

Capacity building and the environment

This section outlines a frame of reference for undertaking EIA training as part of a broader strategy of capacity building. It elaborates several perspectives that EIA trainers should bear in mind when using this manual. These include:

- ♦ *the concept and principles of capacity building for the environment;*
 - ♦ *the evolving demand for EIA training;*
 - ♦ *issues related to the availability and quality of training; and*
 - ♦ *precepts and measures which help to support and ensure the quality of EIA training.*
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In the context of capacity building, countries should be moving as quickly as possible towards self-reliance and domestic sufficiency in EIA practice and training. Capacity assessment provides a first step to identify the constraints and opportunities that apply to EIA training strategy. In many cases, there will be a range of previous activities and ongoing initiatives on which to build. The scope of EIA training requirements will depend, in part, upon the extent to which these other components are in place.

The purpose of EIA training is to develop the knowledge and skills that are needed by participants. Training the trainers has similar objectives and need not be a complex task. But it is particularly important that where out of country trainers are used, the opportunity is taken to transfer their expertise to local personnel. This section provides information that may assist in-country EIA trainers to assume this role directly.

The importance of capacity building

Capacity building is the long-term, voluntary process of increasing the ability of a country to identify and solve its own problems and risks, and to maximise its opportunities. It involves both the mobilisation of human, institutional and other resources and their subsequent strengthening and development. During and after Rio, capacity building for the environment became a major focus for international assistance and cooperation. This area encompasses a range of activities including EIA training, which cannot be seen in isolation from other initiatives to strengthen environmental stewardship or their overall relation to the economic and social fabric.

Capacity building in developing countries was a major theme of *Agenda 21*, the global plan of action to achieve sustainable development agreed at the Earth Summit.

Since Rio, international lending and aid agencies have begun to realign their strategies for capacity building and the environment. The emphasis is on partnership and collaboration with local actors, who are encouraged to take progressively greater responsibility and leadership for the long term, structural changes that are necessary to integrate environment into the mainstream of development.

The aims and principles of this new approach to capacity building and environment are described in Box 1. Within this framework, developing countries should aim to move as quickly as possible towards self-reliance in environment management supported by a well-targeted programme of technical assistance and training. This process should be open to all those who are involved in EIA and implemented through an appropriate range of tools and activities.

Box 1: Aims and principles of capacity building for the environment

The objectives are:

- to promote sound environmental considerations and criteria in the development process
- to strengthen institutional pluralism in civil society

Capacity building is:

- a multi-faceted, systematic process
- owned and is driven by the community in which it is based

This process should:

- integrate environment and development concerns

- take gender issues fully into account in all aspects and levels of development and implementation
- seek to develop appropriate approaches to include all disadvantaged groups in society
- use a variety of management techniques, analytical tools, incentives and organisational structures in order to achieve a given policy objective
- involve the affected and interested public in all aspects of the process
- enhance coordination among government agencies and with civil society

Source: adapted from OECD, 1997.

Many initiatives, which broadly conform to these principles, are underway to build the environmental capacity of developing countries (see Annex 1).

However, there are also evident limitations on what can be achieved in many developing countries. These include weak economic development, restricted finances and a lack of political commitment or social concern for the environment. If environmental capacity building is to be successful, a minimum level of enabling conditions on which to build must be in place already. Capacity assessment can help to select an appropriate strategy.

In many developing countries, capacity building will need to address a lack of public concern and support for the environment, which is an underlying cause of the depletion and deterioration of natural resources. Ways and means of promoting environmental awareness include:

- establishing environmental awards in the community and the workplace;
- organising conferences and meetings to address environmental issues;
- holding an environment 'day' or 'week' or event;
- encouraging public participation in projects and activities that adversely affect the environment;
- recognising the particular contribution of women, NGOs and local communities;
- developing corporate environmental policies and programmes; and
- promoting environmental stewardship and community-based resource management.

A comprehensive programme of capacity building for the environment can be based on five major components (see Box 2):

- training and education;
- organisations and their management;
- networking and linkages among organisations;
- public policy and institutional arrangements; and

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- the overall context or political culture in which these other aspects function.

