



JESSICA SCRANTON | FHI 360

REFLECTIONS ON CAPACITY

DEVELOPMENT AND MEASUREMENT:

A DECADE OF EXPERIENCE

IN MOZAMBIQUE

Introduction

Long an important principle in development, the concept of country ownership was brought to the forefront by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2010 when it launched its development-reform agenda, *USAID Forward*.¹ Important philosophical and pragmatic considerations lie behind this principle. These include a recognition that local entities bring crucial knowledge and experience to the tasks of addressing their community and national challenges; an acknowledgement of the significance of people shaping their own destiny; and aspirations for both sustainability of interventions and organizations in order to improve people's lives and ensure long-term cost-effectiveness. Development practitioners are increasingly turning to capacity development programs to bridge the gap between what local entities currently can do and what is required of them—not only to manage donor funds, but to lead a country's development agenda.

Lessons from CAP Program Implementation

From a decade of implementation experience in Mozambique, the Capable Partners Program (CAP) distilled learnings about both success factors and limitations inherent in program efforts that may be useful to inform the design, implementation, and measurement of future capacity development programs.

We present those here after brief comments on the project and hope our reflections are instructive for those designing or implementing programs in similarly complex environments.²

¹ See: <https://www.usaid.gov/usaiddforward>.

² See also "Overview of the CAP Mozambique Project and its Role in the Fight against HIV/AIDS."

Strengthening CSO Capacity to Contribute to Development

The Capable Partners Program (CAP) in Mozambique strengthened the institutional capacity of Mozambican nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), associations, and their networks to improve the service delivery of HIV/AIDS treatment, care, and prevention programs.

CAP integrated intensive capacity development of its Partners with grants to provide the organizations with opportunities to apply what they learned and demonstrate their capacities to affect HIV/AIDS at the community level. CAP Mozambique was managed by FHI 360 from 2006 to 2016 and was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

The CAP program in Mozambique began as a learning project in 2006 and was able to initiate work quickly and successfully in Mozambique's unique context by adapting CAP approaches and tools used earlier, especially in CAP's programs in Kenya and Chad, and by becoming deeply engaged at national and local levels.

CAP faced a number of challenges that were inherent in the program design and in either the donor or the country context. These included a requirement to deliver on concrete service-provision targets established by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) *in parallel with* institutional strengthening objectives; changes in programmatic, PEPFAR, and USAID priorities over time as conditions changed; the necessity of finding staff with the right experience and willingness to proactively embrace challenges; and handling potential fraud.

At the same time, CAP had the good fortune to work alongside a USAID Mission with a strong vision and commitment to local organizations and that allocated ample resources for several years. The Mission was as interested in program difficulties and problems as in successes—promising sincere support for learning. This enabled CAP to pioneer multiple approaches, determine what was most effective, and redesign project components based on real-time insights.³ Multiple types of assessments helped CAP measure change and redirect support when needed.

CAP also had the flexibility to develop new components based on observed need. For example, CAP provided additional emphasis on internal governance when the project identified weak governance as a root cause of many challenges civil society organizations (CSOs) faced in Mozambique.

CAP had a core team that stayed with the program for many years, allowing it to capitalize on experience over time. CAP produced quality results in a constantly changing environment and in a comparatively low-capacity civil society context.

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Strengthen the Whole Organization

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For example, financial integrity and compliance are the responsibility of an organization as a whole—not just the accountant who prepares a financial report for an audit. Managing financial risk requires performance at multiple levels. If the program team makes procurement requests too late, proper processes may not be followed. If the executive

³ Adaptive management was used in CAP programs around the world. See www.NGOConnect.Net/about for other examples.

director (ED) doesn't understand procedures, she/he cannot verify that the accountant is following them. If the Board of Directors does not understand its role, it cannot ensure the integrity of the organization and its processes. CAP developed the capacity of program staff, the ED, *and* the Board in the requirements and obligations of a USAID grant, as well as in basic financial management principles. This significantly improved adherence to requirements, as well as the quality of financial reports.

