Aidlink

Organisational Capacity-Building Plan

April 2014 - November 2016

27th February 2014

Mike Williams

Consultant on International Development & NGO Management

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List of Acronyms

CB: Capacity Building

INGO: International NGO

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

OD: Organisational Development

OSA: Organisational Self Assessment

PG: (Irish Aid) Programme Grant

PO: Programme Officer

SORP: Standard of Recommended Practice (UK Standard for NGO accounting)

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1.   Introduction

This Capacity Building Plan sets out Aidlink's commitments and activities, over the two-and-a-half year period from January 2014 to August 2016, to implement a systematic partner capacity-building process as set out under the '*Aidlink Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building*[1]' document. The plan has been developed in parallel with and as part of the same process that led to the development of the approach paper[2]. Its purpose is to detail the steps that will be taken by Aidlink, in conjunction with its partners, to put the agreed organisational approach into practice over the next two years.   The *Aidlink Strategic Plan 2013-15* and the *Partnership Approach to Development (2010)* serve as key guiding documents for both the capacity-building approach paper and this capacity-building plan.

2.   Objectives of the Plan

The plan has two overarching objectives, one internal and one external:

1. To build up the **internal capacity of Aidlink itself**, in order to ensure that it can deliver a high-quality **systematic capacity-building support programme** for its partners over the next two years, as set out in the partner capacity-building approach paper.

2. To **facilitate and support each of the five partners** in Kenya and Uganda in enhancing the internal **capacity** and **performance** of their organisations, through a **systematic self-managed internal capacity-building process**, that will ultimately improve the **quality and delivery of their development programmes** for poor and marginalised people.

3.   Aidlink Internal Capacity Building - Objective 1

Aidlink is a small INGO, with a limited staffing capacity, but with a strong track record in developing strong two-way relationships with local organisations.   In order to deliver on the second (external) objective of supporting partners to implement their CB plans, it is crucial for Aidlink, to build its own capacity in the first instance, so that it can provide the level and quality of support that partners will need in implementing their own CB processes.   The timeline for the delivery of all activities on internal capacity building is presented in Annex 1.

3.1   Recruitment of a Second Programme Officer (PO)

Up to now, Aidlink has had just one Programme Officer within the organisation to work with and support partners. Under current arrangements, the Director also provides a significant level of direct support and advice to partners**. A second PO will be recruited in the first half of 2014** to provide extra capacity in supporting partners, while also freeing up some of the Director's time to address broader organisational issues.   While the roles of the two POs will be relatively flexible and interchangeable, it is envisaged that one will take a lead[3] in relation to monitoring of and supporting partners in their organisational development (OD) processes (including their capacity-building

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[1] *Aidlink Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building*, M. Williams, January 2014.
[2] This process is outlined in Annex 1 of the approach paper.
[3] 'Taking a lead' in this context refers to one PO maintaining an **overview** of the five partners OD / CB work, and ensuring that the support provided is **consistent** both with **Aidlink's defined approach**, and with evolving **best practice** in the sector. The other PO will take a similar approach to RBM e.g. in relation to requirements for Irish Aid or other donors. However, both POs will work on aspects of Organisational CB and RBM with individual partners. Hence 'taking a lead' does not mean an exclusive focus on one theme.

initiatives), while the other will take a lead in relation to results based management (RBM). With extra capacity in place, each partner in Kenya and Uganda will in future be visited at least twice per year.

3.2 Building Internal Competency in Relation to OD and Partner Capacity-Building

Aidlink already has a considerable degree of experience in relation to supporting the capacity-building process of partners. However, in moving to a more in-depth, systematic and structured process for supporting partners on CB, it is important that Aidlink has a thorough understanding of how those processes should be developed. In particular, POs will need to have an in-depth **knowledge** on organisational development (OD) and capacity-building processes and the communications **skills** required to facilitate partner organisational self-assessments (OSAs).

A training programme will be put in place in mid 2014 to build Aidlink's internal competency in relation to OD and partner CB. The specific nature of this training programme will be defined more precisely in the near future, but it could include, for example, the participation of staff in specific external training programmes (e.g. within Dóchas or at INTRAC), the organisation of an internal workshop with external expertise, short secondments of staff, or participation in particular courses etc.

