

MAY 6, 2009 SIDE EVENT – SUMMARY REPORT

CSD 17 SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGICAL MAJOR GROUP

CAPACITY BUILDING: WORDS INTO ACTION: Physical, Social & Economic Infrastructure

The event engaged 71 delegates and members of major groups from more than 20 countries in defining their specific issues and to hear their perspectives on effective capacity building actions. The event format included a brief presentation providing context, followed by round table discussions (90 minutes). The discussion focused on the cross cutting issues of Capacity Building and the three infrastructures (Social, Physical and Economic) as they relate to African (and other) rural sustainable development.

Capacity Building can be defined as:

“The building of human, institutional and infrastructure capacity to help societies develop secure, stable and sustainable economies, governments and other institutions through mentoring, training, education, physical projects, the infusion of financial and other resources, and most importantly, the motivation and inspiration of people to improve their lives.”

Results and Recommended Actions

A brief summary of participant contributions are noted below.

Common Rural Issues & Recommended Capacity Building Actions:

- Rural migration to cities is eroding food development capacity for many countries, which results in the need to import food. Solutions are needed to establish jobs for farmers and their families to remain in rural communities.
- Farmers are often the least educated; 90% are women; their farming techniques are extremely rudimentary and minimally effective. Education and systematic farming technologies are needed to boost food production and to keep youth on the farms.
- Governments do not provide sufficient support to farmers, but focus their attention on the cities. An organization of farmers & government relations is needed to boost food production and address farmer capacity shortfalls.
- There is no “check list” to confirm the existence of new infrastructure or to measure & guide progress. Farmers should be given the means to define what they “need” in terms of capacity building.
- Donor fund governance is extremely weak; corruption is a drawback. Effective governance and internal control practices are needed and must be transparent, accountable and participatory.
- Uninformed government workers make poor choices for farmers. Government training is needed in all capacity building aspects (social, physical and economic infrastructures).
- Diverse developed countries help, but there is no coordination to optimize the collective impact and outcome in the recipient country.

- A huge capacity building void is created when women are not consulted on capacity development initiatives. Initiatives are often failures because women as the key element of familiar farming structures are not consulted. Effective facilitated engagement processes are required.

A sampling of specific recommendations for actions that were discussed is given below:

- In a given location, 40,000 chickens are grown, but there are no storage & production facilities for chicken harvesting and marketing. Food is wasted & economic opportunities lost. Action needed: Create infrastructure to manage loss reduction such as abattoir and meat storage facilities, and develop chicken markets.
- Climate has changed and temperatures rising; existing seeds are no longer appropriate for climate conditions. Action needed: Provide seeds that grow effectively in changed climate.
- Government/Farmer relationship management processes do not exist. Action needed: Implement stakeholder management and strategy development processes.
- Supply system technologies do exist but are not applied, i.e. In a given location, farmers know how to maximize the growing of oranges and mangos but lack the knowledge on how to produce and store juice. Action needed: Provide training for the application of these technologies.
- Multiple government and stakeholder roles are unclear; they cannot work together effectively. Action needed: Implement stakeholder management processes.
- Lack of resources to access proprietary technologies limits the farmer's ability to learn and develop capacity. Action needed: Provide access to open source technologies or fund proprietary technology transfer.
- In a given place, electrical power infrastructure reliability is very poor; power outages that last for 3 to 4 days are common. Action needed: Upgrade infrastructure, provide reliable power supply, and implement training in system operation & maintenance. Include women in the training programs.
- Ecosystems are degrading. Action needed: Implement ecosystem safeguard strategies.
- Capacity building needs to involve service training. Action needed: Identify roles to involve local people in projects, assure gender balance and consider characteristics of local culture.