



# Two steps at a time

## Rwanda's Strategic Capacity Building Initiative

# Case Study 02

## Two steps at a time: Rwanda's Strategic Capacity Building Initiative

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## About the Africa Governance Initiative

AGI provides practical advice and support to help Africa's leading reformers to bridge the gap between their vision and the ability of their government to achieve it. We do this by strengthening the government's capacity to deliver programmes that will change ordinary people's lives for the better, from public services and rural development to infrastructure and job creation.

AGI works in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal, with plans for further growth. We work at two levels: at the political leadership level, Tony Blair draws on his ten years as Prime Minister to offer leaders the kind of advice on reform that only someone who has stood in a leader's shoes can give. At the same time our teams, based permanently in each country, work shoulder-to-shoulder with counterparts to put in place the 'nuts and bolts' needed to get things done.

AGI celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2013 and has begun publishing pieces that look at our work and reflect on what we're learning about supporting governance in Africa.

## Executive summary

Rwandan President Paul Kagame had had enough. His country had made impressive progress since the 1994 genocide, tripling GDP per capita, reducing poverty and improving public service delivery. But Kagame's ambition for his country was to reach middle income status by 2020 which meant moving even faster. For years the President had been getting the same excuse from his ministers about why acceleration wasn't possible: lack of capacity. He was tired of hearing this and frustrated by the numerous failed capacity building approaches Rwanda had tried. In 2010, after discussions with Cabinet officials at Rwanda's annual National Leadership Retreat, President Kagame met with Tony Blair along with senior Government of Rwanda officials and the AGI Rwanda team and announced that Rwanda was going to try to something different: government capacity building should focus on four priority areas critical to the country's economic growth; investment, agriculture, energy and mining.

While it wasn't initially clear what this would mean in practice, the Rwandan Government, working with AGI, quickly responded to President Kagame's challenge by developing the concept of a five step capacity development process that would later become the Strategic Capacity Building Initiative (SCBI). In 2011 the government designed and officially launched SCBI, a four-year, 37 million USD, government and donor-funded programme that seeks to implement priorities while building capacity for Rwanda in the four focus areas.

There are four central features of SCBI that emerged from a combination of experience from Rwanda, international development capacity building and AGI's approach to capacity development:

1. It is **priority-driven** in that it is structured around delivery of a small number of specific priorities (from the government's intense focus on achieving tangible results and AGI's support for emphasizing just a handful of objectives)
2. It is **government owned** in a fundamental way: the priorities were chosen by the government's political leadership (from the government's firm commitment to shaping its own development path)
3. It **links the core executive** (the Presidency, Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Finance) to ministries responsible for implementation (from Rwanda's own learning about the importance of cross-government coordination as well as from international best practice)
4. It invests in the **long-term potential of young talent** by pairing Rwandan counterparts with embedded consultants (from Rwanda's own negative experience with fly-in, fly-out consultants and from international best practice)

After a long setup process and lots of joint learning and problem-solving by the government and AGI in 2011 and 2012, SCBI is now fully operational. The government, with AGI assistance, has set up structures and systems to coordinate and implement the initiative and has recruited 24 experts and 61 local counterparts who work across the four primary delivery institutions<sup>1</sup>. While it is too soon to know if SCBI will achieve its ambitious delivery and capacity building objectives, positive results are emerging:

- **AGRICULTURE** – SCBI experts and counterparts in the Ministry of Agriculture have developed an innovative approach known as the "Pilot Sites Initiative", where they test interventions in a focused geographic area to prove their effectiveness before scaling them up. Working with international experts, Rwandan counterparts are being trained in crop and livestock sciences; soil and water management expertise; phytosanitary and postharvest sciences for quality assurance and biosafety of agricultural inputs and outputs. So far, this approach has

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<sup>1</sup> Data from April 2014.

increased farmer income (by, for example, reducing their post-harvest crop losses) and also ensured farmers had greater access to markets.

- **ENERGY** – In the energy sector, SCBI has supported Rwanda’s transition to competitive approaches for sourcing investment. The Energy Investment Unit was established, staffed with SCBI experts and counterparts, and in recent months it issued requests for investors to submit expressions of interest for a 10 MW solar and a 50 MW methane plant. Both have yielded very positive responses from the private sector and will support the government’s efforts to increase energy generation while driving down energy costs in the country.
- **MINING** – SCBI has supported the government in taking huge strides towards better managing Rwanda’s mining sector. Rwanda has become the first country in the region to begin issuing mining certificates at the point of export to certify due diligence in the supply chain, through a system developed by SCBI experts and counterparts. Along with the new Mining Law and Mining Royalty Act, this certification provides a sound basis for investment in Rwanda’s mining sector and a strong platform for dialogue with regional and international communities.
- **MINING** – Another huge achievement for the team in MINIRENA is the establishment of a Mining Cadastre in Rwanda, a Mineral Rights Management System (MRMS), and a Mining Cadastre Unit responsible for its implementation and proper use. This new System is designed to improve management transparency and decision making within the mining sector. Rwanda’s rating in Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index is the lowest in East Africa and the installation of the MRMS will improve openness.
- **INVESTMENT** – Recently, the government negotiated a 22 million USD mining concession with Pella Rwanda Resources Ltd. Having been trained for over a year by their SCBI experts, SCBI counterparts from the Rwanda Development Board and Ministry of Natural Resources were able to lead these negotiations. The deal itself will increase the country’s monthly production of refined minerals from 50 to 120 tonnes over the next five years, and counterpart leadership demonstrates that sustainable capacity is being built.
- **SUSTAINABILITY** – Every day, the capacity of the SCBI counterparts is being developed, and increasingly they are able to lead work with their experts reviewing it. In addition to this tough-to-measure, day-by-day learning, several SCBI counterparts have been promoted to key roles in the Ministry of Natural Resources.

## Lessons learned

SCBI is still being implemented so there’s a lot that the Rwandan Government and AGI are still learning. But there are emerging lessons for both reforming governments looking to develop their delivery capacity and for partners working with them.

### 1. Lesson for governments: Start with a few, concrete objectives

At the core of SCBI is a) a focus on a few genuine government priorities and b) an explicit link to the delivery of those priorities. This focus on improved government function rather than form is an important difference from many failed donor-driven initiatives such as government-wide civil service reforms<sup>2and3</sup>. A lesson for governments is to resist the temptation to fix everything and to focus on a few goals that matter most. A critical part of this is to determine the right level of focus – this doesn’t mean reforming entire sectors but setting tangible targets; for example, boosting national power transmission capacity by 20 percent over five years.

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, Public Sector Reform: What Works And Why? (2008). Available at [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPUBSECRETF/Resources/psr\\_eval.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPUBSECRETF/Resources/psr_eval.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Pritchett, Lant, Andrews, Matthew and Woolcock, Michael, Escaping Capability Traps Through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) (June 22, 2012). Center for Global Development Working Paper No. 299. Available at <http://www.cgdev.org/publication/escaping-capability-traps-through-problem-driven-iterative-adaptation-pdia-working-paper>.

