Strengthening Voices for Better Choices

A capacity needs assessment process

Peter Stephen and Ronnakorn Triraganon
Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC)
July 2009

FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

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Contents

Introduction

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is currently implementing *Strengthening Voices for Better Choices* (SVBC), a project largely financed by the European Union and operating in six tropical forest countries (Brazil, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Sri Lanka and Vietnam).

Within this ambitious project, considerable attention is being paid to strengthening capacity so that key stakeholders have the enhanced skills and knowledge that will allow them to participate more effectively in the development and implementation of new and improved forest governance arrangements.

The Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) has been asked to design a capacity needs assessment (CNA) process for the six national components of SVBC to adapt, integrate and implement to meet the challenges of their national and field activities. The intended outcome of working systematically through the CNA is a capacity-strengthening strategy which can support the dedicated capacity-strengthening programme of each of the project's national components.[1]

Using the assessment process and this document

The challenge in developing the CNA was to develop a process which was detailed enough to allow a logical progression through the assessment, but flexible enough to respond to the wide variation in project focus and implementation in the six countries and robust enough to allow defined outcomes to be achieved. To overcome this challenge, a staged approach to the assessment process is presented. The National Project Coordinators (NPCs) and their assessment teams (if required) can enter or leave this staged process depending on their requirements, resources and outcomes from other project activities and work. Not all stages have to be completed, but they are presented together as it was felt there are valid questions which still need to be considered in the logical development of the assessment process.

For each stage, a number of relatively common tools are also detailed in the online resources page for this report (available from ***www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/forest/fp_our_work/fp_our_work_thematic/fp_our_work_flg/fp_forest_law_resources/***). These tools should be considered as optional support mechanisms for enabling a full exploration of the issues at hand. Again, the tools do not have to be used or followed in their entirety. For instance, if the project has already analyzed and documented current challenges and problems, and there is general understanding and agreement with key partners, then there is no point in working through a problem tree analysis. This stage can be considered completed and the NPCs can move to the following stages.

The tools are back-up mechanisms, and if used should be adapted to suit the local context and requirements. The online resources page lists each suggested tool and provides a step-by-step guide to their use for those that are unfamiliar with them.

The assessment of capacity-strengthening needs is a challenging task. There is no right or wrong way to complete the assessment process, and we hope that the NPCs and their partners will use and adjust the process to ensure it meets their requirements.

Definitions and concepts

Capacity strengthening
Although definitions are generally glossed over, they are important to developing a shared understanding in the sometimes complex and messy world of capacity strengthening and capacity needs assessment. It is important for the NPCs and their partners that a shared understanding of capacity strengthening is developed. Two definitions are provided to help this discussion.

The most widely recognised definition of capacity development or strengthening was published by the United Nations Development Programme in 1997:

> "*the process by which individuals, organizations, institutions and societies develop abilities (individually and collectively) to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives*."[2]

At RECOFTC we have expanded this definition to put greater emphasis on the strategic role of a facilitator in helping this process in an uncertain and changing environment. Our suggested definition is:

> "*Externally or internally initiated processes designed to help individuals and groups to appreciate and manage their changing circumstances and to enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner*."[3]

In generating a common understanding of capacity strengthening, the above definitions are a useful starting point, but in exploring capacity strengthening it is important to consider the dynamic context in which strengthening occurs. Capacity strengthening is:

- Set within a dynamic context and involves individuals, networks, organizations and even societies. It involves processes that include more than just a single organization.
- A process about change in a changing environment.
- An ongoing process of continuous learning, adaptation and innovation in dealing with unanticipated problems or issues. It is concerned with an individual's or organization's long-term ability to learn and solve problems.
- A process in which issues today must be dealt with efficiently and effectively, but the relevance for future work must also be considered. It should allow individuals and organizations to maintain relevance and effectiveness over time by assessing and reacting to future needs.
- Concerned with the role of an outside entity in supporting and enhancing the capabilities of an individual or organization. This support may be conditional in part on the merging of goals and priorities between those supporting and those being supported.

Before we move on, two other important terms used in this document that require consideration are:

> Capacity: *The overall ability of the individual or group to perform their responsibilities. It depends not only on the capabilities of the people, but also on the overall size of the task, the resources which are needed to perform them, and the framework within which they are discharged*.

> Capability: *The knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individuals, separately or as a group, and their competence to undertake the responsibilities assigned to them*.

What is a needs assessment?
A *need* is a necessity, a *want* is a desire. A need is considered as a gap between "what is" and "what should be", and is an essential element required for change. A want is an element recognised and desired by a participant in a change process, but it may not be necessary for change. The questions then are Whose needs? and Who defines these needs?

We ask these two questions simply to highlight that defining needs is often difficult, subjective and will depend on who asks the question and who responds. Participation, transparency and a systematic approach are therefore essential in assessing needs and prioritizing resources to meet these needs. We hope the assessment process provided here will allows this to happen.

What is being assessed?
Capacity for change or reform by key individuals has a number of prerequisites. In no particular order of importance, these are:

> **Awareness + Understanding + Skills + Attitudes/Aspirations + Technology + Resources**

The CNA process presented in the next section will focus on awareness, understanding, skills and attitudes/aspirations. It is the human resources that this assessment process focuses on, but in so doing it is also important to consider technology and resources in the broader assessment of capacity.

In considering the above elements, boundaries (scope or focus) need to be set and confirmed so that key capacities required for change are identified and prioritized. Within these boundaries, the process is:

- Identifying capacity gaps influencing current results and desired ones (situation analysis);
- Prioritizing the capacity gaps (needs assessment); and
- Selecting the most important to work on (action plan).

A 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 outcomes to achieve a desired result.

Depending on the context of the problem and the resources available, a capacity needs assessment can be conducted at one or more levels: individual, organization or sector. But regardless of the entry point, a CNA must take account of the interconnectedness of capacity issues between the targeted level(s) and the enabling environment. This assessment will focus on the individual and organizational levels.

It is also important to remember that a CNA is a capacity-strengthening process in its own right, and that the process is as important as the outcomes.

