Module 5:

Designing Capacity Development Interventions

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Contents

5. DESIGNING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS **1**

Introduction **1**

5.1 Intervention Methods **1**

5.1.1 Methods 2

5.1.2 Deciding on Entry Points to get Started 6

5.1.3 Designing the Best Fit 8

5.1.4 Getting the Sequence Right 9

5.2 Key Considerations **10**

5.2.1 Working with Opportunities and Constraints 10

5.2.2 Ensuring Lasting Change 11

5.2.3 Understanding Incentives 11

5.3 From Interventions to Capacity Development Programmes and Projects **13**

5.3.1 Programme and Project Design 13

5.3.2 Management Approaches 15

Key takeaways **16**

Further reading and resources **18**

List of tables

Table 5-1: Capacity development methods by level *2*

Table 5-2: Example of multiple interventions in a capacity development plan: Papua New Guinea NBSAP *5*

Table 5-3: Four Complementary Options for CD Interventions *11*

List of boxes

Box 5-1: A note about methods and learning *5*

Box 5-2: An example of selecting an entry point *8*

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

5. Designing Capacity Development Interventions

Links to other module

Module 2: Engaging stakeholders and working with partners
Module 3: Assessing existing capacity, change readiness
Module 6: Learning

Introduction

Designing capacity development interventions means **translating the capacity needs identified through assessments** (Module 3) **into practical actions and aligning these actions with the theory of change** (Module 4) developed for biodiversity outcomes. This module provides guidance on how to identify the most appropriate methods, determine where to begin, and design initiatives that are relevant, feasible, and aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It also highlights key factors, such as incentives and change dynamics, that influence whether capacity development efforts succeed or fail. The final module introduces results-based management and adaptive management as tools to plan, monitor, and evaluate capacity development in a structured and adaptive way.

5.1 Intervention Methods

The more complex the need and context, the bigger the need for a range of responses working simultaneously and consecutively over time. **Best fit** selection brings together a range of methods to address the capacity needs in ways that maximises the strengths and mitigates the challenges of each. Importantly, best fit calls for very regular and structured review and learning processes (see adaptive management below) to keep adjusting the selection as capacity emerges and/or the context changes.

You shouldn't try at the start to choose the interventions for all the steps to achieve a long-term goal, because it would not be helpful or relevant. Instead, use the incremental approach to choose interventions and activities guided by what has been achieved so far and the identified priorities for the next steps in the overall process. You might need to experiment with pilot approaches and activities in order to find the most effective way forward.

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5.1.1 Methods

Effective capacity development can be achieved through a wide range of methods, each suited to different contexts, actors, and capacity levels. Selecting the right combination of methods helps address both the 'hard' and 'soft' aspects of capacity. This section outlines common methods used in biodiversity-related capacity development and explains how and when each can be applied. It is not exhaustive, or intended to indicate priorities, relevance or any other type of criteria for choosing which to work with. Some of these methods can be used effectively at multiple levels and for different types of capacity.

Table 5-1: Capacity development methods by level

Method	Description & Application
Cross-cutting methods that support many of the other methods in this table	
Communications *Cross cutting method*	At individual and organizational level communication activities connect groups to share or create information, and also to surface their collective knowledge and wisdom, which in turn enhances and supports learning and change within those groups. Communications are used for awareness raising and advocacy which creates change in the enabling environment. *Behaviour Change Communication* is a specific approach that aims to encourage individuals and communities to adopt behaviours that lead to different and better outcomes in their lives. Widely used in health programmes and could be very influential for biodiversity needs.
Facilitation *Cross cutting method*	Facilitation is structured support for processes designed to lead to change. It is used in activities to develop of soft capacities for individuals, groups and organizations, either as stand alone, or alongside hard capacity development activities. Facilitation is also a very important tool when collaboration and cooperation are needed in the enabling environment.
Methods for individual learning	
Blended learning	A combination of traditional teaching methods (e.g. inside the classroom) with online teaching materials and interactive activities.
Coaching and mentoring (often used interchangeably)	Both are processes to support an individual , and sometimes groups, to improve workplace performance, and guide professional development. **Coaching** deals with workplace challenges and issues and is time bounded. **Mentoring** is longer-term support for an individual's career and personal development. Both can be used with other methods, e.g. as part of leadership development.
Degree-level study overseas	Scholarships to study at overseas universities. *Caution*: overseas study is prone to the 'brain drain' syndrome.

