Supporting the Capacity of Organisations at Community Level

An Exploration of Issues, Methods and Principles for Good Practice

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Contents

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List of Acronyms

ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
AI	appreciative inquiry
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
CB	Capacity Building
CBO	Community-based organisation
CDRN	Community Development Resource Network
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
INTRAC	The International NGO Training and Research Centre
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCB	Organisational capacity building

Introduction

Current thinking on organisational capacity building (OCB) has been shaped by two major shifts in development paradigms that have taken place since the mid-1990s, reflecting broader changes in international development debates (WHO 2001). The first has been the move from a focus on the training of individuals to the development of institutions and organisations, which relates to the literature on systems thinking. The second has emphasised that the performance of an organisation is influenced both by elements that are internal and by external factors relating to the wider political, economic, social and cultural environment in which such organisations are embedded.

In the broader political arena, one reason for extensive interest and international debate in the area of organisational capacity building is a legacy of past failure to achieve sustainable forms of development. This has led to an emphasis on strengthening local ownership of development programmes. Such a focus has renewed existing interest in supporting organisations in order that they can perform in a way that is effective, efficient and sustainable. Current thinking in this area thus links organisational capacity to performance outcomes, and sees organisational capacity building as helping to contribute to the fulfilment of the strategic objectives of development organisations. Such an understanding chimes with various different approaches and trends contained within the wider management literature.

Organisational capacity building is seen as an internal process, which may be enhanced by external assistance whereby capacity is developed through building on that which already exists. Although organisational capacity development programmes vary, they usually incorporate phases that are interlinked and form part of a cycle. The elements that they incorporate include the principles of working in 'genuine' and equitable partnerships; involving the participation of stakeholders; exploring capacity as part of an ongoing interaction with a wider environment; adopting process-thinking; and engaging in a long-term view of development (WHO 2001). Following this logic and rationale, a focus on organisational capacity building in international development is currently being promoted by leading international organisations and donor agencies.

For some time it has been in vogue for international donors to channel resources to community-based organisations (CBOs) directly, purportedly to promote community development, and to move away from channelling resources to these organisations via intermediaries, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In the rhetoric from donors this move is premised on the belief that CBOs need to take ownership of the very processes that are designed to empower them. However, sceptics have expressed doubts about this approach, arguing, for example, that donors are targeting CBOs for instrumental reasons, in order to gain more centralised control over their activities (Pratt et al, 2005). In any case, the move by donors to provide organisational capacity building support to CBOs directly has been applauded in certain circles. It is argued here that, notwithstanding the criticisms levelled against NGOs for 'losing their roots' in recent years (Edwards and Hulme 1997), such intermediary organisations have long histories of conducting work at community level, and if donors are serious in their commitment to promoting community-driven development, they need to engage with them and learn from their experiences.

An examination of the history of approaches to community development is not the purpose of this paper.[1] Rather, this report will adopt a critical approach to current practice in organisational capacity building for CBOs. It draws on policy documents, key informant interviews and case studies of interventions supporting the capacity of organisations at the community level. It is intended as an initial thought piece to provoke ideas and further research around the following constellations of issues:

- What practical methods are being used to promote, encourage and support different organisations at community level? How far are these effectively: (1) developing internal organisational capacities; (2) supporting CBOs in meeting the development needs of their communities; and (3) fostering opportunities for building relationships within civil society and participating in public arenas?
- What principles may be drawn from these experiences that could guide future strategies?
- How can approaches that are used respond more effectively to the specific culture and socio-political context in which community organisations operate?

The paper is organised into three sections. The first briefly explores how CBOs have been defined, outlines their diverse types and highlights some of their key functions. Section two draws out key themes or factors that could be taken into account when working to strengthen organisations at community level. The final section examines the implications of this analysis in terms of lessons learnt and principles derived from the review that might guide future interventions geared at strengthening organisations at the community level.

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[1] Background on this theme can be found in the work of Craig and Mayo (2005), Fowler (2000), Kaplan (2002) and Mansuri and Rao (2004). In addition, see the background paper to an international conference organised by INTRAC (Amman, Jordan, 18⁻20 April 2005) entitled 'Civil society strengthening: is community development the way forward?' by Earle (2005) which describes how early approaches to community development were later seen as attempts to extend control to rural areas rather than efforts to stimulate more meaningful participation of communities in a way that is consistent with an agenda of social empowerment. By the 1970s the concept of community development re-emerged with more political edge, and in a way that was more power-focused (Oakley 1998) and grounded in more 'participatory forms' of development purportedly driven by the community itself.

Section 1: Defining Community-Based Organisations: Types, Characteristics and Functions

The term 'CBOs' is often used in an all-encompassing way as if they were a homogenous group including, for example, CBOs that are formed by 'externally driven' government, donor or NGO initiatives; those set up by people belonging to a specific geographical community; or those set up or sponsored by external agencies. CBOs may thus be 'organic, ascribed, traditional, voluntary, imposed, formal or informal' (Fowler 2005).

However, for the purposes of this paper, CBOs are defined more narrowly as grassroots organisations set up by those belonging to a specific geographical community, rather than community organisations that have been introduced from outside the area of operation and set up by outsiders such as donors, NGOs or others. The size of their operations is relatively small scale; they work in the local communities where they are based; they are membership-based; and they are frequently not legally registered. These CBOs may include, for example, women's groups, youth groups, village development committees, water users' associations, forest users' groups, farmers' groups, pastoralists' groups and self-help groups (Muir, 2004). Such CBOs are seen as forming part of 'civil society', which in turn can be defined as 'associations that exist outside of the state or market and which maintain a degree of autonomy and independence and have the potential to provide alternative views, policies and action to those promoted by the state and market' (INTRAC, 2005). Though this definition suggests that civil society organisations are independent from the state, it should be acknowledged that donors inadvertently play a significant role in shaping the character of civil society. For example, organisations working at community level and beyond may be highly aid-dependent, and it is thus crucial to understand the nature of these power relationships (Howell et al, 2001: 232).

It could be argued that CBOs have some elements that make them distinct from other organisations such as NGOs (Beauclerk 2005). Some would argue, for example, that whereas NGOs are generally formally instituted in the law, CBOs are seldom registered. Whereas NGOs generally include many paid staff, CBOs usually have very few. Because of this, CBO members need to be able to see results, or else their investment in terms of time and energy is hard for them to justify. NGO staff do not necessarily reside in the communities in which they work, and staff do not stand to gain or lose personally from the collective activities undertaken by members of the community in which they work. By contrast, CBOs are generally formed by people with some (usually geographic) connections to the local community. They understand, and are subject to, the local power dynamics of the community, and, providing there is downward accountability to the communities that the CBO purports to serve, are likely to be affected personally and collectively by the activities that the CBO undertakes, as revealed in research conducted by INTRAC in Ethiopia (Pratt and Earle 2004).

