

Building Partnerships: Key Elements of Capacity Building

**An exploration of experiences with
mining communities in Latin America**

Ginger Gibson
CoDevelopment Canada

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building partnerships

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Introduction

Capacity building has become a widely used term for the development of skills at the community level. As the phrase is more widely used, it becomes less specific. Mining companies and governments may implement projects involving capacity building based on watered down and weakened versions of the concept. Hence, this paper seeks to clarify capacity building, specifically by defining key elements through questions that can be asked of projects involving its use.

In this paper, a working definition of capacity building is:

People helping people to build skills to change their own future. Skills can be built a number of levels, including at the level of the individual, organization, community or system.

CoDevelopment Canada is a proponent of strengthening civil society through grassroots level organizing. We are cautious of the desire of mining companies and agencies to develop the capacity of communities. We can envision a future where these urges become top-down attempts to control the kind of capacity that is developed and those who are involved in programs. We can foresee, for example, the desire of corporations and governments to influence indigenous peoples trying to develop leadership capacity over land and natural resources. We are wary of a future where the agenda of mining companies and government dictates priorities for capacity building.

At the same time, we are also critical and reflexive of our own attempts to “develop capacities,” and the motives and skills that we, as an NGO, leave behind.

By clarifying the term and its application, this paper aims to improve the distinction between capacity building, consultation, public relations by a corporation, and other forms of community development.

First, we conducted a review of capacity building, as it is understood by various experts in the field. A number of questions emerge as key elements. We used these questions to clarify the concept, applying it to our own work in Peru, Nicaragua and Bolivia.

1. Who is it for?
2. Who initiates it?
3. Who directs it? Who controls the funds?
4. What is the goal of capacity building?
5. Which levels of community are included?
6. How are new skills integrated?
7. What are the pitfalls to watch out for?

We conclude this exploration with a summary of the key elements that we believe must be present for a program to be called true capacity building.

This paper specifically focuses on community organizing and capacity building in Latin America, drawing on the experiences of CoDevelopment Canada and the thoughts of activists and researchers in the field.¹ We consulted a number of experts in community development and capacity building for this paper, including: Dr. Fiona Solomon, Research Fellow, CSIRO Minerals; Glenda Ferris; Dr. Catherine Macdonald, Perth University; Dr. Nancy Gibson, Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta; and Dr. Martha Macintyre, Centre for the Study of Health and Society, University of Melbourne.

CoDevelopment Canada and capacity building

In 1997, CoDevelopment Canada collaborated with NGOs in Nicaragua, Peru, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Ecuador to develop the Community Decision-Making Model for Mining Activities in the Americas.

The CDM aims at providing communities in Latin America with a reliable source of information and action to influence corporate practice in relation to mining operations in the region, and with a set of guidelines for community decision-making and community engagement in negotiation processes. The model assumes a community has reached agreement that it desires the proposed mining activity.

The CDM rests on three pillars.

1. Building sustainable communities:

- to work with community-controlled organizations that can define local priorities;
- to modify attitudes and practices that exclude people from economic decision-making; and
- to develop the capacity to make mining development serve community goals.

2. Building relationships:

- to fortify a process of mutual education between mining communities, government and corporations
- to establish timing for consultation processes during all stages of mining development
- to facilitate inter-cultural communication and information sharing mechanisms, and
- to have periods of reflection, conciliation, implementation, evaluation and follow-up.

3. Reaching agreement

- to change the power relationship that separates communities from mining corporations; and
- to ensure that the negotiation process is characterized by openness, fairness and understanding of each other's priorities, interests and needs.

An opportunity arose for CoDevelopment Canada to field test the CDM with two NGOs – Maria Elena Cuadra in Nicaragua and CEPROMIN in Bolivia. The team developed a training program to build the capacity of leaders to negotiate with mining companies in communities engaged in small mining. Funds from Canada's International Development Research Council allowed the NGOs to work independently in the communities, running workshops over a two-year period.

