

Introduction

'You need to have a lot of patience and to understand the local context well.'

Organisational consultant Jeroen Stol has been building capacity within the Haarlem–Mutare sports project in Zimbabwe. In this section he shares his experiences and provides general suggestions for successful capacity–building.

Reason for the sports project

Haarlem and Mutare in Zimbabwe have been sister cities since 2000. The Stichting Stedenband Haarlem – Mutare was founded to elaborate and enrich relations between the two cities. The foundation works closely but independently with the city and other organisations and organises activities in both Haarlem and Mutare. Sport is an important part of the partnership between Haarlem and Mutare. Graduates from the CIOS or ALO Sport Academies travel to Mutare as volunteers for six–month periods. They help train and advise sports leaders, teach physical exercise at schools and train athletes.

In 2000 a sports project was launched with a view toward anchoring sports in Mutare's local community structure. Sports are very important in Mutare and are an opportunity for involving young people in the community and teaching them to work together. The multitude of jobless young people in a city such as Mutare and the lack of prospects for improvement in the near future make sports one of the few worthwhile pursuits. In addition, sports help young people enhance their self–awareness and structure their lives.

Building capacity: sport development

Between 2001 and 2004 sports development worker Cees Versteeg was on assignment in Mutare. His mission there was to set up the programme. Educating local sports trainers was pivotal in this programme: unemployed young adults are to be trained to organise sports activities within the community. They needed the skills to arrange sports events, teach courses and the like independently. In 2003 the first group of sports trainers completed the programme. The sports trainers formed the Mutare Haarlem Sportleaders (MHS). Since then, MHS has coordinated and conducted sports activities. They receive assistance from the Netherlands to this end. After Cees Versteeg left in 2004, a junior expert provided local support. Several recent CIOS and ALO graduates have worked in Mutare as volunteers for six–month periods to supervise the project as well.

Scope of the project

- Teach sports trainers: a one-year programme comprising ten modules and covering both theory and practice, including coaching, neighbourhood sports, organising events and management.
- Neighbourhood sports: in four districts (townships) and serving about five hundred children a week.
- Sports at school: courses, competitions and tournaments that sports trainers organise at the schools.
- Teachers' training courses: training students at Marymount Teachers College (for primary schools) and Mutare Teachers College (for secondary schools) who are taking the elective Physical Education & Sport (physical education), with an emphasis on teaching physical education.
- Kicking AIDS Out activities: sports and games to raise awareness and increase knowledge about HIV/AIDS; now part of the YES (Youth Education through Sport) programme of the Sport and Recreation Commission offered throughout Manicaland Province.
- Events: e.g. the annual Multi Sport Festival, the Women in Sport Festival and the Disabled Festival.
- Forming sports clubs, such as the handball club, the cyclists' club and the Mutare Haarlem Athletics Club. Several athletes have participated in the Haarlem half marathon (TROS run / ZilverenKruis Achmea run) in recent years.
- Workshops: multi-day workshops for sports trainers focusing on a specific sport or theme within sports management; in addition, a multi-day team-building activity takes place outside Mutare once every six months.

Building capacity

New stage

In mid 2005 the project entered a new stage. Thanks to sports technique assistance from Haarlem, the sports trainers now know enough to organise sports activities independently. They are not yet able, however, to run MHS entirely independently, as they received limited schooling and understand too little about organisational aspects. To help MHS learn more about this field, organisational advisor Jeroen Stol started an 18-month assignment in Mutare in mid 2005. His mission was to train the MHS board members, the programme manager and the Mutare Sports Officer, so that the organisation will be able to operate independently. These persons are responsible for managing the organisation and maintaining contact with the stakeholders. Since several board members are somewhat inexperienced, Jeroen is responsible for boost-

ing individual capacities and providing advice about restructuring the organisation. The objective for MHS is to operate without Dutch human resources input from 2007.

Figure: schematic overview of operating plan

The figure below highlights the expected results of the capacity building efforts. The operating plan was aimed at achieving these results. Jeroen Stol explains the procedure and activities below.

Results (outcomes) of CB intervention:		
Human Resource Development	Management skills	The boards' financial management and planning skills have improved
	Technical skills	Individual sportleaders have improved their training methods. Sportleaders have improved their ability/capacity in relation to Information Education and Communication.
Organizational Development	Strategy and policy	MHS-members have improved in monitoring and evaluation.
	Learning capability	Sportleaders have an improved ability to reflect on their actions and the consequences/impact. Critical thinking has improved.
	Structure	A system of subcommittees is in place. Clear rules concerning nominations are formulated. The most viable organisational structure/status has been investigated.
	Staffing	Function/Job descriptions
	Finance	The board and a subcommittee have knowledge about fundraising-opportunities and -strategies.
	Networking	MHS has a more positive image with the stakeholders.
	Learning from the environment	MHS has improved in liaising with and learning from similar organisations, on regional and international level.

