



# Capacity Building Policy

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# Capacity Building Policy

**CKU considers capacity building to be the core strategic approach to civil society development. Civil society is where people get together to belong, to live and to create meaning. In short, capacity development of civil society can mean the creation of collective spaces where everyone is acknowledged and can flourish.**

- **Capacity building can strengthen already established collective spaces so as to become more inclusive, transparent and accessible for the poor and marginalised.**

- **Capacity building can also be instrumental in bringing people together and strengthening their voices for better governance and better delivery of public services.**

**Capacity building of civil society occurs when individuals (in organized groups) collectively work for causes beyond individual empowerment. Civil society**

**development enables the poor to get a perspective to work for more just relationships beyond their own interests only, in order to help both improve their own situation and conditions at the societal level.**

**The purpose of CKU's capacity building policy is to outline a vision on how CKU members and partners can work together in capacity building given existing historical contexts and partnerships. CKU, members and partners have a long history of working with capacity building. Yet the term 'capacity building' has been taken to mean many different things and therefore there is a need to clearly formulate what capacity building actually means and how we, as CKU members and partners, should best approach and integrate capacity building into our development work.**





## What is capacity building?

CKU uses the term 'capacity building' which is well-known by our members and partners, but we would like to emphasise that capacity building should aim to develop and strengthen existing structures of, for example, partner organisations and community organisations rather than building and implementing new structures. Most of us are familiar with past stories of Northern missionaries and development workers with good intentions doing things for people in a paternalistic way rather than working with them in a more participatory manner. However, this approach has changed. Over the last decades we mostly have stories of Southern churches and communities working in partnership with Northern organisations, development workers and missionaries to strengthen local resources and enhance local capacities.

### Capacity building

Capacity building is a word that in some way conceals more than it reveals. There are various definitions just in the world of civil society development, and part of the confusion arises as capacity building can refer to several things at once.

Capacity building might mean a means to achieve an end, e.g. a women's group learning numeracy skills to be able to run their own businesses. Alternatively, capacity building could mean a process, e.g. of organisational development. Lastly, capacity building sometimes serves as an end in itself, e.g. an organisation being able to manage its finances and democratic procedures.

CKU acknowledges that capacity building can indeed mean all these three

things in different contexts and thus follows the UNDP's (2006) overall definition of capacity:

*The ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner.*

Capacity in this definition concerns concrete abilities, performance of specific functions, and also assumes that one has the ability to plan, set objectives and achieve them. It is useful to stick to a broad definition of capacity as it appears in many thematic areas and settings. Yet with regard to actual capacity building interventions, it is necessary to be specific at what level capacity is needed, why it should be developed, and with what purpose.



## **Empowerment**

While capacity building concerns the level of abilities, empowerment concerns a deeper personal level. Empowerment literally means to grant or be granted political, social or economic power. Like capacity building, empowerment can refer to a means, a process or an end. Capacity building can be a factor in empowerment, yet it is only a part of empowerment.

Empowerment of poor or marginalised people might imply a fundamental change of perspective, self-perception and self-esteem whether as an individu-

al or a group. An empowerment process starts with one individual who in turn contributes to the empowerment of others and eventually to the empowerment of groups and of civil society. However, in this policy, we apply and refer mainly to empowerment at the individual level. The Nobel Prize-winning economist and development theorist Amartya Sen views empowerment as “expanding people’s opportunities to live the kind of life they value”. This definition captures that people themselves should determine what kind of empowerment they require.

## **Empowerment, capacity building and The Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society**

For true civil society development to take place, The Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society emphasises the collective nature of capacity building rather than individuals’ empowerment. However, although civil society development is a

collective notion, individual needs and interests at various levels in organisations are key change agents that must be included in order for capacity building to become a reality.

# Capacity and empowerment - a theological perspective

## Relationships are fundamental

From a theological perspective, the idea of individual and collective empowerment and capacity would naturally grow out of basic human relationships - primarily one's relationship to God. From a Christian perspective, to be truly human is to be in a living relationship to God, to oneself, to others and to the whole of

creation. According to the Biblical worldview, God created human beings in his own image and with the purpose of being stewards of all creation. God intended people to live in dynamic relationship with God the creator, with themselves, with each other and with all of creation.



## Relationship to God

Humans are created and called to a life in relationship to God.

## Relationship to self

People are uniquely created in God's image and thus have worth and dignity. While we must remember that we are not God, we have a calling to reflect God's image.

## Relationship to others

God created us to be in loving relationships with one another. People are not islands, but made to relate to one another, and to encourage one another to use the gifts we have been given so that each one of us can fulfil our particular callings.