The training program aimed to:

- develop an understanding of the mining industry in general and the mining company in particular;
- identify community strengths and needs through socio-economic studies;
- identify key formal and informal leaders and stakeholders within communities and involve them in training programs;
- develop cross-cultural training between community leaders and companies;

- educate and train leaders on aspects of interest-based negotiating, and
- educate and train leaders on relevant laws pertaining to communities and mining companies (land ownership and agricultural, mining and environmental law).

The training program was developed jointly by the non-profit organizations and run in five communities in Latin America.²

CoDevelopment Canada has also run capacity building programs with Minera Yanacocha company staff to strengthen skills in community consultation and negotiation. Minera Yanacocha is a partner of the Denver based company, Newmont Inc. After a 151 kg mercury spill in northern Peru, CoDev Canada partnered with a local grassroots organization to respond to community needs with training, capacity building, community healing activities, and company training to respond to community needs and negotiate with community leaders.



CAPACITY BUILDING: When a capacity building program is planned, how can we determine that it is not simply consultation or public relations by another name?

Defining capacity building

A cursory examination of the work of agencies involved in capacity building reveals a wide range of goals, focuses and outcomes. In some projects, for example, community activists aim to identify existing skills and build on them; in others, agencies develop the ability of leaders to participate in decision-making about a certain project.

Community-based work by activists and researchers often aims at developing existing skills and resources at the community level as opposed to identifying needs. For example, a map of community capacities is strikingly different from a map of community needs. While the former reveals a range of interests from local business and citizen associations, the latter looks at such factors as the rate of domestic violence or dropouts from high schools.

“The process of identifying capacities and assets, both individual and organizational, is the first step on the path toward community regeneration. Once this new “map” has replaced the one containing needs and deficiencies, the regenerating community can begin to assemble its assets and capacities into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production” (McKnight and Kretzmann 1999: 159).

A World Bank summary of participatory processes refers to capacity building as the improved ability to make decisions about a project and transfer information between groups. The focus is on building people’s capacity to participate in decision-making about a certain subject, as opposed to identifying capacities in a community and strengthening these elements.

The World Bank ‘Pollution and Prevention Handbook’ (1998), for example, contains the following advice on consultation and participatory processes.

- *Start the participatory process as early as possible in the project design.*
- *Ensure government support for a participatory approach.*
- *Identify and then involve the stakeholders.*
- *Involve intermediary NGOs who have local credibility.*
- *Identify and involve responsive individuals or agencies in government.*
- *Build community capacity to make decisions and to convey information back and forth*
- *Make a particular effort to understand the concerns of the poor, who are often not well represented.*
- *Facilitate women’s participation as they may not be represented in the formal structures.*
- *Consider institutional or regulatory measures to support participation.*

In a sense, this World Bank definition of capacity building does not differ dramatically from consultation. One of the key benefits identified in projects involving capacity building is inclusion of community concerns throughout the mine life cycle. While the Berlin II guidelines do not specifically refer to capacity building, they suggest that communities’ concerns be taken into account.

The community is also part of ensuring that the mining project is promoting sustainable development. Consultation enables the company to identify the concerns of the community and to take these into account in the planning and development of a project. It establishes a relationship

between the company and its neighbours, which should increase understanding and trust and avoid unpleasant surprises. Participation means that the community is involved directly in the decision-making process.”

In a 1999 resource, Human Resources Development Canada defines capacity building as network building aimed at community control of decisions that affect them.

Community Capacity Building conceives the notion of a group of citizens working together for their own mutual betterment. It is generally very holistic in nature and encompasses all aspects of the community: economic, social, ecological, political and cultural. Together the group/community seeks out approaches and solutions to economic or social opportunities and challenges. CCB is about building healthy communities. It is a strategic community-driven process, aimed at maintenance, growth, and revitalization - focusing on assets in ways which enhance both economic and social foundations. CCB is the engagement of a social process which entails elements of the entire social agenda. It is philosophy grounded in the belief that people and communities can manage their own affairs, and places control of the developmental process in the hands of the community (of which HRDC is a part). (HRDC 1999)

In another example, the African organization ENDA-TM defines capacity building as the transfer of skills for the eventual implementation of a Convention. This definition is focused on achieving an outcome – implementation – and the framework is externally defined. Once again, however, the focus is on creating institutional structures to integrate existing skills and resources.

