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“World Food System —
A Contribution from Europe”

Capacity Development as a Bridge to Transform Scientific Knowledge into Action for the World Food System

DETLEF VIRCHOW¹, ALEXANDRA PRES², SURESH BABU³, LUEDER CAMMANN⁴

¹*University of Hohenheim, Food Security Center (FSC), Germany*

²*Concepts4capacities, Germany*

³*International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Knowledge, Capacity, and Innovation, United States*

⁴*InWEnt - Capacity Building International, Rural Development, Food and Consumer Protection, Germany*

Abstract

The world food-price crisis and the over-all reverse trend of the world food system to supply the world population with adequate food has shown that generating scientific knowledge alone is not enough to support policy-makers and society in implementing strategies to solve the development problems. Capacity development (CD) is one of the bridges to bring across scientific knowledge to individuals, organisations and to political systems to enable them to assess, analyze, and solve the persisting old and up-coming new challenges in an appropriate manner.

Meanwhile a whole industry has developed around the issue of “capacity development”, which is strong in the development aspect, however weak in systematizing capacity and defining which capacities are actually needed and have to be developed at which level by whom. It seems that there are as many capacity assessment frameworks on the market as organisations working in capacity development and most of these frameworks are organisation-specific and often difficult to understand and utilise by others.

A group of capacity development experts from various organisations have formed a working group and developed a tool to systematize needed competences to build up the appropriate capacity at different levels and to be able to assess missing capacities related to certain challenges. This framework is focusing on capacity rather than the common approach of capacity development. It looks at capacity in a variety of different ways: capacity in time (past to future), capacity of different skills (“soft” and “hard”), capacity as system (complex and simple), and capacity of people (individuals to groups).

The framework is developed in such a way that it can be used by professionals as well as laypersons, from international organisations as well as local civil society groups. The underlying objective of this tool is to encourage people to think of capacity development as a critical development activity in its own right, enabling individuals and groups to develop their ability to manage the food system at the local up to the global level and thereby improving its major task to supply the world population with enough and adequate food.

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