

**THE LIFE OF PROJECT (LOP) APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE &
ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT (ESDM) IN
IMPLEMENTAION TRAINING BY USAID.**

**A CASE OF USAID/WEST AFRICA ESDM TRAININGS FOR STAFF AND PARTNERS (2016-
2017)**

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Background:

The “Life of Project” (LOP) agenda and materials were piloted at a June 2008 workshop in Bagamoyo, Tanzania delivered under the Environmentally Sound Design and Management Capacity-Building Support for Africa (ENCAP) project.¹ This curriculum focused on environmental compliance and ESDM across the project lifecycle and serves as the basis for the training program developed under GEMS and adapted for the USAID/West Africa workshops in Senegal and Ghana.

Consistent with adult learning techniques and a focus on practical application, the agenda reflected the principle that group exercises/field visits should represent at least 50 percent of the total workshop time, and that classroom theory should be systematically reinforced with small group discussions, classroom exercises, quiz games and a field visit component. In addition, the training concept was progressive, beginning with basic skills and addressing the project lifecycle sequentially, from beginning to end.

The views expressed are that of the author and not necessarily that of USAID. The author was Activity Manager for a contract (GEMS 11) buy-in which funded these three training sessions from November 2016 to October 2017 in Saly, Senegal and Akosombo, Ghana). Whilst the language of instruction for the first workshop was French, the 2nd workshop was in English and the last in the series was bilingual.

The paper focuses more on the second workshop in the series of trainings for USAID staff and partners delivered in English which was follow-on to the Francophone workshop in Saly, Senegal (November 28–December 2, 2016). It however discusses results of all three workshops whilst it compares and contrasts some findings of all three workshops.

Workshop Goal

The overall goal of the workshops was to strengthen environmental compliance and environmentally sound design and management (ESDM) of USAID-funded activities in West Africa by ensuring that participants have the motivation, knowledge, and skills necessary to: (1) achieve environmental compliance through project implementation; and (2) otherwise integrate environmental considerations in activity design and management through all aspects of implementation. Secondly, this workshop provided a forum for USAID staff to discuss current environmental compliance and ESDM issues in West Africa.

Towards these ends, the workshops were based on a version of a “hybrid” agenda developed in late 2012 by GEMS principal partners, The Cadmus Group, Inc. (Cadmus) and Sun Mountain International (SMTN), and first delivered in Adama, Ethiopia in December 2012 in a course for USAID/Ethiopia staff and Implementing Partners (IPs). The hybrid agenda sought to combine the strongest elements of existing

¹ ENCAP was a program of USAID/AFR/SD implemented by International Resources Group, prime contractor, and The Cadmus Group, Inc., subcontractor via contract no. EPP-I-00-03-00013-00, Task Order No. 11.

curricula developed by Cadmus and Sun Mountain (SMTN) under previous contracts, and independent of the current collaboration. The training agenda was well received in Ethiopia and at subsequent workshops.

Revisions for the USAID/West Africa workshops included integration of “Special Topics” sessions on pesticides and the PERSUAP and climate change and Climate Risk Management (CRM). This entailed the development of a new technical session on climate change and CRM and an update to existing sessions on pesticides and the PERSUAP. Additionally, the facilitators edited the technical sessions to reduce the number of slides in order to allow time for post-presentation group discussions; each table of five to six participants discussed prepared questions and their own experiences with the assistance of a GEMS or USAID facilitator.

The majority of participants were IP staff, by design, and the workshops focused on strengthening participants’ ability to perform environmental impact assessment (EIA) and prepare Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plans (EMMPs). All three workshops included two field visits and a short “transect walk” exercise at the hotel. Discussion groups focused on considerations and resources for sound design and implementation of effective EMMPs.

Learning Approaches

Adaptations and improvements for these workshops. The workshops carried forward the basic elements of the earlier LOP agenda and training delivery, but made several key changes in structure and delivery: Small group discussions after every technical presentation. In keeping with recent updates to the LOP training methodology, small group discussion exercises were designed to accompany each one of the technical sessions (including special topics). These exercises were intended to encourage a greater degree of participant critical thinking and analysis on ESDM and compliance topics covered, and allows for a higher number of participants to ask questions of GEMS facilitators than the standard plenary question and answer (Q&A) sessions used in previous workshops.

Outside of Classroom Field Exercises.

