SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE BLACK-BOX OF LEARNING FROM TRAINING

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

PSO lists training as a possible strategy to bring about capacity building (CB), through which Member Organisations (MO) support their partners to achieve their mandate. Training is thought to help provide people and organisations with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure a better functioning and performance.

However, PSO has questions about training as a strategy for CB. There are some unknown aspects about training and how exactly it translates to CB. For example: How and why do POs choose for training as a strategy? Why is it preferred over other interventions? How does the training process take place? Who does training for whom?

This study tries to shed some more light on the 'blackbox' of learning from training, by reviewing how training is included in projects and programs, and assessing Member Organizations perceptions on its use, effectiveness and sustainability.

1.2. Methodology

The research was divided into two phases: a Quick Scan of programs and projects found in PSO's system and interviews with MO representatives.

The first part included an analysis of a sample of thirty projects and programmes[1], randomly selected from a total of 230[2] that were retrieved from the PSO system (Axon), for the years 2005 and 2006. The sample provides enough diversity in terms of type, size, location and objectives of projects and programs. Although the focus was mainly on proposals, when available, the final reports were also assessed. In general terms, the documents were analyzed in order to get a more accurate idea on the assumptions and rationale behind training, the relative importance that it has when compared to other capacity building strategies, the amount of resources that are being invested in it, the way the

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[1] Projects: 24 Programmes: 6
[2] Proposals with positive status only

training process takes place, among others[3]. The analysis of documents and interview results relies largely on PSO's concepts of training as a capacity building strategy, and a general vision of training as a process.

In order to get more qualitative and in-depth information about these issues but also about attitudes, perceptions and experiences on training, eleven interviews[4] were held with representatives from PSO member organizations. Member organizations were selected according to number of approved projects and programs, size of projects/programs, percentage of PSO funding, and organizational objectives. Although no systematic sampling criteria were used, the choice of MOs responded to internal suggestions and the expressed intention to provide enough diversity to the sample. Representatives, on the other hand, were selected according to both position, knowledge of PSO and availability.

The following table presents a list of the member organizations that were considered as part of this study. In total, information from almost 50% of PSO member organizations has been analyzed for the purposes of this research.

Table 1:
Sample of Organizations in Phases 1 and 2

No.		Name of Organization	Phase 1: Quick Scan	Phase 2: Interviews
1	CARE		1	1
2	CMC	Centraal Missie Commissariaat	1	1
3	CORDAID		1	1
4	ENVIU		1	
5	GDF	Green Development Foundation	1	
6	GZB	Gereformeerde Zendingsbond	1	
7	HIVOS	Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking	1	
8	HNI	HealthNet TPO	1	
9	HOM	Humanistisch Overleg Mensenrechten	2	
10	ICCO	Interkerkelijke organisatie voor ontwikkelingssamenwerking	8	1
11	KIA	Kerkinactie	1	1

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[3] See Annex 1: Analysis Criteria
[4] See Annex 2: Interview to PSO Members

12	MCNV	Medisch Comité Nederland-Vietnam	1	1
13	NIZA	Nederlands instituut voor Zuidelijk Afrika	1	1
14	NRK	Nederlandse Rode Kruis	1	
15	NSL	Leprastichting	1	
16	PC	Pax Christi Nederland (Stichting Pax Christi Projecten)	2	1
17	TDH	Terre des Hommes	1	
18	TIE	Transnationals Information Exchange		1
19	TPO	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization		1
20	VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas	2	
21	WChild	War Child Nederland	1	
22	WEMOS		1	
23	ZOA	ZOA-Vluchtelingenzorg		1
			30	**11**

1.3. Main findings in a nutshell

This study finds that although in appearance simple and common sense, understanding training within projects and proposals poses many challenges. Attitudes, concepts, practices, and approaches vary according to context, organizational objectives, experiences and needs. Opinions reflect that there is an imbalance between discourse and practice in the way training is understood. Training is rarely described as a process, and its success criteria tend to focus on the implementation phase, rather than on the larger intangible achievement of learning objectives. It is assumed, or expected that the results will come through in the long-term, but little follow–up is done to guarantee its sustainability. Little detailed information is available for PSO and MOs regarding its methodological aspects, for training tends to be demand driven and decisions are made by POs or counterparts. Yet, overall, training is and will apparently continue to be a largely used capacity building strategy, precisely because of its perceived simplicity and advantages.

1.4. Limitations

Information to determine the extent to which training is funded by PSO, as compared to other CB strategies, is not easily available or not reliable enough. Although it is beyond the scope of this research, this comparison may have been useful to provide an indication of how important training actually is within projects and programmes and of how resources are being distributed for capacity development purposes. In broad terms, however, 26%[5] of total planned financial resources and 17%[6] of total realized expenditures are destined to training.

1.5. Structure

In the following chapter, PSO's definitions of CB and training are briefly discussed after which training is placed in a CB framework. In addition, the notion of training as a process rather than a one-off event is applied. Then, in the third chapter, the results of the Quick Scan and the interviews are presented. The chapter follows the different phases of the training process, seeks to understand the way in which training translates into learning from the HRD to the OD level and gives a SWOT analysis of training as perceived by MOs. Chapter 4 looks at the role PSO plays in setting the stage for training, and the MO's reflection on this. The final chapter concludes.

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[5] Rough estimate excludes projects/programmes with incorrect information from Member Organizations
[6] Includes only projects/programmes that have presented final 2005 report.