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

Distance learning	Academic study that participants can follow from home, primarily via online learning.
Exposure visits	Take individuals or groups - to see what others are doing in work or community situations similar to their own. Provides exposure to new knowledge, ideas, and influences. Can stimulate the spread of good practice and innovative approaches. Note: learning objectives need to be clear for this method to be effective.
Online, (Electronic) and Mobile learning	E-learning refers to education delivered through electronic devices, typically using computers and the internet, which is structured and formal in nature. M-learning focuses on learning accessed via mobile devices like smartphones and tablets, designed for on-the-go learning experiences.
Technical training	*External* training which consists of readily available pre-designed courses on subjects such as accounting and computer skills. *Customised* training is created for the needs of a specific group, and often used internally to build technical skills for project implementation.
Methods for organizational change	
Action Reflection Learning Cycle	Structured reflection to learn from completed activities and improve next steps. Can be used at any time and is particularly useful after reaching project milestones, or when a critical incident occurs. Simple templates help teams systematically capture their lessons learned to be applied to next steps.
Action Research	Builds capacity by investigating in real-time the questions "*How can we improve our work*?" or "*What more do we need to know about this subject*?" combined with reflective sessions to share the learning. Can be used for individuals, but most effective when integrated into organizational capacity strengthening strategies and used by small teams.
Experiential learning	A generic heading for numerous processes to support learning from workplace experiences, including: action reflection learning planning cycle, action learning sets, action research, critical incident analysis, on-the-job training, work-based learning, work/job shadowing, and whole person learning. Some of these methods can be used for individuals, but they are most effective when integrated into organizational capacity strengthening strategies to support the development of an organizational learning culture.
Incentive structures	Embedded systems for motivating positive change and ensuring that it is sustained. Incentives influence individual and group behaviour through rewards that can be financial, or other means like recognition. To be most effective an incentive structure must be a transparent component of organizational functioning applied fairly to all. See 5.2.3 below for more about incentives.
Knowledge management	The processes through which organizations or sectors generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. It starts with documentation of what is known about the organization's areas of

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

	interest and then sharing the collected data with those who need it to enhance their job performance. Sharing knowledge like the factors that have influenced project results for good or bad is particularly important for building on success and avoiding repetition of things that didn't work well. The aims is to ensure that all available knowledge assets are used to the best effect. Essential in complex systems to prevent the challenges arising from working in silos.
Leadership development	A range of learning processes designed to enhance the leadership skills. Useful for both existing and potential leaders within organizations and groups. Most effective when using combined methods. Although applied to individuals, it should be embedded as part of an organization's capacity development strategies. **Can be very effective supporting women to take on leadership roles.**
Organizational strengthening	Encompasses three interrelated disciplines: organizational development, change management, and organizational learning. Approaches can involve multiple methods for co-ordinated learning and change processes in organizations. This approach usually works with an organisation's systems and structures, so is most effective when multiple aspects of the system work together simultaneously to learn, develop, and change.
Methods for the enabling environment	
Advocacy	Uses facts, data and real-life examples to influence decision-makers and other stakeholders in support of desired changes to laws, policies or use of resources. Depending on the target groups specific methods might be lobbying, media coverage, or awareness raising campaigns. Can be conducted by groups with different interests working together to achieve a shared goal.
Partnerships and networks	Bringing people, groups and organizations together to work towards a common goal. Partnerships are a central theme in the implementation of capacity development initiatives for biodiversity as they support the development of collaboration and cooperation in the enabling environment. Module 2 provides guidance about working in partnerships.

