

## **Development of Framework for Evaluating Capacity Development Initiatives in International Development.**

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Over the last 10 to 15 years, the focus of development assistance has moved to provision of support for what is known as capacity building (or capacity development). This move is due to individual agencies recognising the dependency of sustainability on capacity development and to the broader articulation of the importance of capacity development by the United Nations as expressed in a range of resolutions by the General Assembly (United Nations, 2004 and 2005).

As a result, capacity development is now core to the activities supported by most development assistance agencies (Whyte, 2004). It is estimated that at least 25% of donor funds are committed to capacity development (Whyte, 2004; Watson, 2006). In some cases, this is even higher. For example, 50% of World Bank funds for Africa support capacity development (World Bank, 2005).

However, capacity and the development of capacity are rarely evaluated. The World Bank (World Bank, 2005, xiv) notes that most of its capacity development activities “are not routinely tracked monitored or evaluated”. In many cases what is measured is at an output level rather than at an outcome level and primarily serves an accountability function (Whyte, 2004; Carman, 2007; Taut, 2007). Where capacity development had been evaluated, the quality of the evaluation was often found to be poor (Forss and Carlsson, 1997; Picciotto, 2003; Bollen et. al., 2005; Watson, 2006).

From this, it can be seen that there is a need for a simple, clear framework to support the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development of international development assistance initiatives. Lusthaus et. al. (1999, 15) stated that the specific characteristics of capacity development activities meant there was a “need to develop a unique framework for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of capacity development”. In a review of the approaches by over 10 major donors to monitoring and evaluation of capacity development in the environment sector, La fontaine (2000, 89) concluded “Further development of tools to support monitoring and evaluation for (capacity development) is crucial”. As recently as 2006, Morgan (2006, 4) identified that “practitioners still appear to be searching for tested tools or frameworks that can help them with ... monitoring and evaluation (of capacity development)”.

This paper presents a framework for monitoring and evaluation of capacity building activities. It has been specifically developed for use on development assistance activities and integrates program logic, dimensions of capacity development and time.

### **Theoretical Basis**

The Framework is based on program logic and UNDP’s (1997) four-level model for capacity development. It has been strongly influenced by Kirkpatrick’s four level model for evaluating training – recognising that training is only one element of capacity building.

### ***Program Logic***

Since the 1980's, donors have based project evaluations on various program logic models. While there continues to be much debate about the usefulness of this, there is no indication that donors are likely to move away from program logic in one form or another over the foreseeable future.

Program logic provides a simple model of what it is believed that a program will do and the underlying "theory" of why this will occur in a specific situation. This cause-and-effect relationship can be thought of as a hypothesis of how the inputs will solve a particular problem and ultimately lead to the planned goal. This hypothesis can then be tested as the program is implemented.

The outcomes are generally at three levels: short, intermediate or long term. Short term outcomes change the participant's (an individual or group) attitude, knowledge or skill (Kellogg, 2004, 18; Coffman, 1999). Kellogg (2004, 18) suggests that they will be achieved within one to three years. Intermediate outcomes occur over four to six years and lead to a change in behaviour (Kellogg, 2004, 18) and result in application of best management practice or appropriate technology (Coffman 1999). Long term outcomes (sometimes referred to as impacts) are the social, economic or environmental changes being sought over a seven to ten year period (Israel 2001, 2; Kellogg, 2004 19) which are reflected in a change in the program participant's status or conditions (Taylor-Powell, 2001, Jones and Henert, 2001, in Gale et al. 2006)

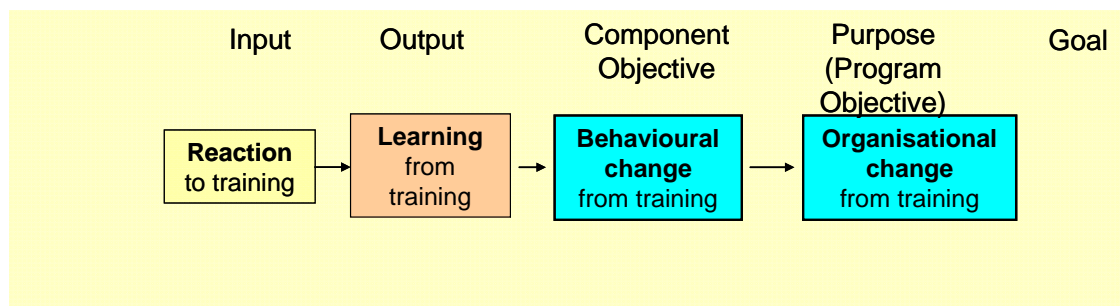
Having identified the linkage in the outcomes hierarchy, the places at which measurement is required to monitor performance can be identified and performance measures developed (McLaughlin and Jordan, 1999, 255; Iverson, 2003). This provides the basis for evaluation.