Capacity building here means providing frameworks for project identification, formulation and implementation, making the maximum use of existing skills and resources and, crucially, bearing in mind that implementation of the project is not the end of the road. At a more basic level than funding or the transfer of technology and know-how, the primary task in the effective implementation of the Convention in sub-Saharan Africa is the creation of an adequate institutional framework, grounded in social relations between competent bodies. (Cissee et al. 1999)

Ian Smillie, a Canadian development expert, writes of capacity building in emergency situations, placing people at the centre of the definition.

There's been a lot of writing about capacity building in development, but not much where emergencies are concerned. The definition I like best in the book is from Kathy Mangones, who writes about the difficulty Haitians have had over the past 200 years in getting a grip on their lives and their society. She talks about “new strategies and directions based on the capacity and potential of concerned populations, enabling them to move from object to subject, victim to actor, to the possibility of being.” The phrase is from a poem, and it captures what capacity building is all about: to be a person and an actor in your community. (IDRC 2001)

In this review of capacity building, a number of questions emerge as key elements. We used these questions to clarify the concept, applying them to our own work in Peru, Nicaragua and Bolivia.

1. Who is it for?
2. Who initiates it?
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6. How are new skills integrated?
7. What are the pitfalls to watch out for?

Capacity building in Peru, Nicaragua and Bolivia

CoDev's work with communities affected by a mercury spill in Peru

In 2001, CoDevelopment Canada partnered with Generación de Capacidades (GyC) to work with three communities affected by a mercury spill and the company responsible for it, Minera Yanacocha (MY), a partner of Denver-based Newmont Corporation. CoDev was asked to serve as a technical advisor to GyC and train the company in conflict resolution and negotiation.

CoDev collected technical information on human and environmental health, translated it, and developed communication strategies with GyC. CoDev also identified communication and community relations problems in the corporation and worked with it to develop training programs to address these issues. For example, in May and June of 2000, CoDev ran training programs to:

- suggest ways in which the community and the company could develop a more constructive and mutually beneficial relationship – based on extensive interviews and meetings with community leaders, community members, local NGOs and company representatives, and
- develop a training program on conflict resolution and negotiation aimed at meeting community and company needs.

On June 2, 2000, 151 kilograms (332.2 pounds) of mercury were spilled in the communities of San Juan, Magdalena and Choropampa. The mercury is a sub-product of the mineral exploitation activities of MY and was supposed to be transported from the mine site to the city of Lima. The town most affected by the spill is Choropampa.

Choropampa is a recently formed population centre situated in the Cajamarca Mountain Range, 1700 metres above sea level. It was created in 1996 on the margins of the roadway that unites the regional government office with the Panamerican highway and has a population of about 800. The economic activity of the area centres on the trade of agro-fishery products native to the zone and sale of products to meet the primary subsistence needs of the residents of the surrounding areas.³

The mercury spill caused by MY is the most significant social and environmental event to have happened within the short social history of this community. It has transformed the lives of its citizens in terms of health, labour, education and religion. It is the primary social experience of a history that is divided into two parts: before and after the spill.

From a global standpoint, this community has a marked rural mentality and worldview; it has a short and improvised experience in organized partisan politics, which has been wrought with social struggle. It is a population with undeniable commercial capacity. Culturally, the community members belong to a mosaic of origins. These groups display characteristics of a population that has suffered

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DIVERSITY OF SKILLS: Facilitators in Peru's project included a range of professionals – an obstetrician, a nurse, a psychologist, an anthropologist and a community planner – pictured here on their way to a community meeting in Choropampa.

the marginalization typical to the Andean region, which is reflected in the manner by which women are omitted from decision-making in the community.

According to MY's data, 140.2 kilograms (308.44 pounds) of mercury have been recovered, and it is calculated that of the remaining 11.8 kilograms (25.96 pounds), 5 kilograms (11 pounds) would have evaporated and 5.8 kilograms (12.76 pounds) would have remained in the hands of residents or third parties.