The Reading and Resources Section below has links to many resources about the methods listed above.

Practitioner tip: Beware the training trap

In order to avoid the trap of thinking everything starts and ends with training individuals, the key stakeholders need to work out the priority issues, making sure that everyone is thinking holistically about the levels and types of capacity that need to come into place.

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Box 0-1: A note about methods and learning

Learning perspectives can be integrated at all levels and stages of the initiative at the design stage. Several of the methods described above are specifically focused on learning, and learning perspectives can be integrated into others. Combining individual and organizational learning is essential to making change sustainable, and sometimes learning at higher levels is also needed for this to happen. Module 6 covers integrating learning into M&E processes and it also has some helpful background theory about learning to help you understand how to develop effective learning approaches for all aspects of capacity development.

The example in Table 5-2 below illustrates what could be done to achieve the *Papua New Guinea NBSAP National Target 3: Strengthen capacity to limit opportunities that promote illegal and unsustainable practices in agriculture, fisheries and fisheries sectors*, using a balanced set of interventions at three levels and for both types of capacity, together with the cross-cutting methods that need to be used throughout. Note that training of individuals is only one small part of the overall array that needs to be applied over time.

Table 5-2: Example of multiple interventions in a capacity development plan: Papua New Guinea NBSAP

	Soft capacity needs	Hard capacity needs
Enabling environment	• Coalition building with key stakeholders, formal and informal, government and business sectors • Lobbying and advocacy with political decision makers • Public awareness campaigns targeting communities currently using illegal and unsustainable practices	• Formulation, or revision, and adoption of enabling legislation • Establishment of necessary department or institute to oversee legislation enactment and coordinate implementation across all sectors and stakeholder groups
Organizational	• Internal advocacy and awareness raising campaigns, establishment of a value driven organizational culture committed to the Target • Leadership development programme • Integrated learning and knowledge management systems	• Development of policies and procedures • Development of strategic and operational plans • Resources for implementation • Data management systems

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

Individual	• Managers: support for development of critical thinking and strategic analysis skills • Staff: practice facilitation skills for working with communities and persuading them to change • Community members: targeted awareness raising to change attitudes as prerequisite to changing behaviours	• Managers: Training on planning, monitoring and evaluation relevant to the target • Staff: Training to upgrade technical knowledge and skills • Community members: Workshops to spread knowledge of effective legal practices
Cross cutting methods	• Monitoring, including reflective learning practices • Communication • Implementation partnerships	

5.1.2 Deciding on Entry Points to get Started

Once the available methods are understood, the next step is to decide *where to begin*. Known as **entry points,** these are the places within a system, such as an individual skill set, an organizational process, or an enabling policy framework, where action is most likely to create meaningful progress. Choosing the right entry points is critical for success, helping to ensure that interventions are timely, relevant, and well-positioned within existing opportunities for change.

Whatever the entry point/s it is important that you consider the links with previous or existing initiatives that new interventions need to relate to and build on. **Remember you are never starting with a blank space.** Also check in with what is happening in other parts of the system, such as other current projects, and how your proposed interventions might interact with them. Something useful to think about is producing some **quick wins** that solve urgent problems. Quick wins can be really effective ways to persuade people to get involved and support longer-term activities. (This is a particularly critical point to address if working in post-crisis and transition situations.)

As explained in the first module on core concepts there are some key considerations for you to think about when selecting entry points, and these are:

1. **Enabling environment:** big systems-level conditions such as laws, policies, institutions and incentives. If the right conditions aren't in place some actions at other levels might not be possible, or the support for them will be limited, making progress difficult and lessening the chances of achieving good results.
2. **Soft capacities:** attitudes, relationships, leadership and trust (which take much longer to achieve sustainably). For work across sectors on complex

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challenges collaboration and cooperation are essential for everyone to work together effectively. At individual and organizational level soft capacity is important to enable hard capacity to be used to maximum effect

3. **Hard capacities:** such as organizational structures, procedures and technical skills needed to improve specific performance and achieve results. These are what is needed to ensure that programmes, projects and activities are all implemented effectively to produce results.