### ***Kirkpatrick's four level model for evaluating training***

Kirkpatrick's model was presented in 1975 (Kirkpatrick, 1975) and still remains the most widely used model for evaluating training. The four levels (Figure 1) are:

1. Reaction - what the participants thought and felt about the training.
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or skills, or changes in attitude.
3. Behaviour - extent of on-the-job behaviour change by the participant as a consequence of the training. and capability improvement and implementation/ application.
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the participant's performance. This is the impact of the training on the participant's organisation and their clients.

Figure 1: Graphical representation of Kirkpatrick's four level model for evaluating training aligned to outcome levels used by AusAID.



Achievement of each lower level is required before a higher level can be achieved.

### ***Capacity Development***

In international development, capacity development has evolved out of a range of approaches to the provision of development assistance in developing countries. This has been well documented (Lusthaus et. al., 1999, 2; La fontaine, 2000, 124; Whyte, 2004, 19). Today, no universal definition of capacity has been established. As Morgan (2006) said "Capacity can be everything or nothing, when it is claimed to be everything, it adds up to nothing". This sentiment has been echoed by others over a long period (Lusthaus, 1999).

However, across the various definitions currently in use there are many common elements. These comprise: inclusion of skills and capabilities; self-reliance/sustainability over the long term through an ability to respond to challenges; and its application to individuals, communities, organisations and even societies (Alliance, 2002; Woodland et. al., 2002; UNDG, 2002; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's definition (2006) that capacity is "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully" captures these elements in a simple definition that is widely accepted. It is used in this paper<sup>1</sup>.

The terms capacity building, capacity development and capacity enhancement also have no universally agreed definition, the meaning varies widely among users and the terms are often used interchangeably (Whyte, 2004; Watson, 2006). Capacity building is seen by some as implying that the capacity is built from a zero capacity base whereas the term capacity development reflects the improvement of existing capacities (UNDG, 2002). The World Bank states that capacity enhancement adds a time dimension to capacity (Mizrahi, 2004), but does not go on to define it more specifically. In practice, the words are used interchangeably by most agencies.

To capture the notion that capacity already exists and development assistance is building on what is already there, the term "capacity development" will be used in this paper. The Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) (2004) definition will be used: capacity development is ". . . the process of developing competencies and capabilities in

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP's (UNDG, 2002) definition is the other commonly used definition. 'Capacity refers to the ability of individuals, communities, institutions, organizations, social and political systems to use the natural, financial, political, social and human resources that are available to them for the definition and pursuit of sustainable development goals.'

individuals, groups, organisations, sectors or countries which will lead to sustained and self generating performance improvement".

#### *UNDP's Four-Level Model for Capacity Development*

During the 1990s a number of models of capacity development were proposed (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1993; UNDP, 1997; Howe et. al., 1999; Alliance, 2003). These varied in approach and focus. The common element was that most recognised capacity development occurred across a range of levels, and was no longer constrained to the individual or even the organisation. Capacity development was seen to include institutions, networks, nations, societies and the enabling environment. The number of levels that were used varied, as did the point of entry for capacity development activities.

Over the last 10 years, UNDP's (1997) four-level model for capacity development emerged as the dominant model for capacity building. The levels in this model are: the individual, entity, interrelationships between entities (networks) and the enabling environment. This four-level model has been widely adopted by various agencies (AusAID, 2004; CIDA (Whyte, 2004), New Souths Wales Department of Health (Leeder, 2006)) and forms the basis of various three level models (DANIDA, 2002; World Bank, 2005; IMF (Whyte, 2004); OECD, 2005, UNDP, 2008).

I chose to retain the four levels as it ensures networks are explicitly identified. My experience has been that networks are often ignored in capacity development initiatives. By maintaining this explicit identification of networks I felt they may be less likely to be overlooked.

