
BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF KENYA'S FARMER ORGANISATIONS

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To increase the capacity of the Kenya Livestock Producers Association (KLPA), a team of national and international organisations mentored the organisation. As a result of the capacity building programme, the skills and knowledge of KLPA staff have grown, and the organisation's policies have been strengthened.

Capacity is the 'means' or the ability to fulfil a task or meet an objective effectively. In Kenya, capacity has often been used in a narrow sense to refer only to the skills of staff and the strength of organisations. Capacity building, however, can also mean building up new capabilities, and although it is a concept that has different meanings for different people, in general it relates to enhancing or strengthening a person's or an organisation's capacity to achieve their goals. Capacity building also increases the ability and resources of persons, communities and organisations to manage, change and define and realise their objectives so they can work more effectively.

Capacity building is as important as capital investment and infrastructure. In 2006, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that capacity building focuses on increasing an individual's and an organisation's abilities to perform core functions, solve problems and objectively deal with development needs. This analysis was supported by those who saw capacity building as a way of improving or upgrading the ability of a person, a team or institution to implement their functions and achieve their objectives. Capacity building is important at all levels, from the individual to the national level, and is relevant to building the organisational capacities of communities and supporting the formation of non-profit organisations.

Capacity building is often equated with training, a one-time financial input or short-term external technical assistance. However, capacity building is not defined by the instruments used but by its goal, which is to enhance the capacity of people and institutions to improve their competence and problem-solving capacities in a sustainable way.

Initiating capacity building

Capacity building processes can be initiated from inside or outside an organisation. They can assist individuals and organisations with links to local area initiatives that can help increase and manage their development goals in a sustainable way. In 2009, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) claimed that capacity development is the 'how' of making development work. Self-dependence and a sense of ownership are the real features of capacity building and these are important factors in the development process. Some argue that there are four common approaches to capacity building: top-down organisational, for example policy; bottom-up organisational, for example staff training; and partnership and community-based approaches.

Capacity building is important in enabling organisations to develop economically and socially. It can be costly and time consuming, but there are a

*Cover Stephen Njagi,
KLPA programme officer,
giving a vote of thanks to
the GLI team*

Left Participants at the Lake Nakuru Flaming Lodge training conducted by GLI in March 2016



Right A face-to-face discussion between KLPA staff members Millicent Wanjiru and Ben Mwangela on the final review of the organisation's capacity assessment



number of methods that can be used to develop staff capacities. These methods have the following strengths and weaknesses:

- 1. Workshop training** allows staff to gain new theoretical knowledge and share their experiences with each other and their trainers. However, workshop training is expensive and the quality of delivery depends on having good facilitators and experts.
- 2. On-the-job learning** is highly regarded as a complementary method to workshop training. It enables staff to put theory into practice and creates mutual learning between extension staff and farmers.
- 3. Cross visits and study tours** also create learning at field level, particularly between staff. However, they are expensive to run and require good organisational skills.
- 4. Staff meetings** create opportunities to share experiences and plan together. They create an environment where progress, outputs and outcomes of activities can be presented, and where problems can be discussed and plans made for the future. These meetings need to be structured and held regularly with managers present.
- 5. Mentoring** is seen as crucial for new staff, including volunteers and contract staff, during the first year of project implementation. Young staff members are less experienced and need mentors who have more experience to give them advice. This requires experienced and qualified mentors.
- 6. The use of the internet and reading documents** can introduce staff to new information but in some areas these sources are difficult to access.
- 7. Formal study** allows staff to upgrade their knowledge and qualifications. However, this requires funds, time and support from managers and families.

The experience of the Kenya Livestock Producers Association

To increase the capacity of the KLPA, and to build up the capacity of its staff at national and county level, the

Association's policies were reviewed and work was conducted to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its relations with its stakeholders. These measures were designed to provide the skills and knowledge KLPA needed to carry out its planned activities.

