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Organisational Self-Assessment

A catalyst for development outcomes?

**ROBERT DAVID WAYNE
2002**

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ABSTRACT:

Organisational self-assessment (OA) is an emerging development practice, often situated within capacity-building interventions. This study places OA at the confluence of the literature on participation, organisation development, and capacity-building for sustainable development. Reports on the nature and merits of several techniques are documented, and a framework developed to describe and classify them.

The study then turns to investigate the extent to which organisational self-assessment is able to influence development outcomes. Using field-level research with community based organisations (CBO's), local NGO's, and health facilities in Bangladesh, the Appreciative Inquiry technique is evaluated for its ability to meet the stated objectives of the implementing organisations, the participants' experience of the process, and its potential to catalyse development.

OA is found to have significant potential to generate development outcomes through its ability to combine the motivation for collective action with a plan of specific actions. This study recommends the extension of its use to new areas of application, such as community disaster preparedness and community water supply management, though with several caveats about how this is implemented.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

•	AI	Appreciative Inquiry
•	APA	Appreciative planning and action
•	BT	Breakthrough (used in UNICEF's whole site workshops)
•	CASA	Capacity self assessment, an OA technique developed by Tearfund UK
•	CBO	Community-based organisation
•	CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
•	Concern	Concern Worldwide, an international NGO with its head office in Ireland
•	CRWRC	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
•	DfID	British Department for International Development
•	DOSA	Discussion-oriented organisational self-assessment
•	EmOC	Emergency obstetric care
•	GEM	Global Environmental Management Initiative
•	HfH	Habitat for Humanity
•	ICI	Institutional capacity indicator
•	IDS	The Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University
•	INTRAC	The International NGO Training and Research Centre
•	LNGO	Local NGO
•	M.Phil	Master of Philosophy
•	NGO	Non-government organisation

- OA Organizational self-assessment
- OCI Organizational capacity indicator, an OA technique used by CRWRC
- OD Organisation development
- OPCA Organisation for the Poor Community Advancement, an NGO based in Mirsarai, Bangladesh
- PM&E Participatory monitoring and evaluation
- PRA Participatory rural appraisal
- PROSE Participatory results-oriented self-evaluation
- PVC USAID's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation
- PVO Private voluntary organisation, as used by USAID
- REMOLD Resource Mobilisation for Development, an NGO based in Noakhali, Bangladesh
- RQ Research question
- SERP South Eastern Regional Programme of Concern Bangladesh
- SRS Skill rating scale
- UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
- UPOMA Unnayan Porikalpanaya Manush, an NGO based in Noakhali, Bangladesh
- USAID United States Agency for International Development
- VDCI Village development capacity index
- WRLH Women's Right to Life and Health, a collaborative initiative of the Government of Bangladesh, UNICEF, and the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Development practice over the past decade has seen a marked transition towards encouraging target communities to design and execute their own development. A trend away from ‘top-down’ to ‘bottom-up’ or ‘grass-roots’ development, has emerged with the participation revolution. Negative experiences with the maintenance of infrastructure have also contributed to the transition, providing strong incentives for international donor organisations to “hand-over” to community-based organisations. More general concerns with sustainability have added weight to this transition in development practice.

‘Capacity-building’ and ‘organisation(al) development’ are primary areas of focus in this new world. Pettit (2000:57) claims that strengthening local organisation is gaining currency as an end in itself, more than just a means to an end. His reasons for the trend include the evidence that local people are more likely to support the process and sustain the results over time when they are able to set their own priorities and design locally appropriate solutions. He sees organisations as often the best form for nurturing capacities, and as building blocks for civil society.

This study explores the emerging group of approaches that may collectively be described as organisational self-assessment (OA) methodologies, and primarily seeks to ascertain whether they can catalyse development outcomes. The following sections set out the rationale for the study, and the specific research questions. Drawing on three streams of literature (participation, organisation development, and capacity-building), Chapter 2 presents a theoretical background for the subsequent documentation of various approaches. Then, using field examples from Bangladesh, an in-depth study explores the use of Appreciative Inquiry with newly established community-based organisations, local NGO’s, and government health facilities. The design of the field research is

presented in Chapter 3, and the findings in Chapter 4. The final chapter concludes with a summary of the findings, a discussion of their implications, and recommendations for future action both in the academic and the professional worlds.

1.2 Rationale for this study

It is in the implementation, not the theory, that capacity-building and organisational development occur. From Pettit's (2000:66) perspective, "support for institution-building is concentrated at the 'national NGO' or governmental level, and there is too little, or the wrong kind of, investment at the level of membership organisations, self-help associations and community-based NGOs." He calls for "fundamental changes in the way aid funding and partnerships are understood, negotiated, structured, timed and assessed", with a focus on organisational development goals rather than projects and partnerships.

Organisational self-assessment (OA) is emerging as one way in which this change in focus is implemented. As will be seen in Chapter 2, several organisations are now trialing OA with local groups, and are using a growing range of approaches. However, there is scant mention of this in the literature. This is partly because organisational assessment sits at the practical end of the development spectrum, and field workers are often more concerned with action than with documentation. The literature that does exist tends to present individual approaches, without an overview of the methodology as a whole. Because the trials are relatively new, few outcomes are reported, and the literature tends to concentrate on describing how to implement these approaches.

Thus there is a real need for research that fills these gaps. What kind of outcomes are available when OA is used with local organisations? What are the differences between various approaches to OA? What applications are they suited to, or otherwise? This study seeks to increase understanding in these areas.

1.3 The approach used to investigate Organisational Self-Assessment.

The main focus of this study is to explore the emerging group of techniques for organisational self-assessment, and to consider whether the methodology is able to influence development outcomes. It attempts to give a longer term perspective on the impact of OA than is currently available from the literature, and to document a range of approaches. I suspect that OA may be a useful mechanism to facilitate disaster mitigation and preparedness in communities. However, without access to organisational assessment examples that specifically deal with disaster mitigation and preparedness, I have decided not to pursue this hypothesis directly.

The hypothesis tested by this research is:

*That organisational self-assessment is a catalyst
for development outcomes.*

And the following research questions (RQ) are used to explore the hypothesis in the field:

*RQ1: Does Appreciative Inquiry achieve the objectives stated by
the implementing organisation?*

*RQ2: Is the use of Appreciative Inquiry seen as beneficial by the
participants?*

*RQ3: Are any development outcomes (or planned outcomes)
directly attributable to the process?*

Using material obtained from practitioners involved with other self-assessment techniques, desktop research also addressed the following questions:

RQ4: How do other organisational self-assessment techniques differ from Appreciative Inquiry?

RQ5: Are there any differences between organisational self-assessment techniques in terms of the outcomes achieved?

RQ6: Can these differences in outcomes be attributed to particular features of the techniques used?

This study draws on three streams of literature (participation, organisation development, and capacity-building) but does not use any of these as a specific framework for the study. The approach taken to the study is descriptive, and uses qualitative research techniques to obtain information from the perceptions of both participants and facilitators. It also draws on ideas about 'development as process', articulated strongly by David Mosse (1998) among others. These ideas present development activities as inherently political, being sites for the negotiation of power relations.

1.4 Delimitations and limitations of the study

This study has been undertaken to fulfil the research requirements of an M.Phil degree in Development Studies. This limited the scope of the field study due to related time and monetary constraints. For this reason, the field research was limited to one country, and one organisational self-assessment technique. Comparative work is limited to information obtained from correspondence with practitioners and several publications, and therefore represents only a cursory view of what could be an interesting study in itself.

The uses of organisational self-assessment investigated here all have a development focus. This study does not venture into the now substantial use of

OA in business settings, or in other developed world initiatives. And beyond this, it is intentionally focused on local or community-based groups, rather than national or international agencies.

Finally, this study is limited by its author, just as it would be by any author. It is impossible to be truly objective even if one tried to. How we interpret any information is coloured by one's individual perspective, and affects what we choose to reveal or conceal, and how we do so. This study represents the perspective of an 'outsider' to the country, culture, and organisations studied. Although the study attempts to represent some of the insiders' views, most interactions required translation, both of the questions asked, and the responses, all of which were perceived through the eyes of the author.

1.5 Definitions of key terms

- Organisational self-assessment A facilitated participatory assessment of an organisation where any decisions on existing status, and any plans for future action, are made by the participating members of that organisation.
- Development outcome A change that improves the potential of individuals or groups to provide for their own needs and aspirations without reducing the potential of others to do the same.
- Local organisation Includes grassroots membership organisations, self-help groups, farmer associations and community-based NGOs located in or near their areas of operation.

1.6 Summary

To summarise, this study explores the emerging group of techniques for organisational self-assessment, found theoretically at the nexus of streams of thought from the participation, organisation development and capacity-building fields. The 'process' approach to development is also used in subsequent analysis. The main focus of the research considers whether the organisational self-assessment methodology is able to influence development outcomes, and this is explored through field research on the use of Appreciative Inquiry with local organisations in Bangladesh. The results are limited to this example although some information has been obtained from development practitioners who have used other techniques.

This research aims to fill some gaps in the literature on this relatively new phenomenon, by providing both an overview of the various techniques in use in a development context and then exploring the kind of outcomes that arise when organisational self-assessment is used with local organisations.

CHAPTER 2: ORGANISATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT THEORY & PRACTICE

2.1 Three streams of thought: a theoretical context for Organisational Self-Assessment.

Located at the meeting point of theory and practice, organisational self-assessment (OA) draws from both. Its history can be traced only in part from the academic literature as practitioners have often contributed to the field without publication. Despite the historic trail being incomplete in this regard, the literature does record the convergence of several streams of thought which have paved the way for the emergence of OA. This nexus of thought from apparently distinct sources is of interest in itself, and the cross-fertilisation of ideas is a potentially powerful source of new ways of thinking and doing, of which OA is just one outcome. Here, the participation paradigm combines with sustainable development's focus on capacity-building and self-reliance, and also with management theories related to organisation development and the learning organisation.

Organisational self-assessment is an exciting outcome of this meeting of ideas. However, as with many practical tools, it may be in danger of being adopted simply as a technique and gradually divorced from the ideas which formed its genesis. This chapter provides a theoretical background to the emerging practice of organisational assessment, and the subsequent chapters go on to consider its contribution to development outcomes.

2.1.1 Organisation Development

The first stream of thinking concerns organisations and their performance. Organisation Development (OD) is the term used to describe planned organisation change. As Rick James indicates, it is a very diverse and ill-defined

field, with no single philosophy, nor one textbook to consult (James, 1998:8). It is possible, however, to chart its development from the early days of management theory. Until the early 1930's, the 'classical school' of thought was dominated by a Social Darwinist ('survival of the fittest') model as propounded by Frederick Taylor. His mechanistic interpretation of employee behaviour precluded their participation in the creative processes of management (Rothwell et al., 1995:13). However, experiments conducted in industry and later in group dynamics exercises, established an alternative view of the organisation as a social system, no longer mechanistic. This formed the 'human relations school' of thought (ibid:16). Beginning with Karl Lewin's work on the dynamics of the change process, applied behavioural science and subsequent studies in motivation for both action and learning led on to the 'human resources school' of thought. Key influences were Abraham Maslow's hierarchical theory of human needs (Maslow, 1943) and Cyril Houle's (1961) findings that people's love of learning itself and their desire for social relationships outweigh practical needs in motivating their learning. John Collier's "action research", based on the understanding that action is informed by research complemented these (James 1998:9).

The application of these theories to management was developed by Chris Argyris, who espoused new ideas about the way that bureaucracy and authority structures tend to stifle action and creativity (Rothwell et al., 1995:22). Rensis Likert of the Survey Research Centre at the University of Michigan developed a survey methodology to measure certain characteristics of any organisation (including leadership, motivation, communication, interaction, decision-making, goal-setting, control, and performance). His use of a questionnaire to do so is echoed by some organisational self-assessment methodologies used today. Further inputs to current thinking are drawn from McGregor's focus on potentials through team-working and joint problem-solving (James, 1998:10), and the Tavistock Institute's view of organisations as "a complex series of interconnected sub-systems" (ibid:10).

The practice of organisation development has evolved alongside these theoretical developments. OD today is commonly seen as an intervention by specialised consultants, using techniques based on an action research model (Rothwell et al., 1995:48). Typical steps in the process include:

1. Entry, where the need for change in an organisation becomes apparent,
2. Start-up, where the consultant, or change-agent is engaged,
3. Assessment and feedback, where the consultant gathers information about the 'problem' and feeds this back to decision makers,
4. Action planning, where the consultant works with decision makers and stakeholders to develop a corrective-action plan,
5. Intervention, in which the change process is carried out,
6. Evaluation, where progress is evaluated,
7. Adoption, in which the members of the organisation own the change, and implement it throughout the organisation, and
8. Separation, where the consultant disengages from the change effort (ibid:52-53).

The application of OD to development organisations has, perhaps predictably, often taken an external consultant model. This arises in part from the source of the ideas (in the north) and the traditional 'technical assistance' model for transfer of ideas and techniques to the developing world. It also reflects the capture of the methodology by northern players who serve to benefit from promoting it as a consultancy arrangement (eg. International NGO Training and Research Centre - INTRAC). To be fair, the OD model does require facilitation, and often an outsider will bring a more balanced perspective to that process, particularly where contested issues are likely to surface.

Alternatives to conventional practice also feature in the literature on OD. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) have proposed an action research model based on a theory of appreciation. This is now played out in practice using 'Appreciative Inquiry' whereby "research into the social (innovation) potential of organisational life [begins] with appreciation" (ibid:160). Even within the more

conventional problem focus of organisation development, the latest developments in the field are tending towards a more autonomous process, as will be seen in the next section.

2.1.2 Participation

The second stream of thinking concerns participation. Originating from within the development sector, participation has enjoyed a meteoric transition from radical alternative to conventional paradigm. Its various incarnations reflect this shift, as the scope of participation thinking has steadily outstripped the vision of earlier proponents. What today is referred to as “a philosophical approach to development rather than a policy” (Orlando Fals-Borda, cited in Burkey, 1993:57) began to take form in the late 1970's as Rapid Rural Appraisal. This was a pragmatic approach to field research which grew out of frustration with biases resulting from outsiders' perspectives, disillusionment with questionnaire surveys, and the acknowledgement that rural people “were themselves knowledgeable on many subjects which touched their lives” (Chambers, 1997:111). It wasn't long before the techniques developed for research in farming and agro-ecosystems analysis converged with those of social anthropology to recognise differences between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives, elevating indigenous people's knowledge. This recognition led to an increased use of ‘participation’ in rural appraisal, acknowledged firstly at the 1985 Khon Kaen International Conference (Chambers, 1997:113).

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has become an all-encompassing term for subsequent developments and permutations. Its spread was rapid, and exciting. Innovators, mainly from NGOs in the South, took the techniques and tools and adapted and modified them to develop both new tools and new areas of application. The scope of ‘participation’, particularly in the Latin American context, broadened to encompass action-research, drawing on Paulo Freire's principles of ‘conscientisation’ developed in his books *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974). His

contention that “poor and exploited people can and should be enabled to analyse their own reality has been widely influential” (Chambers, 1997:106).

More recently, those leading the participation revolution have been grappling with the transition from a set of participatory methods to a participatory philosophy, and how to institutionalise the approach. This is being tackled in a number of arenas. Robert Chambers has been addressing what he terms the ‘final frontier’: the personal behaviour and attitudes of actors and professionals at every level in the development process (Chambers, 1998:xvi). John Gaventa, and others, have directed attention to the ‘scaling up’ of PRA, using learning “as a deliberate and conscious part of the empowerment process”, particularly for civil society groups taking new roles in a decentralised governance environment (Gaventa, 1998:158). Eylers and Forster (1998:100) point to “the increasing awareness that participatory approaches imply the decentralisation of decision-making power and of control over development resources while at the same time stimulating capacities for self-determined, responsible development processes.” Reports from a workshop at IDS suggest that “‘going participatory’ means moving beyond PRA and related methodologies....and exploring in greater depth questions of organisational development” (Blackburn & Holland, 1998:145).