Problems in project implementation are often linked to management issues. If participation in a community activity is low, the cause may lie in the fact that implementing staff were hired without the proper qualifications, not provided the appropriate tools or training, or not paid due to problems associated with project financial management. Without understanding root causes, efforts to resolve an implementation problem might focus on just the front-line workers—not the organizational issues leading to a systemic weakness.

CAP provided technical assistance (TA) in human resources and project structure (e.g., staffing levels and responsibilities, the number of facilitators per supervisor). Following TA, the program saw a marked increase in the quality of Partner interventions. CAP supported organizations to develop human resources management systems (such as clear and transparent recruitment processes based on defined qualifications) and performance management plans at all levels. CAP also supported Partners to budget for, design, hire for, and manage adequate supervision structures. This support contributed to increased quality and expansion of services, improved data reliability, and the agility of organizations to make programmatic changes.⁴

CAP's support for the "whole organization" did not stop with the paid staff. Many of the program Partners had very weak Boards of Directors. Early in one particular grantee relationship when CAP encountered performance problems and staff did not address them adequately, CAP requested meetings with the respective Boards. In some grantee organizations, Board members were also staff, which meant they were not going to hold themselves accountable. In other organizations, Board members were unaware of the project and were not interested or equipped to hold staff accountable. In one case, seeing no possibility of improvement, CAP terminated a grant, which meant, unfortunately, that beneficiary services were interrupted.

To respond to the need to have Board Members engaged and fulfilling appropriate and vital roles in terms of programmatic and organizational oversight, CAP developed a series of interventions to educate grantees and help them to select members capable of fulfilling roles and responsibilities, as well as to help Board Members themselves develop the tools and skills to execute their responsibilities. Following that support, at a later time when CAP met with the Boards of two organizations regarding performance issues, the response was different; each organization was able to respond to the issues, reimburse funds as appropriate, take disciplinary action, and improve their systems to prevent a recurrence.

In these cases, implementation continued without disruption. Ultimately, if we are promoting sustainability, we should be proactively supporting organizations to be

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If we are promoting sustainability, we should be proactively supporting organizations to be responsible for ensuring their own integrity, not only in response to donor oversight.

⁴ See also the CAP technical brief, "Improving Community HIV Prevention: Choosing the Right Activistas."

responsible for ensuring their own integrity, not only in response to donor oversight, and, sometimes, counter to local norms.⁵

Recommendations for smart investments:

- During the selection process for new sub-awards, evaluate Board and executive commitment to change and to engage fully in a capacity development process. Those who are committed are more likely to embrace necessary changes.
- Develop the capacity of multiple levels and elements of the organizational system in order to increase support for change and reduce dependence on specific individuals.
- Support organizations to develop critical core systems (e.g., internal governance, financial and human resource management) that will allow them to ensure their own integrity and continue healthy practices beyond the life of the project. This means allocating a higher percentage of resources to capacity development over several years. Three to five years of intensive capacity development allows time for the Partner and the intermediary organization to develop an open relationship, for the Partner to test changes, and for the Partner to adapt in several key areas. A focus on capacity development may mean lower service-provision results at first, but these can increase as capacity grows, and the early investment can lead to greater sustainability.
- Prioritize a well-facilitated self-assessment. It is a powerful tool for change that empowers an organization to lead its own transformation.⁶ Self-assessment is a particularly valuable approach when funding is limited. It allows for identification of (and support for) one or two priority areas that the Partner recognizes are weak.
- Measure organizational change using quantitative and qualitative measures and value a Partner's commitment to organizational growth as well as to provision of quality services.
- Create mechanisms to spur ownership of organizational growth. This could include using a self-assessment for institutional strengthening, creating incentives for continued buy-in to capacity development efforts (e.g., funding for new ideas, participation in restricted activities focused on organizational sustainability, support for resource mobilization), and/or promotion of organizations that overcome challenges.
- Be patient. It takes time and repetition for individuals to learn new habits; it takes time for systems to adjust, adapt to, and embrace process changes. And organizations need the opportunity to apply what they learn, to make mistakes, and learn from them.