Chapter 2: Understanding Training within a Capacity Building Framework

2.1. PSO Definition of Capacity Building

PSO defines the concept of CB by looking at general definitions of the notion of CB of the international development community. In the policy document *'Financing for Capacity Building By PSO – Conceptual and methodological framework'*, several definitions are cited[7] from which PSO extracts some common elements that it notes it "needs to take into account when defining its concept of capacity building" (PSO, 2003: 5).

There are several aspects to CB that PSO emphasises. First, CB "aims to strengthen the functioning of the organisation or to develop new strategies/activities [...][by] giving organisations the means with which to carry out their mandate and achieve their objectives more effectively and efficiently" (idem). Second, PSO stresses that capacity does not concern individual (human resource development (HRD)) only, but encompasses organisational development (OD) and institutional development (ID) as well. Finally, the terms sustainability and ownership enter the definition. Sustainability refers to a "permanent improvement [...] of the local partner organisation's capacity" (idem: 8), whereas ownership underscores that CB should be "a self-managing process [...] from the initial analysis through the implementation and final evaluation" (idem: 8).

The website provides an explicit definition of CB: "To PSO capacity building means the process through which individuals, groups, organisations, institutes and society increase their capacity to carry out their main tasks, solve their own problems, and define (and achieve) their particular goals; [as well as] to understand what their development needs are, in a wider context, and to cope with this in a sustainable fashion" (PSO website: http://www.pso.nl/).

PSO's framework identifies eight strategies for capacity building. The following diagram summarizes this framework.

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[7] On page 5 of the document, the definitions of CIDA, IFRC, VSO International and UNDP are cited.

Diagram 1:
Capacity Building Strategies
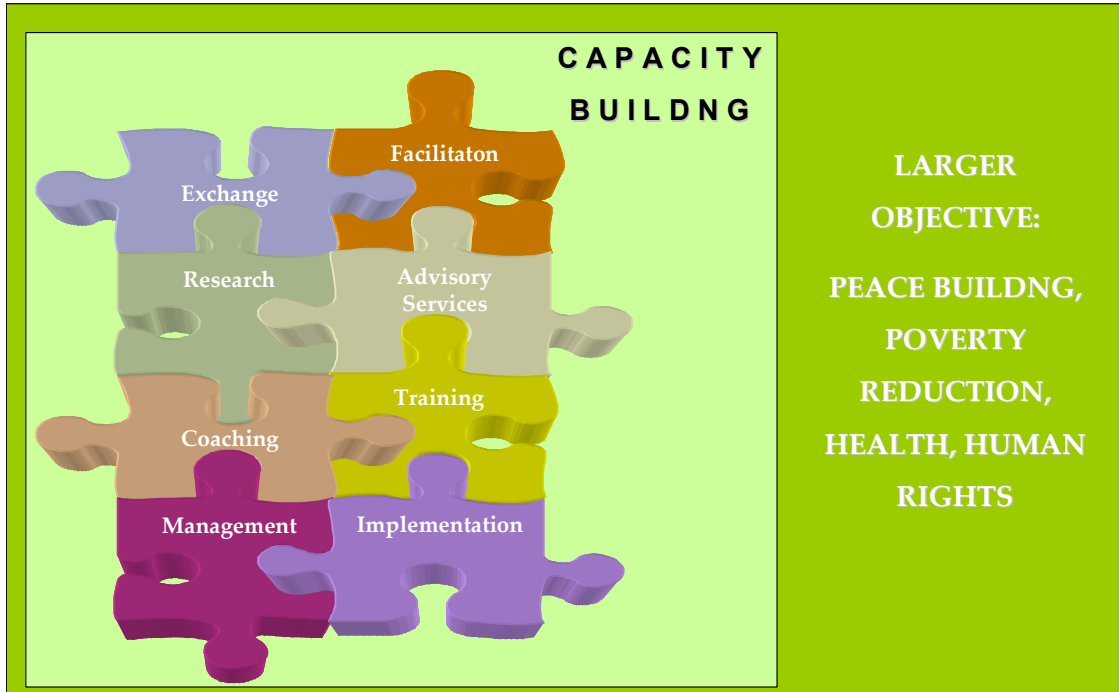
It is understood that all strategies have advantages and disadvantages, and that within projects' and programmes' structures and contents, they are intended to support each other in order to achieve both a capacity building objective, as well as a larger organizational and institutional objective.

2.2. PSO's Definition of Training

When compared to other CB strategies, it is interesting to note that training is not explicitly defined within the PSO framework. It is stated that "the difference between training and education concerns the time period involved" (PSO, 2003: 15). From this it can be concluded that training is understood as a short period of education, but the length of this period is not specified. PSO is aware of this grey area between formal education and training.

Training has the aim to improve skills and knowledge, "both in the interest of the organisation/network and in the personal interests of the trainee" (idem). It is noted that training can provide a tremendous boost to the capacity of an

organisation, but can also enhance the mobility and motivation within the organisation. There is, however, a lot of room for manoeuvre under this definition.

2.3. Training as a Process – A Model

Conceiving training as a process allows for a more detailed and structured analysis of the way it takes place in practice. This research relies on the assumption that training is comprised of a series of systematic activities that intend to lead to a learning objective, at individual or organizational levels. Four phases[8] are identified in this process:

a) Needs Assessment: this refers to the ways the need for training and the training needs (in terms of the knowledge, attitudes and skills that want to be achieved) are determined.

b) Design: it refers to the planning of the way in which the training event itself is organized and structured, in terms of trainers, content, duration, set-up, methodology and material, so that the learning objectives are achieved.

c) Implementation: this phase refers to how the design is put into practice, and also includes logistical aspects (such as communication and location) of the event itself.

d) M&E and Follow-Up: it refers to the observation, assessment and feedback of the training process, in order to verify its quality, achievement of objectives and longer term impact.

