

# Executive Summary

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To achieve sustainable growth and poverty reduction, developing countries need strong institutional capacity. The World Bank devotes significant resources to building stronger institutions and organizations in client countries. It helps build capacity through a variety of means, including technical assistance, studies, equipment, and training. This evaluation focuses on the efficacy of one of the primary instruments for capacity building—training individuals so they are better able to contribute to their country’s development goals.

It was found that most Bank-financed training resulted in individual participant learning, but improved the capacity of client institutions and organizations to achieve development objectives only about half the time.<sup>1</sup> Where training did not succeed, it was because its design was flawed or insufficient attention was paid to the organizational and institutional context in which training took place. The Bank could significantly improve the impact of its training investments through (i) the development of training design guidance to enhance quality assurance and (ii) by making available resource staff with expertise in training design to Bank project managers.

Training provided by the World Bank Institute (WBI) was found to be insufficiently targeted to client needs, and inadequately embedded in broader capacity-building strategies, to substantially impact development capacity. If the WBI is expected (as stated in its mandate) to play a capacity-building role, its training processes need to be substantially reengineered.

**Over the past decade, the Bank has financed approximately \$720 million in training annually, over 90 percent through projects and the remainder through the WBI.** The importance of training to the achievement of development objectives goes well beyond these dollar terms, however.

Training is one of the primary means by which the Bank helps build the capacity of countries to reduce poverty. Moreover, it is often fundamental to the success of other investments. Without trained road maintenance crews, highways crumble. Without trained teachers, school buildings remain empty. Overall, in an estimated 60 percent of projects, training is either integral to the achievement of the goals of one or more components or supportive of all project components.

The Bank supports training in two ways. First, many investment projects include dedicated training components or training activities embedded within project components. Second, the Bank has a separate unit devoted to capacity building—the WBI, which aims to “build skills among groups of individuals involved in performing tasks, and also to strengthen the organizations in which they work, and the socio-political environment within which they operate.”

This evaluation examined the extent to which Bank-financed training contributed to capacity building. **Most Bank-financed training was found to result in individual participant learning, but only about half resulted in substantial changes to workplace behavior or enhanced development capacity.**

Project-based training was more successful than WBI training in this regard. Where learning did not result in changed workplace performance—and thus did not have an impact on development capacity—this could be attributed to one of three reasons: insufficient participant understanding of how to apply learning in the workplace, inadequate incentives or resources for implementation of learning, or inadequate targeting of learning to organizational needs.

For example, inadequate incentives for implementation of learning were found in the Administrative Capacity Building project reviewed in Burkina Faso. Government human-resource managers were trained in performance-evaluation techniques long before the decision was made to implement performance-based evaluation in government. ***Making the leap from individual learning to workplace performance outcomes and, subsequently, to development capacity impact requires both good training design and an appropriate organizational and institutional context in which to apply the learning from training.***

***Training success is predicated on adequate design.*** Good training design was found to involve three characteristics:

- Use of appropriate and professional pedagogic design, including opportunities to practice learned skills;
- Provision of follow-up support to trainees to help them implement knowledge and skills acquired; and
- Targeting of training content, anchored in diagnosis of institutional and/or organizational capacity gaps, formal assessment of participant training needs, and strategic participant selection.

***Much of the Bank-financed training reviewed was found to have design flaws that affected results.*** While over 90 percent of survey respondents found their training to be interesting and lecturers to be of high quality, half stated that course length was too short for the topics covered, and that the course did not devote significant time to practical exercises and projects. Adequate follow-

up support was provided to project trainees in half of the 29 training programs reviewed in field studies, and to WBI trainees in only two of the eight cases reviewed. Finally, of the nearly half of survey respondents who stated that training had less than a substantial impact on key functions of their work, over a third said it was because training lacked relevance to key work functions. This last issue is indicative of inadequate targeting of training content.

***Targeting of training content was found to be the most important design factor driving training success.*** For training to be well targeted, organizational and institutional capacity gaps need to be correctly diagnosed, specific training needs must be assessed, and participants should be selected in a strategic manner. Project-based training reviewed in field missions performed better than WBI training in all of these targeting processes. Projects were better targeted mainly because they have more resources to conduct capacity assessments and because they involve clients more fully in the design of interventions. The WBI does not generally mandate or finance in-depth diagnosis of capacity gaps or assessment of training needs and does not consistently consult with clients on training objectives and design.

