

# Improving performance of WASH actors

## Capacity Self-Assessments of SHAW partner NGOs

Implementing large-scale water, sanitation and hygiene programmes requires expert technical and management skills to ensure that programme goals and targets are realised.

Capacity self-assessments help organisations deepen their understanding of their existing capacities and future capacity needs and enable them to formulate capacity development action plans. These plans guide them in the continuous strengthening of their capacities.

This paper describes IRC's experience and lessons learned in conducting Capacity Self-Assessment workshops as part of the SHAW programme.



IRC, July 2014

This paper describes IRC's experience and lessons learned in conducting Capacity Self-Assessment (CSA) workshops with four NGOs in East Indonesia between 2012 and 2013, as part of the SHAW programme.

CSAs can be a powerful tool to help organisations take responsibility for improving individual skills as well as organisational capabilities. A well-designed, flexible and guided workshop enables participants to embrace change towards their own capacity development. Impact of the CSA is heavily dependent on quality facilitation and follow up support after the initial assessment workshop.

## Capacity development: a continuous process of reflection

An organisation's capacity is measured by its ability to perform its functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably<sup>i</sup>. Capacity is not static, but is fluid. As individuals and organisations adapt to changes in their environment, so do they need to develop new capacities to appropriately address their changed realities<sup>ii</sup>.

Against the backdrop of continuous change in the sector, the delivery of sustainable sanitation and hygiene services requires that organisations engage in a continuous process of assessing, improving and monitoring their existing capacities. Capacity assessments and the formulation of capacity development plans support the continuous process of capacity development.

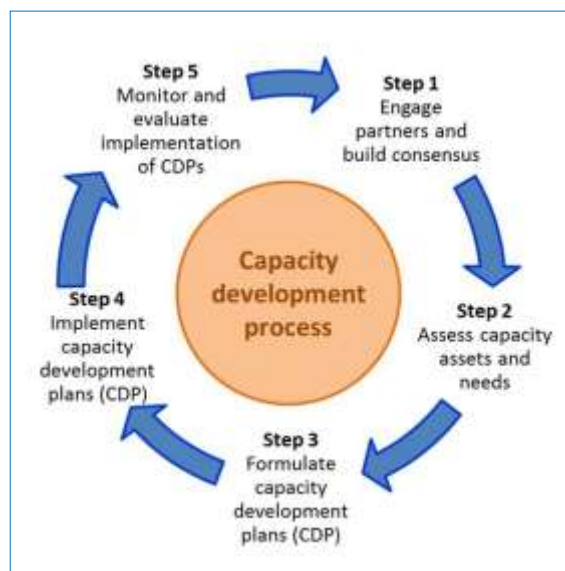


Figure 1: Capacity development process. Source: adapted from UNDP (2008)<sup>iii</sup>

## Capacity self-assessments: a participatory process towards improved organisational performance

Only by first understanding an organisation's existing performance and current and future capacity needs can a useful capacity development plan be made. A capacity Self-Assessment (CSA) is a participatory process of internal data collection and analysis that allows staff to diagnose organisational challenges and identify potential ways to address them. Through a collective process of identifying strengths and potential barriers to effective organisational performance, the following is achieved:

- A shared understanding of the CSA methodology and its role in identifying opportunities and conditions for improvement, rather than pinning blame on individuals.
- A tailor-made capacity development plan developed by and for staff.

- A sense of ownership and commitment of staff and other vital stakeholders to implement the capacity development plan.

In our experience, CSAs initially require support from a skilled external facilitator. However, to ensure that CSAs become part of an ongoing process of improvement, it is vital that skills of key individuals in the organisation are developed so that they can conduct similar exercises on their own in the future.

It is good practice for all CSAs to incorporate a plan for follow-up to help an organisation progress onto the last two steps (step 4: implement capacity development plan; and step 5: monitor and evaluate implementation) outlined in figure 1.

Organisational needs and priorities change, so, CSAs are not intended to be a one-off exercise. Instead, CSAs should be part of a continuous cycle of organisational learning and improvement (assessing, implementing, monitoring and reflection) that brings the organisation closer to achieving its mission.

Successful CSAs require a high level of staff participation, a willingness to share responsibility, and the openness and flexibility to listen to different, even conflicting points of view. Recognising the role of different participants, and practising generosity by giving credit where it is due create a safe space that encourages trust and collective action.

