

Let me join the discussion from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Nairobi, Kenya.

Let me first thank you IRRI, FARA, African Evaluation Association, ICRAF, ILRI, the University of Twente, ICRISAT and independent consultants and consultancy firm colleagues for having shared your views.

Your inputs already cover quite some ground, so I like to just put forward some of the thoughts which they triggered in me, without aiming to be comprehensive in my reply. The feeling which comes up is that your contributions are a sincere and valuable attempt to rationalize what Capacity Building or Capacity Development (CapDev) means, and how we could capture and systemize that. But does it really matter that we come up with consensus and clarity? Is it not more important that we talk about HOW CapDev contributes to Sustainable (Human) Development?

The main innovation that systems' thinking introduces is that rather than prioritizing interventions that need immediate fixing, emphasis is given to defining the "issue creating system", which is made up of interacting parts, which can be used to better understand reality, problems and the context in which they arise. Within a systems thinking approach to CapDev, it is already acknowledged that capacity lies within relationships, more than within the individual elements of the system (e.g. organisations, institutions). The ability to facilitate a process of improving the quality of the relationships is thus in my view an important part of CapDev work. Systems thinking (in contrast to reductionist approaches) could play a supportive role to facilitate a real move towards developing capacities in human development systems; but this requires a paradigm shift away from the more, traditional "western" rooted view and (often) limited tool-led individual, project and thematic (and now flagship?) based CapDev view CGIAR's CRPs (often) practice(s).

Quality of relationships (as imperatives for capacities to be developed) are to a large extent detrimental to how meaningful our connection with others is and how we can shape the process of creating shared values, creating common perspectives, towards a common direction. Informal systems actually determine whether and why people develop and-or build capacities, why they change, and in which direction and why organizations and people work successfully in partnerships, and/or innovate, or not. Most of your input shared touch upon intellectual and rational, abstract concepts, also when e.g. referring to critical concepts of "participation", "consultation" and "ownership". As professionals we seem to be very comfortable in dealing with these abstract concepts, even if translated into simpler words, but are we really able to capture what they mean? Apart from the fact that "development" itself is often linked to "western" interpretations, I believe that we need to delve deeper in what how we as practitioners can facilitate the process of individual and collective ownership (for change) and strengthen "collaborative capacities" ultimately to achieve Sustainable (Human) Development.

Pathways of “collaborative capacity” are complex, starting with identifying partners and actors who are ready to go the extra mile (the change drivers), and who have the power and interest to overcome the barriers and resistance to change. The capacity to develop capacity, to advocate, organize, convene and implement change, is another indispensable ingredient of this readiness to act. The sum of the commitment and the capacity to implement change will determine how quickly and fast subsequent technical and institutional capacity development will take place to allow for research uptake. The ability to facilitate a process of improving the quality of the relationships, changing values, behavior, challenging and encouraging thinking is thus in my view an important part of CapDev.

We need coherent approaches to support our partners to seek collaboration around shared goals and shared values and in reaching out to and include other stakeholders, mobilizing the energy in society to change and improve, to take on opportunities and build upon existing capacities and initiatives. Mechanisms need to be developed for joint accountability of, for example, service delivery to (remotely based) rural communities, with partnerships that build on and build up equity, transparency and mutual benefits. It is not about only reducing poverty, but about **reducing inequalities**.

But then how does CapDev lead to reducing inequalities, changing power relations in terms of (research) knowledge, (technology) skills, resources, etc.? The “new” pathways of the (proposed) Sustainable Development Goals (July, 2014) do refer to capacity building (not CapDev). However, opportunities, challenges and priorities in developing countries are not homogenous; they are likely to differ per sub-region and per country (and likely inside countries). So how do we work together with our partners to assess and work proactively to enhance the change readiness that will eventually determine if change towards more inclusive, resilient human development and growth will accelerate or stifle?

Change readiness is roughly determined by the enablers and constraint in the context; stakeholder interests for and against an agenda; and the capacity to manage change, and this is an areas where we, building on and reinforcing a trusted relationship with our partners, can do much more. Our results should over the medium term pitch the performance of organisations and wider systems, getting well beyond a focus on CapDev processes leading to better performance, and pointing to wider longer term effects at the outcome and impact level. Here, the design of Capacity Development response strategies (based on assessment methodologies) is needed. Further, to promote CGIAR’s strategic priorities and to contribute to sustainable endogenous capacity we need to strengthen our ability to leverage change. This is a subtle discipline that combines how we deliver advice, design services and products (or create spaces for others to do so); how we network and reach out to other actors in the local and global development landscape (and thereby strengthen local, national, regional and global innovation and knowledge networks); how well we understand the setting we are in (including the complex balance of formalized and informal drivers of policy processes and the way these processes end up creating spaces for pro-poor change); how we use our CRPs to strategically leverage change that from the beginning is thought of in up-scaled terms etc.

There are other elements to add, and tons of nuances. A pragmatic approach to CapDev and change will be premised on our ability to act when the moment is there, with acceptance that we may also fail, but with an ability to learn and refine so that we can do better the next time. Let me end by saying that CapDev is a precondition for research *for* development results that sticks, requiring ownership (as capacity will only be developed with ownership) and recognizing complexity because CapDev is shaped by dynamic configurations of interests and power.

Let us exchange ideas how to strengthen our approach, make it pragmatic and operational so that we meet the demand and expectations from our country partners and so that we enhance CGIAR's draft Strategic Results Framework (SRF) chapter on CapDev and strengthen the CapDev guidelines for the 2nd call of CRPs.

With kind regards, Diana

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