

Capacity Development Plans

Trialling New Ways of Working Together in the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) Program

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Top > CDP workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, August 2013.

Above left and right > Partner organisation representatives discuss strategic planning for capacity development during the CDP workshop in Ethiopia, August 2013.

ABOUT CDPs

Capacity Development Plans (CDPs) are part of Australian Volunteers International's (AVI) desire to employ a more strategic approach with partner organisations under the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program.

CDPs aim to outline an intended way of working together based on the articulated capacity development priorities of AVI's overseas partners over a three to five year period. They also indicate how AVI volunteer assignments are expected to contribute to these priorities.

It is anticipated that volunteer assignment effectiveness will improve significantly when a more structured and formalised approach to partnership and capacity development between AVI and partner organisations is implemented.

In order to facilitate the formation of a more strategic approach, AVI developed a Capacity Assessment (CA) tool to establish the capacity development priorities of partner organisations and a Capacity Development Plan (CDP) template to capture the way in which the two organisations will work together.

AVI trialled these CDP tools using two models across seven different countries with a total of 32 partner organisations participating. This report contains the results of the trial based on AVI staff and partner organisation feedback, and proposes some recommendations for AVI and partner organisations wanting to work together in pursuit of capacity development objectives.

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Thank you also to Kylie Harrington for her leadership in developing and implementing the CDP workshops in Ethiopia and Lesotho. We hope the findings of this report help to support more effective collaboration between AVI and partner organisations to improve individual, organisational and institutional capacity in priority areas.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CDPs are part of Australian Volunteers International's (AVI's) desire to employ a more strategic approach to engaging with its partner organisations. CDPs aim to outline an intended way of working together based on a partner organisation's articulated capacity development priorities over the next three to five year period. They also indicate how individual AVI volunteer assignments are expected to contribute collectively to a successful longer-term strategy that responds to the partner organisation's capacity development priorities.

In order to help realise this strategy, AVI developed a Capacity Assessment (CA) tool to guide the process and a Capacity Development Plan (CDP) template to record the plan¹. AVI trialled these tools using two models across seven different countries, with a total of 32 partner organisations participating.

Key benefits and challenges of both the tools and process are listed below and recommendations on how to improve these are outlined at the end of this report.

Benefits of CDP Process and Tools

- > AVI's overseas partners are very supportive of working strategically to strengthen their partnerships with AVI. They see clear potential in the CDPs for improving the effectiveness of volunteer contributions in support of their capacity development.
- > CDP tools were also useful for partner organisations to better understand and plan for the interactions between multiple assignments over time.
- > The CDPs formalised and clarified the thinking underpinning the engagement between AVI, the AVID program and partner organisations. More specifically, CDP tools enabled the clarification of partner organisations' expectations of AVI and how it could assist the organisations over the three to five year period.
- > Partner organisations reported that CDPs helped improve their strategic thinking and/or planning capacity.

Challenges of CDP Process and Tools

- > Inconsistent understanding of the purpose, benefits, concepts, processes and monitoring of CDPs amongst stakeholders.
- > The language of the CDP tools needs to be accessible and easily understood by all users.
- > The tools do not always, or easily, adapt to the wide range of partner organisation types.
- > High level of interaction is required for CDP implementation.
- > Lack of alignment between CDPs and other AVI processes & tools.

¹ The combination of "CA tool and CDP template" will be referred as "CDP tools" throughout this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

Australian Volunteers International is constantly seeking opportunities to improve and strengthen its relationship and strategic planning with partner organisations. This has led AVI to consider the utility and practicality of CDPs.

CDPs respond to the recognised need for AVI to create a shared long-term vision of, and commitment to, a capacity development process with its overseas partners. As such, AVI aims to develop CDPs between AVI and each of its partner organisations.

The main goals of the CDPs are to:

1. Increase AVI's *effectiveness* in supporting partner organisation capacity development.
2. Strengthen the *long-term capacity* of partner organisations.
3. Outline an intended way of *working together* based on the partner organisation's articulated capacity needs over a three to five year period.
4. State how AVI *volunteer assignments* will contribute to the above.

In order to accomplish these goals, AVI developed a simple CA tool to support this process and a CDP template to record the plan. The CDP tools should be used by AVI staff (generally Country Managers) and partner organisation managers to develop the CDP jointly.

AVI is aware of the challenges that may arise when such tools are implemented in different country contexts. To better understand these possible challenges, AVI carried out a trial using two models across seven different countries, with a total of 32 partner organisations participating.

