

Analysis of the core capacities of the PROTOS' NGO partners

Manual

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I. Introduction

As part of its mission "to promote equitable and sustainable water management" PROTOS would like to know better the capacities of its partners in order to optimise the collaboration as part of their future strategy and action research processes.

This methodology allows analysing, together with partners, the capacities and competences of these NGO partners at different levels, in order to define the areas and modalities of collaboration and to strengthen the competencies as mutually agreed.

The water sector - in the broadest sense - wherein operates PROTOS and its partners has undergone significant changes with the decentralisation and deconcentration of services, the expanded role of the user groups in planning and management aspects, and the new place for operators of the private sector.

These changes offer hope for a strengthening of democracy, the increased legitimacy of public authorities and good governance, and the promises of greater effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of services tailored to the needs. They also entail risks insofar as these local actors (authorities, society, private sector) do not have necessarily means, know-how, the power and adequate relations to carry out this new challenge in accordance with the principles of human development.

In this context, PROTOS aims at the development of longlasting partnership relations with NGOs that share the same vision, allowing to pool competencies, capacities, positions and skills, with the final objective to support the processes of change at the local and national level in the partner countries. The purpose of strengthening capacities is both operationally (sustain and valorise the infrastructures) and strategically (making consistent and sustainable choices based on a vision of long-term development). The NGO partners play an important role in the area of training and awareness, social engineering and advocacy with as responsibilities, among others: train and educate users and management structures, support users in the analysis of problems, identify solutions and negotiate with their local authorities, and support users in their organisation.

As part of its partnership strategy (which at present is being updated), PROTOS wants to strengthen the structural collaboration with partners which - beyond the implementation of the projects and development programmes in the field of water and sanitation - are interested in innovative approaches of action research and in collaborating in multi-stakeholder platforms within the sector.

Through a dynamic process, the partnership aims at mutual involvement that contributes to the achievement of consistent and common objectives, and to the strengthening of all partners. The contribution of PROTOS is strongly centred on action research to develop appropriate mechanisms for good governance. PROTOS also takes an active role in the preparations of programmes and actions, based on its comparative advantages. This role includes the following 5 dimensions:

facilitator, support to action research, technical and methodological support, advocacy in Belgium and financial intermediation.

These relationships are based on transparency, equity, benefit sharing, win-win situations, accountability and the complementarity between the partners. In its work, PROTOS attaches great importance to social inclusion, human rights and the protection of the environment.

II. The "five Core Capacities" approach

In 2011, the Belgian Cooperation special evaluator carried out an "evaluation of partnerships of NGOs focused on capacity building"¹. This evaluation is largely inspired on a very interesting model developed by the European Centre of Management Development (ECDPM in French) entitled 'Capacity, Change and Performance policies'². This study uses not only conventional parameters in organisational analysis, but also focuses on aspects such as the commitment of the staff, innovation, the ability to achieve sustainable results, legitimacy and governance.

Following this thematic evaluation, several NGOs, PROTOS included, have decided to use this approach for the analysis of the capacity and capabilities of their partners.

ECDPM defines the needs of organisations as follows: "**capacity** is the power of an organisation or system to create public value."The organisation or the system must have competent people committed to generating development results. It must have the collective embedded capabilities it needs to create developmental value that outside groups want. It must have the support structure it needs to manage and sustain its capabilities. It must be able to find the resources and support in the wider context that allows it to survive and grow. And it must be able to pull these aspects together with some sort of integration, synthesis and coherence."

capacity building is therefore a deep learning process that involves all aspects of the organisation. Most organisational change and capacity building are the result of learning by experience and are almost automatically. Other changes require more resources and energies and are likely to encounter deep resistance within the organisation and/or in the context of work overall. The motivation of all leaders and the team is therefore a condition sine qua none.

The **promotion of capacity development** refers to what *external* partners - domestic or foreign - can do to support, facilitate and catalyse capacity development and related exchange processes.

