

**Børne & Ungdomsnetværket, Danmark
Children & Youth Network, Denmark
BU-Net, Denmark**

**CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
IN
NETWORKS AND BEYOND**

**AN
EXPLORATION
OF
CONCEPTS AND MEASURES**

**September 2005
Final Report
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Foreword – in Danish:

Kapacitetsudvikling er et centralt indsatsområde for Børne- og Ungdomsnetværket, hvorfor styregruppen har ønsket at afdække begrebet gennem en kortlægning af relevant litteratur. Evaluering af Børne- og Ungdomsnetværket, fase 2, har eksplicit anbefalet netværket at iværksætte en begrebsafklarings-proces:

”Det anbefales at iværksætte et mindre studie af, hvorledes deltagerorganisationerne søger at omsætte individuel læring og erfaringsopsamling til en tilsvarende proces på organisationsniveau, d.v.s hvorledes vidensdelingen og kapacitetsudviklingen institutionaliseres” (BogU netværksevaluering 2004, fase 2, side 7).

Formålet med nærværende studie har været at afklare, hvad begrebet dækker, og hvilke mekanismer der virker i forhold til kapacitetsudvikling på henholdsvis individ, gruppe, organisation og netværks-niveau.

Styregruppen er ganske begejstret for resultatet, som sætter fokus på, at ethvert netværk - for at lykkes med sit forehavende - nødvendigvis må forholde sig til den enkelte organisations tilgang til kapacitetsudvikling og læring (samt systemer og procedurer for dette). Studiet skelner mellem den enkeltes kompetence (individ) og organisationens kapacitet. Et fokus på **den menneskelige og organisatoriske bro** mellem netværket og medlemsorganisationen, men også mellem medlemsorganisationen og dens partnere i Syd, er centralt for at den kapacitetsudvikling, som netværket kan tilbyde, lykkes.

Studiet søger endvidere at indkredse de særlige forhold, som gør sig gældende, når man skal lave kapacitetsopbygning med organisationer, der arbejder med børn og unge som fokus: hvordan inddrages børn og unge?, hvordan tages børn og unges kompetencer i betragtning? Og i hvilken udstrækning afhænger dette af den voksne (professionelle udviklingsarbejders) evne til at vurdere og støtte børn og unges kompetenceudvikling?

Rapporten foreligger **på engelsk**, idet den så også kan deles med partnere i Syd!

Vi ønsker god læselyst!

**Styregruppen
Børne og Ungdomsnetværket
September 2005**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BU-Net	: Children and Youth Network, Denmark
CB	: Capacity Building
CD	: Capacity Development
CEDAW	: Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CESCR	: Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CPR	: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CRC	: Children's Rights Convention
HR	: Human Rights
KAB	: Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviour
KM	: Knowledge Management
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
MDG	: Millennium Development Goals
M&E	: Monitoring and Evaluation
OD	: Organisational Development
PME	: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PRSP	: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RBA	: Rights-based Approach
Sida	: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TOR	: Terms of Reference
WB	: World Bank
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme

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- III. Organisational strengthening
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Danish Children & Youth Network, BU-Net, has decided to initiate a brief exploration of concepts and measures regarding capacity building and capacity development. This initiative is a reflection of BU-Net's overarching mandate of facilitating capacity development among member organisations.

Moreover, the initiative is grounded in the finding of recent evaluations, that while the overall performance of the BU-Net has been very positive, there is a need to look closer at “how member organisations are transforming individual learning and experiences into a learning process at the organisational level – that is how knowledge management and capacity development are being institutionalised” (BU-Net Evaluation, 2004, Phase II, p. 7).

Mandate of the BU-Net

The Danish Children & Youth Network is a network of about 30 Danish NGOs working with children and youth programmes in the Global South. The overarching aim of the network is to “strengthen and improve the Danish development aid to children and youth in order to strengthen the position of children and youth in civil society in the South. The objectives of the BU-Net is

- Exchange of experience and lessons among members
- Documentation of lessons and best practices
- Development of strategies and methods in working with children and youth
- Capacity development through advisory services and training courses
- Coordination of activities in the NGO Community and vis-à-vis the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Purpose

The overarching purpose of this report is to equip the BU-Net Secretariat and members better in pursuing the capacity development mandate and in developing strategic measures that will be to this effect. The TOR cover the following questions:

- How is capacity development defined within international development assistance
- How is the relationship between individual and organisation in capacity development processes? Which factors are central in the dialectics between learning and organisational praxis?
- Is it possible to identify a capacity development field for organisations working with and for children and youth?
- How can the question of children' participation and “children's evolving capacities” be addressed in relation to organisational capacity development?
- What factors are essential in a rights based approach to capacity development?
- What can and should a professional network focus at in the efforts at enhancing member's capacity development?
- Is it possible to identify concrete experiences among members with CD, which can be shared within the network?

While all levels of CD will be covered, it has been clarified that the focus of this present assignment is on capacity building in the relationship between BU-Net and member organisations. The question of CD measures unfolding in the relationship between member organisations and local partners/target

groups may be subject to later study and consultation¹. In the relationship between BU-Net and members the guiding question is that of facilitating the institutionalisation within the organisations of the learning generated within or by the network.

The focus on child specific capacities shall be explored as much as possible within the limited time available (two weeks).

Conduct of the Study

During two meetings the BU-Net Coordinator and the Chair of the Board have briefed the Consultant regarding the background and purpose of the assignment and the scope envisaged. The Consultant has contributed to the development of TOR and especially the elaboration of the perspective from an individual learning approach to the inclusion of the dialectics with organisational praxis.

The review will follow the scope and logic of the TOR starting with a short overview of CD concepts in development programming at various levels, including an overview of typologies of capacities followed by an account of some of the critical (success) factors for CD initiatives underlining the interrelatedness between individual learning and organisational praxis. This will provide the platform for zooming in on the field of capacities relating to development of youth and children. In this connection the capability approach offered by the Rights Based Approach will be explored including that of children's evolving capacities.

The methodology has been determined by TOR and is mainly based on literature review. As consultation with members regarding a mapping and assessment of organisational praxis is envisaged after the conduct of the desk study it has not been possible to identify concrete CD experiences of members in this phase. However, the Consultant has consulted with the Steering Group of the BU-Net and drawn on the expertise offered by the two resource persons assigned.

Output

In line with the briefings given by the BU-Net, the Consultant considers the output to be threefold: The actual delivery of this overview report pertaining to TOR, the initial engagement of the BU-Net Board in the reflections regarding ways to improve on the achievement of one of the prime objectives of the BU-Net and finally laying the foundation for a more detailed outline of TOR for the consultation and assessment regarding organisational praxis.

Given the very heterogeneous nature of the member organisations of the Children and Youth network's, the Consultant wishes to draw attention to the particular challenges connected with the communication of the findings and recommendations of the desk review. In this report the meaning of capacity development has been explored and clarified as required in TOR. Moreover reference to BU-Net has been established throughout. Still, it will be relevant to consider the most relevant communication style whereby capacity development issues and discussions become accessible to the majority of the member organisations. This report may thus be synthesised into short briefs, flyers or lunch-debates. This may be considered as forming part of phase two.

1.1 Summary

The perusal of literature and documents relating to CD has confirmed that there is a wealth of thinking on capacity building and organisational strengthening, but relatively little on the processes and

¹ However, many of the observations pertaining to the members relation/capacity to interact with the BU net may be considered as relevant in the relationship between the northern members and their southern counterparts

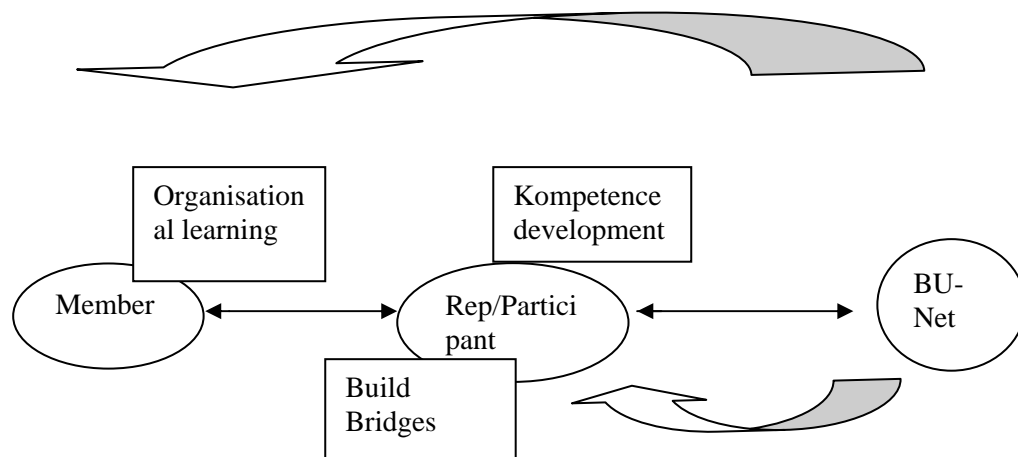
Capacity Development – an exploration

enabling factors in the relationship between Network and member organisation. The question of how individual learning through networking is institutionalised into organisational praxis is neither much illuminated nor explored. The same applies to the question of how lessons of individual members are documented and shared to the benefit of the Network.