If you can work through it with key stakeholders the **zoom in zoom out exercise** explained in Module 3 on change readiness analysis will guide your decisions about entry points, especially at the enabling environment level. Any significant capacity development intervention related to a national level goal will have political dimensions, which may be both formal and informal. A key start-up activity must, therefore, be identification and engagement of relevant political and powerful stakeholders to get their support, or at least to neutralise their resistance.

Guiding questions for entry points

Stakeholders should work together to identify priorities holistically, considering capacities at all levels. Four questions can help:

1. What has to be put in place as a prerequisite for other needs?
2. What resources are available?
3. What can be achieved quickly, and what requires more time?
4. Where is the energy and momentum for change?

The answer to the first question will help identify the initial capacities needed as the first platform to achieve the capacity goal. For example, before a ministry of environment can undertake a marine protection programme it will need to have in place a range of conditions including: laws, policies, systems and procedures; functional working relationships with other ministries; political support for the initiative; motivated and effective leadership; stakeholder engagement and support, together with physical resources and equipment and qualified staff. Such a range can only be put in place by working at multiple levels simultaneously.

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

The soft relational capacities for political support from other ministries and key stakeholders must be approached at the highest level possible and will need a long-term perspective. Other components such as laws, policies and procedures, and effective leadership require both soft and hard capacities at institutional and organizational level, which can only be achieved in the medium term. Qualified staff, who could possibly come into place quickly, represent the individual level.

Box 0-2: An example of selecting an entry point

A major ministry of environment initiative will need ministry of finance agreement about budget allocation, and agreement from other ministries to cooperate and support where there are areas of mutual interest. Without these agreements being in place the ministry of environment initiative would likely be ineffective at best, and a failure at worst. The entry point would need to be **advocacy and coalition building at the enabling environment level,** which could take time, but is essential to achieve any meaningful results. It might be possible to conduct some small preparatory steps at other levels of the system simultaneously, but nothing major can be achieved until key stakeholders are fully aligned to give their support.

5.1.3 Designing the Best Fit

No single method or entry point works everywhere. Designing the **best fit** means combining different approaches in ways that respond to the local context, priorities, and existing capacities. It also involves balancing short-term actions that deliver quick results with longer-term strategies that build sustainable change. This section highlights how to adapt and integrate methods to achieve coherence and impact. The guiding principles below are drawn from helpful lessons learned about programme design from the past. They are not in order of priority, they are all important. The principles are:

- **Do not assume a 'blank canvas':** In every situation there will already be many things happening that should be further developed or incorporated into new initiatives. Good design recognises and builds on what exists and motivates people to support activities by making relevant connections;
- **Remember the context analysis in the ToC:** Too often approaches are decontextualized and apolitical, based on the assumption that if the approach is right the outcome will be positive, regardless of contextual or political factors. Taking into account the context analysis undertaken in the TOC exercise can help to avoid this mistake;
- **Balance hard and soft factors:** All that formal instruments such as laws and policies can do is establish the structure and guiding frameworks for potential change. Much more important are the behaviour and informal processes that surround the development and implementation of formal

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

instruments. Balance is needed to ensure both types of capacity are addressed;

- **Plan beyond training for technical skills:** Technical skills are rarely enough on their own. Individual and shared organizational learning practices are more likely to lead to sustainable capacity in the long term. It is therefore necessary to ensure a balanced approach that works with different types of capacity simultaneously, and also that training is treated as a component of an overall capacity development strategy or plan;
- **Approach scale-up activities carefully:** Scale-up or roll-out can create problems because it can never be guaranteed that effective practices in one set of circumstances will automatically be effective for others. Taking something to scale can create challenges that did not arise in a small-scale initiative;
- **Stay adaptive:** Overly structured intervention plans can end up constraining, rather than enabling the emergence of capacity, it is better to work iteratively using adaptive management methodology to allow for flexibility and responsiveness; and,
- **Monitor absorptive capacity:** The demand side motivation and absorptive capacity to work with the intervention must be monitored, taken into account and adjustments made if necessary because of overload.

