



Capacity Development:

Making the investment count in Uganda

Setting the Ugandan context

'Access to clean and safe water and improved sanitation facilities and practices leads to improved health in human capital and therefore have a direct and immediate impact on overall national economic development and poverty eradication.'

The Ugandan Minister of Water, Lands & Environment (2004).

'Water & sanitation is one of the key priority areas in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) thus Government attaches high priority to the water sector activities and therefore has taken steps to rationalize the delivery of water and sanitation services to our people. ...To enable Government to meet its target of providing access to safe water and sanitation services to everyone in line with the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, Government requires strong and visionary leadership, sound management, effective operation and well planned investments, which should be provided on an equitable basis.'

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister,
Government of Uganda (2004).

The focus here is Uganda where water and sanitation sector reform is underway. A Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) to planning is applied, budget support mechanisms are under development where the water sector's Strategic Investment Plan 2004 to 2015 has been presented to stakeholders. The sector constitutes part of the effort to achieve the Government's intentions under the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and the Millennium Development Goals.

Headline issues

■ *The changing workforce in the sector*

Increases in sector activity and the development of stringent pro-poor performance measurement criteria, together with an expansion of the range of institutions involved, has resulted in a sector workforce from diverse organisations and a wider professional background.

■ *Value for money*

In Uganda an estimated 17% of the water and sanitation sector's budget for the fiscal year 2003/2004 was earmarked for 'capacity building' – more than that for water for production and water resources management combined. Yet no goals were set. Just as with investments in physical infrastructure, money spent on staff training should be planned, designed, implemented and evaluated. This should be standard practice and not subject to one-off initiatives.

■ *Raising the position of the training function*

In the public sector, capacity development has often been seen as an administrative function. Training officers mainly come from other non-training related disciplines and those in managerial positions in this field rarely have any formal education or training in it. The skills needed to ensure a consistently competent workforce are not recognized as a managerial function in the institutional hierarchy. In the water and sanitation sector this makes poor business sense given the amount of money poured into capacity building and training.

■ *The call for coherence and strategy*

In Uganda there is a lack of strategic direction in capacity development and Human Resource Development (HRD), resulting in "fire-fighting" and supply led, short-term interventions. Educational organisations need clear direction from the sector. Development partners should formulate a comprehensive strategy that responds to the question 'capacity for what and for whom?' which feeds into emerging sector reform strategies. This is currently true of the water and sanitation sector in Uganda.



Expressions of demand for sub-sector capacity development

The Uganda water and sanitation sector hold an annual Joint Sector Review (JSR). In the 2004 JSR document no less than 83 references were made to 'lack of' capacity in human resources, including:

Sanitation sub-sector

Inadequate capacity at local government level. This includes poor coordination and collaboration. There is a need to engage with the Ministry of Education and the district directors of medical services and heads of sub district units.

Rural water

In Masindi District (as an example), the capacity of local contractors remains low and district staff are not involved in contract administration.

Urban water

In the context of Internally Delegated Area Management Contracts (IDAMCs) there is need to strengthen head office of NWSC to carry out meaningful centralised roles.

Water for production

The construction of valley tanks and dams is poor. There is a need for an injection of funds to provide capacity building to rectify the situation.

Water resource management

An immediate objective is to create a strategic framework and an associated 15-year action HRD capacity building programme for water resources management. This includes: training needs assessment for central and local institutions and a specific investment plan.

Emergency response and services to Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

There is a need to develop a strategy to build capacity and develop processes to respond to the water and sanitation needs of existing IDPs, and the needs of future disasters.



The Changing Workforce in the Sector

An increase in activities in the sector and also an expansion of the range of institutions involved has resulted in a sector workforce of people from diverse organisations and a wider professional background. Decentralisation has given responsibility to local districts; privatisation is bringing in the private sector; NGOs are active in everything from advocacy to the delivery of services. The work is also changing; technical staff should be working as contract managers, planners, regulators and facilitators. Outputs and performance measurement is changing from physical indicators, to a demand-led service as stated in the sector's 'Golden Indicators'¹. Increased activity and decentralisation means that technicians and engineers now have more responsibility, for financial, human and physical resources.

■ International research supports Ugandan concerns

International research by the UK Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) shows that the water sector in various countries is under-going institutional change. This change needs to be managed, with attention being paid to the changing needs of the sector's human resources. Educational establishments can provide support with both expertise and training to meet changing circumstances but only if they have the right communication with the employers to understand the needs of the workforce in a changing environment. However, educators in turn need support to respond to the changes in their work – in terms of training material and modes of delivery. Some efforts have been made to establish networks of capacity building organisations, but these have not always proved to be effective or sustainable. However, lessons can be learnt from successful examples, to improve the contribution all stakeholders can make to the goals of the sector.

