

IMPLEMENTING RIO+20: THE UNFINISHED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The 1992 Earth Summit recognized the need to address capacity bottlenecks in the implementation of the Rio Commitments. Twenty years hence, hindsight and learning (including from failures) make possible the design of a robust capacity development regime to implement Rio+20 outcomes.

On the Earth Summit's shoulders

After the Earth Summit, which popularized the 'think globally, act locally' slogan, it was understood that much of the work for sustainable development would have to occur at the local level. Shortfalls in local institutional capacity would therefore need to be addressed. Capacity 21 was created for this purpose.

The local issues addressed by Capacity 21 remain critically important today. For example, [UNDP's Charting a Low Carbon Route to Development](#) describes good practices that have worked well globally because they were aligned with national and sub-national realities. On the other hand, a [global evaluation of Capacity 21](#) during its first decade identified two major gaps to be addressed in the future:

- Strengthening links to national institutional and policy architecture—bridging the local and the national; and
- Making adequate inter-sectoral linkages, including with national planning and finance ministries.

These challenges remain important today.

Capacity development for Rio+20

Other lessons have been learned since 1992, particularly about change coalitions, transformation, risk management around vertical funds, and balancing short- and long-term capacity development efforts. This compendium of lessons could serve as a strong platform on which to base a capacity development

A Rio+20 capacity development facility should:

- Create the channels, incentives, and institutional architectures needed to link environmental, social, and economic sector agencies;
- Strengthen national risk management capacities via better results and project management, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation practices;
- Help expand multi-stakeholder engagement, and catalyze multi-party change coalitions and partnerships; and
- Support change champions and platforms through leadership development.

facility to support national implementation of the decisions to be taken at Rio+20—as per the [zero draft](#) of the Rio+20 outcome document. This facility could:

- support risk management associated with vertical fund resources;
- facilitate cross-sectoral institutional pathways for policy coherence and integrated planning;
- support partnerships for change with public, private, and civil society actors; and
- address the need for change platforms and operating space for change drivers and champions.

In order to support national transitions to sustainable development—particularly in terms of policy coherence, risk management, coalition building, and leadership development—a 'capacity for sustainable development' facility should:

- Be fast, nimble, and flexible;
- Be a repository and broker of expertise, knowledge, and technical cooperation to countries and their donors and investors;
- Be backed by a venture fund and a scaling-up fund;

- Facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise, both sectorally and temporally—by engaging rapid SWAT teams, short- and long-term expertise, coaches, mentors and facilitators;
- Use peer-, south-south cooperation, and advanced knowledge sharing approaches;
- Carefully adapt expertise and knowledge to country contexts and typologies (e.g., Small Island Development States, Least Developed Countries, Middle Income Countries, etc.); and
- Focus rigorously on best practices for effective capacity development, emphasizing demand-driven and client-owned processes, sequencing results over time, and honest underpinnings of self-assessments and evidence.

A Rio+20 capacity development facility

The service lines of the facility should include:

- *Helping countries to optimize institutional structures and arrangements for evidence-based inter-sectoral policy coordination, and for integrated planning and resource allocation.* This service line would help countries determine how to best coordinate the national and the local; policy design and implementation; environmental, social and economic ministries; and public, private, and civil society bodies.
- *Assisting countries to manage risks around vertical funds, particularly in terms of project management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, verification, and reporting.* By creating virtuous circles of win-win possibilities, this service line could help deliver ‘value for money’ for partner countries, donors, and private investors.
- *Supporting multi-stakeholder engagement, by creating including private sector and civil society groups representatives in the formulation of policies of commercial and environmental interest.* This service line would emphasize coalition, network, and partnership building, and conflict management.
- *Supporting champions and change drivers.* This service line would strengthen national capacities for leadership development, mentoring, ethics and values training, gender sensitivity, and the like. Operating spaces for change leaders and champions—to convene them nationally and across boundaries, to exchange best practices and lessons learned on platforms for reflection, alignment, and strategizing—could also be created.

The service typology of the facility could include:

- The deployment of capacity development and leadership facilitators (coaches, mentors, peers) accompanied by

Capacity development in action: Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia

Tonle Sap in Cambodia is one of Asia’s largest freshwater lakes. Fed by the Mekong River, it covers 13,000 square kilometers during rainy season; some 3 million people live in its basin.

In the 1990s, Tonle Sap began to silt over due to deforestation and sediment run-off; commercial fishing depleted fish stocks and was putting local fishermen out of their livelihood. An increasingly poor lake-dependent community was having a destructive dependency on the basin’s ecosystem.

A number of large development agencies stepped in to help; Capacity 21 facilitated rapid ‘community dialogues’ and then brokered meetings with local policy makers. The Ministry of Fisheries and Planning Commission engaged in a ‘reinforcement coalition’ with the Ministry of Environment to make policies in an integrated fashion. The Association of Commercial Fisherfolk was trained in sustainable fishery management and on employing subsistence fisherfolk. Local change champions were supported in ensuring that no side encroached on the rights of another side, and in resolving disputes when they arose. The entire initiative was led by Cambodians; very few international experts were involved.

This process occurred at a time when facilitative pathways methodologies for capacity development were still in their infancy. Since then, the global body of knowledge on capacity development has grown, thanks in part to private sector experiences with scaling up.

Tonle Sap Lake is today healthy and its resources are managed sustainably. As such, it can serve as a case study showing how small investments in capacity development can have large payoffs for sustainable development.

technical experts and advisers, with varied timelines as per demand and with clear exit strategies; and

- Customized, easy-to-use knowledge applications and sharing packages tailored to specific countries, or to country typologies.

Financing a Rio+20 capacity development facility

This facility’s resource requirements are estimated to be in the \$500 million range, for a 10-year period. This figure includes a:

- Venture capital fund, to finance the testing of innovative concepts; and
- Scaling up fund, to finance the extension of pilot projects to the national level.

Acknowledgements: Author: Niloy Banerjee, Deputy Director and Senior Policy Advisor, UNDP Capacity Development Group

Contact Information: niloy.banerjee@undp.org