

# A Strategic Approach to International Development Training

Phase One: Best Practice for Development



**INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
TRAINING**

Algate Enterprises  
in association with the Development Resource Centre

**NOVEMBER 2000**

The overall goal of this project is to improve the quality of development assistance provided by New Zealand international development consultants and practitioners through strategically targeted training and development.

The consultation process undertaken throughout this project indicates agreement by participants that the international development competencies presented in this report constitute an acceptable description. The competencies can have an immediate application both within NZODA and agencies working in the development sector.

There is a high level of diversity of people, views, and approaches within the New Zealand development sector. There is significant potential to directly enhance the ability of practitioners through the development and maintenance of a robust system that supports the application of the competencies and maintains their currency throughout the sector. An inter-agency approach to implementing a coordinated training strategy and overseeing the uptake of the competencies is recommended. It is envisaged that an increasingly cohesive, definitive notion of the development sector and its requirements as a profession will be assisted through this approach.

International momentum towards partner-owned development strategies along with the findings of recent DAC and NZODA reviews indicate the 2000 review of NZODA is timely. Competency based training and development processes are most effective when there are clear and consistent links to established strategy. The NZODA review provides an opportunity to integrate the competencies and leading edge training and development practice into the framework of NZODA. Incorporation and modelling of best development practice through internal systems, processes and structures has the potential to significantly impact on the quality of development assistance provided through NZODA.

The review also presents an opportunity to address an avoidable internal tension between diplomatic, trade and development orientations.

One feature of development work noted at all levels through this process is that change is regular, significant and unpredictable. The recommendations in this report are designed to enhance the capacity of individual practitioners and of NZODA to be responsive to change, and to deliver outcomes that achieve results with partners.

## **MFAT adopt competencies for training strategy**

It is recommended that MFAT adopt the competencies presented in this report as a foundation for the international development practitioner training strategy, given the level of endorsement expressed by participants in this analysis. (Section 4.1)

For the purposes of this strategy, it is recommended that MFAT agrees that training be regarded as an ongoing developmental process which encompasses a broad range of learning methods and delivery mechanisms. (Section 3.1)

It is recommended that MFAT recognise that the competencies described are for the purposes of designing training rather than as a benchmark for appropriate development practice. (Section 4.3)

That due to limited interest or value emerging through the needs analysis, it is recommended that MFAT does not pursue categorising certain aspects of development work as specialist competencies at this stage. (Section 4.2)

## **MFAT initiates training coordination in sector**

It is recommended that MFAT(DEV) initiates a process that brings key personnel from MFAT(DEV), DRC, CID, CNZ together annually to plan the year's programme of training in line with development strategies and goals, prior to the budget cycle, and at least quarterly for monitoring and adjusting plans accordingly. The purpose of such a process is to coordinate events and approaches, in order to maximise gains from the allocation of resources and collective activity. The practice should be inclusive and consultative and in itself demonstrate development practice. (Section 7.2)

It is recommended that input and participation by employing or contracting agencies or their representatives be regarded by MFAT as central to the design and implementation of a successful training strategy, given their responsibility for ensuring personnel have the required skills and abilities for the development work required of them. (Section 3.2)

It is recommended that MFAT (DEV) does not pursue the concept of facilitating the emergence of a formal professional association for development practitioners. (Section 7.1)

Given that registering the competencies as unit standards on the NZQA framework is not going to achieve the expressed needs of the sector, it is recommended that MFAT not pursue this as part of the training strategy. (Section 4.5)

## **MFAT(Dev) leads competency uptake**

It is recommended that MFAT integrates the competencies identified in this project into MFAT(DEV) systems and procedures as a means of bringing about change, modelling development principles, and achieving outcomes as agreed with partners. (Section 4.3)

It is recommended that MFAT clearly signals through policy and practice, an obligation and commitment to ensuring that the skills and abilities of practitioners funded to undertake programme work match the needs identified as priorities by partner agencies and governments. (Section 2.2)

It is recommended that relevant strategic management documents are used consistently to inform decisions as to training needs and priorities. (Section 6.1)

It is recommended that MFAT agree that the design, development and implementation of the coordinated training strategy incorporate infrastructure, management and development processes (including those within MFAT) which encourage a continuous process of contesting ideas, evaluation, feedback and learning throughout the development practice system. (Section 6.2)

It is recommended that MFAT invest further in monitoring, analysing and creating access to information which will impact directly and indirectly on training and on the quality of development assistance, including:

- monitoring international trends in development policy and practice to identify effective and innovative models, practices and processes
- analysing global trends and reflecting the regional context in the identification of training related requirements particular to the Pacific and Asia
- learning from field experience to ensure policy and practice build on this experience. (Section 5.2)

### Recommendation for the NZODA review team

It is recommended that the NZODA review team identify mechanisms to enable:

- full integration of the competencies identified through the BPFDP project into the Ministry's internal operations
- enhancement of professional development career pathways within the Ministry
- integration of leading edge training and development practice into the framework of NZODA (DEV) including competency based needs assessment and training design, flexible learning, problem solving, and mentoring.
- infrastructure, management and development processes which encourage a continuous process of contesting ideas, evaluation, feedback and learning throughout the development practice system. (Section 2.3)

## 1. Project Objectives and Methodology

### 1.1 Project Objectives

This project has three phases, each one building on the former:

- Phase 1** needs analysis and development of a competency framework (Best Practice For Development BPFDF)
- Phase 2** development of a national strategic approach to international development training
- Phase 3** implementation of this strategic approach

This report presents findings from Phase 1.

Objectives for Phase 1:

1. Assess the potential training and professional development needs of NZ international development practitioners and consultants over the next 15 years, including modalities for resourcing downstream training and professional development initiatives.
2. Develop a competency framework for NZ international development practitioners and consultants, and recommend options for an institutional framework of responsibility for monitoring the competency framework, and ensuring its currency and relevance to the international development sector.
3. Document and record ideas and information which emerge during the needs analysis process which inform planning for Phases 2 and 3.

Outputs addressed by this report:

- core competencies required by all international development practitioners and consultants
- specialist competencies required by international development practitioners and consultants
- a description of expected development trends in the international development sector over the next 15 years, and the impact on practitioners and the required competencies
- modalities for resourcing downstream training and professional development initiatives
- a benchmark for desired performance of international development practitioners and consultants
- options for an institutional framework of responsibility for monitoring the competency framework, and ensuring its currency and relevance to the international development sector
- ideas and information which emerged during the needs analysis process which will inform Phase 2.

### 1.2 Scope

In undertaking the work described, much information has been gathered that will contribute to the next stages of this project. While the focus of this phase is the identification of competencies, the potential value of the competencies is derived from the system in which

those competencies are embedded. As a result, the scope of work completed so far includes the presentation of information that will inform Phase 2 of this project, and other matters which, if omitted, would have an adverse effect on the overall outcome.

### 1.3 Methodology and Approach

The methodology used for this stage of the project has been based on the principle of participation.

From the outset the project, terms of reference and scope of work to be undertaken have been developed through a consultative and participatory process.