The application of this framework for EIA capacity building is illustrated in Box 2.

Box 2: Major components of capacity development and their relationship to EIA training

- training and education – to develop the skills and competencies necessary for EIA good practice
- organisations and their management – to strengthen the structures, processes and systems for EIA implementation
- networks and linkages – to foster cooperation, information exchange and professional development among EIA stakeholders, both individuals and organisation within and outside the public sector
- policy and institutional framework – to improve EIA legislation, regulations and procedure and their coordination with other processes and tools of appraisal
- overall context – to position EIA with reference to the broader social and economic realities and the political culture of decision-making which conditions what can be achieved

Source: adapted from Clark, 1999.

The particular importance of EIA training

EIA training will be most effective when carried out within a strategic framework, consistent with the principles of capacity building described above. In this context, EIA is both a cornerstone of a comprehensive approach and a priority in situations where options may be limited. The particular importance and value of EIA training reflects many factors, including the mounting costs of environmental deterioration, the reliance on EIA as an instrument for addressing these issues and the wider benefits that can be gained from this type of training. Many developing countries, as well as international agencies, now recognise the need to enhance domestic EIA capacity.

EIA is relied on by international lending and assistance agencies and by many developing countries as a 'first line' of approach to address environmental concerns that lie at the heart of sustainable development. An emphasis on EIA training can pay immediate dividends in strengthening the tools and skills by which developing countries and countries in transition can improve the quality of their environment. In addition, there are wider benefits to be gained from EIA training. EIA is a microcosm of the institutional arrangements and human resources that are required to integrate the environment into development planning and decision-making (see Annex 2).

Increasing demand and emerging requirements for EIA training

Requests for EIA training and assistance from developing countries and countries have multiplied significantly since Rio. This period also coincides with the introduction and strengthening of EIA requirements and procedures for borrowing and assistance by international lending and aid agencies. Every indication is that the demand for EIA training will continue to expand and diversify, driven by new international requirements and evolving EIA practice. Trainers need to be aware of these.

Some current and emerging requirements for EIA training include the following:

- *raising awareness.* The widespread take up of EIA by developing and transitional countries means that decision makers, proponents and all participants need to understand their specific roles and responsibilities, how the EIA process operates and the inputs, outcomes and benefits that can be gained. In many countries, there is still considerable mistrust and insufficient appreciation of the purpose, procedure and potential of EIA.

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Changing this mindset, especially among decision-makers, may be the most challenging issue of all for EIA trainers.

- *instilling core competencies.* A lack of trained professionals is reported to be a major impediment to the effective implementation of EIA systems in developing countries, including Asia and other regions where legislation and procedures are relatively well established. Overcoming this barrier requires training in the technical, administrative and public participation aspects of EIA. The latter area is acknowledged as a particular weakness in many developing countries and training is needed to familiarise EIA practitioners with approaches and techniques that are relevant for application locally.
- *reinforcing accountabilities and strengthening institutional arrangements.* During the 1990s, many developing and transitional countries introduced new EIA legislation and procedures or reformed the existing framework to strengthen weaker elements. Many of them could benefit from further institution strengthening; for example, to the 'checks and balances' which ensure EIA application and compliance and the relationship of the EIA and decision-making processes. EIA training needs to be both current and forward looking, reinforcing accountabilities under existing arrangements and assisting in identifying aspects that require improvement.
- *acquiring tools and skills to improve EIA practice.* A systematic approach will involve training in the main stages and activities of the EIA process (as in this manual). This step-by-step coverage provides a basis for further, in-depth training on the procedure and the methodologies that can be used in impact analysis. In addition, EIA trainers may want to give particular attention to stages of the EIA process that are internationally recognised as important for quality control and assurance purposes (e.g. scoping, review of the EIA Report) and to strengthen aspects of local EIA practice that are known to be weak.
- *introducing and applying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).* The increasing recognition and adoption of SEA has brought demands by developing and transitional countries for training in this area. In SEA training, emphasis should be given to the differentiated approaches that are emerging, rather than focusing only on EIA-based procedure and methodology. Where appropriate, training should support proposals to introduce or implement a formal SEA procedure and/or build on SEA type elements and processes that are in place already in a particular country.
- *using advanced methods and other impact assessment tools.* In certain cases, EIA studies require the application of sophisticated methods of impact prediction, risk assessment and options evaluation and comparison. EIA training should address requirements related to the use of these methods by local experts and to ensuring other practitioners have

