

Orange-Senqu River Awareness Kit

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Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): Capacity Development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2006) define capacity and capacity development as follows:

- **“Capacity”** is understood as the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully
- **“Capacity development”** is understood as the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time

Capacity development is dependent on the quality of institutions and the enabling environment the institutions exist within, which includes incentives and good governance practices (OECD 2006).

Effective capacity development needs to take into account the different types of capacity, including the individual, organisational and institutional framework levels.

- **Individual level** is the development of the human resource capacities e.g. through training programmes
- **Organisational level**, is the development of the organisational capacity e.g. mandates, structure and procedures of a particular organisation
- **Institutional framework level** includes the development of the overall system, the “rule of the game” which e.g. is the national laws and policies

Capacity building (development) implies that “people, instead of plans or structures, are drivers for change and performance” (Pres 2008). Capacity development is a long-term process that includes training, dialogue, networking and advisory services (InWEnt 2006). It requires a flexible approach, adapted and customised to meet organisational and individual needs.

Many river basin organisations are not fully-equipped to deal with the complex and dynamic nature of transboundary water management. Challenges include excessive bureaucracy (which results in over-regulation), resourcing issues with respect to staff, programming that is technically oriented rather than strategic, and weak decision-making and conflicting priorities (Pres 2008).

Capacity development, in the context of a transboundary river basin, requires the following core components (Pres 2008):

- **Professional knowledge:** Managerial aspects of water, including the financial, strategic and business planning
- **Methodological competence:** Human resources development and organisational performance improvement (i.e. training-the-trainers and coaching)
- **Regional cooperation:** Networking between water sector institutions and stakeholders within a particular area
- **Training-needs assessment, monitoring, and evaluation:** Feedback loop to address new capacity development requirements
- **Public relations and awareness:** Creating awareness among the general public about pressing water management and use issues
- **Communities of practice:** Sharing best practices and lessons learned to revise future programs

Capacity Development Steps

The OECD (2006) outlines four main steps involved in capacity development:

- 1) Understanding the International and Country Contexts:** Understanding the context sheds light on the enabling environment and the incentive structures within a country. Conducting an *institutional analysis, power analysis or drivers of change analysis*, as well as analysing the role of external and internal stakeholders can help provide information on the context for capacity development at the country and individual levels.
- 2) Identifying and Supporting Sources of Country-Owned Change:** Countries must lead capacity development initiatives. Capacity assessments should focus on answering the question “capacity development for what” rather than supporting generic capacity development programs. There must be high-level commitment to policy frameworks for capacity development, and focus on building capacity of organisations that could have the highest impact and generate spill-over benefits to other organisations and individuals.
- 3) Delivering Support:** The effectiveness of capacity development initiatives is enhanced by understanding the institutional constraints and ensuring there is a common vision for capacity development outcomes. Engaging the skills and resources of a wide range of national organisations is important, including Non-Governmental Organisations, think-tanks and the private sector. Capacity development must involve not only skill development, but also organisational and institutional changes may be required to effectively put into practice the new skills and resources.
- 4) Learning from Experiences and Sharing Lessons:** Capacity development initiatives should build upon the lessons learned at each of the three levels of capacity development: individual, organisational and enabling



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environment, with a particular emphasis on the enabling environment. Monitoring of the intended outcomes of programs is critical to understanding program effectiveness at both the individual and organisational levels.

Key references for more information on capacity development, guidelines and needs assessments can be accessed at the [OECD website](#) .

[Next: Organisations Supporting Capacity Development in IWRM](#) ►

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