This new way of thinking about participation has spawned new practical approaches. The use of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) has taken off in recent years, though it has immediately run into some of the limitations of conventional development practice: the project model itself, and the skewed power relationships between donors and recipients. Estrella (2000:3) notes that “while there are many variations of conventional monitoring and evaluation, it has been characterised as oriented solely to the needs of funding agencies and policy makers.” Recipient organisations have viewed the technique as a ‘policing mechanism’ (ibid:7), which has led to scepticism about the introduction of PM&E. However Carden (2000:182) reports that this was overcome in trials “as the participants perceived the relevance of the process to their own needs.” He also reports “an emerging realisation that results are not

evident solely in the projects, but also in the environments where projects are implemented” (ibid:176).

Thinking about, and experimentation with, participation has been restricted to practitioners and academics at the leading edge of the field. Many others in practice have only reluctantly taken up the challenge, threatened by its potential to restructure power relations, or even just by its potential to change or delay pre-packaged plans based upon decisions already made. Blackburn & Holland (1998:157) present a “Typology of Participation” developed by Jules Pretty (Pretty et al., 1995). Participation is categorised as:

1. Passive,
2. Information giving,
3. Consultation,
4. For material incentives,
5. Functional,
6. Interactive,
- or 7. Self-mobilisation.

It is at the latter end of this spectrum that this stream feeds into thinking about organisations, self-assessment, and organisation development.

2.1.3 Capacity building for sustainable development

The third stream of thinking which leads into organisational self-assessment comes from the literature on sustainable development, via ideas about capacity-building. Critiques of aid and development practice over the years have highlighted the way that projects have fostered dependency in the client groups, and were not designed for a future beyond external assistance. However, the resulting move to a more ‘sustainable’ development practice saw many projects collapse shortly after external assistance was phased out. A 1989 review of 366 technical cooperation projects in Sub-Saharan Africa with institutional development components found substantial results in only 22 percent of the cases

(Edoho, 1998:244). Despite their willingness, local people often were not ready to resolve all of the myriad of challenges facing a developing country organisation, or project. This was not usually their fault. Development practitioners, driven by project funding cycles and a desire to create and transfer successful interventions to local groups, often withdrew support too early. Kaplan (2000:523) suggests that "development practitioners are normally trained to deliver interventions - or packages or programmes - rather than to read the development phase at which a particular organisation may be." Burkey (1993:217) notes that international agencies tend to close down project areas too soon while local agencies stay too long.

However, the corollary of this failure is that practitioners recognised a greater need to build capacity in developing communities to undertake their own development. "Capacity development is a process by which individuals, groups, organisations, and societies, enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges on a sustainable basis" (Angeles & Gurstein, 2000:454). This is not a simple project-bound task. "Capacity building is strategic, not just another sectoral programme. The work is complex; long-term; changing; expensive in time and money; requires Southern ownership, not just acceptance; and is not a convenient exit route" (James, 1994). This requires fundamental changes in the way aid funds and partnerships are negotiated, structured, timed, and assessed (Pettit, 2000:58). It also takes time. Oxfam treats capacity-building as "an approach to development rather than a set of discrete or pre-packaged interventions", and adds that both the British Department for International Development (DfID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimate that a realistic time frame for organisational strengthening is over ten years (Eade, 1997:3).

The history of capacity-building is a mixed one, and this is reflected in descriptions of it as "the latest fashion for maximising NGO impact" (Eade, 1997:1), "now used so indiscriminately that any meaning it once had may soon evaporate" (ibid:9). Capacity-building draws on ideas about empowerment and participation shaped by Paulo Freire, and also from the Liberation Theology

movement in Latin America. Freire's contention that 'education for liberation' requires a process of problem-solving and dialogue among equals (ibid:10), melded with Liberation Theology's reflection on Christ as an example of personal, collective and even national liberation to generate an "unprecedented level of social organisation" in Christian Base Communities (ibid:12). These radical ideas about the transformation of power and roles in development were, of course, unpalatable to most national and international development actors, but they have gradually influenced mainstream practice. A technique called Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis emerged from Harvard in the late 1980's with a perspective on sustainable development as the process by which vulnerabilities are reduced and capacities increased. Importantly, it also included a recognition that "no one develops anyone else" (ibid:13). Amartya Sen's capabilities approach has also served to shift mainstream development thinking towards individual capacity to achieve quality of life. The livelihoods approach of the late 1990's extends and applies this thinking as a framework of analysis.

However, when it comes to implementing development through the capacity building framework, a spectrum of understanding emerges. A tension exists between the development mainstream located in the liberal/modernisation paradigm, which sees capacity-building as a way to improve the skills of institutions to take up new roles in a decentralised governance environment, and the alternative perspective. This is propounded by change-oriented NGOs, who see capacity-building as a much more open-ended and empowerment-focused mode of people-centred development (Storey, 2002:526). These two co-exist uneasily. Valentine James reflects the mainstream when he writes as editor in his book on capacity-building that "it is necessary to build the capacity of the people of developing countries in order to encourage economic growth and improve the general health of the people and increase life expectancy so as to have healthy and productive societies" (James, V., 1998:3). Contested definitions of the term 'capacity-building' led Eade (1997:23) to state what it is not rather than what it is (ibid:32); capacity-building does not create dependency, or weaken the state, is not solely concerned with financial sustainability, and is not a separate activity. She goes on to express a philosophical approach to capacity-building which

depends more on how we do things than what we do, and sees democratic organisational models as “the essence of a capacity-building approach” (ibid:107). Education and training are not capacity building activities in and of themselves. It is the organisational setting and purpose that define them as such.

2.2 The streams converge: Organisational Self-Assessment

Organisational self-assessment occurs relatively rarely in the development literature. It is an emerging practice, currently under trial in a variety of contexts internationally. The lack of published literature relates to a number of factors. Primary among these is that it is being worked out at the practical end of the development spectrum, far from academic debates and often by field-workers more given to doing than writing. In most cases organisational self-assessment is seen as but one aspect of a capacity-building programme, and has not been isolated for analysis. Also, its use by an organisation has not necessarily been preceded by an academic discussion. In some cases it has come about as a pragmatic response to a perceived lack of accountability to donors, in others it is related to the desire to engage in capacity-building, and with the concept of partnership.

However, some results are starting to emerge, with several years now since the earliest trials began. Much of the literature on this topic is not published, and results or commentary on organisational self-assessment have to be gleaned from internal reports, or websites. A selection of approaches to OA are presented in the following section, beginning with general calls for assessment and moving on to specific examples in Section 2.3.

The approaches may be divided into four main groups (see also Table 2.1). These are: a) Extractive: those in which members’ participation is primarily to provide better information to an outside organisation (whether as a means to provide accountability for donors, or to help design capacity-building interventions); b) Directive: where members participate in collective analysis and decision-making

but the scope of the analysis is still set by an external organisation; c) Facilitative: where members themselves define the scope of their analysis, the criteria for their assessment, and go on to define their own development goals; and d) Autonomous: where the techniques for self-assessment, and the impetus to use them arise from within the organisation without the involvement of any external organisation. The differences between these categories relate to the relationship between two partners in the interaction over organisational assessment, and where the decision-making authority lies. Pretty's 'typology of participation' (Pretty et al., 1995, cited in Blackburn & Holland, 1998:157) was initially considered for describing these categories. However, whilst it can easily distinguish a) from b), Pretty's 'interactive participation' category could be used to describe both directive and facilitative OA. The proposed framework is therefore based not on participation but on partnership and empowerment, describing the relationship between two organisations.

TABLE 2.1 A TYPOLOGY OF OA	
Extractive	Participation is primarily to provide better information to an outside organisation.
Directive	Members participate in collective analysis and decision making, but the scope is still set by an external organisation.
Facilitative	Members define their own scope of analysis, the criteria for their assessment, and set their own goals.
Autonomous	Initiated and designed without the involvement of an external organisation. Facilitator may still be external.

Eade (1997:3) sees strengthening people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to act on these, as the basis of development. However, she also refers to Arturo Escobar, who criticises 'development' itself as a "construct in which to shape and manage relationships between nations and people" arguing for a rejection of the entire paradigm (ibid:12). Although very different, both of these views link the concept of development to relationships and power. Organisational self-assessment sits firmly within the 'development' paradigm,

but seeks to reform the relationship between 'providers' and 'beneficiaries', by encouraging the transfer of visioning and prioritising (ie. the power to decide) to the latter group.

Several authors writing since the mid-nineties have introduced or called for organisational self-assessment, using a variety of terms to describe this. 'Self-appraisal' and planning are seen as closely linked, and "whatever its limitations, the strategic planning process may help to create consensus around a shared sense of purpose, as well as prompting an organisation to look beyond itself" (Eade, 1997:129). INTRAC, an international development consultancy based in Oxford, UK, has published a number of papers on their view of capacity-building, promoting "participatory self-assessment" of NGOs. Rick James (1994) flagged the need for indicators of organisational change to evaluate capacity-building programmes, and goes on to address "process-oriented" organisational development in a later paper (James, R., 1998). He sets the scene by stating that "some ten years of a training dominated approach to capacity-building have shown its severe limitations in improving organisational effectiveness" (ibid:2).

Organisational self-assessment (OA) is introduced with the statement that "good strategies for capacity building require good diagnosis" (Fowler et al., 1995:1). INTRAC go on to say that donors initiate most NGO assessments (ibid:7), often to make funding decisions as they move from project to programme funding, but increasingly to encourage healthy learning organisations. Perhaps to be expected from a consultant providing services in this area, they stress the importance of facilitation by a skilled advisor or consultant (ibid:1), stating that self-reflection alone has problems which include 'organisational blind spots', hierarchy standing in the way of attaining critical views, a related lack of trust or openness, and insufficient awareness of how things could be done better. They suggest several preconditions (ibid:2-3), insisting that it should be participatory and inclusive, that there must be full support from the NGO's governors and chief executive, and all relevant senior managers and critically placed staff should be involved. Other key stakeholders should also have some input. In addition, to defuse the tendency for it to be seen as "a northern instrument of control rather

than learning”, assessment should not be used to decide whether capacity-building support should be continued (ibid:7-8).

Alan Fowler goes on to suggest a set of organisation development ‘rules’ to re-orient and improve existing levels of capacity (1997:187-193). These include group-oriented action-learning based on self-assessment with external facilitation. He suggests that “if done properly, the organisational assessment exercise has already produced organisation development outcomes in terms of greater awareness, has stimulated internal motivation for change, and has improved relationships and generated new insights” (ibid:199).

In an evaluation of three of CIDA’s capacity-building partnerships, Angeles and Gurstein (2000:474) conclude that process-oriented techniques for capacity-building such as “participatory institutional capacity assessment” are critical to complement what they see as conventional methods such as training workshops, consulting services, study tours, and human resource management.

Chris Roche, writing on impact assessment, considers “participatory diagnosis” to be important “because it leaves the categorisation and classification...in the control of members or staff. The result is likely to reflect their priorities and concerns” (Roche, 1999:243). He goes on to list the common elements of an organisational assessment, noting that these can be assessed in a variety of ways (ibid:236). They include:

- Identity and values
- Purpose, vision and strategy
- Human and financial resources
- Systems and procedures
- Organisational culture
- Structure and organisation
- Control and accountability
- Programmes and services
- Performance and results

- Learning and change
- Leadership, management and decision-making
- External linkages and relations

Organisational self-assessment using Appreciative Inquiry is suggested by Power et al. (2002) as one way for international NGOs to re-orient their practice to a 'bottom-up learning' model. The authors are convinced of the potential of this approach to inspire hope in organisations, and as "a superior means of catalysing organisational change" (Grant Power, pers. comm. 2002). However, they also recognise that success is conditional on other factors, particularly the commitment of senior management to a broad-based process of consultation (ibid). It is apparent, from the examples cited in this section, that calls for organisational self-assessment are coming from a variety of sources, and for a variety of reasons. These different approaches tend to influence how OA is implemented.

2.3 Techniques for Organisational Self-Assessment

This section moves on from general descriptions of self-assessment to present a variety of specific techniques from the examples available in the literature. The documentation of these techniques gives a snapshot of the field as it stands at present, as well as providing useful material for the field study. A Village Development Capacity Index (VDCI) has been used in a CIDA funded partnership in northern Ghana, building on earlier efforts to design self-assessment tools for use in under-developed parts of Canada (Jackson, 1998:55-56). The key to the technique is seen as the fact that the community chooses indicators itself.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) was one of the first organisations to publish a comprehensive study on the topic, charting a transition from their extractive Skill Rating Scale (SRS) used in the 1970's, through their Organisational Capacity Indicator (OCI) system to a facilitative partnering

approach using the Appreciative Inquiry methodology. Their report recognises the relational aspect of capacity-building, stating that “any definition of organisational capacity-building must include an organisation’s movement away from dependency on another organisation” (Johnson & Ludema, 1997:151), and “monitoring should be seen as beneficial first to the organisation itself before the information is useful for donors or consultants” (ibid:94). Interestingly, CRWRC found that with the earlier SRS tool, scores tended to increase over time to the point that they no longer reflected the true state of the organisation. Participants have such a strong expectation of improvement, or the need to demonstrate it, that they tend to revise scores upward at each review. This remains an issue today, but is perhaps less likely to develop when the ownership of the assessment rests with the beneficiaries rather than the donor. If the assessment is seen as a donor-sponsored tool to gauge future support, then it may generate unrealistic statements of progress.

World Neighbors has learnt from their experience that “if communities are encouraged to analyse and define their own needs and priorities, local organisation has been more likely to take root and sustain itself over time” (Pettit, 2000:64). Their Action Learning Group has, since 1995, developed participatory action learning methods to “understand, assess and document change in community and organisational capacity” (Gubbels & Koss, 2000:3). They now see ‘guided self-assessment’ as a fundamental component of an effective development strategy. However, these facilitative tools are not sufficient in and of themselves. They must be seen as part of a “coherent, long-term strategy that goes far beyond tools” (ibid:6). The greatest value of guided self-assessment is seen in its potential to foster more systematic and ongoing organisational reflection, rather than in the direct results of any one assessment. However, a key challenge is to move from the learning achieved in the self-assessment workshop to action. This depends on the organisation’s leaders and their ability to foster a strong commitment to change (ibid:12). It is critical that participants generate their own capacity indicators, ensuring that they engage in defining what is important to them, not someone else. It is this engagement, this process, that is important, not the indicators themselves (ibid:15).

Examples of World Neighbors' use of capacity assessment include sustainability-assessment (World Neighbors, 1999) and programme evaluation (McKaig, 2002). In the latter example, two groups forming part of an integrated reproductive health program in India used an organisational capacity assessment to evaluate part of the program. Both groups rated their capacities highly, particularly in the areas of 'unity and cooperation', 'savings and credit', 'leadership', and 'knowledge of activities', although there appeared to be some discrepancy between these positive assessments and some of the records which showed a less than 100% repayment of loans (McKaig, 2002:31). However, a self-confidence that encourages women to address wider social issues was observed (ibid:47), as was a greater sense of ownership (World Neighbors, 1999:7).

Tearfund UK has recently developed an organisational assessment methodology for use by partner organisations (CASA – CApacity Self-Assessment – tool). It is intended to “enable the managers of an organisation to make an assessment of key organisational issues [and to] identify steps for building on the strengths and address[ing] weaknesses” (Crooks & Burn, 2002:1). CASA is made up of three parts, which help organisations to assess their capacity using pre-determined indicators. The assessment areas are as follows:

- a) Internal organisation: *e.g. identity and purpose, management, systems and structures*
- b) External linkages
- c) Projects: *e.g. planning, and impact*

Over the course of the early part of 2002, Tearfund trialed their CASA tool with partners in a variety of contexts (U.K., Cambodia, and Haiti). Initial reports relate mostly to the acceptance of the self-assessment tool. The impact of the tool is not expected to be apparent for a period of 12 to 18 months (Crooks & Burn, 2002:4). Interestingly, the directive nature of this tool proved to be a partial limitation in the trials; “in all three countries it was recognised that some of the indicators would need to be either adapted or clarified in order to fit the context

of the country and the particular situation of the partner” (ibid:2). In fact, in some cases “the indicators were seen as very value-laden....from a strong Tearfund perspective” (ibid:3). During trials, the design of the tool was adapted to a ‘modular’ approach, which gives partners some flexibility in choosing which areas they wish to look at, though still with directive indicators. On the other hand, particularly for smaller partners, the pre-determined indicators were instructive for understanding what is good practice in a particular field (ibid:3).

