Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool Guide

Purpose

The purpose of the organisational capacity assessment is to identify capacity strengths and gaps. This can be used by the individual organisation as well as by the peer learning programme (PLP) for capacity strengthening. The OCAT will be used at the start of the PLP with the support of an INTRAC consultant and by the organisation as a self-assessment at the end of the year. This will help to see where there has been progress made and where further strengthening is needed.

The organisational capacity assessment guide and tool is intended to help PLP participants build a good understanding of the process in conducting capacity assessments so that SDOs may, in turn, use it with their partners in Africa.

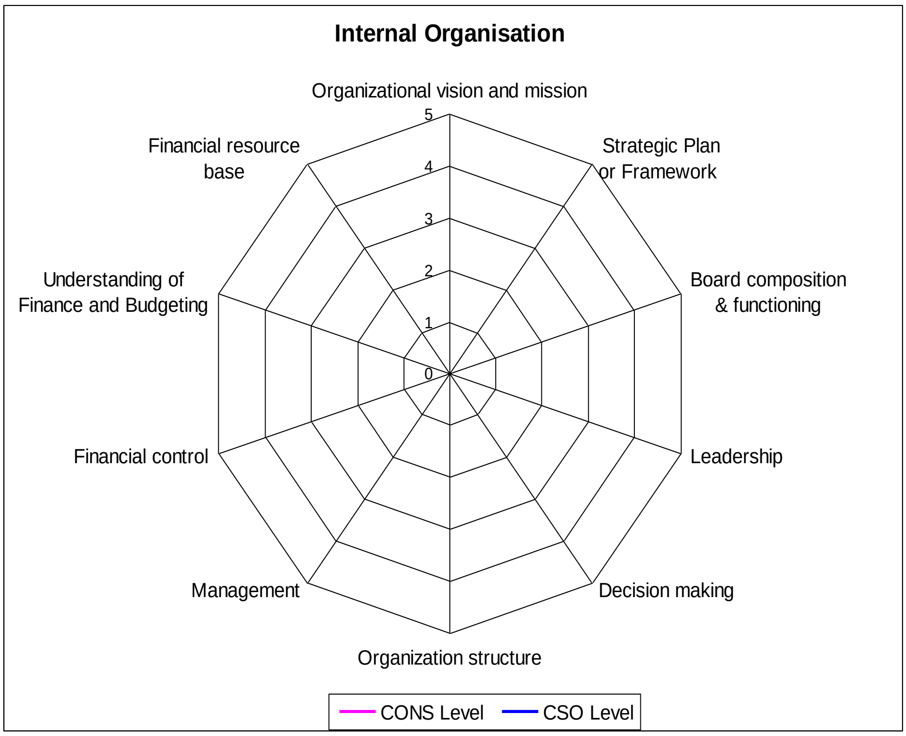
All information that is received by INTRAC will be treated confidentially and used only for the purpose of this Peer Learning Programme (PLP).

The tool

The organisational capacity assessment tool (OCAT) is used to establish the level of capacity on key capacity elements under organisational, programmatic and partnership areas. Organisations can carry out a self-assessment and/or an external assessment by a consultant. This tool aims to enable the small and diaspora organisations to bring together the information gathered and identify a number of things simultaneously:

- Key elements of organisational capacity which may affect future performance
- Indicators for these elements, set along a spectrum from 'least developed' to 'most developed'
- Individual and group identification of where the organisation is currently placed along the spectrum.

The end result of the process is a visual representation in the form of a spidergram (see below) which enables participants to obtain a holistic view of a number of capacity elements at once. This snapshot at the time of the exercise can also be a reference for monitoring and reviewing the development of capacity over time.



What is in the tool?

1. **The dimensions**

The dimensions to be examined for capacity are the internal functioning of the organisation and what the organisation does i.e. its programmes.

2. **The elements**

The elements (or axes) represent different capacity areas within each dimension. The elements (or axes of the spider's web) can be pre-determined, or can be identified by the group.

3. **The indicators**

Indicators are descriptions of the capacities and are set for different phases of development, from 'least developed' through to 'most developed'. Indicators used are:

- Embryonic – not in existence or barely being thought about
- Developing – first steps in developing the capacity, or finding out more about it
- Moderately Developed – partial progress in moving forward, some areas are more advanced than others
- Well-Developed – fuller coverage of the capacity is actively in operation but there may be one or two areas that are still not systematically in usage
- Exemplary – full and systematic use of all aspects of the capacity, and often the SO/SDO is looked to by others as a 'model' in this

4. **Plotting the capacities**

The process of plotting capacities will be covered with each individual organisation. Ideally all members of staff[1] should participate in the exercise.

There are different methods for plotting where the organisation 'sits' on each axis.

a) One slightly **more complex** approach might be to carry out data gathering exercise that is information on each of the capacity areas. For example, the dimension of internal organisation, one of the capacity areas is strategic plan or framework. Consultants assigned to gather data would have to get information on the strategic plan(s) found within the organisation and what is in the plan. This information is the evidence that the organisation would need to look at and decide what level of capacity the organisation is at.

   Once information has been gathered for all the capacity areas, then a separate phase of analysing will take place whereby the organisation needs to come to conclusions about what the evidence is showing with regard to the level of each capacity area.