The **capacity development trajectory** is a well-reasoned and participatory process for organisations that commit. It is a well-focussed process but at the same time uncertain because it is part of a vast and changing context, even more if it relates to multi-stakeholder arrangements. External factors influence the type of capabilities and skills that organisations will need³.

¹ Available on the website of the Service of the Special Evaluator
http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/evaluation_partenariats_ong_renforcement_capacites_tcm313-112949.pdf

² "Capacity Change and Performance - Study Report" Heather Baldomero and Peter Morgan, ECDPM Discussion Paper No. 59 B, 2008 This document is available on
[http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/200164BB4441F544C1257474004CF904/\\$FILE/05-59B-e-Study%20_Report%2029%20may.pdf](http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/200164BB4441F544C1257474004CF904/$FILE/05-59B-e-Study%20_Report%2029%20may.pdf)

³ Inspired by the document "Yes You Can! Self-evaluation manual" NGOs Via Don Bosco

In the current context that is relatively complicated, the problems and opportunities are often multidimensional and complex. No organisation is able to cover all these aspects and dimensions. Collaborations with other actors and stakeholders are therefore required in 'multi-stakeholder' approaches.

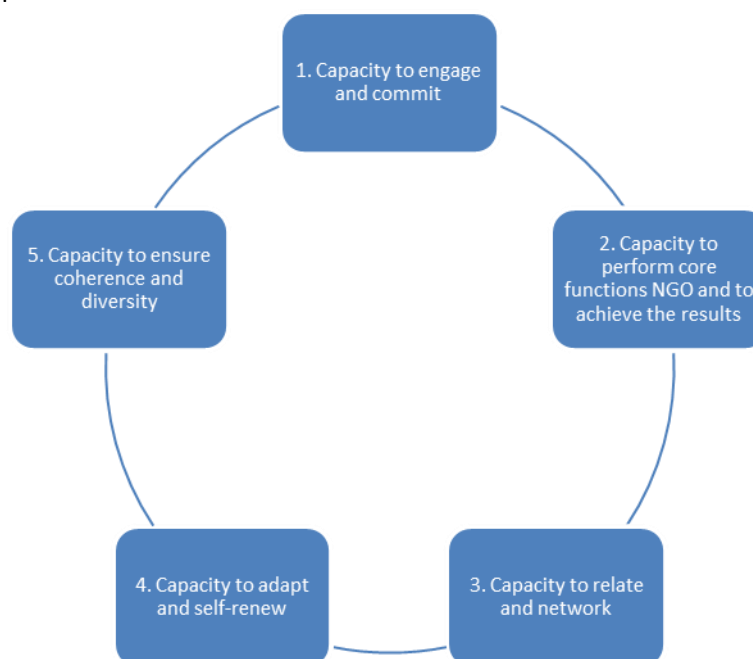
For the analysis of the capacity of an organisation, several elements need to be taken into account⁴:

- the **context** (political, social, and institutional) in which the organisation operates influences its capacity and its ability to develop its capabilities;
- **individual skills** and the (in)direct contributions of people within an organisation affect its capacities; and
- collaboration within the framework of multi-stakeholder interventions and networks enable participating organisations to develop **collective** and complementary **capacities** to survive, as well as to perform tasks that they decide to do.

The 5 Core Capacities

ECDPM researchers have identified 5 Core Capacities (CC). These capacities overlap partially, but all five are necessary to achieve the overall capacity; none is sufficient by itself.

- the capacity to engage and commit
- the capacity to perform the core functions (tasks) of the NGO and to achieve the results
- the capacity to relate and network with other organisations to attract resources and support
- the capacity to adapt and self-renew
- the capacity to balance coherence and diversity and to encourage both stability and innovation



⁴ Inspired by p. 2 IMPACT tool

Core capacity 1: Capacity to engage and commit

The **Core Capacity 1 (CC1)** to engage and commit is in reference to the vision, plans, competencies, skills, attitudes, and resources that enable people and systems to operate.