All phases imply important methodological aspects that interact along the training process. It is also assumed that context factors can positively or negatively affect any stage of the process, and therefore promote or hinder the learning outcome.

Diagram 2 summarizes the framework.

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[8] For practical purposes, these four phases have been identified. They could be split or merged into different ones, if necessary.

Diagram 2:
Training as a Process
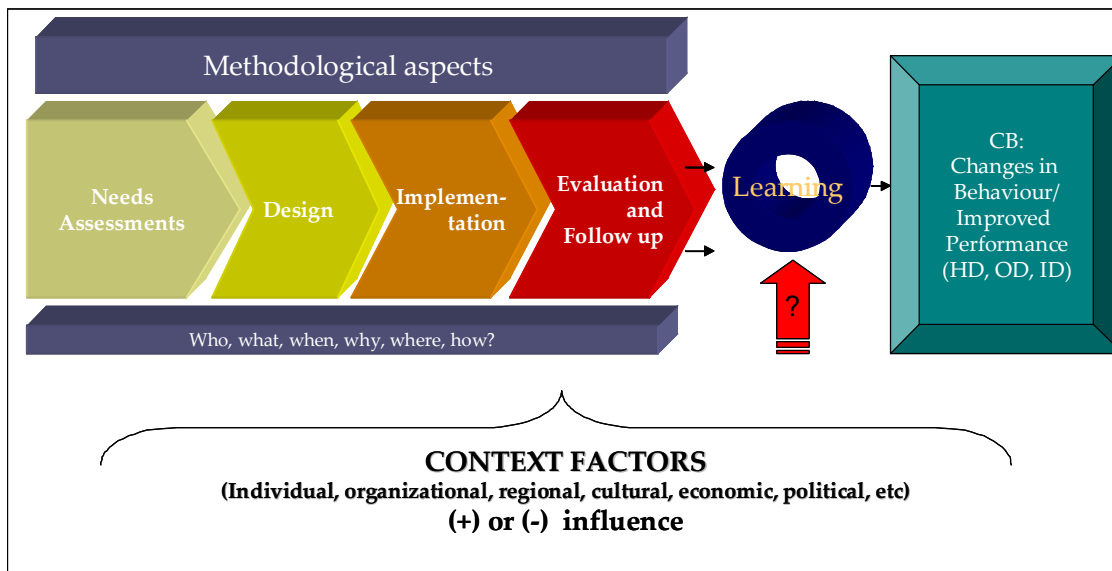
This study's analysis of documents and interview results relies largely on PSO's concepts of training as a capacity building strategy, and a general vision of training as a process.

Chapter 3: Results

This chapter presents the integrated results of the research. First it includes the overall vision and understanding of training. Then it describes the findings on each phase of the training process complemented by the mechanisms used to convert learning into practice. Finally, an analysis of the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is provided.

3.1. Overall Vision and Understanding of Training

The analysis of projects, programmes and interviews suggests that there is really no consensus as to what training is, what it entails, how it should be defined, and especially in its distinction with other capacity building strategies.

The Quick Scan reveals that projects and programmes very rarely include a clear concept of training or a clear rationale or justification for it. In some cases, the justification is inferred from the general justification of the project or programme, and there are hardly explicit explanations as to why training is chosen over other CB strategies. The implicit assumption that training automatically leads to a strengthening of capacities prevails in the preparation of proposals. In some cases, when proposals or reports are drafted in different languages, the term training is lost in translation and replaced for capacity building, for example.

The interviews accentuate the wide range of 'concepts' and approaches regarding training. Some MO representatives define it in a general manner in terms of its objective to build capacity or to transfer skills and knowledge; others define training as a process, but do not identify clear stages; some refer to training mainly as an event where people come together to learn; while a few do not consider relevant to have a definition of training since it is regarded 'common sense'. To some extent, the degree to which the organization defines itself as a capacity building organization or not tends to shape the importance that it assigns to defining such concepts.

Once asked for in more detail, MOs seem to value the importance of considering each steps of the training process but do not rigorously apply it in practice. This is an imbalance between discourse and behaviour.

In addition, and from a process perspective, there is a tendency to discuss training in its implementation phase and to stress the conditions that make a training event successful. It is important to distinguish this because a successful training event does not automatically imply the achievement of the learning objective; that is, changes in behaviour or improved performance.

From the interviews, it is clear that according to MOs, the CB strategies included in PSO's framework tend to overlap. In their opinion, differentiation and ranking among strategies is not always easy or straightforward and the effectiveness of one depends largely on the way it is combined or supported by other strategies. Although this can also be inferred from the way proposals are written, it is hard to judge how systematic or strategic this combination of strategies is in practice. Proposals and final reports, for example, are not often explicit on how strategies are linked to achieve larger learning objectives. Some interviewees even questioned the need to make such clear cut distinctions in order, for example, to quantify the use of resources.

It is important to point out that there seem to be apparent contradictions in the ways MOs approach definitions. On the one hand, they are aware that they are useful for they provide clear frameworks; on the other hand, they are very resistant to the possibilities that definitions may restrict their work.

