Trade Union Organisational Capacity tool (TUOC-tool)
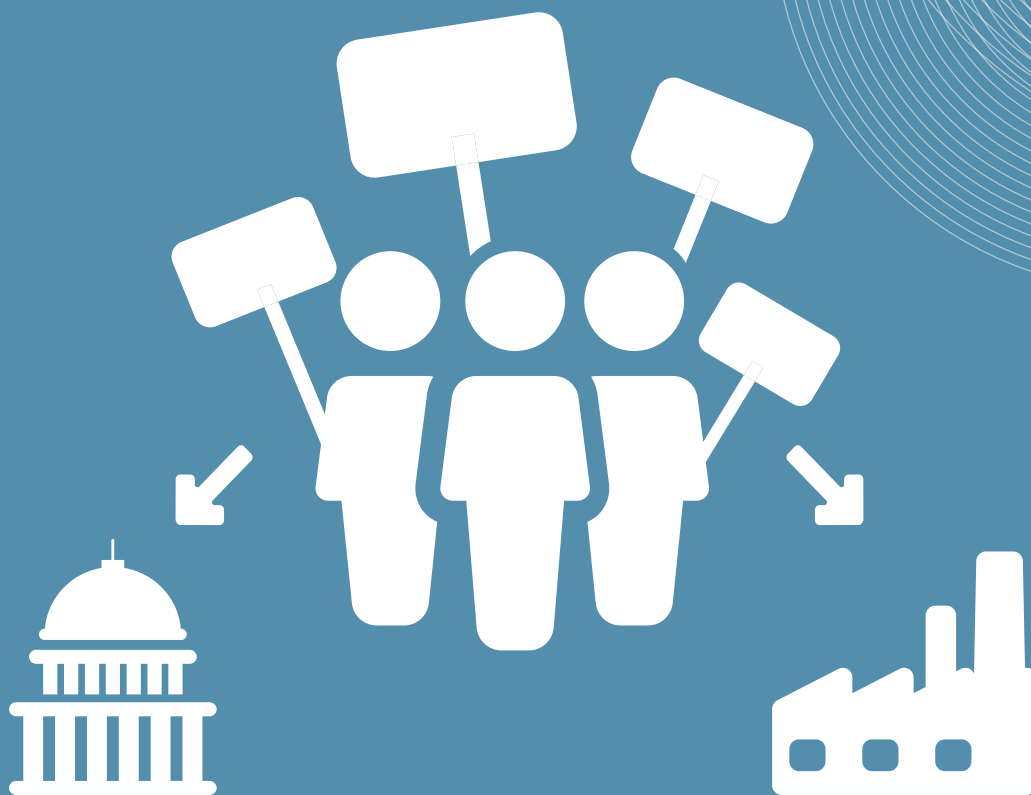
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Working Group on Trade Union Partnerships and Joint Initiatives of the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) launched its work on organisational capacity in the first quarter of 2015. The foundations for this work were laid in an international workshop that analysed different tools used by trade unions to assess and monitor organisational capacity and undertook a reflection on the building blocks of a trade union-specific organisational capacity framework. These inputs were further discussed and developed throughout several seminars and workshops that paved the way towards the elaboration of the Trade Union Organisational Capacity (TUOC) framework. The overall process was undertaken with the support of the Research Institute for Labour and Society (HIVA) from the University of Leuven in Belgium.