Organisations must have the means, the will and the drive, to choose, to empower and to create space for themselves. This is about the capability of an organisation, as a living system, to be conscious and aware of its place in the world, to develop its own motivation and commitment and then to act. This has a lot to do with attitude and self-perception. More specifically, this capability is about human, social, organisational and institutional energy.

This first part of the tool covers how the organisation translates its mission/vision and goals into plans. It analyses the motivation of the team, the ability of the leadership to take decisions and to ensure follow-up, as well as the recognition by the stakeholders.

Core capacity 2: Capacity to perform the core functions (tasks) of the NGO and to achieve the results⁵

The **Core Capacity 2 (CC2)** focuses on the knowledge, the expertise and experience required to carry out actions and achieve the results aimed for. This includes technical and logistical skills, but also management capacity.

The concrete interpretation of the CC2 depends on the role and core functions (tasks) that the NGO actually has and those that it could aspire to.

Core Capacity 3: Capacity to relate and network with other organisations to attract resources and support

The **Core Capacity 3 (CC3)** to relate and network refers to the ability of actors to manage relationships both internally and externally in ways which allow them to act and perform within a given context. The organisation should not operate as an isolated entity.

This capacity is thus about the ability of an organisation to analyse and understand its own environment and set up, manage and sustain key relationships needed for the organisation to survive. The capacity to relate includes being able to earn credibility and legitimacy, to protect the organisation from intrusions, to earn the trust of others, and to influence other stakeholders. Organisations frequently have to compete for power, space, support and resources with a variety of other actors. CC3 therefore also describes an organisation's ability to influence its stakeholders and environment through negotiation and advocacy. The creation of coalitions and alliances can be used to consolidate its position and to increase its efficiency.

⁵ Note for PROTOS: capacity 2 is stated otherwise in the ECDPM approach / Via Don Bosco in the IMPACT/Novib (p. 11) approach. The latter puts more emphasis on the results - and sustainability - more than on the ability to achieve these results.

Core Capacity 4: Capacity to adapt and self-renew

A NGO that is not able to adapt to the evolutions of the context and the time will disappear; it will stagnate, it will suffer from excessive bureaucracy, etc. and it will lose its legitimacy and support.

The **Core Capacity 4 (CC4)** refers to the ability to learn continuously, to take on new roles and manage change. It is also critical that an organisation maintains its legitimacy, relevance and its effectiveness despite the evolution of the context and needs. From this point of view, this capacity also includes the ability of an organisation to deal with disorders (unexpected decisions by Governments or donors, natural disasters, loss of key figures in the organisation, etc.).

Change management requires qualities such as resourcefulness, innovation and the sense of initiative, courage to engage without fear, etc. A culture of adaptive leadership can encourage these qualities by providing opportunities to learn and by creating confidence in the change process.

Core Capacity 5: Capacity to balance coherence and diversity and to encourage both stability and innovation

An organisation needs diversity: a broad variety of skills/competencies, a variety of perspectives and ways of thinking among its members and divisions (teams, departments,). Diversity is a prerequisite for continuous renewal and innovation. This way, it can develop resilience and the flexibility to react adequately to different situations. At the same time, an organisation needs to prevent fragmentation so as not to lose focus. It is important to stay true to your core values, identity, and good practices.

The mix of competencies among staff needs to be kept in balance –e.g. balance between "hard" or technical skills and 'soft' skills, etc. The capability to achieve consistency often also concerns a balancing between centralised control and decentralisation –e.g. in the case of NGOs with a central office and "antennas".

This **Core Capacity 5 (CC5)** refers to the organisation being able to making effective combinations between the different capacities and capabilities, the organisational objectives and the stakeholder interests. Consistency must be ensured.

Caution: some key elements of the functioning of organisations such as the access to resources seem to come back in different parts of the questionnaire, but each time from a different angle.