⁵ See also the CAP technical brief, "Mozambican CSOs Rise to the Challenge: Good Governance in Practice."

⁶ See the CAP technical brief, "Motivating Change: Mozambican Organizations Transform Themselves through the Participatory Organizational Assessment Process."

Set High Standards—Support Organizations to Meet Them

When the CAP Mozambique team conducted a situational analysis in 2006, it repeatedly heard donors and intermediaries mention how weak local organizations were and that they had reservations about whether these organizations would ever achieve the level of performance and management necessary to access direct funding. At that time, civil society in Mozambique was about 20 years old—still quite nascent. A large number of organizations were created in response to emergency situations in which the priority was short-term provision of goods and services. Accountability and capacity development were not typically emphasized. Organizations, their staff members, and Boards had few models to compare themselves to and unknowingly accepted mediocrity and loose standards as the norm. Intermediaries provided support in the areas of technical implementation with which they were familiar and overlooked financial missteps or governance. In fact, because civil society was so young, most staff of intermediaries in Mozambique had limited experience working in or supporting CSOs themselves.

CAP Mozambique—with its mandate to prepare local organizations for direct funding by USAID or another major donor with strict compliance standards—faced an uphill battle. From the beginning, the team insisted on high standards, believing that organizations could reach these if they had the support, information, and opportunity to do so. CAP insisted on adherence to deadlines; that budgets, targets, and proposal narratives be consistent; that justification be provided for budget items; that procurement procedures be followed; and that complete documentation be provided for every transaction every month. Partners complained. They insisted that other donors were not as strict, that CAP was being unrealistic. CAP remained respectful and firm. After a year of implementation, when some Partners had successfully adapted to the new requirements, the complainers changed their tune; early adopters now helped others see the benefits and also adapt.

At the end of the project, former Partners said they appreciated CAP's rigor. They also said they were using their improved systems with other projects and funders. During interviews with USAID-hired evaluators of the CAP project, former Partners indicated a high level of confidence in the data and financial information they were reporting. Among the areas of improvement they cited most frequently were a few that were at first most painful for CAP—timesheets, internal controls, policies and procedures, and reliable data collection.

While working with individual Partners as well as Organizational Development (OD) Clients and grantees from other U.S. government (USG)-funded programs, CAP kept an eye on bigger-picture considerations, as well, in terms of how they might affect civil society in the country as a whole. For example, sometimes organizations wanted to make dramatic salary increases simply because funds might be available. CAP challenged them to justify increases based on market conditions and to consider future implications if salaries could not be maintained in the absence of generous funding amounts such as those from PEPFAR. At the sector level, CAP was keenly aware of how artificial increases could backfire by pricing people out of the market and by damaging credibility.

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CAP PARTNER FROM CCM CELEBRATING GRADUATION. (FHI 360)

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Eight CAP Partners were graduated;⁷ they met CAP's rigorous standards and have been recommended to USAID for direct funding. They are proud. Their reputations are stronger. While USAID funding has not been forthcoming because of changing priorities, these Partners have managed to obtain other funding, partly because of their reputations and because of the reputation CAP had for being strict.

The project's mantra was: "CAP is both rigorous and generous." "Rigorous" meant that the team maintained high standards and monitored Partners closely. "Generous" referred to the ready availability of consistent, informed support. Specific strategies included:

- **Communication of clear, consistent expectations.** At every step—in the request for applications (RFA) sent to prospective grantees/Partners, the Bidders' Conference, the grant agreement documents, and letters—CAP Mozambique made very clear its expectations of Partners, the support it offered, and how to access that support. To accommodate the oral culture that is predominant in Mozambique, all written communication was reinforced verbally in meetings or phone calls to make sure messages were received. CAP worked hard to ensure consistency in the communications and advice provided to Partners. This created a strong foundation for developing relationships between CAP and the Partners and amongst the Partners as well.
- **Consistent and transparent application of policies with all Partners.** CAP made a concerted effort to communicate consistent expectations and information about the process of grant management and consequences for mismanagement. CAP ensured each CSO understood it was being held to the same standards and provided with the same benefits as another CSO. This reduced the potential for jealousy among Partners, and they coalesced as a group of peers. The sense of fairness fostered trust between the Partners and key CAP staff. Furthermore, CAP continued to make decisions as objectively as possible, especially when it came to potential disciplinary actions.
- **Structured support.** CAP Mozambique organized Grants Management Workshops at the start of each grant process to make sure organizational stakeholders understood each clause in their awards, to prepare the first work plan, and to develop the performance management plan. Partners were not used to USAID standards regarding disallowed costs. Because of this, CAP Mozambique included substantial involvement clauses in the grants so that CAP's pre-approval was required before any significant or potentially risky procurements could be made. Another new area for these Partners was analysis of data and strategy development/work planning. CAP Mozambique scheduled intensive TA workshops with each Partner in preparation for the annual work-planning sessions.
- **Responsive support.** To develop positive relationships from the outset, CAP Mozambique staff proactively reminded Partners of grant requirements and associated due dates and elicited questions. Partners began to appreciate the availability of CAP staff and gradually gained the courage to pose questions and share problems. CAP staff listened carefully in order to fully understand specific situations before providing advice, so that any guidance was relevant and practicable. In various evaluation exercises

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⁷ See also "Overview of the CAP Mozambique Project and its Role in the Fight against HIV/AIDS."

Partners cited this constant, friendly support. As one Partner said, “CAP walks with you, side by side...” However, CAP Mozambique never did the work for Partners. This was at times frustrating *for* Partners and often meant delays in implementation; but it also led to organizations being better able to function independently.

- **Diligent monitoring.** CAP Mozambique technical staff conducted monthly visits during the first six months of each Partner project and quarterly thereafter. These allowed the team to monitor how tools and processes were being applied, to better understand the context in which activities were being implemented and to develop trusting relationships with the Partners. The CAP finance team reviewed supporting documentation for monthly financial reports, visited each Partner quarterly, and provided feedback to staff, EDs, and Board members to help Partners improve processes. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team also conducted quarterly visits, carefully reviewing program reports and forms. The M&E team also conducted data verification visits.
- **Progression of consequences.** While targeted assistance and clear communication was enough to motivate some Partners to improve their systems, in other cases, stronger consequences were necessary. CAP Mozambique established a clear progression of consequences. Often, a phone call reminder or a letter to the Board was sufficient. Sometimes, CAP escalated to more serious steps, including withholding advances, disallowing costs, or even terminating a grant.
- **Incentives for change.** CAP created incentives to promote change. Salary increases for staff conducting a grant-funded project were considered only after a market study and salary policy were in place. Participation in CAP’s Resource Mobilization Workshop depended on a Partner having in place a Board-approved strategic plan.

Recommendations for smart investments:

- Use the structure a grant provides as a tool for capacity development. When designing a program that includes both project grants and capacity development, take advantage of the opportunity for ongoing financial and programmatic monitoring.
- Allocate sufficient staff to monitor grantees, and provide support at the most difficult moments of the project management cycle: during design, start-up, annual planning, evaluation, strategic planning, and at the time of any leadership transitions.
- Make graduation meaningful. Consider an ongoing accreditation process to reinforce the standards for graduation.
- Hold organizations accountable. This helps achieve service-delivery and capacity-strengthening results.
- Recognize that termination of a grant is not necessarily a failure of the capacity development program; it is, rather, an opportunity to reallocate resources to those organizations that are more ready to invest in positive transformation.

Relevant Tools and Processes Create Conditions for Success

As the intermediary, CAP helped Mozambican organizations understand unfamiliar USG concepts such as level of effort (LOE), branding and marking, and burn rates. The CAP team also helped USAID understand how changes in indicators or programmatic priorities had dramatic ripple effects on local organizations.

