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The inception phase of Training for Real in Uganda

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31st WEDC International Conference, Kampala, Uganda, 2005

MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS FROM WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

The inception phase of Training for Real in Uganda

B Reed, S Coates, V Male and A Rugumayo, Uganda

Delivering water and sanitation services requires the inputs of many resources; natural, social, political, financial, physical and human. The human resource needs to be of the correct quantity (sufficient staff) and the right quality (qualified and motivated). Capacity building aims to improve the quality of the human resource, but this can be piecemeal, uncoordinated and unsustainable. A sector wide scoping study was made into capacity building needs in Uganda, to see why established training providers were not supplying the industry with the correct quality of staff. The results of the study however highlighted the problems faced by employers in articulating their demands concerning adequately trained and motivated staff. This study formed the inception stage of the Training for Real Project (Uganda).

Introduction

The Training for Real (TfR) project is being carried out in a series of stages to ensure that it matches the demands and priorities in the Ugandan Water and Sanitation Sector.

This paper reviews the inception stage, which provided baseline information, set the scope, reviewed options and made recommendations for the implementation of the main phase of Training for Real. These recommendations were based on an analysis of the findings of the initial mapping and detailed stakeholder consultations carried out during the inception phase.

Ownership within the sector was key to the successful development of the concepts and practical applicability of TfR, so the design and implementation of the stages was approached in a practical and flexible manner. Decision-making about project milestones, priorities and outputs was made in conjunction with stakeholders.

The project and concepts

The Training for Real project is based on international research looking into improving the development of professionals in the water and sanitation sector by improving the dialogue between employers and training providers. The inception phase was designed to: "Undertake initial institutional mapping, secure buy-in and agree institutional, reporting and review mechanisms" with a view to implementing the main TfR activities, including direct stakeholder training and the laying of foundations that will allow for strategic HRD decision making in the water and sanitation sector.

Despite the name of the project, the inception phase was not just limited to "training", but looked beyond personal skills, knowledge and attitudes, to include how the individual relates to the organisation and the enabling environment of the organisation itself. The focus was not on short-term training needs but long-term development of staff.

A sector-wide approach

The water and sanitation sector in Uganda has recognised that a single institution does not have all the means to deliver its goals, but has to work with partners in government, the donor community, NGOs and the private sector if duplication or even contradictions are to be avoided. Each partner makes a different contribution to the sector's goals and each is essential – from the fundi repairing a protected spring to the Minister making policy decisions.

The sector-wide approach (SWAp) has been successful in some situations (such as allocating investments and determining annual focus areas) but has not yet been applied to getting the most from capacity development budgets and activities that underpin effective Human Resource Management (HRM) in the sector. Currently SWAp is not used to agree sector Human Resource Development (HRD) principles or strategic direction. However, it has been recognised that the quality of the sector's staff needs to improve if targets are to be met. It is clear that any improvements in the skills and knowledge of staff need to be targeted towards the sector's goals. Significant funds exist for capacity strengthening, however four things are immediately apparent:

1. There is an absence of a comprehensive sector-wide approach(es) for identifying the competencies that are now required of different cadres and stakeholders;
2. There is a lack of sector-wide principles and strategy for short and long-term human resource development planning and forecasting;
3. There is minimal networking between the teaching institutions and the water sector employing institutions

in as far as continuous professional development and education and training are concerned; and
4. Lessons from the past are not necessarily heeded.

How the consultation was managed

The inception phase was carried out using a variety of methods to gather information and engage with stakeholders (e.g. interviews, meetings, documentation, literature reviews, job analysis, discussions and field visits) as well as using other sources of information including direct observation and inspection of outputs.

Measuring indicators was an important way of validating and comparing information, but it was recognised that this subject does not readily lend itself to simple, concrete measurement (where even qualifications are at best crude indicators of an individual's ability to do a job). The study aimed to "triangulate" so information from one source (especially based on perceptions and viewpoints) was confirmed by other sources. If there is a difference in perceptions, then the reasons for the different viewpoints was an important factor.

The consultation stage was intended to be broad and inclusive first round of investigation, rather than in depth with a limited number of stakeholders and institutions.

Round table meetings

Although the consultation was planned to be broad, there were a number of important individuals who had a key role in capacity building from both the employers and provider institutions. Not only do they have HRD as a substantial remit in their own work (e.g. as training officers) they have a broad view of the sector and can speak for a wider group of stakeholders. So whilst the Programme Management Committee was the main management vehicle for this project, the advice and contributions from a more focused discussion amongst informed parties provided a good sounding board that tested both the findings and the recommendations of the project team.

