

Designing and Implementing Training Programmes

Some General Considerations

Characteristics of adult learners

Many if not most of the trainees in CYCI training programmes are adults. In designing training programmes for adults, it is important to bear in mind that adult learners have specific characteristics that affect the way they learn (see Shah and Pathak, 1994).

These characteristics may include:

- **a highly developed self-image:** adults tend to know who they are and what they want, and think of themselves as self-directing. They need to be seen as unique individuals, treated with respect, and where possible, directly involved in creating their own learning experiences, since this helps them to acquire a sense of ownership of the knowledge they have gained. Adults do not wish to be treated like children and if they fear or feel that this may happen, an obstacle to learning will be created. Efforts should be made to build the confidence and enthusiasm of trainees at an early stage.
- **life experience:** adults bring to the training a rich variety of lived experiences which can serve as a source of learning, both for themselves and others. Trainers should seek to build on the past experiences of trainees. However, if such experience has led to the entrenchment of fixed attitudes and behaviour patterns, this may present an obstacle to learning (Shah and Pathak, 1994). Trainers need to be flexible in their approach and to encourage trainees to be flexible as well.
- **readiness to learn:** adults may be highly motivated and ready to learn, because they understand the purpose and use of the

information and skills they are being taught. On the other hand, some adults may feel that they are too old or mature to learn new things, which again would be an obstacle to effective training (Shah and Pathak, 1994). A participatory approach of 'learning by doing' will help to satisfy those who are eager to learn and provide encouragement to those who need it.

- **desire to apply knowledge immediately:** whereas children tend to think of their education as a preparation for the future, adults need to see the relevance and practicality of what they are being taught immediately, and to put that knowledge to use as quickly as possible (Shah and Pathak, 1994). Trainers should emphasise the practical nature of the work and avoid tests or exams that may promote a fear of failure.
- **desire for feedback:** adults respond positively to the provision of feedback on their progress in learning. Trainers should seek to provide feedback at all stages of the training.

Training in different cultures

Some trainers who have been successful in one culture may experience difficulty in another. The main reason for this is that they are unable to adjust to new learning environments. There are several environmental and cultural factors which can dictate whether training will be a success or a failure. Among the basic considerations when planning training in a new environment are the following:

- **varying literacy levels:** the level of local educational standards may vary and this could significantly impact upon any

planned training programs. Presentation styles, language levels, training techniques must be in line with the literacy levels and experiences of the group.

- **social, political and economic structural changes:** the trends which affect work in countries where these changes are frequent must be taken into consideration by trainers.
- **work attitudes and behaviours:** these may differ from country to country. The trainer must consider the value systems and standards for recognition.
- **varied learning habits:** trainees may have acquired different learning habits owing to the different approaches employed by educational and training institutions in different countries.

Training programme design and implementation takes place in four main phases:

1. design and development
2. organisation and preparation
3. programme delivery
4. evaluation and modification.

Design and Development

Design and development of the training programme takes place in three main steps:

- target group identification and needs assessment
- setting objectives
- programme development.

Target group identification and needs assessment

Target group identification and needs assessment go hand in hand. Training is intended to fill a particular need, e.g. to build knowledge of CYCI implementation. The target group is therefore all those who require this

knowledge but do not have it. Training is also aimed at particular target groups, e.g. Ministry of Youth Affairs and NGO staff. Needs assessment is therefore necessary to determine which members of these target groups require what kind of training. For example, some NGO staff may be knowledgeable about micro-credit accounting procedures, but not about providing basic training to beneficiaries. In this case, a needs assessment would determine that 'training of trainers' is the primary requirement.

Conducting a needs assessment entails finding out what the current capabilities of the target group are. This can be achieved by such techniques as observation, interviews, questionnaires and task analysis. Current staff capabilities are then compared with the capabilities required to implement the CYCI. A checklist of CYCI staff training needs is included as hand-out E in Appendix A of this module.

It is essential that the training programme be designed to meet the specific needs of the target groups.

Setting objectives

The training programme should include a clear statement of what trainees should be able to achieve at the conclusion of the programme. Ideally, it should also state expected levels of performance and the process for measuring this performance. Clear objectives serve to guide trainers in planning and developing activities, selecting appropriate equipment, materials and facilities and developing evaluation standards.

Programme development

In planning an effective training programme, the most commonly used technique is to divide it into units or lessons.

Lesson plans: a lesson may be defined as a self-contained unit of work which is usually flexible and adaptable to most training situations. In designing a lesson plan, the focus

should be what facts, principles, concepts and skills are to be taught, how they are to be taught and how the training is to be assessed. Lesson plans ensure that important materials are not omitted and greatly assist in time management. They are also yardsticks for assessing the effectiveness and professionalism of trainers.

There are three basic components to a lesson plan:

- *a brief introduction* stating what the lesson is about and what trainees will be expected to do. It includes the lesson title, objectives, relevance to the trainees' learning, required materials, activities and timetable;
- *a section on learning activities* which identifies appropriate instructional methods, arranges the teaching points in sequence and shows how learning should be assessed; and
- *a summary* indicating the anticipated objectives to be achieved and assignments which would reinforce what was learnt during the lesson and to assist trainees in applying what they learnt to their particular situations.

