

Institution Building and Capacity Development

Cases for Reflection and Cross-
fertilization: revisiting the establishment
of a training centre in Egypt.

Seminar

Establishing the Urban Management Centre at the Institute of
Management in Kerala, India

15 October 2020X

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1. Preamble

This paper is prepared for the Webinar on Setting up an Urban Management Centre at the Institute of Management in Government, Kerala, India, organized by the Institute of Management in Government (IMG), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala and the Sustainable Urban Development-Smart Cities Project, GIZ, India. The event took place 15-16 October 2020.

The paper depicts the content of the presentation held by Claudio Acioly, and delivered on the 16/10, under the technical session III focusing on 'Setting Up an Urban Management Centre – International Cases.

Upon request of the organizers of the conference, the presentation and present paper focus on the author's experience in setting up training and capacity building centres, and in particular on the case of Egypt, and draws also on his experience as head of capacity building and training of UN-Habitat during the period 2012-2019.

In a nutshell, the presentation unfolds the experience with the Training and Research in Housing and Urban Development Project (TRHUD Project). This was a development cooperation initiative between the Housing and Building Research Centre (HBRC) of the Ministry of Housing, Public Utilities and New Urban Communities of the Government of Egypt, and the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), under the framework of the development cooperation between the Governments of the Netherlands and Egypt. The project was implemented from 1998 to 2005.

As senior staff of IHS during the period 1993-2008, the author worked as Team Leader and programme manager and training advisor of the project based in Cairo, Egypt. The 8 year project led to the establishment of the Urban Training Institute in Egypt (UTI) as a special unit of HBRC under the statutory legislation that regulates university and research centres, which exists to date. The goal of the project and thereafter of UTI was to develop and offer training and capacity building services suitable to urban and housing practitioners and policy makers, NGOs and academicians as well as cadre from private sector institutions in Egypt. It also had a regional ambition.

The development process that led to the establishment of UTI comprised of applied research and case studies development to support the content of the training programme, the in-house training of Egyptian staff of HBRC and short courses in the Netherlands (at IHS and ITC, the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation). Strengthening the capacity of the Egyptian staff of HBRC was part and parcel of the initiative. This resulted in the creation of a core group of 20 staff in charge of different thematic areas in addition to management and administration.

The development of the training content, structure and training methodologies were the result of collaboration between a selected group of staff of HBRC assigned to different thematic areas and IHS staff who specialized on these areas. These evolved into self-initiatives and developments autonomously carried out by the Egyptian staff, and responsibilities gradually being delegated and finally transferred to the Egyptians leading the project and the thematic areas.

Priority areas were selected as a result of training needs assessments and policy reviews of the that identified priorities and problem areas targeted by the government of Egypt in the urban sector. These resulted into the selection of urban environmental management and planning, solid waste management and environmental impact assessment (EIA), land management, housing and slum upgrading, urban management and planning, infrastructure development and finance, GIS and Urban Planning. Full training companions were developed on most of these areas comprising of the

course programme, syllabus, training and session outlines, ppt presentations, case studies, simulation exercises, bibliography and a significant amount of materials translated to Arabic.

The eight year of programme implementation delivered more than 65 training courses and resulted in more than 2,000 people trained from government, private, academic and non-government organizations, offering a unique opportunity to HBRC staff to strengthen their capacity and grow professionally. External evaluation at the end of the programme revealed institutional performance related improvements and individual performance related improvements as result of the training provided by the TRHUD project. This was noticeable on those related to the environmental management, solid waste management and EAI.

This experience revealed that both capacity building and institution building face serious challenges to retain talent and competent staff in order to remain relevant and be able to consolidate itself as centre of excellence. The source of revenue and the ability to remain competitive in the market of training and capacity building and attract new contracts are also critical challenges revealed by the Egyptian experience. All these impact on the continuity and long-term existence of training centres and their relevance.

2. Capacity Building: more than just training

Capacity building for better cities and sustainable urbanization is defined as a change process in an urban setting through which individuals and institutions engage in a set of learning activities, whereby they develop and acquire knowledge, skills, know-how, methods and tools that strengthen their ability to effectively intervene, transform and improve themselves and the environment in which they operate¹. It entails a multiplicity of activities and processes ultimately aiming at the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of policies, projects, programmes, processes, decisions, institutional responses and their outcomes. It involves the strengthening of institutions to fulfil its mission and intrinsic roles and responsibilities in policy, planning, management, implementation, etc.

It is a people's centred activity, knowledge-based and practical oriented through which skills, competencies and abilities are learned, strengthened and further developed to respond to and trigger development change. To be successful, it must be evidence-based and problem-solving oriented. In other words, closely associated to the reality of cities and its inhabitants, with a great sense of reality and objectively defined problems and challenges and the institutions associated to them and the possible ways to surpass them .

In terms of principles and approaches, capacity building focuses on people, institutions and cities and comprise of development of tools, knowledge, skills and training drawn from research and practice that help to trigger the development of smart solutions.

The delivery of transformative and impactful capacity building and training services require a solid organizational and institutional structure capable to provide administrative and management services support to a core group of professional staff who are trained in a variety of thematic areas consonant with the mission of the institution and trained in adult learning methods and pedagogy. The models vary. At one end, an institution with all in-house staff capacity who is in charge of the entire capacity building cycle, and on the other end a neat and clean institution comprised of an essential core group of staff who manage most of the services that are outsourced and delivered by others.

¹ UN-Habitat (2019). Capacity Building Strategy 2020-2030. Zero Draft. October 2019

