

KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND
LOCAL ELECTED LEADERSHIP TRAINING

REPORT ON PARTIAL COMPLETION OF TASK B:

TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

Based on workshops conducted
during
7-9 and 14-16 July 1995

in

Ezulwini and Manzini, Swaziland

Sponsored

by

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
Kingdom of Swaziland

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United States Agency for International Development

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International City/County Management Association

This report was compiled and written

by

Fred Fisher, Workshop Director and Consultant to the Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The initial two workshops for local elected officials from the eight target urban governments of Swaziland were conducted as planned. A total of 55 councillors and board members attended the two workshops (out of a potential 69). With few exceptions, due to prior commitments, the participants attended all sessions and demonstrated a high level of personal commitment to the learning process.

In the final evaluation, participants rated the training as very relevant to their responsibilities as elected officials and very helpful in assisting them in conducting their roles and responsibilities as councillors and board members. (On both inquiries, the participants rated these factors 6.3 and 6.4 out of a maximum of 7.0.)

They were somewhat less positive about the relevance of the training to the needs and practices of council as a body (6.1 and 5.8 on a 7 point scale). As for the topics they found useful, their responses were diverse and positive.

The quality of the training design, the presentation of concepts and ideas in support of the design, and the overall competence and conduct of the trainers in performing their responsibilities were all given a cumulative rating above six (out of a possible seven) by the participants in both workshops.

Forty seven of the 52 participants who completed the final evaluation said the instructor's inputs and exercises were **very appropriate** in helping them improve their knowledge and skills as a councillor. Only two rated them as **somewhat appropriate** and no one rated them as **not at all appropriate**.

Regarding the length of the workshops no one said they were too long but there was no consensus about whether they were **the right length** or **too short**. Twenty five said they were too short and 24 said about the right length. In their individual comments to other questions, many said they would like to see longer and more frequent workshops scheduled to meet their learning needs.

In terms of the participant's expectations going into the workshops, many said they expected the course to be much more theoretical in its approach and less practical, and more passive regarding their own involvement as learners.

The workshops revealed a high commitment to training and to their individual responsibilities as elected officials and community leaders. Nevertheless, they often expressed frustration about the differences in attitudes and perceptions that exist among key stakeholder groups about the newly defined and legislated roles and responsibilities of the councils and boards as local leaders. They gave examples of not being consulted about central government activities taking place within their communities (that have local government consequences) and local staff members who

are often unresponsive to their requests for information and cooperation. These differences in perceptions about the councillor and board roles, if not taken seriously, could further the feeling of mistrust that is beginning to develop between these elected bodies and central government agencies, and their own council and board staff organizations.

Future training opportunities, under this program, should generally follow the recommendations set forth in the needs assessment. These included a series of one day consultations with individual councils and boards, each involving the external consultant and one trainer from SIMPA, and residential workshops (similar to these initial workshops) focusing on the budget and financial responsibilities of councils.

Regarding the first recommendation, the consultations would be based on the needs of the individual local governments and could include both elected and appointed officials. For example, the context of the day-s events could be a workshop involving the council and staff designed to explore their working relationships and how to improve them. They would be held on site to minimize costs and facilitate participation.

The workshops on the financial roles and responsibilities of elected officials (including the budgeting process and fiscal oversight) would be planned and scheduled in much the same way as the initial set of workshops covered in this report. They would require external funding at about the same level needed to implement the July workshops.

The one day on-site consultations would be scheduled as the next set of events under this contract and possibly take place in October. The financial workshops would be held later depending on the availability of funds to cover the room and board costs of participants.

There was a consistent and strong message emanating from the initial set of workshops that the councillors and board members want additional and frequent training opportunities to improve their individual competencies as elected leaders and to build the capacities of their local authorities to be more responsive to, and responsible for, meeting local needs and opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

The initial workshops for local councillors and board members of the Urban Councils and Boards of Swaziland were held in Ezulwini and Manzini on the weekends of 7-9 and 14-16 July 1995. They were based on a needs assessment conducted earlier involving 34 local councillors and board members and key officials of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Given the results of the assessment, the initial workshops focused on skill development in *problem identification, analysis, planning and decision making*.