Every cultural context is unique. The CAP Mozambique team, which included expatriates and Mozambicans working together, quickly identified the need for interpretation—not just translation—of donor language, requirements, indicators, and processes. As the intermediary, the CAP team helped Mozambican organizations understand unfamiliar USG concepts such as level of effort (LOE), branding and marking, and burn rates. The CAP team also helped USAID understand how changes in indicators or programmatic priorities had dramatic ripple effects on local organizations.

The Participatory Self-Assessment Process (POAP)⁸ is an excellent example of how CAP Mozambique adapted international standards of organizational management and made them accessible and useable for local organizations. The POAP allowed Partners to reflect on their own organizational strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for improvement. Facilitation of the tool included training in common organizational development terms and examples from Mozambican organizations. Applied several times over the course of a grant, the POAP also allowed Partners a chance to reflect on their own improvement. The team pushed organizations to ground their self-assessment scores in evidence, challenging them to move beyond generalities. Numerous organizations had honest conversations about their real strengths and weaknesses, often for the first time. Both the CAP Mozambique midterm evaluation⁹ and preliminary findings from the end-of-project evaluation¹⁰ cited the POAP as one of the most transformative component of the project.

CAP Mozambique developed a budget template that captured detailed costs in a way that made sense for each type of expense (travel, training, office costs) to ensure that nothing was forgotten and calculations were accurate. CAP developed a corresponding financial reporting tool to help Partners learn to monitor their budgets and expenditures. CAP also developed a tool to help Partners use LOE to calculate payments and produce paystubs for staff who worked for multiple projects. Revolutionary at the time in Mozambique, this was cited in the end-of- project evaluation as particularly useful.¹¹

CAP carried out an extensive “interpretation” process as part of training for M&E. To many Partners, the PEPFAR indicators seemed confusing and even unrelated to their projects at first. CAP staff worked with Partners to map their activities to each indicator, to develop “sub-indicators” that made sense to the organization and contributed to specific PEPFAR indicators, and developed the tools to collect the data. CAP then took responsibility for aggregating the data as appropriate and reporting to PEPFAR.¹²

⁸ For a fuller discussion of the POAP, see the CAP technical brief, “Motivating Change: Mozambican Organizations Transform Themselves through the Participatory Organizational Assessment Process.”

⁹ Blid N., D’Alessio O’Donnell C., Souto M., Parviainen R. (2013) External Evaluation for Capable Partners Program (CAP)–Mozambique Final Evaluation Report.

¹⁰ USAID/Mozambique Final Performance Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations. Final Debrief: 25 April 2016. GH Pro Consultants: Jennifer Peters, Ritva Parviainen, Dercio Parker, Neha Mehta, Lily Bunke.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See the CAP technical brief, “Promoting Quality Data Systems and the Value of Good Data,” for additional discussion and examples of the mapping of project-specific indicators to PEPFAR indicators.

On a programmatic level, Partners were initially unable to track and analyze change using a tool developed to monitor the status of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The calculations were too complex. CAP explored the use of electronic devices to collect and analyze the data. With these tools, the Partner had financial information and data it could understand and use; there were fewer errors so CAP had greater confidence in the information and was able to report the information with confidence to USAID.

Recommendations for smart investments:

- Develop or adapt tools so they are relevant for the CSOs using them. Pilot and adjust if necessary. Involve the CSOs in developing the tools and processes as much as possible so they are in understandable language. Ensure the tools do meet international standards.
- Invest in systems at the intermediary level to process the information to meet higher-level reporting requirements. This is the role of the intermediary.

Financing the Methodology

With an eye on Partner sustainability as a long-term objective, CAP Mozambique made strategic investments that sometimes meant high up-front costs for labor-intensive processes and support. However, findings from the midterm evaluation and preliminary findings from the end-of-project evaluation show that these investments—such as staff with proven skills to meet the needs of growing organizations; formative research as a mandatory, preliminary step before project design; inclusion of multiple levels and parts of an organization in training and TA; and demands that organizations meet high standards—produced powerful results, even if they took time at the beginning of grantee project implementation.