The boundaries and depths of the particular capacity field within children and youth are not easily defined and in constant development. However, broad agreement existing seems that such a capacity field can and should be identified – also in the case of the BU-Net.

Drawing on various pieces of work the tentative contours of a capacity development field, which encompasses the three levels; individual, organisational and network has been identified. In its generic form it emphasises the critical importance of

- the individual as the human bridge between the member organisation and the network
- the learning system within the organisation enabling it to contribute to, absorb and use knowledge generated in the network (the ‘capture and connectivity’ dimensions)
- the organisational bridges between network and members
- the exchange modalities in use in the Network
- the child and youth specific competencies defined



The importance of identifying the purposes and changes, which capacity development seek to contribute to is underscored by all contemporary works. Measuring the success of CD initiatives thus starts at the level of organisational praxis and ends at the level of changes envisaged in society; in the individual wellbeing of children or in the national policies in place regarding children and youth. The impact chain is thus quite long in the case of the BU-Net, where members frequently work through local partner organisations.

It is suggested for the BU-Net to draw upon this overview in

- making explicit the intended results (changes in members organisational praxis) of the CD measures
- defining better the measures adopted at various levels in light of the purpose
- invest in human and organisational bridges between Network and members
- act jointly on the question of organisational learning systems
- develop exchange modalities accordingly
- ground the child and youth specific expertise and skills in organisational praxis

It is also suggested that BU-Net considers talking about *improving volunteer and staff competencies* and *organisational learning* in the field of children and youth rather than the quite vague and broad term of capacity development.

2. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT - DEFINITIONS

The perusal of literature and manuals confirms the finding of the recent landscape analysis of capacity development conducted by Anne Whyte that there is a plethora of definitions and strategies at work. Let us start by clarifying the use of capacity development and capacity building. Capacity development normally refers to an endogenous process, (that may or may not be in need of support) Capacity building refers to the exogenous process in which Donors and other development agencies are involved². In this report the term capacity development will be used.

Definitions and strategies and not least the importance attached to capacity development have changed over time, from emphasis on expert advisory services and expatriate university trainings to contemporary more complex and systems oriented approaches with emphasis on knowledge management, learning organisations and capacity building via networks.

The BU-Net in itself is an expression of a broader trend where capacity development is frequently addressed by means of knowledge networks.

A recent study initiated by Danida uses the following definition:

We use 'capacity' to denote *the ability of an organisation to produce appropriate outputs*. This definition also applies to a sub-unit of an organisation (e.g. an accounting section producing reports and balance sheets) or a network of organisations (e.g. the ministry of health or finance, regional authorities and public hospitals involved in producing curative hospital-based health services). We thus use an exclusive *organisational* focus in which organisational capacity is broken down into elements. When assembled and interacting – as with the different parts of a car engine – they constitute a capacity, including when the engine is not actually running. When it is turned on, we also talk about *performance* in respect of producing outputs"(Danida, 2004).

The Danida Study also offers a critique of other definitions such as the UNDP's: "It defines capacity as "the ability of people, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives. Such a definition is difficult to distinguish from the general notion of development (Moore, 1995), and a meaningful operational specification of capacity is virtually impossible when the concept is used so broadly". Danida, 2004.

Below is a selection of definitions of capacity used by the various Donors including UNDP.

² However, there are Donors like Sida that uses Capacity Building to describe the endogenous processes.

Box 1

Donor definitions of capacity

UNDP (2003)

Capacity is the ability of individuals, organizations and societies to

Perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve goals.

U.N. (2002)

Capacity refers to the ability of individuals, communities, institutions, organizations, and 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.

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000)

Capacity refers to values, contacts and organizational and technical skills enabling countries, institutions, organizations and individuals from all sections of society to perform their tasks and achieve their development objectives.

SIDA (2000)

The concept of capacity is an overall concept for the conditions that must be in place—for example, knowledge, competence, and effective and development-oriented organizations and institutional frameworks—in order to make development possible. These conditions can change and the concept must therefore provide concrete content from case to case. (Whyte, 2004, p.24)

Donor definitions of capacity development

UNDP (2003)

Capacity development entails the sustainable creation, utilization and retention of capacity (as defined above), in order to reduce poverty, enhance self-reliance and improve people's lives.

United Nations (2002)

Capacity development or building is the process by which individuals, institutions and countries strengthen capacities or abilities. The United Nations and other external actors can assist this endogenous process, by:

- Focusing on enhancing the skills, knowledge and social capabilities available to individuals, institutions, and social and political systems, but also by

- Supporting their integration into the knowledge networks that help to sustain these capabilities, as well as

- Contributing to material and financial support necessary to apply the skills, knowledge and social capabilities.

UNICEF (1996)

Capacity development is any support that strengthens an institution's ability to effectively and efficiently design, implement and evaluate development activities according to its mission.

OECD-DAC (1999)

Capacity development is the process by which individuals, institutions and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems as well as set and achieve goals. It is premised on ownership, choices and self-esteem. The Millennium Development Goals, which target significant human development progress by 2015, create a critical framework for the outcomes of capacity development.

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000)

Capacity development refers to approaches, strategies, methods applied to increase the capacity of organizations and/or institutions. Capacity development is concerned with how to improve processes. This entails more than just defining inputs to which many donors still limit themselves.

CIDA (2002)

Activities, approaches, strategies and methodologies that help organizations, groups and individuals to improve their performance, generate development benefits and achieve their objectives over time. It often involves broad participation, building on local interests and expertise, offering opportunities for learning and linking at micro, meso and macro levels to build ownership and sustainability.

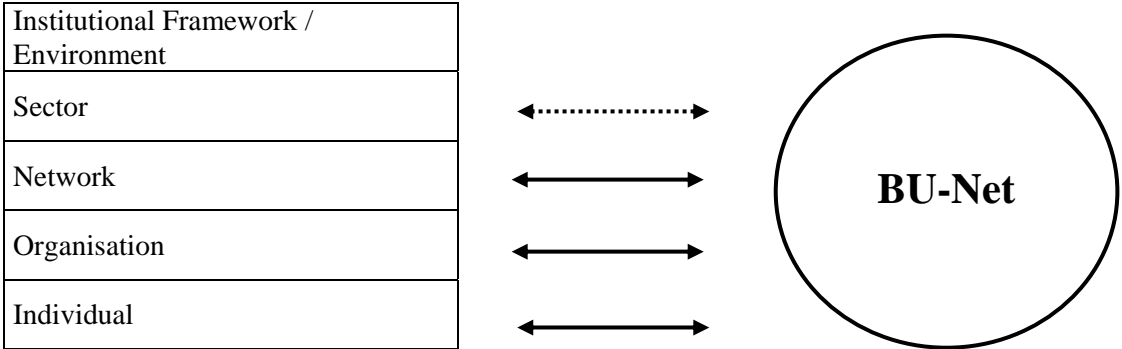
GTZ (2003)

GTZ sees capacity development as the process of strengthening the abilities or capacities of individuals, organizations and societies to make effective use of resources in order to achieve their own goals on a sustainable basis.

At page 6 some tentative suggestions of capacity development definitions useful for the BU-Net are considered.

