tearfund

Disaster Management Capacity Assessment Tool

Guiding Principles (Adapted from SHAPE: Strategic Humanitarian Assessment & Participatory Empowerment Framework)

Overview

- The Disaster Management Capacity Assessment Tool (DMCA) has been adapted from the Strategic Humanitarian Assessment & Participatory Empowerment Framework (SHAPE) which has been successfully implemented in Ethiopia, Bangladesh, DRC, Kenya and Pakistan where Tearfund were the lead agency.
- An in-depth 2 year programme of support for local organisations to strengthen their capacity to determine, influence and deliver humanitarian preparedness and response; by engaging in strengthening at both the structural and programmatic levels.

Aims

The capacity self-assessment aims to help organisations to:

- Identify competencies required to deliver a high quality and significant humanitarian response.
- Understand their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the key components of humanitarian programme management, and ability to influence design and delivery of humanitarian response.
- Foster ownership and commitment to improving humanitarian capacity.
- Prioritise areas for capacity strengthening support.
- Review the progress of humanitarian capacity strengthening initiatives.

Self-Assessment

A three day participatory workshop process to support local organisations to assess their humanitarian capacity using the DMCA framework. The capacity assessment workshop will primarily be facilitated by a Tearfund Capacity Building Officer (or other staff member who is familiar with the partner) plus a co-facilitator. The self-assessment will involve 12 to 20 staff and key people responsible for different aspects of humanitarian work from the organisation. It is essential that senior management participate. Ideally all participants will be available for the full three-day process.

It is critical that the organisation is fully committed to the self-assessment process and understand that it is the starting point of an organisational change process. Organisations should feel comfortable to have honest, robust internal reflections about their current competence and aspirations. In order that this process is not undermined in any way, the capacity self- assessment process is not an audit or external evaluation; the findings will not influence funding decisions - this is the purpose of the Organisational Assessment and SIFT tools.

During the assessment process organisations will review their humanitarian capacity across the following domains:
1. Governance and Leadership,
2. Preparedness and Response,
3. Influence.

They will analyse their capacity using 3 indicators:
(O) Organisational Foundations: Core features that underpin a successful humanitarian response
(H) Humanitarian Capacities: Range of abilities needed to respond to humanitarian crises
(P) Power: Capacity to control and influence

The organisation's representatives in the workshop will discuss each indicator identifying their organisation's experiences, strengths and significant gaps. They will use the framework to rate their current level of competence, providing documentary evidence, explanations and examples as to why they consider themselves currently at this level.

The voices of all members of the organisation should be heard and their views reflected in the rating that is chosen to represent the views of the majority.

Planning and Review

In preparation for the workshop the lead Facilitator and senior management of the partner NGO should meet at least two weeks before the proposed assessment date. This meeting should result in:

- Common understanding of the purpose and principles of the capacity strengthening approach and self-assessment process
- Understanding of the DMCA framework and how to use during the assessment
- Preliminary list of facilitators, participants and venue
- Review of previous, recent capacity assessments.
- Agreement on a point-person within the partner organisation who will be focal point on scheduling, logistics and participation

The focal point should share copies of the DMCA Assessment Tool along with the Guiding Principles and any results from other recent capacity assessments.

Participation

A group size between 12-18 participants is ideal (feedback from the pilot exercise was that ten is too small, twenty is too large). The participants for the assessment should be carefully considered and agreed together with the partner. In the pilots, workshop participation was flagged as a critical issue. For a useful outcome, the organisation must have the "right" people in the room. Participation should include but not be limited to the organisation's top leadership. Consider a balance of:

- Senior staff, the organisation's top leader and managers. If the top leader is not part of the self-assessment discussion and is only brought in at a later stage, defining a capacity strengthening plan will be much more challenging.
- Technical specialists or functional leaders (e.g. finance, HR, etc.) who are able to provide more information about specific aspects of the organisation. It is really important to include the staff who are doing the tasks being discussed. It is not very meaningful discussing the quality of the financial system without the finance staff participating!
- Both "long term development" and "humanitarian" specialists are required.
- Different periods of time with the organisation, but avoiding completely "fresh" staff who may not have much insight unless they will be key people to take the work forward. Many of the indicators require insight into the organisation's experience over time, especially how its humanitarian work has evolved.
- Staff who may "think differently" and bring alternative perspectives with regards to the organisation's leadership, values, use of resources or programming choices.
- A gender balance.
- Participation from the governing board. Truly significant change may require commitment from the level above the humanitarian managers and possibly even the organisation's directorate.
- Someone from outside the organisation, such as a community leader, who is familiar with its activities. The organisation works on behalf of its constituency, so inviting their opinion about the organisation's strengths and gap areas is an appropriate form of accountability.
- Representatives from other organisations who support their work can take part as observers (optional).

