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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

## 2008 UNITAR Hiroshima Fellowship for Afghanistan

Workshop I: “Leadership and Organizational Development for Performance and Results”

Workshop II: “Project Planning and Proposal Writing”

July 2008

Dehradun, India

*With the support of*



Hiroshima Prefecture

*and in partnership with*



### Executive Summary



*Group photo, Dehradun, July 2008*



## **Acknowledgements**

UNITAR would like to express its deep gratitude to the following: Hiroshima Prefecture, the pillar of the Fellowship since inception, for its financial support; Hiroshima City for its many generous contributions; the workshop resource persons - Professor Lorne Jaques of the University of Calgary, Dr. Michael Fors of the Microsoft Corporation, Professor Leo Zonn of the University of Texas at Austin; Mentors present - Professor Jennifer Hatfield of the University of Calgary, Ms. Margaret Thevarakom, Ms. Patsian Low and Mr. Ernest Lee Kian Meng of the Singapore International Foundation (SIF); and Afghan resource persons and UNITAR alumni, Dr. Abdul Tawab Saljuqi and Mr. Sabahuddin Sokout.

UNITAR would also like to thank the Embassies of Afghanistan in Tokyo and Delhi, and the Embassy of India in Kabul, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kabul, and Forest Research Institute of India, for their partnership and commitment.

Our gratitude to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), in particular Director P.R. Sinha, Dean V.B. Mathur and Dr. Sathyakumar, for invaluable hospitality and their many contributions to the workshops.

Last but not least, UNITAR wishes to extend special thanks to the Afghan Fellows and Coaches, for their deep and unwavering devotion to learning and change.



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## Background and Summary

The UNITAR Hiroshima Fellowship for Afghanistan is a long-term capacity-building programme aimed at enhancing leadership and management skills and providing technical and institutional support to a core group of Afghan government officials, academics and practitioners. The Fellowship is structured with Fellows, Mentors, Coaches and UNITAR as key elements, and follows a combination of different training methods (i.e. distance learning tools, team projects and on-site instructor-led workshops). Prior to workshops I and II, Fellows have already gone through a rigorous set of learning activities including participation in Fellowship Orientation sessions led by UNITAR Coaches, two web seminars, a number of audio-web conferences and project work sessions, in addition to regular e-mail exchanges with Mentors and UNITAR staff. The workshops in Dehradun were the first on-site training events of 2008. It was also the first opportunity for the Fellows and Coaches to meet their Mentors and UNITAR resource persons and staff in person.

The two Workshops “Leadership and Organizational Development for Performance and Results” and “Project Planning and Proposal Writing” were held in partnership with the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun, from 7 to 13 July 2008. Thirty-one Fellows, Coaches and resource persons from Afghanistan and six international Mentors and resource persons attended the events. In addition, representatives of UNITAR’s partner

institutions, the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) and Microsoft UK, joined the group, enriching the learning experience. The resource persons were ably supported by two Afghan resource persons (selected from among UNITAR alumni), Dr. Abdul Tawab Saljuqi and Mr. Sabahuddin Sokout. UNITAR aims to sustain and expand the roles of selected Alumni as Afghan resource persons each year to facilitate the development of a core group of trainers and facilitators in Afghanistan.

## Workshop I: Leadership and Organizational Development for Performance and Results

Workshop I of the 2008 Cycle focused on “Leadership and Organizational Development for Performance and Results” as one of the key components of capacity building in the public service in Afghanistan.

The workshop was intensive and interactive, conducted in groups and structured around elements of leadership and its impact on performance and results, coaching and facilitation of teams.

The topics of the workshop included, *inter alia*:

- leadership and its impact on performance and results;
- stakeholder analysis;
- role of social capital;
- team development and facilitation.



During a study visit



Singaporean Mentors, Ms. Patsian Low and Mr. Ernest Lee Kian Meng, and Participants



During a study visit



*Dr. Tawab Saljuqi of the Ministry of Public Health presenting on leadership*

### **Leadership Module: Content and Methodology**

The workshop on leadership opened with a brief exercise where participants were asked to think about leaders they admire and the reasons for this. The qualities identified were compiled as a list to be referred to throughout the session. This was followed by an overview of performance, results and the responsibility of leaders, organizations and communities. Each group of participants was asked to define one of the following terms: 'performance', 'development', 'leadership', 'organization' and 'community', to establish how the terms are understood in the Afghan context, and the opportunities therein for expansion of that understanding.