Levels

Despite the diversity most agencies agree that CD unfolds at a number of levels (Whyte, 2004, p. 25):



The Danida definition is a special case, as it clearly states that CD relates to organisations and that capacity development is a question of enhancing organisational capacity (Danida, 2004)

In terms of levels of capacity development, the BU network in principle covers the three levels, individual, organisational and interagency. This study will mainly pursue the preliminary questions posed of how to move from the individual competence building to influencing organisational praxis.

We similarly see that the BU network squarely falls within one of the frequently used modalities for enhancing professional competencies, namely networks, while the BU-Net has made use of many of the other tools in a view to build competencies among network participants (publications, workshops, trainings, research, evaluations, etc) (Whyte, 2004, p. 38).

Within different sectors of work we see a variation of more detailed and sector specific capacity development definitions (ICT, HIV/AIDS, Higher Education etc) Also the RBA offers a capability approach, which will be considered at page 12.

Systems thinking

One of the dominant features of most contemporary CD thinking is the grounding of capacity development in systems theory. Individuals perform within an organisation, and this organisation operates within a wider system or sector, which again exists under or is framed by an overall framework. Whyte underlines that “We are thus dealing with nested system, and any intervention at one level needs to be cognizant of the interactions with other levels” (Whyte, 2004, p. 68). However, we may go even further in saying that very frequently the interaction will need to encompass several levels in order to arrive at the intended outcome.

Evaluations have generated the lesson, that building individual capacities will only be sustainable if the mother organisation is able to absorb and credit the new capacities or if the mother organisation is strengthened too.

In the development of TOR of this study the BU-Nets definitions of capacity development were enlarged from the individual learning perspective to encompassing also the organisational perspective. Thus, this review will explore further the dialectic between individual competence development and organisational praxis. The last level - the broader institutional framework/enabling environment - is addressed to a lesser extent. The BU-Net has in the past facilitated joint action influencing the official development policies regarding children and youth and ensured that children and youth are kept on the development agenda. However, the statutes of BU-Net do not provide room for BU-Net and its Board

to act as an independent voice with delegated powers from members to directly influence the broader institutional, financial and policy framework under which Danish BU-Net members operate.

However, it is certainly a recommendation that the BU-Net in the future considers what role it may possibly play at all three levels.

Purpose of Capacity Development

There seem to be no disagreement that capacity development concerns an improvement of capacities-irrespective of how these may have been defined and that CD is a positive thing. For what purpose is a much more contested matter. Yet, there are warnings that CD may be a black box that zips scarce and critical resources from other justified development purposes. There are also reminders that CD is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve a goal, a change. Generally speaking CD is defined in terms of improvement of performance – individual, organisational or inter-agency performance.

The review of literature and approaches suggest that most definitions of purpose is more or less linked to the level of CD, namely individual, organisational and inter-agency and we shall therefore zoom in on the capacity development definitions at each level.

Individual Capacities

There are many ways of understanding and categorising individual capacities. A very broad and general one, which at the same time carries an action perspective is the KAB model – Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviour, which is a much used model for planning and evaluation of training programmes. It may also be argued that it is inherently systems-sensitive in that the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour is also determined by the system in which the individual lives and works.

Another categorisation is based on the seven intellects/competencies, which is gaining much prominence within children's development and learning in many parts of the world as well as in human resource development and leadership development.

A third typology is much more sector/professionally oriented focussing as it does on the professional qualification within engineering, accounting, child counselling, etc. In many professional disciplines high levels of certification and standardization exists.

Finally, competence assessments – of both formal and informal competences – are becoming common ground, which seek to identify the real competence in doing the job or solving the problem. The real competence draws on the personal attitudes and skills, on the formal qualifications in actually performing in a given situation.

When talking about building the capacities of volunteers and staff working in member organisations of the BU-Net it clearly appear most relevant to focus on *competence* development and especially competence development relating to the engagement with children and youth in development programming, which is addressed at page 7.

Organisational capacities

Organisational capacities of the non-profit sector or NGO-sector are clustered differently according to the school of thought. In this field there is plenty of works and lessons within organisational analysis and organisational change. The mainstream within contemporary thinking relating to the NGO Development Sector may be said to be represented by ICConsult, Fowler, INTRAC and Oktagonen. Well know to several BU- network members is also the model used by Danida in the capacity assessments of Danish NGOs as part of the grant making procedure.

Danish NGO Capacity Assessments

- Capacity is understood broadly to encompass the total performance potential of individual and systemic resources of an organisation. The assessment will focus on:
 - i) *goals and strategies* of the organisations in relation to their overall vision (consistence, clarity, relevance, specificity, degree of focus)
 - ii) the *capacity to implement* in concordance with their vision, goals and strategies.
 - iii) the *added value* contributed by the NGO to the activities and/or the partners.
 - iiiii) the capacity to change, which implies a focus on the *learning capability* of the organisation in a broad sense. (Danida, Terms of Reference for Capacity Assessments)

ICConsult identifies 5 components as key in organisational analysis and thus for organisational capacity: Vision, Programmes, People, Structures and Procedures.

All components are interrelated because they have a strong mutual influence on each other. Organisational development can be seen as a permanent search for an optimal balance between the components. INTRAC has identified similar dimensions with emphasis on non-formal components: Identity, Legitimacy, Accountability, Leadership, Policy Intervention Process, Support Systems, Culture, and Resources. (INTRAC, 1993), while Fowler operates with two clusters of capacity: Firstly People, Structure Systems, Management and secondly Resources, Relationships and Results and Learning. (Fowler, 1997)

According to Fowler 'capacity' measures an organisation's performance in relation to those its capability to achieve what it sets out to do: to realise its mission. Capacity is thus always related to results.

The Danida Capacity study underlines the importance of the functional and political dimensions of organisational capacity, where the latter refers to power and loyalty systems, internal competition, etc. (Danida, 2004)

Oktagonen developed by Sida (Sida, 2002) uses

- Organisational Base: identity and structure
- Organisational Output: implementation and relevance
- Organisational Capacity development: Competence and Systems
- Organisational Relations: relations to target groups and to external actors

There is a host of organisational scans available – some of the most used ones in the NGO sector are mentioned in the references.

The four principal processes unfolding within an organisation is often understood to be:

1. thinking and learning (I/C Consults' addition to the INTRAC model)
2. doing
3. being
4. relating

Relating concerns the organisational capacities to establish and entertain institutional (inter-organisational) relationships, which is critical in the context of this study.

According to Fowler, this capacity is basically about organisational learning. Hereby we are brought into yet another but very related professional discipline – organisational learning and the learning organisation. However, it may be a good idea to consider the thinking and learning as a process in itself as it may or may not be taking place in inter-organisational settings.

Thinking and learning is indispensable for strategizing and avoiding repeated mistakes and enhancing performance. Organisation thinking and learning is not always visible at first sight, like ‘doing’ or ‘being’. An organisation can facilitate thinking and learning by installing appropriate systems and procedures, and by fostering a learning-supportive culture. Moreover, the management style, including the incentives and reward systems, supports or on the other hand blocks organisation learning. (IC Consult)

The learning systems or also called the knowledge management systems within organisations are key when considering how organisations engage in networks and how they contribute and how they absorb and institutionalise knowledge generated by or communicated by the Network.

Another critical capacity is the human resources – the staff/volunteers – that presently engage with the next level namely the network. As we shall see in the next section on key factors for success in CD, the individual /the participant in the network is the critical human bridge between organisation and network.

Inter-Agency Capacity /Network capacities

Surprising little has been written about network capacities (Nielsen, 2004) Normally, the capacities of a network with a secretariat is perceived in a functional manner (coordination, services provided, outreach, demand, etc.) However, their ability to impact on the members may rely on a number of non-functional factors, which are as important – namely trust, identification, timeliness, etc. (Church, 2002). Similarly, relatively little has been written about the building of capacities of networks, but quite many development projects aim at establishing or strengthening networks.

Networks may also be understood by analysing

- network base – identity, members and structure (architecture and processes)
- network output – services and relevance
- network capacity- professional competencies and inter-agency facilities
- network relationships – internally and externally.

Similar to the organisational analysis, it may be important in assessing network capacities to consider the political dimensions in addition to the functional-rational dimensions, i.e. power and loyalty systems, internal alliances and conflicts of interest.