## The CSA process adapted for assessing SHAW capabilities

In September 2011, a ‘learning and sharing’ workshop highlighted the need for capacity development of partners. IRC designed the CSA methodology to actively involve partners in assessing their own effectiveness in implementing SHAW. The CSAs were intended to generate tailor-made capacity development plans by stimulating reflection, learning and dialogue on an organisation’s overall strengths and weaknesses, examine constraints and challenges, identify gaps between current and desired performance, and generate ideas for addressing these gaps.

A simplified adaptation of McKinsey’s (2001) Capacity Framework for full-fledged organisation assessments was used<sup>iv</sup>. The SHAW programme’s adapted capacity framework was designed to be implemented as a participatory process that incorporated a review of the following elements:

- **Resources:** the basic “building blocks” of an organisation which are the inputs into its production processes.
- **Capabilities:** the means by which an organisation implements its strategy.
- **Strategy:** a plan of action designed to achieve a desired future goal.

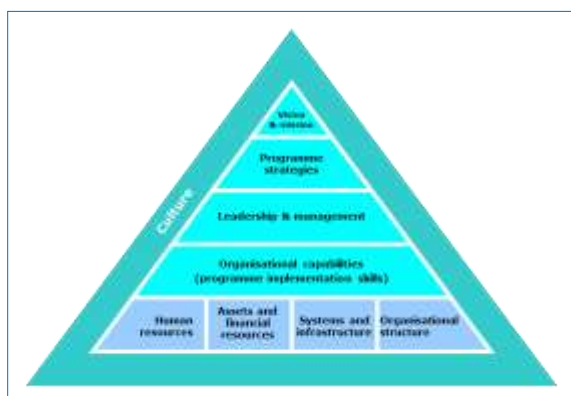


Figure 2: Capacity Self-Assessment model used in SHAW

The SHAW programme’s CSA methodology consists of several tailor-made exercises. The tools and exercises were developed in advance by an IRC consultant, in consultation with the SHAW Programme Coordinator and an Indonesian Programme Coordinator. The CSA workshops were carried out by two facilitators: the IRC consultant who served as lead facilitator and the Indonesian consultant who co-facilitated the workshops and translated materials into *Bahasa Indonesia*.

On average the CSA workshops ran for a duration of five days. While providing a general template, programme schedules for each organisational CSA process were adapted based on factors such as participants’ existing capacity, the organisation’s experience in implementing sanitation and hygiene programmes, and the implementation phase.

Between January 2012 and February 2013 four CSA workshops were organised, benefitting four SHAW partner NGOs and some 80 individuals.

Participants identified the following sessions of the SHAW CSA workshops as most useful:

### Organisational timeline

Participants develop an historical timeline showing the most significant events, achievements, setbacks and changes faced by the organisation. The timeline reveals issues that become useful in later sessions, such as the organisation’s experience in implementing WASH programmes but also the extent of staff turnover and other organisational challenges. Leaving the completed timeline posted on the wall facilitates a process of referring back to its contents during subsequent sessions to further substantiate particular findings.

### Personal information questionnaire

Gathers personal information on each participant and provides more insight into the group composition and knowledge and aspirations of each participant. Information such as employment record, educational background, training and capacity development needs is compiled. To save time, the personal information questionnaire was often completed by participants in the evening.

### Getting to know your organisation

During the course of the workshop participants develop and present an “elevator pitch” of less than a minute, describing the organisation’s reason for existence and its strength. This helps to develop a better understanding of their own organisation, a stronger sense of belonging and the ability to articulate this well.

### Strengths and weaknesses analysis

A short version of the SWOT analysis, which focuses only on strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, is carried out at an early stage of the CSA to inform later sessions. Once strengths and weaknesses have been identified, participants rank these in order of their perceived importance as a first step to prioritising possible capacity development needs.

### Activity mapping

Participants construct an activity matrix to map out the core activities being undertaken by their organisation. The exercise provides an entry point to discuss the “what” and “how” of the SHAW programme, and gives insight into individual competencies and organisational capabilities required for effective and efficient programme implementation. To control the level of detail found in the activity matrix, and in the interest of time—setting the parameters of what is expected is important. For example, prioritise a given number of activities, or focus on activities limited to a

village, as opposed to including sub-district and district level activities.

