

POSITION PAPER NO. 3

The Development Triangle

– About the relationship between advocacy, organisational capacity and strategic deliveries in development projects

By introducing the Development Triangle as an analytical and planning tool, the Project Advice and Training Centre wishes to promote:

- An understanding of *advocacy*, *organisational capacity* and *strategic deliveries* as three important elements of a development project which reinforce one another and pave the way for real change to take place.
- Strategic reflection on the links between these three elements in the design of any development project.
- Partners in a development project mutually clarifying their expectations of the relative weight of each of these three elements.
- Development projects being seen as part of long-term partnerships and processes of change rather than as one-off interventions.

THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE: WHY?

In the course of the past 10-15 years, advocacy has come increasingly to the fore as an important tool to bring about structural and lasting change. The notion that individual organisations can create development by means of traditional service delivery – such as building schools and drilling wells – has taken a back seat. Instead, many donors prefer to support local organisations in conducting advocacy. However, there is growing recognition that for advocacy to be effective, the organisations involved need to gain well-founded knowledge about and strong backing from the groups that they purport to represent. They can do this by means of so-called strategic deliveries.

For example, an educational organisation may set the goal of influencing local authorities to increase the district education budget. To state its case in a compelling manner, the organisation has to be profoundly fa-

miliar with the needs and day-to-day lives of pupils and parents, on whose support it must count. It can achieve this by, for instance, designing a training programme together with local teachers, or by improving teaching facilities through the renovation of run-down classrooms. This will allow the organisation to learn in depth about the context or field at hand, while also upgrading its capacity as an organisation.

The thinking behind the Development Triangle is that strategic deliveries and organisational capacity are not just supplementary to advocacy, but actual preconditions for good advocacy to occur. Looked at the other way around, successful advocacy can widen the organisation's constituency and boost its capacity even further, thus improving its chances of providing more strategic deliveries and – over time – of getting authorities and other decision-makers to take on responsibility for the field in question.

For example, if an agricultural organisation succeeds in engaging the local government in a dialogue about access to land, it will be better equipped to expand its strategy next time around, say, by forging alliances with other agricultural organisations to push for changes in national land rights legislation.

Accordingly, strategic deliveries, organisational capacity and advocacy can reinforce one another through good links between them. When all three are incorporated as integral parts of a project, it tends to boost not only the organisations' legitimacy and roots in the community, but also the scope for generating lasting change.

¹ This position paper has been inspired by a publication of Thematic Forum (a Danish NGO association): 'The Change Triangle - An integrated model to strengthen advocacy in the South through thematic competencies and organizational capacity' (2009).



DEFINITIONS

The term **strategic deliveries** is an elaboration on the former concept of “service deliveries”. Strategic deliveries are what the project partners contribute directly to the target group, encompassing both professional and technical inputs. It may consist of professional methods and processes, such as the development of innovative pedagogy, training of farmers in new agricultural methods or organisation of self-help groups. Strategic deliveries can, however, also be more tangible goods and services, such as renovation of buildings, supplies of equipment, etc., but only if this has a strategic aim related to the local partner’s role as a civil society organisation.

The core of the matter is that making such deliveries must be seen from a long-term perspective as a means of advancing sustainable development rather than as an end in itself. Strategic deliveries can give the organisations involved more in-depth knowledge of the context as well as local support for systematic advocacy either together with or on behalf of the target group.

Organisational capacity refers to the local partner’s ability to carry out activities, using and maintaining the results in a sustainable manner, as well as to the organisation’s legitimacy vis-à-vis the target group. This is about the extent to which the organisation has an adequate local constituency and sufficient knowledge to act and conduct advocacy together with or on behalf of the target group.

Specifically, organisational capacity can include the local partner’s ability and will to:

- Develop professional knowledge.
- Work on strategic planning.
- Ensure transparency in financial and administrative procedures.

- Work for democratic processes internally.
- Develop the organisation, including its leadership structures, procedures and processes.
- Prepare relevant context analysis to substantiate advocacy, among other purposes.
- Support poor target groups’ own organisation, including their ability to bring about change and to speak on their own behalf.
- Network with like-minded organisations.

Danish organisations can help strengthen their partners’ organisational capacity by means of well-targeted capacity building, thus contributing to creating a strong civil society in developing countries.

