

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING (ICB) EVALUATION REPORT – CONCISE VERSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report draws on the experience of implementing the Round one and Round two institutional capacity building (ICB) programme of G-RAP. In effect this applied to some nineteen prominent Research and Advocacy Organisations (RAOs) and Think Tanks in Ghana between September 2004 and December 2007. The focus of the Evaluation is on learning.

G-RAP originally offered beneficiaries three funding windows: Core Grants, Project Grants (TA) and Capacity Development Grants (ICB). In 2007, findings of the G-RAP Mid Term Review (MTR)¹ advocated that G-RAP focus solely on core funding. The rationale being that G-RAP's success rested on its impact in relation to the multi-donor budgetary support (MDBS) rather than upon capacity development. It was argued that RAOs could use core funding for capacity development activities if they chose. Following the MTR recommendations in mid 2007, the ICB programme started to wind down with final completion of ICB activities in December 2007.

G-RAP's understanding of ICB was based upon UNDP's 1998 definition:

“A concept which is broader than organizational development since it includes an emphasis on the overall system, environment or context within which individuals, organizations and societies operate and interact (and not simply a single organization).”

Major Findings

Most ICB interventions had a significant impact on the organisational lives of RAOs. All Research & Advocacy Organisations who underwent the process found the intervention positive. A large percentage of funding (53% in 2005-2006 and 37% in 2006-2007) went into strategic formulation within RAOs, resulting in nine strategies for Round one and eight strategies for Round two.

¹ G-rap Mid Term Review 2006 by David Brown and Nicholas Atampugre – www.g-rap.org

Governance was strengthened – not only were all Boards involved in strategic formulation but four RAOs specifically reviewed Board roles, resulting in Board members becoming more engaged in activities and more accountable for their roles. In Round one 9% of expenditure was spent directly on Boards and 4% in Round two. This figure excludes expenditure on organizing Annual General Meetings.

The ICB process facilitated the access of smaller RAOs to Core funding. This was particularly true of women rights/gender RAOs where organization development engagement led to Core funding and led to the women's rights RAOs spearheading the engendering of the whole G-RAP programme.

ICB's focus on process promoted the dialogue between RAOs, Donors and PMT. RAOs felt they were in control of their OD processes. The general consensus was that, without the ICB's process emphasis, the PMT would have been viewed more as a donor gatekeeper rather than a facilitator of RAO-Donor interchange. This was a positive outcome that supported the operations of the wider G-RAP.

The ICB process facilitated the engendering of G-RAP. Engendering was viewed as an ID intervention where the PMT facilitated stakeholders through the process of engendering the programme.

Room for improvement

The initial process was too rushed and should have been delayed for six months allowing greater sensitization of RAOs and using the knowledge base of stakeholders to improve the programme before disbursement – notably within the area of gender. Neither RAOs nor Donors understood OD and still do not have a common understanding of ID or its potential..

The programme should have been less focused on Accra. With G-rap working with 'established' RAOs a situation ensued where all but one of the RAOs engaged in ICB (and also the wider G-RAP programme) were based in the capital, Accra. More consideration needed to be given to supporting regional RAOs who had the potential of being developed to influence national policy.

More money needed to be available for RAOs to completely transform their organizations. Despite the relatively low level of funding, OD activities achieved considerable outputs and outcomes. More resources would have allowed greater progress to be made; particularly in the larger institutions – \$10,000 USD did not go far in the larger Institutions (e.g. CEPA, CDD, IEA, ISODEC).

Institutional Development never quite got off the ground. Owing to lack of budget provisions, ID activities were delayed to 2007 and were then focused around the engendering of G-RAP. Having a dedicated budget for ID would have allowed for more activities particularly with a learning focus. Devolving the ID budget to RAOs would have sharpened possibilities for collaborative action. As with OD, however, there was a need for resources to be allocated to enable the sensitisation of RAOs on ID benefits.

Understanding and practice of organizational learning is not well-established within RAOs. In particular Leadership and Management competencies are low within RAOs where

the focus is on professional competence. Most Executive Directors became so as a result of their programme knowledge and they have not acquired significant understanding of running organisations. Learning cultures, processes and systems are little understood. The ICB programme made some impact in this area but support needs to be continued enabling those enlightened Executive Directors and managers to carry on their leadership / management development through activities such as coaching, mentoring, action learning – inevitably, there are going to be those Executive Directors who have buried their heads in the sand and close their minds or feel they already know it all. Any programme should be targeted on promoting those who are capable of seeing the light.

