

## **Bonn Workshop on Capacity Development**

### **Contribution to the debate**

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My contribution covers two points, which are closely linked: the necessity for donors to clearly engage into joint learning processes with their partners, and the need to set up decentralised alliances for learning and action.

#### **1) Donors should clearly engage into Joint Learning Processes to better connect to the national context and promote true partnerships in developing countries**

Experience in some development projects tends to prove that sometimes donors think that capacity development is for 'the others' - which means - their 'partners'. I really think that this is part of the problem! Donors need - at least - to develop their capacity to connect to the national/local context, through joint learning processes, which is important *to build confidence* and to progressively *move from "donor-receiver relationships" to true partnerships*... two different modes referring to different ways of working, to different attitudes...

I have just completed an evaluation of a project (in 3 African countries) in which the donor and national (research) partners have succeeded in creating efficient learning platforms with farmer groups to the extent that one of the first sections of my report is entitled '*Capacity development with a difference*'! The evaluation has confirmed - once again - that what we used (in agricultural extension - which is my background) to call '*farmer's resistance to change*' is in fact a coping strategy to deal with our 'expert culture' which did not recognise local knowledge... I could bring more details into the discussion if needed, but, in short, thanks to the learning approach of the project (implemented through appropriate tools and activities), and to the confidence built - *promoting equality*, both parties learnt a lot (and recognised it) and impressive results have been achieved in three years!

#### **2) Donors should help set up Decentralised Alliances for Learning and Action**

This concern derives from the situation we often witness that many times donor representatives at country level or desk officers at donor headquarters (through field visits and discussions with counterparts) can be clearly convinced about actions needed, but once connected with or back to the headquarters they get 'trapped into the bureaucratic machine', with the 'standard principles'...

Drawing back from eight years of experience of being member of a joint commission between a donor country and my country, and from what I still observe today in the field, I strongly believe that donor should devolve more power and resources to their country offices or agents. That will *certainly help do business differently and get 'more value for money'*!

NB. I would like to stress that what is said above can apply, in many cases (and to some extent), to national decision makers (vis-à-vis the regions or decentralised administrative entities)...