

Capacity Building Experiences and Insights in Asia, Africa and the Pacific

Chris LUNNAY, Australia

Key words: Capacity building, sustainability, Lao PDR, Lao Land Titling Project, Pacific Nations, Lesotho, education, training.

SUMMARY

Developing countries need to be in a position to ensure that their land is; effectively and appropriately managed; can support the economic growth of the country; and that people's interests in their land is provided with an acceptable level of protection. This requires governments to have in place effectively operating land administration systems. Governments need to ensure they actively support the building of capacity in land administration. However land administration projects are often designed within organisations where major resource and capacity voids exist.

Capacity building activities are now seen as an integral component of the development of any land administration program. This has not always been the case. Through an analysis of past activities on land administration projects it is possible to gain an appreciation of where capacity building has failed and conversely what capacity building activities have been successful. This paper looks at examples and compares capacity building activities in Lao PDR (Asia), Lesotho (Africa) and the Pacific Nations.

Capacity Building Experiences and Insights in Asia, Africa and the Pacific

Chris LUNNAY, Australia

1. WHY BUILD CAPACITY IN LAND ADMINISTRATION?

Population growth, poverty reduction measures, urban expansion, increased pressure on agricultural land, decentralization of governance and concerns in relation to managing the environment have increased the pressure on land administration activities in developing countries. This has resulted in major public sector efforts to clarify or reform land ownership and use rights, strengthen the legislative basis of these rights and improve recording and conveyancing systems. Within the Pacific Nations these pressures have resulted in increased emphasis on the strengthening of rights over customary land. Land administration and land management institutions are thus being challenged to find ways to balance the often competing demands for their services and to support government initiatives.

Land administration activities generally have a high reliance on legislation, institutions, human resources and of more recent times technology. To develop long term support for land administration activities there has been a realization of the need to build a high level of capacity in order to ensure all of these activities are sustainable and that land is managed for the best interests of a nation as a whole. Developing countries have to react to the increasing development pressures and the pressures being placed on their limited land resources. In a number of developing countries the pressures on land is coming from external sources with developed countries looking at using valuable agricultural land in developing countries to supplement their agricultural output and to support their own economic development.

Developing countries need to be in a position to ensure that their land is; effectively and appropriately managed; can support the economic growth of the country; and that people's interests in their land is provided with an acceptable level of protection. This requires governments to have in place effectively operating land administration systems. Governments therefore need to ensure they actively support the building of capacity in land administration. However land administration projects are often designed within organisations where major resource and capacity voids exist.

What then are we referring too when we talk about building capacity? A definition from the UN defines capacity is as follows:

Capacity can be defined as the ability of individuals and organisations to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably.

Why is there a need to emphasise building of capacity? It is noticeable that, over the last 15 years, that there has been an increased emphasis on capacity building as an important modality in the implementation of land administration projects. This has been reinforced of recent times with the outcomes from the Paris Declaration and the Accra Action Agenda which have emphasised the need for country driven agendas and for a focus on in-country sustainability. The key aspects of capacity building are recognised as being:

- Institutional strengthening and strengthening of governance;
- Human resources development which includes training; and
- Education and building of knowledge

Worth noting at this point is the linkage between capacity and sustainability. Ultimately the aim of capacity building must be to achieve a level of operation such that when institutional reform and projects have been implemented and in cases where donors or multi-lateral financing is provided, that when they withdraw, organisations and strategic activities are able to operate in a sustainable manner within the government structure or private sector environment.

2. CAPACITY BUILDING EXPERIENCES

Capacity building of land administration agencies is invariably difficult and complex. Support required to undertake successful land administration reform is generally under estimated and the existing capacity of organisations is also under estimated. Fortunately land administration projects are looked at as being long term initiatives and this provides an excellent opportunity for projects to focus on capacity building and to build government land administration organisations that are able to support sustainable land administration functions well into the future.

Experience has shown that in developing countries, whether they are in South East Asia, Africa or Pacific Nation, the issues associated with building capacity are similar, although the level of emphasis may vary with some countries being further developed in some areas or with a capacity to support some capacity building activities.

In keeping with the topic of the presentation I will look at comparing land administration agencies in Lao PDR, Lesotho and the Pacific Nations in general. Recognising that the Pacific Nations are geographically spread and situations vary from country to country I will make some generalisations in relation to the Pacific Nations.

2.1 Institutional Strengthening

Generally land administration institutions in developing countries lack the capacity to implement policies, develop plans and to implement reforms necessary to ensure strong and effective governance and management. Capacity building at the institutional level must look closely at enabling good governance and institutional strengthening and the development of supporting mechanisms. The involvement of the private sector needs to also be realised and supported by similar capacity building programs. There is also a need to look at key support and social development initiatives, which are usually strongly supported by donors through their safeguard initiatives, such as gender equity and protection of vulnerable groups. Sustainability of these elements typically requires a strong mandate, commitment and good management from the lead implementing land administration agency.

