle normally lasts three years and includes five main elements:

- 1. Area Survey for CBOs Selection:** The Contact Cycle begins with a survey of suitable areas in the country. Areas where SPO already has contacts are given preference. Support and information from other CBOs is requested to study the accessibility and the law and order situation of a particular area. Efforts are also made to find out whether other support agencies are working there and whether there exists any secondary baseline data prepared by other agencies. The role and communication of the area with the Social Welfare Office is another element that is taken into consideration while assessing whether SPO's potential for the area and whether there is good potential for positive replication of SPO capacity building program.
- 2. Identification, Assessment and Selection of CBOs:** The next step is identification of potential partner CBOs which are situated with access to each other. This step relies on extensive field work, personal scouting of the area, meeting with potential CBOs, reviewing existing documentation of local groups and assessing if the selected groups will be receptive to SPO program. A list of CBOs in the area is prepared and invitations to SPO's "orientation meeting" are sent to all organisations on the list. Attendance, interest and response exhibited by the CBOs at these meetings and the mutual information shared helps in assessing the CBO interest in SPO. There are direct one-to-one meetings between SPO and individual CBOs as well as group activity with several CBOs to develop a rapport. At this stage, a Rapid Organisational Appraisal (ROA) is undertaken with each CBO. The ROA includes institutional mapping, socio-economic profile of the area, organisational history of the CBO, historical prospective of the CBO and comparison with other development ventures in the area. This step concludes with the mutual selection of about six to eight CBOs to participate in the Contact Cycle as a cluster.
- 3. Cluster Formation:** CBOs selected to participate in the Contact Cycle are then organised into a cluster. SPO Programme Co-ordinators and CBOs prepare a Partnership Plan (PP) adapting to the needs of each of the selected CBOs through a process called Participatory Organisational Review (POR). The POR process includes checking on the desirable qualities, essential qualities and killer characteristics in order to help CBOs realise their strengths and weaknesses and also help them understand their optimum potential.
- 4. Capacity Building:** The PP sets in motion a cycle of training in Development Planning and Management (DPM), technical assistance and feedback, networking, linkages, funding of selected projects accompanied by continuous monitoring and follow-up. The DPM training modules were developed in 1992 and have since been improved upon in the light of CBOs needs and SPO experiences gained in the field. DPM courses are designed so that CBOs become thoroughly familiar with development concepts and approaches; and develop appropriate skills in organisational management as well as project planning, development, implementation and monitoring. These skills are essential if CBOs are to play an active role in their community's development.

DEVELOPMENT 1

- Emergence of society
- What is development?
- Charity vs. Development
- Participatory Development

GENDER AWARENESS 2

- Sex vs. Gender
- Gender Roles
- Gender division of Labor
- Women's Multiple Work Load
- Power Relations
- Practical and strategic Gender Needs

RIGHT-BASED APPROACH 3

- An Introduction to Human Rights
- Introduction International Laws
- Why Focus on Women and Children?
- Accountability
- Rights Principles
- Advocacy (Concept)
- Advocacy framework

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION 4

- Forms of Human Social and Political Organizations
- The State and its Role
- Democracy
- What is politics?
- Political structure of Pakistan
- Local Government in Pakistan
- From Information to strategy and Action

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS 5

- What is Environment?
- Eco System
- Environmental Issues -A
- Environmental Issues-B



Putting learning into practise:

After attending each training CBOs have to transform their knowledge into practice and SPO Staff conducts followup visits in the CBO target areas to further reinforce the knowledge imparted. SPO also provides funds for small projects that have been conceived and developed by the CBO thus putting into practice the skills acquired during DPM. Technical assistance and backstopping is provided by SPO during project implementation to ensure that these CBOs get the most out of these small projects in terms of capacity building.

5. Reduced Support: Once a CBO Contact Cycle is completed, SPO begins to pull away to a point where the relationship with the CBO is limited to contact and networking. By this time, the CBO has attained the ability to manage its work independently, to carry out networking, linkages and training, and to share expertise within its own cluster as well as with CBOs in other clusters. The CBOs are also encouraged to develop linkages with donors, government departments and other support agencies/organisations for long term funding and sustainability.

Approach of SPO:

SPO's approach differs from other Pakistani NGOs in the sense that it concentrates on developing **capacity building partnership plans** with clusters (groups of 7-8 CBOs/WOSs) instead of individual community based organisations. Once the CBOs are identified or the WOSs formed, SPO groups these into a geographical cluster for capacity building activities. There are two major advantages in doing so: firstly, this approach minimises SPO's human and financial efforts put into capacity building of individual organisations and is therefore an efficient and cost effective way to impart capacity building. Secondly, the formation, strengthening and sustainability of a cluster encourages mutual co-operation among member organisations and provides an opportunity for member organisations, and in turn their individual members, to understand, develop consensus on and co-operate in the development of their common geographical area.

