



## **Workshops for Leaders, and Leadership Workshops: Support for Meeting the Challenges of Transition**

*During the period from 2001 to 2004, the World Bank supported leadership capacity building initiatives in six countries – each in a different socio-political situation, each facing a distinct set of developmental or transitional challenges. This Dissemination Note summarizes the range of activities briefly, and draws upon these experiences to identify enabling factors and articulate critical choices for consideration when designing leadership interventions.*

**Why Leadership is Important:** In six countries over the past three years, the World Bank has supported leadership capacity building initiatives -- workshops specifically designed for national leaders, or workshops in leadership skills.

These workshops sought to provide skills, experience, and technical information to support leaders in partner governments in mobilizing expertise, resources, and political will in service of critical national goals. Together, they demonstrate three common governance circumstances that illustrate “why leadership matters”:

- countries with new governments moving from resistance to peace-time governance but lacking leadership experience, *where the workshops helped create a shared vision and approach to the technical and adaptive challenges of governance in transition,*
- countries characterized by a lack of trust, either intra or inter-national, *where the workshop provided opportunity and skills to improve communication and develop collaborative strategies,* and
- countries with centralized decision-making processes where the Bank had previously reached out to technocrats who could not take decisions without buy-in from very senior leaders or heads-of-state, *where the workshops helped create productive lines for information-sharing.*

As the examples from these six countries will show, there is no perfect recipe for a successful resolution of these challenging situations. Because the leadership context itself may be “part of the problem”, a successful workshop will identify the most likely entry point and deploy a customized set of tools from a spectrum that includes content-driven technical inputs, experiential sessions, and transformational processes. Although the specific agendas, tools, and techniques have differed, the workshops to date share a common goal – supporting leadership in fragile transitions (be they emerging champions of change or post-conflict transitional leaders) as they work to:

- bring a strategic approach to managing agendas for reconstruction, reform, and development
- break internal deadlock on reform issues
- take strategic actions to realign or re-engage

In the range of examples reviewed here, country teams have worked with specialists, facilitators, and trainers to plan and deliver workshops that have involved combinations of tools and techniques from transformational learning, experiential learning, and

technical training – participants leverage learning from processes they participate in, experiences and “simulations” they undertake, or technical content they absorb. Selecting the best mix of these different tools and techniques is essential to crafting a workshop agenda and structure – along with identifying participants, building enthusiasm and “buy-in”, and choosing the best timing and sequencing for the planned interventions.

### **Country Experiences.**

***Timor-Leste: Transforming a Resistance Movement to Meet the Challenge of Transition.*** From 2001 to 2003, a series of workshops and technical assistance activities were undertaken in Timor-Leste through the Capacity Building Assistance and Development (CAD) project, financed by a grant approved and managed by the Post Conflict Fund (PCF). The leadership and organizational management component of the CAD provided training and skills-building for governance in transition, economic leadership, and nation-building, seeking to build social capital among a wide range of Timorese leaders, from all levels of society. The component activities were specifically planned and delivered to support the emerging institutions of economic governance through three transition phases: a peaceful transition through the election of a Timorese constituent assembly (August 2001), formation of an independent government (June 2002), and the first 100 days of the government’s administration (December 2002).

***Burundi: Building Cohesion and Recreating Trust.*** The Burundi Leadership Training Program, also financed by the PCF, was designed to strengthen the ability of key leaders to work collaboratively and develop a common vision for post-war economic reconstruction. From mid-2002 to early 2004, BLTP worked with three workshop groups, each with 30-35 leader-participants. The initial 5-6 day retreat included “core” training that was intensely experiential and involved role-play, perception exercises, and simulations. Shorter follow-on training workshops were held periodically. All three workshop groups were linked together in a nested structure events, to facilitate a cohesive network involving all of the participating leaders and to build diverse, robust relationships that can enable societal reconstruction.

**Madagascar: Creating a Governance Culture of Learning and Dynamic Change.** In late 2002, Madagascar resolved an extended political crisis; among the challenges confronting the new administration was instilling a sense of team-work to deliver on commitments to “break with the past”. Priorities are combating corruption and improving governance, and moving towards closer integration of Madagascar with the world through exchanges of ideas and global best practices. Beginning in June 2003, the World Bank has supported two related initiatives: a series of Cabinet-level Governmental Learning Retreats, with parallel Learning Events for parliamentarians, civil society, academics, and media; and a Government Leadership Training Program, including workshops and coaching on strategic management, personal development, and transformational leadership skills. A particular focus was placed on “coaching” support for designated leaders involved in delivering key transition results.

