



ລາວ ຄອນຊາວຕິງກູບ ຈຳກັດ
LAO CONSULTING GROUP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UNDP provided grant funding of \$ 250,000 to the Lao National Mekong Committee for the implementation of the “MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training Programme”.

The Programme had the overall objective of ensuring the smooth operations of the MRC during and after relocation. To do this, 50 Lao trainees were recruited and trained to assume support positions in the relocated MRCS.

The Programme was implemented in two modalities, namely

- A mentoring program by the Cambodian incumbents including their temporary transfer from Phnom Penh to Vientiane for the initial stages of the MRCS basing its operations in Vientiane, and
- A Programme of training courses to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in the newly appointed Lao support staff.

Lao Consulting Group was contracted by UNDP to undertake an evaluation of the Programme and this report presents its findings.

The evaluation was undertaken in three ways,

- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Written survey of Lao participants, and
- An Evaluation Workshop for all participants held on November 11 and 12, 2005.

The Programme is a NEX project of UNDP, with UNDP as the funding agency, Lao National Mekong Committee as the executing agency and MRCS as the “beneficiary”. This created what at times was a clumsy implementation process because the necessary courses and their timing was largely determined by MRCS but all processing of these requests was done by LNMC in association with UNDP. To facilitate implementation, a Programme Management Committee comprising of representatives of all three agencies was established.

The series of training courses could be divided into two groups,

- Courses developing specific knowledge and skills, and
- Courses developing work attitudes and more general work practice skills

Overall the Programme was well organised and managed although like all training programmes there were variations – some courses were more relevant, some better presented, some too short and some at the wrong time.

The courses contributed to the effectiveness of the Lao support staff in the discharge of their duties. However the evaluation team were not able to quantitatively assess work performance and match it with knowledge and skills directly attributable to the training attended.

The evaluation team was unable to review the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of each person and determine if the training undertaken did indeed match the needs, and if those needs were in turn based upon the job description. Unfortunately at the time of the evaluation such documents were not available

During delivery of training there was monitoring from time to time by members of the Project Team, resulting in some adjustments being made during the courses, for example a change in starting time. However post training follow-up has to date been a largely neglected area but is one of importance in any evaluation of training programmes. Further training should be part of the on-going human resources development activities of MRCS, but unfortunately this has little funding at present.

The mentoring part of the Programme was at best satisfactory. It was not well structured and the Cambodian incumbents were (at times) reluctant to transfer their knowledge. On the other hand Lao staff were often reluctant to ask questions so that the Cambodian did not always know what to “teach”. Yet by leaving the Lao staff to learn by themselves, at the end they often understood better and were then more effective in their jobs. The evaluation team was unable to interview any Cambodian staff involved and thus relied on the comments of Lao staff in making the assessment and we recognise that this leads to biased conclusions.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the program of training courses upon the work performance of the trainees, the evaluation team made the following findings:

- The overall influence of training courses on effectiveness of work had a mean value of 52%
- The maximum score was 86%, rated by the maintenance supervisor
- The minimum score was 17% by a secretary in Programme Co-ordination Section
- The courses rated as having most influence were:
 - Office Administration, Professional Secretary
 - Lao CPA Financial
 - Office Professional & Administration
 - English for Communications/ Basic English, Computer (Microsoft Office 2003), Time Management
 - Organisational Communications & Teamwork
- The courses rated as having least influence were:
 - Microsoft ACCESS
 - SOLOMON (financial package)

In purely financial terms, when the significant costs of bringing Cambodian staff to Vientiane for the training and handover period are taken into account, the evaluators concluded that the training Programme was not a cost effective operation. But the training Programme does have many positive results and these continue to be seen. However, these positive results are very much attributable to the newly appointed Lao support staff of the MRCS and less to the training *per se*... Most of the Lao staff were, and still are, motivated to be successful in their roles and responsibilities.

The evaluation team was advised that there are unspent funds in the Programme budget and present some suggestions for using it, which forms part of the recommendations below.

Also in making recommendations, the evaluators are aware of the possibility of relocation of MRCS from Vientiane to Phnom Penh in about 2009, when much of the process will need to be repeated.

1. The unexpended budget from the Programme should be used for further training of MRCS staff. The support staff need further training – targeted and specific and the available funds should be spent on this. Whilst the evaluators recognise the merit of using at least some of the budget for training of Riparian staff in technical areas, the evaluator’s TORs did not extend to assessing such a proposal.
2. A lot of problems encountered in the office are due to miscommunication. With many staff, English language ability still needs improvement and the remaining funds can be expended on it. But the recipients of further English training should be carefully selected – a standard required in the office needs to be established using some recognised system (such as TOEFL). Speaking skills can be relatively easily developed through practice but writing skills need a more targeted approach, i.e. targeted to further developing knowledge and skills directly related to the work responsibilities. This should be the focus of further training.
3. All training courses should have follow-up. For example at the end of each course, the training participants should be required to produce an “action plan” and its implementation should be reviewed at some suitable interval.
4. The Human Resource Management process in MRCS needs to be more integrated with the functions of the Personnel Section. In addition, job descriptions need to identify competencies in specific terms relating to key tasks and these should be used to conduct a TNA for each support staff member upon entry to duty. From this an overall personal training program can be developed.
5. The annual performance assessments review (PAR) of MRCS staff should continue to monitor the changes in competencies and identify any needs for further training – accordingly the personal training program can then be updated annually.

ABBREVIATIONS and ACRONYMS

EDC	Enterprise & Development Consultants Co. Ltd.
HQ	Headquarters
LCG	Lao Consulting Group
LNMC	Lao National Mekong Committee
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MRCS	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
NEX	National Executed Project
OJT	On-the-job training
PAR	Performance Assessment Review
PRODOC	Project Document
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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PROJECT CONCEPT AND DESIGN

The Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS) was to relocate its headquarters from Phnom Penh to Vientiane in mid – 2004.

A situational analysis identified the limited availability of qualified support staff in Lao PDR, and with financial constraints, external assistance was needed to sustain MRCS operations during and after relocation.

The MRC is an important regional body, providing a platform for negotiation and compromise in the development of the Lower Mekong River basin with its four independent riparian countries.

UNDP has provided support to MRC since its inception in 1975, and has an on-going commitment to support the MRC vision and activities. UNDP thus committed itself financially to ensuring that the least disruption would arise from the relocation process.

There was a need for approximately 50 Lao support staff to be recruited and prepared through the Lao National Mekong Committee. This was to be accomplished by recruiting trainees in two batches – the first prior to relocation and the second after (physical) relocation was completed.