A steering committee comprising members of MFAT, DRC, and Algate was established to oversee progress of the project, to contribute to project developments, and to address issues as they arose. As a group we have aimed to work collaboratively using the project to build respective capabilities in pursuit of a meaningful partnership for the contract. The steering committee has completed its task successfully, although the constraints resulting from workloads and requirements, personal matters, and time pressures experienced during stage 1 have limited the experience of partnership and capacity building intended for this project. It is anticipated that stage 2 will offer another opportunity to further develop this approach, given the significance of modelling development principles in action as part of this process.

A needs analysis workshop was held in April 2000 using action research - action methods, simulation, and discussion to produce data as a stimulus and initial point of reference. The workshop results were distributed for validation through a workbook.

Interviews and focus groups were used to gather further data on specific areas highlighted during the workshop and literature search. The Development Resource Centre has undertaken extensive searches for literature relevant to this project. Resources and literature have been sourced internationally and researched and analysed for relevance to this project.

Written submissions and email responses have been received nationally from a range of sources. An internet discussion group was established and operated minimally for a short period of time.

### 1.4 Participants

Participants in this stage of the project have been drawn from a wide range of locations and work situations including private sector companies and consultants, NGOs, voluntary sector, MFAT (DEAP, DEV) personnel, NZ development practitioners on contracts, development funding agencies in UK and Ireland, training providers, universities, unions, and nationals from Pacific and Asian countries.

## 2. Consideration of Policy Context

The overall goal of this project is to improve the quality of development assistance provided by New Zealand international development consultants and practitioners through strategically targeted training and development. To do this meaningfully, requires reference to the current international and local policy context and associated processes that are impacting on the development work New Zealand practitioners undertake internationally.

### 2.1 International Policy Context

This discussion takes place within the current New Zealand and international context where reducing poverty is regarded as a priority. The gap between rich and poor is large and growing, in education and health outcomes as well as incomes. The latest assessment undertaken by the World Bank indicates that “unless current trends are reversed, the broadly supported *International Development Goals* - including reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (less than one dollar a day) by 2015 - will not be met.”<sup>1</sup>

In recent years there have been significant international policy initiatives strongly advocating aid approaches which work with partnerships, target poverty, and build ownership by governments through strategies and mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and country owned poverty reduction strategic plans (PRSPs). The Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative II launched at the G7 1999 Summit in Berlin in mid-1999 made debt relief conditional on the formulation of a poverty reduction framework diagnosing the domestic poverty situation plus policies and budgets to address it, and has been followed by a range of proposed actions by the World Bank and the IMF to help meet this objective.

These are not new concepts in development work, and there is a degree of cynicism locally and internationally as to the ability of agencies to translate these words into action without recourse to undue external influence over the use of aid. However it is generally agreed that approaches used in the past have not been successful in achieving real results in targeting poverty, and there is increasing momentum internationally in the uptake and implementation of these initiatives.

*“The year 2000 marks a transformation in efforts to implement national poverty reduction strategies. The perceptions of the development cooperation agencies and the international financial institutions have evolved in recent years. As their poverty reduction goals have become more serious, they have come to recognise that external conditionality is not a very effective tool for persuading governments to adopt policies of which they are unconvinced. The challenge now is to stimulate domestic policy-making towards the emergence of locally generated strategies.”<sup>2</sup>*

The concept of PRSPs and associated strategies is that country authorities, through the broad participation of civil society, develop plans which diagnose obstacles to poverty reduction and growth; develop policies and objectives; monitor progress, and identify the amount of external support, both financial and technical, required to implement the strategy.

The PRSP process aims to:

- (i) strengthen country ownership of poverty reduction strategies;
- (ii) broaden representation of civil society in strategy design;
- (iii) improve coordination among development partners; and
- (iv) focus the analytical, advisory and financial resources of the international community on achieving results in reducing poverty.<sup>3</sup>

These aims present a challenge to current practice in many countries. Interviews with the Social Development Division of DFID (Department for International Development) in the United Kingdom as part of this project revealed the Department has undertaken a significant organisational reorientation in response to the PRSP process. This has included a review and updating of their staff competency framework to assure a skill match with the new approach.

## 2.2 Current Identification of Needs

It is the assertion of this project that agencies working at any level in cooperation with developing countries have an obligation to ensure the skills and abilities of practitioners funded to undertake programme work, match the needs identified as priorities by partner agencies in developing countries.

Interviews with practitioners and consultants throughout this process indicate that some and possibly many programmes and projects are guided by what the practitioner can offer rather than being driven by priority needs. This observation is reinforced by the analysis undertaken by Southern NGO International Forum on Capacity Building:

*"Many 'suppliers' of capacity building have emerged and they have begun to define the content and methods of capacity building. SNGOs, individually and collectively, are finding it difficult to articulate their demands for capacity building and negotiate high quality and relevant capacity building interventions. There is a need to establish quality benchmarks for such services and apply an accreditation system for providers of capacity building. It is also felt that capacity enhancement of capacity building providers is a crucial issue that is currently not being addressed... In the context of changing roles for different development actors, it is felt that capacity building needs for future effectiveness of donors and NNGOs should also be seriously addressed."*<sup>4</sup>

## Recommendation

That MFAT signals clearly through policy and practice an obligation and commitment to ensuring the skills and abilities of practitioners funded to undertake programme work match the needs identified as priorities by partner agencies and governments.

## 2.3 New Zealand Context

Implementation of new international poverty alleviation strategies will inevitably impact directly and indirectly on New Zealand development practice. The recent DAC review of NZODA referred to the ‘international convergence towards partner country-owned strategies’ and made recommendations from this perspective.

Particular DAC peer review recommendations with a high degree of relevance to this project include the following:

- Sharpen the programme’s focus by making poverty reduction a clearer objective for the NZODA programme.
- Look to allocate more ODA towards programmes directly targeting poor people and the basic sources of poverty.
- Examine the current organisational structure of NZODA to determine its strengths and weaknesses in comparison with other possible structures, in the light of international convergence towards partner country-owned strategies involving intensive policy dialogue and donor adaptability.
- Build up a core group of officials for the NZODA programme with both development experience and political skills who would dedicate a substantial part of their careers to development work in Wellington and postings to developing countries.
- Strive to maximise the use of developing countries’ own services and goods in the implementation of projects, including allowing for the use of local managing service consultants from partner countries.<sup>5</sup>

The international policy context, the DAC review recommendations coupled with the results of recent internal reviews relating to NZODA clearly indicate the timing is right for the current review of NZODA policy, organisational structure and operational systems. The BPDFD project is extremely timely in this context, as a substantive review presents a superb opportunity to fully integrate competencies into the infrastructure of NZODA.

Incorporation and modelling of best development practice through internal systems, processes and structures has the potential to significantly impact on the quality of development assistance provided through NZODA.

The NZODA review also presents an opportunity to address an avoidable internal tension between diplomatic, trade and development orientations which became evident through this analysis. Operation of the NZODA programme demands a sophisticated understanding of development concepts interwoven with NZODA strategy. One interviewee in this process commented: “MFAT needs to brand itself as being in the development business. There’s a blur about what they are doing in ADAF, is it development assistance, trade promotion and providing subsidies to NZ companies, or providing linkage opportunities?”

Development specialist career pathways and structures would create opportunities to fully use development expertise within the Ministry, to support and build up the institutional memory regarding best development practice. Ultimately there is significant potential to find creative solutions and strategies to some challenges in the field, for example, how to maximise use of partner countries’ own human resources.

