

HUMANITARIN ACTION FOR THE
PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN (HAPA)

Capacity Development Strategy of HAPA:

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1. Introduction

The January 2010 crisis in Afghanistan especially in Southern Region Provinces (Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul Urozgan & Nimroz) to renewed attention to the dilemmas of Humanitarian action and its relationship with development. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) Supporting capacity development of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the South are confront with many additional Challenges when working in the context of humanitarian crises.

Although crises caused by conflicts or natural hazards each have their specific challenges, there are some common features. Humanitarian crises are characterized by the pressure to respond quickly and to obtain short-term results, in contrast to client-oriented long term development approaches. INGOs experience this pressure not only from their 'back donors' (governments and public), but also from the media, their southern partners, local communities and local governments. Another common challenge is that local CSO capacity is often adversely affected by the crisis.

As a consequence, responses by INGOs may actually undermine existing capacities. There are many examples of local capacities being neglected or of local organizations being judged too weak to work with, without a proper assessment of their capacity. Some INGOs established parallel structures and worked directly with the affected communities from their field offices. On the other hand, there are also many examples of local CSOs being overloaded with funds and increasing their capacities, which can then not be sustained after the crisis.

It situations like Southern Region , CSO budgets are increased enormously in a short time, additional human resources need to be recruited and CSOs venture into relief and rehabilitation activities that are far from their regular mandate. An additional complication

is that CSOs may have to operate in a context that has become politicised and insecure. The tensions and lack of mutual trust in society affects the potential for cooperation.

INGOs have to find a balance between the humanitarian imperative to deliver immediate results (and hence rapidly build the skills to achieve this) and the longer term requirement to contribute to sustainable development.

INGOs in their support to the capacity Development of their civil society partner organizations in the South. Over the last five years the HAPA NGO has implement pilot programmes and offered a platform for reflection and learning through seminars, conferences, collective learning trajectories and action research.

This Note summarizes the lessons learnt from 22 years of HAPA NGO support to capacity development of Staff members in crises, and looks at the trends of capacity development practice in the Southern Region Sub-Offices.

What did the HAPA NGO learn and how did it deal with the many challenges?

The note summarises the understanding of the insights from the many evaluations and reports that resulted from these activities.

Lessons learnt become only meaningful when they lead to changes in behaviour and practice. Therefore the note starts with the lessons learnt and then looks in more detail in applying these lessons in their current practices.

2. Lessons learnt of HAPA NGO.

2.1. Strategic lessons learnt

There is always local capacity

Under all circumstances, individuals with relevant experience and basic skills try to cope with their situation. Humans are always organized in one way or another, whether formally or informally, although links may be brittle and performance poor. In crisis situations, caused by either conflicts or natural disasters, the normal tension between institutional and humanitarian imperatives is highlighted.

On the one hand, crises can be a constraint for the capacity development of HAPA NGO, as they tend to have a negative impact on Local organizations that existed before the natural disaster struck or armed conflict started wounded or displaced; distrust and egoism may increase at the cost of cooperation. On the other hand, crises also offer opportunities to “build-back-better” and to access unexplored funding, knowledge and Expertise. For HAPA NGO, crises can be a chance to contribute to social and political change in society.

Assess and strengthen local capacities

Proper identification and assessment of the local context and availability of existing Capacity is crucial, if one wants to find a Balance between a rapid and effective response, and longer term impact and empowerment. The capacity of HAPA NGO such as social service NGOs, community based organizations and social networks may be weak, but is often underestimated. Humanitarian responses can build on these local organizations.

Strengthening their Capacity is challenging, but needs to be at the core of any strategy in response to crises. The context of conflicts is dynamic and assessments of the local context require regular updating and need to include conflict mapping.

25 of the 58 staff member of HAPA are active in crisis situations. They sometimes support their partner organizations in Humanitarian assistance (relief and rehabilitation), conflict prevention, peace building, human rights, disaster preparedness, and disaster risk reduction. They respond to natural disasters and many support their partner UN & International organizations in Afghanistan.