#### *Approaches to Evaluating Capacity Development in International Development*

The capacity development models do not include information that would support evaluation of capacity development initiatives. There is little practical guidance provided in how to evaluate capacity development activities. Most of what is provided does not include more specific information than the agencies' general guidance on conducting evaluations (Morgan, 2006). This can be seen in the documents produced by the UNDP (1997), Swedish International Development Cooperation (2004), UNDG (2006); and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2009). The exception to this is AusAID's staged approach to assess, plan and monitor capacity development (AusAID, 2006) which focuses on capacity development of the individual and their work group.

As has been noted previously, the quality of evaluations of capacity development initiatives is poor. In my experience, the most widespread issue would be the focus of evaluation of capacity development initiatives on activities and outputs (rather than outcome or impact), and/or evaluation of training outcomes. Reviews of evaluations of capacity development programs conducted by non-government organisations, bi-lateral agencies and multi-lateral organisations have all found similar weaknesses with the evaluations (Lusthaus et. al., 1999; Woodland et. al., 2002; UNDG, 2002; Watson, 2006; UNDP, 2008). These reviews consistently identified that evaluations needed to improve through:

- Consideration of the information needs of different audiences.
- Consideration of both the outcomes and the process.
- Clear and agreed expectations and indicators.
- Inclusive indicators that focus on both outcomes and progress in areas that can be influenced.
- Ensuring that the evaluation framework was flexible rather than fixed.

- Measuring progress and results in measures other than changed performance.
- Recognising that outcomes will not be achieved in a short time frame and often not until after the initiative has finished.
- Being realistic about what the evaluation could achieve and ensuring expectations are realistic.

A number of these reviews found elaborate evaluation frameworks may not be effective and may adversely impact the capacity development outcomes. Morgan (2006, 41) found that where formal evaluations of capacity development activities were effective:

- Existing and target capacities and indicators were clearly and unambiguously defined.
- Stakeholders were able and willing to honestly assess their own capacities.
- There was local ownership of the initiative and the evaluation.

However, he found that these circumstances are rarely encountered or created in donor-supported public sector capacity development interventions in developing countries.

## **The Framework**

### ***Development***

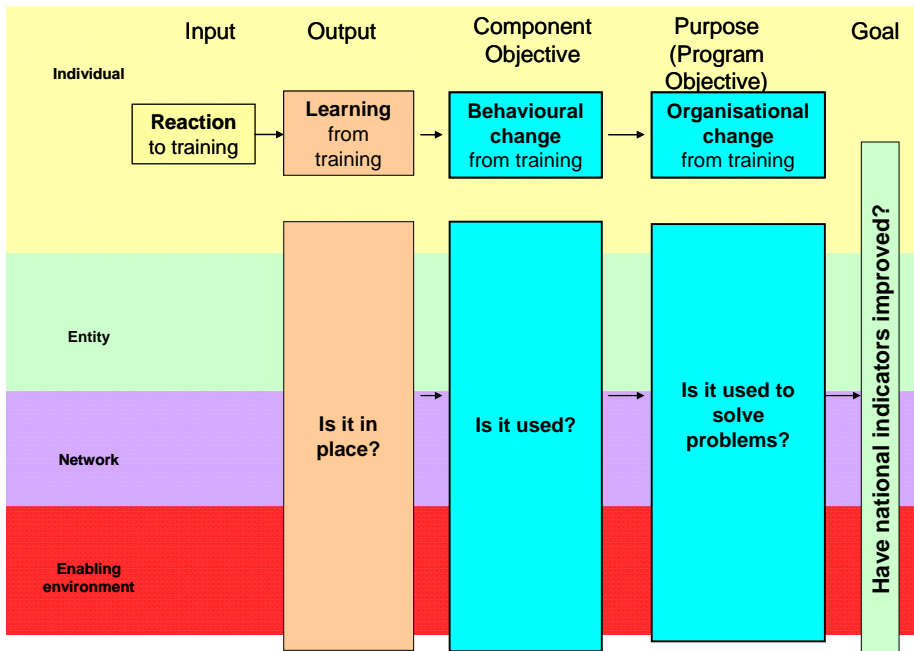
The levels used by Kirkpatrick for training were generalised to other aspects of capacity development (Figure 2):

- Whether learning had occurred was generalised to whether the output was actually in place. For training this would be learning, at the entity level it may be whether the required: systems, strategies, policies or resources are in place. For the network whether networks with relevant external bodies are in place. With the enabling environment it may be whether there was political commitment, legislative and regulatory framework and national structures in place.
- Whether behavioural change had resulted from the training was generalised to whether the output was being used/applied.
- Whether organisational change had resulted was generalised to whether the output was being used to address other problems or issues.