sufficient understanding of their advantages and limitations. Similar considerations apply to the use and application of social impact assessment (SIA), health risk assessment and other forms of impact assessment that are applied parallel to or as part of EIA.

- *promoting an integrated approach.* The priority given to an integrated approach to environment and development decision-making in Agenda 21 has significant implications for EIA training. For example, greater attention needs to be given to the decision-making process, options appraisal and the evaluation and trade-off of environmental, economic and social factors. Other areas of interest include the integrated policy and project appraisal (linking SEA/EIA, SIA and economic appraisal) and the integration of EIA with life cycle analysis, environmental auditing and environmental management systems, which address the environmental impacts of facilities, products and services.
- *meeting new challenges and requirements.* EIA training should be updated regularly to take account of new developments in international law and policy, as well as proposed and pending changes to national EIA and SEA processes. Examples include the additional obligations placed on the EIA procedure of Parties to the UNECE Conventions on EIA in a Transboundary Context and Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and to Justice in Environmental Matters; and extending the use of EIA to implement the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Convention on Climate Change for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or to address the environmental implications of trade policy and agreements (see Box 3).

Box 3: UNEP – UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development

A comprehensive approach to building capacity in new aspects of EIA is offered by the UNEP – UNCTAD initiative on trade, environment and development. It aims to strengthen the capacities of developing and transitional countries to assess and effectively address the environmental impacts of trade policies. A collaborative and integrated approach is being taken, based on five complementary activities:

- *thematic research* on major issues of trade-environment-development and on practical approaches to address them, bearing in mind the sustainable development priorities of countries
- *country studies* to enhance the individual capacities of governments to develop integrated trade, environment and development policies
- *training* to improve understanding and appreciation of the relationship and complementarities of trade, environment and development
- *policy dialogues* to facilitate awareness raising, consultation and exchange of perspectives among experts, practitioners and negotiators at the national, regional and international levels
- *networking and information exchange* to provide technical and operational support at the national and regional levels and to widely disseminate the

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results of the above activities (for example by publishing research, policy dialogue and country study reports, preparing training manuals and interactive courses and creation of a new CBTF website)

Source: Abaza (2000)

Availability and quality of EIA training activities

Many EIA training activities are known to be underway, worldwide and, in particular, in developing countries. Yet relatively little documentation is available on the amount and type of training being delivered. However, it is recognised that the quality of many EIA training courses is a cause for concern and that important steps are being taken to address and rectify this problem.

In terms of potential availability, over 200 entries are listed in the EIA Training Course Database established by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). However, many organisations and consultancies not listed in the database are known to provide various types of EIA training. Recently, both the number and type of EIA training activities in developing countries appear to have increased significantly, notably through the capacity building efforts of international lending and aid agencies. This trend is likely to continue.

Also important is the increase in the number of EIA centres, institutes and networks (see the contact list in Section A). In recent years, many such entities have been established in developed, transitional and developing countries. Their purpose varies but generally they are set up to undertake or facilitate EIA information, research, advisory and training services. Many of them are focal points of networks of information exchange and professional development among EIA practitioners and trainers.

Despite recent progress, demands for EIA training in developing and transitional countries outstrip the available supply of courses and programmes. In addition, as noted in Section A, there is often a mismatch between the types of EIA training provided by different lending, aid and educational institutions and the needs of the recipient country. Much EIA training, too, is reported to be *ad hoc*, over-reliant on outside experts and providing little practical experience. (The aspects to avoid are identified in Box 4.)