## **2. Lesson for governments and partners: Don't forget the nuts and bolts**

Weaknesses in government finance, HR and M&E systems has slowed SCBI's setup and implementation. This points to a complex lesson. On the one hand it's important when planning future initiatives to identify and define responses to these challenges at the programme design stage. But this sits in tension with focusing on just a few problems. The key is to identify and assess the challenges connected to delivering the priority – sometimes through a delivery mapping process – without trying to fix all of them. In some cases, it makes sense to find patchwork solutions so as not to lose focus on the bigger objective.

## **3. Lesson for governments: Balance best practice and best fit**

Many aspects of SCBI – such as pairing experts and counterparts – draw on decades of international development learning on technical assistance. But the Rwandan government also shaped SCBI based on its own experience from failed capacity building programmes over the years (e.g. demanding long-term expert commitment and structuring the programme around a cadre of young professionals). The lesson for governments is to aim for a “practical hybrid”<sup>4</sup>, striking a balance between best practice and fit.

## **4. Lesson for partners: Facilitate local problem solving**

Partners can help governments to take this adaptive approach. AGI's most effective support for the Rwandan Government has been in helping to develop SCBI systems and supporting the coordination of the initiative across government, always trying to bear in mind the local conditions and politics. For example, AGI worked with the government to shape a solution to the contentious issue of whether different institutions should be allowed to pay SCBI counterparts different salaries. This brokering role is one that an emerging body of literature argues is a useful niche for development partners<sup>5</sup>. The lesson for partners is to find a way to serve this function directly or through partnerships.

## **5. Lesson for partners: Build wide government ownership**

This case illustrates that government ownership isn't a simple yes-no proposition. SCBI has been effective where there's genuine government ownership but has struggled when this ingredient is absent. For example, President Kagame's personal commitment is what compelled the Rwandan Government to push through obstacles (like initial donor reluctance) to get the programme launched. But lack of understanding of SCBI amongst some in the government's middle management – sometimes the direct line managers of SCBI experts and counterparts – has created problems for the programme's implementation. The lesson for partners is to recognize the multiple dimensions of government ownership and to play a constructive role in enhancing them.

## **6. Lesson for government and partners: Learn from SCBI thinking not structure**

Building on lesson three, when considering SCBI beyond Rwanda, we should think about adapting rather than replicating the SCBI approach. This case develops a two-step framework. Step 1 is to apply a version of the 5 step design approach. Step 2 is to focus on several particular critical issues: a) prioritisation, b) a problem-driven approach, c) determining the model and d) government ownership.

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<sup>4</sup> Booth, David, Development As A Collective Action Problem: Addressing The Real Challenges Of African Governance (October 2012). Synthesis report of the Africa Power and Politics Programme. Available at <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/6869-africa-power-politics-governance-africa-development-collective-action>.

<sup>5</sup> Tavakoli, Heidi, Simson, Rebecca and Tilley, Helen with Booth, David, Unblocking Results: Using Aid To Address Governance Constraints In Public Service Delivery (May 2013). Overseas Development Institute Centre for Aid & Public Expenditure. Available at <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/7469-governance-politics-aid-service-delivery>.

# Timeline of key events and lessons

**SCBI's design: mid-2010 – end-2010**  
 President Kagame announces GoR capacity building should focus on 4 priority areas. The government conceptualizes the strategic capacity development approach and designs the programme.

**SCBI setup and implementation: end-2010 – mid-2012**  
 After the rapid design phase, the government sets up SCBI focusing the majority of its time on SCBI recruitment.

**SCBI today: mid-2012 – present**  
 SCBI is a fully operational programme and positive results begin to emerge. Government starts to address future strategic challenges.

<p><b>1994 – 2010</b>          Rwanda achieves remarkable development progress but repeatedly struggles with capacity building.</p>	<p><b>Autumn 2010</b>          Ongoing negotiations lead to the WB committing to finance SCBI through GoR's budget.</p>	<p><b>August 2012</b>          Tony Blair visits Rwanda. A photo with Blair and the Rwandan counterparts symbolizes that SCBI is now under way.</p>
<p><b>2008</b>          The Office of Tony Blair (later called AGI) begins working in Rwanda.</p>	<p><b>Spring 2011</b>          The delivery institutions develop implementation strategies that define activities and the roles of the experts and counterparts.</p>	<p><b>Today</b>          SCBI is a functional programme with 24 experts and 61 counterparts working across the focal delivery institutions.</p>
<p><b>July 2010</b>          Tony Blair meets with President Kagame in Rwanda. The President announces that capacity building should focus on 4 areas.</p>	<p><b>July 1, 2011</b>          Technically SCBI starts on this date. But, in reality, no experts or counterparts have been recruited.</p>	<p><b>June 2015</b>          The scheduled end date for SCBI.</p>
<p><b>July 2010</b>          Government, working with AGI, conceives of the 5 steps of strategic capacity building and quickly starts designing SCBI.</p>		
<p><b>August 2010</b>          Steps 1-4: The government, working with AGI and consultants, maps the delivery chain, identifies capacity gaps and designs a package of support.</p>		
<p><b>September 2010</b>          The important part of Step 5: President Kagame pitches SCBI to the President of the World Bank at UNGA.</p>		

# Summary of key analysis & lessons

<p><b>Lessons for governments: Start with a few, concrete objectives</b></p> <p>The unique aspects of SCBI are the concepts of a) focusing on a few genuine government priorities and b) an explicit link to the delivery of those priorities; an important difference from many, failed donor-driven initiatives such as government-wide civil service reforms. A lesson for governments is to resist the temptation to fix everything and to focus on a few goals that matter most.</p>	<p><b>Lesson for governments and partners: Don't forget the nuts and bolts</b></p> <p>Weaknesses in government finance, HR and M&amp;E systems has slowed SCBI's setup and implementation. This points to a complex lesson. On the one hand it's important when planning future initiatives to identify and define responses to these challenges at the programme design stage without losing focus on the bigger objective.</p>	<p><b>Lesson for governments: Balance best practice and best fit</b></p> <p>Many aspects of SCBI draw on decades of international development learning on technical assistance. But the Rwandan government also shaped SCBI based on its own experience from failed capacity building programmes over the years. The lesson for governments is to aim for a "practical hybrid", striking a balance between best practice and fit.</p>	<p><b>Lesson for partners: Facilitate local problem solving</b></p> <p>AGI's most effective support for the Rwandan Government has been in helping to develop SCBI systems and supporting the coordination of the initiative across government, always trying to bear in mind the local conditions and politics. The lesson for partners is to find a way to serve this function directly or through partnerships.</p>	<p><b>Lesson for partners: Build wide government ownership</b></p> <p>This case illustrates that government ownership isn't a simple yes-no proposition. SCBI has been effective where there's genuine government ownership but has struggled when this ingredient is absent. The lesson for partners is to recognize the multiple dimensions of government ownership and to play a constructive role in enhancing them.</p>	<p><b>Lesson for government and partners: Learn from SCBI thinking not structure</b></p> <p>Building on lesson three, when considering SCBI beyond Rwanda, we should think about adapting rather than replicating the SCBI approach. This case develops a two-step framework. Step 1 is to apply a version of the 5 step design approach. Step 2 is to focus on several particular critical issues: a) prioritisation, b) a problem-driven approach, c) determining the model and d) government ownership.</p>
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## Methodology

The author, Dan Hymowitz, carried out three types of research for this case: interviews, a review of SCBI documents, and a review of the wider international development and capacity development literature. We conducted interviews for this case starting in October 2012 in Kigali. The majority of these conversations were with Rwandan Government officials connected to SCBI and with current and former AGI staff. We also interviewed several development partners – including the World Bank and UNDP – that support SCBI. Desk research focused on SCBI background documents such as the SCBI conceptual framework, the institutions’ implementation strategies and PowerPoints developed to and for NCBS on the initiative’s progress. This SCBI-specific research was complemented by research on development capacity building which we cite in the case where specifically referenced.