These levels were seen as corresponding to output and outcomes levels, and specifically output, component objective and program objective (or purpose) used by AusAID.

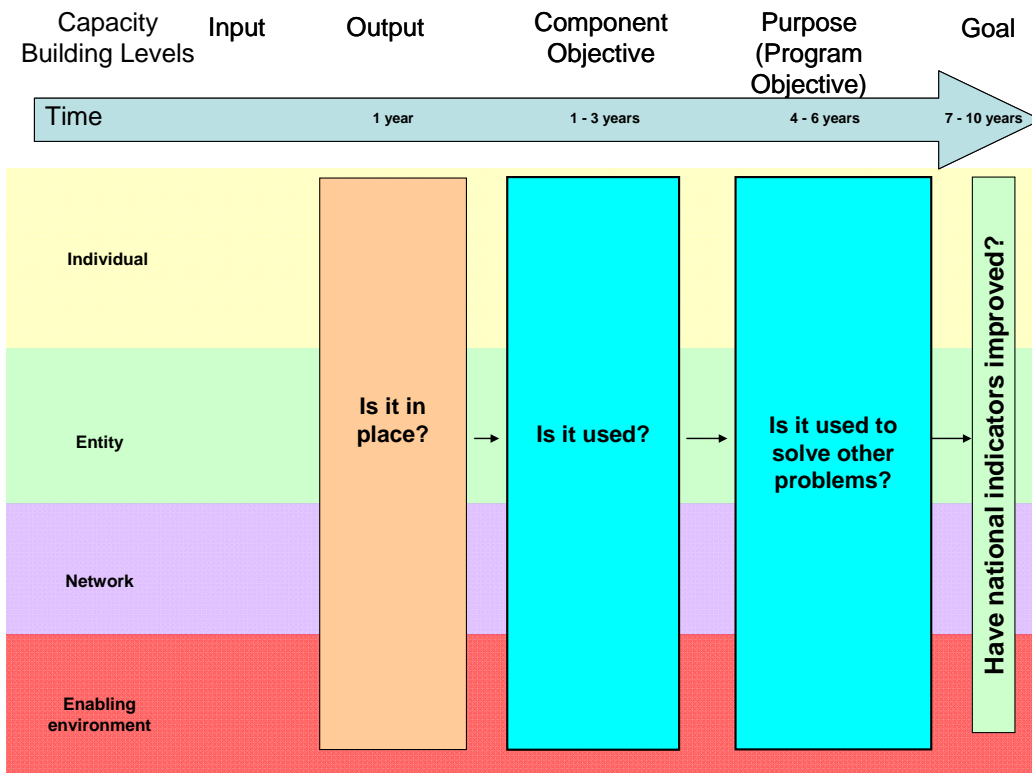
The concepts in program logic, UNDP's (1997) four-level model for capacity development and Kirkpatrick's four level model for evaluation of training were combined to produce a two-dimensional Framework. UNDP's four level model gave the vertical dimension and the program logic gave the horizontal dimension of the Framework.

Figure 2: Graphical representation of the expansion of Kirkpatrick's model for evaluating training to form the Framework for evaluating capacity development outcomes to outcome levels used by AusAID.



Explicit inclusion of time assists in clarifying expectations to all stakeholders (Figure 3). This should help overcome one of the areas of weakness identified in current evaluations of capacity development.

Figure 3: Graphical representation of the Framework for evaluating capacity development outcomes to outcome levels used by AusAID.