To ensure all Lao support staff have the required knowledge and skills, a training program was developed. It combined classroom (formal courses) and on-the-job training, with the outgoing Cambodian staff. They were being directly involved in the preparation of Lao staff and in the handover of responsibilities. The classroom portion aims to ensure adequate capacity in English, computer skills, office administration and management, communication and teamwork skills, in addition to understanding the Mission and activities of the MRC. In addition to the staff recruited to take on Secretarial, Administrative and Financial duties, a further 10 service staff were recruited as drivers, cleaners, messengers and guards.

Qualified training institutions were to provide the classroom training contracted by the LNMC on the basis of the training plans drawn up in the first instance by MRC Human Resources Development Section.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

a) Planned implementation arrangements

The MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training Programme is a NEX project funded by UNDP with the Lao National Mekong Committee (LNMC) as the implementing agency.

The training Programme was to comprise three modalities, namely pre-service training, on-the-job training and follow-up training. This was in order to build up each individual trainee's knowledge, skills and ability as required by the job and must be based on the required competencies.

The strategy was to recruit staff in two batches – the first before relocation and the second after relocation. They were to take part in a two–three month classroom based training program at a selected institution followed by two–three months of on-the-job training at MRCS. This strategy was to apply to both batches of recruits, although OJT in the case of the first batch was to be in Phnom Penh and in Vientiane for the second batch.

According to the project documentation, the Director-General of LNMC is the National Project Director, and his deputy is the National Project Manager. A Project Team was to be established with representatives from LNMC, MRCS and UNDP; this Team being responsible for the day-to-day management of implementation of the whole Programme. The MRC was to design the training program, prepare curriculum outlines, identify personnel to attend the various courses and provide comments on suitable training institutions.

In accordance with UNDP procurement procedures, LNMC would contract the training institutions and make all financial disbursements.

The implementation was to be monitored through monthly review meetings, with Tri-partite meetings and other reporting procedures following the NEX guidelines. Also the Project Team was to make regular visits to the training institutions to monitor progress of training and generally facilitate training.

b) Evaluation of implementation

The actual implementation proceeded generally but not always in accordance with the plan outlined in the project documents.

Firstly, only three courses were delivered before going to Phnom Penh, although they were delivered sequentially over a two-month period. And secondly, they were given by 3 different institutions hence there was no opportunity to build up a rapport with the participants and build competency in a stepwise and integrated manner.

It is also noted that the Programme was delayed in implementation and did not finish on time nor were all funds expended. Two extensions have been granted – the first from July to October 2005, and the second from November 2005 to March 2006.

A number of other weaknesses also came to the attention of the evaluation consultants.

- ❖ Timing was an issue – courses were sometimes scheduled and then the selection of training institutions was a rushed process to meet the course starting date
- ❖ The implementation focus was on training courses. The Project Team did not appear to have any responsibility for the on-the-job training component, which was an integral and important part of the relocation process.
- ❖ Selection of courses seemed to follow the subject areas included in the PRODOC rather than resulting from a systematic TNA of staff when they joined MRC. This is not to say that the courses were not needed, but the relative importance may have been incorrect. Trainees, whilst having some choice in attendance at training courses, in effect did not exercise that right preferring to attend whatever course was offered to them.
- ❖ Follow-up training of participants does not seem to have been carried out. It is known that there is an overall training plan for staff but the evaluation team has not been able to see it nor to confirm the extent to which direct follow-up training to the UNDP funded Programme has taken place
- ❖ The process of selecting participants for a course seemed to lack a structured basis. Some people have attended more than 15 courses, others as few as three courses. The relevance to developing competencies required of their roles has not been conclusively demonstrated
- ❖ The “allowances” paid to trainees was deemed insufficient and had to be supplemented by MRC

c) Training Programme Participants

The following tables present the names of all participants in the Relocation Training Programme and the courses that they undertook. The tables are divided between Batch 1 and Batch 2 participants.

MRC HQ RELOCATION STAFF TRAINING PROJECT

PROJECT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Batch 1

Trainees

Courses		Trainers																		Total	%
		Aksone Phanipong	Chanchouly Athanaphone	Daovieng Sayachack	Duangpy Prothisane	Latdara sengmany	Manosouk Muongmany	Manothone Vorabouth	Navida Manotham	Palamy Soukhathammavong	Pinthong Thipphavongsa	Phonemaly Phinith	Phonesanook Mahavong	Songkane Sayavong	Sonepeth Chantaphone	Soukounan Viravong	Varaphone Silaphet	Vongchanh Keopaphanh			
1	Computer (Microsoft Office 2003)					1	1			1	1	1				1	1		7	39%	
2	English for Communications/Basic English	1				1	1		1	1	1	1				1	1		1	10	56%
3	Office Administration	1					1	1	1	1	1	1				1	1		1	10	56%
4	Organisational Communication & Teamwork (#1)	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	15	83%
5	Technical Writing Skills	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		15	83%
6	Solomon (#1)	1	1				1	1					1	1	1	1			1	9	50%
7	Professional Secretary (#1)						1		1	1				1						4	22%
8	First Aid Kit	1				1	1			1		1			1	1		1		8	44%
9	Fire Extinguisher							1										1		2	11%
10	Professional Secretary (#2)	1	1	1				1			1	1			1		1		1	9	50%
11	Developing MS.ASP.NET				1															1	6%
12	Office Professional & Administration	1	1				1						1	1					1	6	33%
13	Professional English Writing (#1)	1	1				1		1	1			1	1					1	8	44%
14	Microsoft Access (#1)			1		1		1			1	1		1	1	1				8	44%
15	Time Management	1		1	1	1	1						1		1		1	1		9	50%
16	Information Management												1		1	1	1		1	5	28%
17	Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersoanl Skills (#1)		1		1	1	1	1		1										7	39%
18	Official Letter Writing	1	1				1			1				1					1	6	33%
19	Professional English Writing (#2)			1								1			1	1				4	22%
20	Solomon (#2)									1			1	1						3	17%
21	Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersoanl Skills (#2)	1								1		1		1		1	1		1	7	39%
22	Lao CPA Financial																	1		1	6%
23	Microsoft Access (#2)	1	1				1		1	1			1						1	7	39%
24	Official Protocol &Professional Arrangement	1					1			1			1	1	1	1	1		1	9	50%
25	Computer Art & Graphic Design				1															1	6%
Total		14	9	6	4	8	15	7	7	13	8	10	10	11	9	12	10	6	12		