The main objectives of the trial were to:

- a) Assess whether the CDP tools served their intended purpose.
- b) Learn about the process and challenges of using the CDP tools (across different regions and with a diverse range of partner organisations).
- c) Learn about the partner organisations' level of understanding of the concepts and language used in the CDP tools.
- d) Discuss potential improvements to the tools and process, and propose possible next steps.

The lessons learned from the trial were used to inform this report and the recommendations that conclude it.

2. METHODOLOGY

In 2013, CDPs tools were developed by AVI to support and strengthen the long-term partnerships between AVI and partner organisations. The tools were trialled with a total of 32 partner organisations, using two different models: One-on-One Conversations and Workshops. AVI's Regional Managers and Country Managers involved in delivering the AVID program provided initial feedback on the draft tools before the trial commenced. This report contains findings that were aggregated from both models. Quotes are anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

2.1 Model 1: One-On-One Conversations

The main purpose of this model was to understand the practicalities of implementing CDPs in the field and possible challenges with the proposed CDP tools. Three Country Managers, from three different geographic regions, met one-on-one with partner organisation managers to develop and draft the CDPs. Each chose different ways to organise and facilitate the discussions.

In total, eleven partner organisations drawn from Cambodia, Thailand, Jordan, Lebanon, and Solomon Islands met with Country Managers to work on the CDPs using the draft tools. The sample of partner organisations for this model was selected based on a number of factors: the varied lengths of time they have partnered with AVI, the size of the organisation, and the type of organisation (see *Table 1* for more details).

2.2 Model 2: Workshops

The purpose of this model was to introduce the CDPs within a capacity development training context and to provide an open forum for partner organisations to share their perspectives on the CDP tools. To do this, AVI staff led a one-day workshop in two countries: Lesotho and Ethiopia. During these workshops, partner organisations were first presented with background information on the intent and purpose of the CDPs and then worked together in small groups with the support of AVI staff.

Participants explored whether CDP tools were appropriate for their own planning needs. This included identifying any organisational, practical or cultural issues that the tools and process might raise for them. The workshops also aimed to explore the partner organisations' perspectives on AVI's plan to implement them in the future. Participants were not asked to complete the CDP tools in full, but to practice working with them by completing one section for each CDP tool.

Representatives from all partner organisations in Lesotho and Ethiopia and a number of current volunteers participated in the workshops. A total of 21 representatives from nine partner organisations participated in the workshop in Ethiopia; and 16 representatives from 14 partner organisations in Lesotho.

2.3 Participants

The table below (*Table 1*) summarises the partner organisations who took part in the trial.

2.4 Outcomes

Results of the trial were collected, coded, analysed and shared with all Country and Regional Managers and other relevant AVI staff for feedback. In-depth discussions based on the preliminary findings took place during an AVI operational management meeting held in Bangkok in September 2013.

Table 1: Partner organisation trial participants

Partner organisation sample		Workshops	Total	One-on-one
Type of Host Organisation	Community-level organisation/ Local Non-Government Organisation (NGO)	17	7	24
	Government	2	2	4
	International NGO	0	2	2
	Educational Institution	4	0	4
Strategic planning capacity	High	9	3	12
	Medium	9	3	12
	Low	5	5	10
Length of partnership	Long term partnership (two years or more)	15	5	20
	New partner	8	6	14

3. DESCRIBING THE CDP PROCESS AND TOOLS

3.1 The Process

AVI believes that CDPs will facilitate the development of a more strategic partnership with overseas partners because they identify shared goals and clear plans for achieving those goals.

A CDP is the result of a process that is carried out between an AVI staff member and representatives of AVI's partner organisations. The process aims to identify partner organisation priority areas and entails outlining an intended way of working together over a three to five year period.

The capacity development priorities might be determined independently by the partner organisation or identified jointly by partner organisation managers and AVI staff working through the CDP process.

CDPs aim to:

1. Improve the effectiveness of volunteer assignments.
2. Support a long-term strategic partnership.
3. Clearly articulate the support that AVI can offer to partner organisations, and how partner organisations will support volunteers to successfully achieve assignment goals.
4. Provide a framework for assessing the capacity development outcomes of the partnership.
5. Feed into the ongoing monitoring and assessment process for the overall partnership.