Too much ICB time went on PMT related activities. Only 34% of the ICB Advisor's time was actually spent supporting direct ICB-related activities: other time was spent supporting and being involved in other PMT activities. A devolved ICB budget for both OD and ID activities would have yielded greater results.

The ICB programme would have benefited from being housed separately from G-RAP. Leading on from the previous point: if the programme had been separate from the PMT with its focus on the business processes of the fund (applications, reporting, financing etc) the ICB could have been better focused. Housing it in a separate institution would have provided support for the OD Advisor, may have freed up the ICB process from unnecessary bureaucracy and allowed for greater creativity – particularly in terms of communication and ID activities.

Engendering G-RAP. While promoting the engendering of the PMT and RAOs, the donors exempted themselves from the process. Amongst the donors, only CIDA demonstrated any depth of commitment to engendering.

Recommendations

Donors consider supporting a technical assistance/ capacity development programme. Not having a capacity development programme supporting NGOs and Think Tanks in Ghana limits the effectiveness of civil society organisation. It will also prevent smaller NGOs accessing G-RAP funding as their systems (especially strategic plans) will not meet G-RAP requirements thus reinforcing the clique of those organisations who are receiving funding. A side issue is that currently donors insist that funding is restricted to activities within Ghana – despite all RAOs having a West African Regional /Pan African presence. If organisations are going to be strengthened they will naturally raise their research and advocacy lenses from Ghana to a Sub-Regional focus and should not be penalised for this. Consideration should be given to making G-RAP regional.

Stakeholders should consider ways of providing ongoing support to leadership development and management development. The former would be targeted at Executive Directors and Boards - the latter managers. Mentoring, Coaching and Action Learning would be the preferred approaches to tackling this.

Mechanism need to be established to monitor the effectiveness of RAOs who are using G-RAP Core funds for ICB related activities. As RAOs are able to use Core funds for OD activities there is the risk that any money spent on OD activities will not be properly

monitored. There is a need to develop systems to ensure OD support is of a sufficiently high quality to lead to quality outputs and outcomes.

Accountability mechanisms. Creating an elite class of RAOs raises issues of how these organisations use their power. No mechanism exists for holding RAOs accountable for their actions/ non-actions. This is not only in terms of corruption (one Executive Director was publicly accused of corruption during the programme but the issue was not of any interest to any of G-rap's stakeholders!), but how RAOs use their power and influence to include, exclude, promote or ignore issues.

There are clear indications that some of the RAOs are moving too close to the establishment to be able to objectively monitor Government policy. Creating accountability mechanism would be easier if the donors themselves adopted such systems – DFID for example promotes governance but has no mechanisms to hold itself accountable to its constituencies within Ghana.

This Executive Summary is a brief overview of the ICB process – there is a full Evaluation Report available on the G-RAP web site (www.g-rap.org) while pages 4 to 8 of this bullet point version gives the essential information relating to the evaluation. In a conscious attempt to promote environmental sensitivity there is no intention to produce hard copies of these Reports.

Happy reading

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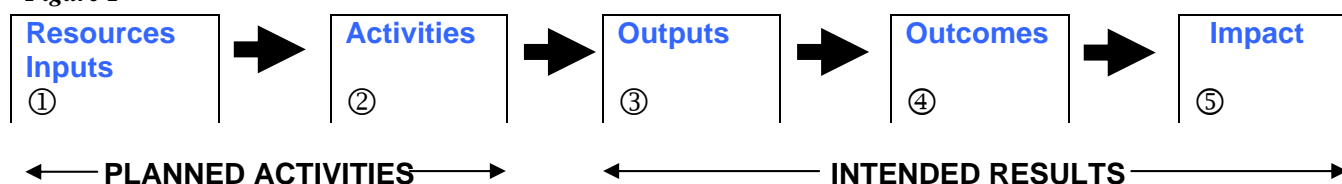
Bullet Point Review of ICB Activities

September 2004- December 2007

Overview

- ◇ **The Scope** - September 2004 to 31 December 2007 – ICB programme Activities only.
- ◇ **The Purpose** - is to evaluate the ICB programme, synthesising learning from both planned and unplanned activities in order to better inform stakeholders of future options surrounding ICB.
- ◇ **The Model** used for the report is based on the five step ‘Logic Model’. Figure 1 below portrays this - when “read” from left to right describe programme basics over time from planning through to results:

Figure 1



- ◇ **Organisation Development (OD) + Institutional Development (ID)**. Within the G-RAP programme OD activities are viewed as activities internal to individual RAOs while ID activities are designed to cut across RAOs and promote networking, coalition building.
- ◇ ICB activities were ongoing up to December 2007.