Timetable: each lesson plan should include a timeframe within which trainees will be required to complete an activity or go through the content (with provision for recesses). In addition, the programme as a whole requires a structured timeframe. In estimating the setting up a timetable, account should be taken of the type of content, the amount of detail, any possible learning difficulties, instructional methods and strategy and common group characteristics.

The presentation and format of lesson plans varies according to the experience and style of individual trainers as well as the nature of the exercise. Experienced trainers may be able to utilise abbreviated lesson plans while those less experienced trainers may prefer very detailed and clear-cut plans.

Selecting Training Methods

In designing a training lesson and developing a lesson plan, appropriate training strategies should be selected. The strategy details the particular methodology employed to facilitate the process of learning. In general, a participatory approach is recommended, in which as far as possible trainees 'learn by doing'. A wide spectrum of training methods maintain variety and interest, motivate trainees and allow for their full participation.

Strategies that can be employed include:

- **lectures and demonstrations** – although these are not very participatory methods, they are probably the most commonly used. They employ a one-way system of communication where trainees listen and take notes, occasionally asking questions. Interaction between the group and trainer takes place at the end of the lecture. If the objective is to convey information then this approach may be the most effective, particularly for introducing new subjects since short presentations may serve to stimulate the participants and arouse interest. Lectures present a manageable alternative where time is limited or there is a large group of trainees. The skills of the trainer ultimately determine the effectiveness of this method. The demonstration method is usually highly visual and verbal. It involves showing trainees how some task or procedure should be carried out. Trainees are given the opportunity to practice it with feedback from the trainer.
- **group activities:** trainees work together on tasks and share experiences and difficulties under the guidance of the trainer. The most common methods of group learning are through group discussions and brainstorming. Owing to its informal nature, the group discussion method facilitates good interaction, involvement and retention of information by trainees. In

exploring issues, comparing views and sharing problems, trainees may experience a change in attitude. In brainstorming, trainees generate as many ideas possible in a short time, sharing with the group whatever ideas come to mind, without interrupting the flow of ideas with criticism or discussion. The creative principle of brainstorming is that ideas stimulate the development of other ideas.

- **structured experiences:** these include case studies, role plays and business games. The case study method presents a real-life situation which trainees study and discuss in depth in an effort to diagnose problems and arrive at solutions. In using this method trainees gain new insight into their own ways of thinking, talking, listening, and making decisions. In role plays learning situations are acted out by trainees who put themselves in the place of the characters in an imaginary situation that simulates real life experiences. Business games focus on management principles: groups of trainees are given information on a company and are required to assume various roles in that company, make decisions and take actions. The probable outcomes of the groups' decisions are then assessed. In-basket exercises involve giving trainees a varied set of documentation similar to that with which they deal on a daily basis. Each trainee is required to take action and make decisions based on the content of each document. Results are then evaluated and compared.
- **individual learning,** in which trainees learn not through group interactions or with the direct assistance of the facilitator, but through independent study in which they are merely supervised. This method is usually limited in scope and is most effective if alternated with other training methods.

Selection of the training method determines how the objectives within a particular lesson

will be achieved. The method chosen will depend on factors such as the facilities, objectives, time, size of the group and the trainers' experience.

Organisation and Preparation

Planning is an important element in organising the training programme and provides the foundation for the programme's success. It includes the planning and execution of effective marketing and promotion to recruit prospective trainees, operating within a budget and selecting and organising premises, facilities, equipment and materials. It is also important when organising the training that the calendar be consulted for public holidays and major sporting or other events, since if a training activity coincides with such events participation may be affected.

Recruitment and marketing/promotion

Recruitment and promotion are directed towards the target groups identified in the previous phase. To ensure that those selected to participate in the programme are willing to learn and will benefit from it, it is advisable that the individual profiles of prospective trainees be reviewed before confirming their participation.

Promotion of the programme can be done through the media, personal contact and/or direct mail. Cost is a significant factor; strategies to maintain low promotional costs may include personal contacts with key persons within target organisations, soliciting sponsorship of advertisements in the media or free ads in local newspapers and radio, and distributing brochures with covering letters to key organisations, followed up by personal visits or telephone calls.

Budgeting

Budgeting is a critical part of the overall organisation process. All training programmes are required to be implemented within the

guidelines of a budget. This is necessary in order to establish appropriate fees (or interest rates, in the case of micro-credit beneficiaries) to be charged to trainees, control expenses and give an indication of a projected profit or loss. Training programmes may be funded by donor agencies which require justification for their inputs. If in preparing budgetary estimates, it is determined that there are insufficient funds for the programme as originally planned, then it is necessary to establish priorities and reduce costs.

Facilities and equipment

Early identification and selection of appropriate venues for conducting training programmes are crucial. Any equipment required must be reserved and necessary arrangements made for accommodation for trainees and facilitators. One way of ensuring that all the necessary items are put in place is to develop an organising checklist which details all actions to be done (e.g. reserve conference rooms in a hotel, rent overhead projectors), the target date for the action and the date it was actually carried out.

