

What is Capacity WORKS

Capacity WORKS has proved a great success in German international cooperation, where it has achieved an excellent track record as a model for cooperation management. This has been the case regardless of the considerable differences between the various countries, cultures and sectors in which we work. Capacity WORKS was first developed in 2006 within the former GTZ, one of the predecessor organisations of today's GIZ. Following a two-year pilot phase in 2009 and 2010 we then introduced it as our management model for sustainable development. Today, Capacity WORKS is an integral part of all GIZ's key procedures from programme design, to implementation, to internal evaluation and reporting.

Capacity WORKS was originally developed for projects focusing on the capacity development of partner countries as understood in the context of technical cooperation. In this context, 'capacity' means the ability of people, organisations and societies to manage their own sustainable development processes and adapt to changing circumstances. This includes recognising obstacles to development, designing strategies to tackle them, and then successfully implementing these.

At GIZ this ability is often described as 'proactive management capacity'. This ability encompasses the political will, interests, knowledge, values and financial resources that the agents concerned need in order to achieve their own development goals. In other words, capacity development is about developing capacities of individuals, organisations and societies so that partner countries can articulate, negotiate and realise the processes of reform and development that they themselves envisage.

GIZ (and its predecessor organisations) possess more than 30 years of experience with this core competence. Today, alongside 'traditional' capacity development services more and more projects are emerging that reflect the needs and goals of other clients, and require new ways of approaching them. Examples of this include management and logistical services, advisory services for global partnerships and fund management. Regardless of the client or clients involved, all these services are subsumed under the term 'international cooperation'. The Capacity WORKS management model has always proved expedient in situations where cooperation systems arise. It supports users in managing the processes of negotiation and decision-making involving various actors, so that the desired objectives and results are achieved sustainably.

What's new?

The merger of GIZ's predecessor organisations DED, GTZ and Capacity Building International, Germany provided an opportunity to also make this cooperation expertise available to those parts of the company that had not been involved in developing it. At the same time, new experiences invariably teach us new lessons. As Capacity WORKS was gradually rolled out at GIZ, the ideas contained in the success factors were fine-tuned, and the contexts in which they are applied were broadened. These developments made it necessary to update the management model. This new version makes available the state of the art in cooperation management at GIZ.

Existing users will notice that this version of Capacity WORKS looks much more closely at the topic of objectives and results. The distinction drawn between cooperation systems and networks also adds an important and enriching dimension to the model. The new version describes with even greater clarity the management of cross-organisational strategy development. Learning and innovation processes are examined with a stronger focus on knowledge sharing. All these new developments are also reflected in the modified toolbox, which supports concrete managerial decision-making in cooperation systems. The toolbox contains both tried and tested tools, and new ones. It contains methodologies that are particularly relevant to the work of GIZ, but will also be useful to other organisations involved in professional cooperation management.

In other words, the time had come to update the Capacity WORKS manual. At the same time, other national and international organisations are becoming increasingly interested in this practical knowledge. Their interest is further boosted by the growing importance of cooperation in all areas of society. So GIZ is now making its expertise available to all interested readers. This version of Capacity WORKS will therefore not focus primarily on the specific context of international cooperation. We have set out to describe basic concepts and ideas in ways that are easy to understand so that they can be put to productive use in all kinds of cooperation systems, in all kinds of settings.



The 5 success factors of CW

Using Capacity WORKS

Capacity WORKS offers various angles from which to take a structured look at cooperation systems. This helps users to assess the status quo of an area of social concern, and on that basis identify realistic objectives and results for a project. The model is also used later on when the project is being managed and the strategy implemented.

In other words, Capacity WORKS keeps one eye on the area of social concern (the permanent cooperation system) and the other on the project (the temporary cooperation system). It combines the two in practical ways in order to prevent two risks: action for action's sake, which is the result of inadequate analysis, and paralysis, which is the result of excessive analysis, which saps people's courage and leaves them with no energy for actual activities.

The management model also plays an important role in monitoring results achieved. It supports monitoring in the project, reviews it, and helps users check whether a cooperation system is moving in the desired direction. So how can all these functions of the management model be used?

The systemic loop shown in the graphic explains how: In cases where a project is to be initiated in order to facilitate specific changes in a permanent cooperation system, a cyclical approach has proved beneficial. The first step involves gathering information. This is used to enable the participants to develop a shared and true picture of the permanent cooperation system. The five success factors provide helpful angles from which to approach this.