In explaining the recent raise of networks a number of factors and benefits have been put to the fore:

- the search for increased performance through networking
- realisation of common objectives, however the network must occupy a strategic niche
- the “must” of being an open and connected organisation to gain legitimacy (Donor conditionality and public perceptions)
- the access to funding through network affiliation

Building of network capacity must be considered in light of the overall mandate given to the network: To facilitate members’ performance or to act as an independent voice. In the latter case focus would be on the ability of the network to produce outputs in line with its own defined purposes as an independent actor. In the first place enhanced capacity should be to relate to and improve members performance, which is the purpose of BU-Net. Key factors for successful CD of the network itself is considered in Chapter 2.1

Highlights from contemporary capacity debates

The development debate offers (at least) two schools of thought. One that CD is so encompassing that it amounts to be equal to development as such. Another calls it a new perspective in aid enhancing the ability to perform in the future. The pit-falls of CD are many and there has especially been criticism of the tendency to use a lot of resources on CD without knowing the results or diverting critical resources away from direct service delivery or development programmes into vaguely defined CD measures for intermediaries.

Also the means/techniques employed in capacity building are debated. The recent proliferation of a workshop culture is discussed in terms of its broader value beyond the NGO jet set participating. If at the end of the day it is the organisational performance that matters, the relevance of ad hoc, separate staff training is put at question (Schacter, 2000).

The question of output focus is much debated. As noted above the Danida CD study proposes that CD should be perceived and evaluated by how it influences or changes the output of the organisation. Others underline the building up of capacities to act more independently, to act on future challenges and to enhance organisational sustainability, which are issues that clearly goes beyond the output focus.

Summing up

A technical definition of CD may be reached but the decision of what the aim, contents and direction of the CD should be is fundamentally a political decision where the opinions and lessons about “good development” are at front. In the children’s and youth campus it is the present thinking about child development, participation, etc. that determines the overall aims of CD.

In view of the above a workable definition of capacity development of the BU-Net could be to take departure in

- Capacity development covering three levels, where at present the BU is mostly focussing at the individual competence building
- The systems approach underlining the interrelatedness between individual, organisation and network
- Apply a dialectic perspective encompassing the learning perspective from individual learning to organisational praxis and the organisational perspective from organisational structure and culture to individual praxis. In short competence development and organisational learning.
- Decide on the specific scope and contents to be the focus of the BU-Net CD - in comparison with other CD initiatives

2.1. Key factors in successful CD

There are a number of overarching reminders for successful CD that has been extrapolated from the literature review and the manuals, no matter the level of focus.

- Avoid CD being an objective in itself; it is a means to achieve a certain goal, certain praxis, a certain change.
- Define the objectives, changes to be achieved in terms of changes at both levels; individual competencies and organisational praxis.
- Analyse carefully the status quo in terms of practical and strategic capacity development needs and in terms of the preparedness and commitment to invest.
- Monitor according to outcomes

- Ensure leadership commitment and drivers for change

It can be noted that at present the BU-Net is more articulate on the CD activities it undertakes, than on the goal, the praxis or the change they want to bring about by using CD as the means. Moreover, while the CD initiatives are monitored (training evaluations), they are seldom monitored according to the changes brought about (outcome).

Success factors at the individual level – competence development

There is a wealth of knowledge on training and learning with the individual in focus as mentioned above. The best practices in training are well established alluding to a number of principles:

- relevance to work area and future challenges
- involvement and participation
- addressing both knowledge, attitudes and behaviour
- allow for use of several learning styles
- facilitate the step from intention to action
- training environment to respect culture, integrity and rights
- regular brush up
- real competence develops in real job situations

However, we will not dwell in more detail at this level in isolation, but rather look at success factors at all levels within the system encompassing both the individual playing the crucial role of acting as the *human bridge* between the network and the member organisation, the network and finally the organisation.

Presently, the main focus of the BU-Net is the building of the knowledge and competencies of the participants of member organisations. However, there do not exist an overview of how BU-Net members are engaging in building individual capacities of partner staff and with what strategies and methods.

The Bridge – Human or Organisational?

The literature and lessons suggest the following key factors for “successful” networking and for institutionalising the information and lessons shared in the networks into the member organisation.

Acting as a bridge – the individuals representing different member organisations should be aware of their crucial role as a human bridge and be supported in best performing this function (a responsibility of both organisation and network)

Make the right choice in representation – the professional and personal capabilities of engaging and sharing in the network is important for the other members continued interest in the network. With Fowlers word: “a networks utility and value stands or falls on members as sources of useful information to be shared” (Fowler, 1977, pp. 112). Within this category is also the risks presented by participants pursuing personal interests or hidden agendas.

Investing in the interpersonal relationships – as all networking whether virtual or through actual meetings take place through interface between individuals it is key to support an appreciative and trustful networking environment.

Participating with a clear organisational perspective – while personal interest is valid, it is important that the participant has the organisational perspective in mind. Both for sharing into the network as well as bringing back home the most relevant to the organisation.

Involve the management – lessons learned show that “networks become more effective as membership extends beyond an individual into their organisation” (Fowler, 1997, p. 113).

Critical factors at the organisational level

Directly related to that of networking success factors concern the following:

- **Identify and make explicit the purpose** of participation in the network, the input and results previewed, both internally and vis-à-vis other network members.
- **Be selective in choosing networks** – it takes time and resources to participate and even more to really gain from the participation.
- **Dress-up and support the representative** – both in providing input and in providing a platform for reporting back and sharing
- **Link into existing learning systems within the organisation** – this is probably the most demanding step of them all, because many organisations do not have learning systems well adapted to profiting from inter-agency exchange.

Viewed more broadly, the success of capacity building measures within organisations are often hinging on the following factors, as highlighted in the Danida study, such as leadership commitment, external incentives and creative room for change (Annex II).

Measures/strategies used in organisational capacity building will inevitably move beyond the individual and address at least one of the components of organisational capacity (staff, structures, cultures etc.) as outlined at page 9. As stated before as the components are interrelated and works in a delicate balance, CD at organisational level frequently implies setting in place broader organisational change processes.

“Organisational Capacity Building can be seen as a conscious and holistic intervention, which aims to improve an organisations effectiveness and sustainability in relation to mission and context. Interventions focus on identifying and developing the elements of capacity within an organisation such as skills, systems, leadership....These investments in organisational functions and processes would aim to result in an actual change in programme performance and, ultimately, in the lives of the poorest and most marginalised groups”. INTRAC, 2005, p.5)

Presently, there do not exist an overview of the extent to which BU-members engage in and support organisational capacity building of partner organisations. Nor is there presently an overview of how BU-members approach capacity building within their own organisation.

There are indications that many member organisations have started investing in enhancing capacities for strategic planning, programme management, M&E and of course for child and youth specific competencies, which the BU-Net is an expression of in itself. However, the cases where a systems approach has been initiated in a broader organisational change process appear rare. The exceptions to this general picture may be the few organisations, which in the past have undergone a quite radical transformation due to the development of a children’s rights approach. However, even in these cases the development seem to have been incremental and step by step as needs arise more than a designed organisational change process (Lansdown, 2004).

Critical factors at the Network Secretariat/Board level

In cases where the networks prime purpose is to support the capacity development of the membership organisations, the literature suggests the following to be critical

- be aware of the above factors relating to the actual participant and to the member organisation and eventually assist in getting these conditions in place.
- be relevant in content, timing and format
- proper needs assessment prior to the planning of CD measures (not necessarily very cumbersome)
- using the systems perspective in planning and approach – recognition that there need to be a receptivity within the mother organisation for the skills the trainee has acquired during the training or even more radically, the employment of the skills may require change in organisational procedures in order to enhance performance.
- Use the appropriate method to the level of intervention (Annex III)
- Balance carefully inputs with benefits
- Communicate clearly the time and resource implications of networking
- Adapt to the various segments of the network both in terms of levels of participation and types of benefits

Measures/strategies adopted by networks like BU-Net in enhancing members' capacities are many. The literature most frequently highlights trainings, workshops, information newsletters, databases, technical advisory services etc.

