Panel on Monitoring & Evaluating Local Capacity Building Approaches

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Presenters

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Moderator:	So we need a microphone.
	[Laughter]
Moderator:	But I just like hearing myself talk. Who wants to start?
Edward Scholl:	I'm Edward Scholl. I'm with Project Concern International, and I'm a Country Director for India for PCI.
	I'd like to share a few reflections on the evolution of capacity building, especially organizational and country capacity building, and how that – the implications of that on M&E, and how M&E capacity building differs from M&E more traditional development interventions.
	Let me go back ten years to the beginning of PEPFAR, because I think PEPFAR has had an outside influence on this field.
Moderator:	Do people know what PEPFAR is?
Edward Scholl:	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, began in 2003, and really altered the terrain, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, for development programming, particularly in health. And one of the focuses of PEPFAR was working with new partners, rather the traditional partners or the largest technical assistance firms, we wanted use new partners.
	And with that was the challenge of working with some new partners, and new partners that hadn't

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had a lot of experience working with USAID before. And so part of PEPFAR's resources went to organizational capacity development. And for example, the firm I previously worked for, JSI, had a couple of grants, one from CDC, one from USAID, to develop the capacity of new partners.

And then with PEPFAR 2, there was even more of a focus on building sustainability, capacity building, and working in partnership with governments. The emphasis on emergency response ended, and it was more of a partnership and long-term capacity building approach.

So anyway, that led to probably a whole cottage industry springing forth with organizational capacity assessment tools, interventions to improve the capacity of local organizations and governments.

And then USAID Forward, the impetus to this now and also focusing on working with local partners. And the Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and malaria also has emphasized local capacity building a lot, as it has recognized the weakness of some principle recipients and country-coordinated mechanisms and discovered evidence of fraud and inability to spend grant money on the program from not only AID but from the Global Fund there's been a focus on capacity building.

So what are the implications of this for M&E as different from M&E of traditional development approaches? I think there's several, and one would be that we can't assume that capacity development is the same as performance improvement, and seek to measure it in the same way. In fact, performance would theoretically decrease if you're working to build capacity, you're not always going to be able to find increases in service statistics,

increases in knowledge or behaviors, if you are truly working to build capacity in areas like governance and leadership and financial management and human resource management.

Also, the – improved capacity is multi-dimensional, and rarely there's a linear connection between inputs and outputs. And it's associated with multiple causes and effects, some of them unintended. And so we need to have an M&E system that is, you know, probably less amenable to detailed planning in advance, and more flexible, and pragmatic.

We also need new M&E tools, such as organizational capacity tools, rather than simply relying on one-dimensional measures of _____ change or behavior change. We also need to change our time orientation. Capacity building takes time, and so the number – rather than looking for immediately changes in six months to a year, we're going to have to look for the three or four year timeframe.

We also need to include more reflection and learning among participants in the organizational capacity building efforts. Oftentimes, we won't' even know what to look for at the outset, and we must rely on the participants themselves to help us identify, okay, what does this mean for your organization in terms of improved capacity? How – what are going to be our targets and how are we going to measure them?

And then finally, we need to encourage more ownership of the capacity development process. If we're truly doing capacity development, we need to make sure that we are building – that we're involving the participants in the planning of the M&E, and not just subjecting them to M&E, but

involving them in planning and utilizing the data and disseminating it, so that the capacity development is not only the organization, but it's also the capacity of their M&E capabilities.

Jeff Swedberg: Thanks. My name is Jeff Swedberg. I am a monitoring evaluation associate for a firm called QED, which is based in the United States. We're a monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management firm. And a lot of the examples that I'm going to use for my little talk here are from a institutional M&E contract that we've been implementing in Iraq for the last three years, and I'll talk about that.

But in the meantime, in seeing the topic I was supposed to be talking about on M&E capacity building, I took a look at what was on the web, and USAID actually has some pretty good material in their Tip series. They have a – I believe it was first done in 2000. They updated it in 2011. And they go through a lot of the existing tools that are available for the monitoring and evaluation of capacity building exercises.

And most of them involve workshops. Most of them involve self-assessment, with through the facilitation of a consultant, or maybe through self-assessment by the members of a CSO. Anna and Chuck were talking about one of these earlier today, this morning, I believe the M&E For Me program.

