

COUNTERPART INTERNATIONAL is a leading international development organization that strengthens the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world. Organizational capacity building is central to Counterpart's original mission of investing in and supporting local organizations to create opportunities for self-defined and locally-owned development. An early contributor to USAID's Capacity Building (1.0 and 2.0) frameworks and tools, Counterpart's organizational capacity building approach continues to evolve over time while remaining a participatory process in which our partner CSOs prioritize their needs and forms of assistance so that they can best deliver on their mission.

Our work is defined by our results. For more than 50 years, Counterpart has provided technical support and built partnerships with more than 10,000 organizations worldwide, leaving behind wholly independent legacy organizations providing capacity building services to their partners in the South Pacific, Central and South Asia, the Caucasus, Latin America, and Africa. Testament to the effectiveness of our approach is that we have recently negotiated an implementation partnership agreement with an Association of Central Asian Regional CSOs which we helped to start nearly 20 years ago. In the preceding years, they have received millions of direct funding from USAID and other international donors and are a key policymaking force in Central Asia.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND PERFORMANCE APPROACH

Our Organizational Capacity and Performance (OCP) framework draws upon our own experiences and products while also incorporating external advancements and proven industry tools to meet the evolving needs of our CSO strengthening partners and stakeholders. This framework maintains elements of what has demonstrably worked for Counterpart and our partners over the years but also incorporates new ideas from USAID's Capacity 2.0 approach; innovations derived from the Counterpart Social Sector Accelerator and our Innovation for Change program; and in response to trends and events affecting civil society. Counterpart's approach to CSO capacity building is unique in that we have a decades-long, mature, experiential understanding of the importance of and composition of civil society. Other elements unique to Counterpart include:

- Incorporating **local systems principles** and partnerships, including customizing and teaching partners to use political economy, social networking, and stakeholder analysis tools to think and work politically;
- Utilizing data-informed decision-making and corresponding **adaptive management techniques** to ensure that we are always evaluating our assumptions and activities for maximum efficiency and impact;
- Adopting innovation and technology as **change accelerators** for both organizational capacity and the methods and activities they use to affect change;
- Facilitating **network-based learning and collective action models** to strengthen social capital, leverage unique network member skills, and scale activities through communication and coordination; and
- Paving the way toward CSO **sustainability and self-reliance** by using a comprehensive set of Counterpart-created and customized tools that bolster both the demand side of organizational entrepreneurship and fundraising as well as the supply side, creating an enabling environment and mechanisms for community philanthropy and domestic resource mobilization.

Counterpart's organizational capacity building work is employed as a means (better organizational systems, structure, and resources) to an end of political, social, economic, and security impacts and outcomes. We call this our **capacity dividend**. A Partner Organizational Change Survey of 115 CSO recipients of our capacity building services found that 75% increased their paid staff, 73% increased the number of services they offered, 79% increased their participation in networks, and 55% increased their funding sources after Counterpart's capacity building.



ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Counterpart understands the inherent complexities of capacity building and that every organization and every country context is unique, requiring a customized and contextualized approach and that the process must be owned by the participating CSOs. Understanding this complexity, Counterpart employs the following elements in nearly all capacity building programs:

ELEMENT 1: CONTEXTUAL AND SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

This element examines and evaluates the situational context and the systems within which our programs and CSO partners work. While contextual evaluation is not a new process, Counterpart's approach is unique in that we involve our partners in all evaluations, so they have the tools and skills to regularly assess, evaluate, and adapt to rapidly changing conditions that impact their work. This builds ownership and self-reliance because the solutions are based on evaluations and analysis led by our CSO partners.

ELEMENT 2: ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATIONS

Counterpart uses a customizable *Participatory Organizational Development Assessment (PODA)* diagnostic to evaluate the existing capacity of organizations.

EVALUATION CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORIES
Governance and Accountability	Board, Legal Policy Manuals, Internal and External Oversight, Fiduciary Accountability
Finance and Administration	Financial Management Policies and Controls, Documented Human Resource Practices
Resource Acquisition and Growth	Market Awareness and Strategy, Asset Identification, Financial Sustainability Action Plan
Products and Services	Clear Presentation, Market Relevance, Continuous Learning, Research and Development
Outreach, Partnerships, Advocacy	Constituency, Partnership Strategy, Outreach Plan, Advocacy Practice
Management for Results	Practices Inclusion and Delegation, Ethical Standards, Client / Constituent Focus

Counterpart's PODA diagnostic is unique in multiple ways. First, the evaluations all use a participatory process where staff from different parts of the organization respond to question prompts and self-evaluate the systems and work of the CSO. Secondly, we do not just look for the existence of a system, manual, or tool but we explore the understanding and use of it within the organization. Thirdly, the PODA is fully customizable based on the type, size, and needs of the CSO. In developing and designing this process, we have created more than 220 standard organizational capacity indicators. For organizations that want to receive international donor funding, we use a more rigorous evaluation process, but we can also develop a streamlined diagnostic for community-based organizations or initiative groups that want to formalize their work as a CSO. In Bangladesh, Counterpart is piloting an online CSO self-evaluation website to provide motivated CSOs with a new tool for self-learning and accountability.

ELEMENT 3: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLANNING

Following the organizational evaluation processes, Counterpart works with individual organizations and affiliated or networked organizations to identify self-defined priorities for capacity development as well as activities that enable them to better achieve their organizational mission and meet the needs of their constituents. In working with individual organizations, Counterpart uses two primary guided capacity building planning activities: capacity development action planning (C-DAP) and financial sustainability action planning (F-SAP). During these two activities, Counterpart plays an engaged, supportive, and instructional facilitator role. Our partner organizations lead the issue identification and prioritization effort based on the results of the diagnostics described in element one. Our in-country capacity building staff work with partners to identify a logical



workplan, activity schedules, and human and financial resources to fill capacity gaps. This is a critical point in the capacity building process and often determines the level of motivation and local ownership of capacity building.