Linkages are encouraged among member CBOs/WOSs so that a local base of information and support services is established at each cluster level. The focus of SPO is to enable local groups make decisions related to resources themselves i.e. acquire and use local and external resources in a way that ensures greater participation and accountability in the use of development resources. These clusters once capacitated, can then provide a focal point for development activities in the area and are the first step in becoming Local Area NGOs and later PDCs.

The Learning Information System

Central to SPO's desire of developing into a learning organisation is the Learning Information System (LIS). In order to learn from it's experience, SPO has to make it's monitoring and reporting system more efficient and the information produced more accessible and available. To assist in this area, SPO has been developing a computerised system, the LIS. The LIS is a database of performance information which SPO uses in a variety of ways including:

1. Tracking the transformation of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) into development organisations (CBDOs) - The LIS has a 5 point maturity scale, in addition to a range of Capacity Development Indicators (CBIs) that are used to represent the different steps of the transformation. These steps can be examined on screen or printed out for a particular CBO or a cluster of CBOs.
2. Tracking the progress of CBOs through SPOs contact cycle - Each month the LIS receives data from the regions on the steps of the contact cycle completed for each CBO. This data is then compiled into tables which show the progress of the CBOs in each of all clusters.

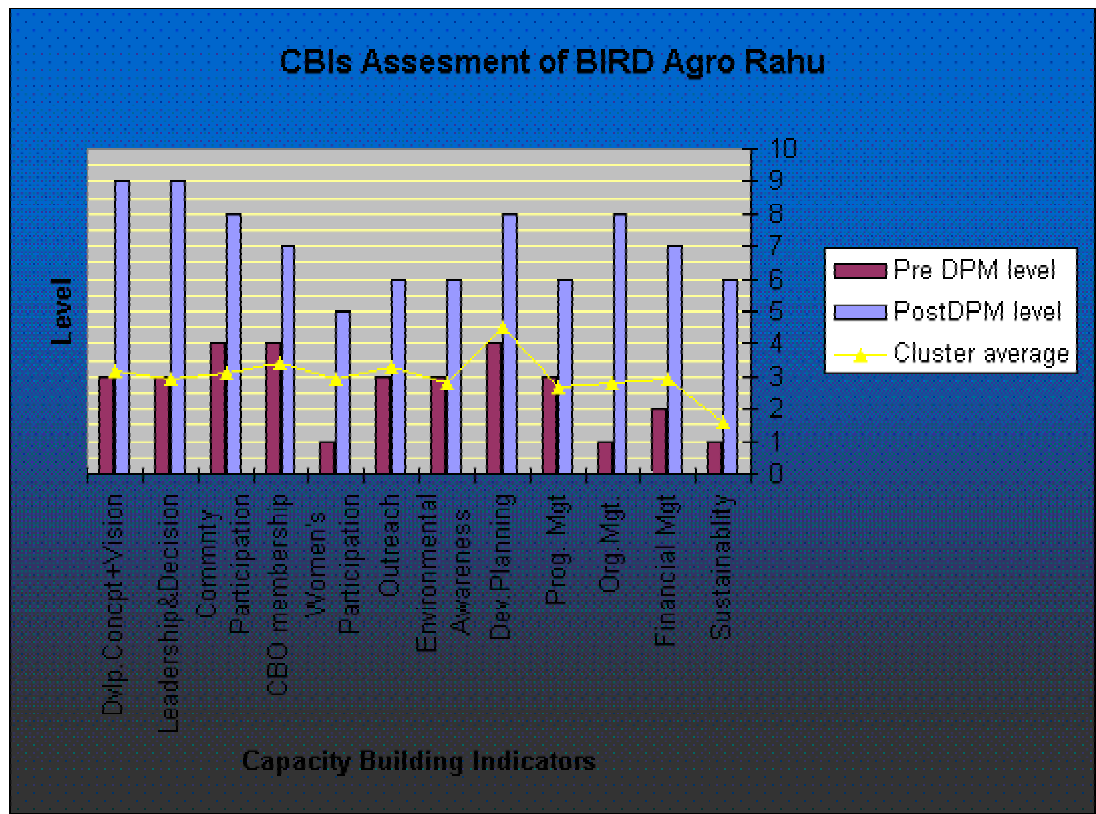
3. Learning about the effectiveness of its capacity building inputs - By measuring the process of transformation over time, including baseline information, SPO can learn about how CBOs respond to different components of the contact cycle, why some CBOs progress faster than others, even in the same cluster, why particular inputs may be more effective than others, and how some inputs may need to be customised for different regions.
4. Producing monthly reports of activities undertaken versus planned - The LIS compiles activity data from all the regions which is printed out in graph or table form
5. Preparing for field and monitoring visits - The LIS is used to print background information on the CBOs to be visited

The LIS has been a useful tool for SPO in the continuous enhancement of its performance through applied learnings. SPO has also shared its experience with other NGOs in Pakistan. SPO is committed to improving and extending this tool to other areas of its operations in a phased and realistic manner.