Why conduct a capacity needs assessment?

- *Support strategy formulation*: It is part of an analytical process that precedes investments.
- *Contribute to the detailed design of capacity-intervention strategies*: Findings from the needs assessment must be integrated into the design and development of programmes and projects.
- *Enhance monitoring and evaluation*: It allows for a baseline and the subsequent tracking of progress with iterated assessments over time, thus continually improving capacity-development programme design and effectiveness.
- *Promote institutional learning and empowerment*: It is an important internal learning exercise.
- *Advocate for reform and transformation*: The needs assessment can create interest and a desire for change and reform.

When to conduct a capacity needs assessment?

A CNA should be used for the analysis of capacity-strengthening needs before the design or implementation of a project or programme, or when there are major changes in project direction. But the assessment of needs should not stop after the initial design or implementation phase. It is a continuous and iterative process, so best considered as part of an ongoing management and programming process.

Who should conduct the assessment?

Part of the planning process (see next section) is to determine roles and responsibilities, including who should conduct the assessment. The assessment may be done by an individual or a group, and in turn this group may be an internal team or formed from a broader external steering committee. Regardless, the following criteria can help in selecting team members likely to commit to the process:

- *Credibility*: Someone recognized by the main stakeholders and by members of the organization as having the right mix of authority, responsibility, knowledge of the organization and insight;
- *Technical expertise*: Someone who understands the assessment approach, can share responsibilities for the planning, management, and use of the assessment, is knowledgeable about the project and services of the supporting organization, and can analyze data;
- *Impartiality*: Someone who can balance the perspectives of different people;
- *Communication skills*: Someone who can communicate the results of the assessment in a manner that all can understand;
- *Interpersonal skills*: Someone who can interact with all parties in a sensitive and effective manner, and can work on a team; and
- *Availability*: Someone who is available to conduct the assessment and will commit time to working on it.


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The capacity needs assessment process

The process suggested does not provide the “answer” – analysis, discussion, judgments, problem-solving and teamwork are required. What the process does provide is a systematic, transparent and participatory way of considering capacity-strengthening needs, appropriate interventions and the resources to meet these needs.

But the CNA is not a strategy: it is a starting point for developing a strategy. It should also not be a stand-alone, poorly resourced or poorly integrated process. This would run the considerable risk of raising unrealistic expectations, leading to disappointment, frustration and possibly further disadvantaging weaker stakeholders in the process. The CNA must be clearly integrated with other strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes of the project.

The assessment is built upon eight stages, each with their own activities and a number of optional tools to help explore, analyze and build up a rich but focused picture of the capacity-strengthening needs of key individuals and stakeholders (a full description of all the optional tools within the CNA is given on the online resource page). The process is a staged approach; NPCs and their assessment team (if required) can enter at any stage or level depending on their requirements, resources and outcomes from other project activities.

Although the stages are linked, they do not have to be conducted in a linear way. The table below illustrates each stage of the assessment process, the key outcomes of each stage, and the optional tools to help explore the issues and expected outcomes.

Please note that the tools presented are quite common and are not intended as blueprints. They are presented and designed to trigger thinking, and should be adapted to the prevailing circumstances in which they will be applied. They are also intended to be used in a highly participatory manner (where appropriate), allowing the sharing of experiences and lessons learned and helping to build on and enhance existing capacity.

As indicated in the Introduction, these tools should be considered as optional support mechanisms to allow a full exploration of the issues at hand. They do not have to be used! For instance, if the project has already analyzed and documented current challenges and problems, and there is a general understanding and agreement with key partners, then there is no point in working through a problem tree analysis.

The tools are back-up mechanisms and, if used, should be adapted to suit the local context and requirements. The online resource page

Process	Stage	Key outcomes	Assumptions/Comments	Optional support tools
Review	**1. Planning for the assessment process** “What are we really trying to do and why?”	A clear understanding by the assessment team of responsibilities for conducting the assessment, resources available and boundaries in which the assessment will occur.	These three stages of the assessment process are about reviewing the project intent, developments to date and building upon earlier project outcomes and findings. It is also about ensuring integration of the assessment process and outcomes with other key project strategies and processes. The stages and optional support tools are to ensure the logical and transparent development of the entire process, and to ensure there is an adequate base upon to which analyze capacity for action.	► 5 Ws and 1 H ► Mind mapping
	2. Situation analysis “What must be achieved, but who and what is stopping us?”	A clear understanding of what the NPCs and partners would like to achieve, current challenges and key stakeholders that need to be involved.		► Visioning exercise ► Problem tree analysis ► Stakeholder analysis/ management
	3. Action analysis “What are the critical actions that must be implemented and by whom?”	The identification of critical actions that must be implemented and those stakeholders responsible for implementation and action.		► Force field analysis ► Prioritization matrix
Analyze	**4. Capacity assessment** “Who has the capacity to implement these actions and where are the gaps?”	Assessment of the current capacity of individuals and organizations to implement the critical actions and where capacity gaps exist.	These two stages are at the heart of the assessment process. They will also consume the most time and resources.	► Learner KSA Gap Analysis ► 7-S Framework ► Data Collection Methods
	5. Capacity-strengthening interventions “What interventions are required to bridge the defined gaps/needs?”	The matching of capacity-strengthening interventions to bridge capacity gaps in order to perform the critical actions for success.	The assessment must be built upon an participatory, transparent and informed review undertaken in stages 1–3.	► Capacity-strengthening intervention list
Document	**6. Action plan** “What resources are required, for what activities and when?”	The documentation of required actions, interventions, resources, responsibilities and time lines.	Without adequate resourcing, timetabling and communication of the actions, the assessment process may falter.	
	7. Strategy “How are the outcomes communicated, implemented and evaluated?”	The documentation of the assumptions, objectives, process, outcomes, feasibility and monitoring and evaluation.		
Reflect	**8. Review and reflection** “What worked, what needs improving, what has been learned?”	Assessment of what was learned.	The reflection process should also be taking place throughout all stages.	

lists each suggested tool and provides a step-by-step guide to their use for those unfamiliar with them.

