

## MAKING THE CASE FOR CAPACITY BUILDING: EVALUATING PACT'S GRANTMAKING AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM IN SOUTH AFRICA

### THE UMBRELLA GRANTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (UGM)

When the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) gave assistance to South Africa in 2004 for prevention, treatment, care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS, and orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), it wanted to work with South African non-governmental organization (NGOs) with close community ties. Because South Africa's share of funding through the Presidents' Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was the largest of any country, USAID staff were unable to provide the level of support necessary to manage the numerous small grants. It called upon [Pact](#), for its expertise to assist through their Community REACH, a global program funded by USAID's Office of HIV/AIDS (OHA).

**UGM Quick facts**  
*Country:* South Africa  
*Geographic coverage:* country-wide (all nine provinces)  
*Duration:* 2004 to 2012 (Phases I and II)  
*Budget:* Phase 1=USD 72.95 M  
Phase 2=USD 239.56 M  
*90% of budget went to sub-grants*  
*Type:* Combined grant making and capacity building project

Pact is an international non-government organization with the vision of a world where people exercise their voice, build their own solutions and take ownership over their future. Its projects enable systemic solutions that allow those who are poor and marginalized to earn a dignified living, be healthy and take part in the benefits that nature provides. Pact accomplishes this by strengthening local capacity, forging effective governance systems and transforming markets into a force for development. Pact operates in over 60 countries in the areas of health, livelihoods and natural resource management and has been operating in South Africa since 2003.

During the first phase of the program, the number of grantees increased rapidly from 7 in 2004, to 18 by 2007. By the time of the evaluation, Pact had worked with a total of 25 partners with grants ranging from USD\$300,000 to \$8,000,000 annually. These primary partners implemented activities in multiple sites and in many cases provided sub-grants to their community based organizational (CBO) partners (over 70 sub-grantees in total). The PEPFAR program was considered to be emergency assistance focused on scaling up activities to fight the AIDS epidemic. Pact, however, raised the need for an organizational capacity building component to ensure the effectiveness of the grants. While capacity support constituted a narrow portion of the original program, which focused mainly on financial management, monitoring and reporting, and grant compliance, Pact maintained a capacity development approach in its grants management program.

In 2007 the PEPFAR program was reauthorized and the program was renewed following a competitive proposal process. In this second phase, it became known as the [Umbrella Grants Management](#) (UGM) program. By that time, the program had demonstrated the benefit that the capacity building assistance had provided to the effectiveness of the grants. It was now considered essential for success of the program overall and was therefore expanded to include the full complement of support services traditionally part of Pact's grant making approach.

#### *UGM's Program Approach*

Pact had implemented the project with a Theory of Change hypothesis: that the combined effect of grant making and organizational capacity building would result in improved grantee competence to deliver more efficient and high

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quality programs on a large enough scale to lead to improved prevention practices as well as increase health,

emotional and economic wellbeing of persons living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHIA) and OVC. Capacity building support focused in five areas: financial management; monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER); program planning and implementation; organization development; and HIV and AIDS technical capacity.

Support to South African NGOs began once USAID selected their proposal from a competitive process and referred them to UGM as a grantee. Pact in South Africa then worked with the NGO's staff to develop a customized plan to focus support where it was needed, as determined by its set of participatory capacity assessment tools. Overall administrative capacity was assessed before the grant was awarded using the Management Capacity Assessment Tool (MCAT); organizational capacity was assessed using an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA). Pact's OCA methodology used worldwide is a comprehensive and highly participatory approach to organizational change, learning and development. UGM used this methodology to develop a set of customized self-assessment tools. Grantees used these tools to reflect on their systems, structures, and practices in the key capacity areas of governance, leadership, internal management, project management, technical programming, and monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (MERL). The results of the initial OCA formed the basis of an Institutional Strengthening Plan (ISP), outlining the priority areas to focus efforts. The milestones and targets in the plan reflected donor standards for grant compliance. Progress toward these standards was linked to funding replenishment tranches.

During implementation, UGM uses a peer approach to grants management with its partners. Project staff support the grantee by developing capacity through training and mentoring in increased organizational performance. The work is carried out and monitored through regular contact and site visits between the grantee and Pact's South Africa team. Grantees submit monthly financial reports and quarterly program progress reports (unless program or management risk suggests more frequent reporting is appropriate).