Batch 2**Trainees****Courses**

		Alounyadeh Banouvang	Arounyadei Luanglaj	Chandaworn Bounnad	Chansouk Souphanthavong	Chittina Misaiphon	Khamphet Piphatthna	Liantham Payasane	Lina Phonethip	Manivanh Phanouvang	Mukdalay Xayavath	Nalinthone Vissatra	Ornchanh Thepkayson	Phamavanh Anoulack	Phonemany Phommachack	Phosavath Thepthala	Phoukhoum Veopadith	Somchit Vongsay	Southida Kingsada	Total	%
6	Solomon (#1)													1						1	5%
7	Professional Secretary (#1)			1	1	1			1	1							1	1		7	37%
8	First Aid Kit													1						1	5%
9	Fire Extinguisher					1														1	5%
12	Office Professional & Administration			1	1	1	1		1	1				1	1			1	1	10	53%
13	Professional English Writing (#1)			1	1	1			1	1		1		1					1	8	42%
14	Microsoft Access (#1)		1													1	1	1		4	21%
15	Organisational Communications & Teamwork (#2)		1	1	1	1	1			1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	13	68%
16	Introduction to ArcGIS	1					1													2	11%
17	Time Management	1	1				1							1						4	21%
18	Information Management			1		1		1	1			1			1	1		1	1	9	47%
19	General English (PR12)												1							1	5%
20	Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersoanl Skills (#1)				1	1	1		1											4	21%
21	Computer Art & Graphic Design												1							1	5%
23	General English (PR13)												1							1	5%
24	Building Geodatabases	1					1													2	11%
25	Official Letter Writing			1		1		1	1	1		1								6	32%
26	Professional English Writing (#2)		1								1				1	1		1		5	26%
27	Solomon (#2)		1		1				1	1		1			1	1				7	37%
28	Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersoanl Skills (#2)		1	1					1	1		1						1		6	32%
30	Microsoft Access (#2)			1				1	1	1		1		1					1	7	37%
31	Official Protocol & Professional Arrangement			1	1	1	1		1	1		1								7	37%
Total		3	6	9	7	8	5	3	9	5	8	2	7	3	6	6	5	2	7	6	

EVALUATION PROCESS AND FINDINGS

a) Methodology of Evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken using a number of modalities, namely

- i. Interviews and discussions with stakeholders – in particular the Project Team, training course providers and current supervisors of some the Programme participants
- ii. A workshop (planned) for all participants conducted on November 11 and 12, 2005 at Thalath
- iii. Written survey of all participants – distributed to those attending at Thalath, and at MRC office for the absentees
- iv. Review of available documentation



Figure 1. Team game at evaluation workshop

Unfortunately it was not possible to interview any of the Cambodian staff who took part in the training, especially about their role in the on-the-job component. By the time of this evaluation all had returned to Phnom Penh. This is a major weakness of the evaluation and results in a biased set of data on which to draw conclusions.

A decision was made not to include the drivers, cleaners and similar auxiliary staff in this evaluation although they did participate in some training activities. The exception was the maintenance manager who was fully involved in the training Programme.

The names of the stakeholders interviewed are presented in ANNEX 5, and the documents reviewed are listed in ANNEX 6.

b) Results of Evaluation

I. Course Presentation Issues

This evaluation did not seek to make any assessment on the presentation of course *per se*. Rather the focus has been upon the impact of training in preparing the Lao support staff to undertake their designated roles in the MRCS. The evaluation of the course delivery was already the subject of another Workshop conducted by EDC in the middle of 2005.

However in the course of this evaluation matters of concern about course organisation and delivery arose. For example, during discussions at the Workshop several trainees commented upon the timing and venues of courses. They felt, and the evaluators agreed, that it is difficult to concentrate on a course when it is given after normal working hours. When people have been working all day and then have to take a late afternoon – early evening training course, the concerns of the office and tiredness can go with the trainees and have an impact in the classroom. Tiredness (or lack of it) influences the effectiveness of learning. Further, when a course is at a location distant from MRC offices, adequate time needs to be allowed for travelling from the MRC to the venue. These simple but practical issues can have a negative impact upon effective learning. It is suggested that to maximise concentration upon training, courses occupy a full half-day, either morning or afternoon, leaving the remainder of the day for work. However in the case of courses extending through several weeks or even months, it is impractical to take so much time out of the workday, so that training can really only be given in the evenings or possibly weekends.



Figure 2. Assessing the delivery of courses

Another issue which relates more directly to impact, concerned testing in association with training courses. Some training institutions tested knowledge at the beginning of training; for example it was used with English courses in order to stream participants. Some institutions also tested at the completion of the training course and used the difference in scores as an indicator of knowledge and skills acquired. But no standard was set, no common procedure required. The evaluators feel that this is a weakness in the training Programme and any future courses would benefit from its inclusion.

II. On-the-job Training

On-the-job training was to have been a critical part of the Programme for transfer of knowledge and skills. It is spelled out clearly in the Project Document (Page 2 Strategy para 4) yet the “Project Results and Resources Framework” overlooks it completely.

Lao staff recruited in Batch 1, were sent to Phnom Penh specifically for on-the-job training. During the workshop, several made it clear that the system had flaws. It was not structured and thus relied more upon the willingness of both parties to cooperate. It was claimed that some Cambodian were obstructionist, and others took the attitude that the Lao should ask whatever they needed to know. But Lao are reluctant to ask such questions; sometimes they do not know what questions to ask or how to ask. One negative comment made was that the Cambodian did not teach the “little tricks” that were essential to the smooth handover of responsibilities.

Overall the evaluation team concluded that OJT, whilst effective to some extent was not an outstanding success.

III. Development of Knowledge and Skills

In evaluating the development of knowledge and skills, the main instrument used was the “personal survey form” (see ANNEX 3).

The form required the trainees to make an assessment of the extent to which each course they attended “influenced the effectiveness of performance of task” for every task in their job description and for every training course attended.

In analysing the results, the evaluators looked at the results from two perspectives (i) the people and (ii) the courses. In presenting and discussing results the focus is upon the extremes rather than the majority in the middle. Two courses – “First Aid” and “Fire Extinguisher” have been removed from the analysis, as these are very general in nature and do not relate directly to the TORs of any of the trainees.

Some people attended a lot of courses, other people attended very few. In the latter situation it is noted that the selection was very much targeted to specifically expressed needs.

