

Training sustainability

Compiled opinions from the National
Training Management Workshop
11-13 March 1999, Hyderabad.

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Introduction and context

1. During the workshop of the 4th National Hydrology Training Co-ordination Meeting on 11-13 March 1999, participating Training Co-ordinators and representatives of the Central Training Institutes were asked to write an essay on training sustainability beyond December 2001. This activity was inspired by the recent World Bank request to submit a sustainability action plan before 31 March 1999.
2. When explaining the assignment, the assumptions were set that, by December 2001, all targeted HIS staff would be fully trained, and that present project provisions would phase out and can not be extended, including WB funds, PCS support and Technical Assistance. The workshop participants were given one hour to address the following basic questions:
 - *Why* is sustainability in training required, *what* is the scope of work included?
 - *Who* would have a role to play in sustainability provisions?
 - *How* could training be made sustainable? Which actions could selected key players take?
3. The participants were given the option to justify that the HIS would not require continued training. Nobody followed this path of reasoning. All authors took the assignment seriously. The 38 hand-written results were analysed by the Consultant, compiled, loosely grouped and annotated. The wording is kept as close as possible to the original phrasing and some quotes are verbatim. Occasionally, text between brackets is added to improve readability, or to clarify ambiguity. Copies of the original essays are available in the HP Office in New Delhi.
4. When studying the justifications and ideas in this report, the reader should realise that this compilation is an open, uncensored inventory of first ideas. Most participants reflected on sustainability questions for the first time in their TC job.

Nevertheless, the reader will agree that the collective wisdom of the national training co-ordination team deserves serious attention and follow-up. The compiled results are very useful for the States and Central Agencies when drafting their final, more concrete sustainability action plans.

Why sustainability?

1. All 38 respondents pointed out that staffing changes always remain a (unmanageable) fact of life in the agencies, because of transfers, promotions, retirements and new staff. Consequently, training is always required to prepare newcomers for their job.
2. It was stressed by some that these staff changes are not necessarily matters to endure and complain about. HP implementing agencies are multidisciplinary organisations and job rotation is an added attraction. Staff in the department is not assigned to exclusive tasks and need to be trained in all tasks they may be charged with in the future. Not all re-postings and promotions imply a loss of trained HP staff and related training investments. They may still be active or accessible as trainer and/or (promoted) supervisor or HIS manager.
3. Training is by definition part of human resources development and an unquestionable, continuous requirement. (Only) trained staff is an asset to an organisation.
4. New technology (instruments, software, models, concepts and working practices) are expected. Agencies normally disseminate these advancements through distributed manuals, circulars, memorandums and publications. Training helps to transfer new developments in a more effective manner. Although training is basically a demand driven affair in which the agencies have a major say in the contents, the coverage of new hydrology developments is mainly supply-driven as the agencies may not be aware of new developments and (national) efforts in standardisation.
5. Implementation of the HIS will create a chain reaction in organisational changes: increasing data, increasing contacts with data users, automation of working procedures. These implications need to be resolved through training.
6. There is always room for improvement in the HIS itself. In a way, HIS is a scientific quest and has no end. Training can create scientific HIS interest and dissemination of results.
7. Training is an investment in the new generation of hydrology professionals. Including (more) R&D topics and computerisation in their curriculum would ensure their interest. For new staff with an academic background, in-service training is always required to supplement know-how with the in-service job practicalities.
8. Designated HP training institutes may drop out or get too busy to proceed with their role in HIS training. Even when they are interested, how can it be ensured that they keep their knowledge up to date and deliver useful training?
9. Printed training modules in HP format consolidate training contents and delivery methods. However, beyond 2001, provisions are needed to keep modules up-to-date in a professional manner.
10. In States where the HP includes only part of the geographical area, continuation of training is required to cover non-HP staff. Example: only 1/3 of the surface water area in Madhya Pradesh is under the project.
11. In some States the present training targets are low, but reasonable estimates, that match with the availability of staff and equipment. At the end of the project, there would still be a

negative balance in training targets. Hence, access to training programmes is required to complete the total targets in these States.