**Papua New Guinea: Breaking Deadlock and Undertaking Difficult Conversations.** In mid-2003, the World Bank Country Manager for Papua New Guinea, inspired by the transformative experiences provided by professional facilitation during the Bank’s New Managers’ Leadership Program, proposed that the Bank provide facilitation expertise for a similar intervention in service of the national leadership of Papua New Guinea. At the time, the relationship between the PNG leadership and the international donor community was in a virtual deadlock; challenges seemed overwhelming to all parties, relationships were functioning at a very low level, and results were elusive. Based on a process of assessment and discussion, the facilitator designed a series of nested events: a workshop with key members of the PNG government, a session with representatives of donor agencies, and then a joint session. Participants diagnosed “their problem” and then practiced skills needed to undertake difficult discussions and manage the consequences.

**Tajikistan: Making Strategic Choices to Engage with Donors.** In late 2003, the World Bank’s LICUS group asked the World Bank Institute (WBI) to launch a peer-to-peer strategic leadership program for senior Government leaders in Tajikistan. As the country leaves behind a post-conflict phase and begins to address a more traditional reform and transition agenda, leaders were spending long work days, sometimes in weak organizations, on large numbers of small tasks, leaving little time for setting strategic priorities for dealing with donors. Technical training on the content (the “what”) of economic reforms was perceived as widely available, but few opportunities existed for Tajiki leaders to learn from other practitioners “how” to actually implement reforms. A group of senior practitioners from different countries were identified and asked to prepare case studies on leadership aspects during their time in power. In May 2004, ministers, deputy ministers and representatives from key institutions met with peers from Russia, Turkey and Latvia for a three-day seminar.

**Central African Republic: Deepening Dialogue.** In November 2004, a joint LICUS-WBI team, working collaboratively with the Government of the CAR and the UNDP, presented a Leadership Seminar in Bangui. The event sought to mobilize stakeholders and existing resources around collective commitment to the “transition results matrix”; identify and present lessons learned by leaders who have or are effectively managing transitions and engage them in priority-setting and problem-solving with the workshop participants; and expose and build consensus around prioritized actions to mitigate behaviors which could threaten the election process planned for early 2005. The workshop used a customized combination of peer learning, “capacity for results” focus, and team building. This was the first time in 15 years that representatives of political parties, labor unions, journalists, civil society, and government had sat together and worked through operational challenges facing the country.

### **Critical Choices: Building the Best Mix for the Country-Specific Context**

There is no one “correct” model for design and delivery of a workshop, nor is an agenda that worked well in one context necessarily the best choice in another setting. Identify the most promising entry point – what style and approach, what topics and content, might participant-leaders be most receptive to? Identify and articulate their perceptions of problems, and then present options appropriate for their culture and situation. If “leadership” is defined as “being strategic with donors”, begin there as an entry point. Successful delivery of leadership interventions requires:

- understanding the country-specific leadership context, including political dynamics, cultural issues of hierarchy and style, and historical tensions, will help make **choices about tools, content, and delivery approach**;
- meticulous work in supporting those individuals who are “champions” of the potential leadership intervention, while also broadening the circle of support for proposed activities, will help make **decisions about participants**;
- a medium-term vision of how to build on results of the first intervention, and mobilize resources appropriately, will help make **choices about timing, sequencing, and structure**.
- a nuanced effort to build rapport with a wide range of stakeholders and observers in ways that enhance credibility and position the organizers/facilitators as “honest brokers”, will help with decisions on both **participants and timing, sequencing, and structure**.

**Participants.** Determining the “right group” requires a clear articulation of purpose, and a detailed analysis of the country-specific situation, validated through discussions with potential participants. Participants may come from government only, or include civil society, academia, Parliament and political parties, military, and the private sector. Workshops could engage mixed groups, or opt for parallel homogenous events. **Bringing in outliers** or political “spoilers” could help discover unseen common ground, while **building solidarity** amongst reformers would be served better by deeper work with a smaller group of participants. In Timor-Leste, the first workshop targeted the most receptive leaders; the resultant “buzz” motivated more reluctant individuals for the second workshop. Inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals in a “leadership” event can appeal to (or insult) egos; using a consultative process to solicit opinions about “who leaders are” builds acceptance of the resulting list, even if it is restricted. **Identifying people as leaders** by their contribution to the nation and their role in its future, but **inviting them as individuals**, reduces hierarchical barriers.

**Timing, Sequencing, and Structure.** Single events have proven to have much less durable impact than workshops designed with follow-up activities; if a single event “trial balloon” is the only option at the outset, careful attention to the outcomes can help in the design and resourcing of future events. Workshops can be timed to precede key events (elections, as in Timor-Leste and CAR), to support strategic initiatives or phases (a new administration, in Madagascar), or as a catalyst to resolve a crisis (Papua New Guinea). A multi-day event in a “retreat” setting, with follow-on events to refresh and renew commitments, is most likely to produce durable changes in behavior, while shorter more formal events may work for technical seminars.

