

LWR & ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



COODEPROSA cooperative members show off their prize-winning cocoa, which was awarded best in Nicaragua. LWR provided the cooperative with training to improve production and processing methods, as well as expert technical assistance from private sector buyers.

BACKGROUND

Since its founding in 1945, Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has worked with local partner organizations to develop and implement relief and development programs. LWR's partnership approach grows out of the conviction that local institutions are best positioned to act on behalf of their communities, due to their understanding of local context, their connections to civil society and government authorities, and the role they play in ensuring sustainability. Working through local partners is foundational to LWR's capacity development approach. LWR's approach equips local organizations with tools and capacities that make them more effective as institutions, relevant to those they serve and capable of leading social change efforts. LWR partners with more than 150 organizations working in Africa, Latin America, and Asia and the Middle East.

LWR'S APPROACH

Through its organizational capacity development approach, LWR maximizes the impact of local partner organizations by jointly assessing their strengths and weaknesses and designing strategies for greater accountability, transparency and sustainability. LWR's approach, informed by decades of

experience, tailors time and resource investments to partners' needs and local operating environments. Through collaborative trainings and workshops in conjunction with follow-up coaching and mentoring, LWR enables partners to appropriate new learning and immediately put knowledge into practice in their programs and organizations.

LWR strengthens community systems by encouraging active local participation and involvement from problem identification through solution ownership in the areas of **assessment and action planning, governance and accountability, operational and technical capacities.**

CAPACITY BUILDING PROCESS AND TOOLS

Capacity Assessment and Action Planning

Following initial dialogue with key stakeholders, LWR conducts an **organizational capacity assessment** with its local partner organizations to jointly identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. The assessment evaluates organizational aspirations, structure and governance, human resources, financial management, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, among others.

Action plans are then co-developed by LWR and its partner organization, to reflect the identified needs and the goals for performance improvement to achieve the local organization's mission. Action plans build upon existing assets and strengths



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to build strong and sustainable structures and systems. Where necessary, stand-alone or targeted capacity development interventions are designed to strengthen specific capacity areas, so that partner organizations attain a basic level of implementation readiness.

An explicit learning component is embedded in the action plan through frequent **monitoring** of targeted capacity areas to inform course correction as needed, and ultimately measure the effectiveness of project activities during the life of a project. Common monitoring tools track progress on technical, programmatic and financial management. LWR's **exit strategy** is built into this process, through the identification and targeting of key capacities and pathways towards sustainability, for focus in each capacity building area of the action plan.

Governance and Accountability Capacity

In order to foster sustainable organizations that benefit from internal and external credibility, legitimacy and member cohesion, LWR supports partner organization **governance and accountability capacity**. Trainings and ongoing mentorship with organizational leaders and members ensure that roles, responsibilities and rules are clear. In many cases, LWR facilitates the formation or formal recognition of organizations through legal registration, membership in relevant coalitions and other channels. LWR also supports planning processes that are inclusive and encourage sound strategic and business practices. Through the development of strategies, systems, and policies that fill identified gaps, organizations become stronger and more able to provide sustainable services to their members.

Where appropriate, the approach also focuses on strengthening partners to represent and advocate for their members at national or international levels. LWR also connects local partners to strategic institutions and networks, including government and financial service providers, to leverage the impact of LWR investment and further enhance partner organization sustainability.

In many cases, the approach also employs a coaching model. LWR staff serve as mentors to the leadership of partner organizations to support governance skills and processes that improve accountability to stakeholders.

A series of manuals and toolkits have been developed to systematize LWR's support to organizational function.

Operational Capacity

LWR supports partner organization **operational capacity** by focusing on financial and administrative management and provision of infrastructure when needed. Tailored trainings and ongoing mentorship with staff, leaders and members enhance groups' financial and functional literacy. LWR or project finance staff are sometimes embedded in the partner organization to provide ongoing support to systems and mentoring that allow permanent staff or leadership to learn on the job. To accompany learned skills, software or other infrastructure is sometimes provided to support partner organization operations. LWR's finance and human resource procedures may inform partner organizational capacities and function; LWR often uses a participatory, self-reflective process to help partners develop policies and procedures of their own.

For smaller or younger partner organizations that need time to develop and effectively follow sophisticated accounting and financial management systems, LWR takes an early hands-on role to ensure proper financial management. Project activities then serve as a platform for partner staff to "learn by doing" with oversight from LWR staff. Regular feedback loops and compliance tools and manuals support the grading and "graduation" of partners according to their operational strength.

Technical Capacity

LWR supports partner organization **technical capacity** through training and coaching on targeted areas essential for program implementation and to improve core business function, such as production or processing of cocoa. For agricultural programs, embedded extension workers enable partner organizations to deliver front-end services to their members. Conversely, large-scale efforts to build disaster risk reduction capacity through early warning systems, evacuation routes and other means, illustrate the reach and depth of LWR's approach throughout local communities.

Strategic partnerships leverage LWR's experience and knowledge to create resources that are used broadly in the development community. A series of LWR technical manuals, tool kits and other resources support partner organization capacity in cocoa and coffee particularly. Under LWR's Learning for Gender Integration initiative, several partner organizations have benefited from trainings and ongoing mentoring to improve gender inclusiveness in their operations and programming. LWR's Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework provides a structure and tools to partner organization efforts as well.



An agronomist exchanges with a Tanzanian farmer on best farming practices.