In selecting a venue for the training, the physical characteristics of the premises should be considered since they could affect the delivery and impact of the training. Factors to be considered include noise levels, comfort, ventilation, lighting, ease of location, accessibility (including wheelchair access), size of training rooms, availability of audio-visual aids and secretarial services.

Room layout for training activities is another consideration. Seating arrangements which foster face-to-face contact encourage participation and communication, and create an informal environment.

Selecting training aids

Training aids are used to communicate and to stimulate. They may include:

- radio and tape recordings

- illustrations, photographs, charts, diagrams, flip charts, chalkboards, bulletin boards, pictures
- slides, transparencies, filmstrips, videotapes
- books, manuals, handouts, financial statements, pamphlets.

In selecting training aids the following general criteria can be applied:

- aids must be suitable to the interest, maturity and ability of the trainees and the activity
- a balance should be maintained in the aids being used
- aids should not be overused, as they may distract from each other or go over the same ground.

Programme Delivery

Establishing a healthy learning climate

A well-designed, short-term training programme should flow naturally. Under minimal supervision, trainees should be able to move easily from one activity to another and understand the relevance of each activity. A sense of common purpose, shared between trainees and trainer, facilitates effective training. Efforts toward fostering a businesslike approach should motivate trainees to learn and are critical. The trainer should want to instruct and enjoy instructing, should know how people learn, and be flexible.

As part of developing a positive and healthy learning climate, the trainer should become acquainted with trainees. This may be done through personal introductions, use of name tags and placing of name cards on tables. Ice-breaking exercises also help set the stage.

Assessing beneficiary expectations

The trainer should ensure at an early stage that the expectations of trainees match the training

being offered. It may be necessary to modify the training content or style of presentation, or to reorient trainee expectations towards the objectives of the training being offered.

There may also be an element of resistance to the training on the part of beneficiaries, stemming from involuntary attendance, arduous tasks, lack of challenge or interest in the topics, resentment of procedures etc. If such resistance is present, sensitive trainers should attempt to understand its cause and resolve it early in the programme.

Control and discipline

Trainers should always be in control of their training sessions, particularly in short-term training programmes where time is limited. Maintaining discipline requires trainers to show respect for the trainees and for themselves. The trainer needs to establish his or her credibility and gain the respect of the trainees. This can be assisted by showing cheerfulness, enthusiasm and confidence in the subjects and the materials to be used. The trainer's manner of speech should present a positive and friendly image.

Trainers who are able to keep control and maintain discipline:

- understand the needs of trainees and feel secure in their relationships with them
- are able to interpret and enforce rules fairly
- know the subject matter well and are aware of related recent developments
- are sincerely interested in people
- use persuasion, reason and good interpersonal relationships as the basis for their leadership style
- conduct themselves professionally at all times.

Timing

Timing is an important consideration,

especially in short-term training. Each training session should have an allotted timeframe. The point at which deviation from this timeframe should commence, if at all, is a difficult question.

Training is always an intense exercise and it is the normal practice for trainers to attempt to achieve more than usual in a particular time. The impact of such intensity varies from individual to individual and while some may find the challenges of the exercise stimulating and exciting others may become exhausted and agitated, or become impatient with those who take longer to absorb information or occupy a lot of time with questions.

Another factor which must be taken into account is the rate at which the training progresses. In determining the appropriate rate at which activities should be implemented and maintained, it is important to identify the 'high points' and the process of smoothing which follows them. Trainees should not be swamped with a large amount of information which exceeds their attention span. Varying the training methods used can help alleviate this problem.

Evaluation and Modification

Measuring the content, quality and effectiveness of the training programme is of vital importance for the main stakeholders: the trainees, the implementing agency, the trainer and the sponsor or funder of the training.

It is important to check the objectives of trainees against the planned objectives during the early stages of the programme. Trainees are always anxious to get feedback on their performance, accomplishments and any areas where they may have fallen short and this helps to motivate them.

Evaluation is also important to trainers at every stage of the programme. They must monitor trainee progress during the programme and identify the more interesting

and relevant activities, as well as ensure that the pace is not so slow as to create boredom and not so fast that trainees become disoriented and lost.

The implementing agency and the training sponsors are generally interested to know if increased productivity and skills utilisation are achieved as a direct result of the training programmes.

The basis for evaluating the benefits of the training programme is the needs assessment which originally defined the training requirements. Results must be measured against training needs as initially defined, and the system of evaluation must establish whether or not the anticipated goals were achieved. Trainers can also benefit from personal and specific feedback from trainees on the materials, delivery process and methodology.

Evaluation is an ongoing process which should be done throughout all stages, from the design stage, throughout the training programme, at the end of the programme and some time after the end of the programme.

Tools for Evaluation

The most common tools used for measurement, evaluation and diagnosis of training programmes are:

- I. questions and answers;
- II. observation of trainee behaviour;
- III. tests and demonstrations; and
- IV. questionnaires.

These tools are used for making feedback systems an integral part of training design and the learning process.