Principles and Approaches

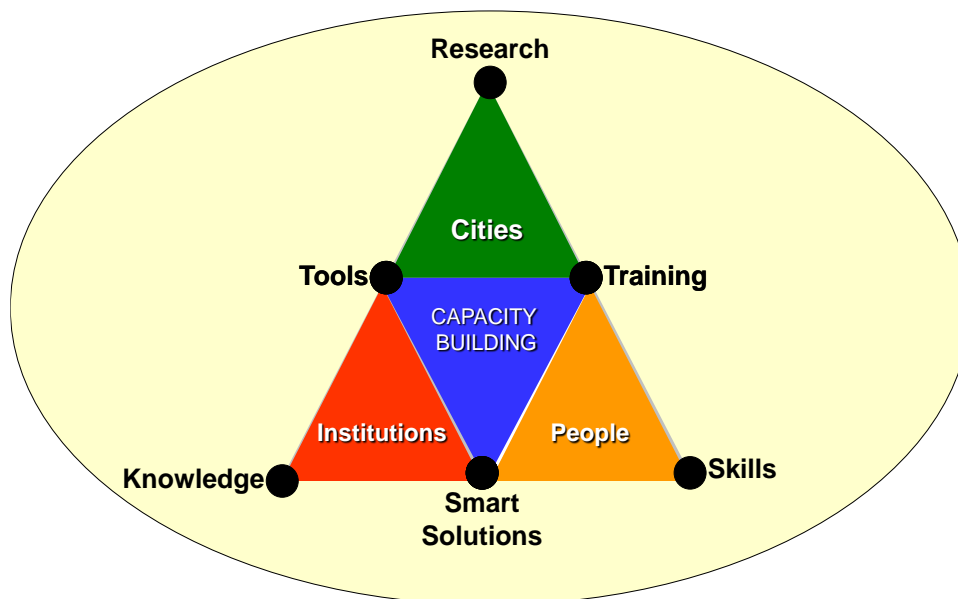


Figure 1: Capacity Building Framework

3. Developing Capacities in Egypt

Throughout the 80's and 90's the Netherlands Fellowship Programme sponsored a significant number of Egyptians to follow specialized short courses at the IHS and other international education institutes in The Netherlands. The Egyptian government had manifested its interest to strengthen the capacity of mid-career and senior managers of central and local governments. Quite a number of them came from the housing and urban development sector and many of whom were associated with the Housing and Building Research Centre (HBRC) and the General Organization of Physical Planning (GOPP), both institutions being part of the Ministry of Housing, Public Utilities and New Urban Communities. Upon return to Egypt these alumni started to articulate the need to strengthen the capacity of staff in a more systematic and long-term basis through institutional development projects, specialized courses, applied research that could broaden their competencies and achieve greater exposure to international cases and practices.

In 1995, an inception and project formulation mission took place and the Training and Research in Housing and Urban Development Project (TRHUD) was born. The development cooperation agreement between the Netherlands Government and the Government of Egypt set in motion an institution building and capacity building project hosted at the HBRC, and setting up the cooperation between HBRC and the IHS during a first phase of 4 years. The project budget provided for fellowships to study at IHS, the purchase of equipment and furnishing completely two big classrooms and offices for the professional and administrative staff, computers, projectors, training support materials and a specialized library, and also the overhead costs for staff assigned to the project on a secondment basis. The project was placed in a full floor in a new building recently finished in the HBRC premises. Upon successful completion of its first phase, the Netherlands government decided to award a second phase of four years now with a goal to establish a specialized training institution

and involve other Dutch international training institution. A partnership with between IHS and ITC² was set up with a goal to expand the portfolio of courses and focus areas of the programme towards monitoring and planning supported by GIS-Geographical Information Systems. As a result, a GIS lab was also created during the second phase of the TRHUD Programme.

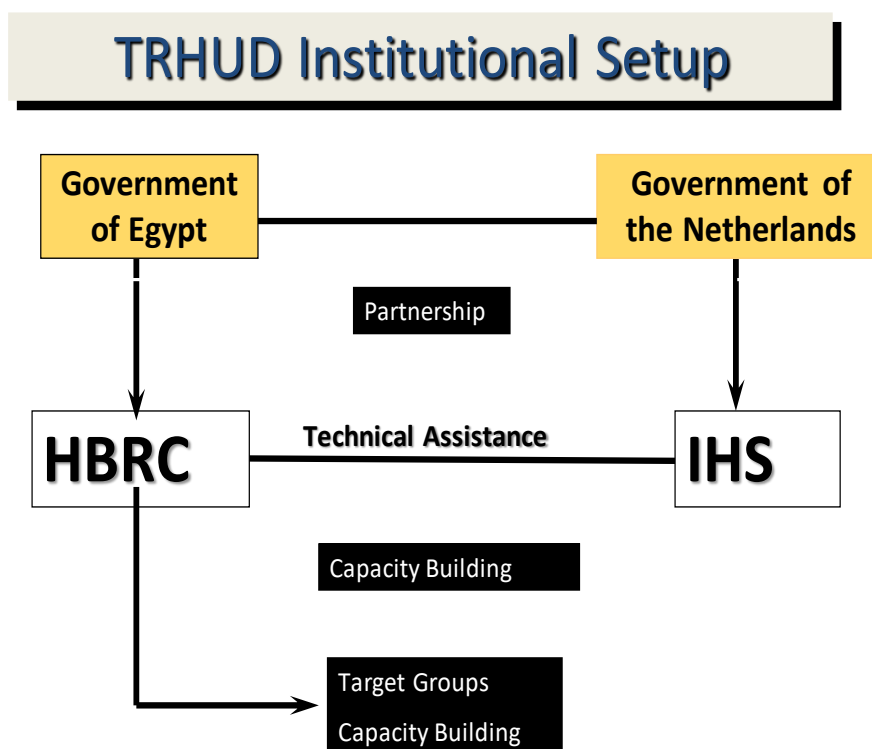


Figure 2: The Setting of Development Cooperation

The goal of the TRHUD project was to support the policies of the Egyptian Government through the strengthening of the capacity of local and national government institutions responsible for housing and urban development projects and programmes. That would be achieved through the implementation of training and human resources development activities that would strengthen the skills, knowledge and competencies of government officials, senior policy makers and the technical cadre in charge of housing and urban development. It also considered central government agencies, governorates as well as their partners in the public, private, academic and non-government sectors as potential target group of this initiative. The project also aimed at strengthening the capabilities of HBRC and its staff to design, plan and deliver targeted, innovative and problem-solving training in housing and urban development related areas. The project would also provide for a spring board to offer training at the regional level and attract participants from the Arabic speaking countries, offering an opportunity for HBRC to gain leadership in the regional stage. “The focus of technical assistance, provided by IHS to HBRC, is to build capacity of HBRC to provide urban management

² IHS-Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies and ITC- the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation are two of the five Dutch International Education Institutes, established in the immediate post-world war II period to advance solutions for the post war Netherlands which were expanded to other countries through international education and programmes at post-graduation level. As per decisions of the Dutch Parliament in the beginning of the 2000’s, these institutes merged with and became part of major Dutch universities.

training not only to local governments but also to urban professional entities. The approach is to design training programs that are responsive both to the needs expressed by departments of the government and demand of the market”³.

4. Setting up the Project: the training needs and capacity building strategy

From the outset it was essential to define the training needs through training needs assessment (TNA) activities that could identify knowledge gaps and performance shortcomings both at domains of the target groups (externally) and the domains of HBRC (internally). This exercise was also part of an effort to identify staff from HBRC and unfold the areas of development that would need to be strengthened in their profile so that they would be assigned to course development. The TNA was also meant to map the knowledge and skills gaps that existed in the broad context of target groups and their respective institutions. The latter proved to be more difficult given the limitations in marketing and outreach of the project during its earlier stage.

Interviews with key experts, visits to institutions, the analysis of policy documents of the government, brainstorming sessions with HBRC staff, conversations with leading experts, visits to universities and training institutions, and governorates, as well as the review of literature on Egypt’s housing and urban development were all part and parcel of this deep dive into the training needs of the potential target groups of the project. But it had become clear that it would be necessary to fine tune the findings of this exercise before the priority areas for course development and research would get started. In the meantime, researchers from HBRC were requested to elaborate a research agenda that could lead to development of case studies, generate knowledge and a breadth of knowledge of key Egyptian experiences within the domains of housing and urban development.