And one of the things that kind of struck me about these, reading through them, is that there are a lot of similarities to these programs, but ultimately, everyone seems to be – you need to kind of look at the process all over again when you start looking at a new program, new capacity building program that you want to evaluate.

Some of these ones that you can look at, there's the Participatory Results-Oriented Self-Evaluation that EDC developed. There's the Institutional Development Framework, MSI has developed that. The Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool, or the OCAT, that was a PACT development tool. The Dynamic Participatory Institutional Diagnosis, the Organizational Capacity Indicator, those are an alphabet soup of the various tools that are out there.

But ultimately, I was looking at our activities in Iraq, and sort of I was talking to our team back there and saying, have we used any of these? And the answer basically is no, none of them were really appropriate for what we were doing in Iraq. Ultimately, I think most of these tools are useful for CSOs, for civil society organizations.

But capacity building is more than just about that. And it involves a lot of things that are evaluated that wouldn't necessarily be seen first as a capacity building effort, but in USAID Iraq, increasingly, almost everything they do there is capacity building, to some extent. This was a very, very large portfolio that has been shrinking rapidly, and is on a blind path to sort of moving out of assistance fairly soon.

So just an example of some of the things that we're doing there: One of the things that we're looking at is financial development. Capacity building and financial development is not about NGOs. It's about building the capacity of the central bank, of the credit information bureau. And some of the things that you need to look at there, it's not going to be through self-critiquing workshops. You're going to need to talk to high ranking banking officials. And in order to look at that, you're going

to have to look at the composition of your evaluation team.

It's very important to bring evaluators that are considered peers. For instance, in that particular case, we brought central bankers from Egypt.

Another example, micro-finance institutions. There is capacity building involved in these efforts as well. In our capacity building or evaluating capacity building there, we relied heavily on use of document review. And we – our evaluators sent out requests for a lot of these financial documents that MFIs are required, financial self-sufficiency forms for fully at risks, and so on. And when the evaluators got these forms back, they realized that there was a real big divide in the number of organizations that actually have these documents, could supply them, and then some that just didn't have them at all. So that tells you something about the lack of sustainability of an organization, if they can't provide these very basic documents.

Finally, I know my time's just about up, but we also looked at a more traditional – some civil society based capacity building program, Access to Justice, which were CSOs that were set up to provide people with information about their rights to justice in Iraq.

And in this particular case, we sent around our enumerators to about 22 of 45 different CSOs that were working in this particular area. And one thing that we did here, a bit of a lesson learned, instead of going to the – to the implementing partner for a list of these, our evaluators actually went unannounced, and in the process found that a large number of these 22 groups that they went to, there was nobody there. There was essentially – an

organization had been set up, but their door wasn't even unlocked.

So that's probably another lessons learned about this whole process, is don't rely entirely on your implementing partner for your information. You need to gout and gather some of this information. And sometimes it's just about being announced in order to get it.

A few basic just lessons learned about this. Especially this is true in Iraq. The regional affiliation of your team is very important. If you're going to be collecting data in Anbar Province, you want to have probably Sunni evaluators that are from that area. You want to be able to pair your evaluation team with both a monitoring and evaluation specialist and a subject matter expert, especially for something as technical as banking policy. That's absolutely critical. You have to have somebody that truly knows that subject matter. But you need to have somebody that knows M&E at the same time.

Pairing by gender. Important in Iraq, probably important in many of these countries that you're working in here. There's many countries where it's difficult for a male to get information from a female, and vice versa, and I'll leave it at that.

[Laughter]

Orlen Ocleasa: Hello, my name is Orlen. I'm the same Orlen from this morning.

[Laughter]

I'd like to answer the question that you posed on impact evaluation after 12 months or 18 months. For me, I think that's the best time, the evaluating time, especially if your project is a 3-year project,

and it's an agricultural project, like ours. Our experience in the Philippines with our project, and we've been promoting fruit trees, and it will take about a year or two for them to bear fruits, and it will take some time for the partners to increase their production and income.

So when a project launches, the seedlings are too small. There is nothing to harvest. So we have a very hard time right now evaluating the productivity of the farmers, because their seedlings are still growing. So it's different in agriculture.

But for a five-year project, maybe in the middle, there's some impact coming out ____. But even then, working with people, community-based organizations or beneficiaries, people are very interested when the development agency or the, should I say the NGO or the partners, are still in the area. They still have the _____, the fire burning.