Stakeholder mapping

The initial mapping of stakeholder interest, activity and institutional arrangements informed the recommendations for the direction of the TfR project. It gave a detailed overview of HRD, training and capacity building in the sector (rural, small town and urban) and at the same time informed stakeholders of the purpose of the project. Ensuring interest in the work would help in ensuring demand for any subsequent activities. The investigations divided stakeholders into the demand-side (employers) and the supply-side (the trainers and academics). The focus was on water supply and sanitation, (excreta disposal) rather than Water Resource Management or Water for Production unless this provided useful information.

Demand-side focus

The interest was in the capacity development of engineers and other staff, rather than community capacity building - the focus was on those people who are responsible for ensuring service delivery to consumers, for example: technical staff with diplomas, operators, environmental health inspectors, supervisors, district managers, customer service personnel and all levels of management.

Table 1. Institutions consulted

Demand side	
Directorate of Water Development	National Water and Sewerage Corporation
Ministry of Local Government	Ministry of Public Service
Ministry of Education and Sports	M&E Associates (Private sector consultants)
National Curriculum Development Centre	Pearl Engineering Company Ltd (private sector contractors)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Ondeo Services Uganda Limited (OSUL)
SNV	Busoga Trust
District Engineers	District Water Officers
Supply side	
Makerere University, Institute of Public Health	Faculty of Technology, Makerere University
Kyambogo University	Mbale School of Hygiene
St Joseph Technical Institute, Kisubi	NETWAS –U
Others	
Japan International Cooperation Agency	German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

Supply-side

The interest was in the main departments (as well as employer in-house training e.g. NWSC training centre) that deal with the education of engineers and technical staff, including environmental health inspectors. This looked at what is taught, to whom, at what level and who teaches it. The focus was on graduate, post graduate and professional development (short courses for the water supply and sanitation sector industry), but the whole project cycle was also included, to include construction staff and technicians.

Approach

The stakeholder mapping for demand and supply sides was conducted through a series of interviews with representatives of each stakeholder group, supported by relevant documentation. The aim was to see more than one person in

each stakeholder institution. This approach built a picture of capacity building policies, strategy, activity, budgets and physical and human resources. Information was requested for the last 3 years, what is presently happening and any plans for the next 5 years. The interviewer looked for facts, preferred HRD /training/ capacity building practices and norms, actual activities and the perceptions of those involved.

The interviews were semi structured and for the major stakeholders lasted between 2-3 hours (with follow up visits). Time for preparation, document sourcing, crosschecking, writing-up and liaison with WEDC staff was in addition to this. Each interview was recorded in the form of retained interview notes and a comprehensive write up, but not an analysis of the information at this stage although judgements were made as to whether the interviewer regarded the information as reliable.

In order to triangulate data, and in preparation for the full project, the interview was supported by as much written documentation as possible. It was important early on to try and establish fact from opinion. The interviewer attempted to find out what evidence existed for the effectiveness, or otherwise of the various activities, and looked for any evidence of measurable indicators, what these were, whether they were used and who set them.

Document reviews

The collected documentation was reviewed to see what is being written down (or not) concerning capacity building. These documents were not restricted to capacity building issues, but general operational and policy activities.

Other initiatives

HRM is a core management activity, and as such, was covered by "mainstream" management meetings and documentation. An example is the Joint Sector Review, which, although not focusing on capacity building, made reference to staffing issues. These need to be recognised and recorded as they often have more importance within the sector than specific capacity development activities.

Table 2. Case studies used

Case studies	
The National Council for Higher Education	Training for Decentralization; District Focused Internships
UWASNET Capacity Building Framework	Water Resources Department, DWD
IRC Resource Centre Development	GTZ Private Sector Support
The Uganda Institution of Professional Engineers Development of Training Guidelines and Standards	

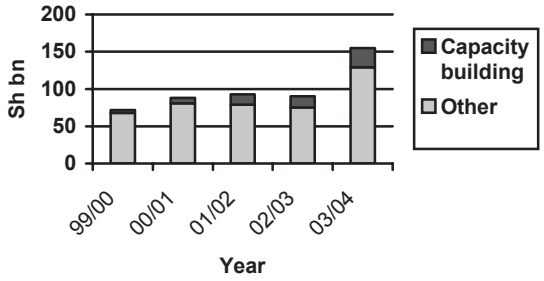


Figure 1. Water and sanitation investment trends

Other activities that fall outside a limited view of capacity building but still provide staff with the skills and knowledge required for their work (such as resource centres, professional institutions and guidance documents), were included as indicators of the state of professional development in the sector. These other initiatives were used as illustrative case studies in the project.