Combine short-term strategy with long-term vision

Capacity development in a ‘normal’ context (i.e. a non-emergency situation) requires long-term commitments. In crisis situations, the immediate humanitarian needs often require the capacity to respond quickly, e.g. the ability to distribute relief items to the most affected population in a short time-frame. This implies short-term strategies to strengthen the implementing capacity. However, care should be taken that the rapid up-scaling of capacity to meet the demands of the crisis does not lead to a situation where there are negative longer term consequences for the NGO involved. Although in the context of sudden onset disasters, one cannot expect that a long-term capacity strategy will be developed in the

early response phase, one can at least expect that there is a long-term vision. Without such vision, civil society risks coming out of the crisis disempowered rather than strengthened.

Response to humanitarian crises often takes place in protracted crisis contexts. Conflicts in Afghanistan and especially Southern Region Provinces have continued for many years. Longer-term strategies are realistic in such environments, as there is more time available to plan and implement them. This also applies to responses to natural disasters in high risk areas such as Central, Northern & Western Afghanistan.

HAPA capacity development and Sustainable perspective

HAPA NGO in Southern Region have become aware of the difficulty of unlimited capacity development solely to training in skills, which are needed to fulfill their own accountability requirements such as project cycle Management and financial management: it creates local duplicate that remain fully Dependent. Parallel to the operational Capacity needs, attention to sustainable organizational development can make the difference between a clone and an Independent partner: e.g. the capability to relate (network with other organizations) and to adapt and self-renew in an ever-changing context. HAPA NGO must be supported in the Regular review of their vision, mission, Structures, systems and strategies in order remain effective in a fast moving world.

HAPA Strategy for capacity development: The sources of lessons learnt

The 2007-10 strategy of HAPA aims to improve the quality of cooperation of their staff from participating in different capacity development training of related organizations and their partners, and reinforce the contribution of an independent social civil society to community development and poverty alleviation. Learning is a central issue.

To reach its objective HAPA uses four interlinked strategies to support sustainable capacity development. These strategies will applied to "normal" development contexts as well as to contexts of conflict or natural disaster-related humanitarian crises. They are interlinked and lessons from one strategy often feed into another at various levels.

Strategy 1: Facilitation of learning of individual member organizations

HAPA is facilitating staff members to learn from the capacity development support in practice. This identifies a challenge in their relationship with Southern partners and together with HAPA a process of learning is developed to address the issue. These processes give HAPA an insight into the practice of its staff members and the challenges each staff member faces.

Strategy 2: Financing of programmes

The programmes support capacity development of their Southern partners and allow members to systematically learn from the implementation. HAPA has a separate fund for capacity development in humanitarian assistance. Financing is strategically aimed at improving quality and trained the local staff of HAPA of each mentioned provinces.

Strategy 3: modernization

The HAPA Innovation supports staff member initiatives that aim to improve the processes or programmes with their Southern Region in an innovative way. The lessons from the most successful innovations are shared in workshops

Strategy 4: Collective learning

Together with member organizations, HAPA identifies common issues on capacity development that merit being the object of joint reflection. With staff member And Partner organizations collective learning is organized either through single events or through a longer trajectory.

Invest in relationships

The quality of the HAPA NGO determines the room for external support to local capacity development. The added value that partnership has in development situations, in terms of reach, effectiveness and capacity building, also holds in crisis situations. Especially when working partnerships are already in place, these offer an effective starting point for responding to disasters and conflict.