In a more in-depth examination of leadership for performance the question of 'what', organizations with their leaders have to achieve, and 'why' it is important rather than 'who' leads an organization was discussed. The topic provoked many reflections on performance management in Afghanistan. After understanding the 'whats' and 'whys' of a great performance, the **performance matrix**, which provided

explanation on how goals, design and management differ on different levels was introduced. To better understand how these levels work, a case study was given, reflecting the situation of one woman, Ria, who died in childbirth. Each group was asked to analyze the reasons of Ria's death from an organizational perspective and think of the organizational solution for the problem. Following brief group presentations the concepts related to objectives, sustainability and transformation were presented. Each group was then asked to classify their organizational solutions based on the introduced concepts. The discussion was then led back to the qualities of a good leader with emphasis on his/her ability to serve, which in turn would lead to gaining greater support.

The workshop offered a substantial session on result based management (RBM), relevant also in the context of project management for donors such as the World Bank, and the role of stakeholders in the process. The stakeholder analysis exercise generated a lot of interest and discussion among the participants, as it elaborated the reasons for consulting stakeholders and the process of identification and assessment of their impact on the project and/or organization. Participants learned to develop stakeholder maps as a tool to visually identify stakeholders and their impact and interests. Some methods of involving or knowing stakeholders were also identified.

The concept of social capital and its importance within organizations was new for almost all participants, and one that they connected with immediately. The



*Dr. Lorne Jaques of the University of Calgary*



*Dr. Jennifer Hatfield and participants in discussion*



*Clarifying ideas*



discussion started with a simple exercise where an ordinary chair was put in front of the class as a subject and everyone was invited to comment on what he/she saw. The exercise demonstrated the multiple possibilities of definitions of a simple subject such as a 'chair', and highlighted the richness of thoughts within the group. The de-briefing of the exercise smoothly led into the definition of social capital within groups/organizations/society/ country and its importance for better performance and results. Some qualities of a performing organization such as facilitation of communication within the organization, clear identification of roles and responsibilities; provision of mechanisms for participation of an organization's members in the decision-making process and others, were analyzed. The theoretical background on social capital also included definitions of 'structural' and 'cognitive' social capital and their interrelationship. Some examples of how social capital can be used negatively were also introduced where it was used as a resource and a source of power. The session continued with brief introductions to the three inter-related concepts of importance to 'community' - local associations and networks; social satisfaction and direct indicators.

The session on development began with an exercise on change (**Box 1**).

The concept of 'Followship' was also introduced in the context of leadership as an important element. A follower accepts, takes, understands and delivers orders/tasks from a leader. A key element to have strong followship is **trust**. The

topic provoked discussions on whether the followship concept is present and has sufficient attention in Afghanistan.

In addition to discussions on the Afghan experience throughout the workshop, one session, entitled "Leadership – reflections from Afghanistan" was conducted by Dr. Tawab Saljuqi. The session began with the findings of a survey (conducted by Dr. Lorne Jaques and Dr. Saljuqi) on the perceptions of existing leaders, and the qualities desired in an Afghan leader. As expected the presentation generated much discussion, concluding with the assessment that the desired qualities in a leader were not yet flourishing in the current Afghan environment.

At the end of the first day, as a "journaling" exercise, each participant was asked to write down his/her thoughts on a subject studied during the day. This individual activity provided an opportunity for self-reflection, helping participants recognize the leadership skills they possessed or needed to develop/enhance.

### Team Development Module: Content and Methodology

The team development module addressed an important component of leadership and based on feedback from the previous year, was found to be most pertinent to Afghanistan. This year it was also introduced earlier in the programme so as to facilitate the Fellowship's group dynamics, and improve understanding and cooperation within the groups for more productive outcomes of team projects. The team development module also offered an

#### **Box 1. Exercise on Change**

Participants were asked to divide into pairs and face each other. The pairs were asked to turn their backs on their partners, and one person in each pair was requested to make three changes in his/her appearance. The partner was then asked to identify the changes made. The same people were asked to make another five changes. Following this the corresponding partner was asked to make ten changes in their own appearance all at once. In the debrief participants were requested to analyze their experience during the exercise. The exercise clearly showed some characteristics of change and their implications – *such as that change can be sudden and enforced from the outside, there might be limited resources to bring necessary change, some changes are not necessary and are just artificial, etc.*



intensive working session involving Mentors and Coaches present on coaching and facilitation within the context of the Fellowship and beyond. The module also allowed the Coaches to take their skills to the next level through co-facilitation with the lead resource person, and analysis of the team challenges.