Based on guidance from the USAID/West Africa Regional Environmental Adviser (REA), the workshop included a one-hour transect walk exercise at the hotel and two half-day field exercises with follow-on small-group work. The transect walk was designed to practice baseline characterization. The first field exercise was to practice baseline characterization, impact identification, and mitigation design. The second field exercise was intended to review the prior elements and practice development of monitoring indicators that correspond to previously identified mitigation measures.

Field visits to non-USAID-funded projects in close proximity to the hotel. In the interest of providing participants with more time to perform post-field visit analysis and EMMP write-up, the SMTN training team selected field visit locations within a 10-20 minute drive of the hotel. The project sites in Akosombo selected were not USAID-funded projects, but the hypothetical scenarios applied for the purposes of EMMP development were designed as USAID projects. Participants were instructed to consider the project visited as an opportunity to learn from an existing project in order to inform the design of a new, hypothetical USAID-funded activity that shares the same objectives and baseline conditions. In prepared field guides, SMTN provided a short description of this hypothetical activity to assist participants in practicing the EIA process.

The Google Site and Participants’ Forum. The facilitation team developed a post-workshop web platform for participants to share information and questions. The Google Sites and Google Groups platforms provided workshop follow-up support to participants. The Google Site was set up to provide participants with all workshop materials and resources (also provided on the GEMS website), as well as to host a Participant Forum, where participants were engaged by the facilitation team over the following 6-9 months.

Participants were provided additional motivation via short quizzes, exercises, and questions on ESDM and environmental compliance that the SMTN facilitators will post on the forum. In addition, participants will be encouraged to share experiences from their work.

Findings

Evaluation approaches involved Small-Group Presentations, Individual daily workshop evaluations and Individual final workshop evaluation. Daily evaluations revealed overall satisfaction with workshop methodology, content, organization and logistics. Participants also used evaluations to provide helpful recommendations for facilitators. During final evaluation, Participants provided positive feedback regarding the practical and interactive aspects of the workshop, including the field exercises, which exposed participants to the “real deal” and enabled them to put the classroom lessons into practice.

Workshop Results

The tables below summarize the evaluation results for mainly Jan 2017 Akosombo workshop except otherwise stated. Spreadsheets containing full transcriptions of the evaluations are available from GEMS upon request. Individual comments on the evaluations also offered a number of insights for strengthening future workshops.

TABLE 1 DAILY EVALUATION RESULTS

EVALUATION ELEMENT	AVERAGE SCORES					
	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	Average across 5 days
Quality of the methodology used during the day	4.37	4.50	4.93	4.77	4.82	4.68
General usefulness of this day’s theme for your organization	4.56	4.75	4.71	4.77	4.76	4.71
Quality of the information presented today	4.37	4.69	4.64	4.54	4.69	4.59
Satisfaction with the hotel, room and food	4.04	4.13	4.43	4.23	4.53	4.27
Satisfaction with the workshop organization	4.11	4.50	4.57	4.69	4.65	4.50

After each day evaluation forms were distributed and participants took time to evaluate five different elements. The average scores for the Akosombo workshop in January 2017 are presented above. Rating based on the following scale: 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = average, 2 = inadequate, 1 = bad

TABLE 2: FINAL EVALUATION RESULTS

Rating based on the following scale: 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = average, 2 = inadequate, 1 = bad

EVALUATION ELEMENT	AVERAGE SCORES		
	AKOSOMBO, GHANA (JANUARY 2017)	SALY, SENEGAL (OCTOBER (2016)	AKOSOMBO, GHANA (OCTOBER 2017)
Technical Quality	4.74	4.64	4.43
Facilitation	4.37	4.53	4.38
Logistics	4.39	4.29	3.76
Venue	4.53	4.13	4.43
Field Visits	4.79	4.60	4.67

The final results of 3 different workshops held within a one year period. The first was a francophone workshop held in October 2016 for the large francophone population of Staff and IPs mostly in Sahelian West Africa. The second was an anglophone one held in Ghana for English speaking staff of USAID and their IPs. The final one was a bilingual training held for both Sahelian and non Sahelian West Africa staff and partners.

Learning Approach was also evaluated. After each day evaluation forms were distributed and participants took time to evaluate five different elements. The average scores for the Akosombo workshop in January 2017 are presented BELOW.

