



**DEVELOPING**  
**CAPACITIES**  
**FOR SUSTAINABLE**  
**COMMUNITIES**

## CAPACITY 2015, BUILDING ON SUCCESS

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT Programme activities since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil gave UNDP the mandate to assist countries in creating capacities to fulfil their commitments for the implementation of Agenda 21, the Summit's blueprint for action.

This task is a responsibility of **Capacity 21**, a trust fund created immediately after the Earth Summit. In the last nine years, Capacity 21 has worked with more than 75 developing and transition countries, spending roughly US\$85 million to help them develop highly effective methodologies and other capacities for sustainable development. An independent global evaluation of Capacity 21 in 2001 recommended the launch of a new capacity development platform –“Capacity 2015”– to assist countries in meeting the sustainable development challenges of the 21st century. The evaluation found that Capacity 21 had garnered extensive and impressive experience in helping countries develop capacities for sustainable development, and that many of its features remain vital for meeting countries' needs over the next decade.

Other funds and programmes managed by UNDP have provided unique financial and technical support for grassroots capacity development initiatives focused on communities' sustainable development priorities. These include the **Small Grants Programme** from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the **Africa 2000 Network and Local Initiatives for the Environment** (LIFE). All of these support decentralized initiatives based on transparent, participatory and community-driven approaches. Recent independent reviews have rated

them very highly. Capacity 2015 will build on and expand the scope of these local capacity development success stories.

Capacity 2015 will also help the global community meet the Millennium Development Goals –especially halving poverty by 2015– within the framework of Agenda 21.

## A NEW CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

THE EXPERIENCES OF CAPACITY 21 AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES, INCLUDING RECENT UNDP WORK on “Reforming Technical Cooperation” underline the need for systematic, long-term approaches that address the capacity development needs at individual, institutional and societal levels.

Being capacity development at the centre of most UNDP programmes, there are some gaps, particularly at local level and in the links between local and other levels, specially related to the new challenges of globalisation.

## CAPACITY 2015 PLATFORM

THE CAPACITY 2015 PLATFORM WILL BE BUILT UPON THIS NEW CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM.

It will assist communities in developing their capacities to nurture healthy local economies, societies and environments; to effectively face the challenges of globalisation; and to derive the greatest possible benefit from actual and emerging global trends, such as rapid changes in information technologies. The platform will encourage and empower people to take ownership of the processes and decisions affecting their lives.

### The platform will:

- Address capacity development needs of communities, tying them to national economic, social and environmental policy and processes.
- Help local communities and their private sectors, as well as national and local authorities, to overcome capacity constraints to achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- Promote local and national partnerships among public and private sectors and the major groups within civil society, giving each new opportunities to bring to bear their respective strengths and resources, and learn from one another.
- Ensure strong synergies among capacity development initiatives, particularly those related to multilateral environmental treaties, poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development strategies.

## FOCUS OF THE PLATFORM

THE CAPACITY 2015 WILL SUPPORT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WITH A number of complementary activities. Each area of activity will bring together a number of partner programmes and institutions from within and outside UNDP. This structure aims to ensure effective collaboration and co-ordination among partners and a high degree of synergy and mutual support both within and among the different areas of activity.

Initial core areas of activity will include community capacity development, strategies for sustainable development and capacity development for multilateral environmental agreements:

- **Capacity Development for Communities:** Direct, practical support to developing capacities for sustainable development at the community level. This aims to bring together partners within UNDP, such as the GEF Small Grants Programme, LIFE and Africa

2000, as well as global and regional partners such as the International Center for Local Environmental Initiatives and Development Alternatives.