The first workshop involved 21 councillors from Mbabane and Manzini full time and two part time (out of a possible 30). The second was attended by 32 councillors and board members from the following local authorities: Nhlangano, Pigg's Peak, and Siteki Town Councils and Hlathikula, Mankayane and Lavumisa Town Boards (see appendices for names of those participating). Copies of the workshop agenda have also been included in the appendices of this report.

With a few exceptions the workshops were conducted as planned although the second workshop design was altered somewhat to reflect lessons learned during the initial workshop and the challenge of working with six individual councils and boards rather than two. The programmes were directed by Fred Fisher, Director, International Development Institute for Organization and Management (IDIOM), Biglerville, Pennsylvania with assistance from James Obaso, Institute of Development Management and Muntu Mntungwa, Khanyisile Mmemma and Mbuso Simelane from the Swaziland Institute of Management and Public Administration, Mbabane.

The following is a summary of the written evaluations conducted at the completion of each workshop. The evaluation questions were preceded by a short introduction explaining the format of the questionnaire. For purposes of this report, there is a short explanation of the process used for collecting quantitative data. All other inquiries in the evaluation are self-explanatory. Regarding the collection of quantitative information a number of questions on the written evaluation were followed by a seven point continuum, such as:

NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 TO A GREAT EXTENT

In response to a number of questions, participants were asked to circle the number between the two extremes that best reflected their opinion about the enquiry. The number that follows each of these inquiries in the following text represents the mean average of the scores of participants in each workshop who completed the evaluation.

Twenty one participants completed the written evaluation of the first workshop (involving members of the Manzini and Mbabane Councils) and 31 completed the evaluation questionnaire following the second workshop. As stated earlier, the following are summaries of participant responses, beginning with the first workshop.

**Summary of Evaluation Remarks from
Those Participating in the Ezulwini Workshop
[Manzini and Mbabane Councils]**

Seminar Objectives:

1. To what extent did the course meet the following learning objectives:
 - (i) To increase participant knowledge of their roles and responsibilities as elected local government leaders. **[mean average: 6.4 of possible 7]**
 - (ii) To enhance their leadership skills in decision making, communications and problem solving. **[6.3]**
 - (iii) To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their new leadership roles and responsibilities. **[6.4]**

Seminar Content:

2. How relevant was the overall seminar to your responsibilities as a local government councillor? **[6.3]**
3. To what extent was the content of the seminar relevant to the needs and practices of council as a body? **[6.1]**
4. How helpful will this learning experience be in assisting you to carry out your roles and responsibilities as a councillor? **[6.3]**
5. What individual session or topic did you find most useful?
(Be as specific as possible).

Policy making (4); conception, problem identification and formulation of solutions(4); strategic planning and resource mobilization; autonomy of councils (2); no clear policy for new councilors because of lack of recognized political growth or accepted political culture; collective objectivity in so far as the execution of our duties are concerned; fact finding (2); perceptions exercise; reports and discussions; relations between council and staff; sharing ideas through discussion; and, all were very interesting.

[Note: some of the responses (recorded above and after

subsequent questions) are not directly related to the question but they are reported as stated and provide insight into the thinking of the participants at the completion of the workshop]

6. What individual session or topic did you find least useful?
(Be as specific as possible).

Problem analysis, stakeholder analysis; discussion of the schedule; council-staff relations; role of councillor as boss; autonomy; the idea that council should not be run as a business. *[note: the last comment was not a session but rather a discussion that emerged on several occasions during the workshop]*

Seminar Design and Conduct:

7. How effectively did the trainers adapt the focus and content of the workshop to meet participant needs during the course? [6.0]
8. To what extent did the design and conduct of the course encourage individual participation? [6.2]
9. To what extent did you have an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with other participants? [6.2]
10. Should the seminar have been organized differently in terms of time?

Yes [6] No [13]

If yes, how?

Ten participants said to Increase the amount of time; several issues were raised that needed more time for discussion; hold the training immediately before and after election to office; time wasn't managed properly during the sessions.

11. What could have been done to improve the quality of this learning experience?

Use siSwati 100%; seminar was appropriate and timely; more sessions; quality okay but need handouts for each session; one more workshop; more time for group discussion; more time and more discussion; more instructional classroom teaching and less participation with tests to ascertain comprehension.