## Relationship to Creation

Just as humans become what they are in relationship to one another, humans also exist in relationship to Creation at large. Called to stewardship and co-creation, humans are called to manifest their likeness of God in the sharing of resources.

In our broken world, no man or woman lives in a perfect relationship with God, oneself, others or creation. For everyone, the relationship on all four levels is broken or "out of joint". Another word for this brokenness is sin.

In a Western context, sin has often been seen as something that first and foremost was applied to the individual level - affecting man's relation to God, yet the Biblical understanding of 'sin' is not limited to a vertical relation or an individual perspective. Sin or the brokenness of the world affects not only the individual or the spiritual relationship but also relationships on the horizontal or the social level as well as the relationship to all of creation. Modern theology talks about 'structural sin', which applies to neglect of children as well as unjust relationships of world trade and the misuse of resources. It is worth noting that for poor people, the experience of unjust and non-harmonious relationships often oc-

cupies a large part of their lives. Bryant Myers, a leading Christian development thinker puts it this way:

*"Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work; that are not just; that are not for life; that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings".*

As humans we share the brokenness. Yet we also share the yearning of relationships being restored and the world being a better and fairer place to live.

As Christians we believe that there is hope for a changed world, because God is there, as Creator, Reconciler and Renewer, and we see ourselves also as stewards of this hope. The vision is to restore relationships and to create more just collective spaces for people to live, love and share. The vision is also to fulfil the role as stewards of God's creation and shared resources.

## Biblical metaphor for fellowship: The body

The new Testament uses a powerful metaphor when it talks about the church being the body of Christ (Ephesians 4, Rom 1, 1 Kor. 12) in this world, where each individual or member has to see him or herself as a part of the body, where each member has different functions and all are needed in order for the body to function. There are different callings and duties but all are needed for the community to be able to work. The eye cannot say: "what use is the arm?" or the arm cannot say: "what use is the ear?" They all need to be there for the body to work. It is together that they can be the body.

CKU's idea of capacity building draws on this strong metaphor, as it emphasises that each individual part needs to be acknowledged, respected and strengthened to create a truly collective civil society. Though the Biblical picture primarily relates to the work of the church as the body of Christ, the picture can provide inspiration for capacity building of organisations or communities. The understanding that each and everyone has a unique gift to contribute to the whole, and that no person can work on his/her own is true also at the organisational level. Any organisation has the potential of empowering its stakeholders, members and staff, and to contribute jointly to society. In any group, how fragile and corrupt it may be; there are ways of working that can be cultivated to grow and develop. Capacity building and organisational

development should be professionally planned, but such processes cannot and should not be completely controlled as that would seriously hamper them. Humans can create space for change, yet the turning point is out of human hands. The determining point where the decision is taken or a group gets inspired to look ahead cannot be forced. It is only possible to provide space for that point to be reached. That is why, in a Christian inspired context of organizational development, the expression space for grace has been applied by Rick James of INTRAC. Depending on one's perspective, the turning point is reached by the force of the process itself, the spiritual - or by the grace of God.

Empowerment understood as a changed self-perception becomes a key word here again. Change can come only through changed individuals, particularly leaders who again influence collectives to change. For collectives to change, some tools are needed to secure good stewardship of shared resources, or in other words, good governance and management in organisations at various levels.

For CKU the concept of 'broken relations' as something which Christians strive to overcome is mirrored in the focus on i.e. the development of collective capacities to strengthen human relations and joint efforts that extend beyond what individuals themselves can accomplish.



# Levels of capacity building

In CKU's work capacity building takes place at three levels: the community level, the organisational level, and ultimately the sector level.

	Capacity building as a means	Capacity building as an end
Capacity building at community level	Strengthen capacity of poor and marginalised people to undertake defined activities.	Strengthen capacity of poor and marginalised people to participate in political and socioeconomic arenas according to objectives defined by themselves.
Capacity building of individual organisations in civil society	Strengthen organisations to perform specified activities.	Strengthen organisations to fulfil their missions.
Capacity building at sector level	Strengthen the sector regarding specific services or models.	Strengthen the sector by supporting the delivery of adequate responses to citizens' needs.

*Adapted after Eades 1997 and James & Hailey 2007*

Whereas traditionally many CKU partners and members focus on the community level, gradually over the last five years there have been good practices at the organisational level, and even a few at the sector level. While CKU wishes to continue supporting capacity building at the community level, we see interventions at the organisational level as a priority area. To secure good development work over time with the communities, partner organisations themselves need to be developed too. Only with good work at the grass roots level and a healthy organisational structure, can sustainable change at the sector level be envisaged.



**Center for Kirkeligt  
Udviklingsamarbejde**