Urine analysis of samples collected June 12, 2000 from the zone surrounding San Juan, Choropampa and Magdalena show that 965 people have been affected – 418 cases of contamination between 20 and 50 mg/lit. and 547 people poisoned at a level between 50 and 200 mg/lit.

The one-year anniversary of the accident has passed. There remains in the population a dissatisfaction with the solutions put forward to date. Remaining concerns include MY's presence, the lack of quality of state services, the need for greater capacity for management and negotiation by local authorities, and the strengthening of grassroots organizations.

CoDev's work with artisanal mining communities in Nicaragua

CoDevelopment Canada recently partnered with the Maria Elena Cuadra Movement in Leon, Nicaragua to train artisanal miners in conflict resolution and negotiation.

As a women's organization, MEC brings a strong gender perspective to its work with the communities of La India, Santa Rosa de Peñon and Via Nueva. While these communities are different, Josefina Ulloa, the leader of the effort, says the training was like "a window opening."

"There is less fear in the communities, less fear of selling out to the company, less fear of how weak their position is. There is a greater sense of control," she says, noting a greater sense of equality, personal power and a collective understanding of history.

The three communities are near to the 5,000 square mile mining concession of Toronto-based Blackhawk Mining Ltd. (known in Nicaragua as Triton) in northwest Nicaragua. The concession has proven gold reserves with a lifespan of three to four years, and the three communities are engaged in artisanal mining in parts of the concession.

The communities rely almost exclusively on mining to support the economy, and less so on agriculture. The area was hard hit by Hurricane Mitch and the economy has been extremely slow to recover.

Triton and the International Development Research Centre supported the development of training programs to build community skills to negotiate with the company in 2000-2001. Workshops held by MEC and CoDev focused on conflict resolution and negotiating skills and strategies, as well as defining responsible mining, rights and responsibilities. MEC adapted the training to community needs identified through a needs and resources assessment.

When it first arrived, MEC was seen as a negotiator or mediator from the company. While this role was clarified with the community many times, MEC continued to be distrusted. This view changed only with time spent by MEC staff in the communities. The key worry in the communities was that organizations were sold-out to the company. MEC emphasized that, even if CoDev or MEC was sold out, the community didn't have to be sold out. The communities then worked through an initial resistance to meeting with the company, eventually deciding to begin negotiations.

MEC's work at the community level was aimed at developing networks in the community, strengthening community leadership, helping community members to develop skills in negotiations, and outlining a community development plan. Three community priorities were identified:

- land rights;
- concession rights; and
- technical support.

In the final workshop, company personnel from Blackhawk participated alongside community members. Together, the group defined their perceptions of responsible mining.

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CoDev's work with artisanal mining communities in Bolivia

CoDevelopment Canada's partnership with the Center for the Promotion of Mining (CEPROMIN) led to a capacity building effort in the Bolivian communities of Atocha, Tasna and Cotagaita in 1999 and 2000. CoDev originally became involved because a Canadian mining company was considering investing in the region, but as mineral prices fell it withdrew from the area. CoDev provided information on Canadian mining companies, data on international markets and workshop material on negotiation and training.

In the absence of mining companies, artisanal miners work together in local cooperatives. The training project was aimed at developing the ability of local leaders to create a community vision of responsible mining, community goals, and a cadre of leaders who could negotiate to attain these goals. There is a long history of social protest regarding mining concerns in Bolivia, and community members saw training in negotiation as one of an array of strategies to achieve their goals.

CEPROMIN already had contacts in the communities and, with its strong gender perspective, was able to successfully integrate women into the project. A reference group was set up in each community to serve as a local resource. However, CEPROMIN, headquartered in La Paz, was limited by one factor: the great distance to the communities. As it is almost a two-day journey to Atocha, time and expense made it prohibitive for CEPROMIN to spend more than one week a month in the region. Regardless, CEPROMIN accomplished eight workshops in popular participation, eight in negotiation and resolution of conflicts, and two in action investigation.

In Atocha, a range of stakeholders were involved in each workshop, although involvement of participants was irregular. At one point there were 20 people in a workshop; the next had eight, making it difficult to achieve continuity. In the end, at least 12 people received training in interest-based negotiations. Tasna and Cotagaita community members were involved in training in Atocha, but were later less involved due to the difficulty in getting to the communities.

