APEC Strengths and Weaknesses in Building Human Resource Development Capacity

Purpose: Information
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APEC Strengths and Weaknesses in Building HRD Capacity

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Presentation Outline

1. Background on the Strategic Approach to Sustainable Capacity Building Project
2. What is meant by Capacity Building?
3. …and how is the concept applied in APEC?
4. Results of a “stocktaking” of APEC HRD Working Group Projects
5. Issues for consideration in developing a strategic framework for guiding future capacity building efforts
Project Background

Strategic Approach to Sustainable Capacity Building

Meeting the Challenges of Regional Economic Integration in APEC

Project Objectives

• To develop a strategic framework for sustainable capacity building programs in APEC to raise the institutional as well as human capacity of government/business/civil society to meet the new challenges of economic integration in APEC

• To crystallize a long-term vision of capacity building, specifically targeting developing economies of the APEC region.
Methodology

• Review past capacity-building projects within and outside of CBN
• Develop a framework, guiding principles and general guidelines for APEC capacity building
• Identify issues and make policy recommendations
• Establish a network of institutions and individuals, who will update/implement capacity-building programs on a sustained basis.

Key Activities

1. Inaugural Steering Committee Meeting (June 2009)
2. Stock taking of past projects
3. This Plenary Session
   – To articulate what APEC does best
   – Identify future needs and directions for capacity building in APEC
4. Develop Medium Term Strategy including a Capacity Building Framework and a set of Principles and Guidelines
5. Preparation of final report and recommendations
What is Meant by Capacity Building?

“Capacity Building” as understood in international development vs. “Capacity Building” as used in APEC

A Broad Definition of Capacity Building from the UN

Capacity building occurs in individuals, organizations, communities and in societies as a whole. At its broadest level capacity building

“encompasses the [economy’s] human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environment potentials and limits and of needs perceived by the people of the country concerned”.

Source: Capacity Building - Agenda 21’s definition (Chapter 37,UNCED, 1992).
Capacity Building Encompasses…

1. **Legal and regulatory** frameworks, policies and laws.
2. **Human resources development.**
   – individual knowledge and skills and access to information through formal and informal education and training.
3. **Institutional (or organizational) development.**
   – management structures, processes and procedures within organizations and relationships among different organizations and stakeholders
4. **Information systems**
   – disseminate and share knowledge and good practices

Some Operational Concepts of Capacity Building

“The faculty of a technical assistance programme to enable beneficiary [economies] to perform and sustain targeted functions on their own as a direct result of that programme.”

Could be:
   – Either short term or Long term
   – Focused on individuals or institutions

Comprises various types of activities:
   – Training, including training of trainers
   – Advisory services
   – Networking

-UNCTAD Evaluation Report on its capacity-building activities, 2002
Some Operational Concepts of Capacity Building

“Capacity building is a process – a means to an end – by which individuals, groups and communities further develop their understanding, ability and motivation …

“Capacity building should not be considered in isolation. [It] should specifically support effective… implementation.

“Capacity building provides important intermediate outcomes related to attitude, behaviour and practice change, and increased engagement.”

Some Operational Concepts of Capacity Building

“Activities can be considered under the broad headings of awareness raising, information and knowledge [sharing], skills and training, and facilitation and support.

“Together these activity areas aim to build people’s ability to act as well as their motivation to act.”

-Australian Government Guidebook (related specifically to Natural Resources Management)
Capacity Building in APEC  
(Refers to APEC in General—not the HRD WG)

- APEC’s Economic and Technical Cooperation Activities (ECOTECH) have placed increased emphasis on capacity-building in recent years.

- Much of what APEC does under the TILF agenda can also be classified as capacity building.

- Although APEC undertakes many activities that are consistent with established capacity-building practices, there is a perspective that projects often consist of *ad hoc* workshops and seminars organized on the margins of other pressing business, with few sustainable results.

  — This may be due in part to how APEC rules and management systems have evolved.

Moreover APEC Projects are often implemented by individuals who are not experts in education or capacity building.

"Organizers have to coordinate and direct all aspects of the event. However, it is a burden … since there are a lot of aspects that have to be coordinated with different offices within and outside [the ministry]. Unless both APEC and WTO offices are really committed on both the logistical and subject aspects, at the end, the more committed side ends up with most of the work."