Regardless of the different notions on training, it can be inferred from PSO's numbers, its internal perceptions, project and programme documents and MO's perceptions, that training is largely used as a capacity building strategy. The interviews confirmed that there is a very positive attitude towards training among MO's. In fact, nine of the eleven respondents expressed very favourable opinions about their experiences with training, highlighted its advantages over its disadvantages[9] and emphasized the need to further support training. To some, in fact, training constitutes the most important strategy. These MOs, however, are fully aware that certain aspects have to be improved in order to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of training. Two MOs, in turn, expressed mixed-feelings about it, acknowledging that they did not openly encourage training. Instead, they considered other strategies such as learning-by-doing as more cost-effective and sustainable.

The MO's opinions about the extent to which training is used are very relevant. When asked to make a judgement about whether training is used more, less or as

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[9] See SWOT Analysis

much as needed, most respondents replied that it is used to an appropriate extent; that is, as much as needed. It would be interesting to compare this perception to PSO's.

The following table presents a summary of the responses.

Table 2: Opinions about the use of training

Total Interviews	Training is used as much as it needs to	Training is used more than it is actually needed	Training is used less than what is needed	No opinion/Other
11	6	0	1	4

An interesting point to mention here is that MOs 're-direct' training demands and suggest other capacity building strategies, if they believe that contents are not relevant, not conducive to the fulfilment of organizational objectives, or if they think that in a particular context training is not the most appropriate strategy. Context, in fact, seems to play a very crucial role to understand, assess and value training.

3.2. The Training Process

3.2.1. Needs Assessment

The needs assessment is critical in the decision to use training as a strategy for CB. It is vital to know the needs of a target group before deciding to do training, but also to understand how training should be used. Thus, a needs assessment should determine what skills are missing in an organization but also if training is the most effective strategy to meet these needs.

In general, it is not clear whether there is a specific needs assessment for the training. Typically, there is a needs assessment for the overall intervention. From the interviews, it became apparent that in most cases the need for training is also derived from this needs assessment. However, there is little information on how

the capacity of the trainees and organization is assessed, and why a specific training is chosen.

The MOs have different ways of understanding the need for training. It is interesting to see who does the needs assessment and how it takes place. From the Quick Scan, seven different forms of doing a needs assessment emerged, which are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 3: Different forms of needs assessment (from the quickscan)

Form of needs assessment	*What is it?*
1. Background and context information	An extensive analysis of the context, indicating that skills are generally missing, typically by PO
2. Workshop/Seminar	A gathering of MO with POs, during which the POs communicate their needs to the MO.
3. Learning by doing	On the basis of a longstanding relationship between MO and PO, the needs are defined.
4. Organisational SWOT analysis	An external evaluation of the PO by the MO, focusing at where the training would
5. Explicitly stated needs assessment	For example, Participatory Needs Assessment
6. Consultation of end beneficiaries	The people that benefit from the work of the PO are consulted as to what could be improved.
7. No reference to needs assessment	There is no form of needs assessment whatsoever

Most often, the needs assessment is based on lessons learned from previous experiences (trial and error), a gathering with the POs in the form of a workshop or seminar or just a context analysis. Where needs assessments take place, there is almost always a role for the PO to play. The involvement of the PO in the needs assessment ranges from participatory workshops to self assessments from which (training) needs emanate. From the Quick Scan it is striking that there are still quite some cases in which there is no mention of a proper needs assessment.

The interviews proved very useful to provide additional information. These confirmed that needs assessments most often take place in the form of a workshop, during which the POs and the MOs brainstorm on what skills and knowledge are needed. In addition, the working relations are an important source of information.

All MOs noted the importance of assessing the needs together with the local organisations. For example, CMC stated that "the needs assessment is a dialogue between the PO and the MO. Only if the POs ask for training, CMC will initiate a process". In some cases, the MO is very much involved in the organisational needs assessment, but ICCO mentions that "the PO can very well do on its own the necessary capacity assessment and ICCO will (only) facilitate where needed".

However, there are several issues encountered by the MOs that inhibit the adherence to this principle. For example, sometimes the local organisations are not aware that certain trainings exist, and the MO can "proposes a training on a subject or tool not known by the POs". An example of this is a PO that did not know about the existence of trainings on negotiation skills, after the implementation of which the PO was very enthusiastic.

Second, there are sometimes context factors that complicate the needs assessment. This especially holds true for organisations like TPO-Healthnet, ZOA and CARE NL that work in the grey area between relief efforts and development. CARE NL mentions it "is far from the field and often has tight deadlines to start operations as soon as a conflict is over. Deadlines for funding proposals do not leave a lot of space to have a good needs assessment. The needs are identified gradually along the collaboration and operations are adjusted based on lessons learned".

The needs assessment as such is not a systematic undertaking. Mostly, the PO is involved, unless context factors inhibit this. There is no one definition of a needs assessment that the MO adhere to, and sometimes the needs assessment is simply based on a context analysis or lacking altogether. The question is whether there should be such a methodology or framework for a needs assessment and whether PSO should play a role in this.

3.2.2 Design

In the design of the training, decisions are made on how the necessary skills and knowledge are to be communicated. Also, it describes how the elements of the training process come together in the intervention logic. In short, what methods are to be used towards the realization of the learning objective and its application into the practice of the POs.

