



Swedish Capacity Development on Food Security: What has Worked, and How Could it Improve?

About this report

This report is based on presentations and discussions at the workshop “The Impact of Capacity Development on Food Security”, held in Stockholm, on 3 March 2016. It was organised by SLU Global, in collaboration with the Swedish International Agriculture Network Initiative (SIANI).

The workshop gathered Swedish academics and officials with their counterparts from partner countries. The purpose was to analyse and share past experiences, and provide tentative recommendations for future projects and programmes for capacity development on food security.

This document is a synthesis of the insights of academics and officials with different backgrounds and experiences in the area of food security. Therefore, some of those insights and recommendations may seem divergent and even contradictory.

The aim of the workshop was not to provide final or agreed recommendations but to provide a ground for further and deeper discussions about capacity development for food security, and the Swedish involvement in the area.

Key messages

- Swedish involvement in capacity development on food security to date has had positive impacts but there is still room for improvement.
- Some capacity development projects have been good at developing technical capacity and also on “soft” issues such as gender equity and institutional capacity.
- Some additional benefits for professionals enrolled on courses in Swedish universities as part of capacity development programmes have included gathering experiences about the Swedish educational system and society, and about the institutional structures used for capacity development.
- The diverse Swedish actors involved in capacity development for food security should agree common definitions and concepts regarding capacity development.
- The institutional framework governing and regulating capacity building interventions should be clarified and redefined.
- Interventions should have a stronger focus on institutional capacity and not so much on individual capacity development, for longer-term impact.
- Some capacity development programmes for food security need to put an even stronger focus on participatory approaches and on long-term partnerships.
- Gender issues should also be discussed and mainstreamed at early stages.



Overview of Swedish experience

Positive impacts

Most experiences shared during the workshop are related with education of students from partner countries in Sweden. Educational programmes in food security have been good not only on developing “hard” technical capacities among food-sector professionals but also on “soft” issues such as gender equity and institutional capacity. Training in Sweden is considered of high quality and is well appreciated in partner countries.

Following courses in Sweden, many professionals have taken up senior positions in their countries of origin, and have contributed to their countries’ own capacity development. Many of them have gone on to create Masters and PhD programmes in their countries with Swedish support. Long-term involvement from Swedish partners has been key in this process.

This flow of knowledge has also facilitated scaling up of capacity development initiatives within partner

countries and regions. This is of crucial importance, as one of the biggest challenges for low-income countries is that very few of them are involved in capacity development at regional level.

Some additional positive effects of the capacity development programmes have included visiting professionals gathering experiences about the Swedish educational system, society in general, as well as the institutional structure used for capacity development.

Later on, some of these experiences could be adapted to the particular conditions in partner countries. Some participants of the workshop consider important to develop some formal training on that matter as well.

Participants of the workshop agreed that, in general terms, Swedish involvement in capacity development on food security has had positive impacts, but they also considered that there is still room for improvement.



Photo by Richard Hopkins

Recommendations

There are four main recommendations for future joint capacity development programmes on food security by Sweden and its partner countries:

1. The diverse Swedish actors involved in capacity development should agree on common definitions and concepts regarding capacity development.
2. The institutional framework governing and regulating capacity building interventions should be clarified and redefined.
3. Interventions should have a stronger focus on institutional capacity and not so much on individual capacity development, for longer-term impact.
4. Some capacity development programmes should put a stronger focus on participatory approaches and on long-term partnership. Gender issues should also be discussed and mainstreamed at early stages.

Overview of Swedish experience (cont)

Areas for improvement

Agreed definitions and concepts

The Swedish Policy for Global Development, Politik för global utveckling or PGU (Government of Sweden. 2002), involves a wide range of Swedish actors and was conceived to promote just and sustainable development in the world. However, different Swedish actors have different visions and definitions of the “how” and the “what” regarding capacity development.

Very often, capacity development programmes involving Swedish organisations and its partners had conflicting visions and outcomes; for example, some follow the “no-harm” principle, while others work on export and services that should be conducted at zero cost.

There are also different ideas about what is the “private sector”.

The very concept of capacity development needs to be discussed, as well as the methods to measure its impact. Swedish actors should also be aware of the repercussions of capacity development interventions at individual, institutional and country level.

Therefore, more joint discussions among different Swedish actors are recommended.

Redefinition of the institutional framework

The institutional framework that governs capacity development is unclear and the rules and regulations are often contradictory.

