

Evaluation of Agriterra's support  
to capacity development

Based on evidence from case studies in:

MVIWATA, Tanzania

SYDIP, Democratic Republic of Congo

FEKRITAMA, Madagascar

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## Acronyms

5CC	5 core capabilities model
8PI	8 profiling indicators model
ACWW	Associated Country Women of the World
AFAFO	Advisors for African Farmers Organisations
AgriCord	The international alliance of agri-agencies
Agri-ProFocus	Partnership of Dutch donor agencies, credit institutions, companies, training and knowledge institutions
AIN	Agro-info.net
AMPROSEM	L'Association Malagasy pour la Promotion des Semences
ANAE	Association Nationale d'Actions Environnementales
BIANCO	Bureau Indépendant Anti-Corruption Madagascar
CD	capacity development
CIAT	Centre International pour l'Agriculture Tropicale
CIDIN	Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen
CODEPROVI	Cooperative des Dépositaires des Produits Vivriers
CITE	Centre d'information technique et économique
CPM	Coalition Paysanne de Madagascar
DDP	Dutch development partner
DGIS	Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (the Netherlands)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRDR	Direction Régionale du Développement Rural
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EAFF	Eastern Africa Farmers' Federation
ESAFF	Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FIPA	Fédération Internationale des Producteurs Agricoles
FOPAC/NK	Fédération des Organisations des Producteurs Agricoles du Congo au Nord-Kivu
FFP	Farmers Fighting Poverty
FVTM	Fédération des Femmes Rurales de Madagascar
GA	General Assembly
GADHOP	Groupe d'associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de Paix en territoire de Beni Lubero
GCD	Groupe Conseil Développement
ICA	International Cooperative Alliance
ICCO	Interchurch organisation for development cooperation
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
IDFC	International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFAP	International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LOFEPACO	Ligue des Organisations des Femmes Paysannes du Congo
LTO	Land- en Tuinbouw Organisatie (Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture)
MAEP	Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche
MATOR	FEKRITAMA's tourism cooperative, Madagascar Tourisme Rural
MEC	Saving and credit cooperative

M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAM	Programme Alimentair Mondial
PASAPA	Plan d'Action pour la Souverainité Alimentaire et la Professionnalisation des Agriculteurs
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking System
PHARMAKINA	Société Agro-Industrielle et Pharmaceutique
PIPGA/PBO	Programa de Investigación Participativa Generadora de Alternativas de Desarrollo Participatief/Beleidsgenererend Onderzoek (an approach for participatory policy formulation)
RMO	Rural membership organization
SCC	Swedish Cooperative Centre
SG	Secretary general
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SRI	Le Système de Riziculture Intensive
SYDIP	Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Paysans
TITEM	Microfinance institution in Madagascar
ToR	Terms of Reference
VECO	Belgian NGO (Vredeseilanden-COOPIBO)
WIMA	A network of people in DRC engaged in peace building
WMC	World Mining Company

## Summary

**Conclusion 1:** *Over the years, the rural membership organizations (RMOs) have become stronger and enhanced their capability to deliver on development objectives. This enhanced capability is mostly the result of a combination of internal factors (members, staff, systems and leadership) and external support. In this context, external factors do not play a dominant role in capacity development.*

The three RMOs have grown considerably and have improved their capabilities thanks to a strong internal dynamics and their membership spirit. This membership spirit is reflected in mechanisms of shared strategies, planning and budgeting and accountability. Strong leadership is another important reason for the growth of these organizations, but it also constitutes a potential risk for sustained capacity if leadership were to change. The three RMOs have changed and developed in a mainly endogenous way, but this has been enabled by financial and other non-material support from external sources, such as Agriterra.

Staff and members in leading positions are highly motivated and committed to the organization, even when pay is suspended (e.g. in 2010). They are proud to belong to their organization. The commitment of members from the local and intermediary levels to come from far away to attend and assist in meetings is a strong asset of these organizations.

The RMOs have shown that they are capable of adjusting to sudden changes (e.g. Agriterra's suspension of funding in 2010). The capacity to relate to a large number of external stakeholders in different local, national and international networks is another strong asset of these organizations.

The areas of concern are:

- The performance of the local units of these continuously growing organizations
- The weak mobilization of these organizations' own resources and limited number of paying members
- The strong dependency on leadership

**Conclusion 2:** *The organizations have increased their outreach, the number of regions, the number of members – particularly the females and youth – and their training and extension activities. In addition to improving land access rights for small farmers, the organizations also have helped farmers develop new economic activities. However, they are far from reaching the development objectives because there are still substantial problems, and external negative forces have had a major impact on these organizations, especially in DRC and Madagascar, though less so in Tanzania.*

More financial resources – mainly from external resources such as Agriterra and other donors – result in more capacity, more activities and more outputs. The number of staff, visits and services has increased and led ultimately to improved outcomes, as verified by many of the members who were visited. Their housing situations, means of transport and incidental income increases have improved. However, this picture should not be taken to reflect the general situation.

The following emerged from the interviews with staff and members:

- Some members relinquish land property rights
- Members adopt modern farming methods

- Production has increased for some products (rice, potato, cinchona)
- Members are consulted and participate in strategic and operational discussions
- Revenues of members have increased (not all chains)
- Members are proud to belong to the RMO

The development of economic activities is a slow process. It depends heavily on external (market) factors, which have not had a positive impact in DRC or Madagascar. DRC is a fragile state, and the region around the city of Butembo is at the heart of this fragility, marked by insecurity, clashes between organized and armed groups in villages, bad infrastructure and unstable markets. In Madagascar, the political turmoil has led, among other things, to lower prices for agricultural products to keep urban consumers calm. Economic development is very hard to plan under such circumstances. Sometimes there is a success story to tell, but in other cases there is no progress to report. It is difficult to influence market factors, so the organizations try to mitigate this situation by organizing targeted support for their members. The RMOs are not sufficiently well equipped to achieve this yet, however.

Access to land is another key issue. The situation has improved for some, but not in general. There are many strong political and economic forces at work, and there is no law protecting small farmers. A case-to-case approach is needed, rather than a general strategy, to give all the farmers in the regions access to land.

Taking into consideration the very difficult context these organizations have to operate in, with strong opposing forces and an enormous demand for better land rights and social economic development, one must conclude that the original problems that prompted the establishment of RMOs are still present. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether there will be any lasting positive changes for members. Stronger rural membership organizations certainly can influence these situations, but the contextual factors render this influence negligible.

***Conclusion 3:*** *Agriterra's intervention strategy is leading to changes in these organizations' capacity and services.*

Agriterra's support has been effective in terms of enabling the organizations to increase their activities through enhanced organizational capacity (see result chains in Annex 3). The funding of these organizations made it possible for them to hire more trained staff and thus enhance their outreach. Institutional advice has led to improved performance internally, such as financial administration, and recruitment, planning and monitoring procedures. The technical expertise Agriterra supplied has had a direct impact on members but also on staff members who received on-the-job training. Agriterra has insisted on strengthening economic activities, on including women and youth, and establishing links with other organizations (also internationally). This support would not have been effective if the quality of the experts and their advice had not been high, or if the RMOs had not been receptive to this advice. The fact that many changes were accepted and are being introduced is a sign of the support's effectiveness.

***Conclusion 4:*** *The RMOs have managed to grow and develop because of their own strengths and vision. Agriterra's role, however, which consists of providing not only technical and financial support but also ideas for further development (gender, participation and economic activities), has had a significant impact on this capacity development process.*

Agriterra supports the RMOs through a flexible approach, mostly catering to *on demand* requests. The experts are sent to an RMO when the latter has expressed the need to improve the growing and storing of potatoes, for example, and acquire methods for calculating the costs for this. Another type of demand may be an emerging potential for rural tourism or the possibility of introducing microcredit schemes. The institutional advisors focus on the internal organization, as well as issues such as membership fees or the participation of youth and women. The advisors speak the same '(technical) language' as their counterparts and have proven their commitment and enthusiasm. Members and staff hold their attitude in high esteem.

Funding was stable for years (until 2010) and allocated based on submitted projects or programmes. The budgeting, funding and reporting process is done independently from the advisory process. As a development partner, Agriterra engages in dialogue on issues such as gender, women and youth, and attempts to increase these groups' participation in activities and meetings or promote their membership in governing bodies. Advisors visit and discuss strategies for change, for example the need to increase the RMOs' economic activities and support members, but also to provide them with a solid financial foundation.

**Conclusion 5:** *Agriterra focuses on strengthening the rural membership organizations based on a theory of change that has as its central pillars the strengthening of RMO capacity and providing support for their activities and services. There are two flanking policies, namely to influence the policies of international and bilateral donors, and link up Northern and Southern organizations.*

There is a close and tangible connection between Agriterra's general development objectives and its CD support objectives. Agriterra's theory of change and intervention strategy relies on an analysis of the rural poor in many countries. The problems are of a political, social, cultural, economic and technical nature. The RMOs can and should be an important player in the process aimed at creating good governance and democracy, and improving economic development and the distribution of income in rural areas. There are other relevant actors as well, such as NGOs, lobby groups and political organizations, but Agriterra has chosen to focus solely on RMOs. Agriterra believes in the effectiveness of the 'farmers support farmers' concept, and the organization is well positioned and structured to facilitate this F2F support.

Agriterra has developed several tools to support its services (SOLUTIONS), and they have designed internal processes to ensure quality of delivery (ISO). Giving RMOs and others access to documentation and information is an important feature of its work.

**Conclusion 6:** *Agriterra's theory of change has been applied to the RMOs and remains a powerful approach to further their development. In order to increase opportunities for stronger, more sustainable organizations and services, this approach should be used in a balanced way, by allocating funds and providing advice. The farmer-to-farmer approach can thus remain the central leitmotif.*

The combination of financial support, expert advice and peer-to-peer discussions about the organization and its strategic direction is an effective way of supporting capacity development. But successful support depends on the individuals: their capacity, commitment, relationships and mutual trust. Successful support also depends on its being predictable. The right conditions for improved service delivery

are much harder to come by in Madagascar and DRC, due to difficult and negative external factors, while this is less the case in Tanzania.

**Conclusion 7:** *RMOs cannot become financially independent if they want to influence decision makers from the agricultural sector and the government (at the local and national levels), and continue serving thousands of small farmers. They need to tailor their ambitions to the context and reduce donor dependence.*

Agriterra's theory of change and intervention strategy defines the general development objective as follows: RMOs are influential in their societies and economies. This influence extends beyond farmers having access to land and increased incomes. Indeed, RMOs are influential at the national, regional and even international levels. But they will always need external funding. The many farmers that still need to be reached is another key challenge. Agriterra's view that RMOs can achieve (financial) independence after a period of approximately seven years is not realistic as long as the above-mentioned situation is not maintained.

**Conclusion 8:** *The context plays a crucial role in the RMOs' delivery of services and always should be analyzed when preparing or revising strategic and operational plans.*

External risks were the cause of a serious lack of progress in DRC and Madagascar. The change of government in Madagascar, which caused a political deadlock, and the lack of governance and infrastructure in DRC, are contextual factors beyond the control of the RMOs and Agriterra. The question here is to what extent these external factors are taken into account when formulating objectives for RMOs to deliver adequate services to its members. A lesson to be learned from this is to include a context analysis from the beginning and during each review, and define realistic goals.

**Conclusion 9:** *The dimensions of politics, power and culture are difficult to grasp, but by creating a relationship between Agriterra and the RMOs that is stable and based on trust, these dimensions can be potentially revealed and consequently discussed.*

The key elements of capacity, such as leadership, trust between staff and members at the local level are difficult for an external actor like Agriterra to influence. It takes solid knowledge, time and courage to address these issues when and if required.

**Conclusion 10:** *Agriterra must decide whether to focus on the larger picture, i.e. mainly financial operations, or whether to take on the role of a development partner that reaches out to a limited number of RMOs and practices a farmer-to-farmer approach.*

Because these rural membership organizations only have very limited resources themselves, they will remain dependent on a reliable partner that respects ownership and an autonomous pace of change. The challenge facing Agriterra is to take a very clear stand on its relationship with its partners, i.e. the thin line between the donor-receiver relationship and the real partner relationship.

Agriterra's original reason for supporting rural membership organizations with a farmer-to-farmer approach is strong and still holds. This should not change. The combination of financial support, institutional advice and expert advice is a very



powerful way of supporting the development of rural membership organizations. However, the balance of these three kinds of support is important and not always present.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Capacity development occupies a prominent place in international development cooperation. The substantial amount of support provided, however, has often not resulted in significant increases in capacity, particularly capacity geared to poverty reduction. This fact was acknowledged in the *Accra Agenda for Action* of September 2008, which confirmed that developing countries need robust capacity – strong institutions, systems and local expertise – if they are to fully own and manage their development processes, and to achieve their economic, social and environmental goals. Furthermore, the document states that capacity development is the responsibility of developing countries, with donors playing a supportive role. The *Accra Agenda for Action* emphasizes that capacity development is an essential aspect of development cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Capacity development also occupies a prominent place in the implementation of Dutch development cooperation. However, during a consultation organized by IOB in preparation for this evaluation, policy officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch development partners from NGOs (hereafter DDPs) and the private sector commented that there is a lack of clarity about what capacity means and how capacity development works. The Ministry has not issued a policy document outlining its vision of capacity development or a manual to guide decisions on capacity development strategies, or approving the funding of programmes and projects. Similarly, many of the DDPs that focus on capacity development lack coherent guidance regarding capacity development. In daily practice, policy officers from both the Ministry and the DDPs rely on general concepts of capacity set out in thematic policy notes and on their own experiences. This lack of clarity is not only found in the Netherlands, but throughout the entire development community.

### 1.2 Dutch development partners

Agriterra was founded in 1997 by a group of Dutch rural membership organizations.<sup>2</sup> Its predecessor was the Paulo Freire Stichting, which until that year focused on agricultural education, mainly in Central America. Agriterra was in part created to broaden the geographical scope of its predecessor and to focus on the capacity development of rural membership organizations (farmers' organizations, cooperative societies, rural women's organizations). This firmly anchored Agriterra in the Dutch agricultural sector, which is reflected in Agriterra's governing bodies. Agriterra can therefore be described as a so-called agri-agency, a development agency founded by rural membership organizations and the business community connected to agricultural cooperative societies. The agency was designed to strengthen other rural membership organizations (RMOs), based on a peer-to-peer model of development cooperation.

Another key moment in Agriterra's history was the creation, in 2003, of AgriCord, an alliance of agri-agencies from OECD member countries. Agriterra is an active member of this alliance, as well as Agri-ProFocus (since 2005), the Dutch platform for organizations involved in strengthening producer organizations. Between 1997 and 2009, Agriterra has grown, both in terms of human resources (from five people to more than 40) and annual project turnover (from a few hundred thousand euros to

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<sup>1</sup> *Accra Agenda for Action*, 4 September 2008, Accra, Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> LTO Nederland, the Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture; NCR, the National Cooperative Council for Agriculture and Horticulture; NAJK, the Dutch Agricultural Youth Organization; and SSVO, the Dutch Foundation of Cooperating Women's Associations.

more than €15 million). The organization is now firmly established in the Netherlands and abroad, and has a reputation for being *the* Dutch organization for development cooperation with rural producer organizations.

### **1.3 Purpose of the evaluation**

This evaluation has been requested by IOB and is part of a series of seven evaluations entitled 'Evaluation of Dutch support to capacity development; based on evidence from case studies'. The purpose of this series of evaluations is: 'To respond to the need of both the Ministry and Dutch NGOs, and their partners in developing countries, for knowledge and insights that will contribute to further policy development'.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the evaluation seeks to increase knowledge of how, and under what circumstances, capacity development support can be effective. Therefore, the evaluation will focus on identifying key factors that explain the results of external support to capacity development (CD) and focus strongly on learning.

It became clear during the design phase of this evaluation that it would not be possible to conduct one single evaluation that does justice to the whole range of different support activities and their diverse contexts. Therefore, it was decided to use a programmatic approach, in which DDPs and departments of the Ministry were asked to participate in this evaluation. Consequently, DDPs and IOB conducted a series of separate evaluations under the aegis of these general terms of reference. On the one hand, these general terms of reference aim to provide sufficient guidance to establish some consistency between the separate evaluations. And on the other hand, they create sufficient flexibility for the inclusion of context-specific issues and specific characteristics of different support activities.

Agriterra expressed an interest to participate in this evaluation in order to get an outside perspective on its support for CD interventions and the results, and particularly on its use of the eight profiling indicators (8PI), a longitudinal measurement of CD that uses a standard set of indicators and sub-indicators.

### **An open systems approach to CD**

IOB has proposed an open systems approach to understanding CD. This approach stresses the fact that any organization will influence and be influenced by a number of internal and external factors, which eventually determine capacity development. In brief, organizations are viewed as open systems with permeable borders (see Figure 1).

The open systems approach to capacity development has four pillars:

- Adopt an open systems view on organizations
- Use a results-oriented method
- Give context full consideration
- Exploit both the functional-rational and the political economy aspects of organizations and change<sup>4</sup>

The implications of this approach are that CD cannot solely be viewed as having a conventional cause-and-effect relationship with results, which can be planned in detail and successfully managed, as if in a vacuum. Instead, a variety of factors and actors will influence both performance and results – for better or worse. They are referred to as 'interfering variables' in the figure below. Along this line, IOB concludes

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.minbuza.nl/dsresource?objectid=buzabeheer:28873&type=org>

<sup>4</sup> Boesen, N. (2005) Looking forward: A results-oriented model. *Development Outreach*, World Bank Institute.

that CD must be seen as an endogenous nonlinear process, strongly influenced by a range of internal and external factors with major implications for evaluations aiming at explaining effective strategies for identifying and addressing capacity challenges and development. By the same token, donor support is merely one of several factors. Fully grasping the influence of an organization's operating context thus requires an expansive analysis of location-specific circumstances and factors, both internal and external.