Long-term commitment to a partner Relationship is important for successful sustainable capacity development. Smooth transition of HAPA NGO support from relief to rehabilitation and development and vice versa enables the development or continuation of long-term capacity development strategies. These long-term relations also provide the basis on which to support and develop disaster preparedness capacity. Therefore in high risk areas, both Southern and Northern NGOs in Afghanistan (and their back donors) should give greater priority to preparedness for future crises. Strengthening the capacity of Southern NGOs at the national level does not automatically mean that the lower levels, e.g. community based organizations are Strengthened. Capacity development needs to cover the whole 'aid chain' even more:

“Capacity building should be taken beyond the level of individual organizations: the challenge is to look at effective ways to Strengthen the civil society sector as a whole. In view of the often noted problems with coordination in emergency and post-emergency situations, a stronger domestic civil society sector could contribute to the

effectiveness of aid.” Institutional development of the sector is also important in crisis situations.

The potential of an international partnership to develop joint North-South capacity for advocacy and lobby on common issues is often not exploited, although many Southern NGOs are interested in working on this issue.

Southern Region capacity development requires learning & Practices

Contributing to capacity development in the South puts high demands on Practical work , as it requires critical reflection on one's own approaches and internal organization. The additional need for a broader orientation in which theory and practice are linked led to strategic cooperation between HAPA and the ANDAMA department of Afghanistan. One of the outcomes of this cooperation is a peer review of partnerships in crises-related interventions by HAPA NGO.

One of the interesting lessons learnt from this review is that looking at each other's practice can be an effective tool for mutual learning from each other's interventions.

2.2. Methodological lessons learnt

So far, discussions on capacity development have centred mainly around **what** capacity is needed, much less around the questions on **how** it should be built. By using methods that are not effective for the specific context many well-intended capacity development initiatives have failed to produce tangible results. This does not however imply that completely different methodologies have to be developed for crisis contexts.

Approaches for a 'regular Development context' can be applied in breakable environments, if adapted

Approaches, tools, and strategies for capacity development, which have been designed for 'normal' contexts can be used in fragile environments as well. The Civil Society Index developed by SWABAC, ANCB, ACBAR and other in coordination or the model for Integrated Organisation Management from the Management Development Foundation were found to have their merits in fragile environments, such as the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. However, it is essential to adjust and adapt these tools for the specific context of fragile environments. For example, the dynamic environment of fragile states requires more frequent context analysis and organizational assessments than in a 'normal' context. Testing other approaches, tools and instruments for quick assessments and analysis remains very relevant.

Flexibility in capacity development

In fragile conflict and post-conflict Environments, capacity development Approaches must be flexible. A fast changing context requires that HAPA NGO play different roles at different moments. Southern Region INGOs and their back donors should provide space for these changes. The process of translating policy into strategy and then into operational interventions must be short to allow for this flexibility. Tools that have been developed for complex development situations may also be of great use in crisis situations. Planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) tools that focus more on processes and relationships, and more on what is actually happening than on predetermined indicators, need to be tested more systematically.

Potential role of HAPA

HAPA NGO in this context are organizations which operate at the national level and do not have direct interventions at the community level, except for pilot projects. The HAPA NGO can play a link between INGOs and local Community. The HAPA NGO work directly with community based organizations (CBOs), while HAPA NGO can fulfill functions such as needs assessments and training. The War Conflicts in Marja District in Helmand province in Afghanistan response d by HAPA showed that an HAPA NGO with knowledge and experience in national disaster response can play an important role in strengthening the development in disaster more and more. Response and enhance coordination and links with local government. This role can be both short-term for strengthening the immediate capacity for disaster response and long-term in strengthening the disaster preparedness capacity for potential future disasters. The role of HAPA NGO and the consequences of their aid role for their civil society role need to be carefully observed and evaluated.

3. Current practice of HAPA NGO

To what extent HAPA apply the lessons learnt we have mentioned? How do they actually approach capacity development in humanitarian crises? What are their priorities and what are the important trends?

Partnership

Most NGOs have signed the Code of Conduct of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement on Disaster Relief. The first article is that "the humanitarian imperative comes first". Therefore, for the direct aid to people affected by crises has the highest priority and most resources are allocated to this purpose.