The BU-Net has kept track of the many capacity building initiatives undertaken by the BU-Net over the years and annual reviews have considered the appropriateness of these according to the interests of the membership. The means employed by BU-Net have been trainings, workshops, and seminars, thematic working groups around issues identified as relevant by members. Focus has been on developing the individual capacities of the participants in the BU-Net, while an organisational focus has as yet not been developed, perhaps partly due to the manner in which the BU-Net is operating.

BU-Net has thus not yet directly addressed how the individual learning facilitated within the network is carried on into the organisational praxis. However, the trainings seek to facilitate the role of the human bridge by working on cases from the member organisations, by discussing current organisational praxis and by sharing models/experiences regarding organisational approaches – i.e. adoption of children's rights programming within an organisation. Nevertheless, the results of the training are – for good reasons – defined at the individual level.³

An example of addressing organisational praxis is the issuance of “best practice” manuals on HIV/AIDS. However, the pick-up and adoption of this best practice within the various organisations have hitherto been considered the responsibility of the member organisations. It could be considered relevant to discuss how the issuance of such best practices could be accompanied by both facilitation measures and a commitment on the part of members to use it actively.

Measuring the impact versus measuring the benefits

Measuring the success and impact of CD initiatives thus starts at the level of organisational praxis and ends at the level of changes envisaged in society be it at the level of the individual wellbeing of

³ The trainings are provided by a professional training institution and participants from different members sign up for the training.

children or the national policies in place regarding children and youth. The impact chain is thus quite long in the case of the BU-Net, where members frequently work through local partner organisations.

There may be many benefits derived from networking that do not readily translate into impact. With regard to benefits and motivation for participating in a network there may be a number of additional factors to the ones considered above. Often the reason for participation is not as rational as we would like to think. In other instances, the benefits derived from participating may be very different from a big to a small organisation. Several works underline the lack of capacity to participate in the network as a limit to the benefits that can be derived. In the same vein it is often stated that the smallest NGOs have most difficulties in contributing and in benefiting.

However, some type of benefits may be much more important for smaller organisations and the impact of network CD may be much more instantly seen. This applies in the cases, where the volunteer or staff participating in the network get access to key professional expertise and advice not available within the small NGO, get access to general information flows not normally passing the small NGO and where the staff normally working alone becomes part of a professional community, which is important for job satisfaction and performance. In addition, as there are few organisational hierarchies to mount and barriers to break, the staff may more easily translate the new knowledge into new (organisational) practice.

With regard to the scope and relevance of network activities and services including training, there are divergent opinions. On the one hand the network should be limited to exploring its strategic niche (child & youth) as outlined above. However, often we see networks expanding into broader and more general fields such as NGO planning and management, monitoring and evaluation. Some argue that this is undue competition with existing networks on general technical skills and risk overstretching the network. Others argue that the operationalisation of the thematic and professional skills (children and youth, human rights, etc.) hinges upon the quality of the overall planning and monitoring skills. Thus within rights based approaches it is again and again underlined that RBA rests on good programming practice and if there is no good programming practice RBA is not likely to succeed either.

The experiences of many networks including the Danish seem to indicate that the challenge lies in the institutionalisation of the lessons, information and approaches exchanged within the network. In other words: the challenge lies in moving from considering children's best interests to actually operationalising it. For that reason many specialised networks opt for servicing their members with technical skills, thematic skills and advisory services in one.

Experience also shows that i.e. human rights NGOs in need of organisational strengthening and management upgrading give priority to a process consultant having expertise in both human rights NGO work and in organisational change and are hesitant to engage with general management consultants. This is partly due to the fact that mission, identity and the special conditions of work in human rights are often determining organisational structures and processes.

This suggests that the conveyance of thematic skills and competencies and approaches are best done in a mix with the technical and programming skills. Too often NGO volunteers and staff finds it cumbersome to have participated in a log frame training just to find that at the end of the day the LFA does not easily fit the children's rights project she is preparing.

Measures/strategies involved in building capacity of the network (secretariat) normally focus on one or more components/dimensions of the network found to be malfunctioning or limiting the performance of the network, but the importance of balancing with other elements of the network is underscored by many (Fowler, Nielsen).

When measuring the benefits of CD it will be important to define the results and changes sought and identify easy ways of assessing if these results were achieved. An analysis of the strategy to achieve such changes is necessary. Too often it is presumed that capacity development will lead to the changes. CD may be a necessary condition, but frequently not a sufficient condition. Additional funds, changes in command structures or changed programming processes may be needed too.

Summing up, the human bridge between network and member organisations is often the most direct and visible link between visions of the network and the results of the organisation. However, the above has highlighted the host of factors at play relating to network, participant and the organisation, which is crucial in turning visions into results. It may suggest that in order to ensure the institutionalisation of external knowledge and approaches (gained through networking) it may be relevant to

- move beyond the human bridge and establish an organisational bridge
- change the tide – instead of the organisational representative going to the network meeting, the network comes to the member organisation with use of various tools
- explore new tools and processes which are more attuned to changing organisational behaviour and act as positive incentives for the adoption of relevant skills and procedures:
 - Peer reviews guided by the Network facilitator on an agreed issues of relevance to the network and to the member organisation
 - Reflective Teams – focussing on one experienced barrier for institutionalisation and learning
 - On the job sharing – frequently the participants in an NGO thematic network occupy the same type of jobs/functions in their respective organisations. (HIV expert/ programme planner) Swapping chairs for a day or a week provides useful insights into bottlenecks and opportunities.
 - Best practice papers accompanied by both facilitation measures and expression of commitment from the members.
- Focus on the learning systems in the member organisations and the ability to contribute and absorb learning and information generated in or through the Network.
 - Pursue the full circle in knowledge management - Knowledge building, sharing and application.

In light of the importance of the overall learning system within the participating organisations, it could be considered if different networks could join forces in addressing this underlying critical factor for the success of capacity development measures rather than remaining only at the level of CD activities in the form of workshops, trainings, exchanges, newsletters, etc.

A recent stocktaking among Danish NGOs indicated that at present there is plenty on offer in the Danish NGO community in terms of lectures, trainings, debates, conferences, sharing and linking within many issues. The main challenge lies in the absorption and use of these inputs within the organisations⁴. This takes us to the aforementioned issue of organisational learning.

Organisational learning and knowledge management

There is a host of concepts and approaches to organisational learning and knowledge management (KM) even within the NGO Development Sector⁵. Thus, it is as big a professional field as capacity development. While this appears exhausting, one comfort is that organisational learning and

⁴ Minutes of Founding Meeting of Thematisk Forum, April 2005.

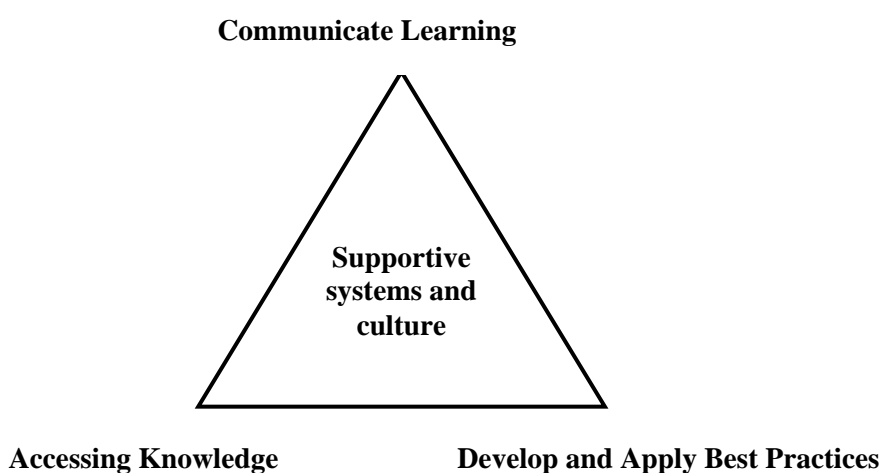
⁵ ActionAid has introduced the ALPS – Accountability, learning and planning system
Oxfam GB has introduced a Framework for Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Management;
Ibis is planning to develop a Global Learning System; UNDP has just launched the Knowledge Management Strategy.

knowledge management have exactly the same vision as capacity development - namely to improve the effectiveness of the organisation in reaching its goals and having an impact.