III. How to use the Capacity Analysis tool of PROTOS

a) The purpose of the tool

This analysis allows PROTOS to have a clear idea on the capacities 'to be strengthened' of its partners and allows the partner to know the opinion of PROTOS with regard to its competencies to be strengthened⁶. The analysis focuses therefore on the needs of strengthening capacities as felt by the NGO and PROTOS and this in view of the ambitions and opportunities for collaboration. The tool

⁶ PROTOS team will use this same tool to inform the partner on what PROTOS considered the abilities and weaknesses of the partner.

serves as a starting point for the discussion/exchange on the future collaboration between PROTOS and the partner and on the capacities needed within this framework. It allows identifying capacity building needs and determines the contribution of PROTOS in this process depending on its possibilities.

In the Excel file under 'Analysis of the capacities of the NGO partners of PROTOS', the PROTOS partner is invited to provide information to the worksheet 1 'Profile', sheet 2 'Financial information'. They are also invited to answer questions of the sheet 3 'Questionnaire on the 5CC'. The findings, comments and overall scores are automatically copied to the worksheet 4 'Summary'. This 'summary' will facilitate discussions with PROTOS on the capacities to be strengthened. The detailed answers on the questions in worksheet 3 should therefore not necessarily be shared with PROTOS.

Important note: PROTOS is aware that some of its partners have already done similar exercises in other support programmes. The outcome of these exercises and analysis can probably be used to complete the tool of PROTOS (especially the green parts of sheet 3). PROTOS would be happy to receive the conclusions of such other exercises (as an annex to this tool).

On basis of this same tool, PROTOS will also share its perception/experience regarding the capacities of the partner. The pooling of the 2 respective analyses (partner and PROTOS) - during the dialogue between the partners - can be a basis for future collaboration and especially to establish the path/trajectory of capacity building and to specify the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners, now and in the future.

The first time that the organisation is using the tool can be considered as a baseline for the development of its capacities. This baseline will allow, after a few years of capacity building, to assess the changes made in each core capacity and the sustainability of these changes. This is however not a tool for monitoring in the strict sense because it analyses the assessed needs of NGOs to strengthen specific capacities and capabilities and not the level of the capacities as such. With a working environment that is changing rapidly, the needs and competencies of the NGOs need to evolve as well.

b) Description of the tool





A **first part** consists of conventional information about the mission of the NGO, its scope of activities, its organisation, its staff,... see sheet 1 'Profile of the partner NGOs' and sheet 2 'Financial information'. By completing these sheets, PROTOS has essential information for collaboration and to inform its donors.

The **second part** of the tool, including the sheets 3 and 4, is the analysis of the NGOs' capacity to engage (see capacity 1), to carry out its programme (see capacity 2), its innovative capacity (see capacity 4) and its capacity to build the networks (see capacity 3) and how this is done in a coherent manner (see capacity 5).

For each core capacity subdomains or topics are identified. For each topic/subdomains a list of questions - or rather considerations - are included, allowing the NGO to better understand the issues covered by the subject. The NGO is asked to mark a '1' in the column responding to its point of view

with regard to the question (see part of the table highlighted in orange)⁷. PROTOS is aware that some of these subjects/areas may be more or less relevant and critical to your organisation.

The 4 columns correspond to the following definition:

OK and!		We are OK... and we are aiming for excellence
OK but...		We are OK for now... but maybe we should improve a few things
Problem		We are not OK... and we really need to change things around here
Not sure if relevant		Question not relevant (and/or controversial?) I'm not sure...

Note that the questions cover **the needs your organisation perceives depending on its ambitions and the opportunities that arise**. The questions DO NOT refer to your present strengths or weakness! In other words, even if your organisation is already very strong in one or the other field, there may be opportunities to further strengthen these fields, given new challenges that may arise, such as opportunities for action research.