ELEMENT 4: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FACILITATION

Counterpart's role as capacity building provider centers around mentoring and on-site technical assistance, coaching, providing access and referrals to resources, and making organizational connections for shared learning opportunities. We do not provide a series of off-the-shelf trainings but instead want our partner CSOs to prioritize and identify capacity building needs and solutions as well as allocate staff time and organizational resources to meet their prioritized needs. Counterpart's capacity building resources are abundant and diverse. They include a training curriculum, content, and manual database that contains more than 1,500 products in a variety of forms and in dozens of languages. Counterpart also utilizes the capacity building resources of our network partners, the WomenLead Institute and the Social Sector Accelerator. We forge strategic partnerships and have access to content and tools in sector areas such as agriculture, humanitarian assistance, health, natural resource management, and social enterprise.

ELEMENT 5: COLLECTIVE IMPACT THROUGH NETWORKING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Counterpart partners with CSOs to improve their financial and program management and their governance structures - all with an emphasis on **collective impact** or building the commitment and skills of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration. Counterpart included the conditions and processes of collective impact into our **Integrated Social Accountability** model, a framework that creates opportunities for and knowledge sharing surrounding networking around issues of common concern. Working collaboratively, CSOs are best positioned to represent the interests of citizens and demand more responsive governance. Counterpart's approach to network development and coalition building focuses on network purpose, social capital and trust, leadership, communication, collaborative action, and measurement. Counterpart has invested heavily in the learning around effective networking, primarily through our global Innovation for Change (I4C) and Information Safety and Capacity (ISC) programs which expand and strengthen networking opportunities for CSOs throughout the world to push back against the trend of closing civic space. The success of these and other networking initiatives is building local ownership of the process and ensuring that partners drive the reform and development agenda rather than a pre-conceived idea of what is needed. Counterpart embraces technology as a vital tool in this effort in order to democratize communications and learning, conduct social network analysis, automate tasks and utilize artificial intelligence to identify and predict trends, and expand fundraising capabilities.

ELEMENT 6: MONITOR, EVALUATE, AND LEARN

This element builds out from **Counterpart's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)** methodology as well as a renewed practice of designing and measuring for performance and results. Also, important to our practice in this area is working with our partners to integrate better monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems within their organizations and mission-driven activity efforts. Every Counterpart program contains rigorous MEL and CLA elements aimed at improving overall program performance as well as contributing to better designs of future programs. In addition to the quantitative and observatory aspects of Counterpart's tools described above, we have incorporated complementary MEL tools that incorporate a focus on results as well as learning the considerations and critical factors that led to those results. This is important and addressed our observed need that CSOs were overly focused on quantitative donor compliance at the expense of ties to their communities, constituents, and public officials. Our programs work best when they are action and change focused as opposed to an overemphasis on theory and introspection.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING TOOLS AND METHODS

The following is a sample of Counterpart's most notable capacity building tools and methodologies out of a larger collection of 100+ products.



TECHNICAL RESOURCE	PURPOSE
Participatory Organizational Development Assessment (PODA)	Counterpart's foundational organizational capacity diagnostic. The full version contains more than 200 evaluation indicators and six categories of CSO capacity. This is fully customizable and in 5 languages.
Capacity Development Action Plan (C-DAP)	Workplanning tool that includes prioritized actions, schedule of deliverables, and a responsibility table.
Civil Society Enabling Resource Analysis (CS-ERA)	A new tool that identifies the sources, systems, and laws regarding civil society resources available in countries or at the sub-national level.
Financial Sustainability Action Plan (F-SAP)	A participatory diagnostic that Counterpart uses with CSOs to identify internal assets, envision future financial goals, and develop plans for resource acquisition.
Proposal Writers Handbook and Resource Acquisition Training	A standard and regularly updated proposal writing handbook for local CSO partners as well as a corresponding training series on six modes of local fundraising.
Capacity Building Training Library	A collection of dozens of core civil society capacity building training manuals – many of which are in multiple languages and customized for specific programs and organization types.
Social Enterprise Toolbox	An online database of tools for CSOs that want to initiate social enterprises
Network Capacity Diagnostic and Network Strengthening Tools	A diagnostic and tools aimed at evaluating networking capacities as well as providing different network models and other capacity assistance tools.
Information Security Toolbox	Counterpart's global network of information security specialists have a collection of training materials, check-lists, and software to assist journalists, CSOs, and civic activists
Civic Innovation Lab Model	A successful human-centered co-design process that results in innovative solutions to social problems that have then been funded by private sector stakeholders.
Appreciative Community Mobilization Model	A 10-step process that Counterpart applies at the community level to mobilize citizens to prioritize local needs and develop an action plan for local stability and development.
Communa-Das Service Exchange	Shared economy platform for CSOs to barter and trade for needed services with other CSOs.
Social Media and Social Networking Analysis	Powerful web-based tools that Counterpart uses to monitor online dialogues, issue trends, and relational networks. We use these tools on a country level to identify priority issues for advocacy and also as an early warning alert system for increasing tensions or violence.
Online Organizational Training and Certification Tools	Counterpart created the tools and processes for certifying local CSOs for USAID funding in Central Asia, the Caucuses, and Latin America. In Bangladesh, we are piloting an online tool to support this process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To explore the approaches and tools of Counterpart's Inclusive Social Accountability framework and how it relates to global health, visit counterpart.org/inclusive-social-accountability.