## Recommendation

That the NZODA review team identify mechanisms to enable:

1. *Full integration of the competencies identified through the BPFDP project into the Ministry's internal operations*
2. *Enhancement of professional development career pathways within the Ministry*
3. *Integration of leading edge training and development practice into the framework of NZODA (DEV) including competency based needs assessment and training design, flexible learning, problem solving, mentoring.*
4. *Infrastructure, management and development strategies which encourage continuous processes of contesting ideas, evaluation, feedback and learning throughout the development practice system.*

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank Group, Partners in Transforming Development: New Approaches to Developing Country-Owned Poverty Reduction Strategies. March 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Healey, John, Foster, Mick, Norton, Andy and Booth, David Towards National Public Expenditure Strategies for Poverty Reduction, Overseas Development Institute Paper, March 2000

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> International Forum on Capacity Building, Synthesis Meeting of the Southern NGO investigation into capacity building, Website, 1998

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p8

## 3. Training and Development Definitions and Applications

The purpose of this section is to present the perspective on training and development that has informed this project, discuss responsibility for training initiatives, and summarize participant thinking on standards and qualifications.

### 3.1 Training as a Developmental Process

This project has been working from the premise that training is a developmental process with a vocational orientation.

Training is often described and understood in terms of a series of separate events or courses. Regarding training as an ongoing developmental process (as with education) provides a more expansive and comprehensive opportunity for the development of a training strategy.

Adopting this notion of training requires more than coaching people in “how to” or simple repetitions of tasks to specified performance measures. It requires comprehending how people learn, their motivations for developing their abilities, empathising with the learner and their experiences of learning, structuring the process of learning to suit the learner, and choosing methodologies that value both formative and summative approaches.

There are a number of factors which each bring complexity to the process of individual development including the learner, the trainer, the relationship between the trainer and learner, the training method, the underlying theory and concepts, the task or application, and the context in which the learner is required to perform. In addition there are phenomena of which a trainer or developer should be aware and actively attend to in a training relationship. These include: parallel process, dependency, and congruence between trainer functioning and what is being taught.

Considering training in its broadest sense allows for a wide range of learning methods and contexts. These include reading, assignments, coaching and supervision, courses, self-paced learning packages, experiential learning, mentoring, project based learning, and on-job training.

Training is designed to address an identified gap between expected/desired behaviour in a specific context and current demonstrated capability. Identification of this gap or need can occur at an industry, organisational, professional, team, individual, contract, job or task level, and is commonly known as a training needs analysis.

The level of needs analysis undertaken for this project has been at an occupational or professional level in defining competencies required in that profession. The anticipated outcome of training undertaken from this needs analysis is that abilities are applied by development practitioners and consultants as required in international development contexts. These requirements are driven by needs identified by the host country and may be specified in a range of ways, including employment contracts, contractual agreements, job descriptions, and project terms of reference.

Some participants in this project have sought clarification over the focus on training as distinct from education. It is not the intention of this project to value one over the other nor

is there a suggestion or implied intention to establish a training programme in place of education programmes. It is envisaged that acquisition of skill, knowledge, ability, and wisdom in development will be achieved through the provision of both training and education.

### Recommendation

That MFAT agrees for the purposes of this strategy that training be regarded as an ongoing developmental process which encompasses a broad range of learning methods and delivery mechanisms.

### 3.2 Who is responsible for development skills training?

In the field of international development as coordinated from New Zealand, the employment status and conditions among individuals varies enormously, and includes volunteers, NGO personnel, government officials, and self-employed and contracted consultants.

It is the assertion of this project that each employing or contracting agency has a responsibility to assure their personnel have the required skills and abilities to carry out the work expected of them, or opportunity to develop these. Given the specific interest in NZODA in the achievement of development outcomes, MFAT can be included as a stakeholder with responsibility for development skills training.

Given the diversity of practitioners, consultants, employers and contractors in this context, it is perhaps not surprising that vocational development skills training has to date been fairly ad hoc. Consulting New Zealand, VASS, CID, VSA and many other agencies have their own training schedules and approaches for members, volunteers and staff.

Discussions with the various agencies indicate there is interest and willingness to explore some degree of coordinated training through the development of a training strategy. Reasons identified for this interest include potential financial advantage or cost saving, overlap and commonality of training needs and focus, opportunity to expand and learn about other development work being undertaken, and the value in working together to build the development practitioner profession.

### Recommendation

*That input and participation by employing or contracting agencies or their representatives be regarded by MFAT as central to the design and implementation of a successful training strategy, given their responsibility for ensuring personnel have the required skills and abilities for the development work required of them.*

## 4. Competencies and their application

This section presents the competencies developed through the needs analysis process, and discusses their use and application. Limits of competencies and benchmarking as concepts are explored, and options for qualifications considered.

### 4.1 Presenting the competencies from the needs analysis

The competencies are presented as a description of the learning outcomes people must achieve in order to be competent as development practitioners and include skills, knowledge, and attitudes that govern the behaviour of the development practitioner. Considered in isolation, the development competencies have little meaning or value. Achievement of real impact rests on the development and maintenance of a robust system that supports their application and retains their currency throughout the development sector.

This process is explored fully in section 6 of this report.

There are three areas of measurement that have been expressed as providing evidence of successful development initiatives: self determination, capacity building, and sustainability. The competencies have been organised into these areas. The high levels of interrelationship between concepts of capacity building and self determination are acknowledged.

#### Facilitate self determination

- Develop participation from the very outset and retain throughout the programme.
- Engage breadth of community - obtain their input as to their priorities for development.
- Maintain own functioning as a facilitator, there to help so the community agency is at the driving wheel and fully responsible for prioritising developmental needs.
- Demonstrate relationship skills. For example, ask questions in a manner that stimulates people's participation, and builds trust and confidence; adopt an appreciative enquiry.
- Vary own presentation to provide leadership and expert guidance without taking a superior position as an expert.
- Demonstrate group leadership and team building skills
- Establish partnerships that demonstrate comprehension of commitment, equality and participation.
- Create networks that establish and develop own credibility and links with people of influence.
- Discern motivations of individuals e.g. profiteering, saving face, and address their concerns through skillful communication.
- Demonstrate understanding of officials' position compared with politicians' position on issues.
- Identify the main players or main development priorities e.g. Treasury officials or PM's Department.
- Identify occasions when it is necessary to pressure for change, and demonstrate strength and integrity to achieve this.

- Maintain a diplomatic approach - assume the best without being naïve.
- Acknowledge mistakes, cultural differences, problems and find traditional ways to address them, remembering that traditions change.
- Find out and understand traditional systems in community use local contacts.
- Demonstrate awareness of own conduct and what it conveys in the context of the cultural environment.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to culture and situations from grassroots level.
- See through traditional and cultural eyes using a cultural overlay of the host country.
- Show respect and accommodate cultural differences and encourage hosts/ counterparts to do the same.
- Identify and respond to situations where cultural difference is used as an excuse not to change.
- Compose a team taking into account the values and meaning from the host country's perspective.
- Differentiate between emergency and development interventions and intervene in ways that ensure self determination.