Following on from the initial training, the 'lead PO' on OD and Partner Capacity-Building will be responsible for ensuring that Aidlink's approach to OD and capacity-building is evolving in line with best practice in the sector on a continuing basis. Apart from the CB approach paper (including Dóchas checklists) that will be shared with partners as part of their OSA processes, Aidlink will also seek to **develop specific guidance notes for partners over time in relation to particular aspects of CB work**.

3.3 Building Internal Competency in Relation to Results Based Management (RBM)

The *Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building[4]* identifies Results Based Management (RBM) as a key focus area for support to partners. In line with the increasing emphasis on RBM in the sector, Aidlink has invested a lot of energy over the last two years in supporting its partners to develop results frameworks for their programmes, particularly in the context of (but not exclusively for) Irish Aid's Programme Funding for Aidlink. The intention is that this work will be deepened over the new two years.

As for OD and capacity-building more generally, Aidlink will take early steps to **build up its own internal competency in relation to RBM in 2014**. The precise nature of this internal CB initiative will be defined more precisely over the coming weeks, and again may include staff participation in external courses or events, or the organisation of an internal workshop. The lead PO on RBM will be responsible for ensuring that Aidlink's approach to RBM is evolving in line with best practice in the sector, including the **development of a specific paper outlining the organisational approach to RBM by early 2015**.

3.4 Building Internal Competency in relation to Advocacy and a Rights Approach

Supporting partners in developing a rights approach to their work has also been identified as a focus area within the Aidlink Strategic Plan and in the capacity building approach paper[5]. Hence, it is important for Aidlink to build up its own knowledge and experience in relation to a rights approach also. While important, this is seen as being less urgent that internal capacity development in relation

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[4] As outlined in Section 3.12 of the approach paper.
[5] As outlined n Section 3.13 of the approach paper.

to Partner CB and RBM. Hence, **training on a rights approach will take place in early 2015, with a paper outlining the approach and guiding notes for partners being developed by mid-2015**.

3.5   A 10-year Review of Aidlink's Partnership and Capacity-Building Approach

Aidlink has considerable experience in relation to the application of a partnership approach, and the relative successes or failures of individual interventions have been noted or documented to a degree, but the effectiveness of the overall partnership approach has not been evaluated to-date. **The development of a learning approach within the organisation will be a key feature of the internal capacity-building approach over the coming years**.   In this context, **a 10-year review of the relationships with the existing five partners in Kenya and Uganda will be undertaken in early 2015**. In order to obtain a holistic and fully objective view, the process will be managed by an external consultant. It will trace the development and progress of each of the partners, both organisationally and programmatically, over that period, with particular reference to the support they have received in that period from all external sources (including both programme funding and capacity-support).   It will then seek to draw conclusions on the specific impact of Aidlink's programming and CB support over that period.

3.6   A 10-year Review of the Immersion Programme

The Immersion Programme that is implemented with a partner in Ghana currently operates quite separately and differently from the other partnerships in Kenya and Uganda.   However, the possibility of developing further immersion programmes in East Africa is currently being explored. The potential of creating a more coherent and complementary approach across the two types of partnership (immersion and programme / CB support) is also being considered at a strategic level. For these reasons, but also in the interest of developing Aidlink's organisational lesson learning approach, **a 10-year review of the Immersion Programme is planned to start in the second quarter of 2015**. It is envisaged that additional capacity in relation to the Immersion Programme will be recruited in 2014 in order to support the expansion of the programme.

3.7   Annual Internal Review of Partner CB and Programme Work

An internal annual review of the partner CB support programme and partner development programmes is planned to take place in late November / early December each year. The timing of the review is designed to allow for prompt internal discussion in follow-up to the three-day workshop with the five partners that is scheduled for early / mid November each year (see Section 4.7, below). Participants in the review will include board members, management and staff of Aidlink.

The purpose of the review will be to consider all aspects of relationships with and progress of partners (organisational and programmatic), with particular reference to issues that have arisen in the annual partner workshop at field level. As a further means of deepening board members' understanding of Aidlink's field work, and subject to budgetary constraints, consideration may be given to holding one of these annual review meetings at field level, to follow on directly from a field visit by some board members and staff.

The third (internal) annual review meeting in November 2016 will provide an opportunity to discuss the five evaluation reports from the two-year Partner Capacity-Building Programme that will be available at that point. **The delivery of the overall CB plan (both internal and external components) will be evaluated against the original objectives**, as stated in Section 2, above.