Ideally all participants will be available for the full three-day process. This commitment will support the prioritisation process and build ownership in the conclusion.

Supporting Evidence

It is useful to obtain copies of the key organisational documents prior to the self-assessment process. Especially if an outside facilitator is being used to support the process, these documents are useful to get an orientation to the organisation so as to be more effective with facilitation and asking leading questions. The documentation is also useful to have on hand for more thorough review during the capacity strengthening planning process at a later stage. Key documents could include:

- Results of previous capacity assessments: Organisational Assessment (TF), SIFT Assessment (TF)
- Strategic plan and Emergency preparedness plan
- Contingency plan
- Organisational structure or organogram
- Organisational policies and procedures (procurement, HR, gender, finance etc.)
- Significant donor reports or evaluations
- Sample job descriptions

Ground Rules

A key take-away is the idea of confidentiality and participation in the assessment. Everyone has an opinion that should be respected, but in order to create a safe space where staff feel free to share, the group should discuss the importance of confidentiality. There may be other ground rules that should be surfaced, depending on the context: use of mobile phones, tablets or laptops; attendance; time-keeping; respect etc. Reviewing expectations and ground rules can also be done in a participatory manner. Each day should be primarily focused on one of the three domains[1]: Governance and Leadership, Influence, Preparedness and Response

Scoring & Prioritisation

The score for the indicator is based on a 0-5 scale:

- **0** - not in place, or scarcely addressed
- **1** - in place, but not working well, or not well used
- **2** - in place and working, or used quite widely, but not yet consistently or across the board
- **3** - fully in place
- **4** - functioning very well,
- **5** - exceptional, top class

In the workshop participants are encouraged to score each indicator as individuals, confidentially. As one Technical Working Group described it during the pilot assessment exercise, it is important to control for the "hidden influence" of senior staff steering the conversation to the extent possible.

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[1] Given time constraints the facilitators will find slippages and overlaps.

To reach a consensus score for the indicator the group needs to talk through differences of opinion. Shortcutting this by averaging the individual ratings is less valuable than doing the analysis together. Through this discussion the richest insight into the organisation is gained. The process of getting to a consensus will hopefully reveal the strength of argument or significant examples that help the whole group own the final score.

There is an important role for the facilitator to challenge the organisation to justify its self-assessment in each area. This is a self-assessment, not an audit or evaluation, so the organisation's final rating is what stands. However, the facilitator can and should push the organisation to justify its rating.

Over the three-day workshop process several capacity areas will be discussed each day. At the end of each day, as a conclusion wrap-up exercise, the group will be asked to reflect on which three indicators[2] are the highest priorities for the group. Therefore by the end of the workshop some initial prioritisation will have taken place by the organisation which will be useful in the next stage of the process. At the conclusion of each day, the facilitator should push the group towards an overall prioritisation.

> ** Priority range **0-5** where **0** is not a priority, and **5** is the highest.

Each day, twelve to fifteen indicators will be discussed by the group and scores awarded. Amongst this list identify the three "most important", "highest priority" or "most critical" indicators in order: 1, 2 and 3. Do this each day so that at the end of the workshop nine priority indicators are identified.

The results of the self-assessment can also be presented in a graphic format by the use of Spider diagram allowing for better visualisation about how the organisation has scored in each competency domain.