- Trainees Attending Most Courses
 - (i) Manosouk Muongmany (15 courses)
 - (ii) Axone Phanipong (14 courses)
 - (iii) Palamany Soukhathammavong (13 courses)
- Trainees Attending Fewest Courses
 - (i) Nalinthone Vasinthara (2 courses)
 - (ii) Phoukhoun Vongsay (2 courses)
 - (iii) Several trainees attended only 3 courses

The courses most attended were the “software” ones which impact more on attitudes than on knowledge and skills (see next section). Nonetheless “Organisational Communication and Teamwork” is important within an entity such as MRC where sections can work very much in isolation, and yet where cooperation can facilitate the work..



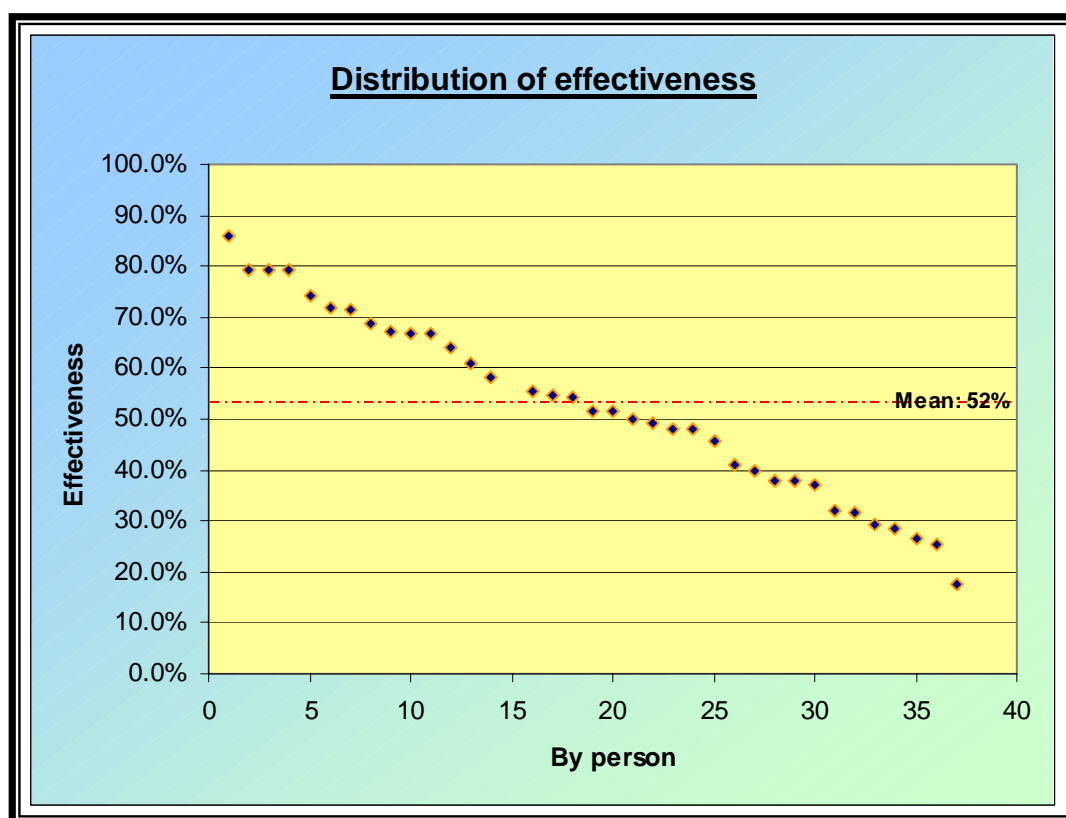
Figure 3. Building on planning and teamwork

- Courses Attended by the Most People
 - (i) Organisational Communication & Teamwork (28 people)
 - (ii) Microsoft ACCESS (26 people)
 - (iii) Professional English Writing (25 people)
 - (iv) Maximising Personal Effectiveness (23 people)
- Courses Attended by Fewest People
 - (v) Developing MS ASP NET (1 person)
 - (vi) Lao CPA Financial (1 person)
 - (vii) Computer Art & Graphic Design (1 person)
 - (viii) General English PR 13 (1 person)

This group of courses attended by only one (1) person were not offered to other trainees, rather they were selected by the participant as meeting their needs..

The results of the analysis of the Personal Survey of Trainees are presented in ANNEX 7 (Analysis of Trainee Self Evaluation)

The graphic following summarises the results.



The development of functional English is critical – it is the working language of the MRC. In Batch 1 some 43 “person–courses” of English were undertaken, whilst in Batch 2 there were only 21 “person–courses”. Of the total of 64 “person–courses” taken, 52 “person–courses” focused on various aspects of writing skills. This is arguably putting the emphasis where it is most needed, since nobody should

have been recruited who has poor speaking skills. Indeed the presentations made during the evaluation workshop provided evidence of their oral skills.

IV. Attitude Changes

The evaluation team considered that an understanding of the MRC indicated attitude change, the adoption of an “MRC culture” – the Mission, activities and the role each played in supporting/achieving MRC objectives. All staff should know this as they did have a form of “induction training”!! However it was noted at the evaluation workshop, that during Session III, they initially struggled to identify such things, and each group tended to look for ideas from the others. The training Programme being evaluated here was not responsible to conduct such a course, we understand that it is a matter for the Personnel section, but it does need to be addressed. People work less effectively when they do not understand well the environment within which they work.

V. Core Competencies

All job descriptions record a number of core competencies as being required of staff; included are the following - **communication, teamwork, planning and organising and client orientation.**



Figure 4. Client orientation ???

A number of training courses undertaken develop these competencies so as part of the evaluation workshop an indicative assessment was made during Session III. The objective of the exercise was to see just how the

core competencies were used in a game situation that produced the best results when people cooperated.

The groups passed the “test” but in making their presentation tended to say the right things, although these were not necessarily demonstrated during the exercise. In other words, they knew the theory but did not practice it. The groups did however have a good sense of teamwork.

It was also noticeable that leadership was lacking – nobody clearly took this role upon themselves (and nor was it allocated).

c) Effectiveness

During interviews with supervisors of the Lao support staff in MRCS, it was evident that most are doing a good job – the job expected of them in accordance with their job description and also in meeting the expectations of the supervisor.

This can be attributed in part to personal characteristics - the growing professionalism and the motivation to be seen to be doing a job well. But some of the successful handover must also be attributed to the benefits accruing from the training Programme.

The comment was made, and the evaluators noticed it in the Workshop, that staff are generally failing to display initiative. This, we understand was also demonstrated in the on-the-job training when Lao waited for guidance rather than actively seeking it.