The tool surfaced organisational issues which were then able to be analysed in greater detail. For example the Alliance of Christian Women of Haiti found that lack of participation related to poor communication systems, rather than simply being a management issue (Crooks & Burn, 2002:3). The tool also consistently proved effective in team building, and in enabling participants to reflect individually before discussing their organisation as a group. Using a ‘Kirkpatrick’ framework of evaluation, which considers impacts on four levels (reaction, learning, application, and organisational change), all organisations reacted positively. They learnt of issues such as weak vision and strategy, external linkages, or communication, and in one case applied this learning immediately by turning down offers of government funding until their vision and direction were clarified (ibid:5).

USAID’s Office for Private and Voluntary Cooperation (PVC) promotes the use of DOSA - Discussion Oriented Self Assessment, with grantees, mostly U.S. private voluntary organisations with NGO partners. Developed in 1997, as an application of the participatory results-oriented self-evaluation (PROSE) method to USAID grantees (Lessik & Michener, 2000:6), this directive technique assesses the direction and scope of organisational change in six areas: human resource management; financial resource management; service delivery; organisational learning; external relations; and strategic management. The technique combines periods of collective discussion with individual assessments which are analysed off site (Levinger & Bloom:2). In an informal review in 2000, PVC reported that more than 90% of their respondents used the capacity assessments as the basis for organisational changes (USAID, 2000:4), and 66%

of the partner NGOs (with whom grantees also conducted capacity assessments, some using Appreciative Inquiry) reported making similar changes (ibid:11). PVC found that DOSA acted as a “catalyst and enabler” for internal capacity-building, and that insights gained through organisational self-assessment “often ripple and ramify in a profound way” (ibid:4-5). It cites the example of ‘PVO H’ which recognised a performance deficit in its relationship with stakeholders. Interestingly, this recognition occurred not at the first assessment but a year later at the DOSA review, and resulted in a significant re-orienting of the organisation towards those stakeholders. USAID also offers managers the choice of other techniques including Pact’s Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool, which uses a team from within the organisation to conduct the assessment on pre-defined areas and indicators.

Several organisations have applied the Appreciative Inquiry methodology to development contexts. MYRADA, an NGO in Southern India, has been trialing AI in rural community development since 1999. The trials with over 500 community groups have convinced them of the value of the process (Ashford & Patkar, 2001:iv). In fact, the positive approach of the AI methodology highlighted for them the disadvantages of other need or problem-based approaches; “the focus on needs entrenched a sense of dependence that reduced people’s motivation to initiate their own development activities” (ibid:5). Their experiences with the approach have led to a number of recommendations: it is seen as necessary to have all of the key stakeholders involved from the beginning; location and timing are seen as an important consideration; clear recording of the results and the vision statement is urged; and it is useful to analyse participants’ stories immediately after they are told (ibid:13). Action plans need to include both short-term and longer-term objectives, which “ensures that [members] will be buoyed by their short-term achievements while still addressing their long-term goals and structural changes” (ibid:31). Reported outcomes include quite remarkable impacts. In one case, “the village council had mobilised and completed [four] programs, achiev[ing] their visions for five years in less than one” (ibid:33). The technique is seen as very effective in “establishing and inspiring group vision, developing strategies and engendering

interest in implementing them, [and] creat[ing] a sense of ownership in new initiatives. It can [also] be a useful feedback tool” (ibid:39). They caution that Appreciative Inquiry does not in and of itself create resources, build technical skills or establish new institutional relationships, but add that it has “a strong emotional element” which participants and practitioners can find “quite transformative” (ibid :39).

Mac Odell from Habitat for Humanity (HfH) in Nepal reports that their Appreciative Planning and Action (APA) technique, a variant of Appreciative Inquiry, has produced similar remarkable outcomes. Their Galle affiliate in Sri Lanka accomplished in less than one year almost everything they had dreamed of during a strategic planning exercise with a five year horizon. Similar stories were reported from Nepal including one in which workshop participants made an action plan for local fundraising, scheduling meetings with potential donors before the end of the day, and going on to have amongst the highest levels of local fundraising of HfH affiliates in Nepal. Monthly impact monitoring has revealed changes in people’s outlook on life and self-confidence, and cleaner surroundings through increased use of latrines. The process is seen as “even more powerful than [initially] imagined”; “what started as an inquiry into impacts already observed is already contributing positively to the generation of additional impacts” (Odell, 2002). In the Women’s Empowerment Project, both the number of women with businesses, and their earnings, increased dramatically following APA, *prior* to specific interventions designed to achieve those impacts (Odell, 2000). The use of a positive approach to inquiry and assessment is credited with empowering women to take direct action to improve their lives.

Also in Nepal, Tricia Lustig (n.d.) reports on the impact of a brief appreciative exercise conducted in Phakhel community in 1999. Due to the limited time that the subsistence level farmers could afford to spend, initially a two hour AI was conducted. An extra step asking “What can we do right now?” was added by Mac Odell and used to generate actions that could inspire subsequent commitment to working together. Some difficulties were encountered, particularly amongst those who could not read. They took some time to get used to the methodology

and ultimately had to be taught how to plan. Facilitation skills were found to be important to help overcome obstacles, as participants would otherwise tend to retreat to “old and familiar behaviour patterns and get stuck.” However this is not as critical as first thought; “There have been many stuckness-es and issues, which they have managed to solve for themselves without outside help” (Lustig, pers. comm. 2002). Outcomes were seen in the raising of substantial amounts of capital, and the preparation of foundations for a school. The rest of the building has subsequently been funded through a grant from PLAN International, but villagers continue to raise money for teacher salaries, equipment and books, and one-off government fees. More recently, and independently from PLAN, they have set up a cooperative with neighbouring wards, purchasing four buses to ply the road between the village and Kathmandu Valley, all with local money and a bank loan they arranged themselves (Lustig, pers. comm. 2002). One man commented that:

“for the past forty years we have been holding our hands out for aid from the government and what do we get? We fight, we can’t agree on anything and we don’t feel good about ourselves. Forty years ago we did a lot together because there was no one else to help us and you know what? We were proud of what we did! We were proud of our village” (Lustig, n.d.).

Tricia Lustig believes that they have changed their paradigm and returned to doing things for themselves (Lustig, pers. comm. 2002).

World Vision sees the use of Appreciative Inquiry as a part of its capacity building model. This seeks the point of greatest synergy between appreciative, technical, internal, and external approaches to capacity building (Booy & Ole Sena, 1999:47). It is used as an approach; “a way of organisational behaviour that is consistent and practised on a regular basis” (Booy, pers. comm. 2002), and is not restricted to any one technique. The outcomes from use with communities include “positive planning for the future[,] in community, higher levels of interaction between community members, greater focus in planning

implementing and monitoring outcomes, more positive feedback to staff and communities, [and a] greater degree of satisfaction” (ibid). In communities where they have consistently used AI over time, World Vision have noted “a higher degree of hope in the future, greater participation by all members, increased investment of both time and money for change, [and] greater articulation of the future” (ibid). The implementation of AI “takes a lot of time and energy”, and “requires a whole attitude change amongst staff”, “but people like it after they have had time to practice it” (ibid). It also influences the implementers; Dirk Booy (pers. comm. 2002) credits AI as having a direct impact on his own leadership and management style, and positively influencing his approach to people and his work. He has found that it doesn’t work in every community for a range of reasons, which can include poor leadership or contextual factors such as civil unrest. It tends to work better in communities that have a history to relate to and share rather than in transient communities (Booy, pers. comm. 2002).

2.4 Appreciative Inquiry and the process approach

Of the techniques and approaches to organisational assessment described above, only one, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), has a significant body of literature surrounding it. This literature is particularly interesting as it sets this method apart from the others conceptually. Originating with David Cooperrider’s doctoral research in organisation development, and published by Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987), Appreciative Inquiry is based on a ‘socio-rationalist’ view of science. This promotes the idea that altering the way we think, and the way we symbolise the world, has potential for guiding changes in the way we act, and consequently the social order. Human systems will move in the direction of what they study. Central to the early literature promoting AI is the extension of this premise to action research. Acknowledging the generative potential of action research, but criticising its separation of theory from practice (ibid:134), Cooperrider and Srivastva proposed a conceptual re-configuration of the action research model. They suggested a move from the conventional problem

identification and solution approach, to an appreciative one searching for the social potential in an organisation through collective inquiry and normative dialogue. This parallels a move from the modernist paradigm of classical or scientific management into a new mode of continuous learning and innovation (Johnson & Ludema, 1997:73). The approach later became seen as an intervention framework, with what is described as the 4-D model emerging in 1990 (Barrett, n.d.). The first 'D' is termed 'Discovery', where individuals are asked to appreciate the best of what they already have in their organisational context. This step often results in stories which, when shared, build cooperation and morale (Johnson & Ludema, 1997:76). Next, 'Dreaming' asks members to envision what might be, building on a natural tendency to envision new possibilities when the best of what is has been identified and valued (ibid:78). Then 'Dialogue' allows members to discuss these possibilities and decide what should be, and finally 'Delivery' implements this. This model is worked out in a variety of ways in practice. The approach used by Concern in Bangladesh is described in Section 3.3.

Subsequent authors have started to flesh out an understanding of Appreciative Inquiry, exploring why and how it works. Most of these draw on experiences in North American or multi-national corporate environments, but some examples also use the technique in educational or non-profit organisations. The most important concepts underlying AI are summarised by Liebler (1997:3), and these include the ideas that image and action are linked (our behaviour is influenced by our image of the future), organisations move in the direction of the questions they ask, all organisations have something about their past to value, and organisations are not fixed. Hall and Hammond (1998) note that because AI "truly honours the past" it is a wonderful way to help people manage change. Ludema (2001) sees the linguistic construction of new images of possibility; "textured vocabularies of hope", as a catalyst for positive social and organisational transformation. In his view, hope builds community, imagines possibilities, enlivens the human spirit, and spawns generative action. This is contrasted with vocabularies of deficit and deficiency inherent in the "critical and problem-focussed methods of contemporary social science." Liebler (1997:7),

suggests an interesting application for this aspect, reporting experienced practitioners as saying that it is particularly important to stimulate hope [in cultures] where people are already overcome by the weight of fatalism.

Bushe (1998) commends the positive story-telling aspect of AI as an important opportunity for establishing team identity in new teams, because it gives people a chance to tell others in a somewhat indirect way, what is important to them, and what roles they prefer to occupy within a group. It also holds potential for existing teams, particularly when they are “stuck in a rut and need creative ways out.” The process is transformative through the development of images that resolve underlying paradoxes for a group. To Barrett & Cooperrider (2001), one way out of group conflict is to avoid tackling the problem head-on, and instead to use “generative metaphor” (a way of seeing something as if it were something else) to help overcome defensiveness. Using Cooperrider’s ‘heliotropic hypothesis’ (in which social systems evolve toward the most positive images they hold of themselves), Bushe (2001) goes on to build the case for using AI as a change strategy. He bases this on the premise that organisations have an informal inner dialogue, carried through the stories people tell themselves and each other, which acts as a stabilising force and can even “account for failures in following through rationally arrived at decisions.” AI is seen as having the potential to change the stories that circulate in the organisation’s inner dialogue. However, as Bushe concludes, appreciation also needs to be balanced with critical thinking.

Johnston (2002:15) observed in larger groups that AI was responsible for “person after person adopting profound respect for other people in the room” and that “how we asked the questions became the actual intervention.” Both he, and others involved in the same large-group intervention, note that experiencing the wholeness of a system brings out the best in people, teams, and organisations. Whitney and Cooperrider (2000) suggest that this is because having everyone there evokes trust; “you don’t have to be suspicious about what others will do - there are no others”. They also credit the appreciative interview process as giving everyone equal voice from the beginning, allowing each person to explore their

own thinking in the relative safety of one-on-one dialogue, and establishing a model of both sharing and listening in a deeply focussed way. Appreciative Inquiry works because it is relationally and values driven. It builds collaboration by practicing collaboration and it restores creativity, energy, and hope (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 1999).

Also relevant to this research is some recent work on the bigger picture; on development itself. I have located organisational self-assessment at the meeting point of participation, capacity-building, and organisation development. Recent changes in each of these streams reflect a paradigmatic shift in this bigger picture. Our understanding of what constitutes development has become process-oriented, and the importance of projects has diminished. The new literature articulating this change is relevant to this research. David Mosse (1998:4) describes the change as alternative (to the “machine metaphor”) in three ways. Firstly a learning process approach is favoured over a blueprint one, relationship and contextual elements are given more weight, and finally, dynamic, unpredictable, and idiosyncratic elements of a development programme are recognised and seen as being central to success or failure. Conventional monitoring using indicator-based systems is seen as a constraint, unable to adequately delve into the messy unpredictable areas of change, and unable to reveal the local social relations shaping the outcomes. “Development projects are political systems in which different perspectives contend for influence” (ibid:21). An inductive and open-ended “process-monitoring” approach is favoured to complement the traditional techniques by revealing information usable to those involved.

2.5 Some comments on the research literature

Despite the fact that we can draw a historical background for organisational self-assessment from three streams of literature (organisation development, participation, and sustainable development), it is apparent that there is not, as yet, a consensus of thinking about OA. Some would have a predetermined

questionnaire for an organisation to rate itself against, whilst others would have them choose their own areas of inquiry. Most would see facilitation as critical, and yet might disagree about whether facilitators are externally or internally sourced. And who participates? The whole organisation or just the managers? These factors all highlight a gap in the literature. Although at least one partial listing of techniques has been compiled (Lessick & Michener, 2000), there has been no overall discussion about self-assessment. Perhaps this is due to the location of OA at the practical end of the development spectrum. There is a parallel here with the logical framework approach which has “relatively little accompanying theory” despite its wide use (Gasper, 2000:17). OA practitioners report on their experience with the tools they have developed and trialed, but haven’t gone as far as isolating the generic outcomes. The body of literature surrounding Appreciative Inquiry stands out from this generalisation. However even this comes from a relatively small but prolific group of researchers (especially David Cooperrider), many of whom have been actively involved in programmes to investigate, promote, and disseminate, the use of AI (eg. the GEM Initiative of Case Western Reserve University). Neither does it generally make comparison with other techniques.

I have attempted in a small and incomplete way in the previous sections to document something of the range of techniques used for organisational self-assessment. In doing so it has become apparent that although new, OA is subject to some of the age-old debates of the development sector. Differing ideas about what constitutes development affect how OA is implemented. Understandings of the development relationship range from something *done for* a beneficiary, through something *done with* the beneficiary to something *initiated and done by* the (former) beneficiary. The same issues of who initiates?, who decides?, and who acts? apply to different approaches to organisational self-assessment. Some approaches are extractive, some directive, and others facilitative. Potentially they could be autonomous, but I am not aware of any that fall into this category yet.

Other debates lament the adoption of OA simply as a technique, without recognising its potential within a process approach. Bushe (2001) fears this will

result in AI becoming “just another discarded innovation on the junk heap of ‘failed’ management strategies”. Others caution that you cannot properly implement AI without embracing the philosophy behind it. This distinction reflects the gap between the modernist and post-modernist paradigms. Using OA instrumentally, as a technique, sits within a modernist paradigm, and tends to concentrate on predictable and measurable results. However, postmodernist views focus much more on process than results. Techniques are favoured if they bring people together, give equal voice and respect to all, and articulate new social constructions of reality. They sit within a wider social context and cannot be divorced from this. Appreciative Inquiry is theoretically grounded in this paradigm, more so than the other techniques surveyed here. But even here, the perspective of the facilitator will really determine whether it is used in a way that allows organisational learning and individual growth.