### Facilitate capacity building

- Diagnose and analyse community capacity.
- Impart knowledge and skills to ensure ongoing capability.
- Act local, think global.
- Accurately assess partners' ability to recognise own strengths, weaknesses, skills, and necessities etc within the organisation.
- Assess own capability of working and challenging the status quo in order to maintain functioning as a change agent.
- Select processes that have intrinsic value as well as gaining results for the programme.
- Identify parameters of the programme to ensure involvement of key stakeholders.
- Identify and establish working relationships with key stakeholders, programme owners and programme target group.
- Establish formal relationships that suit the protocol required of the situation.
- Bring together diverse inputs from a spectrum of stakeholders and use this for decision making about most important capacity-building needs.
- Sustain the image of the local counterpart within the local community.
- Help form a vision for the future and a long-term action plan/goals which involve growth or improved levels of competency.
- Assess whether programme or project is donor driven and influence changes to maintain a balanced approach.
- Identify possibilities for leverage that will ensure ownership and commitment of stakeholders.
- Identify processes that empower.
- Integrate local skills and knowledge with complementary support based on capacity assessment.

- Continually work with stakeholders to ensure realistic expectations of the project or programme.
- Work with resources/capabilities within country.
- Use existing institutional mechanisms eg national disaster mechanisms/committees, NGOs, community agencies, to assist development initiatives.
- Set realistic targets and maintain a pragmatic approach.
- Make interventions at multiple levels in complex systems.
- Identify how technology and associated training can be used to enhance capacity (technical instruments, software etc.).
- Identify asset management, maintenance, other contributing factors and levels of authority/responsibility that influence capability.
- See beyond immediate and physical symptoms of a situation to clarify causal factors that need to be addressed.
- Get support from the programme funder(s) to demonstrate and make visible the backup behind the practitioner, recognising the impact of this on power dynamics.
- Review and follow up the programme as a result of analytical enquiry with community.
- Build emergency management capacity.

### Ensure sustainability of the work

- Ensure partners understand the meaning of sustainability and develop their comprehension of the consequences e.g. differentiating between capital and operating costs.
- Identify ways to make solutions locally owned.
- Identify existing key frameworks in the host country and determine ways to use these.
- Identify the scope of needs and how these are to be met based on principles of self determination.
- Weigh up positives and negatives in short and long term to assess the sustainability of work/interventions.
- Recognise symptoms of corruption and respond in such a way that own integrity is maintained.
- Analyse where investment is likely to make a difference and prioritise interventions accordingly.
- Analyse socio/political/economic context and history and the meaning of this for the programme.
- Identify global issues and how these impact on development work generally.
- Relate international development policies and goals and how these impact on work in practice.
- Relate development initiatives to human rights, theories of community development, social change, economics, cultural development, politics, national government and governance, globalisation, poverty reduction, partnership, participation, capacity building, sustainability.

- Relate own practice to theories concerning gender and development.
- Apply systems theory to analyse elements of complex systems.
- Identify interplay between elements within a system to determine motivations and agendas and what interventions are required.
- Identify systems that do not operate on democratic principles and how to progress work in such systems.
- Carry out social and environmental impact analysis and extrapolate over intergenerational time span.
- Anticipate means of avoiding situations becoming problematic in the future e.g. identify early warning systems, recognise points of vulnerability.
- Identify resource requirements - suitability, quantity etc.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that MFAT adopt the competencies presented in this report as a foundation for the international development practitioner training strategy, given the level of support for the competencies expressed by participants.

## 4.2 Specialist Competencies

Specialist competencies relate to professional identity, expertise in a particular subject, or trade e.g. engineering, forestry, management, training, etc and as such are outside the scope of competencies described here.

Any one of the development competencies could be become a specialty with complexity developing according to variables such as requirements of context. Identifying or singling out particular specialist areas does not seem particularly helpful. There may be specific applications or experience for which a practitioner becomes recognised as a specialist, for example working in militarised zones, or in hostile conditions.

### Recommendation

That due to limited interest or value emerging through the needs analysis, that MFAT not pursue categorising certain aspects of development work as specialist competencies at this stage.

## 4.3 Best Practice and Standard Setting

The competencies presented above are supported by participants in the survey as reflecting the core of development practice and as generally applicable to all consultants working on contracts funded by ADAF.

Competencies are a tool designed to assist human resource functions. They have application in recruitment and selection, induction, training and development, monitoring, evaluation, planning, career development, developing job descriptions, and training needs analysis.

The terms best practice and benchmarking have caused consternation for some participants in this project. Competencies can become counter-productive if their descriptions and applications are prescriptive or rigid.

Participants in the process expressed firmly that while there are a set of competencies which are essential to development work, it is important that development work is not considered to be a simple, linear task or process. As Kaplan suggests: “ We are looking for a responsive development practice which is able to build appropriate and flexible interventions in accordance with nuanced and subtle readings, in a context fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty and continuous change.” <sup>1</sup>

A central ability in development practice is one of assessing and adapting own functioning to remain appropriate and adequate in each situation. The training and development of a person’s ability to be alert, creative, responsible and accountable is about ensuring an integration of theory, methods, and resources which are most likely to result in a congruent and thoughtful response when faced with the challenges of development work. “Building people’s capacity to learn and make connections becomes more important than accumulating information about lessons learned in the past.....it is the process of learning that really matters.” <sup>2</sup>

Current descriptions of best practice tend to relate to qualities of *processes* which are desirable and more likely to produce effective results. They do not define or prescribe standards or a benchmark of an individual performance.<sup>3</sup> It is recommended that this approach also be adopted for this project, and that emphasis be placed on the quality of systems and processes which will support the uptake of the competencies, and ultimately guide the training and development of practitioners and consultants. MFAT (DEV), as part of the funding and quality assurance system for development practice locally, is in a key position to begin this process immediately. Integrating the competencies internally for staff and attending to the design of an operational system that models best practice with characteristics such as openness and flexibility has the potential to impact significantly on the development outcomes with partner countries.

## Recommendation

That MFAT recognise that the competencies described are for the purposes of designing training rather than as a benchmark for appropriate development practice.

## Recommendation

That the competencies identified in this project are integrated into MFAT (DEV) as a means of bringing about change, modelling development principles, and achieving desired outcomes as agreed with partners.

### 4.4 Competency Models in Organisations

The development practitioner training strategy clearly extends beyond any one organisation. However it is useful to consider the way competencies can be integrated into organisational functioning, and to extrapolate the concepts into the wider training system.

Competencies and competency-based human resources management are common practice in many private sector areas and on the rise in many public and community agencies. Organisations have used the idea of competencies for over fifty years, with the expansion of the competency movement initially within the private sector and, now, into the public one. This has resulted in a proliferation of definitions, tools, models and applications.

Dubois (1993), a leading expert in the applied competency field, defines competence as “the employee’s capacity to meet (or exceed) a job’s requirements by producing the job outputs at an expected level of quality within the constraints of the organization’s internal and external environments.” He goes on to adapt Boyatzis’ (1982) definition of competency and states that “a job competency is an underlying characteristic of an employee ... motive, trait, skill, aspects of one’s self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge ... which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job.”<sup>4</sup>

Dubois (1993) in defining competency models states that they “provide the adhesion or “glue” that is necessary among the elements of an organisation’s human resource management system.

Competency models help organisations take a unified and coordinated approach to the following:

- designing the human resource management system, including job design
- recruitment and selection of staff
- performance improvement
- employee development
- career planning or pathways
- succession planning
- performance appraisals
- compensation systems for a job.