Planning for the assessment process

Time needs to be set aside for exploring the reasons for implementing a CNA, its linkages with other key project strategies, and the broader linkages with the governance reform processes being supported by the project. Reviewing key project documents such as logframes and reassessing the project's mandate, aims and objectives, and how a CNA can support, these is important. This might be well understood by the NPCs, but now it is time to share and refine understandings and intended outcomes with key, like-minded stakeholders who should be involved in the assessment process.

Resources and time to support the assessment process must be considered. It is also important to establish realistic boundaries and goals for the CNA process. An assessment team may be required and, if so, it would be important to explore what the NPCs, their assessment team and even key partners understand to be needs, capacity strengthening, and even governance.

It is time to ask the question: What are we trying to do and why?

Suggested Tool: The 5 Ws (and 1 H)

What is it?

A simple and effective action-planning tool using simple focusing questions to clarify roles, responsibilities and resources for implementing the assessment.

Expected outcomes

A clear statement of who is responsible for the assessment, how the assessment will be resourced, how the results will be used, how the assessment is integrated into the broader project system, and what risks are involved.

Getting started

Ask and document the following questions of those planning and supporting the assessment process:

- **Why?** Why do it? Why do it then? Why do it there? Why do it that way?
- **When?** When is it done? What other times can it be done? What other times should it be done?
- **Who?** Who does it? Who is responsible for it? Who else can do it? Who should be involved?
- **What?** What to do? What is already being done? What else should be done? What should be the focus? What are the expected outcomes?
- **Where?** Where to do it? Where should it be done? Where can it be done?
- **How?** How to do it? How should it be done? Is there another way of doing it? How will it be resourced?

Please note

Without a firm commitment from management to the resourcing of such a process, working through the above questions may yield few results. A **mind map** may also be a useful tool to focus discussions.

Situation analysis

Step 1 considers some important issues in planning the assessment process. A situational analysis is the first step in putting these plans into action by assessing the big picture, and then critically considering what key actions and tasks must be in place to achieve desired outcomes. It is the start of identifying gaps between current results and desired ones. It will also allow for an assessment of whether the strengthening of human capacity (which this methodology focuses on) will in fact play a major role in solving the potential problem(s).

There are many ways of doing a situational analysis. But the basic question to ask is: What is really happening? An accurate description and understanding of the situation in which the assessment will take place is quite critical. There are many tools to help with this analysis, such a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), but three tools are suggested to help explore the situation and answer three specific questions:

- What is to be achieved through governance reform? (*visioning tool*); and
- What are the key problem(s) impeding this reform process? (*problem tree analysis*).

A third aspect of the situation analysis is a comprehensive review of the stakeholders who have the motivation, capacity and legitimacy to effect positive change:

- Who is involved, what can they contribute, and what are their incentives for change? (*stakeholder management*)

Although these suggested questions and tools are presented in a list, they do not have to follow this sequence. The sequence and usage of the tools will vary considerably depending on many factors, but the process needs to be participatory and transparent. Stakeholders need to be involved in a meaningful way so that the situational analysis is well-grounded and ownership of the assessment process grows among a broad range of partners and stakeholders.

It is time to ask the question: What must be achieved, and who and what is stopping us?

What could be? – The vision of forest governance reform

It is important that key stakeholders and partners supporting the project and reform process think beyond the limited life of the project and the outcomes stated in such documents as the project logframe. What do they really want to achieve in 10 years? Where will they be in 10 years and what impact will this project have in allowing them to get there? This articulation of a "vision" can often be inferred from project documents, but it is also important to seek clarity and a common understanding of what people genuinely want to achieve.

Suggested Tool: Visioning

What is it?

A *vision* is a general statement of an improved future. Visioning is a useful way to help people move away from focussing on daily problems and routine ways of solving immediate problems to longer term goals or visions of "what could be" and imagining new paths they themselves could create. It is also an important tool to develop shared visions between partners as well as helping to find common ground between conflicting parties and interests.

Expected outcomes

- The starting point for a discussion of "what can be" and what needs to be in place to achieve this.
- The development of ownership of a (shared) vision by a group of key partners in the reform process.

Getting started

A good introduction as to why the exercise is being undertaken is necessary. Then a future scenario is established or participants are asked a series of questions that allow them to imagine "what could be" the desired outcomes from the project.

Please note

The described vision(s) needs to be clearly documented as this forms the basis for exploring specific problems that are impacting on achieving this vision.

What is? – Current challenges and problems
In working towards a vision, many problems or issues will arise, but it is important to be strategic – to pick the low-hanging fruit. A problem tree analysis is a useful step in exploring underlying causes of key problems or obstacles that are impeding (or will impede) governance reform and the desired vision as articulated above.

Suggested Tool: Problem tree analysis

What is it?
A problem tree analysis is a useful tool to help illustrate the linkages between causes of an identified problem or issue and, in so doing, discover underlying or root causes of an institutional problem.

Expected outcomes
- ► A clear and graphically documented understanding of the root or underlying causes of a particular problem that is impeding the achievement of a particular objective or vision.
- ► A clear understanding of the causes and effects resulting from an identified problem. From this partners need to further explore driving (positive) and restraining (negative) actions that may be impacting on governance reform.

Getting started
From the documented vision, brainstorm and agree upon a key (and specific) problem. From this problem, note down the causes of the problem and keep asking the question WHY for each of the identified causes until the root causes have been identified.

Stakeholders and stakeholder management
Reform and change processes will have their advocates and detractors, depending on the real and perceived outcomes of the process (as measured in terms of power, returns, rights and responsibilities). It is important to identify stakeholders who will either be effected by the reform process or have the ability to impact (positively or negatively) on these processes. It is therefore important to assess stakeholders to align their capacity, motives and incentives for the implementation of key actions to achieve the desired outcomes. (Please remember that broad terms such as “community”, “industry” or “government” can often hide diverse and often contradictory interests within these groups.)