The information gathered and analysis

A broad consultation with many diverse stakeholders identified the following findings.

Measure performance

It was estimated that about 17% of the budget for FY '03/'04 was earmarked for capacity building (more than the amount on water for production and water resources information combined) yet goals for this sub-sector had not been set (see figure 1). The value of any investment in professional development was difficult to quantify and therefore justify.

Co-ordination and direction required

There was a clear lack of planning and strategic direction, with predominance of "fire-fighting" and supply led, short-term interventions. It takes over 10 years to develop some sector professionals (see figure 2) and, in a changing environment, continued availability of qualified, experienced staff is likely to be more of a barrier to success than financial or other material constraints. Educational organisations will not be able to provide support to the sector unless there is a clear direction. There were examples of good practice and

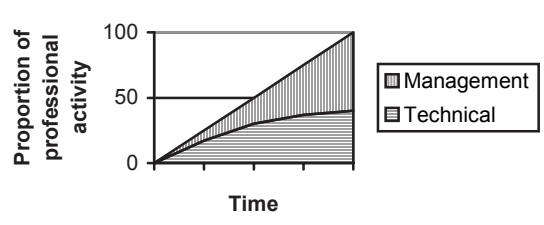


Figure 2. Changing skills over professional careers

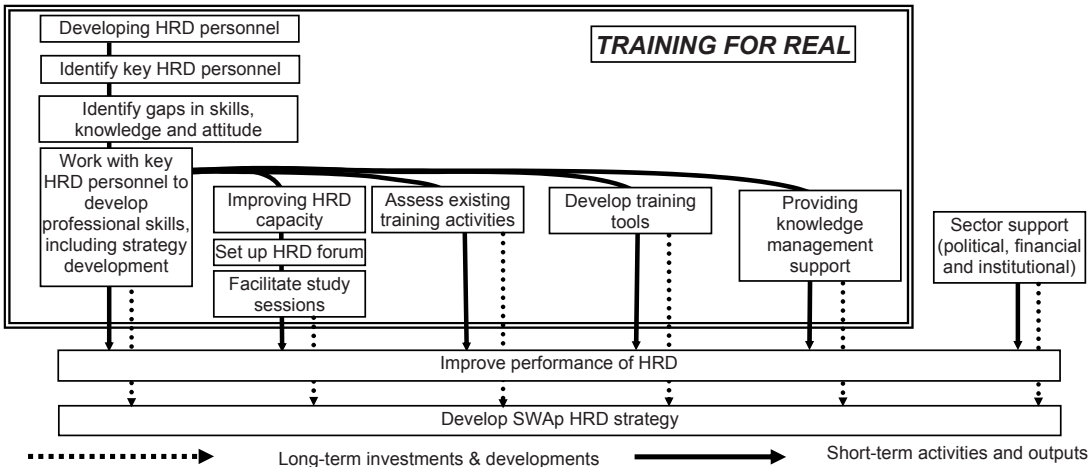


Figure 3. Changing skills over professional careers

innovative professional development, but this needs to be shared and expanded.

Capacity building is needed

There was a clear need for staff development. Specific issues included:

- Contract management skills across the whole sector (client, consultants and contractors)
- Awareness and understanding of socio-economic issues by technical staff (and vice versa)
- Management and team leadership skills
- Structured professional development to ensure a mix of theory and practical experience
- Strategic thinking and planning (for managers in all sectors)
- The need to develop generic skills across the sector (report writing and analytical skills as examples) which underpin other activities
- Customer awareness (particularly in the rural and peri-urban context)
- General capacity building for contractors.
- Human resource management skills

Recommendations for TfR

The original premise of TfR was that training suppliers were not effectively responding to the demands of the sector due to poor links between to the two. This study should however, that one of the problems was the sector employers were not able to voice their HRD needs effectively. This was especially true of longer-term, strategic needs. Three options for the main TfR project were identified:

1. Continue the TfR project as planned, meeting immediate demands to link supply and demand sides of capacity building, but not necessarily meeting longer-term objectives
2. Concentrate on developing a longer-term HRD strategy, but not producing any immediate, tangible outputs
3. Adapt the existing proposed TfR to reinforce the strategic component, combining a longer-term view with some immediate visible outputs and improvements.

It was recommended that the third option be used to balance longer-term strategy development with shorter-term activities and out-puts. The mechanism was to work with key sector HRD staff, to build up their skills and capacity so that they can, in turn, develop strategies and plans based on international good practice.

Note

More information on TfR can be found at:
http://wedc.lboro.ac.uk/tfr/

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