Any investment an organisation makes in competency model development work has benefits beyond the usefulness of the results for human resource development purposes. The American Compensation Association (1996) conducted a major survey of 217 mid to large size organizations to determine their use and experience with competencies.<sup>5</sup> The survey found organisations using competencies valued their use most for communicating

valued behaviours and organisational culture; improving performance across the board, emphasising people rather than job capabilities, and encouraging cross functional and team work. The findings of the survey also suggest that competency based human resource management is most effective when competencies are linked closely to proven strategic planning processes and measurable organizational performance standards.

#### 4.5 Standards and Qualifications

The consultation process undertaken through this project has resulted in general agreement with the set of competencies presented in Section 4.1 of this report.

A variety of viewpoints was expressed regarding how value might be ascribed to achievement of the competencies. While there was general interest and support for a process recognising development as a particular field of expertise, there is no common agreement as to the use of NZQA and the Qualifications Framework as a mechanism for achieving this recognition.

Some participants are engaged in the Consulting New Zealand initiative to add generic international consulting units to the Framework, and are promoting the concept of including development practice as a subset of these. It is anticipated that the generic international consulting units will be registered at Level 8 or post-graduate level on the Framework, and it is likely that the development competencies would also be submitted at this level.

A substantial proportion of the stakeholders identified as significant for this project were negative towards the idea of incorporating the competencies into the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Concerns were raised that NZQA processes present an overly rigid system of standard setting and qualification that devalues other pathways of learning and potentially excludes participation by some groups who do not hold tertiary qualifications. Concerns were also expressed that qualifications can become a constraint for participation in development activity, particularly among those with little formal education. Registering the development competencies at Level 8 on the Framework is likely to exclude many development practitioners who are ineligible or unable to access post graduate training, and also challenges the requirement specified by many that training be short, modular, incremental and experiential.

#### Recommendation

Given that registering the competencies as unit standards on the NZQA framework is not going to achieve the expressed needs of the sector, it is recommended that MFAT not pursue this pathway as part of the training strategy.  
practice.

Universities are significant players in the development sector providing research, currency, credibility, leading edge theory and practice, and a source of new practitioners. In their own right, universities take responsibility for the competencies written into their curricula and the abilities developed in their students. We suggest universities and other training providers be a major contributor to the consultations convened by the co-ordinating body.

## Recommendation

That MFAT (DEV) initiates a process that brings key personnel from MFAT (DEV), DRC, CID, CNZ together annually to plan the year's programme of training in line with development strategies and goals, prior to budget cycle, and at least quarterly for monitoring

<sup>1</sup> Kaplan, Allan The Development of Capacity, Non Governmental Liaison Service, Switzerland, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Edwards, Michael Organisational learning in non-governmental organisations: What have we learned? 1997, Public Administration and Development Vol.17, John Wiley & Sons. p235-250,

<sup>3</sup>Jacobs, Colin Best Practice Model, Human Resource Development Group Working Papers No. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Scott Cooper, Eton Lawrence, James Kierstead, Brian Lynch and Sally Luce: Competencies -A Brief Overview of Development and Application to Public and Private Sectors. Research Directorate Policy, Research and Communications Branch Public Service Commission of Canada April 1998

<sup>5</sup> American Compensation Association, . Raising the Bar: Using Competencies to Enhance Employee Performance. Scottsdale, AZ: ACA. 1996

## 5. International trends and their implications for this project

The terms of reference for this project specify consideration of the trends and changes over the next 15 years. This section presents broad trends and issues that have been identified as impacting on development work, discusses how these trends are influencing development, and also considers the process of identifying trends and analysing their impact on development work. These trends are analysed within the overarching international framework of poverty reduction.

### 5.1 International Trends and Development Issues

Presented here are some of the known and significant trends evident now and likely to impact on the work of development practitioners, and on the funding and administration of development work at least over the next few years.

The Villa Borsig Workshop in 1998 focussed on “Development Issues in the 21st Century”.<sup>1</sup> Scholars and researchers drawn from a diverse range of international contexts identified the six trends likely to have the greatest impact in defining the institutional and policy matrix of sustainable development in the 21st Century. These trends are:

1. a tendency towards **globalisation** (including emerging global governance and increasing international coordination of aid and development responses)
2. continuing **environmental change**
3. **demographic transition** in developing countries challenging poverty reduction
4. greater **political participation and community involvement**
5. increasing **decentralisation** and the emergence of smaller economic clusters within the nation state
6. sweeping **urbanisation** in the developing world, including emerging megacities<sup>2</sup>

These six trends were raised and discussed by participants as part of this project. Additional trends that New Zealand practitioners and consultants identified as significant and likely to impact directly on the competencies expected of development practitioners are presented below. (As far as possible, the impact of these trends has been considered in the design of the competencies presented in this report).

#### 5.1.1 Move to programmes rather than projects<sup>3</sup>

Internationally the focus on poverty has influenced a move towards *programmes* or substantial, cohesive, often multi-staged approaches which focus on outcomes and away from *projects* or ad hoc, often short term undertakings which focus on inputs. While the language used in New Zealand may differ, the shift is the same.

Response locally to this trend is mixed. Some participants expressed concern that small community development initiatives will not be able to compete in a more coordinated environment. Others expressed strong support for programmes envisaging

increased coordination of information, less duplication and waste of resources, and more cohesive capacity building.

The impact of this trend is that development practitioners need to be able to comprehend the complexity of systems and relationships that can arise in a programme; to be able to maintain and articulate a strong link between community development initiatives and overall programme outcomes; potentially to sustain multiple relationships over a long period of time and distance; and the flexibility to operate within this complexity.

### **5.1.2 Communications technology will advance significantly within next 15 years**

Advances in communication technology have changed how development practitioners carry out their work.

New technology increases the possibility for “remote working”. Rather than being based in the local country, practitioners will be increasingly reliant on local consultants. This, in turn has the potential to develop technical skills of counterparts. There are recent initiatives at the World Bank to assure plans are in place to attend to the increasing technology divide between rich and poor. This trend opens up opportunities for better communication and sharing of workloads and more continuous capacity building.

The impact for development practitioner’s competencies include being able to use the latest technology, to work at a distance, to create strong relationships and communication with resources and counterparts in the host country, and to consider technological demands and remote work as significant variables when planning and designing programmes.

### **5.1.3 There will be significant environmental degradation**

Environmental degradation is recognised as having a major impact on continuing poverty, and is already a significant factor in gaining approval for major infrastructure projects.<sup>4</sup> Programmes that prevent environmental degradation or assist recovery from disaster resulting from environmental degradation are becoming an increasing priority for development assistance.

The impact of this trend will raise the importance of environmental planning, impact assessment, designing mitigation measures, and products as essential competencies. These competencies may be required generally of any individual development practitioner or for specialists such as trained environment impact analysts.

#### 5.1.4 There will be continuing uncertainty and unpredictability in contexts where development work is undertaken, for example as manifested in unstable nation states or countries with long histories of ethnic or religious conflict.

In conflict, a country's infrastructure is often targeted and consequently funds are directed to emergency relief and military interventions. Working in such conditions which are often dangerous, usually politicised, complex, and volatile, demands that a development practitioner is discerning about the key players and careful in their relationships and decision making with respect to authority over the incoming aid and assistance.

