

Capacity Development Forum 2021

Design and Delivery of Individual Capacity Building Programmes

08-09 December 2021 | Virtual Convening

<https://iihs.co.in/capacity-building/capacity-development-forum/>

About the Capacity Development Forum

Through the Capacity Development Forum (CDF), IIHS aims to bring together diverse stakeholders involved in capacity development in India into a 'community of practice' to consolidate learnings from across the country and around the world. The long term objective of the forum is to collaborate to make capacity development practice more effective and create an open access repository of knowledge on capacity development.

Background: Design and Delivery of Individual Capacity Building Programmes

Strengthening individual capacities contributes to building institutional capacities, and helps drive change and transformation in society and the economy. It is hence important to explore how capacity development institutions can improve their initiatives and programmes to ensure effective capacity building of individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted capacity development, in terms of restricting physical interactions, peer learning, and field visits, among others.

The first convening of the CDF, held virtually on 8 - 9, December, 2021, focused on the capacity development of urban practitioners at an individual scale, across different sectors of the Urban. Conversations were grounded in the context of the ongoing pandemic and its impact on capacity development programmes and how this has impacted the shift to online modes of delivery, the choice of pedagogical tools and technological solutions, and the overall outlook for future CD practice.

Thematic Session Notes

Session 1: Setting the Context: Capacity Building for Urban Development in India

India is emerging as the site for the largest urban transformation in the world. More than 300 million people will be added to India's urban population in the next 20-30 years, as the economic base moves from agriculture to services and manufacturing. Although India's urban landscape is riddled with challenges such as concentration of poverty, inequality and

environmental degradation, the opportunities that it presents are also tremendous, especially in the fields of economic development and creation of livelihoods. A comprehensive response to this has been emerging from the Indian government, with the third generation of core urban missions, including AMRUT, SBM and PMAY, being rolled out in 2021. There is also an increase in private sector involvement to address the needs of a growing urban population.

India's Urban Challenges

The Indian urban situation has been changing rapidly. Fast change calls for a systemic approach that can bring together practice, research, and capacity development, which in turn can help education for a new generation of interdisciplinary urban practitioners. The greatest challenge is that of integration of these fragmented areas of work.

India's capacity challenges in urban development stem from weak urban governance, weak fiscal base of cities, fragmentation between state, urban local bodies and parastatals, lack of leadership, interdisciplinary skills and knowledge in urban institutions. In order to deliver effective outcomes, capacity development must be linked to urban sector reforms that address these challenges.

Individual Capacity Building for Urban Development

Two key questions that need to be addressed are whose capacities are being built and what capacities are being built. Capacity development cannot deliver impact at scale if both these questions are not addressed comprehensively. Table 1 summarizes the high-level answers to the two key questions.

Table 1: Building Individual Capacity

Level	Whose Capacities?	What Capacities?
Leadership	MPs and MLAs, IAS, IPS, IFS, Defence, CxOs in Corporate and Social Sectors, Academic Leadership	Public Policy, Institutional Design and Financial Reform
Middle Management	ULB Representatives, Commissioners, Planning, Engineering & Development Professionals, Managers in Corporate and Social Sectors, Academicians	Strategic Networking, Programmatic Approaches, Interdisciplinary Implementation Frameworks
Operational Staff	ULB and Local Functionaries, Practitioners, Activists	Project Partnerships, Cross-disciplinary Skills

As the table indicates, individual capacity building needs to address individuals not just in the public sphere, but also among the private sector, practising professionals, academia, and the social sector. All actors need to come together to drive urban transformation in a sustained and sustainable manner.

The Post-COVID Situation

COVID has forced capacity building initiatives to pivot from a face-to-face mode to a digital mode. This presents a range of interesting opportunities, but comes with its own challenges. Infusing hybrid and blended learning modalities needs to be carefully considered for the capacity building of urban practitioners. The use of productised programmes to reach a larger audience, a mix of synchronous and asynchronous courses, cross sectoral and experiential programmes, and the creation and deployment of content in regional languages to enable wider inclusion are some of the ways forward.

