

ASSET Practice Note

Planning and Preparing SSR Courses

What does planning and preparing SSR courses involve?

The preparation and planning of SSR courses are critical for its success. A number of activities and/or steps need to be undertaken before the actual implementation of a course or training activity in order to ensure the quality of the training content, its delivery, effectiveness and impact.

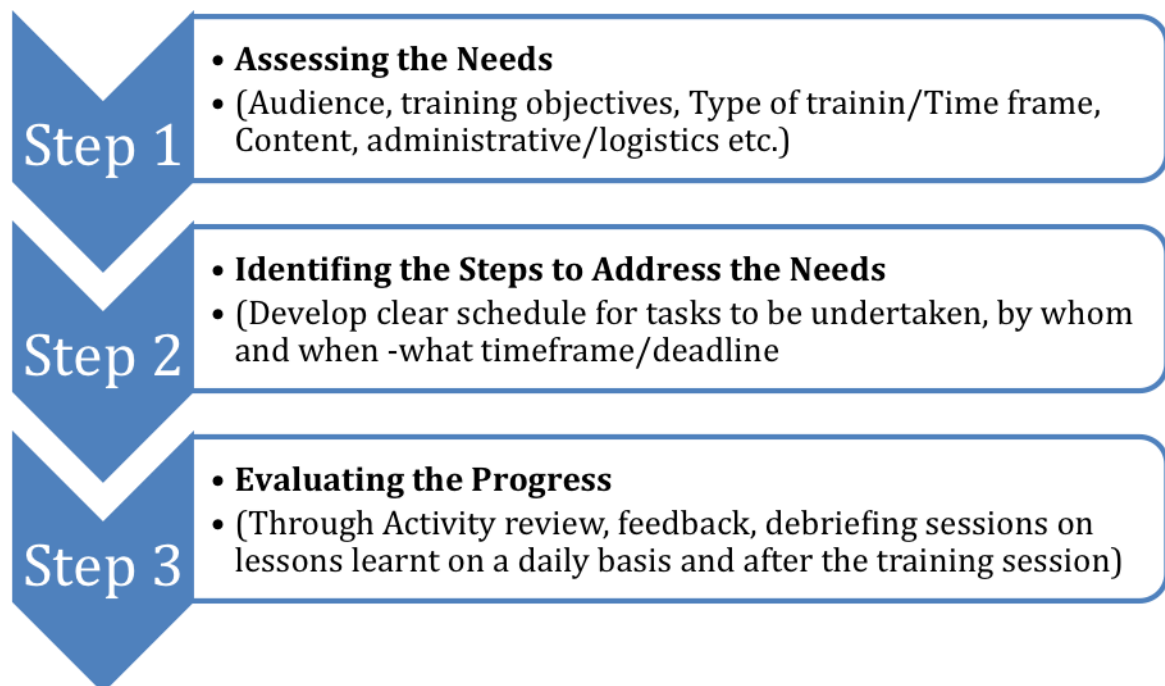
“If you fail to plan, you will plan to fail.” ~ Kolawole Kayode, African proverb

Preparation and planning are necessary for every type of training activity. It is particularly important when undertaking training in a new setting, with a new audience or in an environment/context in which the trainer has little to no previous experience. The duration of the course preparation and planning varies on a case-by-case basis according to the time available and the experience of the trainer. The trainer can begin planning a year in advance or a few days in advance depending upon the context. However, as a good practice, trainers are recommended to undertake their planning and preparation in good time to enable them to put in place all the necessary arrangements required for the effective implementation of the training. In other words, don't leave things to the last minute if you can avoid it!

How does one go about planning and preparing an SSR course?

The following steps may be used by any trainer trying to effectively plan and prepare an SSR course. The trainer should be flexible and innovative enough to adapt and modify the training activities/methodologies to the particular training context and audience during the planning and delivery of the course.

(Graphic below still needs editing.)



In preparing and planning SSR courses, trainers need to consider the following aspects:

Audience

Prior to beginning a course, trainers need to have basic information about their training participants. Training needs assessments should be undertaken, for instance through a questionnaire and conversations with the training organisers and trainees in order to gather the necessary information, such as:

- Who is your targeted audience?
- What is the professional and educational background and experience of the trainees?
- Do they have any previous knowledge of SSR?
- Are there any sensitive issues relating to SSR that the trainer should be aware of or avoid in relating to the audience?

