

Mutual capacity development

A modern and effective approach for fair, green and global change

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Fair, Green & Global Alliance

ActionAid, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie/Friends of the Earth Netherlands, SOMO and the Transnational Institute

THE NEED FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION

The Fair, Green and Global (FGG) Alliance focuses on improving corporate conduct, trade and investment, and financial and tax systems – key areas where change is vitally needed to achieve inclusive societies in which human rights are respected and global public goods managed sustainably. The many problems we observe – including poverty, hunger, inequality, and climate change – manifest themselves most visibly and tangibly in low and lower-middle income countries. But they are often rooted in global structures and systems. Solving these problems thus requires global cooperation. It requires a concerted effort by strong civil society actors located in many different places using different types of leverage to influence different decision-makers.

MUTUAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The FGG Alliance engages in global cooperation using an approach that we call mutual capacity development. 'Mutual' describes both how we embark on capacity development and what we expect from it. Mutual capacity development entails investing in long-term sustainable relationships with other civil society actors (e.g. CSOs and social movements). These relationships are based on mutual respect, equality and the shared belief that civil society actors and their constituents can best speak for themselves. As a process, mutual capacity development:

- Involves actively learning together, both through participatory one-off activities (e.g. trainings, workshops, seminars) and through collaborative processes (e.g. joint research, joint lobbying and advocacy, joint campaigning)

- Recognises and harnesses different expertise, knowledge and skills to develop effective, collective strategies (e.g. network-level strategies)
- Includes advocating for positive changes in policy, rules and regulations (in the Netherlands, Europe and internationally) to create or guarantee space for civic actors to engage in decision-making processes and to conduct their own lobbying and advocacy

THE CAPACITIES NEEDED TO MAKE PEOPLE'S VOICES HEARD

In today's dynamic, globalised world, civil society actors need a special mix of capacities to make the voice of people heard and to hold policymakers and companies to account. Mutual capacity development shapes not only *how* we cooperate to strengthen each other, but also *which* capacities we aim to strengthen. This is how mutual capacity development looks in practice:

ACCESS – *The capacity to muscle a seat at the table.*

Both ENDS and its partners work together with other CSOs to improve the policies of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Their goal is to create more engagement and space for CSOs and local communities in the GCF decision-making process and in distribution of GCF financial resources. The groups convene prior to GCF Board meetings to strategise, assess policy decisions and develop joint inputs. This is a crucial moment for mutual capacity development: the groups exchange knowledge about GCF projects and accreditations, policy gaps, and work together to formulate and bring the right messages to the right decision-makers. Because the Netherlands has a seat on the GCF Board, Both ENDS plays a key role in facilitating access for Southern partners to the Dutch GCF Board member.

CONSTITUENCY – *The capacity to speak with a loud, collective voice.*

ActionAid and its partners across Africa are supporting rural African women as they build a movement to secure their land and natural resource rights, build their own power and speak for themselves in a loud, collective voice. ActionAid's approach respects the rural women as the movement's leaders and the legitimate experts on the issues they face. ActionAid uses its skills and contacts to facilitate contact between the women across Africa, and contact between the women and decision-makers, but it's the women who are in the driver's seat: they have developed the movement's strategy, devised and implemented its plans, and empowered and learned from each other along the way.

KNOWLEDGE – *The capacity to build a solid case.* Many organisations are advocating for greater accountability of development banks and increased access to remedy for abuses, yet no single organisation has the complete picture. SOMO and Both ENDS teamed up with partners across three continents to make a systematic, comparative analysis of the banks and their accountability mechanisms from the perspective of affected communities and complainants. The co-authors divided the tasks and contributed their unique knowledge and expertise to the report, while learning from their peers in the process. Dividing the work enabled the groups to build the strongest case possible and helped enhance the effectiveness of follow-up advocacy with banks around the world.

ADVOCACY SKILLS – *The capacity to communicate effectively.* Many civil society actors are experts in on-the-ground impacts of policies, but lack the skills to communicate and advocate effectively in the language spoken by decision-makers, or to translate that language for their constituents. Trade and investment agreements are a good example. TNI and Friends of the Earth International joined partners in Asia in co-organising a participatory workshop on investment protection. Together, the groups developed the objectives and content of the workshop, which included active sharing of knowledge and experiences, cross-fertilisation of ideas and enrichment of everyone attending. The workshop's interactive format, which involved role playing and argumentation practice, prepared participants to directly articulate a robust case to policymakers. It also built their confidence to take part in debates, communicate with the media, and coordinate messages and strategies across regions.

LEVERAGE – *The capacity to exert influence.* To be effective at lobbying and advocacy, one must always consider who holds the power and how they can be influenced. Global networks are critical for identifying multiple leverage points and developing the capacity to exert influence wherever and whenever it's needed. In response to a case of labour rights abuses involving workers in Sri Lanka, the Clean Clothes Campaign and its partners mapped the leverage points, including both local and distant actors, from factory management to European brands, retailers and consumers. The groups made an inventory of knowledge, expertise, skills and contacts across the CCC network and then coordinated diverse local and international actions to exert influence over respective targets. The application of pressure on multiple leverage points ultimately proved critical to the success of the workers' case.

AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT – *The capacity to undertake action freely and safely.* The FGG programme works to ensure that people, communities and civil society actors can freely and safely organise, voice their opinions, express their grievances, claim and defend their rights, and secure remedy. Securing an enabling environment – guaranteeing that people have the capacity to freely and safely make their voices heard – requires sweeping, fundamental change. Everyone must play their part. In the case of the murder of indigenous Lenca activist Berta Cáceres, for example, Milieudefensie co-organised a delegation of Lenca activists from Honduras to bring their demands directly to decision-makers in the Netherlands and other European countries, while other FGG members urged Dutch development bank FMO to divest from the project the Lenca people are resisting to an enabling environment.

MAXIMISING COLLECTIVE STRENGTHS

Access, constituencies, knowledge, advocacy skills, leverage and an enabling environment: developing these key capacities is achieved by working and learning together, maximising each other's strengths and addressing each other's weaknesses. In Sri Lanka. In Honduras. And right here in the Netherlands. Each and every one of the examples described above can be linked to the lobbying and advocacy efforts of FGG members themselves. This is both logical and necessary. When FGG members address Dutch, European or international decision-makers, they are doing so *at the request of partners and their constituencies*, on the basis of knowledge, evidence and analyses generated with partners and their constituencies, to further goals that are *shared by partners and their constituencies*. And whenever possible, FGG members engage in such efforts *alongside of partners and their constituencies*, as they can speak best about the problems they face and the solutions they want.

For more on mutual capacity development, go to the full report at fairgreenandglobal.org

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Both ENDS
Connecting people for change

Clean
Clothes
Campaign

SOMO

milieudefensie
Friends of the Earth Netherlands

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