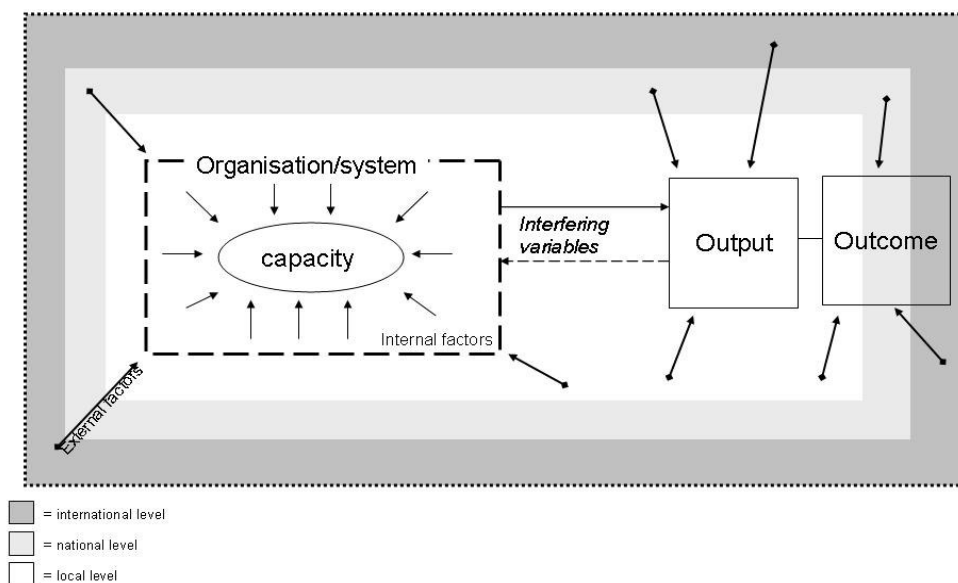


Figure 1. Organizations as open systems

IOB proposes using a so-called 'balanced approach to monitor and evaluate capacity' (see Figure 2). This interpretation of the open systems approach is also the basis for the five core capabilities framework developed by Baser and Morgan,<sup>5</sup> which is the general analytical framework for this study and the basis for organizational assessments made at a given moment in time.

<sup>5</sup> Baser, H. and Morgan, P. (2008) *Capacity, Change and Performance: Study Report*. Discussion Paper 59B. Maastricht: ECDPM. [www.ecdpm.org/dp59B](http://www.ecdpm.org/dp59B)

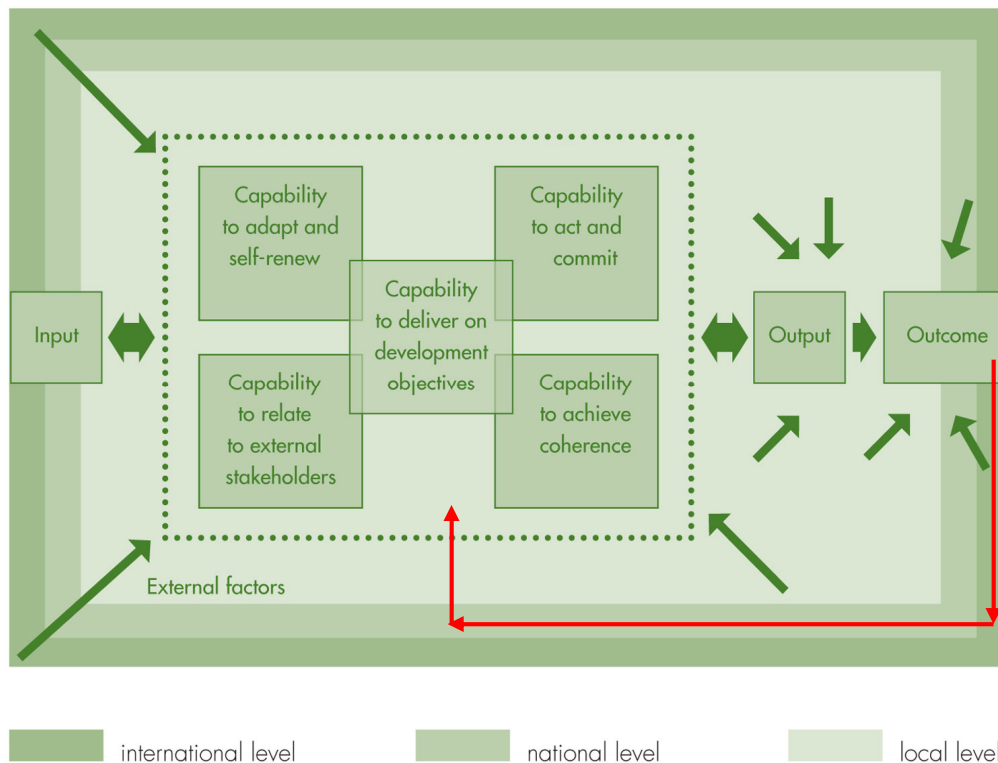


Figure 2. Analytical framework for capacity development (adapted from de Lange, 2009)<sup>6</sup>

## 1.4 Objectives, key issues and evaluation questions

### Objectives of the Agriterra evaluation

The general objective of the evaluation is to provide new insights into how and under what circumstances capacities are developed and how support for capacity development can be provided more effectively. The evaluation will attempt to identify the factors that explain the impact Agriterra's support has had on capacity development.

The main questions to be answered according to IOB's general Terms of Reference (ToR) are:

1. What changes have taken place in the capacity of Southern organizations?
  - How do the five capabilities manifest themselves in these organizations?
  - How have the capabilities changed in previous years?
  - Which external factors have had the most significant impact on the organization? How have these factors changed over time, and which of these external factors were particularly relevant to the organization's capacity?
  - What internal factors are significant? How have these factors changed over time, and which of these internal factors were particularly relevant to the organization's capacity?

<sup>6</sup> De Lange, P. (2009) Evaluating capacity development support. *Capacity.org* 37: 2. [www.capacity.org/en/content/view/full/5465/\(issue\)/21125](http://www.capacity.org/en/content/view/full/5465/(issue)/21125)

- Did the outputs achieved by the organization have a significant effect on its capacity?
2. What effects have changes in the capacity of Southern organizations had on the realization of their development objectives?
    - What is the organization's output and how has it changed?
    - Which external factors have had an effect on (changes in) outputs?
    - Have outputs changed due to capacity changes?
    - Has outcome changed due to output changes?
    - What are the organization's inputs and how have these changed over time?
    - Have changes in the five core capabilities improved the organization's efficiency (output/input)?
  3. How effective have external (DDP) interventions been in strengthening the capacity of Southern organizations?
    - What effects have external (DDP) interventions had on the (changes in the) five capabilities?
    - What conditions are needed to sustain the present capacity level?
    - To what extent are external (DDP) interventions implemented professionally? Annex 7 of the ToR explores this question and defines the term 'professional'.
    - Does the Southern organization consider the external (DDP) intervention an added value (compared to other interventions)?
  4. What factors explain the effectiveness of Agriterra's interventions? What lessons can be learned?

In addition, the team evaluating Agriterra added a fifth question to explore the two frameworks of indicators proposed by IOB and Agriterra in more detail:

5. How useful are the five core capabilities (5CC) and Agriterra's eight profiling indicators in measuring and understanding capacity development?

These questions have guided the three case studies that are summarized and analyzed in this report.

## **1.5 Methodology and conduct of the evaluation**

### **Case-specific arrangements**

In consultation with Agriterra, the evaluators chose three case studies that are representative of Agriterra's support for CD. Key criteria for their selection were: they must be a long-term partner of Agriterra that have had several organizational profiling analyses conducted to assess changes in CD over time; they must have received financial and advisory assistance in most of the work areas covered by Agriterra; they should not qualify as an unadulterated success story since one of the objectives is to learn lessons from challenges; they are membership-based network organizations.

The three selected case studies are 1) National Network of Small-Scale Farmers Groups (MVIWATA) in Tanzania; 2) Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Paysans (SYDIP) in the Democratic Republic of Congo; 3) Confédération des Agriculteurs Malagasy (FEKRITAMA) in Madagascar. All three cases are agricultural network organizations with a strong emphasis on their membership status.

A standard ToR was used for each of the three local case studies based on the evaluation questions and sub-questions posed by IOB (see section 1.4). For each case study, the evaluators would agree on a programme for the evaluation based on proposals from the lead consultant and discussions with the local consultant and local partner.

Phase one:

- Team leader prepares methodology and questionnaire with the local consultant
- Kick-off workshop with local partner
- Interviews with stakeholders in the local organization
- Initial field visits to local partners and to intervention areas
- First report and agenda finalized for phase II of the evaluation to be carried out by the local consultant

Phase two:

- Desk study by local consultant
- Additional field visits to local partner to assess and verify changes
- Debriefing with the board and office staff
- Assessing information collected using the 5CCs and Agriterra's 8PIs
- Finalization of report

There were two debriefings, once after the visit of the international and local experts, and a second one after the field visit of the local expert. The second planned visit of the international evaluator was cancelled due to logistical and financial complications. Spending money on airfare a second time, just for a debriefing, was not considered prudent. Instead, the local consultant did the debriefing after consulting the international evaluator on the findings of phase II of the evaluation.

## **1.6 The paradox of measuring CD and establishing a common CD language**

Indeed, the main purpose of this evaluation is to measure CD. Though CD is receiving increasing attention, it remains an elusive concept to many practitioners. It is striking how many definitions and number of CD indicators there are, and yet there seems to be little consensus about them. In a recent article, Rick James noted that:

Monitoring and evaluating capacity building is notoriously difficult. It rarely takes place partly because stakeholders disagree on fundamental questions of 'who it is for' and 'how it should be done'. ...The term itself is pure development jargon. It remains impervious to translation and definitions are highly contested. Efforts to do so have been likened to 'nailing jelly'.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, CD presents several methodological dilemmas. We can decide to do nothing because of these difficulties and the associated costs, and hope for the best. Or we can turn to the long list of indicators – such as IOB's 5CC framework or Agriterra's 8PIs – in the hope that they will nail the jelly, and then compare which set of indicators seems to work best in reality. This theoretical way of measuring CD may end up becoming a science in its own right. It may well require highly complex systems that are likely to invalidate or even reduce capacity in the organizations in question. And it is questionable whether any such list would ever fully capture all context-specific indicators in the first place.

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<sup>7</sup> Rick James (2009) *Dealing with the Dilemmas in Monitoring and Evaluating Capacity Building*. M&E Paper 2, Oxford: INTRAC.

Another way of measuring CD may simply be to ask the local partner to explain which events they consider to have been particularly significant for the organization in helping it to perform effectively over a longer period of time. This method is unlikely to enable the researcher to immediately categorize the answers into a consolidated global framework of CD indicators. Unfortunately, this would make comparison at aggregation levels difficult, which is one of the overall objectives of this IOB series of CD evaluations. On the positive side, it may help to paint a more diverse picture of how and under which contextual circumstances CD actually expresses itself.

During the development of an overall methodology for this series of evaluations, IOB and participating DDPs initially attempted to design a process in which suitable CD indicators were negotiated with local partners in advance in order to come up with a list of final indicators more widely validated by involved stakeholders. Unfortunately, implementing this methodology turned out to be more complex than expected, and it did not generate the desired list of CD indicators. To make up for this, the steering group decided that at the beginning of each case study mission, the Evaluation Team (ET) should conduct a staff workshop to arrive at a common understanding of CD and associated indicators for further operationalization. This is what has been referred to as the *calibration* of CD indicators. Ideally, this would be a final check of indicators with local stakeholders before applying them more rigorously in the field studies.

This represents yet another methodological challenge for the evaluators. Sharing a predetermined set of indicators in a workshop setting with local stakeholders who may not normally think in terms of CD may introduce another bias, simply because the scope and the language for discussing CD and its indicators has been predefined. Several of the indicators are abstract and difficult to discuss with staff and members in layman's terms. Some of the indicators show a Western bias as well, such as the role of leaders, the issue of integrity and transparency. So there is also a risk that the predetermined CD indicators would be more or less confirmed by local stakeholders with some minor corrections, without necessarily arriving at a well-tested set of new global indicators that has included the partner's local, contextual dimension.

To reduce such a potential bias, the evaluators decided not to discuss explicitly the interviewees' understanding of the term CD. Instead, the evaluators purposely asked general questions, conducting the interviews in a very open and associative manner. These talks increased the evaluators' understanding of how interviewees viewed their own capacity and related changes over the years. It was also decided to use the interviewees' language to the largest extent possible, such as Kinande, Kiswahili or French. Annex 2.2 contains an example of how the interviews in the field were organized.

However, the evaluators did make use of the indicators intuitively throughout the assignment to explore how relevant the indicators were for understanding and explaining CD processes and changes over time in the three cases. Agritererra's 8PI model was used in the reports on the individual cases. In order to further test the practical applicability of the 5CC indicators and make a comparison with other evaluations, reporting on the individual cases in this synthesis report (chapter 2) has been organized according to the 5CCs, as formulated in annex 4: 'Indicators defining the five core capabilities' of the global ToR. All case findings are reported using the 5CCs and their sub-sets of indicators in order to do justice to the framework. As agreed and referring to question 5 of the ToR, the two sets of indicators. In other words, the 5CCs and the 8PIs are discussed and compared to discover which of these are most useful for capturing the key dynamics of the RMOs reviewed.



### **1.7 Limitations**

A funding crisis resulting from Agriterra's decision not to financially back MVIWATA's operations in 2010 following funding constraints made it difficult for the evaluators to engage with key staff at MVIWATA for the case study. In fact, several meetings and discussions were cancelled, and sometimes people did not show up. This limited interaction with MVIWATA staff severely hampered the evaluators' ability to perform their tasks. Therefore, most findings are based on a thorough review of available reports, the facts of which were occasionally checked with staff, as well as field visits by the local consultant. This kind of a situation is bound to influence the final outcome of MVIWATA's evaluation and the reliability of the conclusions. It should, nevertheless, be noted that the case study, despite its limitations, has been deemed valuable by both MVIWATA and Agriterra.

### **1.8 Organization of the evaluation**

This evaluation is part of a series of seven separate evaluations for which IOB is ultimately responsible.

The evaluation team consisted of Herman Snelder (team leader and evaluator of SYDIP and FEKRITAMA), Thomas Lewinsky and Loïsa Kitakaya (MVIWATA), Christophe Nzalamingi (SYDIPSYDIP), Victorien Randriamahonina and Peter Hof's (FEKRITAMAFEKRITAMA).

The reference group consisted of Kees Blokland (Agriterra) Paul Engel (ECDPM), Aaltje de Roos (DGIS), Vera Gianotten (independent) and Eelco Baan (SNV) and Eric Kamphuis (IOB).

## 2 The case studies

As mentioned in section 1.5 on methodology, the evaluators structured the presentation of the three case studies according to the 5CCs. This was done to systematically test the proposed indicators against the findings and thereby arrive at an assessment of the general applicability of the 5CC framework. At the end of the case study presentation, the evaluators return to the original evaluation questions posed by IOB for a general discussion.

### 2.1 Case study I: MVIWATA, Tanzania

MVIWATA was established in 1993 by 22 innovative farmers from seven regions in Tanzania. Its primary focus was to disseminate agricultural extension messages to local farming communities that only had sporadic networking prospects at the local level in and around the Morogor area. MVIWATA has a limited, largely voluntary staff and relies on small donations from external sources. Around the year 2000, MVIWATA began to establish a more stable staffing structure and was able to secure funding for this from donors. This was followed by a conscious strategy to gradually shift the focus to networking activities, which enabled MVIWATA to increase its presence in additional regions of Tanzania. In 2003, the organization's constitution was rewritten with a conscious emphasis on regional networking, lobbying and advocacy in order to attain national outreach and impact. This new emphasis effectively turned MVIWATA's focus away from extension and to developing human capacities for farmer groups through multiple-level networking.

#### Unit of analysis

Today, MVIWATA can be described as an agricultural membership association consisting of small- and medium-sized local farmers' organizations. Its central national office plays an overall coordinating role on behalf of its local network members. Using the IOB categorization of collaborative associations, MVIWATA would belong to category V: Programme alignment with organizations from another sector (public or private).

#### Outcome statement<sup>8</sup>

MVIWATA seeks, through its networking strategy, to support the capacity development of small-scale farmer groups, resulting in their effective participation in and representation of their own interests locally, regionally and nationally at relevant policy levels to promote their social and economic development.

#### Findings assessed against the 5CC framework indicators

##### 1) *What changes have taken place in MVIWATA's capacity?*

*CC1. The Southern organization has the capability to act and commit.*

There is substantial evidence that MVIWATA has consistently strengthened its capacity to act and commit. It appears to be a participatory organization that is in regular contact with its constituency, and it has steadily increased its outreach to all of Tanzania's regions.

A turning point was when MVIWATA rewrote its constitution in 2003, making a conscious decision to focus more on regional networking, lobbying and advocacy in order to attain national outreach and impact. Since 2000, MVIWATA has had a

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<sup>8</sup> From a recent MVIWATA brochure

relatively stable staffing structure and an evolving financial and management capacity.

One present concern is whether MVIWATA's ambition to become a nationwide network is overstressing its capability in terms of staff and resources. MVIWATA does not consider this an issue, since, in its opinion, all the local network chapters may evolve as they please and according to their local capacity. MVIWATA considers this diversity an organic process of capacity development.

The organization's monitoring capacity appears to focus primarily on activities at this point. It is not always clear to what extent MVIWATA is learning lessons from this monitoring process – which observations could potentially lead to corrective action, for example? These kinds of questions raise the concern that interventions are initiated or supported without effective feedback loops.

Leadership is clearly concentrated at the top, and the current CEO appears to be the organization's main architect. This has certainly enhanced MVIWATA's capacity, but at this point there is no obvious second in command, no one who could easily step in and take over. An abrupt change in leadership could therefore potentially reverse the capacity development gains. Staff made reference to the CEO several times when asked specific questions about MVIWATA's way of working, setting priorities and even logistical capacity, indicating a hierarchical leadership style.

*CC2. The Southern organization has the capability to deliver on development objectives.*

MVIWATA's track record demonstrates that it has been able to secure substantial resources from several relevant donors. It has also gradually managed to create more core staff positions over time, though many of these have been associated with specific projects. However, this is also a potential danger as the dependency on external donor funds makes the organization vulnerable to changes in donor priorities. Interestingly, MVIWATA has felt comfortable enough to turn down potential donors, when it believed new programme areas might compromise existing capacities.

Overall, it seems MVIWATA has managed to deliver on most of its development objectives, which primarily entails institutional strengthening of farmer groups through local and mid-level networks to increase their voice and effectively represent their interests. The expansion of the network to yet more regions testifies to this, as does MVIWATA's demonstrated capacity to support local farmer networks in their efforts to engage local market providers, as does its track record in collaborating effectively with local government.

Whether MVIWATA's national office – as the main unit of analysis – can be said to command a stable infrastructure for its core tasks depends on how this is perceived. Yes, they have helped to create a national network, but several local organizations still appear quite dependent on the support and services of MVIWATA's national office as the main mover. This is especially true when it comes to lobbying and advocacy, two areas which the local networks still feel they have insufficient capacity in.

MVIWATA has good access to knowledge that is relevant to its constituency, which helps promote its long-term aspirations. However, apparently a great deal of this knowledge remains in the minds of people in the form of intuitive (tacit) knowledge. Thus, though there were well-developed strategy documents, their documented implementation was less comprehensive, as a result of limited attention to monitoring and lesson learning.

*CC3. The Southern organization has the capability to relate to external stakeholders.* This is probably the strongest of MVIWATA's capacities. MVIWATA liaises with an impressive number of external actors. Some are from the private sector (for marketing agricultural produce), whereas others include viable savings and credit societies. These alliances instil a more commercial, business-oriented spirit in local networks.

