



INTERNAL EVALUATION

Sixth Regional Seminar For Labour Based Practitioners

29th September - 3 October 1997

Jinja, Uganda

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1. Introduction

The Sixth Regional Seminar for labour based practitioners was held in Jinja - Uganda from 29 September to 3 October 1997. The seminar was organised by the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications in Uganda, with support of ILO/ASIST. The theme of the seminar was "The Right Tool for The Job".

The objective of this paper is to critically evaluate the organisation of the Sixth Regional Seminar, and to consider approaches for institutionalisation. Institutionalisation is pertinent, since the next Regional Seminar will be the last one under ASIST III. The paper also gives preferences of the participants of the Sixth Regional Seminar for the location and theme of the next seminar.

1.1 Objectives of the Regional Seminar

At the end of the seminar, the objectives were evaluated by the participants in a plenary session. The results were as follows:

Objectives	Evaluation Results
1. To bring together practitioners of labour based roadworks	All participants felt this was achieved
2. To update participants on employment intensive programmes	Most participants felt this was not achieved
3. To broaden participants horizons	Most participants abstained from giving opinion on this objective
4. To obtain feedback from participants	There were no responses to this objective
5. To identify and debate key issues	60% of the participants felt this was achieved

Objective two and three were not fully met, since the Regional Seminar concentrated on tools and equipment, and most papers dealt with roadworks specifically. Thus, general information and new approaches received little attention. For the first time the groupwork methodology was not adopted, accounting for the lack of response on objective four.

1.2 Number of participants

The total number of participants was one hundred and seventeen (117), representing fourteen countries, namely: Ghana, Egypt, Mozambique, Kenya, South Africa, Switzerland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, UK, Eritrea, Tanzania, Lesotho, Uganda and Botswana.

Most participants felt that the number of participants was right, though about 20 per cent felt that it was too high.

1.3 Theme of the seminar

The theme “The Right Tool for the Job” was selected through elaborate discussions within ILO, based on the preference indicated by the participants of the Fifth Regional Seminar. However, the Ugandan organisers were not very happy with the theme, and would have preferred the theme of contractor development. This may have limited their ‘feeling of ownership’ of the seminar. It is proposed to involve the organisers in the selection of the theme.

Most participants felt that the theme was appropriate, but two comments were made for improvement: (1) to better update participants on trends, it may be considered to expand the ‘scene setting’ part; and (2) papers should address the topic given to them and not divert from it.

1.4 Role of ILO/ASIST in the organisation

The Ugandan organising committee was the host of the seminar, while ILO/ASIST provided advisory support to the committee. ILO/ASIST carried out the following functions:

- provided Terms of Reference (TOR) and checklist for the organising committee, detailing all their responsibilities as well as a time table
- provided advice through e-mail, fax and telephone
- held missions in July and September
- took over various functions during the seminar
- prepared seminar proceedings

2. Seminar organisation

2.1 Status of ILO/ASIST in the organisation

The status of ILO/ASIST was misconceived by various participants and speakers, who referred to the seminar as an ILO/ASIST seminar. The organising committee seemingly perceived it as an ILO/ASIST seminar as well, and abdicated some of their responsibilities. These circumstances placed ASIST in an uncomfortable position, since ASIST’s influence was limited to advisory support.

2.2 Preparation of the seminar

ILO/ASIST informed Uganda on the proposed Regional Seminar nine months in advance. A formal letter agreeing to host the seminar followed three months later, after which Terms of Reference (TOR) were agreed upon and an organisation committee was formed.

The management committee proved to be slow in implementing the TOR. The main problem was that the committee did not keep ILO/ASIST informed on their progress and waited to be directed on what to do. On several occasions they confirmed that they had made appropriate arrangements, which had not been done (for example: hotel bookings, transport arrangements and sending out invitations).

As a result, ILO/ASIST made two trips to Uganda, sent various e-mail and fax messages, and took over part of the organisation. A checklist was finally drawn and given to the team leader to guide him in final preparatory work.

The poor performance of the management committee may have been caused by their limited experience in organising a seminar of this magnitude. A limited feeling of ownership and busy work schedule may have resulted in poor motivation.