This case was initially drafted in early 2013 and therefore is a snapshot of SCBI from that period. We have updated key data and facts where possible and have noted where we have done so.

# SCBI narrative

## Genocide and aftermath

Rwanda's remarkable recovery and development since the genocide has been well profiled so this case will focus on a few high-level issues pertinent to SCBI rather than re-telling that story. Inevitably, Rwanda's 1994 genocide and aftermath are central. Up to 1 million people were killed and millions more were displaced internally and into neighbouring countries. Poverty increased dramatically, reaching 78 percent of the population in 1994<sup>6</sup>, and the country's social systems were destroyed. More specific to this case, the genocide and aftermath severely damaged the Rwandan government's capacity largely through the sheer number of people killed and displaced. In 1995, 79% of Rwandan civil servants had not completed secondary education.<sup>7</sup>

In the period right after the genocide, the government focused on the most immediate challenges including security and the chaos of internal displacement. "There wasn't really time to create a strategy at this point," said Stella Ford Mugabo, today the Minister of Cabinet Affairs. "We were just thinking about unity and reconciliation."

By the late 1990's and early 2000's, Rwanda had, in development parlance, transitioned from an emergency to a rehabilitation and then into a development phase. In 2000, Rwanda published its "Vision 2020" laying out its plans to become a middle income country, and then in 2002 its first Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). And the country's second PRS (known as the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS)) was accompanied by the seven pillar Multi-Sector Capacity Building Program (MSCBP), the government's first systematic capacity development initiative.

## Immediate contextual factors

By early 2010, the overall story of Rwanda's post-genocide progress was extremely positive. GDP per capita had more than tripled, poverty had been reduced and there were improvements in service delivery ranging from health to education to water and sanitation. But President Kagame and his government were impatient and wanted more and faster progress. Over and over again, government was recognizing capacity as the central challenge. A National Skills Audit presented to Rwanda's National Leadership Retreat in 2009 reported a 31 percent skills gap in the public sector. The Rwandan Government responded by creating the Public Sector Capacity Building Secretariat (Today called that National Capacity Building Secretariat or NCBS<sup>8</sup>), a central body to oversee public sector capacity development activities. But this wasn't enough.

The government and its partners had for years recognized capacity as the central issue for Rwanda's development. Donors had spent a huge amount on capacity building and both the government and donors were growing impatient with the lack of results. Why weren't these capacity building initiatives working? Several issues stood out:

### 1. Fly-in, fly-out consultants:

Most donor-supported capacity building programmes in Rwanda used foreign consultants who travelled to Rwanda for short-term stints. "The problem was that these fly-in, fly-out consultants

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<sup>6</sup> The World Bank, IDA At Work: Rwanda: From Post-Conflict Reconstruction To Development (August 2009). Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/IDA/Resources/ida-Rwanda-10-02-09.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> The Government of Rwanda, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (June 2002). Available at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/2002/rwa/01/>.

<sup>8</sup> The rest of this case refers to NCBS rather than PSCBS though the name wasn't officially changed until the middle of 2013.

just weren't leaving capacity here in the country," said Vivian Kayitesi, the Rwanda Development Board's (RDB's) Head of Investment Promotion and Implementation. Many Rwandan government officials echoed Kayitesi's description: consultants would often write and hand over a report or strategy document that no one in Rwanda had the capacity to implement.

## **2. Training abroad:**

"You send someone to another country to train and what they're learning isn't applicable at home. For example, they may be learning to use software that's not even used in their home office," said Anita Kayirangwa, the UNDP and ADB Project Coordinator at NCBS.

## **3. Lack of coordination across institutions:**

In February 2010, the government held its National Leadership Retreat in lakeside Rubavu to review development progress. On the surface, results looked positive: most ministries were meeting their EDPRS targets. "It was impressive. Green, green, green," said Ms. Ford Mugabo referring to the colour that represents "on track" in the government's progress trackers. But many local officials in attendance complained that while, yes, schools were being built, schools often lacked teachers or electricity or roads to surrounding communities. The government's chief realization from Rubavu was that the EDPRS was missing cross-government coordination. While this was a general point about Rwanda's approach to development, top government officials also left sensing a need for better government-wide integration of its capacity strengthening efforts.

## **4. Lack of prioritisation:**

The government, in part through its work with AGI, realized it had too many capacity building initiatives in too many sectors. Increasingly government was aware that it was going to have to choose which areas to focus on first.

These problems built an appetite in Rwanda for trying something new. But it took a conversation between President Kagame and Tony Blair in mid-2010 to provide the catalyst.

## **AGI in Rwanda**

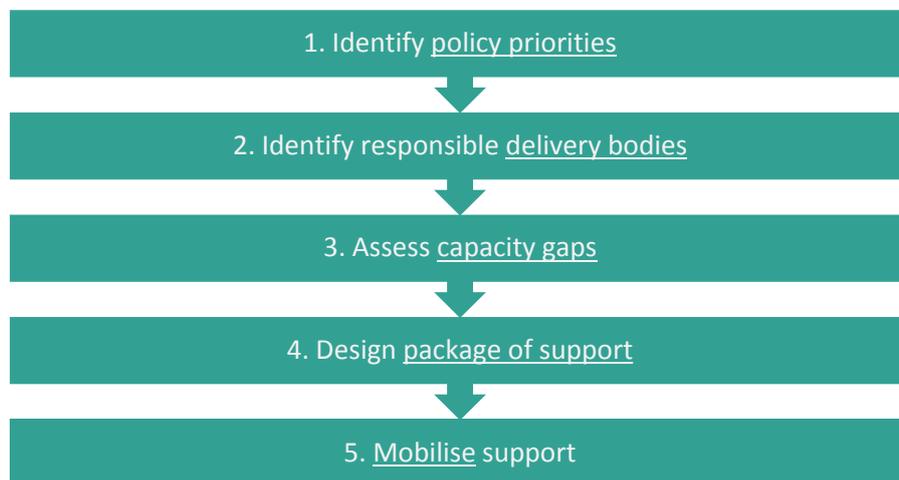
AGI's Rwanda project emerged from discussions between President Kagame and Tony Blair in December 2007. Beginning in July 2008, a team of nine worked in Kigali mainly in the Presidency. When AGI began its second phase in Rwanda in August 2009, it assigned a dedicated advisor to support the government's Capacity Building Fund.

But the turning point came in summer 2010 when Tony Blair travelled to Rwanda to meet with President Kagame. During a final session, Kagame and Blair jointly spoke to government officials and the AGI Rwanda team and President Kagame announced that he wanted capacity building to now focus on four priority areas critical to Rwanda's economic growth: investment, agriculture, energy and mining.