The functions of CBOs also vary greatly. Whereas some may be focused almost entirely on resource management and service provision in the local community, others are focused on advocacy, consciousness-raising and making people aware of the opportunities for negotiating and influencing decision-making processes in broader socio-economic arenas (Henderson and Thomas 2005).

Some suggest that CBOs have an organisational form, however informal and therefore follow the standard principles of capacity building. Yet, others have argued

that CBOs have distinctive features and that the capacity building interventions for CBOs must be distinctive also. Standard approaches to capacity building and organisational change derived from the historical experience and traditions of the North may not fit with looser and more fluid organisational forms known to, and accepted in, communities in the South (Howell 2002). For example, a capacity building programme that treats an informal CBO such as a burial society or women's group offering childcare services, as if they were a more formal NGO (and therefore needing written policies and procedures) is likely to be at best ineffective and at worst counter-productive.

If we accept that many CBOs have a much looser and more fluid organisational form, the approach that we take to capacity building will need to be even more focused on the nature of local dynamics and the importance of wider social, cultural and political processes. Thus, this would imply first and foremost locating the CBO within a particular historical, cultural, socio-political and economic context. For example, understanding the role of kinship networks and how these play out both within and outside the CBO would be part of this process.

Section 2: Organisational Approaches to Capacity Building for Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening, and Key Issues for Practice

This section explores the considerations that need to be taken into account in thinking through the process of strengthening organisations at community level. These are drawn from a broad spectrum of primary and secondary sources, including case study material and policy documents, semi-structured interviews with key staff members at INTRAC and debates and outputs generated from a recent international conference on this theme.[2] The issues examined are grouped around five specific domains and a synthesis of the learning points in each of these areas can be found in Appendix 1.

2.1 Pre-planning stage: awareness of local context

Why does local context matter?

'Cultural and contextual understanding is needed because these influence the nature of capacity building needs, the appropriateness of different capacity building approaches and the nature of client ownership of the process' (James, 2002).

Becoming aware of the existing institutional and political landscape at community level, and the inter-linkages that exist between formal and informal CBOs, is essential for any OCB intervention to succeed. The systems that operate within a particular institutional landscape may not be clearly 'visible' and are fairly intangible since people in institutions relate to and interact with each other in different and complex ways, and often on the margins of more formalised organisational structures. The blurring of the local and the global and the increased interconnectedness and interdependence between institutions further compounds this problem.[3]

Yet a lack of awareness of the local socio-political and institutional landscape means that programmes aimed at OCB of CBOs may lead, for example, to the duplication of efforts such as the creation of new organisations to perform specific functions that are already being covered by existing organisations. Lack of awareness of the existing institutional landscape will not only curtail the effectiveness of any programme that is implemented but, worse still, could also to undermine existing organisational capacities. By contrast, for example, strengthening the organisational planning of a CBO, supplementing capacities of existing structures and couching the language of OCB in one that is closely adapted to the culture of local people (James 2002) is likely to have more impact.

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[2] 'Civil society and community development: civil society support – is community development the way forward?' (18–20 April, 2005, Amman, Jordan). See
http://www.intrac.org/pages/jordanconferencepapers_abstracts.html for conference outputs and key messages.
[3] What is understood as the 'local institutional context' is likely to be more interconnected to global processes than could be expected at first sight. This is due to globalisation, increased mobility and reduced barriers to interaction through, for example, the Internet. Thus, local institutions and 'local culture' are increasingly influenced by, and have influence on, external agents. For example, 'local' organisations such as faith-based groups may be influenced by, and obtain resources and information from Diaspora groups based in Europe.

> **_Case study: the Aga-Khan Foundation, Pakistan_**
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> AKRSP (Aga Khan Rural Support Programme) realised that the institutional landscape of the northern areas and Chitral was a complex heritage of diverse and indigenous forms of organisation, including clans based on kinship and faith and organised in a framework of feudal authority. The spirit of collective action in this area is thus rooted firmly in these traditions. Assessing the shared social and cultural experience, interests, values and perceptions of joint need felt by members of the local community was the first step to defining which kind of collective action was appropriate. This awareness also led to the ability to identify both cultural barriers to organisational change and levers for such change.
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> _Source: Wood and Shakil 2003_

Being aware of the importance of context not only refers to awareness of the institutional landscape but also the broader social, cultural, religious and political context (including the international aid industry) that CBOs must respond to in a way that is strategic and tactical. Taking the time to get a deeper understanding of the local social context will also reveal the entrenched nature of power dynamics at local level, which directly impinge on development outcomes of CBOs.

How do power dynamics in the wider community affect the way that community-based organisations work in practice?

CBOs are often viewed in terms of their internal dynamics and functioning, as if they were separate entities rather than embedded in the community at large. When considering supporting organisations at community level, it should be understood that CBOs are embedded in communities, that local power dynamics within the wider community affect the way that CBOs operate, and that people benefit, or lose out, as a result.[4] The assumption that CBOs and other civil society organisations are essentially benign and democratic has been strongly criticised (Howell 2002). For this reason, it is essential that practitioners consider the following question: What are the actual power, cultural and group dynamics that operate at community level, such as patron–kin relationships, gender relationships, intra-household rivalries and local power dynamics, that are likely to directly affect development outcomes of programmes that are implemented by CBOs?

Though in theory the strategic objectives of OCB of CBOs aimed at for example, civil society strengthening, may be to ensure that members mobilise and claim their rights, this may be undermined by local social realities. For example, many members of communities are related by kinship ties and other alliances. Similarly the control of resources influences power dynamics through such divisions as class, gender and age. Where community members are interrelated, individuals are likely to fear speaking out about unjust practice in CBOs or claiming their rights, and may stand to lose particular benefits to the community or sever relationships with key contacts (Wright, 2003). In the words of Mansuri and Rao, 'exercising choice and voice can be costly under certain conditions' (2004: 6). Similarly, poorer members of communities may be beholden to particular individuals who occupy positions of power and control key resources that affect the livelihoods of the poor. These poorer members may

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[4] This is a nuanced area since there may be different types of elite capture, such as 'outright theft and corruption and what might be called benevolent capture' (Mansuri and Rao 2004: 30).

also lack time or money to contribute to organisational activities. Furthermore, people may be 'adversely incorporated' into CBOs.[5] Where prospects for voice do not exist or are weak, people may be tied to CBOs by moral ties, through dependency or allegiance to leaders, rather than on a more voluntary basis which, in theory at least, gives rise to more genuine kinds of participation (Wood and Shakil, 2003).