Lao PDR: In Lao PDR the land administration activities were developed from a very low base and from a very small organisation of 11 staff. As the land administration activities

expanded to an organisation of more than 1,000 people (including those involved with systematic registration) and covered 17 provinces there was a need for the Department of Lands to progressively modify organisational structures. The agency faced difficult times in adapting to this rapid expansion and capacity development faced many challenges. Just at a point where there was a general feeling that progress was being made in building an acceptable level of capacity a decision was made by the government to undertake a major restructuring of land related functions. The creation of a National Land Management Authority created major restructuring and management issues and proceeded to highlight the fragility of capacity building.

Lesotho: The existing land administration structure faces many challenges with large backlogs of lease approvals, poor procedures, management issues and ineffective organisational arrangements. The government has supported the creation of a new Land Administration Authority that will be focused on service delivery and cost recovery of services. Given the current capacity of the current agency there will be many challenges ahead. Capacity building although recognised as an issue to be grappled with by management, a clear policy and approach to capacity building has yet to be developed.

Pacific Nations: Most Pacific Nations have limited capacity in their land administration authorities. The AusAID funded Pacific Land program is aimed at supporting land administration initiatives in various Pacific countries, including capacity building and supporting customary land initiatives. Pacific Nations invariably face problems with capacity building and supporting land administration activities and these include:

- Limited staff numbers – e.g. Vanuatu Department of Lands has an approved structure of 65 staff but have only 23 positions filled;
- Low level of support for training;
- Limited opportunities for personal development through tertiary education;
- Unclear approaches to addressing customary land issues
- Increasing external pressures to support regulated land administration procedures.

2.2 Human Resource Development

The development of the human resources necessary to maintain the land administration is critical. To strengthen capacity to record, maintain and deliver land administration services requires short term training approaches for introducing new systems and technology, as well as longer term education opportunities to ensure there is a stream of skilled personnel to maintain the system.

Training needs to be continuous and past training should be followed up with refresher training or training reviews to ensure the new skills or theories learnt are being applied in the workplace correctly and have improved processes or performance. This is expressly relevant where new technology is being introduced such as GPS or computer based applications. Who benefits from the training is important. While managerial training is very important, capacity building opportunities should not only be received by higher ranked officials as up-skilling and information dissemination has to get to operational staff.

Lao PDR: As previously highlighted the Department of Lands in Lao underwent a dramatic expansion over a short time period. Human resource development was a strategic issue however its significance in building sustainability into the organisation was underestimated by the government. There was a reluctance to spend money on training of management and technical staff as it was seen as not being the best use of funds. Strangely, training was strongly supported for field staff. Some management training was undertaken but this was not at the intensity required to support long term sustainability. Towards the end of the project as the interest in computerisation of land administration activities increased the importance of training became more obvious and funds were made available from some of the more basic training programs that assisted in building capacity within the lower levels of the organisation.

Lesotho: Within the current organisation there has been limited focus on staff training and capacity building. Management have not seen it as a priority and funding for training is difficult to obtain. Unfortunately project activities in Lesotho have not focused on capacity building of land administration staff. Much training will be required as the new Land Administration Authority is created. Time will tell as to whether the government realises the importance of training as an integral component of the creation of a new agency.

Pacific Nations: Pacific Nations face unique situations in relation to human resource development and its support for capacity building. Their isolation, small population base and cost involved in travel make it difficult for land administration staff to undertake training and to maintain currency in relation to management and technology. This applies not only to government staff but also the private sector.

There is a need for Pacific Nations to look at some innovative ways of providing an appropriate training regime. There has been a realisation amongst the Pacific Nations that land practitioners need ongoing support and a Pacific Islands Land Professionals Association (PILPA) has been formed with the aim of assisting land practitioners with training and professional development. A Pacific Islands Planners Association (PIPA) has also been formed with a similar goal.

2.3 Education and Building Knowledge

Donor programs to assist developing countries to improve their land administration and tenure systems often include education and training components to build the capacity and skills of professionals and officials in the those countries. The education and training may involve supporting students while they study at institutions in the donor country or, where courses are available, in the recipient country. Evidence suggests that building the capacity of institutions in developing countries to educate their own students can lead to more sustainable results in the longer term.

The capacity to develop tertiary institutions to support the long term capacity building in land administration is varied. Long term and large financial commitments to establishing education institutions for land administration, cadastral surveying and computer training is encouraged

by donors as it shows the government's commitment to developing a sustainable industry base.

However as a consequence of capacity building at the individual level often problems of staff retention arise. Long term educational opportunities are attractive for staff, especially where higher educational opportunities to study abroad are offered.