In the green part of the questionnaire in sheet 3, you are asked to mark a global score (in the right columns)⁸ and explain this score through indicating/concluding on which issues are important for your organisation and suggest trajectories for your capacity building in these areas. These conclusions will be also automatically transcribed in sheet 4 'Summary'.

This last table (sheet 4) will serve as a basis for the exchange with PROTOS on the capacity building needs (see below).

⁷ Marking a '1' makes it easier to make a graphic presentation of scores.
Attention: It is thus not necessary to copy the signs in the questionnaire 5 CC!

⁸ Since some questions or issues may be more important to your judgment than others, it is NOT suggested to give an 'average' score.

c) Advantages of a participatory use of the tool in your organisation

The tool is developed so that it can be: (1) filled only by the management of the NGO or (2) serve as a basis for discussion within the NGO. In the latter case, the tool is filled individually by members of the⁹ partner NGO before discussing within the team these different aspects of the capacity of the NGO. A single overall score should then be passed to PROTOS (automatically on the sheet 4 'Summary').

- Sharing the results with the staff is a good thing (making them to participate is even better) as it allows them to feel involved with the future plans for the organisation. It will enable them to take responsibility for the future, and it demonstrates the openness and transparency of the leadership.
- The results of the organisational assessment can be used to identify issues that need strengthening. These points can be classified in order of priority according to (1) the needs and the capacity of staff in terms of time available to address them, but also (2) based on existing or future potential alliances and the skills to engage with partners (in a 'linking capacities' approach).
- The results can highlight training needs of staff. They might also lead to a proposal for funding being submitted to donors. Some donors may suggest training courses or identify an appropriate consultant or specialist to work with staff on building up their knowledge and skills.
- The organisational assessment can be carried out each year. The pattern of the results developed over a number of years enables the leadership to monitor progress and changes made. The annual results can be displayed to the attention of all staff, encouraging discussions on changes and how to address them. It is recommended that you keep copies of the plenary score sheets in a safe place so that you can compare them with scores in future years.
- Such an analysis could also benefit the relations of the NGO in the country or to the beneficiaries or persuade donors.

d) Dialogue between the partners on capacity building

As part of its partnership strategy (at present it is being updated), PROTOS wants to respect the integrity of its partners. It does not intervene in the internal organisation of the partner as long as problems or weaknesses do not affect the implementation of the project and/or joint programme. However, it is clear that PROTOS will ensure that its NGO partners share the same values with respect to, among others, social inclusion, human rights, protection of the environment.

So the NGOs can choose (1) to share all elements of this self-assessment with PROTOS i.e. all responses to the detailed questions of worksheet 3 'Questionnaire 5CC' - or (2) share only the results of sheet 4 'Summary'. The level of partnership, experiences and problems encountered in the collaboration, ... will influence this decision.

With the same tool, the PROTOS field representatives will also prepare their point of view on the current capacities of the partner NGO and its needs for capacity building as perceived by PROTOS.

⁹ Additional columns are then to be added in the 3 'Questionnaire 5 CC' sheet to compare the responses of the different people involved.