Session 2: Dialogue: How Individual Capacity Building Can Develop Institutional Capacities in Urban India and the Global South

One of the major challenges for capacity development practice across countries in the Global South is to find pathways to convert individual capacities into institutional capacities for better urban governance and service delivery. Individuals are the building blocks of institutional capacity, and are instrumental in creating and sustaining enabling environments to achieve developmental outcomes. This is especially relevant in the context of the rapid pace of urbanisation in virtually every city in every developing country.

This dialogue focused on the role that capacity building plays in the context of the Global South and specifically in urban India, with discussants sharing their experiences from working in the development sector over several decades. Capacity building initiatives that have a clearly defined purpose are the most likely to bring about transformation and help in the success of developmental projects.

The dialogue began with a discussion on the core drivers for capacity development and explored pathways to transformative change with examples from the Global South. In South Africa, individual capacities built in the times of Apartheid around themes of urban development and local governance, led to the development of institutional capacities when these individuals went on to occupy official positions in the post-Apartheid government, resulting in systemic change.

Institutional transformation may be driven from within, like in the case of Ethiopia, where a new course on urban governance was developed in the Ethiopian Civil Service University with the help of the IHS in Rotterdam, to train urban professionals. Yet, not all change can be brought about from within and the role of external entities in enabling transformatory change can be significant.

Challenging public narratives paves the way for new initiatives that can lead to transformation. External players like NGOs and civil society enabled this by generating data, analysis and evidence for an initiative in Uganda that set out to transform the role of secondary cities in the national economy.

The dialogue moved on to the Indian context, starting with the institution of the civil service in India. The high calibre and integrity of civil servants are assets to driving transformational change and could be leveraged by greater certainty in the period of their posting and by strengthening their accountability to the citizens they are meant to serve.

The dialogue reflected on the responsibility bestowed upon local governments in India by the 74th Constitution Amendment Act and the mismatch between responsibility and capacity and resources at the local government level. There is a need for stronger and more functional local governments that alter the prevailing sectoral implementation to focus on development programmes.

Sectoral approaches in urban management are often driven by development finance agencies that end up creating sector-focused institutions and fragmenting the landscape of urban governance. An institutional architecture that enables a more cohesive response to challenges is an important component in the success of urban governance.

Urban local governments in India have developed skills in urban governance over time. Using their internal capacities in policy making by breaking existing institutional barriers can drive transformation, rather than always seeking and accepting advice from external experts.

The dialogue concluded by exploring pathways from individual to institutional capacity development, going from critique (what is wrong) to proposition (how can it be done differently) to agency (power to effect change).

Key Takeaways

- Individual capacity building efforts must begin by outlining their purpose, answering the why and the what, and linking them to reform.
- Individual capacity building often results in institutional capacity building by creating an effective enabling environment.
- Augmenting and leveraging internal capacity must be prioritised before bringing in external experts.
- The role of independent external organisations is significant in enabling evidence-driven changes in public policy.
- Local governments must adopt a concerted approach to urban challenges and break down sectoral and institutional barriers.

Session 3: Panel Discussion: Pedagogical Tools for Individual Capacity Building — Learners' Experience

This session brought together learners from various IIHS capacity building programmes spanning a range of topics and formats and adopting a variety of pedagogical approaches and methods. The format of these programmes included online, offline and hybrid. They involved different pedagogical approaches such as classroom instruction, flipped classrooms, case studies, audio visual aids, site visits, group discussions, mentorship and handholding. The objective of this session was to gather learner impressions on which pedagogical methods and approaches worked better in their respective learning contexts.