The module started with the DiSC® Personal Profile Test assessing individual behavioral styles and personal characteristics (**Box 2**). Coaches had already taken the test last year, and so helped Fellows take theirs<sup>1</sup>. The analysis of test results lead into explanation on the different working styles of each. Then, participants were asked to combine groups based on their working styles identified in the test and discuss the strengths/weaknesses of each style. The

debriefing exercise thereafter identified the working styles and characteristics of personalities present in each Fellowship group and helped Fellows understand their personal preferences and styles, and also see why certain dynamics took place in their respective groups.

An interactive presentation on the use of coaching and facilitation skills within the Fellowship explained the role Coaches should play in their groups, their responsibilities and appropriate ways to provide feedback. It was recommended that Coaches have a stronger role in the beginning of the Fellowship, and once groups understand and agree on their goals and the means to achieve them, Coaches should take the position of observers, providing groups only with feedback and advice. At the end of the

#### **Box 2. DiSC test**

*“The DiSC analysis has given us the clear vision about our working style which was not known by us to date and we learned our roles in the group and learned how to improve our responsibility and leadership style and how to deal with other group members”, Fellow 2008*

As a part of the Team Development module, the Fellows took a DiSC ® Personal Profile Test, as a way to assess behavioral styles and preferences of individuals, in order to improve their work productivity and teamwork. Given after the Fellows had already completed their individual assignments, this test aimed to improve productivity or teamwork in the narrow sense and to help Fellows learn about themselves – their preferred behavioral styles, personal strengths and weaknesses, and how their own personality traits affect their judgments of and their relations with other team members. The fact that others’ personal profiles mostly agreed with their own observations did much to convince the Fellows that their own test results could be trusted.

The test also helped the Fellows see if their teams were well-balanced (with a mix of personality profiles and work styles, and some people’s strengths complementing others’ weaknesses), and what could be done to improve the effectiveness and teamwork of less balanced teams. They were also able to better anticipate disagreements and conflicts arising from theirs (and others’) personal traits, and try to avoid these by changing their behavior in future team work scenarios.

The test, along with the analysis and discussion of its results and the related exercises, gave the participants an opportunity to learn about themselves, to become more conscious of their biases and reflect on their behavior towards others. In the context of the overall aims of the Fellowship, it aimed to make them better team members, managers and leaders, and more confident and effective in working together with other people to contribute to the transformation and development of their organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> The glossary of the test was developed by the 2007 Coaches for the last cycle.



programme Coaches should again step in to ensure that the results meet the Fellowship requirements and timeline. The 2008 Coaches were asked to comment on their personal experiences in the Fellowship. Following the discussion of coaching skills and the Coaches' presentations, many Fellows commented that they could now better understand their Coaches' behavior during the Cycle. There was also discussion (initiated originally by some Coaches during the Coaching for Coaches Module) on whether the term 'Facilitator' should be used instead of the term 'Coach' as it better reflects the role of Coaches in the Fellowship context. Beyond the Fellowship, the session on coaching was meant to offer skills and guidance to the Afghan practitioners on facilitating teamwork in their organizations. The role of Mentors was also touched upon during the session and continued in more detail in

the respective groups.

The team development module also covered themes such as why teams are created, and the elements a team must have in order to be effective. The role of a leader in team performance was also emphasized. The Tuckman Model was introduced, describing the forming, storming, norming and performing stages of team development, and emphasis was placed on the importance of a careful They were then asked to identify the stage at which they think their Fellowship group was in and why.

The team development module was completed with a half day of team challenges, used to practically demonstrate the stages the Fellowship teams went through during their development (**Box 3**). The challenges

### **Box 3. Team Challenges**

As a conclusion to the team development module, each Fellowship group had to participate in three team challenges. Six groups were divided into three teams – two groups per team. The challenges to be overcome by each team were: the Treacherous Mountain Pass where the members of two different groups were placed at opposite ends of the room to each other and had to swap positions by moving through an electronic maze; a Poisonous Waste challenge where members of two groups had to move and stack objects in a defined format by pulling the strings of a pyramid in a cooperative manner; and, a Lava Pit where two groups had to move to the opposite side of the room by using rubber caterpillar tracks as special shoes. The exercises all had a humanitarian theme as groups had to either deliver emergency medicine for a rare disease, save a population from hazardous waste or rescue villagers from a volcano eruption. Thirty minutes were allocated for each exercise. The teams were allowed to have verbal communication for only the first ten minutes during which they were meant to develop a strategy or plan for further action and for non-verbal communication as well. After each exercise, the Coaches, who did not participate but rather observed their groups, were asked to conduct de-briefing sessions. During these sessions, groups discussed their performance and tried to analyze why tasks were or were not achieved. The exercises and the de-briefing sessions were also observed by Mentors and resource persons.