The Quick Scan provides little information on how training is designed and whether standard or special methodologies are applied. In some cases, there is broad information on the number and duration of training events and the number and positions of staff targeted, but this is not linked to the content and a learning objective. The responsibility of the design was, in the sample of the Quick Scan, often partly attributed to the foreign expert assigned to programs and projects. However, the vision and assumptions on the intervention logic are not clearly specified and it is not clear if it is POs or MOs that shape the training design.

This gap was explained during the interviews with the MOs. They clarified that POs are generally responsible for the design of the training and that the MOs avoid interfering in the way their partners intend to implement training. The understanding is that once the training is 'approved' by the MO, it is not necessary to report details to either the MO or PSO.

However, there are certain exceptions that are conditioned by the availability of local expertise. PC, for example, split the design of a sports and peace building programme in Africa in two parts. The sports component was designed in the Netherlands, under close supervision by the MO. The second component on peace building was designed by a regional PO in Africa.

In general, there are no standard practices for the design of training methodologies or materials. POs or counterparts may design their own material - depending on the training topic and target groups - but they can also contact local providers to implement training on more general topics. TIE centers, for example, tend to replicate and adapt a particular training methodology (Production Mapping) designed by the Brasil TIE center.

In short, in spite of the importance of the design phase, there are still many unanswered questions on this phase. For example, it would be interesting to further observe whether context specific or topic specific considerations prevail in deciding how to design training.

3.2.3. Implementation

Consequently, it is interesting to identify who implements the training and how a number of factors influence its success. In the past, training was provided

mainly by foreign (Dutch) experts. Some MOs explain that in the initial phases of operations, the relationships with POs need to time to strengthen, building mutual trust. Especially MOs operating in the grey area between emergency relief and development or post-conflict contexts, have local partners that are not yet formally organized and whose capacities are very limited, which constrains their ability to take charge of identifying trainers and leading the training process.

Most MOs interviewed pinpointed that they need to build networks in their target countries in order to identify appropriate local or regional organizations and experts to provide training. Hence, in a first phase, MOs find it is easier to draw on their own networks and databases in The Netherlands when searching for trainers. As pinpointed by CMC, networking in the target countries is important but very hard, especially if there is no local office of the MO.

Nevertheless, a transition is taking place in which there is a tendency to increasingly identify local or regional experts to supply training in response to a concerns arising from experiences with foreign experts. Local experts are not only much cheaper, but can also better ensure effectiveness and sustainability of local training processes since they know how to deal with the culture and context of the trainees better. Using the words of CMC, "it is often assumed that a person who can communicate well in Asia can communicate well in Africa and Latin America as well. But this is not at all the case. Trainers must know the context and be sensitive to it". Put more concisely, training drawn on regional expertise is often more cost-effective.

The quality and responsiveness of trainers and trainees are obviously decisive factors for the success of the training. Experienced trainers with the ability to communicate and stimulate a dynamic group of motivated trainees will result in more successful trainings. In this respect, contextual considerations play an important role. For instance, when groups are composed by people from very different backgrounds and levels of knowledge, it is more difficult to ensure an (equal) learning of new skills and knowledge. In addition, exchange and group work between trainees is difficult when ethnic tensions divide them. Finally, if logistics do not work properly training loses its quality.

A final consideration on the implementation of training regards its use in conjunction with other strategies for CB. Most of the interviewed MOs use more than one strategy for CB at a time. For example, training and coaching are often used together in order to apply and practice skills acquired with training. In emergency situations strategies of implementation and management are used in

a first stage. Gradually, training is provided to strengthen often newly formed POs. However, the difference between strategies is often not as clear-cut as suggested by the PSO framework.

3.2.4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Training is generally not formally monitored and evaluated as such. Rather, it is monitored as a component of the broader project/programme monitoring practice and limits itself to the output level (e.g. indicators on number of beneficiaries, sessions and skills taught). Based on the log frame of the overall intervention, the M&E for training generally fulfils financial accountability purposes. Using those formats it is very hard to evaluate the strategy and to measure and isolate the effect of training from other strategies and factors influencing the CB process.

MCNV is aware of this challenge and is currently working on indicators to measure effectiveness of CB in its projects. Others, such as NIZA, expect to get insights about CB's outcomes through impact assessments done after four years of programme implementation. TPO-Healthnet uses indicators such as pre- and post- testing of trainee's knowledge. In addition, it verifies whether their partners have been able to keep up the quality standards after two or three years. All in all, evaluations are not frequent and rarely external. They are usually only done for broad programmes focused on training as their main activity.

In the case of training on management and organizational issues (f.eg. financial accounting, logical frameworks, etc.), the effectiveness of training is more easily identifiable looking at the quality of reporting documents and working relations between MOs and POs. In the words of ZOA, "it creates a common language between MOs and their partners". The development of the organization is the proof of training's success. However the impact of partners' activities on the target group is hardly evaluated.

3.2.5. Follow-up

When seen as a one-off event, training is not followed up. On the other hand, if training is seen as a process, follow-up should be part of it in order to make sure skills and knowledge are successfully applied in practice. Workshops to analyze problems of implementation and follow-up training serve to keep skills updated.

Other CB strategies are helpful at that stage such as coaching and advising. The Quick Scan as well as the interviews pointed to a lack of follow-up in the vast majority of cases. In very few cases references were made to moments of reflection on learning within the overall programme. This was however not specifically linked to training.