3.8   Participation in Irish and International Capacity-Building Initiatives

In order to develop its expertise in relation to partnership and capacity-building further, Aidlink will look for opportunities to engage in specific **learning, research or networking initiatives on these themes at Irish and / or international levels**. **A basic scoping exercise will be undertaken to identify**

possible opportunities in this regard. The initial scoping will be a brief exercise to be conducted in mid-2014, though the organisation is unlikely to invest heavily in any major exercises until 2015 because of an already significant workload in 2014, and other more immediate priorities as outlined in the preceding sections above. Possible opportunities might include participation in further Dóchas initiatives on partnership or capacity-building[6], the regular Keystone Accountability international partnership studies, or other partnership initiatives linked to the Development Effectiveness agenda or Post-2015 Development Framework at international level.

3.9   Developing Thematic Programming Papers

As most of the programmes implemented by Aidlink's five programming partners have their roots in or are connected to WASH and healthcare initiatives, s**hort thematic policy papers** will be developed in relation to both of these areas (and others if required) with a dual purpose:

- To clarify, both internally and for partners, the priorities and limits for support from Aidlink on each of these themes;
- To provide some guidance and focus for partners in developing their thematic programmes.

A general policy in relation to funding and programming priorities will also be developed to cover issues such as **beneficiary targeting and equality approaches** (with specific reference to gender and disability). The priorities and scheduling for the development of policy papers will be assessed in the first quarter of 2015, with a view to work on these policies in the second half of 2015 - after the 10-year studies on partnership and the Immersion Programme have been concluded.

3.10   Funding and Budget for Capacity-Building Plan

An organisational exercise is already underway to develop a fundraising plan to increase funding from public sources. The recruitment of an additional programming PO in the short term will be funded by reducing programme funding allocations to the five partners in 2014. It is envisaged that the additional Immersion Project capacity, referred to in Section 3.6 above, will be at least partly funded by a planned expansion of the Immersion Programme. This expansion will also lead to an increase in funding for the organisation as a whole, and for internal and external capacity-building initiatives in particular. **The cost of Aidlink support activities for partner CB at field level** (as outlined in Section 4, below) **and of the internal CB costs** described above (in Section 3) **will be allocated to the Programme Quality and Administration lines under the Irish Aid Programme Grant (PG)**, as appropriate.

Additional CB activities of partners themselves (e.g. costs of OSAs) will be charged to the programming lines of the Irish Aid PG, subject to agreement with Irish Aid[7], or to unrestricted income where necessary. It has also been agreed at board level that Aidlink will in future present its accounts fully in line with the SORP standard (as also requested by Irish Aid) a move that will result in more representative and favourable administration cost ratios being presented in the Aidlink annual report. A detailed budget to include costs of all of these capacity-building initiatives will be completed in April.

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[6] Aidlink previously participated in the Dóchas Partnership Survey on Irish NGOs in Kenya, and in the development of the Dóchas Guidelines on Partnership.
[7] The move to a structured and systematic CB support for partners, as outlined in the new approach paper, is considered by Aidlink to be an integral part of the overall programme of work funded by Irish Aid under the PG scheme. Hence, it is logical for these costs to be included as PG programme costs.

4.   Capacity-Building Support for Partners – Objective 2

Under the Partner Capacity-Building Support Plan outlined in this section, each of the five Aidlink partners in Kenya and Uganda will develop its own two-year capacity-building plan to be implemented from late-2014 to late-2016. Aidlink's '*triple approach*'[8] in supporting partners will include the following:

- Facilitating the **development** of the five comprehensive partner capacity-building plans;
- Providing **targeted CB support in specific areas** under that plan; and
- **Accompanying, monitoring and supporting partners** in managing their overall CB plans (including interventions supported by other external agencies).

The actions to be taken at each of the five stages of the Aidlink Capacity Building Cycle,[9] are described in detail in the *Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building.* Hence*,* only the basic overview of each stage is presented here.

Partners in Uganda and Kenya
The five partners to which support will be provided are Girl Child Network and Diocese of Lodwar in Kenya and EMESCO, Caritas MAADO and VAD in Uganda, all of whom also receive programme funding for their development programmes from Aidlink. Under the plans to expand the Immersion Programme to Uganda and / or Kenya and to integrate it more with development programming activities (as described in Section 3.6, above) additional capacity support may be provided to these or other partners where appropriate.