Observations of different groups' performance during the different activities clearly revealed which groups had established procedures prior to moving to action and which had not. Some groups took time to understand the challenge, discussed the best means to solve it and tried to appoint a team leader prior to undertaking the activity. Other groups started to use the tools provided without a clear understanding of their mechanism and without a well defined plan to achieve the goal. These groups usually skipped the "forming" stage of team development and immediately moved to a "storming" stage. Nevertheless, after detailed analysis of their own performance during the de-briefing sessions, the performance of all the groups gradually improved. In addition, the outcome of the exercises was better for those teams where members of two different Fellowship groups helped each other, and saw the different group members not as opponents, but rather as partners; plus they had the flexibility to change leaders mid-exercise so as to better match the leader's skills with the problem at hand.



clearly demonstrated the dynamics of each group and the level of understanding and cooperation that existed between its members. Fellows found these to be eye-opening and extremely fascinating as

everything that had been discussed in the workshop up to that point could be seen in action. Many groups realized that they were not at the stage they had assigned for themselves before the exercises.



*Dr. Michael Fors of Microsoft Corporation*



*The "Treacherous Mountain Pass"*



*Negotiating with "Poisonous Waste"*



## Workshop II on Project Planning and Proposal Writing: Content and Methodology

Workshop II aimed at equipping participants with a basic knowledge of project planning and proposal writing in order to prepare them for work on their team projects. The overall objectives of the workshop were:

- to enhance participants' understanding of project planning;
- to introduce skills in proposal writing; and
- to further develop team projects.

Workshop II started with a presentation on the importance of planning for project success. Participants were exposed to situations where the importance of planning and the ability to articulate a project's goals and objectives play a crucial role in ensuring project sponsorship and success. The session presented project planning as a basic tool for translating ideas into reality for organizational success. It emphasized that in order to make an idea understood it is necessary that the presentation about the project idea be designed in a way that builds a healthy relationship between presenters and the audience, which eventually influences the decision on the project itself.

Participants were then introduced to a project worksheet as a tool to better articulate the project idea at a high-level. Two 2008 Coaches were requested to present their personal experiences in filling

out the project worksheets step by step with interactive discussion from the group. Once the tool was understood, all groups were asked to fill out the worksheet for their Fellowship's team projects. This exercise allowed additional time for Fellows to think on their team project more carefully. Most of the groups finalized their team project during this exercise.

The workshop then continued with the elements of a project proposal. In order to better understand what a proposal should reflect, the concept of fundraising and different types of fundraising were introduced as well as the important question of 'why do people/organizations give?' It was highlighted that if an institution seeks funds it has first to clearly understand its own objectives and needs and, based on that, identify suitable people/organizations which are willing and ready to assist. "Friends-raising" before fundraising is important as it develops trust between the potential recipient and donor. Participants were also reminded that in order to achieve their objectives, organizations should not limit fundraising to financial aid, but include all possible types of support, like in-kind contributions, partnership and others.

The key concepts and components for a proposal to be effective were explained. Participants were first asked to sit in their groups and define the terms 'goal' and 'objective'. Then, each group had to identify the goals and objectives for their team projects. Emphasis was made on the importance of the close relationship between goals, objectives and activities in order to achieve them.



*Prof. Leo Zonn of the University of Texas at Austin*



*UNITAR's Mr. Sabahuddin Sokout outlining key concepts of proposals*



*Group work*



*Presenting to peers*

An explanation on effective project design addressed the topics of project input, output and its impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries. It also underlined the importance of demonstrating sustainability of a project in any proposal. The discussion continued with the identification of the different components of a project budget, its possible modifications throughout the project cycle as well as the ways to handle these modifications. The critical topic of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was also mentioned as an important component of a proposal to ensure that the organization is serious in its actions.

Sessions on proposal writing and fundraising helped participants to better understand funding proposal requirements, as well as donor expectations and the thinking behind decisions to invest.

Nearly all participants indicated that the topics were highly relevant to their job responsibilities and Afghanistan's current situation. Since the workshop provided a very thorough overview of all aspects of project planning and proposal writing, it offered a number of valuable insights for many with extensive experience in this area.