3.3 Learning into Practice

As stated earlier, there are two implicit assumptions (or expectations?) about training that must be carefully addressed. One is the link between training and individual learning. The other one is the link between individual learning and organizational learning, or how human resources development actually translates into organizational development (HRD to OD). These are key questions for the effectiveness and sustainability of training. But since they are intangible, they also constitute challenges to the practice of training. Therefore, knowing whether and how MOs view and address these assumptions is also essential to understand training in practice.

Beyond the stated assumptions, the Quick Scan did not provide useful information in this respect. The interviews, however, added valuable input. Most MOs agree that this is a very complicated part of training, and some even argued that the main weaknesses of training, from their experience and their own practice, can be identified here. A few accepted that, although very important, they do not do anything to monitor these final aspects of training. Some, however, managed to mention or recall specific mechanisms or activities that are implemented in projects and programmes, in order to actively control for these intangible aspects and reduce the possible threats to training[10]. For example, some MOs purposely promote the inclusion of more than one member of their POs in a training event, in order to reduce the risk of brain drain and guarantee that the knowledge remains within the organization. Training-to-train also fulfills this objective, and is especially effective if follow-up trainings are somehow supervised in order to provide feedback.

In addition, using different combinations of capacity building strategies is referred to as another mechanism to ensure learning. For example, combining training with exchange visits and exercises are quoted by MNCV and TIE as ways in which training outcomes can be enhanced and translated into

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[10] See SWOT Analysis

organizational development. Particular types of training, such as on-the-job training and team functioning were referred to as very effective for translating HRD to OD. Finally, TIE incorporates a "cultural translator" in the training events that they support through their local centers. This translator has, among others, the responsibility to guarantee a common trade union terminology understanding during trainings' formal and informal discussions.

3.4. SWOT analysis of training as perceived by MOs[11]

Strengths	Weaknesses[12]
▪ Brings people together to learn from each other	▪ In some cases too directive*
▪ Helps to create a common language on concepts used which facilitates the dialogue between POs and MOs	▪ Lack of dynamism, motivation, interaction in the group
▪ Relatively cheap and easy strategy that reaches a big number of people	▪ Quality of the trainer
▪ Training helps build structure, a systematic picture of a whole issue	▪ Inappropriate implementation/methodologies
▪ Opportunity to share information, skills and exchange	▪ Different levels of knowledge among participants
▪ Opens space to share traumatic experiences (context of peace building)*	▪ Bad selection of participants
▪ Addresses needs that cannot be fulfilled locally*	▪ Time constrains (find the right length)
	▪ Poor needs assessments

Opportunities	Threats
▪ The relationship between MOs and POs can be ameliorated thanks to improved documentation and reporting done by PO	▪ Donor driven instead of demand driven
▪ Training gives the opportunity to POs to improve the fulfilment of their mandate	▪ Language barriers in multicultural environments
▪ Trainers and consultancy organizations are generally available locally or regionally. They are potentially more knowledgeable about the local culture; this impacts positively on the learning of trainees	▪ Political context (e.g. ethnic tensions so people don't want to come together in regional trainings, people fear repression if get organized)
▪ Use training to develop both people and organisational systems	▪ Gender issues (women don't speak up)
▪ Alternate training with practice of skills taught	▪ Poor communication means among PO branches hinder sharing of skills and information*
▪ Follow up to make training a process*	▪ MOs may make wrong choice of Partner Organizations (corruption, not committed to its mandate…) to work with in post-conflict contexts
▪ Impact assessments would contribute to determine the effectiveness of training in terms of improved practice*	▪ Some POs might like training for the wrong reasons (e.g. provides them with a certificate…)
▪ The use of information technology to diffuse knowledge more easily (distant learning)	▪ Some skills need hardware to be used properly (e.g. computers)
	▪ Trained staff might leave the organization (brain drain)

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[11] Source: Interviews with MOs. These results do not reflect the opinion of all MOs. Items indicated with a star reflect the opinion of only one or two MOs interviewed.

[12] These were some (potential) weaknesses, which were not experienced in all cases.

Chapter 4: PSO and Training

The primary objective of this study was to understand how the MOs feel about training as a strategy for CB. A directly related question in the context of this study is what role PSO plays and could play in setting the stage for the use of training as a strategy. To get an idea of where the MOs stand, they were asked to comment on PSO's CB framework in general and the training component in particular.

4.1. The current CB framework

Almost all MOs are quite enthusiastic about the distinction between HRD, OD and ID, as it makes more understandable what exactly the focus of the MO's CB interventions is. ICCO stated: "the HRD, OD, ID differentiation is very useful. It is easy to grasp what we mean with CB, and it facilitates the analysis of an organisation and helps POs get the picture clear". However, there are several objections to the current framework.

First, the MOs expressed the importance of keeping the CB framework as broad as possible. Many perceived it as "too narrow" or "constraining"[13]. In some cases, where PSO funding is only part of a project or programme, the proposal has already been approved by international donors. Nevertheless, PSO asks for a package of detailed information, before it (too) approves the proposal. This leads to frustration amongst MOs. Especially the MOs with other sources of funding, weigh the advantages against the disadvantages of requesting PSO money. Like one organization stated: "sometimes we think 'never mind' because it is too much of a nuisance to write the enormous amounts of paperwork".

Second, there are several organisations that have difficulties finding good POs that can be worked with, or that do not work with POs. Especially ZOA, Care NL and TPO-Healthnet expressed their reservations about the framework, which does not allow for the cooperation with groups that are not a formal PO (thus with some form of legal status). "Independent of the context, there is one model of CB focusing mainly on local NGOs". Because these organisations work in different contexts, they typically work through country offices. The framework should, in their view, provide space for this, as well as cooperation with community based organisations (CBOs) and local governments. PSO has already taken initiative in this.