4.1   Supporting Partner Organisational Self Assessments (OSAs) – Stage 1

The first stage of the CB process is for each partner to undertake a structured self-assessment of its own organisation, with facilitation and support from Aidlink. Preparations for OSAs (see Section 3.5 of the approach paper) will begin in June 2014, with a view to having a slightly staggered approach across partners throughout, so that Aidlink is able to engage fully with each of them at all stages. It is envisaged that **all partners will have completed OSAs by October**. Aidlink POs will play a key role in overseeing the OSA processes (see Section 3.6 of the approach paper), including a direct facilitation role. Additional support from external facilitators or specialist agencies (e.g. an accountant to look at financial capacity) may also be sought where required.

4.2:   Preparation of Partner Organisational Capacity-Building Plans – Stage 2

On completion of their OSAs each partner will proceed to develop a full two-year 'single, integrated capacity-building plan' (see Section 3.7 of the approach paper). This single plan will incorporate all capacity-building activities to be undertaken by the partner in a systematic and coherent manner over a two-year period, with potential support from a number of external agencies, including Aidlink. **The specific areas of support to be provided by Aidlink, including funding, training, technical support or linkages, will be clearly defined at this stage,[10]** as will the roles to be played by all others, (potentially including multilateral or bilateral donors, international NGOs, specific capacity-building agencies and / or external consultants). In line with the completion of OSAs, plans will also be developed in a slightly staggered manner, with a **target completion date of November 2014 for the preparation of all plans**.

4.3   Implementation of Partner Capacity-Building Plans – Stage 3

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[8] The triple approach is described in Section 3.1 of the CB Approach paper.
[9] The Aidlink Capacity Building Cycle itself is described in Section 3.3 of the CB Approach paper.
[10] In line with *Table 2: Types of Capacity-Building Support from Aidlink* in the CB Approach paper.

All partners will start to implement their plans immediately after developing them. Aidlink and other contributors will have clear timeframes for specific CB initiatives to be supported during the two-year cycle. Plans will be designed to allow for full coherence between CB and programming activities, so that unnecessary work overload is avoided (see Section 3.8 of the CB Approach paper). **Key focal areas for specific capacity support from Aidlink during this period will be on the further development of partner RBM systems, and on support for the development of a rights approach in their development programmes**. However, Aidlink's specific CB support under the two-year CB plans will not be confined to these two themes. Aidlink will also provide funding, technical support and external linkages for partners in other areas that will be identified and agreed during the planning process (Phase 2).

4.4   Monitoring the Implementation of CB Plans – Stage 4

Partners will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of their plans, but Aidlink will also play a key accompanying and oversight role in ensuring that all CB activities are being implemented in a coherent and timely manner. In particular, Aidlink POs will discuss progress with partners on a regular basis to ensure that any significant issues or problems relating to activities supported by other agencies can be resolved in an efficient and constructive manner.

4.4.1   Six Monthly Reports

Partners will submit the first six-monthly CB updates in May and June 2015. The relevant Aidlink PO will discuss these reports in detail with the partners, either via Skype or during field visits. Following the annual reviews (see 4.4.2, below), a further set of six-monthly reports will be prepared and discussed in May to June 2016.

4.4.2   Annual CB Review Meetings

Annual reviews of the implementation of each of the five partner CB plans will take place at field level between October and November 2015. Where adjustments to a plan are necessary and justified (e.g. due to a dramatic change in the local context), activities will be adjusted or changed accordingly. Aidlink POs will play a facilitating role in the review process. Other CB supporting agencies may be invited to participate in annual reviews, where relevant and appropriate.

4.5   Evaluation of the Two-Year Partner Capacity Building Processes – Stage 5

Independent (external) formal evaluations of the implementation of each of the CB plans will take place towards the end of the two-year cycle in September - October 2016. Aidlink POs will be responsible for establishing and managing the independent evaluation processes. Other CB supporting agencies will be invited to participate in the evaluation processes. Each evaluation will look specifically at the level of increase in **capacity** (outputs) and **performance** (outcomes) of the partner in relation to the specific **targets** across the full range of capacity themes. The evaluations will also seek to obtain evidence of the ultimate **impact** of CB initiatives in relation to the achievement of sustainable benefits for target beneficiaries of partner programmes.