5.1.4 Getting the Sequence Right

Sequencing refers to the order, timing, and layering of activities so that one builds on another and creates cumulative progress building from one platform of capacity to the next. Well-designed interventions have careful sequencing built in from the start, recognizing that capacity development is iterative rather than linear, requiring learning, adjustment, and refinement as implementation unfolds. This section explains how to plan a logical progression of actions that supports continuous growth and adaptation.

Sequencing does not mean that all interventions and activities must follow each other one at a time, it means taking **a long-term perspective** and getting them into **the most logical groupings and order for success.** It is about working at the operational level with **what is doable, realistic and acceptable to all stakeholders** at any given time, rather than creating ambitious plans that are doomed because the right conditions are not in place. Sequencing is also dependent on resource availability. In short it is necessary to be very strategic in prioritising needs and choosing a logical sequence of interventions to ensure that activities address capacity incrementally and coherently.

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Practitioner tip: Guide questions

Discussing these questions with the stakeholders working with you on planning will help you to decide on the best sequence of activities.

- What are the priorities at the identified entry point/s and what needs to be done to address them?
- Is there anything that could result in a quick win?
- What array of interventions would make a harmonised approach for this complexity?
- How busy is the target entity or group with other demands? What can they realistically take on at this time?
- What will achieve the best balance between a focus on necessary and immediate results and long-term capacity development?
- What will achieve the best balance between internal capacity development and positive changes in the enabling environment?
- How can internal or external opportunities be used to maximum benefit?

Note: As the first set of changes come into place they may create conditions that mean the next steps need to be dealt with differently. Or external factors, for example a change in economic conditions, might create major impact on the overall context. If this happens the key stakeholders will need to stop, review, reflect and possibly revise the TOC and approaches applied as each stage of the process is implemented.

5.2 Key Considerations

Success in designing capacity development interventions requires selecting the right methods and entry points based on understanding the wider context and the human and institutional factors that influence change. The following key considerations - opportunities and constraints, change, and incentives - help ensure that interventions are realistic, adaptive, and likely to produce lasting results.

5.2.1 Working with Opportunities and Constraints

You are very unlikely ever to find yourself working in a situation in which there are many helpful opportunities and no constraints. It could be argued that no capacity development interventions should be undertaken until there is a fully enabling environment at the national or sector level, so precious resources are

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

not wasted on activities that cannot result in change. However, in many situations that would mean nothing ever gets started. So what you need to aim for is careful and nuanced decision making about entry points, taking account of the constraints, to work with internal drivers of change in ways that help them to influence, overcome or work around any institutional constraints.

When working at a sector or organizational level some agencies use a simple matrix to categorise capacity needs and guide interventions, as this example from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) illustrates:

Table 5-3: Four Complementary Options for CD Interventions

	Predominantly Functional-Rational Perspective	Predominantly Political Perspective
Internal elements, supply side	Focus on getting the job done	Focus on getting power, loyalties, and incentives right
Context or external stakeholders and factors, demand side	Focus on creating an enabling regulatory and supervisory environment	Focus on increasing external pressure for performance

5.2.2 Ensuring Lasting Change

Another factor to think about at the start is how to ensure that appropriate follow up is in place to support implementation of new learning or procedures – this is about focusing on the capacity utilization and retention stages explained in Module 1. At all levels follow up has been proven to be critical for activities to result in sustainable change. For example: individuals need support to implement new learning into their working practices; organizations need regular review and revision of their plans, policies and procedures to keep them up to date and meaningful; and, in the enabling environment relationships and partnerships needs constant attention to ensure they remain in place and able to support change processes. Again, this is an issue you will need to work on with key stakeholders. Initiatives for organizational learning can be helpful for getting everyone to understand the nature of the learning process required to embed change. There is more on this important subject in Module 6.