Advocacy is a systematic effort to influence decision-makers or the public in order to bring about lasting change for a significant number of people. Advocacy may target politicians and international forums, but may also be directed at local authorities, communities, school boards, or perhaps private firms in the local area. Advocacy work will often contain:

- Setting of clear goals regarding what kinds of change is to be achieved.
- Argumentation based on rights or documented factual knowledge.
- Analysis of relevant decision-makers and the political context.
- Forging of alliances with other organisations.
- Strategic use of, for instance, negotiations and media.

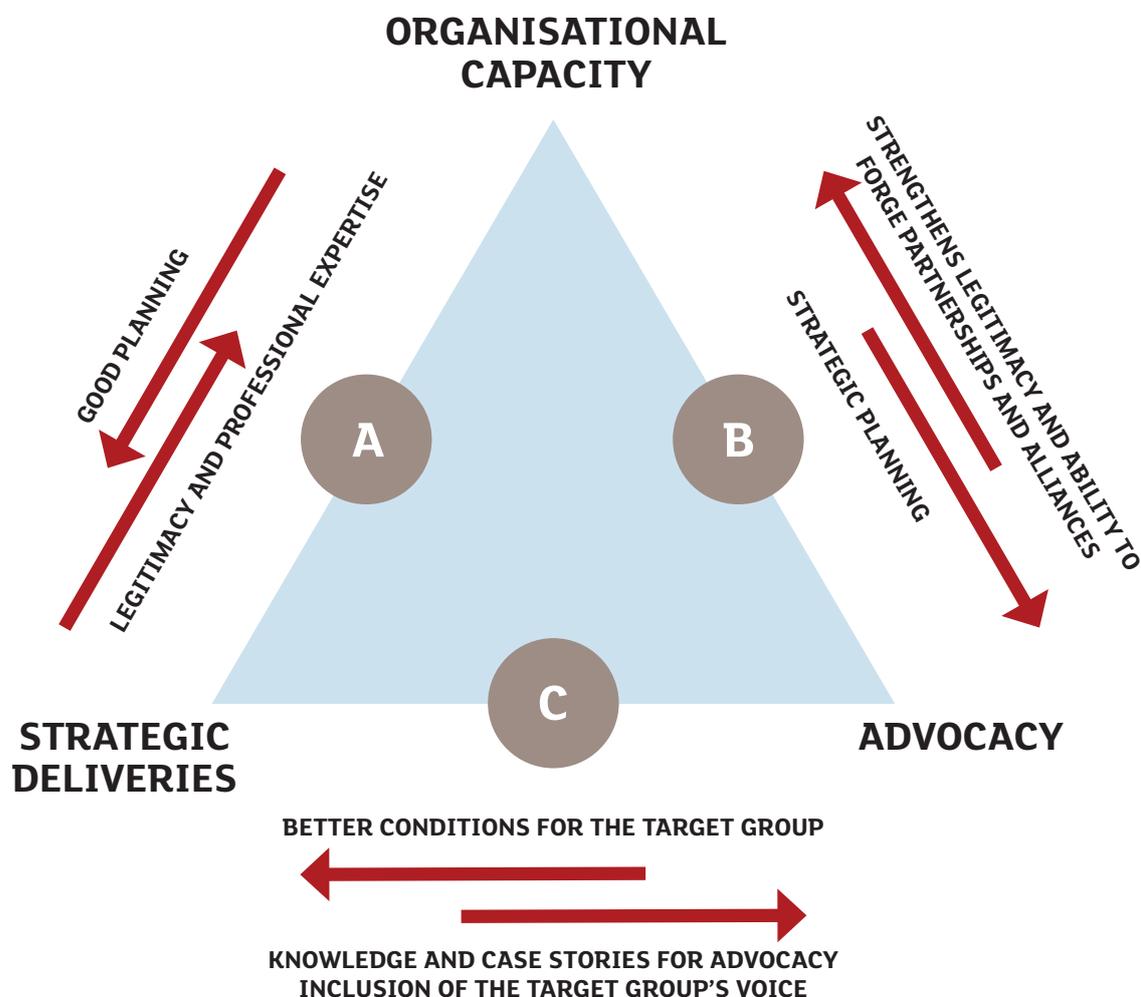
Advocacy is more thoroughly described in a second position paper by the Project Advice and Training Centre.

EXPLANATION OF THE MODEL

The Development Triangles illustrates the relationship between the three elements and how they influence each other.