It is difficult, for example, to identify the different Swedish authorities with the power to take decisions on matters related to capacity development on food security, and it is common to have two or more authorities regulating the use of the same funds. One authority may say that certain funds are to be used only in partner countries, and another that those funds are to be used only in Sweden.

Different authorities should coordinate, redefine and synchronize the rules regarding the use of funds for capacity development.

The list of Swedish authorities includes, but is not reduced to, the Swedish Research Council, Sida, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Formas, Forte, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, etc.

Institutional capacity development

In the area of education, there has been a stronger focus on individual rather than institutional capacity development. A problem with this has been that some of the professionals, once they complete their training, never go back to their home countries or other low-income countries, and instead stay in Europe or move to other high-income countries. Therefore, capacity development programmes should focus more on developing capacity at institutional level, not only at individual level.

Institutions should also be able to increase institutional memory and create and spread best practices. To further develop institutional capacity, it is also important to invest in equipment and infrastructure, particularly in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

It is also important to acknowledge that capacity development needs to be more than academic or higher education. Most educational programmes on food security do not include hands-on training or vocational education.

Developing communication capacities is crucial for professionals, from partner countries taking part on training programmes in Sweden, to share their experiences and speed up learning processes in their home countries. Training programmes should also include the development of communication skills.

Capacity development and food security

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, describes capacity development as a “process that has the aim of enhancing the skills of individuals and organisations and of changing formal or informal standards and regulations i.e. institutional frameworks”. However, capacity development includes not only education and training but can also include physical resources such as the development of administrative systems and information and communications technology (ICT). In contrast to the concept of capacity building, which implies that something is “built by outsiders”, capacity development emphasises that capacity must grow from the inside. This form of capacity is stimulated externally but cannot

be developed by outsiders (Sida, 2005).

For decades, Sweden has been supporting initiatives to develop capacity on food security in low-income countries. However, rapid changes in global climate; the exponential growth of the world’s population, with resulting increase in food demand; land and water scarcity; and other challenges require a broader understanding of capacity development in food security, and of what Sweden should do next to improve future initiatives in this area.

This report is a synthesis of insights and experiences presented by the workshop participants. The majority of the 22 participants were academics, mostly from SLU. An important part of the insights and recommendations were focused on higher education and training programmes on food security.

Areas for improvement (cont)

Stronger focus on participatory and long-term involvement

In capacity development, top-down approaches did not work so well. Although some programmes have been trying to create more horizontal partner relationships, there is a need for an even more participatory, horizontal and bottom-up approach in the future. In the past, joint activities between Sweden and its partners have been valuable and well appreciated.

The most successful programmes so far have been those with a more participatory character and long-term involvement from Swedish organisations. In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008) and rights-based approaches, the needs and conditions of the recipients should be the point of departure for different interventions.

A closer coordination between donors, partner organisations and countries and other stakeholders - including governments and the private sector- should take place even at planning and proposal level. And there should be mechanisms in place to facilitate such involvement.

Gender issues should also be discussed and mainstreamed at early stages. In this way, collaboration between partner organisations will be more horizontal and bottom-up oriented. Long-term involvement leads long term planning and sustainability. Therefore, long-term programmes should be given priority, starting with a clear definition of what is to be considered short and long term in capacity development for food security.



Photo by Ewa Wredle

References

1. Government of Sweden. 2002. Government Bill 2002/03:122. "Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development". Available at <http://bit.ly/2eQFKA5>
2. Sida. 2005. Manual for Capacity Development: Method Document. Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Sida). Available at: <http://bit.ly/2fALM98>
3. OECD. 2008. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2fAJCGC>

Workshop program

Time	Session
	Moderator: MSc Alex Arévalo Vásquez
13.00-13.30	Dr Khieu Borin, Adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Cambodia. Addressing Sustainable Food Security through Capacity Development
13.30-14.00	Assoc Prof Linley Chiwona-Karltun, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences – SLU. Africa's unfolding agrifood system: implications for capacity building.
14.00-14.15	MSc Aimable Nsabimana, Univ of Rwanda. The role of Research in Agribusiness, Food availability and Policy Implication.
14.15-14.30	Dr Joakim Holmdahl, Swedish Board of Agriculture. Capacity building - introducing a solid food safety system in Georgia
14.30-14.45	Ms Phoebe Odihambo, Program director for Agriculture Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP), Kenya. Harmonization between actors in the agricultural sector, involving government bodies, private actors and development companies, to reach the targets for income and food security.
14.45-15.15	Coffee/tea break
15.15-16.30	Group discussion (round-table-discussion)
16.30-17.00	Concluding remarks from the discussion



List of workshop participants

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