The CDP process requires AVI and its partners to:

1. Identify and prioritise areas where both organisations can work together.
2. Develop a plan for how the partner organisation and AVI can work together to build the organisation's long-term capacity.
3. Record the planned activities.
4. Have ongoing conversations between Country Managers and partner organisation representatives over the years to ensure the CDP is updated to track prioritised inputs.

3.2 The Tools

Capacity Assessment (CA) Tool

In order to support the development of the CDPs, AVI has developed a simple CA tool (*see Annex 1*) that is designed to capture key organisational information and facilitate discussion between AVI and partner organisations regarding capacity development priorities. This tool is not designed to carry out a full assessment of the organisation's capacity, but rather identify the organisation's priorities.

Capacity Development Plan (CDP) Template

Following the CA tool, the CDP template (*see Annex 2*) focuses on how AVI volunteers could fit into a successful longer-term strategy that will help enable partner organisations to strengthen their capacity over the next three to five years. The CDP template provides the structure for AVI staff and partner organisations to develop and record their CDP. This template should also be used to monitor progress and track prioritised inputs.

4. FINDINGS

The CDP trial found that all partner organisations needed support in one way or another when completing the CDPs, with different types of partners encountering different challenges. This section outlines those challenges, as well as highlighting positive factors that may enable successful implementation of CDPs.

4.1 Prior Strategic Planning Experience

Most AVI staff found that it was easier to work on CDPs with partner organisations that have strong experience in strategic planning. AVI staff participating in the One-on-One Conversation model spent significant time “explaining [what] needed to be done and why” to organisations that have not done any type of strategic planning before. AVI staff needed to provide examples and discuss the benefits of strategic planning for partnership improvement. Sometimes the experience of specific individuals, beyond the capacity of an institution, played a crucial role in a successful CDP development process.

Despite most AVI staff finding it easier to discuss the CDP process with organisations or staff that had experience in strategic planning, they also found that once the benefits and purpose were discussed, the actual completion of the CDP tools was easier with organisations that did not have much experience. This was because these organisations did not need to adapt their existing organisational strategy to the CDPs.

Staff who facilitated the CDP workshops commented that the strategic planning capacity of some partners was very impressive. Many had a very clear idea of their priorities and were very confident in completing the tools. In these cases, the challenge is to ensure that the areas of capacity development they have identified can be appropriately addressed through the support that AVI can provide.

4.2 Size of the Partner Organisation

While the process presents some challenges for small organisations with limited strategic planning capacity, larger organisations also face some implementation challenges.

“For small NGOs, this process could be undertaken more easily and over a couple of sessions or days as there are fewer stakeholders. But for a larger organisation with many program teams, it requires a much greater commitment from the [partner organisation] and requires a greater ability to facilitate participatory processes (e.g. focus groups, meetings, workshops) to gather the information required to define capacity gaps and ensure ‘voice’ from different perspectives. Senior management openly admit they are not always able to identify their operational/technical gaps, strengths etc. There is also a need to understand and negotiate the ‘donor’ identity and provide an environment where [partner organisations] are realistic about their needs, priorities, and achievements and do not see CDPs as a requirement to ensure more support.”

– AVI Country Manager, One-on-One Conversation model

It is important to keep in mind that CDPs should not be seen as a strategic planning tool by AVI staff or partner organisations; they simply aim to capture the way AVI and partner organisations interact to improve the capacity of the organisation in priority areas.

4.3 Length of Relationship with AVI

AVI staff members that participated in the workshops and one-on-one conversations with partner organisations highlighted some different challenges when working with relatively new partners as opposed to long-term partner organisations.

For organisations that have a long-term partnership with AVI, there is already trust and evidence of success based on the work volunteers have conducted within the organisation. With newer partners there is a strong sense of the unknown about the work of AVI volunteers and of the partnership in general. During workshops, longer-term partners spoke very positively about their collective experience with AVI. This is likely to positively influence their level of engagement with the CDPs and is also reassuring for new partners to hear.

An AVI Country Manager also mentioned that with long-term partners *“it means that we can start better defining our way of working, change certain ways of thinking (ie. doers vs capacity builders) and start thinking of an exit strategy”*. Conversely, another AVI staff member mentioned that *“the challenge with long-term partners is that this is a shift in the way we are working and demands more information/collaboration, but does not necessarily present a great difference in the support they will receive.”* Therefore, in some ways *“working with new partners is easier”* because *“CDPs present an approach that does not challenge any pre-existing ideas and helps define the relationship more clearly in terms of understanding [capacity building]”*.

