



Cotonou Infokit

Building Capacities

The new opportunities for dialogue and participation in ACP-EU cooperation will not be effectively used in the absence of well-informed and organised non-state actors. This is fully recognised in the Cotonou Agreement, which stress the need to invest resources in capacity building of non-state actors. In this fiche, we provide an overview of possible capacity building measures as well as ways to obtain this support.

In the new Agreement, both parties have committed themselves to provide capacity support to non-state actors and local governments (articles 4, 5, 7, 33), facilitating their participation in ACP-EU cooperation. Different forms of capacity support are envisaged:

Information. Necessary for effective participation, this has been weak in past ACP-EU cooperation. Article 5 says that Cotonou resources can be used 'to provide more information and awareness of the basic features of ACP-EU partnership'. This could, for instance, be done by producing a local newsletter for non-state actors, providing information on the overall Agreement, on the programming dialogue with the government and related Country Support Strategy, and on ways to access resources. Another option is to improve information flows through cooperation with northern partners.

Organisation and representation. In the process of identifying eligible actors, ACP governments and the EU will confront questions of the legitimacy and representation of non-state actors. The Cotonou Agreement recognises the need to support efforts of non-state actors at different levels (national, regional, global), helping them to better

organise themselves as representative structures and capable dialogue partners.

Networking. Resources can be mobilised to promote channels of communication, networking, exchange of experiences as well as strategic alliances among non-state actors at different levels. Cooperation should also 'encourage partnership and links between ACP and EU actors.'

Structured dialogue. The Agreement seeks to promote new public-private partnerships in which different actors join forces to achieve common goals through task division. To move in this direction, dialogue processes between non-state actors and governments could be supported at different levels.

Who Should Do What?

These provisions create openings for capacity building initiatives towards non-state actors, to be funded with Cotonou resources. However, it is not clear how this will work in practice. This is a fairly new business for all parties involved and the role division (who should do what) is not yet neatly defined. Capacity building is a rather intangible process and it is not necessarily something that ACP-EU cooperation is good at. In several ACP countries, governments may not be keen to strengthen the capacity of non-state actors, as requested by the Cotonou Agreement. There is also a danger of creating aid-dependent organisations or networks of non-state actors.

What does this mean for non-state actors in ACP countries? How can they obtain support for their information and capacity building needs in relation to ACP-EU cooperation? A few pointers may help:

According to the programming guidelines, the EC Delegations will facilitate the provision of information and capacity building to non-state actors (in close collaboration with the ACP government). EC delegations will also have the necessary resources for activities related to information, consultation/dialogue and capacity building. These resources can, in principle, be directly accessed by non-state actors without the approval of the country's National Authorising Officer for each single activity. This means that specific requests from non-state actors could be directed to the EC Delegation.

Capacity building measures can be integrated in concrete programmes supported by the NIPs or RIPs. For instance, the promotion of structured dialogue between governments and non-state actors is increasingly included in the design of new projects (a decentralised cooperation

programme or a regional tourism programme). This can take the form of a workshop, bringing together the different stakeholders to identify appropriate implementation strategies as well as the capacity needs of the actors involved and the ways to address them.

The EC Delegations are not well placed to do the capacity job themselves. This is recognised in the programming guidelines, which stress the need to make use of local expertise (e.g. process facilitators), and existing or emerging structures of non-state actors. Examples of emerging local structures are the ACP Civil Society Forum, the ACP Business Forum and the ACP Local Government Platform. These are recent structures that aim to improve information flows and promote capacity building for their members.

Collaboration with European non-state actors is another way to obtain capacity building support. The EC budget lines for NGO co-financing and decentralised cooperation can cater for this need.