MVIWATA is considered a reliable broker in the eyes of local networks, local businesses and local governments, and has maintained links to national research and educational institutions over time. MVIWATA sits in on several boards and commissions, and has initiated a good number of national campaigns and entered into coalitions relevant to its constituency.

MVIWATA has developed strong relationships outside its own network at the regional, national and international levels, which has made it influential at higher policy levels. Examples of such relationships include policy research institutes; land rights research institutes; poverty alleviation research institutes; and other regional networks. MVIWATA recently even assisted the regional Eastern and Southern Africa Farmers' Federation (ESAFF) in getting registered in Tanzania and in developing a future fund-raising strategy. In short, MVIWATA has a great deal of social and political legitimacy and leverage, and is considered an important actor to be reckoned with in Tanzania.

*CC4. The Southern organization has the capability to adapt and self-renew.* MVIWATA has consistently demonstrated its ability to adapt its strategic orientation in response to changes and opportunities in the external environment. For example, the changes in MVIWATA's legal registration status always occurred in response to a strategic repositioning of the organization amid a changing external environment.

The same could be said about how it has adjusted its constitution over time as it matured, and as ambitions and needs changed. The focus in 2003 on the mid-level network was a major turning point that acknowledged the fact that working at only the local level would have limited effectiveness in influencing higher-level policy issues, including more strategic collaboration with the government.

For example, when Tanzania decided to decentralize in 2005, MVIWATA immediately engaged in this process by analyzing the implications of this policy shift for its constituency and sensitizing its members on how to request transparency and make use of local resource allocation procedures.

Another example is MVIWATA's role in the Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS), an instrument devised by civil society to enable local communities to monitor public expenditure by local governments. The application of this instrument was even welcomed by local government staff, who also benefited from the dialogues organized by MVIWATA about transparency and accountability.

It can therefore be concluded that MVIWATA has proactively managed to reposition itself as and when required, which may help explain its relatively high standing in Tanzania to date.

*CC5. The Southern organization has the capability to achieve coherence.* The vision, mandate and strategy appear consistent, and staff throughout the organization are generally familiar with them and use them to guide decision making. Members, however, have a more rudimentary knowledge of these issues. The staff's frequent references to the constitution and strategy indicate that the latter are

actively used as guiding tools. However, most of the visionary thinking and strategic action appear to be concentrated at the very top.

The organization has formulated a number of operating principles to guide its work in capacity development. Some of these principles appear slightly lofty at times, and it is not clear to what degree their application is being monitored.

The leadership at the top appears capable of maintaining a good balance between stability and change, which may also explain its consistent ability to attract numerous donors over time.

However, MVIWATA runs the risk of overstretching its own capacity and limited resources by setting overly ambitious goals, compared to what it can realistically do, especially if donor funding is reduced. It was not possible to identify clear criteria regarding the type of support MVIWATA should or would provide to individual networks or groups, which indicates that planning, prioritization and resource allocation could be improved.

## **2) *What effects have changes in MVIWATA'S capacity had on the realization of its development objectives?***

Given the limitations of this case study, and the limited interaction with key staff, the evaluators found it challenging to answer this question in detail. Most of the analysis was thus based on desk studies and could not be triangulated. Therefore, there is insufficient information available to answer this question effectively.

## **3) *How effective have Agriterra's interventions been in strengthening MVIWATA's capacity?***

Agriterra's interventions can best be described as a support mechanism for the implementation of MVIWATA's 2004-2008 strategic plan at the institutional, organizational and individual levels, with which it is clearly aligned. It is also clear that Agriterra has provided much-needed support to help set up more stable internal systems and structures at the national office, including salary support for core staff. However, this also exposes MVIWATA to external funding shocks, something that actually happened during this mission when Agriterra suddenly suspended funding for 2010.

The persistent commitment to support the strengthening of mid-level and local networks, and the setting up of transparent governance structures through the network is quite likely to increase MVIWATA's stability as a network in the years to come as far as the institution itself is concerned. Agriterra's support over the years has remained very flexible and responsive to MVIWATA's pursuit of its own strategic plan. In that sense, Agriterra's support has by default ensured that MVIWATA's capacity development process remained an endogenous process.

This approach to capacity development support is also demonstrated by Agriterra's use of the Organizational Profiling Tool, which gauges the overall progress of the local organization, irrespective of Agriterra's specific contributions. The tool emphasizes several capacity indicators similar to those of the 5CCs. In theory, the tool helps spot where more support is needed and can, if used in dialogue with the local partner, become a powerful way of supporting the capacity development of local organizations.

Agriterra's approach to and support of capacity development processes, which ensures that they remain endogenous affairs, may mean that attribution is sometimes harder to determine. It also shows that Agriterra is fully satisfied and comfortable with its role as a contributor or catalyst to local capacity development processes, which it considers much more significant than promoting its own specific contributions, which it then wants to take credit for.

## **2.2 Case study II: FEKRITAMA, Madagascar**

FEKRITAMA is a rural membership organization established in November 1987, and its mission is to help farmers in need defend their interests and rights against powerful forces who act and make decisions against them in the agricultural sector and in society in general.

The property and land issue is one of FEKRITAMA's principal areas of focus, because 95% of its members own less than three hectares of land, and hardly any of it is secure. The farmers do not have formal land rights but nevertheless consider themselves owners based on traditional customs. Nevertheless, their dealings with influential people means that they face a number of risks. FEKRITAMA's vision, mission and strategies were developed to address these serious land issues, as well as economic problems.

### **Unit of analysis**

FEKRITAMA can be described as an agricultural membership association consisting of individual farmers organized at the local and regional levels. Using the IOB categorization of collaborative associations, FEKRITAMA would belong to category V: Programme alignment with organizations from another sector (public or private).

### **Vision, mission and objectives**

FEKRITAMA's vision structures the agricultural sector in value chains, in which the farmers are professionals who promote sustainable agriculture and a social economy that guarantees realistic food security and autonomy. They believe in a rural society that includes women and young people on equal terms. FEKRITAMA wants to develop an enabling work and living environment, where farmer families have the opportunity to develop and become more professional. FEKRITAMA is pursuing the following main development objectives:

- √ Ensure food security in the rural areas
- √ Promote the professional capacity of farmers in a social economy
- √ Defend the social and economic interests of farmers
- √ Protect the physical environment

### **Findings assessed against the 5CC framework indicators**

#### **1) What changes have taken place in FEKRITAMA's capacity?**

*CC1. The Southern organization has the capability to act and commit.*

There is substantial evidence that FEKRITAMA has consistently strengthened its capacity to act and commit over time. It is a participatory organization that is in regular contact with its constituency, and it has steadily increased its outreach to 19 of Madagascar's 22 regions.

The strategic plan includes realistic goals translated into operational plans containing a budget, a time frame, actions to be taken and responsibilities for its implementation. These plans are approved annually in a General Assembly (GA). Members participate in this policy-making process according to what is described in

its statutes. Members of FEKRITAMA participate regularly in consultations and training sessions about the technical and economic aspects of their work, such as production methods.

Members of FEKRITAMA's staff have contracts with formal job descriptions. They have training plans that are documented and formalized. The number of female staff in the office is limited, which FEKRITAMA says is the result of hiring staff according to professional standards, not taking into account positive discrimination, i.e. the gender aspect.

The organization develops realistic financial plans and reports with an annual profit-and-loss statement and balance sheet that is audited by internal and external auditors. The budget is related to the strategic and annual plans, such as its Plan d'Action pour la Souveraineté Alimentaire et la Professionnalisation des Agriculteurs (PASAPA). FEKRITAMA earns money through membership fees, payment for services rendered to members and for other economic activities. Although the organization has substantially increased its own income (from 58 million ariary<sup>9</sup> in 2000 to 269 million Ariary in 2009), in terms of the percentage compared to the total budget this growth was just 17% in 2009. Compared to 2000, this is a decline of 11%. The main reason for this is the acquisition of large-scale funding from EU and other donors. FEKRITAMA is a member of national and international networks, federations and organizations, from which it can draw resources, knowledge and ideas for implementing its own programme.

FEKRITAMA is well structured and organized in terms of monitoring its plans. The GA discusses and approves the annual reports, including relevant financial statements. The report contains a comparison of achievements in terms of activities and results and planning. The GA meets periodically. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system does not always assess the targets and indicators from the strategy and project documents, but staff members are aware of both their financial and technical responsibilities in the monitoring system. The monitoring data and information makes it possible to regularly update and provide feedback to the decision makers and responsible units, but it is also a learning process and is used to adapt plans.

Leadership is in the hands of the president and the secretary general (SG), who have held these positions for 11 years. It was only recently, in November 2009, that a new president and SG were elected. But as of February 2010, they had not yet taken up their positions. Leadership is rooted in agricultural practice and rural life. Members of the organization have the right and actual power to dismiss the board if it performs below the norm. This has not been the case in the last 11 years. FEKRITAMA has a code of conduct that is an integral part of the organization's policies and rules. These principles are accepted by the leaders and staff members.

The integrity and leading role of the SG and president seem to be accepted by the staff, who show a sufficiently professional and independent attitude in their work and ideas. FEKRITAMA's staff has even continued working for the organization despite having been laid off since there was not enough money to pay salaries in 2010. The key question is: what will the new leadership offer the organization?

*CC2. The Southern organization has the capability to deliver on development objectives.*

FEKRITAMA's track record demonstrates its ability to secure substantial resources from several donors, such as SCC, Cordaid (until 2000), the European Union and

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<sup>9</sup> One euro = 2700 ariary or 1000 ariary = 0.37 euros (2006).

Agriterra. The EU is a donor, but it can be considered a client as well. FEKRITAMA has won a tender for a project to strengthen regional agricultural centres. Its financial resources have increased ever since it was founded, with the exception of a short decrease in 2003. Its total budget has increased from 205 million ariary in 2000 to 1.6 billion ariary in 2009, an increase of 682%. A large part of the money in the 2009 budget – 83%, as opposed to 28% in 2000 – was donor- or project-based. As long as the development objectives of donors are in line with FEKRITAMA's, one could say that FEKRITAMA has the capability to deliver on development objectives. However, its basis and sustainability remain weak because it depends on the willingness and ability of donors to continue funding. This is not a given in light of Madagascar's current political climate and Agriterra's current financial situation.

FEKRITAMA implements the necessary infrastructure in the country's capital, Antananarivo, for central office tasks and for organizing training events and meetings. There are a limited number of cars, so staff also uses public transport to visit regional centres.

The number of staff has risen from 10 in 2000 to 53 in 2009, a substantial increase connected to the increase in activities and budgets. There are 14 female staff members now and, according to our interviews, this is the result of professional screening. The organization has developed clear policies, job descriptions and training plans for staff. Regular evaluation or appraisal sessions are still lacking, however.

FEKRITAMA has potential access to a wide variety of knowledge from the various organizations it deals with, in whichever capacity. These organizations include ministries, who define and implement policies; research institutes, who explore ways of increasing rice production (e.g. SRI, the System of Rice Intensification); and Agriterra, who explore specific themes, such as rural tourism, microcredit schemes, and the inclusion of youngsters and women in the organization. FEKRITAMA is aware of the fact that better use could be made of these organizations and their expertise. Knowledge management systems remain a challenge for FEKRITAMA, as for many other organizations.

*CC3. The Southern organization has the capability to relate to external stakeholders.* This is probably the strongest of FEKRITAMA's capacities. FEKRITAMA liaises with an impressive number of external actors in the same sector, as well as NGOs, the private and government sector, and international organizations. Examples include AMPROSEM, BIANCO, CITE, DRDR, FIPA, FVTM, MAEP and SCC. (see separate report on FEKRITAMA).

FEKRITAMA's members consider the organization to be a social one (44,837 active members out of a total of 46,699). The number of women (16,556) and young people (25,865) is impressive. The number of associations becoming members of FEKRITAMA is also growing, from 440 in 2000 to 2015 in 2009, an increase of 358%.

The organization participates in debates on themes related to its mission and contributes to local political development. It is a member of a number of national, provincial and district-level commissions and participates through these channels in policy-making processes and their implementation. But the organization questions to what extent these contributions have led to real changes in policies. Relations with the country's Ministry of Agriculture have always been good and instrumental in getting things done, but since the new and contested government took office, there no longer has been any cooperation at the political level.



The organization's leadership and staff have integrity, and this is the result of choosing the right people by applying clear recruitment procedures and questioning leadership in the GA. Other factors contributing to this integrity are clear descriptions of the separate roles and responsibilities of policy-making bodies and executive bodies. Members have the formal right and the power to protest against the board and management's decisions and policies, and how they are implemented. They can also dismiss the board. Again, the code of conduct is a key part of the organization's policies, and its rules and principles are respected by the leaders and the staff members.

Agriterra considers FEKRITAMA to be a reliable partner. Its systems are securely in place, and it reports in a correct and timely manner on finances and operational results. The organization has developed a track record of delivering on its promises towards members, donors and partners. In terms of rules, FEKRITAMA has formal statutes in place as well. The statutes outline the members' rights and obligations, and, moreover, they document the financial procedures to be followed.

FEKRITAMA is aware of the importance of coalitions. It cooperates with stakeholders at the district, provincial and national levels. It is a member of regional and global bodies, and it seeks cooperation from like-minded international organizations, such as SCC and Agriterra.

The importance of having a network of relevant external stakeholders was evident during our mission. We spent time with a local organization during the field visit that combines a support role with a more commercial activity related to the buying of rice. A meeting attended by more than 20 different stakeholders was organized in Antananarivo. The stakeholders explained their programmes and collaboration with FEKRITAMA (e.g. TITEM, ANAE, CPM, GCD/SRI, MAEP, MEC and MATOR). These types of networks are essentially informal, organic and depend on personalities and actual themes. FEKRITAMA does not map out or review all the relations with these actors in a structured and regular manner.

*CC4. The Southern organization has the capability to adapt and self-renew.*

The most important change from an economic perspective is the growing attention for increased production and marketing, whether organized in value chains or not. This change came about in 2006 after Agriterra analyzed FEKRITAMA's needs, progress and bottlenecks hampering the organization's operation. Although several agri-chains were created and attention was devoted to production and income, these important objectives need yet more attention. It takes time to implement a strategy change at the local level, taking into consideration potential obstacles such as people's willingness to organize in cooperatives, access to microcredit schemes and high-quality inputs, and the creation of marketing outlets.

A second important change is the political situation. A new government took power by force in 2009 and has overruled the former government's highly appreciated agricultural policies and strategies. As a result, the price of rice has dropped due to pressure from urban society. Farmers in the rural areas are barely able to break even when they sell their rice. FEKRITAMA does not have miraculous solutions for these key changes, which are beyond their influence, but it has intensified its programme with the intention of doubling or tripling rice production by introducing a new method called SRI.

A third change in FEKRITAMA's strategy is to cooperate with the government in its programmes to stimulate youngsters from towns to take up the agricultural challenge and produce food in rural areas. There are mixed feelings about whether

FEKRITAMA's strategy to work with the government is the right decision, but the fact is that FEKRITAMA is highly vulnerable and has to act cautiously.

A fourth change has been encouraged by Agritererra and entails the inclusion of women and youngsters in the organization and its activities. Today, the number of women and youngsters compared to the total number of members is astonishingly high, but it is not clear whether the figures are representative. A high number of female and young members participate in the activities, but they are not represented in the formal structures where there are very few women or youngsters. Gender is part of the vision, mission and strategy.

FEKRITAMA has displayed an interest to learn from results, and in this sense the M&E framework serves its purpose. During the mission's visit to organized farmers, they clearly expressed their willingness to learn and asked questions and made suggestions for solutions. Exchanging information about experiences and the lessons learned is crucial to this type of collaboration. FEKRITAMA has introduced a knowledge management system into its organization (including how to collect, process, organize and disseminate information). It hardly uses the records from the M&E system; rather, it uses stories from farmers in the field.

*CC5. The Southern organization has the capability to achieve coherence.*

The organization has a clear vision, mission and strategy for achieving its objectives either through formal programmes or its own regular activities. Members participate regularly in consultations and general meetings where these objectives and strategies are tested against results in the field.

The scope of FEKRITAMA's activities is consistent with its vision and mission, and this is reflected every year in an annual plan derived from the organizational strategies. Since the nature of the problems FEKRITAMA faces does not change and progress is necessarily slow, the organization keeps to the activities that were originally formulated when the organization was founded. The main issue is basically the right to own land and the development of a social economy. Activities and funding are the cornerstones of the programme. Coherence is also created by stable management and leadership, reflected by the long tenures of the SG and president.

## **2) What effects have changes in FEKRITAMA'S capacity had on the realization of its development objectives?**

Some examples of outputs as a result of changes in FEKRITAMA's capacity include:

- Closer collaboration with authorities on land issues and cattle theft
- Production of seeds (rice, maize and peanuts)
- Sales of agricultural inputs (fertilizer, pesticides, tools and equipment)
- Technical advice to associations in the field of administration, rules and regulations, statutes, etc.
- Information on production techniques for all sorts of crops
- Market information (price, supply and demand, buyers, etc.)
- Training in SRI, gender, HIV/Aids, etc.
- Facilitation and organization of value chains

In addition to holding discussions at the secretariat level in Antananarivo and reading the (annual) reports, the evaluation team visited the villages of Imeritsiatosika and Sandrandahy and walked through the fields, talking to farmer groups (see Chapter 3.3 and Annex 6 in the report on FEKRITAMA). We observed the improved production of rice, the production of seedlings, an awareness of gender issues in farmer groups and the role played by local extension workers. We heard stories about rules and

regulations in local associations, about resistance to the creation of cooperatives, of which there were examples of bad past experiences. We also learned that the trained and more skilled members do not always relinquish other essential resources, such as credit or improved inputs at reasonable prices, to increase production. The investment programmes in the rice, peanut and maize value chains is the result of a study tour in West Africa. The findings were used to encourage similar programmes in Madagascar.

FEKRITAMA has a solid database for a number of agricultural products on the number of producers, the number of female producers, production, overall turnover and financial results per member. In general, the data show rather drastic increases, but production and income figures have decreased. The effects of the political and economic crisis have been deeply felt in the villages, and this was discussed during the field visits on 21 January and 3 and 4 February. Depending on the economic activities, some members increased their income (production of silk worms), while others saw it diminish (rural tourism, marketing of milk).

The above-mentioned results were achieved, among others ways, by the services of FEKRITAMA's staff. This would not have been possible without external funds.