Suggested Tool: Stakeholder management

What is it?
A stakeholder management tool is an extension of a stakeholder analysis tool. Individuals and groups who will either be affected by a reform process or have the ability to impact on the process are identified. But the tool goes further in that it allows some discussion and exploration of how each of the stakeholders can be supported, and what capacities each requires to institute governance reform.

Expected outcomes
- ► The categorization of stakeholders and the identification of “opponents”, “followers” and “enthusiasts”, their power to influence, and their desired or required support.
- ► A “living document” which can be updated as the outcomes and impacts of the reform process become clear and as new stakeholder enter or leave the process.

Getting started
Identify stakeholders and then assess them against: 1) the impact of change on them; 2) their reaction to change; 3) their level of power and influence; and 4) desired support.

Please note
This tool can be contentious, particularly where those involved in the analysis are diverse or in conflict. Care should be taken in its use and in the reporting of its outcomes. Likewise there can be repercussions if key stakeholders (such as opponents) are omitted or ignored by the analysis.

This process should be an iterative one that is repeated regularly as changes become evident and new stakeholders enter the process or are identified, and as incentives and motivations change.

Although the tool has been presented in the middle of the CNA process, it could and indeed should be conducted at the start and revised throughout the CNA.

As indicated, a stakeholder analysis is an vital step. But a comprehensive and participatory stakeholder analysis also helps to ensure that the assessment considers local knowledge and current capacities, as well as the positions of those opposed to any reforms.

The situational analysis is an important step in the CNA methodology. Although the tools do not need to be covered and presented exactly as described above, by the end of the situational analysis it is important to have a good understanding of:

- ► What is to be achieved through the project and the forest governance reform process;
- ► The key problems, obstacles or challenges that are being, or will be, faced in achieving the desired outcome; and
- ► Those stakeholders who can positively or negatively influence the reform process, and how the process impacts on them.

Action analysis
The assessment must now focus on key actions to move from “what is” to “what could be”. This stage of the assessment pulls this information together in a logical, transparent and strategic manner. It is time to ask the question: What are the critical actions that must be implemented and by whom?

Moving from “what is” to “what could be” – Positive and negative actions
Forest governance reform is a dynamic process. There will be negative (restraining) actions that are impeding or will impede reform, as well as positive (driving) actions that can be harnessed or taken to further promote good governance reform. In sticking to the theme of being strategic, it is important to identify key actions where capacity

needs to be strengthened to overcome negative actions and where capacity can be enhanced to further promote positive actions. A force field analysis is a useful tool in exploring these issues.

Suggested Tool: Force field analysis

What is it?
Force field analysis is a tool which can be used to analyze forces (actions) that help or obstruct change for a specific situation. It is a useful tool for drafting a strategic change plan and for examining the feasibility of strategic actions.

Expected outcomes
- Clear documentation of positive (driving) actions that need to be strengthened through enhancing capacity, and negative (restraining) actions where capacity may have to be strengthened.

Getting started
To start the force field analysis, focus on the key challenge or problem impeding the achievement of the desired vision. This becomes the central issue of analysis for which positive and negative actions need to be identified. Be as specific as possible in identifying the problem or issues to analyze – converting this into a goal statement can also help to focus the analysis.

Please note
This tool builds upon the visioning and the problem-tree exercise, both of which are useful, but not necessary, in framing the discussions surrounding the force field analysis. A key to using this tool is converting a problem statement into a goal statement. If there is more than one problem or issue that is to be explored then separate force field analyses need to be completed for each one.

Prioritizing actions
The collection of data from the situational analysis and further assessment and verification may lead to a considerable quantity of data, ideas and information being considered. The key is continually asking: What are the critical actions that will ensure positive and sustained outcomes? The identification and assessment of what is a "critical" action must be participatory and transparent, as it is these actions against which capacities will be assessed. A prioritization matrix tool is useful if the number of identified actions is particularly large and some selection is required to focus on critical actions.

Suggested Tool: Prioritization matrix

What is it?
A prioritization matrix is a technique used to achieve consensus within a group of participants about the selection of the most critical actions. The matrix helps to rank the issues by particular criteria, as defined by the participants, thereby allowing participants to see clearly which actions they consider the most critical to a successful outcome.

Expected outcomes
- A measurable and logical basis for determining the most important actions to the success of the reform process.

Getting started
Draw up a matrix with identified actions in the first column and criteria for analysis of the actions along the headings of the other columns. The criteria for analysis can be developed through a brainstorming session or may be based on such issues as frequency, importance and feasibility. Participants are then given 10 dots to allocate as they wish. Those actions with the most dots are considered the most critical for further analysis.

Matching actions with stakeholders
A simple framework is provided as a useful starting point in matching critical actions that key stakeholders need to undertake with the critical incentives needed for them to act. The outcomes of the situational analysis can be fed into the framework, which can be used in a participatory and logical manner. The table opposite provides some suggested framework headings.

Vision statement: Vision or desired outcomes from forest governance reform

Objectives	Required actions	Required actors	Incentives for actors to take or not take required actions	
			Plus	Minus
Objective 1	Action 1	Actor X	Positive incentive for Actor X to do Action 1	Negative incentive for Actor X to do Action 1
		Actor Y		
	Action 2			
Objective 2				

Important questions to ask when completing the framework:

1. Is the vision developed in the visioning exercise or taken from project documents still valid? Are key stakeholder and partners still "buying into it"?
2. Are the objectives going to help achieve this vision? Are the objectives derived from the force field analysis or from project documents still valid?
3. Are the identified required (critical) actions going to achieve the stated objectives? Are the critical actions identified in the force field analysis and prioritization matrix still valid?
4. Are the identified stakeholders accurately linked to the actions that they must perform? Are they happy with this assessment?
5. Have incentives been identified which will realistically influence stakeholders to ensure that action is taken. (These influences can be both positive ("the carrot") or negative ("the stick"), and stakeholders may take or block action depending on how the incentives or actions affect their status – their wealth, prestige, kinship and so forth.