**Table 1. UGM Monitoring Framework (Abridged)**

UGM's goals and objectives:
<b>Goal:</b> To scale-up HIV and AIDS services through local and international implementing partners.
<b>Objective 1:</b> Use Pact's grant management system to provide partners and subpartners with access to funds to scale up HIV and AIDS services.
<b>Objective 2:</b> Enhance organizational sustainability through institutional strengthening of indigenous partners.
<b>Objective 3:</b> Improve the quality of HIV / AIDS partner services by increasing access to technical expertise.

Key Concept to Measure	Sample Indicators	Validation Method
<b>Quality and Scale of Services delivered to Beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ # people in care / receiving services</li> <li>✓ % grantees using accepted service delivery protocols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PEPFAR data audits</li> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Beneficiary perceptions</li> </ul>
<b>Grantee capacity to manage programs effectively and efficiently</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Scores of 3 assessment tools at baseline and 24 mos. (Admin/Finance; organizational, technical, MERL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Grantee perception</li> <li>• Document review (reports, audits, plans, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Financial viability and effectiveness of Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ \$ USG funding received by grantees</li> <li>✓ % grantees with clear fundraising strategy</li> <li>✓ % grantees achieving annual program targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring reports</li> <li>• Internal audits</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Grant MER data</li> </ul>

### Monitoring Project Results

Since UGM provides grant management and capacity building support to grantees for improved organizational effectiveness and technical service delivery, Pact SA was clear that its impact could not be measured as change for the

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ultimate beneficiaries (OVCs and PLWHIA). Those results could only be attributed to grantees who implement the services. So UGM staff developed a results chain of the program hypothesis to monitor the causal linkages assumed to lead to results. A set of indicators and validation methods made up the project's M&E framework (*see table 1*).

Monitoring data were triangulated from at least three different sources before concluding plausible association for program interventions. Changes in MCAT and OCA scores from the baseline at the beginning of a grant and from the final reassessment at the end established partners' progress and growth. Regular site visits, written documentation of improvements in systems and structures, timeliness and accuracy of reports, partner feedback surveys, and independent analysis from sources such as audit reports, all helped the staff understand the changes that were occurring.

Every six months, the UGM team held two-day partner review meetings to reflect on the progress of the program. The full team reviewed each partner's work, results plans, progress reports and insights gained from site visits. From this they summarize the achievements, gaps and possible needs for each. Trends were sought across the entire portfolio that might be addressed through shared training or mentoring and each partner support plan was updated.

### EVALUATING UGM EFFECTIVENESS

By 2009, Pact SA was working with over 90 nongovernmental organizations (20 grantees and their 70 sub-partners plus local affiliates and CBOs) delivering services across South Africa and, through FY 2009, across the whole spectrum of HIV and AIDS prevention, care, and treatment services. While the second phase of the program had already begun, Pact staff felt the need to review its accomplishments in the five years of implementation and test the program's hypothesis in order to improve its program in the next phase.

#### *Framing the Evaluation*

Pact SA obtained feedback from their key stakeholders by commissioning an outcome evaluation. Pact teams in South Africa and Washington, DC, and USAID, jointly developed three evaluation questions to address several stakeholder purposes including:

- *Pact* - to inform program improvement strategies based on evidence of what works (or doesn't), and to document key lessons learned.
- *Pact* - to share lessons learned in South Africa across Pact's various programs world-wide.
- *US Government (USAID and Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC)* – to provide essential information on the value of the Umbrella Grants Management (UGM) model and to inform decision making on potential use of this approach for scaling up programs in developing countries.
- *Other grant management organizations* – to guide potential improvements in similar programs.
- *Capacity development organizations* – to share lessons and provide new literature on capacity development in the context of developing country grant making.

#### Three Evaluation Questions:

- ? What key features of the Pact SA grant management program enhanced or prohibited successful implementation and achievement of the key program objectives?
- ? What were the key results, strengths and weaknesses of the capacity development processes implemented by Pact SA under the grant management program?
- ? What key elements in the Pact SA internal management structure and systems contributed (positively or negatively) to achievement or failure to achieve program results?