The development practitioner will need a thorough comprehension of the relationship between politics, conflict, religious and other beliefs, military functioning, and important values guiding the country's response in situations of conflict. There is a challenge for the development worker to differentiate between emergency and development interventions and intervene in ways that promote self determination, build capacity and work towards sustainability.

#### 5.1.5 Capacity building approaches suggest there will be an increasing use of local people in projects

Working with counterparts as colleagues allows for the development of skills and capacity which provide for longer term sustainability of the project goals. Internationally some countries have developed their capacity to the extent that they no longer require external development expertise.

Some participants in this analysis operating from a global economy perspective suggested this creates a need for practitioners to focus on how they can add value, and to have good marketing techniques. Others indicated the danger of perpetuating a dependency on donor countries for assistance thereby providing work for consultants.

This trend may suggest a response that is more in the realm of strategic management than in competency requirements of a development practitioner, although the impact of this trend will be to heighten the importance of training and development, coaching, mentoring, and communication with partners. There also needs to be an ability among development workers to work with local level tailored responses that address problems emerging at a macro level.

#### 5.1.6 Population increases in developing world will continue

This trend will affect resource allocation and environmental degradation, military and relief needs, health and safety issues, and increased potential breakdown of infrastructure.

The impact of this trend on the development practitioner is a need for programme planning and design to focus on multiple outcomes and macro scale solutions. Plans will also need to include sound maintenance strategies and funding or asset management practices.

#### 5.1.7 Globalisation will continue

Globalisation is a major topic and a subject in its own right as a matter for research. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected so does our awareness of our collective responsibility for attending to cause and effect at a global level.

Perceptions of participants in this project were that some groups will get left behind and that we need to be vigilant to enable full participation.

#### 5.1.8 Urbanisation will continue

Participants perceived that urbanisation will raise some very complex questions for New Zealand practitioners. Grappling with this issue will require initiative that goes beyond the simple single outcome style of aid, to the complex technical team-oriented approach, for example, how to address mass urban poverty especially in India and Africa.

### 5.2 Keeping up with trends

This was an ambitious activity from the outset, and has challenged the researchers considerably in grappling with the task. The notion of being able to forecast likely changes over such a period has been challenged strongly by many participants who believe the rate of change and scientific advances make this activity highly questionable.

For example the internet was barely conceived of 15 years ago and technological developments at the time did not indicate the extent of the impact we are now experiencing.

However this undertaking has shone light on a potential improvement to the current system - improved access to research and information. Access to good quality information and analysis about trends, theories, analysis, new approaches and statistics in relation to programmes and to the Asia and Pacific context would be of great assistance to practitioners. Web technology is enabling access to an ever expanding range of contexts, and opens up opportunities to provide more coherent information flows.

## Recommendation

That MFAT invest further in monitoring, analysing and creating access to information which will impact directly and indirectly on training and on the quality of development assistance, including:

- monitoring international trends in development policy and practice to identify effective and innovative models, practices and processes;
- analysing global trends and reflecting the regional context in the identification of training related requirements particular to the Pacific and Asia
- learning from field experience to ensure policy and practice build from this experience

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<sup>1</sup> Kochendorfer\_Lucius Gudrun and Pleskovic, Boris Development Issues in the 21st Century, Villa Borsig Workshop Series, 1998

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p5

<sup>3</sup> A note on language: Such is the complexity of work, terminology, multiple meanings, usage of language, and use of acronyms, it is common practice within MFAT (DEV) to accompany Terms of Reference and project descriptions with a glossary. The adoption of common terminology would greatly assist understanding in this sector.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, World Bank, Eighth Session, April 2000

## 6. Developing a System for Implementing Training

Considered alone, the development competencies identified through this analysis have little meaning or value. Achievement of real impact rests on the development and maintenance of a robust system that supports their application and retains their currency throughout the development community.

This section draws upon information from the analysis, from international examples of competencies being used in development practice and also from human resource management material to identify desired or required attributes of the system.

### 6.1 Linking competencies to strategy and goals

Competency based training and development processes are most effective when there are clear and consistent links to strategic planning processes.<sup>1</sup>

The goal for this project (as identified in the Terms of Reference) is to improve the quality of development assistance provided by New Zealand international development consultants through strategically targeted training and development. To achieve this requires an ability to continually relate training and development interventions to the project and programme needs as identified by host countries. The challenge is to resist resourcing training that appeals through cost, ease or precedent yet does not build the desired and required skills among practitioners.

NZODA strategy is currently described in Investing in A Common Future. The linkage between competencies and strategy also needs to occur at a project/programme level, at a country plan level (eg PRSPs) and at an organisational planning level (eg NGO plans).

### Recommendation

That relevant strategic management documents are used consistently to inform decisions as to training needs and priorities.

### 6.2 Creating an open system which facilitates ongoing learning

Much has been written on the desirability of learning organisations and the openness of systems. Both are vital attributes of an effective competency based training system committed to ongoing development. For example, a 1997 review of AusAID found “a strong need to establish a framework within which decisions about the allocation of aid funds, the choice of programs and projects, monitoring the effective implementation of policy - fundamentally, the way the whole program is managed - is based on a continuous process of contesting ideas, evaluation, feedback and learning”.<sup>2</sup>

This requires a willingness to reflect, examine, critique, review and change. A systemic approach puts everything under scrutiny including policy, strategy, processes and

procedures, recognising that all elements are interdependent and therefore have influence over development practice.

This system extends to the range of people and organisations engaged in development work including universities, contractors, donors, counterparts, and practitioners. Actively getting participation and contributions from this wider group is a sign of openness and signals the degree to which a training system will retain its vitality, relevance, and legitimacy.

Indications are that there is untapped information available throughout the development sector locally and internationally which could improve the quality of work undertaken. Anecdotal evidence signals replication of work that could be avoided with better access to information and analysis. While monitoring and evaluation may occur adequately at a project or programme level, there are opportunities being missed for learning at a wider level. The 'lessons learned' initiative by ADAF and VASS goes some way towards this process. A commitment to modelling good development practice in the development and implementation of the training strategy will powerfully impact on people's willingness to engage.

### Recommendation

That MFAT agree that the design, development and implementation of the coordinated training strategy incorporate infrastructure, management and development processes which encourage a continuous process of contesting ideas, evaluation, feedback and learning throughout the development practice system.

### 6.3 Investigation of development training programmes internationally

Through our research process we have not found any precedent or model where development training is strategised and coordinated nationally or where programmes are provided and coordinated for development practitioners across the private sector, NGOs, and within government. We understand this to be a reflection of the scale and scope of aid and development in other countries influencing the form and approach to training.

The most common form of development training is within organisations where training is targeted to a particular sector, and of training events that are open and accessed by a range of practitioners.

We include here some discussion and learnings from examples of training programmes in Ireland (APSO), the World Bank, and in DFID (Department for International Development) based in London.

### 6.3.1 APSO (Agency for Personal Service Overseas) Ireland

Based in Dublin, Ireland, APSO's training service has developed over 25 years and aims to provide an efficient, quality service which is responsive to the training needs of until recently Irish development workers, although membership of the European Union requires this focus to broaden. Its basic purpose is to prepare development workers to be more effective in their work and lives overseas. It includes a range of pre-departure courses, provisions for in-country training and training grants for short courses and full/part-time post-graduate training.