**Tools, Content, and Delivery Approach.** The workshops summarized in Table 1 demonstrate that a range of content can be delivered with a variety of tools and approaches. The value, and innovation, has been found not in the “what” as much as in the “how”:

Transformational (process-driven): intensive sessions using motivational and dynamic techniques to build capacity in **change management** (leadership training, coaching support, team-building work) including skills in managing tensions, achieving breakthroughs, involving

stakeholders, building and holding coalitions; and **strengthening motivation and ethos of public service**, leveraging personal behavioral transformation and developing an institutional commitment (in unit, ministry, team) to an agenda. In Papua New Guinea, the application of specific transformational tools to a specific challenge helped loosen a destructive communication blockage, while in Madagascar and Timor-Leste a “coaching” approach to transformational skills helped leaders develop new patterns for governing.

Experiential (experience-driven): sessions may range in content delivery and skills focus, but all require participants’ active involvement during the session itself (as distinct from passive listening or reading):

- **peer-to-peer** – first-hand accounts, strategic stock-taking; humble case studies of success or failure, not prescriptive “best practice” lectures
- **simulations** – exercises and role-plays that mimic or proxy for high-risk real-life situations
- **personal skills and growth tools** – practice in communication skills, time management, public speaking; techniques to maintain focus on results

In Burundi, facilitators created a safe environment that allowed participants to experiment with normally risky choices and explore the consequences; the lessons were directly applicable to the ethnic and political tensions embedded in their fragile peace process, and the common experience brought together former opponents in a uniquely effective way.

Technical / Substantive (content-driven): workshops for leaders in which the agenda is heavily weighted with technical content must be made distinctive from “normal” technical seminars. Pay careful attention to how you add value -- what makes this a “leadership workshop”? In Tajikistan and CAR, using an experiential peer-to-peer format with abundant unstructured “face-time” between visitor-leaders and participant-leaders gave an authenticity to the technical content. Credibility came not from high-profile technocrats or technical arguments, but from **grounding the technical substance in a political and historical reality**, in an experiential context. Follow-on workshops in Tajikistan are addressing substantive topics previously considered “untouchable”, such as options for running the budget and strategies to develop the private sector.

**Conclusion.** Successful interventions are **highly customized**, based on a clear understanding of the country context, whether post-conflict or transitional re-engagement. The design of effective leadership initiatives depends on **pragmatic opportunism** and the ability to engage with leaders to identify fertile ground and a strategic entry point. Sponsors and organizers must be willing to commit to an agenda that does not depend exclusively on a technocratic presentation, but rather acknowledges the country-specific context and explicitly incorporates **political and historical aspects**.

*This Dissemination Note was issued jointly by the LICUS unit in OPCS and the Public Sector Governance unit in PREM; summary notes on individual workshops are also available. For further information, please contact Barbry Keller in LICUS (ext 85610) or Stephen Ndegwa in PREM (ext 31510).*

**Table 1: Summary of Leadership Initiatives and Workshops for Leaders, 2001-2004**

	Participant Mix						Timing, Sequencing, and Structure	Tools, Content, and Delivery Approach		
	Government	Parliament / Political Parties	Civil Society	Private Sector	Military / Security	Donor Agencies		Transformational	Experiential	Technical
<b>Timor-Leste</b> – Governance in Transition Workshops, 2001 – Communication Workshops – Leadership Coaching, December 2002 – Youth LED Retreats 2004	X	X	X	X	X		– timed to key transition phases – early “buzz” generated interest; early consultations generated buy-in – full range of leaders involved – trust and cohesion allowed later coaching interventions – technical inputs <u>followed</u> transformational inputs	☐	☐	☐
<b>Burundi</b> – Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) – Military Academy training workshops	X	X	X	X	X		– sequence of multiple, linked and “nested” workshops designed in advance – early broad consultation – involved full range of actors		☐	
<b>Madagascar</b> – Governmental Learning Retreats, June 03 – Jan 04 – Parallel Learning Events – Leadership Training 2004 – The Transformation Project	X		X	X			– parallel initiatives linked at key junctures – technical inputs grounded in “peer to peer” credibility – transformational and experiential inputs target subset of participants from larger technical Retreats	☐	☐	☐
<b>Tajikistan</b> – Strategic Leadership Workshop, 2004 – Follow-on Workshops, October 2004	X			X			– structured to respond to leaders’ definition of “problem” – peer-to-peer experiential learning more acceptable than technical lectures – transformational interventions too risky at first; moderate team-building may be possible		☐	☐
<b>Papua New Guinea</b> – Leadership Workshops, 2004	X					X	– fertile ground was a shared frustration with dysfunction – nested workshops with sub-groups, then joined together	☐		
<b>Central African Republic</b> – Leadership Seminar, 2004	X	X	X	X	X		– peer-to-peer experiential learning from regional leaders – technical work anchored by Transition Results Matrix		☐	☐