5.2.3 Understanding Incentives

An incentive is anything that motivates an individual or group to do something. Given that capacity change is as much a political as a technical process what can be achieved is frequently dictated by power and incentive structures. Successful capacity development initiatives are, like all other types of change,

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

dependent on having the right incentives in place to reward positive improvements and make them sustainable i.e. giving people a good reason to change - an answer to the question "*What's in it for us?*". Incentives are most usually considered at the individual level however, they exist at and flow between, all levels, including the enabling environment. As explained in Module 3 on doing assessments, it will help if you look at incentives at that stage, especially taking account of the fact that culture and context are powerful sources of both positive and perverse incentives.

5.2.3.1 Definitions

Positive incentives: Rewards or motivators aligned with positive change. They can be financial, non-financial, formal, or informal, for example a bonus or promotion to reward improved performance.

Perverse incentives: Factors that motivate people for the wrong reason, either financial or informal, for example attending a training course for the per diem rather than learning.

An incentive can have both positive and negative impacts at the same time, because positive rewards can produce unintended consequences, for example one staff member getting a bonus might demotivate others who did not get it.

5.2.3.2 Important non-financial incentives

A non-financial incentive that can work for both individuals and at organizational level is **benchmarking and competition,** through setting targets for achievement and stimulating healthy rivalry.

Accountability and transparency are not usually thought of as incentives, but you might find it useful think about them as powerful tools for motivating improvements in organizational performance or governance at the enabling environment level. Unlike the private sector, public sector institutions are not generally held accountable in terms of happy customers being essential to their corporate survival. Publicly available information about what decisions are made and how they are made, especially for resource allocation, can have a positive influence on decision makers at all levels, especially politicians who are very conscious of public opinion. Establishing comprehensive and effective accountability systems linked to service standards and customer satisfaction takes time and will only come into place and be sustainable if linked to other incentives, rather than being solely a system of control and sanctions.

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Practitioner tip

If you are thinking about designing an incentive structure these questions will help you decide what might work. Using them as the basis for discussion with stakeholders could be an effective way of getting something very helpful into place.

- What incentives did you identify when doing the stakeholder mapping and capacity assessment exercises that are having either a positive or negative influence in the system you need to work with? What rewards or motivators are currently influencing individual behaviour, organizational functioning, or factors in the enabling environment?
- What could be put in place to introduce or reinforce positive incentives and reduce perverse ones?
- Who or what might you be able to mobilise in the external environment as the source of demand-side calls for improved performance, better results and accountability or accountability to beneficiary groups, local or national leaders, and/or donors?
- Could any of these incentives backfire (become perverse)?

5.3 From Interventions to Capacity Development Programmes and Projects

Once capacity development interventions have been identified, it is advisable to organize them into coherent programmes or projects that can be effectively implemented, monitored, and adapted over time. This process involves aligning interventions with the overall theory of change, ensuring consistency with broader biodiversity goals, and integrating results-based and adaptive management principles. Well-designed programmes and projects provide the operational structure through which capacity development strategies are translated into tangible action and measurable outcomes.

5.3.1 Programme and Project Design

Once the analytical preparatory step are complete, and a ToC and results hierarchy has been formulated, the focus can shift to designing the response. This stage involves making informed decisions about how best to meet the identified needs, within the specific context and available resources. There are no universal solutions — every situation requires a tailor-made approach.

DRAFT - CONFIDENTIAL

5.3.1.1 Definitions

Programme: The higher-level framework: it defines the overall goals, strategies, and long-term directions for capacity development in a sector, country, or institution. A programme usually spans several years, involves multiple stakeholders, and contains a set of related projects that work together towards the overall goal.