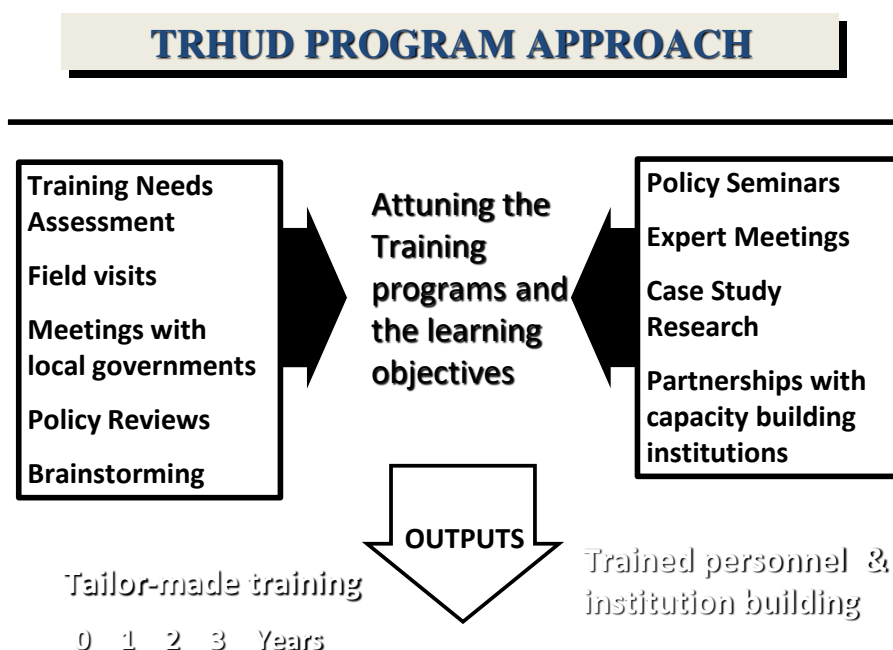


Figure 3: The Development Approach of the Project

In a nutshell, the research was meant to broaden the knowledge and provide training support materials drawn from real cases and evidences. These were divided in three modalities:

³ Progress Report Number 10, TRHUD Project, Project Number EG 007801 (Jan-Jun 2000)

1. **Case Study Research** aiming at best practices, documentation and unfolding the genesis of the experiences (what and how, when and by whom, how much and which impact and result). This would feed directly the courses in the form of case study sessions and be the source of training support materials as well as the foundation for in-class simulation exercises.
2. **Applied Research**, focusing on an ongoing project and initiative under implementation by government, private or international organizations. This would bring knowledge and skills to project staff and inspire project preparations. The idea of learning by doing.
3. **Academic Research** aiming at theory development and/or testing formulated assumptions, related to professional ambitions and research projects of HBRC staff pursuing their master or PhD studies. The outcome would feed into the development hypothesis to be presented in parts of the courses and/or related to training sessions.

5. An action oriented training and market assessment

Orientation workshops were designed and implemented, led by the IHS resident staff in collaboration with HBRC staff as a way to fast track course development and overcome the institutional inertia of HBRC. The inertia had to do with unresolved financial arrangements to award remuneration of HBRC staff assigned to work on the project, their level of responsibilities and saying in the project management and directions, and the norms of cultural behaviour differentiating staff by hierarchy and status which influenced the sense of responsibility and ownership of the project amongst the more senior staff of HBRC. This was not congruent with the culture of organization of IHS and the Netherlands tradition in development cooperation. The project had reached a nearly stalemate due to these issues coupled with a reluctant leadership on both sides. The inception phase disclosed the challenges of the practice of development cooperation. Actions taken by the management of HBRC proved vital to turn around the environment of project implementation with the nomination of young leadership willing to take calculated risks, more tuned with international development and willing to advance the transformative agenda of the project.

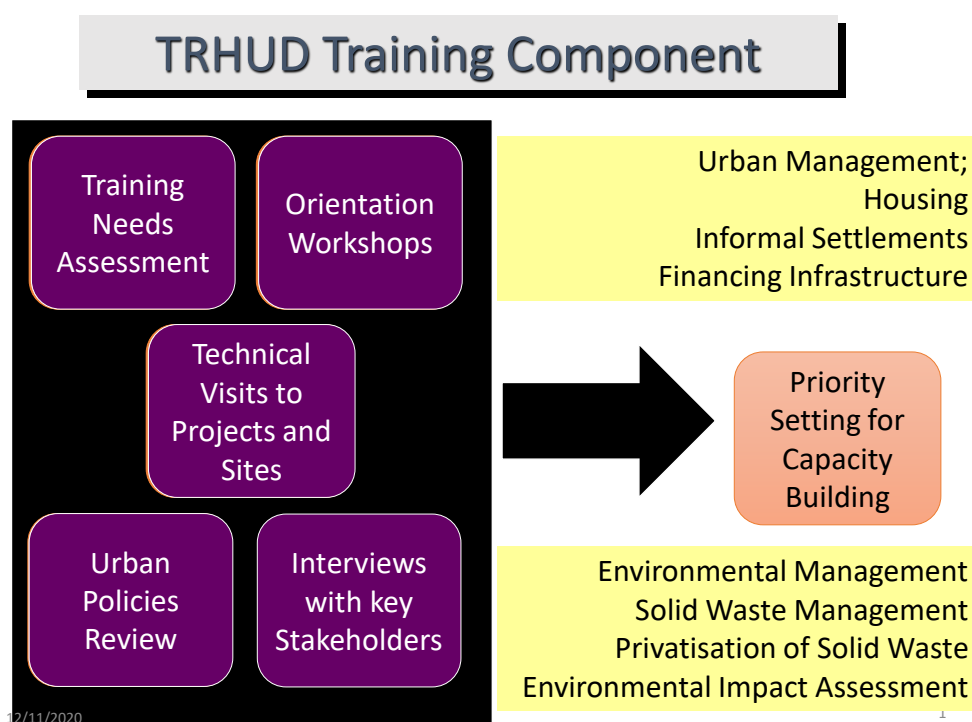


Figure 4: The Framework for Training Development

The orientation workshops were also meant to ingrain confidence and experience in working together (IHS staff-HBRC staff) in course development and delivery in an experimental manner, bringing the value added of IHS experience in professional training in different cultural contexts. But most important feature of the orientation workshop strategy was the exploration of the demand for training in the broad Egyptian market and institutional environment.

From the demand side of training, the orientation workshops provided an opportunity to extract information essential for the content of the future training programmes directly from a group of competitively selected group of experts and professionals invited to these workshops. The workshops actually functioned as an active and unique training needs assessment that fed into the development of the future courses.

From the point of view of the supply of training, the experimental character of the orientation workshops gave opportunity to bring to the forefront some of the innovative aspects of training and education provided by IHS in the Netherlands and other developing countries such as Peru, Indonesia, Romania, India, Brazil and Colombia in areas like community-based action planning, urban management, urban environmental management and planning, citywide slum upgrading. The orientation workshops actually provided a platform for IHS and HBRC to market the THRUD Project and its products.

Next to the orientation workshops and in-class training needs assessment, reviews of policy documents, interviews and brainstorming sessions with HBRC staff, visits and working meetings with projects and organizations involved in urban development programmes and interviews with key stakeholders provided sufficient information to set priorities. These confirmed the findings of the inception missions and the priorities identified in the project document. Priorities were set on: informal settlements, housing, urban management and local government planning and management, infrastructure development and finance, solid waste management and environmental impact assessment.