In more general terms, we were informed of the following changes in the lives of members:

- Further adoption of modern farming methods (SRI, medicinal plants)
- Feeling of pride at being part of FEKRITAMA
- Members pay their annual contributions
- Members are consulted for meetings at local/district or national levels
- Local authorities consider members important partners

### **3) How effective have Agriterra's interventions been in strengthening FEKRITAMA's capacity?**

Agriterra's interventions can best be described as a support mechanism for the implementation of FEKRITAMA's strategic PASAPA plans from 2002 onwards. Financial support has been important because it has grown from 92 million ariary in 2002 to 364 million in 2009. This represents 23% of FEKRITAMA's 2009 budget. Different sources have confirmed that this financial support has been consistently smooth: FEKRITAMA is well capable of presenting budgets and accounting for results, and this has enabled Agriterra to handle affairs expediently. However, this also exposes FEKRITAMA to external funding shocks, something that actually happened during this mission when Agriterra suddenly suspended funds for 2010. This happened in addition to the previously announced halt of Swedish support to the value chain project. The intervention was effective until 2009, but it appears to be vulnerable in 2010.

Although Agriterra's support over the years has remained very flexible and responsive to FEKRITAMA's pursuit of its own strategic plan, there is a slight imbalance, which is to say there have been too few missions to establish a real personal and professional relationship. A 2006 mission that focused on economic activities and support for FEKRITAMA's producers had considerable impact. One could say that FEKRITAMA did not ask for much external assistance or inputs, but one could also argue that effective partnerships require regular contact and fresh inputs. Agriterra's support has by default ensured that FEKRITAMA's capacity development process remained an endogenous process.

The support has been effective also because the organizational conditions are favourable. FEKRITAMA is a stable and tightly structured organization at all levels with strong and long-lasting leadership. Working with these types of organizations is rewarding in the sense that new ideas and experiences are taken on board, but they do not always take action quickly enough according to Agriterra (culture and experiences).

Agriterra's approach and support to capacity development processes ensures that they remain endogenous and that attribution can be determined only in relation to specific aspects of capacity, such as trained staff and funds, but not to capacity development processes in general. Agriterra is fully satisfied and comfortable with its role as a contributor or catalyst to a local capacity development process.

### **2.3 Case study III: SYDIP, Democratic Republic of Congo**

The idea of creating SYDIP (Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Paysans) was born in 1993 after members of Butembo's civil society met in Northern Kivu, a province in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Twelve farmers' organizations and NGOs were behind the initial idea to create SYDIP. It was not until 1996 that SYDIP was officially established. SYDIP is structured as a union and was created in a spirit of solidarity. It advocates equality without discrimination, a policy many farmers adhere to. SYDIP chooses its own leaders, and up to this day most of the leaders are from this original generation.

#### **Unit of analysis**

SYDIP can be described as an agricultural membership association consisting of individual farmers organized at the local and regional levels. Using the IOB categorization of collaborative associations, SYDIP would belong to category V: Programme alignment with organizations from another sector (public or private).

#### **Vision, mission and strategy**

SYDIP considers farmers to be professionals operating in a world that demands hard work but also promotes solidarity and justice. SYDIP's mission is to improve the situation for farmers by undertaking a number of activities in the following areas:

- Lobbying and advocacy for the interests of farmers
- Mobilize the union spirit
- Legal support and guidance for members
- Technical agricultural advice
- Inclusion of gender and youth in all activities
- Marketing research
- Structuring of producer organizations

These are some of the ways in which SYDIP wants to help improve the economic and social conditions of small farmers and enhance their capacity to negotiate for a better agricultural profession.

SYDIP creates strong 'units' of farmers within the organization and at different levels, namely the local, district and provincial. It has also created groups of women and youngsters to see to their specific interests. There are 12 producer organizations for different products.

The services SYDIP offers include:

- Legal support and guidance for members in order to defend their professional interests and their right to live a decent life in rural areas

- Advice and training in technical areas such as agriculture, livestock, fisheries and handicraft
- Marketing research for agricultural products
- An information service for land issues in Northern Kivu
- A voice for farmers to defend their rights

The vision and policy for developing capacity is as follows:

- Organize and mobilize a large movement of small farmers united in a Chamber of Farmers by structuring their producer organizations. SYDIP should guide, inform and train the farmers in order to better defend their rights.
- In order to realize this goal, SYDIP needs external support from local, national and international partners, as well as a network of local actors.
- The values behind these interventions and support are 'unite in solidarity' and 'equality without discrimination'.
- SYDIP wants to promote capacity development by creating clear objectives based on a regular analysis of the context and the problems that generate the strategic and annual plans. SYDIP refers to this as planned change. The organization is, of course, aware of the need to solve urgent problems whenever they occur.

## **Findings assessed against the 5CC framework indicators**

### **1) What changes have taken place in SYDIP's capacity?**

*CC1. The southern organization has the capability to act and commit.*

SYDIP has prepared strategic plans (2009-2012) and translated them into annual plans. These plans and reports were prepared by the central office (secretariat general) and presented and discussed during annual meetings (GA). The procedures for the participation of representatives (producer organizations, women, youth, local committees and intermediate levels) are strictly adhered to. One problem is that trained leaders and representatives who participate in these discussions at a central level do not sufficiently inform members at the local level. Hence, there is an information and communication gap.

SYDIP considers it important to train its staff and members, be it on site, in the office, in a classroom or by exposing them to foreign countries. In line with the union spirit, and the strict rules and regulations that exist in DRC, there are manuals with procedures about staffing guidelines: recruitment, profiles, task description, contracts and annual performance reviews. Staff are recruited for two years, and if they perform well, they are offered permanent contracts. Every three months, the staff (30 at present) discusses their performance with superiors. Seven staff members are female, and although women are encouraged to apply for jobs at SYDIP, few do so.

SYDIP manages to acquire funds from internal and external sources, but the system is plagued by serious flaws and dangers. Not all the members pay their annual contribution. Not surprisingly, increasing the number of paying members is a priority in the strategic plan. Another issue is the modest income generated from commercial activities. A third problem is funding cuts by SYDIP's largest donor in 2010. Since Agritererra is also experiencing severe funding problems, organizations such as SYDIP will only get small subsidies for the year 2010. Half of the organization's revenue comes from external funding, so external funding cuts, whether temporary or not, puts the sustainability of some activities at serious risk.

There is a clear description of responsibilities with regard to finances: budgets are approved in the annual meetings and the secretariat gets a mandate to perform

accordingly. There is a clear distinction between the role of the secretariat and the board.

SYDIP has an extensive local, regional and international network. It has partnerships with the government in different networks such as GADHOP, Wima, FOPAC/NK and LOFEPACO. It has relations with the local university (the Catholic University of Graben) and research organizations such as CIAT and FARA. And it is a member of EAFF and IFAP (Paris). SYDIP is also a partner in a project together with Agrisud, a French organization whose motto is 'fighting poverty through enterprise', and who implements projects with European Commission money. SYDIP clearly describes the relationships it has with all its partners and what the latter's responsibilities are.

The organization has a well-integrated and well-embedded system for monitoring plans. The annual meeting approves the progress and financial reports. All project descriptions and objectives have indicators that are measured and monitored. Every three months, a report is produced according to the manual for financial and administrative procedures. Field staff are expected to submit monthly reports. Field officers receive feedback from the staff at the central office during monthly meetings. Lessons should be drawn during these meetings on how to improve procedures. Although the systems and procedures are clearly outlined, they are not always followed in practice. There are many reasons for this, such as insufficient discipline and distant management, physical bottlenecks and irregular meetings.

Leadership is well institutionalized at SYDIP and cannot be understood only in terms of the two men in charge, namely the president and SG. They are both quite new at the organization (the president's first term ends in 2010, and the SG was only appointed in 2008). In fact, the organization's leadership runs through all levels, such as the youth, producer and women's commissions, and at the local and central levels as well. This is all very well described and institutionalized in the organization. The challenge, however, lies in bridging the gap between those who are well trained and those who are not, and between the informed (at the central level) and less informed (at the local levels).

The leadership's integrity is accepted by the staff and the members, in part because they have the right to dismiss members of the board during the annual meeting. Elections for new board members are organized every five years. There is respect for mandates and procedures.

*CC2. SYDIP has the capability to deliver on development objectives.*

The financial resources have diminished over the years mainly due to reduced income from annual membership fees and project funding by international donors. Income from the organization's own commercial activities is growing but not sufficiently to cover a significant part of recurring costs. SYDIP's dependency on external funding makes it vulnerable.

The service delivery does not rely heavily on infrastructure, though SYDIP does have access to a good physical infrastructure (offices, stores) and means of transport. The various stations for the production of seeds are important. There is no serious shortage in that respect.

Staffing is quite stable, even during hard times, such as the year 2010, when people continued to work at the organization despite a lack of external funding. A cynic might say that there are no or few other job alternatives for staff, but it is clear from discussions that staff members feel they have a mission and are proud to belong to the organization. Staff members receive training in their area of competence and are

outsourced to external missions. Some staff members have extensive experience, and the organization can benefit from the expertise of new staff members, in areas such as marketing and commerce. The recently introduced staff appraisal system is a potentially useful tool.

SYDIP considers knowledge and its acquisition crucial, and as a result it has strong links to other institutes and networks. However, the organization does not seem to take sufficient advantage of these partnerships and their body of knowledge. Some reasons why the organization does not learn sufficiently from its experiences are other priorities and time pressure. SYDIP is aware that this needs to improve. In fact, a project was organized in April 2010 in the area of potato production. Visitors from neighbouring regions and local producers gathered around potato fields to exchange experiences and discuss problems. This is a good example of how to learn from practice.

*CC3. The organization has the capability to relate to external stakeholders.* SYDIP is a type of union and has strong social and political ties with small farmers. It is their organization, and they actively participate in discussions, elections and have a voice in the approval of plans and reports. One problem, however, is that a high number of members do not pay their annual contribution, and this can be interpreted as a lack of faith in the organization. SYDIP is working hard to increase the number of paying members.

SYDIP does not belong to any government commissions, although the government consults the organization on certain issues. It is part of a network of government institutions, and yet it is difficult for the organization to influence policy (through FOPAC/NK, for example) at the national level. Other stakeholders include local organizations working in the same area. Field visits showed that SYDIP is considered an important partner with whom others like to collaborate whenever possible. On the other hand, overlapping activities generates some competition between these organizations.

SYDIP has done much to avoid the problem of corruption and to create a culture of integrity. It has done this by setting up the organization with separate mandates and annual meetings at every level; by delegating responsibility to all levels in the GA; by implementing strict procedures during annual meetings; by giving its staff the power to veto decisions taken by management and the board that are inconsistent with earlier agreements; and by clearly defining the individual responsibilities of the board and the SG. The statutes also contain a code of conduct pertaining to these issues. All these aspects help to create a culture in which different members of staff regularly interact, thereby reducing the risk of corruption.

SYDIP's strength is its highly structured and participatory way of making strategic and annual plans. The strategic plan for 2009-2012 outlines a vision and strategic objectives to which the members must adhere. Delegations from the local and intermediary levels will voice their concerns if operations run behind schedule. However, the many physical bottlenecks – such as poor road conditions, vast geographical expanses, weather, the distance between the central office in Butembo and the farmers in the field – remain a serious obstacle to effective service delivery. Documentation of the organization's track record in terms of delivering on its promises to constituents, donors and partners is still poor.

SYDIP is very much aware of the importance of establishing coalitions with other organizations, and it puts this into practice. It has created institutional ties with numerous organizations at the local, regional and international levels. Projects with

the FAO, PAM, VECO and Agriterra are examples of these ties. It also collaborates in the field of research with the Catholic University of Graben in Butembo, CIAT and FARA. SYDIP has commercial ties with PHARMAKINA, CODEPROVI, WMC and others. At the international level, they are represented in EAFF and IFAP. There has been some progress in the way SYDIP maintains contacts, and informs partners and stakeholders – a website was built for the organization, for example – but it is not updated regularly. However, one can learn about SYDIP on various other websites (Agriterra, VECO, Agrisud, [AFAFO](#)).

*CC4. SYDIP has the capability to adapt and self-renew.*

Its origin is the concept of a union, a strong institution to defend the rights of small farmers against powerful actors, such as the government and rich local businessmen. Management and board members observe and interpret changes in the region or the country, as well as new laws, new policies, new players and new officials. They monitor these external trends and respond by getting involved in commissions or participating in meetings, at the national level too (through their umbrella organization).

Of course, the security situation is always precarious, which could have an impact on small farmers, their families and the support they receive from SYDIP. SYDIP acknowledged the need to focus more on economic activities, but this was partly the result of opinions voiced from the outside and internal pressure by small farmers. So while the awareness that change is needed exists, making these changes takes more time and effort than one would expect. Suddenly SYDIP finds itself having to offer a wide range of services and organize facilities in many fields. This is one of the major challenges it faces, and it is an extremely difficult one in the context of Northern Kivu.

The organization has accepted the new policy of attracting women and youth to the organization, and offering additional services and facilities. Women now constitute the majority of members of the organization, but they are not yet represented proportionally in the various boards and commissions.

Encouraging and rewarding learning and the exchange of knowledge is not a top priority on the management's agenda. All regular meetings, monitoring and evaluation sessions, and other events are occasions for learning and improving, which is more the result of institutionalized rules and externally driven procedures than the initiative of an individual manager.

*CC5. The Southern organization has the capability to achieve coherence.*

Some of the main characteristics of an organization like SYDIP are its mandate, vision and strategy, which the staff is familiar with so that all plans and services can be geared towards achieving the organization's objectives. In a sense, these objectives are simple and clear: defend the rights of small farmers and promote socio-economic development. This was the case in 1993, and it is still one of the main pillars of the organization's existence today. SYDIP, structured like a union, also devotes a great deal of attention to strict and transparent rules and regulations, and it encourages member participation. It is consistent about these organizational principles, and it will remain consistent in the future. SYDIP's members remind management of these principles during meetings. If leadership or management fail to uphold these principles consistently, they will be voted out of office.

## **2) What effects have changes in SYDIP's capacity had on the realization of its development objectives?**



The services that have improved as a result of better capacity are:

- √ Legal support to members on land issues
- √ Leadership training at all levels
- √ Technical advice on agricultural production, cost calculations and sales
- √ Facilitation and organization of value chains (five out of 12)
- √ Sale of agricultural inputs, including seeds and small plants
- √ Improved marketing information and marketing conditions for members
- √ Informing and training members in areas such as gender and HIV-Aids

These improvements were explained to us during interviews at headquarters with delegations from the agricultural centres, delegations of producer federations, farmer representatives and paralegals. This information was verified during visits to agricultural centres in Kasongwere, Bukondi, Luotu, Bulambo, Mutwanga and Oïcha (see Chapter 3.3 and Annexes 4 and 6 in the report on SYDIP).

These improved services have led to changes at the member level, such as:

- A feeling of pride to be a farmer capable of negotiating with authorities
- A feeling of belonging to the 'family of SYDIP farmers'
- Members are consulted to resolve problems with other farmers
- Women and youth are well represented and active in the organization
- Better knowledge about land rights and how to acquire them (in certain cases)
- Farmers have more economic awareness
- Acceptance of new production techniques
- Access to cinchona seeds, coffee, etc.
- Increased production (potato, cinchona)
- Commercial awareness of costs, calculation of prices, market conditions
- Increased income
- Savings from higher income or investments (houses, motorcycles)

Visits to the field indicate that there are certainly things that need improvement:

- Members complain that other farmers and non-members are able to access SYDIP's services too easily. 'They are only interested in getting inputs at low prices or gaining new insights during field visits by extension workers.'
- At the local level, members do not know the extension workers and are not aware of their democratic rights as members of SYDIP, nor what kind of influence they have inside the organization. Only those who have received training are aware of these rights.
- Those who have been trained as leaders do not sufficiently transfer their knowledge and insights to other members. As a result, two distinct groups have emerged inside the organization.
- There are a number of paralegal advisors who accompany members in their fight for access to land rights. But recently no new advisors were trained, and there was not any transfer of know-how.
- Although some physical improvements could be observed here and there, in general the poor living conditions in the villages remained unchanged.

The transfer of knowledge and know-how from technicians to farmers, from experienced legal advisors to new ones or from leaders to farmers remains insufficiently visible in the villages.

### **3) How effective have Agriterra's interventions been in terms of strengthening SYDIP's capacity?<sup>10</sup>**

Agriterra has supported several SYDIP programmes since 2002. These programmes were SYDIP action plans with objectives that dovetailed well with the organization's mission and strategy: land rights, legal support for farmers, training and awareness of rights (union), agricultural production and extension services, self-supporting activities, leadership (male, youth and female), marketing and communication strategies. Agriterra supported these activities by funding them and providing technical advice.

The previous sections outlined the positive changes in the organization's capacity. They are obvious and confirmed by this mission. However, the process is not complete yet. More things need to be worked on, such as the marketing capacity, the organization of the extension services and the agents, the financial systems and accounts, perhaps more efficiency as well. There is doubt about whether the organization has become stronger as a result of Agriterra's interventions. But no doubt the organization still needs strengthening.

One example from something heard at the secretariat general: the regular visits by the liaison officer have provided excellent opportunities to discuss and find solutions for our institutional and organizational constraints or questions. Also we have learned to plan and prepare budgets for the activities better.

It is the same story at the member level (development objectives). Agriterra has contributed to improved service delivery in the areas of legal support, leadership, agricultural production and marketing. Again, there is no doubt that there is a great deal more that needs to be accomplished AND improved.

One example given by farmers in the local commission that was visited: the visits to the potato producer organization generated new varieties, increased yields and a higher income for us (no exact figures available).

SYDIP's capacity has been strengthened, but the effects of this in terms of changes for members (outcome) are influenced by mostly negative external factors. Neither Agriterra nor SYDIP are in a position to influence these factors, such as bad governance, insecurity in some districts, the absence of an agricultural strategy, few supporting institutions, such as rural credit, roads, markets and the attitude of waiting for help. SYDIP and Agriterra are trying to mitigate the lack of these essential services by engaging in focused activities that supply credit to members, organize value chains from the producer to the markets in Butembo or Goma and raise awareness among members that it is better to act than to wait. However, in a vast and badly accessible region, this is a huge challenge to which one only can bring slight improvements.

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<sup>10</sup> *Effectiveness*: The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance. ....

*Relevance*: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and the policies of partners and donors. ....

*Efficiency*: An economic measure of how economically resources, inputs (funds expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results. ....

*Sustainability*: The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time' (OECD/DAC, 2006: 36).

## 2.4 Analysis and conclusions

### 2.4.1 Analysis

#### **1. What changes have taken place in Southern organizations' capacity?**

The organizations Agritererra supports have shown considerable progress in creating the capacity to act and commit by producing strategic annual plans and acquiring resources to implement these plans. They have designed monitoring systems and use the information when dealing with members during annual meetings. Their financial reporting systems are well developed or, as is the case with SYDIP, they receive full support when improving the systems. The sharing of ideas, making joint plans and budgets, and accounting for results are important elements of these membership organizations, ones that remain important notwithstanding their growth. Members we have spoken to explicitly mentioned this.