— A project overseer quoted in an evaluation report on APEC trade-policy capacity building
Capacity Building in APEC

But the need to improve is well-recognized:

“There is much scope to enhance the effectiveness of ECOTECH activities in APEC. Most importantly, capacity-building should be viewed from a long-term perspective. Broadening the traditional definition of projects from one-off workshops and seminars to encompassing multi-year projects will allow for more lasting and impactful outcomes.”

-HO Meng Kit, Chair of the APEC SOM Committee on ECOTECH, Singapore’s Deputy APEC Senior Official and Deputy Secretary (Management) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008)

2006 Recommendations for Strengthening Trade Policy Capacity Building in APEC

1. Take a programmatic approach
2. Target beneficiaries and expected accomplishments
3. Develop prototypes for practitioners
4. Select participants
5. Establish a clear syllabus
6. Utilize distance-learning techniques
7. Make seminars and training courses to be much more interactive
8. Facilitate networking
2006 Recommendations for Strengthening Trade Policy Capacity Building in APEC

9. Provide incentives for satisfactory completion
10. Build capacity through a network
11. Provide network management and services
12. Explore and use external resources much more extensively and wisely
13. Share roles among government officials, the secretariat, and partners providing expertise on the subject matter, pedagogy and logistics organization (research institutes, international organizations, private service companies).
14. Evaluate the outcomes

Lessons from the HRD Working Group “Stocktaking”

Given the expressed desire to improve the effectiveness of APEC’s capacity-building efforts, the HRD Working Group could be a source of leadership and good practice.

– Expertise in education, adult learning and labour market policies, all of which are foundational to the concepts of capacity building.
– One of the most active among the APEC fora, with a large portfolio of completed and active projects.
Lessons from the HRD Working Group “Stocktaking”

• Reviewed a cross section of HRD WG projects proposed as cases of good capacity-building practice.
• Purpose was not to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of project implementation—it was to identify common patterns and themes to develop a strategic framework for future capacity-building efforts.

Projects Reviewed

1. Long-term partnership with the Overseas Vocational Training Association (OVTA) of Japan
   (Series of self-funded projects beginning in 1996)
2. Enhanced Risk Management System in the APEC Region: Toward Establishing Effective Corporate Governance (HRD01-2003T)
3. A Collaborative Study on Innovations for Teaching and Learning Mathematics in Different Cultures Among the Five APEC Member Economies - Japan, Korea, Russia, Viet Nam and Thailand (HRD 05-2004)
4. Capacity Building for Recycling-Based Economy (RBE) in APEC (HRD01-2004T)
Projects Reviewed

5. *APEC Learning Community for Shared Prosperity*  
   (HRD 05-2004 and subsequent projects)

6. *Capacity Building for the New International Architecture in Trade and Investment*  
   (HRD01-2005T)

7. *New Corporate Procurement Strategy on Trade in Goods and Services in APEC Region - Supply-chain options with CSR Perspective*  
   (HRD 01-2006T)

8. *Capacity Building for Investment Liberalization and Facilitation* (HRD 01-2007T)

9. *Increasing the Productivity of APEC Economies through High Performance Workplace Systems*  
   (HRD 01-2007)

10. *Collaborative Studies in on Innovations for Teaching and Learning Mathematics (II) & (III)*  
    (HRD 02-2007 and 02-2008)

11. *Capitalizing Information Technology for Greater Access and Equity Among Poor and Rural Communities*  
    (HRD 03-2008)

Projects Reviewed

   (HRD Wiki)

Themes included: curriculum development; skills enhancement; analyses of policy trends and implications; management challenges and practices; impacts of technology, especially ICT; improving labour market effectiveness.

Modalities included: case analyses; sharing of good practices; networking; piloting of programs; funding of innovations.

Channels of knowledge dissemination included: face-to-face discussion; annual conferences; web publishing; printed reports; electronic media; curricular resource materials.
CBN typically convenes expert networks to prepare case studies on liberalisation themes and/or to pilot training curricula.

EDNET employs programmatic approaches through multi-phase projects and tools that produce learning resources using a variety of media.
LSPN has established long-term partnerships for annual learning events and has adopted demand-based responsive approaches in programming its activities.

HRD WG Networks employ many aspects of good capacity-building practice.