- **Strategies for Sustainable Development:** Support for national strategies that guide countries towards sustainable development and help ensure their communities receive the support they require. These strategies will bring practical support to communities, helping them address their priority sustainable development needs, while also linking their efforts to national and global initiatives. Partners should include the International Institute for Environment and Development, the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP.
- **Capacity Development for Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs):** Support for developing the capacities needed to ensure effective community participation in key MEAs – particularly the conventions on biological diversity, climate change and desertification – in a context of sustainable community development. This support will build on UNDP-GEF’s Capacity Development Initiative, bringing in partners from the various Convention Secretariats, international NGO partners and others.
- **Capacity Development for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** Another area of activity will operate as a parallel facility, supporting community capacity development, strategies for sustainable development and capacity development for the MEAs, all focused on the unique opportunities and challenges - specially the socio economic and environmental vulnerability - of the Small Island Developing States.
- **Strategic Capacity Development Facility:** This facility can be used together with any of the others described above, or on its own. It will offer developing and transition countries a

uniquely responsive, flexible and timely mechanism to prepare broader capacity development initiatives, quickly. It may be used to respond to new capacity development opportunities of needs, such as ambitious agendas of newly elected governments, or sudden challenges or emergencies that threaten to undermine sustainable development.

## PRINCIPLES OF THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

- Local and national actors need to achieve ownership, defining their own needs and implementing their own solutions.
- Capacity development is an ongoing process of transformation.
- Urgent short-term poverty concerns and longer-term sustainability issues require carefully integrated responses.
- Civic engagement and sound participatory processes are key elements in the design, implementation and monitoring of social, economic, and environmental policies and practices.
- The approach should be universal but flexible, allowing for different emphases in response to varying sustainable development priorities among different communities, countries and regions.
- Work should be carried on through partnerships and strategic alliances, emphasizing the key role of networking in knowledge acquisition.
- Capacity development must include the establishment of the necessary enabling environments at all levels.
- Existing capacities need to be developed, not replaced.
- Cultural identities and values need to be recognized, respected and productively incorporated.

## OUTCOMES OF THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

- National and local policies and legislation reviewed and revised, eliminating bottlenecks and ensuring incentives for local sustainable development.
- Local and national capacities (human, institutional and societal) developed and contributing to sustainable development, including poverty alleviation in communities.
- Networks formed and supporting civic engagement and responsible local leadership.
- Information and communications systems in place, helping communities participate in decisions governing their involvement in the global economy.
- Broad participatory platforms in place for designing, implementing and monitoring strategies, plans and other planning instruments.
- Resource mobilization campaigns designed and assisting communities to overcome marginalization and other barriers to competing successfully in a globalising world.
- Functional partnerships and networks developed, involving communities with national, regional and international partners that can support local capacity development for sustainable development that includes poverty reduction.

## PARTNERS IN THE CAPACITY 2015 PLATFORM

LOCAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS WILL INCLUDE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR INFORMAL REPRESENTATIVES, local and national authorities, entrepreneurs, media, community-based organizations and other civil society groups and academia. Regional and global actors will include bi- and multilateral development agencies and banks, information networks and global foundations.

Each partner will have clearly defined roles, objectives and responsibilities in implementing and monitoring shared activities and be accountable to the others for achieving agreed results.

## WHERE THE PLATFORM WILL WORK

THE PLATFORM WILL OPERATE IN ALL DEVELOPING AND TRANSITION COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE different approaches and levels of funding for regions, countries and communities at different socio-economic levels.

Within a country, sites might be municipalities, villages or other appropriate venues, based on national economic, political and administrative structures.

The platform will also support capacity development at the national level, ensuring the necessary enabling environment for local sustainability.

## HOW THE PLATFORM WILL OPERATE

THE PLATFORM WILL SUPPORT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE INDIVIDUAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIETAL levels, emphasizing gender equality.

Funding will directly support local and national partnerships and processes, which UNDP will assist through its national execution modalities in its country offices. Small secretariats in each region will facilitate and promote regional partnerships and provide regional coordination mechanisms. A small unit at UNDP Headquarters in New York will play the same

role on a global scale, report to partners and share Capacity 2015 experiences through an information programme.

## NEXT STEPS

- Build the partnerships needed to sustain the platform at all levels.
- Initiate a consultation process with selected partner countries to define an initial phase of the programme, adjusting and fine-tuning the concept and methodology.
- Reach agreement on a detailed proposal, to emerge from the Fourth Session of the Preparatory Committee in Bali.
- Launch the Capacity 2015 platform in Johannesburg.



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# Capacity 2015

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