Finally it is important to note that the workshop was jointly delivered by Dr. Zonn and one of the Afghan resource persons, Mr. Sabahuddin Sokout. The collaboration was appreciated by the Fellows not only because they were pleased to see former fellows in the role of resource persons in the case of both Dr. Saljuqi and Mr. Sokout throughout the Dehradun events, but also because Afghan experiences and perspectives were better grasped.

## Organization of Workshops

For a brief glance on how the curriculum and planning links the three workshops through a Fellowship Cycle please see **Box 4**.

The 2008 workshops I and II were organized in partnership with the Wildlife Institute of India and with the help of other UNITAR partners in Afghanistan, Japan and India<sup>2</sup>. The WII organized study visits to Mussoorie, as well as to its own premises and the Forest Research Institute (FRI). Additional activities included a study visit to Qutb Minar in Delhi. These study visits highlighted the progress India has made in protecting the environment and preserving its biodiversity and cultural heritage, which could be a useful case study for Afghanistan where these areas are still in the early stages of development.

All workshop sessions were conducted in a facilitation format with short presentations interspersed with Q&A and follow-up. Many sessions were accompanied by physical activities – moving from one section of the room to another, changing seats (and partners in each group), thus keeping participants alert and engaged. This facilitated active interaction, outside of groups formed at the start of the Fellowship, exposing participants to different perspectives encouraging them to learn from one another.

Each day an After Action Review (AAR) was conducted where participants were asked to briefly present on the most important subject, a 'jewel', learned during the previous day. About 12-15 participants were able to make brief presentations during these AARs. From the second day

<sup>2</sup> The Afghan Civil Service Commission and the Embassy of Afghanistan in Tokyo facilitated all preparations, including the issue and extension of service passports. Embassies and Consulates of India in Japan, Afghanistan, US, Canada and Singapore expedited visa arrangements. UNITAR delegated most of the logistical arrangements for the workshops to its partner, Wildlife Institute of India, which has once again impressed the participants with its professionalism and quality of the assistance.



onwards all AARs and de-briefings were conducted by Coaches/Afghan resource persons. In addition, before study trips, all participants were provided with questions to which they were asked to reply during the follow up de-briefing session. While for the visits to the WII and FRI participants were asked to bring back and present something tangible (photos, a leaf, etc) which for them represented the nature of each institution and its mandate; for the visit to Mussorie, participants were asked to comment about the human and natural environment and the interrelation between the two. Organized de-briefings for the study visits were new to the Fellowship, but proved to be an effective tool as it kept participants alert and engaged, while offering a better understanding of the purpose of the study trips.

The Fellows gave an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the workshop organization. The Friendship Dinner hosted by UNITAR and the WII was

attended by representatives of numerous research institutions in Dehradun, and provided an opportunity for the Afghan participants to establish contacts with their Indian colleagues.

The Dehradun event was the best attended thus far according to the number of Mentors, partners and resource persons present. Five Mentors of the four Fellowship groups attended the workshops which allowed for a deeper understanding of the Mentor-Coach-Fellows dynamics and took the relationship within the groups to a higher level. This rich gathering allowed groups to have substantive meetings during and after workshop hours to discuss their concerns, ideas and further steps.

In addition to the Fellowship Community circle, the workshop was briefly attended by the Consul of the Embassy of Afghanistan in India, Mr. Abbas Bashir. Last, but not least, Professor Radha

#### **Box 4. Fellowship Cycle – Structure and Flow**

In the Fellowship cycle, Dehradun is an important turning point. Fellows have by then grasped a basic understanding of their/their organizations' needs; they have also begun to understand the mechanics of the Fellowship at the individual level, and are now ready to move into the next phase of working as a team on a project. The facilitation and team development module aims at accelerating this process by addressing roles and responsibilities as well as team-building; the leadership module discusses the impact of individuals in leadership or fellowship roles, as well as the accumulation of social capital on performance -- concepts and skills required to translate findings from needs assessments into appropriate solutions; and project planning and proposal writing offers two practical tools immediately applicable to the next stage in developing a team project within the Fellowship, or beyond.

Upon return from Dehradun, fellows begin work on the next assignments related to the team project with support from Mentors and Coaches. Their work is further supported by the ongoing webseminar series which offers training sessions on topics related to the team project assignments such as a further discussion on practical tools to ensure performance in organizations, and skills for developing training as a capacity-building tool.

Finally the training and project work culminates in the final meeting in Hiroshima. Fellows present their reports on team projects, after which the workshop focuses on the **process of implementation** of an organization development or change project using the Fellows' projects as case studies. The workshop ends with a reassessment of teamwork within the groups and how the facilitation and teambuilding skills learned in Dehradun were useful, or not, and a working session on how concepts learned within the Fellowship will be useful or applicable in the Fellows' work environments.



