

**Development of a Concept
and Draft Terms of Reference
for a Capacity Building Network
for the Sound Management of Chemicals**

Discussion Paper - Draft

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This document has been prepared by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research as a basis for further discussions among interested parties.

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1. Introduction

This paper is meant to provide a starting point for discussion among interested parties to address the call of ISG 3 for a consultative process to develop a concept and draft terms of reference (TOR) for a Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals. It outlines possible objectives and functions of the Capacity Building Network and provides an indicative listing of questions which would need to be further addressed during the consultation process. An overview of the proposed process through which the TOR will be developed is also provided. It is expected that through comments of interested parties, the concept of the Capacity Building Network can be further developed over the coming months, as a basis for preparing a decision paper for Forum III by 21 February which is meant to facilitate discussions on this issue at Forum III.

2. Background

During the Third Intersessional Group Meeting (ISG 3) of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), which took place in Yokohama, Japan in December 1998, a thematic session on strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for the sound management of chemicals was organized. During this session, a working group discussed a proposal introduced by the European Commission on the development of a Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals to enhance co-ordination and co-operation and to develop partnerships to assist both developing and developed countries to enhance the effectiveness of capacity building projects.

The proposal received broad-based support, however, within the short time frame available, it was not possible to reach agreement on the exact nature and functions of the Capacity Building Network, as the term “network” raised different expectations and had a wide range of interpretations. A recommendation was therefore agreed upon by ISG 3 to make use of the time between ISG 3 and Forum III in the year 2000 to further develop the concept of a Capacity Building Network with the following wording: "ISG 3 supported the establishment of a Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals and invited UNITAR, in collaboration with other IOMC Participating Organizations, countries and other interested parties, to develop a draft Terms of Reference for the network, for discussion and possible adoption at Forum III".

3. Is There a Rationale for Initiating a Capacity Building Network ?

The number of chemicals management related training and technical assistance programmes organized by countries, international organizations, and other groups participating in the IFCS is significant and likely to grow as sound chemicals management receives an increasing amount of national and international attention. Activities implemented through these various

bodies range from organizing workshops to long term projects involving significant transfer of financial resources.

Major capacity building initiatives are implemented by the following actors :

- Participating Organizations of the IOMC (i.e. UNEP, WHO, ILO, FAO, UNIDO, UNITAR and OECD)¹
- multi-lateral and regional development banks and finance institutions (World Bank, ADB, GEF, etc.)
- bi-lateral development co-operation agencies (SDC, Danida, USAID, etc.)²
- ministries/agencies responsible for chemicals management (USEPA, KEMI, etc.)
- private sector entities (member companies of CEFIC, CMA, GCPF, etc.)
- public and labor interest groups (PAN, ICEM, etc.)
- academic/research entities (IUPAC, universities, etc.)

Considering the myriad of ongoing activities and the number of organizations and countries involved worldwide, the issue has arisen to what extent these activities are well known, reasonably well co-ordinated, etc. Specific questions which are relevant in this context include, inter alia:

- Where/how can up-to-date information on ongoing and planned projects implemented through the above actors be easily obtained?
- Who are the points of contacts in organizations and countries providing assistance who could provide relevant information about past, ongoing and planned training and capacity building activities?
- For which topics are training and guidance documentation already available and where/how can these materials be accessed/obtained?

¹ A report issued by the Inter-Organization Co-ordinating Committee (IOCC) of the IOMC on relevant activities conducted in 1996-1997 revealed that almost all IOMC Participating Organizations (POs), both through their regular budgets and with extra-budgetary resources, carry out significant training and capacity building activities addressing various areas of chemicals management (IFCS/ISG3/92.20B).

² The second OECD Survey of Development Assistance Activities for [Chemicals Management] Capacity Building (1998) identified no less than 230 ongoing bi-lateral projects, supported by some 17 OECD Member States and the European Commission (<http://www.oecd.org/ehs/capacity/index.htm>).

- Are the experiences gained and lessons learned through various capacity building projects (the “project memory”) somewhere documented in a simple format, and if so, are they available to interested parties?
- Are there opportunities for “piggy backing” projects, i.e. building on achievements in a stepwise fashion thus leading to increased potential for sustainable capacity?
- Are there possible duplication of efforts and non-beneficial overlaps and, if so, how can they be avoided?
- What are the procedures and formal channels to apply for/obtaining external assistance through various organizations, development co-operation agencies, etc.?

Although several organizations have made significant progress to document and co-ordinate their activities, opportunities may remain to provide potentially interested parties more systematic and up-to-date information about various aspects of capacity building activities, as outlined above. It is within this context that ISG 3 has called for a consultative process to develop a Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management.