Assessment of individual and organizational capacities
The action analysis framework clearly identifies critical actions that must be implemented and performed to a satisfactory level if desired governance outcomes and reforms are to be achieved. The next step is to assess whether key individuals and their organizations have the capacity to implement these actions and achieve the desired action outcomes. This stage of the assessment must be the most systematic, and in many cases it will consume the most time and resources. This is the key stage in the assessment process.

It is time to ask the question: Who has the capacity to implement these actions and where are the gaps?

In asking this question, key stakeholders, informed observers and relevant documents will have to be consulted. While this process is underway it is important to understand the importance of the data being collected, the source of the data and the limitations of this data. For example, if collecting data from only one group of people, the data will reflect only the views of that group; there is little way of knowing whether it reflects general opinion. An effort needs to be made to check and cross-check the data by triangulating (collecting data in three or more ways) to reduce inconsistencies and confirm results from more than one source. The interpretation and analysis will be much stronger if they come from several different sources.

Suggested Tools: Data collection methods

Data and information can be collected from either documents or people. Documentary sources can be internal (reports, plans, policy, promotional brochures, etc.) or external (legislation, partner documentation, media reports, donor reports, etc.). It is important to review what is important – it is easy to become overwhelmed.

Data from people can be obtained individually or from groups, and either directly through conversation and interviews or indirectly through observation. Who to meet is always a central question. Ideally you will want to meet as many people as possible, but time and resource constraints, political sensitivity, people's availability and geographical location will limit this desire. Using the outcomes of the stakeholder analysis will help to make strategic choices, as well as matching the data collection methods to the audience.

Assessing individual (learner) capacity
In the discussion of definitions and concepts, individual capacity for change was represented as:

**Awareness + Understanding + Skills +
Attitudes/Aspirations + Technology + Resources**

Building on this further, the assessment concentrates on the capacity needs of key individuals in terms of knowledge (awareness + understanding), skills and attitudes (KSA). In assessing individual capacity-strengthening needs, three tasks are required:

❶ Job-task-KSA analysis (knowledge, skills and attitudes);
❷ The assessment of the learner; and
❸ The gap analysis.

Again, the focus must be on the specific actions that an individual must perform to achieve the identified objectives and outcomes. The analysis of a learner's job can provide a good understanding of what the learner usually does in their course of work, and what they may need to perform better. It may sometimes be necessary to analyze a person's full job, but commonly the assessment is concerned only with certain tasks related to the identified critical actions and capacities.

This first step of the job analysis is the most systematic and, in many cases, the most time-consuming and complicated. (There is also a risk that participants may turn against the analysis if it is used as a job-performance test).

1. Job-task-KSA analysis – What is required?
Before assessing the learner, it is useful to spend some time in analyzing what is actually expected from the learner and at what level the learner is required to perform if certain actions are to be achieved. This analysis can be broken down into three steps:

❶ Job analysis: breaking down the job into specific tasks and carefully examining them in the context in which the job has to be done, why it needs to be done, and what the problems are. (The overall context of the job should also become clear during the organizational analysis.)
❷ Task analysis: breaking down the tasks into smaller sub-tasks. This is particularly important if the learner needs to carry out specific actions required for reform or change.
❸ KSA analysis: breaking down the sub-tasks into required knowledge, skills and attitude to perform the identified sub-tasks or actions at the required level.

The task listing may be used to determine which of the tasks are perceived to be critical, either because they have to be done often or because the learners' find them difficult. The task listing can also be used to gain an idea of the learners' perception of individual development needs and the importance of performing that specific task in their jobs.

2. The assessment of the learner
Various methods can be used to gather information for the learner analysis. The best is to go to the learners' working environment to observe and interview them while performing the job. Ask them if they have an official job description or terms of reference. Discuss this with them and ask how it relates to their actual work. If time or money do not allow you to visit the working environment, you can also interview a group of learners, or make a list of critical tasks with their supervisors or other informants. The issues to explore include:

- The job in terms of main tasks and responsibilities, and required knowledge and skills.
- What achievements the learner is proud of, what they enjoy doing.
- What makes these tasks and responsibilities easier or harder.
- Interests and motivation concerning the job.
- Dislikes about the job.
- Future perspective, wishes.
- Opportunities, constraints and problems.
- Ideas on how to solve these constraints and problems.
- Weaknesses in knowledge or skills required for the earlier defined tasks and responsibilities.
- Past training experiences, likes and dislikes about this training.
- Perspectives on the concerned organizations and communities.

3. The gap analysis
During this analysis, gaps are identified between the result of the required job-task-KSA analysis and the current job-task-KSA assessment. Identifying the gaps helps in:


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- Developing specific learning objectives and contents related to the actual job, roles, tasks and responsibilities of the participants;
- Making any capacity-strengthening intervention more practical than theoretical, including attitude and skill development;
- Determining the scope, appropriate approach and time needed for any capacity-strengthening intervention; and
- Assessing the progress of the participants through monitoring and evaluation exercises.

Suggested Tool: Learner KSA gap analysis

What is it?
This is not so much a tool as a useful framework to guide the analysis of capacity at the individual level for performing key functions or actions to achieve a desired outcome(s) or objective(s).

Expected outcomes
- A documented report on the capacity and capacity needs at the individual level. Such a report may look like:

Learner profile: Forest extension officer			
Job description: Community forestry assessment			
Required action/task 1: Negotiation with community – preparing the management plan			
Current capacity: Limited	Knowledge: Reasonable understanding of CF management plan process	Skills: No facilitation/ negotiation skills	Attitudes: Good relationship with villagers, but tends to work with men and avoids women
Required capacity: High	Knowledge: Improved understand-ing of CF management plan process	Skills: Facilitation/ negotiation	Attitudes: Gender concerns