CEPROMIN leaders reported a difference between the interests of local leaders and those who held no formal position. This reflects the need for training programs to include diversity of leadership. Leaders of organizations emphasized:

- pavement of the roads;
- breeding of livestock;
- improvement and creation of colleges and schools;
- improvement of secondary roads; and
- improvement of land for cultivation and forestation.

Informal leaders or people involved in grassroots organizations emphasized:

- job creation;
- pavement of principal roads in the community;
- reforestation;
- construction of seniors homes and daycares; and
- improved attention to health.

Who is it for?

The answer is simple: *everyone*.

In all definitions reviewed for this paper, communities were the sites for capacity building. Communities have also been the focus of skill building for most of CoDev's work. CoDev's focus has traditionally been on the development of skills of community leaders to participate in decision-making about mining activities and to negotiate with companies.

Programs have paid specific attention to the inclusion of women. Separate early training with women, broad goals, and scheduling around needs are key to facilitating their participation. This is in response to concerns from all of our projects. For example, in our Nicaraguan project, cooperatives defined very narrow community goals for negotiating with the mining company, effectively excluding women and their concerns from the discussion.

However, in our experience, mining companies are often ill prepared to negotiate or work closely with communities. In our most recent project in Peru, CoDev developed a training program for MY staff in conflict resolution and negotiation, and is now developing a guide based on the experience. When MY staff developed a map of its perception of existing community organizations and ties between the company and the community, they discovered large gaps in their analysis of the communities.

A map was also developed in the community by a group of 50 people representing different local organizations. Comparison of the community and company maps revealed that the company was linked only to municipal level authorities, who the community felt were not connected to grassroots organizations. This analysis revealed that MY's communication and outreach strategy was falling short of reaching informal leaders. A new strategy was soon developed.

Triton training in Nicaragua also brought together company executives with community members with whom they had previously been in conflict. The training focused on comparing the similarities in community and company definitions of responsible mining, which were remarkably similar.

Capacity building at the governmental level (municipal, regional and national) may also be critical for responsible collaborative decision-making about mining. Inefficient and corrupt agencies have hindered progress towards collective decision-making in mining. At worst, these agencies tend to favour the interests of companies and ignore those of communities. At best, these bureaucracies are simply impotent and functioning without credibility or trust.

Who initiates it?

In all three cases examined here, non-profit organizations or the companies initiated capacity building. In Nicaragua and Bolivia, non-profits identified communities located near Canadian mining companies. Training at the community level was suggested and negotiated with community leaders in each case. The subject and theme of the training was pre-determined by the non-profits. The themes were remarkably flexible, in that they were adapted to meet community needs. For example, in Bolivia, training in computer programs was developed after community leaders articulated this need.

In Peru, capacity building was initiated after the mercury spill by the company and a local organization funded by the company. Programs and projects have been constantly negotiated and re-negotiated with the communities over the past six months. At one point in the project, GyC was asked to leave Choropampa because it receives company funds. However, with time GyC staff have been able to return and continue their work with families. Local community politics are dynamic and change constantly, with some months of greater conflict than others. Buy-in at the family level for GyC's work has been easy to achieve because it has immediate relevancy for families affected by the mercury, while at the leadership level it has been extremely difficult to achieve because of intense distrust of the company and company funded initiatives.

LOCAL LEADERS AND TIME:
Work with communities
requires people committed
to working over time
to build trust.



Who directs it?

Who controls the funds?

In these cases, non-profits directed the program and the funds for capacity building. Funding to CoDev's southern partners is locally controlled to allow for maximum decision-making at the organizational level and also to encourage the development of administration and management skills.

It is to be expected that partnership support of local organizations raises conflict. In Nicaragua, for example, communities wanted lawyers to attend negotiations with the company, but lacked the funds to hire them. MEC had set aside a small amount of money for the community to hire its internal lawyer. The community refused to hire this lawyer and a conflict ensued. This kind of conflict is to be expected; local strategies to adapt and manage conflict need to be developed.