But when these NGOs or community-based organizations are withdrawn from the area, then that's the test of the real organization. Many organizations fade out. ___ _____ because they die out after the _____. So that's a test.

So for me, a year after evaluation can be – that's a good -- for impact information, because it will take time for people to change. Even the practice, maybe at the start when we are there, the beneficiaries are not yet convinced. But when you are out sometimes they think, oh, this is a good practice. Maybe I will try. So that's the test for the real impact evaluation.

And going back to capacity building. This morning we talked about M&E for capacity building and the M&E as capacity building. So it's like M&E is

then, monitoring and evaluating capacity building for monitoring and evaluation. With these partners what we have in mind is that we will help us gather data. You will give us the data. But I feel guilty just now, I realize that our intention was selfish because we want there to be our partner to collect data. But we – yes, we capacitated that because we want them to collect good quality data.

But now I realize that capacity building is not just a one package, an overnight. It's an ongoing process. And as they go through the collection of data, the local community organizations they learn also. They learn, through practice.

And when we left, when we left an area, the organizations now continue to use the facilities that we provided them, continue to practice, and then the skills that they acquired from us, especially on management of data, they are able to use them with another partner, with another agency.

So maybe as a contractor or maybe as an NGO, if you partner with an NGO, we should also set a target that it's not just for them to be our data collectors, but maybe for them to grow also, enhance the capacity for monitoring and evaluation, so that in the future, that's our legacy. We capacitated them to be an effective monitoring organization, I mean an effective organization with an effective M&E system. Thank you.

Josephine Francisco: I'm going to keep my last comments brief, because I've already learned so much from this panel and from all of you. And again, USAID really is just really learning from so many out there, and we're really grateful for that.

I want to end with a story which is probably a familiar story to many of us, Alice in Wonderland.

And a piece of the story, you might remember that Alice in Wonderland, she – well, Alice, before she falls asleep, goes to the looking glass, and finds – she wakes up in Wonderland, and doesn't know where she is, and is wandering around, and ends up at a fork in the road.

And at that fork in the road she meets the Cheshire cat, and asks the Cheshire cat, "What road should I take?" And the Cheshire cat says, "Well, where do you want to go?" And she says, "I don't know." And the Cheshire cat says, "Well, that's easy, then, because any road will take you there."

And to me, I think that's really meaningful, as we think about local capacity building efforts and monitoring and evaluation. Unless we really know where we want to go, it's going to feel like any road is going to take us there. And even as we do monitoring and evaluation, it's going to seem like, okay, we're successful enough because we're doing it. But unless we are really linking our results with what we are tracking, it's going to be – it's going to feel like, you know, any road is going to take us there.

And one thing, we were recently putting together a training here at RDMA, working with local systems, and working on the monitoring and evaluation piece for this. And we really have been making this push for our own staff to really consider, again, what is the purpose of this? What are those final outcomes?

And we mentioned at the very beginning that we're currently working on our regional and our country development cooperation strategies. A number of countries are indeed integrating local capacity building efforts into their results, high level results frameworks, and with that, we are encouraging

them to, again, consider, okay, if we're going to be doing local capacity development, what do we want this to achieve?

We no longer think it's good enough to say, well, building capacity is being able to win a USAID contract and manage a USAID contract. I mean, you could have two PhDs and still not know the USAID contracting lingo. That's no longer good enough as a purpose. We really need to be looking at how not just to produce more widgets or more outputs, but how to really achieve better development results through working with local systems.

I guess the other side of it is sometimes people – and I come from – in addition to working with government, at some time I did study at the University of the Philippines in the Community Development School, which is known for activists, and the activists are actually very anti-foreign aid, and very focused on the process of community development, and often push that the process of development is good in and of itself.

And that's somewhat arguable from an agency-like mine now –

[Laughter]

We want to see results and tangible results very quickly. So somewhere finding a middle ground for this between donors, partners, implementers on the ground, and what are meaningful outcomes that you can work towards together, and results that you can track and evaluate together? It's easier said than done.

I will say that it is so important that we go beyond just the inputs. So we talk about the importance of

impact and outcome, certainly moving beyond outputs, and I will say, admittedly, USAID, we focus a lot – we have – previously, it was implementation procurement reform, and we had a top line indicator, and I don't know the word for word exact on this, but basically, we were tracking the percent total of the total program funds that are used through local – or going to local systems, which isn't even an output. It's actually an input indicator.