However, the further away from the centre (head office) the members are situated, the less influence they have. That was also the case with MVIWATA. Indeed, members of MVIWATA could theoretically use the recently introduced governance system, but conversations with these members revealed that they were not fully aware of how to do this, and they mentioned that they rely on the head office to help their local organizations. SYDIP members even complained about the geographical distance and the division of members into two groups: those who know about recent developments and have access to knowledge, and those who do not. Not surprisingly, distance and time constraints were mentioned as reasons for this, but there is more to it than meets the eye. Some trained people simply do not want to share what they have gained with others.

Strong leadership has proven to be instrumental to the growth of the organizations. In Madagascar, MVIWATA's president of the GA and the SG are both well connected to people in high political positions: not only do they have a strong vision but also good external relations. In Madagascar, the SG and the president are a strong team. According to the RMOs' statutes, new elections are organized every five years. However, the leaders in Madagascar occupied their positions for 11 years. In DRC, elections are due to be held this year, while at MVIWATA the president who opposed the SG a few years ago was expelled. Notwithstanding the fact that organizations have become much stronger, leadership remains an internal threat. Strong leaders do not necessarily have successors waiting in the wings and hold their positions for a long time.

The proportion of the overall budgets derived from subsidies was high in all cases. However, annual contributions and economic activity generated by the organizations themselves was comparatively small. Farmers do not have money. As little as US\$1–2 is a large sum of money for them. Various external factors, such as bad road conditions, tradesmen interfering with farmers in markets and difficulties identifying storage facilities, make it difficult to organize value chains. Internal factors include a lack of clear and direct financial incentives to join, a lack of active marketing activities by staff, a lack of trust, and insufficient knowledge and commitment on the part of staff. Another important reason why these RMOs generate little revenue themselves may be the difficulty to align and integrate land rights policies within a single organization, which is more closely connected to lobbying and advocacy than to a distinct set of economic activities.

The ability of these organizations' leaders to channel requests to one or several donor organizations resulted in an increase of available resources. They have learned to

speak the right language and managed to convince donors of their cause: to support farmers who need access to land, knowledge and economic resources. The number of members has been growing commensurately to these organizations' huge potential. All of them have made many requests for support. Nevertheless, this strong feature has been taken advantage of in some cases, namely when members do not pay their annual contribution and get away with it. This has prompted SYDIP and MVIWATA to take action and attempt to increase the number of paying members again. But the number of registered members at MVIWATA has fluctuated so radically from one year to the next, it raises the question of how many real members there actually are. With growth, these organizations also run the risk of creating distance between the top (secretariat) and lower echelons. The evaluators felt this during their study visits.

The number of female members has increased in all cases. In Madagascar, women constitute more than 50% of the total number of members. The explanation for this spectacular rise is certainly down in part to Agriterra's strategy to extend financial and other resources to promote gender in the organizations. So far, however, this has not led to an equal share of women in technical or leading positions.

The capability to adapt and self-renew is clearly demonstrated when it comes to adjusting strategies and resources in response to Agriterra's sudden cuts in financial support. In all three cases, the organizations reacted appropriately though differently: MVIWATA's SG searched for alternative sources of funding, while FEKRITAMA and SYDIP's leadership took drastic measures to reduce costs.

Not surprisingly, changes are implemented much more slowly when there are no sudden shocks to the system. The introduction of value chains has been slow at all the organizations, and they were not all successfully introduced. The reasons why it takes so long vary, ranging from bad experiences with cooperatives in Madagascar in the past to very difficult external market conditions. There are changes in the capabilities of these organizations, but they are gradual. All organizations have shown their capability to produce reports, to demonstrate accountability, to forge alliances with more and more partners and to develop new activities.

External factors only had a negative impact on the internal capacity of organizations in a few cases. In fact, external factors had an overall positive impact. The RMOs attract staff from the local market and establish relations with local authorities and arrange work permits. Basic facilities such as water and electricity are present most of the time. The RMOs' goal of serving more members enables them to develop and improve, as do their internal feedback mechanisms. Financial and other kinds of support from Agriterra and other external development partners is instrumental to this growth.

The internal factors that have an impact on these organizations' capabilities also include a combination of better informed and trained members and support staff with a well-developed support structure and strong leadership. This results in stronger organizations with a well-defined identity. The critical internal success factors needed for endogenous development include the information and feedback staff receives from members during technical meetings (product groups) or in GAs. Other internal success factors are staff relations and management behaviour. In one of the cases, management tried to exert too much control, thereby stifling the staff's development. External success factors include frequent contact and meetings with other like-minded local organizations associated either with governments, NGOs or the private sector.

The nature of these three RMOs make them examples of endogenous development. They all began as what one may term 'unions' that defend farmers' rights, and this spirit and political choice goes hand in hand with developing from within. Strong leaders and committed staff are the backbone of this endogenous development, but democratic systems are also essential in this respect. All the RMOs have close external ties, which encourage endogenous development. The practical nature of Agriterra's expert visits are considered to be highly encouraging for learning on site.

An example of an external threat to endogenous development is the existence of a heavily funded European Commission project, which – although working in the same area (value chains) – does not further develop the capacity of an organization like SYDIP. After four years, the project will be terminated, and SYDIP most likely will not have enhanced its capacity.

NGOs that deliver services and goods free of charge to members and farmers could also potentially impede (capacity) development as well.

## **2. What effects have changes in the capacity of Southern organizations had on the realization of their development objectives?**

The organizations have grown considerably in terms of number of members, number of female members, the development of (new) economic activities, the resources received over the years, the organizations' own financial resources and the number of regions in which the organizations work. There is huge potential for realizing the development objectives, but as yet not as much has been achieved as one would have hoped for.

The development of economic activities is a slow process. It depends heavily on external (market) factors, which have not had a positive impact in DRC or Madagascar. DRC is a fragile state, and the region around the city of Butembo is at the heart of this fragility, marked by insecurity, clashes between organized and armed groups in villages, bad infrastructure and unstable markets. Economic development is very hard to plan under such circumstances. Sometimes there is a success story to tell, but in other cases there is no progress to report. It is difficult to influence market factors, so the organizations try to mitigate this situation by organizing targeted support for their members.

Access to land is another key issue. The situation has improved for some, but not in general. There are many strong political and economic forces at work, and there is no law protecting small farmers. A case-to-case approach is needed, rather than a general strategy, to give all the farmers in the regions access to land. However, MVIWATA was able to cite a couple of positive examples, including one where it had been able to oppose land-grabbing by powerful local actors. The members of MVIWATA in question should, in fact, have been protected by the law, but it was not enforced.

More financial resources, not only from proper resources but also from Agriterra and other donors, result in more capacity, more activities and more outputs. The number of staff, the number of visits and the number of services have increased and led ultimately to improved outcomes, as verified by many of the members who were visited. Their houses, means of transport and incomes have improved. However, this picture should not be taken to reflect the general situation. Rather, it is based more on incidental evidence.

All cases show a clear connection between improved outputs as a result of more inputs. However, it is nearly impossible to prove that efficiency has improved as a

result of more inputs. There are no benchmarks for measuring the effect of inputs on efficiency. Moreover, the context is also an important factor in determining efficiency levels. Think, for example, of road conditions, weather, and the availability of water and electricity.

Not surprisingly, the organizations still generally find it extremely difficult to resolve the 'raison d'être' issue, namely that farmers must have more access to land and higher incomes, and perhaps even secure, sustained livelihoods.

### **3. How effective have external (Agriterra) interventions been in terms of strengthening the capacity of Southern partners?<sup>11</sup>**

Agriterra's support has been effective in terms of enabling the organizations to increase their activities through enhanced organizational capacity (see result chains in Annex 3). The funding of these organizations made it possible for them to hire more trained staff and thus enhance their outreach. Institutional advice has led to improved performance internally, such as financial administration, and recruitment, planning and monitoring procedures. The technical expertise Agriterra supplied has had a direct impact on members but also on staff members who received on-the-job training. Agriterra has insisted on strengthening economic activities, on including women and youth, and establishing links with other organizations (also internationally). This support would not have been effective if the quality of its experts and its advice had not been high, or if the RMOs had not been receptive to this advice. The fact that many changes were accepted and are being introduced is a sign of the support's effectiveness.

Agriterra is aware of the need to send professionals to the RMOs. There is an intake process for the experts, during which candidates are screened on their technical and communicative capacities. The assignment (ToR) is discussed between the liaison officer and the expert before the visit takes place. After the visit, a short report is written and sent to Agriterra. Feedback is requested from the organization.

During all the interviews, it was stressed that Agriterra's commitment and professionalism during its interventions were highly valued.

The combination of programme funding, expert missions and regular contact with the liaison officer worked the best in SYDIP's case, where all three of the elements were present simultaneously. Dedicated liaison officers visited the organization regularly and advised the organization on institutional matters. There were expert missions on agricultural production and marketing (e.g. potatoes), and an important funding programme was implemented. This combination was not applied with the same intensity everywhere, and at MVIWATA the technical support has been quite limited in recent years. It depends on the organization's demands as well as the ability of Agriterra and the individual liaison officer to respond.

The requirement to sustain the present capacity level is to have financial and human resources to implement the activities. The funding has to come from either internal or external sources. The internal sources in the form of membership fees or income derived from economic activities are insufficient at this moment. The external (donor) source is thus the only significant source that helps to sustain the present capacity level. But in addition to external funding, a well-functioning internal organization with strong leadership and management are other conditions for converting this potential capacity into a reality that may be maintained over time, even if at a lower level.

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<sup>11</sup> OECD/DAC (2006), p.36.

Agriterra's strengths can be attributed to its helping organizations to become stronger and increase their capacity. We have observed, and heard from many members, that their organizations have been supported in an effective way by a professional staff. All the organizations have shown that they have a comprehensive opinion about their capacity, i.e. the structure, the systems, the strategy and the staff. The organizations all have internal mechanisms for accountability. Mechanisms are also in place to receive ideas, feedback and to learn. They are typical membership organizations that are aware of the need to have their house 'in good order'. The regular meetings with members but also the GA are good opportunities to exchange views and information and to draw conclusions. All three RMOs invest in training staff and leadership at different levels in the network. The RMOs are set on achieving their ambitions and are aware of the importance of developing capacity within their organizations.

#### **4. What factors explain the level of effectiveness of external (Agriterra) interventions? What lessons can be learned?**

Agriterra uses a specific approach called the 'farmer to farmer' approach. Its strength is its explicit and clear advice in the area of agricultural production and marketing. In other words, the expert and the beneficiary 'speak the same language'. It is important that the Dutch expert has up-to-date knowledge on agricultural developments in specific areas.

Enhancing other organizations' capacities has always been Agriterra's core intervention. In particular, Agriterra considers issues such as the strategic potential, staff capacity, gender, income diversification, participation, accountability, representation and rate of organization. These capacities have, in general, improved in RMOs over the years of their partnership with Agriterra. Agriterra supports these internal developments at other organizations with a combination of funds, and technical and institutional expertise. The personal commitment and professionalism of Agriterra's staff is crucial for understanding the changes that have been realized in the RMOs. Agriterra's staff can be described as development partners who engage in discussions and have a positive influence on capacity development choices made by the RMOs.

Agriterra's experts are highly committed and do not view their assignment as just another job. Agriterra's liaison officers regularly visit RMOs and engage in serious discussions; engagement, after all, entails discussion. They familiarize themselves with the situation in DRC or Tanzania and gain an understanding of the organizations' strengths and weaknesses. This is considered one of the stronger features of Agriterra's method of collaborating with other organizations.

Agriterra respects ownership. RMOs propose plans and asks for support, which is facilitated by Agriterra if it falls within the budget.

The administrative procedures are clear as well: RMOs receive a new injection of money after they have sent the accounts and reports for the previous period. Agriterra is transparent and accounts for its engagements with the RMOs. It sends money according to agreed upon budgets.

A more critical issue is the RMOs' budgets. In recent years, they always grew proportionately with the total budget and grew more than 50% (except in the case of FEKRITAMA, who received funds for implementing an EC project). The budgets are used for specific projects, training and lobbying activities, but also to cover recurrent

costs. This creates a culture of dependency, which is not necessarily wrong, but it would have been more desirable had they generated their own revenue. And it would have been more efficient had they marketed their agricultural produce, which would have generated income for the organizations.

## 2.4.2 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1:** *Over the years, the organizations have become stronger and enhanced their capability to deliver on development objectives. This enhanced capability is mostly the result of a combination of internal factors (members, staff, systems and leadership) and external support. In this context, external factors do not play a dominant role in capacity development.*

A strong internal dynamics, resulting from the membership spirit in these organizations, has improved their capabilities. This membership spirit is reflected in mechanisms of shared strategy making, planning, budgeting and accountability. Strong leadership is another important factor behind the growth of these organizations, but it also constitutes a potential risk for sustained capacity if leadership were to change. This development process is primarily endogenous, but it is enabled by financial and other non-material support from external sources, such as Agriterra. Because these RMOs only have very limited resources themselves, they will remain dependent on a reliable partner that respects ownership and an autonomous pace of change, which Agriterra appears to do.

The division of responsibilities and the mandates is very clear and enables the organizations to function transparently. This transparency is true at the structural levels, from local to central, but it is also reflected in the distinction between producers, women and youth groups at these levels. Linked to this is the democratic nature of the organizations. Meetings are held regularly at every level, during which members make decisions on strategies, planning and reports. This system functions because members are committed and trained to actively participate in these meetings. There are procedures in place for elections and representation. The systems of accountability are well developed and enforced. The annual reports are presented to the representatives of the various layers and approved by them.

Staff and members in leading positions are highly motivated and committed to the organization, even when pay is suspended (e.g. in 2010). They are proud to belong to their organization. The commitment of members from the local and intermediary levels to come from far away to attend and assist in meetings is a strong asset of these organizations.

The RMOs have shown that they are capable of adjusting to sudden changes (e.g. Agriterra's suspension of funding in 2010). The capacity to relate to a large number of external stakeholders in different local, national and international networks is another strong asset of these organizations.

The main areas of concern are:

- The performance of the local units of these continuously growing organizations
- The weak mobilization of these organizations' own resources and limited number of paying members
- The strong dependency on leadership



**Conclusion 2:** *The organizations have increased their outreach, the number of regions, the number of members – particularly the females and youth – and their training and extension activities. In addition to improving land access rights for small farmers, the organizations also have helped farmers develop new economic activities. However, they are far from reaching their development objectives because there are still substantial problems, and external negative forces have had a major impact on these organizations, especially in DRC and Madagascar, though less so in Tanzania.*

Taking into consideration the very difficult context these organizations have to operate in, with strong opposing forces and an enormous demand for better land rights and social economic development, one must conclude that the original problems that prompted the establishment of RMOs are still present:

- Rich traders and politicians buy land, and poor farmers have to move further away from the cities and villages
- The market is very weak and prices are too low; the middlemen are the ones who benefit from the situation and farmers suffer
- The political situation is very unstable, which results in non-existent or badly implemented policies and practices

Therefore, it is difficult to say whether there will be any lasting positive changes for members. Stronger rural membership organizations certainly can influence these situations, but the contextual factors render this influence negligible. Think, for example, of bad governance, corruption, bad roads, no security from armed forces, a lack of good agricultural policies protecting small farmers and NGOs bringing goods and services for free.

**Conclusion 3:** *Agriterra's intervention strategy is leading to changes in these organizations' capacity and services when applied in this combined manner with committed Agriterra staff and a receptive RMO. In some cases this combined support is not sufficiently practiced.*

The farmer-to-farmer approach Agriterra uses to support RMOs is strong. The combination of financial support, institutional advice and expert advice is a very powerful way of supporting the development of RMOs. However, the balance of these three kinds of support is important and not always present. See also the earlier discussion on the necessity of this potentially powerful combination.

**Conclusion 4:** *The RMOs have managed to grow and develop because of their own strengths and vision. Agriterra's external support, however, which consists not only of technical and financial support but also of ideas for further development (gender, participation and economic activities) has had a significant, positive impact on this capacity development process.*

Agriterra supports the RMOs through a flexible approach, mostly catering to *on demand* requests. The experts are sent to an RMO when the latter has expressed the need to improve the growing and storing of potatoes, for example, and acquire methods for calculating the costs for this. Another type of demand may be an emerging potential for rural tourism or the possibility of introducing microcredit schemes. The institutional advisors focus on the internal organization, as well as issues such as membership fees or the participation of youth and women. The advisors speak the same '(technical) language' as their counterparts and have proven their commitment and enthusiasm. Members and staff hold their attitude in high esteem.

Funding was stable for years (until 2010) and allocated based on submitted projects or programmes. The budgeting, funding and reporting process is done independently from the advisory process. As a development partner, Agriterra engages in dialogue on issues such as gender, women and youth, and attempts to increase these groups' participation in activities and meetings or promote their membership in governing bodies. Advisors visit and discuss strategies for change, for example the need to increase the RMOs' economic activities and support members, but also to provide them with a solid financial foundation.

### 3 Policy reconstruction

#### 3.1 Vision and mission<sup>12</sup>

Agriterra's mission is to strengthen rural producer organizations, the legitimate representatives of rural people. This is based on the following analysis and vision: although the majority of the world population is urbanized, in developing countries most people still live and work in rural areas. The greater part of the rural population consists of poor farmers, amounting to more than one billion people, who feed the rest of the world. Agriterra is convinced that well-organized and strong farmers' organizations contribute to improved democratic relations, faster economic development and fairer income distribution (i.e. achieving the first Millennium Development Goal), as has been demonstrated in several publications.<sup>13</sup> They are essential to fight hunger and poverty in rural areas and indeed not only there. As long as farmers do not join forces, they will remain politically powerless and economically disadvantaged, and therefore they will not be able to play that envisaged role – hence Agriterra's ambition to help them strengthen and develop their capacities.<sup>14</sup> Agriterra's stated outcome is the strengthening of rural producers' organizations.

#### 3.2 Dutch development partners' intervention theory regarding capacity development

##### Capacity and capacity development

As is clear from the above, Agriterra's core business is capacity development: the strengthening of rural producer organizations (rural people's organizations) so that they themselves become genuinely democratic membership organizations that provide the services their members require. Agriterra's goal in its work with rural membership organizations is twofold: institutional strengthening and the promotion of economic initiatives. Economic initiatives involve projects that will increase the income of both the organizations and their members.

This is not to imply that Agriterra works with just any weak producer organization: it is important to know what organizations need strengthening, and why. Agriterra primarily selects those organizations that have the potential to become strong civil society actors, and in this sense the rural people's organizations with which it cooperates should have the following characteristics:<sup>15</sup>

- Their constituency should represent a considerable share of the rural population in their country or in the region where they operate
- They should aspire to fulfil a specific role in development
- They should work towards a society that allows the rural population to fully participate in political and economic processes
- They should always try to engage in constructive dialogue with other stakeholders (which does not preclude the option of strong protest when this is required)

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<sup>12</sup> Inception report.