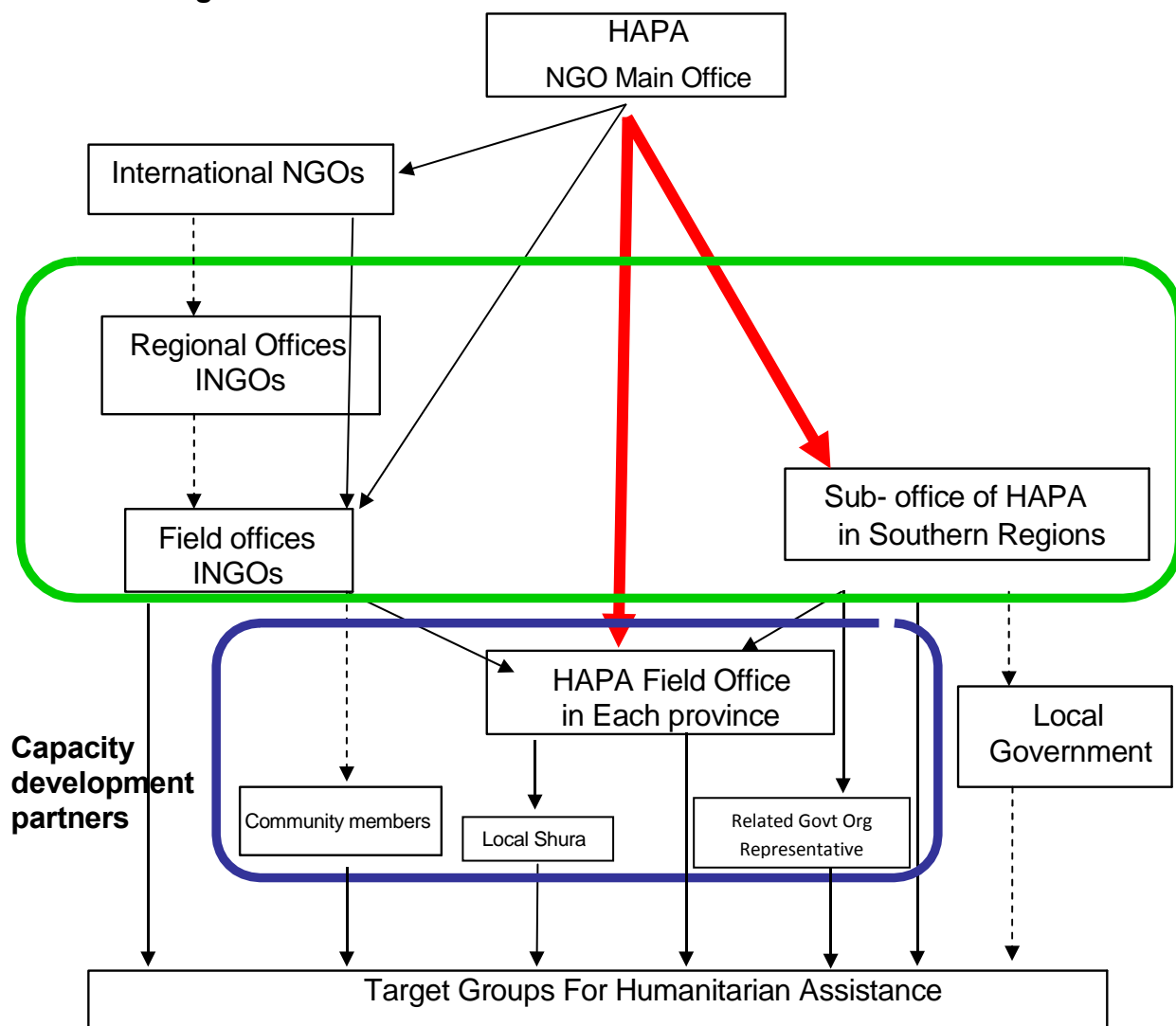
In addition to direct support, HAPA NGO has identified support to the capacity development of their partner organizations as a priority area. Compared to 10 years ago, when a number of Organizations were still operational in the field and worked directly with the affected Populations from their field offices, HAPA Staffs are now mostly working by Channeling assistance in the South. It has been recognized that the effects of a field presence must always be carefully considered from both the relief and

the sustainability angle. So the lesson that “there is always local capacity” now seems to be applied in practice.