Third, the framework's classification of the different strategies[14] for CB is not perceived as particularly useful, outside the fact that it provides a broad idea of what the MO is

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[13] ICCO does not share this opinion and actually found the PSO framework relatively broad.
[14] Exchange, facilitation, coaching, research, training, advisory services, management, implementation.

focusing on. "It is just a rough estimation of activities" and not used outside this. Describing instruments so much diminishes the flexibility of the CB combinations. MOs feel that they should be able to do anything they want to achieve CB, whether it is facilitation, training, coaching or a combination of the three. In practice, as stated earlier, the distinction is hard to make.

4.2. PSO's role

The HRD, OD, ID classification of the CB framework is perceived as useful. However, the MOs urge for the framework to be kept as broad as possible as it is already perceived as constraining. The MOs did not see a role for PSO to define more specifically training, or to set a framework for how training can and cannot be used as a strategy. The MOs expressed the desire to be free in the way in which training is used as a strategy for CB.

All MOs agreed that PSO has another important role to play. Rather than providing the framework, PSO should be a "platform of knowledge". ICCO mentioned it can serve very useful to combine efforts and to learn from each other's experiences. The knowledge centre is very important in this respect, to share ideas and positive experiences on training and to provide the possibility to reflect. PSO is valuable as an outsider to reflect on training, the programme and on the contextual specificities. CMC agrees: "The knowledge centre of PSO is where the value added is. It should become a knowledge-broker".

TPO-Healthnet stated that there are many valuable sources of information on the latest developments of CB and training such as Universities, KIT, UN-OCHA and other UN agencies. PSO could take the role of a platform filtering valuable information and guiding the MOs to it.

But the MOs also stated PSO should become more demand-driven, or as one organization put it: "this knowledge has to be asked for by the MO, otherwise it is just an annoyance. There should be much more of a dialogue". Particularly, PSO has a useful role in programmatic action. For example: workshops on how projects in Asia are to be approached differently from those in Africa, or the experiences of setting up cooperation with churches. Workshops on how to do training in specific were not perceived as useful.

ICCO mentioned that PSO could also have a bigger role in ensuring the right people for the right job, as this proves difficult in practice. PSO could study how it could assist MO/POs in strategic approaches to human resource management, which incorporates a longer run plan to refresh staff. Cordaid added that PSO could have a role in the marketing of CB components. Finally, for ZOA and CARE, the knowledge centre could help provide a theoretical framework for cooperation with CBOs.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Questions for Further Research

This study set out to understand how PSO's members and their POs feel about training and how they use it as a strategy for capacity building. It relied both on PSO's CB framework and the notion of training as a process in order to investigate how each step of the process takes place. A Quick Scan of the documents for a sample of projects and programmes available in PSO's database and interviews with a selection of MO representatives helped shed some light on the 'blackbox' of the learning process associated with training. The main findings are summarized below.

- In general, the MOs are positive about training. However, they do not share a common or clear concept of training. The MOs note that it is very hard to define this strategy, as it can easily overlap with other strategies. In other words, in practice, the boundaries among some of them are very unclear. There is, nevertheless, a schism in this respect. On the one hand, the MOs expressed the desire to understand training better; but on the other hand, they do not want definitions to restrict their practice. Despite feeling positive about training as a strategy for CB, the MOs feel that there is a lot of room to improve training and its sustainability.

- Although MOs do not automatically conceive training as a process, when asked more in detail they do understand it as such. Yet this understanding does not shape their practice on training. MOs tend to focus more on the implementation phase of training.

- Specific needs assessments for trainings are hardly present. There is a needs assessment for the overall project/programme intervention. Most often this takes shape in the form of a gathering of the PO and the MO, such as a workshop. These meetings are at the same time used to assess what skills are lacking in an organization (organizational needs assessment). But there is no information on how MOs decide that training is the most effective strategy to meet these needs.

- Although acknowledged as a crucial factor for the success of the training event, MOs do not have extensive information on the design of training. Their level of involvement varies largely, according to the nature of the working relationship with the PO, the topics identified, the target groups and the availability of expertise at local or regional levels.

- In the implementation of training, the quality and responsiveness of trainers and trainees, as well as the specific context factors were signalled as determinant for the success of the training event. The MOs note that training is always

implemented in conjunction with other strategies. Also, they note that local and regional expertise is more cost effective for the provision of training. However, dependent on the context they work in, some MOs experience difficulties to find or address local or regional expertise.

- Training is generally not treated as a process by MOs. It is usually constrained to the implementation phase; in other words, the events or series of events. There is a severe lack of follow-up in almost all cases, which raises questions about the sustainability.

- The results of the SWOT analysis indicate that the training's main strength is that it provides a platform for sharing knowledge and experience, it creates a common language and it is a quick and cheap way of boosting skills and knowledge. Weaknesses identified do not relate to training itself, but rather to potential aspects that may go wrong along the training process. Particularly, weaknesses are found in the needs assessment, the quality of the trainer and the motivation of the trainees. The MOs acknowledge the opportunities of training as a strategy, especially the potential use of local expertise, focusing training on systems instead of persons, and incorporating follow-up. At the same time, there are many contextual issues that endanger the effectiveness of training, from language issues to brain drain.