4.6   Starting a New Two-Year Capacity-Building Cycle

On completion of the evaluations, Aidlink will facilitate each partner to conduct a new OSA in the period October - November 2016, with a view to developing a new 2-year CB plan immediately afterwards. The findings from the evaluations and results from the OSA will be used to develop the new plans.

4.7   Annual Three-Day Partner Workshops

An annual three-day (minimum) workshop involving all five partners will take plane in November each year, just after the completion of initial OSAs in 2014, after the completion of one-year reviews in 2015, and after the final evaluations in 2016. The workshops will focus on four main themes:

- Partner Organisational CB Processes
- Development of RBM approaches
- Development of a Rights Approach
- Progress on programming interventions (including those funded by Aidlink, and by others), and the linkages between CB processes and programme delivery.

The workshops will be used as a key learning and training opportunity for all partners, and for Aidlink itself.

4.8   Partner Exchange Visits and External Learning Events

A key part of Aidlink's approach to partner CB is the development of exchanges among the five partners themselves; enabling them to visit and learn from other organisations (outside of the Aidlink five); and supporting them to participate in various networks and events where they can share their knowledge and learn from others. Scope for these types of activities will be built into each of the five partner CB plans, so that events and activities are planned and arranged in a consistent manner, and are relevant and supportive to the needs of each organisation.

Annex 1:

Timeline for Objective 1:   Aidlink Internal Capacity-Building Plan: April 2014 - November 2016

No.	Action	Leader	April – December 2014 A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2015 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2016 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N
1.1	Recruit second Aidlink PO[11]	Director – with Board				▓	▓																											
1.2	Internal CB / training for Aidlink staff on Org. Development / CB	Lead PO on CB to source training.						▓	▓	▓	▓																							
1.3.1	Internal CB / training for Aidlink Staff on Results Based Management	Lead PO on RBM to source training.								▓	▓																							
1.3.2	Development of paper and guidance notes on Aidlink's approach to RBM	Lead PO on RBM to manage process.										▓	▓	▓																				
1.4.1	Internal CB / training for Aidlink staff in relation to a rights approach.	PO													▓	▓																		
1.4.2	Development of a paper and guidance notes on a rights approach.	PO															▓	▓																
1.5	10-year study on the impact of partnerships and CB from 2004 to 2014.	CB PO to manage external consultancy.										▓	▓																					
1.6	10-year study on the impact of Aidlink's Immersion Programme 2004-2014.	Director																▓	▓	▓														
1.7	Annual Review of Internal and Partner CB Project.	Lead PO on CB to organise									▓										▓													▓
1.8	Scoping of opportunities for engagement in broader CB initiatives.	Lead PO in CB									▓																							
1.9	Development of thematic programming policies.	POs											▓				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
1.10	CB Budget and Fundraising Plan.	Director / Board	▓																															

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[11] Recruitment of second programme officer will create additional capacity for immersion

Annex 2:

Timeline for Objective 2:   Support for Partner Capacity-Building Processes 2014-2016

No.	Action	Leader	April – December 2014									2015												2016										
			A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N
2.1	Preparation with 5 partners for OSAs	POs							3	5																								
2.2	Implementation of OSAa (Stage 1)	POs								2	3																							
2.3	Preparation of Organisational CB Plans (Stage 2)	POs									2	2	1																					
2.4	Implementation of initial 2-year Partner CB Plans (Stage3)	POs										5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3
2.5	Monitoring of CB plans by Aidlink and Partners (Stage 4)	POs										5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3
2.5.1	Six monthly CB progress reports and discussions with partners (Stage 4)	POs															2	3											2	3				
2.5.2	Annual CB Review Meetings with individual partners (Stage 4)	POs																				2	3											
2.6	Evaluation of Individual 2-Year CB Plans (Stage 5)	POs to organise																														2	3	
2.7	Start of New 2-year CB Cycles: New OSA by each partner (Stage 6 / 1)	POs																														2	3	
2.8	Annual 3-day workshop with 5 Partners: Programmes, CB, RBM, Rights	Director, POs								5												5											5	
2.9	Partner exchange visits, visits to third parties, external conferences / events (ongoing / intermittent)	POs																																