Reed and Coates (2003)

Value for Money

Lack of an adequate human resource strategy means that the impact of capacity development cannot be easily measured, so:

- The value of the human resource is underestimated;
- The value for money of training and workshops cannot be adequately assessed;
- The decision to buy in skills or retrain workers cannot be rationally made;
- The correct amount of investment required in HRD is difficult to quantify; and
- Reporting on capacity development achievements in the context of the sector's goals is difficult.

The Sector's 2003 Rural Water and Sanitation Issue Paper raised the valid concern that the money being spent on capacity building may or may not have the same impact on services as investment in direct implementation. Issues of sustainability of the human resource and the sustainability of the physical infrastructure are interrelated. The importance of communities is well recognised, but again, what level of investment is cost-effective? The quantity of investment has to be closely related to the quality of the investment.

■ Concerns about capacity development expenditure

"... capacity building has to be effective and well coordinated. USD 27 million can easily be wasted in training programmes, workshops and seminars of little use and where the bulk of the cost is spent on allowances, food and conference facilities. This is the real challenge; i.e. to provide relevant cost-effective training, eventually resulting in the assumed sustainability improvements. A certain amount spent on a training programme requires a lot more personnel resources than the same amount being spent on hardware."

Joint Sector Review (2003)

¹ See GOU report on Water and Sanitation Sector Performance Measurement, 2004

Questions raised during the Training for Real consultation into the state of capacity development in the Uganda water and sanitation sector.

Are all capacity building initiatives necessary? Should they be co-ordinated? Can the stakeholders retain ownership of shared initiatives? Who should champion capacity building in the sector and at what level?

The various asset holding, regulatory, enabling, co-ordinating and monitoring roles that are emerging within the sector mainly focus on concrete activities, financial issues, contractual and performance monitoring. Human resources can form the major asset of some organisations, so should human resource development be added to the regulation remit?

Incentives for training; how can short-term financial remuneration (e.g. workshop allowances) be adapted to motivate individuals towards long-term career growth and organisational development?

In order to provide targeted training, task allocation and job descriptions are required. Increasing movement of staff between institutions will require understanding, recognition and acceptance of work experience throughout the sector. Is some sort of common understanding needed in order that educational establishments and professional institutions can provide managers, engineers, socio-economists and technicians for the whole sector?

Each sub-sector and organisation has highlighted the need for capacity development. Is a human resource development strategy needed for each sub-sector? How should a sector-wide strategy be developed? Can the process move from isolated training-needs analysis to skills analysis and continuous professional development?

Training for Real (2003)

■ Supply and demand

The demand responsive approach recognises the role the consumer of a service has in demanding how it is delivered, rather than just accepting what a supplier offers. Assessing the human resource will enable managers to demand investments in their staff and provide evidence for that demand. The suppliers of capacity development are organisations that can deliver individuals with increased skills, knowledge and experience, such as universities and colleges.

Raising the position of the Training Function

Subsidiarity is moving management responsibility down to the lowest reasonable level. The different aspects of capacity development and HRD need to be developed to different extents at different levels; technical staff are being given more responsibility and so they need additional skills to manage delivery. Sector wide and strategic responsibilities cannot be delegated and there is an argument for giving the development of people a higher status within the organisational structure to reflect its importance. For example, for the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), staff costs are one of the biggest areas of operational expenditure, exceeded only by plant costs. Managing that expenditure is a key activity if the organisation is to produce value for money.

Decentralisation and fragmentation of the sector means that it is becoming more difficult to provide 'people development' support, hence district engineers being provided with interim support through the Technical Support Units (TSUs). Increasing private involvement may promote a short-term approach to staff training and lead to qualified and experienced staff being poached from government and NGO organisations. The human resource of the sector is a common resource and may be vulnerable to market forces.

These circumstances call for expertise in training and human resource development to make sure investment is sustained and the benefits reaped. People working in training are professionals and need the support afforded to other cadre-engineers and doctors for example.

■ Strengthening capacity involves more than the development of skill

The quality of the human resource is often called its capacity. This has three components:

1. Group factors (the working environment, institutional arrangements, organisational structures);
2. Individual factors, such as attitudes, skills, knowledge and experience; and
3. How the individual relates to the group (social environment, motivation, views of the rewards and leadership the organisation offers).

People require the following factors to be in place if they are to work to their full potential:

- The work environment must be right (such as management structures, institutional arrangements, allocation of responsibilities);
- They need to be motivated to work (adequate rewards (e.g. financial, career paths, recognition) and working conditions, leadership, social environment and enthusiasm); and
- They need the correct attitudes, skills, knowledge and experience for the job (which requires the job to be adequately understood and described).

So for example: Investment in developing IT and computer skills will only be effective if staff then have computers to work on. It will only increase performance if the work requires computers. It will only contribute to reaching the goal if other factors, such as data for analysis or funds for delivery, are also available. And, a computer on the desk of the manager's secretary does not constitute organisational 'internet access' if only a few can use the machine.