One barrier to effective development of knowledge and skills in the MRCS support staff was their own lack of understanding of their own job description. Participants commented that they did not know well enough their own job – perhaps understandable when much of the training took place at or soon after entry to employment. Had participants understood their tasks better they could have provided guidance to the trainers on aspects that needed emphasis. Trainers claimed to have asked this sort of question but received little useful feedback. Trainees by the time of the Evaluation Workshop understood their roles much better and can see how they would have benefited much more with more focused training, training focused upon specific job needs.

Likewise trainees had little knowledge of the MRC, its mission, the Programmes, structure etc. This showed up at the Workshop when they were asked to draw a picture depicting such things. There was a lot of “head scratching” and a lot of copying between groups. But generally they knew better where their own section fitted in, and the roles it had to play as a support group.

It should be noted that the analysis upon which this discussion of effectiveness of the training Programme is based was not able to partition the results into causes and effects. All trainees come into courses with knowledge and skills – they would not otherwise have been recruited. Therefore when a course is considered to have had a low impact upon the performance of the Task in the TOR, it may well be that the entry level of knowledge is already adequate to perform the task.

Also it should be remembered that some courses will have a significant effect on doing one (or several) tasks but be almost irrelevant to another task i.e. not every course influences the performance of every task.

In summary, the training Programme has been an effective intervention in ensuring a smooth handover of responsibilities with the least disruption to MRCS work.

d) Efficiency

The total costs of the relocation of MRCS from Phnom Penh to Vientiane ran to millions of dollars. The \$ 250,000 allocated by UNDP for the MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training Programme was quite small in relation to the total cost.

However the evaluation consultants on the evidence available to them must conclude that the Programme was only a marginally efficient exercise.

Could the incoming Lao staff have been prepared better and at a lower cost? Certainly on-the-job training in Phnom Penh was a necessary element for a limited number of staff. At the very least they needed to see the office(s) functioning under normal conditions. Unfortunately by the time they arrived in Phnom Penh, offices were beginning to scale down in preparation for packing and removal. And it is a moot point as to whether the amount of time the outgoing Cambodian staff spent in Vientiane was justified given the frequency of negative comments about the value of that part of OJT.

It is also concluded that there could have been better targeting of course participation. Whilst it is true that the major cost of most training courses is setting them up, it is also true that the incremental costs of additional participants beyond a critical minimum number is quite low. A greater number of attendees at fewer courses would in all probability achieve the same level of capacity building. Then the savings could have been directed towards having more courses specifically targeted to the needs as determined through both TNA and also regular follow-up post training. For example, the Microsoft Office course could have been focused on advanced use of the software since all staff recruited should have had, and probably did have, all the basic skills.

e) Sustainability

The understanding of sustainability as it is normally applied in evaluations is not especially applicable in this Programme.

On the one hand the knowledge and skills acquired are sustainable **IF** they are used on a regular basis, but on the other hand they can be easily forgotten if not used. And then if the need arises to use such ability, some refresher training might be needed.

Sustainability can also be viewed positively in so far as the participants have acquired a wide range of new knowledge and skills, which makes them more

capable persons, and thus more employable beyond any contract that they might have with MRCS.

Having participated in this training Programme hopefully opens their eyes to a wider horizon and opens up possibilities that may have never previously been contemplated. In this way not only the individual but also the country benefits. This is perhaps the most valuable form of sustainability.



Figure 5. The MRC Mission

f) Conclusion

In ANNEX III of the Project Document, the “Objective” and “Success Indicators” for the training Programme are described.

As a conclusion, the evaluation team have the following comments to make on the achievement of these two parameters:

❖ Objective

The objective has been partially met. Support personnel were not adequately trained prior to the relocation; much of the training of Batch 1 took place after relocation. However the evaluation team was not in a position to comment on the extent of any interruption to operations and/or poor performance in the period immediately after relocation when the effects of incomplete training would have been most noticed. The presence of many of the Cambodian incumbents mitigated those effects.

❖ **Success Indicators**

1. According to records made available only 19 Lao trainees were recruited in the first Batch, however that was sufficient to continue the work upon relocation to Vientiane
2. Based upon current assignments there would appear to be more secretaries and fewer accountants recruited in Batch 1 than specified
3. Records show that only 19 trainees were recruited in Batch 2 but this was a sufficient number to replace all non-Lao support staff, who had all vacated their positions within one year of relocation ie by July 2005.
4. The trainees recruited have been trained, and have assumed positions as secretaries, accountant or administrative assistant. Some trainees have taken up technical support positions.
5. The trainees have all been trained as was required under the Programme. In general, the training has been accomplished successfully but in many cases the training has not been sufficient. There is a need for further training to build on the current skill levels and take them to a more advanced level of ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The consultants have a number of recommendations to make as a result of their evaluation of this Programme. Some are specific to the Programme, others relate more generally to training in the MRCS. Whilst this is not part of the TORs it is felt that they are relevant for any future similar activities. They might also be useful in dealing with other funding agencies, although the HR section is already well aware of such things.

1. The unexpended budget from the Programme should be used for further training of MRCS staff. Whilst the evaluators recognise the merit of using at least some of the budget for training of Riparian staff in technical areas, the TORs did not extend to assessing such a proposal. The support staff need further training – targeted and specific and the available funds should be spent on this.
2. A lot of problems encountered in the office are due to miscommunication. English language ability still needs improvement and remaining funds can be expended on it. But the recipients of further English training should be carefully selected – a standard required in the office needs to be established, based on an accepted method such as TOEFL Speaking skills can be relatively easily developed through practice but writing skills need a more targeted approach i.e. targeted to further developing knowledge and skills directly related to the work responsibilities. This should be the focus of further training.
3. All the training courses conducted to date should have follow-up. Furthermore, any training given using the unspent funds should have training participants produce an “action plan”, and its implementation be reviewed at some suitable interval.
4. The Human Resource Management process in MRCS needs to be more integrated with the functions of the Personnel Section. In addition, job descriptions need to identify competencies in specific terms relating to key tasks and these should be used to conduct a TNA for each support staff member upon entry to duty. From this an overall personal training program can be developed.
5. The PAR undertaken by each staff member of MRCS should continue to include identification of training needs, and should be based upon changes in competencies. The training program for each staff member can then be updated annually following the assessment.

