

博士論文(要約)

Community-Level Capacity Assessment for Sustainable Development in Rural Africa

(アフリカの持続可能な農村開発に向けたキャパシティ・アセスメント)

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Despite Africa's enormous potential, as well as the large amount of funding and various development interventions it has received in recent decades, extreme poverty, a key challenge in rural Africa, has not been significantly abated. To tackle multi-dimensional challenges in rural Africa, past development programs led by central governments or external organizations alone have clearly shown their limitations. Consequently, local capacity development, as a means of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development, deserves more attention than ever. However, the meaning and critical aspects of capacity, in addition to how capacity should be measured, often remain vague, despite frequent references to the term "capacity". Furthermore, there are no frameworks or practical tools for assessing local capacity, particularly at the community level in the context of rural Africa. Such circumstances have led to a relatively low impact of capacity development efforts and a limited elucidation of the specific dimensions and key roles of capacity. Against this backdrop, undertaking a critical assessment is indispensable for examining the roles of local capacity and exploring effective and efficient approaches to capacity development to ensure sustainable development outcomes in the long term in rural Africa.

This study aims to develop a capacity assessment framework that can 1) evaluate the capacity of rural communities (particularly development leaders), 2) examine linkages between local capacity and sustainable development, and 3) identify factors that contribute to the levels and qualities of capacity and development outcomes at the community level — for recommending feasible capacity development approaches to contribute to long-term sustainable development in rural Africa. To address these objectives, a series of research activities has been undertaken. First, existing theories, concepts, methods, practices and perceptions concerning capacity and capacity assessment have been reviewed through a wide range of literature and national- and local-level dialogues in Ghana and Malawi. Subsequently, field research activities, including preparatory research (February-March 2015), field data

collection (August-September 2015 and February-March 2016) and facilitating feedback sharing and validation (August-September 2016), were undertaken in six communities in both the Wa West District in the Upper West Region of Ghana and the Mulanje District in the Southern Region of Malawi, totaling 12 communities. The communities were selected based on the distribution of geographical and administrative areas and their developmental project history. Regarding the project history, the study communities were selected based on the existence or non-existence of integrated rural development projects with capacity development components supported by external development partners (i.e., “projects”) previously and/or at present: a) four communities with Previous and Ongoing projects (P/O), b) two communities with No Previous but Ongoing projects (NP/O), c) two communities with Previous but No Ongoing projects (P/NO), and d) four communities with No Previous and No Ongoing projects (NP/NO).

The assessment examined functional capacities, which are the soft skills of development leaders in communities for facilitating community-driven development, as a main pillar of this research. Key dimensions of the functional capacities examined include: “Mutual Accountability”, a foundational aspect of development that forges trust and ensures transparency; “Engagement and Participation” as an engine for accelerating proactive and inclusive development processes; and “Ownership” for promoting long-term community-driven development. Another type of capacity, i.e., technical capacities, has been reviewed and cross-checked with functional capacities. Technical capacities are those associated with particular areas of expertise and practice in specific sectors or themes. Since the number of technical capacities is innumerable, they were assessed through one selected area of technical capacities, i.e., “disaster management”, as an example. The assessment also analyzed communities’ perceptions of 16 key development sectors, which were selected based on the context of rural Africa, for comparison with the levels and qualities of capacities.

The dimensions listed above have been examined mainly through focus group discussions (FGDs) with separate groups of men (194; averaging 16.2 in each community), women (287; averaging 23.9), and development leaders (87; averaging 7.3), totaling 568 participants in the 12 communities. Observations and individual interviews with 102 respondents, consisting of both men and women ranging from the young and middle aged to the elderly, have been undertaken to cross check with the results obtained through the FGDs. The capacity assessment results have been computed using a 0-5 scale for each indicator that has been clearly defined in the rubric.

This research affirms that the key dimensions of the capacities identified are valid perspectives with which to assess capacity at the community level in rural communities in Ghana and Malawi. Capacity assessment tools for facilitators have been developed for their possible applications accordingly in other parts of rural Africa. This study also reveals that development aid has contributed to the enhancement of short- and medium-term development outcomes and technical capacities in N/O, NP/O and P/NO communities but made limited contributions to functional capacities, even compared to NP/NO communities. It is affirmed that capacity development is not sustainable if there is no or limited strategies for long-term sustainability, as observed in some concrete cases. The levels of community ownership in the cycles of external development projects also affect the likelihood of the sustainability of development efforts and outcomes. Observing feedback and activities during repeated visits during the fieldwork, it is found that capacity assessment can serve as a learning tool for facilitating changes in mindset and actions, impacting the sustainability of development outcomes.

This research offers some specific recommendations to both external stakeholders that intend to provide capacity development support through development aid and local communities that are intended to promote community-driven development. Based on the findings, the key recommendations of this study are three-fold, as follows: i) place more emphasis on functional capacities with long-term perspectives, ii) enhance local ownership in both external projects and self-help efforts, and iii) promote the application of community-level capacity assessment as a potential tool for sustainable development in rural communities in Africa.

This research thus concludes that community-level capacity assessment and capacity development, with an increased focus on functional capacities and ownership perspectives as well as long-term strategies, can contribute to the sustainability of development outcomes in rural Africa.