Case study: evidence from Mothers' clubs in Cajamarca, Peru[6]

Research on microfinance programmes in mothers' clubs in Cajamarca, Peru revealed how local power dynamics were negatively affecting the development outcomes of these CBOs. The members elected the leaders that already had standing and influence in the community. Many of the rank-and-file members, on the other hand, were illiterate, and had started working to produce products to sell, but the group leaders misappropriated the profits. When asked why the members did not speak up about this injustice, it appeared that they were inter-related through kinship ties and were afraid of severing contacts with the leaders, to whom they were beholden outside the microfinance group. These wider power dynamics in the community at large were having a major impact on how the microfinance programme was run and on those who were benefiting or losing out from it.

Source: Wright-Revolledo 2004a

This case study implies that prior to supporting CBOs in programme design, practitioners engaged in OCB need to understand the different kinds of structures that exist in the community, and identify the social practices that are likely to shape and affect development outcomes. Where the power dimension is ignored, OCB will remain, at best, cosmetic (James 2002), and, at worst, may actually reinforce social inequality. At the same time, challenging power issues through OCB needs careful and sensitive handling. Mansuri and Rao (2004) warn that external agencies that pre-empt political and social change without fully understanding the context may disrupt local dynamics and reinforce existing inequalities rather than supporting forms of progressive change that might empower the most excluded.

OCB aimed at CBOs will need awareness of local power dynamics, and the influence of capacity builders may be restricted to encouraging those running CBOs to use their power more appropriately as well as empowering members to take more responsibility for their organisation.[7] Those engaged in organisational capacity building work also need to understand what makes people join CBOs, what the implications are for those that join and those that do not, and what threatens that motivation.

What makes people join community-based organisations and what threatens this motivation?

What motivates people to join CBOs? Understanding how patterns of collective action have manifested themselves in particular developing areas, and what the 'drivers for change' are (Fowler 2005) in these areas is useful in understanding the motivational basis for collective action. It is also important to be aware of the exclusionary mechanisms at present in CBOs in particular contexts and how this affects motivation to join.

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[5] The term, 'adverse incorporation' has been coined by Wood (2003).
[6] For more information see Wright-Revolledo 2004a.
[7] For more information on promoting effective leadership, see James 2002.

Not all CBOs are representative of their members though where the issues are pertinent to, and embedded in, the very existence of the community, CBOs are more likely to gain the commitment of a wider range of members (Sahley and Pratt 2003). Other threats to group motivation and the implications of this in terms of strengthening organisational capacity also need to be considered. For example, intra-household dynamics and tensions are one issue. Another significant problem is that NGOs may create new CBOs around the projects that they wish to support, overlooking those identified as important by the community, and this in turn may threaten long-standing commitment to these programmes by the local community.

Conflict and mistrust between members often threatens the sustainability of CBOs. This can be heightened when collective benefits are perceived to fall more to certain members than others. One implication of understanding group dynamics is the need to provide space for working through negative feelings, and strengthening the members' capacity to identify the issues and resolve them collectively. This may be an important component of OCB that is specifically aimed at CBOs.

Case study: Connections, South Africa – managing group dynamics[8]

It is important to be prepared to provide space for issues relating to group dynamics as they arise, rather than following a set workshop agenda rigidly. Members should be encouraged to be honest about their feelings and give voice to them, and to understand that doing so will not lead to retribution. This can be achieved by explaining that emotions are important facts of organisational life that need to be worked through. Implementing communication exercises where people can learn to listen, inquire, advocate effectively, respond and give feedback can enhance the group's communication skills. One exercise is to encourage each participant to think of an image that represents the organisation as they currently experience it, and to use the ideas generated to tackle some of the more sensitive issues surrounding group dynamics.

Source: Schirin Yachkaschi, Connections, South Africa

Besides conflict between members of CBOs, other threats to CBOs include political and economic crisis, and entrenched poverty that restricts the time that members can devote to community activities. This can make it hard to do OCB with a consistent group of individuals. Also, increased socio-economic differentiation and inequality within communities, where, for example, some households are engaged in activities such as migration and receipt of remittances, means that the reliance of local people on CBOs may decrease.[9] Similarly the needs of these groups will vary. A study by La Ferrara (2002) suggests that where communities are highly unequal and socially differentiated, which is often the case, the group is less likely to operate effectively, members are more likely to misappropriate funds, less likely to interact frequently and are less motivated to participate. The trend towards individualism may conflict with the vision, that CBOs purportedly share, of equality, homogeneity and mutual interest around common objectives, and may lead to less participation overall (Wood and Shakil 2003). This has important implications for OCB. Members of CBOs need to be encouraged to think strategically in order to respond to these broader socio-economic changes that may threaten their very survival. Thus, OCB needs to be

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[8] For more information on this organisation's approach, see Yachkaschi 2005).
[9] A report generated from an international conference on community development in rural areas of Central Asia (Garbutt 2004) highlighted the need for further study into the impact of labour migration on community development.

focused on enabling CBOs to adapt to new challenges if they are to continue to be relevant to and attract the commitment of those they purportedly serve.

2.2 Planning organisational capacity building interventions

Whose capacity should be built?

'Capacity building is not power neutral. Where capacities are built there are both winners and losers. Capacity building cannot be disconnected from issues of power, competition over resources or control over them' (Morgan 1996 cited in James 2002: 80).

All too often better-resourced communities are more likely to be targeted for OCB support. As stated by Howell, clientelistic ties can steer donors towards particular groups of the poor embedded in patronage networks from village level upwards (2002). Similarly, it should be acknowledged that CBOs often have goals and objectives that are not always easily aligned to those of the donors or NGOs, and may not always be appropriate project partners for development programmes (Sahley and Pratt 2003). Questions also need to be raised about how accountable in practice are CBOs to those who they claim to represent. Thus, donors may need to be focused less on building organisations, and more on using OCB to build in mechanisms that ensure local accountability (Mansuri and Rao 2004).

Another issue concerns who within CBOs should be selected for OCB. In the final analysis, whichever CBOs and individuals in them are selected, it is likely that certain groups and individuals will be excluded. It is thus important to be clear and open from the outset about the criteria used to decide whose capacity to build before the programme negotiates with the CBOs they intend to work with (ACORD 2002).

Choosing which structures to work with

'NGOs and donors increasingly prefer to work with new CBOs that have been externally created, yet these are rarely sustainable beyond the life of the project' (Sahley and Pratt 2003: 80).

