

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background:

This report is based on a survey of Southern NGOs (SNGOs) that was conducted by ANGOC on the basis of decisions taken by the Second Steering Committee Meeting of the International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB) and the forum's Regional Caucus for Asia.

The report builds on the knowledge and information of earlier documents on SNGO capacity-building, in particular, the 1997 consultations for South and East Asia NGOs, which were conducted by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), respectively.

The survey was conducted using an ANGOC-drafted questionnaire that was mailed to some 200 NGOs throughout the region. The survey instrument included questions designed to generate information on: (i) the profile of SNGOs involved in capacity-building activities and their respective areas of specialization; (ii) current programs and activities of these SNGOs; and (iii) trends, needs and opportunities. (*Refer to Appendix B*)

Since postal surveys have a generally poor response rate (this one had a response rate of about 15%), it is not possible to claim that the results of this research provide a comprehensive overview of Southern NGO perspectives and needs on capacity building. Instead, they should be considered as indicative of trends, particularly if they are supported by other studies, such as, the findings of the earlier Asian NGO consultations conducted by PRIA and IIRR.

B. The International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB):

In October 1996, Southern NGO members of the NGO-World Bank committee proposed the formation of an International Working Group to promote more dialogue among donor agencies, Southern NGOs (SNGOs) and Northern NGOs (NNGOs) on promising approaches and best practices for the capacity-building of Southern NGOs. To inform this organizing process, the NGO Working Group on the World Bank, the NGO Unit in the World Bank and the USAID Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation undertook a survey of northern donor experiences in SNGO capacity building.

Following this, some 35 donor agencies, SNGOs and NNGOs participated in an exploratory meeting in Washington, DC in May 1997 that reviewed current practices in SNGO capacity building and discussed priority issues. The participants also established an Interim Steering Committee to facilitate the formation of an international working group on capacity building.

The Interim Steering Committee prepared a framework of issues on capacity-building and, from July 1997 to April 1998, facilitated the conduct of surveys and consultations with different stakeholders, including northern NGOs, donors (multilateral, bilateral and foundations) and southern NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia and the Pacific. In all, the participants of the consultations included 350 southern NGOs, 100 northern NGOs and 20 donors.

The initial results of these surveys and consultations, which were presented in a synthesis-cum-planning meeting of the Interim Steering Committee in London in January 1998, indicated the need to launch an international forum for dialogue among various stakeholders on the capacity building of southern NGOs.

The extended consultation process culminated in the International Conference on Future Capacity Building of Southern NGOs, which was held at the European Commission in Brussels in May 1998. The conference was convened with the following purposes:

1. To share the emerging results of the consultations;
2. To identify priorities for future capacity building of southern NGOs;
3. To build agreement on the operating and action framework of the International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB); and
4. To formally launch the IFCB.

The conference, which brought together more than 150 participants from southern NGOs, northern NGOs and foundations, bilateral and multilateral donors, provided a platform for analysis of the surveys and consultations with the view of identifying the priorities for capacity building of southern NGOs.

Launched at the conference was the International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB), a multi-stakeholder group of SNGOs, NNGOs and Donors, that is focused on the capacity-building priorities of Southern NGOs with a view to enhancing their contributions in addressing issues of poverty, marginalization, democratization, strengthening of civil society, human rights and sustainable human development.

Specifically, the Forum seeks to:

1. Facilitate information sharing and cooperation within and across constituencies on policies, programs and innovations in capacity building of Southern NGOs;
2. Promote dialogue at the national, regional and international levels among Southern NGOs, their counterpart Northern NGOs and donors so that policies, programs and practices on capacity building will be informed and influenced by the voices and experiences of Southern NGOs;
3. Support emerging capacity building initiatives that address the priority needs of Southern NGOs and promote learning about innovations; and
4. Promote an enabling environment for more effective responses to the capacity building needs of Southern NGOs.

As a primary strategy, the Forum shall build on existing activities and enable its partners to undertake initiatives appropriate to decentralized geographic and thematic priorities. The Forum shall focus its efforts in addressing the following five capacity building needs of southern NGOs: (a) leadership development; (b) policy research and advocacy; (c) information access and dissemination; (d) building alliances, coalitions, networks, North-South and inter-sectoral partnerships; and (e) financial sustainability.

Its initial two-year workplan consists of the following activities:

1. Mapping of existing initiatives, providers and practices of capacity building with a view to strengthening the knowledge base;
2. Identifying lessons from best practices in the priority areas of SNGO capacity building;
3. Expanding consultations to include stakeholders from countries, regions and sectors that have not yet been represented adequately;
4. Promoting regular communication and information-sharing among participants through website and other means;
5. Convening multi-stakeholder regional fora within a year;
6. Convening a global forum in the second year for dialogue among different stakeholders on the policies, approaches and programs of capacity building for southern NGOs.

In the conduct of the forum's activities, the Chairperson and Secretariat receive guidance from a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the different constituency groups. The Steering Committee is mandated to evolve an action-plan, mobilize resources and facilitate the program of the Forum during its first two years.

II. FINDINGS FROM THE SOUTH AND EAST ASIA CONSULTATIONS

In 1996, the IFCB Interim Steering Committee designated the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) to conduct initial consultations in South and East Asia to identify the capacity building needs of Asian NGOs. The consultation process resulted in two regional workshops – the first in New Delhi in November 1997 and the second in the Philippines in January 1998 – which brought together some 155 NGOs from all over the region.

The results of the two consultations are summarized below.

A. Meaning of Capacity Building:

Capacity building must encompass the development of both individual workers and the organization itself. Past capacity building have been concentrated on individuals on the assumption that these individuals, when appropriately and technically trained, will translate their new knowledge and skills into organizational program and financial