In effect, President Kagame was pressing his government to take a problem-solving approach to capacity building by defining first what they should be trying to achieve. Another important decision was made at this joint session: NCBS would move from MIFOTRA (the Labour Ministry) to MINECOFIN (the Finance Ministry) so that the government could connect capacity building more closely to planning and budgeting cycles.

## Designing SCBI: summer 2010 – autumn 2010

The Rwandan Government quickly responded to the President’s challenge. The President’s inner circle, including Chief of Staff Ines Mpambara, working with AGI, quickly solidified a five step approach (see the section below for more on the theory behind SCBI) for designing a capacity building initiative around these priorities:



They also agreed that AGI Advisors would work with counterparts in the delivery institutions, the Presidency and MINECOFIN to design the programme. These discussions also led to another important decision: that President Kagame would pitch the programme to donors at the UN General Assembly in September. This didn’t leave a lot of time.

# The theory behind SCBI

This section looks at the theory underpinning SCBI to help understand how SCBI is similar to and different from other capacity development programmes. We consider SCBI from two related perspectives: a) the SCBI five step design process and b) a few core programme features of SCBI. Experience and learning on capacity development from Rwanda, the international development community and AGI each contributed to SCBI.

## SCBI design process

### Step 1: Identify policy priorities

The decision to focus on a few objectives came out of the Rwandan Government-AGI collaboration. For years the government and AGI had worked together to both define the government's priorities and to line up government systems behind them. For AGI the focus on prioritisation stems from Tony Blair's own government experience: "a mistake that I made, which is that, in the first few years, I thought if I just bashed the system hard enough, the change happened. In my second term... we then set up a whole new way of working at the centre of government, which did this: We ruthlessly prioritized."<sup>9</sup>

On the surface, it may not seem unique that SCBI is structured around government priorities. The development community says that it believes that partner-funded capacity building should match up with country objectives.<sup>10</sup> However, in practice donors have often focused on unwieldy, government-wide programmes, such as civil service reform<sup>11</sup> that aren't areas government is genuinely committed to. One unique aspect of SCBI is that it targets a small number of specific development objectives that President Kagame himself determined.

### Steps 2 & 3: Identify responsible delivery bodies, Assess capacity gaps

These connected steps in the design process originate from different sources. Some of the thinking – particularly on delivery chain mapping – was borrowed from the UK Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU)<sup>12</sup>. But it's also well-established development practice to shape capacity building programmes starting from an analysis of the system that's needed to achieve the objective.<sup>13</sup>

What is particular to SCBI is that it focuses on delivery outcomes. Donor-funded capacity building doesn't consistently do this. To take an example, the World Bank's Diagnostic Protocol states that Bank-funded public sector management programmes can focus on "problems in upstream

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<sup>9</sup> Tony Blair remarks at "Delivering Results - A Conversation with Jim Yong Kim, Tony Blair, and Michael Barber" (10 April 2013). Available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2013/04/10/delivering-results-conversation-jim-yong-kim-tony-blair-michael-barber>.

<sup>10</sup> Organisation For Economic Co-Operation And Development (OECD), The Challenge Of Capacity Development: Working Towards Good Practice (2006). Available at <http://www.oecd.org/development/governance-development/36326495.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> World Bank Independent Evaluation Group.

<sup>12</sup> The World Bank, GET Note: Center of Government Delivery Units (November 2010). Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVANTICORR/Resources/3035863-1285601351606/NovemberGetNote.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, Making Technical Cooperation More Effective (March 2009). Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/ensure-aid-effectiveness/documents/guidelines\\_on\\_tc\\_finale\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/ensure-aid-effectiveness/documents/guidelines_on_tc_finale_en.pdf).

institutional behaviors or functioning”<sup>14</sup>. What this sometimes leads to are programmes that target process reforms unconnected to delivery.

### **Steps 4 & 5: Design package of support, Mobilise support**

Unlike the first three steps in the design process, steps 4 & 5 played out through pragmatic discussions and negotiations between the government and stakeholders (rather than being derived from a particular theory).

## **Additional SCBI principles**

The government developed SCBI through the five step design process. However, there are additional central features of SCBI not specifically connected to the design process itself.

### **Coordination**

SCBI seeks to maximize horizontal and vertical linkages throughout government from the Presidency through key delivery institutions. The concept behind this originates from a few places. The main source is Rwanda’s own development experience and particularly the lesson from the Rubavu retreat that government institutions were working in silos leading to positive outputs but sometimes flawed outcomes. Beyond Rwanda, the development literature also talks about the importance of coordination<sup>15</sup>.

### **3 levels of capacity building**

SCBI aims to build capacity at the individual, institutional and organizational levels. The focus on three levels is drawn from international development best practice where it is well accepted that capacity must be built on multiple tiers to succeed<sup>16</sup>.

### **Embedded support and pairing**

A core aspect of the SCBI approach is to hire international experts, embed them in ministries, and pair them with recent Rwandan college graduates. This has a few origins. Most important is Rwanda’s failed experience relying on short-term, foreign consultants. With SCBI, the government has insisted that foreign experts commit to longer contracts in country and be explicitly assessed on whether they are building counterpart capacity. While many countries and development institutions criticise the use of foreign technical assistance<sup>17</sup>, the reality is this remains a common practice (for all kinds of reasons)<sup>18</sup>.

### **The SCBI difference?**

The general observation from this assessment is that there are components of SCBI that are in line with and even draw on conventional international development thinking. What makes SCBI different are 1) the focus on building the programme around genuine government priorities and 2) the explicit link with the delivery of those priorities.

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<sup>14</sup> Public Sector & Governance Board, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, The World Bank, The World Bank’s Approach To Public Sector Management 2011-2020: “Better Results From Public Sector Institutions” (February 3, 2012). Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPUBLICSECTORANDGOVERNANCE/Resources/286304-1286388782250/7457546-1303330758812/COMPLETE.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> OECD.

<sup>16</sup> OECD.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 1993: People’s Participation (1993). Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1993/>.

<sup>18</sup> Ikhide, S. and Dansokho, M., An Assessment Of Recent Trends In The Use Of Expatriate Technical Experts In Selected Countries In SSA (2011). The African Capacity Building Foundation.

### **Steps 1-3: Identify policy priorities, identify responsible delivery bodies, assess capacity gaps**

Step one in the design process had been partially but not fully completed. President Kagame's announcement solidified that investment, mining, agriculture and energy would be the focus of the programme. But prioritisation required more than this: what were the priorities within these sectors. The aim was to think about this at the programme level. "The challenging questions conceptually were first what was the right level in terms of the specificity of the priority and second what was the right level of ambition of the target," said Andy Ratcliffe, AGI's Director of Strategy & Development, who at the time was AGI's Rwanda Deputy Country Head. The capacity assessment process would help to answer these questions. Agriculture was the biggest challenge in some ways. "MINAGRI [the Ministry of Agriculture] was trying to include multiple priorities," said Ms. Mugabo. "We had to push back on them and say you have to select just one."