Analysis of Resources/Inputs

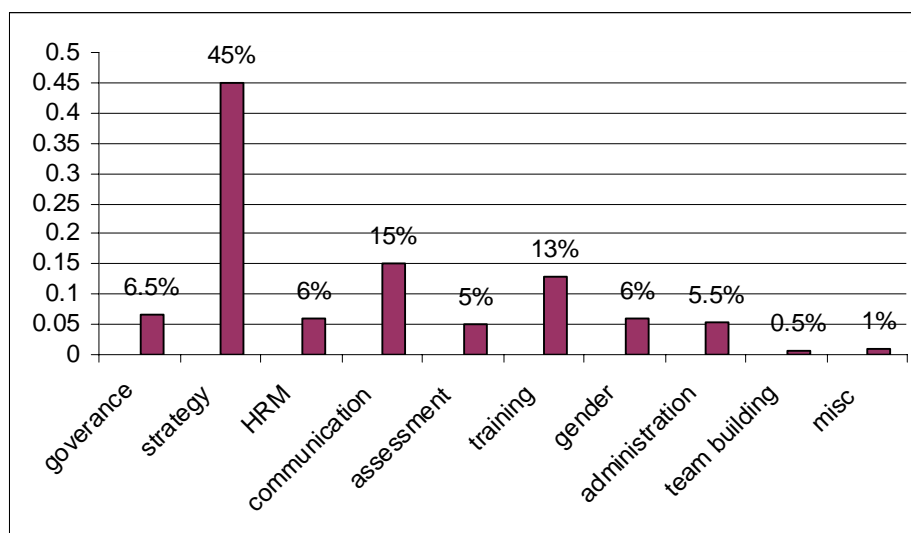
Overview of ICB expenditure

US\$

a.	Cost of the OD/ID advisor for ICB related activities in 2004-2007 (376 days of OD/ID input) The figure of £61,000 represents total time engaged in ICB as well as in wider programme management activities Only 34% of £61,000 (£20,740 or \$41,500) was spent on direct ICB activities (base: timelogs)	41,500
b.	Back-up administration and data processing support (SNV part time)	4,700
c.	IBIS / SNV OD assessments along with monitoring support	6,905
d.	Funds allocated to RAOs (2005-2006: \$92,510; 2006-2007: \$211,250)	303,760
e.	Various expenses paid to ICB Advisor	432
	Total expenditure on ICB	\$ 357,297

Programme Activities

Analysis of Total ICB Expenditure in Percentages



Grantees spent 45% of their ICB grants on strategy

Training and HRM featured more prominently in 2006-2007

Total ICB funds available was \$303,760.00

Outputs

Outputs are the direct products of programme activities. This report views two areas of output: Programme outputs & RAO outputs.

Programme success criteria included:

- ◇ ICB programme met G-rap requirements as expressed in its logical framework
- ◇ An assessment tool was developed by October 2004 to assess all applicants to G-RAP
- ◇ Capacity Building of RAOs through OD activities following development ICB Workplans
- ◇ Capacity Building of RAOs through ID activities
- ◇ Effective and efficient utilisation of ICB funds

RAO outputs as expressed in OD work plans:

Governance

Four RAOs used their ICB funding to specifically work with issues within Boards. This amounted to 7% of overall ICB expenditure. All RAOs who reviewed strategy engaged Boards in their processes while there was a wide recognition that the competence of the Board was a significant organisational factor – the Board could no longer be ‘just a figurehead body’.

Strategy

Seventeen RAOs produced strategic plans – following an interactive participatory process which engaged staff and Board members: As a result of its strategic review one RAO opened

an office in Tamale, while another opened a Resource Centre. Several of the smaller RAOs shifted from an only advocacy focus to also including research in their activities. .

HRM

Seven RAOs updated their HRM systems

One RAO engaged a senior economist through an international recruitment process

Several of the research RAOs used ICB funding to supplement staff salaries – in so doing boosting their ability to retain and motivate key staff – or recruit additional staff

Communication

One RAO engaged an ICT specialist to review its ICT structure and five purchased IT equipment – to update outmoded computers, servers, printers, internet connections

Assessment

In order to meet funding requirements of a donor, one RAO spent its ICB grant of \$10,000 on a full OD assessment engaging SNV and KPMG which gave it access to other donor funding.

Training

Eight RAOs engaged in training (including Board training), customer care, planning, gender.

Three RAOs paid for staff to attend a one year module of Organisation Systems Development programme while one RAO is organising management training with British Council programme.

Gender

One RAO engaged in gender training of all staff while all but two of the 19 RAOs contributed positively to the wider engendering process.