Somewhat related to this issue is the criticism that the appreciative approach does not adequately address certain aspects of organisational life, notably the financial and accounting arrangements. This argument is used by some (Bill Crooks, pers. comm. 2002) to argue for a more directive approach to organisational self-assessment. This highlights another gap in the literature on Appreciative Inquiry. There is very little in the way of critique, or even discussion of the limitations of the technique. Such critique would contradict the positive focus of the appreciative approach, and this may be why proponents have not subjected it to the academic scrutiny one might expect. However, I believe it is important to evaluate the approach from a critical perspective as well as an appreciative one. Interestingly, in one case where a comparison between an appreciative and a more conventional approach is reported in the literature, they were found to complement one another. In an Catholic urban school, “the [problem-focussed evaluation] provided a significant agenda for change, but the Appreciative Inquiry approach balanced it with a rich articulation of what is most valued by the institution’s members at all levels” (Van Buskirk, 2002:86).

Contextual factors, particularly social relations in organisations and communities, are largely overlooked in the literature on organisational self-

assessment. However, development projects are political systems in which different perspectives contend for influence (Mosse, 1998:21). Just as development benefits tend to be appropriated by those with greatest power in a community, OA can be subject to the same appropriation. Powerful actors may have multiple benefits to obtain from this process. Involvement may reinforce their standing within the organisation, demonstrating commitment, and it may also give them influence over the planning of future activities. Although the process is participatory, this is not in itself a guarantee that everyone will have equal influence over decisions made. So organisational self-assessment becomes a new site for the negotiation of power relations, and the literature is lacking whenever this is overlooked. As Eade (1997, p26) cautions; “if activities intended to build capacity are introduced into a skewed environment of access to skills or opportunities, they may de-facto reinforce existing forms of power and exclusion.”

2.6 Summary of the literature on Organisational Self-Assessment

Organisational self-assessment is a rapidly emerging intervention methodology in the development sector. Techniques are being developed by a number of organisations, and are being adapted and employed by many more. The approaches inherent in their design reflect something of the modernist/post-modernist divide, and the use of the techniques exhibits a variety of understandings of the relationship between implementing and participating organisations. To describe this, I have used a spectrum ranging from extractive, through directive, and facilitative, to autonomous self-assessment. Where a particular example sits on this spectrum depends on how the assessment is initiated, and on how the scope of the inquiry and the indicators of status are selected.

Those that have been writing on these techniques have found the intervention to be generally successful. Participants have often found the experience encouraging, and in some cases inspiring. Several techniques have had a positive

outcome in situations where organisations have experienced internal conflict, and vision building seems to be a common outcome. The story-collection aspect of Appreciative Inquiry appears to be particularly transformational, with some quite remarkable early outcomes indicating significant group unity and motivation. However, there is very little literature reporting on the longer-term outcomes of organisational self-assessment. It was acknowledged very recently that there is a dearth of longitudinal case studies that connect the subtle micro-effects of Appreciative Inquiry to enduring change (Van Buskirk, 2002:68). The literature on OA abounds with information about the start-up phase and how the techniques have been accepted, but offers little on outcomes and impacts. This is not surprising given how recent the trials of these techniques are, and the fact that capacity-building and organisational strengthening are long-term activities (Eade, 1997:5).

2.7 The contribution this study will make

This study explores the emerging group of techniques for organisational self-assessment, and seeks to determine the extent to which the OA methodology is able to influence development outcomes. This contributes to two gaps in the literature. Firstly, by considering and documenting experiences from a number of methodologies, a greater understanding of the common or generic outcomes is achieved. Secondly, by investigating in detail the outcomes from the use of Appreciative Inquiry with local organisations in Bangladesh, this study adds detail to the emerging literature on the outcomes of this technique in a development context.

Whilst it provides a longer term perspective on the developmental impact of this type of methodology than most examples in the literature, the trials of these techniques are so recent that it cannot be seen as the final word on the matter. In many cases, second and subsequent assessments have yet to be made, and the technique is not yet incorporated as a part of the organisation's regular practice. More research will be needed in future to add further insights.

CHAPTER 3: FIELD RESEARCH WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS IN BANGLADESH

3.1 General method

Using a case study approach, this research seeks to find a causative link between the organisational assessment tool and outcomes. However, this is not quite as simple as it may seem. As Peil (1982:13) notes, “The most difficult part of proving causation is eliminating other factors.” This is particularly relevant with this study as time and financial constraints have limited the extent of field research. To maximise the ability to eliminate other causative factors, the approach explores the use of OA with a variety of organisations. This allows group- or organisation- specific factors to be isolated from the assessment outcomes.

A qualitative approach was adopted, given that the nature of outcomes and participants’ experiences were usually expressed in descriptive terms, and some were not readily quantified (e.g. factors like trust and unity within an organisation). Within this overall approach, the research was designed to utilise a variety of methods and sources in a carefully sequenced way to build up an understanding of the effect of the organisational assessment tools. This allows ‘triangulation’ of the information to both cross-check and support conclusions obtained from one source, and to identify discrepancies which may lead to additional conclusions.

3.2 Specific procedures

The methods used in the research fall generally into the following categories:

- a) Meetings with individuals to facilitate the logistical aspects of the research.
- b) Key informant interviews with the implementing organisation, to obtain an historical background to their use of organisational self-assessment, together with individual perspectives on the groups where it has been trialed, and its effectiveness.
- c) Review of secondary information sources, mostly project documentation held by the implementing organisation.
- d) Workshops with local staff of the implementing organisation to gain further history and perspectives on their use and experience of OA, and to help refine the field-work design. The workshops included time-line, and time-trend analyses, and brainstorm lists of process experiences and development outcomes from the OA intervention.
- e) Focus group discussions with participants, using PRA tools such as time-line and time-trend analyses, and pictorial lists of process experiences and development outcomes for analysis using matrix ranking.
- f) Semi-structured interviews with group members were sought after the focus group discussions, and also with other community members (to provide an external perspective on observed outcomes).
- g) A workshop with the implementing organisation was used to present preliminary results and conclusions with a facilitated discussion to draw out comment and reaction.

h) A draft version of the findings from this study was reviewed by Concern.

3.3 Organisations studied

Organisational self-assessment is increasingly being used in a development context but its use is still relatively uncommon. The selection of a country and organisation with which to conduct field research has been purposive, but dictated more by opportunity than anything else. The initial selection was based on my interest in community development. Several NGO's were approached to host the fieldwork, namely Tearfund UK for opportunities with partners in India and China, Concern Worldwide in Bangladesh, and World Neighbors in India. Each uses organisational self-assessment. As it turned out, with travel restrictions affecting India, the opportunity to visit Concern's programme in Bangladesh proved to be the most suitable. For financial reasons, and in keeping with the scope of this level of research, it was deemed appropriate to restrict the study to one country visit but to maximise the variety within that country. Concern has used Appreciative Inquiry (AI) with community based organisations (CBOs), local NGOs, and government health facilities, and thus presents an ideal spectrum of target organisations to allow comparative study. In addition, contacts were established with UNICEF, who have also used Appreciative Inquiry with health institutions in Bangladesh.

Concern's use of Appreciative Inquiry sits in the facilitative category of the OA typology introduced in Chapter 2. They begin with a 'story-collection' phase, typically lasting five days. This is followed with a five day workshop, which starts with groups identifying capacities from the stories and forming them into capacity areas. After 'dreaming' of future possibilities, the groups assess their existing status in each capacity area using pictures to indicate stages of maturity. And using the same scale, they choose their desired future status. Differences of opinion regarding maturity are resolved in an adjudicated debate. Tasks are then defined and responsibilities allocated. UNICEF's approach is broadly similar, but does not use the pictorial representation of maturity or the adjudicated debate.

Finding a balance between depth of study within organisations and breadth of study across a variety of comparable organisations was the critical part of the field research design. This was resolved by selecting the primary focus of the research to be in Concern's South East Regional Programme, based at Chittagong, and focussing in greatest depth on their CBO project. Within this, two of the possible four organisations were selected for variety (different cultural groups, and different Concern staff perceptions of organisational strength). As a comparison, a third CBO was visited on the outskirts of Dhaka.

Concern's partnership project also has three local NGOs from which two were selected, on the basis of different cultural and operational focii. As it turned out, some information was also derived from the third. The government health facilities were explored in less depth. They were not visited, although reports were selected, and Concern staff interviewed. Similarly the UNICEF programme was covered by review of secondary sources and an interview of a key UNICEF staff member. Table 3.1 summarises the main field research sample, and shows the balance between depth and breadth.

TABLE 3.1 FIELD RESEARCH SAMPLE				
ORGANISATION (and location)	GREATEST DEPTH : Participants' opinion sought individually and collectively	MORE DEPTH: Participants' opinion sought collectively	LESS DEPTH: Implementing staff opinion sought	LEAST DEPTH: Data obtained from reports and/or email contact with implementing staff
Jagrata CBO (Chittagong)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bondhan CBO (Chittagong)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demra CBO (Dhaka)		✓	✓	✓
REMOLD LNGO (Noakhali)		✓	✓	✓
UPOMA LNGO (Noakhali)			✓	✓
OPCA LNGO (Mirsarai)		✓	✓	✓
Concern's Municipal health facility capacity assessment			✓	✓
UNICEF's health facility workshops			✓	✓

3.4 Data collection and treatment

Data collection was carried out in the period 31 July to 24 August by myself and Ria Wayne, who acted as recorder and accompanied me on all visits. Concern staff members were generally interviewed in English, but participant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in local languages. Concern staff

provided translation for the focus group discussions, and independent translation was used for individual interviews wherever possible.

We recorded our notes from all conversations by hand in notebooks. Pictorial results from PRA exercises were photographed and notes made from the associated presentations. The notebook record of interviews has subsequently been coded to facilitate the referencing of all quotations and conclusions. These codes are used in the following chapter to indicate the data sources, and are referenced in Appendix 1.

3.5 Comments on the methodology

This section presents post-fieldwork reflections on the conduct of the study and the methodology used. These were generated by doing the research, and may also be seen as the limitations of the study. They present significant opportunities for learning, and consequently have helped me to develop my research skills.

The study plan restricted field research to the one country, Bangladesh, and one organisational assessment method; Appreciative Inquiry. Efforts were made to obtain data on other techniques using email contact, and through published sources. However, I found that the quality of information obtained in the field vastly outweighed that obtained otherwise. Direct comparisons were possible but limited to the areas of evaluation that authors or correspondents chose to reveal. However, in the field, the interviews and discussions were able to explore evaluative outcomes in much greater detail through follow-up questions.

I found that the restriction of the fieldwork to one country was beneficial, given the scope of this study as the research component of an M.Phil degree. The availability of several types of organisation within the same country context allowed comparisons without additional cultural and locational variables. I had not fully anticipated how much material I needed to gather to locate each organisation in its historical context. This all took time, and I was glad to have

allotted all my field time to the one country and technique. However, it does mean that the applicability of the results is not as broad as if the same research questions had been explored across several organisational assessment techniques.

Despite the above comments, I still faced time constraints with my field research. PRA techniques tended to take longer than I expected, and I often faced the choice between cutting short an obviously stimulating and rich (in research terms) activity, or continuing at the expense of the participants' time, and need to complete other activities in the course of the day. If planning again, I would allow more time with groups, and more overall time. To allow more time with groups may actually require some payment for their time. People in the slums find it difficult to take periods of time away from their productive activities. Overall, the field research plan went remarkably well, particularly in a country like Bangladesh, where delays and interruptions are common especially during the monsoon. This was largely due to the generous support of the staff of Concern, who arranged and facilitated most of the meetings and interviews.

The choice of research techniques was found to be useful and appropriate for the purpose of this research. The focus group discussions in particular appeared to generate an opportunity for reflection on the achievements of the organisations, and were very favourably received by participants. In some cases the responses also generated useful feedback for Concern project staff. Matrix scoring and ranking on several dimensions of organisational change was found to be a very useful way of identifying the relative importance of impacts, introducing a quantitative dimension to the largely qualitative study.

The reliance on Concern staff for selection of interviewees and focus group participants is a potential source of selection bias. Where possible this was minimised by specifying criteria for their selection. Also, on most occasions Concern project staff provided translation for focus group discussions and for some interviews. An independent translator was obtained for some of the interviews, to lower the risk of biases being introduced, but was not available for all interviews. Even with an independent translator, the Concern staff member

was still present at the interviews. This may have led to responses being framed in a way that reflected favourably on Concern. In one particular case (C27), the interview was clearly affected by our association with Concern. The interviewee was openly disgruntled with Concern's decision to decline a funding request, and used the opportunity to express this. Had we been acting independently, we may have avoided this type of bias. However, without the assistance of Concern staff, it would not have been possible to gain access to these organisations.

3.6 Summary of field research design

The research design has been chosen to provide a pragmatic but useful means of answering the research questions and particularly RQ3, which seeks to link specific outcomes to the use of organisational self-assessment. Locations and opportunities for the research were limited and resulted in the selection of Bangladesh as the sole research site. However, the extent of Concern's use of Appreciative Inquiry within Bangladesh provided significant scope for comparison of results between different types of organisation, and between similar organisations located in different cultural groups or at different developmental stages. Purposive selection was used to focus the field investigations on CBOs in Chittagong and Local NGOs in the rural areas of Chittagong Division. Further comparisons were obtained from another CBO near Dhaka, and from assessments of health facilities conducted both by Concern and by UNICEF. Due to time and financial constraints these were investigated in less depth. These restrictions provided a significant learning opportunity. If planning again, I would allow more time with groups and more overall time. The research was largely qualitative, featuring semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and workshops, and it was carried out entirely by myself with the support of my wife who recorded notes from interviews and group discussions. Concern staff ably provided introductions, facilities and translation where needed, and independent translation was used also.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Comments on the research questions

This research is centred around the hypothesis that organisational assessment tools can catalyse development outcomes. The research questions were designed without much information about the nature of the organisations to be visited, and so the first part of the field visit was targeted at building an appreciation of the historical context of the organisations and the objectives of Concern in facilitating the organisational assessments. I found from an early stage that the overall hypothesis was readily answered, as people were visibly proud of the outcomes of their organisational assessment. Research Question 3 became an opportunity to catalogue the types of outcomes. Research Question 2 was more difficult to explore. Participants tended to reflect favourably on the process because of the outcomes, and found questions designed to draw out their opinion about the process itself quite difficult to answer. However, it was considered important to pursue this question as the potential of the methodology to catalyse development outcomes will be limited if it is difficult to achieve enthusiasm for the process.

The other element of this research is a comparison with other OA techniques. Information on these was obtained from email contact with development practitioners, and from published documentation. Research Questions 4-6 were designed to explore comparisons between the different methodologies. However, it was found to be difficult to obtain evaluative material from either source, and comparisons are limited solely to the areas reported by practitioners.

4.2 RQ1: Does Appreciative Inquiry achieve the objectives stated by the implementing organisation?

This section explores the above question for three types of organisation: CBOs, Local NGOs, and health institutions. The objectives of the implementing organisations are identified at the start of each subsection, with the findings presented following.

4.2.1 Concern's Community Based Organisations

From their 'Amader Sangathan (Our organisation)' project proposal (SSC11:1), Concern's objective is "to strengthen 44 existing CBOs in four urban areas of Bangladesh so that they can independently and sustainably coordinate and implement initiatives in the interests of their members and communities." The following results were anticipated (ibid:1):

- “- Planning and management capacity of CBOs at organisational and activity level increased.
- Capacity to resource activities increased.
- Microfinance management capacity increased.
- Capacity for accessing services on members' behalf and advocating for members' rights increased.
- Organisational capacity of Concern to implement this and similar capacity-building projects increased.”

From my study of the Amader Sangathan Project organisations in Chittagong, the expected results appear to have been achieved at least in part. Both organisations have operational annual plans, currently in the second year of their five year planning cycle. However, these have been prepared with considerable facilitation support from Concern. To determine how much value was placed on the planning process, I asked the focus groups to explain the importance of their plans. In Bondhan, organisation members placed considerable value on the

planning process, with the president adding that “it is very important, if I do any work with my family I also need planning” (C13). At Jagrata, the importance of planning was also recognised, with comments like “after planning we have more confidence to do any work” from those present at the planning workshop, and “after planning any work do easy” and “we know from planning when and what work we’ll do” from those who were not at the workshop (C15). These perceptions provide a good grounding for the development of planning capacity within these groups. In fact, some capacity gains were noted between the first and second annual plans. One observer noted approximate active participation rates of 80% at the planning stage of the first planning workshop, with an improvement to between 85-90% at the second annual planning workshop, and attributed this to an increase in understanding (C19).