<sup>13</sup> Paxton, P. (2002) Social capital and democracy: An interdependent relationship. *American Sociology Review* 67:2, pp. 254-277; Gouët, C., Leeuwis, C. and Paassen, J.M. van (2009) Theoretical perspectives on the role and significance of rural producer organisations in development: Implications for capacity development. *Social and Economic Studies* 58:3/4, pp. 75-109.

<sup>14</sup> *Mission Statement*, Agriterra, 2004

<sup>15</sup> Agriterra (2006) *Farmers Fighting Poverty*. Contribution to a conference hosted by the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation and Agriterra in Arnhem on 31 May 2006.

- They should be open to exchanges and dialogue with similar organizations from other countries.

Agriterra's approach to capacity development is strictly limited to rural membership organizations: value chains, networks, platforms or other hybrids are not objects of intervention.

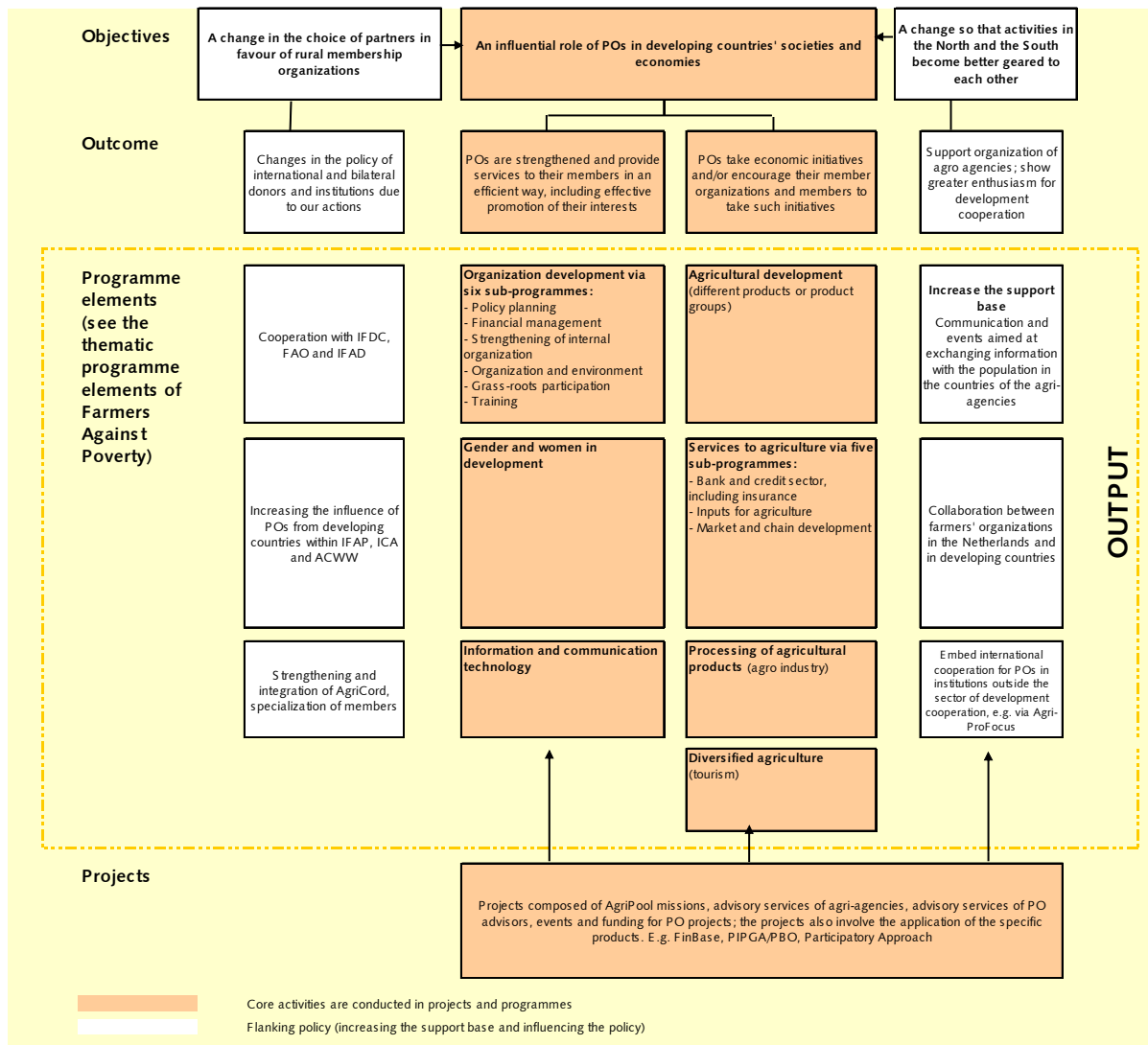


Figure 3. Programme elements

### External support to capacity development

Agriterra does not work on its own, but complements the resources provided by other actors to enhance its capacity development work. An essential part of this is peer-to-peer cooperation and exchange among rural people's organizations. Agriterra believes

that the best development advice for farmers' organizations comes from experts from other farmers' organizations. These are insiders who know what is at stake, since all these organizations have accumulated experiences that can be useful to others. This farmer-to-farmer cooperation is reflected in the long-term collaborative efforts between Northern and Southern rural people's organizations and in the management of a database of experts (called AgriPool, see [www.agripool.org](http://www.agripool.org)). The main asset of the database is the experience of its experts (farmers, managers, board members, etc.) in farmers' organizations.

Agriterra mediates in the facilitation of these various forms of cooperation among organizations in developing countries, and between these organizations and organizations in the Netherlands. Other (non-AgriPool) consultants are hired on an ad hoc basis. Other relatively external forms of support are provided by the previously mentioned alliances (AgriCord and Agri-ProFocus), which aims to fine-tune project selection and work distribution.

Likewise, several alliances with academic institutions have contributed and will continue to contribute to Agriterra's theory of change and the quality of support in specific areas:

- Wageningen University & Research Centre (2002–7): The Development Web, a research project on how rural people's organizations can contribute to development.
- Wageningen University & Research Centre (2005–6): Analysis and evaluation of Agriterra's profiling tool.
- CIDIN-Nijmegen (2009–present): Customizing the cooperation with cooperative societies, whose operational strategies (and the definition of their 'capacity') are different from those of general advocacy-type farmers' organizations.
- International Development Studies, University of Utrecht (2009–present): IS Academy on land governance and land grabbing.

### **Values and guiding principles with respect to development**

*Professionalism:* Agriterra's liaison and project officers provide appropriate professional support to RMOs in the field of agriculture and related fields. With AgriPool, Agriterra can ensure that a pool of expert staff will respond to an organization's specific needs and requests. This pool is complemented by Agri-ProFocus, a collaborative effort between the Dutch government, financial sector and research institutes to provide more comprehensive solutions for complex agricultural questions involving many actors.

*Transparency:* Agriterra aims to create transparency and accountability, showing what it is happening and why. Its profiling tool attests to this (to be discussed further in Chapter 5), as does its monitoring of the progress and performance of projects on AIN (the Agro-info.net website, which presents all of its interventions/projects to the general public).

*Client satisfaction:* The litmus test of the success of Agriterra's interventions is the extent to which client organizations are satisfied with Agriterra's services. The rural people's organizations should own the process, while Agriterra and the other partner organizations should facilitate support. The relationship between Agriterra and the rural people's organizations is based on sound analysis and dialogue, leading to innovative actions and opportunities to learn. Agriterra's initiatives are demand-oriented, i.e. they are based on requests from rural people's organizations. Clients understand these initiatives well, thanks to efficient, transparent and client-friendly tools and procedures. An ongoing client satisfaction survey (web-based) is permanently being carried out.

*Sustainability:* This is an important part of the initiatives, processes and systems developed by Agriterra with the rural people's organizations. The latter should not only be able to solve their immediate problems, but they should acquire the capacity to address different kinds of problems in the long term in different kinds of conditions. The desire for more financial autonomy is particularly important: an organization that generates its own income, speaks with its own voice.

### Impact, outcome and output

For a complete discussion of how Agriterra arranges results in a hierarchy (impact, outcomes and outputs), the reader is referred to the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme document (2006) and Agriterra's M&E manual.<sup>16</sup> The essentials are described in the following paragraphs.

Agriterra's core business is capacity development and the strengthening of producer organizations. Thus, what Agriterra wants to be held primarily accountable for is its success or failure to develop that capacity. The results of this capacity development are defined as 'outcome' in its M&E system, and are measured by the profiling tool.

However, stronger organizations are not the ultimate goal of Agriterra's work: as is the case in any true development agency, the goal is to sustainably improve people's lives. Agriterra helps to develop capacities because it is convinced that strong rural people's organizations are a sine qua non for poverty alleviation, democracy and socio-economic development. The latter, and above all poverty reduction, is what Agriterra understands as 'impact'.

Finally, output refers to the tangible results in projects that should contribute to organizations becoming stronger, so that they in turn can contribute to poverty alleviation, democracy and socio-economic development. Below, we mention the main processes behind impact, outcomes and outputs separately.<sup>17</sup>

### Outcomes

Agriterra's preferred outcome is the strengthening of producers' organizations. The profiling of rural people's organizations makes it possible to gauge the progress of with which an organization is strengthened at different moments in time using key indicators. It creates a sort of 'progress report' (see Figure 4) that analyzes how organizations become stronger and which particular aspects need further strengthening in order to serve its members as effectively as possible.



Figure 4. Progress report

<sup>16</sup> Published by Agriterra in 2006 and 2008, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> The definitions used by Agriterra are not the same as those used in this IOB study.

### **The outputs**

The outputs are the immediate products of the interventions in the form of advice, financing and collaboration with third parties. They have been aggregated as targets within work areas, the work areas being specific themes within the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme. As far as the work with the rural people's organizations is concerned, there are 17 work areas, some of which are related to the strengthening of capacities, i.e. of rural people's organizations (management, accounting, procedures), and others with improving the level of service delivery to members.

Since Agriterra's core business is organizational strengthening (= capacity development), 100% of its annual budget is dedicated to this activity. In 2007, the budget amounted to €11 million and in 2008 to almost €16 million. More specifically, approximately 70% of this was transferred to client organizations for project implementation.

## **3.3 Strategy and approach**

### **Main clients**

Agriterra's clients are exclusively rural membership organizations (farmers' organizations, rural women's organizations and cooperative societies) that have a tangible regional, national or international presence. They are committed to fighting poverty (which does not necessarily mean that these organizations unite only the poorest rural people in their respective countries).

The final beneficiaries of the support are of course the farmers, but the essence of the work is to help organizations – as opposed to Agriterra – succeed in reaching their members.

### **Main partners**

Contrary to the situation in many development agencies, in Agriterra's case there is no distinction between clients/target group and partners. In other agencies, the target group might be the indigenous people of the Brazilian rainforest, for example, but the work itself will be carried out by a local NGO. Agriterra avoids this situation by establishing work agreements with the same organizations that represent the target group. In other words, Agriterra wants to work directly with the target group and bypass intermediate organizations.

So, in this sense, there are no local partners other than the client organizations. This being said, there are of course international partners who are co-signatories of the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme, the main ones being the alliance of agri-agencies in AgriCord, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)<sup>18</sup> and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

At an individual level, the partners are all committed representatives of the Dutch organized agricultural sector. Agriterra established AgriPool to offer adequate professional support. AgriPool is a database of experts who are members or employees of a rural people's organization with relevant expertise, ranging from crop

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<sup>18</sup> IFAP is the world's largest farmers' organization. It represents more than 600 million farmer families through 115 national organizations from 80 countries. Farmers from industrialized and developing countries can use this worldwide network to exchange ideas and formulate shared priorities.

knowledge, cattle breeding and fishery to microcredit schemes and management training.

### Orientation towards clients

The description above shows that Agriterra delivers its services directly to its clients. The main goal of RMOs is to provide good services to its members. The organization can provide the services itself or through third parties. Agriterra assists by working with the organization to discover whether it is best placed to provide the services itself or not. Once this has been decided, it can help the organization provide the service, help the organization make other providers supply the service or help the organization overcome the weaknesses that stand in the way of that service delivery.

To identify these organizations, Agriterra uses 'organizational mapping', a quick and dirty desk-based inventory of potentially relevant member-based organizations in a given country using country statistics, an inventory of the most relevant organizations, and conclusions and recommendations on possible clients. A quick scan of potential organizations before, after or during a mapping calculates their chances of becoming a client.

After a cooperation agreement has been reached, Agriterra has to decide, together with the organization, whether it is best placed to provide the services itself or not. Once this has been decided, it can help the organization provide the service (better) or help the organization make other providers supply the service.

Rural people's organizations fulfil a mission defined by their constituents. As shown in Figure 5, that mission should lead to 'results' in the form of services for the members. These will, to a great extent, determine and be determined by the organization's 'means'. The actors, suppliers and other partners, as well as the context (enabling environment), are all important to keep the organization healthy.

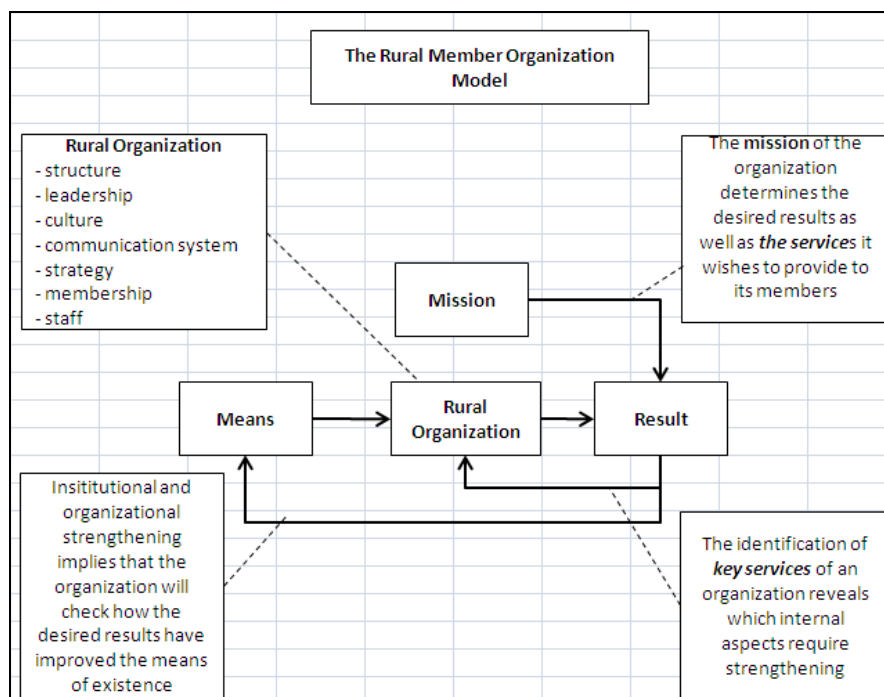




Figure 5. The rural member organization model

### 3.4 Core products and process

The main products developed by Agriterra are advisory services and funding services.

The advisory services facilitate and accompany the capacity development processes of RMOs. These services are provided by Agriterra liaison officers and experts and are mainly geared towards helping the organization as a whole, and less so to specific projects. The liaison officers have several functions: advisor, matchmaker, product developer, ambassador and scout. They are responsible for maintaining smooth contact with the RMOs in their portfolio.

The technical experts work in organizations based in the Netherlands, and they are recruited based on RMO demand. The candidates are screened on the required qualities of an advisor, such as language and report-writing skills. These experts are entered into the AgriPool database and are not only expected to deliver adequate services for the RMOs but also to create lasting linkages between the RMOs and the organizations in the Netherlands. The screening is not only the responsibility of the liaison officer but also of the AgriPool manager, who ensures that the right quality standards are employed. The experts work according to a professional description of their assignment, and after the mission the receiving RMO prepares an evaluation. The results are usually satisfactory, but there are some rare cases where poor performance is discussed between the expert, the liaison officer and the AgriPool manager.

Expected results and performance indicators are linked to the core tasks mentioned above and outlined in a cooperation agreement. Other important instruments are the results of the profiling exercises and the projects executed through contracts elaborated by the funding department. They usually differ from case to case.

This brings us to the funding services, which represent Agriterra's second main product. Agriterra has developed funding services and funding models that allow rural people's organizations to effectively acquire financial management capacities and, in the long run, move towards financial autonomy. Agriterra's funding department has developed a so-called solution for that purpose: FinBase. This is a series of tools, instruments and solutions developed by Agriterra for the staff of RMOs. The process starts with an audit or profiling procedure, after which recommendations are made. After client approval, a second phase kicks in, during which measures are implemented, monitored and evaluated. Agriterra actively assists its clients with financial support and direct advice.

Through the entire cycle of collaboration, Agriterra's projects department is in charge of processing applications for project funding and the administrative side of the advisory services.

The FinBase solution is a more concrete tool than the two main products (advice and funding services). Indeed, Agriterra is developing a number of products, which it calls Solutions, based on past performance and experience. They include packages designed to handle the frequent project proposals by rural people's organizations in a more product-driven manner. In addition to FinBase, there are seven other Solutions:

- Rural tourism development
- Participatory policy formulation

- Setting up cooperative societies
- Setting up a micro-insurance product package for members
- Grass-roots participation
- ICT for farmers' organizations
- Setting an agricultural research agenda

Agriterra always plans and implements its service delivery in the framework of budgeted and approved projects, and this procedure is closely monitored by project officers and on Agro-info.net (see M&E manual). The projects handled by the projects department all go through the same cycle as in many other development agencies. In Agriterra's case, the different phases are called Application, Definition, Execution and Completion. These phases convey the formal status of a project, with the addition of 'Rejected', of course. The status of every project and the date of all status changes are there for all to see on AIN ([www.agro-info.net](http://www.agro-info.net)). This enables clients to monitor the progress of the project that they have submitted in real time.

Similarly, they can follow preparations for field trips and advisory missions, and the recruitment of necessary experts, on Agro-info.net.

The above is part of an attempt (ISO-inspired) to increase orientation towards the client, which is also reflected in the attempt to be as demand-oriented as possible. Agriterra encourages the RMOs to define for themselves which partnerships, alliances and projects they want to realize. They should make their own choices regarding the development policy of their organization and country. Agriterra helps them implement that policy and advises them on which development path to take. For Agriterra, the point of departure for any strengthening process is always the organization's mission and vision: do the proposed activities contribute to the realization of those ambitions, or the capacity to realize them? In this sense, the previously discussed profiling procedure also serves a second goal: to provide information for dialogue between all parties concerned (Agriterra, the organizations) on the strategic orientation of the cooperation.