Box 4: Avoid the following in EIA training

EIA trainers should make sure they avoid commonly voiced concerns about the quality of EIA training courses:

- *supply-based* – often EIA training reflects what the donor organisation wants to do rather than being demand or needs driven
- *ad hoc* – in too many cases EIA training is a one-time, ‘hit or miss’ activity that lacks continuity and follow up
- *lack of clear objectives* – without which it is difficult to target and design EIA training to suit requirements and to evaluate what has been achieved;
- *‘one-course-fits-all’ approach* – the same EIA training course is delivered everywhere with only limited adjustment to account for local situations
- *unrelated to capacity development* – EIA training is not demonstrably part of, or coordinated with, a framework for building capacity

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Towards good practice in EIA training

The need to improve the availability and quality of EIA training is widely recognised. In this regard, there is an interest in identifying principles of good practice for EIA training and the key aids and measures which support such an approach. An initial framework for quality assurance in the conduct of EIA is outlined below. It focuses on four basic questions:

- *what are the basic requirements for good quality EIA training?*
- *what should EIA training aim to provide for its target audience?*
- *who should provide EIA training?*
- *how should this activity be designed and delivered?*

Basic requirements for good quality EIA training

Basic requirements to ensure good quality EIA training are outlined in Box 5. These principles were established at a meeting on EIA training organised by the European Commission at Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain in 1993 and have since gained wider acceptance. Many of them are implemented in the approach outlined in this manual (as indicated below).

The purpose of EIA training is to promote EIA good practice (see Section E). In order to do so, the following actions should be taken:

- clarify the objectives and content of courses (see Section C);
- define and target the groups to be trained (see Section C);
- use appropriate learning approaches and training methods (see Section D); and
- recruit a roster of suitable EIA trainers to deliver the course (see Section D).

Box 5: Principles of EIA training

Be clear about 'good EIA practice'

The purpose of EIA training is to promote good EIA practice. Therefore, guidance should be provided on what constitutes good EIA practice in order to clarify the objectives and desirable content of EIA training.

Target the right people for training

EIA training programmes and courses should focus on the needs of well-defined target groups and take, when necessary, sufficient account of their varied background.

Use appropriate teaching and learning approaches

These should be practical in nature, be learner-active and emphasise problems and conflict-solving situations, as well as technical skills (including the use of information technology).

Use appropriate training methods and aids

Effective use should be made of real-world case studies and simulation exercises, role playing situations, etc.

Use effective trainers

Trainers should possess practical EIA experience and sound pedagogical skills

Source: EIA Centre Leaflet 7, 1995.

The KITS approach to promote EIA good practice

EIA training should impart the **Knowledge, Information, Tools and Skills** (KITS) necessary for its target audience to understand and/or undertake EIA to internationally agreed or locally defined standards. The elements of the KITS approach are:

- appropriate *knowledge* of EIA good practice at the level necessary for those being trained to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively;
- up-to-date *information* on relevant developments and case experience in EIA law, procedure and methodology;
- best-practice *tools* and lessons that are applicable and work in the situation and setting in question; and
- ‘hands-on’ *skills* to apply these factors to local problem solving and decision-making.

ESP qualifications for EIA trainers (Experience, Sensitivity, Professionalism)

The issues of who should provide EIA training and how to assure their competency are sensitive ones. However, they must be addressed in the light of concerns about the quality of much EIA training. Preferably, those designing and delivering a major programme (for ‘training the trainers’) should meet basic ESP qualifications, namely:

- *experience* in EIA training and/or practice (and ideally both) in a given country or region;
- *sensitivity* to local needs and cultural considerations and their reflection in EIA trends and issues; and
- *professionalism* as demonstrated by a proven record of EIA training and practice in similar contexts and settings.

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Customised design and delivery of EIA training

The design and delivery of EIA training should be tailored to the needs and requirements of participants and form part of a defined strategy for capacity building in given country. Customised or 'bespoke' training should:

- focus on the immediate needs and long term requirements of specific target group(s);
- involve local experts in design and delivery of training courses;
- provide case materials examples that are applicable to the country in question; and
- establish provision for follow up and continuity, e.g. further training, information exchange, networking etc.