This guidance note presents the TUOC framework, with a concrete overview of the steps that can be followed in its application and includes recommendations on how to apply it.
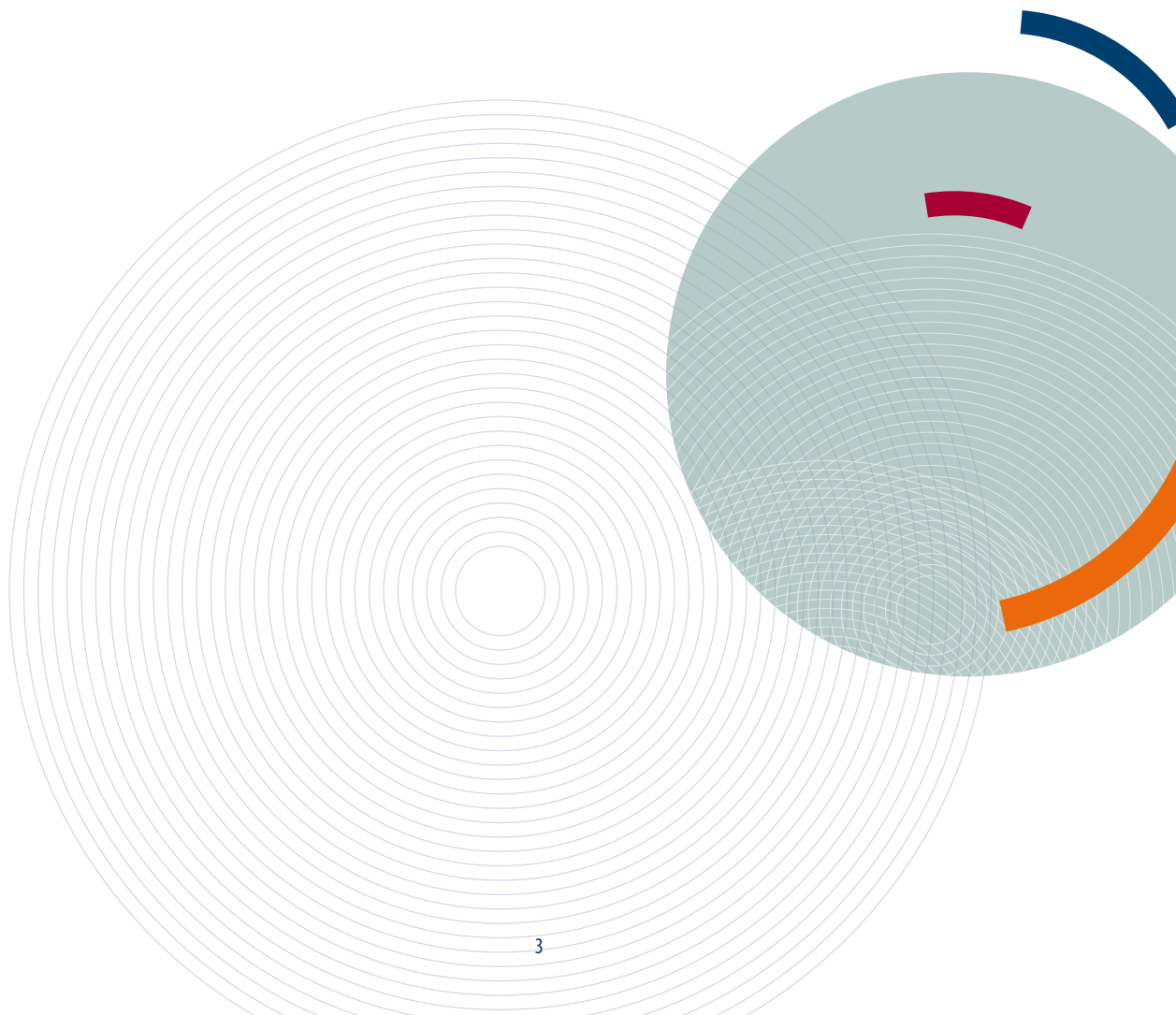
2. TRADE UNION WAYS OF LOOKING AT ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

In the process of coming up with the TUOC framework, a whole set of organisational capacity frameworks and tools used by trade unions were mapped and analysed. Our mapping resulted in the identification of 10 different instruments that looked at organisational capacity from different angles, some only looking at specific capacities (financial, project management), others which were more comprehensive (looking at both hard and soft skills). Some instruments were developed by unions for internal use, but many emerged in the context of trade union development cooperation programmes.

While the existing instruments all had their strengths and weaknesses, the overall appreciation of the TUDCN Partnerships Working Group was that there was a need to put forward a specific framework that responds to the needs of trade unions, going beyond those of international partners in trade union development cooperation programmes.

The Trade Union Development Effectiveness Principles were established as a basis for this work, given the relevance of democratic ownership, transparency and accountability, inclusiveness and equality, autonomy, coherence and sustainability for the trade union organisational capacity process.