Steps two and three - mapping the delivery chain and identifying capacity gaps – happened at the same time. The assessments required deep sector expertise so the government, working with AGI, recruited outside consultants for three of the four areas; agriculture, mining and energy<sup>19</sup>.

The government and AGI also shaped a framework for the capacity assessments. Step one was to understand the context around the priority like why the priority was chosen and how much progress had been made on delivery so far. Next was to see which institutions were relevant for implementation by mapping the delivery chain. "For example with crops, it's not just MINAGRI," said Ms. Mugabo. "There are other actors who are involved or who should be. The key was to find all responsible agencies and map them." The third step was to identify capacity gaps along this chain. Andy Ratcliffe highlighted the importance of mapping the entire delivery chain in response to the challenge the government had discovered at the Rubavu leadership retreat: "Understanding those upstream and horizontal linkages was really critical." Interestingly, the assessments did not attempt to analyse the wider capacity of the whole ministry. "We tried to get ministers to make the case for why x capacity would make a difference for delivery," said Andy Ratcliffe. It was a challenge getting ministries to choose which capacity gaps were most important to focus on. Andy Ratcliffe remembered, "sometimes we tried to make them answer the question, if you got to hire just 3 people, what roles would you choose?"

Following is an example of the top-level findings from one of the sector capacity assessments. The most significant capacity gaps for the agriculture priority were identified as:

- Planning and coordination for a number of bodies around the Ministry of Agriculture at the central level
- Supply chain delivery of the CIP, appropriate structures and technical skills involving CIP implementation at the district level
- Development and management of post-harvest and value-addition policies
- Local seed industry
- Research and geographical information systems

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<sup>19</sup> The assessment for the fourth area – investment – was conducted by an AGI Advisor working with the leadership of the Rwanda Development Board (RDB).

#### **Step 4: Design package of support**

Steps 1-3 set objectives and identified the barriers to achieving them. But the five step design process didn't reveal what the programme should actually look like. In theory, the government could have tried different models; for example, hiring the top available Rwandan expert to fill each capacity gap or using a combination of foreign expertise and Rwandans. The decision to hire top foreign experts on a longer term basis and to pair them with talented young counterparts resulted from a few things:

- Rwanda's negative experience with "fly-in, fly-out" consultants
- The reality that there were few Rwandan experts to fill the gaps
- Rwanda's cultural openness to promoting young people

#### **Step 5: Mobilizing resources**

SCBI was initially costed at 37 million USD – mainly for the salaries of experts and counterparts, counterpart training, and some hardware and equipment for SCBI staff. At that price tag, SCBI wasn't likely to become a reality without donor support. A big reason for the rush to design SCBI in summer 2010 was so President Kagame could fundraise at the UN General Assembly in September. And President Kagame used a meeting there with World Bank President Robert Zoellick to ask for support for SCBI. This was an important step in the process though the government would need to continue discussing the matter with the World Bank's team in Rwanda. Eventually the WB agreed to support SCBI and, just as importantly for the government, through direct budget support.

**“We tried to get ministers to make the case for why x capacity would make a difference for delivery. Sometimes we tried to make them answer the question, if you got to hire just 3 people, what roles would you choose?”**

**– Andy Ratcliffe, AGI**

SCBI setup and implementation: Late 2010 – early 2012

In late 2010, only the basic elements of SCBI had been determined. The government had decided on the programme's eventual implementation structure. MINECOFIN would oversee the delivery of the SCBI. And NCBS, now an agency of MINECOFIN, would serve as the day-to-day coordinator of the programme working with the four lead delivery institutions: the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINIRENA), the Rwandan Development Board (RDB), the Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI).

#### **Implementation strategies**

By early 2011, the government had secured most of the donor support it needed but funders were still frustrated by lack of details about the programme. “There wasn't a lot in writing,” said Tessa MacArthur of the World Bank's Rwanda Country Office. “We were trying to get them [the government] to produce project documents.” In March and April, the four focal institutions began to work on their implementation strategies which for the first time defined the roles of the experts and counterparts and more specific objectives for the initiative.

Challenges emerged during this process. In a few cases some government officials still weren't clear about what the SCBI model was. For example, some institutions designed implementation strategies around training programmes rather than the joint work of experts and counterparts that was supposed to be the core of SCBI. RDB meanwhile found that it had to almost start from scratch: "RDB essentially had to re-strategise and do it [the capacity assessment] all over again," said AGI's Nina Stochniol, who at the time was an AGI Governance Advisor working with RDB. "I think this was a result of the speed of the design process [in summer 2010]."

### **SCBI "begins"**

While SCBI officially began on July 1st, 2011, the reality is the first year of SCBI implementation was dominated by the government's recruitment of experts and counterparts. The initial aim was to hire 41 experts and 61 counterparts – though these numbers changed as SCBI implementation got under way. For a number of reasons, recruitment turned out to be an extremely difficult and slow process. Even as of the drafting of this case, recruitment remains one of SCBI's biggest challenges.

**"We [RDB] essentially had to re-strategize and do it [the capacity assessment] all over again," said Nina Stochniol, who at the time was an AGI Governance Advisor working with RDB. "I think this was a result of the speed of the design process."**

There were a number of reasons for this. First, it was hard for the government to find experts who had the combination of technical skills, interpersonal skills and willingness to adapt to the local context and to commit to working in Rwanda for two years. Second, hiring counterparts was difficult because the positions required knowledge in areas of technical expertise recent graduates didn't have: "No one was applying," said AGI Advisor Allison George "because these were not topics that schools were teaching. So we had to ask, what's acceptable experience?" A third barrier was that SCBI had not been communicated well to MDAs and people within ministries weren't clear on what SCBI was or what they were recruiting for. Fourth, was the government's capacity constraints and lack of experience. SCBI Coordinators, who were supposed to guide the process, hadn't been hired yet and ministry human resource and finance systems struggled to keep up. There were also particular challenges connected to hiring foreign experts. Sometimes the government didn't have knowledge of the best recruitment channels to use. In some cases, HR departments posted advertisements for international experts in local newspapers. The result was that "no one was applying," said Allison George.

### **SCBI today**

Slowly, and with varying degrees of success in the different institutions, there was progress on recruiting. Technically SCBI began on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. But implementation, in effect, began on a rolling basis throughout 2012 as experts and counterparts were gradually hired.