5. BENEFITS OF CDPs

5.1 Strong Buy-In From Partner Organisations

“She [partner staff member] was very happy that I chose her organisation to be part of the trial, which shows that she believed it would be a useful activity.”

– AVI Country Manager, One-on-One Conversation model

During both models of the trial, partner organisations expressed their excitement at having been chosen to participate. Partners are very interested in working in a more strategic manner and believe that CDPs will help improve the effectiveness of AVI’s support. They felt that by having a documented strategic long-term plan, the outcomes of previous assignments could inform the capacity development priorities for future assignments, ensuring greater long-term sustainability.

Despite the strong buy-in from partners for CDPs in general, the majority of partner organisation representatives felt that they needed to discuss the CDP tools and process with their colleagues before progressing further. Specific feedback from partner organisation representatives regarding this includes:

- > One partner organisation representative expressed a need for them to run internal focus groups to gather input from their operations and technical staff. This is a process that would require time, resources and translation but the representative felt that it would be a worthwhile way to fully prepare for the CDP process.
- > After meeting with the Country Manager, another organisation decided that they would need to have a half-day internal workshop to address the [CDP tools] first, after which they would invite the Country Manager for a presentation to comment on their findings.
- > There was also a stated desire from two partner organisations to make it a fully collaborative and participatory process, where input from all levels of the organisation could be included.

5.2 CDPs Assist with Planning for Multiple Assignments

Feedback from AVI staff gathered after the trial showed that CDPs are seen as a positive and useful tool by partner organisations and AVI staff. They agree that CDPs will help to shape and reinforce the partnership over the longer-term and this is seen as beneficial for the planning of multiple assignments within the one organisation.

During the trial, the CDP tools also helped partner organisations better understand how multiple assignments could be part of an integrated strategy to achieve particular capacity development outcomes. Long-term strategic planning can also include planning for different inputs - multiple, serial, short and long-term volunteers - to effectively support partners’ priority areas. It is important, however, throughout this process, for both parties to be realistic about the limitations of AVI’s capacity to support partners over the long-term.

5.3 CDPs Clarify Partnership Expectations

“Through this process [partner organisations] seem to understand better our role and how we want to be engaged with them over the long-term, not just a two year assignment. It provides them with reassurance that AVI is seeking longer-term partnerships.”

– AVI staff member, Workshop model

According to AVI staff who participated in this trial, partner organisations have a varied understanding of the AVID program and its objectives. This is especially true for newer partner organisations compared to organisations that AVI has been working with for many years. As such, the CDP workshops were a particularly useful way for new partners to engage with and hear from AVI’s longer-term partners. The CDP tools used in this trial enhanced partners’ knowledge of the AVID program and helped to make explicit AVI’s goal to improve their long-term capacity.

5.4 CDPs Improve Strategic Planning Capacity

Although the main purpose of developing CDPs was not to develop the organisational strategic planning capacity of partner organisations, AVI found that this could potentially be an unintended - and positive - outcome of partner organisations engaging in the CDP process.

In cases where partner organisations are just beginning to think about their own strategic planning, an AVI Country Manager mentioned, *“this exercise has actually helped them think in this way. [Partner organisations] are now looking at broader strategic thinking, so in a way this may have sparked them to look beyond this basic exercise with AVI”*. Also, one partner organisation representative, who participated in a workshop, said that *“clarification of AVI’s understanding of capacity development was useful as it provides a shared understanding going forward and perhaps provides the opportunity for organisations to identify other opportunities for developing their own capacity.”*

The CDP tools used in this trial helped to support a new way of approaching organisational strategic planning for some partner organisations. In general, partner organisations were accustomed to thinking about a lack of capacity, funds or support in much broader areas, such as *“we need more funding”* or much narrower areas, such as *“we need someone to write proposals for funding and show us how to do it”*.

The proposed CDP tools, however, provide the opportunity to discuss how particular capacity development priorities can be addressed by utilising volunteers in particular ways. The tools help organisations to envision how multiple volunteer assignments can develop particular capacities over time.

6. CHALLENGES

6.1 Inconsistent Understanding of Key Elements of CDPs

As with any new organisational practice, it takes time for all stakeholders to embrace and commit to a new process. This is even more challenging when stakeholders do not fully understand the purpose, have not seen the benefits, and where the process is yet to be fully developed and documented.