ANNEX 1

CONSULTANT TORs



United Nations Development Programme

Lao PDR

MRCs RELOCATION STAFF TRAINING PROJECT (UNDP 00013340)

PROJECT AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES EVALUATION ORGANISER/EVALUATOR

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is an intergovernmental body created by an agreement between the four countries sharing the Lower Mekong Basin: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, signed on 5 April 1995, established the framework for cooperation between the four governments for joint management of the Mekong's water and natural resources.

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) Secretariat has relocated from Phnom Penh to Vientiane in June 2004.

To ensure the least interruption of MRC programme operations and the immediate resumption of the full-speed functioning of the MRC Secretariat following its relocation to Vientiane, recruiting and training sufficient number of Lao qualified personnel was determined as a factor for success. The training activities started in early 2004 and will continue to September 2005.

As the project is now approaching its end, the workshop to evaluate the project and the training programmes will be conducted. This Terms of Reference is for an individual/team of individuals/company who will plan, organize, and facilitate a workshop during which the project and programme is (self) evaluated. In addition individual/team of individuals/company is expected to review the project documentation, have individual meeting with the project stakeholders not able to join the workshop, make evaluation on the project and consolidate workshop outputs and the results of documentation review/evaluation into one evaluation report covering the project implementation and the training programmes.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of this Project and training programmes evaluation & evaluation workshop is to evaluate all training activities conducted during the project as well as the MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training project in general (management) from the first stage of the implementation of the project towards the final stage. This training evaluation & evaluation workshop shall be able to look for the benefit and impact of the project including both the training activities and project management aspect. In addition, it is important that

recommendations for the points to be developed are made and that the identified lessons learned for the project to be used for the implementation of the training activities in the future.

Scope of Work

The consultancy will consist of following parts:

- Planning, organizing and facilitating the evaluation workshop in collaboration with the HRD Programme officer of MRC Secretariat and the Project Management team (LNMC). Please see below for the details of the workshop.
- Review of the project & training programmes documentation
- Conduct individual meetings with the Project Team and key stakeholders not able to participate the evaluation workshop.
- Evaluation of the project and training programmes
- Writing the evaluation report based on the results from the workshop, review and other consultations.

Requirements for the Workshop

The workshop shall encompass at least the following issues:

- The evaluation of the institutions that conducted the training for the MRC support staff
- The self-assessment on capacity of the staff before and after the training programme
- The lessons learned during the on-the-job training and job transfer from Cambodian counterparts
- The general concept of the training activities – strengths, weaknesses, lessons learned
- The concrete recommendations from the staff related to the improvement of the training programme and activities
- Assessment of the operational effectiveness of the project

Number of participants: 40 persons (Lao support staff)
Date: 14~15 October, 2005
Conducted by: Consultant, Facilitator and/or Institution
Venue: Vientiane province, Lao PDR
Language: Bilingual (English and Lao)
Coordinated by: HRD Section, MRC Secretariat and the MRC HQ Relocation Staff
Training Project at LNMC
Funded by: UNDP

The workshop shall be closely supervised by HRD Programme Officer of MRC Secretariat and a representative from the Project Management team (LNMC)

Qualifications of the required consultant

This consultancy can be carried out by individual, team of individuals or company. The following experience, skills and qualifications are required:

- Strong experience in designing and conducting workshops and in project evaluation

- team leadership skills and experience
- technical expertise on training activities
- Strong facilitation skills and experience
- problem solving and analytical abilities
- excellent communication skills
- Fluency in English (speaking and report writing).

Expected outputs

- 1.5-2 days evaluation workshop conducted successfully
Good quality evaluation report covering the information achieved during the workshop and the individual meetings (in English, hard and soft copies)

Duration of consultancy & reporting

The consultancy is for 9 days including:

2 days for preparations of the workshop

2 days for the workshop

3 days for the review of the documentation and individual meetings

2 days for the writing of the report.

The consultant (individual/team of individuals/company) will report to the UNDP Programme Officer.

Proposals and Criteria for the Selection

Proposal for this consultancy should include following:

- Draft workplan for the evaluation including methodology
- Proposal for the workshop programme including schedule and methodology
- CVs of individuals going to carry out the tasks
- Price schedule

The proposals will be evaluated on the following basis:

<u>Score</u>	<u>Weight</u>	
Previous evaluation experience	50%	
Proposal for workshop programme, schedule and methodology		30%
Work plan for the consultancy	10%	
Price	10%	

Proposal should be submitted to UNDP Laos.

ANNEX 2

LIST of PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS

BATCH 1

Name	Position	Section	Workshop Attendance**
Aksone Phanipong	Secretary	HRS	Yes
Chanchouly Athanaphone	Secretary	OPD	Yes
Daovieng Sayachack	Travel Asst	FAS	Yes
Duangpy Phothisane	Website Admin	OCEO	Yes
Latdara sengmany	Finance clerk	FAS	Yes
Manosouk Muongmany	Secretary	AIFP	Yes
Manothone Vorabout	Secretary	FP	Yes
Navida Manotham	Secretary	ENV	Yes
Palamany Soukhathammavong	Secretary	OCEO	No
Pinthong Thippavongsa	Receptionist	FAS	Yes
Phonemaly Phinith	Registry Clerk	FAS	Yes
Phonesanook Mahavong	Admin Asst	ENV	Yes
Songkane Sayavong	Admin secretary	FAS	Yes
Sonpeth Chantaphone	Finance secretary	FAS	Yes
Soukouman Viravong	Secretary	FMMP	Yes
Varaphone Silaphet	Secretary	WRMP	No
Venephet Keopaphanh	Finance Asst	FAS	Yes
Vongchanh Indavong	Admin Asst	BDP	Yes

**** Attended Workshop on November 11 & 12, 2005**

BATCH 2

Name	Position	Section	Workshop Attendance**
Alounyadeth Banouvong	Geographic tech	TSD	No
Arounyadej Luanglaj	Finance Asst	FAS	Yes
Chandaworn Bounnad	Admin Asst	OCEO	Yes
Chansouk Souphanthavong	Secretary	PCS	Yes
Chittina Misaiphon	Secretary	PLD	No
Khamphet Piphatthna	Maintenance Supervisor	FAS	No
Liankham Payasane	GIS Asst	TSD	Yes
Lina Phonethip	Secretary	TSD	No
Manivanh Phanouvong	Program Asst	Prog Asst	Yes
Mukdalay Xayarath	Personnel Asst	PCS	Yes
Nalinthone Vissatra	Secretary	BDP	Yes
Ornchanh Thepkayson	Procurement Asst	FAS	Yes
Phannavanh Anoulack	Graphic Designer	OCEO	Yes
Phonemany Phommachack	Admin Asst	WUP	No
Phonesavat Thepthala	Admin Asst	FAS	Yes
Phosaikham Veopadith	Finance Asst	FAS	No
Phoukhoun Vongsay	Finance Asst	FAS	No
Somchit Luangkhot	Registry Clerk		Yes
Southida Kingsada	Secretary	EP	Yes

**** Attended Workshop on November 11 & 12, 2005**

ANNEX 3

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT FORMAT

MRC HQ RELOCATION STAFF TRAINING PROJECT

PROJECT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Effective influence of training on work performance

Name

Position, Sector.