12. If you could make one change in the design and conduct of the course, what

would it be?

Seven said the time was too short; add one more day; give the session on policy making; should be more practical; more handouts; ensure more participation (some individuals left without making a single sound).

Training Materials:

13. How useful were the reading materials sent to you prior to the workshop in preparing you to participate in the workshop? [5.7]

[note: two said they had no time to read them which may reflect the dilemma faced by more than these two based on other comments]

14. Were the concepts and ideas presented during the workshop clear and understandable? [6.7]
15. If any of your responses to the previous questions on course materials were below 4, please explain. [no comments]
16. In general, how appropriate were the instructor-s inputs and exercises in helping you improve your knowledge and skills as a councillor?

Very appropriate [21]

Somewhat appropriate [0]

Not at all appropriate [0]

Overview:

17. To what extent were your expectations about the course fulfilled? [6.4]
18. In what way did the course differ from your expectations?

I thought it would be a lecture type course but it was best way of delivery; very informal, open discussions; thought siSwati would be used totally; expected to be informed rather than informing the facilitators of our dilemma; easy to follow; very short; more practical than theoretical which was helpful; very instructive and effective.

19. Was the course:

Too long [0]

About the right length [10]

Too short [11]

20. Regarding the trainers:

(a) Did they know the subject matter? [6.4]

(b) Did they communicate the materials and ideas clearly? [6.5]

8 Were they practical in their training approach? [6.5]

(d) Were they sensitive to your learning needs? [6.4]

21. If you rated any of the above questions below 4, please explain. [no comments]

22. Finally, we would appreciate any other comments you might have that would help the organizers of this course meet local government training needs more effectively in the future.

Should be organized at least once a month; siSwati language should be used; seminar inspiring and thought provoking; relevant to work of councillors; course was good and well presented; we understood most of the things but it was too short; what we have learned can be applied to council and we would like to see more workshops in the future; thanks; had more material than time to cover it; budgeting; valuation of properties and implications on rates; you have cultivated a good, tolerant culture; more courses at closer intervals to help us be better and come out of office having executed our duties effectively by the end of our terms; more courses; no unnecessary debates; more courses as frequently as possible; more time; written tests for councillors; such courses should be held as often as possible and be longer; a workshop of this magnitude should be at least four days long; training is the backbone of development; workshop on how to deal with council-staff relations in depth; complaint raised toward the end on a personal attack should have been treated as a lesson; and finally, it would be of great help if it were possible to record some of the open discussions and views expressed in some of the open debates-to have someone take notes on important issues and intended policies. I want to express my appreciation to the organizers for their patience and understanding, it has been a great help to me.

WORKSHOP DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS ON FIRST WORKSHOP

Several things surprised me about the workshop. First, I was concerned the attendance would be much lower with this group of councillors. Second, I didn't expect so many comments asking for more and longer workshops, knowing the many commitments and busy schedules these individuals are confronted with. Thirdly, the discussions were much freer and livelier than I had expected.

The participants, working in small task groups, drafted short position papers on three issues: the need for more local autonomy; their lack of involvement in the Urban Development Project; and, the budgeting process (including their concern for new revenue sources and the need to control expenditures). These papers are necessarily sketchy (given the time available to draft them) but they reflect major concerns of these two policy bodies. They believe they need more autonomy and generally support the newly drafted Urban Government legislation proposed by MHUD. This is countered by their concern that they must also have the ability and will to be responsive and responsible within any expanded local government mandate.

Regarding their comments on the Urban Development Program (World Bank initiative), they feel they have been largely left out of the consultative process and bypassed by project staff, the lending institution and its local administrative/monitoring mechanisms. From my perspective, this is probably a legitimate concern (one that is reflected by reality in too many such programs around the world). Urban development is not just a managerial responsibility and technical undertaking, it is a political process. In order to implement these projects effectively and efficiently they must involve the local elected leaders as key stakeholders in the process.