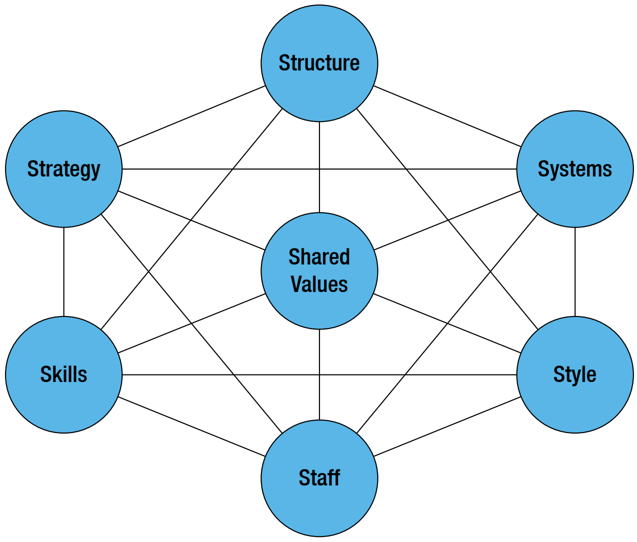
Getting started
Clearly identify the key actions that are required, to what level these have to be performed, and those individuals who have the responsibility to perform these actions. Then identify key individuals to interview and prepare a checklist and series of questions that need to be explored with the learner.

Please note
It is important that this assessment does not turn into an on-the-spot, impromptu job performance appraisal. Care needs to be taken to ensure that consent and a clear mandate from senior management are provided so that both the assessor and those assessed understand the purpose of the assessment, what information will be collected, and how it will be used.

Assessing organizational capacity
Organizational capacity is only briefly considered here, as the CNA is based more on individual capacity-strengthening needs. Yet, the linkage between individual and organizational capacity is extremely important and intricate. So to consider one aspect without the other would be counterproductive.

Importantly, as you move through the assessment of organizational capacity, do not forget the “community”. At this level they will have their own organizational and institutional structures, and capacity-strengthening needs.

A useful framework for assessing organizational capacity needs is presented opposite. This covers seven interdependent variables of an organization’s “design”, taking into account both its hardware (strategy, structure and systems) and its software (management styles, staff, skills and shared values, i.e. culture) (see figure).



The 7s of Organizational Capacity

Strategy	The direction and scope of the company over the long term. *Questions to ask: Clarity of vision and goals that guide the organization? Extent to which these are shared amongst staff? Level of participation in formulating these? Short-term goals to achieve strategy?*
Structure	The basic relationships of the organization (who reports to whom) to support its objectives. *Questions to ask: Organization of functions and roles of main depart–ments/units? Definitions of roles and responsibilities? Mechanisms for participation of key stakeholders – staff, government, civil society? Does the structure support strategy and organization objectives?*
System	The formal and informal procedures that support the strategy and structure. The procedures, processes and routines that characterize how the work should be done, i.e. financial systems, recruiting, promotion and performance appraisal, information systems, budget systems. *Questions to ask: Effectiveness of human, financial and technology systems that support objectives? Nature of incentives within HR? Rewards systems? Monitoring and evaluation systems?*
Style	The leadership approach of management and how key managers behave in achieving the organization’s goals. *Questions to ask: The management style; how do managers make deci–sions? How do they spend their time? What do they focus their attention on? Extent to which the environment is supportive of staff? Level of communication?*
Staff	The organization’s human resources and how they are developed, trained, and motivated. *Questions to ask: Effectiveness of staff utilization? Adequacy of staff resources? Level of staff motivation? Factors that would increase staff satisfaction?*
Skills	The capabilities and competencies that exist within the organization. What it does best. *Questions to ask: What is the organization best at? Nature of the task re–quirements and individual skills/knowledge needed for task effectiveness? Adequacy of the task–skill match? Opportunities for training/knowledge sharing?*
Shared values	The values and beliefs of the organization. The central guiding concept and ideas of an organization around which it is built. *Questions to ask: Nature of the rules (formal and informal), values, customs and principles that guide the organization’s behaviour? Extent to which core professional values are internalized?*

As the process of assessing organizational capacity can be complex and time-consuming, make sure that the assessment is specific to an identified critical action the organization must perform.

A 7-S framework (tool) is a useful model for asking strategic questions at the organizational level about capacity needs to achieve the actions, outcomes and objectives in the action analysis.

Suggested Tool: The 7-S framework

What is it?
This is not so much a tool as a useful framework to guide the analysis of capacity for seven key variables at the organizational level.

Expected outcomes
- A documented report on the capacity and capacity needs required by the organization to implement key actions. Such a report may look like:

Organizational capacity	Required action and current capacity to perform action				
Strategy	Strategic direction clearly laid down through legislation, but poor understanding of strategic direction within organization leading to confused on-ground outcomes and overlapping responsibilities with other NRM agencies **Current capacity**:				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 = low 5 = high	**Required capacity to achieve action outcomes**:				
	1	2	3	***4***	5
Structure					
System					
Style					
Staff					
Skills					
Shared values					

Getting started
Identify key managers or individuals within the organization, or through interviews, and collect data on each of the seven organizational variables. Also consult organizational and partner documents.

Please note
It is important that the analysis of an organization stays focused on identifying organizational capacity gaps that are hindering implementation of the required critical actions.

Organization and community analysis
The 7-S framework can also be adapted to helping understand some of the community organizational issues. A community or group of people with shared interests and values will also be organized (perhaps informally) to deal with the challenges of forest governance reform. The best way to assess the organizational or institutional capacity of a community would be to visit the community and conduct a series of participatory assessments using PRA techniques to explore the seven organizational variables. (If time or money are unavailable to visit the village(s), you could use existing reference materials or try to identify people who know the area well and can inform you.)

What makes the exercise unique is the type of information that will be collected. It is important to keep the focus of the exercise on those specific actions identified in the action analysis that the community must implement. It is also important not to go with a preconceived idea that your strategy will be the solution and so select or interpret only those data that justify your strategy. Stay focused, but at the same time keep an open mind (and eyes and ears).

In the methodology, we have considered organization and individual levels, but it may also be important to further differentiate between organization, sub-unit, group/team and then individual.

At the conclusion of this stage:

1. Key stakeholders and key individuals are matched to the implementation of critical actions;
2. The capacity gaps (needs) of key individuals (learners) are assessed and documented; and
3. Organizational capacity gaps (needs) of key stakeholders are assessed and documented.