Indicator Score (0-5)
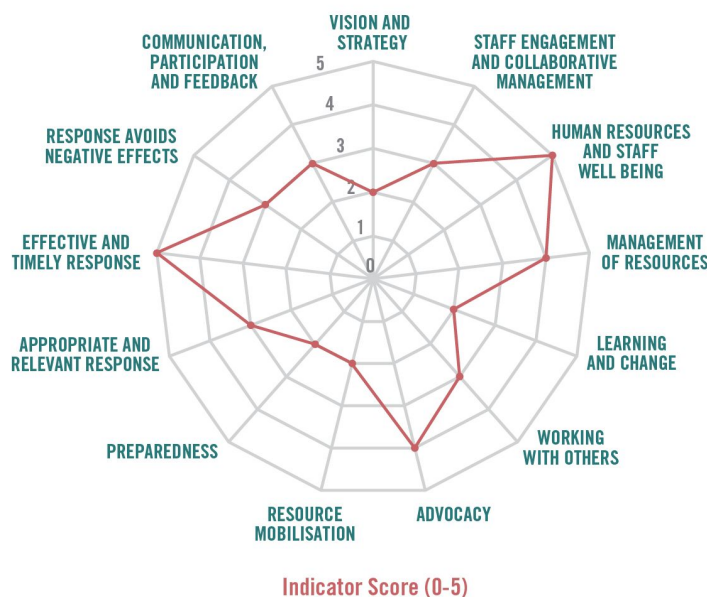
Capacity Strengthening Programme

A capacity strengthening programme will then be developed according to the needs and priorities agreed by the partner and Tearfund.

The priorities, needs and aspirations identified during the capacity assessment will form the basis of a capacity strengthening plan (CSP). This will be developed by the local organisation through a separate, but related process. **The CSP should be owned by the partner and they should feel free to look to other agencies to fund aspects of their CSP beyond Tearfund.**

The completed DMCA framework provides baseline information of the organisation's competencies at the start of the process. In the second and subsequent years of capacity building, the framework will provide a basis against which to assess progress.

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[2] Why three? During the Bangladesh pilot a short fifteen minute conclusion exercise each day asked the participants to come up one by one and "vote" on which three indicators they considered the most vital for the organisation to invest in through the project. Limiting each participant to three choices forced a gentle form of prioritisation. Votes were tallied and the outcome illustrated a clear ranking. Limiting participants to only one choice may have resulted in an outcry, as obviously each day urgent discussions identified several weaknesses. Allowing participants to choose more indicators would have diluted the prioritisation process. However there is no hard and fast rule except the advice that taking a few minutes at the end of each day to reflect and prioritise, even though everyone is tired and they want to go home, brings the assessment to a neat conclusion each day and makes it much easier after the workshop to draw conclusions.

Adapting the tool: When using the DMCA framework facilitators need to be aware that investments in capacity assessment may have already taken place. Rather than duplicating, where appropriate the DMCA framework should build upon this prior work to help inform and short-cut the self-assessment process. The responsibility for ensuring that this is done rests with the facilitator. Preparation for the workshop should involve a review of the results of other recent capacity assessments and information should be fed into the workshop process at the relevant points in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and discussion.

Tearfund should seek to select local organisations with a mandate for humanitarian response and a strong commitment to strengthening their capacity to determine and deliver humanitarian responses. It is important to encourage the leadership of the local organisations to be really open, to encourage staff to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and create space to make changes. We must ensure that our capacity strengthening work with local organisations is based on a shared strategy and that the process empowers them to take responsibility for creating change in their own organisations. Only the organisation itself can change, therefore we seek to involve the highest levels of leadership such as the organisations' Boards of Directors. [3]

There is a need for a range of learning methods that target the organisation's attitudes, knowledge, practice, policies and systems. This process will promote alternative approaches and strengthen local organisation's understanding of these so that they demand these themselves. [4] These could include ongoing accompaniment, self-assessment, emergency simulations, workshops, leadership development, technical support visits, e-learning, coaching, peer review and exchange and on the job training.

Rather than creating a two-year plan right at the outset, organisations will be encouraged to set one year objectives, with detailed work plans for the first six months (as a minimum). After a year, the local organisation will carry out a follow up assessment process against the DMCA framework to review the progress of humanitarian capacity strengthening initiatives undergone. The method for the follow-up self-assessment will be agreed with the local organisations. Peer review processes will be encouraged.