#### *Engaging the Evaluation Team*

As part of a two-tier solicitation process, Pact first issued an expression of interest. From 110 respondents, 10 were

invited to submit a full proposal that addressed the evaluation’s TOR. Because no one organization had all the desired skills, the TOR was revised to encourage partnerships among the finalists. The four-person team, formed between [LTL Strategies](#) in Washington, DC, and [Keystone Accountability](#) in Cape Town, South Africa, was selected because of their combined expertise in evaluating grants management programs and in facilitating effective feedback mechanisms from multiple stakeholders.

*Data Collection Methods*

The evaluation team used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques to triangulate and validate findings. Data sources included:

- ✓ **Document review** of program agreements, project monitoring frameworks, periodic progress reports, and literature on leading approaches to grant making and NGO capacity building.
- ✓ **Individual and focus group Interviews** with the key institutional stakeholders, Pact staff in South Africa and in Washington, DC, and USAID personnel at the South Africa Mission and at USAID headquarters in Washington, DC.
- ✓ **Grantee site visits** with a selection of grantees validated outcomes and issues emerging from the other sources. This allowed more in-depth conversation with partners on the changes they perceived in their capacity since the start of the program and the reasons for these changes. It allowed the team to see the actual plans, strategies, and documents that were developed and to observe how they were used within the organization.
- ✓ **Internet-based electronic survey** sent to all present and past grantees to solicit and compare their views on the program. Questions explored experiences of Pact SA’s performance across five main areas of grant making: 1) the pre-award assessment; 2) quality of interactions and communications (relationship); 3) grant monitoring and evaluation; 4) capacity building support; and 5) general comparative perceptions with other grant makers. The 92% response rate for the survey provided valuable feedback data from grantees.
- ✓ **A one-day grantee reflective workshop** was held with a sample of survey respondents at the end of the field work to report the results back and discuss, validate, deepen and enrich the conclusions. The well-attended session proved to be an important part of the evaluation process, as it was significant in promoting participation and learning among partners by comparing and expanding responses. The meeting also engaged grantees in formulating preliminary recommendations.

*Summarizing and Attributing Results*

Using the data-collection system maintained by the program, the evaluators analyzed it to uncover overall trends across all grantees. Key organizational data such as annual budget, donor profile, number of staff, level of staff turnover, and capacity scores from the MCAT and OCA assessments, were compared to construct a synthesis of the changes in the partner’s organizational capacity during the term of their grant. The outcomes from this analysis were validated through insights gained from the individual interviews and site visits to grantees. The team looked for

**Table 2. Summary of Evaluation Methods and Data Sources**

Stakeholder	Data Source	Collection Methods
Pact SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Key program staff members</li> <li>✓ Program documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews (individual, group)</li> <li>• Document review</li> </ul>
PactWorld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individuals supporting Pact SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> </ul>
USAID SA & DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individuals managing or providing oversight for Pact SA (<i>current, past</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> </ul>
Pact SA prime partners and grantees ( <i>current, past</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Staff members of grantee organizations</li> <li>✓ Participants in Grantee Reflective Workshop</li> <li>✓ Grantee records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous survey</li> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Grantee Reflective Workshop</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Site visits</li> </ul>



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consensus and agreement in the opinions expressed through the interviews and online survey. This triangulated and corroborated the views of the three stakeholder groups concerning the effectiveness of the program.

Site visits with grantees provided the evaluation team with a demonstration of the changes occurring. Where the MCAT and OCA reports had identified challenges in the lack of formal systems, policies or procedures in an organization, the team found new systems and procedures in place. One recommendation was to re-assess these areas and formalize the learning processes throughout the program cycle. Monitoring, management and reporting systems assessed as weak were observed to be producing accurate and reliable data, having passed a recent independent audit. Partners reported addressing capacity gaps with the help of UGM's close monitoring, training and coaching. Trainings were received with mixed reviews, however the coaching components were viewed most favorably. Finally, many partners had expanded their service levels and were exceeding PEPFAR targets.