### **3.5 Present policy in perspective**

*Farmer-to-farmer approach.* The idea of creating an organization like Agriterra originally came from LTO, the Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture. Agriterra insisted from the outset on a long-term commitment from LTO in order to avoid becoming a mere extension of LTO. The farmer-to-farmer concept was developed to safeguard the North-South relations of farmers and their organizations. Shortly after, South-South relations also were evaluated during field visits. In the meantime, more than 10 years after its establishment in 1997, this commitment and the close relations between farmers and their organizations in the North and the South have become even stronger.

Important turning points in Agriterra's development, both in terms of policy and the organization of work, will be listed below. The above-mentioned creation of AgriCord and of Agri-ProFocus were important landmarks, which have impacted and changed policies and practices.

*Gender issues.* It became clear at the turn of the millennium that real success can only be achieved if women are involved at all levels of the organization. This conclusion was reached on the basis of analyses of the economic roles and contributions of both women and men. Thus, in 2001 Agriterra incorporated a women's programme into its general programme, and established indicators for the

inventory and evaluation of these gender issues. Agriterra aims to spend an average of 40% of its total expenditure on support for women's and gender issues.

*Structural strategic and financial alliance.* Agriterra had a strategic alliance with two Dutch development agencies (Cordaid and ICCO) for 10 years (1997-2006). They funded the lion's share of Agriterra's work during that period, and Agriterra was able to work relatively independently. In 2005 and 2006, the groundwork was laid for some major shifts in the alliance, its scope and how its work was organized. From 2007 onwards, a structural strategic and financial alliance was created with the Dutch government that became the main funder of the Farmers Fighting Poverty Programme (2007–10). This alliance is still in force. And unlike the earlier programmes, this one was a joint effort by all of AgriCord's agri-agencies, who pooled their resources for the execution of the planned activities, using the same online project management system: AIN ([www.agro-info.net](http://www.agro-info.net)). Nevertheless, there are still many challenges in the M&E realm, such as work harmonization.

*Direct cooperation with the lowest levels of rural producer organizations.* The new programme had many ambitions, but one of the most important ones was to fight poverty by cooperating directly with the lower-level chapters of the organizations (i.e. the local, district and provincial farmers' associations), instead of only cooperating with the umbrella organization. However, this mode of cooperation has to be executed in close consultation and triangular cooperation with the higher-level umbrella organization to which the local/district/provincial body belongs. The most recent activity report (see [www.agriterra.org/activityreport2008](http://www.agriterra.org/activityreport2008)) shows that good results have been obtained, but there is still much to be done.

*Capacity development through concrete products (Solutions).* Another notable difference is the structuring of Agriterra's capacity development work in products, also known as Solutions, which are rooted in the most frequent problems and challenges faced by rural people's organizations. This structuring makes the capacity development work less abstract and more visible to both the general public as well as the clients. See also 'Core products and processes', below. Finally, the 2007–10 programme will devote more attention to supporting the development of economic initiatives.

### 3.6 Analysis and conclusions

Agriterra's **theory of change** and its intervention strategy relies on an analysis of the rural poor in many countries. The problems are of a political, social, cultural, economic and technical nature. In order to contribute to good governance and democracy, to economic development and better distribution of incomes in a rural context, the RMOs can and should play an important role.

The pillars of interventions and support Agriterra has chosen can be distinguished as follows: 1) strengthening the capacity of RMOs; 2) supporting the activities/services of RMOs; 3) influencing policies of international and bilateral donors; and 4) linking up Northern and Southern organizations. The latter two are called ranking policies.

**The ambitions** are high, specifically when it comes to financial autonomy. Considering the huge challenges associated with improving the lives of poor farmers, who often have no land rights, and the difficulty of playing a lobbying and advocacy role at different levels (local, national, regional and international), it seems optimistic to believe RMOs can achieve financial autonomy. While it is a commendable goal, it is

not really realistic, even if the economic activities of RMOs become sustainable in the long term.

**The focus** of Agriterra's interventions is clear: RMOs. There are other relevant actors as well, such as NGOs, lobby groups and political organizations, but Agriterra has chosen to focus solely on RMOs. The improved capacity of these RMOs is called 'outcome', which does not dovetail with official development definitions of the term. The latter usually define outcome as changes in people's lives, farmers in this case. Agriterra calls this impact. From the perspective of ownership and partnerships, it is interesting to consider RMOs as 'clients'. They receive advice, and a relationship of trust is established, which improves service delivery to farmers. However, this may clash with the reality, which requires that more attention is devoted to the service delivery itself. This is Agriterra's policy, and the organization sends experts to visit RMOs and work in the field with the RMOs' staff, as well as the members themselves.

**The selected approach and tools** reflect the (political) choice to use RMOs for implementation. However, this technocratic approach has produced many complex tools for measuring progress in terms of either the organizations' development through the 8PI model or the targets of outputs within work areas. For an outsider it is not easy to get to grips with all these instruments and their mathematical approach. One could ask whether it contributes to the understanding of Agriterra's capacity development efforts and results.

## 4 Analysis and conclusions

### 4.1 Analysis

This chapter contrasts the evidence found in the three cases with the policy and theory of change. Lessons are drawn from the evidence and applied to Agritererra's present policies and practices.

Table 1 compares the general findings of the case studies with Agritererra's practices vis-à-vis the RMOs, and its own performance level.

Table 1. Indicators defining the five core capabilities

Core capability	Cases (general findings)	Agritererra (in relation to RMOs and internally)
1 The Southern organization has the capability to act and commit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RMOs have a plan, make decisions and act on these decisions.</li> <li>The RMOs enforces effective human, institutional and financial resource mobilization.</li> <li>The RMOs monitor projects but are less systematic about monitoring organizational performances.</li> <li>Leadership is action-oriented and the RMOs' driving force.</li> <li>It is assumed that the leadership's integrity is accepted by the staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AT encourages RMOs to plan and propose projects and programmes for funding. <i>AT has large programmes, such as FFP, but funds have been exhausted since 2010.</i></li> <li>AT supports the RMOs in improving human, institutional and financial resource mobilization.</li> <li>AT is not involved in monitoring RMOs except for reporting on projects. <i>AT is monitoring a comprehensive set of indicators, sub-indicators and work areas. But the process tends to be overly complex and technocratic.</i></li> <li>AT does not interfere in leadership issues but does occasionally support managers to improve their performance.</li> </ul>
2 The Southern organization has the capability to deliver on development objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RMOs had adequate financial and human resources until 2010, when AT funding was cut.</li> <li>The physical and mental distance between the field and secretariat is becoming too great (in some cases).</li> <li>The RMOs' infrastructure is considered sufficient and relevant for their core tasks.</li> <li>The RMOs have adequate and sufficiently stable human resources at their disposal.</li> <li>The RMOs have access to knowledge resources.</li> <li>The RMOs have fully paid semi-voluntary staff to train farmers and extend development messages. (legal, gender, HIV-Aids, etc.).</li> <li>The RMOs have working systems in place to organize services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AT injects considerable funds into RMOs, which leads to dependency. Often funds are used to strengthen RMO secretariats, which creates a gap between the organizations' central and local levels. <i>Efforts to stimulate earnings through economic activities or membership fees are not very successful.</i></li> <li>AT does fund activities more than infrastructure.</li> <li>AT is funding the training of staff and members, off and on the job.</li> <li>AT sends experts in specific fields and ensures that these experts are well selected and prepared. There were few cases of unsatisfactory performances; the few cases were mostly related to communication issues and interference.</li> <li>To AT, CD has reached an acceptable level when RMOs have financial autonomy and sufficient members. Support should last for seven years. In reality these criteria are not applied. RMOs are too dependent on financial support and are likely to remain so.</li> </ul>
3 The Southern organization has the capability to relate to external	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RMOs are seen as politically and socially legitimate by relevant stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For AT, this is a precondition before engaging with an RMO.</li> <li>Depending on the active role of the liaison officer, AT facilitates relations</li> </ul>

<p>stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The RMOs have operational credibility/reliability in the eyes of relevant stakeholders. There is some competition with NGOs, and relations with governments are very sensitive.</li> <li>• The RMOs are aware of the importance of coalitions and put this awareness into practice.</li> <li>• The RMOs maintain adequate alliances with relevant external stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<p>with other national and international stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking is an important part of AT's strategy and is encouraged. AT is a member of AgriCord, and has ties with Agri-ProFocus, for example.</li> <li>• <i>AT has a procedure in place to develop cooperation agreements, but this is not always applied and only few agreements have been signed. The evolution of AT's relationship with RMOs and their demands is also unclear.</i></li> </ul>
<p>4 The Southern organization has the capability to adapt and self-renew.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management has an understanding of shifting contexts and relevant trends (external factors).</li> <li>• Management has the confidence to change: it leaves room for diversity, flexibility and creativity.</li> <li>• Management encourages and rewards learning and exchange, including in its own management.</li> <li>• The organization uses opportunities and incentives, acknowledges mistakes that have been made and encourages a climate of discipline to learn (not able to verify).</li> <li>• Learning is an ad hoc process, more so than a well-orchestrated activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>AT has no influence on the contexts and concentrates on the internal organization and service delivery. It is assumed that leadership and management are very aware of context and trends.</i></li> <li>• <i>AT does not interfere in styles of management; they are highly culturally determined.</i></li> <li>• AT does not interfere in internal management, apart from supporting democratic processes within the RMOs, enabling feedback and discussions about delivery and planning.</li> <li>• AT uses formal and informal procedures to generate a learning approach. These procedures are very well documented.</li> <li>• AT does not systematically audit the RMOs' progress and learning processes. Only 4 RMOs (out of 150) are audited per year.</li> </ul>
<p>5 The Southern organization has the capability to achieve coherence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The RMOs have a clear mandate, vision and strategy, which staff are familiar with and which management uses inform its decision-making process.</li> <li>• The RMOs have a well-defined set of operating principles.</li> <li>• Leadership is committed to achieving coherence, balancing stability and change.</li> <li>• There is consistency between ambition, vision, strategy and operations.</li> <li>• The RMOs have a well-defined governance structure, in which elected representatives influence decisions at the central level.</li> </ul>	<p>Both AT and the RMOs distinguish themselves from other organizations by presenting a clear mandate, vision and strategy. This is part of the culture of AT and the RMOs.</p> <p>AT and the RMOs have an astonishing set of rules, procedures and systems in place. A risk of excessive procedure exists at AT. AT does not influence RMO leadership, which is outside AT's scope of influence. AT's leadership has a strong vision and is committed to achieving results.</p> <p>AT and the RMOs are consistent in the way they define operations, based on vision and strategy.</p> <p>AT has a well-defined governance structure with a board, and management. AT's Board decides on policies. Strategies are decided by the director and heads of departments. Staff reviews implementation and strategies on a regular basis in an formal and informal way.</p>

Agriterra's theory of change, the central pillars of which are to strengthen the RMOs' capacity and their services to their members, is put into practice through its funding and advisory services. The advisory services come in the form of either technical expertise, in areas such as agricultural products, microcredit or tourism, or institutional support, which focuses on gender, on systems or strategic planning and monitoring. The liaison officers play a crucial role. They often handle institutional issues as well. Experts from AgriPool, farmers or staff from Dutch farmers' organizations deal with the technical questions. Agriterra does not necessarily combine these forms of support in the same way for all RMOs. The mix of these ingredients for assistance depends on RMO demands (ownership as the foundation), on the liaison officers' assessment and the experiences of the RMOs with the technical advisors and their organizations. Practical considerations also play a role, such as accessibility, language, physical conditions and, last but not least, the relationship between the liaison officers and RMO management. Although no general rules exist for these forms of assistance, the principle that they should be combined is well embedded in the organization. If there is too much funding or insufficiently regular contact, the strengths of this unique concept suffer and relations become ordinary donor-recipient relations. This is not the spirit behind Agriterra's *raison d'être*, which holds great stock in the farmer-to-farmer concept.

Agriterra's strategy is to agree with the RMO on the support trajectory. Although this is the official procedure, it is not always followed. The starting point for collaboration is the RMO's ownership of the process. The RMO proposes a programme, asks for funding and expert advice. Agriterra does not force anything on them. But with time, it is not inconceivable that there may be a gradual shift. One could ask whether Agriterra is becoming a development organization, e.g. a microfinance organization, or will it remain an RMO looking for partnerships or twinning projects? The answer to this question leads to different approaches.

Although partnership is Agriterra's central approach, it is a funding agency and uses the classical programme approach with a programme cycle that measures CD by means of milestones (8 profiling indicators). It also sets targets and performs evaluations. This means the nature of Agriterra's relationships with the RMOs can vary significantly, which may happen unconsciously and even be undesirable.

Funding is a key element of Agriterra's strategy to strengthen RMOs. In the case of MVIWATA (2006-2009), Agriterra's financial contribution was on average about 25% of the organization's total budget. The figures for SYDIP and FEKRITAMA are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Agriterra's financial contribution (in absolute and % terms).

Year	2007	2008	2009
SYDIP (absolute) US\$	225,280	233,502	194,001
SYDIP (% of total budget)	53	57	68
Year	2003	2006	2009
FEKRITAMA (absolute) ariary	92.381.242	253.510.775	385.319.752
FEKRITAMA (% of total budget)	80	30 <sup>19</sup>	22 <sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> FEKRITAMA managed to get additional funding from SCC and an EC project (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Same for 2009.

This has led to a dependency that became painful when funds were exhausted. The RMOs had to take drastic measures or seek alternative sources of funding. The reason for the sudden exhaustion of funds is not the subject of this evaluation. However, it is important to ask why RMOs were not able to be less dependent on single funders. RMOs were not able to generate funds through their own economic activities or by raising membership fees. But their ambition to grow did not waver, nor did their desire to play a (lobbying) role at the national and international levels. To realize this you need funds, which Agriterra and SCC were willing to offer. The case of the EC project is slightly different because FEKRITAMA won a contract and is consequently undertaking extra activities.

It is Agriterra's policy to make RMOs independent from external funding, but it has not succeeded in doing this. On the contrary, Agriterra increased its funding. In light of the economic potential of RMO members, it also seems an unrealistic objective. It is therefore ironic that successful RMOs attract donor money but become dependent in the process. Organizations that acquire funds to implement their plans and thus achieve their objectives have to ask themselves how to strike the right balance between their own funds and donor funds (compare this, for example, to the Dutch rule, currently being debated, that organizations applying for government development money have to generate 25% of their total budget themselves). Few manage to do this, and hence strive to maximize donor money, which from an economic perspective is much easier than earning money by undertaking economic and marketing activities.

The theory of change does not include internal or external risks. In the evaluated cases, the internal risks did not seem to play an important role, since most of the RMOs services could be strengthened by seeking external input. External risks were responsible for a lack of progress in DRC and Madagascar. The change of government in Madagascar, which caused a political deadlock, and the lack of governance and infrastructure in DRC, are contextual factors beyond the control of the RMOs and Agriterra. The question here is to what extent these external factors are taken into account when formulating objectives for RMOs to deliver adequate services to their members. The lesson to be learned from this is to conduct a context analysis from the outset and during each review, and define realistic goals.

A final point is the question of leadership, power and culture. These are not mentioned explicitly in Agriterra's theory of change or in the 8PI model. Everybody knows how important these characteristics are in organizations, even more so in countries with little countervailing power. These characteristics remain hidden from Agriterra unless the liaison officer or experts that regularly visit the organization are capable of understanding and addressing these issues, particularly if these characteristics impede an organization's development.

Agriterra's approach is highly functional and rational, and focuses on the formal, tangible dimensions of organizations. The organizations' hidden or informal characteristics are not described. They include leadership, whether in the hands of one person or shared, whether new or old; certain members' influence; power games; the internal network; the ability to use each others' strengths or exploit the weaknesses of other staff members; the culture of sharing or keeping things for one's self; teamwork; and the financial incentives or lack thereof. All of these hidden and informal characteristics are also essential for achieving development objectives. They are not measured according to the 8PI model, but as long as the liaison officer is open to them and has a relationship of trust with RMO leaders, they are discussed. They are mentioned in the 5CC model, but the evaluation team did not succeed in implementing these characteristics. Including them in an analysis of the RMOs is a



worthwhile endeavour, but it requires a relationship of mutual trust and confidence to get reliable answers.

Agriterra is facing serious financial problems at the moment, and there is a feeling of uneasiness regarding its chosen strategy. As the director stated at the annual meeting: 'Should we concentrate on the big picture and get a large chunk of the money promised by the Group of Twenty, or should we lower our ambitions and work directly with a limited number of RMOs, without being very active in the (inter)national Agri Cord or Agri-ProFocus network?'

## 4.2 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1:** *Agriterra's theory of change has been applied to the RMOs and remains a powerful approach to further their development. In order to increase opportunities for stronger, more sustainable organizations and services, this approach should be used in a balanced way, by allocating funds and providing advice. The farmer-to-farmer approach can thus remain the central leitmotif.*

There is no 'one size fits all': the right balance between funds and advice is determined by Agriterra's liaison officer, who analyzes the demand for support by the RMO. This support should be reassessed annually by the liaison officer visiting the RMOs.

**Conclusion 2:** *RMOs cannot become financially independent if they want to influence decision makers from the agricultural sector and the government (at the local and national levels), and continue serving thousands of small farmers. They need to tailor their ambitions to the context and reduce donor dependence.*

The lesson to be learned from Agriterra's funding crisis is to avoid such a shock again by encouraging RMOs to either diversify the external funding sources (as MVIWATA has done) or actively pursue a financial autonomy strategy for a period of seven years, for example.

**Conclusion 3:** *The context plays a crucial role in the delivery of services to the RMOs and always should be analyzed when preparing strategic and operational plans.*

Agriterra is advised to focus more attention on the contextual factors and actors, and it should support RMOs at the national and local levels in the latter's struggle to change land laws and improve the economic and legal conditions for selling agricultural produce.

**Conclusion 4:** *The dimensions of politics, power and culture are difficult to grasp, but by creating a relationship between Agriterra and the RMOs that is stable and based on trust, these dimensions can be potentially revealed and consequently discussed.*

The combination of financial support, expert advice and peer-to-peer discussions about the organization and its strategic direction is an effective way of supporting capacity development. But successful support depends on the individuals: their capacity, commitment, relationships and mutual trust. Successful support also depends on its being predictable. The right conditions for improved service delivery are much harder to come by in Madagascar and DRC, due to difficult and negative external factors, while this is less the case in Tanzania. The key elements of capacity such as leadership, and trust between staff and members at the local level are

difficult for an external actor like Agriterra to influence. It takes solid knowledge, time and courage to address these issues when and if required.

One of the challenges facing Agriterra is to convince RMOs to make changes in their organization and in their services (production and chains) so they can have ownership of the processes. The other challenge is to take a very clear stand on its relationship with its partners because there is a thin line between donor-receiver relationships and real partner relationships.