These investments did not always present CAP in the most favorable light in terms of cost when compared with projects that focused solely on implementation. However, the organizational-change results are a testament to the value of these investments.

A factor that was difficult to quantify but that also had implications for the cost-effectiveness of the program was the readiness of organizations to engage in capacity development. CAP had the opportunity to test an alternative approach when asked to provide organizational development support to organizations funded by other USG mechanisms. The team adapted tools and processes already developed for CAP Partners in order to deliver a more standardized package in a two-phased approach. In the first phase, CAP provided training and related assignments to a cohort of 16 non-Partner organizations, together with two or three individualized follow-up TA visits. Those organizations that engaged fully in the process and completed the assignments were then selected for the second phase, which included a POAP and support based on its results.



GRANDMOTHER RELIEVED TO HAVE SUPPORT FROM A CAP PARTNER FOR HER FAMILY. (FHI 360)

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Organizations selected for the second phase required less TA, progressed rapidly, and achieved results quickly in large part because they were ready to engage.¹³ The phased process was effective because organizations had to progress independently to be considered for the more intensive (and more expensive) second phase. This approach deserves further study as a strategy to maximize return on investment for capacity development.

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Finally, two important external factors also affected costs. Managing grants in a high-risk environment requires a high level of monitoring, which in turn requires staff and travel. Externally driven changes to funding priorities and changes to indicators and funding availability affected Partner organizations dramatically. In some cases, shifts in programmatic emphases by the donor meant it was no longer possible to continue funding certain organizations and grants were terminated. In other cases, where organizations could make required programmatic shifts, CAP Mozambique expended significant resources supporting Partners to understand and adjust to the changes—typically at least a 9- to 12-month process. Sometimes these programmatic shifts required modifications to work plans and agreements, which were also time-intensive processes.

Recommendations for smart investments:

- Allocate sufficient resources to make a meaningful upfront investment. Invest in skilled staff who have the depth of experience and relationship skills necessary to be effective TA providers. Train multiple stakeholders from each organization in order to promote organizational change. Shift the balance of approaches to favor customized, on-site TA.
- Make a long-term commitment. A commitment of at least five years provides an organization with sufficient stability for staff and Board members to focus on strengthening core systems. It also allows the organization and stakeholders to see the fruit of their work in improved internal capacities as well as in improved or scaled-up services.
- Consider a phased approach to capacity development (and to funding)—with an organization’s continuing involvement dependent upon performance.

Donor Coordination Reinforces Good Practices

The relationships intermediaries build with local organizations play a strong role in the success of local organizations—in both their capacities and their outcomes with beneficiaries. In addition, intermediaries and other donors can support their relationships with local CSOs by pooling knowledge and coordinating their actions when appropriate to help local organizations manage their growth and stay on track in terms of adherence to standards. CAP made concerted efforts to understand the backgrounds and past experiences and performance of its local Partners and also coordinated with other donors who had been involved with them to gain insights and avoid problems. For example:

¹³ See also the CAP technical briefs, “Integrating Gender and GBV into HIV Prevention Programming in Mozambique” and “Mozambican CSOs Embrace Social and Behavior Change Communication.”

- When contacting a prior donor to “check a reference” for a potential grantee, CAP Mozambique learned that the other donor had concerns about the organization’s financial management. The organization appeared to have taken adequate measures to avoid a repeat situation, so CAP entered into a grant agreement, including pre-award conditions and prioritization of capacity development to respond to those areas of past and potential risk. In this case donor coordination helped CAP mitigate risk.
- When CAP Mozambique identified persistent weaknesses in core organizational systems with a grant recipient, it discussed the matter with other donors and organized a meeting. The donors agreed to a coordinated response and potential consequences, thus helping the organization understand the seriousness of the issues.
- In another case a grantee was successful in resource mobilization and managed several additional projects. These were stretching the current managers too thin; however, additional staff were not brought on so that responsibilities could be distributed appropriately. Performance was suffering. CAP met with the other donor and through a coordinated intervention, helped the Partner to restructure. The organization was able to keep a key staff person and promote others; performance on the projects improved, thus enhancing the organization’s reputation as a reliable Partner.