Purpose of CDPs: Feedback provided by AVI staff showed that there is some uncertainty regarding the purpose of implementing CDPs. Questions from Country Managers ranged from *“is it our responsibility to make partner organisations have strategic plans that we are somehow responsible for?”* to whether AVI is just doing *“in-depth capacity assessments and strategic planning... so that we can fill in our forms? We need to be clear on the purpose.”*

When CDPs were drafted as part of this trial, there was some confusion among AVI staff and partner organisations as to whether the purpose was to develop the organisational strategic planning capacity of the partner, or to support partners to formulate their capacity development priorities and design a plan on how to work together with AVI to pursue those priorities. AVI should seek to emphasise the latter of these as the main purpose of the CDPs. Where the process also enhances the organisational strategic planning capacity of the partner, this should be regarded as an additional benefit.

Benefits of CDPs: Even though buy-in from partner organisations for the CDPs was strong, there is potential for imbalance between the level of investment required and the perceived benefits of CDPs. AVI staff reported that the process of completing the CDP tools required significant time and commitment from partner organisations. Considering that these organisations often lack resources, it could be perceived that the request is unreasonable if AVI cannot guarantee that volunteers will be provided in a timely manner or commit to respond to the priorities expressed in the CDPs. This could be especially true when partner organisations have invested significant time and effort in developing CDPs and partner organisations are not yet certain about the benefits that these efforts will provide.

CDP Processes:

(i) Who leads the process? There are different perspectives on the best possible approach to developing CDPs. After trialling different models, AVI staff were not clear about whether the process should be led by AVI staff, partner organisations, or whether it should be a shared effort. AVI staff felt that there is a fine line between how much AVI should lead versus providing support through the process. According to AVI staff feedback, current CDP tools do not encourage a joint process, as the language currently used in the tools is directed to AVI staff and not to both organisations. Workshop participants specifically highlighted this in their feedback.

Aligned with who should lead the work, is the question of how much influence AVI should have on the results, and how

prescriptive Country Managers should be in terms of what is expected in the final plan. For example, a Country Manager asked: *“Do [Country Managers] need to be more instructive? For example, Child Protection is an AVI priority but will not necessarily be mapped out in this process if not identified by the partner organisation?”* This feedback should be specifically addressed in future guidelines for the implementation of CDPs.

(ii) Involvement of Volunteers: AVI staff felt that there are benefits and challenges with having volunteers participate in the CDP process. In some cases it is difficult for volunteers to think beyond their particular role - and they are often not in a position to provide feedback on other matters within their organisations. In other cases the volunteers can play a pivotal role in strategic planning, based on their experience of working inside the organisation but also having an ‘outsider’s’ perspective. The involvement of volunteers should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

(iii) Workshop Constraints: Partner organisations also provided feedback for AVI to improve the workshops and make them more relevant for their needs. For example, they would have liked to use the CDP tools for an extended period of time, and to be able to work with representatives from different organisations by *“having a more structured mixer activity where different organisations could discuss their activities and how we are working with AVI. Perhaps pairing organisations with a current AVI volunteer and with a new organisation who don’t currently have a volunteer may be good for sharing experiences.”*

(iv) Concepts: Variation in the breadth and focus of the feedback on the CDP tools was significant. The diversity of responses does not correlate with the type of partner organisations or length of partnership with AVI, but rather is related to the particular individual’s understanding of the concepts used in the tools. For example, in the Capacity Assessment tool, under “area of capacity”, some AVI staff provided information relating to governance, advocacy activities, monitoring and evaluation etc, while others focused on projects that the organisations deliver (such as education projects and job training projects). The examples provided under the heading in the tool seem to contribute to the confusion amongst the stakeholders. As such, further clarification of the concepts contained within the tool is required.

Furthermore, not all Country Managers and Program Officers define and approach concepts such as capacity development in the same way or have the same level of understanding of all the different concepts involved in the process of developing a strategic plan. Hence, there is a need for greater conceptual clarity and agreement.

(v) Monitoring: AVI staff questioned how CDPs will be monitored to ensure progress has been made, that plans are still up to date, and that assignments are developing the capacity of partner organisations as intended. Currently there is no clear plan for how this would take place and who would be responsible for leading the process.

6.2 Complex Language of CDP Tools

The way current CDP tools are structured and the language used did not clearly communicate the purpose and focus of the CDPs. AVI staff found that throughout the trial workshop, a significant amount of time was spent explaining the language and concepts contained in the tools before the conversation could move to a discussion about CDPs.

The complexity of some language used in the CDP tools was criticised by AVI staff, partner organisations and volunteers attending the workshop. A partner organisation representative mentioned that *“it would be helpful for us if the tools presented in the workshop are simpler”*.