### *Reporting and Using Evaluation Results*

Through investigation, the evaluators concluded that overall Pact's UGM project has been highly successful. Findings revealed a rapid growth in the scale and reach of grantees' HIV and AIDS services, shown in substantial achievement and exceeding PEPFAR targets by almost all grantee partners. They concluded that the capacity building interventions over the five years had positively contributed to a nine-fold increase in the scale of HIV/AIDS service delivery, and a 400% increase in the funding absorptive capacity of partners. Nearly all grantees consistently achieved or exceeded PEPFAR program quality targets. Both USAID and partners expressed full satisfaction in Pact's performance. The evaluation team engaged Pact SA on the findings and their implications during an interactive final meeting.

Once the evaluation was completed, UGM staff held their own internal reflection to interpret and assimilate the findings. They then held interactive events with the other stakeholders to present the findings and lessons learned. Pact SA held a webinar for all Pact offices worldwide and also presented their experience at a peer gathering in Istanbul. As a result of the evaluation findings and recommendations, Pact SA made key changes to the program. They came to fully understand the importance of a positive relationship in fostering trust, a key ingredient in capacity building success. They also found that the capacity building work they had assumed partners were replicating with their own sub-grantees was not working well, addressing the sentiments that sub-partners had not received enough support. In response, they structured a 'cascade' approach that began with joint facilitation of OCA assessments and capacity building workshops for sub-grantees. This shared leadership was phased out by gradually handing over of capacity building responsibilities to the partners as they were ready.

The evaluation gave tangible credence to the project's hypothesis that organizational capacity building leverages better service delivery. While anecdotal evidence had already influenced the program's direction in its second phase, the exercise provided the data to substantiate the changes, thus making the case that an investment in the

### UGM Evaluation Findings (related to the evaluation questions)\* :

1. Key features of the grants management program were Pact's rigorous tool-based approach, its combination of compliance and support measures, and its relationship-based capacity building inputs, especially development of each grantee's financial management and MER (monitoring, evaluation and reporting) systems and skills.
2. Key results are the specific successes in the grantees' abilities to meet PEPFAR's rigorous standards (including passing financial audit) and to achieve impressive increases in the numbers of persons served with improved prevention, care and treatment services. Due to: Pact's emphasis on partnership and building relationships of trust, both with USAID and with grantees.
3. Pact SA has developed a highly systematic approach to managing the complexity of PEPFAR funding used due to its effective staff, systems established, and Pact's management of good working relations among staff and with USAID/SA and the grantee partners.

*\*Taken from the UGM Evaluation Report, 2010, p. iv.*

organizational capacity of South African NGOs can have a lasting impact on the lives of the people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

### INSIGHTS INTO THE CHALLENGES OF EVALUATING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Evaluating complex social change efforts, such as organizational capacity building, are characteristically challenging, particularly when it comes to issues of results, effectiveness and attribution. Moreover, organizational performance and capacity are not always directly linked and their connections can be difficult to unravel. When organizational capacity building first came into prominence as a technical area in the early 1990s, development agencies focused on improving the technical and grant compliance skills of local organizations. They relied heavily on training individuals at workshops that did not necessarily translate into better results.

The thematic area has since matured its approaches. It looks more holistically at organizational development, performance and sustainability as indicators of capacity. While the approach has proven to be more effective long-term, it adds significant complexity to an evaluation exercise, requiring a rethinking of traditional methods. Fortunately, practitioners have been learning from cases such as UGM to develop effective methods and approaches for addressing these challenges.

The following are lessons helpful in understanding UGM's success.

#### 1. Articulate a clear monitoring and evaluation framework.

For capacity development to be evaluated, it is critical that evaluators first know what capacity is and how to recognize it. There are different perceptions of capacity, what it is for and how it is built. These stem from important, underlying conceptual differences between stakeholders. Therefore, articulating the project's change hypothesis and maintaining an effective monitoring system that captures relevant data is the foundation of an effective evaluation. It frames the evaluation and mitigates problems with those conceptual differences, saving time and resources. When a project knows the specific parameters of what it wants to learn, and what is realistic and cost effective to accomplish, it gives evaluators the freedom to design the tools and approaches within their technical expertise to meet those expectations.

Pact's established expertise in capacity building developed over several decades of experience in many countries provided a good foundation for the evaluation. Their proven assessment methodologies, monitoring approaches and specific Theory of Change were in place for UGM from the beginning. Pact has learned that capacity building is not a linear process and success cannot be determined simply by comparing quantitative data gathered from the baseline and at the end-of-project. It is more important to look at trends over time and see the entire growth progression. UGM's data-collection system reflected this complexity and tried to follow the complete story. The evaluation team's findings stemmed directly from it.