And many of us are starting to say as we look at monitoring and evaluation, you know, just that input level, it's not enough. Again, we need to be thinking at this higher level.

Fully agree with the need that – the reality that this kind of thing takes time, though, and just tying it back to our conversations yesterday. Again, we are learning from you, and in order to learn from you, we encourage you as evaluators to think about ways to communicate it effectively to donors, to governments, and also to help us think about actionable items.

So even though we recognize that local capacity building efforts can take time, please help us think about what are those actual steps to lead to those longer term outcomes.

| Moderator: | Last chance for anyone that has some final comments for the group, or a question. |

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk]

[Laughter]

Orlen Ocleasa:	I asked myself not to ask questions in this last part of the presentation, but. Hearing about this activism at the University –
	[Crosstalk]
Josephine Francisco:	I wasn't one of the activists.
	[Laughter]
Orlen Ocleasa:	That's part of our lives, listening to the conventional wisdom always, and we overdo it, so much so that we cannot progress. That's another story, I think. But I like the way you put it, using the story of Alice and Wonderland. I like how you related that with the other discussion. And that's a very nice story that's used in the field of M&E. And it's very valid, to me. Because to practice only theoretical and pedagogical aspects of M&E, because if we don't know what to measure or how do we measure at all?
Josephine Francisco:	Yes.
Orlen Ocleasa:	That's why we apply this theory of change and program theory, and that's the difference, really. The way I look at it, that's the difference between traditional monitoring approaches and the emerging approach that we have right now, because if we don't know what we are looking for, that reflects on our design, actually. Traditional monitoring is something like fishing net, drawing from the river, and anything you get – any fish at all, would be the impact, or something like that.
	But, I mean, theory of, theory of change, I mean, the social phenomenon, and we are actually representing the thing that we want to achieve, and we agree on this , that this is the thing that we want to measure, such that, you know, what do I prove, in that sense?

Now on the other hand, I would like to raise a thought on the impact issue, and I would like to drive home the point, again, there are competing, different schools of thought. People in the World Bank, I would say, for instance, Judy Baker, if you have come across Judy Baker's book, there is a tacit understanding in the field of M&E that you have a period of three years or more, especially when we use the business-based principle.

One year or six months or twelve month is thought of to be a _____, and I'm not saying that that is a false statement, I'm just just emphasizing that there are really – there are really a variety of thinking right now in the field of M&E.

Moderator: Any reaction?

Audience Member 1:   I would like to express my overall to the presenters and all the organizers, including _____. Since yesterday and today I have learned a lot from M&E applied to many, many fields.

[Laughter]

[Background voices]

Audience Member 1:   Apply to many fields, including in inclusive growth, inequality, capacity building, and other aspects. So I would like to thank ___ _____ because we need the knowledge [Inaudible Comments].

My comments for gender is _____ now, I'm not so sure whether it is good or bad, because between men and women naturally, and that means already we have a [Inaudible Comments].And then for the capacity for the capacity building, because of [Inaudible Comments] also now the capacity building has become a global concern.

So I would like to share the idea of we need international collaboration for capacity building, we cannot perform capacity building in each country or each local place without it. Second is we need professional skills in order to share some experience with to the capacity building. And this morning from one of the panelists who stressed that training cannot be the only capacity development _____. Even trainings is not capacity building, but in the process it's part of it, we cannot forget it.

And I think that capacity building should be [Inaudible Comments] and in developmental psychology that one would be that we belong to that _____ ____. And number two is it is needed for international collaboration in order to have experience and professional knowledge transfer. And the last for M&E. We need to measure the capacity and make monitoring also in order to improve [Inaudible comment].

Moderator: Thank you.

[Background voices]

Audience Member 2:   [Inaudible]

But I think the benefit of doing that kind of evaluation after _____ ____ after the ____ of the project is that ___ ____, and every time you do evaluation, we have this question in the information stage on sustainability. And I would say that ___ ____ because we cannot see or answer that, and we just only say that that project has potential for sustainability, but we cannot prove that, because the time is not arrived yet to say that.

