

## **Accountability as driver for capacity development and for effective support to capacity development**

by Thomas Theisohn

**Accountability as vital driver for CD in any system.** Any functioning organism or system depends on sensors and feedback loops fundamental to its capacity to perform. In this sense accountability is a vital driver for capacity development in social systems because (1) it motivates adaptation and change, (2) it builds evidence and legitimacy for action, (3) it empowers stakeholders to question and claim their rights, and (4) it opens legitimate ways to challenge undue influence and vested interests. Accountability mechanisms can be defined in actionable terms with clear rules, roles and responsibilities that guide their implementation.

**Accountability for effective support to CD.** The above argument also applies to the aid system where partners collaborate in support to capacity development and where frequently competing agendas and collective action problems prevent optimal synergies. Domestic and external agents can agree on accountability rules that help monitor, measure and correct the effectiveness of their support to capacity development. All development partners should accept to have their support regularly scrutinized on whether and how effectively it contributes to capacity development, including the dynamics and quality of the relationship. Accepting such scrutiny in a proactive, transparent and responsive way is an important step for donors and domestic agents to improve their performance in supporting CD.

### **Propositions for Accra:**

**(1) Regular evidence-based review of the aid relationship and effectiveness of support to capacity development.** Stakeholders on country level can judge best whether and how development partners (domestic and external) effectively contribute to capacity development. Forms of more objective evidence-based reviews of the aid partnership have been established in Tanzania, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Vietnam with other countries about to follow. In it-self an evidence-based form of monitoring the quality of aid relations is a contribution to capacity development as it helps the aid system to take note of problems and to adjust. Specifically reviewing the effectiveness in supporting capacity development helps to focus directly on CD. The country being the epicentre for CD such review is likely to be most valuable if it is **country-based**, involving country level stakeholders, **comprehensive**, covering all capacity development partners and **independent**, transparent and evidence-based. Further, a system of comprehensive country based assessments is likely to be more realistic, practical, cost effective, and more meaningful than fragmented performance reviews.

### **(2) A country level ombudsman for effectiveness of aid and support to CD.**

An in-country ombudsperson could channel complaints straight to the appropriate authority or forum in-country and to counterparts in the respective agency headquarters, multilateral processes such facilitated by the DAC, the UN or others as pertinent. Establishing an ombudsman function would create channel for complaints and recourse for development stakeholders and help create a dynamic for change in CD practices. Existing institutions could be mandated or a new function created. An ombudsperson would in any case represent a relatively minor collective investment that could make judgements on effectiveness of capacity development efforts more accurate, more honest and anchored in evidence where it matters most: on country level.