Berlin Statement on International Development Training

Final Declaration of the High Level Retreat on the Effectiveness of International Development Training, Berlin, 4.-5. June 2008

Purpose

While development agencies generally meet under the auspices of the networks of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, there is no joint agenda on International Development Training. Therefore, a group of development training institutes (DTIs)[1] met for a High Level Retreat on the Effectiveness of International Development Training, in Berlin on 4th-5th of June 2008 to develop this agenda.

Background

All development actors have a responsibility to promote the objectives of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the development training institutions sought ways to promote the pillars of that declaration. In particular they discussed ways to increase country ownership in the provision of training, to align training provided by DTIs with country needs and systems, to work towards common standards, to facilitate learning about what works in different contexts, and to collaborate in joint program development where feasible.

Because several recent evaluation studies have brought specific areas of training practice into question, it was opportune for the DTIs to review common issues of Operational Effectiveness. Retreat participants engaged with the issues raised by these critiques, exchanged views and good practices, and identified specific issues for follow-up in the coming months.

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[1] The term DTI is meant to include specialized training institutes as well as units of bi- and multilateral development agencies and regional development banks that are implementing development training.

Key Messages

The retreat led to several key messages with respect to the Operational Effectiveness of DTIs and to the Aid Effectiveness of training. These messages were formulated with the explicit recognition of the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and are to be submitted for the consideration of the Accra High-Level Forum in September 2008.

1. Effectiveness - Training in the context of capacity development

Training addresses not only learning at the individual level, but must be integrated into a wider capacity development effort to include capacity gaps at the organizational and institutional levels.

Effectiveness of training requires matching training to the capacity needs identified in specific contexts and specifying the type of learning outcomes to be achieved, such as enhanced skills, raised awareness or improved consensus. It equally requires that trained staff can be retained and institutions are thus effectively strengthened. The risk of a brain drain of trained staff needs to be taken into regard.

DTIs are well placed to implement training and other forms of capacity development. Whether training or other forms of capacity development are the most effective means to address capacity gaps must be determined beforehand in the capacity needs assessment.

2. Guidelines for the development of training programs

DTIs note the widespread need for general directions on training cycle management. This need should be addressed through tools that provide orientation and inspiration, rather than formal rules and standards.

Developing such tools could start with an exchange of successful practices among DTIs. In addition, the issues of learning methods and modes, including the use of technology, require further analytical work and discussion, including research or disseminating research results.

In doing so, the definition of training should be expanded beyond the classroom to include means such as eLearning, mentoring, coaching, and secondments, peer exchanges and experience-based learning methods.

3. Metrics - Indicators for and evaluation of training

The metrics of training programs is an area for urgent research, with a particular focus on the impact of training on organizations, policies and other institutional structures and systems, based on clearly formulated and articulated objectives and change processes (see Key Message 1). Monitoring and evaluation are to be seen as continuous activities.

More work needs to be done into distilling lessons from training evaluations such as the recent World Bank IEG evaluation of training, seeking to determine what works

best in what context. Participating DTIs noted that mechanisms should be found for more information-sharing on methodologies and results of training evaluations.

While metrics should be project- or program-specific, they also need to be formulated on the basis of general guidelines that partner governments and donors agree on (see Key Message 4).

4. Country Ownership - Strengthening training institutions

DTIs should re-invigorate efforts to strengthen existing national training institutes; promote peer learning among national and regional training institutes and provide a comparative perspective.

Promising approaches are: Giving support for national champions and for centers of excellence, and linking them to DTIs; training of trainers; making increasing use of national training experts in DTIs' own programs; and providing salary and budget support to improve staff retention rates. Most training materials must be adapted for local use and rooted in the country context - translating them is often not sufficient.

Closing capacity gaps at the organizational and institutional levels requires getting a buy-in from the trainees' institutions. In doing so, ownership should not be limited to the public sector and the government, but include other important actors, most notably civil society and the private sector.

5. Alignment - Partner country needs assessments

DTIs need to align to partner countries' needs assessment systems. It is important that partner institutions themselves undertake the capacity needs assessment; if necessary DTIs should first strengthen the partner capacity to do so.