Project: Specific and operational: it translates parts of the programme into concrete sets of activities, timelines, budgets, and responsibilities. Projects are shorter-term, more focused in scope, and directly implement parts of the programme strategy and plans.

Together, programme and project design provide the roadmap for moving from identified capacity needs to practical, context-specific interventions. Good design ensures that initiatives are **relevant, feasible, sustainable, and measurable.**

5.3.1.2 Adopt a platform approach

Complex situations and challenges require **a long-term process orientation that works iteratively towards the capacity goal.** This means you need to be strategic in both phasing the activities over time and working simultaneously at multiple levels and with multiple strands of activities. This is sometimes called the **platform approach,** because as capacity comes into place from each phase of activities it becomes the platform for moving on to the next. Working in this way will allow you to make appropriate responses to what is emerging, and to take account of any changing factors in the environment.

5.3.1.3 Timeframes

Planning should also be realistic in terms of scope and timeframe. Detailed planning works best for short-term targets (1–2 years), with moderate detail for the medium term (3–4 years) and only broad intentions for the longer term. Timeframes should also reflect **absorptive capacity:** people and institutions already have to manage many competing demands, and few can work on multiple changes simultaneously alongside routine responsibilities. Sequencing change carefully — and sometimes thinking in decades rather than months — is therefore essential.

5.3.1.4 Monitoring and measurement

Finally, **monitoring and measurement** should be built into design from the outset, not added on later. This ensures that progress can be tracked effectively, and results demonstrated efficiently.

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Importantly, the intended results (outcomes and outputs) and related indicators must be **reviewed and adapted** throughout the life of the initiative as circumstances evolve.

5.3.2 Management Approaches

Another important decision that needs to be made in the design phase is about the management approach. There are two options – Results Based Management (RBM) and adaptive management. Both approaches are concerned with results, but they use different ways to achieve them. The explanations that follow can help you decide which approach, or maybe a combination of the two, will be best suited for your particular needs.

5.3.2.1 Overview of RBM

RBM is a strategic approach that focuses on **achieving defined results.** It provides the overarching framework within which tools like the TOC and logical framework are used. It is an approach favoured by donors because they believe it has rigour and is good for accountability in terms of tracking both how resources have been used in implementation, and the direct results achieved. It usually follows a standard flow of steps - assess, plan, implement and evaluate.

In the context of capacity development, RBM can help to ensure that interventions are clearly linked to desired results, especially hard capacity targets such as improved organizational functioning or technical capabilities. It has a strong focus on ongoing monitoring and adaptation, helping to keep efforts aligned with both **local priorities** and **global biodiversity commitments.**

However, it has been found that RBM leads to the simplification of complex social issues and is, therefore, ineffective in many situations. Neither does it work well where the focus needs to be on aspects of soft capacity like good governance. In some circumstances the demand for tangible results can be dysfunctional, creating an unhelpful trap for all involved.

5.3.2.2 Overview of adaptive management

Adaptive management emerged in 1970s as *'adaptive environmental assessment and management to improve natural resource management in the face of uncertainty.'* It has now been adopted and developed in many sectors but is still considered to be particularly relevant for working in complex systems like climate change and biodiversity.

Adaptive management has learning embedded at its heart and uses methods, tools, routines and the mindset to keep questioning whether or not the current ways of working are making progress towards the desired change. It keeps the

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TOC in constant review. If what is being done is not proving to be very effective, the approach encourages responsiveness and flexibility to change to something better. This correlates with everything that is said about the need for learning approaches and adaptation to be built into work in complex contexts, so it is very relevant for complex biodiversity challenges. Adaptive management theory is helpful for design, because it is all about generating and using learning to ensure flexible programming is the foundation for planning.