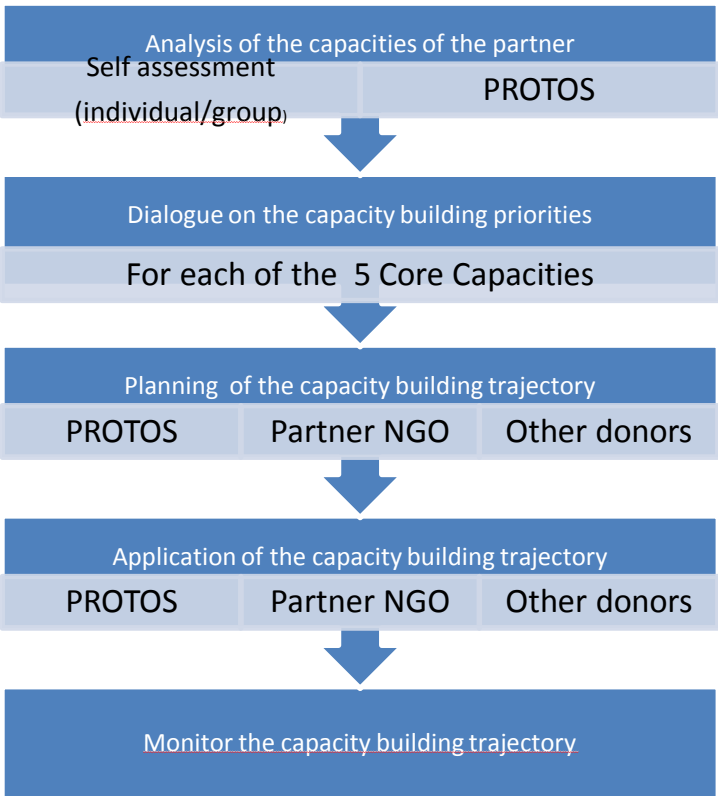
Sharing of this point of view of PROTOS and the analysis made by the NGO itself will facilitate an open dialogue on partnership and capacity building.

e) Definition of capacity building needs

Together, PROTOS and the partner will define all modes of collaboration and capacity building needs.

PROTOS does however not intend to systematically cover all requests/needs for capacity building and will support the NGO especially/only in the areas in which it has a genuine comparative advantage or deep knowledge. The NGO should try to organise itself for the strengthening of (other) competencies or speak to other partners.

The chronology of the use of the tool can be illustrated as follows:







f) Fill tool




Filling out sheets 1 and 2 should not cause major problems because it is standard information collected by most donors.

The exemple below is an extract of the sheet 3 'Questionnaire 5 CC', under subcategory 4 "Innovation - capacity to adapt and self-renew". The test-NGO answered questions by marking a "1" in the column that corresponds to its choice (see cells highlighted in orange).

Afterwards, the test- NGO included in the green line its **conclusion** on this aspect and the **capacity building needs** as identified for this same aspect. It also gives an **overall score** for that subdomain (here 4.1 'strategies'). To do so, it marks a "1" in one of the four right columns (green line).

		OK	OK but	Problem	Not sure if relevant
	The 5 Core Capacities (CC) and the building blocks				
C4	Capacity to adapt and self-renew				
	The NGO is able to learn on an on-going basis, to accept new roles and adapt to a changing context and new needs				
C41	Strategies				
41 a	Does the NGO sufficiently use the information of the M&E system to adapt its reporting and further planning?	1			
41 b	Are changes in the working/political context monitored and is the strategy adapted accordingly?		1		
41 c	Are strategic evaluations (mid-term) and context analyses frequently updated and do they consider changes actor-constellations?		1		
<i>Following line: Please include your conclusions on the topic, your capacity building needs and to score an overall score (right)</i>					
C41	<p>Strategies:</p> <p>Our NGOs regularly adapts its strategy based on the information obtained through our system of monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>However, our team is not sufficiently armed to master the latest developments in the sector and bring them to new strategies.</p> <p>Our NGO needs support to review its strategy.</p>		1		