As mentioned earlier, BU-Net may be considered a knowledge network and it has been established that it is key how member organisations are able to use and institutionalise the knowledge and lessons learned within the network. The paradox is that many knowledge networks do not operate according to the “best practices for knowledge networks”, nor do they pay sufficient attention to the organisational learning and knowledge management (KM) within the member organisations.

This situation is not an exception. UNDP’s recent strategy on KM notes in the introduction: “UNDP generates a wealth of development knowledge. Unfortunately, the organisation does not know what it knows” (UNDP, 2004).

A simple model adapted from BOND sees organisational learning as:



All three dimensions underscore the importance of knowledge management, which evolves around the issues of *capture* and *connectivity*. The challenge is on the one hand to capture the knowledge that resides in individuals, teams and organisations, somehow synthesise and codify it and communicate it in an appropriate manner. On the other hand it concerns the challenge of ensuring that processes are in place that enables the person or organisation which needs to know something to access and use this knowledge – the question of connectivity. (www.bond.org)

The notion of capture and connectivity is very illustrative of the epicentre in the human and organisational bridges mentioned earlier in this report and is spot-on in relation to how to institutionalise knowledge.

Making organisational learning reality is of course a challenge in itself and there is no scarcity of recommendations for both quick fixes and holistic processes.⁶ Two issues are important to mention. Firstly, that it has a lot to do with establishing a learning culture and some junctions for synthesising and communicating (See Annex IV & V). Secondly, that the link to Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System (PME) systems is crucial. The literature on learning organisations do not tap much into the PME discipline, which is strange, but it seems indispensable to mention that organisational learning cannot escape linking to the PME system of the organisation. Just recently, the work by

⁶ Bond has an annotated bibliography on this subject.

Britton mentions the learning systems as a way of closing the gap between the M&E system and the planning (Britton, 2005).

Britton discuss the stimulation of motives, means and opportunities for learning and stress that all three have to be present to make it happen – as all three factors need to be in place for a crime to happen. Below are some concrete suggestions for creating the space – opportunity- for learning (Britton, 2005).

Creating the space for learning	Individual	Collective
Formal	<p>Organisations can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimise learning by building it into job descriptions. • Manage workload planning to avoid overload. • Use HR mechanisms such as staff supervision and appraisal to monitor and evaluate individuals' contributions to organisational learning. • Ensure that each person has an individual plan for their own learning and development. • Develop 'reflective practitioner' competences. • Set up individual mentoring and coaching schemes. • Encourage and enable attendance at training courses, workshops, conferences and meetings. • Create opportunities for individuals to represent the organisation in networks. • Encourage individuals to write articles for publication. 	<p>Organisations can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build learning objectives into project and programme plans and organisational strategy. • Develop team work as a required way of working. • Develop mechanisms for establishing collective responsibility for results. • Set up action learning sets, learning groups and communities of practice. • Organise training courses, workshops, conferences and meetings. • Introduce 'no-travel' times, 'homeweeks'²⁹ and 'reflection periods'. • Commission learning reviews to examine themes of work. • Create cross-functional teams to develop guidelines, procedures or policies. • Include an explicit 'lessons learnt' section in all regular reporting formats.
Informal	<p>Individuals can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in time for reflection at the end of each day and at significant stages of pieces of work. • Engage in informal networking. • Join and use on-line discussion forums. • Develop 'habits' that support reflective practice (eg keep a learning journal). 	<p>Organisations can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide physical space that encourages informal networking. • Set up intranets, newsletters or other ways of keeping people informed about each other's work. <p>Source: Britton, 2005</p>

The BU-Net may want to look closer at how the motives, means and opportunities are being stimulated at the individual, organisational and network level.

3. CD IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The justification of the BU-Net is the enhancement of children and youth specific capacities among member-organisations. This justification rests on the assumption that working for and with children and youth requires certain competencies, approaches and modalities. Competencies and approaches

which organisations working with and for children better know and use in order to improve their performance.

This assumption is easily confirmed by looking at the requests being voiced in the network – requests that are clearly not likely to draw similar interest of agencies not having children as a primary target or beneficiary group. It is also confirmed by the Phase II Evaluation report, which states that consultations indicate that despite the differences among members, a field of common interest within capacity development regarding children and youth can easily be defined.

The children and youth specific themes voiced within the network have been as follows:

- Child labour
- Rights based programming vis-à-vis children and youth
- Children’s participation
- Child sensitive indicators
- Facilitation in relation to children and youth
- Development psychology
- Children without parents
- Children in conflict
- Young Men

The BU-Net has already been instrumental in relation to building capacities in the above-mentioned areas. *Having said that, it is probably also true to say that the BU-Net would gain from making their strategic niche more visible and explicit and from articulating better the outcomes which the CD of members are intended to contribute to.*

The existence of a children and youth specific professional field is moreover confirmed by looking at the established professional disciplines at work within children’s and youth sector in developing and developed countries. This covers child specific psychiatric, psychological, social, health, educational, occupational and criminal justice competencies, which each command an immense field of knowledge networks, best practices and specialised expertise.

Finally, in a CD perspective, we should not overlook the capabilities required if the organisation is actually run by children and if the network is a network of children’s clubs. The next sections will explore this issue further.

Towards an RBA definition of capabilities

A human rights perspective highlights the crucial importance of strengthening the interface - the vertical relationship between duty-bearers and rights holders from the community level up to the national and international levels. It considers the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill substantial human rights (right to education, right to freedom of expression) and it emphasizes the process rights of non-discrimination, participation and accountability. It uses human rights standards and principles at both the analytical and operational levels.

As evident, the RBA is inherently systems oriented focussing on the dialectic between the rights-holder (the child), the duty-bearer (parents, school masters etc) and the broader regulatory framework. The RBA is proposing to consider the capabilities of the rights-holders to claim and protect their rights and the capabilities of the duty-bearers along three similar dimensions:

<p>Rights-holders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of rights/ knowledge of rights • Authority/legitimacy to claim rights • Resources/ skills to claim and protect rights.
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<p>Duty-bearers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of duty /Knowledge of rights (will) • Authority/Legitimacy to respect and protect and fulfil • Resources/skills to protect and fulfil rights and comply with duties

Thus, in the RBA framework there is more focus on capabilities encompassing not only the dimensions of resources and skills, but also the crucial dimensions of recognition/will and of authority and legitimacy to claim/uphold rights. This relates to whether the children have legitimate channels of complaint and redress, whether they have authority (are considered a subject under the law) or whether their young age renders them devoid of any rights. The authority/legitimacy to act on the part of the duty-bearer relates to whether the School Head Master or the police officer are vested with corresponding powers or these powers have been centralized at higher levels⁷.

The duty-bearer chain & the capability link

In a RBA perspective it is crucial not only to be able to assess and enhance the capabilities of children. It is of equal importance to be able to assess the capabilities of various duty-bearers to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. Unfortunately, the Lansdown study do not provide insights into the modalities for assessing the capabilities of duty-bearers for dealing with children and while doing so enhancing children's rights.

UNICEF works with the so-called duty-bearer chain, which sees to identify the duty-bearers at various levels right from the parents, the community, to the schoolmaster, to the Ministry of Education and eventually international duty-bearers such as Donors. At each level it is possible to conduct a capability assessment and identify the gaps in the duty-bearer chain and in the capability link. It is beyond this report to account for all levels. Suffice to mention that among Danish BU-Net members, various capability concepts have been developed and used.

An assessment in line with the above three dimensions will clarify the actual capabilities of the children in question and provide guidance for the appropriate strengthening of this capability. It is to be noted that the RBA paradigm's use of 'capabilities' is very similar to the use of 'competency' mentioned earlier - relating as it is to the actual ability to tackle a certain task, challenge or situation.

For the BU-Net and its members it could be considered to use capabilities or competence when referring to individual "capacities" whether be it children or adults and capacity when referring to organisational capacity.

Children's evolving capacities

As indicated above, children's knowledge and recognition of their own rights naturally change with age and with the experiences gained through their childhood. The authority and legitimacy claimed by children in their pursuit of rights also change over time, as does the legitimacy accorded by the society to the voices of children. Finally, the skills and resources of children to claim their rights, to know the proper avenues of redress and to actively protect their own rights are not static but subject to age, exposure, guidance and teachings.

The concept of children's 'evolving capacities' has been reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, where Article 5 of the Convention states that direction and guidance, provided by parents or others with responsibility for the child, must take into account the 'capacities' of the child to exercise rights on his or her own behalf.