Lao PDR: The Lao Land Titling Project was very successful in building capacity in tertiary education. The model of education support for the project was based on a model of building capacity and sustainability in the education system to support land administration activities in Laos. The project developed an In-Country Course in Surveying and Land Administration which focused on developing lecturer capacity, curriculum development and program delivery. It has proved to be very successful and the initial high diploma course has now been developed into a Degree in Surveying and Land Administration and is now implemented without external support. It is worth noting that one of the keys to the success of this capacity building exercise was the strong ownership role of the program by the head of the Polytechnic School. He owned the initiative and drove it all the way.

Lesotho: There is limited support for tertiary education in land administration. A number of land administration modules are provided as part of engineering related courses but there is no course in land administration provided in country. Suitable land administration courses are available in South Africa. Lesotho faces issues similar to those being faced by Pacific Nations, including small population, the option of obtaining an education outside of the country and following the gaining of a qualification there are limited incentives to return home. Lesotho is going to encounter difficulties in building an appropriate level of capacity in the proposed Land Administration Authority, especially in relation to technological development and ongoing development of new land administration systems.

Pacific Nations: The dispersed geographic nature of Pacific Nations means that each country faces its own unique problems in relation to education and building knowledge. Most Pacific island countries have little if any capacity of their own to train and educate land professionals. Tertiary education in the required fields is available in the region at the University of the South Pacific, based in Fiji, and at the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea. These institutions have difficulty meeting the education and training needs in land-related areas for their host countries, let alone for the region. However these organisations are pivotal if an acceptable level of capacity in land administration in the Pacific region is to be achieved.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING INSIGHTS

The above overview highlight the importance of capacity building and sustainability to considered up front and centre as strategic outcomes from any support that is provided to land administration agencies. There must be a realisation that donor support lasts for only a limited period of time and that it is during this period that land administration agencies must move towards achieving sustainability.

The following table provides an overview of the insights in relation to capacity building from Lao PDR, Lesotho and the Pacific Nations.

	Lao PDR	Lesotho	Pacific Nations
Institutional strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution built from a small department to a large decentralised organisation • Long term focus • Difficulties in supporting expansion • Decision to build a larger land management agency identified capacity building issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing capacity is limited • Focus on the creation of a self funding Land Administration Authority (LAA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally weak agencies • Limited capacity to support land administration functions • Future focus will be on developing sustainable organisations
Human Resource Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term focus on building capacity • Reluctance to invest in development and training of human resources • Limited focus on training in technology means that development of technological solutions is difficult • No private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term focus on building capacity • Reluctance to acknowledge limited capacity of staff • Very limited private sector capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most nations have limited capacity • Small pool of qualified practitioners • Issues of government funding and staffing • Difficulties in implementing training and technology • Small private sector capacity • PILPA and PIPA
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity built over a period of 8 years • Degree in Surveying and Land Administration (viewed as a model for developing countries) • A very successful capacity building activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No educational focus on land administration • Limited capacity to develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Technology (PNG) • University of PNG • University of South Pacific – provides distance learning • How to provide cost effective education in land administration for all Pacific Nations?

The strategies for sustainable capacity building should include:

- Ensure a sustainable capacity building strategy is considered in all design components, particularly where new systems and technologies are introduced;
- Use refresher training and training reviews to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of training and newly applied systems or technology;
- Use of Training of Trainer courses to improve leadership and develop training base;
- Ensure that technological solutions are sustainable and do not require ongoing external support; and
- Ensure institutional educational facilities are accessible, and if not that alternative approaches to education are developed.

REFERENCES

- Childress, M., 2002, *Capacity Building for Land Administration in East Asia: Seeking Effective Approaches for the 21st Century*. FAO of the United Nations.
- Lunnay, C., 2005, *Land Administration in the Asian Region-Challenges and Opportunities*, Expert Group Meeting on secure land tenure: 'new legal frameworks and tools' UNESCAP- in Bangkok, Thailand, 8-9 December 2005
- Lunnay, C., 2008, *Training and Educating Land Professionals; the Value of Institutional Partnerships*, Making land Work, AusAID
- LLTP Technical Assistance (TA) Report E10, 1998 "Final Report On Surveying Education Strategy and Draft Course Curriculum".
- LLTP Technical Assistance (TA) Report F2, 2001, *Strengthening Education and Surveying in Lao PDR Curriculum Development Report*.
- Virachit, V and Lunnay, C., 2005, *The Lao Land Titling Project – Innovative Land Tools in Lao PDR*, Expert Group Meeting on secure land tenure: 'new legal frameworks and tools' UNESCAP- in Bangkok, Thailand, 8-9 December 2005

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Chris Lunnay is Director, International Projects in the consulting company Land Equity International. He has been Team Leader on large land administration projects including the Indonesian Land Administration Project and the Lao Land Titling Project. Since 2006 he has been actively involved in land administration activities in the Pacific.

CONTACT

Chris Lunnay
Land Equity International
PO Box 798, Wollongong, NSW
AUSTRALIA 2520
Tel. + 61 2 4227 6680
Fax. + 61 2 4228 9944
Email: clunnay@landequity.com.au
Web site: www.landequity.com.au