12. Specific new topics mentioned, for future inclusion in the training menu:

- Climatic changes
- Flood forecasting
- (Trends in) hydrological changes
- Mathematical modelling for the growing amount of data
- Application models for data users
- Stage-discharge models
- Sediment flow models
- Quantification of the pollution problem
- Sediment toxicity
- Response to (presently unknown) HIS issues as faced after 2-3 years of operations
- Global links
- Equipment maintenance and replacements
- HIS concepts for high level staff and data users
- Sharing of water resources will become more difficult in the future as water users increase and water availability decreases. Under these new conditions, data collection, processing and usage for water resources planning, management and conflict solving, may change accordingly. Training should prepare the staff to respond to these new HIS requirements.

Who is to take action?

1. The variety of HP training needs, courses and events can not be managed by one agency or institution on its own. All participants indicated that sustainability efforts need to take place simultaneously at various levels, and in consultation with each other.
2. For staff training at stations, in laboratories and data entry units, the agencies themselves are mentioned as first option for sustainability provisions. Within the Agency, the establishment of training cells is desired. Some perceive this cell as a human resource development task force, with representatives from all levels of staff. Others as a one- man job for the Training Co-ordinator a/o Department Head. Some define the training cell as the collective team of Training Co-ordinator(s) and in-house trainers. A few would like to have a dedicated training room where training equipment is permanently available.
3. It was further mentioned that in the future, annual training targets will be far lower than at present and it was suggested to keep in-house training provisions/cells at a reasonably low cost level. For the CWC a link with the existing Training Directorate is suggested.
4. Some agencies look forward to continue and expand their working relations with selected institutes in the area, for example: Kerala Engineering Research Institute (KERI), GSDA in Nasik, Maharashtra (ready by 2000/2001), local branches of the Central Pollution Control Board etc. Typically, the agencies did not refer to local WALMI as focal training point, but WALMI representatives do envisage a major role in future training provisions
5. To preserve specialised training in data processing, storage and application topics, both the CTI representatives and the Agencies agree that designated CTI retain a major responsibility.
6. No mention was made of the fact that for laboratory practices and basic chemistry training, there is as yet no dedicated training institute for training of trainers and other centralised courses.
7. CTIs and the States recognise that central institutes themselves need to team-up, bilaterally and collectively, to seek access to knowledge resources and get top-down authorised inputs to play their training role in a credible manner. A national forum to share experiences and develop complementary curricula is important for the CTIs to function.

Suggested actions

General statements (quotes)

- “Where there is a will, there is a way.”
- “Only optimistic views, not pessimistic, will create sustainability.”
- “Prioritise (training) quality over quantity.”
- “Hydrology and related training are of national interest. Sustainability is a must.”
- “Training should not be made more expensive.”
- “Make annual training compulsory.”
- “Promote the importance of training.”
- “Extend the Hydrology Project.”

References to HIS context

Some authors stated that training sustainability is not an isolated affair. Training sustainability will only be taken seriously in case the HIS itself becomes a more recognised area of importance. To promote the Project and the HIS the following suggestions were made:

- Create free-standing, autonomous SW+GW hydrology unit, with independent powers, budget and the possibility to directly deal with data users. The responsibility to deliver quality data will result in better commitment to employ good staff and keep performance standards high through regular training.
- Observe a (national) water resources day. (In fact, the 22 March is already a dedicated Water Resources / World Water Day for the last 13 years)
- Start HIS website at Internet.
- Circulate newsletter, which can also serve as a communication tool for a forum of hydrology experts who answer questions from the field.
- Go round with a 2-day promotional workshop in all States and Agencies.
- Promote best sites (locations, offices) to demonstrate HIS practices.
- Publish articles in professional journals.
- Collaborate with the Indian Association of Hydrologists. Same body could initiate topical conferences

References to training quality

Many authors feel that the interest in training and its sustainability, is often frustrated by the negative image associated with (some) ongoing training. Expectations on training impact are high, but spoiled in practice by enforced participation, boringly long sessions, formal communications between trainers/faculty and trainees, and poor logistics. In other words: why bother about sustainability of training that is itself not popular to start with. Only better training quality will raise the interest in its sustainability. To improve training quality, it was suggested to:

- Nominate only willing and interested staff for training and not force training upon them
- Keep relationships between trainees and organisations (providers, trainers) cordial
- Increase the number of short informal courses and deliver (more) sessions in a workshop style, with participatory methods and opportunities to share working experiences, rather than listening to irrelevant lectures.
- Delete (academic) contents which are irrelevant for the participants

- Collect hydrology reference materials and complete the stock of training modules, trainer kits etc. This has to be combined with staff who would actively scan books, journals etc for new developments.
- Improve professional capacity of trainers and faculty to produce (new) modules and attractive handouts.