TABLE 3: LEARNING METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION ELEMENT	AVERAGE SCORE (5=very good, 1=bad)	SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT COMMENTS
Balance in time allocation (presentation, group exercises, field visits, discussions and dynamics)	4.63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time allotment sufficient • Field trips were great • Good balance - Enough time for discussion
Technical quality of the materials	4.53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a lot of information • Materials were well designed to assist us with the exercises and our own work
Level of satisfaction with group exercises	4.58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On days 1 & 2 recommend moving around a bit more & doing more than just "discuss in groups" Give us problems to solve. • The group exercises encouraged team work, reflecting real field situations

The average scores for the bilingual workshop in Akosombo - Ghana in October 2017 are presented below: This was the last in the series of 3 Workshops. Participants knowledge increased from an average of 2.9 to 4.10. This represented a **41.38%** increase in knowledge in one week which is very remarkable.

TABLE 4: INITIAL VRS POST WORKSHOP KNOWLEDGE OF PARTICIPANTS

EVALUATION ELEMENT	AVERAGE SCORE (5=very good, 1=bad)	INTERPRETATION
Initial knowledge: Thinking back to before you received an invitation to this workshop, how would you have rated your understanding of USAID environmental regulation and ESDM? (1= No Knowledge, 5=very advanced)	2.90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the majority of the USAID Mission and Project Management staff in attendance reported a high degree of prior knowledge of environmental compliance with Reg 216and ESDM (4-5) a majority of the participants were from IP organizations and reported a lower degree of initial knowledge.
Post Workshop Knowledge To what extent has the workshop increased your knowledge of USAID environmental compliance requirements?	4.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the workshop average knowledge of USAID environmental compliance requirements increased from 2.90 to 4. This is a positive increase that reflects the beneficial impact of the workshop on knowledge of environmental compliance and ESDM.

Highly Rated/Lowly Rated Sessions

At the end of each day of the workshop, participants were asked to rate the **presentation quality** and the **usefulness for their organization** of each session. They were asked to respond on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) and were offered the opportunity to provide comments about each session.

The highest-rated sessions for **presentation quality** were **Sessions 14a and 14b, the EMMP Skill-Building Exercise Field Visit and Small Group Work** in January 2017. Participants noted that they were able to put into practice the theoretical concepts and skills covered in previous classroom sessions. One participant noted: “Being out in the field has been a great learning adventure and the leader did a good job with facilities and getting members to ask questions relevant to our projects.” Participants also found the post-field work group exercise to be a valuable experience in which knowledge was shared and new ideas were generated.

Other particularly highly rated sessions included:

- **Session 15c:** Environmental Compliance Reporting,
- **Session 9:** Recommended Best Practice for EMMP Development, Application, Monitoring and Evaluation and
- **Session 8:** The Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP).

Participants also noted that **Session 3** was a “great session” that presented “new and important skills” and that **Session 4** “built upon the previous session’s concepts and described how they relate to USAID.” In general, participants noted that most of the presentations were interesting, presented clearly, well structured, and engaging.

Lessons learned

As reflected in the ratings and comments, the workshop was largely very well received. Regardless, key feedback was considered and lessons learned as reference for future workshops. The venue scored higher in the Ghanaian (Akosombo) workshops because field sites were in close proximity. In SALY we were unable to find non USAID project sites in close proximity.

Participants were pleased with the field exercises. Despite the fact that in some previous workshops, participants expressed confusion over being taken to a non-USAID-funded activity, in this workshop, SMTN prefaced the fieldwork with a description of the exercise that helped frame the field visits in a more effective manner. The “hypothetical” USAID-funded activity scenario worked very well, and there were very few clarifying questions regarding the purpose or intent of the EMMP design activity that followed the field visit. In cases in which there are no USAID-funded activities within 30 minutes of the workshop venue, it is established best practice to search for other relevant government or NGO-funded projects in the area and plan to use a similar structure to the EMMP Skill Building Exercise used in Akosombo.

Conclusion

EIA training for practitioners achieve immense results when adult learning techniques and a focus on practical application are employed. The agenda of such training should reflect the principle that group exercises/field visits should represent at least 50 percent of the total workshop time, and that classroom theory should be systematically reinforced with small group discussions, classroom exercises, quiz games and a field visit component.

References

GEMS 11 training report: USAID/West Africa regional environmental compliance and ESDM in project implementation training; 23-27 January, 2017; October 23-27, Akosombo, Ghana.

GEMS 11 training report: USAID/West Africa regional environmental compliance and ESDM in project implementation training; November 28-December 3, Saly, Senegal

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