In the last year-and-a-half, SCBI has blossomed from a handful of recruits and very little in the way of structure and processes to a fully operational programme. 24 experts are paired with 61 local counterparts across the four delivery institutions. SCBI coordinators have been recruited, in addition to the SCBI coordinator in NCBS. Financial systems, which caused delayed payments to experts and

counterparts, are beginning to function more effectively. And monitoring and reporting tools for SCBI are improving the information flow between NCBS and the MDAs. And though it's too soon to assess if SCBI will achieve its ambitious objectives, positive results are emerging:

- **AGRICULTURE** – SCBI experts and counterparts in the Ministry of Agriculture have developed an innovative approach known as the “Pilot Sites Initiative”, where they test interventions in a focused geographic area to prove their effectiveness before scaling them up. Working with international experts, Rwandan counterparts are being trained in crop and livestock sciences; soil and water management expertise; phytosanitary and postharvest sciences for quality assurance and biosafety of agricultural inputs and outputs. So far, this approach has increased farmer income (by, for example, reducing their post-harvest crop losses) and also ensured farmers had greater access to markets.
- **ENERGY** – In the energy sector, SCBI has supported Rwanda’s transition to competitive approaches for sourcing investment. The Energy Investment Unit was established, staffed with SCBI experts and counterparts, and in recent months it issued requests for investors to submit expressions of interest for a 10 MW solar and a 50 MW methane plant. Both have yielded very positive responses from the private sector and will support the government’s efforts to increase energy generation while driving down energy costs in the country.
- **MINING** – SCBI has supported the government in taking huge strides towards better managing Rwanda’s mining sector. Rwanda has become the first country in the region to begin issuing mining certificates at the point of export to certify due diligence in the supply chain, through a system developed by SCBI experts and counterparts. Along with the new Mining Law and Mining Royalty Act, this certification provides a sound basis for investment in Rwanda’s mining sector and a strong platform for dialogue with regional and international communities.
- **MINING** – Another huge achievement for the team in MINIRENA is the establishment of a Mining Cadastre in Rwanda, a Mineral Rights Management System (MRMS), and a Mining Cadastre Unit responsible for its implementation and proper use. This new System is designed to improve management transparency and decision making within the mining sector. Rwanda’s rating in Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index is the lowest in East Africa and the installation of the MRMS will improve openness.
- **INVESTMENT** – Recently, the government negotiated a 22 million USD mining concession with Pella Rwanda Resources Ltd. Having been trained for over a year by their SCBI experts, SCBI counterparts from the Rwanda Development Board and Ministry of Natural Resources were able to lead these negotiations. The deal itself will increase the country’s monthly production of refined minerals from 50 to 120 tonnes over the next five years, and counterpart leadership demonstrates that sustainable capacity is being built.
- **SUSTAINABILITY** – Every day, the capacity of the SCBI counterparts is being developed, and increasingly they are able to lead work with their experts reviewing it. In addition to this tough-to-measure, day-by-day learning, several SCBI counterparts have been promoted to key roles in the Ministry of Natural Resources.

## The Future of SCBI

The main features of SCBI are set but the government, working with AGI, is taking a problem-driven approach to adapting the programme. The MINAGRI Pilot Sites Initiative is one such response helping to make sure that the SCBI doesn’t become yet another uncoordinated development initiative in Rwanda - along the lines of what the government found at the 2010 National Leadership Retreat. SCBI experts and counterparts from different technical areas work together so that their work is integrated rather than functioning as a set of siloed projects. More broadly, the government and AGI are continuing to look at how to optimize the capacity that is being built to allow

counterparts to develop in their current roles but to also potentially step into wider leadership positions.

# Analysis and lessons learned

SCBI is midway through its implementation so there's a lot that Rwandan Government and AGI are still learning. But there are emerging lessons for both reforming governments looking to develop their delivery capacity and for partners working with them.

1. Lesson for governments: Start with a few, concrete objectives
2. Lesson for government and partners: Don't forget the nuts and bolts
3. Lesson for governments: Balance best practice and best fit
4. Lesson for partners: Facilitate local problem solving
5. Lesson for partners: Build wide government ownership

## 1. Lesson for governments: Start with a few, concrete objectives

At the heart of SCBI are tandem features: a) a focus on a few genuine government priorities and b) a link to the delivery of those priorities. Choosing a small number of things is important because when resources are scarce – financing isn't the only thing, human capacity and expertise as well as political capital count too – they need to be concentrated on the areas that matter most. The connection to delivery is significant because stakeholders both inside and outside government tend to stay more engaged when tangible objectives are at stake.

Emphasising priorities and delivery hardly sounds revolutionary and yet capacity building programmes don't always do this. A common past capacity development mistake has been to attempt initiatives like civil service reforms<sup>20</sup> that suffer on both fronts:

- They're sprawling rather than focused on a handful of objectives
- They emphasise "form (what organizations 'look like') over function (what they actually 'do')"<sup>21</sup> that feel disconnected from tangible results which often means there's little political will to see them through

### Lessons beyond Rwanda

By the end of SCBI we'll be able to say more about whether these factors have made the programme successful or not. A few tentative lessons from SCBI to date are to:

- Resist the temptation to fix everything and focus on a few goals that matter most. A critical part of this is to shape the right level of focus by picking priorities that hit a 'sweet spot': not too wide, like fixing an entire sector, and not too narrow, like building a new hospital.
- Choose things that can impact citizens' lives most tangibly. This will mean different things depending on the context – roads, power transmission, important agriculture inputs, jobs or secondary education. But success is more likely when the results matter.

## 2. Lesson for government and partners: Don't forget the nuts and bolts

The design and setup periods of SCBI are a tale of two phases. In the design period government accomplished a lot in just a few months. But the setup and early implementation phase moved at a snail's pace; at times it looked like SCBI might not get off the ground. The biggest reason for the slow setup period were problems with key factors underlying SCBI: government finance, human resource and M&E systems.

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<sup>20</sup> World Bank Independent Evaluation Group.

<sup>21</sup> Pritchett, Lant, Andrews, Matthew and Woolcock, Michael.

SCBI created demands on the finance systems in NCBS and the four delivery institutions which led to problems such as delays in paying SCBI expert and counterpart salaries. Meanwhile hiring for SCBI has been the programme's most visible challenge resulting in roughly a year in which the initiative was under way in theory but hardly in reality. These challenges can be partially blamed on ministry human resource departments which didn't have experience recruiting international experts; though some argue that the actual issue is that the government and AGI should have anticipated these inevitable challenges and that expectations about how long hiring would take were unrealistic.

### **Lessons beyond Rwanda**

- One easier said than done lesson is to simultaneously identify these 'foundational issues' at the start and to respond in a way that keeps progress toward larger objectives on track. In practice this means patching up rather than fixing and sometimes addressing problems in unsustainable ways in the interest of getting things done. In this case, that might have meant anticipating problems in government finance and HR systems and hiring outside TA to make sure these functions worked well enough to keep SCBI on track. This isn't optimal but may sometimes be the right call.
- A second lesson is to be realistic: the government and AGI were overly optimistic about their hiring timelines. A lesson for governments that comes up time and time again in various forms is to approach analogous moments in projects with caution. Depending on the situation, the response may be as basic as budgeting more time for tricky or untested parts of projects.

## **3. Lesson for governments: Balance best fit and best practice**

SCBI is an interesting example of the marriage of external experience and Rwanda's own learning about how to do capacity building. In other words, balancing best fit and best practice.

Many aspects of SCBI aren't revolutionary. For example, most capacity building initiatives today start from an analysis of capacity gaps and try to address three levels of capacity - individual, institutional and organizational. But important parts of SCBI are from Rwanda's experience with capacity building. Almost everyone from the Rwandan Government interviewed for this case talked about the country's previous problems with "fly-in, fly-out" consultants as the basis for insisting that SCBI experts commit to longer-term in-country stints. Government's focus on coordination – evident in the comprehensive programme management and coordination structures and systems that NCBS has created for SCBI – is a result of the government's lessons from the 2010 National Leadership Retreat about the problems of ministries working in siloes. And the bold decision to structure the initiative around a cadre of recent university graduates was made in part because of Rwanda's particular openness to promoting young people.

