

# National Workshop on Capacity Needs Assessment of Extension and Advisory Service Providers

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## Capacity assessment

Capacity assessment refers to the process by which the capacity of a group/organisation is reviewed against desired goals, and the capacity **gaps** are identified for further action.

Capacity Need Assessment (CNA) is not only about recognising **gaps**, but also about identifying **existing capacity** and **latent capacity** (current capacity that is neither used nor recognised) and ensuring that both are enhanced and clearly linked with the **outcomes** to achieve a desired result.

## 4 types of Capacities

- **Institutional** capacities (include rules, regulations and practices that set the overarching contextual environment) – structural
- **Organisational** capacities (how various actors come together to perform given tasks) – functional
- **Individual** capacities (technical, functional and leadership skills of individuals)
- **Knowledge base** (creation, absorption and diffusion of information and expertise towards effective development solution) - information

**FAO framework** talks about functional and technical capacities across three levels: individuals, organisations and enabling environment.

- **Individual level** relates to knowledge, skills (technical and managerial) and attitudes
- **Organisational level** relates to public, private and civil society organisations and networks of organisations
- **Enabling environment level** relates to political commitment and vision; policy, legal, regulatory and economic frameworks

## Functional capacities

- Policy and normative capacity: Capacities to formulate and implement policies and lead policy reform
- Knowledge capacity: Capacities to access, generate, manage and exchange information and knowledge
- Partnering Capacity: Capacities to engage in networks, alliances and partnerships
- Implementation Capacity: Management capacities to implement and deliver programmes and projects, from planning to monitoring, and evaluation

# Approach

**Incremental approach-** starts with identification of **existing capacity** as the foundation for identifying realistic steps

Incremental approach has a more positive feel, because of its affirmative starting point, it is helpful for involving targeted stakeholders in participatory self-assessment

Defines needs as realistic steps that move the organisation forward in the right direction

**Gap analysis** - starts with the definition of how things 'should be' (potential), then looks at how they are (current) and defines the difference between the two as what is missing.

- tends to be based on externally defined criteria for full and effective functioning of the organisation
- tend not to recognise or value existing capacity sufficiently well to make it the starting point
- statement of the ideal situation is often far too ambitious to be helpful in setting realistic goals
- tends to focus on hard capacities, with little attention given to essential soft capacities

**UNDP capacity assessment framework** has 3 dimensions

- **Points of entry:** Capacity resides at three levels, viz., enabling environment, organisational and individual.

- **Core issues:** institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge and accountability.

- **Functional and technical capacities:** Three levels- individual, institutional and systemic

**Individual:** refers to the process of changing attitudes and behaviours-impacting knowledge and developing skills while maximizing the benefits of participation, knowledge exchange and ownership.

**Institutional:** focuses on the overall organizational performance and functioning capabilities, as well as the ability of an organization to adapt to change.

**Systemic:** emphasizes the overall policy framework in which individuals and organizations operate and interact with the external environment

Finding the most appropriate entry point for assessing capacity is critical to a successful outcome. Logically, assessment should start with the big picture at the level of enabling environment and then proceed to the lower levels. UNDP suggests the most common entry point is at the organization level.

The initial focus may be on strengthening an organization.

Existing capacity can provide a useful starting point to design future capacity. Experience suggests that it is better to build from existing strengths rather than inventing something new from scratch.