APSO is funded almost entirely by the Irish government and has only recently received funding from the EU. A training needs analysis conducted for a PhD thesis informed the design and structure of the current programme.<sup>3</sup> Mostly APSO provides training to volunteers, NGOs, and staff; it is not usual for APSO to provide services to private companies or to private individual consultants.

Training is targeted to different groups including:

- First-time Development Workers
- Long-term Experienced
- Specialist Services Overseas
- Emergency Relief Workers
- Election Observers
- Home and Overseas Project Managers
- Managers of NGOs

For assignments overseas the set of skills required for a specific assignment is noted through a systematic process, personnel are selected and training is given by APSO staff or by sub-contracted specialist staff. Training is divided into desired, compulsory and optional training. Courses range from 1 - 2 days to two weeks.

APSO has developed an effective flow diagram which graphically presents the interrelationship between the development process, and the recruitment, selection and training of the development worker. This is presented in Appendix 3, along with an outline of the course titles provided by APSO.

### 6.3.2 The World Bank training programme

The World Bank has developed its own training programme for Bank staff, introducing its own version of process management. The traditional cycle of identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiation and Board approval followed by implementation and evaluation has been replaced by stages of "listening, piloting, demonstrating and mainstreaming" as central components of the training.

In the 1999 Financial Year, the Professional and Technical Training Program and the Administrative and Clients Support network offered 190 formal classroom-based training courses and seminars. The estimated number of training days in total was 25,777, signalling a significant training investment by this Agency.

This training formed the basis of a comprehensive evaluation of the Bank staff training programme in 1999.<sup>4</sup>

Key drivers of quality in high rating courses identified 5 significant variables – pacing of instruction; application of concepts and principles to Bank work; the materials for use during training; the balance among lecture, discussion and application (less talk more action), and the balance between theoretical and practical information.

Key factors sustaining the World Bank training were:

- Management involvement in enhancing transfer of learning and performance improvement
- Performance enhancement systems such as help-desks or hotlines, clinics, learning groups, access to web-sites and access to expert and resource persons for mentoring or consultation,
- Efficiency in the use of financial inputs

One measure promoted in the World Bank is the “strengthening and supporting of thematic groups as vehicles for learning and knowledge transfer; implementing the incentives, partnerships and culture/behaviour change needed for effective learning”.<sup>5</sup>

### 6.3.3 Department For International Development (DFID), Britain

The Social Development Division of DFID has 90 staff, with a recent shift in orientation from running projects or programmes themselves to influencing at a policy and organisational level.

The Division has integrated a competency model which they are finding to be of great assistance in assuring there is a good match between personnel and the work required in the division.

Staff are recruited and assessed against the competencies. Competencies are used following induction to develop training plans, and form the measure for ongoing achievement and assessment of Social Development Advisors. Staff new to the area of work are recruited as associate professional officers. Traditionally these staff would work immediately on projects overseas; now there is a requirement that they spend a foundation year in the Ministry, undertaking research and policy work, and developing skills through a targeted skills training programme.

The Division has an annual resource planning system which integrates staffing, budget, resourcing and training components. Senior staff commented they found the competency model extremely useful in enabling adaptability and speedy training and assessment response to the rate of change they see as characteristic of work in the development sector. The example was given of the PRSP process which is

significantly impacting on the work undertaken by the Division and requiring a shift in emphasis for many staff on the skills required.

There are 12 competencies, with three levels within each competency which relate to seniority of staff and the work expected.

Competency areas are:

- Developing social understanding
- Applying social development expertise
- Critical thinking and judgement
- Creative thinking and innovation
- Social awareness and commitment
- Flexibility and self development
- Facilitation and consultation
- Negotiation and influencing
- Achieving results
- Concern for effectiveness

DFID is currently exploring the option of establishing a training resource centre external to the organisation to attend to the training needs of development professionals. This is in response to an identified gap in training available specific to development practitioners who have worked for 2 - 3 years.

DFID hosts an annual conference of staff development professionals to network and attend to skills development. Demand for this kind of forum has been increasing steadily over the past few years.

#### 6.3.4 Lessons learned from other models

While these organisations don't provide definitive models suitable for application as a whole, their experience provides valuable lessons, information and guidance to the design, establishment, and operation of a training programme in New Zealand. The following points are likely to be relevant and helpful.

- Conditions and outputs must be right for achieving outcomes and impact from training – for example, transfer of learning into the workplace is critical, opportunities must be provided to enable this or the training can be wasted. Ongoing assistance enhances learning – help desks, learning groups, websites, mentors (APSO).
- Relating training to mission and strategies of core agencies anchors training (APSO).
- Need to measure and demonstrate the value for money invested in knowledge management and learning through monitoring and evaluation. (World Bank)
- Adults learn best and are likely to use information when learning is experiential and social. This requires a participatory or interactive process which allows them to use prior knowledge and to engage in a process of knowledge construction. (World Bank)

- Move from a content-driven to a learner centered approach, ie use a competency-based performance improvement model in curriculum development and course design; clearly identify the performance requirements of the jobs or tasks and the definition of competencies and levels of knowledge and skills that should be the focus in training courses; carry out a more thorough and technical approach to the assessment of learning needs for different target groups; define measurable learning objectives; develop modularised and integrated training courses of short duration that are responsive to different learning levels and can allow progressive development of expertise (World Bank).
- Question how structured and non-structured knowledge domains impact on course delivery methods, when both call for the development of skills, strategies and learning – to learning approaches, and both are subject to constant change and the consequent updating of information and materials. Assure injection of training expertise into management, design development and delivery of training (World Bank)
- Value or outcome of training is not only the content but networking, sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas, and developing new approaches, perceptions and insights into Bank work during training. If courses are filled with presentations there is little room for this kind of activity. (World Bank)
- Competency based models integrated fully into Human Resource Management and planning systems enable more accurate matching of staff, skills and work, and also enable a flexible response to a rapidly changing environment (DFID)

## 6.4 Design factors

New Zealand's population, culture and psyche, aid budget, government and private sector structure, all suggest that a unique approach is required to determine the form and funding of training and professional development initiatives.

Training design factors gathered through this analysis will inform stage 2 of this project in determining a strategy for providing training and development opportunities. The diversity of people, views, and interests within the development sector is reflected in the information gathered. No one solution or approach will suit all. A summary of the views expressed regarding the form and funding of training is presented below; more data is available for Stage 2 to guide the design process.

### 6.4.1 Identification of possible recipients of training

Besides the development practitioner, anyone making interventions that have a direct influence on overseas development programmes will require training or education of some sort including New Zealand consultants in the private sector, independent development practitioners, MFAT staff, consultants and practitioners indigenous to the host country, donors, and NGO personnel.

#### 6.4.2 Cost

The cost of training should be minimised to retain access, which may impact on the duration, location and form of training. Price should not become the determining factor.

#### 6.4.3 Timing

The timing and schedule of training opportunities may need to accommodate monsoon or cyclone, festivals, parliamentary sessions and other seasonal or contextual factors. The mobility of the target group requires a high degree of flexibility in scheduling and delivery form.

