

Monitoring outcomes and impacts of capacity development in the water sector: a Cap-Net UNDP experience

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Abstract

Cap-Net UNDP is an international capacity development network for integrated water resources management (IWRM). Cap-Net's approach of working through regional and country networks is an effective method of drawing together various experts from different disciplines, fostering local ownership for capacity development and scaling-up implementation of IWRM. This paper discusses the lessons drawn from outcome monitoring of Cap-Net capacity development courses for 2 consecutive years 2010–12. Cap-Net follows the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan that it developed and this helps Cap-Net to learn about progress towards its objectives. It also allows for corrective measures to the on-going process in capacity development program delivery. Lessons from the outcome monitoring exercises provided guidance for revision of monitoring approaches in order to capture the outcomes and impacts and to contribute to the overall goal of Cap-Net. It was realized that interest and involvement of partner networks, continuous follow-up of the courses and standardized processes are important for successful monitoring.

Keywords: Capacity development; Evaluation; Impacts; Monitoring; Outcome

1. Introduction

Cap-Net UNDP is an international network for capacity development in integrated water resources management (IWRM). Cap-Net UNDP delivers two types of capacity development activities for IWRM through regional and country networks. The first type of activity responds to new ideas and approaches in IWRM and the second type addresses emerging issues responding to local demand. This demand responsive approach ensures both relevance and impact. Cap-Net works through partner networks that benefit from having the knowledge of experts from different backgrounds and disciplines who are working together to achieve a common goal. This opens up the opportunity to scale up action

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and share experiences rapidly across the countries and regions. The three main objectives of Cap-Net could be simply described as:

1. capacity development – improvement of the capacity of individuals and organizations for sustainable management of water resources;
2. strengthening partnerships – develop the capacity of partner networks to make better outreach and to collaborate on effective delivery of capacity development; and
3. knowledge management – ensuring access to the new international and local knowledge, establish monitoring system.

Network strengthening and knowledge management helps successful delivery of capacity development. Cap-Net Capacity development courses are mainly found in two types; Training of Trainers (ToT) and non-ToT. ToT courses aim to train professionals to train others in the sector and non-ToT courses are organized by the partner networks mostly with the contribution of professional organizations in their country or region. Cap-Net courses provides training in technical and practical knowledge on different thematic areas under sustainable water resources management. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is the measure and assess progress towards achievement of outcomes and outputs which are known as development results (UNDP, 2002). Cap-Net follows a pre-designed Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MELP) that includes all dimensions for monitoring output, outcome and potential impact of capacity development, network development and strengthening and knowledge management (Cap-Net UNDP, 2009). The MELP, Cap-Net UNDP toolkit provides systematic guidance for conducting periodically monitoring while providing feedback to the on-going delivery process of Cap-Net capacity development. Technical reports on Cap-Net courses include the responses to a follow-up questionnaire that is used to monitor the capacity development output although outcomes need to be captured by a separate assessment. This paper specifically focuses on outcome monitoring of the capacity development courses from 2010 to 2012.

The specific objectives of the paper are:

- to discuss the appropriateness of MELP tools and methods adopted in the outcome monitoring of courses by Cap-Net;
- to learn from the past and feed back into the process in order to improve tools and procedures adapted in Cap-Net capacity development courses; and
- to assess the progress towards achievement of planned outcome in Cap-Net's logical framework.

2. Method

The outcome monitoring process was started by reviewing internal documentation on the Cap-Net MELP and technical reports of the conducted courses. Monitoring exercises were conducted on two periods starting in October 2011 and August 2012 which spend approximately 3 months for each monitoring event. The Cap-Net MELP has included a questionnaire for outcome monitoring of the courses conducted by regional and country networks. Therefore both monitoring exercises adapted the same questionnaire, but with several modifications (Annex 1 and 2, available online at <http://www.iwaponline.com/wp/015/021.pdf>) in order to obtain answers easily from the course participants. The courses conducted within a 6–12 month time period prior to the monitoring exercise were considered for monitoring taking into account that the participants

Table 1. Details of outcome monitoring exercises in 2 consecutive years.