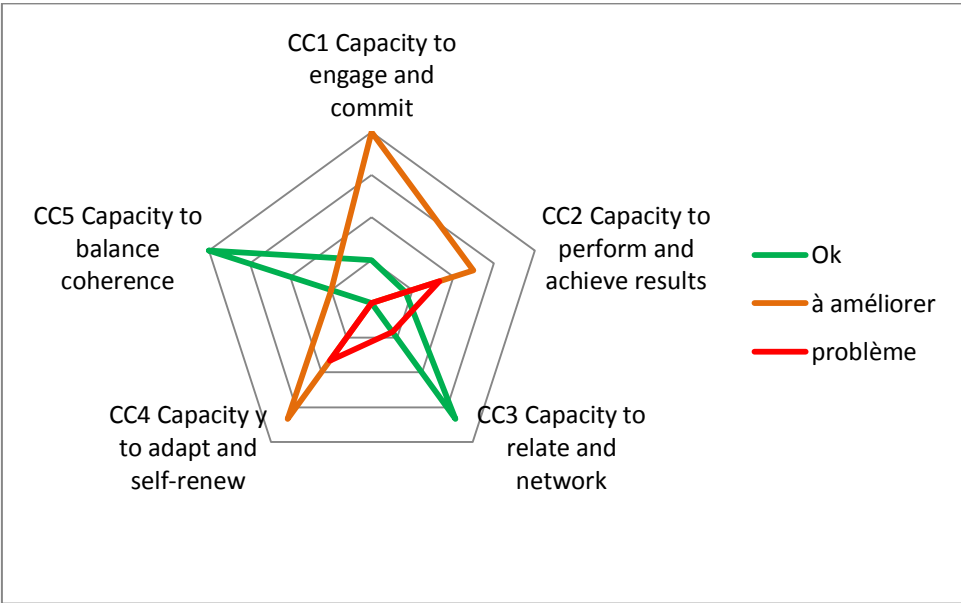
The green line is automatically copied into the sheet 4 ' Summary' (see below), which is the basis for discussion with PROTOS (and other partners), on the partner NGO capacity needs as identified and mutually agreed.

					
	Summary of the results	OK and!	OK but...	Problem	Not sure if relevant
C1	Capacity to engage and commit				
C11	Strategy, mission/vision and values:	0	0	0	0
C12	Team spirit - motivation of staff to achieve results:	0	0	0	0
C13	Leadership:	0	0	0	0
C14	Commitment of the Board of Directors:	0	0	0	0
C15	Recognition by the stakeholders:	0	0	0	0
C2	Capacity to perform the core functions (tasks) of the NGO and to achieve the results				
C21	Human Resource Management (HRM):				
...	.....	0	0	0	0
C3	Capacity to relate and network with other organisations to attract resources and support				
C31	Mobilisation of resources and support:				
...	....	0	0	0	0
C4	Capacity to adapt and self-renew				
	Strategies: Our NGOs regularly adapts its strategy based on the information obtained through our system of monitoring and evaluation. However, our team is not sufficiently armed to master the latest developments in the sector and bring them to new strategies.				
C41	Our NGO needs support to review its strategy.	0	1	0	0
C5	Capacity to balance coherence and diversity and to encourage both stability and innovation				
C51	Maintaining strategic coherence:				
...	....	0	0	0	0

Based on the scores by subgroup, a summary table and schema (spider web) is developed almost automatically, allowing to quickly see where the NGO perceives the needs for the strengthening its capacities.

For example, the results of an analysis 'test':

	OK	To improve	Problem	Not sure	Number of domains
Capacity to engage and commit	1	4	0	0	5
Capacity to perform the core functions (tasks) of the NGO and to achieve the results	1	3	2	0	6
Capacity to relate and network with other organisations to attract resources and support	4	0	1	1	6
Capacity to adapt and self-renew	0	4	2	0	6
Capacity to balance coherence and diversity and to encourage both stability and innovation	4	1	0	0	5



A possible reflection for this example in this 'test' analysis can be:

- that the NGO considers that it is competent with regard to networking (CC3) and coherence (CC5) but:
- that it feels the need for further strengthening in the field of: 'Capacity to engage and commit (CC1)' and 'Capacity to adapt and self-renew (CC4)'.
- There appeared to be only a few subdomains where its competencies are clearly insufficient (compared to its needs) - and therefore those need to be strengthened - including (in the case of this test) for resources mobilisation, strengthening of other partners, sharing lessons learned and risk management.



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Inspired on : Yes You Can! The PDO's Guide to Capacity Self-Assessment & Capacity Development Action Planning, Via Don Bosco (2012) and IMPACT Alliance Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool, OXFAM/NOVIB (2011)

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