4. Suggested Guiding Principles for Further Developing the Capacity Building Network Concept

Taking into consideration that capacity building activities of various partners participating in the IFCS are, and will continue to be, independently organized by the respective countries and organizations and recognizing that significant additional financial resources for the operation of a Capacity Building Network are unlikely to become available, this discussion paper has been developed based on the guiding principles that a Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals should:

- not interfere with specialized network arrangements already in place or under development³;
- be a simple and flexible mechanism which provides “value added”;
- require only a minimal secretariat infrastructure; and
- be introduced in a phased approach, as experience is being gained over time.

These guiding principles are rather general in nature, however, they are meant to set the general tone for the further developing and shaping of the network concept as described below.

³ E.g. the clearing house mechanism discussed in the context of negotiating a legal agreements on POPs, the Network of PRTR Resource Persons initiated through the IOMC PRTR Co-ordinating Group, etc.

5. What Could Be the Objectives of the Capacity Building Network?

As a starting point for discussion it is suggested that Capacity Building Network could serve the following objectives:

- (1) to provide easy access to routinely updated and current information on past, ongoing, and future capacity building projects of organizations and countries listed in section 3 (Who is active where, when, on what?);
- (2) to catalyze the designation of Points of Contact (POCs) for chemicals management capacity building within organizations⁴ and countries;
- (3) to facilitate access to existing guidance and training documentation available through various organizations and countries;
- (4) to provide general information about opportunities and formal procedures to access/applying for capacity building resources; and
- (5) to provide a mechanism of exchanging lessons learned through specific capacity building projects (“keeping the project memory alive”).

6. Who is Expected to Benefit From the Capacity Building Network ?

Those who would be expected to benefit from the existence of a Capacity Building Network may include:

- government officials and representatives of NGOs in developing countries and countries in transition seeking information on, and support for national capacity building projects;
- project managers and staff in multi- and bi-lateral organizations, non-governmental organizations or other private or public entities involved in the design and implementation of capacity building programmes;
- any other interested party (e.g. general public).

⁴ See also ISG 3 recommendation ES 16 through which “ donor agencies, development banks....should be asked to designate appropriate contact points for chemicals management [capacity building]”.

7. Practical Services Which Could be Provided Through the Capacity Building Network

For all parties involved in chemical management capacity building activities, the Capacity Building Network could provide a practical reference, entry point, or “yellow pages” for finding information about various aspects of chemicals management capacity building.

Specific services could, for example, include⁵:

- (1) a **Gateway to Existing Information Sources on Capacity Building Activities** providing references, linkages, and, if feasible, search capabilities of existing relevant Internet sites of various “capacity building providers” in order to allow interested parties to obtain more easily information on-going and planned capacity building activities, if possible by country, region or topic area;⁶
- (2) a **Reference Library of Existing Training and Guidance Documentation** providing reference and/or access to capacity building documents of IOMC POs and other organizations, including addresses to obtain the documents and/or hyper-links on the internet to the actual documents themselves;⁷
- (3) a **Project Case Study Library**, to be build up over time, containing information, grouped by subject area, about innovative country based projects, including experiences gained and lessons learned, as well as points of contacts for further information;
- (4) a **“Getting a Project Started” Information Service** including information on ways, means and official procedures to apply for and access support of organizations and countries providing assistance; and
- (5) a **Listing of Priorities and Related Needs** developed and provided by countries seeking external support, to inform those interested in providing assistance (e.g. potential donors) with a better picture of where assistance is most needed and would be most effective (“better matching”).

⁵ Not all of these services will need to be developed from scratch, as important ground work may have already been done in certain cases through various organizations and/or countries (e.g. the OECD Survey of Development Assistance Activities).

⁶ Such a gateway would need to be linked with the ongoing effort of IOMC Participating Organizations to provide one IOMC gateway to their Internet Sites

⁷ UNITAR, together with IOMC POs, has already compiled an annotated listing of guidance and training materials available through IOMC POs which could be expanded to include materials of other organizations.

8. How Could the Capacity Building Network Operate?

It is envisioned that the Capacity Building Network would mainly operate through information maintained and provided through its “members”. The lead for development of specific services could be taken through potentially interested organizations as a contribution to the Capacity Building Network, in particular if certain activities have already been undertaken which address or partially address specific Capacity Building Network objectives.

The Capacity Building Network would operate primarily -- but not exclusively -- as an Internet site, the location/host of which would have to be determined. The main site would be constructed and maintained as an initial gateway for those seeking to find information as well as those who wish to facilitate access to information and documentation.

