

## Platform for leadership

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**This issue of Capacity.org includes contributions on various aspects of leadership. Leadership is about action and about change at the individual, organisational and societal levels. Ultimately, leadership is indispensable for the development and growth of capacity.**

This view implies that becoming a leader means not only acquiring the 'hard' skills or technical knowledge required for project management, including critical and analytical thinking, negotiation skills and team work. Leadership also involves a set of abilities referred to as 'soft' skills, which are developed through introspection, reflection and 'walking the talk'.



As the contributions to this issue show, learning to master the hard skills is not sufficient, in and of itself, to effect change, which is the essence of leadership. In the feature article Rick James observes that long-lasting and effective change happens only when individual leaders themselves decide that they have to change. The change happens at this deep internal level before it is externalised as changed behaviour. Authentic change is an 'inside-out' process.

In order to be effective, leadership development programmes must utilise existing resources that are compatible with the values and cultural references in a given society. Seen from such a framework, it becomes clear that we are talking about a process, and that the development of leadership requires time and often a set of different learning tools. Two articles in this issue offer insights based on the experiences of organisations working in two very different contexts – CReDO in Moldova and the international network AsiaDHRRA. In both cases the authors describe how their organisations have developed and combined a variety of learning tools over a period of time.

Without followers, of course, there can be no leaders. Leadership development should therefore be concerned with the task of establishing leadership not as an individual endeavour, but rather as a collective action to promote the common good of the community or group. Both leaders and followers have their own roles to play, and their own responsibilities. A vibrant citizenry, as South African Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi explains in the interview, is one that is attentive and well informed, and which asks questions to ensure that leaders remain accountable and retain their legitimacy. Rather than feeling threatened by this, the Minister believes that every country needs leaders who are courageous enough to accept such vibrancy, and who are strong enough to use it to society's advantage.

To complement the theoretical and practical insights presented in this issue, in August 2006 Capacity.org will launch an interactive web platform on issues related to 'leadership in development'. This will be the first in a series of resource corners on the Capacity.org website, where you can find and share documents, cutting-edge tools and methods, and case experiences. And you can interact with others in this field by engaging in moderated e-discussions, posting queries and exchanging personal profiles.



If you are interested in leadership issues, please watch out for the resource corner, and sign up at [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org). We look forward to meeting you online.

*Between 2003 and March 2006 Dr Odeh coordinated the Institute's leadership programmes for youth, women and indigenous groups. She is lead consultant for the 'Leadership in development' resource corner on the Capacity.org website.*