#### 2. Focus on the whole system, not just the organizational components.

Many capacity building M&E frameworks concentrate on identifying parts, functions and assets of an organization (VanSant 2000). This gives a useful initial understanding of the structure and intentions of the organization, but provides little understanding of the complex relationships and patterns of behavior of an organization, both internally

#### Useful Tools in Evaluating Capacity Development

##### Approaches

- Outcome Mapping
- Most Significant Change (MSC)
- Appreciative Inquiry

##### Techniques

- Case studies (single / comparative)
- Surveys (esp. electronic)
- Action research
- Timeline drawings
- Semi-structured interviews
- Open ended questioning

and with its outside environment. Beyond changes in structures, there is the need to explain why change has occurred (or not), capture relationship between functions, and identify shifts in how the organization relates to and works with others, e.g., beneficiaries, donors, government, and peers. Therefore, capacity building projects cannot rely solely on monitoring the skills development of individuals, but must link it to systems within the organization and how it affects performance of the organization or sector overall. The framing of the UGM evaluation provided this broad contextual exploration needed to be comprehensive and make a plausible determination of the project impact.

### **3. Use a mix of participatory approaches.**

Capacity development is largely about human behavior, actions and relationships; perception plays a major role in determining the scale and value of behavior changes and their impact (Baser 2008). Evidence suggests that participatory M&E processes help ensure more active engagement by participants, a greater degree of ownership, and increased reliability and quality assurance of the information obtained (Hailey 2003). Because it relies on perception, evaluating capacity development requires multiple forms of evidence and opinion to be gathered from a broad range of perspectives to generate meaningful insights. Surveys are a good way of bringing feedback from a very wide set of respondents that could not practically be interviewed. Engaging participants in the reporting of the results so that they can hear how their responses compare with those of others adds depth to that breath. Reflective case studies, both single case and comparative, provide the anecdotal illustration of results suggested by monitoring data. Activity-based exercises that facilitate group inquiry and reflection from multiple perspectives include focus group discussions, role-plays, and drawing. In the absence of baseline data, retroactive scoring and timelines can help participants quantify the extent of capacity changes over time. Group agreement on qualitative statements can be quantified through techniques such as card ranking, bubble analysis or consensus meters. New real-time feedback systems, such as Keystone's [Constituency Voice](#) methodology, are being developed for rapid and cost-effective monitoring of perceptions.

The UGM evaluation team solicited the perspectives from the three primary stakeholder groups – Pact staff, project grantees, and the donor agency – to look for consensus or disagreement. The internet-based survey allowed a quantification of agreement among grantees on a series of statements concerning the quality of support from and interactions with the project that could then be aggregated and contrasted by demographics. The reflective workshop played an equally important role of reporting survey results to respondents for validation through discussion of their causes and implications.

### **4. Make learning and reflection an outcome of the process.**

Self-evaluation and reflection is important in capacity building as a way to contribute to the ultimate goal of capacity building itself. Monitoring that simply extracts information and reports it *upward* to donors and not *downward* to participants does not contribute to learning. Participatory M&E processes are more time and resource intensive yet strengthen the very capacities for thinking, learning and reflection critical to organizational growth. Accountability for improvement implies that systems for monitoring and determining progress must be locally controlled by the people who will make use of the information generated. Equally important is to focus on strengths and processes of self-development. Extractive and deficit-based evaluation methods can result in *decapacitating* an organization if it undermines these processes.

Pact's OCA methodologies recognize that the responsibility for learning, priority setting and organizational

performance rests with the partner organization. The UGM project, therefore, plays the role of facilitating capacity development, creating ownership and understanding for improvement within the organization itself. The project evaluation was similarly framed to focus on investigating learning and improvement. The investigation questions aimed to establish lessons and areas for improvement. The final reflective meetings held with all three stakeholder groups further promoted this result. Their open and transparent presentation of the findings sparked deeper reflection, analysis and connections among ideas and participants.