Funding provided to non-profits has spin-off effects in the communities. Non-profits are also able to help community members to write project proposals and obtain outside funding. In San Juan, Peru, for example, a micro-enterprise project was developed with the aid of GyC.

"Community feedback" is critical but can be difficult to obtain. Our experience in Peru, for example, illustrates that simplified notions of "community" and expectations of a homogenous response to local development are ill founded. There are many competing and diverse interests within communities. Some families in Peru wanted more information and education on mercury, while others were interested only in pursuing full compensation from the company. The community has been fractured by the spill, with some families receiving compensation and others receiving none, based on a scheme determined by MY and experts. As a result, GyC and CoDev have continuously had to adapt to local realities, and network constantly to keep abreast of diverse opinions.

What is the goal of capacity building?

The goals of CoDev's partnership projects in capacity building are to increase citizens' ability to:

- participate in decision making about mining related activities;
- make informed decisions about mining activity; and
- educate others about mining activity.

The approach and methods used to meet these goals is different in each project. However, there are common elements. For instance, all projects are based on popular education methodologies. The content of each training program is then adapted to meet local needs.

In Peru, for example, GyC projects continue to be adapted to meet the most pressing needs of the Choropampan population, such as the need for a qualified, reliable technical assurance regarding the long-term affects of mercury on people, animals, plants, water and air.

In the medium term, projects of the most importance include training and elaboration of public health and environmental defence projects for families, groups and communities. Projects might include such topics as management of toxic, organic and inorganic waste, improvement of the organization of the weekly market and its environmental impact, the construction of sanitary (septic) services to homes, and a resolution to the stagnant water problem.

In the long term, the Choropampan population has two basic needs. First, there is an urgent need for political formation, concentrating on social actors such as leaders, organizations and authorities. Second, the community is in need of a basic coherent, environmental urban plan for the population centre.

Which levels of community are included?

The projects examined here focus on capacity building at various levels within the community. Projects in Nicaragua and Bolivia are focused exclusively on leaders of organizations or informal leaders within the community. In Peru, GyC staff work at the family level to inform people of the effects of mercury on health and the environment. They also work with organizations, teachers and youth in the area of environmental education. GyC's work with the formal community leaders is limited, due in part to time constraints of the leaders.

Different end results and tradeoffs are achieved through focusing on different levels of organization (as demonstrated in the Model for Capacity Building).

- Individual – By working with individual community members, non-profits may help to increase knowledge and participation across the community, including those who do not traditionally hold power within decision-making spheres. One danger in focusing on the individual level, however, is that goals of duly elected authorities may be undermined.
- Family – The involvement of families helps people to learn and advance together based on a shared vision and understanding. It may also allow for action on the immediate needs of families, such as health and education. However the danger of undermining community leadership is still present.
- Organization – Working with organizations allows a direct focus on the administrative and project skills that advance decision making and results. In the case of mining communities, stronger leaders tend to be more effective in articulating the goals and needs of communities to mining companies.
- System – Capacity building at the macro-level – institutions such as governments and companies – is critical, especially in countries with weak democracies. This kind of capacity building can help to change the ways in which the structure of the economic and political systems favour certain interests without conscious decision-making or agenda setting.

MARGINALIZED GROUPS:
Capacity building programs need to specifically focus on the needs of marginalized groups, such as women.



How are new skills integrated?

This final question is perhaps the most difficult to answer with regard to CoDev projects. People who have been involved in training programs are hard to track, and the integration of skills into their lives is difficult to evaluate. In Bolivia, CEPROMIN is seeing the fruit of many new projects that were germinated during training programs, including new projects that build on the relationships with leaders from previous programs. In Peru, family members continuously ask to be involved in GyC programs.

While these are testaments to the success of capacity building, there nevertheless exists a danger that capacities built cannot be sustained in the long term. If hope of employment is raised through training programs, for example, and there is no economic base capable of integrating these skills, people can become further disillusioned.

Furthermore, not every project is solely focused on capacity building. Hence, there will be spin-off benefits from other elements. For example, GyC aims to provide immediate psychological and social support to families suffering from the mercury spill. At the same time, the project aims to build leadership capacity to develop local projects.