Year of exercise	Time period considered	Number of courses conducted	Number of courses monitored	Sampling method	Questionnaire
2011 Oct	June 2010 May 2011	30	16	Purposive sampling based on network interest	4 questions sent via email (Annex 1)
2012 Aug	June 2011 April 2012	27	18	Selected all possible courses to monitor ¹	5 questions sent via email with web link (Annex 2)

would have had the opportunity to implement the knowledge gained and perhaps noticed any impact. Table 1 describes the details of courses which were included in the outcome monitoring. All the data that are used for the illustrations throughout the paper are based on the monitoring reports in 2011 and 2012.

In 2011, networks managers were allowed to select the courses to be monitored according to their interest and they were asked how to contact participants either through the network or directly by Cap-Net (Mohando, 2011). In 2012, 18 courses were taken for the assessment, but nine were excluded for practical reasons using a plan to follow a different procedure for outcome monitoring (monitoring by the network that implemented the course). The courses conducted during the selected periods of 2 consecutive years can be categorized into the main themes shown in Table 2.

The 2011 questionnaire (Annex 1) consisted of four open ended questions and provided to answer by email (Mohando, 2011). The 2012 questionnaire (Annex 2) consisted of five questions with a closed ended part and an open ended part and provided participants, via email with the possibility of answering using either a web link (Google docs) or directly in the body of the email according to their preference.

Table 2. Categorization of courses conducted in the selected periods for monitoring.

Theme	Number of courses conducted	
	2011	2012
IWRM principles and planning, water allocation	6	2
Climate and water	5	4
Gender and water	4	0
River basin management	4	2
Environment/water pollution	4	0
Transparency and integrity in water, water governance	2	2
Groundwater	1	5
Data and information management, financing in water sector	1	1
Flood management, hydro-climatic disaster	1	3
School training	1	1
Urban water management, water supply and sanitation	1	2
Water conflicts – understanding and resolving	0	5
Total	30	27

¹ Seven courses were already in the process of being monitored by the partner networks that were involved in those courses. One course conducted for grass root level community leaders was difficult to assess by a web-based survey, and one course was not suitable for assessment using the questionnaire. Therefore these nine courses were excluded from the assessment.

Data analysis became much easier when the web link was provided, but some respondents may not have had time or suitable internet access to go to the web link to answer. Two reminders were sent in 10 days intervals from the day the questionnaire was sent. The responses were tabulated in an Excel worksheet and analyzed to present the overall outcome.

Some selected participants were consulted for follow-up questions on their answers to the questionnaire in 2012. Individuals for further consultation were selected based on their responses on progress they made after the course. Short stories were developed and this helped to identify the potential impact of the courses and constraints to achieving an impact. Outcome mapping was done in order to evaluate whether Cap-Net is heading towards achieving the expected outcomes of its strategic plan 2010–13. The results were compiled and discussed for corrective measures using lessons learnt during the monitoring process.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Courses and participation

Two assessments covered 34 capacity development activities supported by Cap-Net and delivered through its partner networks benefitting a large number of participants across the regions, as categorized in the Table 3 and 4.

Table 3. Distribution of courses among the regions.

Region	Number of courses in 2011	Number of courses in 2012	Distribution of participants 2011 (%)	Distribution of participants 2012 (%)
Latin America and Caribbean	9	4	60.4	25
Africa and Middle East	4	8	24.7	42
Asia	3	6	14.6	27
Not clearly mentioned/ other regions			0.3	5
Total	16	18	100 (<i>n</i> = 364)	100 (<i>n</i> = 587)

Table 4. Countries represented by the participants in each region.

Africa and Middle East	Burundi, Chad, DCR, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Lebanon, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	Latin America Caribbean	Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago
		Asia	Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam
		Europe and other	Spain

Table 5. Gender distribution among the participants of monitored courses.