### **5. Triangulate and validate results and attribution.**

While participatory methods are critical, they do have drawbacks. In addition, an over-reliance on participatory methods can be misleading. External stakeholders may suspect an intentional or unintentional bias in the data. Consequently, participatory or self-assessment approaches need to be triangulated to ensure adequate credibility and rigor (Hailey 2003). Quantifying qualitative data and collecting external opinions can overcome these accusations by providing reference points that can overcome assessment subjectivity or bias. Gathering information from stakeholders in other capacity building programs can also help establish a benchmark by which to judge a project. Sectoral experts can similarly give perspective that can help distinguish changes within the project cohort, versus trends within the sector at large. Intentional sampling of partners with a variety of characteristics (e.g. large/small, young/well-established, past/present, successful/less-successful, urban/rural, and thematic focus) can help establish patterns and uniformity of the outcomes. Partners who withdrew from the project are important sources for understanding why the project may have not met their needs.

To achieve this balance, the UGM project looks for changes in such things as funding levels, beneficiary service levels and independent audits. The evaluation team similarly triangulated the results of the survey and interviews with partner information and its own direct site visits. Survey results would have been more powerful had there been other similar grant makers with which to compare performance ratings (as is Keystone's usual practice).

### **6. Build trust with participants.**

Issues related to organizational capacity can touch upon very sensitive areas within an organization, such as legitimacy, reputation, and funding. Even the effectiveness of the implementer of a capacity building project is subject to sensitive scrutiny. Participants may feel threatened by methods or indicators they do not understand and may perceive the exercise to be bureaucratic, or possibly tied to future funding. This perception can inhibit responses and lead to a manipulation of information. Taking time to transparently explain assessment methods, how information will be used and judgments made, and what will be done with the findings can build trust. Furthermore, when stakeholders see how an evaluation can benefit them, their investment in the findings can grow considerably.

This was found to be true for both the UGM project as well as the evaluation team. During program implementation, Pact SA found that OCA self-assessment accuracy increased as trust developed between the grantee and the UGM. Initial scores tended to be inflated the real capacity levels. Nearly all partners reported the second assessment to be more realistic as they better understood the process and how the results were used (Sonko 2011). Similarly, the evaluation team invested time in understanding Pact's approach to capacity building and what they would like to learn from the evaluation. Survey and interview participants were assured that their responses would be anonymous and identified only with demographic information. The results were later publically and transparently validated. In both ways, grantees felt their views were taken seriously, thus building trust and further



strengthening relationships.

**7. Accept plausible association.**

Capacity building projects can be complex, multi-faceted programs with a number of intervention points within a dynamic environment over many years. Ultimately, responsibility for increasing organizational capacity and improving performance lies with the grantees themselves. This makes definitive attribution for change (positive or negative) an impossible task. The basis for conclusions in capacity building evaluations more closely resembles that of a court room than a laboratory<sup>1</sup>. Defining assumptions and causal linkages in advance can point to plausible associations between the activities and outcomes, which may help explain the factors behind the change.

In hypothesizing its influence, UGM looked for specific changes and mapped them to project interventions. For example, a partner may have lacked a strategic plan before joining, yet finalized one during the grant period. With further evidence that the plan was developed shortly after a representative attended the strategic planning training, given that the organization expressed that the workshop was instrumental, it can be concluded that the project was a positive impetus and contribution to the development of the plan.

**8. Understand the context and environment.**

Organizational capacity is part of a complex web of pressures and relationship in which it works. Shifts in organizational, sectorial or political dynamics can support or diminish capacity regardless of project efforts. Additionally, culture plays an important role in defining performance measures. Therefore, effective evaluation methods balance adaptation to the local context with the need for indicators and results that can be compared in a broader context. In the UGM evaluation for example, evaluators had to understand a multitude of external factors, such as the programming policies and priorities of USAID and the Department of Health that inhibited the procurement and delivery of Anti-Retroviral (ARV) treatments.

**9. Allow adequate time.**

Lastly, give attention to the effort and time required to commission a good evaluation. Evaluations, particularly ones that actively engage major stakeholders, are time and labor intensive. If the evaluation is planned for the very end of the project period there is a high risk of running out of time and money, resulting in a rushed and perhaps faulty evaluation. Pact SA took approximately one year from preparation to report.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to André Proctor, Programme Services Director at Keystone, for this analogy.



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