

Everybody's Business ! - Nobody's Responsibility ? CD champions partner for promoting change

by Thomas Theisohn

The “policy - implementation gap” for CD support needs to be addressed. Everybody recognizes by now that capacity development is a lynch pin for development effectiveness. While the knowledge base needs to be further broadened and deepened, research and practical experience already has established a solid foundation for action. Policies are starting to change, but implementation on the ground lags far behind. This is partly due to organizational inertia, insufficient energy and resources directed to reaching agents at the country level, inconsistent policy guidance, resistance and vested interest in established set ups and programmes. CD champions within countries and agencies remain fragmented and thus have difficulty influencing mainstream development processes.

Any ‘agenda for change’ needs ‘agents for change’. Over recent years initiatives for capacity development have multiplied at all levels. It is time that those who spearhead the debate and who advocate CD join forces both globally and at the country level, which is the epicentre for capacity development. Partnerships among CD champions, agents with vision, energy and charisma, can form effective alliances for jointly taking forward a post-Accra agenda for change in CD practice.

Propositions for Accra:

- (1) Donors and partners should agree on an effective process to pursue a CD agenda post-Accra.** It could be established as a DAC joint venture or global partnership mandated by the parties in Accra to help support a concerted donor-partner country effort in moving CD knowledge into concrete operational changes for effective CD support. This should be an inclusive exercise and implicate key capacity development forces within the UN and the MDBs. Developing countries should be fully implied in this process, with adequate level of participation throughout.
- (2) A global partnership of CD champions to promote effective CD practice.** Those who have been at the forefront of CD work should explore the creation of a partnership for promoting change. This may include including the DAC, LenCD, UNDP, Capacity.org, ACBF, CDNet, the Capacity Collective, ECDPM and others. This partnership of CD champions should seek a close link to the official process and constructively cooperate with it. Care, however, needs to be taken that this process remain highly flexible and does not get bogged down in inter-governmental politics or bureaucratic processes. The partnership could be convened on a rotational basis with a continued support for continuity. (Possibly the DAC, UNDP, or LenCD?)
- (3) Partnerships of CD champions at the country-level.** Similarly at the country level an effort to promote real change also requires a bundling of energies around a common vision, agenda and an orchestration of change within mainstream processes. A joint effort can start with a small number of determined partners but should seek to consolidate a broader basis across constituencies, civil society, government and donor agents. The partnership would converge about possible synergies and a strategy to influence mainstream domestic and aid processes. It should be driven by CD champions and seek to bring together key constituencies (government, donor experts, practitioners ...), for broadening learning, defining quality criteria, establishing accountability mechanisms, advocating change in relevant institutions. Again, care would need to be taken so that a partnership of CD champions remains dynamic and creative and does not get bogged down in extraneous politics or bureaucracy.