Perceived leadership and management capacity improvements were assessed directly with the focus groups, through a matrix scoring technique. Given 10 possible points, and asked to proportion them between the situation before and after their CBO formation, Bondhan CBO members indicated a doubling of capacity (from 2 to 4 points) (C13), whilst Jagrata reported even greater improvements (from 3 to 7, and from 2 to 8 points) (C15). Microfinance capacity was assessed with focus groups using the same matrix scoring method, with results indicating perceived increases in capacity (from 3 to 5 points by Bondhan CBO members and from 4 to 6 points by their executive committee. Identical assessments were obtained at Jagrata). The capacity to access services on members behalf was also assessed using this method. Jagrata executive members indicated an improvement from 3 to 7 points whilst general members indicated a smaller change from 3 to 5 points. This may reflect the fact that executive committee members are more often those interacting with service providers, though at Bondhan, both groups reported the same increase from 2 to 5 points.

The capacity to resource activities has increased through the accumulation of CBO funds. For example, since establishment in April 2001, Bondhan CBO has accumulated Taka 17,800, and their overall savings now stand at Taka 72,000 (C13).

Perceptions of Concern field staff also indicate results in line with their objectives with specific references made to improved management capacity and microfinance loan facilitation (C19). However, the overall objective of sustainable independent organisations is not yet achieved, as the organisations are at an early stage in the five year project.

4.2.2 Concern's local partner NGOs

Concern's South East Regional Programme (SERP) partner NGOs in Noakhali and Mirsarai have been involved in two recent assessments. Firstly a 'needs assessment' to identify the conditions prevailing in the target communities was conducted, and this was followed up with a capacity assessment of each organisation (C10).

Concern's South East Regional Program aims strategically "to work with smaller low capacity LNGOs to build their organisational capacity. So that in the long run these organisations on their own could effectively design, plan and implement programme[s] in their target areas" (SSC18:3). The purpose of the assessment was "to identify the basic organisational capacity of [the local NGO]. At the same time plan to strengthen their organisational capacity in order to provide basic development assistance to the poorest of the poor of their programme area" (ibid:3, repeated in SSC19 and SSC20).

The capacity assessment resulted in a table rating the organisation in several 'capacity areas'. In the case of REMOLD, nine such areas were identified. Gender relations and participatory planning were assessed to be in the nascent stage of development, represented symbolically by a seed being sown. The next stage was represented by a germinating seedling, and included capacity areas such as result oriented monitoring and evaluation, information collection and preservation, and human resource development. The remaining four capacity areas (organisation with skilled human resources, effective use of resources, self reliant REMOLD, and skilled leader) were considered to be in the 'sapling stage', and indicate that "the fragile stage is over. Support is required but not

extensive support” (SSC18). Similar assessments were made with the other NGOs, OPCA and UPOMA (SSC19 and SSC20).

On the basis of this capacity assessment, a strategic plan was made identifying specific actions to initiate capacity improvements within each of the capacity areas over a five year period (e.g. SSC18). These were then broken down to identify targets for the first year, and also those areas where Concern would provide inputs. Concern has since prepared project proposals based on this plan. The proposal for REMOLD identifies Concern’s intention to establish and strengthen gender sensitive organisational systems and management structures within REMOLD, develop knowledge and skills regarding networking and advocacy, and initiate training and a participatory monitoring and evaluation system (SSC21). This, and related proposals for UPOMA and OPCA, aim to fulfil Concern’s stated objective of planning to strengthen their organisational capacity.

4.2.3 Concern’s work with Government health facilities

The stated purpose of Concern’s Child Survival Project “is to strengthen the capacity of the municipality to deliver specific child survival activities that are of good quality and are sustainable with existing Municipality and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare resources. This contributes to an overall goal to develop a sustainable and comprehensive health service system in the municipality” (SSC29:2).

“The specific objectives of the assessment [were]:

- To assess current institutional health capacity for delivery of municipal services.
- To facilitate municipal health staff to identify constraints and priority problems at the institutional level.
- To determine priority training needs and to consider other appropriate actions for institutional health strengthening at municipal level.

- To identify institutional capacity indicators (ICIs) for Saidpur Municipality Health Department.
- To provide a baseline for follow-up Institutional Health Capacity Assessments that will facilitate mid-term and final evaluations.
- To explore the appropriateness of Appreciative Inquiry as a tool for assessment with local government health departments” (ibid:3-4).

The initial Appreciative Inquiry assessment of Saidpur Municipality Health Department was conducted in September and October 1999. A mid-term review was completed in July 2002 (SSC28), and provided an opportunity for reflection on the achievements of the health institution and on the assessment process itself.

The initial workshop produced a completed capacity assessment (SSC27), rating the department in 11 capacity areas based on underlying themes drawn from the interview material. The capacity areas were: continuity; human resources development; committed leadership; management culture; community participation; results; shared values; innovation; information resources; learning; and networking. So, at a superficial level, Concern’s objective was attained. However, the mid-term review reveals that the initial assessment was not entirely accurate (SSC28:Section 2.5). In some cases, participants overestimated their capacity in the initial assessment, and chose to re-rank their status at the mid-term review. A new capacity area, monitoring and evaluation, was also added. This had not emerged as an area of organisational capacity in the original assessment, and highlights a potential limitation of the methodology. However, these outcomes also indicate the flexibility of the technique, provided it is used on a regular basis.

The objective of assisting municipal health staff to identify constraints and priority problems at the institutional level was not met, as a direct result of Appreciative Inquiry’s philosophical approach (which consciously directs focus to the positive aspects of an organisation). This was acknowledged by the Concern team at the time with the following comment: “failure to address this

specific objective did not detract in any way at all from the outcome of the assessment” (SSC29:19).

The remaining objectives included the need to identify institutional capacity indicators, and to determine priority training needs. It is clear that neither of these was fully achieved in the capacity assessment itself, instead being suggested as a follow on (SSC29:21). Although some training has been undertaken successfully, it was left to the mid-term review stage to develop specific action plans, which provide indicators of achievement. The experience of this review has reinforced in the mind of the primary facilitator the need for both qualitative and quantitative indicators to provide a means of comparison with which to measure progress (C6). The assessment process provided a baseline for subsequent assessments, and was used as the primary framework for the mid-term review. The AI tool was seen by the facilitators to be appropriate for use with local government health departments (SSC29:21).

4.2.4 UNICEF’s work with health facilities

UNICEF’s Women’s Right to Life and Health (WRLH) initiative has the objective of “investing in EmOC [emergency obstetric care] services to contribute in the reduction of maternal deaths in Bangladesh” (SSU2:6). The primary objective of the workshop was to develop the hospital microplan involving all the hospital staff (SSU1:1). The specific objectives were to:

- “- Share the findings of hospital staff interview
- Create common shared vision especially on emergency obstetric care (EmOC)
- Identify the breakthrough (BT) tasks to achieve the goals
- Form the breakthrough (BT) teams with commitments
- Develop the plan of action (microplan) for all the BT teams, and
- Capacity building of the UNICEF Field Officers and the partner organisation” (SSU1:1).

UNICEF's Whole Site Workshop at Meherpur District Hospital (SSU1) followed these activities in sequence; reporting the findings of staff interviews, identifying a common shared vision and 'breakthrough tasks', and then forming 'breakthrough teams' to develop plans of action for each team. Together these now form the 'hospital microplan.' So the immediate objectives of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop have been fulfilled. However, the overriding objective of improving emergency obstetric care services will not be achieved unless the action plans are actually carried out. At this stage, quarterly review and annual review phases are seen as part of the intervention, but it is too early to determine outcomes in terms of the utilisation of the facility, and quality of performance (U1). The Meherpur workshop was conducted in May 2002, and only four sites have actually been through the whole cycle so far. Of some concern in this regard is the fact that the attendance of doctors at the Meherpur site was low. Only 65% of the staff were involved in the workshop, and the doctors and consultants were particularly unrepresented (SSU1). This block of relatively powerful people who have not 'owned' the proposed changes, presents a potential source of resistance to that change.

Capacity building of the UNICEF Field Officers is not reported in relation to the Meherpur workshop, but is referred to in more general documentation. Dr Tajul, the Technical Officer of the WRLH programme, notices a big change in the field officers: "they have become much more confident, taking initiatives on their own and coming up with innovative ideas" (SSU2:14). However, this cannot be attributed directly to their involvement in the AI workshops. Their jobs provide many additional opportunities for capacity development.

4.3 RQ2: Is the use of AI seen as beneficial by the participants?

This question was designed to ensure that the views of the participants were represented, and not just those of the implementing agencies. The acceptability of the tool is a critical factor in determining its potential use with new groups or in different contexts, and thereby affects the potential of the technique to catalyse development outcomes. My field research sought participants' perspectives through interviews and focus group discussion, and also indirectly through workshop reports and interviews with implementing staff.

4.3.1 Concern's Community Based Organisations

Direct comments about the process were obtained from interviews with individual participants and from focus group discussions with three CBOs. Two of these were recently established in Chittagong under Concern's Amader Sangothan Project and one in Demra on the outskirts of Dhaka. Favourable impressions of the planning exercise were expressed by all of these groups, though further probing revealed that there were both positive and negative aspects to the process itself.

On the positive side, the exercise allowed the participants to focus on some ideas and aspects of their organisation which they had not previously considered (C13). They were able to learn about local resources (such as local government services) which they had not previously known how to access (C15). The derivation of capacities from people's stories was seen as "very good" and the preparation of a plan boosted confidence (C15). In fact, the story-telling aspect of the workshop is quite powerful. One interviewee described how she recognised that she could improve her own life through working, on hearing the story of another woman's survival in desperate circumstances (C16). The pictorial representation of capacity status and goals was seen by some participants as the best part of the workshop (C32, C33). The participatory nature of the planning process was highly valued (C32) as was the equal treatment of

female and male perspectives in the workshop, and the cooperation resulting between male and female members in the CBO (C15). The apportioning of responsibilities in the plan was also valued (C33). The Demra CBO had just completed their latest planning workshop a week before our visit, and were able to add their impressions on the value of ongoing planning. They found the review of their achievements to be helpful, and inspiring for continuing to a new planning cycle (C38).

On the other hand, some negative aspects were expressed by participants. In the case of one CBO, the time horizons that they set for completion of tasks were unrealistic, and have subsequently needed review (C13). The process was difficult to understand for some of the participants, and they did not comprehend some of the language used (C15). The hardest part was seen to be the process of determining the capacity areas from the positive images (C32, C33). The purpose of story-telling was not initially understood, but as its value became clear, it was seen as inspirational (C17b). This tallies well with Bushe's analysis of the use of storytelling with teams to develop new images and resolve underlying paradoxes (Bushe 1998). The time involved for the five day workshop was onerous for some (C15, C17b) though not for others. One person said that it could have been a day longer so that there would be more time to gain understanding (C17). Some women faced resistance from husbands or others in the community who did not want them to attend the workshop. They managed to do so in spite of this, even though they were sceptical that there would be any results (C16).

From an earlier review of the appreciative inquiry process in Chittagong (SSC13:12), participants are recorded as valuing the process on several levels: The capacity assessment process was "fantastic" and "very enjoying", making their dreams clear, building their ownership, and helping them to understand how to run or manage their organisation. The best part was the opportunity to know about other 'collaborators' which built feelings of respect for one another. This parallels the reports of Johnston (2002:15) in Section 2.4. Limitations expressed refer to the workshop period hampering their daily earning ability, and that more facilitation was required to build greater understanding of the process. The

definition of capacity areas was particularly difficult for the participants, who found it hard to express their thoughts in words.

Further perceptions on the use of the tool were sought from the field staff involved in the workshops. One commented that “this is a very effective method for literate people, but not for illiterate. They cannot realise where it’s going...20-30% can’t grasp what’s going on” (C12, supported by C18 & C19). This comment applied mainly to the planning stage, as the same participants were observed to have told good stories. However, some difficulties were experienced at the story collection stage as people did not understand what would happen with the stories, or the stories focussed on problems rather than positive experiences (C19). This issue was also raised in the earlier study, with the suggestion that at least two or three educated participants are required in each group (SSC13). Another facilitator suggested that more visual techniques should be used to give a greater balance between the inputs of “fast, medium and slow learners”, implying that the process suffered from its reliance on literacy (C14, and in SSC13, which also suggests more games could be used).

The issue of the process taking people from their daily activities also came up in most interviews, but with the observation that only one or two people dropped out of the workshops over the course of the week (C12). The process was seen as ‘expensive’ both on Concern with 2-3 people engaged over the 5 day period, and on the participants who forego income for that period (C14). It also required lots of preparation and paperwork (C19). However, the results were inspiring; “everyone really enjoyed [the story collection and dream]. They felt they [previously] had no goals, and had never thought that way before, and this process allowed them to do that” (C18). The process was seen as highly participatory, creating ownership amongst participants and inspiring them to future development (SSC13). The role of the facilitator is recognised as vital to the process, but there is a fine balance between facilitating participation and suggesting outcomes: “In the AI process, sometimes [the] facilitator’s role becomes wider than the role of members of Amader Sangathan” (SSC12:4).

4.3.2 Concern's local partner NGOs

For the local NGOs, UPOMA, REMOLD, and OPCA, the primary workshop participants were the organisation staff members, although stories were sought from beneficiaries and stakeholders. Perceptions of the AI capacity assessment workshops were obtained from senior staff of all three organisations, and from workshop participants of the latter two.

The workshop participants were asked to identify and rank both positive and negative aspects of the capacity assessment workshops. With REMOLD, this was done in groups with staff members and internal beneficiaries separated. Both highly valued the positive focus of the story collection and subsequent capacity assessment. The beneficiaries emphasised the feeling of unity they gained, saying that they “feel like those involved in the group are like one family...like brothers and sisters” (C21). Staff members and beneficiaries valued the participatory approach. The workshop also provided an opportunity for staff to learn about monitoring and evaluation, and for beneficiaries to learn about organisational structure and roles (C21). At OPCA, the groups were more similar, each comprised of both office and field-based staff members. Here the story-collection was valued highest by two groups and the dreaming or visioning step by the third. Story-collection was described as “the focal point”, able to capture information that might otherwise not have been brought to the discussion, and able to provide a good overview by including all stakeholders (C28). This emphasis on participation was also valued within the groups, as was the training that staff received to orient them for story collection.

Senior staff spoke favourably of the process, with different emphases in each case. The project director of UPOMA credited the AI workshop with having transformed his understanding and integration of participation in a way that even 10 weeks studying PRA in India had not (C20). The REMOLD director found the process very interesting and helpful, though initially he hadn't understood why they collected stories. He would like to use it within his organisation at several levels but feels that external expertise is required to build skills for this

(C24). At OPCA, the director particularly valued the strategic planning component of the workshop (C27).

On the negative side, both REMOLD and OPCA staff thought the time period of five days was too short, with suggested alternatives ranging from eight days through to 20-25 days or even one month. The main focus of this time extension would be on story collection, providing more time to establish rapport with stakeholders before obtaining their stories; “It takes people time to remember positives - so you need to spend time” (C28). The story analysis (where positive images are extracted from the story) was also seen to require more time to allow more thorough treatment (C28). Other issues which arose included the timing of the exercise, as one particular workshop was conducted during Ramadan, and the involvement of external stakeholders. This latter issue was particularly interesting as in most cases, the involvement of external stakeholders was seen as beneficial. But in one case, caution was suggested. Powerful stakeholders may reflect unfavourably on the goals of empowering women in a conservative rural community, and influence members’ husbands to restrict their involvement. This possibility was overcome by including the stakeholders in the early parts of the exercise, but completing the planning stage solely with NGO members (C24).

4.3.3 Concern’s work with Government health facilities

The participants in the Saidpur Municipality Health Department Appreciative Inquiry workshops were not interviewed directly, but comments were obtained from the facilitators of the exercise. The focus on the positive in the appreciative approach was seen to be the key to the success of the assessment in the local government environment (C41). There was some initial resistance to using AI and as it is hard to describe ahead of time, it was found preferential to show people its operation (C41). The capacity assessment stage was characterised by “vibrant discussion”, and “meaningful dialogue about all elements of the organisation, both in terms of its current status and its aspiration” (SSC29:12). The overall process also encouraged participation (SSC28).