Gender	2011 (%)	2012 (%)
Male	61 (<i>n</i> = 223)	30 (<i>n</i> = 178)
Female	36 (<i>n</i> = 132)	13 (<i>n</i> = 77)
No data on gender segregation	3 (<i>n</i> = 9)	57 (<i>n</i> = 332)

When considering the participation in the courses monitored in 2012, the highest number was from Argentina (136) and then from Kenya (65) and Zimbabwe (68), whereas considerable numbers were from Malaysia (33), Bangladesh (33), India (35) and Pakistan (28). In terms of gender, the majority was male in both years monitored (Table 5), but gender data have not been clearly reported in 2012 because they have not been included in some of the documents (technical report or participants list). Participants' profession and area of work is also important to determine their potential area of contribution. Table 6 shows the participant distribution based on their area of work.

The majority of the participants were from the education and research institutions followed by other government organizations. Through organizing regional training activities Cap-Net expects the participants will disseminate their knowledge among professionals in the sector in their own countries.

3.2. Responses for the outcome monitoring survey

Response percentages for the questionnaire were very low for both monitoring years (135 in 2011 and 64 in 2012). There were three courses with zero response in 2012, which gives Cap-Net a red signal to think back to the process and suggest some remedies for future monitoring. Some participants responded very promptly and enthusiastically, but it was very difficult to obtain responses from the majority, as shown in Figure 1. The lowest responses were found for the courses that were conducted relating to the following themes.

- Climate change and IWRM, hydro-climatic disasters
- Applications of WRM indicators, IWRM for river basin organizations (RBOs)
- Transparency, water integrity and governance
- Water sector financing.

Low responses were collected for several reasons, for example, not having the correct email addresses for some participants who changed organizations and only gave the old organizational email address,

Table 6. Participants' area of work.

Participants' area of work	2011 (%)	2012 (%)
Education/research	38	53
Government	39	25
Civil society organization	12	3
Private sector	4	5
International organizations/ networks	1	5
Other projects	6	9

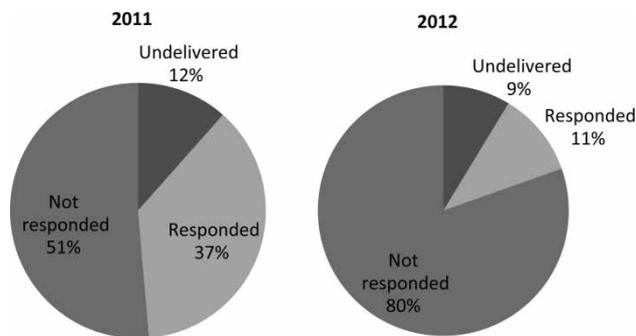


Fig. 1. Response percentages for the outcome monitoring surveys in 2011 and 2012.

participants on the lists who did not attend (a few responses mentioned ‘I was not a targeted participant for this course’, implying that some support staff or students who did not attend the course may have been included in the list), inclusion of facilitators and supporters in the same list without demarcation, participants who did not have an email address and so on. This is a remarkable point in monitoring and it shows the importance of having a more precise and standard format for the list of participants which is a most useful component required in monitoring.

Respondents to the questionnaire represent 30 countries from different regions of the world. However, a large number of participants from some countries where the courses were conducted did not respond well (Table 7). It will be important in future to make participants aware about the outcome and impact survey, probably during the course, so that they are prepared when they receive the survey questionnaire.

Even though it is difficult to provide conclusions in the absence of some respondents’ data from a representative sample, it is worth discussing the results of respondents who did reply. Two assessments had quite different questions, but information gathered from those questions can be summarized together. A majority (>90%) of the respondents have used the acquired knowledge from the course for their performance at work as summarized in Table 8. Also, a majority have made use of this knowledge to improve academic performance at work by enhancing materials, introducing new concepts and so on, while a few reported actions to influence policy making.