Customised programmes that were created keeping specific needs of the learners in mind were more effective in achieving learning outcomes, because such programmes could be pitched at the right level, the learning journeys could be tailored and curated to support specific learning needs, and the outcomes could be measured more clearly against already identified baselines. Extended support, where faculty was available for discussions even after the workshop, was well-appreciated and led to better transfer of learning to the workplace. Mentorship worked best when hierarchies were flattened and the mentor facilitated free and open discussions. Customised capacity building interventions could provide scope for creative exploration, systems thinking and a problem solving orientation.

Site visits were especially useful to explore how a new technology or innovation had been implemented. Seeing working models on site also helped participants think about the various

possibilities in their areas of work, and enabled cross-learning. The discussants also felt that cross-state exposure was very valuable in getting to know the on-ground practices prevalent in other states. Local projects have a strong socio- economic dimension, and adequate attention needs to be paid in site visits to highlight those aspects. Through site visits, participants developed empathy and understood the importance of community involvement in development efforts.

Discussants noted how heterogeneous groups, both in online programmes or in-person workshops, almost always led to greater peer learning and cross-sectoral understanding, richer discussions, wider perspectives and better learning outcomes. Facilitators' skills were key in enabling this exchange of knowledge in such programmes. The flipped classroom methodology allowed learners to use the session effectively to engage with the instructor and their peers to learn in an active mode, through detailed discussions on implementation rather than passively receiving abstract concepts. Discussants recognised the utility of such methods involving heterogeneous learner groups in providing scope for the sharing of best practices.

Discussants also shared their experiences with the post-pandemic digital pivot and discussed conditions for the effectiveness of online programmes. In their opinion, tighter collaboration within the peer group and regular discussions with the facilitators contributed to the success of such programmes. It was felt that the transfer of learning to the workplace could be made more effective by handholding for a period of time after the training.

In courses that were technical and required skills such as programming, online training was challenging for both facilitators and learners, particularly in groups where the exposure to technical skills was not uniform. For heterogeneous learner groups, defining the technical prerequisites might help make these courses more efficient and effective.

Key Takeaways

- Courses customised to the learning cohort are best for serving different learning styles and achieving learning outcomes.
- The skills of the facilitator are key in understanding the learning needs and baseline for the group and determining the level of the course as well as the methods that would best suit the learning needs of a particular group.
- A learner-centric approach, where active and applicative learning was facilitated helped in achieving better learning outcomes.

- Heterogeneous groups almost always lead to greater peer learning and cross-sectoral understanding, richer discussions, widening of perspectives and better overall learning outcomes, except in courses where technical skills are being taught.
- Extended support in the form of curated discussion groups and/or mentorship where faculty was available for discussions even after the workshop/ programme led to better outcomes.
- A tighter collaboration within the peer group and regular discussions with the facilitator are key to making online programmes effective.

Session 4: Panel Discussion: Pedagogical Tools for Individual Capacity Building: Trainers' Perspective

This panel discussed pedagogical methods and approaches that trainers have adopted over time, and sustainable models that have evolved in individual capacity building. In the context of COVID induced restrictions, the panel discussed changes to the design and delivery of capacity development programmes.

In the course of their discussions, the panellists touched upon the following key topics:

- Programme design and delivery to improve the effectiveness of capacity building
- Effects of the pandemic on training budgets, and on pedagogical approaches due to COVID
- Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and evaluation of capacity building programmes

The session began with a discussion on the effectiveness of capacity development programmes, and the need for these programmes to go beyond their traditional sectoral approach, open up new ways of thinking and give participants a different perspective. Programmes are more effective when they are designed to enable learning, unlearning and relearning. Customised training programmes based on an assessment of the skill and knowledge levels of learners ensure better learning outcomes.

To encourage, enable and cater to different ways of learning, combining different pedagogical methods such as panel discussions, small and large group discussions and simulation exercises, could be used. The capacity development sector also has a key role to play in addressing immediate and emergent training needs, such as those that arise due to the pandemic situation and other such "Black Swan" events.