A (previously cited) recent international conference in Amman (Jordan) on community development for civil society strengthening incorporating over 70 practitioners from 34 countries debated amongst other things the question as to whether, and in what contexts, it is preferable to support the capacity of local CBOs as opposed to creating new ones. A report on the discussions of one of the regional groups concluded: 'In Central Asia, traditional institutions such as *aksakals*, *ashar* and *mahallas* have survived and play an important role in solving problems and sustaining local livelihoods…it is important to capitalise on the existing institutions instead of establishing new structures, which in the Central Asian experience proved to be unsustainable in the long run' (Babajanian cited in conference report, INTRAC 2005). In addition, doctoral research presented at this conference by Kolybashkina, analysing the case study of a UNDP Crimea integration and development programme, also suggested that creating parallel structures instead of working with existing ones had not worked, as the new structures failed to receive sustained support by local communities and did not survive beyond the project life span.

A key message of this conference summarised in the final report underlines this point:

'The move by many international NGOs to stimulate the formation of local community based organisations (CBOs) will not necessarily be part of a civil society strengthening agenda, if the real focus is to achieve externally predetermined aims. Furthermore, the goals and priorities of a community may change over time; thus organisations created for specific external needs (to act as a delivery mechanism) could become irrelevant when circumstances change' (Pratt and Wright-Revolledo 2005).

This reiterates the point that creating new CBOs could radically tilt the balance of local power relationships. It also points to the broader pitfalls of 'attempting to fashion civil society from the outside' (Howell 2002: 129).

The following case study serves as an example of an organisation that has learnt from past mistakes, and has adapted project design to build on the local capacities of existing organisations.

Case study: community capacity development programme in Rakai, Uganda

Previous work at CONCERN suggested that attention needed to be dedicated to strengthening existing capacities and making use of existing structures. CONCERN had created new structures running parallel to existing ones, but had not perhaps engaged sufficiently with the existing structures, and this had raised questions on sustainability issues, leading to a change of approach within this organisation.

Reflecting this change of approach, and in order to avoid the duplication of structures, the objective of this programme was to strengthen the organisational planning and implementing capacities of existing organisations, and to ensure better linkages between community planning, civil society groups and local government.

Source: CONCERN 2004b

This policy document reinforces the view that in particular contexts, working with existing local structures can have better outcomes than duplicating efforts by creating new or parallel ones. At the same time, it argues that care must also be taken in order that existing structures do not become too closely identified with the support of INGOs in a way that enables them to maintain their local identity and ownership.

How can organisational capacity building encourage community-based organisations to become more pro-poor?

'Projects that rely on community participation have not been particularly effective in targeting the poor' (Mansuri and Rao 2004: 1).

Even though the poorest and most socially excluded may be hard to work with[10], a programme needs at least to consider whether the strategy for organisational strengthening of CBOs includes mechanisms to enable the CBO to reach, and be accountable to, the needs of the poorest (Sahley and Pratt 2003). To ensure that the benefits of CBOs are transferred more broadly to the core poor means ensuring that the most vulnerable in the community participate, not only in needs assessment planning and programme design, but also in the monitoring and evaluation of the

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[10] They may have the least time to engage in such activities and little formal education, and may suffer from low self-esteem.

OCB process.[11] Yet this is complex in operational terms since the poorest are the least likely to have time to engage in such participatory practices, and this can lead to a selection-bias against them (Mansuri and Rao 2004). Though this is undoubtedly complex terrain, as even identifying the poorest individuals within poor communities is problematic, without incorporating a strategy to target the poor into the OCB process, it is very possible that the benefits will be captured by non-target groups, hence risking deepening rather than challenging the entrenched inequalities and power relations at community level.

Case study: the Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) in Nakasongola and Lira Districts, Uganda

This project was aimed at 'promoting sustainable livelihoods in the Nakasongola and Lira districts through facilitating change, promoting participation and ensuring effective management of local organisations involved in community development work' (Methven and Odoch 2004). The secondary aim was to train local government and extension workers in order to equip them with knowledge and skills for community-based participatory planning and management practices. CDRN is committed to a rights-based approach in order to achieve this. A review of this programme was designed to inform local authorities and stakeholders on how best to intervene and support CBOs in the areas where the project operates.

This review reported that certain CBOs were not intent on increasing their membership due in part to lack of commitment from particular individuals. This led the reviewers to question 'whether they may end up being very small, sharing benefits only between a "self-selected" group' (Methven and Odoch 2004: 7). Such a procedure risked excluding the poorest who lacked the time and money to contribute to group activities. CDRN subsequently sought different strategies to overcome this.

Source: Methven and Odoch 2004

This report thus questions how far particular CBOs are able to have an impact on improving the lives of poorer members, and how far the benefits of participation are transferred to the wider community. In this particular case, the reviewers suggested that a partial way of overcoming the problem might be to accept non-monetised contributions to group activities and, more broadly, to think strategically about how the poorest could benefit in practice. OCB initiatives aimed at CBOs should consider ways that this can be done, rather than assuming that such interventions and support always bolster 'pro-poor' politics (Howell 2002).

Selecting criteria to guide the nature of organisational capacity building initiatives

Political context and the local socio-cultural environment will help define the kind of OCB strategy that is appropriate.[12] CBOs may be engaged in activities broadly relating to resources in a number of different ways and will be able to determine

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[11] For examples of pro-poor initiatives that have increased the scope of citizen participation in all decision-making and implementation processes, see *Environment and Urbanization* Brief No. 11, April 2005.
[12] 'Local context will determine the appropriateness of different kinds of organisational capacity building interventions, the nature of internal capacity building needs and the impact of the capacity building programme' (James 2002: 89).

where their OCB needs lie.[13] Exploring the activities in which CBOs are engaged in terms of Henderson and Thomas' framework (2005) of resource acquisition, improvement, rejection, conservation, administration and provision begs the question: How far are different CBOs concerned with providing community-based services? Furthermore, how far are they focused on consciousness-raising, and making people alert to the opportunities for influencing local decision-making processes and wider social and economic issues? One example of this might be funeral societies taking on HIV prevention campaigns (James, personal communication).

At the previously cited conference in Jordan, concern was expressed by participants who felt that there are certain risks involved in turning CBOs into frontline deliverers of services. It was concluded that whether the service itself is worthy or not, a problem arises when it dominates the energy and focus of CBOs.[14] In some cases it may be inappropriate to burden CBOs with service provision or local development initiatives (Sahley and Pratt 2003). There are also likely to be marked differences in terms of organisational capacity of different CBOs affecting whether they can truly bring about development in their communities.[15] A key issue is that whichever strategy is employed, and at whichever level, it needs to be determined by local context and the process locally owned.

Specific questions that need to be thought about in terms of the criteria guiding OCB aimed at civil society strengthening include:

1. How is the CBO 'situated' (historically, culturally, socially, politically and so on)?
2. What is the nature of the membership, and what are the group dynamics?
3. How do the members define their needs?
4. Is there a genuine desire to enhance organisational capacity or is this being imposed from outside?
5. What stage is the organisation at in its life cycle?
6. What are the power dynamics at the local level and what is the nature of the relationships that they already have with external organisations? How might these relationships be enhanced?
7. Is the CBO in a position to provide services to the wider community or will this be a distraction from other activities that it considers to be important?