The next phase is to match capacity-strengthening interventions to the identified capacity needs at organizational and individual levels.

Selecting the appropriate suite of capacity-strengthening interventions

The process of identifying capacity-strengthening interventions should be done in as consultative and participatory a manner as possible to promote ownership and commitment. Although there are no hard and fast rules for selecting the most appropriate capacity-strengthening intervention, a useful starting point is to consider capacity-strengthening needs, at both the individual level and the organizational level, as being overcome either by training or by non-training interventions. Again, the focus must be on specific interventions to achieve specific outcomes related to the desired actions and objectives.

It is time to ask the question: What interventions are required to bridge the defined gaps/needs?

The key questions to explore this further are:

- Which constraints or needs of the learner are non-trainable? What interventions would best help to overcome the identified needs?
- Which constraints or needs of the learner are trainable? What knowledge, skills or attitudes is the individual lacking? Be as specific as possible.
- Which constraints or needs at the organizational level would be best overcome by which activity?
- If training at the organizational level is identified as an appropriate intervention, what knowledge, skills or attitudes is the organization lacking? Be as specific as possible.

The capacity-strengthening interventions listed below can be matched to the identified needs of both the individual and the organization. A word of caution about the table opposite: the list presented is to serve only as a starting point for broader thinking on the issue. It is not a strategy blueprint. The interventions are designed to trigger thinking and will need to be adapted to the circumstances in which they will be applied.

In further considering capacity-strengthening interventions, the following questions should be addressed:

- Is the intervention appropriate for the problem?
- What is the nature and source of the problem for which an intervention is felt to be a solution?
- What preconditions are needed if the intervention is to have a good chance of being effective?
- Is the relationship between the selected intervention and the broader system of which it is a part clear and understood?
- What combinations of interventions will work best in what circumstances?

Technical assistance, equipment, infrastructure, connectivity	▹ Short-term and long-term technical assistance (placement of advisers, consultants, resource persons) ▹ Recruitment ▹ Everything from buildings to desks to computers to pencils ▹ Software, training materials ▹ Internet connectivity/broadband purchase ▹ Calibration and certification of equipment to international standards ▹ Access to hard copy and online journals ▹ Bibliographic resources ▹ Direct support to journals ▹ Graduate and training awards/scholarships
Individual training and education	*Discipline–specific, technical–based training* ▹ Tertiary studies (degrees, certificates, non-certificate [including via scholarships]) ▹ Non-accredited training (in-house courses and external courses) ▹ Guided reading ▹ Self-learning through manuals/texts ▹ Distance learning ▹ Study tours ▹ Exchange visits *Non–sector specific, interdisciplinary* ▹ As above, but for such issues as management, administration, leadership and entrepreneurship
Individual, work–specific, learning processes	▹ Structured on-the-job training (usually teaching people to do a set task) ▹ Coaching (helping people to solve their own problems through asking effective questions) ▹ Mentoring (helping people work through their own career issues; providing guidance and support in career progression) ▹ Study tours ▹ Exchange visits ▹ On-the-job apprenticeships/internships ▹ Training others/training of trainers ▹ Leadership/modelling appropriate behaviours ▹ Work shadowing ▹ Learning journals ▹ Research assistantships, fieldwork internships *Workshops and conferences* ▹ Training and planning workshops ▹ Meetings for sharing or knowledge and networking ▹ Conferences for presenting results, gaining knowledge and networking
Group, work–specific, learning processes	▹ Team learning through facilitated problem solving ▹ Learning circles ▹ Project work ▹ Job placements/job rotation ▹ Process reviews ▹ Work group reviews ▹ Organizational reviews ▹ Critical incident learning – either review from a mistake or review after a major event (e.g. annual budget process) ▹ Customer surveys and follow-up action ▹ Organizational climate/culture surveys and follow-up action ▹ Team strengthening ▹ Team retreats ▹ Development of “model” responses, e.g. checklists for regular tasks, standard responses to common enquiries, examples of common documents ▹ Conducting pilots to test new ideas ▹ Study tours ▹ Exchange visits

- Which interventions can be most easily combined? Or least easily combined? What is known about ordering these interventions?
- Do we have the skills and resources to implement the intervention? What exactly is the contribution that will be required?
- What is the relationship between the project management strategy and the capacity-development intervention? Do the two fit together?
- What are the various organizational relationships between the various actors? Are these likely to support capacity development? Are they likely to impact on the effectiveness of the intervention?
- Will the selected and linked interventions form a suitable approach to capacity strengthening likely to achieve the desired outcomes?

In presenting a list of capacity-strengthening interventions, there is the danger of selecting a single intervention as THE appropriate strategy. A stand-alone capacity-strengthening intervention does little to strengthen or enhance capacity without being integrated into a broader project strategy or action plan.

Capacity strengthening is a multi-level, interrelated and dynamic process, and no matter how well-planned the intervention or strategy, communities and organizations ultimately develop their capacities in unplanned and spontaneous ways in response to external opportunities, threats or simply individual initiatives. This spontaneity must also be “planned” for.

Capacity-strengthening action plan (scheduling and resources required)

The methodology has allowed critical actions to be identified and capacity-strengthening needs identified for implementing critical actions. But now careful consideration of the scheduling of activities and identification of a range of resources is required.

It is time to ask the question: What resources are required for what activities and when?

The table below provides a framework for building up a capacity-strengthening action plan.

Objectives	Action needed	Capacity–strengthening intervention		Stake–holder or individuals required	Resources required	Who is responsible	Time lines
		Trainable	Non–trainable				
Objective 1	Action 1						
	Action 2						
Objective 2	Action 1						

Some additional considerations:

1. Feasibility

This is an important consideration that only key stakeholders and key individuals will be able to answer. Full participation in the development of the action plan will ensure a feasible, realistic and logical set of capacity-strengthening interventions.