Purpose / Objectives

This includes an understanding of both the declared purpose of the training and the often 'hidden' purpose of the training. Trainers should always try to be aware of and address the expectations of those who have requested the training as well as the expectations of the trainees, where possible and appropriate. This information can also be gathered as part of the training needs assessment. Where this information is not available beforehand, expectations of the trainees can be gathered during the introductory session of the training through a brainstorming activity on expectations. Nevertheless, the trainer should also anticipate what some of these expectations may be and prepare to explain whether these will be addressed within the context of the training or not.

As part of the planning process, the trainer should define clear objectives of the course as well as learning objectives for each session. These should be clearly communicated to the trainees from the outset of the course. This will alleviate any misunderstandings or false expectations, as well as serve as a measure for the trainer and trainees to later assess whether these objectives have indeed been met.

Content

In determining the training content, the trainer should use the learning objectives of each session to guide the development of training context and methodologies. The trainer should attempt to include materials and examples of local/cultural relevance to the specific audience. Where this is not possible, an attempt should be made to include resource persons from the country or region in order to co-facilitate, give a presentation or provide useful information throughout the training.

Method and duration

Though in principle, the funding available and the terms of the training contract will determine the method and duration of the training, the trainer should nevertheless assess whether the planned method and duration are appropriate and adequate for the targeted audience. Where this is not the case, the trainer needs to explore ways of addressing the gaps or recommending some other complementary and/or follow-up activities.

Logistics and administrative issues

While it is evident that every training session must have logistics planned before the training, it is important that the trainer discusses with the workshop organisers the need for the trainees to arrive to the training venue on time, for proper training

facilities to be made available (including rooms/space for both plenary and group work activities), proper timing for meals/tea breaks, etc.

Monitoring and evaluation

All training courses and activities should be evaluated as to their efficacy. Whether or not the learning objectives have been reached is critical to know so that improvements can be made both during the course itself and in the planning and delivery of future courses. Monitoring and evaluation of whether or not learning objectives have been met can be carried out in various ways, namely:

- Monitoring exercises at the end of a session or day of training in order to see how to adapt the training to meet participant's expectations and learning objectives.
- Issuing pre and post tests that ask the same SSR-relevant questions before and after the training in order to see whether knowledge has been gained as a result of the training.
- The use of tasks, exercises and assignments during the training to test the application of knowledge from the training.
- Course evaluation to understand whether the course was enjoyed, useful, and what can be improved.

The trainer can use the following table as a guide to evaluate the preparation and planning of the course. In determining the outcome, the scores may be graded on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the highest), if desired.

Pre-workshop planning and preparation issues	What steps were taken before and during the workshop to address this?	Outcome/impact of the steps taken?	What unexpected issues came up during the course that were not prepared/planned for?
Audience			
Purpose/Objectives			
Content & resource materials			
Methods and duration			
Logistics/administrative issues			
Monitoring and evaluation			
Sustainability & follow-up activities			
Total Score			

Sustainability & follow-up

The trainer may consider any of the following:

- Undertaking a Training-of-Trainers.
- Development of a Core Group of Trainers (based in the same institution/agency, locality, and with the same regional or thematic focus).
- Mainstreaming the training activities into existing mechanisms e.g. in existing training and educational institutions, such as curriculum integration and development in training/educational institutions including training institutions for security sector agencies.

- Advocating for the inclusion of a training component and increased SSR literacy in national and institutional policies and laws such as the national security strategy of the respective country.
- Advocacy for regular/long term budget allocation for SSR training? by the nations or request countries/agencies.

Lessons learned in planning and preparing SSR training courses

The Liberian Parliamentary Training (ASSN/KCL/CDD):

- The effective use of resource persons from the region has strengthened the bond with, trust of and buy-in by the government of Liberia and follow-up activities.
- Efforts need to be made on the logistics level to ensure that participants will not expect the training workshop organisers to cover cost for their spouses.

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