References to trainers

In many essays, the need to expand and preserve the pool of in-house trainers was not referred to. Others made this a strong point and suggested:

- Only to select experienced and interested staff for this job.
- Find (administrative) ways to provide in-house trainers with incentives/honorarium for their extra work.
- Create fresh batches of trainers. (During the workshop it was confirmed that many trainers drop out, get transferred, are not interested, perform poorly.)
- Keep trainers updated on new (data collection) advancements.
- Keep in-house trainers posted for two / three years.

References to agencies, training cells and local institutes

- Central agencies already have a training cell or Training Directorate at HQ. These should be involved in and watch over training programming, deliveries and effectiveness.
- Start with training cell in the agencies to identify in-house training needs and to monitor progress and impact. These cells should differentiate training requirements for management, middle level and field staff.
- Dedicated training funds in Agencies or State level were often mentioned as prerequisite for sustainability. One author suggested to set aside 1% of the working budget for in-house training and delegate sanctioning authority to TC a/o Heads. Alternatively, local training institutes that have a targeted role to play should increase their HIS training budget line.
- Training is often announced as surprise action, and is (thus) not perceived by the staff as a normal, regular feature in the organisation. To demonstrate management commitment to training, some suggested to set annual, recurrent targets, for example: 20% of field staff for in-house training and 2% of (other) staff for external, central training.
- Expand/allow/promote access to training and workshops for lower staff levels. (This statement seems ambiguous, as all HIS staff levels are earmarked for training. Perhaps this statement refers to the fact that for interesting training courses, higher-ranking staff makes use of training opportunities that are targeted at lower HIS levels.)
- The Agencies/senior officials lack initiatives to make use of current training offers made by CTIs. This demotivates the CTIs and they are reluctant to re-start their efforts. More responsiveness is needed.
- Designate a venue in or close to the Agency as training venue, equip this venue with basic training equipment
- Assess the performance of Agencies and staff on a regular basis. This would renew and maintain interest in training as tool to improve staff performance.
- Make staff training part of the system / the organisation's culture
- Let experienced staff train newcomers as part of their (supervision) duties.

- Incorporate hydrometry, hydrometeorology and (basic/advanced) computer training in regular WALMI/WALAMTARI programmes. This would logically fit in existing irrigation oriented training curricula.
- Maintain personal (HIS) staff records (in which intended training, the learning path, is listed and monitored). Successive Heads would then observe these records and not re-target staff training plans.
- Agencies should regularly confirm whether CTIs are still planning for the courses they are looking for. In case of reduced supply, they would then search for alternative provisions.

References to CTIs

- Create central funds for visiting experts/faculty/consultants to cover new developments
- Agencies should show higher interest in training proposed by the CTIs, otherwise the CTIs would lose their interest to continue.
- CTIs should have a regular, predictable calendar of repeated courses. This would give Agencies the chance to schedule their training requirements and avoid hasty nominations for the wrong persons. Quarterly supply is required for fixed predictable slots.

References to training management

The importance of training co-ordination (personal or institutional) is recognised and need to be sustained. Some authors indicated that training development and management need to be taken up more seriously.

- Closer contact between the Nodal Officer and TC(s) to remain up-to-date on staffing, new equipment, performance levels etc.
- Hold regular work meetings with active trainers.
- Prepare proper plans and respond to training evaluations, as this will help to demonstrate the need for continuous training
- Manage training in a professional manner and maintain a precise training monitoring system, covering targets, calendars and impact
- CTIs to keep in touch with trainees and agencies (to identify internal training needs) and institutes/resources/planners/policy makers (to spot new development)

References to inter-state and national level co-operation

- Training and research resources in India are adequate. There is no need to create new institutes for HIS training. Making use of available resources is the real problem.
- Indian training centres should co-operate, exchange programmes, obtain international contacts
- Update/modernise training contents on a regular basis. Scan and review publications, hydrology equipment and software market etc., and communicate findings to Agencies and CTIs.
- (Start and facilitate) networking, exchange of ideas and experiences between the States
- Continue with National Hydrology Training Co-ordination meetings