2. Resources and costs

Identifying required resources is essential, but a calculation of costs may also be needed to assess the feasibility of the action plan. These costs should include fixed costs (regardless of how many participants are involved), variable costs (extra costs per participant), direct costs (such as salaries, allowances, logistics, lodging and transport) and indirect costs (such as power consumption and opportunity costs such as salaries for the training period).

3. Capacity-strengthening providers

In considering the question Who is responsible?, it is important to consider other capacity-strengthening providers who are capable and can provide the appropriate services for the identified need. These providers may be at the local, national or international level depending on the target group, action, topic and mandate. When considering such providers it is important to consider:

- Who are they and at what level do they operate (local, national or international)?
- What are their mandates?
- What are their capacities?
- What is their focus in relation to the desired actions?
- What types of capacity-strengthening programmes do they currently offer?

4. Constraints and assumptions
It may be necessary to list potential or actual constraints to the action plan to ensure that appropriate countermeasures are taken. Likewise, the assumptions that have led to some key conclusions or interventions can be listed.

Developing a capacity-strengthening strategy
The action plan goes some way towards developing a capacity-strengthening strategy. A strategy further packages the action plan, however, ensuring that all underlying assumptions and objectives are clearly stated, as well as the linkages to other strategies and broader institutional processes.

It is time to ask the question: How are the outcomes communicated, implemented and evaluated?

The development of an action plan into a strategy is important as it:

- Explains why a certain combination of methods and means is proposed to reach specific objectives;
- Explains why an emphasis is put on certain types of interventions and supporting activities;
- Explains how a particular set of objectives can be achieved given a specific target group or audience, available resources, working conditions and socio-political context; and
- Makes explicit assumptions about learning, change and reform.

As such, any capacity-strengthening strategy will be assessed on the following grounds:

- The underlying assumptions.
- How effective the strategy is under the current context and under the given conditions. Will it realize the desired change or reform?
- Will the strategy lead to an efficient use of resources? Does the strategy use minimum inputs to realize the required changes? Is the strategy realistic in its assumptions regarding availability of financial, human or other resources?
- Does the strategy relate well to the characteristics and conditions of the potential participants or beneficiaries of the strategy?
- Is the strategy flexible? Will it operate under difficult or varying conditions?

Suggested format for a capacity-strengthening strategy:

❶ *Rational*: A paragraph to half-page clearly stating and explaining the main purpose of the CNA strategy and justifying its need.

❷ *Strategy findings*: This chapter presents the outcomes of the CNA. This should include the identified visions and objectives for reform and the capacity-strengthening needs (gaps) hindering the required actions by the key stakeholders. The identified capacity-strengthening interventions can then be presented with clear linkages to how capacity-strengthening gaps will be overcome.

❸ *Objectives and description of the strategy*: Besides the objectives, this should spell out the nature and coverage of the strategy, highlighting its focus and emphasis. It may include the whole process or certain critical sections, depending on the audience.

❹ *Strategy methodology*: This is a process section which lists the tools and techniques used in capacity-strengthening interventions, with an attachment detailing the worksheets or tools used. It also describes how the process took place.

❺ *Action plan and feasibility analysis*: The feasibility analysis presents the conclusions and recommendations concerning the capacity-strengthening context and interventions. Suggestions or advice can be included on how to solve or lessen the identified problems and constraints of the capacity-strengthening context. It should assess the effectiveness of training and non-training interventions as a solution to the problem in the present context. It ends with a capacity-strengthening action plan, including scope, duration and an estimate of the cost of implementing the suggested strategy.

❻ *Monitoring and evaluation plan*: This section needs to consider ways to monitor and evaluate the strategy. These will include baselines and indicators from which to measure progress, how outcomes and impacts are measured, and resourcing issues for the monitoring and evaluation activities.

❼ *Conclusion*: Highlighting key findings, potential challenges and key constraints to implementing the strategy.

❽ *Attachments*: Possible attachments include team members; methodology schedule and activities; names or number of people, villages and organizations assessed and interviewed; tools used; secondary data accessed; and so on.

A strategy is only as good as its promoters. Four reasons why a strategy will be shelved:

❶ From the beginning, no one had ownership of the process or its results;
❷ The analysis was not strategically conceived, it answered the wrong questions and it addressed the wrong stakeholders;
❸ The context of the situation has changed so dramatically that the outcomes and findings are no longer relevant; and
❹ Leaders were uninterested in the results, they had insufficient resources or interest to act on the findings, or they disagreed with the findings.

Reviewing and reflecting

Conducting a capacity needs assessment is a capacity-strengthening activity in its own right. The process therefore needs to be reviewed and reflected on to identify lessons and improvements for future assessments:

- What stood out for you (regarding interventions, scheduling, risks and so on)?
- What concerned you?
- What excited you?
- What new insights have you gained through the process?
- How do the actions and capacity-strengthening interventions in your plan or strategy integrate with other existing tasks or deadlines, your personal development, and your work performance plan(s)?
- What does this mean for the overall project and project team?
- How do you plan to celebrate your success so far?

Reflection is an integral contributor to learning and creating – it seeks to make sense of processes, problems, issues and constraints that become apparent after actions are taken, or not taken. Reflecting allows for an understanding of complex issues and circumstances to develop; this process is greatly enhanced by discussion, dialogue and support from other individuals in groups.

✽ ✽ ✽ ✽

Notes and abbreviations

1. The CNA is not a strategy in itself. IUCN project staff (or partner organization staff) are responsible for the development of a strategy which ensures the implementation of the outcomes from the needs assessment. The CNA also focuses on human resource development. The methodology will not focus on infrastructure, financial or material resource needs.

2. UNDP (1997) *Capacity Development*. Technical Advisory Paper 2, Management Development and Governance Division, United Nations Development Programme, New York.

3. Stephen, P., O'Brien, N. and Triraganon, R. (2006) *Capacity Building for CBNRM in Asia: A Regional Review*. Report to International Development Research Centre, June 2006.

Abbreviations

CF	Community forestry
CNA	Capacity needs assessment
HR	Human resources
KSA	Knowledge, skills and attitudes
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NRM	Natural resource management
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
SVBC	Strengthening Voices for Better Choices

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