4.3.4 UNICEF's work with health facilities

My research into the experience of the UNICEF/Government of Bangladesh partner programme also used comments from the implementers rather than the participants. The Appreciative Inquiry method was not accepted by all health facilities, and they have found that it takes advocacy work just to get the opportunity to undertake the exercise; “it takes a lot of lobbying...you have to buy the commitment of people at the beginning” (U1). They have achieved this in some cases by taking the civil surgeon and administrative staff through a very small Appreciative Inquiry to explain the process. The methodology itself has been found to be “very intensive” and “needs people who’ll believe in the process” (U1).

The participants are reported to have varying responses to the process. For some, it is the first time in their life that their views have been sought, and they are really motivated by this. The process is radical also: “it has never happened before; [the] gate keeper, ward boys, and sweepers, sitting with nurses and surgeons round a table.” This can be humbling for the people at higher levels, but is “exhilarating” for those lower down in the organisation (U1). However, even at the higher levels this can be seen as positive. In Meherpur, the civil surgeon expressed that “he didn’t realise that a ward boy could have this understanding [of the needs of the patient]” after hearing a story of his initiative to help a patient (U1, and SSU2).

4.4 RQ3: Are any development outcomes (or planned outcomes) directly attributable to the process?

4.4.1 Concern’s Community Based Organisations

The research with CBOs generated a large catalogue of changes and developments that have occurred since the organisations were established. Not all of these can be said to be due solely to the organisational assessment workshop, as Concern has maintained a pretty active role assisting them with training, management guidance, and other programmes in their community. However, some outcomes are solely or partially attributable to the assessment workshop. Table 4.1 lists those changes or outcomes observed or reported, and classifies them using a counterfactual approach based on the level of certainty around their linkage to the assessment process.

TABLE 4.1 ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES IN CONCERN’S CBOs			
OUTCOME	LINKAGE TO ASSESSMENT PROCESS	INFORMATION SOURCE	REF
Organisational identity strengthened			
- Sign board	partial	Bondhan CBO Jagrata CBO	C13 C15
- Office	partial	Bondhan CBO Sharmanay CBO Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C13 C14 C15 C37
- Slogan, logo	direct	Khaliajuri CBO Sharmanay CBO Jagrata CBO	C6 C14 C15
- Constitution prepared	partial	Jagrata CBO	C15
- Government registration achieved	partial	Khaliajuri CBO Demra CBO	C6 C37
- Awareness raising through celebration of specific events	partial	Bondhan CBO Sharmanay CBO Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C13 C14 C15 C37

- Organisation receiving more visitors	partial	Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C32 C37
Strategic planning achieved			
- Long-term visioning and planning	direct	Khaliajuri and Chittagong CBOs Demra CBO	C6 C12 C13 C14 C15 C37
- Short-term (annual plan)	direct	Khaliajuri and Chittagong CBOs Demra CBO	C6 C12 C13 C14 C15 C37
Utilisation of local resources			
- Established links with government and local leaders	partial	Khaliajuri CBO Bondhan CBO Sharmanay CBO Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C6 C13 C14 C15 C37
- Communicate with NGO's	partial	Bondhan CBO Sharmanay CBO Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C13 C14 C15 C38
- Communicate with banks	partial	Bondhan CBO Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C13 C15 C38
Specific activities			
- Resisted group 'buy-out' by local NGO	indirect	Khaliajuri CBO	C6
- Established income generating enterprises (fishing, rickshaw, sewing)	partial	Bondhan CBO Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C13 C15 C37
- Established feeder schools in community	partial	Bondhan CBO Sharmanay CBO Jagrata CBO	C13 C14 C15
- Established community learning centre	partial	Bondhan CBO Jagrata CBO	C13 C15
- Undertaking social development activities in community	partial	Bondhan CBO	C13
- Established garbage collection services	partial	Bondhan CBO	C13 C16

- Collective responses to individual needs (serious sickness, marriage etc.) "If someone dies - we used to say let him die. Now if someone's in trouble we all go to help together." (C16)	partial	Bondhan CBO Jagrata CBO	C13 C15 C16
- Staff recruited	partial	Jagrata CBO	C15
- Provided support to weak groups	partial	Demra CBO	C37
- Established new groups	partial	Jagrata CBO	C15
- Made environmental improvements, (clearing rubbish and drains, planting trees, road repair)	partial	Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C15 C33 C37
- Conflict resolution for savings and credit groups	partial	Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C30 C32 C38
- Formed joint committee to address drug, dowry, and early marriage issues	partial	Demra CBO	C37
- Made plans to advocate for a health centre in the community	partial	Demra CBO	C37
Organisational changes			
- More systematic and regular, disciplined	partial	general Bondhan CBO	C7 C13
- Internal relationships/unity improved ("they help each other", "we trust each other")	direct	general Chittagong CBOs Demra CBO	C7 C12 C13 C17 C19 C38
- Clear allocation of responsibilities	direct - from planning	general	C7
- Communication skills improved, including individuals' confidence in public speaking	partial	Bondhan CBO Demra CBO	C13 C32 C38
- Awareness of development needs and willingness to respond improved	direct	Bondhan CBO	C13 C32
- Collective decision making ability improved; ("more confidence", and "solve problems themselves")	partial	Jagrata CBO	C19
- Management capacity improved	partial	Jagrata CBO	C19
- Savings of both groups and CBOs have increased	partial	Jagrata CBO Demra CBO	C32 C37

Individual changes			
- Improved knowledge about education, fund management, and rights	partial	Chittagong CBOs	C12
- Status increased	indirect	Bondhan CBO	C13
- Students' education increased	partial	Bondhan CBO	C13
- Female roles in family decision making increasing	partial	Bondhan CBO	C13 C16 C32
- Landlords have started to be more helpful	indirect	Bondhan CBO	C18
- People have increased self-respect, dress well, and present themselves well	indirect	Bondhan CBO	C18
- Women are eating better; the same food as men, as they realise both need to eat well to work.	indirect	Bondhan CBO	C18
- Individual hope for the future improved, particularly with respect to educational opportunities for children	partial	Bondhan CBO	C33
Other outcomes			
- Frontline staff attitudes have changed and they now deal with problems in a new way.	direct	general	C7
- Small crimes in the community have reduced due to the unity and efforts of CBO members	partial	Jagrata CBO	C30 C31
- Community unity has increased: "now Bihari and Bengali cooperate"	indirect	Jagrata CBO	C32

Comparisons between CBOs on the basis of perceived outcomes has not shown up any significant differences, except perhaps that Bondhan CBO tends to dominate the 'individual changes' category. This may reflect their having had more 'room to improve' than the other CBO's as they have only recently been engaged in capacity-building efforts, and are also a very poor and semi-transient community.

4.4.2 Concern's local partner NGOs

The capacity assessments undertaken with local NGOs have had less time to show significant outcomes as they were conducted less than a year ago. However, some outcomes are already apparent. These include both organisational and individual changes.

At an organisational level, all of the NGOs prepared a strategic plan as a direct output of the process. These have shaped Concern's partnership project proposals. REMOLD invited participation from their project beneficiaries, from another NGO working in the area, and from local stakeholders. This has built the NGOs profile and acceptance in their community (C10), as has the increased networking planned and implemented by OPCA (C28). The beneficiaries recognise that there has been an attitude change which improves their willingness to help one another (C21). Within UPOMA, a more participatory approach has been adopted as a direct consequence of the appreciative inquiry workshop. Greater sharing amongst colleagues has also resulted (C20) which supports the claim that AI builds collaboration (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 1999).

During the workshops, these organisations learnt about monitoring and evaluation, and resolved to build this capacity in their organisations. And, without subsequent input from Concern, they have been visiting their field areas more regularly, and have asked for assistance in developing a monthly reporting format (C10, C21). OPCA has already adopted monthly reporting as a direct follow-on from the workshop (C28). Similarly, they have "a new thirst" for high quality training materials for use with their beneficiary groups (C10). At REMOLD, the capacity assessment highlighted existing difficulties in the accounting area of the organisation, directly resulting in their decision to transform the accountant position into a full-time role (C24). And OPCA has already managed to establish two new partnerships with international NGO's, in line with their strategic plan (developed through the capacity assessment process) (C27). They have improved the role definitions within the organisation, giving

staff the freedom to manage their time more effectively, and also allowing accountability to improve (C28).

At an individual level, the process energised the staff, who feel that their input has been valued, and they have increased in confidence as a result (C10). The participatory nature of the process also resulted in proposals that would not have been incorporated if left to senior staff. For example, in Char Matua, where men often spend significant periods working away from home, specific income generating activities were proposed to allow the women to provide adequately for their families during this period (C10). And, interestingly, the story collection aspect of the process has proven useful in providing alternative models and case studies. Real-life stories can provide a powerful evocation of a message. During UPOMA's story collection phase, one project beneficiary told a story about how she (and her family) was asked to provide a bicycle as part of her dowry. This was a huge expense for them, and they refused the offer of marriage, rather than going into debt. She has subsequently married, and her story is now being used to demonstrate that there are alternatives to providing a dowry (C20).

4.4.3 Concern's work with Government health facilities

At the Government health facility level, the outcomes of the organisational assessment process were investigated by the mid-term review (SSC28). The review sought the views of staff and stakeholders about the major changes that have taken place over the period 1999-2002.

At the organisational level, the process appears to have been helpful in defining or re-defining roles and responsibilities, and staff are now "more serious about their responsibilities" (SSC28). On-the-job training has been introduced, but the informal learning system that was proposed has not yet been put in place. However, staff are taking more care to collect and learn health-related information.

Changes that have been attributed to this period include an increase in referral cases, a reduction in post-immunisation infection, an increase in community involvement in health education sessions and health related activities, with related educational benefits and a reduction in maternal mortality. In fact, the community is reported to be “taking more care about their neighbours” (SSC28). The education programme has also impacted on people’s health decisions, with less purchases of inappropriate medicine, and increasing use of lower-cost government services. An “emergency health fund” is proposed to help the hard-core poor access health services. Training has been provided for traditional birth attendants, with a resulting reduction in labour complications. Environmental sanitation is much improved, with garbage collection services, increased use of latrines and clean drinking water, and general improvements in cleanliness. However, these outcomes can only be loosely linked with the organisational assessment process, as there was no specific action plan developed at the initial workshop.

4.4.4 UNICEF’s work with health facilities

UNICEF’s partnership with the Government of Bangladesh is in its early stages, and definitive outcomes are not yet available. An evaluation is proposed for next year, which will measure outcomes in terms of the utilisation of the facility, and the incidence of case fatalities. However, several outcomes are already apparent. Attitudes of staff towards their service provision, and towards their opportunities for learning and improving skills, have changed, and training has improved availability of services at some facilities. The referral rates from facilities are starting to drop (SSU2:23), and examples are reported of facilities “finding the motivation to make do with what little resources they have at their disposal” which “given the history of the indifferent, patronizing and non-cooperative attitude of the senior health officials [is] remarkable” (ibid:27-28).

The role of capacity self-assessment in these motivational changes is inconclusive because a training program titled ‘Initiating Transformation’ has also been used. Involving nine days of face to face interaction between various

parties, it has been credited with noticeable changes of behaviour “work[ing] towards building and improving relationships rather than destroying them with negative behaviour” (SSU2:29). So at best, the role of organisational assessment in the changes will be partial.

4.5 RQ4 - RQ6: Other Organisational Self-Assessment techniques

Material obtained from both primary and secondary sources about several other OA techniques is included in Section 2.3. Although evaluative material on these techniques was difficult to obtain, this section discusses what can be said about Research Questions 4-6. First, using the framework introduced in Section 2.2, it is possible to classify the techniques. Of the examples presented in Section 2.3, CRWRC, MYRADA, and World Vision all use Appreciative Inquiry. Habitat for Humanity and Lasadev in Nepal use a variant of Appreciative Inquiry called Appreciative Planning and Action (APA). These may all be classified as facilitative OA interventions, since they allow groups to make their own assessments, using their own criteria, and then to develop their own plans in response. They also use the appreciative method of seeking positive stories early in the process. However, they vary in how long the process takes, and whether it is all done in one workshop, or accumulated over a longer period. The remaining techniques include World Neighbors’ Guided Self Assessment, which would also be described as facilitative, but differs in that it doesn’t use an appreciative approach. Tearfund’s CASA and USAID’s DOSA may both be described as directive, as all the capacity areas, and indicators, are pre-defined, but there is still the intention that these techniques will help the organisations become more self-reliant.

RQ5 asks whether there are any differences in the outcomes between these techniques, and RQ6 seeks to find out why. Some differences have emerged in reports of the participants’ experience, notably Tearfund’s partners’ complaints that the pre-defined indicators were seen as value-laden (Crooks & Burn, 2002:3). No such reports were obtained from Concern’s use of Appreciative

Inquiry as it does not use pre-defined indicators. Despite this, Tearfund's reported early outcomes are similar to those obtained by Concern in Bangladesh, with team building, learning around external relations, and early actions all specifically mentioned (ibid:5). Information on outcomes from USAID's DOSA is less specific, although the general tenor of comments appears to reflect a similar enthusiasm with the process as expressed by those using AI. The experience of 'PVO H' finding new insights at subsequent assessments (USAID, 2000), parallels that of several organisations where Concern has used AI. This highlights the value of repeating the assessment process on a periodic basis. World Neighbors' use of guided self-assessment in India (McKaig, 2002) is not directly comparable, as it was effectively a participatory evaluation, and outcomes from the assessment itself were not reported.

These findings, together with the many resonant experiences from different uses of the Appreciative Inquiry technique (refer to Section 2.3), tend to indicate that the assessment techniques are generally obtaining similar outcomes. However, the information available is not sufficient to state this with any certainty.

4.6 Unanticipated results

Whilst these findings are relatively unremarkable in that they are largely the expected outcomes of planned capacity-building inputs, there are several findings that were unexpected. Primary among these is the degree of enthusiasm about the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, supporting Ashford & Patkar's recognition that it tends to have a "strong emotional element" (2001:39). Enthusiasm was encountered amongst individual CBO members, local NGO staff, and at the implementing level. It was inspiring to see CBO members visibly proud of their new-found identity, and their plans. For some, the story collection phase had been unique in their experience, and they found the process liberating. No one had ever valued their input before, and they had not previously acknowledged their own abilities. At the local NGO level, the participatory nature of the planning methodology was perhaps the most inspiring feature,

whilst at the implementing level, the ability of the technique to foster involvement and motivation amongst participants was most encouraging. At the implementing level, several respondents described themselves as “followers of AI” or “in love with AI” (C7) to express their enthusiasm for the technique. They contrasted its potential for motivation of participants with that of PRA which is seen as “a very hard technique” (C6) by comparison. It was surprising to hear from people experienced with PRA techniques that AI was more participatory (C7, C20).

Interestingly, the two people who expressed any reservations about the technique were from Concern’s head office. The first generally favours the technique but has concerns that it does not tend to address some aspects of organisational life, particularly financial sustainability (C2). Because I had heard a similar criticism of AI from another source in the UK (Bill Crooks, pers. comm. 2002), I was particularly interested in this issue. Thus it was unexpected to discover that REMOLD’s capacity assessment process had addressed the accounting role in their organisation, and they had responded with significant staffing changes. And at Demra CBO, they had considered this issue and decided to increase income through establishing more sub-groups. However, very little reference was made to financial sustainability in the newer CBOs in Chittagong. The second critic of AI had not personally been involved with the process at field level, but questioned the way that the facilitator summarises people’s stories to develop a capacity statement (C4). Many other respondents also stressed the importance of the facilitator in the entire process.

Another aspect of the results which was unexpected was related to the fact that the capacity assessment workshops were just one of many inputs from the implementing organisation. These workshops are not conducted in isolation. They are part of a programme of capacity building involving a number of interventions. However, the workshop provides quite an intense period of contact time, and is therefore an opportunity for knowledge transfer. This was noticed in the local NGO plans with their introduction of the monitoring and evaluation capacity areas, which they had not previously considered. Initially I perceived

this as a negative matter, indicating control of the process by the facilitator. However, on reflection, the workshop has provided a unique opportunity for new concepts to be introduced to the organisation and in a way that is highly interactive and participatory (compared to a formal training session). This outcome of the process was totally unexpected.