Drawing attention to the digital pivot forced by the COVID pandemic, the panel noted that a virtual format may be more suited to programmes that focus on knowledge acquisition and peer learning, and for cross-regional programmes, including dispersed geographies and conflict-hit areas. In the post-pandemic context, the hybrid mode is emerging as the preferred choice for long-term application-oriented programme delivery.

The panel noted the importance of a systematic assessment of training needs as a basis for programme design and development. Competency mapping is useful only when job descriptions correctly reflect the actual tasks that employees are expected to perform. The involvement of parent departments and organisations at every step, is very crucial for mapping and tracking competencies. These include conducting TNAs specific to desired outcomes, establishing a process for appropriate capacity development interventions, incentivising the application of acquired learning, and assigning responsibility to relevant personnel to ensure that the capacity building activities and training programmes are leveraged to deliver on outcomes.

There is a need for evolving monitoring and evaluation frameworks for capacity development programmes, including evaluation at the end of a course for learning outcomes, and impact evaluation after a prescribed period of time. The challenges for evaluation lie in isolating extraneous factors such as budgetary constraints, changes in postings and delays in decision making, among others.

Stressing the importance of a programmatic approach to capacity development and an enabling environment for the same, the panel referred to the National Training Policy devised in 1996 and updated in 2012, as an example of a mechanism with which to establish a structure, with a link to career progression, and systematic impact assessment to ensure adequate budgetary allocations for, and better uptake of capacity building programmes.

Key Takeaways

- There needs to be more structured capacity building programmes for public and private practitioners, mandated and linked to career progression.
- On-the-job training, simulation and experiential methods are most effective for transfer of training. The enabling environment or the ecosystem is crucial for effective training.
- Training of trainers needs to be given adequate importance. Structured programmes to improve the skills of facilitators and recognition of these skills within a commonly accepted framework are necessary.

Session 5: Guest Talk: Theory of Change in Capacity Building for Urban Development: Challenges and Opportunities

In this session, a retired civil servant with experience across sectors presented the practitioner's perspective on implementing schemes and in policy making, and shared some thoughts on the Theory of Change in capacity building aimed at urban transformation. Speaking from his experience of implementing the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Scheme across the state of Himachal Pradesh, the speaker said that the key to affecting change lies in influencing the behaviour of individuals and in getting the community to take ownership of its own problems.

The developmental problems that India has faced have historically been seen to be the lack of infrastructure arising out of a deficit in either finance or technical capabilities. Therefore, early development programmes were designed with the objective of obtaining funding and technical skills, and were focussed on features, implementation and monitoring, leading to results that were not sustainable. However, while finance and technical skills are important, they are subsidiary to addressing behavioural issues that lie at the heart of these problems. Programmatic solutions that are driven by an academic understanding of the problem or are adopted in a bid to replicate successes elsewhere, often do not look beyond the features of the programme into the behavioural aspects that underpin the problem to be solved.

The role that capacity building can play in developmental programmes is to enable the community to analyse its own behaviour and come up with its own reasons for why it needs to change. Once this crucial step is achieved, appropriate technical knowledge may be provided as a supplement. Typically, a top-down approach is followed across most programmes and schemes, where technical solutions are offered first, prejudging the problem. Instead, communities should be enabled through effective capacity building to come up with their own problem statements. When people in the community own the problem, they have an incentive to change. When this is done, the community finds the means to change on their own and the need for any subsidies is reduced. The speaker used the learnings from the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) programme in rural areas to emphasise the importance of the motivation to change at the community level and that affecting human behaviour is at the crux of the theory of change. The role of capacity building is to nudge the community in the right direction.

Behaviour change must occur voluntarily and cannot be imposed. However, in the target-driven environment in which practitioners find themselves, this often becomes very difficult to achieve. Across sectors, practitioners need to understand their end objectives, analyse their own views on the situation and derive suitable solutions for achieving those objectives.