Kumar, member of the UNITAR Board of Trustees and the Director of the Nelson Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution at the Jamia Millia Islamia University, attended the workshops' closing session, and gave a brief talk on the reality of conflicts and their reasons.

### Alumni Involvement

Six Coaches, graduates of previous Fellowship Cycles and each responsible for overseeing a group of Fellows throughout the current Cycle were in attendance. During the workshops, Coaches worked closely with their groups, Mentors and the resource persons on exercises and assignments. Also, two resource persons from Afghanistan, UNITAR's former Coaches, conducted training sessions during the workshops. This practice was highly rated by all participants as it showed true skills transfer from the international to the national levels. In addition, every day two different Coaches/Afghan resource persons ably conducted the AAR, which gave them exposure to different aspects of facilitation.

The meeting between UNITAR staff and Coaches/Afghan resource persons on the overall experience with the Fellowship in a new capacity was organized. Most of the Coaches did not face problems with their groups of Fellows, however, there were a few difficult cases for which some advice and recommendations were provided by the rest of the group. In addition a separate discussion on the newly established association of the UNITAR alumni, the Afghan Consultancy, Training and Research Association (ACTRA), took place not only within the close circle of Coaches, Mentors and resource persons, but ideas from the whole Fellowship group were also requested (**Box 5**).

The programme also benefited from the active and supportive HO alumni network at large (the workshop venues and preparations were made possible by the commitment and support of UNITAR's alumni from the Wildlife Institute of India).

Other alumni from India attended the Friendship dinner and had an opportunity to be linked into a bigger UNITAR alumni network.

### Preparations for Workshop III in Hiroshima

Throughout the workshops and especially at their conclusion, Fellows were given a briefing on the requirements for Assignments II and III, to be completed as preparation for Hiroshima. Both assignments are group assignments. Assignment II is to develop a brief concept paper for the team project, which should clearly demonstrate the *what, why* and *how* of the planned project. Fellows had multiple opportunities to discuss their possible team projects and work on project worksheets. Assignment II is considered as a simple step to lead to Assignment III which includes the submission of a written report and a formal presentation on the **detailed** plan for the team project, a key requirement for completing the Fellowship. Assignment III also requires the development of a training curriculum, if training is chosen as a team project, and project proposal, if the project plan included a fundraising component. Detailed guidelines and supplemental readings were provided to assist the Fellows' work on the assignments.

### Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony took place on 13 July 2008. It was addressed by Dean Vinod Mathur and Dr. Sathyakumar on behalf of the WII, followed by Dr. Sharapiya Kakimova on behalf of UNITAR, Professor Jennifer Hatfield on behalf of the Mentors, Mr. Gul Afghan Saleh on behalf of the Coaches and Ms. Najla Sabri on behalf of the Fellows. Professor Radha Kumar made the keynote address during the closing ceremony while touching upon conflict and peace issues, subjects which are pertinent to Afghanistan and which provoked deep interest within the group. The address was so resonant that UNITAR has already received requests to continue



this discussion in the future. In addition to providing the group photo, and small tokens for each participant, the WII made a very special gesture by re-awarding the diploma of completion for a WII course to one of the 2008 Fellows, Mr. Jan Hekmatjo, who graduated from the WII more than 20 years ago and had lost his diploma during the conflict years. He is one of the few WII alumni in Afghanistan. The diploma award was a highlight of the closing ceremony as it also provided a deeper connection between the UNITAR and WII networks.

After the formal ceremony the Fellowship community had the opportunity for informal exchanges during the travel to and stay in Delhi.

### Evaluations

...“we are a living nation and we can change and we could bring the change that the world expects from us and we expect

*from ourselves. In a few words I could say that this course was few days of planting hopes for the future of Afghanistan - this was a project with all the Tuckman stages and I can see it quickly reaching the norming and performing stage”...<sup>3</sup>*

The energy and excitement generated from the Dehradun gathering can be measured from the fact that in addition to the evaluation questionnaires, we have received substantive individual reports with recommendations from many Fellows, and detailed notes from Coaches and Mentors with valuable insights for the workshops and the Fellowship at large. The challenge of course is to compile and consolidate these inputs into a coherent whole and we have attempted to do so below:

### Workshops and Methodology

Evaluation of the workshops was overwhelmingly positive. Many Fellows noted that practical exercises introduced during the workshop, especially games on

#### **Box 5. Afghan Consultancy, Training and Research Association (ACTRA)**

The ACTRA, an association of Afghan professionals trained by UNITAR, was established in March 2008 after a long consultation process between UNITAR and its alumni network and complicated judicial procedures. Since the launch of the Fellowship one thing has been clear; that the Fellowship in its current format cannot be sustained indefinitely by UNITAR, and therefore the primary long-term goal of the programme has been the establishment of a core-group of like-minded and trained Afghan professionals who can act as a resource for leadership in capacity-building and development. ACTRA is the formal realization of that goal. Although very much in its infancy, it is driven by the commitment and aspirations of its members to be a think-tank of professionals from various fields, functioning as a network and support unit for training and research in Afghanistan.