Organisational consulting

Field experience of an organisational advisor

Jeroen Stol has been with MHS as an organisational consultant for nearly a year. During this period he has learned a lot about building and strengthening the capacity of a counterpart organisation. In his experience, knowledge of the local context and interests are essential to promote capacity building. This applies both for the interests of the surroundings of the organisation and for the personal interests of people within the organisation.

Jeroen Stol describes his approach to consulting organisations:

'My organisational approach is to intervene as little as possible. I facilitate and advise. My role is to keep bringing more matters to the attention of board members and the local coordinator. This requires changes within the organisation, such as clearly distributing the duties of the board members, appointing a chairman and a co-chairman, as well as a secretary and an assistant secretary. In the event that the former steps down, for whatever reason, continuity and knowledge will nonetheless be preserved within the organisation. Another example is rotating half the board members every year, rather than all board members every two years.'

'The stakeholder dynamics in Mutare are so complex that setting change in motion requires being embedded in the local structure without becoming part of it. I am convinced that the same holds true for projects in other countries.'

'At the first workshops that I held to understand the motivations of sports trainers who are involved in the sports project and are the driving force, I asked 'why does MHS exist?'. What purpose does the organisation serve? The top 3 answers indicated that earning a living was the primary objective. I had not expected such answers. In time, I have come to accept this, as it is perfectly logical and legitimate. Without the sports project, they have nothing. This changed my perspective, since the interests turned out to be entirely different from what I had expected.'

Suggestions

Perform a thorough analysis of the counterpart organisation

'We started the capacity-building effort with a thorough analysis. I did it during the first 2 – 3 months. I spoke with stakeholders, observed and spent a lot of

time looking over people's shoulders in the organisation. The result was a list of 42 areas for improvement. In addition, I had the board members complete a questionnaire. I asked them for their opinion of the organisation: Where do we stand? Where can we grow? Where do we need additional capacity?

I compared the two analyses and discussed the highlights at workshops with board members. Since the board members are volunteers, they cannot be expected to devote themselves to the project full-time. We therefore identified 16 items to improve during my year and a half in Mutare. We will accomplish this by training each other or by commissioning external trainers.'

Attune improvement

Attune improvement courses to match the capacities present. Efforts to strengthen organisations should explicitly take into account the capacities within the organisation. Reinforcement should reflect the knowledge of the people in the organisation.

We assigned 2 areas for improvement to each board member. He or she has extensive latitude in how to address them. We expected that this approach would cultivate ownership and encourage individual initiatives. Unfortunately, we were overly optimistic, as these people have only primary schooling. These people are doers.'

'The plan is ready, and 16 areas for improvement have been put in writing and are being expressed in plans of action. Some have already been completed. We are working hard to improve financial management skills. Rather than examining the finances of the organisation, we check how far the treasurer is with his work. This is already a major milestone: I no longer need to tally all the figures! The treasurer now reports directly to Haarlem.'

'When I leave about nine months from now, I expect that the organisation will be far more professional. This does not mean that all the work will be finished. I hope that MHS will be able to manage on its own, but they still have a lot to learn. I have recommended that somebody succeed me, but such a person needs to understand the local context. Perhaps somebody could be brought in from MYSA, similar to a South-South exchange.'

Use the available expertise, and have it imparted by people in the field!

'Recently I spoke with MYSA (Mathare Youth Soccer Association) about incorporating the Kicking AIDS Out activities within MHS. While this was one of the main activities at MYSA, it is still on the back burner at MHS. We look forward to integrating these activities in the work that MHS does. The best way would be to recruit a Kenyan local to tell them how this is done in Kenya. I think that this will make more of an impression, and that the expert will understand the context more easily. At MHS people understand the theory but lack the practical know-how to integrate this topic in their activities. Once you show others that a certain approach works, they will follow it as well.'

Vision on capacity building

How do the activities of MHS reflect the vision on capacity-building within the sister-cities team?

The vision on capacity-building is the outcome of a partnership between ICCO and City Link Haarlem-Mutare (sister cities) that is based on the principles of ownership and self-sufficiency. The capacity-building operating plan highlights these principles.

MHS distinguishes two forms of capacity-building. One form concerns capacity-building by its members (the sports trainers) and the other the capacity-building process, which serves to prepare the organisation for a period without Dutch assistance.