Session 6: Panel Discussion: Models, Types and Components of Individual Capacity Building Programmes

This expert panel discussed capacity building in different contexts, examples of innovative capacity development initiatives, extended capacity building models to include components like mentoring and handholding, the need for programme design to incorporate a bottom up approach, an institutional environment conducive to utilising built capacities, and ways in which individual capacity development can bring about large-scale change.

The panel began with a discussion on the need for capacity building at various levels in the context of research. Research to be meaningful, must address critical challenges, create social demand and find its way into policy. For research to be usable, it must be process-oriented and comprehensive. The challenges posed by interdisciplinary domains in developing research capacity can be overcome by working in heterogeneous groups around particular thematic areas and setting up knowledge exchanges. The agency of the researcher is also important, as is the guidance of a senior mentor for intellectual anchoring. Capacities must also be developed to effectively communicate research findings and to use the evidence generated.

Discussing capacity development for policy design, the panel noted that the public policy space in India is driven by experts rather than by citizens, focusing on quick solutions rather than on understanding the problem and getting to the root cause. Policy design and management should involve a citizen centric approach, embedded in design thinking, data analysis, evidence, statistics and monitoring and evaluation. There is a need to train citizens to analyse the problem, and give them the agency to solve problems, especially the poor and socio-economically disadvantaged, who have their own ways of finding solutions.

Illustrating how individual capacity development can bring about large-scale change, the panel listed three distinct elements of the process: transformation, agency and power. When capacity building is able to influence individuals and transform them, it imparts agency to them that can result in institutional and societal transformation. Agency influences power dynamics and brings about change.

Focusing on the purpose and design of capacity development programmes for urban development, the panel pointed out that capacity building does not imply the dissemination and consumption of narrow sector specific knowledge. A clear vision of the overall outputs and outcomes of capacity development programmes can enable both content and learning to be defined and structured well. The focus of capacity building must be on knowledge development, skill development, learning and partnership. Capacity can be built in several innovative ways other than traditional training programmes, and can involve a range of

stakeholders and participants. The necessary institutional structures must be available to convert learning to outcomes. In this context, the panel noted the new initiatives for Capacity Development by the government such as the formation of the Capacity Building Commission to integrate all training in central government ministries.

Key Takeaways

- A monitoring and evaluation framework is necessary to gauge the effectiveness of capacity building programmes. It is important to carry forward learnings from capacity building programmes to future projects and programmes. The bridge between learning and practice must first be created and then sustained.
- In capacity building exercises, it is important to consider the institutional landscape, identify stakeholders whose capacity is to be built, estimate the required capacity, identify the enabling organisational and policy frameworks, and devise ways to strategise key interventions.
- Public participation and political will are important for the success of projects. When citizens identify projects that are the most important to them, they are most likely to succeed.

Session 7: Panel Discussion: Online and Blended Capacity Building Programmes

This session sought to explore the different ways in which the pandemic has affected the design and delivery of capacity development programmes, the impact on learning especially from the urban practitioner's perspective, the way forward for capacity building institutions in the post-pandemic situation, and the conceptualising and delivery of online capacity development programmes at scale by keeping the community in focus rather than the individual, and by democratising content for wider dissemination.

The panel began by discussing the rise of online learning post the pandemic and accompanying trends. The pandemic has been a game changer for the use of technology in learning in multiple ways. Online learning platforms have enabled institutions to put together material and reach people around the world at scale. The demand for online courses has spiked since the start of the pandemic and the number of people willing to pay for certificates has gone up. There has been a huge increase in demand for courses that helped people make sense of what was happening around the world, such as courses on public health, sustainable urban development, nature-based solutions, climate change, etc. As learners are more at ease with technology, they are willing to experiment with different formats. Shorter formats and

engaging videos are becoming more popular. Structured courses with time limits for completion are becoming harder to sustain.