		Training courses attended					
		Information Management	Soft-Programme Evaluation Workshop	Official Letter Writing	Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersoanl Skills (#2)	Microsoft Access (#2)	Official Protocol & Professional Arrangement
1	Organises & coordinates preparation for JC, Council etc						
2	Maintains records of JC & Council meetings						
3	Assists in preparing MRC work programme						
4	Drafts correspondence						
5	Assists in implementation of MRC Notification Procedures registry						
6	Performs other duties as required						
	•						
	•						
	•						

MRC HQ RELOCATION STAFF TRAINING PROJECT

PROJECT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Effective influence of training on work performance

Instructions:

Please score the following trainings that you undertook in terms of how they have influenced the effectiveness in carrying out the key tasks in your job description:

- 0:** Use 0 if the training was not relevant to the tasks
- 1:** Use 1 for very little influence on effectiveness on the performance of your tasks
- 2:** Use 2 for moderate influence on effectiveness on the performance of your tasks
- 3:** Use 3 for a lot of influence on effectiveness on the performance of your tasks

All cells should contain a number

If your job description says: ***Performs other duties as assigned by the supervisor***, please list any of these duties in the space provided.

ANNEX 4

WORKSHOP PAPERS

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

(November 11 and 12, 2005)

Friday 11th

2030	Opening address Mr Vongdara Keomuongchanh (LNMC)
2045	Introductions <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Evaluation/facilitation team2. Participants
2100	Workshop program and expectations
2115	Explanation of questionnaire, and distribution
2130	Close

Saturday 12th

0800	Game
0815	<u>Session 1</u> Discussion in small groups on the “Organisation and Management of Training Program and Courses . Explanation, and group allocation by facilitators
1000	Coffee break (15 minutes)
1015	Discussion continues
1045	Presentation on findings by each group
1200	Lunch
1300	Game
1315	<u>Session 2</u> Group discussion on impacts of training on core competencies . Explanation, and group allocation by facilitators
1400	Group presentations
1500	Coffee break (15 minutes)
1515	<u>Session 3</u> Group discussions on organisational attitudes Explanation, and group allocation by facilitators
1645	Closing address by Ms. Sirixai Phanthavongs (UNDP)
1700	Departure for Vientiane

SESSION #1**ORGANISATION & MANAGEMENT of TRAINING**

Discuss your experiences in the MRC Relocation Training Program as outlined below.

Report briefly to the meeting and highlight particular strengths and good points; if necessary also matters that substantially failed to meet standards.

	Strength	Weakness
Section 1 General 1. Timing 2. Duration 3. Venue – place and institution 4. Resource persons		
Section 2 Course and Objectives 1. Known in advance 2. Clear and understandable 3. Relevant 4. Achieved 5. Structured presentation 6. Appropriate style 7. Notes and handouts		
Section 3 Practical and OJT 1. Adequate time allocated 2. Structured 3. Supervised 4. Relevant 5. Assistance provided by Khmer staff		
Section 4 Programme Management & Coordination 1. MRC responsibilities 2. UNDP responsibilities 3. LNMC responsibilities		

Prepare and present your findings on a flipchart in the style above.

SESSION #2

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ATTITUDE DEVELOPMENT

Competency Development

In your job description, **communication, teamwork, planning and organisation** and **client focus** are listed as *Core Competencies*.

Discuss how your participation in the MRC Relocation Training Programme has improved these competencies.

Using the drinking straws and rubber bands provided make a model to represent your answers; you must use all drinking straws

SESSION #3

Discuss how your office contributes to the achievement of the goals and objectives of MRCS

Discuss in terms of the following:

6. Understanding of Mission of MRC
7. Understanding of activities of MRC
8. Organisational structure of your programme or Section; how does it contribute to the activities and mission of MRC

Transpose your discussion onto the flipchart for presentation as a drawing

ANNEX 5

LIST of PEOPLE CONSULTED

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Position</u>
Mr. Dirk Overweg	MRCS	Chief, Finance & Administration
Ms. Anoulone Kittarath	MRCS	Senior Administrator
Ms. Katihanna Ilomaki	UNDP	Unit Manager, Environment
Ms. Sirixai Phanthavongs	UNDP	Programme Analyst
Mr. Vongdara Keomuangchanh	LNMC	Deputy Director
Ms. Kongsang	LNMC	Project Accountant
Mr. Inthaneth Norasingh Resources	MRCS	Programme Officer, Human
Mr. Chantala Phaboonheuang	LAC	Manager, Business Studies
Mrs. Galina Bannavong	LAC	Head of Business Adm. Department
Mr. Chris Carroll	LAC	Instructor of Business
Ms. Luz Julieta Rio	EDC	Senior Advisor

ANNEX 6

DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- Professional Secretary
Course Report: 7 – 11 March, 2005
Enterprise and Development Consultants Co., Ltd
- Report of programmed activity report
Mekong River Commission Secretariat
1 February 2005
- Office Professional and Administrator
Course Report: 14 – 18 March, 2005
Informatics Computer School
- MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training – Programme Document
UNDP, Lao PDR
12 November 2003
- Annual Project Report January 2004 – December 2004
Project 00013340 MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training
UNDP, Lao PDR
25 January 2005
- Annual Work Plan - 2004
MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training
UNDP, Lao PDR
- Annual Work Plan - 2005
MRC HQ Relocation Staff Training
UNDP, Lao PDR
- Advanced English Professional Writing Skills
Course Report: 4 March – may 13, 2005
Lao American College
- Report of Annual Workshop of Staff Training Programme
Enterprise & Development Consultants Co., Ltd
20 December 2004
- ຄູ່ມືການປະຖິມພະຍາບານ ຂັ້ນຕົ້ນ ສຳລັບອາສາສະໝັກ
ອົງການການແດງລາວ, ກອງສົ່ງເສີມສຸຂະພາບ
(In English: Handbook on First Aid – Basic Level for Volunteers)
Lao Red Cross