POPULAR EDUCATION:
Materials used in capacity building efforts were developed with local artists and tested with community members before they were used in a training program. The materials pictured here are used by GyC to help organizations plan local projects.



What are the pitfalls to watch out for?

CoDevelopment Canada has identified some concerns with projects that aim to enhance skills and build capacity in communities – including our own. Projects should be wary of creating or participating in the following pitfalls.

- *Don't replace or bypass existing skills* – The focus of capacity building can be paternalistic. Well-meaning organizations can replace or gloss over existing skills, knowledge and institutional capacity within the community.
- *Don't assume collaboration is the model that fits the community.* Assumptions that collaboration will work for an entire community may be ill founded. For example, the Nicaragua mining cooperatives examined here are based on the collective bargaining power of individuals with one interest: working in a concession. It may be difficult to get a community with a number of cooperatives to work together. However, common topics such as responsible mining may be sufficiently broad for a collaborative approach.
- *Don't assume that assets and risks will be commonly shared.* Training programs that assume that a community is homogenous and insist on a common vision may miss the diversity and depth of a community. Communities, like governments, often do not share the risks and benefits of decisions equally. Corruption is as likely to exist at the local level as it is at the national level.
- *Don't download decision making to the local level.* Communities are often asked to make decisions without a broad understanding of regional, national or international contexts. Furthermore, when communities made decisions or negotiate privately at the local level, they may have no protection or support outside of their community. In the Nicaraguan mining example, the community wanted to hire a lawyer but lacked the resources to do so. Further, community members supporting families may find it challenging to actively participate in ongoing activities and decision-making.
- *Don't bypass the government.* Inefficient or corrupt bureaucracies have often been bypassed with the well-meant intent of increasing community well being. The assumption is that communities will be better at distributing benefits than the state is sometimes incorrect. The responsibilities of the state in a democracy should not be shouldered by a community or by a company. For example, in Peru the Ministry of Health is discredited because of its history of corruption, but further discredited by a parallel system put in place by MY doctors to monitor health. Bypassing government may only serve to further weaken the state.

These concerns by no means overwhelm the need to develop the capacities of leaders and individuals in communities to participate actively in decisions related to mining activities. They should serve only as a caution to project leaders.

Conclusion and recommendations

By exploring our experiences in Peru, Nicaragua and Bolivia, we have identified the following key elements that distinguish capacity building from consultation, public relation or other forms of community development.

- *Capacity building for all.* Programs should begin with early analysis of the appropriate sites for capacity building. Company staff, agency workers and community members may all be in need of new skills to jointly plan mining development. It is important to not overlook factors at play outside of the community: problems associated with weak bureaucracies or companies that are unable to effectively communicate and negotiate with community leaders.
- *Collaborative planning, local buy-in and research.* Programs aimed at developing capacity at community levels should be initiated collaboratively with community leaders, ensuring that grassroots organizations and informal leaders also have a voice and that strategies are tailored to local realities. Local buy-in for programs and leadership from local government may be key to program success. Formative research or capacity and needs assessments can help to identify key areas for program focus.
- *Funds.* Funds for capacity building efforts should be controlled locally wherever possible. Local control of finances encourages organizations to develop administrative and managerial skills. Funds should be sought from foundations, companies and governments. At the same time, capacity building programs usually require a high level of voluntary commitment and committed leadership.
- *Tangible skills.* Program leaders should specifically identify tangible skills that can be integrated into the economy after the project is complete. It should be recognized that personal, professional and organizational goals may need to be met throughout the life of a program. Locally defined goals are more likely to build on existing capacity and strengths.
- *Multi-level involvement and strengthening of networks.* Capacity building may require the involvement of various levels of the community – individual, family, organization and institution. Work done only at the individual or family level, for example, may undermine the goals of duly elected leaders. Integration between the levels can be bolstered through strengthening of networks between people and organizations locally, regionally and nationally.