- PSO's framework is generally perceived as a useful tool to understand better what the MO and PO are actually doing in that the HRD, OD and ID framework sets the stage for organizational capacity analyses. However, most MOs mentioned at the same time that they found it restrictive and especially the classification of CB strategies was not recognized as valuable. According to the MOs, training in particular should be left as broadly defined as possible, if at all, so that they have space to use whatever form of intervention they feel is best. Rather, PSO is seen to be useful as what one MO called a 'knowledge-broker'. There is a clear need for a platform of knowledge sharing and learning. This holds true for CB in general but also for training in particular. In that sense, a demand-driven programmatic approach to training, like workshops on general themes or context factors, could be an important role for PSO to play.

Further questions for research arise from this study and its discussion with PSO staff members:

- How can MOs and their POs be incited to use a more systematic framework for training without feeling restricted in their work?

- How relevant is it to isolate training from other CB strategies?

- Would the use of a more systematic framework lead to an increase in effectiveness of training? To what extent would this benefit justify PSO's investment in terms of time and resources?

- How can such frameworks be embedded into PO's human resources management strategies?

Appendix 1: ANALYSIS CRITERIA (PROJECT AND PROGRAMME DOCUMENTS)

Number	
Name	of project
Member Org	name
Country	Name
Overall project objective	
Duration project	in weeks
Rationale of training? **(Objectives/Concept/Justification/Assumptions?)**	Describe/Analyze
% of Strategy	Source: Jaarplan
Are there other CB interventions?	Which - Source jaarplan
	Which: Source report
	Total
	training (specify source)
	ratio in proposal
Budget	ratio in final report
Training topics	List
Level of training	1=HRD 2=OD 3= ID (Make comments)
	gain skills
	gain knowledge
	train to train
	group development
Training objectives	relationships with other orgs/inst
Number of training events	
Duration of Training	
Who decides on training?	1=PSO MO 0=PO (Make Comments)
Is there a needs assessment?	1=yes 0=no
Comments on NA	
To what extent is PO involved in the needs assessment?	1=not at all 2=consulted 3=co-decision
To what extent is PO involved in training design	1=not at all 2=consulted 3=co-decision
Who executes training program	1=Foreign expert 2=local expert
Participants/Beneficiaries of training	
Number of Beneficiaries	
Type of training (where?)	1=On-the-job 0=off-the-job
Is training evaluated?	1=yes 0=no
who evaluates?	1=MO 2=PO
	action plan?
	moments of reflection?
Follow up after training?	what?

I.   General Information

Name of Member Organization:	
Main field or areas of work:	
Name of Interviewee:	
Position:	
Date:	
Date of start up operations:	
Years of membership with PSO:	

*From PSO

II.   General Topics on Capacity Building

1. How does your organization define capacity building? (Follow up questions: Does the *organization have its own framework? Who develops this framework? How important is capacity building within the organization and its projects and programmes?)*

2. How does PSO's framework on Capacity Building shape your choice of capacity building strategies? Please explain. What is similar and what is different between the PSO framework and your own framework?

3. What is your opinion about this framework? (*Usefulness, clarity, communication, assessment, follow up)* How can this be improved?

4. In general terms, what would you say are your organization's:
   a) Five most frequently used capacity building strategies (Rank from 1-5)
   b) Three most effective ones, according to programmes' and projects' experiences (Rank from 1-3)

Strategy	A	B	Comments on reasons
Exchange			
Facilitation			
Coaching			
Research			
Training			
Advisory Services			
Management			
Implementation			
Óthers:			

* 1= Most frequent/Most effective
III.   General on Training

1. In general terms, what do you think and how do you feel about training as a CB strategy?

2. How do you define training? *(Follow up: personal, organizational definitions; short-term needs/long-term needs)*

3. How does training take place? Who tends to make decisions on training as a strategy? How is training designed? Who monitors and evaluates the training process? Who decides how to monitor and evaluate? How do you incorporate feedback from the PO?

4. In your opinion, within your projects and programmes:
    i.   Training is used as much as it needs to be used
    ii. Training is used more than what is actually needed
    iii. Training is used less than what is needed
    iv. No   opinion/Other:

    _____

Strengths
5. Why is training chosen as a strategy as opposed to other strategies? What are the expected outcomes?

6. What makes training effective? Can you please provide one example of a successful experience and point out briefly why it was successful?

Weaknesses
7. What are the weaknesses if training? Are they country or project/programme specific?   How do you deal with these weaknesses? *(Examples…)*

8. What do partner organizations see as the main weaknesses of training? In what ways are they similar to and in what ways do their differ from your opinion?

9. According to your experience, in which parts of the training process can the main weaknesses be found?
    i. Needs Assessment
    ii. Design of Training
    iii. Execution and Implementation
    iv. Monitoring and Evaluation
    v. Conversion of individual to organizational learning

Follow up on each one of these aspects of the training process (for a particular project??): Who? What? How? Why? Feedback? Or focus on two?: the best and the worst one?

Opportunities

10. What can be improved about training?

Threats

11. What kind of context factors or conditions tend to hinder the effectiveness of training in projects or programmes? Please provide an example.

Others

12. How do you ensure that individual learning translates into organisational learning Is the link between individual learning and organisational learning automatic? How do you try to stimulate this process?

IV. Final Comments and Recommendations

1. In your opinion, what role should PSO play in the future in terms of further developing training as a strategy?

2. What else do we need to know to understand how your organisation uses training as a strategy?

3. What questions do you have about using training as a strategy?