Recommendations for smart investments:

- Learn about each grant recipient’s other donors early on and initiate a relationship of goodwill to share positive and negative experiences throughout the relationship with a grantee. Contact other donors (and intermediaries) and take the time to compare budgets and processes in order to provide consistent guidance where possible, and explain differences when necessary.

Limitations and Challenges

While CAP Mozambique maintained its core values, changes in funding priorities affected the nature of interventions over the years. For example, PEPFAR II supported health systems strengthening, but PEPFAR 3.0 prioritized service delivery with a focus on clinical service. Resources shifted, Partner interventions shifted, and interventions that were difficult to count, such as advocacy and support for networks, were deprioritized.

Measuring organizational change is complex. CAP Mozambique chose to use a combination of assessments to balance the learning and ownership gained from facilitated self-assessment with the more objective results that could be gained from external assessments conducted by CAP staff. The choice to prioritize CSO self-assessment throughout the project had a significant, positive effect on Partners’ willingness to tackle even the most sensitive organizational issues. This decision proved to be a good one for promoting organizational ownership of growth; yet this decision also made it difficult to compare organizations based on their scores or to aggregate data.

The most effective capacity development efforts are tailored to the specific needs of an organization, in part because each is a unique system. However, customization also makes it difficult to compare and contrast change across a group of organizations.

The openness, or willingness, of an organization to engage honestly in its own capacity development is a huge factor in successful institutional growth. But this willingness is challenging to measure.

Effective capacity development efforts are tailored to the specific needs of an organization, in part because each is a unique system. However, customization also makes it difficult to compare change across a group of organizations. Different Partners saw improvements at different rates in different areas according to varying factors—ranging from the priority given to a certain organizational system, to the initial level of capacity, to the readiness of an organization to focus on certain challenges. The lack of fully standardized interventions within CAP Mozambique, while a conscious choice, created certain challenges for evaluating the overall impact of the project's capacity development efforts.

Mozambican CSOs were more resistant to engaging in capacity development than CSOs in other countries where CAP worked. CAP strategy was to encourage ownership over the process through the self-assessment and cultivate a culture of partnership. This worked well with a number of organizations but not with all. One could argue that breaking down those walls was a significant accomplishment in itself; but there was no assessment to capture this process. The willingness of an organization to engage honestly in its own capacity development is a huge factor in institutional growth. But this willingness would have been challenging to measure and even more challenging to chart meaningfully across organizations.

The results described in CAP's collection of technical briefs provide evidence about the largely positive organizational growth achieved by each of CAP's Partners and OD Clients. They do not, however, paint a holistic picture of the journey each organization took. The trajectory of change for each organization was rarely a smooth one.

Trying to capture even one organization's story of change is both exciting and challenging. The moment one asks why one change has happened, one often finds it necessary to examine another organizational domain that influenced that change—and has its own story. This describes to a certain extent how CAP Mozambique evolved. Each organization had a unique history—filled with successes and failures that were its own. CAP entered the lives of these organizations for a brief moment in time, and the rest was and remains up to them.

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Vision of a Stronger Mozambique

Now that civil society in Mozambique is maturing, it may be time to focus on the processes that enable organizations to contribute to greater development impacts, which call for not only strong organizational operations and systems, but also for partnering, adaptive management, and agility in a complex context. To paraphrase from one of the lessons above, it might be time to foster a significantly higher level of social capital (bonds of trust and connection) in a country whose recent history has not fostered it.

CSOs in Mozambique (and elsewhere) are part of a large ecosystem with public, private, and government actors. All of these stakeholders would benefit from social capital that can affect change through productive alliances, a shared understanding of challenges, and a joint embrace of opportunities. This kind of united and integrated development approach calls people to a higher level of accountability and responsibility. Mozambican civil society and those who support it may find it is time to invest in collective impact and how multiple actors can achieve shared purpose.

Document written in 2016.