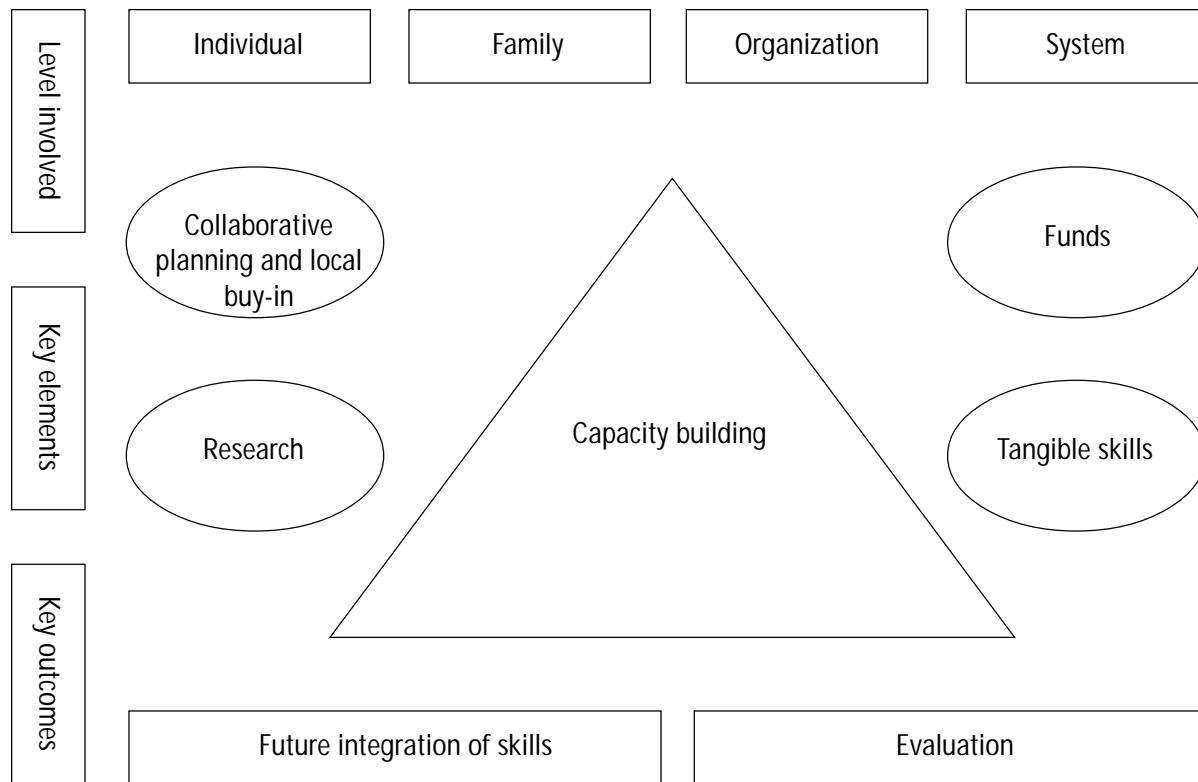
- *Integration of skills and evaluation.* Long-term planning for how skills will be integrated into the local, regional or national economy should be emphasized at the outset of a program. Evaluation of programs will be key to determining whether skills have been incorporated.
- *Planning for pitfalls.* Capacity building models have a time and place and may not be applicable to all situations. There are numerous drawbacks and pitfalls to these models, but with critical evaluation and joint planning, it is hoped that these pitfalls can be avoided.

We hope that the analysis presented and questions raised in this paper may be used by other organizations to discern true capacity building and collaboratively plan effective programs.

By critically planning our own interests, goals, and funding structures we are best able to ensure that capacity building continues to serve the interests of many, instead of being dominated by powerful groups.

Model for capacity building

This model refers to the key elements and outcomes of capacity building. Project leaders can plan with local communities to address each of the key elements before a project begins. Each element is discussed in the section, Conclusions and recommendations.



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Notes

¹ This research paper draws on the framework of the Community Decision-Making Model for Mining Activities in the Americas. However, it is an addendum to the model, specifically focused on capacity building and training needs. Information gathering and sharing mechanisms are treated in a separate paper, also commissioned by the MMSD.

² The three NGOs have since published a guide in Spanish based on the experience of training leaders in the mining communities.

³ GyC has been sub-contracted to write about its work with the communities in a separate paper. Please see this paper for a complete summary of the work.