Finally, regarding these three position papers, the last one on budget only skims the surface of the discussions that took place about financial issues and concerns during the workshop. Two issues were dominant in their discussions: the financial/budgeting process itself (involving interaction with the Council staff); and, the need to broaden revenue bases in their jurisdictions and to control current expenditures. Both of these issues will need to be addressed if these organizations are to achieve the level of fiscal responsibility they realize is essential for their communities. On controlling expenditures, in particular, many councillors feel they are not receiving the level of cooperation or information from the staff that is essential to make rational and difficult decisions about the allocation of scarce fiscal resources within their respective local authorities.

There appears to be considerable mistrust between the two councils and their respective staffs. The councils feel they are not being given access to important information, that the technical staff often hides behind their professionalism (resulting in inaction) and frequently refuses to cooperate with Council. These are not novel circumstances in the annals of council-staff relations, nor do they reflect the staff's perspective on these matters. Nevertheless, the allegations seem to be serious enough to warrant early attention and perhaps outside assistance to help the individual councils mediate differences between them and their management teams. One possible intervention strategy is to use this project to hold one day role negotiation and conflict resolution sessions between these Councils and their respective staffs.

There also seems to be confusion among the councillors regarding their powers and responsibilities vs. the hiring and firing of council staff. Some expressed considerable

frustration about the quality and numbers of council employees and the Councils inability to address these issues in any responsible way. Again, their concerns represent only one side of the picture. Nevertheless, it is an important issue to be considered in these *pioneering days* of local self-governance in Swaziland.

Finally, it was apparent from the many discussions that providing an opportunity for these two elected bodies to *Dialogue* for an uninterrupted time about their problems, differences, similarities and futures was a valuable by-product of the workshop. Moreover, it is apparent from their responses to the written evaluation and comments made in various contexts during both workshops, that there is a pent-up demand for additional elected leadership training in Swaziland.

Summary of remarks from those councillors and board members who participated in the Manzini workshop [including three Town Councils and three Town Boards: 14-16 July 1995]

Seminar Objectives:

1. To what extent did the course meet the following learning objectives:
 - (I) To increase participant knowledge of their roles and responsibilities as elected local government leaders. [6.1]
 - (ii) To enhance their leadership skills in decision making, communications and problem solving. [6.0]
 - (iii) To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their new leadership roles and responsibilities. [6.1]

Seminar Content:

2. How relevant was the overall seminar to your responsibilities as a local government councillor? [6.4]
3. To what extent was the content of the seminar relevant to the needs and practices of council as a body? [5.8]

4. How helpful will this learning experience be in assisting you to carry out your roles and responsibilities as a councillor?[**6.4**]
5. What individual session or topic did you find most useful?
(Be as specific as possible).

Eleven said: *strategic planning*; four, *problem identification*; three, *problem solving*; two each, *action planning*, *awareness*, *goal setting* and *All relevant*®, and one each said, *breakdown in communication*, *involving the community*, and *A course gave us very good information on how we can tackle projects*®.

6. What individual session or topic did you find least useful?
(Be as specific as possible).

Four stated *strategic planning* and one, *goal setting*.

Seminar Design and Conduct:

7. How effectively did the trainers adapt the focus and content of the workshop to meet participant needs during the course?
[**5.7**]
8. To what extent did the design and conduct of the course encourage individual participation? [**6.0**]
9. To what extent did you have an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with other participants? [**5.7**]
10. Should the seminar have been organized differently in terms of time?
Yes [**10**] No [**19**]

If yes, how?

Some sessions were omitted because of time (2); it should have been longer (4); well organized but too short; speed could have been lowered; more time given to individual council presentation; increase to one week.

11. What could have been done to improve the quality of this learning experience?

More time (5); provide videos and vocabulary; simulation exercise; case study would help; greater frequency of training programs; short notes to circulate after each session as a reference; no ready made solutions given; couldn't have been better; and, the process was just the best in my opinion.

12. If you could make one change in the design and conduct of the course, what would it be?

Translate handouts into siSwati for those who don't understand English as well; I need more time to make changes; course should be at least: 4 days, 1-2 weeks, 3 weeks; lines of communication is an essential part (to include); limit time of participant reports; fresh air (in afternoon); could have been encouraged by a certificate of attendance; lower the pace and increase the time to finish course; avoid fatigue by participants.