The role of capacity-building and strengthening local sports structures in the activities of MHS

A capacity-building curriculum has been designed for trainee (i.e. beginning) sports trainers. They may complete a one-year programme comprising ten modules (ten modules available on request). This curriculum enhances the knowledge and skills of trainees in sports, administration and organisation and leadership.

The comprehensive approach of MHS benefits recreational sports structures as well. Sports trainers help at school during P.E. (physical education) classes, are active on community sports grounds at after-school sports for children and are required to participate in sports clubs. This leads to vast network of mutually supportive pillars. The club feature is especially important for reinforcing a local sports infrastructure.

Jeroen Stol: 'Nobody wins a competition alone. Public and semi-public agencies need to be involved in all cases. This does not mean that they are involved in the decisions. One of the strengths of this programme is that it reinforces the independent social centre field.'

Is building sports capacity an end or a means for MHS?

'Thus far, building sports capacity has been more of an intrinsic objective than a vehicle for development activities. Still, the main issue is hard to distinguish from subsidiary matters. After six years, however, MHS has recorded several personal successes. Stakeholders who previously expressed disapproval are now more amenable to considering a follow-up curriculum for advanced sports trainers. Such assistance is very welcome: in the present socioeconomic context, social advancement is not a realistic prospect for the sports trainers.'

Is capacity-building and the strengthening of sports structures more relevant to organisations or individuals?

'Both, as the HRD, OD and ID charts in the operating plan indicate. The primary reason for dispatching me was to empower MHS as an organisation. The strength of this organisation soon turned out to depend largely on its members, who are volunteers with little schooling. They run the organisation. The capacity-building process obviously addresses these members as well. We need to start by teaching them skills that are commensurate with certain organisational basics. This process is impossible to disassociate from organisational capacity-building. It relates to establishing the organisation!

Structural needs of the organisation receive consideration as well. Training individuals alone will not guarantee overall coherence. The same holds true for the ID component. Focusing exclusively on strengthening individuals and the organisation will not ensure success. Continuous interaction with the surroundings is needed, both with the target group and with public and semi-public agencies.'

Do you regard training trainers as capacity-building?

'Yes, but not necessarily. MHS sports trainers are basically required to perform community service within the context to be empowered.'

Ownership is essential

'Considering the capacity-building plan we drafted together, I find the execution rather disappointing. I am a coach and a motivator. Had I left immediately

after drafting the plan, nothing more would have happened. Ownership of the total project clearly outweighs ownership of capacity-building activities.

Lessons learned

Micro level

- Explain to all stakeholders, including those within your own organisation, what your objective is and the role you will fulfil in this process.
- Always bear in mind that everything is different there. Synchronize your Western pattern of expectations with the local reality.
- Be flexible about the objectives that have been set.
- In an unmanageable context such as the one in Zimbabwe, consolidation is a major achievement.
- Remember that you are working with an organisation of volunteers. No matter how committed they are, earning a living is their first priority.
- The target group is not well educated. Providing knowledge and skills may serve a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it serves as an incentive and awakens interest. On the other hand, it teaches skills applicable within the organisation or later on in practice. If the latter is the main objective, then a follow-up course is important as well. A single fundraising workshop, for example, does not make the participants qualified fundraisers.

Meso level

- Never become a 'solo operator'. In other words, use the multi-stakeholder approach.
- Team up, involve the stakeholders, but retain sovereignty.
- Protocol is crucial.

Macro level

- Remember that programmes such as MHS will never be self-financing.
- Remember that funds for financing sports activities may be substantial but nonetheless insufficient to bring about community development and social growth.
- Train your organisation to network and raise funds. Much depends on public awareness and funds.

Success factors for capacity building

- motivation
- ownership

- expertise
- patience
- acceptance of the facilitator
- receptive surroundings

Success factors for strengthening local sports structures

- Always perform a multi-stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis is the identification of the key stakeholders in the analysis and planning stage of a change process and assesses their interests and how these interests are likely to affect this process. It results in deciding whom to involve and how to involve these people in the analysis and planning (and tentatively in the change implementation) process.
- Make yourself indispensable and appreciated among the target group by tailoring the activities to relate to their sphere of perception and their needs.

Do's and don'ts

- Ownership is what matters most. This can be cultivated.
- Allow sufficient time (at least 3 months) to perform an analysis. Use several methods and as many sources as possible.
- Ensure that the plan arises from a joint effort. While this often leads to ownership, such an outcome is not guaranteed!
- Adapt your expectations regarding quality of execution to the level of the individual or organisation.
- Be careful not to badger people with questions: they might stop answering.
- Delays do not always prevent completion. Be flexible about scheduling.
- The mission of the organisational consultant was formulated entirely in Haarlem. More influence and more input from the local counterpart is needed.