4.7 Summary of findings

In summary, the organisational assessment process was useful in meeting the specific objectives of the implementing organisations, though it is important to note that in all cases, the assessment process was only one component of an overall programme of interventions. Interestingly, at Saidpur Municipality Health Department, where the initial Appreciative Inquiry workshop stopped short of preparing an action plan, some of the capacity areas were found in a subsequent review to have experienced limited progress. This highlights the fact that the AI workshop alone does not develop sufficient internal impetus to address all issues. An action plan with assigned responsibilities plays an important role in this regard. At the other sites considered in this study, such action plans were developed as an integral part of the process, successfully meeting specific organisational objectives.

The participants' experience of the process was generally reported very favourably, though with some caveats. Generally the CBO members found the workshops difficult to attend, as they were unable to complete their normal activities, and in some cases faced resistance from family or community members. A shorter time period would be better received. In direct contrast, the NGO staff found the workshops too short, and would like to take more time to reflect on their organisation, and plan for their future. However, they are paid for their time, and don't face the same conflict as they are already expected to be at work. In the government health facilities, both Concern and UNICEF found that considerable 'lobbying' and preparatory work was required to obtain sufficient staff involvement in the workshops (particularly at the higher levels). The

process itself was found to be inspiring for the people at lower levels, some of whom had never been consulted before, and it was in some cases humbling for senior staff. Amongst illiterate people, the process was not entirely understood, which led to reduced participation. However, certain parts of the workshop featured pictorial methods, and these received good reviews from all participants. Facilitation was seen as a vital and skilled component of the process, and plays a significant part in determining the outcome.

Numerous outcomes were reported by participants and implementing organisations, though many of these are only partially or indirectly related to the organisational assessment process. The main areas of direct influence are in the preparation of strategic action plans, vision and identity building, role definition and task allocation, and the building of the relational components of the organisations (trust, unity, communication skills etc.). In addition to this, the workshops have provided a unique opportunity for new concepts to be introduced to the organisations. These direct outcomes within the organisation have a follow-on effect in people's lives and communities. The most obvious are in the areas identified in the action plans as they are carried out (eg. environmental improvements), but others relate to the participatory philosophy of the process. Appreciation for the perspectives and stories of others was observed in the way organisations are valuing the inputs of stakeholders and beneficiaries. And related to this, the valuing of people's views has the consequence of generating increased self-esteem and ownership within their organisation. Some social effects have also been observed with group or organisational unity allowing collective actions to resist social injustices.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Organisational Self-Assessment ^{iv} does catalyse development outcomes

This study hypothesises that organisational self-assessment can catalyse development outcomes. However, multiple understandings of both ‘development’, and ‘outcomes’, complicate the matter. More clarification is needed before conclusions can be drawn. So, without restricting the meaning of either term, a ‘development outcome’ may be seen as a change that improves the potential of individuals or groups to provide for their own needs and aspirations without reducing the potential of others to do the same. The use of the term ‘potential’ rather than ‘ability’ allows this concept of development to include emotional changes, such as a rise in self-confidence, as well as physical changes.

Several conclusions may be drawn regarding the limitations of organisational self-assessment. Firstly, its success depends on several other factors. This study found a variety of understandings of the relationship between implementing and participating organisations and proposes a spectrum ranging from extractive, through directive and facilitative to autonomous to describe this (Refer Section 2.2). The outcome of the assessments will differ with each of these. Who facilitates is also important. Many people, both in the literature and in the field study stress that the facilitation of the assessment is vital. They comment that the facilitator’s understanding of participation, and of the philosophy underlying the OA techniques, influences the assessment process. This study also found that the organisational assessments were difficult for illiterate or poorly educated people to understand. However, some phases of the techniques were particularly well received, whilst others were identified as much harder. There may be potential to design these in a way that make them more accessible. Finally, OA is not conducted in the isolation of a sterile laboratory. By contrast, it enters into a

complex social setting with many other interactions occurring, some of which reflect prevailing power relations in the community. This new interaction provides a new site for the negotiation of these relations.

Despite these limitations, it is clear that organisational self-assessment does catalyse development outcomes. Most evident from the field study described here were changes in the hope, for their future, of individuals and groups. With newly established groups, the assessments served to build group identity, and vision. Some people expressed significant increases in confidence resulting either directly from their involvement in the assessment, particularly the story-collection phase, or from completing activities planned at the workshop. A heightened sense of unity was established in the groups, and new ideas of potential action were surfaced through the assessment. Some of these came from within the group and some from the facilitators. The self-assessment workshop provides a new and quite unique forum for the introduction of such ideas. When tools use directive questions, the questions themselves can also provide a means by which new ideas are introduced to the group. Perhaps most significantly, where coupled with a planning stage, organisational assessment workshops produce, in a participatory way, a plan for future activities. There is an indication from Concern's experience at Saidpur that, without such a plan, the vision, identity, and unity outcomes do not translate to more tangible changes. That is to say that self-assessment alone is only a weak generator of change, akin to planning without ownership. However when coupled with planning, a synergy is created, providing an outlet for the renewed vision, identity and unity of an organisation, and providing ownership of the plan itself.

Although not directly related to the hypothesis, it was also of interest to consider whether an appreciative approach is sufficient in and of itself, or whether it overlooks some aspects which are essential to organisational function. This study finds the results to be inconclusive in this regard. ✓

5.1.2 Alternative explanations

It is possible that the outcomes attributed to the organisational assessments are entirely due to the solidarity expressed by the implementing organisation, building the trust and confidence of the participants, rather than the assessment itself. Or perhaps they could be due to the empowering effect of participation in the process. However, each of these is a natural component of the assessment, and cannot really be isolated from it.

Another possible explanation for the findings is that they are due in most part to other inputs from implementing organisations, and cannot be traced back to the assessment. To some extent this may well be the case. The assessments were conducted in the context of ongoing relationships between the implementing and participating organisations. These included other inputs and interactions. However, this study has recognised this possibility and sought to determine what is directly attributable to the assessment. Interviewees and focus groups were asked to consider the workshop itself rather than the overall relationship, and although some strayed to the wider relationship, they generally responded within these guidelines. In any case, the workshop represents a significant proportion of the time devoted to the overall relationship and consequently would be partially responsible for this alternative finding.

A directive relationship may be another alternative explanation for the outcomes. Perhaps the implementing organisation is directing activities that it considers appropriate, and the increases in unity, vision, and identity are merely responses to the benefits that the participants see that they gain from this. However, this possibility does not give credit to either participants or facilitators in the conduct of the assessment. To be valid, this alternative would imply that the assessment itself was a sham, making the dialogue and participation largely pointless. This is most unlikely.

5.1.3 Impact of this study

This study has identified and documented various techniques used for organisational self-assessment in a development context. By doing so it has become evident that some of the differences in these techniques can be traced to a philosophical divide between modernist and post-modernist perspectives. To describe these differences, a framework has been developed based on the relationship between actors in the organisational self-assessment process (see Section 2.2). Who initiates the assessment, and who decides the areas to be assessed and their indicators, all contribute to this framework.

Significant outcomes have been observed from the organisational self-assessment methodology studied, mostly in the less tangible dimensions of organisational life; hope, trust, unity, identity, and ownership among others. These are the very areas which many development interventions struggle to achieve, and yet are the foundation for self-reliant sustainable development (Burkey, 1993). The ability of this technique to impact these areas has a potential impact for anyone involved in implementing development assistance. The methodology is a potential catalyst for development, and forms a useful opportunity to advance development objectives within the context of an overall capacity-building partnership strategy.

The theoretical background of organisational self-assessment needs development. This study has attempted to advance this by proposing a framework to differentiate the techniques. Further study of the synergy between the assessment and planning components of the techniques would go further in this regard. The literature on Appreciative Inquiry develops a theoretical framework for this technique, focusing on the collective construction of images of the future, a process which itself contributes to achieving that future state. This perspective has a potentially significant impact on how development plans are made. There is room for the extension of this theory to the other assessment techniques, and it will be interesting to see how well it holds up.

5.1.4 Strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the study

This study documents a variety of OA techniques used in community development, and is possibly the first such list to report field experiences with the techniques. However, this is not the primary focus of the research, and is treated only in cursory detail. The list of OA techniques is not, nor does it claim to be, exhaustive.

The primary strength of this study is in providing detail on the longer-term outcomes of organisational self-assessment. Although still less than three years old, this is a long time compared with many of the examples reported in the literature. Some issues regarding how to institutionalise the OA process, who facilitates, and how much is truly attributable to the assessment have been exposed by this longer term perspective. The other side of the same coin is that three years is not long in capacity-building terms. This study reports on a work in progress, not the final picture. So this may also be seen as another limitation of the study.

Another strength of this study is in its ability to compare the use of one organisational self-assessment technique across a variety of organisations in a similar context. This rare opportunity was provided by Concern's use of Appreciative Inquiry within both community development and partnership programmes. Thus both the implementing organisation and the local context were the same for the majority of the organisations studied. This allowed greater comparison on factors internal to the organisation.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the study is that it represents an outsider's view, despite the fact that it attempts to represent some of the insiders' comments. Most interactions required translation, both of the questions asked, and the responses, all of which were perceived through the eyes of the author. Additional to this weakness is that most contacts with organisations were facilitated by Concern, the implementer of the OA. Whilst we could not have achieved the study without Concern's assistance and guidance, their involvement

in selecting representatives for interviews, and also in facilitating some of the focus group discussions, actually limits the validity of the findings.

Finally, it was found to be difficult to separate OA-related outcomes from those derived from other inputs made by the implementing organisation. In some cases there is no clear boundary between the OA and other contact between field staff and the organisation. It has been necessary to use a counterfactual approach to pinpoint those outcomes directly attributable to the OA, but this leaves out the many outcomes which are partially derived from the assessment. Thus the approach limits the discussion of the potential outcomes of this technique. ✓

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Implications for professional practice

Organisational self-assessment has significant potential to catalyse development outcomes because of the way in which enthusiasm, vision, identity and ownership are developed around planned activities. However, it is not simply a technique, although it is often perceived as such. The examples of its use with CBOs and local NGOs discussed in this study all build capacity for self-reliance through a range of interventions. OA is one, albeit a very significant one. But as observed at Saidpur, if decoupled from the planning component it loses much of its effect. The philosophy behind OA is as important as the technique itself. It is participatory and empowering, and reconstructs the internal dialogue within an organisation. In some cases, it is also appreciative. Treated as a technique, without placing it in the context of this philosophy diminishes its effect.

Development practitioners intending to use organisational self-assessment would do well to be aware of their own paradigm when doing so. How they understand development itself, and their relationship with the participating organisation, will influence the type of organisational assessment process adopted. OA potentially changes the relationship between implementing and participating organisations,

empowering the latter to set their own goals, and doing so explicitly through the implementing organisation. Such a shift in the locus of power in the development relationship requires the implementing agency to desire, or at least accept, this change.

At the outset of this study, I sought to explore the potential of the organisational self-assessment methodology for use in disaster mitigation and preparedness, but chose not to address this directly. From the findings in this study, it has become apparent that there is significant potential for its application to this field, and many other areas also. The particular challenge with disaster preparedness is that the disaster is most of the time not present nor imminent, and yet unless preparation is made during this stage, the damage may be worse, and the response less than adequate. How does a community remain prepared for a disaster in the face of continued lack of interruption to their lives? I see potential in organisational self-assessment as a way to raise both consideration of the issues, and to catalyse the motivation to address these. The inherent recognition that an organisation is a developing entity plays an important part in this role, and the adoption of the technique as an annual or regular review provides an opportunity to keep disaster preparedness in mind through long periods without disasters. Using OA in this context could both strengthen the organisation's ability to perform all its functions, and keep it attentive to its disaster preparedness responsibilities. As the paradigm of development intervention shifts from hands-on to partnership, the responsibility for disaster mitigation and preparedness falls more and more on local organisations. Self-assessment potentially builds awareness, within an organisation, of the issues and of a planned response. Similar applications for organisational self-assessment may be found in organisations charged with a service role, such as water supply management. It is easy, whilst the supply continues, to avoid maintenance, but better to keep interest and motivation focussed on improvement and ongoing maintenance. Again organisational self-assessment can potentially help in this regard.

Sourcing facilitators is likely to become a potential issue for development practitioners. Quality facilitation of organisational self-assessment has emerged as an important factor in this study, both from the field research and from the literature. Several respondents suggested that facilitators must have a good appreciation of the philosophy behind the technique. The facilitator often provides an outside view, which may be seen as impartial if he or she is not pre-aligned with any internal coalitions or opinions. This study has shown that they are also able to introduce new information and ideas to a group forum. Such inputs can have a significant impact on the outcome of an assessment. So where should one look for the facilitator who exhibits all these criteria? How much should be done by 'experts' and how much handed over to 'insiders'? It remains valid and important to encourage the development of skills for self-reliance in local organisations, but it is equally important to use an outsider for the facilitation of OA. Perhaps this issue may be resolved by encouraging each organisation to develop skills in facilitation, and then to use these as a consultant to other organisations. This would resemble the use of internal auditors from one company as external auditors in another under the ISO 9001 quality assurance accreditation system. Also it potentially allows the process freedom from dependence on northern consultants. The transfer of ideas through facilitation from south to south could occur in this model, and perhaps north-south transfer would be achieved indirectly through the training sessions for 'southern' facilitators.

5.2.2 Implications for a scholarly understanding of the field

Three very practically oriented streams of literature may have merged to form the genesis of organisational self-assessment, but increasingly this investigation of the methodology has pointed back towards the philosophical underpinnings of the activity we term 'development.' Here, in line with Chambers (1997:130) outsiders' behaviour and attitudes are critical. The world view of the facilitator and the implementing organisation influence their understanding of what constitutes development, and this understanding in turn affects the relationship between the organisations. As this study has shown, these understandings have

had their outworking in the realm of organisational self-assessment. The level of freedom given to the participating organisation is instructive in showing up this relationship. The assessment may be extractive, directive, or facilitative depending on whose interests predominate.

By observing examples of the use of Appreciative Inquiry, this study discovered that without the planning component of the methodology, the outcomes are limited. Participants become 'all fired up with nowhere to go.' The planning component of the approach is very important. But would it be sufficient alone? I would contend otherwise. It is the synergy between the reflective appreciative aspects of assessment and the development of future goals and actions that is the key to the surprising success reported from this methodology. By first reconstructing and articulating individual and collective images of organisational life, the stage is set for coalescing individual motivation around collective possibilities and goals.

Much has been made of Appreciative Inquiry's ability to produce significant organisational change, both in developed and developing world contexts. But one question has not been adequately resolved: whether there are inherent gaps in the appreciative approach. Does AI by its very nature avoid some of the basics of organisational life, particularly financial accountability and sustainability? This study didn't set out to explore this issue directly, but does report one example where such matters were actively pursued following an AI assessment. In another case conventional and appreciative techniques were reported as complementary rather than exclusive. Further research may shed more light on this important question about the scope of the appreciative approach.

5.2.3 Implications for theory building

Whilst this study has sought to determine the potential of organisational self-assessment at a very practical level, it has also generated some insights for a theoretical understanding of the field. OA is an intervention, and as such seeks to use the transforming power of collective reality construction instrumentally.

Most existing theory depicts this construction of reality in a passive descriptive way rather than an instrumental one. This new field therefore presents new possibilities for the development of theory.

The framework developed to categorise types of organisational self-assessment has parallels in the participation literature. A typology of participation ranging from passive to self-mobilisation (Pretty et al., 1995, reproduced in Blackburn & Holland, 1998:157), essentially describes the relationship between development actors, just as this framework for self-assessment does. Lusthaus et al. (1999:xiii) recognise a continuum of self-assessment approaches based on the degree of control of the process by the organisation concerned.