6. Incremental Training Development Strategy: orientation workshops

The orientation workshops were part and parcel of the incremental training development strategy that enabled the project to fast track course development and define the curriculum as well as training methodology suitable to an Egyptian context.

These were 5 days workshops with 3 hours of training per day comprised of two sessions of 1.5 hour with an interval of 30 minutes, taking place during the mornings, combining practical concepts and its policy and project implications with references to international case studies from developing as well as developed countries. Each session were clearly outlined, bibliographic references made, PowerPoint presentations, video's and very interactive sessions to extract the maximum of the participants' experiences, views and ideas. These were intensive and interactive workshops of 15 hours class with a certificate of attendance to those who attended 100%. All participants attended all training sessions.

The preparation of the orientation workshops put into motion a marketing strategy basically using faxes and printed materials delivered to the selected institutions/invited participants. The secretariat followed up on the correspondences to ensure firm confirmation of their participation. The response was beyond expectation and a selective group of professionals attended these workshops from international and national organizations, all engaged hands-on on problems of informal settlements, infrastructure, local governance, planning and finance.

The curriculum and session design triggered the production of a lot of training support materials that proved very useful in the future courses. Many experimentations took place in pedagogic as well as methodological terms. The topic and the type of training were tested and because the training was very interactive and making use of participants' experience, their feedback proved to be extremely useful for finetuning the future training. As we got acquainted with the challenges faced by Egyptian cities, the more focused the training response started to become.

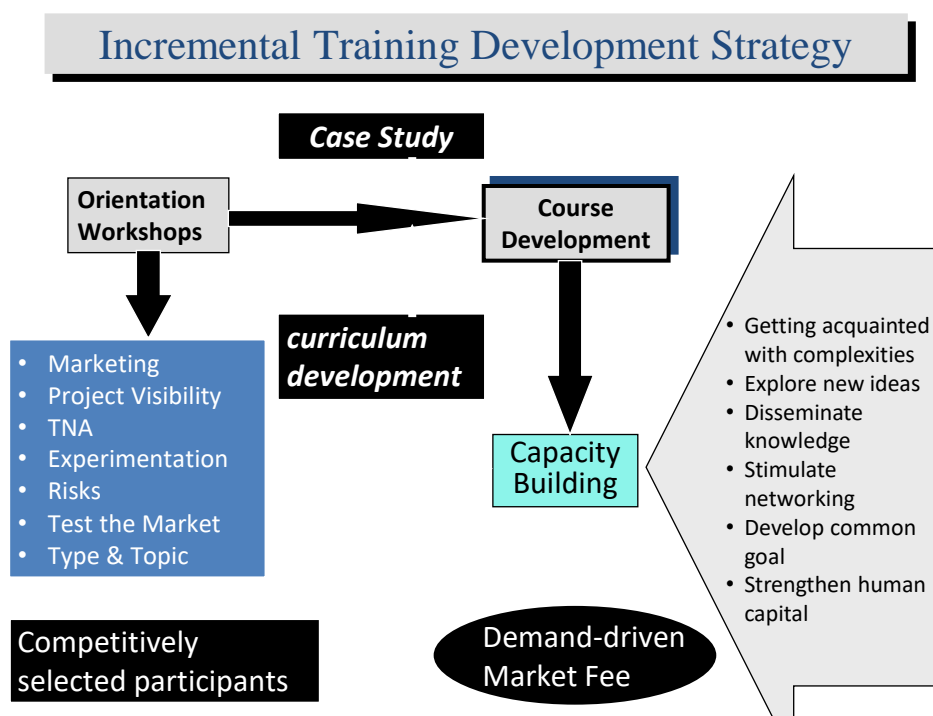


Figure 5: The Orientation Workshops Unfolded

7. Urban challenges and problems focused by training

In a nutshell, the urban challenges faced by Egyptian cities at the end of the 1990's revealed a rapid rate of urbanization and urban expansion mostly informal, led on the one hand by a vibrant informal land and housing market and on the other by the new towns development on desert land led by the Government. Half of the population was already living in cities and these were facing an increasing deterioration of the quality of air and the overall urban environment and quality of life due to traffic pollution, conflicting land use and inadequate solid waste management, coupled with weak capacities of local governments to manage their increasing responsibilities in city management and planning and to respond adequately to decentralisation and devolution policies adopted by the national government.

Heavy penalties from the adoption of Martial Law on illegal construction over agricultural land did not stop Illegal land subdivision of privately owned agricultural land which gained spectacular scale and speed, demonstrating the vibrancy of informal urbanization. Multi-story buildings reaching 7 floors, illegally built on agricultural land informally converted into urban use, generating densely occupied neighbourhoods. The lack of public space, services and basic infrastructure made the situation critical for the population. Local governments and district level of governance were not able to anticipate and prevent this to happen at such a speed and scale.

This informal housing supply was fuelled by the scarcity of affordable housing options, in part made it worsened by the rent control act. This created an artificial housing shortage, high price of housing and rent because a sizeable housing stock remained closed and unused by property owners who had little incentives to place them in the open rental market. Informal rental arrangements increased and illegal rooftop developments, sub-rent and informal housing increased. Low income families were compelled to seek housing accommodation in the informal settlements, in the alternative rental market that emerged materializing a vicious cycle pervasive for Egypt's sustainable urbanization. This has had adverse impact on the housing stock that showed signs of poor maintenance and physical deterioration since property owners had no incentive to maintain their rented properties subject to rent control.