### **Lessons beyond Rwanda**

The lesson for governments and partners sounds intuitive but doesn't always happen in reality: use a "hybrid approach"<sup>22</sup> of blending outside experience where it makes sense but tailored to the local context. There's no recipe for getting this balance right. An important trick is to identify and apply the principles that matter from outside experience without trying to copy exact forms. In the final section of this case we apply this way of thinking to considering this approach to capacity development in other contexts.

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<sup>22</sup> Booth, David, Development As A Collective Action Problem: Addressing The Real Challenges Of African Governance (October 2012). Synthesis report of the Africa Power and Politics Programme. Available at <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/6869-africa-power-politics-governance-africa-development-collective-action>.

## 4. Lesson for partners: Facilitate local problem solving

The connected lesson relates to how partners can support governments to take this adaptive approach. AGI has helped this process in Rwanda by supporting the development of SCBI systems and the coordination of the initiative across government.

Take AGI's support for the design of SCBI. This wasn't copying and pasting a capacity building model from another country – Rwanda had already seen plenty of that – but helping the government to shape a solution for Rwanda. AGI was particularly useful in supporting the four delivery institutions to identify priorities to focus capacity building on and in working across agencies within sectors to figure out which capacity gaps were most important to address. Similarly, AGI helped the government to shape some of the 'best fit' design features mentioned in the last lesson.

Another central AGI role has been to help coordinate SCBI by working with the government to create structures and systems such as the recruitment and M&E processes. AGI has helped broker solutions to the challenges that inevitably arise along the way. For example, early on there were understandable debates about whether different institutions should be allowed to pay different salaries to counterparts. This wasn't a problem with a technical solution so AGI's support was most helpful in assisting government to find a compromise response (eventually this meant RDB being allowed to pay counterparts higher salaries for certain positions).

And AGI is also helping the government to anticipate and address SCBI's forthcoming strategic challenges. A notable example of this are several complex challenges linked to counterpart continuity such as how counterparts can become experts in the future and how the government can get counterparts to continue to work in Rwanda in the face of tempting opportunities abroad. AGI is working with the government to think through these issues exploring, for example, options such as a UK Civil Service Fast Stream-style initiative.

### **Lessons beyond Rwanda**

The lesson for partners is to support governments in ways that go with the grain of local conditions and politics - a role that an emerging body of literature argues is a useful niche for development partners<sup>23</sup>. This doesn't mean the end of traditional technical assistance which is still often needed (as in this very case). But when supporting complex programmes like SCBI there may be a need for a flexible, solutions-broker as well. For development actors who can't do this directly, this may mean partnering with organizations or individuals who can.

## 5. Lesson for partners: Build wide government ownership

This case illustrates the complexity and importance of government ownership: SCBI has been effective where government ownership is strong and it's struggled where it's lacking.

In fundamental ways, SCBI is a government owned and led initiative. The impetus for it came directly from President Kagame. Government developed the programme around genuine priorities. And the initiative is financed primarily through direct budget support. Government ownership of SCBI was also quite evident in interviews for this case with Rwandan government officials articulating support for SCBI's principles and its operational reality. For example, many in government spoke about plans to use the SCBI approach in new sectors.

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<sup>23</sup> Tavakoli, Heidi, Simson, Rebecca and Tilley, Helen with Booth, David.

But this isn't the whole picture. Just because the President and his top advisors are committed to SCBI doesn't mean the whole government is. Research for this case showed that ministers and permanent secretaries are supportive and engaged with the programme. But this support has been weaker at the level of the managers who oversee the work of experts and counterparts. Some, attribute this to the fact that they weren't brought into the process early enough. This has led to a few interrelated problems such as experts and counterparts getting pressured by managers to work beyond their focus areas. Recognizing these problems, SCBI's leaders have conducted awareness raising activities to try and broaden support for the programme which has started to improve the situation.

### Lessons beyond Rwanda

- Think of government ownership as broadly as possible (see table below). High-level government commitment is important but not the only issue. Each of the country ownership dimensions presented in the table below matter to varying extents.
- You can enhance government ownership. In other words, partners' behaviour matters to this. To take an obvious example, partners can enhance government ownership by funding projects through modalities like direct budget support. But partners should also consider softer factors such as building understanding and buy-in for initiatives beyond the obvious high-level actors. This can and should be something that partners do collaboratively with government.

Dimensions of country ownership				
This table presents a stylized view of the levels of country ownership for each dimension. The most basic level is the minimum needed to be able to attempt a strategic capacity building programme.				
Dimension of country ownership	General factor for partner consideration	Example of a basic version	Example of a mid-level version	Example of an optimal version
Programme built around country priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without at least the basic version of this, a strategic capacity building programme is impossible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top leadership is committed to the issue and it's actually at the top of his/her agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top leadership commitment (at the start and over time)</li> <li>• Other key senior officials support the priority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding, commitment and buy-in for the priority throughout government</li> </ul>
Breadth of understanding of and commitment to the capacity building programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners can work with government to improve this over time (as has been the case in Rwanda)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a senior government champion (ministerial level) who understands the programme's principles and has the clout to steward the programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The President is committed to the programme</li> <li>• Leadership in the delivery institution understands and is committed to the programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The President starts and remains committed to the programme</li> <li>• There's a senior government champion</li> <li>• Commitment to the programme throughout the primary delivery institutions</li> <li>• Buy-in for the programme throughout the delivery chain(s)</li> </ul>

Design process and programme operations managed by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners may actively support design and programme operations at the start and then scale back involvement over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the design and coordination process is driven by partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners support programme operations but government provides leadership and makes the key decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal partner support provided for the programme's coordination</li> </ul>
Donor support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An important though relatively technical dimension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some kind of basket or pooled fund mechanism that enables greater country ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget support (or country-funded)</li> </ul>

# The SCBI model in other countries

## Adapting the approach rather than replicating

In this final section, we apply part of the lesson about balancing best practice and best fit to consider how to use the SCBI approach in other countries. In line with this earlier lesson, the right framework isn't replicating SCBI but rather applying SCBI principles. What does this mean in practice? This case proposes two categories to think about when creating a strategic capacity development programme in another country:

1. Applying the five step design approach
2. Carefully considering several critical issues central to the eventual programme's success

## Five step design process

Creating a strategic capacity building programme begins with some version of the five step design process used to develop SCBI in Rwanda. The reality is that, given varying circumstances in different countries – e.g. available time, capacity or funding – it may make sense to carry out a more or less robust version of each step.

Recognizing this, the table in **Annex 1** is a tool to help governments or partners carry out the five steps. For each step, the table illustrates how the government could attempt three versions of that step: 1) a basic version, 2) a more complicated version or 3) an even more challenging but also more optimal version. The basic column can be considered the simplest way to carry out that step. The “more thorough” column is more difficult to carry out but, if executed well, is more likely to lead to a successful capacity building programme. In Rwanda's case, it executed some steps more thoroughly and some using the most basic approach. Partners, in supporting the design process, should attempt to balance best practice and best fit by pressing for better elements at each step while also considering which version of the step makes most sense for that government.