5.3.2.3 Comparison between adaptive and results-based management

As explained above while both approaches focus on achieving results, they do have significant differences. Having started with pre-defined results in logical frameworks RBM follows the cause-and-effect approach to achieving those results. Adaptive management starts with a deep understanding of a system and deliberately incorporates learning and adaptation into ongoing decision-making to improve understanding for achieving goals in complex circumstances. It embraces flexibility and learning from experience and supports changing methods when something is not working well, emphasising the need to understand local context and on finding local solutions to local problems rather than imported practices.

In summary, RBM has strengths and advantages that are relevant for some types of projects, especially those with a short timeframe and easily measured technical targets. It is also good for meeting donor needs. But for longer-term initiatives dealing with complex change and where ongoing learning is essential for success, adaptive management is the more suitable approach.

Key takeaways

- Doing the analysis to guide you to selection of the right entry points means that you will be able to start your work at the points in the system that will have the most impact for enabling change to come into place.
- Best fit design is about selecting and sequencing different approaches, methods and tools over time, using a platform approach to get capacity into place step by step.
- There are many different methods to choose from: some are cross-cutting for all needs, but others are specific to the individual, organizational or enabling environment levels.
- You need to be sure that your design choices take account of how to utilize opportunities, and work best to overcome constraints. Also, that your choices will work to embed positive changes for the long-term. Strategic use of incentives can be a good approach for doing this.

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- RBM and adaptive management approaches have different strengths. RBM works well for projects with short-term and technical targets. Adaptive management is the best suited for working in long-term complex processes in which many factors can and do change all the time.

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Further reading and resources

Documents

Methods:

Action reflection learning planning (ARLP) cycle there are many resources available online, see for example https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=153810&section=3.4

Action research also has many resources available online, for example https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/36584_01_Koshy_et_al_Ch_01.pdf

Advocacy: The INTRAC Praxis Paper on Capacity Building for Advocacy is aimed at civil society organizations, but the principles and practices are relevant for any sector

Blended learning: A useful summary of blended learning and how it links to other approaches is available https://edtechnology.co.uk/latest-news/ultimate-guide-to-blended-learning/. Follow the links from this page to get more information on how to develop blended learning programmes.

Change management many tools are available at https://www.strategies-for-managing-change.com/index.html

Coaching and mentoring: a set of resources on coaching and mentoring

Communication: processes that connect groups and surface their collective knowledge and wisdom, in order to enhance and support learning and change within those groups. Some specific communication methods are the World Café, Open Space Technology and Appreciative Inquiry.

E-learning – many available resources, for example GIZ's Academy for International Cooperation

Experiential learning: in addition to ARLP and action research above other methods can be considered: action learning sets, critical incident analysis, on-the-job training, work-based learning, work/job shadowing, and whole person learning. The Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc website founded and run by David and Alice Kolb offers many tools and resources related to experiential learning.

Exposure: exposure visits take people to see what others are doing in work situations similar to their own. This short practical brief explains further.

Facilitation - The Learning for Sustainability website has useful links to many resources, including guidance on how to facilitate online..

Knowledge management https://knowledge-management-tools.net/ has many very helpful resources

Leadership development: A useful paper from the Centre for Creative Leadership is on Developing a Leadership Strategy. This article from the Society for Human Resource Management gives a very good overview of leadership development processes, with links to many other resources.

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Working with incentives

The Public Sector Capacity Building Secretariat in Rwanda (now the Rwanda Development Board) provides the success story of the **Social Security Fund of Rwanda**, which illustrates best practices for using incentives to develop, utilize, and retain capacity in a public sector institution.

Another interesting case study is the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, written up as a case study by JICA. This study shows how incentives were used strategically in the process of creating an effective municipal utility.

Other resources

In this short video (2.55 mins), Professor Beryl Levinger sets out the case for thinking about many different tools and approaches for capacity development, and stresses the benefits of something as simple as having the right conversation with key stakeholders as a means to initiate change.

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