   One way of coming to conclusions or arriving at this *diagnosis* is the following group exercise:

   Firstly, all participants must be familiar with the results of the individual data gathering exercises. These could be presented by the consultant in a summary form at the beginning of the meeting, but it would be best if the participants had received some written information beforehand.

[1] It is understood that some organisations in the PLP have no - or only one - paid members of staff. The process can be adapted as necessary.

Second, cards are spread across the floor or wall, to reproduce the main structure of the Spidergram tool. It would be clearest to use three different sets of colours (one colour for Internal Organisation and one for Programme/Linkages). The capacity is written on each card i.e. what appears on the left hand shaded column in the Tool - for example 'shared values and beliefs'.

The cards are laid out vertically – in the same order as they appear in the Tool. Make sure there is plenty of space between each card.

Then, horizontally at the top put down cards numbered 1 to 5 and write the appropriate words for each number i.e. embryonic, developing, moderately developed, well-developed and exemplary.

It will look like this:

Internal Organisation

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Embryonic	Developing	Moderately Developed	Well-Developed	Exemplary
Organisational Vision & Purpose					
Shared Values & Beliefs					
Strategic Plan or Framework					
Board composition & Functioning etc					

Each individual participant is asked to put on post-its a value for each one of the capacities and write down a reference to the evidence on which that value is based. It is best to take each capacity in turn, rather than attempt to do all of them at once.

For example – Individual X may decide to write on a post-it for 'Organisational Vision & Purpose' the number '2' and the words: 'documents; external comments; survey info; rich pictures; strengths/weakness exercise'

Once the post-its are completed for the first capacity, everyone comes up and sticks their post-it in the appropriate place on the wall/floor. Once all the post-its are in place, it is possible to see the overall picture:

- If there is overwhelming predominance in one level, then the answer is clear – that is the level that most people agree upon. It may be worth quickly checking on the other post-its by reading out the evidence for lower/higher scores and seeing whether the group would like to collectively reassess the overall score.

- Where there is a spread of opinions – it would be necessary to enter into discussion based on the evidence cited.

The best approach would be to note down that discussion is necessary, and move on to the next capacity. That way a momentum is developed, and the group can quickly cover all the capacities without stopping for too much discussion. The end result will be that some capacity levels will have been easily agreed upon, and others identified for further discussion.

The discussion can take place then in small groups or in plenary. The aim is to achieve agreement on levels for each capacity area. Where agreement is not possible, then the alternative views should be noted for discussion in the workshop with the consultant.

When the organisation has reached a consensus on their scoring, the consultant will look at the evidence that you have gathered this normally done in a semi-workshop and would make his/her own scoring. The consultant and the organisation will share the different results and will have to agree where there is disagreement on the scoring. The expectation is for the organisation to be as honest about their scorings on each of the capacity areas.

Summary of the steps

- Consultant to be responsible for the assessment
- Consultant to gather information on each of the capacity areas that will be used as evidence
- Where possible members of the organisation participate in the exercise to analyse the evidence and score the organisation
- Scoring done individually and then collectively to have an agreed score
- Consultant given evidence on each capacity area preferably in a semi-workshop
- Consultant summarises scores and the scores reviewed
- Discuss areas of disagreement
- Reach consensus
- Produce spidergram reflecting level of capacity in the two dimensions
- After a year organisation conducts a self assessment to produce a new spidergram and assess what progress has been made during the year

b) The **light touch** approach combines data gathering with diagnosis, and would be appropriate when there is little time available or where there already had been some kind of previous capacity or needs assessment taking place recently.

This approach could use the card exercise above, or could do a slightly different version as follows:

Firstly, individually each member of the organisation draws the web on 3 sheets of paper – one for each dimension (internal, programme, relational). The web will have the correct number of axes and each axis will be named with one capacity area. These could be pre-prepared. Individually they plot where they think the organisation sits currently along each of the axes. The individual can join up the crosses across the web to see the overall pattern.

A large flipchart web is drawn on three flipchart papers, one for each dimension. Once finished, each individual comes up and draws a cross against the same points on the flip chart web. It doesn't matter if individuals draw their crosses over each other. The aim is to see if there is a pattern emerging which expresses consensus of opinion.

Small group or plenary discussions should then focus on the following:

- Where there is consensus – what is the evidence that people had to put their crosses there? Is it the same evidence? Is there any contradicting evidence identified by people who didn't put their cross there? Is that evidence convincing enough to perhaps change the position of the cross?

- Where there is no clear consensus – i.e. where the marks are spread across the length of the axis – what is the evidence for each level? Is there a possibility of coming to agreement on the level once this evidence is shared and discussed?

The aim is to come to agreement for each capacity. The result of the discussions can be plotted on new flipcharts and the crosses can then be joined up, to see an overall pattern.

The consultant will engage the group to do a scoring which will then be discussed with the group and ensure that an agreed spidergram is produced.

The steps in a) above can be followed if people use this method.

Resources Needed
- A copy of the tool
- Cards
- Post-its
- Pre-prepared flipcharts with spiderwebs drawn, including correct number of axes (elements)
- Pre-prepared cards with 'spider' axes written on them
- Pre-prepared sheets with blank spiderwebs, for individuals to locate their crosses
- Felt pens to write and draw crosses

This version has been customised from an existing INTRAC OCAT for the Common Ground Initiative SDO Peer Learning Programme.