There are major differences in the way for HAPA to channel their support. **Figure 1** illustrates how funds are channeled through the chain, and shows HAPA NGO staff for capacity development. A few staff members also target local government agencies for capacity development.

A number of HAPA field offices that work directly with community based organizations. Capacity development of HAPA for them is strengthening community structures. National staffs in field offices work directly with formal and informal way with HAPA at the community level.

Figure 1: Financial chain of humanitarian assistance of HAPA NGO.



The majority of HAPA has partnership relations with INGOs at national and provincial levels. Their capacity development efforts priorities these partner organizations.

There are partner organizations in crisis areas with almost no constituency or links to Community members. These NGOs are service providers, for example running a hospital. the study on civil society in southern Afghanistan, concludes that many NGOs in the provinces of Uruzgan and Kandahar do not have a constituency and should be referred to as social entrepreneurs rather than CSOs. Provided these NGOs deliver their services well, it may be justifiable to support them. However the lack of constituency is very relevant if one intends to strengthen capacities that go beyond delivering services to advocacy for social change, They are facing the challenge that their partner organizations will not necessarily be equipped for these roles. A number of members deal with this challenge by supporting separate advocacy organizations as well as service delivery organizations.

From human resource development to organizational development and beyond

The majority of members' capacity development work in crises is directed towards their partners' human resource development. Training staff in project cycle management and financial management are the most frequent subjects. This was confirmed in the peer review of afghan NGO on partnership in crises. These are also the areas that are required by donor organizations and their back donors for financial management and accountability. A recurring issue regarding capacity building is who sets the agenda and for what purpose. Capacity building may become a means to control partners' adherence to standards and financial accountability, and it has been suggested this has more to do with disciplining organizations to become good partners than to help them to realize their own goals".

Despite this emphasis on human resource development, we are seeing a clear trend of HAPA NGO to take a wider Perspective on capacity development, even in crisis-related interventions. Support to organizational development and institutional development is getting more priority in Policies and programmes. When the focus Shifts from relief to rehabilitation, there is more attention given to sustainable capacity development. Most members realize that the sustainable recovery of the affected Population is only possible if the capacity of local organizations is also strengthened. We can conclude that the lesson on the Importance of "taking a wider perspective than just training" is gradually being adopted.

Funding

HAPA experience difficulties in obtaining external funds for capacity development in /for humanitarian crises. If funds are made available at all, organizations face strong competition for the limited allocation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Afghanistan does not granted small fund to finance capacity development programmes in humanitarian crises, covering less than 30% of the total expenditures for humanitarian crises Local NGO. HAPA has explicitly included programme criteria that favor the Development of a long-term vision on local capacity development. In sudden crisis situations it cannot be expected that a long-term strategy for capacity development is immediately possible. But one can expect the intention or plan to produce such a strategy in a reasonable time period.

Most NGOs have access to limited un-earmarked funds and are able to support their partners in line with the lessons learnt. A small number do not have this access. Despite good intentions, these members remain dependent on the willingness of their back donors to realize their objectives.

Strengthening partnership relations, Joint learning through M&E systems

The term partnership is most frequently used for relations where INGOs fund local NGOs to perform humanitarian work. The relationships take different shapes and vary in intensity. They give the following examples of relationships to show the diversity:

- 1) A contractual agreement based on a Tendering procedure where local Organizations simply implement a job for which the parameters are fixed by The donor. No capacity building is Involved; the bidders need to prove they possess the required capacities For the job.
- 2) A short-term incidental project applied by HAPA NGO engaged in relief or Rehabilitation. Functional capacity building may be part of the project.
- 3) A longer-term partnership whereby the HAPA NGO commits itself to support his NGO or organization on a long-term basis, including capacity building.
- 4) A long-term partnership where the parties engage in a horizontal relationship in which the partners (ideally) have a say in the policies and decision making of the HAPA NGO as much as the other way around.