## **Application**

The Framework is first used to clarify and explicate what the initiative will/will not be doing. In doing this:

1. Identify/confirm what capacity development levels the initiative will be supporting.
2. Identify/confirm the expected outputs and outcomes in relation to each of these capacity development levels.
3. Gain agreement for these from relevant stakeholders (if not done previously).
4. Place all agreed outputs and outcomes for the initiative on the Framework at the appropriate level.
5. Develop the logic to show how these outputs link through to the agreed outcomes.
6. Identify any gaps which may impact capacity development outcomes.
7. Gain agreement for the logic and acceptance that the initiative will/will not address these gaps from relevant stakeholders.
8. The Framework is then used to clarify and explicate what will be monitored and evaluated. In doing this:
9. Develop indicators to monitor progress. These should be structured to ask:
  - At the output level: is it in place?
  - At the immediate outcome level/component objective level: is it used?
  - At the intermediate outcome level/program objective level: is it used to solve other problems?
10. Develop a graphical display of these on the Framework.
11. Gain agreement for the indicators from relevant stakeholders.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan should be developed which documents the tools used to collect and analyse data, responsibilities and timelines for these activities. Reporting should also be agreed.

As the initiative is monitored, progress towards enhanced capacity can be demonstrated as each of the four levels moves along the horizontal dimension of the Framework. The monitoring must ask whether there has been progress between output/outcome levels. If there has, why? This will provide information to address whether this initiative or other factors contributed to the progress. It will also identify which aspects of the support provided by this initiative were effective. This will assist in improving knowledge about effective capacity building approaches.

If there hasn't been progress, the question asked is why not? This may identify gaps in the program logic or weakness at other levels (vertical dimension) which are preventing capacity development progress. Stakeholders must then consider how these issues will be addressed. If the decision is made that they won't be addressed, continuation of support to the areas where progress is prevented would need to be reconsidered.

This will also identify capacity development approaches which are not proving effective. The reasons for this should be considered and alternative approaches identified. Again, this will assist in improving knowledge about ineffective capacity building approaches.

The Framework is not fixed. It is designed to focus attention on both progress and each of the four levels that have been broadly agreed as necessary for successful capacity development. Where progress is not as planned, changes in the support provided/approach would be adopted, and therefore the design and Framework would change.

### **Application of the Framework to the Community Sector Program (CSP) in Solomon Islands**

The AusAID funded Community Sector Program (CSP) commenced in February 2005 with a purpose “to build capacity for self-reliance within communities, civil society organisations and service providers”. This Program was to build on the previous Community Peace and Restoration Fund (CPRF) which was established in November 2000 to promote peace, reconciliation and reintegration of communities through provision of small-scale, high impact activities. The incomplete activities from CPRF were transferred to CSP to complete. It is being managed by GHD Hassall.

CSP introduced a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in early 2009. It was agreed that the Framework should emphasise capacity development and enable progress (or lack of progress) towards capacity development to be identified. The capacity development monitoring and evaluation framework discussed in this paper was used.

Prior to its application, the program logic was reviewed and revised. It was decided that with only one year of the Program remaining, the broad Program structure should not be adjusted, only clarified. This led to the purpose being clarified as: To build capacities required to enable communities to meet their development needs. The program logic and objectives at a Component level were also clarified.