Training Materials:

13. How useful were the reading materials sent to you prior to the workshop in preparing you to participate in the workshop? [5.8]
14. Were the concepts and ideas presented during the workshop clear and understandable? [5.7]
15. If any of your responses to the previous questions on course materials were below 4, please explain.

Training materials should have been sent a week or more in advance (2).

16. In general, how appropriate were the instructor-s inputs and exercises in helping you improve your knowledge and skills as a councillor?

Very appropriate [**26**]

Somewhat appropriate [**2**]

Not at all appropriate [**0**]

Overview:

17. To what extent were your expectations about the course fulfilled? [**6.2**]

18. In what way did the course differ from your expectations?

Thought it would be more theoretical; more practical than I expected; handled professionally; expected to hear how other countries handle similar issues; thought it would be only lectures; not taught in usual school trends; only that we missed council-staff relations; we were well looked after but given a lot of work; task work was very good and interesting; satisfied my expectations; exceeded my expectations; enlightening.

19. Was the course:

Too long [**0**]

About the right length [**14**]

Too short [**14**]

20. Regarding the trainers:

(a) Did they know the subject matter? [**6.3**]

(b) Did they communicate the materials and ideas clearly? [**6.2**]

8 Were they practical in their training approach? [**6.0**]

(d) Were they sensitive to your learning needs? [**6.2**]

21. If you rated any of the above questions below 4, please explain.

[**no comments**]

22. Finally, we would appreciate any other comments you might have that would help the organizers of this course meet local government training needs more effectively in the future.

Training of councillors should be conducted regularly, if possible; a lot of achievement was made; more such courses to refresh councillors minds and make practical implementation of what has been learned; would appreciate regular courses; individual follow-ups with councils to cover *relationships with staff* and *improved structure of meetings*; be given reading materials earlier; more time; course has been enlightening and refreshing; I hope more can be scheduled in the near future; I was real fascinated by the sessions on *strategic planning*, *perceptions* and *problem identification*; everything was wonderful; course was well organized; should try and talk about problems other councils are having; workshop shouldn't be so short; your teaching is excellent, keep it up; very effective course; need more of these; this course must not come to an end; it was really an eye opener and helped all participants exchange ideas and information and to get to know each other.

WORKSHOP DIRECTOR-S COMMENTS ON SECOND WORKSHOP

The second workshop involved six different local government teams of councillors and board members, thus changing the dynamics of pursuing an experiential learning process. We decided to limit the content of the workshop to a more intensive problem solving process, providing participants with the opportunity to spend more time with other members of their own elected body rather than working in mixed groups of participants. This proved to be a good decision since individual council and board teams were able to work on one issue for most of the workshop and further develop their individual and group skills in decision making and problem solving.

The problems and opportunities they addressed were diverse, including: street venders (Nhlangano); town planning (Mankayane); increased crime (Hlathikula); squatters (Lavumisa); water shortage (Siteki); and, lack of effective communication between members of the Council, their Chairperson, the Town Clerk and the Ministry (Piggs Peak). Each council and board went through a series of exercises to more clearly define their problem or issue, to analyze the problem/opportunity, define goals and expected outcomes, and develop options and action plans for resolving the problem or to take advantage of an opportunity within the community for positive change.

One message was very clear: both workshop groups want more training. Under this current contract, there are two options that have been discussed both within the Ministry and with workshop participants. These include: (1) one day consultancies in each of the local authorities to address an issue they have identified as important to focus on (could include the council/board staff as well); and (2) a weekend workshop to focus on finances and the budget process.

Beyond this contract there will be many opportunities to develop and conduct short training sessions to address other learning needs raised in the initial needs assessment interviews and during the workshops. For example, several participants raised the issue regarding the conduct of council/board meetings. The potential for locally planned and conducted workshops is being enhanced by the involvement of trainers from the two local training institutions, SIMPA and IDM

in these workshops.

Finally, those reading this report are urged to review the comments of the workshop participants as expressed in the written evaluations. They provide valuable insights into the direction the elected leaders (the client) would like to see training take in the future and the importance they place on the development of their own competencies in strengthening the local self-governance process.