- Advanced English for Professional and Official Letter Writing
Course Report: 13 July 2005 – 15 August 2005
acl
18 August 2005
- English Technical Writing Skills
Course Report: October 2004 to January 2005
Century 21st School of English
- Organizational Culture, Communication and Teamwork
Course Report: 7-18th June 2004
Home of English Business School
- Time Management
Course Completion (Evaluation) Report: 06-08 April 2005
MCPTC
- Microsoft ACCESS
Course Report: 7 -09-2005 to 30-09-2005
Soutsaka Institute
- Microsoft ACCESS and Information Management
Course Report: 15 -04-2005 to 21-04-2005
Soutsaka Institute
- Microsoft OFFICE 2003
Course Report: February 2004
Soutsaka Institute
- Professional Secretary
Course Report: 24-26 January 2005
Enterprise and Development Consultants Co., LTD
- Maximizing Personal Effectiveness and Inter-personal skills
Course Report: 9-11 May 2005
Enterprise & Development Consultants Co., LTD
- “The study of the impact and effectiveness of the previous training programmes for Lao support staff”
Report of Programme Evaluation Workshop:
Enterprise & Development Consultants Co.,
July 2004

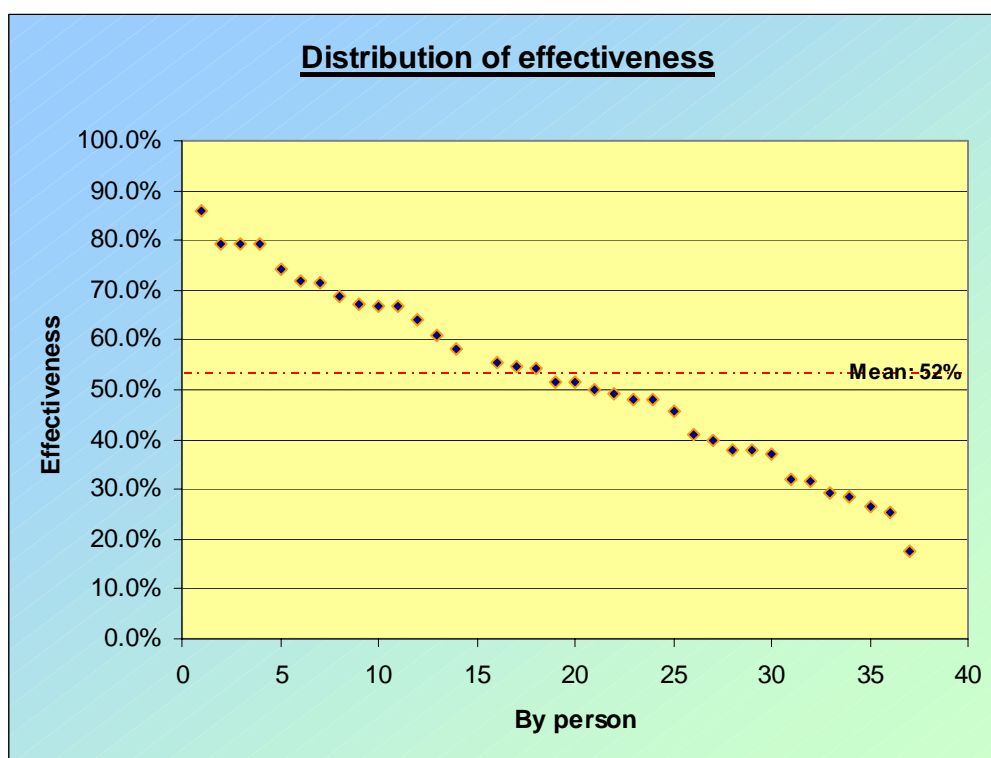
- Maximizing Personal Effectiveness and Inter-personal Skills
Course Report: 10 – 12 August 2005
Enterprise & Development Consultants Co., LTD
- Training Programme for MRCS Lao Support Staff
Observation Report on English Training: 18 February to 16 March 2004
LNMC
- Report of Solomon Training course
MRC
26 November 2004
- Office Administration
Course Completion & Evaluation Report: 18 March – 25 April 2004
MCPTC

ANNEX 7

ANALYSIS of TRAINEE SELF EVALUATION

Summary of Analysis of Effectiveness

- The mean effectiveness of overall training on the performance of tasks in job description: 52.4%
This mean is low and shows that the overall training has moderate influence of the work performance. However, we have to bear in mind that this rate of effectiveness is calculated on all tasks in the job description and that not all training has relevance to each task. Furthermore, many trainees attended courses, which have increased their knowledge but that they did not really use in the performance of their tasks. For example, many have attended Solomon and Microsoft Access training, but have seldom used these programs.
- Highest scoring of effectiveness by a trainee: 86%
The person is the maintenance supervisor and has attended 5 courses:
 - Fire extinguisher
 - Office Professional & Administration
 - Organisational Communications & Teamwork
 - Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersonal Skills
 - Official Protocol & Professional Arrangement
 Except for Fire Extinguisher, which was not included in the analysis of effectiveness, these courses are more general and relate to the personal development of the trainee. However these training courses have developed his competence for the performance of his duties as maintenance supervisor.



- Lowest scoring of effectiveness of training on work performance by a trainee: 17%.

The person works as a secretary and has attended 7 courses:

- Professional Secretary
- Office Professional & Administration
- Professional English Writing
- Organisational Communications & Teamwork
- Maximising Personal Effectiveness & Interpersonal Skills
- Solomon
- Official Protocol & Professional Arrangement

The low rating here means that the training has little influence on the performance of her tasks. She rated Solomon training as not relevant to the work performance. The other training were too general. The person has already skills and competence and has a good work methodology when she was recruited.

- 47% of trainees (17 persons) rated the effectiveness of the training above the mean
- First 5 ranked courses which has influenced the work performance:
 1. Lao CPA Financial
 2. Office Administration, Professional Secretary
 3. Office Professional & Administration
 4. English for Communications/ Basic English, Computer (Microsoft Office 2003), Time Management
 5. Organisational Communications & Teamwork
- Courses which has the least influence on the work performance:
 1. Solomon
 2. Official Protocol & Professional Arrangement
 3. Microsoft Access

As discussed earlier, many people undertook these courses but did not use them.

- 2 persons rated Solomon training as not relevant to the performance of any their tasks and another 2 persons rated Microsoft Access the same way.