The ACTRA has already started its activities by co-facilitating with UNITAR the web seminar series on Human Resource Development and Management, having already conducted two seminars to-date, with three more to go.

The discussion on the ACTRA’s goals, objectives and activities which started in the classroom during the workshop, will continue through e-mail correspondence and will be further expanded to the whole Fellowship Community in Afghanistan and around the world.

For more information please visit:

[www.unitar.org/hiroshima/afghancorner/association/index.htm](http://www.unitar.org/hiroshima/afghancorner/association/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Quote from one of the follow up reports from Fellows. All quotations used from now on in the text are from the collected questionnaires from Fellows and Coaches or follow up reports from all parties involved.



Member of the UNITAR Board of Trustees  
Professor Radha Kumar addresses the  
closing ceremony

team challenges, helped them analyze the leadership and team work in the Fellowship as well as within their respective organizations.

Nearly all participants indicated that workshops I & II were well designed in terms of their structure and content and that the topics were highly relevant to their job responsibilities and Afghanistan's current situation. Two participants though mentioned that simplification of language used in some cases is required while another three identified that the content of workshop I should have been simplified in general as sometimes it was difficult to catch the meaning. One participant felt that workshop I did not have enough sessions on leadership, but rather on performance, while another participant felt that workshop II missed an important session on project management. Three participants also mentioned that time management of workshop II could be improved and more time should be allocated for the subject in the future.

In terms of **methodology**, lectures and training materials, nearly all participants noted that it was good as lectures were interspersed with practical exercises throughout and allowed participants to work on their Fellowship team projects as well. Some participants though mentioned that more background reading materials would be necessary for the future. One of the points which came out across most of the collected questionnaires is that

participants highly appreciated the involvement of two Afghan resource persons during the workshops which was referred to as 'true capacity building'. One Fellow characterized the methodology used as, 'very different than all other workshops which I have participated in before, with lots of activities. I especially appreciated the case studies at the end of each lecture'. However, some participants felt that sometimes lectures were long and did not have enough exercises in it. One Fellow recommended having pre- and post- workshops tests in order to evaluate the gained knowledge better.

Most of the participants identified that workshops topics were **relevant** to their present job responsibilities and many indicated that they will apply the lessons learned in their offices upon return to Afghanistan. "The topics were relevant to our needs, because we did not understand leadership and we did not know at all about our work styles, and standard works styles. We have never heard about social capital. Now we know all and can apply it". One Fellow noted that the topics were relevant "*because the many examples used were the same problems of my company*". Another one raised the point that for her the topics were relevant "*as I am part of a team in my office and by now after the workshop, I know the role of myself better and the importance of communication, trust (social capital), etc. The workshop showed me how leaders and team are bound to each other and can't work without each others' cooperation*". However, it was requested to have more practical applications of leadership and followship principles for their organizations, while a Mentor suggested that "*the didactic components were strong but could be strengthened by using the experience of the participants*". As Afghanistan gets a lot of funding for its reconstruction efforts, most of the participants deal with the proposal writing and/or project management in their current jobs and therefore were appreciative of workshop II topics' relevance to their work.



Facilitation and workshop materials were rated highly by the participants. Using different tools like video clips and exercises made workshops more practical and helped participants to practice acquired knowledge. Team challenges were highly rated by most of the participants for demonstrating the weaknesses and strengths of the Fellowship groups and helping them understand groups' performances. The recommendation was made to record exercises in the future which can allow groups to re-visit their groups dynamics and styles during in-class debriefs and reviews.

Participants also highly rated study visits and the keynote address at the closing session as important additions to the classroom based learning. The presence of many UNITAR Mentors, partners and resource persons was greatly appreciated by all.

Many pointed out that active participation of all participants in discussions and exercises created a good learning environment which led to the building of social capital within the group along with building high motivation.