### Capacity assessment questionnaire

The second of two questionnaires completed by participants, a capacity assessment questionnaire compiles information on staff perceptions about the organisation’s strategies, leadership and management, capabilities and resources. Unlike the personal information questionnaire, this questionnaire is completed during the workshop, to provide participants with opportunity to seek advice and guidance from the facilitators.

To obtain reliable information, it is helpful to introduce this questionnaire only when participants already have better insight on the organisation’s performance.

### Activity performance assessment

During this exercise, criteria for assessing the organisation’s performance are discussed, and an assessment of current performance against those criteria is conducted. To aid in the reflection process, a list of possible criteria, organisational capacities and staff skills are defined in advance by the facilitators for participants to prioritise and add to.

### Synthesising, identifying and prioritising capacity areas

During this exercise, participants discuss and agree upon the most important capacity gaps that were identified during the previous sessions and that need to be addressed urgently.

### Action planning

Having completed the above exercises, participants move on to develop a realistic action plan that identifies who takes responsibility for which tasks, and within what timeframe. Where necessary the need for specific external support is identified.

## Six lessons learnt about CSAs

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Overall, CSAs have proven useful for developing specific and tailor-made capacity development activities instead of standard training for individual staff members. The CSA process has played a pivotal role in creating organisational ownership for change.

Lessons from the SHAW programme’s experience in conducting CSAs are outlined below in the hope of providing facilitators and organisations with guidance in undertaking similar processes.



### 1. Enter into workshops with no assumptions

Several sessions took longer than anticipated because assumptions were made about the degree of participants' knowledge on the SHAW programme. To address this mismatch, a significant amount of time went in to explaining the programme's rationale and strategies to prepare participants for critical reflection and strategizing.

To some extent this was resolved in later CSAs by engaging in more thorough preparations before the CSA workshop. This proved to be very useful, especially in facilitating the exercises dealing with activity mapping and activity performance assessments.

### 2. Be equipped with a toolbox of exercises

Generic workshop templates are useful in realising a certain degree of coherence. But, because each organisation is unique, CSAs should allow for enough flexibility to explore emerging issues and to meet broader workshop objectives. It is helpful to bring a toolbox of alternative exercises to facilitate on-the-spot adaptation of exercises.

Although the CSAs were intended to assess capacity rather than develop capacity, there were demands for the latter. In response, some sessions were added, such as: reviewing village cadre job descriptions, creating seasonal calendars for effective programme planning, creating a picture of the SHAW programme's intended and achieved results, and organising and planning for performance monitoring.

### 3. Factor in flexibility in programme schedule

Related to the first two lessons, it benefits the process and collective learning if added time is factored into the programme schedule to address pressing concerns or demands of participants, within the framework of the CSA methodology.

### 4. Synthesise lessons after each session

Initially participants were asked to synthesise the main findings of the various CSA sessions towards the end of the week. However, this resulted in the inefficient use of time as discussions points were repeated, new issues were added, and priorities kept on changing.

Instead, creating a running summary of outcomes, at the end of each session, helps participants to prioritise main findings, identify emerging issues, and cross out information addressed or no longer valid as discussions progress during a day's work.

### 5. Quality facilitation is key

Although the preparation of tools in advance is important, the quality of facilitation is more so. Because sensitive issues are typically raised and discussed during CSA workshops, facilitators need to be able to manage participants' emotions so as not to "throw off the process". Some qualities of an effective facilitator include the ability to:

- Create an atmosphere of trust and openness so that participants are able to freely share their concerns on the CSA process and colleagues (including managers).
- Create a supportive and affirming environment so that both staff and leadership do not feel vulnerable or attacked when their performance is being judged.
- Manage conflicts that may arise, as some exercises may surface historical tensions that have not properly been resolved.
- Manage expectations, as staff may have unrealistic expectations about the pace of change that follows the conclusion of a CSA.

### 6. Consider post-CSA support

Once a CSA workshop has been concluded, various forms of post-CSA support must be planned for. If a CSA workshop reveals significant organisational weaknesses, it is not realistic to expect that the organisation can take full responsibility over the implementation of capacity development plans on its own.

All four organisations that participated in the SHAW programme's-facilitated CSA requested follow-up, such as training on facilitation skills and designing operational guidelines for use in the programme.