2.3 Transport arrangements

Before the seminar, ILO/ASIST discussed the transport arrangements with the organising committee various times, and the organising committee assured that good arrangements were made. However, transport to site was very poor. The journey to Mbale from Jinja was marked by delay in arrival of a vehicle, after which the bus also broke down. The whole arrangement of transport showed serious lack of commitment on the part of the management committee.

The question is whether ILO/ASIST should have left the responsibility of organising the transport with the organising committee, or should have taken full responsibility.

2.4 Accommodation

Jinja, being the only town with a sufficient number of accommodation located near the field site, was selected as venue. ILO/ASIST visited the hotels together with the organisers and made initial arrangements to be followed up by the organising committee. One week before the seminar, ILO/ASIST visited Uganda again, since hotel bookings had not yet been made.

Participants were booked at six different hotels, since Jinja town did not have an hotel of more than 50 bed capacity. This placed extra demand on the transport system. Given the rural background of the town and standards of the hotels, one can say that they performed very well.

The organising committee intended to organise various leisure activities. Two cocktails were organised, while other intended activities didn't take place.

2.5. Evaluation

ILO/ASIST had provided the evaluation forms used during the Fifth Regional Seminar and asked the organising committee to update them. The committee then distributed evaluation forms, which had several mistakes, and had to be redone. A better follow-up by ILO/ASIST could have prevented this.

Results of the evaluation are attached.

2.6 Proceedings

A consultant from Uganda was nominated by the management committee to document the proceedings of the seminar. ASIST managed and paid for the proceedings. The draft proceedings are being prepared by the consultant were fair, but still required considerable amount of work.

2.7 Recommendations

It may be more efficient to contract out the seminar organisation to an experienced and reputable firm. Either the whole organisation can be subcontracted, or the logistical arrangements (hotel, transport, etc.). The contractor would work under the auspices of the organising committee, with

technical advice from ILO/ASIST. The contracted firm should be given Terms Of Reference and expected output which would determine payment.

The organisers should be involved in the selection of the topic of the seminar, to further develop a 'feeling of ownership'. During the seminar, short management meetings should be programmed. The part on scene setting can be expanded to better update participants on trends.

3. Finances of the seminar

3.1 Seminar fees

This was the first time fees had been charged for attendance of the seminar. The intention was to provide Ugandan organisers with funds to run the seminar, and to assess the financial sustainability of the seminar. While participants from other countries were charged US\$350, Ugandan nationals were charged US\$50. The participants raised no objection to the charges, and the number and representation of participants indicate that funding was not a limiting factor in attendance of the seminar.

Most participants settled the fee during registration. This proved to be the best method since transfer of funds through telegraphic transfer proved to be problematic.

3.2 Account

The Ministry of Works Training Centre Project account was used to bank the fees. The management committee obtained authority from the Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Works) to use the account since it was easily accessible and efficient for such a temporary but crucial seminar. This arrangement worked well and funds were available when needed.

3.3 Accountability

The management committee was responsible for the financial management. To obtain a satisfactory account of the finances, a budget proposal was drawn for expending the income from the fees. The committee was also advised by ILO/ASIST to maintain an expenditure ledger in accordance with sound financial principles. After the seminar the committee was expected to prepare a comprehensive financial report. The financial status and sustainability of future seminars can only be assessed after the receipt and analysis of the report. This report has not yet been received.

3.4 Recommendations

The next seminar should set the level of seminar fees high enough to sustain all seminar costs (with or without costs of backstopping?), and sound financial principles should be ensured.

4. Programme methodology

4.1 Presentations

The presentations were organised by ILO/ASIST, in collaboration with the organising committee. Presenters were informed five months in advance, and asked to send papers to ILO/ASIST one month before the Regional Seminar.

Though most people were happy with the presentations, it was noted that there were too many papers, while some papers did not address the main theme of the seminar.

The problem was that most authors presented the papers too late to ILO/ASIST. Some papers even arrived during the seminar. The safety measure to consider in the future are:

- to reward authors to provide papers to ILO/ASIST not later than one month in advance
- to invite a high number of authors and set deadline dates for acceptance. Of the received papers, a selection can be made
- to present less papers, with more time for discussion.

