

# ASSET Practice Note

## Use of Simulation in SSR Training and Education

### What is simulation?

A simulation is a training method in which trainees are exposed to conditions that are as similar as possible to those to be encountered in real life. Clearly, there are restrictions to creating a realistic scenario including the restrictions of time and materials. Therefore 'simulations' or 'simulation games' replicate only some of the essential components of reality: those that are critical features of the situation. By replicating these features, the focus is upon problem solving experienced in a situation that is safe and controlled.

Security sector reform (SSR) does not allow for experiments. SSR is a complicated, time-dependent procedure with many variables. Critically, making mistakes in an SSR process can lead to failure, expenses, frustration, and possibly victims. The benefit with simulation exercises is that it allows two things:

- *Experimentation.* Participants can try out the effects of different interventions.
- *Mistakes.* Errors in a simulation are never fatal. In fact, they are excellent learning tools, to help avoid repetition in the real world.

A simulation consists of three elements: preparation, run-through, and assessment of lessons learned.

### Preparation

Preparation involves writing a scenario, including the setting, specific roles representing problematic positions (e.g. government ministers, rebels, journalists, women's organisations), and developing a timeframe. Here are a few things to consider:

- Selecting a fictitious setting or country is often preferable to a real one. This allows the trainees to explore an alternate reality in which they can learn more freely, ensures a level playing field, and transcends any political sensitivities attached to a real country case.
- Ideally, a simulation is best run with no less than five trainees, up to a maximum of twenty-five.
- Trainees should be provided with enough background information on the role/position they have been asked to assume (i.e. government minister, rebel, etc.), including their main interests and objective. Trainees should not be told what to do or how to behave during the simulation.
- The simulation should be adjusted to the needs of the trainees, including their professional backgrounds, objectives, and level of SSR knowledge, among other things.

### A 'run' or series of run-throughs

The players (trainees) are briefed on their roles, on the background, and on the simulation rules, and one or more 'runs' are initiated, in which the players interact. Quite often (and ideally) the run will not follow a script, and surprising results (which mimic real-life) are displayed.

The critical issue during the run is to allow the relationships and situation to develop naturally from the initial scenario set-up. The only management the trainer should maintain is to ensure basic rules are observed. The trainer must allow and encourage

spontaneity, imagination, and creativity in interpreting the rules: this is what the office-holders will do in any case.

### Assessment of lessons learned

A simulation must be followed by an assessment or debrief. Critically, this should not reflect on the quality of acting or on the behaviour of the role-players. It should focus on how the simulation increased understanding of real-world problems, what options the roles had, how rules were transgressed or manipulated (as they would be in real life) and how such problems can be anticipated and dealt with.

### How are simulations used in SSR training and education?

For the purposes of SSR training, simulations come in two extensive varieties. While these two varieties are broadly similar, there are differences in the process, and more importantly, in the effect. The two types we are concerned with here (there are others which need not concern us) are role-play simulations and team-problem simulations.

#### Role-play simulations

In role-play simulations, individuals are assigned to roles and they are expected to act “as if” they were the role, which might be “Prime Minister”, “Chief of Police”, or “Rebel Commander”. They are then faced with a specific problem they must solve.

#### Team-problem simulations

A group representing for instance a negotiating team, is faced with a problem such as “planning the establishment of a police oversight committee”. The trainer can represent other actors (police staff, police commanders, government) or other teams can be put in charge of those roles.

Simulations are **ideal for different types of audiences:**

1. CESS has used them successfully with middle-ranking government (including security forces) officials to simulate decision-making in the process of SSR.
2. BICC and CESS have used simulations successfully with senior SSR trainees with experience in the field.
3. DCAF has used simulation successfully with junior SSR trainees – though the simulation clearly needs to be adapted to their level of understanding.

In order to run a simulation, **you will need the following resources:**

1. Printed sheets of instructions for role players (which might include ‘secret’ instructions only the character and the facilitator/controller should know).
2. A general sheet of instructions explaining the background, the issue, and the roles, to be distributed to all players and non-playing audience if any.
3. Flip charts for the assessment/lesson learning.
4. Space where role players can discuss matters privately with other roles players (a lot of politics takes place behind closed doors).

### Suggested schedule

Time	Activity	Materials
45 min	Preparation of role-play: introduction, reading of material, allocation of roles	Role handouts General introduction
60 min	Role-play	
75 min	Lessons learned	Flip chart
<b>180 min</b>	<b>Total</b>	

## Running a simulation: the example of “Assra”

The “Assra” simulation (all materials available from OECD-DAC, CESS, or BICC), developed by CESS and BICC was used in several training sessions for SSR trainers. At its core is the country of Assra, a fictitious country newly emerged from a civil war. The simulation took the following form:

### Preparation of role-play (45 min)

- **The background to Assra was presented in the form of a handout.**  
 The setting of the simulation was a meeting convened by the UN representative to start the process of reforming the security services in Assra after a civil conflict. To do so, a number of individuals from opposing groups – government, opposition, and rebels – were to assemble and discuss the way forward.
- **A selection of role players was chosen.**  
 In some courses, there were a very large number of participants, and in that case some of the participants served as observers/audience. In others, all trainees participated. Each of the role players received a handout that provided:
  - a. Public information (which the observers and all the role players had available as well).
  - b. Private information (which only the controller and the role player had).

