

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May: Session 2: Mutual Accountability RT5**  
By Liz Higgins

Capacity is understood as the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully.....Capacity development is understood as the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time (OECD 2006).

Demand from Partner Countries for a more responsive approach to capacity development. What does a more responsive approach mean?

Current approaches are often fragmented and ad hoc and fail to address systemic weaknesses. Approach looks at capacity deficits which is often addressed by providing training, often through once off workshops or cascade approaches, or technical assistance which is not necessarily performance based..

They tend to be measured in terms of inputs-numbers of people trained, equipment provided etc rather than competency development, confidence building and behaviour change which leads to improved systems for delivering services.

Strengthening oversight and management, building greater capacity to generate and use data for policy development and planning, better communication and information available to citizens can result in more informed citizens able to demand accountability from their governments (at local and central level) can all contribute to systemic improvements and promote mutual accountability. Example of coordinated support by donors in Uganda to the OAG.

Stronger leadership from government on development assistance requires strengthening of systems for aid management including capacity to accurately and comprehensively record all public sector funds (Menu of options P. 8) and to align policy priorities with budget management and demonstrate effective use of these funds through improved service delivery.

The approach to CD needs to recognise local knowledge and experience, promote critical reflection and problem solving and provide opportunities for people to develop skills and competencies which enable them to carry out their work more effectively (to manage their affairs successfully). Indicators of success should relate to the improved level of performance and better services.

Example from Uganda of an approach to school improvement which was an empowering experience for educators in the region; building capacity to undertake research and for critical reflection, development of tools for data collection, the skills to analyse data and to use for planning and the confidence to work with others to institutionalise good practices and approaches. A similar approach to capacity development of school management committees undertaken by an NGO enabled parents to be more aware of their rights and responsibilities and to demand quality education for their children. Involvement of local leaders (political and technical) created ownership within the region and had the potential to create a ripple effect on other elements of the system.

Such initiatives take time, require a high level of commitment from those involved, need to be grounded in the local context but linked to national reforms. Support needs to be sustained over a long period.