As underlined by Lansdown, it is important "to recognise that it is not respect for rights, as such, which is influenced by the evolving capacities of children: All the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child extend to all children irrespective of capacity. What is at issue is where responsibility for the exercise of the rights lies"(Lansdown, 2005, p. 8). In short, it concerns the continuum between *acting and deciding for the*

⁷ The 3rd level in the CD definitions – the regulatory framework – has thus been integrated and reflected into this capability definition.

child in order to ensure respect, protection and fulfilment of her rights and *supporting the independent choice* and act of the child in the exercise of rights.

The study by Lansdown clarifies the many implications of this concept in international law, which goes beyond this overview. At the heart of this study is, however, the question of how assessment of children's evolving capabilities is made and how capabilities are enhanced.

Lansdown concludes that: "One of the challenges associated with using the assessment of children's evolving capacities as the basis for the exercise of rights is the lack of effective definitions of competence, compounded by a lack of availability of skilled personnel for its assessment" (Lansdown, 2005, p. 10). Lansdown seeks inspiration in the praxis developed around medical consent, which provides the following direction:

- **Ability to understand and communicate relevant information.** The child needs to be able to understand the available alternatives, express a preference, articulate concerns and ask relevant questions.
- **Ability to think and choose with some degree of independence.** The child needs to be able to exercise a choice without coercion or manipulation and be capable of thinking through the issues for itself.
- **Ability to assess the potential for benefit, risk and harm.** The child must be able to understand the consequences of different courses of action, how they will affect him or her, the risks involved and the short and long-term implications.
- **Achievement of a fairly stable set of values.** The child needs to have some value base from which to make a decision.

However, there are many other areas in which codification and graduation of children's capabilities are made. The question is how useful very detailed and comprehensive systems are in the context of development planning. As rightly mentioned by Lansdown, the same thresholds of competence are not necessary for all decisions, nor are all aspects of competence relevant for all types of decision-making or responsibility. Thus, the analysis will have to be highly contextual and attuned to the particular rights/problem/issue.

It can be noted that concept of children's evolving capacities apparently do not distinguish between capacity, qualification (skill) and competence, as suggested by Knudsen. Personal capacities according to Knudsen develop mainly with age and general development, while both qualifications, skills and competence may be developed by means of targeted training, counselling, education, etc. The emphasis on *evolving* may exactly mean the inherent evolutionary phases, which all children undergo. In a development perspective it is thus extremely important to understand and take due regard of children's evolving capacities, as the challenges is how to improve or changes these during project interventions or education.

In a combination of the above perspectives it may in many cases be most appropriate and straightforward to ask the following three questions:

- What is the present understanding of rights and recognition of own rights and rights of others? How can this be improved?
- What is the extent of authority and legitimacy? How can this be improved?
- What are the present skills and resources available in order to take appropriate action/decisions? How can these be improved?

Children's Participation

The above dimensions may also be of inspiration in considering the appropriate level of children's participation in programme planning and execution. It is a fine balance: on the one hand to encourage children's involvement and autonomous decision making and on the other hand to ensure that "children are not forced to engage in activities that expose them to responsibilities, risks or experiences that are inappropriate or harmful in view of their youth"(Lansdown, 2005, p.9).

“Children’s participation and influence

From the priorities and the opinions of the Danish organisations (inquiry) it seems that most organisations find it important to empower the individual child, strengthen children’s self esteem, trust and hope. Both the Kwetu Mbagala in Tanzania and SFI in the Philippines seem to promote children’s own organisation, decision-making and self-management. When asked some other organisations opinionated that the situation and work with street children was so complicated that it was important to give them a clear framework, coherence and tranquillity, and that their own organisation or decision making might give too many conflicts and failures” (Madsen & Danielsen, 2004, p.24).

Within the Children’s Rights Paradigm a lot of thinking and lessons have been generated regarding children’s participation. Reviews have found that “children’s participation is given a high priority both at the level of organisational commitment and implementation in the field as a key dimension of CRP. However, emerging from that extensive experience is a number of challenges which require continuing discussion and analysis, for example:

- Different conceptualisations of participation in the development and human rights field
- Lack of appropriate skills amongst staff and partners
- Concept of children as individual rights holders in communities where this is not recognised
- Exposure to risk
- Need for investment in building a culture of participation
- Lack of tools for monitoring and evaluation
- Lack of focus on younger children
- Ensuring sustainability

In addition, there has been relatively little debate as to the different implications of rights-based programming when working with children and youth rather than adults. Although the broad principles are similar, the childhood status of children does necessarily impact on the nature of both participation and advocacy and requires consideration of the evolving capacities of children. These issues need further attention“ (Child Rights Benchmarking Study, 2004, p. 50).

A UNICEF review highlights the many reasons for promoting child participation from improving the efficiency of the programme to giving children and youth a voice, while underlining the crucial importance of removing societal barriers for child and youth participation (UNICEF, 2004). Other actors such as Oxfam consider the question of participation in the light of “voice poverty” and the “right to be heard”.

A wealth of children’s participation reviews and kits are available (Plan, 2003), which cannot be covered here, but it is certainly an important field of capacity building and one training has already been conducted by BU-Net.

The interrelatedness between capacity (competence) and participation is thus again stressed. Capacity is key for participation and participation of children and youth is key to their development and learning. However, the participation perspective and the question of when they are capable of participation is also an expression of an external and adult oriented perspective. Children and youth are per definition in the centre of their own development and the challenge is also how we as adults, parents or development professionals can enter the world of children and participates in a meaningful and constructive way.

Few are the guidelines for adults’ participation in the world of children and youth. However, thinking and good practices have been developed regarding the meaningful and appreciative communication and engagement with children.⁸ A search has also been made as to the thinking and lessons regarding children’s participation in networks and organisational structures – however very little has transpired.

⁸ Examples are the works by Harville Hendrix and by Kompashuset.

An affirmative answer can thus be given to the initial question, if there are certain issues that children and youth focused organisations should take into consideration when undertaking CD initiatives? This applies in CD measures undertaken by member organisations vis-à-vis local partners comprising children and youth or undertaken by local partners in relation to children and youth, and not so much at present in the BU-Net's institutional relationship to Danish members. However, in so far the BU-Net in the future would start to engage directly with the *children and youth members* of some of the member organisations consideration of children's competence and participation becomes crucial.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Concluding observations and recommendations have been presented throughout the report where relevant and needed, but the main lines will be synthesised here.

The broad field of capacity building has in the context of networks wishing to build capacity of network members' three key pillars:

- the building of child specific *competence* of the staff/participants
- the enhancement of organisational learning *systems* which taps into inter-organisational knowledge networks
- the facilitation of human and organisational *bridges* between network and member organisations.

These three pillars, intervention areas, are considered key in institutionalising the learning generated in networks (Annex V).

The importance of keeping a focus on the broader outcomes of capacity development measures has been underlined – success is to be monitored at the level of changed organisational praxis and impact for children. However, a number of benefits of networking may not easily be traced through impact chains, but remain as benefits at the organisational level i.e. staff satisfaction within communities of practices.

One risk the networks may be running is the tendency to focus at pouring more knowledge into the uncharted waters/space between organisations. Without building the capacity to receive, absorb and transform into organisational praxis and to share, compile, synthesise and communicate in an appropriate manner conducive to the learning of other organisations.

The tentative conclusion is thus that success of the CD building objective of networks hinges on the state of organisational learning systems within participating organisations. Until now many networks including the BU-Net have taken these systems for granted. A minimum absorption and sharing system have been presumed that would make the network services meaningful and not wasted.

This tendency is global and local – most new networks in Denmark have a thematic focus; advocacy, water, poultry, environment while very few actually address the issue of organisational development and learning⁹.

The main overall recommendations to the BU-Net are;

- at the individual level it is relevant for BU-Net and members to think in terms of *competence development*
- at the organisational level it is relevant for BU-Net to consider *organisational learning systems*

⁹ Danida financed thematic networks counts 9. Arena for Organisational Development has addressed the issue of learning in networks.