More disaster preparedness and prevention

HAPA is giving increasing priority to disaster preparedness, risk reduction and conflict prevention in high risk areas. All those involved in relief and rehabilitation also give priority to Strengthening the capacity of their staff in preparedness and prevention.

Capacity development in humanitarian crises and capacity development for disaster preparedness, and prevention are overlapping themes. Most of the NGOs in SR also have difficulties in raising funds for preparedness and prevention, both from government and private sources. Despite giving high priority to this theme, in most organizations only a small percentage of the overall turnover on response is spent on preparedness and prevention.

Staffing

There is a clear trend between HAPA staff in capacity development programmes. Priority is given to the recruitment of national staff or from the region. The qualification criteria for HAPA staff are changing. Rather than an humanitarian assistance manager, who is directly operational, the trend is towards employing staff who are able to facilitate the work done by partner organizations.

Most member organizations prefer to employ staff who can link relief with rehabilitation and development. However, these competencies are in short supply, in particular during large

Scale responses. Junior programmes exist, but the number of vacancies in the humanitarian field is limited.

HAPA staff Attended Workshops, Conferences and Trainings in international and national level

HAPA Staffs had attended each year from 2012 the annual consultation with NGOs for 2012/2013 Conferences in Switzerland Geneva.

Many trainings and workshops in country level in Project Cycle management, Report writing , proposal writing, fund raising ,Finance and accounting , NGOs Law of conduct, capacity building , Making Plan/ Strategy , M&E , TOT, Transitional period , Emergency response funds ERF , civil protection and other etc.

Most of the HAPA staff has a bachelor and some of them has a master degree level staff and mid-high education level is working in the field. (Mono-gram of HAPA NGO is attached for more information)

Linking relief, rehabilitation and development

There is a lack of theorizing about extended crises with more and less violent or critical periods or with natural hazards compounding the crisis. The intervention models of aid remain based on a dichotomy between relief and development, though practice shows that there are many ways in which relief and development efforts are already linked.” Linking relief, rehabilitation and development has been a reality for member organizations in their priority countries. HAPA provide sustainable capacity development support only in priority provinces. In the case where these staff support relief or rehabilitation outside.

Future directions

HAPA is facing many challenges in their efforts to support the capacity envelopment of civil society partners. At the level of individual organizations many lessons are learnt. The joint reflection and exchange with peers and other actors in the chain does not get enough attention and the lessons that do trickle through are not always acted upon. There is a clear need for methods and instruments that enable mutual learning at all levels, from target groups up to the back donor, and to apply the lessons learnt.

4. Conclusion

This paper identified the lessons learnt by HAPA NGO in the development of the capacity of CSOs in the context of humanitarian crises. In our view, the needed “to do” mode must be combined with a wider vision on capacity development and with better documentation and application of the many lessons learnt.

Capacity development is complex and this is even more so the case in fragile contexts. Therefore, learning is a central issue.

An examination of what HAPA actually do reveals that most do have internal learning processes and seek to apply the lessons learnt. However, more attention needs to be paid to learning together with strategic partners, and to learning from their perspective.

In crises, the humanitarian imperative must be better balanced with the reconstruction and development imperatives. Local service NGOs implementing agendas largely set by foreign donors must be distinguished from HAPA that have an important role to play as civil society actors: contribute to peace, social justice and democracy that is supported by its citizens rather than foreign agencies. More rigorous application of our own lessons learnt will contribute to this.

It is possible to use tools and strategies designed for “normal” development and adapt these for the context of humanitarian crises. In this, we must distinguish between short- and long-term capacity development objectives and build in sufficient room for flexibility. Such tools and strategies must be the result of sector-wide collaboration and international partnership. It would interesting to develop this further with interested partners from around the world.

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