This implies that one of the underlying considerations for the framework is that organisations develop their own organisational needs and priorities in an autonomous way. A self-assessment approach, guided by practicality and simplicity, was therefore considered as necessary. This led to building the framework on a methodology that is familiar to trade unions, such as the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. It was also acknowledged that in order for the TUOC framework to be readily used, it should be flexible and allow for adaptation to contextual differences.

The work towards the elaboration of the TUOC framework has taken all these considerations into account. Although a specific finalised model is put forward in these guidelines, given the different settings in which it can be used and the different approaches that trade unions have to organisational capacity, there might be a need to adapt the framework to particular contexts. The tool can also be used at different levels, going from an analysis of a national centre or confederation, a federation or a department to that of a specific union at local or enterprise level. In this sense, it is recommended that before its use organisations analyse and review the framework so that it can best respond to their needs.

1 http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/TU_develop_EN.pdf

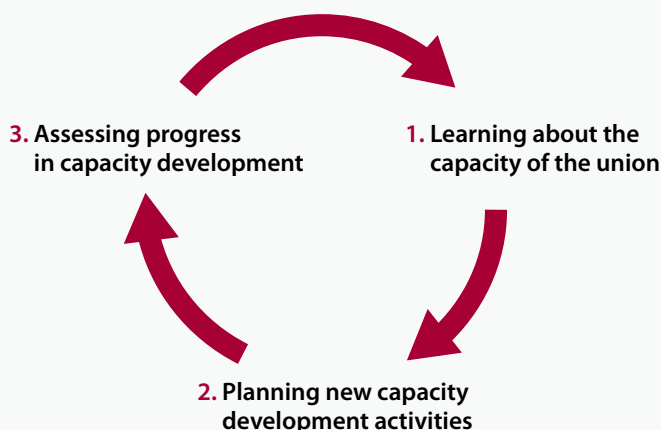# 3. TUOC - A TOOL TO EXAMINE ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY OF TRADE UNIONS

This section describes the trade union organisational capacity (TUOC) framework and how it can be used in practice. The TUOC framework was developed by a global group of trade union activists and differs from other organisational capacity frameworks by taking into account the specific needs and organisational dynamics, and language of trade unions. The TUOC tool provides guidance on how to approach trade union organisational capacity in different settings.[2]

TUOC- THE BASICS

Aim of TUOC - The main aim of the TUOC tool is to support unions in their efforts to strengthen their organisational capacity. The tool can be used at different phases of the organisational cycle (figure 1).

It can be used as a support tool to learn about the capacity of the union in three main areas (internal organizational capacity, capacities to relate and capacities to influence and deliver), looking both at internal and external factors that affect the functioning of the union. A second way is to use the tool to identify capacity areas that need to be strengthened, and to reflect on strategies to do so. A final application is the use of TUOC to assess the progress in the capacity of the organisation, for example after a period of capacity strengthening interventions.

Figure 1: Three phases in which the TUOC tool can be used

3. Assessing progress in capacity development

1. Learning about the capacity of the union
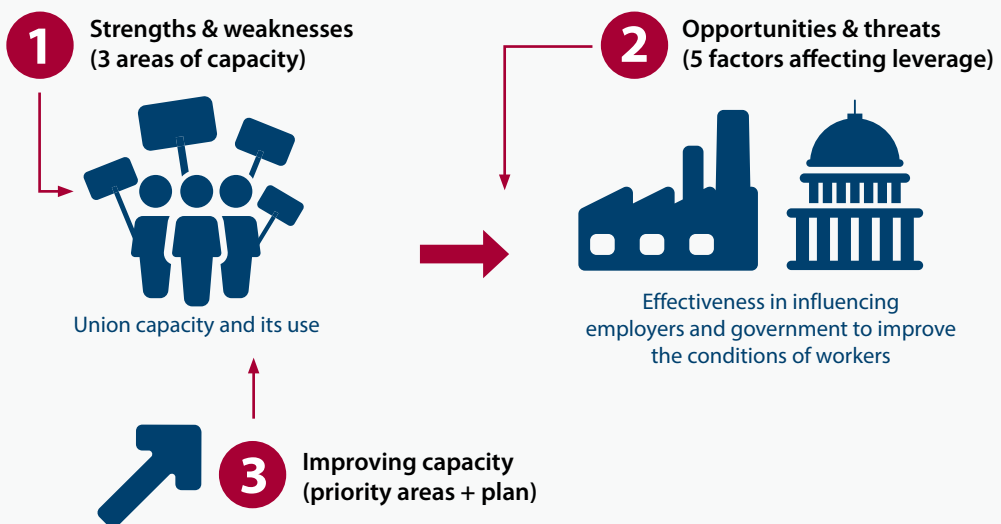
2. Planning new capacity development activities

2 Over a period of a year different scenarios were tested to apply the TUOC framework. In this guidance note an approach is presented based on those experiences.