#### Logistics and Organization

Despite the overall positive evaluation of the workshops' content and methodology, many participants indicated that the tight schedule of the workshops resulted in not enough allocation of time for preparation and reading materials. As one Mentor put it *"the program was very full, there was little time for reflection or what I call "Open Spaces" for small group dialogue on a particular point"*. Transportation between Dehradun and Delhi was considered to be quite tough and it was strongly recommended to be re-considered in the future. Participants also requested that accommodation and meals in Dehradun be improved. Internet access at the hotel was problematic almost throughout.

In short the workshops were positively reviewed overall, and provided many

valuable lessons to be taken into consideration by UNITAR for the Fellowship's continuation in future cycles.

#### Mid-term evaluation of the Fellowship

In addition to the workshops, a mid-term Fellowship evaluation was conducted.

**Assignment I:** Fellows found Assignment I a valuable learning and investigative tool to understand personal, organizational and sectoral needs and concerns. One of the Fellows comments that *"It was a very useful tool for me and I learnt a lot going through the process because it was my first exposure to such an exercise"*. Many Fellows pointed out that it was the first time they had conducted a needs assessment, and that although initially it was a bit difficult to understand whether they were on the right track or not, comments from Coaches and Mentors helped a lot.

While in some groups, team project selections did not take time, others had to meet and discuss it several times. Groups with Fellows from different organizations had some difficulties in identifying a team project, but after consultations they managed to make the choice. One technique of selecting a team project, mentioned in the questionnaire, was to list all weaknesses and challenges from Fellows' organizations, and then identify the common problems raised in all needs assessments which could be addressed in the project.

Many participants do not foresee any problems to fulfilling the Fellowship requirements from now on. However, time constraints is one of the obstacles



*Participants with UNITAR staff*



mentioned.

**Web Seminars:** Web seminars, the new initiative of the 2008 Cycle, were evaluated by participants as “important and useful”. Most of the participants mentioned that web seminars contributed to their knowledge and understanding of human resource management. However, many participants indicated the necessity for more time allocation for the web seminars. In addition some technical problems faced were identified as a barrier to better results. Participants also listed topics of preference that they would like to see addressed in the remaining three sessions. The 2 topics most requested in the order of preference are (a) organizational development and change tools; and (b) development of training as a capacity building tool. There are others which make the list but are quite behind in terms of votes.

**Audio-web conferences (AWC):** are admitted to be a good communication tool only when there are no internet problems. This year only few groups benefited from the AWCs as most of the time there were connectivity issues, so time was spent on trying to solve those problems rather than interact with Mentors who were patiently waiting for their groups to come on-line. Of course e-mail communication is considered as the most useful tool for communication until now.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>4</sup>:

- Provide training in Afghanistan provinces where security is better or other neighbouring countries like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan or others;
- Provide more materials on workshop subjects in advance;
- In addition to presentations, provide background materials for topics;
- Use simple language during presentations;
- Continue encouraging active participation from all;
- Ensure continuity of the overall themes

- across different modules;
- Make video recordings of team-building exercises ‘for in-class dissection’;
- Use more Afghan group’s experiences/case studies to strengthen the topics content and to connect it to the Afghanistan perspective;
- Ensure more practical applications of the workshops’ subjects;
- Connect topics of the workshops not only to the Fellowship framework, but even better to the professional workplace of each Fellow//Coach and see how the topics can contribute to their work environment and performance;
- Continue involving Afghan alumni in the delivery and conduct of workshops;
- Allocate more time for each subject;
- Allocation of more time for “open spaces” for ‘small group dialog on a particular point’ (1-2 hours per day during official workshop hours, not after);
- Increase usage of self reflection exercise allowing participants to better understand the contents;
- Increase number of exercises;
- Include cultural session on India by the partner institution to improve cooperation and level of involvement from all sides;
- Improve means of transportation and food;
- Request all participants use laptops during the sessions to provide an end of day report/reflection on the day. In addition, no paper will be wasted.

Finally, the opening keynote address by the Director of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office, Ms. Nassrine Azimi, was mentioned by many Afghans in evaluations, as well as subsequent communications, as the most inspiring and appropriate note with which to launch the proceedings in Dehradun. The quote that was referred to by all participants as the main message was “*The pull of the future is stronger than the push of the past*”, which resonated with the group as it strives to change not only its future, but the very future of Afghanistan.

Sharapiya Kakimova, Hiroshima  
Humaira Kamal, Phoenix  
August 2008

<sup>4</sup> All recommendations are based on the analysis of the questionnaires and follow up reports.

## Notes

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