## Core issues to consider at design

The annexed table lays out the steps to design a strategic capacity building initiative. But partners should also give special consideration to a handful of factors critical to successfully creating a strategic capacity building programme. While we can't definitively link these factors to outcomes since SCBI is still partway through implementation, from AGI's experience, a programme is unlikely to succeed without getting these elements correct.

### **Prioritisation**

Step one of the design process is fundamental. Rwanda's commitment to prioritisation in addition to President Kagame's clear statement about the four areas of focus mean that SCBI is structured around genuine government priorities. A strategic approach to capacity building is contingent on reaching a similar level of clarity around and commitment to a small number of key issues. For partners, this may mean playing a facilitating role to help governments to make tough choices about what to focus on.

### **A problem-driven approach**

The other especially important piece of the design process is step 3: determining the capacities most essential to achieving a specific delivery priority. For strategic capacity building to be effective, the programme needs to respond to these most significant capacity gaps.

### **The challenge of determining what approach to use**

The most difficult part of the design process is determining the right capacity building model to use. In Rwanda, the decision to use embedded foreign experts paired with young Rwandan counterparts was made for a number of reasons including: the government was averse to continuing to use short-term foreign consultants, there were few appropriate Rwanda experts and the government was particularly open to the idea of focusing SCBI around young professionals.

But there were other models that could have been used. And there's no easy way to determine "the right" approach. The "design a package of support" step in the design process itself doesn't provide definitive answers. At this stage in SCBI's implementation, it's too soon to say if the experts paired with counterparts model was the correct one. The capacity building literature offers advice on lessons learned over the years but not a clear answer on which model to use. It's unfortunate that the case of SCBI can't answer this more clearly. However, a few tips for partners supporting governments in other context are:

- *Mobilize capacity:* Whether it's young professionals or talent from the diaspora, it's essential to mobilize capacity to fill the gaps identified. This may sound obvious but in some contexts this may be tricky.
- *The TA landscape:* In most countries that might look at a SCBI-style capacity building programme, there's likely to be an existing complicated landscape of donor-funded technical assistance. In Rwanda, this provided more of a challenge in some institutions than others. But the lesson is that the new programme needs be designed to either benefit from or avoid directly clashing with the existing TA context.
- *Balancing multiple levels:* One underemphasized aspect of the SCBI approach is the focus on building capacity at three levels: individual; organisational; and environmental. Putting talented individuals in place tends to receive the most focus but ultimately individuals can't succeed without finding ways to strengthen the structures, policies and external environment around those individuals.

### **Maximizing government ownership**

In general, with strategic capacity building and more widely, more country ownership means a greater chance that a programme will succeed. Earlier we described how SCBI illustrates a particularly varied picture: in many respects SCBI is very much country-owned and in other ways less so. In designing, setting up and supporting the implementation of a strategic capacity building programme – regardless of the eventual programme structure – partners should recognize the different dimensions of country ownership and strive to build it across each one (the earlier tool may be useful).

## Building on this case study

This case study is the second publication from AGI's Insight and Learning practice. AGI will continue to publish new content which we hope will contribute to topical discussions on governance and capacity building.

We would like to thank the Government of Rwanda for their collaboration on this case study. SCBI was conceived and implemented by the Government of Rwanda and AGI is glad to have the opportunity work with the government on this initiative.

If you have any questions about this case study or you would like to learn more about our Insight and Learning practice please do contact us:

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## Annex 1: Generalising the five step SCBI design approach<sup>24</sup>

Step	Most basic version	Mid-level	More thorough/optimal
<b>Step 1: Identify priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set the maximum number of priorities at 5</li> <li>Set a basic mechanism that at a minimum allows the President to select priorities</li> <li>Execute the mechanism</li> <li>Selected priority needs to work technically and politically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set criteria (including a maximum number of priorities)</li> <li>Use a more involved mechanism (e.g. Rwanda's Leadership Retreat) that includes key government power centres and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the credibility of the process with important government stakeholders</li> <li>Hold informal discussions with key stakeholders to maximize their support for the prioritisation process</li> <li>Ensure government buy-in at all levels</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 1 month</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 2-3 months</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 6-8 months</li> <li>Estimated support: 2 consultants/advisors</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2: Identify responsible delivery bodies</b>  (A light touch step and less of a capacity strain on governments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand which institutions matter for the delivery of the priority</li> <li>Understand how these institutions impact the lead institution (e.g. by providing resources, by delivering a service, by providing political support etc.)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough review of documents and sources including policy documents, internal organograms and stakeholder discussions</li> <li>Understand the impact of upstream institutions on the lead ministry</li> <li>Map the delivery chain</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 3 weeks</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 5 weeks</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3: Assess capacity gaps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess individual-level capacity</li> <li>Focus on the capacity of the lead institution</li> <li>Inputs primarily from just a few senior ministry officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess individual and organisational levels</li> <li>Focus on the capacity of the lead institution and upstream institutions (centre and Ministry of Finance)</li> <li>A sector expert carries out the assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess gaps at the individual, organizational and institutional level</li> <li>Understand the context around the priority such as its scope and why it's been selected</li> <li>Understand the capacity building context including what other initiatives are in place</li> <li>Full assessment of lead, upstream and downstream institutions</li> <li>Factor underlying systems' capacity gaps into the design of the programme</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 1 week</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 1 month</li> <li>Estimated support: 2 consultants/advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 2 months</li> <li>Estimated support: 2 consultants/advisors</li> </ul>

<sup>24</sup> The basic version of the step lists what the features of that version could be. The more thorough versions list additional possible features (rather than re-stating the basic features which are assumed for any version).

Step	Most basic version	Mid-level	More thorough/optimal version
<b>Step 4: Design package of support</b>  (Can begin concurrently with earlier steps)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define basic options for different possible programme models</li> <li>Senior government officials discuss and select their preferred model through a formal mechanism</li> <li>Develop basic project document that lays out objectives, approach, timeline and budget</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess options for different (or complementary) capacity building models               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen capacity of existing mid-level experts from that country</li> <li>Training or schooling abroad</li> <li>SCBI model of embedded pairing of experts and local counterparts</li> </ul> </li> <li>Consult stakeholders upstream, downstream and throughout the coordination structures</li> <li>More thorough project document includes risks, M&amp;E</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 3 weeks</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 2 months</li> <li>Estimated support: 2 consultants/advisors</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5: Mobilize support</b>  (Can and should begin concurrently with earlier steps; this may or may not be necessary if the partner is themselves the likely funder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential funding prospects</li> <li>Submit project proposal to donor prospects</li> <li>Senior government officials follow up with donors to push for their support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share draft concept notes and updates with donors for feedback at intervals during earlier design stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a clear fundraising strategy at the start of the design process</li> <li>Hold donor consultations at the start of the design process. Government may want to consider programme modifications based on donor feedback.</li> <li>Discuss aid modalities with donors and press for direct budget support. If budget support isn't an option, explore next best possibilities such as a TA pooled fund.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 4 weeks</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 6 weeks</li> <li>Estimated support: 1 consultant/advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated time: 8 weeks</li> <li>Estimated support: 1-2 consultants/advisors</li> </ul>