A short or full TUOC process - There are different scenarios at hand, depending on the context (available time and resources). A short version allows for a quick analysis of how the union performs in three capacity areas, together with an assessment of external factors that enable or block the operating space of the union. The in-depth version of the TUOC tool involves a more systematic assessment of the capacity around the same three capacity clusters, but further unpacked according to nine sub-capacities.

What are the building blocks? - The basis for the TUOC tool is the well-known **SWOT approach.** Figure 2 visualises the three steps in the SWOT process. Unions are invited to look at strengths and weaknesses of their organisation (step 1) on the basis of the TUOC framework, while at the same time analysing external opportunities and threats (step 2). Combining these steps helps to identify realistic options and priorities in strengthening the capacity (step 3).

Who should participate? – This depends on the context of the use of the TUOC tool. In the TUOC approach, it is encouraged to use self-assessment approaches, possibly complemented with asking feedback from other stakeholders. This implies that a comprehensive reflection would involve different layers of the union. If time and resources allow, feedback can be obtained for specific sub-areas of capacity from the union membership (for example, on the quality of the services) and other stakeholders (eg. on the expertise of the union, how well it is prepared in negotiations...).

Figure 2: Overview of the three steps of the TUOC tool

1 Strengths & weaknesses
(3 areas of capacity)

Union capacity and its use

2 Opportunities & threats
(5 factors affecting leverage)

Effectiveness in influencing employers and government to improve the conditions of workers

3 Improving capacity
(priority areas + plan)

TUOC FRAMEWORK: A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

The underlying TUOC framework is inspired by trade union views on what constitute key areas of capacities, further structured based on insights from the 5 Capability framework developed by ECDPM (2008) and earlier work from INTRAC (2007).

The framework distinguishes between three main areas of capacity (box 1), thereby acknowledging the importance of the internal functioning of the union, the capacity to build productive relationships with internal and external stakeholders for resource mobilisation and communication, and the capacity to actually deliver results on the ground.

A further breakdown of the three capacity areas in sub-capacities can be found in annex 1.

The three capacity areas are interrelated and overlapping and the sub-capacities can touch upon several of the capacity areas, as shown in Figure 3.

Box 1: three capacity areas of TUOC

1. Internal organisational capacities
  ▶ Strategic planning & learning, leadership
  ▶ Structures and procedures
2. Capacities to relate
  ▶ Resource mobilisation
  ▶ Communication and networking
3. Capacities to influence and deliver
  ▶ Education & training
  ▶ Organizing & mobilizing
  ▶ Influencing government, business & society
  ▶ Collective bargaining
 ▶ Service delivery & legal support

Figure 3: Trade union capacities

Internal organisational capacities

Strategic planning & learning, leadership

Structures & procedures

Education & training

Service delivery, & legal support

Resource mobilisation

Organising & mobilising

Influencing gov, business & society

Communication & networking

Collective bargaining

Capacities to relate

Capacities to influence and deliver

All unions will require basic elements of the three capacity areas, but the relative importance of the different sub-capacities might differ substantially between unions, depending on the maturity of the union and its worldviews, but also on the local context. For example, a young confederation which needs to first establish visibility and internal support for its existence, will most likely not prioritise the development of a wide set of services. This list of sub-capacities is therefore provided for inspiration, but will require adjustment according to the local needs and context.

The guidance note also presents a simple framework (step 2) to facilitate a critical discussion on how the context can be considered more systematically when determining capacity development priority areas.