***The organizational context for implementation of knowledge and skills learned was a second important determinant of successful capacity building through training.*** Training builds development capacity only when trainees have adequate resources and incentives to implement learning in the workplace. One-third of training participants surveyed stated that they lacked sufficient material resources to implement learning in the workplace. Some trainees also lacked incentives to implement learning. Insufficient incentives were found to be particularly problematic in two contexts. First, in decentralized training programs like in-service teacher training, the central government's commitment to training goals did not necessarily translate into strong commitment among regional government officials, training participants, or their managers. Second, in public sectors of countries with

weaker government capacity, low salary levels and lack of merit-based promotion systems reduced the incentives of staff to pursue their own professional development.

***Even where resources or incentives were initially lacking, training succeeded as long as there was strong client commitment to training goals and adequate support was given to addressing related workplace capacity gaps.*** For example, the WBI's partnership with the Bangladesh central bank resulted in the creation of a highly effective policy analysis unit. Successful outcomes could be attributed to the strong support of the governor of the central bank for the program, as well as the integration of training with technical assistance and the financing of equipment and salaries through a related World Bank–financed project.

Field studies revealed examples of successful World Bank–financed training activities provided by local training institutions, client governments, international consultants and training providers, as well as the WBI. ***In all cases, training succeeded when its design was good and the organizational and institutional capacity context was adequately addressed in conjunction with training.***

***The WBI's training procedures and practices do not sufficiently anchor training within comprehensive capacity-building strategies, and are thus not generally conducive to building sustainable capacity.*** The WBI lacks systemic mechanisms for in-depth diagnosis of organizational capacity gaps or formal needs assessment of training participants. It also lacks standardized procedures for meaningful direct consultation with clients on training needs and priorities. In most cases, the WBI does not directly provide follow-up support to facilitate workplace implementation of learning. It also does not systematically link its training programs to complementary capacity-building support provided by operations or other partners.

***The quality of project-financed training is uneven due to the lack of explicit design standards for all World Bank training activities, and lack of expert support for training activities embedded in projects.*** Bank-

financed projects provide an opportunity for effective use of training as part of an integrated capacity-building strategy. The project model can ensure that training is integrated into a comprehensive, multiyear relationship with the target organization, financing a range of complementary capacity-building interventions. However, the lack of expert support for training design and defined design standards makes it difficult for project teams to adequately supervise the design and implementation of training. This also prevents quality assurance mechanisms from being applied to training activities.

***The Bank does not adequately monitor or evaluate training results.*** Most project-based and WBI training reviewed in field studies did not include sufficient monitoring and evaluation of training. Project Implementation Completion Reports seldom report on more than the numbers of persons trained and include little or no information on training results in terms of the workplace behavior of participants and impact on development capacity, even where training is fundamental to the achievement of project goals. The WBI systematically monitors at the program level only the number of participant training days and participant satisfaction, neither of which provides information on the impact of training on capacity-building objectives. Hence, clients, project task teams, and WBI task managers generally lack sufficient information to detect training weaknesses and improve training performance where necessary.

## Recommendations

The Bank can enhance the vital contribution of training to client capacity building by ensuring that the training it supports

- Is linked to the Bank's support for development objectives in client countries,
- Is embedded within broader capacity-building strategies that provide complementary support for the implementation of learning, and
- Conforms with best practice in training design.

The following three recommendations are intended to lead to this outcome:

1. The Bank needs to develop guidance and quality criteria for the design and implementation of training, to enable quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation of all its training support. This guidance should be applied to all training financed by the Bank, including training that is directly provided by units such as the WBI. Design guidance should include
  - Diagnosis and training-needs assessment requirements for training initiation;
  - Participant selection criteria;
  - Standards for the use of practical exercises and other active-learning techniques within training;
  - Use of follow-up support; and
  - Provisions for monitoring and evaluation, including specification of performance-change objectives and key monitorable indicators.
2. The Bank could improve the quality and impact of training by making available to its Regional staff and borrowers, resource persons with technical expertise in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of training.
3. Management must clarify the WBI's mandate on provision of training with capacity-building

goals. If the WBI is to play a capacity-building role in client countries, its training processes should be substantially reengineered to ensure that training is likely to contribute to sustainable change. New WBI training processes should ensure that all training meets the following criteria:

- Is based on a comprehensive capacity assessment of the target organization(s)/institution(s)—done in cooperation with clients—identifying (i) clear and specific capacity-building objectives; (ii) the human, institutional, and organizational capacity support that is necessary in order to achieve these objectives; and (iii) measurable indicators of success;
- Is undertaken after work is done with operations and partners to identify and confirm, in advance, what resources for all capacity-building support are required to achieve the objectives, including, where needed, (i) multiyear training programs, (ii) follow-up technical assistance, and (iii) organizational and institutional support measures, such as policy support and financing of implementation of learning; and
- Is subject to external quality review and evaluation of results.