Taking a postmodernist perspective on the relationship between development actors, then the different approaches are socially constructed. They stem from multiple understandings of the idea or concept of development. These are then filtered through prevailing power structures in the relationship between development actors to generate an actual outcome. In many different fora the same process is repeated, giving rise to a range of possible interpretations of a technique or process, and a range of possible outcomes. The corollary of the postmodern perspective is that socially constructed realities can be reconstructed. On reflection and analysis our understandings of social realities may change. This is evident in the outcomes of the self-assessments in this study. If such reflection were to encompass the relationships between implementing and participating organisations, perhaps the potential to enhance outcomes by transforming these relationships would be generated.

The organisational self-assessment methodology is being used within the context of an overall capacity-building strategy, and as such it constitutes a component or aspect of the process of development. The process approach attends not just to the outcome, but to the quality of the transaction, and to the relationships implied (Mosse, 1998:17). This approach is perhaps the best forum for developing the ideas expressed in the previous paragraphs. By focussing on the quality of the relationship between development actors, the power relations which mediate this

relationship are made explicit, and also the understandings of development which guide individual actors can be explored. The instrumental use of the techniques can also be analysed within a perspective on development as process.

5.2.4 Future research studies

Although this study reports the use of organisational self-assessment from established examples, it has become apparent that there is a need to continue to monitor the emerging outcomes. The ongoing use of OA is another issue which is begging further research. How does the process of OA get institutionalised? Should repeat assessments cover the same capacity areas or redefine those areas again? How do participants' engage in the process when it changes from novel to routine? Do the outcomes change as it becomes institutionalised? This study found that the repeat assessments provided an opportunity for participants to reflect critically on their original assessment, sometimes deciding that they were overly optimistic. This result suggests potential for disillusionment to set in over several cycles of re-assessment, and it will be interesting to observe how this works out in practice.

Any future research will need to face the issue of how (or whether) to isolate outcomes wholly attributable to OA, from those attributable to other aspects of the relationship between implementing and participating organisations. Here the counterfactual approach was used, but this inherently excludes many outcomes that derive from both. By exploring approaches to capacity building or organisation development, it may be possible to capture the wider outcomes of using these techniques within a development relationship between two actors. An analysis of the changes in, and characteristics of, this relationship, from a 'development as process' perspective would complement the findings of this study.

An interesting issue which remains unresolved is whether the appreciative approach is sufficient to address every aspect of organisational life, or would benefit from coupling with a problem-focussed approach. Literature is hard to

find on this issue, although one example reported here suggests that the two are not exclusive and can even be complementary (Van Buskirk, 2002). This would be interesting to explore further, and would probably require some form of action research trials. Similarly, scope exists for exploring the potential application of organisational self-assessment to disaster preparedness initiatives. Possible developments of the individual techniques to make them more accessible to illiterate participants could also be investigated further. An action research model may be the best way to explore these issues.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Further research

This emerging technique provides significant opportunities for further research. A number of possible future studies have been indicated through the findings of this one. These fall into two categories;

- a) Exploration through action research of new applications for organisational self-assessment and of possible improvements in specific techniques.

Recommended topics include:

- The trial of new pictorial methods to improve the engagement of illiterate participants in the assessment process.
- Action research trial(s) to explore the application of organisational self-assessment techniques to local disaster preparedness.
- Action research trial(s) to explore the application of organisational self-assessment techniques to community-based management of assets requiring ongoing maintenance, such as water supply facilities.

- Evaluation of techniques combining an appreciative with a problem focus, by action research trial.
- b) Broader analysis of the methodology using a ‘development as process’ lens.

Recommended topics include:

- Longitudinal studies to pursue the institutionalisation of OA, both with a focus on outcomes, and on changes in the relationships between development actors. This would include consideration of the possible appropriation of the new forum by powerful stakeholders.
- Comparative work between OA techniques with a particular focus on how the relationships between development actors differ, building on the framework presented in this study.

5.3.2 Changes in professional practice

The findings of this study indicate that good facilitation is a key aspect of organisational self-assessment. Facilitation from skilled outsiders is preferred, to give an external and non-partisan perspective to the process, and also to provide another opportunity for new ideas to be introduced to an organisation. Skills in facilitation depend on a number of factors including training, listening abilities, world-view, and experience. The development or sourcing of such skills should be considered as an integral component of any capacity-building programme. In this regard, a ‘resource pool’ approach is suggested to build and maintain skills for facilitation within localities. This could be achieved by developing the skills within each organisation, and developing networks for the interchange of these members to allow ‘external’ facilitation at another organisation. Alternatively, local pools of specialist facilitation consultants could be established.

The finding that parts of the organisational assessment process can be difficult for illiterate or poorly educated persons warrants a change in professional practice. Every attempt should be made to make the process more intelligible for these people. The key to this is already in evidence from the enthusiasm that these same participants showed for the pictorial representation of organisational capacity. Experimentation with pictorial representation, or other creative solutions, for the more difficult components of the process is recommended.

The final recommendation is perhaps better described as an encouragement to development professionals. The way in which we view 'development' affects all our relationships within this realm, including the relationships governing the organisational self-assessment interaction. A personal awareness of where our understanding fits on the spectrum is important, as the use of the techniques will be affected by this. OA is not simply a technique, and it would do well to recognise our objectives for its use within the context of any development relationship. At the outset of any programme which proposes the use of OA it may be appropriate to make explicit these objectives. In the context of true partnership, these could then be re-negotiated by representatives of the organisation with which the assessment is proposed. This could be communicated in a 'terms of reference' style, if appropriate, within the context of pre-assessment discussions and 'lobbying.'

5.3.3 Modifications to accepted theoretical constraints

By taking the field of organisational self-assessment and exploring the several streams of literature that refer to it, this study has found that none is itself completely sufficient to locate organisational self-assessment. It lies at the confluence of these streams. The outcomes of the assessments occur not just because it has a positive approach, nor just because it is participatory. This research has identified that if you separate the planning component from the motivational one, outcomes may be less than when combined. There is a synergy generated at the meeting of these components of the process, as there is at the

meeting of these streams in the literature. A holistic perspective is required when analysing this type of interaction.

Organisational self-assessment is a new site for interaction between development actors. Development professionals from implementing organisations interact with participating organisations. The nature of their relationship determines how that interaction occurs. This study proposes a framework to describe this interaction over self-assessment. And in turn, the understanding of ‘development,’ by the individual actors, and their organisations, determines much of the relationship. So, a theoretical framework that takes cognisance of this relationship and makes it explicit is needed. The ‘development as process’ or ‘process approach’ has much to offer in this regard, and may provide the best theoretical basis for the desired holistic perspective.

5.4 Summary

This study brings together a range of approaches to organisational self-assessment currently being used in development contexts, and then explores in depth Concern’s use of Appreciative Inquiry in Bangladesh. The documentation of various approaches has revealed differences in the philosophy underlying the techniques used, which express themselves in how the information is used, who participates, who decides the scope of the assessment, and the indicators used. Essentially these differences stem from different understandings of ‘development’, and the consequent relationship between implementing and participating organisations. A framework has been developed in this study to describe the differences in approach to organisational self-assessment. Examples may be extractive, directive, facilitative, or (potentially) autonomous. Appreciative Inquiry falls into the facilitative category.

The field study investigated experiences of the use of Appreciative Inquiry with community-based organisations, local NGOs, and government health facilities. Using a qualitative research methodology, information was sought on the

experiences of the participants during the assessment, and the outcomes resulting from it. The findings should be treated cautiously because of the distinct possibility of outsider bias, and the difficulty of attribution. But despite this, they show that organisational self-assessment can be a catalyst for development outcomes. It is particularly good at building organisational identity, vision, individual and collective hope, trust, and unity. This study found that it also provides a new forum for the introduction of ideas to an organisation. Perhaps most significantly, organisational self-assessment workshops produce, in a participatory way, a plan for future activities, and build group ownership for the plans. It is the synergy between strengthening the intangible, emotional aspects of organisation, and providing an opportunity to utilise these through the action plan that appears to give organisational self-assessment its unique ability to catalyse development outcomes.

As the methodology is still emerging, it is recommended that organisational assessment is explored further using both longitudinal and comparative studies. There is room for improvements in the methods used in the assessments to make them more accessible to those with low levels of literacy or education. It is also recommended that the application of organisational self-assessment to the fields of disaster preparedness and infrastructure management by local organisations is trialed. Because organisational assessment provides a new site for the negotiation of power relations both within organisations and between implementing and participating ones, the adoption of a 'development as process' perspective is recommended. This would require professionals to make more explicit their understanding of 'development' and their objectives for the use of organisational self-assessment. It would also require academics or evaluators to consider the relationships between actors in the interaction over organisational self-assessment. This more holistic approach would better accommodate the fact that organisational self-assessment generally occurs within the context of a wider development relationship.

APPENDIX 1: FIELD RESEARCH SOURCES

The following table lists both primary and secondary research sources obtained during field work in Bangladesh in July and August 2002. Each source was given a unique label, or code, which is used in the text to refer to these sources. To assure confidentiality, the primary sources list presents these in groups, and avoids identifying individuals.

Primary sources:

RESEARCH SOURCES	CODE*
Meetings with senior staff to obtain permissions and to obtain a background to the organisation's work	C1, C2, C36
Interviews with senior staff	C3, C4, C5, C8, U1
Interviews with implementing staff (both current and former employees)	C6, C7, C39, C41
Interviews with field office staff	C9, C10, C12, C14, C29, C34, C37
Focus-group discussions with field office staff	C11, C18, C19
Interviews with LNGO staff	C20, C23, C24, C27
Focus-group discussions with LNGO staff	C25, C28
Focus-group discussions with LNGO beneficiaries	C21, C26
Interviews with LNGO beneficiaries	C22
Focus-group discussions with CBO members	C13, C15, C38
Interviews with CBO members	C16, C17, C17b, C30, C32, C33
Interviews with non-CBO community members	C31
Feedback sessions to discuss preliminary findings with staff and seek comments	C35, C40

*Note: Code is prefixed with 'C' to denote Concern, and 'U' to denote UNICEF.

Secondary sources:

GENERAL:

LABEL	REFERENCE
SSC1	Datta, D. 2002, <i>Crisis and coping strategies of the poor: the role of local institutions in Bangladesh</i> , PRA Promoters' Society - Bangladesh, Dhaka.

CONCERN OVERVIEW:

LABEL	REFERENCE
SSC2	Umme, S. 2001, "A presentation on local NGO capacity assessment - using appreciative inquiry to build capacity: An organisational capacity assessment of Concern's partner organisation." Paper presented to the Bangladesh National Evaluation Forum, Dhaka, January 10 2001.
SSC3	Datta, D., Sen Gupta, N., Begum, K., Debnath, N., Khanam, R. & Shaha, N. 1998, <i>Organisation Building and Organisational Sustainability: Impact assessment, capacity assessment, and hope for the future</i> . Programme Support Cell, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC4	Concern Bangladesh, n.d., <i>Concern</i> , Concern Bangladesh promotional brochure, Dhaka.
SSC5	Rahman, S. 2002, "Action plan for group level", (unpublished table) Disaster and Environment Management Programme, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC6	Umme, S., 2002, "Use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in Concern", (unpublished report prepared in direct response to email questions), Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.

CONCERN - AMADER SANGOTHAN:

LABEL	REFERENCE
SSC7	Chittagong Regional Programme, Sept 2000, "Area Committee problem solving, ranking & future planning", (unpublished table) Urban Community Development Project, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC8	Urban Community Development Project, Feb 2001, "CBO Election Report", (unpublished report) Urban Community Development Project, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC9	Khatoon, Z. 2002, "Ankur Capacity Areas", (unpublished table) SERP, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC10	Datta, D., Hossain, I. & Watts, E. Aug 2000, <i>Listening to CBOs: Development of the project exit strategy through participatory capacity assessment in relation to the sustainability of CBOs</i> , Urban Community Development Project, Bowbazar, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC11	Concern Worldwide, Nov 2000, "Amader Shongothan (Our Organisation): Proposal for capacity development of community-based organisations representing the urban poor in Bangladesh", (unpublished project proposal) Concern Worldwide, Dublin.
SSC12	Umme, S. Oct 2001, "Amader Sangothan, the central report: AI process follow-up for CBO capacity assessment and capacity development" (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC13	Nessa, K. Sept 2001, "Follow up report of Amader Sangothans: for South East Regional Programme", (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC14	Concern Bangladesh, Feb 2002, "Amader Shongothan: Monitoring Tools - August 2001", (unpublished table) Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC15	Khatoon, Z. Aug 2002, "Ankur Shongothan, Translation of Capacity Areas and Plan", (unpublished transcript) Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC16	Khatoon, Z. Aug 2002, "Translation of two appreciative interviews conducted in 2001", (unpublished transcript) Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.

SSC17	Khatoon, Z. Aug 2002, "Translation of Ankur Shongothan's list of dream statements" (unpublished transcript) Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
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CONCERN - PARTNERSHIP:

LABEL	REFERENCE
SSC18	Islam, M. Nov 2001, "Organisational capacity assessment process: Capacity assessment of REMOLD through appreciative inquiry", (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC19	Islam, M. Nov 2001, "Organisational capacity assessment process: Capacity assessment of UPOMA through appreciative inquiry", (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC20	Islam, M. Nov 2001, "Organisational capacity assessment process: Capacity assessment of OPCA through appreciative inquiry", (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC21	Islam, N. Aug 2002, "Project Proposal: Building capacity of REMOLD, a local NGO, to protect women against gender violation and promote socio-economic livelihood options in Char Matua under Noakhali district in partnership with South East Regional Programme (SERP) of Concern Bangladesh", (unpublished draft proposal and logframe) SERP, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC22	Islam, N. Aug 2002, "Logical framework for building capacity of a local NGO to increase the socio-economic condition of Tripura ethnic minority groups living in hill areas of Mirsarai", (unpublished draft logframe) SERP, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC23	Islam, N. Aug 2002, "Logical framework for building capacity of a local NGO to increase access to livelihood assets in Boyar Char", (unpublished draft logframe) SERP, Concern Bangladesh, Chittagong.
SSC24	OPCA n.d., "Organisation for the Poor Community Advancement", (unpublished organisation description) OPCA, Mirsarai, Bangladesh.

SSC25	REMOLD n.d., "Resource Mobilisation for Development", (unpublished organisation description) REMOLD, Noakhali, Bangladesh.
SSC26	Umme, S. & Islam, M. Aug 2000, "Local organisation capacity assessment process: Assessment of Shushilan through appreciative inquiry", (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.

CONCERN HEALTH INSTITUTION CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS:

LABEL	REFERENCE
SSC27	Islam, M. n.d., "Initial assessments of Saidpur and Parbatipur Municipality Health Departments", (unpublished report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC28	Islam, M. Aug 2002, "Health institution capacity assessment process: Midterm review of Saidpur and Parbatipur Municipality Health Department capacity building process through appreciative inquiry", (unpublished draft report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSC29	Choudhury, P. S. & Islam, M. Nov 1999, "Health Institution capacity assessment process: Assessment of Saidpur Municipality Health Department through Appreciative Inquiry", (unpublished draft report) Organisational Development Unit, Concern Bangladesh, Dhaka.

UNICEF:

LABEL	REFERENCE
SSU1	UNICEF, May 2002, "Whole Site Workshop, Meherpur District Hospital 5-9 May 2002: Workshop report", (unpublished report) Health and Nutrition Section, UNICEF Bangladesh, Dhaka.
SSU2	Rahman, A. Jan 2002, <i>The women's right to life and health initiative (WRLH) in Bangladesh: In search of quality life saving care for women</i> , (descriptive booklet) UNICEF - Bangladesh Country Office, Dhaka.
SSU3	UNICEF, n.d., <i>Women's right to life and health: Accelerating efforts to reduce maternal deaths and disability in Bangladesh</i> , (promotional brochure) UNICEF - Bangladesh Country Office, Dhaka.
SSU4	Islam, T. n.d., "Guidelines for AI Interview", (unpublished guide) WRLH, UNICEF, Dhaka.
SSU5	Islam, T. n.d., "Guidelines for follow-up on BT teams", (unpublished guide) WRLH, UNICEF, Dhaka.
SSU6	WRLH, n.d., "Development of hospital microplan whole site workshop: Facilitators' guide", (unpublished guide) WRLH, UNICEF, Dhaka.

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