Reed and Coates (2003)



The call for Coherence and Strategy

The sector wide approach to planning has brought the value of coordination to the fore. Overall direction comes through the PEAP, the Joint Sector Review, the Sector Working and Thematic Groups and the annual adoption of 'undertakings', and district level plans supported by the TSUs. Capacity development requires the same approach: coordination, direction and ultimately an alignment of sub-sector strategies.

Good practice in human resource development is easily explained and generally makes sense. However, it is more difficult to take responsibility and action. It is clear that a finance manager has prime responsibility for the work performance of accountants and bookkeepers (and takes steps to manage and improve their performance); all managers should accept responsibility for the training and development of their own staff. This does not mean acting in isolation but rather working directly with other managers, training and personnel staff to identify and prioritise HRD needs and contribute to the shaping of cohesive corporate human resource strategies. This is particularly challenging where heavily centralised decision-making procedure is being transformed into a decentralised structure.

All this points toward the need for a shift in the way we think and act in relation to capacity development. Attitudes towards training and the prevailing organisational culture regarding learning and access to it, risk undermining the skills people have and their willingness and ability to participate in change. Just as technical delivery of water and sanitation services has changed to take a more demand-led approach, the management of people at work has also been developing its approach to meet the needs of organisations. Professional development has to be put into the business context to ensure that investments in staff are targeted to meet institutional strategies. This approach can also be applied to groups of separate institutions to determine a sector-wide strategy, such as the method the Uganda Water And Sanitation Network (UWASNET) has taken in developing the whole of the NGO sector working in water and sanitation.

- "HRD ... conveys a sense of developmental policy that can extend beyond those who work in the organisation to those who, although not legally its 'employees', none the less make an essential contribution to its success – for example [non-governmental organisations] [private operators] and suppliers"
Training for Real consultation (2003)

Staff development is a cycle of assessment within an organisational strategy, followed by actions to enhance the resource and finally by assessing the impact and the areas in need of further development. This change moves from a one-off "training needs analysis" exercise to on going "skills analysis" – centring the development of people in their job, the organisation and the sector objectives. Evaluation of need and impact occur at the start and finish of the development cycle.



WELL is a network of resource centres:

WEDC at Loughborough University UK
IRC at Delft, The Netherlands
AMREF, Nairobi, Kenya
IWSD, Harare, Zimbabwe
LSHTM at University of London, UK

TREND, Kumasi, Ghana
SEUF, Kerala, India
ICDDR, B, Dhaka, Bangladesh
NETWAS, Nairobi, Kenya

This note was funded by the
UK Department for International Development (DFID).
The views expressed, however, are not necessarily those of DFID.

Published by WEDC on behalf of WELL

This Country Note takes a critical look at one typical water and sanitation sector investment area: capacity development, with specific focus on Uganda.

Training for Real

All of the issues raised in this note and more, are being looked at as part of the Joint Sector Programme's capacity development project called 'Training for Real'. For more information about the project's events and learning please contact:

In Uganda:

Victor Male
Phone: 077624308
Email: victormale@hotmail.com

Joseph Epitu
Phone: 077408068
Email: jepitu@dwd.co.ug

In the UK:

Sue Coates or Sam Kayaga,
Water Engineering and Development Centre
(WEDC), Loughborough University,
LE11 3TU UK
Email: s.coates@Lboro.ac.uk,
s.m.kayaga@Lboro.ac.uk
Phone: 0 (44) 1509 222885
Fax: 0 (44) 1509 211079

Key references

- Government of Uganda, Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment (2003) *Joint Sector Review 2003: Report*
- Government of Uganda, Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment (2004) *Joint Sector Review 2004: Report*
- Joint Sector Review (2003) *Rural Sector Issue Paper*, Government of Uganda
- Reed B.J., Coates S. (2003) 'Sector-wide Capacity Building: A discussion paper on making investments in training address the real needs of the sector'. WEDC, Loughborough University

Full details of all the material used in support of this Country Note are available at
www.Lboro.ac.uk/well

Other County Notes in this series can be found at
www.Lboro.ac.uk/well

DFID Resource Centre in Water, Sanitation & Environmental Health
www.Lboro.ac.uk/well

Country Note compiled by Sue Coates, Brian Reed and Julie Fisher (WEDC) for the Joint Sector Programme's Training for Real Project (Uganda), in collaboration with WELL.

For further information, contact:

WELL
Water, Engineering and Development Centre
(WEDC)
Loughborough University
Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Email: WELL@Lboro.ac.uk
Phone: 0 (44) 1509 222885
Fax: 0 (44) 1509 211079
Website: <http://www.Lboro.ac.uk/well/>