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[13] Henderson and Thomas (2005) have usefully classified the kinds of work that CBOs are engaged in as: resource acquisition (for example, of a new community centre); resource improvement (for example, making officials more responsive to community needs; resource rejection (for example, where a group rejects proposals to introduce particular kinds of resources, such as a mine, into a community); resource conservation (for example, where groups attempt to conserve resources in the face of threat to remove them); resource administration (for example, local residents are contracted to manage a local resource, but resources are owned by an outside authority); and resource provision (for example, residents attempt to provide services independently of the formal structures of service provision). One category that is absent and could be added is that of enjoyment and social activity (Pratt, personal communication 2006).
[14] Concern was expressed by the authors of several of the papers that such changes are masking a move to 'de-politicise' both community development and local civil society development, increasing the focus on local service provision, thus avoiding the need for engagement with difficult political issues at the national level (Pratt and Wright-Revolledo 2005).
[15] Encouraging CBOs, for example, to develop a housing project involving negotiations with local councils, banks and other structures or encouraging them to write funding applications where many members may be illiterate may be both unrealistic and inappropriate.

8. What level of investment is available for OCB and over what period or time span (short/medium/long-term)?

(Adapted from training materials by Lipson, INTRAC 2005).

These kinds of considerations might form part of a needs assessment exercise prior to devising the particular strategy for organisational capacity building aimed at a particular CBO.

Achieving local ownership and buy-in

'Participation is usually quite instrumental…a way of ensuring that a project succeeds without forcing [an external agency] to surrender a degree of power' (Sahley and Pratt 2003: 88).

Where OCB is imposed from the outside, this often leads to little local ownership of the process. It is therefore crucial, in the case of CBOs, that those whose capacity is being enhanced direct the process. A key objective of stakeholder ownership and participation is the incorporation of local knowledge into the project's decision-making processes (Mansuri and Rao 2004). Interestingly, however, though a wide range of stakeholders may be consulted at the level of needs assessment, few are typically asked to participate at the level of programme design or in the monitoring and evaluation of the OCB process (Sahley and Pratt 2003). Furthermore, even when different sectors in local communities are consulted, this is often quite superficial.[16]

To be 'truly participative' the OCB process must be aware of these pitfalls and must genuinely allow stakeholders to exercise voice and choice. This requires not only that care is taken in the way people are consulted, but also surrendering an element of control to them so they can determine what their needs are and direct the process by which this should be achieved. When creating OCB plans for CBOs, it is necessary to take into account any conflicts between the different stakeholders. OCB aimed at CBOs should allow communities to participate in the design of projects, in formulating project aims and objectives and developing indicators, activities and outputs in such a way that promotes 'learning-by-doing'.

> ### *Case study: CONCERN's Child Survival Programme (in Saidpur and Parbatibur, Bangladesh) to improve the effectiveness of municipal authorities in responding to the needs of CBOs*
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> This project was aimed at supporting municipal authorities in identifying and responding more effectively to the practical and strategic needs of CBOs in the areas of Saidpur and Parbatibur. CONCERN did not provide any material resources to municipality health staff or to the CBOs, but did assist in identifying the local and national sources that they could access. CONCERN's efforts were focused on strengthening municipality health systems at all levels. Their input was confined to OCB in areas such as leadership and delegation, participatory management systems and supervisory training.

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[16] Mansuri and Rao (2004) citing Mosse (2001), for example, have suggested that even when stakeholders are consulted, this often occurs at public events that reflect local power and authority dynamics. Also, project facilitators may unwittingly shape and direct participatory exercises to suit the agendas of external agencies. Participation is thus often used to legitimise the project's previously established priorities, and may be little supported by the community.

Clarifying of mutual roles, responsibilities and expectations using techniques of appreciative inquiry (AI)[17] was found to be extremely fruitful. This was important in focusing on the type of interventions to be carried out, and in gaining the commitment of municipal authorities and other stakeholders. It was also perceived by the trainers to be an especially sensitive, non-threatening and effective mechanism in helping to establish the roles and responsibilities of the different interest groups.

Source: CONCERN-Bangladesh, 2004c

In terms of gaining buy-in, different sectors need to believe that there are tangible benefits to be had from working as a group and pursuing collective strategies.[18] For example, winning over local elites involves recognising who has the power to influence them (Garbutt 2004). Reports need to be presented to stakeholders in particular agencies in concise and readable formats in order that they can be convinced of the value of what is proposed.

Addressing gender issues through organisational capacity building

CBOs may reflect gender imbalances pertaining to the community at large. Understanding is needed of the structural inequalities and power hierarchies, which can curtail women's meaningful participation in collective decision-making and, more broadly, in leadership positions. As argued by Mansuri and Rao (2004:23), 'it is the more powerful who are the only ones who can effectively communicate with outsiders, read project documents, keep accounts and records and write proposals'. Similarly, due to power hierarchies, women may not be adequately represented in executive positions in CBOs.[19] In addition, large domestic burdens may curtail their ability to attend the meetings of CBOs. Furthermore, leadership work often requires regular absences from home, involving visits to donor agencies and participation in training programmes.

Case Study: the Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) in Nakasongola and Lira Districts, Uganda

A review of this study reported that the programme had met problems in including women in the training modules on management issues, project planning and advocacy since their spouses did not accept their absence for five consecutive days whilst they were on a training workshop. This report proposed that one way of overcoming this problem was to introduce mechanisms so that training could take place in locations that were closer to their homes.

Source: Methven and Odoch 2004

OCB of CBOs must be premised on in-depth understanding of the specific context and the specific complexities and subtleties of gender relations in that context in order to gage what kind of interventions would be appropriate. It would then require removing barriers to women's meaningful participation and considering how to

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[17] This adopts an appreciative stance rather than a problem-centred approach.

[18] As Mansuri and Rao state, stimulating commitment to CBOs 'may require more than educating people about their common interests…it may also require helping them to see the benefits of collective action' (Mansuri and Rao 2004: 18).

[19] Low educational levels leading to illiteracy often also adversely affect their leadership capabilities and give women a poor self-image (Djegal et al. 1996). Marriage also curtails women's ability to take on civic duties, and can inhibit their freedom of association and movement.

strengthen women's role more broadly at societal level. Conscious efforts to include women, to identify capable leaders and to invite them to participate in training may have more impact (Opare 2005).

Those practising OCB need to think strategically about other ways of addressing such kinds of structural inequalities. Having examined some of the issues affecting the planning of a strategy for OCB of CBOs, the next section addresses issues specifically relating to strengthening of internal capacity.