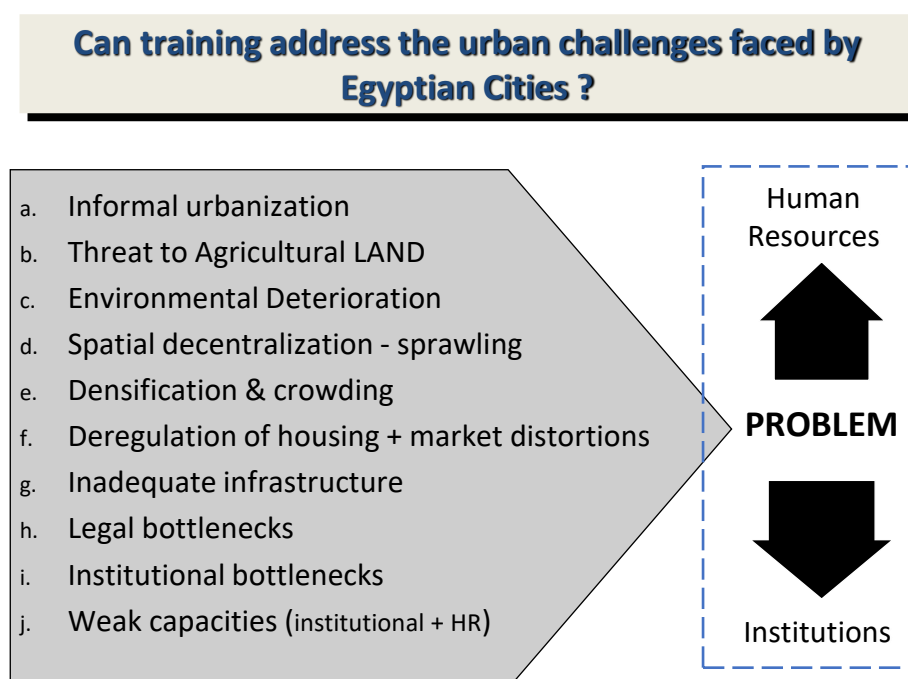


Figure 6: The Challenges of Urbanization in Egypt

The government remained focused on promoting strategies of deconcentrating population and economic activities from Greater Cairo region towards new towns on desert land that remained semi-occupied. A lot of distortions in the housing sector and pressure on land prices were becoming visible as house price-to-income ratio increased and excluded more people from accessing adequate housing. Government programmes were not able to meet the increasing demand for affordable housing. From the housing policy perspective, the informal housing stock owned by the poor in Egypt represented a large proportion of urban assets. An estimate of Egyptian real estate indicated that 92 percent of dwellings in the urban sector and 87 percent of the holdings in the rural sector are informal. This translated into over US \$ 240 billion in assets that are not inserted into the formal housing markets. This was the result of a study carried by the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD) led by Hernando De Soto.

Infrastructure provision relied on heavy state investment. The government promoted legislation and embarked into a number of public private partnership arrangements with BOT and BOOT⁴ becoming very popular in large scale water and sewerage but also energy projects. Solid waste management

⁴ BOT-Build Operate and Transfer, BOOT-Build Own Operate and Transfer.

was also subject to privatization which revealed a clear conflict with the sizeable informal garbage collection system carried out by the community of garbage pickers (Zabaleen) which responded to 1/3 of the garbage collection in Greater Cairo Region. These services represented a significant economy associated with the recycling industry. It goes without saying that this practice caused a lot impact on health of people and on the quality of the urban environment.

In the environment sector, there were a lot of novel initiatives taken by the national government with the enactment of the 1994 Law no. 4 restructuring the EEAA-Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency and transforming it as the executive arm of the Ministry of Environment that was established in 1997. Thus 5 years after the adoption of the Agenda 21 during the 2nd Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The mission of the EEAA and the establishment of environmental units in every governorate provided an opportunity for the project to respond through training and capacity building to equip the governorates and EEAA with the necessary skills and competence to implement its statutory mission.



Figure 7; Informal land occupation of agricultural land in the periphery of Giza, Egypt

The TRHUD Project had mapped the critical issues and launched a process to design and implement training and capacity building focusing on developing an in-depth understanding of the underlying causes of these challenges and the design of alternatives that draw on international experiences, case studies and project experiences in Egypt. Applied research helped to collect evidences, document experiences and build knowledge, skills, lessons learned that were systematized into training sessions and background training materials.

Tackling these problems through training and capacity building had to consider equally the development of human resources thus focusing on knowledge, skills, know-how and competencies as well as on institutional development issues that take into account institutional capacity building and institutional related performance issues.

8. Training and Course Development

The development of the courses and training programmes comprised of multiple activities around the close cooperation between IHS and HBRC staff within their areas of expertise. In case the expertise was not sufficiently developed in HBRC, selected staff were sent to training at IHS and occasionally elsewhere. During this overseas training, HBRC staff gained knowledge and developed their skills in the specific priority areas of the project and took the opportunity to work together with the IHS staff in the design of the course while being abroad. In addition to that, Training of Trainers Workshops were conducted in Cairo (one week) and The Netherlands (one-month).

Upon return to Egypt, the HBRC staff were assigned as course coordinator(s) and given the task to develop and deliver the specific course. A rule of thumb was to assign two staff to work as coordinators of each course, enriching the cross-fertilization amongst them, spreading and mainstreaming capacities on the specific subjects within HBRC core staff assigned to work in the project.

Staff and Course Development

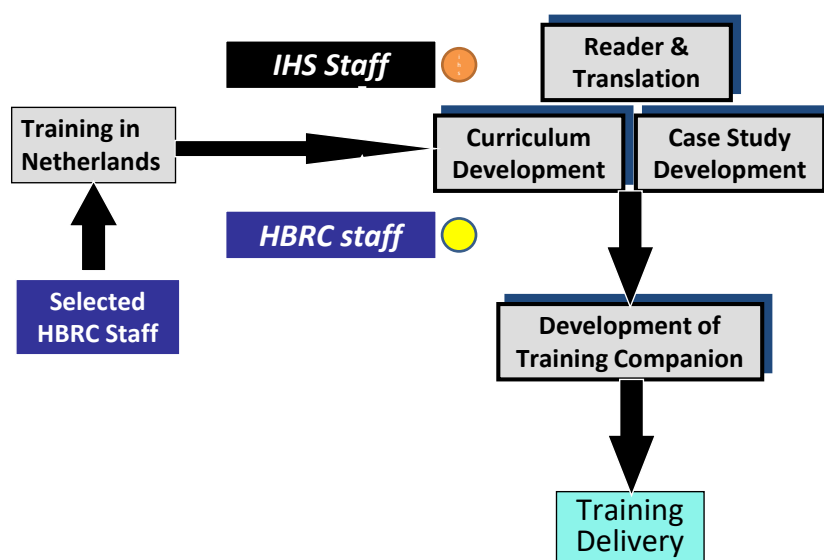


Figure 8: Course Development

The curriculum needed to address the fundamentals (knowledge of the subject area, theoretical and conceptual references that are useful for policy making and implementation), the operationalisation of the knowledge and translation into skills and abilities/proficiencies and be sustained by examples (case studies, simulation exercises) and specific literature. As product of this development process involving the close cooperation and exchange between HBRC and IHS staff, one can identify the following:

- Course outline (problem analysis, goals and methods to reach results of training);
- Session outline (detailed outline of the content of each session, learning objectives, background references and expected results of each session).
- Compulsory reading and mandatory reading
- Practical exercise (simulation exercises, learning by doing, applying a particular tool)
- Complete training companion with trainers' notes, detailed course and session outlines, and all background materials;
- Reader (a compilation of articles, cases, chapters of books translated into Arabic)

Through this collaboration, we could exercise the transfer of knowledge and strengthening the skills and knowhow of the counterpart staff of HBRC in an incremental and dynamic manner, giving and taking, learning and teaching in a two-way traffic of knowledge creation. IHS staff had a specific task to strengthen the training development and training delivery capabilities of HBRC staff assigned to work with him/her. Guest lecturers were also invited. Key Egyptian experts from different thematic subject from private, public and academic institutions were often invited to present specific Egyptian experiences in planning, housing and informal settlement upgrading, privatisation, infrastructure management, solid waste management, new town development, etc.

The development of selected case studies which included but not limited to the narrative and description of the case (documentation, genesis of the process under a specific institutional and political context) and the translation of international literature were important elements of the curriculum. The project also made a colossal effort to translate key papers and background into Arabic which were part and parcel of the readers made available and for the exclusive use of the of the participants of the TRHUD supported courses. These were articles, chapters, reports, extract of case studies, etc. and not always abiding to the rules of property rights since permission for translation was not always arranged. Nevertheless, authorship and reference to authors were always recognized and quoted. At times, university scholars requested us a copy and a declaration for their translated article so that this would add on their university records.