Using this package, EIA training can be undertaken at many different levels and over different periods of time as part of a coherent approach to capacity building. For example, the activities might range from graduate degree programmes in order to supply personnel who are competent in the disciplines that are applied as part of EIA studies to short-term, intensive training courses to improve awareness of the EIA process or to provide guidance to EIA practitioners on techniques and methods.

Measures to support and enhance EIA training

If the above framework for EIA good practice is to be implemented fully and effectively, a number of measures will need to be employed by EIA trainers or developed through the application of the approach outlined in this manual. These measures can be grouped into two broad categories:

- *strategic mechanisms, including alliances and partnerships with other key actors, to advance EIA capacity building in the country or region; and*
- *specific actions to support EIA training and facilitate follow up and continuity.*

Strategic mechanisms

A number of ways by which EIA capacity building can be taken forward have been identified in this section. Their application in support of EIA training will depend on a realistic assessment of the opportunities for donor collaboration and partnerships with NGOs and others to pool resources, create added value and gain efficiencies from proposed activities. Section C of the manual contains a package of tools for this purpose. Their use will help to identify the feasibility of a strategic approach as well as EIA-specific training needs and course requirements.

Specific measures and actions

Specific measures and actions that can be taken to support EIA training and to help ensure continuity include:

- improving and disseminating training aids;
- holding meetings of EIA trainers to exchange information and experience;
- developing a library of EIA reports and documentation;
- establishing a database of EIA professionals, trainers and experts;
- collecting examples of EIA good practice;
- producing an EIA newsletter;
- exchange programmes for EIA trainers; and
- undertaking applied research on EIA training, focusing on tools and aids to design, deliver and evaluate programmes.

When undertaking networking and information exchange, south-south links, as well as north-south links, can be cultivated. Some of the emerging models of good practice in inter-regional cooperation and partnership are given in Annex 1.

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References

The preparation of this section has drawn on the following references.

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Annex I: Some examples of EIA training and capacity building activities

The following examples are illustrative of the type of initiatives now underway through partnership and collaboration by multilateral and bilateral assistance agencies, NGOs and developing countries and institutions. The focus is on more comprehensive approaches in which EIA training forms part of a larger strategy of capacity building and on regional cooperation and self-help. Trainers can add or substitute other examples that are relevant to their regions.

EIA training in Tanzania

In 1995, the University of Dar es Salaam and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) began a comprehensive EIA training needs assessment for Tanzania. This pilot study reviewed:

- ♦ relevant legislation and institutional mandates;
- ♦ environmental impact statements;
- ♦ available expertise in disciplines relevant to EIA
- ♦ training materials and courses available in Tanzania.

Based on this assessment, the partner institutions identified priority targets for EIA training and the resources required to meet them. Subsequently, a package of EIA training materials was prepared for local delivery and use by Tanzanian trainers (see references under IIED in Annex I, Section A).

EIA capacity building in Sub-Saharan Africa

The World Conservation Union (IUCN East Africa Office), the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UNEP and the World Bank co-hosted a workshop of EIA stakeholders from most Sub-Saharan African countries (Nairobi, July 1998). The workshop resulted in the preparation of an African EIA Capacity Building Action Plan. The core African working group presented and discussed a draft at the IAIA Annual Meeting (Glasgow, June 1999). The Plan recommends a comprehensive region-wide programme of EIA training, networking and institution building. Its implementation is recognised as depending on two key preconditions: a strong commitment by the governments concerned; and a coordinated and transparent response by donor agencies and international NGOs. The draft plan is to be taken forward through the AMCEN meeting and a donors' roundtable.

The Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme (METAP)

Now in its tenth year, METAP is a partnership between the countries of the region, the European Commission, UNDP and the World Bank. In addition to project activities, the programme involves capacity building for the environment in each

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participating country (see www.METAP.org). The EIA initiative is designed to strengthen EIA systems in METAP countries through:

- ♦ *documentation and a data-base* of EIA legislation, procedures, guidelines and technical materials;
- ♦ *region-wide seminars* on aspects of EIA best practice, methods and techniques; and
- ♦ *specialised, on-the job training* in applications to air, water and industrial pollution, which are becoming of particular concern to Middle Eastern and North African countries in the region.

The Asian Regional Environment Assessment Programme (AREAP)

This programme covers the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is undertaken with the support of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and technical cooperation from the Netherlands EIA Commission. AREAP assists Asian countries in the use of EIA and auditing to implement the provisions of various international agreements on the environment. These include the UN conventions on Climate Change, Desertification, Biological Diversity and the trans-boundary movement of hazardous materials. Although the emphasis is on EIA training, AREAP also undertakes EIA studies, audits and conflict resolution of environmental issues, especially those of a trans-boundary nature, involving the handling of hazardous materials. A Newsletter keeps partners and others informed about activities and events (see <http://www.iucn.org>).

The Sofia Initiative on EIA and SEA

The Sofia Initiative on EIA and SEA in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) was established at the Ministerial Conference of the Environment for Europe process (Sofia, Bulgaria, 1995). It has focused on the development of EIA and SEA process and practice through regional cooperation and workshops to exchange information and experience among CEE professionals.

Capacity building is focused on:

- i) principles for the design of SEA systems in the CEE region;
- ii) strengthening public participation in order to implement the Aarhus Convention;
- iii) methodologies for SEA of regional, transport and rural development plans; and
- iv) training in SEA through the adaptation and use of the UNEP manual.

EIA capacity building contributes to the much larger *Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REPP)* for Balkan countries, especially those affected most by recent conflict. The aim of *REPP* is to strengthen what the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) calls environmental civil society as a precondition regional stability and functioning democracies. The aim of the project is to help

develop or upgrade national EIA systems in the Balkans to meet international standards.

It is being implemented within the Sofia initiative on EIA to develop:

- ♦ *EIA Guidelines* to assist in drafting and implementing EIA legislation (developed jointly with the European Commission, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Bank and WHO to reflect their requirements).
- ♦ *Regional EIA Training Manual* for national and regional training of future EIA/SEA trainers and practitioners (based on the EIA Guidelines and the UNEP EIA Training Manual).
- ♦ *EIA Training Programme* in five 'priority need' countries (Croatia, Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo) for public administrators, EIA consultants and NGO representatives who are likely to become involved in EIAs prepared under the Balkan Stability Pact development programme.
- ♦ *Regional Network of EIA Practitioners* implemented by periodic meetings of a Working Group of Senior EIA Officials and by the attendance of EIA experts from participating countries at other EIA/SEA workshops of the Sofia Initiative, IAIA regional meetings, etc.

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Annex 2: Some wider benefits of EIA training

There is an increasing need for EIA-trained practitioners and decision-makers in both government and the private sector. A better understanding of EIA, and the ability to apply it effectively, has a number of evident benefits. These include the following:

Legal and economic benefits of EIA training:

- provide expertise to meet increasing regulatory requirements;
- help to avoid costly and time consuming legal challenges;
- encourage a cooperative approach to problem solving; and
- promote cost savings through the use of resources and the reduction of environmental pollution.

Motivational benefits of EIA training:

- strengthen organisational links amongst managers and technical staff;
- instill environmental citizenship that can lead to raised morale and employee satisfaction;
- provide a positive image to stakeholders and the public; and
- encourage policy or corporate leadership.

Developing multi-sector expertise

EIA training can impart and facilitate:

- interactive and consultative skills, extending in certain cases to mediation and dispute resolution;
- dealing with the public, NGOs and community groups;
- linking technical information, interests and values and management considerations; and
- making realistic trade-offs and choices having regard to the circumstances and context of decision-making.

Developing interpersonal skills

EIA training can help to improve:

- presentation and management skills;
- practical problem solving under conditions of uncertainty; and
- agenda setting, understanding strategy and compromise through the mutual accommodation of interests.