In section 4 the use of the Full TUOC framework is presented.
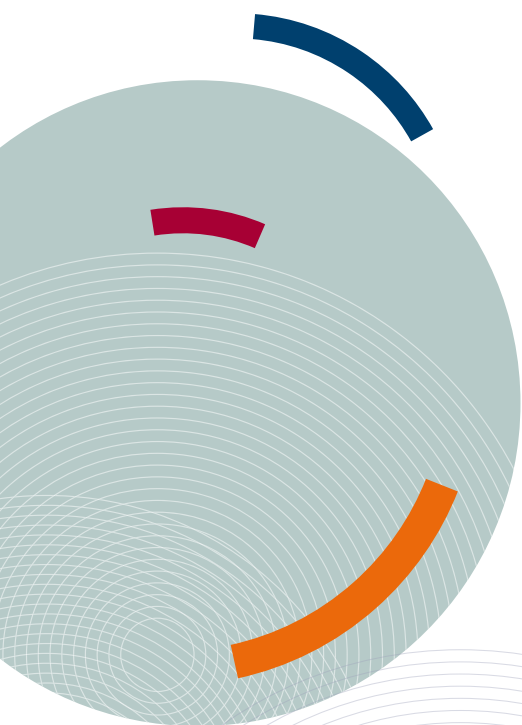
4. USING TUOC

This section gives a step-by-step description of the TUOC approach when it is used in its full or complete form. This means in essence that the level of analysis is more in-depth, supported amongst others by a short survey on different capacity areas (Annex 1), which should be completed and analysed by the participants in the TUOC exercise. The note includes some practical guidance for each step, together with some facilitation tips for the person taking the lead of the overall process.

The TUOC tool can be applied in a workshop setting, where for example the three steps are run through over the course of one day. Ideally, preparatory work will be done by a small team to collect some experiences and evidence on the performance of the union in different capacity areas. Alternatively, the different steps in the tool can also be spread over a number of meetings if time does not allow convening people in a full day workshop. The process can be facilitated by an outsider, but can also be done by the organisation itself.

Preparatory phase - Reflect about when and how this process can be done so that it builds on existing planning, and learning moments so that the outcomes are most likely to be used afterwards. A good period is the run-up to a congress, for example. Feel free to adjust the approach to fit your own needs and context.

Make sure that you review the relevance of the different sub-capacities in the TUOC questionnaire for your union. If some are not relevant or others are missing, customise them to fit your own situation. Also discuss with a small team if you want to use a scoring approach (for example, low-medium-high; or a score from 1 to 5), or rather a qualitative approach. In the latter case people can make notes next to the different sub-capacities and use this as a basis for discussion in group.

Starting-up - Introduce all the colleagues to the aim of the exercise and indicate how the findings will be used. Give some background on the origins of the TUOC tool (see introduction) and explain that the exercise has three simple steps, mainly based on the SWOT approach.

STEP 1
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
(2 HOURS)

Introduce shortly the three main capacity areas and the sub-capacities, and explain that they are seen as core capacities of organisations to function well. Afterwards take some time to explain the TUOC questionnaire in Annex 1.

▸ When the participants have understood the questionnaire, ask them to complete it individually (for scoring system to be used, see above). Ask people to add as much as possible arguments for the score in the 'arguments' column.

▸ Then ask your colleagues to share their assessment and have a discussion about the main strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. Try to identify the 1 or 2 main strengths and 1 or 2 weaknesses for each of the three main capacity areas and write them down separately.

▸ Aside from the questionnaires with the assessments, the main output of this step 1 can be summarised in a table as follows:

1 **Strengths & weaknesses
(3 areas of capacity)**

Union capacity and its use

Facilitation tip

Step 1 will at least take 2 hours. When introducing the questionnaire consider going through some of the sub-capacities and check if they are well understood. Ask them to score the statements, while thinking about how the organisation has been doing over the last few years.

Table 1: Output summary table with main organisational strengths and weaknesses

1. Internal organisational capacities	
Main strengths	**Main weaknesses**
…	…
…	…
2. Capacities to relate	
Main strengths	**Main weaknesses**
…	…
…	…
3. Capacities to influence and deliver	
Main strengths	**Main weaknesses**
…	…
…	…

STEP 2
OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS
(2 HOURS)

The effectiveness of unions is heavily determined by a range of external factors related to the nature of the government, the economy and the labour market. This step provides a framework to reflect on which external factors are most conducive and which ones are affecting the power of the union in a negative way. This analysis will be used as an input in step 3 to prioritise which critical capacities require further strengthening.