2.3 Building internal organisational capacity

Training for effective organisational functioning and civil society strengthening

Training is still the most common mechanism for enhancing organisational capacities. Yet how far the training of key individuals leads to stronger and more effective organisations in practice has to been questioned (Lipson 2003: 82).[20]

In cases where the broader aim of supporting the organisational capacity building of CBOs is that of civil society strengthening, then training needs to lead to consciousness-raising and enhancing political awareness so that people can better understand and question the factors that perpetuate poverty and powerlessness (Henderson and Thomas 2005). This would require that training of individuals in CBOs move away from an instrumental kind of agenda to one that raises individuals' consciousness, promotes critical thinking and develops their political engagement.[21]

In terms of delivery, the training of CBOs needs to respond to the priorities that they themselves determine. For example, the emphasis is on enabling the CBO to diagnose its own problems and develop its own solutions (James 2002). Training will of course vary from one place to another but may include the following kinds of modules: values clarification; encouraging critical thinking; strategic planning[22]; developing leadership skills[23]; conflict resolution; monitoring; and evaluation of the

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[20] Similarly, the link between training for organisational effectiveness and training for civil society strengthening is often assumed rather than demonstrated.

[21] Henderson and Thomas (2005: 185) suggest key areas of awareness that need to be created through training. These include awareness of: (1) the self and one's position and abilities to achieve some change. This includes a motivation to seek change; (2) the collective aspects of a problem (that is, that there are other people going through a similar situation or experience); (3) the possibilities of collective action and the powerfulness of efforts of a group as compared with that of individuals; (4) the political nature of decisions made in organisations such as local authorities about the allocation of scarce resources; (5) how the concerns of one's group relate to those of other groups in the neighbourhood. This awareness may lead to a strategic need to form alliances with others to achieve change; (6) broader political and socio-economic issues (in regional, national and international matters); (7) causal questions about arrangements that govern matters such as distribution of income, wealth, opportunities and power.

[22] Ensuring that the organisation's mission and goals are clarified will enable the group to work better.

[23] For example, organisational capacity building programmes may need to focus on assisting the leadership to use their power more appropriately as well as empowering the members to take more responsibility for their organisation. In order for the CBO itself to change, leaders need to be treated in a tactful way to make them consider positive incentives to change. This is because organisations will not change unless leaders undergo some process of personal change. Effective change needs to be owned by the leadership (James 2002). Yet all too often leaders are revered and members fear retribution by leaders for speaking out. James

capacity building process. It is of key importance is that training should not 'stand alone' but should include mentoring, regular review sessions and action learning sets (Lipson 2003).

Where the trainer cannot deliver on particular subjects, by establishing links with other agencies different kinds of training can be facilitated, provided that these agencies are also attuned to the needs and expectations of the participants. CBOs can learn much from groups working in similar arenas (for example, through horizontal learning). Engaging in such processes can encourage CBOs to develop skills in creating and maintaining networks and alliances, thus strengthening their capacity to deal with external actors.

Internal documents from INTRAC and interviews with staff highlight other important issues: (1) local authorities as well as CBOs need to be trained in tandem where possible; (2) training needs to be pitched at the right level and regular follow-up is critical; (3) mechanisms must be in place so that CBOs can monitor their own progress, and evaluations need to be a continuous part of the OCB process, not just a means of judging effectiveness after this support is withdrawn. These issues are brought out in the following case study from Uganda:

Case study: the Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) in Nakasongola and Lira Districts, Uganda

Training both local government and community leaders is essential
This review points out the importance of training on the one hand for CBOs so they are able to hold governments to account, and on the other hand, for local government officials to encourage them to change their views and practices in terms of improving their own accountability to communities. If a programme has trained one side (such as CBOs), they are likely to face major challenges from the other (that is, local government officials).

Pitching training at the right level
Training needs 'to start from where CBOs are' (Methven and Odoch 2004: 14) and to be built up accordingly.

Establishing a methodology for follow-up of CBOs in order to monitor and ensure their effectiveness
This report concluded that long-term monitoring of impact was imperative for CBOs if they were to develop skills in advocacy to demand more accountability and better services. The report added that this needs to be done in a way that encourages self-reliance in groups.

Source: Methven and Odoch, 2004

Training also needs to be carefully designed so as not to compound existing power differences in CBOs. It is also crucial to build in incentives for training to be transferred between members in the CBO: evidence from Bangladesh suggests that without this, it cannot be assumed that such transfer will occur.

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adds: 'Capacity building that does not address the very personal and individual nature of organisational change (especially at leadership level) risks being superficial' (James 2002: 65).

> **Case study: CONCERN's rural development programme's organisation-building approach with landless and marginal farmers, Bangladesh**
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> **Training must be designed so as not to compound existing differences between members of CBOs.** It emerged in focus group discussions with members of CBOs that by training leaders in capacity building, these particular individuals often get opportunities to participate in workshops and to visit other NGOs. Rank-and-file members do not always enjoy such benefits. In this case, the capacity building of particular individuals could compound rather than challenge the power differences already existing in the group.
>
> **Leaders do not necessarily share the learning or experience of training with other group members.** Members do not always benefit from capacity building of leaders, and incentives need to be built in to ensure that this takes place.
>
> *Source: CONCERN-Bangladesh, 2004*

Ownership of the organisational capacity building process

'Many donors who try and support capacity building programmes get so involved in the details that they completely remove client ownership of the process…Believing and trusting in those whose capacity is being built is necessary otherwise the capacity building programme will fail' (James 2002).

Those engaged in OCB are expected to contribute to a process of enhancing capacity for collective action, ensuring adequate representation and participation and where necessary encouraging the breaking of elite domination (Mansuri and Rao 2004: 24). Yet it is often hard for those working with local CBOs to accept that they need to undertake a supportive role in such a way that responsibility for decision-making concerning the CBO, and any development projects in which it may be engaged, falls to the members themselves (Sahley and Pratt 2003).

It is crucial that those whose capacity is being enhanced must be able to own and direct this process: 'Northern agencies are often unwilling to relinquish any real power or control…[they] are guilty of wanting to build the capacity of partners whilst at the same time not giving them any room to implement that new capacity (James 2002).[24] Having examined some of the issues relating to building of internal organisational capacity, the next section addresses how CBOs can manage their relationships with others.

2.4 Managing relationships with others

'OCB needs to focus on creating downward forms of accountability and simultaneously maintaining close links between the higher levels of government and CBOs' (Mansuri and Rao 2004: 26).

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[24] Interestingly, practitioners at the international conference in Jordan on community development for civil society strengthening also highlighted that it is important to make clear to the members of CBOs themselves the reason for this paradigm shift so they are empowered to take ownership, rather than expecting or demanding external staff to execute the programme and take strategic decisions for them.