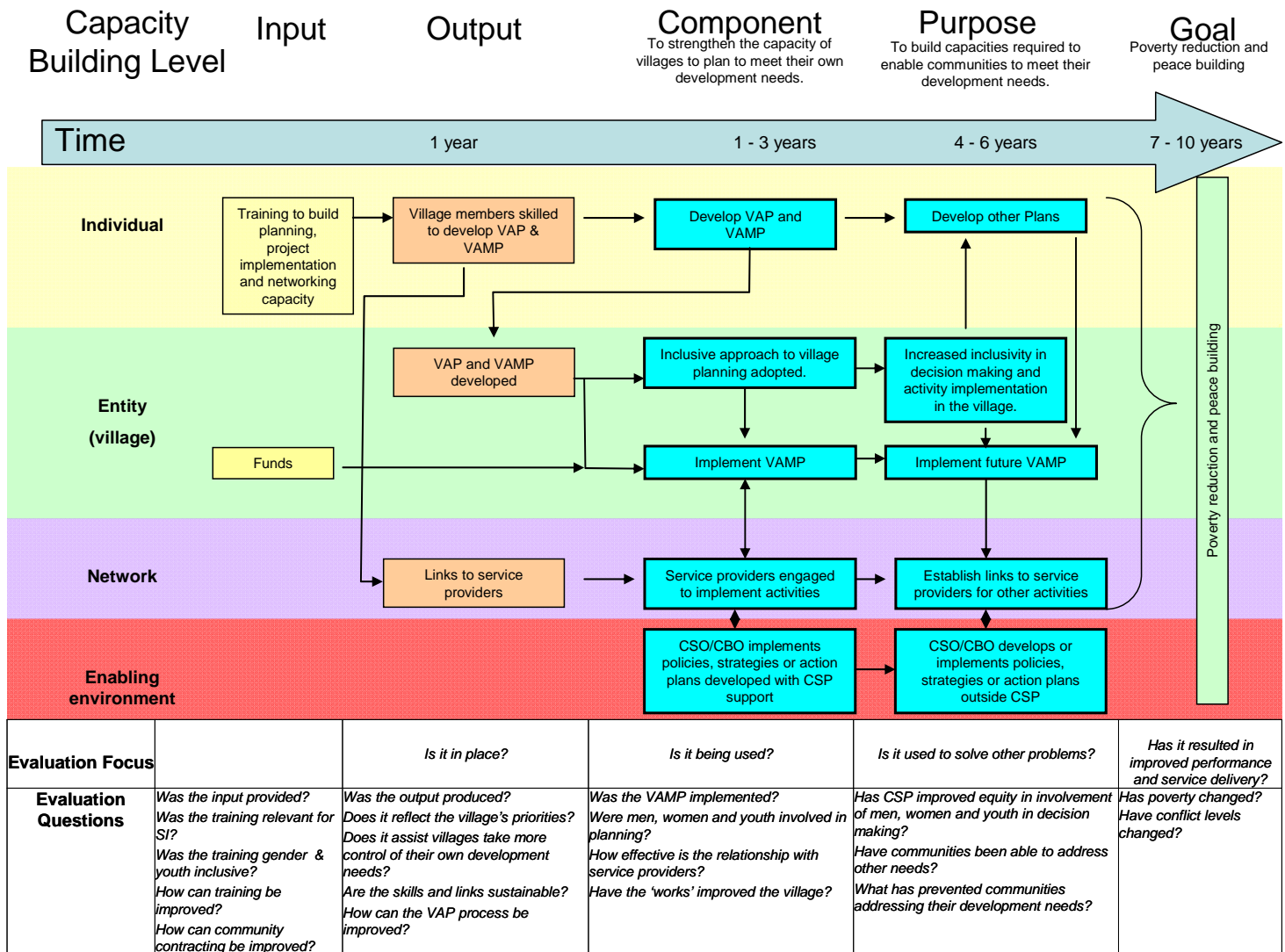
The program logic was then reflected graphically in a 4x4 framework which aligned the logical framework and capacity development elements. For clarity, this was done for each of CSP’s components (Figure 4). In developing this framework it became clear that the four elements of capacity building (enabling environment, networks, entity/organisation and individual) were not addressed by some components in sufficient depth, or at all.

The key evaluation questions were then developed (Figure 4). These were designed to focus on the questions: is it in place (output level), is it used (component level), and has it been used in a different context (purpose level)? From these, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and detailed Plan were developed and are now being implemented.

The relationship between time and outcomes is explicitly identified. It clearly shows the longer times required to achieve higher order outcomes. This demonstrates the necessity of the evaluation to address whether the path CSP is on can be expected to achieve the goal over time, rather than whether the goal has been achieved or not.



Figure 4: Capacity building monitoring and evaluation framework for Component 1 (Villages) for CSP.



The framework has only been used for a short period of time and not from the start of the Program. As a result, many of the expected benefits will not be evidenced during its implementation. However the following benefits appear to have arisen:

- Areas where capacity development was not being addressed were identified.
- Helped clarify what was meant by capacity development (the term was often used synonymously with training).
- Helped clarify key evaluation questions to ask for each hierarchy level. This has resulted in a much clearer and more focussed approach to evaluation.
- Improved understanding of the purpose of the evaluation.

- Improved the team's commitment to evaluation.

At this stage no negatives have arisen as a result of the use of the Framework.

These benefits have been achieved through: the graphical presentation, explicit representation of each element of capacity development, and use of one question to focus evaluation at each hierarchical level (is it in place, is it used, and has it been used in a different context?). However, other factors may account for this as well.

## Future

Over the next two years I hope to test and refine this Framework on several capacity development programs with the hope that it may provide the simple "tested ... framework that can help (practitioners) with ... monitoring and evaluation (of capacity development)" that Morgan (2006, 4) calls for.

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