6.3 CDP Tools not Flexible for Diverse Range of Partner Organisations

Based on participating AVI staff feedback, the current CDP tools are not flexible enough to be used easily by organisations with strong experience in strategic planning for capacity development. In particular, the current tools do not provide space for the organisation's existing strategies and plans to be outlined. The tools could be slightly adapted to allow for this, however, AVI should also communicate that the purpose of CDPs is to develop a strategic way of working with AVI, rather than capturing the full extent of the partner's strategic planning.

6.4 Collaboration with Partner Organisation Leadership

AVI staff emphasised that the amount of time required to complete the CDPs and the lack of resources associated with completing them was a challenge. To ensure a successful process, the leadership of partner organisations needs to be fully involved. During the trial, despite the partner organisation's enthusiasm to cooperate, it was a challenge to involve leadership staff due to the amount of time required to undertake the process.

6.5 Time Required to Complete CDPs

Developing CDPs is an incredibly resource intensive process, in terms of both human and time resources. AVI staff spent an average of five hours (four in Cambodia, three in Solomon Islands and eight in Jordan/Lebanon) to complete the CDPs when working one-on-one with partner organisations. One AVI staff member spent 90 minutes meeting with partner organisation staff and used the remainder of the time to complete the form. Another spent several hours completing the tools together with the partner organisation. A third Country Manager took the approach of meeting first, taking notes and then completing the tools, and then worked together with the partner organisation to come to agreement on the final CDP.

This is compounded in large partner organisations with complex structures; often these organisations have several departments and many staff to be consulted through the process. As such, significantly more time is required to complete the CDP process than that which was allocated during the CDP trial.

6.6 Lack of Alignment between CDPs and Existing AVI Processes

Following the trial, AVI Country Managers questioned how CDPs will interact with and replace or complement existing AVI processes. The CDP tools are not yet aligned with other processes and forms used by AVI to gather information for partnership and assignment development. Accordingly, future implementation plans will need to clearly outline how CDPs will be integrated with existing processes.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The CDP trial revealed a strong commitment from AVI and partner organisations to develop a more strategic way of working together to increase volunteer effectiveness and to enhance long-term partnerships. Through working on CDPs together, stakeholders were able to articulate the variety of challenges they encountered or could envisage in the future. The trial demonstrated that some changes need to be implemented at the AVID program level to overcome these challenges. The work required to make the CDP process successful is substantial and requires an appropriate allocation of resources.

The trial findings and feedback from AVI Country Managers suggests that a more cohesive and integrated approach towards CDPs needs to be developed across the AVID program. While validating the CDP approach, the trial also identified a number of potential improvements to both the tools and the process. This section proposes recommendations on how to do this.

7.1 Building a Capacity Development Framework

In order to have a more cohesive approach to capacity development and improve the effectiveness of volunteer assignments, a Capacity Development Framework should be developed. The Framework would ensure that the purpose of capacity development is clear for all stakeholders and that partner organisations can easily see the benefit of investing the time and resources needed to work more strategically with AVI.

The Framework would also generate a shared understanding of critical concepts and indicators to be measured, include a monitoring plan, and outline a clear implementation process.

1. The CD Framework should:

- I. Develop concepts:** Concepts related to CDPs, such as 'capacity', 'capacity development' and 'strategic planning' should be clearly articulated within the framework.
- II. Improve Alignment:** Data collected through the CDP process should fit within AVI's existing ways of working with partner organisations. For example, information gathered using the current CDP tools should support other existing partnership processes and forms and not duplicate information already gathered.
- III. Outline Process Implementation:** A clear set of expectations of the CDP process should be developed, including monitoring and evaluation activities and roles and responsibilities.⁶
- IV. Guide Monitoring:** A standardised set of indicators to monitor progress should be defined. These should be established at the beginning of the implementation process and progress should be tracked.

2. Improvement of the tools should focus on:

- I. Using clear language:** Language should be simple and accessible for all users. Providing clear examples should make it easier for less experienced partner organisations to provide appropriate data and follow the process easily.
- II. Being flexible:** Partner organisations have different levels of experience in conducting strategic planning, vary in size and structure, and have different degrees of experience working with AVI. The CDP tools should be able to be adapted to the different strategic planning needs and capacity of all organisations.
- III. Having a simple format:** This will ensure the CDP tools focus on capturing the knowledge needed to support partner organisations' capacity, without making the process unnecessarily time consuming or burdensome.
- IV. Being Distinguishable:** The CA tool and the CDP template should be visually distinguishable, using a different colour for each. They should also be clearly numbered in the sequence in which they are to be used (1 for CA tool, 2 for CDP template).