But then I think I've been pretty lucky to be able to get the opportunity to manage a program that received funding for monitoring and evaluation

from different donors, and then I have the chance also different approaches of the different donors, which was one of the things that I really like. It is always ____ _____ the program managers that after the project end, for some years, maybe three, four years, ____ an external evaluator to the team, and look at the sustainability of their funding, which goes like two years back. And that could be applied to any kind of activities or projects that we committed to deliver in development capacity building, water, sanitation, health, education, anything.

So – and I think that's a very useful tool ____ how the ___ _____ look at organizing that resource to do it in the appropriate manner, and [Inaudible Comments].

Moderator: Thank you.

Audience Member 3:   I just would like to add on to this morning's presentation, the M&E for Me presentation by Anna and Chatwut. In relation to the topic of evaluating the results of the program after a year or more than a year.   Anna didn't say that this, as a program officer at that time, at the end of the project, we didn't have money to do a full scale evaluation, but we wanted to know – that project was focused on organizational capacity development, and we provided many things for financial system development to _____ testing to HIV care and support, so all kinds of organizational capacity ____ be provided.

And so we asked the community-based organizations, what is the most valuable thing that you got from the project? What we did was we used a most significant change methodology, which I'm sure many of you in this room are familiar with. We went to each organization and asked all

the full time staff to identify the most significant change story. And staff shared their story together and voted the most significant change story for their organization. It came out that most of the organizations, nine out of ten CBOs and NGOs, the most significant thing that they got from the project was the M&E capacity building.

So – and then we probe further. You know, why? Why is it important, in that – and it's different by organization. Some organizations said that ____ NGOs ____ which has a separate M&E unit, and the program unit said that it just helped us collaborate with each other better, because now _____ you understand what they're doing better, for example. I just wanted to share the story.

Moderator:	Great story.
	[Laughter]
Moderator:	Any other comments?
	[Background voices]
	[Laughter]
Audience Member 4:	Just I wanted to know that, you know, nowadays, the trainings _____ we are talking about the local capacity building ____ and I just wanted to [Inaudible Comments].
	Then what is, you know, the strategy of USAID doing these kinds of things? [Inaudible Comments] And I'm just curious to know that, you know, this is there going to be another summit, and because it is very useful to learn from each other, so we can use this kind of knowledge and these skills in our daily day to day activities.

But I was also expecting a little bit more, like, you know, are there any declarations or something is going on [Inaudible Comments].

Moderator: Jim or Maura? She's sliding underneath the table.

Audience Member 5:   Thank you. I think that your question was looking for USAID strategy on how we are building local capacity. We talked a little bit earlier about USAID Forward and our reforms to work more directly with local organizations ___ ____ capacity building, local government, national government, ___ ____, civil society.

But the actual details about – each mission has its own plan and strategy that it's implementing for how it will address that, because it obviously depends on the context of where USAID is working and what kind of local partners it's engaging with in terms of what that strategy will look like, and what tools and approaches and models that we'll use to get there. A very broad answer to a broad question.

[Crosstalk]

Moderator: I think that we also could say that it's ____. So one of the things that we're also looking at is the fact that ___ ____. And so we're looking at service providers, looking at ____. So how do we maybe look at this issue of building a community of evaluators in the countries themselves? I mean, we're really right at the beginning stages of trying to identify what's the best way to build the local capacity generally____ not only delivering ____ implementing organizations, NGOs, CBOs, but also as ____ was saying, partner organizations that NGOs could be working with to help them build that capacity. And _____ provides ___ _____.

	That's another ___ ___. So that is a great question from __ _____.
Audience Member 6:	I was just going to add, to try to answer your question as well, ____ –
	[Crosstalk]
	[Laughter]
Moderator:	I've got a microphone on its way.
	[Crosstalk]
	[Laughter]
Audience Member 7:	I also wanted to add one I think positive development, which is Vietnam, but could be in your country, is the focus on ____ partnership document.
Moderator:	Yeah.
Audience Member 7:	Vietnam did ____ taking it on board ____ ____ and on local capacity development. They had to come up with a new plan, which has all sorts of indicators, which is [Inaudible Comments] But also, with the different communities, trying to be a bit more organized, which is one of our challenges, is to be organized ____ that sort of cooperation around it to provide that assistance.
	And so it's been useful, and it might be – I don't know if it's –
Moderator:	I think that's going to be the last comment, because we're used to having people wanting to get out of here so they can go shopping before they leave Bangkok. We don't want to get in the way of shopping now, do we?
	[Laughter]

Moderator: So we're going to –

[End of Audio]