While learners are taking advantage of already available courses online to build their capacities, knowledge-based courses can be made more successful if they are tailored for a specific requirement. Many universities augment their classroom programmes by using online material. Pedagogy and organisational learning systems have to catch up, and re-skill and re-train people as they move jobs, careers and locations. The panel noted that hybrid learning will thrive in the future and there needs to be a balance between face-to-face and on-screen engagement and/or learning.

The panel moved on to discuss online learning in the context of India's urban development. As urban India grows and new challenges emerge, there is a need to break the vicious cycle of resource wastage and data silos, and to leverage technology to support the development of cities. On the supply side, content needs to be aggregated and curated into courses of different durations that speak to multiple sectors. On the demand side, learning needs must be aggregated at the city level and mechanisms and processes should be created that can build networks, apply knowledge and leverage built capacity.

There is a need for capacity building to focus on the community and not just be directed to individuals, as each individual is part of a larger network. The panel felt that the problems in urban development are emerging at an increasing rate and our capacity to solve them needs to keep up. Often, the focus is on applying existing solutions rather than on clearly articulating the problem. The panel pointed out that the right solution to the wrong problem is still the wrong solution. The capacity of the community can be built when community learning is addressed in a 'many-to-many' and 'any-to-any' mode. Enabling interaction and dialogue and democratising content can facilitate favourable outcomes at the community level.

Key Takeaways

- Formats of traditional workshops / courses and site visits can never be replaced. Therefore, there is a need for more curated knowledge products. Hybrid formats will thrive and organisational learning systems have to adapt.
- Capacity building is a runtime activity that must constantly update and validate knowledge.
- Online formats allow aggregation of content and curation of courses of different durations that speak to multiple sectors addressing urban development in the Indian context.

- To address the emerging development challenges of urban India, there is a need to break the cycle of resource wastage and data silos, and leverage technology to support the development of cities.

Session 8: Closing Dialogue: Capacity Development and Leadership

This dialogue focused on improving the effectiveness of capacity development programmes to address gaps in leadership skills, the characteristics of leaders and the role of leadership in creating enabling conditions for institutions to use built capacities.

Capacity building is effective when it builds people's capacities and transfers learning to the workplace. Capacity building is a very diverse term, and refers to a range of interventions, different combinations of which cater to the different needs of diverse sets of learners. Currently, most of the content creation for training seems supply-led. There is a need to understand and link the supply to the actual training needs to address gaps. Emphasising that learning is a two-way process, the discussants stressed on the importance of learning from the grassroots first, and completely understanding the prevalent situation, before venturing to design any capacity development programme. An example of this is the *Shodh Yatra* that is a journey into the depths of rural India in an effort to understand people's lives, their unique circumstances, their struggles and their search for solutions.

On improving capacity building initiatives, the discussants felt that establishing a learning cycle with a two-way approach between the facilitator and the learner works best. The distance between the facilitator and the learner must be optimum for favourable learning outcomes. Experiential learning and individualised learning have emerged as important modes of administering learning programmes.

Focussing on the role of leadership and capacity development for leaders, the discussants agreed that in moulding leadership values in a person, attitudes and behaviour are very important aspects that play a central role in shaping the identity of individuals, and their behaviours and competencies. Agency and empathy are crucial to develop among leaders. Some of the important qualities of a good leader are the ability to frame a challenge, respect domain expertise, and allow for mistakes. The passion to address the problem, and the ability to mobilise a larger group to solve the problem distinguish leaders from others. They stressed the importance of leadership in using built capacities and the need to make institutions more fertile by expanding their mandate.

Key Takeaways

- Most of the content creation is supply-led. There is a need to understand and link the supply to the training needs, that will address capacity gaps.
- Learning should be a two-way process between facilitators and learners.
- Leadership plays an important role in enabling the right conditions for capacity development.
- Psychology shapes the identity of individuals, attitudes, behaviours and competencies and thus is central to the capacity development of leaders.