Capacity Development – an exploration

- at the network level it is relevant to facilitate *human and organisational bridges*
- finally, the BU-net may consider their role regarding the *overall institutional framework/enabling environment (Danida policies etc)*

Regarding children and youth specific competencies and learning systems, it is recommended

- to make the strategic niche more visible, explicit and articulating better the outcomes which the CD of members is intended to contribute to.

A mapping of the experiences with capacity building measures among member organisations both in relation to their own organisation as well as partners could benefit from considering the levels and dimensions/components of capacity development outlined in this review. While doing so particular attention could be placed at

- the present systems of organisational learning, which the BU-Net taps into
- the feasibility of enhancing human and organisational bridges
- ways to enhance the present effort at moving from skills development to competence building

Moreover, it could be relevant through consultation with members to look at how the motives, means and opportunities for learning about children and youth can be stimulated at the individual, organisational and network level.

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Selected list of websites:

- www.crin.org contains a listing of contemporary literature and evaluations on children's participation
- www.bond.org contains a listing of contemporary literature and evaluations regarding organisational learning and knowledge management including the *Young People in Development Group*.
- www.capacity.org contains a listing of contemporary literature on capacity development

Capacity Development – an exploration

www.icconsult.nl contains a listing of organisational scans.

www.un.org/esa/socdev/uny contains resources re. Youth at the United Nations

www.ydn.org.za is the youth network of development NGOs in South Africa.

ANNEX II

Most capacity improvements in organisations occurred where several of the following conditions prevailed:

Strong demand-side pressures for improvements are exerted from outside the organisation (from clients/customers, political owners, supervisory bodies, competitors or quasi-competitors etc.).

Top management provides visible leadership for change, promotes a clear sense of mission, encourages participation, establishes explicit expectations about performance, and rewards well-performing staff (recognition, pay, pro-motion based on merit, etc).

Change is approached in an integrated manner, stimulating fertilisation and exchange across the boundaries of segments, units and professions.

A critical mass of staff members, including front-line staff, are ultimately involved in and committed to the change process, being motivated to change existing ways of doing things.

Organisational innovations are embraced, tested and adapted (e.g. better operational and strategic planning, improved mechanisms for beneficiary involvement, better monitoring, etc.).

Quick wins that deepen commitment for change become visible early in the process.

The scope of change (type and depth) is commensurate with internal and external commitment, as well as with the organisation's capacity to manage the change process.

Resources for developing capacities and implementing change (e.g. time dedicated by key staff members; budgets for training, facilitation, information dissemination, etc.) are prioritised; daily business activities do not override change objectives.

Top management and change agents manage the change process strategically and proactively, including both internal and external aspects of the process (communication, sequencing, timing, feedback loops, celebration of victories, recognition of problems etc.).

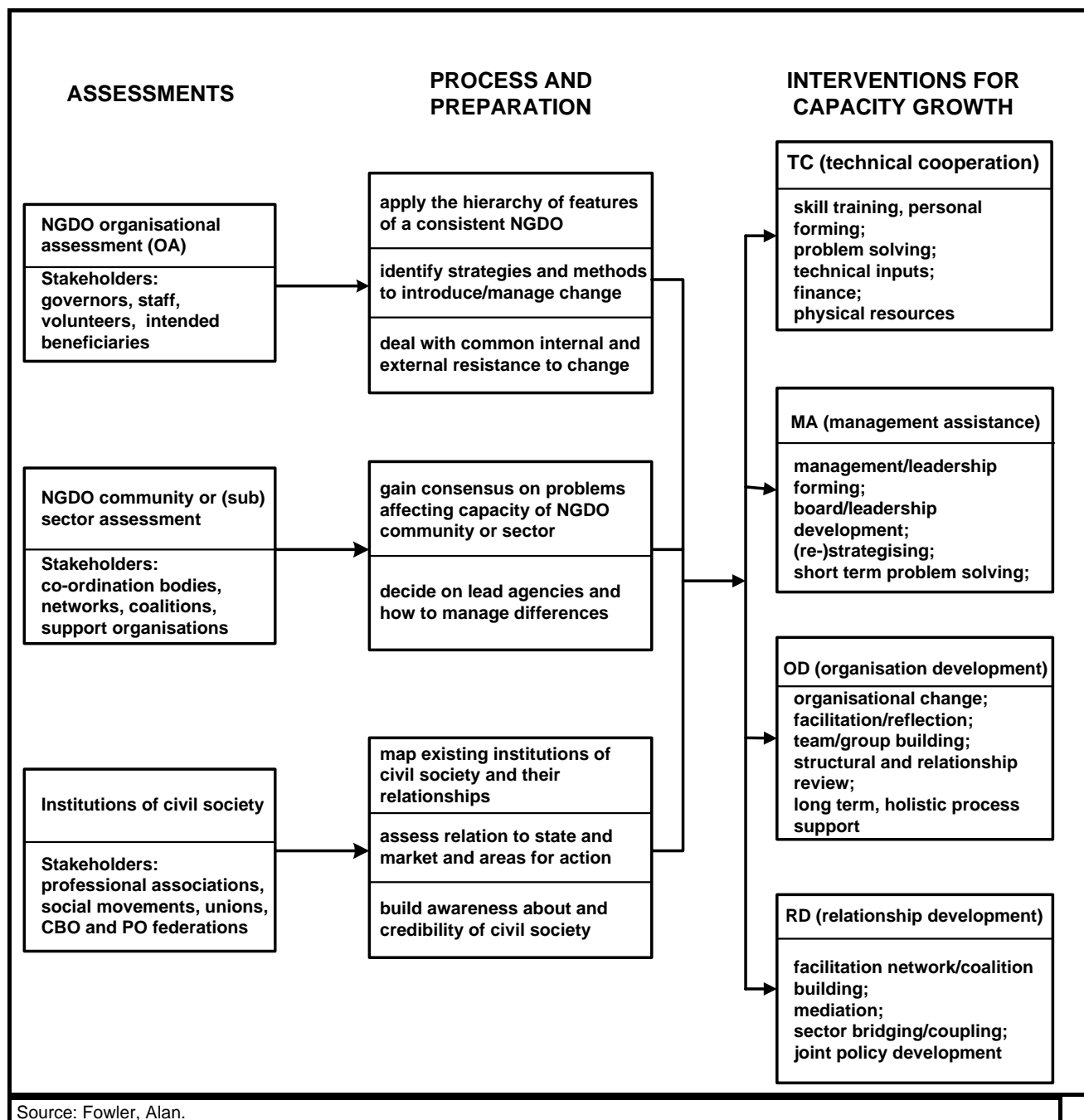
Sources: Boesen et al., 2002; Grindle, 1997; Horton, 2002; Nunberg and Nellis, 1995; Tandler, 1989; Kanter, 1983; Senge, 1990; Robbins and Finley, 1997.³

“Clear commitment to and leadership of change from those in charge is, perhaps, the single most important factor for capacity development efforts to succeed”.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida, Evaluation Department: Capacity Development Evaluation, August 2004, p. 6-7.

ANNEX III

TYPES OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR NGDOs



ANNEX IV

The Learning Organisation

..it is crucial to invest in suitable infrastructure to collect data and/or narrative perceptions but also in developing the analytical skills and insights of those who interpret it. This analysis should in turn lead to improved action, or practice, through a better understanding of and in response to the changing context. As a developmental process that integrates thinking and doing, making the link between assessment and improved action is a process of learning. Without an organisational culture that is supportive of learning it is difficult to make this link effectively. In order to support and enable a culture of learning, organisations may need to demonstrate that:

- Learning is a legitimate activity, i.e. learning is seen as an integral part of each individual's work responsibilities, not something to be done in the individual's own time.
- Learning is encouraged and supported, i.e. managers make it part of their responsibility to ensure that their colleagues are given personal encouragement to contribute to the development of the organisation's practice and policy.
- Learning is given adequate resources, i.e. there is a recognition that learning takes time and it may also require other resources, including funding.
- Learning is rewarded, i.e. individuals who contribute to the organisation's evolution are given recognition for their efforts and are provided with opportunities to represent the organisation's thinking to others.
- The internal barriers to learning can be overcome, i.e. strategies for addressing internal barriers to learning, based on a systematic analysis, are devised and made clear to all members of the organisation.(INTRAC, 2005. p. 23)

ANNEX V: KNOWLEDGE IN NETWORKS