Mentoring was an innovative approach that was designed to accelerate the development of staff capacity. This was provided by a team drawn from international and national organisations.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Kenya Agricultural Value Chain Enterprise (KAVES) and Fintrack funded a project on livestock within USAID's Feed the Future programme. It was important for KLPA before engaging in this programme to have relevant organisational policies in place.

USAID, the African Institution Innovation Mechanism (AIIM) and KAVES, through its partner organisation AIIM Assist, identified the need to develop capacity via an organisational capacity assessment (OCA) and a review of the administration and strategic plans.

The Global Leadership Institute (GLI) acted as consultants and implemented an 8-month training and mentorship programme. This enabled KLPA to use this technical support to develop and review policies including its strategic plan, financial policy, procurement policies, human resources policies and gender and youth policies. The 8-month work plan facilitated capacity building programmes, training and mentoring in KLPA in accordance with the contract agreements with USAID and KAVES, and also following the working arrangements established during previous engagements with USAID AIIM-Assist. The results of the OCA process of KLPA were also taken into consideration.

Identifying the organisational policy gaps within KLPA

With this technical support KLPA was able to develop and review its plans and policies. Gaps were identified through OCA before the GLI mentorship across six capacity areas: governance, finance, administration systems, human resources, programme management, and programme performance. Five policies were

developed, even though the capacity building, training and mentoring programme took a considerable amount of time and there was a shortage of staff capable of dealing with the six key areas identified.

- 1. Strategic plan.** A strategic plan is critical to any organisation as it brings decision making and planning together to provide overall direction as to how objectives will be achieved and how best to keep up to date with the latest models and best practices.
- 2. Financial policy.** Due to financial control responsibilities, KLPA came up with a policy to enable the control of the organisation's funds by its financial department.
- 3. Procurement policies.** Standards were proposed that would enable the establishment of procedures to be used by KLPA when procuring supplies, expendable property and equipment as well as real property and services.
- 4. Human resource policies.** KLPA developed a manual which will act as a reference document for the KLPA Board, management and staff. It also forms a basis for the development of KLPA's working culture and environment. Any changes to the policies contained in this manual will require the authorisation of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). However, where changes in policy might have significant financial implications, the CEO will seek the approval of the KLPA Board prior to implementation.
- 5. Gender and youth policies.** These policies provide guidelines on how KLPA will mainstream gender and youth in its work.

Mentoring

The first mentoring workshop took place at the Lake Nakuru Flamingo Lodge in March 2016. Its objective was to create an understanding of the whole procedure and that relevant information could be shared within the organisation. The strategic planning process was extensive as it required background information on the organisation and its programmes, and a comprehensive understanding of KLPA's operations. After the mentoring workshop, there was a successful strategic planning workshop later in the year.

AIIM Assist and the relevant KLPA staff met in May 2016 for a pre-organisational capacity assessment site

visit and a follow-up and successful OCA later that month. The KLPA mentoring sessions were later reviewed by AIIM-Assist. Successful review and mentoring sessions were made possible because of good coordination and documentation of the experience developed by AIIM-Assist trainers. A new capacity need was identified and addressed which was relevant to gender and youth in the KLPA. However, the meeting faced planning problems because many of the organisers and new staff did not understand the organisation's policies because manuals and policies briefs were not complete and there were problems regarding time and venue. Only a few of those invited attended the final AIIM-Assist workshop because of budget constraints and there were not many KLPA staff in attendance. Those concerned with gender and youth policy were also inadequately represented.

Conclusion

The training revealed that KLPA staff were aware of the various capacity building options open to them. KLPA staff were able to play an important role in the emotional and social support of new staff, and developed new frontiers to improve the organisation's economic capacity and commercialisation. During the training we found that most staff joined farmer groups for economic empowerment and, therefore, the focus of all stakeholders should be more geared towards empowering and engaging small-scale farmers on how to undertake farming as a business.

The study has made a considerable contribution to earlier guide materials and has identified various themes that need to be worked on in future. Some of the themes that need to be explored include the relationship between community-based farmer associations and their performance and the extent to which local governments and other stakeholders can collaborate with existing farmer groups to promote an active business community.



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