#### 6.4.4 Method

Methodologies that enable experiential learning, are structured, focussed, interactive, flexible and varied are favoured by participants. The location and availability of distance learning, and self paced learning is also seen as desirable.

#### 6.4.5 Duration

A combination of short and longer events/programmes that are modular, graded, and incremental is seen as desirable.

#### 6.4.6 Training Providers

There are a range of options and availability of suitable trainers. It has been suggested that selection of trainers should be based on criteria and that because a “development guru” happens to be in town is not in itself a good rationale for organising a training event.

#### 6.4.7 Implementation

An implementation plan should be developed following the development of a training strategy that takes account of cycles, important dates and consideration of strategic management decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Cooper, Eton Lawrence, James Kierstead, Brian Lynch and Sally Luce: Competencies -A Brief Overview of Development and Application to Public and Private Sectors. Research Directorate Policy, Research and Communications Branch Public Service Commission of Canada April 1998

<sup>2</sup> One Clear Objective: poverty reduction through sustainable development. Report of the Committee of Review April, Commonwealth of Australia 1997 p 312.

<sup>3</sup> O'Dwyer, Tony Oliver, Training and Third World Development: An Identification of the Training Needs of Irish Development Workers in the Context of Appropriate Criteria for Development. Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Sukai Prom Jackson, Ray Rist, Sean Biko Sankofa Martin, Tena Malone, Chunnong Zhou, Chika Hayashi. An Evaluation of the Bank Staff Training Program – FY 99. WBI Evaluation Studies Number ES99-43. World Bank Institute, The World Bank, Washington D.C. 1999 p1

<sup>5</sup> ibid p1

## 7. Options for an Institutional Framework

There are multiple institutional frameworks already in existence within the development sector e.g. MFAT, CID, CNZ, DRC, although no single body has the responsibility for monitoring competencies of the sector. To suggest that there are options for identifying an institutional framework for monitoring competencies presupposes ownership of and commitment to the competencies. Firstly, there is a lack of definition or identity of a development sector, and secondly, while there is general agreement with the competencies described, there is not a shared commitment to a single set of competencies.

### 7.1 Consideration of a Professional Association

Practitioners are satisfied with maintaining the existing differentiation between the various agencies and organisations, and consider their identities and purposes distinct. There was little indication of interest or support for any formal distinct professional association for development practitioners.

#### Recommendation

That MFAT (DEV) does not pursue the concept of facilitating the emergence of a formal professional association for development practitioners at this time.

### 7.2 Coordination of the training strategy and facilitating interaction

Participants expressed strong interest in opportunities for increased contact and interaction across the development practitioner and consultancy field, and identified the following reasons for this interest:

- creating access to accumulative knowledge, resources and experience to ensure the quality and ongoing development of international development work;
- providing opportunities that bring people together geographically or thematically to share ideas and discuss development issues;
- coordinating training and provide opportunities for transferring skills;
- discussing delivery methods and improvement to programme implementation;
- representing the views and interests of development practitioners generally;
- adding strength to development resources and expertise within MFAT;
- holding accountability for development code of ethics and conduct;
- acting as steward of standards of development practice;
- overseeing evaluation and monitoring processes to assure quality of practice.

Participants were asked to consider how this coordination and interaction might work.

The organisations put forward by the researchers to possibly undertake this work include MFAT (DEV), DRC, CID, CNZ. None of these bodies individually was regarded by participants as legitimate to do this work on its own. There was also limited interest in

the establishment of any new formal structure to undertake this work.

It was agreed by some members however, that it would be possible and desirable for the bodies mentioned above to meet and co-ordinate their training, identifying synergies, commonalities and opportunities to meet their interests presented above. There is a some scepticism in the wider sector as to whether these bodies can work together to cover all requirements and interests of development practitioners. It is however recommended that these agencies are best suited for this purpose and that this approach could significantly impact on the quality of development practice.

Universities are significant players in the development sector providing research, currency, credibility, leading edge theory and practice, and a source of new practitioners. In their own right, universities take responsibility for the competencies written into their curricula and the abilities developed in their students. We suggest universities and other training providers be a major contributor to the consultations convened by the co-ordinating body.

## Recommendation

That MFAT (DEV) initiates a process that brings key personnel from MFAT (DEV), DRC, CID, CNZ together annually to plan the year's programme of training in line with development strategies and goals, prior to budget cycle, and at least quarterly for monitoring and adjusting plans accordingly. The purpose of such a process is to coordinate events and approaches to maximise gain from allocation of resources and collective activity. The practice should be inclusive and consultative and in itself demonstrate development practice.

The definition of the profession or industry known as the development sector and which body should have responsibility for monitoring competencies is still the subject of debate. As a result of the work undertaken on this project, we are unconvinced that the debate is necessary or that it assists the outcomes of this project but believe that MFAT is a central player and pivotal to development work and is best to look to itself first. Stage two of this project provides a vehicle for addressing these matters.

## 8. Conclusion

This project is perceived by participants as an MFAT(DEV) initiative.

Given the responses and findings of Stage 1 of this project, it is recommended that preparatory work through inter-agency coordination is required for the implementation of a competency framework of benefit to the sector.

The integration of the competencies within MFAT(DEV) has potential to be a powerful influence for change.

We conclude that the information gained from this stage of the project warrants its continuation and encourage MFAT to commence stage two of the project as soon as possible to maintain momentum and relevance of data.

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## Appendix One - Current context training and education

### One-off training or short courses:

- Development Cooperation Division
- ADAF
- Council for International Development
- Consulting New Zealand
- Tradenz
- Development Resource Centre
- occasionally one-off training courses are offered by large NGOs or individual consulting companies

### Development Studies or Relevant Papers are offered at:

- Auckland University
- AUT
- Unitec (working with NGOs in Pacific in particular)
- Massey University
- Waikato University
- Victoria University
- Canterbury University
- Lincoln University
- Otago University

### Links to Development Studies in NZ at

[http://www.drc.org.nz/links/Development\\_Studies/New\\_Zealand/](http://www.drc.org.nz/links/Development_Studies/New_Zealand/)

There may also be one off events organised by larger individual consulting companies/NGOs.

## AUSTRALIA

### Short or one-off training courses:

- International Development Support Services (IDSS)
- IDSS offers a range of excellent short course training.
- Ausaid
- Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA)
- ANU (Professional Short Course Training)

### Development studies at:

- Australian National University
- Flinders University (Adelaide)
- Edith Cowan University (Perth)
- Victoria University of Technology (Melbourne)
- Deakin University (Melbourne)
- Monash University (Melbourne)

## Appendix 2 - APSO training courses

Titles regularly offered include the following:

### ORIENTATION TRAINING

- Initial Preparation
- Renewal
- Emergency
- Election Observers

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Training for Trainers
- Cross-Cultural Teamwork
- Participation: Its Meaning and Practice
- Coping with Stress Overseas
- Mediation & Conflict
- Resolution
- Language Training

### ADAPTION OF PROF. SKILLS

- Health Care (Emergency)
- Living and Teaching in China
- Rural Development

### MANAGEMENT SKILLS

- Building the Capacity of Communities
- Working with Partner Organisations in the South
- Project Management
- Project Funding

### IN-COUNTRY TRAINING

- Language Training
- Orientation Training
- Professional/ Communication Skills