



OED REACH

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Based on *World Bank Support for Capacity Building in Africa*.

World Bank Support for Capacity Building in Africa

- The Bank has made its support for capacity building in Africa more relevant by extending its traditional focus beyond building organizations and individual skills to strengthening institutions and demand for improved public services, and by shifting to programmatic support. Still, most support for capacity building in country programs remains fragmented—designed and managed project by project. This makes it difficult to capture cross-sectoral issues and opportunities, and to learn lessons across operations.
- The challenges of capacity building vary markedly across countries and sectors. While the Bank is moving to better customize its capacity building approaches to country conditions, it needs to develop sector-specific guidance on diagnosing capacity needs and evaluating capacity building measures.
- The Bank does not apply the same rigorous business practices to its capacity building work that it applies in other areas. Its tools—notably technical assistance and training—are not effectively used, and its range of instruments—notably programmatic support, Economic and Sector Work, and activities of the World Bank Institute—are not fully utilized. Moreover, most activities lack standard quality assurance processes at the design stage, and they are not routinely tracked, monitored, and evaluated.

African countries need to improve the performance of their public sectors if they are going to achieve their goals of growth, poverty reduction, and the provision of better services for their citizens. Between 1995 and 2004, the Bank provided some \$9 billion in lending and close to \$900 million in grants and administrative budget to support public sector capacity building in Africa. This evaluation assesses Bank support for public sector capacity building in Africa over these past 10 years. It is based on six country studies, assessments of country strategies and operations across the Region, and review of the work of the World Bank Institute, the Institutional Development Fund, and the Bank-supported African Capacity Building Foundation.

Main Findings

Changes in approach have made the Bank's capacity building support more relevant

Conscious of the limited impact of its capacity building support in the face of Africa's still-weak public sectors, the Bank has progressively broadened its support to include the strengthening of public institutions, with emphasis in Africa on public financial management, decentralization, and governance. It has also increased its range of lending instruments for delivering capacity building support. These changes are relevant because they recognize that capacity building is a long-term process requiring a systemic approach and both effective demand and supply for improved public sector performance.

In the Africa Region, all recent country strategies have identified public sector capacity building as a core objective. They are shifting to sectorwide programs and budget support, which set broad strategic frameworks for identifying long-term capacity building needs. Some also include new multisector projects that address capacity building issues within and across ministries and levels of government. These new efforts may help authorities prioritize capacity building activities and donor support.

But even with these improvements, the Bank's support for capacity building in Africa remains less effective than it could be. This evaluation finds four areas in need of strengthening.

Most capacity support remains fragmented.

Most capacity building support is designed and managed operation by operation. This makes it difficult to capture cross-sector issues, and to learn lessons across operations. Many capacity building activities are founded on inadequate needs assessments and lack appropriate sequencing of measures aimed at institutional and organizational change and individual skill building.

Sector-specific capacity building strategies need strengthening.

The challenges of capacity building vary across sectors as well as across countries. The sectoral challenges reflect variations in such factors as the power of interested groups, and the labor intensity and decentralization of service provision. While the Bank is moving to better customize its capacity building approaches to country conditions, it has devoted inadequate effort to deriving lessons along sectoral dimensions and fostering country-led capacity building planning within sector programs.

Tools and instruments could be more effectively and fully utilized.

The Bank's traditional tools—technical assistance and training—have often proved ineffective in helping to build sustained public sector capacity. Economic and sector work does not contribute to public sector capacity building as much as it could. Programmatic support has been more effective in enhancing strategic planning than in improving sector management and service delivery. The World Bank Institute has not yet completed its shift in focus from individual lending to capacity building.

Quality assurance is inadequate

The Bank does not apply the same rigorous business practices to its capacity work that it applies in other areas. Although capacity building is a stated corporate priority, most activities lack standard quality assurance processes at the design stage, and capacity building interventions are not routinely tracked, monitored, and evaluated.

Recommendations

These findings underscore the importance of treating capacity building in Africa as a core objective and ensuring that Bank support is country-owned, results-oriented, and evidence-based. The evaluation recommends that:

- The Bank, at the corporate level, should strengthen its knowledge base and amplify its capacity building framework to help countries a) prioritize capacity building activities and guide donor support; b) link institutional, organizational, and human capacity developments; and c) transform traditional capacity building tools to improve results. It should also ensure that guidelines and processes are in place for self- and independent evaluation of Bank interventions.
- Sector and thematic leadership should develop sector-specific guidance on diagnosing public sector capacity needs, enhancing incentives for sector performance improvements, and monitoring and evaluating interventions.
- Regional Senior Management should ensure that CAS processes are used effectively to help countries identify and strengthen the capacities they need to plan, implement, and measure the results of their poverty reduction strategies. They should also ensure that all operations that aim to build public sector capacity are based on adequate assessments of capacity needs and have ways to monitor, and evaluate results.
- The Bank should reassess what role training should play in its capacity building support, how it should be provided, and what should be the respective roles of a central training unit and Regional programs in any future support for this activity.



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