The first generation of courses were delivered jointly by IHS and HBRC staff using two projectors in class showing English and Arabic PowerPoint presentations, with HBRC staff acting as co-trainer and translator of the sessions led by the IHS staff. This was a strategy to get HBRC staff conversant with issues and themes brought in by IHS staff and learn by doing in partnership with the IHS staff. In the beginning the IHS staff would take a larger portion of the sessions under his/her responsibility. There was always an interpreter/translator working closely with the IHS staff when working in the classroom. With the delivery of subsequent editions of the courses, not only curriculum was improved, sessions and case studies refined, but also the roles of HBRC and IHS staff were revisited. With time there was an increase of the number of sessions under the leadership of HBRC staff and a decrease of sessions under the leadership of IHS staff. This was not an accidental but an intentional policy to enlarge responsibility of HBRC staff for course delivery and gradually retreat IHS staff from leading sessions and be placed in the position of coach and advisor of the courses.

9. The marketing and delivery of courses

The courses were focusing on the critical problems identified by the project during the inception and training needs assessment phases which included the orientation workshops, as outlined earlier on this paper. A schedule of courses were agreed upon by the project management team (HBRC and IHS staff) and teams of experts were assigned to deliver the specific courses. Folders and marketing materials were prepared and spread through different means. Packages delivered by the drivers of the project to the key institutions and short-listed target groups; announcements sent via faxes and word of mouth completed the marketing strategy. Application forms were specifically prepared so that candidates/applicants could express their motivations, clarify their positions, institutions to which they were associated with, and in which way the course would help him/her to address the problems dealt with by her/his organization/project.

The first editions of the courses were free of charge. HBRC did not charge course fees. This was considered a development cooperation outcome. The primary objective was to get the courses well known within the wider Egyptian public and achieve a wider recognition of the value added of the courses and achieve a broad outreach and therefore widening capacity building opportunities for Egyptian professionals. Thus, the priority and serious attention was given to quality, organization, punctuality and professionalism. The intention was to offer a game change type of training not yet

available in Egypt and create a breadth for future cost recovery in the subsequent years. This approach ensured that the courses and training programmes remained innovative in many ways and attracted many applications subsequently. The partnership with a Dutch institution like IHS was highly appreciated and a course certificate containing the logo of HBRC and IHS were valued by the participants.

10. Innovations in training and capacity building in Egypt

Three aspects that made the programmes offered by the project quite different from what had been traditionally offered in the market of training in Egypt. One innovation was the field work embedded into the curriculum of all courses. The participants were taken to a site, a problem area, a project, a local institution and visit the situation on the ground, meet with residents, hear the experts, and look with their own eyes the solutions and challenges being addressed. Many Egyptians were not aware and often not familiar with the type of critical problems and challenging situations that the courses offered to them. In a way, and surprisingly too, for many participants, the courses and the field work were an eye opening to their own reality. The field work was followed by action planning exercises so that teams of participants would deepen their analysis and propose solutions to the problems that they have identified during field work.

Another aspect that proved to be new in the Egyptian context of those days was the interactive, problem-solving and case study-based type of training which stimulated participants to bring their own experience and create a rich and dynamic learning environment based on lectures and exchange of experiences by the participants. Group work and presentations added to the lively and at times heated discussions in class. Thus course participants actually contributed to the training programme.

A third aspect was the horizontal playing field in the classroom where participants were treated equally during training activities. There was no difference due to hierarchic positions that they occupy in the government structure or in their organizations. In a way the course environment was subverting the culture of organizations commonly found in the Egyptian bureaucracy. There was obviously respect but not submission to positions of authority in the classroom. The delivery of the courses were also providing the opportunity for assertive leadership development of course coordinator. The practice of leading the sessions while empowering participants to bring in their insights in discussions where every opinion counted. This was encouraged and specifically brought in by IHS whose programs of training and education have had the trademark of interaction, dynamism, exchange, group work and adult learning pedagogy.

In terms of duration, the courses were organized in 2 or 3 daily sessions of 1.5 hour with intervals of 30 to 20 minutes of coffee break in-between. The duration of the courses varied from 2 to 3 weeks. A total of 5 to 6 days of training days per week which would bring a total amount of training between 30 to nearly 70 hours. The first generation of courses were very intensive, planned during the mornings in a way to fit well in the culture of events of this nature in Egypt.

11. From Project to Institution Building

There was an expected outcome after 8 years of technical assistance of IHS to HBRC: the establishment of a training centre of excellence. All steps on finance, administration, management, institutional and organizational development, staffing, staff development and rules and regulations were undertaken.

During the second phase of the project, a road map was laid down to phase out the leadership of IHS in project management and implementation and incrementally delegate full responsibility to HBRC staff assigned to the project. The strategy was to transfer responsibility, financial management and

all project assets to the Egyptian counterparts, strengthen the management capacity of HBRC staff assigned to the project and use the second phase to consolidate the institution building and the capacity building approach. Central in this strategy was the transformation of the TRHUD project into an institution managed solely by the Egyptians that would ensure continuation and consolidation of the achievements of the project and the investments made through the Dutch-Egypt development cooperation agreement.

The goal of the second phase of the project⁵ with a duration of another 4 years was spelled out in its project document as follows:

“The establishment of a sustainable urban training institute (UTI) in Egypt, which is capable to provide training and capacity building services to local governments, urban management institutions and professional entities. By the end of project period UTI is expected to be a consolidated, well-known and sustainable institution capable to cover its operational costs”.

One of the major task of IHS was to develop a Business plan for UTI. This was discussed with the project management team, presented to the Steering Committee of the project and further discussed with and approved by the leadership of HBRC. After consideration of several options, a decision was made to use the university law under which HBRC was able to set up a special unit to function with a relative independence and capable to set up its rules of engagement and acquire projects and funding from outside, recruit consultants and outsource activities as needed. A decree was prepared by HBRC and the Urban Training Institute of Egypt – UTI was founded with its statute and basic functions outlined.

Setting up an institution required the establishment of a series of internal rules, regulations and procedures. A series of management procedures were developed in order to create means to exercise financial management and control on income and expenditures, reporting on the annual balance sheet and so forth. The budget⁶ delegated to UTI by IHS provided an opportunity for the Egyptian counterparts to exercise financial management and take operational and financial decisions. The budget expenditures were audited by an internationally recognised accounting firm (KPMG-Hassan Hassam) every six months and on annual basis. This helped to create a culture of financial administration, train staff and enhance capabilities of the management team and staff responsible for the financial administration of TRHUD and now becoming UTI. In addition to that, rules and procedures on decision-making, staff organisation, approval procedures, procurement and contracts were also developed.

A series of guidelines for using equipment, computers as well as office supplies and overall office space were developed through the phase one of the TRHUD project and this served the purpose for UTI as well. Staff performance assessment-SPA were also developed and through which individual targets were set by the staff assigned to work on courses and case studies and other project activities based on which they were subject to performance assessment.