The external factors are grouped in five clusters:[3]

▶ Relationship with political and regulatory institutions, and nature of labour laws and policies.

▶ Economic climate and product market: health of the industry, competition...

▶ Technology, the organisation of work, and labour supply & demand: eg. workers with substitutable skills.

▶ Role played by business in social dialogue, the level of fragmentation of the union landscape, etc.

▶ Social attitudes: attitudes of general public towards unions and mobilisation potential.

The framework is presented in more detail in the figure below. The analysis provides insights into the main external factors affecting the work of the union, either positively (on the left side) or negatively (on the right side). This analysis can be used to discuss the feasibility and appropriateness of investing in certain types of capacity or not.

2 **Opportunities & threats**
(5 factors affecting leverage)

Effectiveness in influencing employers and government to improve the conditions of workers

Box 2: An example.

The 'XX' in Figure 4 present a fictitious example of scoring for a union in a sector in a country. In the example there is a hostile environment for labour (government), but there is an economic upturn, a moderate stance by business, and the supply of labour is more or less matching demand. In this case, the union might want to consider strengthening its capacity for bipartite social dialogue (through formal and informal contacts with business), rather than wasting efforts in tripartite negotiations or trying to influence the state to adopt more labour-friendly regulation.

3 This is an adapted version of the framework by David Weil: A Strategic Choice Framework for Union Decision Making (David Weil, 2007), http://www.scatsurvey.com/Weil_Article.pdf

Figure 4: An overview of external factors influencing union power for 4 countries, positioned against an adapted typology from Weil (2007)

	Factors increasing union power					Factors decreasing union power
Political / regulatory institutions	Sufficiently strong influence on political players				XX	Limited influence on political players
	Labour friendly regulation			XX		Hostile labour regulation
	Substantial policy space for labour				XX	Limited policy space for labour
Economic climate / product market	Growing profitability		XX			Declining profitability
	Economic upturn		XX			Economic downturn
	Limited competition	XX				High competition
	Formal economy	XX				Informal economy
Technology and work organisat./ labour supply & demand	Workers with rare skills or using complex technology			XX		Workers with substitutable skills
	Limited supply of labour for the sector		XX			Growing supply of labour for given sector
Other stakeholders	Labour-friendly stance by business		XX			Hostile stance by business
	Limited union fragmentation			XX		High union fragmentation
Social attitudes	High public support for union work		XX			Low public support for union work
	Tradition of mass mobilisation			XX		Difficult to do mass mobilisation

In a group, run through the figure above (see template in Annex 2) and discuss the degree in which a certain factor applies for the operating environment of the union. If the score is towards the left side, then that factor plays out in a positive way for the union. If it is scored towards the right, it is actually a disadvantage for the union.

Once you have gone through the figure, the main output of this step 2 can be summarised in terms of opportunities (factors increasing union power) and threats (factors decreasing union power). You might also want to add other opportunities and threats.

STEP 3
PRIORITY AREAS & ACTION PLAN
(3 HOURS)

This step is included to arrive at concrete ideas on capacity areas that need to be strengthened. First the priority areas are selected, then afterwards a plan is developed also taking into account ongoing dynamics in the organisation.

A) SELECTING PRIORITY AREAS

This step combines the findings from step 1 and step 2 to arrive at priority areas for capacity development. It might help to bring the outcomes of step 1 and step 2 together in a table such as in table 2, so that everybody has an overview of what has been produced up to now.

► With the whole team, run through the first two columns of table 2, and discuss what the implications are for the selection of priority areas for capacity development. Think in terms of what are 'critical capacity areas' to have in the current operating environment rather than what is 'nice to have'.

► Identify a short list of priority areas for capacity development (column 3 of table 3).
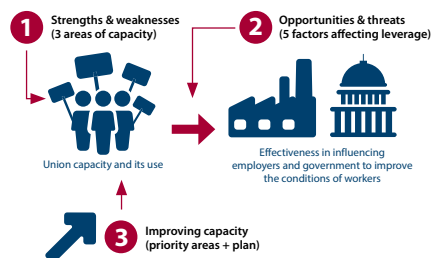
Facilitation tip

Be realistic in the number of priority areas you want to tackle with your capacity development plan. It is better to start modestly with 1 or 2 short term goals and 1 or 2 goals for the longer term.