Capacity Strengthening Plan Journey
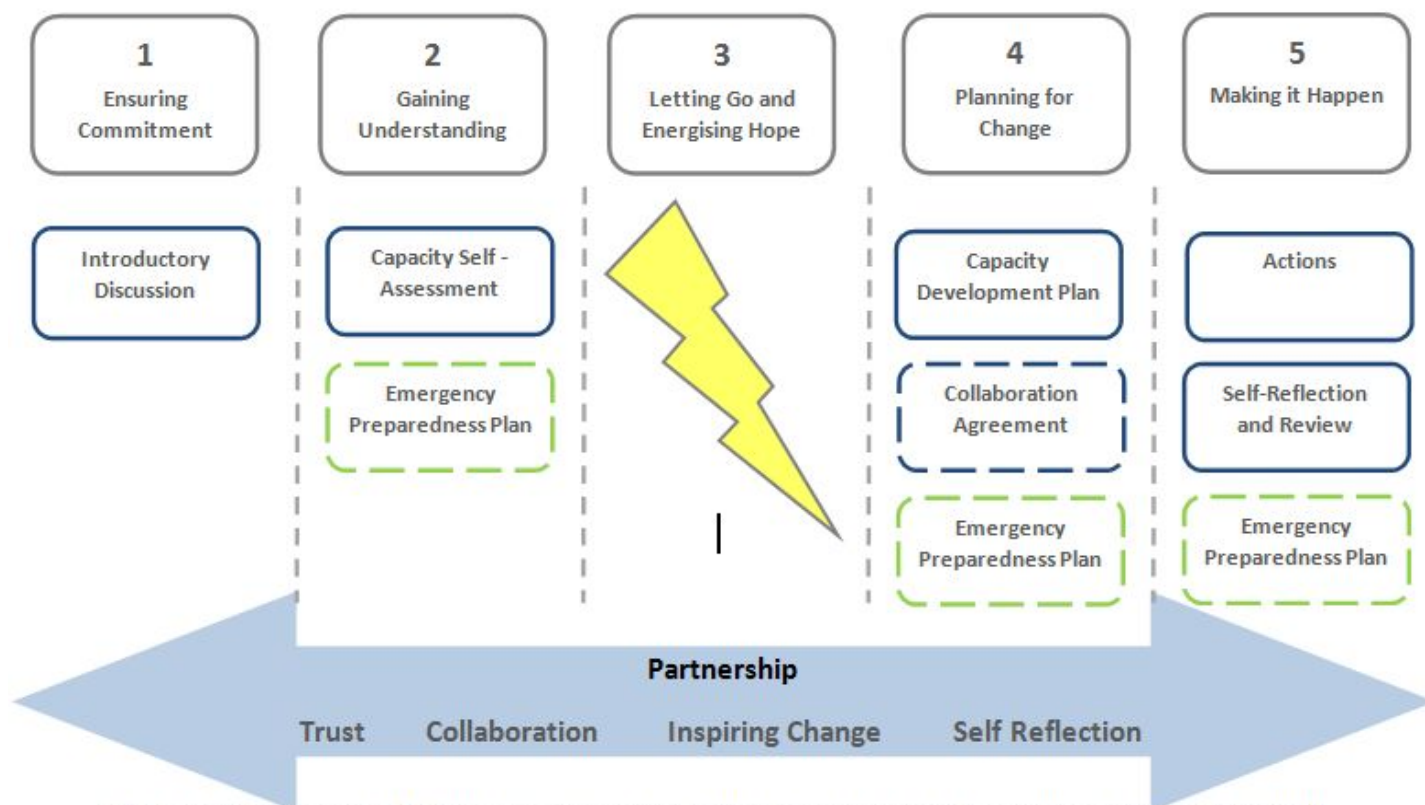
(This diagram has been adapted from Inspiring Change Creating More Space for Grace in Organisations, Rick James, Digni, 2012)

[3] The Challenge of Capacity Development: Working towards good practice. DAC Guidelines and Reference Series. OECD (2006)
Capacity Building for NGOs: Making it Work, Rick James and John Hailey, INTRAC (2007)
Capacity, Complexity and Consulting; lessons from managing capacity development projects, Ajoy Datta, Louise Shaxson and Arnaldo Pellini, ODI (2012)
[4] Capacity, Complexity and Consulting; lessons from managing capacity development projects, Ajoy Datta, Louise Shaxson and Arnaldo Pellini, 2012, ODI.