Case study of a partner organization :

Assesment of a Partner Organisation through application of CBIs-Capacity building indicators

3	9	3.2Dvlp.Concpt+Vision
3	9	2.9Leadership&Decision
4	8	3.1Commnty Participation
4	7	3.4CBO membership
1	5	2.9Women's Participation
3	6	3.3Outrech
3	6	2.8Environmental Awareness
4	8	4.5Dev.Planning
3	6	2.7Prog. Mgt
1	8	2.8Org.Mgt.
2	7	2.9Financial Mgt
1	6	1.6Sustainability



1	CBO	below 35%		
2	CBO with some lackings	35-55%	Result of CBO Pre DPM level	1
3	CBDO with some gaps	55-69%	Post DPM Level	4
4	Operational CBDO	70-84%		
5	Ideal CBDO	85% and above		

CBO below 35%
Operational CBDO

Stages and Characteristics of CBO

Development concept and Vision(Ideal CBO)

CBO is totally oriented to developmental approach of self help and empowerment.

CBO's activities contributes to the achievement of Vision and Mission

CBO has developed a strategic plan for next five years.

Leadership and Decisionmaking.(Ideal CBO)

Secondline leadership in place.

Leadership monitors the performance and review the strategy.

Member feel positive about all decisions.They feel that their concerns about these were heard and discussed.

Leadership is participatory.All opportunities are shared with solved as appropriate.

All problems are recognised and solved as appropriate.

Community Participation(Operational Development Oriented)

Every body benefits or is allowed to avail equal benefits from CBOs work.

Community participates in identifying planning,managing & supervising programmes.

Majority of the community is invoved in key decisions.

CBO Membership(Operational Development Oriented)

More than 70% of the poor and middle class householdsa are represented.

65% of households are represented.

75% of members attend every meeting/50% participate.

75% of the members pay membership fee.

Women Participation(Development oriented with some gaps)

Some of the CBOs activities are addressing women issues.

Women issues are discussed through male community.

Women membership initiated.

Women are consulted before making decision.

Outreach(Development oriented with some gaps)

CBO is well known within its community.

CBO is a member of district level networks.

CBO is in contact with line departments but the relation is formal.

The CBO has received funding but has yet to acquire sufficient credibility to be considered by other donors.

Environment Awareness(Development oriented with some gaps)

Members activity seek information on environment.

CBO consciously practice traditional conservation methods.

Members have attended in depth training on impact assesment.

Development Planning(Operational development Oriented)

Management has a comprehensive system for program development and implementatiomn.

This system can provide required information to donor

The budget reflects program plans. the budget is controlled on an ongoing basis.

Program Management(Developmenty oriented with some gaps)

Informal system exists to monitor program activities.

CBO prepares reports on demand of donor but do not share with other stakeholders.

Basic evaluation is carried out on demand of donor.

Organisational Managemen(Operational Development Oriented)

Adminstrative procedures and manuals exist but are not referred to regularly.

Regular meetings are held with preplanned agenda and appropriate action is taken on decisions.

CBO has achieved most its targets planned during last year.

Financial Management(Operational Development Oriented)

Financial procedures and reporting systems are in place and function partially. Funds are managed for each project separately.

Independent audits or external financial reviews are performed periodically on donor's request.

Internal audits are being conducted on an ad hoc basis.

CBO occasionally produces accurate and complete financial reports which it makes available to the management and donor.

Sustainability(Development oriented with some gaps)

CBO has mobilised significant in kind contributions from within its own community

e.g.(voluntary labour/use of space/technical assistance)

The PO has a shared vision but as yet lacks the understanding and skills to interact with other development partners.

Members have skill to plan manage the projects but they are not confident enough.

Conclusion:

Findings of this paper concludes that the “capacity building” is a very useful approach but we need to view capacity building from a holistic perspective, rather than addressing human, societal and institutional development issues in parts. Studying different parts and hoping thereby to capture the whole, it is argued that we need to generate a picture of the whole through exploring the relationships between the various parts, because it is through these relationships that the complexity of the whole emerges.

This paper concludes that the Capacity building should be seen as a process whereby individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner. It makes local communities, organizations, and governments of developing countries key actors and places them in the center for their own development.

Paper also concludes that this process should be monitored with some monitoring tool like LIS that provides continuous feedback on set indicators how the CBO is moving towards the path of capacity building.