4.2 Panel of Experts

The organising committee was asked to organise the panel of experts. When this was not done, ILO/ASIST took over. The panel of experts received a score of 3.3 out of 5. The following recommendations can be considered to improve on the methodology:

- to select, notify and furnish the panel with the relevant papers before the Regional Seminar. This would give them ample time to prepare their points effectively
- to better brief and guide the panel
- a panel should consist of maximum two experts.

4.3. End of Day and Programme Statements

Participants observed that there were no clear, “End of Day” conclusions. Such conclusions can result work towards “End of Programme” conclusions. This was not done this time, and made it difficult to draw proper conclusions.

4.4. Plenary versus Group Work Sessions

Group work sessions were not included in the seminar programme. However, comments received indicated that group work method was viewed favourably. Two approaches can be considered:

- Group discussion (as in previous Regional Seminars)
- Workshops: a number of workshops can run concurrently, with time apportioned for presentation and discussions.

4.5. Field Visit

The field visit and demonstration were highly evaluated by the participants. However, the field visit was unfortunately marred by lack of time due transport problems and rain. Participants suggested that exhibitions should take place

near the venue of the seminar. This was not possible in Uganda due to unavoidable logistical constraints.

4.6 Chairpersons

Chairpersons performed their duties fairly. The only comment received about them indicated that some of them did not control time effectively. It is unfortunate to note that the seminar committee took little interest in this, and ILO/ASIST ended in programming for the chairpersons.

5. Sustainability

If the Regional Seminar is to be a regular and sustainable event, the next seminar should test an approach. In this respect, it is encouraging to note that the seminar fee proved to be successful, and financial sustainability is thus within reach. Some suggestions are:

- **Set the seminar fee at the real cost of the seminar** (without ILO backstopping). The fee proved viable during the Sixth Regional Seminar, but not all costs were included yet.
- **Institutionalisation.** One institution or committee has to be responsible for the organisation of the Regional Seminar. It is proposed to leave this responsibility with the ILO (MDT or HQ).

A permanent committee ("Olympic committee") comprising labour based institutions and university faculties can be formed to decide on the venue, theme, organisers, time table and dates of the next seminar, at the end of each seminar. The responsible country will form an organising committee.

- **Commercial firm/ bidding.** To lessen the required technical assistance, it is proposed to invite commercial firms to bid for a contract to run the seminar. They would be responsible for all logistical arrangements, or the whole running of the seminar. The firm should fall under the organising committee of the country.
- **Technical support needed by ILO**
- **Allow one year for preparation.** The venue and topic for the next Regional Seminar can best be proposed during the seminar.

6. Seventh Regional Seminar

Participants proposed the following:

Countries:	Zambia	20 participants
	Egypt	12
	Zimbabwe	7
	Mozambique	7
	Other	23
Themes:	Contractor development: 20 participants	
	Quality control, standards, equipment: 8	
	LBT outside the road sector: 7	
	Policies (incl. planning, finance and sustainability): 7	
	Site management and labour productivity: 5	
	Impact of LBT (include environment): 5	
	Training: 1	
Dates:	Early 1999	

It is proposed to start organising the Regional Seminar as soon as possible.

7. Conclusions

The Seventh Regional Seminar will be the last under ASIST III. Thus, if the Regional Seminar should become a sustainable and regular event, methodologies will have to be piloted during that seminar. In this respect it is encouraging to note that the seminar fee was successful, and financial sustainability is thus within reach. Other proposed methodologies are listed in chapter 5.

Even if it is decided that the next seminar will be the last one, it is worthwhile to improve on its organisation and methodology. Some of the main recommendations include:

- to start preparation for Regional Seminar one year in advance, and to involve the organising country from the start
- to use a private firm specializing in organisation of seminars to manage the seminar.
- to continue using a seminar fee
- to apply for papers well in advance and reward the selected papers
- to continue using a panel of experts and chairpersons, but improve on the organisation
- to consider using group discussions or workshops
- to install 'end of day' and 'end of seminar' conclusions.

Annex:

Results of the evaluation