Table 2: combining step 1 and step 2 to arrive at priority areas for capacity development

Step 1: Organisational capacity	+	Step 2: External opportunities & threats	►	Step 3: capacity development priorities
Strengths:		**Opportunities:**		……
……		……		……
Weaknesses:		**Threats:**		
……		……		

A simplified example of how the table can be completed is provided below. The example is describing the situation of a confederation in a fictional country, with certain types of strengths and weaknesses, and confronted with a range of challenges and opportunities.

Table 3: Example of TUOC exercise with confederation in country x

Step 1: Organisational capacity **+**	Step 2: External opportunities & threats **▶**	Step 3: capacity development priorities
Strengths: ✓ Recognised as main national social partner on the side of unions ✓ Strong in advocacy work ✓ Credibility as voice of civil society **Weaknesses:** ✓ Long term decline in membership ✓ Conflicts with some affiliates of the confederation ✓ Decreasing number of services for affiliates ✓ Financial sustainability: donor dependence, affiliates not paying	**Opportunities:** ✓ Ministry of labour receptive to union demands ✓ Progressive labour policies adopted at the regional level (SADC, or ASEAN, ..) **Threats:** ✓ Informal sector growing ✓ Hostile government: cabinet of prime minister, ministry of finance... ✓ Judiciary losing independence ✓ Hostile labour law reforms ✓ Competition with other donor-funded and government-funded confederations ✓ Donor fatigue: international community increasingly focused on security problems in other countries	**Scenario 1:** ✓ Further strengthening capacity to communicate alternative 'frames' (messages) for effective advocacy ✓ Build capacity to set-up alliances with relevant CSOs ✓ Advocate about progressive regional labour policies **Scenario 2:** ✓ Reverse the decline in membership by investing in organising informal sector workers ✓ Build new services to attract membership

B) DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

This step involves:
▶ Working with the output of the previous step (list with priority areas for capacity development: eg. the scenarios of column 3 in table 3).

▶ Analysing what is required at different levels to make change possible:
  • Professional development of staff and managers as individuals or in team.
  • Organisational development: changes in organisational procedures, practices, & culture.
  • Institutional development: required changes in the operating environment.

▶ Making sure that the organisational change strategies take into account both formal structures, policies and practices and informal norms and practices (see facilation tips).

▶ Pay attention that the ideas are aligned as much as possible with internal dynamics (both positive and negative). This sub-step involves the analysis of internal positive and negative developments which need to be considered. The idea of this step is that any capacity development strategy needs to build as much as possible on existing dynamics, interests and needs, both from the perspective of the membership and the union leadership. In most cases unions are already involved in various processes of organisational change, which can be strengthened rather than duplicated. At the same time, the union might have bad experiences with previous reforms or certain solutions might be sensitive for various reasons.

Facilitation tip

For types of organisational change which requires changing social and/or cultural norms (eg. gender, leadership style, ..) , make sure that you do not limit your strategies to tackling the formal and visible side of the issues. Making manuals and procedures, and doing training will most often not be enough in this case. More personalised forms of support at the individual level (such as coaching), or at the collective level (eg. action research), might be required.

These solutions will face substantial resistance. For this sub-step, you can take into account:

- Current and prospective interests of membership.
- Union leadership priorities and strategies.
- Organisational identity and culture.
- Internal challenges.

The output of this sub-step can take the form of the following table:

Internal positive and negative developments (with examples)	
Positive developments	**Negative developments**
· New provident fund being established · New female leadership with experience in gender mainstreaming… · …	· Internal conflict between national leadership and leadership of sector X · Trained shop stewards promoted to management level… · …

▶ Deciding on capacity development activities, and resources

Table 4: A matrix to plan activities and resources

Capacity development priorities[4]	Activities	Resources required
Capacity area 1	Analysing what is required at different levels to make change possible: · Professional development of staff and managers as individuals or in team · Organisational development: changes in organisational procedures, practices, & culture · Institutional development: required changes in the operating environment Making sure that the organisational change strategies take into account both formal structures, policies and practices and informal norms and practices	Human (expertise, time, ..) and financial
Capacity area 2		
….		