The Netherlands government approval of the second phase of the TRHUD project envisaged a closer collaboration between the Dutch international education institutions. This brought ITC as one of the partners in supporting UTI through the TRHUD II project. The project sponsored the establishment of a fully equipped GIS lab with a total of 15 computers and all peripherals like plotters, colour printers, server, air condition, network, software and hardware and several staff were trained and

⁵ The official phases of the project were set as follows: Phase I: 01/10/1996 – 01/06/2000 and Phase II: 01/06/2000 – 31/05/2004.

⁶ In terms of project budget, the Netherlands Government contribution was as follows: NLG 4,800,000.00 (phase I) and NLG 4,399,385.00 (phase II) in Dutch Guilders. The Egyptian Government contribution to the project was as follows: NLG 3,541,800.00 (phase II).

assigned to develop GIS-based training courses. The course development approach adopted during Phase I of the project was refined and further implemented with the arrival of ITC to the project.

12. Results and Achievements

In 2001, at the end of the phase one of the TRHUD Project, eight national courses had been fully developed and assembled in training companions on informal settlement upgrading and housing, urban management and land management, urban environmental management and planning and urban infrastructure management and finance. They had been offered several times and attended by over 300 professionals from public, private and community and academic sectors. By the end of the phase two of the project, in 2004, these numbers had increased to 1918 participants who had attended more than 100 courses delivered by the project and UTI. All courses were evaluated extensively by the participants at the end of course. The results of the evaluation were extremely positive and kept increasing in quality in time. Several case study researches were also carried out on peripheral land development, cost recovery of slum upgrading, community development, sites and services project, relocation and eviction, environmental preservation, financing infrastructure and other topics related to course development.

Two books in English and Arabic on Urban Management Practice in Belbeis and Environmental Impact Assessment had been published. These two case studies fuelled course development, were widely used in training and showed case the value added of the project, bringing wider visibility to UTI and its staff. In the case of Belbeis, the city had become a destination for field work of the courses on urban management, land and infrastructure development. The staff of Belbeis municipality had become very receptive to share their experience and innovations in city management.

An external evaluation was commissioned by IHS to assess the results and impacts of the project at the very end of the 8 years of project implementation. UTI was fully operational with the Egyptian counterparts in full control of the assets and means of implementation, deploying its rules and regulations and with a core team of staff engaged in courses, case studies and consultancy assignments to GOPP, GIZ and increasingly engaging in project and contract acquisition. A dynamic and young management team of TRHUD was confirmed at the executive management of UTI.

The courses on urban environmental management and planning (participatory environmental management, solid waste management, environmental impact assessment) had produced real measurable impacts. These courses had produced institutional-related performance improvement impact and individual-related performance improvement impact. Participants who attended these courses could report the direct use of the tools, instruments, methods and knowledge acquired through the courses in their work and within their institution, with visible concrete impacts on the ground. At the governorate level this was more visible given that most of the staff from the environmental units that were established by the governorates, as per law no 4, had attended the courses at UTI. In this respect, capacity building was right on the spot and responded to the needs of local governments.

Shortly after emancipating and breaking its dependence from the Dutch development cooperation funding, UTI quickly demonstrated the ability to generate contracts⁷ to broaden the breadth of its financial reserve while continuing to offer competitive fees and interesting and relevant job to its staff. Thus one of the key conditions was being met by a training institution to guarantee its continuity and institutional consolidation as outlined in the goals of the TRHUD project.

⁷ A sizeable contract signed with GOPP produced a unique opportunity for UTI to make use of its GIS capabilities in producing digital mapping and spatial analysis for the 200+ villages of Egypt.

Nevertheless, it was becoming clear that the experience accumulated with 8 years of TRHUD project implementation in collaboration with international institutions and the rich process of building a successful training centre had raised the profile of those staff of HBRC assigned to work on the project and UTI. It not only strengthened their professional capacity, offering additional training abroad and work positions to grow at home, but also exposed them to a professional market where national and international institutions operated and potentially offered better remuneration and career perspectives.

UTI would have to continue with its dynamism and continuous institutional transformation in order to remain relevant and attractive for its staff. It was unavoidable and it soon became clear that TRHUD and UTI had become a springboard to an interesting world of consultancies abroad, well paid jobs in Saudi Arabia, contracts with international organizations like GIZ, UN-Habitat and senior positions in the national government. There was a renewal of staff as UTI continue on its path to become a well-grounded national training centre. Ultimately, many staff moved out of UTI to become successful professionals in international organizations and in government. Some reaching the top of the government cadre such as executive directors of state institutions, ministerial posts and even prime-minister position. A group of young professionals who seized the opportunity to contribute to development of their own country and moved on to realize their professional ambitions.

13. A brief note on UN-Habitat's Capacity Building Experience

A reflection on my years of tenure as head of capacity building and training at UN-Habitat provides some useful considerations for the current initiative in setting a training centre in Kerala. For a number of years UN-Habitat focused its development assistance in the capacity building sector on training institutions in the developing countries. The goal was to nurture sustainable urban development and strengthen local governments' capacities to plan, manage, finance and monitor urban development within their jurisdiction. It was thought that the best way to achieve that was to strengthen the capacity of training institutions so that they would be well-equipped to support and provide meaningful and fit for purpose capacity building and training services in their own countries. Thus creating a breadth of capacity building multipliers.

UN-Habitat produced a set of normative products in the form of training guides and toolkits ranging from participatory planning, participatory budgeting to local government finance and local economic development. Training of trainers workshops would bring together training institutions from various countries to unpack these guides, get acquainted with the subjects and tools, and subsequently roll out and scale up training and capacity building back home.

The experience showed that with few exceptions, the majority of the training institutions relied on donor funding and external finance and contracts to continue its mission. These institutions faced difficulties to remain fully operational when donors' sources ceased since local sources of funding and revenues from training were often insufficient to keep the best and the brightest of their trainers and to allow the institutions to remain in full operation. This resulted that many training institutions could not scale up and maintain the needed training and capacity building services. The turn over of staff as illustrated by the case of UTI-Egypt was also another feature that affected the sustainability of the training institutions.

From 2013 onwards we shifted the approach and started to work directly with cities and national governments and focusing on city leaders, policy makers, decision makers including mayors and senior officials from national and local governments as well as the technical cadre of government institutions. Another shift was to closely link the provision of capacity building and training services

with UN-Habitat programming and implementation in cities and countries and targeting the institutions with whom UN-Habitat has established cooperation agreements. This does not mean the abandonment of the training institutions constituency but to partner with local training institutions where they best fit and work with the recipient organizations.

Capacity Building at UN-Habitat



Figure 9: UN-Habitat Capacity Building Services in a Nutshell

UN-Habitat continues to produce knowledge products in the form of strategy documents, practical guides for design, policy, planning and implementation followed by training toolkits and training companions and guides to unpack these knowledge products and transform them into operational training packages. It has adopted what we call ‘a virtuous cycle of training and capacity building’ which comprises of a trilogy of products: a concept/strategy document on the subject, a practical guide to address it in programmatic and project form, and a training toolkit to allow for rolling out of training by training institutions.