Recognizing that not all countries have access to the Internet, the efforts of donor entities and others to assist countries in gaining Internet access will be important to the Capacity Building Network’s relevance and success. In addition, other means (e.g. provision of hard copies of certain information) would need to be sought to facilitate the use of the Capacity Building Network by those for whom Internet is not readily available.

9. Designation of Points of Contact

The real essence of the Capacity Building Network would be the commitment of organizations, countries and people to make it work and to make available and/or provide access to relevant information. Thus, an important initial step in the development of the Capacity Building Network will be the designation of *Points of Contact* (POCs) in organizations and countries providing assistance (i.e. those listed in Section 3) who would have the responsibility to make relevant information available, as a contribution to the Capacity Building Network. It is suggested that the IFCS and IOMC mechanisms be used as the starting point for facilitating the identification of an initial list of POCs, and for publicizing and generating interest in the Capacity Building Network. Other relevant POCs could be added on an ongoing basis. Those groups participating in the IFCS which implement capacity building projects would need to consult among its constituency/members how to best organize the designation of POCs, as those may have to perform certain functions on behalf of a larger group of individual entities in certain cases.

10. Opportunities for Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition

Although the Capacity Building Network is unlikely to generate additional resources, it is expected to provide opportunities for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as relevant information would be more accessible. Also, the benefit of better co-ordinated efforts catalyzed through the Capacity Building Network may lead to the refocusing and/or redirection of available funding in the medium and long term.

Those countries which are actively seeking external support may therefore want to consider to increase their efforts to provide potentially interested parties with ready access to information on ongoing national activities and priorities in order to facilitate better “matching” of country priorities and external assistance and to demonstrate their efforts to ensure co-ordination. This could be achieved, for example:

- by making their National Profile and Plans of Action on identified priorities widely available; and
- by establishing an internet site for the national programme for the sound management of chemicals which summarizes ongoing and planned chemicals management initiatives implemented through various ministries and other organizations.

Such efforts could be co-ordinated at the national level, as appropriate, through the national IFCS focal point and be considered as a contribution to the Capacity Building Network from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Also, by making available the lessons learned through specific projects through the Library of Case Studies, recipients of assistance could make a significant contribution towards achieving the objectives of the Capacity Building Network.

11. Questions for Further Discussion

It is expected that the concept of the Capacity Building Network for the Sound Management of Chemicals is shaped by organizations and countries which have an active interest in it and expect to benefit from its services. Further discussions are therefore required to address, inter alia, the following questions:

- Are the proposed objectives (Section 5) and services (Section 7) of the network useful and realistic? Are some considered more important than others?
- What practical steps could be taken to initiate the Capacity Building Network in a step-by-step manner?
- How can commitment of interested parties be obtained?

- Does the Capacity Building Network require a small secretariat or could secretariat services be shared among interested organizations and countries?
- etc.

12. Proposed Consultation Process Leading Towards Forum III Discussions

In order to obtain a better understanding of the potential interest of major capacity building providers and recipients in shaping the establishment of the Capacity Building Network, an open process will be implemented prior to Forum III, in order to provide the IFCS with a sound proposal and draft Terms of Reference which reflects broad-based input and thinking.

Milestones in this process include:

- draft “Discussion Paper” prepared by UNITAR and circulated to FSC members, IOMC POs and other interested parties for initial review and comments (October 1999)
- discussion among IOMC POs during the 12th meeting of the IOCC (2-3 December 1999)
- finalization of Discussion Paper and preparation of a draft Terms of Reference to be sent out in preparation of the international review meeting and in preparation of FSC discussions in the year 2000 (15 December 1999)
- international review meeting with interested parties, 25-26 January 2000, Geneva
- submission of final Forum III working paper and draft TOR to the FSC (21 February 2000)
- discussion at Forum III, possible endorsement/adoption of TOR, and possible commitment of IFCS partners to participate in the Capacity Building Network (October 2000)

Annex 1: Practical Examples of How the Capacity Building Network Could Function

Example 1

USAID received a request from Country X to support a safe use project for pesticides. USAID consults the Capacity Building Network Homepage and finds out that one IOMC PO and two bi-lateral organizations have supported pesticides projects in Country X over the past years. USAID consults both with the requesting country and the focal points of the assistance agencies to ensure full complementarity and co-ordination with past activities prior to initiating a new project. Results of the project will be summarized and placed as a case study in the Capacity Building Network Library

Example 2

Country Y has organized a National Priority Setting Workshop and identified chemical legislation as its top priority. Country Y consults the Capacity Building Network Homepage and identifies two country projects that were implemented in neighboring countries on this topic. Country Y contacts the focal points in the neighboring countries and those in the countries/organizations which provided the assistance, as an input into the further development of its national action plan and in mobilizing external support.

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