1. Multi-phase project planning
2. Replication of proven methodologies
3. Creation of expert networks
4. Deployment of the techniques in pilot training and production of curriculum resources
5. Demand-driven activities responding to stakeholder needs
HRD WG Networks employ many aspects of good capacity-building practice.

6. Projects generally implemented efficiently and effectively—mostly on time and generally on budget.

7. Demonstrated willingness to collaborate across fora, as strongly encouraged by APEC—though this has brought with it coordination challenges.

8. Secured strong commitment of the partners by engaging them actively in face-to-face discussions at the inception phase.

8. Demonstrated creativity in partnering with other organizations.

9. Linked to existing networks of individual and institutions to build effective relationships and expand networking reach.

10. Project themes have generally been relevant to APEC goals and priorities—achieving this alignment has been a challenge given APEC’s diversity.
But there are some gaps.

1. One-off seminars and workshops without follow up.
   - Some may be desirable to create networks and to explore potential areas for long-term collaboration.
   - But too many diffuse efforts make concrete capacity-improvements difficult to achieve.

2. Longer-term evaluations and systematic measurement of progress is fairly rare—but there are exceptions!
   - APEC evaluation requirements focus on how resources are deployed and what activities take place, not what they have achieved. “What” but not “So what”?
   - Systems for evaluating progress need to be flexible, cost-effective and practical.
   - They must take also into account the diversity of APEC’s membership and the voluntary nature of APEC cooperation.
   - Designing effective progress measurement systems is not easy.
But there are some gaps.

3. Knowledge management and dissemination can be problematic—the HRD Wiki helps, but it doesn’t cover everything.

4. Planning and prioritizing will remain challenging.
   – Balancing creativity and experimentation with alignment to strategic goals
   – Focus on sustainability of the results achieved

Conceptual Framework for Assessing Capacity Building Efforts

Relevance: Focus on priority area? Address identified shortcomings? Meet recipients’ genuine needs?

Effectiveness: Are the objectives achieved?

Efficiency: Cost effective in terms of the results attained?

Sustainability: Potential of a program to continue after the activity has ended.

Impact: Measurable results achieved in terms of [APEC’s goals for the development of the region].

Source: UNCTAD
Critical Success Factors for Programming Capacity Building Activities

1. Take an integrated approach, offering flexible solutions to real needs.
2. Make the activity demand-driven by the beneficiary economies.
3. Focus on institution building (versus simply focusing on individual capacity building).

4. Take a long-term perspective:
   – Many APEC activities focus on awareness raising or information sharing.
   – Thus is important, but it is arguably not capacity building.
   – Seminars and “short training programs are usually insufficient for enabling individuals to sustain activities on their own”. [UNCTAD document]
Critical Success Factors for Programming Capacity Building Activities

5. Assure adequate resources (both administrative and financial).

6. Ensure coordination across APEC fora, and with other international organizations.

(With acknowledgments to the evaluation report conducted for the WCBG of CTI in 2006.)

APEC Perspective
(Ambassador Michael Tay June 11, 2009)

“APEC has limited resources, so projects are generally of small dollar value and are done on an ad-hoc basis.

“But we're aware of these deficiencies and have embarked on a serious program of review and reform.

“The committee that coordinates capacity building in APEC is currently doing a stock take of capacity building gaps and members' needs.

“And it's developing new criteria to rank project proposals to ensure that high quality and high priority projects are approved.

“There is also a move towards multi-year projects that build year-on-year, producing more tangible and lasting benefits.

“And the important issues of follow-up and evaluation are also being addressed.”
In Conclusion

1. The HRD Working Group has typically followed good capacity building practice.
2. The HRD Working Group has capacity-building expertise that could benefit APEC overall.
3. The key issues to address are as follows:
   - How to develop effective multi-activity, multi-phase programming approaches, given budget and other constraints?
   - How to manage and disseminate the knowledge created?
   - How to implement and learn from follow-up evaluations systematically?

Questions for the Networks

Moving to a Program Approach

1. What themes/modalities have been effective?
2. Doing more of what would lead to greater sustainability of project results in the future? What activities should be deemphasized or avoided?
3. What can be done to make knowledge more accessible?

Evaluating Results

1. What frameworks should be developed to measure progress? (e.g. changes to attitudes or behaviours, deployment of good practice, etc.)
2. What practical measurement approaches can be implemented? Who should take responsibility?