Ideally, CSAs should become an annual event, allowing management to track progress and staff to be heard and being able to contribute to the organisation's future.

## Indonesia's SHAW programme

The Sanitation, Hygiene and Water (SHAW) programme is a 4.5 year programme (mid-2010 to end-2014) implemented across nine districts in East Indonesia. Its overall goal is to help reduce poverty by strengthening the capacity of local governments, private sector and other local stakeholders to effectively deliver sanitation and hygiene services in rural communities.

The SHAW programme builds upon Indonesia's Ministry of Health's *Sanitasi Total Berbasis Masyarakat* (STBM), which applies a community-based approach for implementing sanitation and hygiene programmes, and subsequent scale up. SHAW aims to reach over 1.1 million people in more than 1,000 villages and is the first-ever attempt, with Government, to enable the scaling up of STBM in Indonesia.

The programme's specific aims are to sustain behaviour change in the following:

- ⇒ Ending the practice of open defecation
- ⇒ Hand washing with soap
- ⇒ Household water treatment and safe storage
- ⇒ Household solid waste management
- ⇒ Household liquid waste management

Funding for the € 15.4 million programme is provided by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dutch NGO Simavi, five Indonesian NGOs – Yayasan Rumsram, Yayasan Dian Desa, Yayasan Masyarakat Peduli, CD-Bethesda, and Plan Indonesia – and the local communities. The programme is supported by IRC and other international organisations.

SHAW also introduced a new methodology for community-based monitoring whereby the communities are responsible for collecting and analysing qualitative data on outputs (such as increased access to and improved quality of toilets and hand washing facilities) and quantitative data on outcomes (change in sanitation and hygiene behaviours and practices).

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- <sup>i</sup> UNDP- United Nations Development Programme. 1998. Capacity Assessment and Development in a Systems and Strategic Management Context. Technical Advisory Paper No. 3, January 1998, <http://bit.ly/1x0UCKx>.
  - <sup>ii</sup> The development of organisational capacity involves undertaking capacity development activities in the following domains: **human resource development**, equipping individuals who work for the organisation with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively; **organisational development**, strengthening an organisation's systems and work processes to enable it achieve its goals and accomplish its mission; and **institutional development**, influencing the wider environment in which an organisation operates, such as policy and legal frameworks.
  - <sup>iii</sup> UNDP- United Nations Development Programme. 2008. *Supporting Capacity Development; The UNDP Approach*. New York: UNDP, <http://bit.ly/1kU26K8>.
  - <sup>iv</sup> Two elements were added: 'Leadership & management' and 'Assets and financial resources'. See: Venture Philanthropy Partners. 2001. *Effective Capacity Building in Non-profit Organisations*. Prepared for Venture Philanthropy Partners by McKinsey, September 2001, <http://bit.ly/1np7kkY>



Simavi is an international development organisation. In 2020 we want to have fundamentally improved the health of 10 million people. Health is a prerequisite to get out of poverty. Therefore, we work in marginalised communities on water, sanitation and hygiene, and on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

But we cannot do this alone. Our strength lies in bringing together communities, businesses and governments - in the countries in which we operate and beyond. For only by sharing knowledge and experience, we can contribute to a sustainable basis for a healthy existence. As such, we are always looking for collaborations that bring us closer to our mission: **basic health for all**.

For more information visit [www.simavi.nl](http://www.simavi.nl)

## IRC

IRC is an international think-and-do tank that works with governments, NGOs, businesses and people around the world to find long-term solutions to the global crisis in water, sanitation and hygiene services. At the heart of our mission is the aim to move from short-term interventions to sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services.

With over 40 years of experience, we run programmes in more than 25 countries and large-scale projects in seven focus countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. IRC is supported by a team of over 100 staff across the world.

For more information visit [www.ircwash.org](http://www.ircwash.org)



**To learn more about the SHAW programme in East Indonesia visit the following websites:**

⇒ [www.simavi.nl](http://www.simavi.nl)

⇒ [www.ircwash.org/projects/sanitation-hygiene-and-water-project-indonesia](http://www.ircwash.org/projects/sanitation-hygiene-and-water-project-indonesia)

Or contact Martin Keijzer, SHAW Programme Coordinator

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**To learn more about the SHAW programme's Capacity Self-Assessment methodology, contact**

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