

Capacity Building

The Paris Declaration mentions building capacity in many paragraphs – because it is vital to achieving development results, building ownership, leveraging alignment of aid, and providing for accountability. Capacity is not only a matter of skills; it also encompasses governing capacity, institutional capacity to formulate effective development policies and to manage implementation in a way that will produce results, capacity to manage aid and coordinate technical assistance, and capacity for democratic accountability – that is, government capacity to provide accountable and transparent information, and parliament and civil organization capacity to hold the government accountable. The political economy of capacity – for example, the functioning of the civil service, and the availability of skills in the private sector and in universities – is another vital aspect of capacity building.

The Paris Declaration emphasizes that partner countries need to take the lead in building their capacity, on the basis of their capacity development strategies.

Findings of the 2008 Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey

The evaluations reveal that although there has been some progress, there are both real and perceived limits on the capacities of all partner countries to exercise leadership, particularly in formulating and implementing capacity development programs, and in coordinating donor support for capacity building. Most partner countries lack coherent and sustainable capacity-development strategies, and they report a range of constraints to effective aid management: weak administration with high staff turnover and low salaries, ineffective parliaments, and volatile civil society organizations

The Survey shows that technical assistance is increasingly coordinated, although donor-driven and -managed technical assistance comes at high costs and undermines existing capacity by replacing national staff. Much technical assistance focuses on training rather than organizational or institutional development.

According to the Survey, donor agencies also have capacity constraints and cannot always deliver in the spirit of the Paris Declaration. Delegation of staff and of decision authority from headquarters to the field level is seen as one of the crucial responses to deal with these constraints.

Accra Agenda for Action

The Accra Agenda calls for strengthening the capacity of partner countries to lead and manage development. It states that together developing countries and donors will systematically identify areas in which there is a need to strengthen capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels. Donors' support for capacity development will be



demand-driven and designed to support country ownership, and donors and partner countries will work together at all levels to promote operational changes to make capacity development more effective.