While the details of the assessments will reflect the diversity of partner institutions, all partners will need to meet certain criteria: to have a clear development strategy; to determine the level at which the assessment be done (micro, meso, or macro); to identify local institutions and stakeholders that would participate in the assessment; to link assessments to results and outcomes; and (most importantly) to set clear priorities among the needs identified. The retreat also discussed how DTIs could best support the assessment process.

6. Harmonization - International division of labor

DTIs generally agree on the need to improve harmonization of their work to reduce duplication and burdens on partners, and to build synergies among themselves. DTIs are open to rely on common principles of complementarity, comparative advantage, proximity to client, additionality, and effective coordination. Harmonization can thus account for DTIs having different mandates and are operating in different contexts.

Getting to know each other better among DTIs is an important starting point for harmonization. A first step would be to take stock of the major institutions providing training as part of official development cooperation, the type and scale of their operations, and competencies.

7. Collaboration - Joint content development, sharing rosters, didactical approaches & training formats

International Development Training materials developed with public funds should be disseminated as widely as possible. Sharing existing materials or expert rosters could be an effective first step for collaboration, being less time consuming and resource intensive than joint development.

Sharing of training programs and of capacity development resources should first be piloted to identify, in a practical setting, any issues on intellectual property rights, privacy, quality control, and business model. In this context, alternative models and licensing options could be explored. Progress on joint development would best be achieved through specific collaborative initiatives that generate experiences and help to identify approaches that can be realized effectively.

Making their own materials available to the public or starting specific joint content development initiatives can be done by DTIs individually. Addressing collective issues will require larger DTIs to take over some of the investments and development work (e.g. setting up and managing a website for sharing materials).

Follow-Up for Implementation

Recognizing the importance of maintaining momentum on the key issues, several of which had emerged separately in different roundtables, the Retreat welcomed the offers of participants to share ideas on the follow up items with the following working titles:

(A)   How-To Guide on Training Programs

Participating DTIs intend to take up the need for general directions on training cycle management and jointly work on the development of a "how-to guide"[2] on training programs, in response to key messages from sections 1 and 2 of the Berlin Statement. There are existing good practices and these need to be shared and adopted.

The nature and scope and the most appropriate term for the product will be decided by the collaborating partners. Potential issues that were discussed at the retreat and could be included are: (i) How to match the capacity building measure - training or other forms - to the capacity needs identified in specific contexts? (ii) How to distinguish training that is critical to a change process from the skills building that is required for the normal and efficient running of an organization? (iii) How to capture training cycle management in a concise set of general guidelines? (iv) How to develop toolkits for training cycle management?

InWEnt offered to be the initial convening champion for this follow up, to collect ideas and suggestions and to coordinate next steps. Interested DTIs may contact Günther Taube (guenther.taube@inwent.org).

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[2] The terms "Guidelines," "Orientation Map," and "How-To Guide" had all been used.

(B) Certification Standards and Programs

Further work on certification standards and programs was proposed by several participants. A focal point of contact would be needed to initially convene interested partners and collaborate in response to key messages from sections 4 and 5 of the Berlin Statement.

(C) Sharing Capacity Development Resources

The first step in response to key messages from section 7 of the Berlin Statement for sharing training materials or expert rosters will require individual efforts of DTIs to make their own materials as widely available as possible. Participating DTIs expressed their interest to follow-up on this in a future forum.

(D) Metrics

Distilling lessons from training evaluations and promoting metrics that go beyond effects on individuals were identified as important follow-up steps to key messages in section 3 of the Berlin Statement. WBI offered to collaborate with participant organizations on this and Samuel Otoo (sotoo@worldbank.org) would initially convene interested parties.

(E) Mapping of Development Training Institutions

Getting to know each other better among DTIs was identified as an important step towards harmonization responding to relevant key messages in section 6 of the Berlin Statement. Undertaking a mapping of Development Training Institutions would require someone to take the lead as well as the collaboration of all involved. Participant DTIs interested in exploring these issues are invited to contact others with a proposal. The more far-reaching consideration to develop a database or a network of DTIs could be taken up in a follow-up meeting.