3. Education and training activities should be developed and implemented in the following areas:

- I. AVI staff in-country and partner organisations should be appropriately trained to:**
 - > Ensure a shared understanding of capacity development concepts and the consistent application of the framework across the program. This would include a uniform understanding of the purpose, benefits, concepts, as well as the implementation and monitoring processes of the CDPs.
 - > Reinforce the understanding of CDPs as a process that is conducted jointly by AVI and partner organisations. The outcome of the planning process should summarise how both organisations intend to work together for a period of three to five years.
- II. Country Managers should be trained to:**
 - > Strengthen their capacity to support strategic planning for capacity development when working with partner organisations with varying levels of strategic planning experience.
 - > Better understand how CDPs could be adapted to align with partner organisations' strategic plans (where they exist). Pre-existing organisational strategic plans should ideally be treated as an asset rather than a challenge.
 - > Effectively follow up with monitoring activities to assess the effectiveness and ongoing relevance of the CDP.

⁶ See Annex 1 for guidance on implementation process.

4. Resources should be provided to:

- I. Focus on Developing a Capacity Development Framework:** Specific staff members should be assigned to develop, lead and monitor progress of the Framework, its implementation and monitoring.
- II. Support AVI in-country offices:** The formalisation of the CDP process will necessitate greater input at the country level. Adequate resources should be provided to in-country office staff to enable them to implement and monitor the CDPs with each partner organisation.
- III. Develop and Implement CDP Workshops:** Both time and material resources should be allocated to deliver workshops that foster an appropriate understanding of capacity development amongst partner organisations. These workshops should also provide space for sharing experiences between partner organisations.

8. ANNEX 1 –

DRAFT FOR CDP PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 Process

Based on feedback, a proposed structure for the CDP process could be:

I. Introduction: A CDP workshop with partner organisation representatives during which AVI provides context, establishes expectations, defines concepts, and shares examples of outcomes. A sample CDP could be provided to each partner organisation. The workshop should include exercises for partner organisations to carry out. This process will most likely require substantial internal consultation with partner organisation staff without AVI presence (see more specific suggestions for workshops and a CDP Guide below).

II. Gathering information: The exercises and activities provided in a CDP Guide should be carried out by partner organisations independent of AVI.

III. Presentation: Partner organisations should present information gathered within their organisations to AVI staff for discussion.

IV. CDP meeting: AVI and partner organisations work together to complete, clarify and ensure a common understanding and set of priorities. The final plan should clearly demonstrate a 'map' for the partnership.

8.2 CDP Workshop

A full day workshop at the country level could be delivered for all partner organisations to foster a common understanding of CDPs and language around strategic planning, particularly for capacity development. When designing the workshops, specific feedback provided from partner organisations during this trial should be included. The workshop should encourage partner organisations that have more experience with strategic planning to provide support to those which are new to it. Current volunteers who are working on this kind of activity with their partner organisations could be invited as well.⁷

Topics that the workshop could cover include:

- > Introduction to AVI goals and the purpose of CDPs
- > Defining concepts
- > Partnership
- > Capacity
 - Capacity priorities
 - Capacity development
- > Strategic planning
 - Why organisations might do strategic planning?
 - How to do a capacity assessment of their organisation?

> Practical exercise

- What capacities does your organisation have?
- What are your main capacity needs?
- Possible avenues for strategic planning for capacity development through volunteers

Following the workshops, partner organisations should have a clearer understanding of the concepts and goals of the CDPs, and would be better prepared to gather the data required from their organisations. Sufficient time should be allowed for each partner organisation to work on this process independently, which could be agreed between the partner organisation and Country Manager.

8.3 CDP Guide

The CDP Guide should recognise efficient levels of understanding and experience, and remain simple and user-friendly. The Guide can be sent to partner organisations and all AVI in-country staff prior to the CDP workshop in order to understand AVI's approach to partnership, capacity development and strategic planning.