Facilitating alliances between community-based organisations and other local organisations/external decision-making bodies

Even if CBOs are initially successful in their activities they may lack the material resources and connections to sustain their efforts (Cleaver cited in Mansuri and Rao 2004). Clearly, however, not all CBOs will be of a disposition or at a stage where they are able to become involved in advocacy work. For those that are very fluid in structure and mainly run by volunteers, this may be neither feasible nor appropriate. However, for those organisations that are 'ready', willing and able, strengthening the capacities of CBOs may strengthen existing capacity to put pressure on village or local authorities at the community level, and to get their voices heard beyond their own communities. Some issues and needs may go beyond those that individual CBOs can address. OCB needs to ensure that for those organisations at the stage where they are able to go further, CBOs are able to create strategic alliances in order to influence decision-making at other levels, such as at district and national level. The government also needs to be convinced of the need to be transparent and accountable to the needs of local communities. The literature on how CBOs relate to others is relatively sparse; therefore, much of this section relies heavily on the work of Henderson and Thomas (2005).

Relating to groups and other organisations in the community

Leaders of CBOs may be ambivalent about relating to other organisations in the community through constructing, for example, umbrella organisations which may in certain cases help individual organisations to exert more power. Similarly, other organisations may mistrust CBOs, and question their credibility. CBOs may choose to be connected to other groups, and co-ordinate activities in such a way that the more practical benefits of joining with groups with similar interests are felt, such as the ability to access new funding possibilities or to share resources, thus cutting individual costs. CBOs may choose to link up in such a way as to produce tangible benefits by, for example, sharing existing facilities and resources, stimulating new projects and establishing new resources.

> *Case study: the Community Development Resources Network (CDRN) in Nakasongola and Lira Districts, Uganda*
>
> **Linking CBOs together can enable them to speak with a stronger voice.** Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that CBOs work together, for example, so that they can make complaints collectively. Also, getting their needs represented at district (rather than community level) forums is challenging. One way to encourage CBOs to work collectively is for them to channel information and requests collectively to the local government administration, and it may be effective to set up sub-county steering committees comprising CBO representatives.
>
> **Development agencies need to support CBOs by speaking out alongside them.** It is suggested in the review that donors should not only rely on the CBOs becoming sufficiently empowered to raise their voices. Rather, it was recommended that CDRN as part of Ugandan civil society could publicise the voice of the CBOs in national and local forums, and also link CBOs to relevant advocacy groups and other services.
>
> *Source: Methven and Odoch 2004*

Notwithstanding the benefits that can come from collaboration, it is important that individuals have both the skills and the time available for this work. All too often

leaders put themselves forward, but then find time commitments make their continuing involvement unsustainable. Similarly, there are risks of 'losing' leaders who may be co-opted by other groups – or by NGOs!

Negotiating with decision-makers outside the community-based organisation

In theory, in cases where the OCB process is aimed at civil society strengthening for example, CBOs need to be able to influence decision-making agencies that are external to them. The role of the facilitator or capacity builder is not so much to be a channel between the CBO and outside agents, but rather to encourage direct contact between them in such a way that the dominance of the organisational capacity builder in facilitating this interaction becomes less and less (Henderson and Thomas 2005: 193). In this way, OCB for CBOs is not a single, isolated intervention, but can aid, for example, the building of partnerships between CBOs and local governments in order that the work of CBOs can be strengthened and sustained.[25]

Clearly, it may be wholly unrealistic to expect CBOs to represent the interests of their organisation to influential people in a way that is forceful and convincing, given power differentials between them and well resourced 'expert' agencies. In terms of enhancing the ability of an organisation to relate to others, much will depend on the stage the organisation is at and the nature of the connections that have been built up previously. It is also important that the group is sufficiently strong itself before it considers forming formal organisational links with other groups.

Yet, as a long-term goal, CBOs can benefit from an enhanced capacity to manage relationships with organisations and bodies such as other neighbourhood groups, local government, service agencies and so on. Enhancing such relationships implies building on skills in representing and negotiating the interests of the group as well as being tactical about which strategies are chosen and how these are executed. Though this may seem like much to aim for, without these skills CBOs are likely to be vulnerable to co-optation or manipulation by powerful agencies or local politicians.[26]

2.5 Phasing out organisational capacity building support

The key issue in terms of OCB is that 'leavings and endings need to be planned for' (Henderson and Thomas 2005: 242). It is important that evaluations of the OCB process are not left to the end but are included throughout, and, as highlighted previously, it is critical that CBOs and the communities themselves are fully engaged in this process. This will require evaluating the effects of capacity building interventions both in terms of their direct effects and in terms of their indirect or wider impacts (in both positive and negative domains of impact).[27] Through evaluation, new areas of need will come to light. The evaluations should also be fed back to

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[25] Coaching in negotiation skills in order that people in CBOs are in a position to bargain directly with local authorities can be undertaken through practice exercises and prior rehearsal of the negotiation. In particular, members need to be clear about the outcome they want to achieve, who their allies are, what leverage they have, what action is required within the opportunities of the situation in which they are organising, how to go about getting funds, and skilful timing in terms of knowing which issues to bring up and when (Henderson and Thomas 2005).

[26] For an example of such manipulation in the Peruvian context, see Schady (2000).

[27] Wider impacts are often best gleaned through using qualitative approaches. See Wright-Revolledo on the qualitative impact assessment protocol QUIP (2004b).

community groups in such a way that they can evaluate their own efforts and effectiveness.

In cases where funding comes to an end or is withdrawn, it is important that CBOs have developed skills in accessing other sources of funding, and this should be embedded into the OCB strategy.

Good practice in terms of withdrawing OCB support

- Timing the withdrawal well (for example when the CBO has achieved a goal) is important in order to keep confidence and morale high.
- It is important to understand how people experience endings and how the capacity builder also may experience, for example, a sense of loss or a process of self-evaluation.
- The capacity builder or agency needs to ensure that gains will be maintained after he or she disengages from the CBO. This will include ensuring that the group's structures and procedures are suitable for the tasks that remain to be accomplished. Helping the group consolidate its future relations in the wider community is also important.
- Terminating contact with the group should be guided by the following principles: (1) Indicate and confirm the successes of the group; (2) Gear activities towards helping members consolidate their attempts to reach outside the group.
- All members of the CBO should be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the organisational capacity programme.

Source: Henderson and Thomas, 2005

In cases where a CBO is facing closure rather than the OCB coming to an end, the group may disband because members feel that they have achieved their aims and that it is more appropriate for the group to end rather than work on new issues. Members may join new community groups, or may re-form with new constituents at a later stage. A group may end because it has run out of funding. Other unplanned endings may include a sudden loss of members or leaders due, for example, to major conflicts between members. Illness of members in strategic positions can lead to group collapse, as can the gradual loss of members for reasons such as apathy, slow progress or lack of interest. Such endings are likely to leave members disillusioned and with a wariness of joining community groups again. It is the role of the facilitator of the OCB process to help the group 'work through' these feelings (Henderson and Thomas 2005).