Administration

One RAO reviewed its administrative and financial systems and another reviewed its documentation and filing systems.

Team Development

One RAO had a team building event for 39 staff

RAOs had training in M+E techniques and financial management coaching from Ernst & Young.

Miscellaneous

Activities included two RAOs reviewing their M+E systems and one paying of professional dues for their staff

Outcomes

Outcomes are the ‘specific changes in behaviour, knowledge, skills, status and level of functioning’ that arise from the outputs.

- RAOs were generally strengthened from the ICB process – not only were RAOs more focused on their vision, strategic goals and objectives – but additionally RAOs have been strengthened through a greater emphasis on performance – which included Board member performance

- RAOs – especially the Executive Directors – are generally more aware of the various issues within their organisations resulting, for instance, in more participative approaches to engaging staff in decision making processes
- ICB’s fixation on process also impacted upon the PMT’s approach to RAO’s and Donors. It would have been more likely that the PMT would have adopted a donor gatekeeper role rather than a facilitative role
- The programme will leave a legacy where all RAOs recognise the importance of gender – both organisationally and gender integration into programming.
- Communication and ICT systems have been strengthened as a result of the initiative allowing greater internal and external communication between RAO and stakeholders. This is not only in terms of hard technological communication but also a greater emphasis on soft communication within RAOs such as meetings, internal information systems and communication between team members. One Resource Centre and one Library with open access to RAOs and the public resulted from the funding.
- Several RAOs identified the need for management training for key staff resulting in the general total management competence.
- Heightened Performance – an interactive session with RAOs identified three areas in which the ICB process had heightened performance in their RAOs.
- As a result of Staff + Board training and development (more staff being sent on programmes: board training) it was felt by RAOs that productivity, effectiveness and motivation had been increased.
- The purchase of ICT equipment – ‘not having work interrupted by faulty equipment’ was seen as a factor in raising motivation and performance.
- RAOs used the ICB money to recruit quality staff – including research staff – which raised performance. One RAO had been able to better engage their Board through increasing attendance payments.

Lessons Learned

- A Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned is the need not to rush into programme activities before taking time to ensure that certain foundations have been laid.
- ◇ Prior to G-RAP’s start-up in September 2004 there was little comprehensive understanding amongst stakeholders as to what ICB actually was.
 - ◇ More time was needed to be spent on establishing precise outcomes and success criteria prior to the start of the ICB programme.
 - ◇ There needed to be greater ownership by RAOs of the ICB programme
 - ◇ A wider discussion with RAOs would have enabled more discussion around gender prior to start up and allowed for greater sensitivity and consensus on gender within the ICB (and wider) programme
 - ◇ More consensus would have been achieved around the self assessment
 - ◇ A comprehensive communication strategy could have been developed
- B ICB is a process and so fundamentally different from Core and Technical Assistance funding; more would have been achieved if ICB had been given its own budget.
- ◇ With a devolved budget the OD Advisor would have been able to spend significant more

time on ICB activities rather on wider PMT activities. Over the 18 months only 34% of the OD Advisor's time was focused directly on the ICB programme and 66% on wider PMT activities.

- ◇ De-linking would have allowed the OD Advisor to operate within a development body which would be able to offer considerable support.
- ◇ There would have been greater focus on communications and ID.
- ◇ A separate ICB unit would have resulted in less bureaucracy.
- ◇ There would have been a greater focus on learning for both Donors and RAOs

C Logical Frameworks are inappropriate for Capacity Development programmes

Conclusions

- It is too early to say what the long term successes of the ICB programme are there is every indication that solid foundations have been set on which the RAOs could further be strengthened. The worrying aspect is that OD initiatives by themselves only go so far – they need to be complemented by ID activities. The ICB programme has invested too little time and resources to produce any significant ID output.
- In Ghana capacity development would benefit from a debate amongst development practitioners on what role ID can play in supporting development initiatives.
- The significant success of the ICB programme has been its ability to bring into Core funding smaller RAOs who would not have qualified for Core funding – this includes the majority of the woman rights/gender based RAOs.
- In the future there needs to be a mechanism to monitor RAOs who use Core funding for ICB related activities.
- Donors should consider establishing an autonomous Capacity Development programme to run alongside G-RAP targeting less developed RAOs or networks. To guarantee quality and value for money this should be supported by a professional development partner with expertise in OD and ID.
- RAOs have enormous training and development needs at an individual, team and organisational level. In particular there needs to be support to raise both leadership and management competence and to promote a learning culture where collaboration between RAOs is important.