A key question remains: Is Agriterra a donor or development partner that is inclined to monitor its projects and expenses, or is it building a 'farmer-to-farmer' relationship, in which a programme approach (no funding of separate projects, no monitoring per project) is the logical mode of collaboration?

### **4.3 Lessons to be learned from research on Agriterra**

Agriterra can use some of the 12 implications mentioned in the article 'Organism or machine?' to critically look at its support for capacity development:

- Keep a focus on ownership, because change is fundamentally political. Agriterra is very much focused on ownership.
- Approach capacity development more as a process of experimentation and learning than a process consisting of predetermined activities. Agriterra could focus more on process.
- Invest more in understanding the context in terms of political, social and cultural norms and practices, which shape the way an organization understands capacity, change and performance. Regular visits by Agriterra's liaison officers or experts are crucial for understanding the context. This is not always the case with the RMOs supported by Agriterra.
- Analyze more precisely the nature of change needed for determining which kind of support is appropriate. Agriterra is flexible in its support within a fixed set of approaches and expertise.
- Conduct capacity diagnoses as an intrinsic part of the change process and identify strengths. The 8PI model should be used more for this purpose and become a tool for communication rather than for capacity assessment. However, it serves its purpose as benchmarking tool.
- Devote greater attention and give more recognition to less visible aspects of capacity, such as values, legitimacy, identity and self-confidence. This is part and parcel of Agriterra's current approach.
- Be more creative about support options. Agriterra proposes a variety of options in addition to international technical assistance, such as national technical assistance, peer-to-peer visits, exposure to foreign countries and input from international experts in the farming sector.
- Be prepared to accept/tolerate a higher degree of risk and failure on the road to promoting learning and innovation. Although Agriterra is realistic and accepts these risks, a more systematic learning approach would be beneficial in its effort to support the organizations.
- Invest in relationship building. This is one Agriterra's strongest points.
- Be more realistic about the scope of external intervention. External partners are marginal actors and wield less influence than underlying domestic processes and forces. This is both true and untrue: Agriterra's funding is not marginal and significantly impacts the RMOs' activities and scope. Agriterra should make its funding policy and funding practice very explicit., In other words, there is no standard recipe for funding practices since the situation varies from country to country and organization to organization.

## 5 Comparing the 5CC and 8PI models

*How effective are the five core capabilities model and Agriterra's eight profiling indicators model in measuring and understanding capacity development?*

The evaluators made use of two different sets of CD indicator frameworks for their assessment of the three case studies: IOB's 5CC model and Agriterra's 8PI model. Both frameworks are intended to help measure and understand CD better by identifying several of the factors that may normally not emerge from conventional organizational analysis tools. This is especially the case for indicators that try to capture the external contextual factors that influence an organization's performance, which is a fundamental assumption behind the open systems model that IOB has recommended for the CD evaluation series.

The evaluators have consciously not applied the indicators rigorously during the interviews with staff and members of the three organizations, since this would most likely not do justice to the full range of factors that influence CD, some of which may be hidden to the naked eye. Instead, the evaluators found it useful to apply both frameworks intuitively during the field work in order to assess which of the frameworks have appeared most suitable for capturing the CD of the organizations in the three case studies. The 5CC and the 8PI frameworks were assessed in detail after the interviews together with the management of the three RMOs. They examined the relevant indicators and rated them according to their ability to explain key aspects of CD (Annex 4). Finally, in our presentation of the three case studies in this chapter, the evaluators used the 5CC framework to structure our findings on capacity changes over time. In other words, this was another way of testing the practical applicability of the framework.

It is understood that IOB does not have a specific interest in assessing the 8PIs, let alone comparing the two frameworks, since this is not part of the ToR. However, Agriterra has informed the evaluators that they would find such a comparison valuable. Agriterra's interest in an evaluation of the 8PIs derives from the fact that they primarily work with membership organizations and therefore are particularly interested in discovering which of the two frameworks is most suitable for assessing its partner organizations' CD. Lessons can probably be learned from an analysis of both frameworks, which could potentially help improve Agriterra's own internal knowledge about the most powerful CD indicators for future assessments.

The interaction between organizations and their external environment, which entails a constant exchange between internal and external actors in the organization, is a key component of the open systems model, which the 5CCs framework is derived from. These exchanges represent several competing factors that can benefit or obstruct the performance of an individual organization. A main criterion for assessing the usefulness of the 5CC framework, therefore, must be the extent to which it effectively captures ongoing exchanges and the dynamics of the individual organization and the external environment, and how these may influence CD. The same criterion will be used for Agriterra's 8PIs, since the profiling tool has been designed particularly for membership organizations assumed to have an ongoing interaction with a dynamic, changing environment with competing interests.

### **The 5CC framework**

The evaluators believe that each of the main five core capabilities is suitable for describing elements of CD applicable to the three case studies. This was also demonstrated in the presentation of the three cases in this chapter. However, the

majority of the CCs are actually related more on internal organizational aspects, and less to the wider context – with the exception of CC3: ‘The Southern organization has the capability to relate to external stakeholders.’ This makes the link established in the ToR between the 5CCs and the open systems model less obvious, as most of the focus is on internal organizational aspects.

Whereas this lack of attention on external aspects in the proposed indicators may not represent a major problem for organizations whose performance criteria are easy to determine, this is not true of network organizations, such as the ones Agriterra works with. The ability to relate externally in numerous ways will be one of the most significant aspects of measuring the relationship between capacity development and performance. In an attempt to calibrate the 5CCs of organizations with more intense external relations, IOB has developed a list of additional indicators for member-based Collaborative Associations (see Table 3 below). However, apart from the new indicator ‘The capability to achieve coherence’, which will be explored in a bit more detail, most of the other indicators remain a bit too general to help capture changes in CD for network organizations.

Table 3. Additional indicators for Collaborative Associations

Core capability	Additional indicators for Collaborative Associations
To commit and act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership is shared rather than positional</li> <li>2. Members act to satisfy the interests of all members</li> </ol>
To deliver on objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is sufficient transparency, data freely shared and explained</li> </ol>
To adapt and self-renew	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Members effectively deal with their diversity and power asymmetries</li> </ol>
To achieve coherence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a results driven structure and process</li> <li>2. Attitudes of respect and trust are present, avoiding stereotyping or reactive behaviour (culture)</li> <li>3. Credit and responsibility for the collaboration is shared among members</li> <li>4. Members ensure that views of less powerful stakeholders are given a voice</li> </ol>

Source: *Evaluation of collaborative associations*, by Piet de Lange (IOB), 24 April 2009

The ‘To achieve coherence’ indicator seems at first glance to be more relevant to network organizations, though it is difficult to assess how to further implement these indicators. But if ‘results-driven structure and process’ implies a conscious focus on how the network can contribute to collective higher-level development results generated by numerous actors, then this complements open systems thinking well. However, the ‘attitudes of respect and trust’ indicator, though undoubtedly important for maintaining a healthy balance within a wider network, remains vague and hard to implement in practice. One could even say that manifestations of ‘respect and trust’ differ widely from country to country, network to network and culture to culture, making it practically impossible to determine, let alone assess, their importance. Instead, the main challenge is likely to be the use of this indicator as a general frame of reference from which specific questions can be derived to illustrate the local context.

Shared ‘credit and responsibility for the collaboration’ is another key factor that will determine whether the networks stay together in the long term. It will certainly reveal insights into the capacity of the network to perform as an effective collective. Measuring this in practice may be extremely difficult, however, and will be influenced by local power relations that dictate, for example, who is allowed to take credit for a network’s collective accomplishments. This also relates to the fourth indicator, which advocates giving a voice to the views of less powerful stakeholders.

Another thing missing from this list is the need to take a closer look at the indicators associated with networks' governance structures, which in many ways will determine how strong a voice members have and how power imbalances are dealt with, if at all. Thus, in the three case studies, the *active* membership and the ability of these members to influence the agenda by using the governance structures played a major role in determining the network organization's overall credibility and legitimacy, and hence its capacity as well.

Overall, the 5CCs are relevant, but at an operational level they are somewhat too general and open to interpretation. It would have been particularly interesting if more attention been paid to the organization's ability to operate in a complex external environment. In most cases, this ultimately determines which capacity will survive in the long term. It also determines the degree to which support for a specific capacity will lead to long-term capacity changes. This is already a fundamental assumption behind the open systems model. The additional indicators for Collaborative Associations attempt to make up for this, but they remain subjective.

The evaluators were surprised that there was no mention of gender in the 5CCs. This suggests that CD processes are either gender neutral, or that gender does not significantly influence CD processes. In fact, gender has been a mainstay on the development agenda for at least the past 30 years, precisely because no development effort, including capacity development, can be considered gender neutral. On the contrary, it has been long accepted that if development efforts are not carefully calibrated against gender inequalities, gender discrimination will increase, not decrease. The evaluators believe that future 5CC frameworks should make a serious effort to develop indicators that will determine existing gender patterns and inequalities and make this a major area of attention in capacity development. This would also help us learn more about how gender patterns may influence CD processes, including how to promote more female leadership within CD efforts in male-dominated societies.

### **The 8PI framework**

Agriterra has, compared to most other DDP organizations in the field of CD, made a concerted attempt to capture CD as it happens over time for its local partners through their organizational profiling. The 8PI model is fundamentally a computerized data information system meant to capture progress in organizational development over time and identify capacity gaps.

Currently, the profiling is first and foremost an internal Agriterra M&E mechanism. Agriterra uses several indicators to monitor the performance of local network partners receiving support over time. Their performance is then formally documented in organizational profiles. According to Agriterra, the indicators are a mix of factual indicators and indicators that still require evaluation. Together, these are called composite indicators. They consist of high-ranking '*leading indicators*' and associated '*lagging indicators*'. This combination makes it possible to produce an overall assessment of the key leading indicators.

Agriterra's indicators have been developed with the specific purpose of capturing CD for organizational networks since Agriterra's core business is to lend support to agricultural networks. Annex 4 presents a straightforward summary and assessment by the evaluators of Agriterra's leading indicators of CD for networks, using MVIWATA as an example. Agriterra uses eight leading and about 60 associated lagging indicators (see Annex 4).

The eight relevant organizational leading indicators for CD are:

1. Representation
2. Participation
3. Accountability
4. Strategic potential
5. Professional capacity
6. Gender
7. Income diversification
8. Rate of organization

Taking as an example the 'Representation' indicator that is meant to capture the degree to which the organization is able to develop and maintain effective external relations, as well as the degree to which it can use its influence in these relations, see the summary in Table 4. As such, the indicator resembles the 5CC one concerning the ability to relate to external stakeholders.

Table 4. Leading and lagging indicators

Leading indicator	Lagging indicators
<p><b>1. Representation:</b> The ability to develop and maintain external relations, and how these are used to influence and position the organization within its external environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal presence in/relevance of governmental/parliamentary bodies</li> <li>• Functions in governmental/parliamentary bodies</li> <li>• In-country cooperation linkages, memberships and their relevance</li> <li>• Functions in in-country cooperation linkages and memberships</li> <li>• Cooperation with research institutes</li> <li>• Policy proposals to the government</li> <li>• International memberships and their relevance</li> <li>• Functions in international memberships</li> <li>• International relations</li> <li>• Private enterprises</li> <li>• Presence in the media</li> <li>• Quality of website</li> <li>• Emphasis on propositions instead of protest</li> <li>• Number of visits of foreign delegations to PO</li> <li>• Number of POs making visits abroad</li> </ul>

The operationalization of leading indicators into several lagging indicators is at times ambiguous, nor is it always obvious why one lagging indicator falls under one category instead of another. Though a broad set of indicators may be a good way to triangulate and cross-check information in a number of capacity areas, using too many simultaneously may blur the overall picture, making it difficult to attach importance to individual indicators. After studying all of Agriterra's leading indicators, the evaluators concluded that the most suitable ones for capturing CD in networking organizations are: representation, accountability, professional capacity, gender and income diversification. For their individual breakdown, see Annex 4.

The evaluators believe that the 8PI model also shows a great deal of potential as a capacity development tool. The longitudinal perspective this model employs is useful for monitoring capacity progress spanning several years, and this also requires, by implication, that Agriterra uphold its commitment to partners for a longer period of time. However, the evaluators are not convinced that the 8PI model is being used for capacity development purposes at this point. They also question whether it was ever designed for this purpose. For example, in the 2006 Profile, a number of 'organizational needs' were identified that MVIWATA could address to strengthen its own capacity. It reads a bit like a long wish list. The items on the list may be hard to

address without a clear plan of operation, limited resources and limited follow-up, making it equally difficult to address the question of ownership.

Nevertheless, compared to CD tools used by many other development partners, e.g. the Capacity Scan, Agriterra's organizational profiling tool is certainly a good way of monitoring CD over time. The evaluators believe that a simplified version would enable the profiling to be put to more immediate use with local partners and help them better understand and use this tool. This, in turn, would make it easier for them to reflect on their own CD and subsequently strengthen it. Rick James recently expressed a similar sentiment:

'M&E of capacity building needs to be built on self-assessment processes. NGOs themselves are in the best position to identify meaningful change and indicators. Such processes usually need some external facilitation, even to just create the organizational time to do it well. Such self-assessment processes, however, will be much more robust if they are supplemented by periodic external perspectives (through stakeholder interviews or surveys) that give some outside validation.'<sup>21</sup>

### **A comparison of the 5CC and 8PI models**

The evaluators feel that both models struggle to reveal the human aspects, which are admittedly much harder to quantify, let alone aggregate. These aspects include culture, interpersonal relations, power, personalities and the ability of external actors to influence the organization and vice versa. The indicators for Collaborative Associations have made a fresh attempt to more effectively capture these aspects, but they remain subjective and require further operationalization and contextualization to yield meaningful information.

True, the intended calibration exercise of the 5CCs at the beginning of each case study was partly expected to compensate for this by means of a tailor-made and operational 5CC framework for the local context. However, the evaluators doubt whether local stakeholders are readily able or even willing to interpret the 5CC framework or, indeed, to translate their own cultural discourse into a Western conceptual model of CD which may be far removed from how they would assess the performance of their own organizations. How to communicate such issues effectively across multicultural borders remains a challenge.

A fundamental consideration, namely the fourth pillar of the open systems approach to capacity development, is the functional-rational dimension and the political economy dimension of changes in capacity.<sup>22</sup> The 5CC model has attempted to approach some of the dimensions related to political economy in its indicators for Collaborative Associations, though as mentioned these raise several additional questions about how to measure it. The 8PI framework is practically silent on the dimensions of political economy. To summarize, neither of the two frameworks has managed to really provide new insights here.

Generally, the 5CCs seem to be suitable for several different types of organizations in a multitude of sectors. This may make it an appealing tool for many organizations. But the 5CCs do not provide much new knowledge and resemble much of the existing literature and research on organizational development and existing checklists for assessments, with the exception of their indicators for Collaborative Associations.

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<sup>21</sup> Rick James (2009) *Dealing with the Dilemmas in Monitoring and Evaluating Capacity Building*. INTRAC, M&E Paper 2.

<sup>22</sup> The open systems approach was also a fundamental element of the course: Institutional Assessment for Capacity Development conducted by MDF for EC delegations 2006-2009.

Moving to Agriterra's 8PIs, which have been operationalized to a far greater degree, they may be of more immediate use to membership organizations. The 8PI model is a better reflection of some of the dynamics and values of membership organizations, such as a clear emphasis on representation, gender, accountability and participation. These aspects are less well captured by the 5CCs, though network organizations must keep close track of them. This is a fundamental difference between the two frameworks. The evaluators consider most of the 8PIs useful for this CD evaluation since they offer a way of formulating analytical questions. However, looking at the leading indicators and the associated lagging indicators, the evaluators feel there is sometimes too much overlap and ambiguity, including how to interpret the significance of each indicator for creating an overall picture or giving them an overall score. This may ultimately shed doubt on the validity of the final analysis.

One of the clear strengths of Agriterra's indicators is that they are applied several times over the course of a long-term partnership, producing a capacity baseline from the beginning against which progress can be gauged. Future support can then be adjusted in order to address key capacity areas still found wanting. The evaluators believe that to capitalize on this strength, the profiling exercise has to become a collective task between the DDP and the local partner, and that substantial dialogue must be established before, during and after the process to ensure that both parties can fully benefit from using the indicators, which is not currently the case. This leaves us with some fundamental considerations about the use of a CD assessment framework.

1. Should the framework serve as a basis for dialogue with the partner to collectively reflect on how to further develop CD?
2. Is the framework simply a way to help a DDP determine resource allocation and future strengthening activities for the local partner?
3. Is it the DDP's responsibility to keep internal track of key CD changes at local partners over time as a monitoring tool and thus establish accountability between the local partner and the DDP?
4. Is the framework meant to demonstrate the DDP's performance to third parties, e.g. to donors, in the form of a track record showing how effectively the DDP has supported CD in the South?
5. If it is intended as a basis for dialogue, then the system must be kept simple so all stakeholders can actively participate in its assessment. Also, the number and sophistication of indicators should be kept to a minimum to make real dialogue possible. There is great potential for achieving this, as long as the use of the 8PIs is adjusted, though this is not yet happening. The 5CC model tries to accomplish this through a calibration process at the beginning, but several of the indicators are quite academic and Westernized, which tends to confine the dialogue instead of opening it up. Nevertheless, note has been taken of the positive intention behind the calibration process.
6. The 8PI framework has great potential for monitoring and proposing future CD interventions for the local partner based on proper justifications. However, the gaps that emerged (which were identified as part of the profiles) during the case studies were not followed up consistently, by either Agriterra or the local partner, raising the issue of ownership. Using the framework to make accurate assessments also requires regular visits by advisors and peers to local partners to help interpret the data according to realities on the ground.
7. The 8PI framework seems a useful tool at first glance for establishing accountability regarding the relationship between the local partner and the DDP. Indeed, several staff members who were interviewed saw the framework



primarily as Agriterra's obligation Agriterra's to report. There is nothing wrong with that, as long this is understood by all parties.

8. The 8PI framework is an extremely useful tool for conducting internal assessments, and Agriterra regularly uses it for that purpose to evaluate its own performance. Agriterra also uses it to present a clearer picture to its Dutch audience and to donors of the results of its support. However, the abundant use of leading and lagging indicators sometimes raises doubts as to whether too much is being measured, or whether we are indeed measuring the right things, and whether they provide a good overview of what is going on in relation to CD.

**Annexes**

- Annex 1: ToR
- Annex 2.1: Methodology: three cases
- Annex 2.2: Field visit guide (French)
- Annex 2.3: Persons interviewed (SYDIP and FEKRITAMA)
- Annex 3.1: Result chains: MVIWATA
- Annex 3.2: Result chains: FEKRITAMA
- Annex 3.3: Result chains: SYDIP
- Annex 4: Indicator cases
- Annex 5: References