The CDP Guide should:

- I.** Include an outline of AVI's rationale for introducing CDPs, introduce the CDP process, and how it is integrated into the whole partnership (e.g. determine whether Personnel Request Forms or other existing forms will be replaced by CDPs).
- II.** Be used as a communication tool to clearly and consistently inform all partner organisations about the processes, tools and meetings required by AVI in order to be able to assist them to build their organisational capacity.
- III.** Provide example responses to questions that include several possible answers (so the guide is not too prescriptive). Examples should define the level of detail required and whether individual, organisational, and institutional levels of capacity development should be considered when completing the CDP tools. Examples of CDP tools developed by other organisations could also be a useful additional resource.

⁷ Volunteers can provide valuable information when their role is related to strategic planning or when partner organisations feel they could benefit from the volunteer's participation. Volunteers should be invited to participate on a case-to-case basis.



9. ANNEX 2 – CDP TOOLS

Capacity Assessment (CA) Tool

Capacity Development Plan (CDP) Template

1. HO CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Host Organisation: _____ **HO Representative:** _____

AVI Representative: _____ **Date Assessment Completed:** _____

Determine and collate capacity needs in the table below, a plan responsive to these needs can then be developed and documented in the accompanying *HO Capacity Development Plan*. A common method of analysing various aspects of Host Organisation (HO) capacity is presented in the table below. Determine if this is the right fit for the HO to assess how it is meeting its own goals. Alternatively, you can determine other ways the HO holds for viewing itself, its functions and/or its ability to achieve its goals and amend the section 'Area of Capacity' below as necessary.

FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS: From [insert month/year] TO [insert month/year]					
HOST ORGANISATION: MISSION or MANDATE or PURPOSE	AREA OF CAPACITY How is the HO achieving its mission / mandate / purpose? <i>(Use the information below as a guide only. This can be developed in any way that is appropriate to the HO functionality)</i>	PRIORITY LEVEL Use scale below* to prioritise different areas of capacity	CURRENT SITUATION What capacity already exists in relation to the priority areas and what are the identified areas of need?	ACTIONS WHAT steps has the HO already identified or commenced? What further action or support is needed?	WHEN? Now / Soon / Later <i>If there are several CD priorities, what 'order' might they be addressed in?</i>
Provide a brief statement, summary or list of the goals, objectives or purpose of the HO with whom you are working. Could be linked to specific strategies if available e.g. > Organisation Strategy > Global or National Sector Specific Strategies > Institutional or Agency Mandates > Unit targets or indicators					

* Priority Rating Scale (HO to self-assess): **1 = Low importance:** This is not important for us, other areas are far more important. **2 = Medium importance:** This is of importance to us but is not urgent or critical. **3 = High importance:** This is very important and urgent, and is one of the most significant changes needed.

To build the rationale for collaboration, please consider and respond to the following questions:

- a) When considering HO needs, demonstrate how the use of AVID volunteers would be best utilised (as opposed to other international volunteer, short-term, technical assistance or other kinds of inputs/ programs)?

- b) How do the proposed AVI inputs strengthen/ enhance existing capacity in the organisation, or steps the HO is undertaking or planning to implement?

- c) Do suggested inputs build upon the work of the HO through any existing initiatives and/or previous or current volunteers?

- d) Will the work of AVI volunteers (or other inputs) be integrated and sustainable across the organisation? If so, how?

2. HO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (3-5 Years)

Host Organisation: _____ **HO Representative:** _____

AVI Representative: _____ **Date Plan Agreed:** _____

This document should be used in conjunction with the *HO Capacity Assessment Tool*. It is the 3-5 year action plan that responds to the needs identified during the capacity assessment process which will have included the AVI Organisational Appraisal Form and the AVI: HO Capacity Assessment Tool. It should document where AVI has potential to provide specific inputs that meet HO needs and support achievement of HO goals and lead to assignment requests. An annual review process will track progress against planned inputs and allow for amendments over time.

FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS: From [insert month/year] TO [insert month/year] TO [insert month/year]						
YEAR	MONTH or QUARTER	HO Priority Capacity Area and current status <i>(Refer to HO Capacity Assessment for details)</i>	Planned AVI Support. Briefly list AVID role and scope <i>e.g. refer to capacity assessment document for description of existing strengths and initiatives that the assignments will build on.</i>	Expected change in capacity area after AVI support / input <i>What 'milestones' are expected to be achieved – this might be at the level of assignment outcomes; individual, organisational or institutional capacity.</i>	Potential external supports that could be facilitated through AVI <i>e.g. relationships with other AVI programs e.g. APOs, PACE, CGS, RVs or organisations in Australia / existing relationships or other avenues for resource support.</i>	
ONE						
TWO						
THREE						