4 Identified in step 3 of Table 2

ANNEX 1:
TUOC SURVEY

Internal organisational capacities		Score (L/M/H)[5]	Arguments
Strategic planning & learning, leadership	Capacity to measure progress and do research	Low	
	Capacity to plan strategically	Medium	
	Capacity to learn as an organisation and adapt	High	
	Capacity of leadership to lead through democratic governance, instill a healthy organisational culture, to motivate and inspire	…..	
	Capacity to have clear direction (shared vision, employee involvement)		
Structures & procedures	Capacity to divide tasks & responsibilities (role clarity)		
	Capacity to implement functioning procedures for key organisational processes		
	Capacity to implement inclusive and democratic structures		
	Capacity to realise autonomous structures		
Capacities to relate		Score (L/M/H)[5]	Arguments
Resource mobilisation	Capacity to attract and retain capable human resources for the organisation		
	Capacity to mobilise external technical expertise where required		
	Capacity to mobilise the necessary financial resources to ensure financial sustainability		
	Capacity to collect and manage dues		
Communication & networking	Capacity to generate, communicate and share information *internally*		
	Capacity to generate, communicate and share information *externally*		
	Capacity to build networks & alliances with other unions, civil society orgs and other relevant stakeholders		
	Capacity to achieve internal legitimacy and support		
	Capacity to achieve external legitimacy		

5 Other scoring systems can be used, depending on the preference of the union: eg. scores from 1 to 5 (with 1:very low and 5= very strong); or only qualitative scores with some comments.

Capacities to influence and deliver		Score (L/M/H)	Arguments
Education & training	Capacity to design & implement capacity development activities (training, coaching, informal learning activities)		
	Capacity to network and cooperate with educational institutions		
	Capacity to track the progress of skills development initiatives		
Organising & mobilising	Capacity to organise & retain members		
	Capacity to build a movement		
	Capacity to mobilise & engage members		
	Capacity to do membership management		
Influencing gov, business & society	Capacity to influence governmental actors		
	Capacity to influence employers and their interest groups		
	Capacity to conduct effective dialogue with different stakeholders		
	Capacity to campaign different audiences		
	Capacity to lobby & advocate policy makers		
	Capacity to reach out through partnerships & alliances		
Collective bargaining	Capacity to do situational analysis of the labour market, and industry constraints and opportunities		
	Capacity to articulate and aggregate members' needs		
	Capacity to develop strategic bargaining proposals		
	Capacity to negotiate effectively in bipartite and tripartite social dialogue		
Service delivery, & legal support	Capacity to realise needs-based improvements for workers		
	Capacity to provide collective services		
	Capacity to provide legal advice & support		

ANNEX 2: TEMPLATE - AN OVERVIEW OF EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING UNION POWER[6]

	Factors increasing union power	← →	Factors decreasing union power
Political / regulatory institutions	Sufficiently strong influence on political players		Limited influence on political players
	Labour friendly regulation		Hostile labour regulation
	Substantial policy space for labour		Limited policy space for labour
Economic climate / product market	Growing profitability		Declining profitability
	Economic upturn		Economic downturn
	Limited competition		High competition
	Formal economy		Informal economy
Technology and work organisat./ labour supply & demand	Workers with rare skills or using complex technology		Workers with substitutable skills
	Limited supply of labour for the sector		Growing supply of labour for given sector
Other stakeholders	Labour-friendly stance by business		Hostile stance by business
	Limited union fragmentation		High union fragmentation
Social attitudes	High public support for union work		Low public support for union work
	Tradition of mass mobilisation		Difficult to do mass mobilisation

6 This framework was positioned against and adapted typology from David Weil (2007)

The Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) is an initiative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), bringing together affiliated trade union organisations, solidarity support organisations, regional ITUC organisations, the Global Union Federations (GUFs), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC). TUDCN's objective is to bring the trade union perspective into the international development policy debates and improve the coordination and effectiveness of trade union development cooperation activities.

TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION NETWORK (TUDCN)
RÉSEAU SYNDICAL DE COOPÉRATION AU DÉVELOPPEMENT (RSCD)
RED SINDICAL DE COOPERACIÓN AL DESARROLLO (RSCD)