Conclusion: Implications for Future Practice

This review has brought together a range of issues relating to good practice for OCB aimed at CBOs in terms of awareness of local context, planning the OCB strategy, increasing internal capacity, managing relationships with others and phasing out OCB support. It next examines some implications of these observations for practice, highlighting ten principles to guide future interventions and suggests areas for future research.

1. The members of CBOs are likely to be inter-related through household networks and individuals will be beholden to leaders outside the CBOs. As a result particular sensitivity to understanding community power relationships and local kinship structures and intra-household dynamics is vital to the OCB process.

2. CBOs can be highly informal in structure and more fluid and less observable in terms of their organisational forms. They can often disappear and remerge in different and unpredictable ways. By extension it could be argued that it is the internalisation of skills connected with running an organisation more than the sustainability of the CBOs themselves that may be more important (Pratt, personal communication, 2006).

3. Members of CBOs often live and work in the community, offering their time, which is often unpaid. The OCB process needs to be sensitive to this fact that the impacts of this process are likely to be felt by members living in the community long after the OCB processes has ended.

4. Particular understanding of what brings people together in specific communities and how this changes over time and in response to political, socio-economic and cultural change is vital.

5. Members of CBOs can, but do not necessarily, represent the interests of those external to it. Understanding how the benefits might extend to or exclude others, including the very poorest (such as female-headed households who are likely to be curtailed from attending CBOs at all due to heavy domestic burdens) is important to consider as part of the OCB process.

6. Clearly, the organisational culture of CBOs is likely to reflect power differentials and gender imbalances that exist in the community at large. Such an understanding needs to be built into the OCB strategy.

7. CBOs need to direct the process of OCB, and given the likelihood of lower literacy levels and time constraints on members, this requires a longer time horizon.

8. Donors should endeavour to avoid duplicating existing community structures and rather build on existing ones, where these are not oppressive. Producing new structures does not always guarantee the privileging of local needs or sustainable organisations beyond the life of a particular project. OCB needs to be focused less on building organisations per se and more on building in mechanisms that ensure local accountability and helping people to internalise transferable skills.

9. Phasing out OCB support to CBOs requires particularly careful planning, good timing and sensitive handling. In particular it is important that the CBO is able to monitor its own progress and that it has been linked up with external agencies that

are able to help sustain its efforts. By extension, even if the activities of a particular CBO cannot be sustained, the focus needs to be on ensuring that a 'residual capacity' remains 'in people' beyond the CBO (Fowler 2005).

10. In cases where it is feasible and appropriate, CBOs need to strengthen their ability to influence decision-making agencies external to them, and to improve their material base and negotiating position.

One remaining challenge is that though some documentation is starting to surface on the engagement of INGOs with CBOs, much more is still required on the experiences of local NGOs (such as that of Connections in South Africa contained within this review) in providing OCB support to CBOs. In this regard it is hoped that initiatives such as INTRAC's Praxis programme will provide more opportunity for the documentation of such experiences in such a way to inform future policy and practice in this emerging area.

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Appendix 1: Synthesis of factors to address when supporting the organisational capacity of community-based organisations

DOMAIN	THEME	LESSON LEARNT
1.UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT	**Why does local context matter? Identifying the institutional structures that exist**	• Local context influences the nature of capacity building needs and the appropriateness of different approaches. • This is a complex but essential task. Identifying and strengthening the organisational capacities of local structures is likely to have most impact.
	Understanding how CBOs are embedded in communities	• Recognising the power dynamics at play in local communities; understanding the social, economic and cultural factors which bind people or act as preconditions for conflict; allegiance to kin/local elites; understanding elite capture and adverse incorporation into groups. • Understanding the factors that motivate people to join CBOs and those that threaten association • Space needs to be provided so that group members can work through negative feelings and learn techniques of conflict resolution. They also need to be trained in how to hold leaders accountable.
2. PLANNING THE OCB STRATEGY	**Choosing whose capacity to build**	• This is a political decision – criteria for choosing the CBOs should be made transparent.
	Planning how to reach the core poor	• Without incorporating a strategy to target the poor into the OCB process, it is extremely likely that the benefits will be captured by non-target groups.
	Choosing what OCB should be carried out and at what level	• Political context and the local socio-cultural environment will define the kind of OCB intervention that is appropriate.

	Ensuring local ownership and buy-in **Ensuring gender sensitivity in all operations**	• Clarifying roles, responsibilities and expectations of all interest groups from the outset is important. • Gaining trust takes time. • Strategic plans need to incorporate ways of encouraging women's decision-making capacity in CBOs and improving their situation outside it.
3. BUILDING INTERNAL CAPACITY	**Training, knowledge transfer and follow-up** **Encouraging staff to act as facilitators**	• Both local government workers and community leaders need training and reorientation as to their roles and responsibilities. • Pitching training at the right level is of supreme importance. • It cannot be assumed that knowledge will automatically be transferred to the group or that benefits are extended to the rest of the community. Mechanisms and incentive systems need to be put in place to ensure this. • Ensuring follow-up to ensure the impact of training of CBOs is essential. • Ensuring that CBOs can monitor their own effectiveness is crucial. • Staff need to understand that their role is to 'support' people's own efforts rather than to 'execute' activities on behalf of them. • Staff need to be trained so as not to underestimate local capacities.
4. MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	**Being heard beyond community level** **Relating to other local organisations**	• Speaking out alongside CBOs is also important. • CBOs need to be connected to, and to co-ordinate activities with, other groups in such a way that the more practical benefits of joining with groups with similar interests are felt.

	Negotiating with decision-makers outside the CBO	• As a long-term goal, the CBO needs to learn to be able to think and act politically and to manage relationships with organisations and bodies such as other neighbourhood groups, local government and service agencies.
5. PHASING OUT OCB SUPPORT	**Terminating contact with the CBO**	• Careful planning is required for phasing out OCB support to CBOs.

Supporting the Capacity of Organisations at Community Level
An Exploration of Issues, Methods and Principles for Good Practice

Katie Wright-Revolledo

This paper adopts a critical approach to current practice in organisational capacity building (OCB) for community-based organisations (CBOs). The central question raised by this paper is: How can approaches to OCB respond more effectively to the specific culture and socio-political contexts in which CBOs operate? It brings together a range of issues relating to good practice for OCB in terms of: awareness of local context, planning the OCB strategy, increasing internal capacity, managing relationships with others and phasing out OCB support. The conclusion examines some implications of these observations for practice, and highlights principles to guide future interventions and areas for future research.

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