Many respondents (62.7% in 2011 and 90.6% in 2012) have shared the knowledge with people outside their organization through conferences and networking, training stakeholders and water users, discussions, distribution of training materials, curriculum development and reforms, by incorporating it into proposals and presentations (Table 9).

Since the two assessments used different questions it is difficult to compare the answers. Responses from both years revealed that the questions should be simple and clear to be easily understood by the respondents. In the 2012 questionnaire, participants were given closed ended questions and asked to elaborate the answer, which helped to capture their success stories and the constraints they faced in using or sharing the knowledge. Since the response percentage was very low in 2012, it is advisable to rephrase the questions with much simpler wording and reduce the number of questions to gather most important details only (it might be possible to combine two questions and make it simpler for the respondent). It is necessary to revise the monitoring strategy that was adopted in the past 2 years so that network managers and course coordinators are closely involved rather than MELP being run by the Cap-Net secretariat.

Table 7. Responses from different countries in 2012².

No.	Country	Participants	Responses	No.	Country	Participants	Responses
1	Argentina	136	5	24	Rwanda	3	2
2	Brazil	7	1	25	Senegal	1	0
3	Colombia	1	0	26	Sierra Leone	3	0
4	Costa Rica	2	0	27	South Africa	8	4
5	El Salvador	1	1	28	Sudan	3	0
6	Mexico	2	2	29	Swaziland	1	1
7	Botswana	2	0	30	Tanzania	13	1
8	Burkina Faso	3	1	31	Togo	8	0
9	Burundi	11	1	32	Trinidad & Tobago	1	0
10	Congo	9	2	33	Vietnam	1	1
11	Côte d'Ivoire	4	1	34	Uganda	7	0
12	Egypt	3	0	35	Zambia	10	0
13	Ethiopia	7	1	36	Zimbabwe	68	4
14	Gambia	3	3	37	Indonesia	1	1
15	Guinea-Bissau	3	1	38	Malaysia	33	3
16	Guinea	3	0	39	Bangladesh	33	1
17	Kenya	65	6	40	India	35	11
18	Lebanon	1	1	41	Pakistan	28	1
19	Liberia	3	1	42	Srilanka	2	1
20	Mozambique	1	0	43	Thailand	26	3
21	Namibia	3	1	44	The Netherlands	1	0
22	Nigeria	1	1	45	Denmark	2	0
23	Palestine	1	1		Undefined	27	0
					Total	587	64

Table 8. Answer to question number 1.

Have you used the knowledge from the course to improve your performance at work?		2011 (%)	2012 (%)
No	Still in planning	3.7	4.7
	Facing constraints		3.1
Yes	In progress	93.3	57.8
	Already done		34.4
No answer		3	

3.3. Short stories

Short stories developed by consulting the respondents show how the knowledge is being used in water sector capacity development or in water management practices. Figure 2 shows the distribution of 17 short stories among the regions, some of which have been included in this paper.

² In the 2011 report no data were reported on the geographic coverage of the respondents. Therefore the table gives only 2012 data.

Table 9. Sharing the knowledge with outside stakeholders.

Have you shared the knowledge with colleagues/ stakeholders outside your organization?		2011 (%)	2012 (%)
No	Still in planning	35.1	7.8
	Facing constraints		1.6
Yes	In progress	62.7	50.0
	Already done		40.6
No answer		2.20	



Fig. 2. Reported stories distribution in different regions.

The first two accounts elaborate on how participants have disseminated the knowledge through discussions and training workshops and applied in programs.

3.3.1. Short story from Burundi. The Climate Change Adaptation: Strategies and Tools training workshop was conducted by the Nile Basin Capacity Building Network with the objective of strengthening the capacities of the Nile basin water professionals in dealing with climate change issues. Dr Nyandwi Venant is an assistant lecturer at the University of Burundi and a member of Friends of the Earth (Les Amis de la Terre Burundi – ATEBU), Bujumbura, Burundi. He says that ‘After the course I’ve gained

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