- A. Strategic deliveries can give an organisation greater legitimacy and professional expertise as regards its target group, members and field of work. Moreover, good organisational capacity will improve both the planning and the quality of strategic deliveries.
- B. Good organisational capacity also serves to substantiate good strategic planning of advocacy activities. Successful advocacy will in turn strengthen the organisation even more, setting the stage for expanding the outlook of its strategies, possibly by means of new alliances and networks.
- C. Effective advocacy can lead to decision-makers improving conditions for the target group. Meanwhile, a project making strategic deliveries will generate knowledge and case stories contributing to the advocacy work.





VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE

Varying balance: The model can be a good analytical tool for the planning of a development project. However, the relative weight of each of the three elements hinges strongly on the type of project concerned and the context at hand. If the local partner is a new grassroots organisation, the focus will tend to be on organisational development and strategic deliveries. Such an organisation will need to be strengthened structurally. At the same time, there will often be a need to deliver something tangible to the target group.

Strategies concerning advocacy can then be incorporated at a later stage. If, for example, the local partner is an established interest group which champions the rights and access to health services of people with disabilities, it may be important to invest efforts in developing an advocacy strategy. This can be combined with strategic deliveries in terms of training health workers in non-discriminatory medical attention. In fragile situations, such as post-conflict zones, there could also be a

need to deliver some tangible goods and services, such as renovation of classrooms or the like, for a project to get off the ground in the first place.

Bringing several partners into play: Different organisations can implement different aspects of the Development Triangle. In a project dedicated to sustainable forestry development, local cooperatives may be in charge of training forest workers in new working methods and FSC certification, while a national NGO can draw on the cooperatives' experiences in efforts to influence national forestry legislation.

Time horizon: When planning a project, it is important to set goals for noticeable and tangible results within all three elements of the Development Triangle. However, planning for different kinds of results in different phases of the project is still an option. For example, objectives and indicators for strategic deliveries and capacity building can be defined for the first phase, whereas those for advocacy will often not be relevant until a later stage. In the case of a small-scale project with a short implementation period, whose objective is,

say, the establishment of self-help groups, greater co-operation within a community or the like, it may never become relevant to design advocacy work, though the potential for this in subsequent interventions might still be appropriate to consider.

Clarifying expectations and resources: The Development Triangle can be useful as a tool in a clarification process between partner organisations. Do the partners have matching expectations of, for example, strategic deliveries and advocacy? Moreover, the model can shine a light on the partners' strengths and weaknesses. To which areas can the respective partners from the North and the South contribute? And in which areas is there a need for capacity building or external resources?

THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE IN APPLICATIONS TO THE PROJECT FUND²

In the assessment of applications to the Project Fund, demands for a good balance between the three elements of the Development Triangle will be attuned to the project's nature and size. The larger the project, the stricter the requirement that linkage between strategic deliveries, organisational development and advocacy be integrated into the project design. It is not obligatory for advocacy to be part of a project if the amount applied for is less than DKK 1 million. However, the application must reflect on the potential for advocacy in a possible subsequent phase of intervention.

² See the guidelines entitled: *"The Project Fund – a support facility for Danish popular organisations' cooperation with civil society in developing countries"*, the Project Advice and Training Centre 2011.

Case: the Development Triangle in action

An organisation launches a project for street children. Its strategy is to build shelters, where children are fed, housed and taught a trade. The project becomes a success by managing to get a high percentage of destitute children off the street and into paid work. After some time, the organisation begins to network with other shelters in the area, and together they influence the provincial government to take a look at its method and adopt it as official policy. By means of strategic deliveries, such as shelters and vocational skills training, the organisation achieves the legitimacy to speak on behalf of street children. It can now demonstrate its familiarity with the situation on the ground to the authorities. It knows the children and it has tried out a method that works. By learning from its running of the shelters, the organisation becomes better at organising and administrating in general, thus managing to enter into networking with like-minded shelters. Against the background of its experiences with street children, and on the strength of joining forces with other shelters, the organisation succeeds in engaging with the national authorities and, ultimately, in expanding the number of shelters, this time with funds from the state.

THE PATC POSITION PAPERS

The Steering Committee of the Project Advisory and Training centre, PATC, has adopted a number of position papers that describe our view of how various key concepts in the development work must be understood and interpreted in practice. The position papers are prepared on the basis of our practices and experiences from member organizations, development projects and

activities, our consultancy and training activities as well as our administration of the Project Fund.

The papers are not static documents but will at appropriate intervals be revised in the light of experience gained. Simultaneously, several position papers being prepared on other topics.

See the latest version and other position papers on www.prngo.dk



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