One fundamental shift in the delivery of capacity building services of UN-Habitat is the adoption of the training needs assessment (TNA) as a stepping stone in training design and delivery. The TNA has become a permanent feature in order to ensure that training remains demand driven, responsive to the needs and addressing knowledge gaps, competencies shortcomings and institutional performance gaps. Several interactive online tools such as Turning Technologies, Mentimeter, Zoho and other polling systems have been used combining in-class sessions with TNA sessions in-situ. Resources allowing, comprehensive approaches are adopted and focus group meetings are organized as part of the preparatory process of training design.

Another feature of UN-Habitat’s capacity building approach is the adoption of e-learning through different forms of products that range from online training modules to the global urban lectures

series which are similar to MOOC-Massive Online Open Courses⁸. These are series of 15-20 minutes lectures on specific subjects that are associated with knowledge resources, publications, reports and that altogether offers self-paced learning. These are freely accessible without hurdles of registration and passwords. Consistent with this approach, the New Urban Agenda Platform provides for freely accessible online training on the new urban agenda. The SDG platform as well, and the Covid-19 pandemics has accelerated the development and supply of only learning opportunities that one should not disregard in the future.

UN-Habitat has been working on capacity building and training that combines e-learning and presential type of training, incorporating a number of interactive tools and simulation exercises, with modules specially designed to fit the type of demand profiles of participants e.g. mayors, technical cadre, policy makers. In that respect, mayors city labs and urban labs have become a hands-on practical type of workshops, intensive, problem-solving and very interactive that brings about solutions directly from training.

The Virtuous Cycle of Capacity Building

EXAMPLE: The Trilogy of Citywide Slum Upgrading

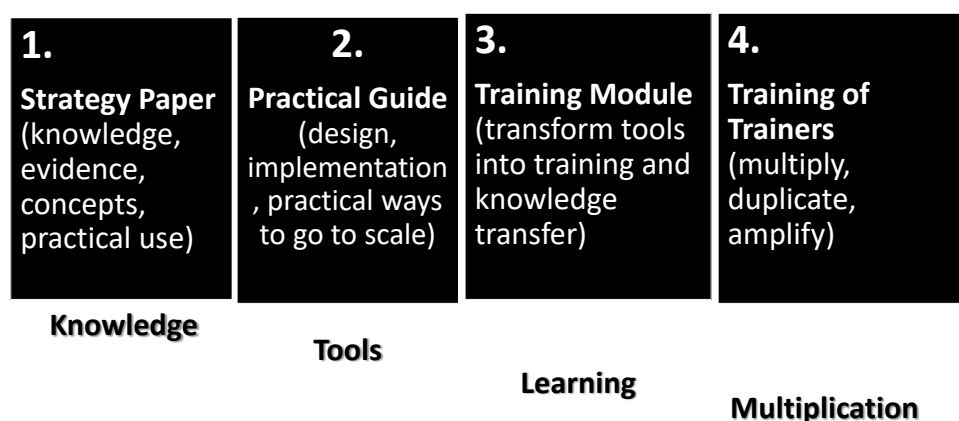


Figure 10: The Virtuous Cycle of Capacity Building and Training

14. Lessons learned and final conclusions

The rapid process of urbanization is placing city governments in the spotlight. City managers, planners, decision makers are confronted with a phenomenon of scale and pace that needs quick and sustained response. Unfortunately, local and city governments are not sufficiently equipped with instruments and well-trained personnel to anticipate and provide solutions that can help cities to embark into a path of planned and sustainable urbanization. Training and capacity building is

⁸ The urban lectures can be found here: <https://unhabitat.org/knowledge/global-urban-lectures> or <https://uni.unhabitat.org/global-urban-lectures/>

needed. An urgently needed in scale and focus. Training institutions have an important role to play. Nevertheless, there are a few challenges to address:

a. Challenges on Institution building:

In order to remain relevant and transformative, training institutions need to adopt dynamic management and creative forms to offer a work environment that is able to retain talent and competent staff. The best and the brightest of the staff, trainers that embrace the noble task of transfer of knowledge and improve the capacity of others, those who are rising stars and that gradually acquire a market value for what they bring to institutions. Thus, a creative work environment coupled with financial incentives must be considered.

There is a need to build and maintain solid and reliable sources of revenue and funding so that capacity building services can be sustained, giving institutional continuity and the consolidation of institutions. A long-term business plan is required for training institutions and with this in hand seek public, private and international funding to complement on fee-based activities to back services provision and overhead costs.

As part of this business plan which outlines a long-term vision, a capacity building strategy must be prepared and outline a roadmap to consolidate and maintain the training institution as a centre of excellence. What does it need to do to remain as reference and centre of excellence? This will attract and retain talents and build a reputation that can become the source of branding of the institution that needs to be followed up by marketing, outreach and communication.

b. Challenges on capacity building

Training and capacity building services need to remain relevant and innovative, in constant movement of improvements and innovation in learning, tools, methodologies and pedagogies. Therefore, training needs assessment (TNA) must be incorporated into all services so that the capacity building and training services to be provided remain demand-driven and responsive to the needs, demand and problem areas. The dynamism in course development and delivery will be an important element in creating a product (course) that has value-added in the 'market' of training. It goes without saying that the training provided, the course and capacity building services, must meet the participants' career ambitions. Is this providing me with the skills and knowledge that I need to advance in my career and be successful in addressing this particular problem?

An effective TNA helps to unfold the elements for a successful and targeted course that addresses the issues and problems at hand and the training needs. But it is important to maintain costs competitive within the wider market of capacity building and training. Costs for delivering the course and for recipients who is paying a course fee. Once a successful programme has been delivered, keep a continuous process of improvement and innovations.

It is extremely important to construct training companions of the courses, keep the files, presentations, background materials and evaluations. This is usually neglected dimension that needs to be considered. The need to organize a system to retain this institutional memory and the materials and products developed in time related to the different courses. Nowadays we have cloud storage which makes it easy to organize the repository of course materials and products⁹ in a systematic manner that is made available to the staff of the entire organization. This will ensure continuity and quality of service delivery.

⁹ UN-Habitat has now organized and made available its training and capacity building materials to the wide public under www.capacitybuildingunhabitat.org

ⁱ *Claudio Acioly Jr is an architect and urban planner, a development practitioner with over 40 years of experience in more than 30 countries. He worked as practicing expert, program manager, resident technical and policy advisor or short-term consultant to governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations such as UNDP, World Bank, UNECE, UN-Habitat, GIZ, EU, Cordaid, DGHIS. Acioly was senior programme manager of GIZ and director of the European Union's International Urban Cooperation Programme for Latin America, coordinating and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020). He was head of Housing Policy and head of Capacity Building of UN-Habitat, coordinator of the UN Housing Rights Programme and supervisor of the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat (2008-2019). Acioly was senior housing land and expert with the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) (1993-2008). He started his career working for the government of the city of Brasilia in a citywide housing and slum upgrading programme (1983-1987) followed by a 3 year period working for the Dutch government in a neighbourhood upgrading project in Guinea-Bissau (1989-1992).*