The roles included (a sample background is shown in the box below):

- Vice President Henry Kabal.
- Chair of the Opposition, John Shoshah.
- “General” Simon of the paramilitary TATOS group.
- Commander Rachel Bobolink, of the rebel HILAT group.
- Mrs. Laura Sand, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (DSRSG).
- Ms. Helana Nistrow, Commentator from the Assra TV station.

### Role-play (60 min)

- **First Act: Committee meeting**  
 The players were given time to study their roles. They then convened before an audience, and, following the public (and private) instructions debated local security sector reform.
- **Second Act: Private Consultations**  
 After a period of discussion, they broke up for ‘private’ consultations. This allowed the controller to stream new information to the players (some of it public, some private) and also allowed the players to discuss things informally between themselves, strike deals, and construct potential alliances. These negotiations were visible to the audience who could move about, but hidden from other role players. The TV reporter, for instance, had interviews with the main players, trying to elicit ‘private’ information from them, but was barred from the secret negotiations between Commander Bobolink and John Shoshah.
- **Third act: Final committee meeting**  
 The players then reconvened for another negotiation session (which in some simulation games reached agreement, in others, not). Following that session the UN DSRSG announced what the committee had agreed on (which varied from game run to game run).

### Example of public and private information: Chair of the Opposition John Shoshah

#### Public role information

Age 50, newly married to his second wife, 2 children. Owner of one of the largest firms in Assra. He comes from a family that was always involved in business and politics. His father was also very famous in Assra. He inherited the position of the chairman of the opposition party on the basis of his father's reputation. He is proud of his close connection to the police force. He is considered a hardliner within his party.

#### Private role information

- You would like to get as much influence as possible even if you have publicly said you hoped for a fair and thorough hearing and debate.
- You have not yet heard much about SSR. You received the DAC Guidelines some days ago but had no time to read or discuss them.
- You are convinced that for the sake of the country and the people all groups have to unite. The opposition is willing and able to bring peace and stability back to Assra. You yourself will work for a smooth transition from the old system to a new Assra. You appreciate the back-up from the population and welcome the foreign partners' support for reforms. It is high time for the opposition to take over the power in Assra. Of course a great amount of money is needed from the international donors to pay, train and equip the police forces.
- You are a bit fearful of uncontrolled forces in HILAT, the Smurf's rebel army.

#### Questions for preparing the meeting: John Shoshah role player

You should develop consistent and rational positions for the negotiations. The following questions occupy you:

- How would you argue for your position?
- What is important for you in order to emphasize your general goal?
- What is your strategy in the meeting in order to reach a step towards your personal goals?

### Lessons learned (75 min)

#### ➤ **Assessment/Lessons learned**

The entire class (role players, audience, and controller/facilitator) then discussed the issues such as how various interests played out, and the lessons learned about building coalitions, building trust, the role of public media, etc.

Lessons learned are discussed in plenum, so that all the trainees are exposed to them. This section is usually divided into four parts:

1. The trainer discusses the objectives of the exercise, and describes in brief the events that occurred during the simulation and their significance.
2. The various role players, speaking in turn, provide the 'hidden' dimension: why they made or did not make certain decisions; what they were trying to achieve; etc. They also note any 'secret' information they were given, and private deals they may have made.
3. The floor is opened to discussion, moderated by the trainer or game controller. The question to be addressed is "What can be learned about how SSR comes about (or does not) from the exercise?" The trainer must ensure that the discussion does not focus on the players skills as actors, or on the 'realism' of their performance.
4. Finally, the trainer summarises the main points that have been learned, and relates them to the rest of the course.

The controller has two essential tasks:

- To serve as a nexus for information control, so as to ensure that 'reality' does not become confused. Thus, though players may make 'secret' deals, these

must be reported to, and recorded by, the controller to be ‘real’ – that is, a feature in the simulation.

- To keep things on an even keel. Sometimes tempers flare, as role players often take their roles very seriously, and players may try to take shortcuts. In the first case, a half hour or so cooling off period is called for; in the other, it might be necessary to stop the simulation and reiterate the basic rules.

### Running a simulation: tips and tricks

- Encourage the role players to be imaginative and to expand their roles, provided they inform the controller beforehand. For example, a player playing Commander Bobolink might decide she had a nervous tick which she was sensitive about, and which affected her negotiation stance.
- Encourage role players to use the features provided to make characters seem more real: not all the information about a character is ‘necessary’ but it makes playing the character more fun and more realistic.
- Within a role, a player can be very innovative: in one game, a loyal secretary informed on her boss to the authorities, and he confessed his illegal activities on television, throwing the entire process into disarray.
- Make sure the controller documents every change of information, so contradictory facts are not provided. For example, make sure the controller knows, and writes down all the names given or spontaneously made up by role players, so that city, organization, country, and personal names do not get mixed up!
- It is very useful to separate the game from the assessment for example, by going to lunch, or overnight, which allows time for tempers to cool, and participants to think about the lessons learned, not the quality of the acting.
- Simulations are likely to be carried out more realistically if the trainees are allowed to discuss in their own language. If trainers and trainees do not share the same language, simultaneous interpretation should be used.

### Where can I find more information?

- “Starlink” simulation. Available from CESS. [www.cess.org](http://www.cess.org)
- “Carana” simulation. Available from BICC. [www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de)
- “ASSRA” available from OECD-DAC, CESS, BICC.

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