

Diplomacy Training Program

Report on the January 1992 session

Summary

The Jan 92 session was very successful. All aspects of the session were improved, in comparison with previous years. The new teaching program was significantly better, and, along with the Manual, should lead to greater knowledge retention and involvement by participants well after the session has ended. Each participant kept a Journal and completed a personal Action Plan.

This session had fewer classroom hours than before. Total classroom hours were approximately 160, making it a 40 hour week. Participants also worked at home, on their journals, role plays, and in discussion. Overall the retention of information, skills and understandings was much improved.

There is still room for further improvement, of course. It is highly unlikely that DTP sessions will remain static. Some suggestions for next year are included at the end of this report.

Costs

Costs have increased, partly due to a lower number of participants in this session (24) and partly due to a higher standard being attained, both in accomodation and teaching and it seems likely that we will need to raise the fee to sponsors. The Aus\$3000 sponsorship fee has remained constant for 3 years and the exchange rate has changed unfavourably. Consequently the Jan 93 session will require a sponsorship fee of Aus\$3500.

1. The new teaching program

Over 20 new workshops were incorporated into Jan 92 session, following the assistance provided by Ford Foundation in July 91. This meant less time was allocated to lectures. Sometimes workshops were simplified from the original plan, due to time constraints. But in general the group activities worked well and participants enjoyed the experience. More time was able to be spent on skills training and group cooperation as well as discussion and individual follow-up. Understandings of essential concepts was improved.

Retention of information

With such an intensive course providing a huge amount of information it is hardly surprising that retention during the session is difficult. A multiple choice test conducted at the end found significant gaps in participants' knowledge.

However this is not a cause for concern as the Manual will provide that information if, and when, the participant requires it. It is intended to be a resource for use after the session is ended.

Sending advance materials, particularly on the UN system, could help in retention of information. This would enable participants to absorb information over a longer time and to prepare themselves for the course content.

The Journal

For the first time participants kept a personal Journal. This provides a way for participants to make the session personal and to structure their own note taking. In addition all participants prepared Action Plans as outcomes from their Journal. This provides a mechanism for follow-up as well as a set of concrete activities for the participants when they return to their organisations.

History and Politics

Many participants requested more information on world history and politics. This helps them put their new knowledge into context. Many participants do not know essential elements of world history, like the significance of the two world wars, or the economic history of colonialism, let alone the functioning of global bodies like the UN.

2. The participants

There were 24 participants, from 14 countries. They were, on average, younger and more actively involved in human rights than previous groups. There were no Australian Aboriginal participants and few Pacific Islanders. Some last minute visa problems (which included the withdrawal of two participants' passports to prevent them attending the session), as well as last minute withdrawals, caused the low number of participants.

Government involvement

This was the first occasion in which we have had a participant from the foreign service of a government. This caused concern to some participants. Although government representatives can learn an enormous amount from the session it appears that they do not mix well with the other participants. They have a different point of view which tends to make group work difficult for them and the rest of the group.

Selection

Selection was much improved this year owing to the new application form used this year as well as to greater awareness of the session in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is possible to divide DTP participants into essentially two main groups. Those working on **national issues** (eg independence for Tibet or East Timor, or gross violations of human rights), and so directly concerned with the international representation of their issue at the UN, and those working at the **grass roots** on essentially local concerns (eg with village women, or children in refugee camps).

Grass Roots participants may never go to Geneva or New York. Nevertheless they also need to understand the system as well as be able to cooperate with those who do. Emphasis is given to the limitations of the UN, in particular the costly and time-consuming pilgrimage to Geneva which many human rights defenders make, often in ignorance of the system and the way it works.

The session needs to cater for both groups. In addition, participants have widely varying experience, skills and knowledge and the sharing of these is a very fertile activity. The knowledge of international human rights procedures, for example, is empowering, even to those unlikely to utilise them directly.

3. Participants' evaluation

Through anonymous questionnaires and through group and individual discussion the following points were raised by participants:

- * Australian Aboriginal participation needs to be ensured. It is important for the sharing of knowledge about Australia (few participants had ever met an Aboriginal person).
- * Gender issues need a special day
- * Follow-up program needed in a few years time
- * Participants' Country reports - need more time and could be done out of the classroom, perhaps in one of the houses, making it into a cultural evening. Participants should bring materials.
- * First week - needs to provide more background information on world politics and history
- * Materials on UN system should be sent in advance
- * The Security Council role play should be run over consecutive days, ie have no interruption to the roles. More information is needed on country situations
- * Not enough time to digest information
- * Need more practical examples of "how to be a human rights defender" at the grass roots level. Participants should be seen more as trainers going back to train their own people.
- * Some speakers used difficult language and spoke too fast
- * The session is too intensive

Participants' comments are incorporated into the continuing development of the teaching program wherever possible. Sometimes the comments do not accord with DTP objectives. For example the primary objective of Country Reports (where participants have 15 minutes to present their own country situation to the class) is to place them in a situation which many human rights defenders face ie having to make a convincing legal and factual presentation in a very short time in a formal setting. This is not always an enjoyable experience for them.

The same applies to the Security Council crisis role play and other UN models. Having to reverse roles and play the part of a government can be a stressful and un-nerving experience. However it is a good way to provide insight into the functioning of government policy and the way "reasons of State" interfere with humanitarian concerns.

4. The Manual

The Manual is generally described as very useful and comprehensive. However it appears obvious that few participants will have read through it all during the four weeks. There were some comments that the language was too difficult and that page numbering needs improvement.

Certainly the teaching program should make more direct reference to the Manual, providing advance reading, for example, for the next day's workshops and lectures. However the Manual will be used most after the course is completed. It should be an independent reference tool not a step by step explanation of the teaching program.

Recommendations

1. The sponsorship fee should be raised to Aus\$3500 per person.
2. Advance materials should be sent to participants giving more information about the session and specifically on the UN system.
3. Day 1 of the session should be devoted to an Orientation Day, with specific content about Aboriginal Australia, as well as building on the information kit, housekeeping information about accommodation, the session, the Journal, Action Plans etc
4. The Teaching Program needs to be adapted to include additional emphasis on:
Gender issues
The participants as 'trainers'
Global history and politics
5. The session should be restricted to non government participants only.

Teaching Program

The following is a breakdown of class time in hours

• Orientation	4
• Case Studies (country situations)	13
• The UN System and procedures	26
• International and Human Rights Law	13
• Human Rights, enforcement and standards	8
• Human Rights Treaty bodies	8
• Negotiations	14
• Media	16
• Report writing	8
• Oral presentation	10
• Role Plays (UN models)	30
• Journal writing	8
• Evaluation, feedback	4
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Total classroom hours	160

Workshop Convenors

Fessahaie Abraham - is Director of the Eritrean Relief Association in Australia

Philip Alston - is Professor of Law and Director of the Centre for Advanced Legal Studies in International and Public Law at the Australian National University. He is also an independent expert on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Brian Brooks - is Professor of Law at the Australian Graduate School of Management.

Jose Campino - works in the Secretary-General's office in the UN Secretariat in New York

Donna Craig - is a senior lecturer in Environmental Law, Macquarie University

Laksiri Fernando - formerly worked with World University Service, in Geneva.

Madge Fletcher - works in the Aboriginal Organisations Training section of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs

Jemima Garret - is a Pacific correspondent for Radio Australia

Janet Hunt - is Campaign Manager and Education Officer for the Australian Council for Overseas Aid.

Patricia Hyndman - is Associate Professor of Law at UNSW and formerly Secretary of LawAsia

Moana Jackson - is a lawyer at the Maori Legal Service, Wellington, New Zealand

Dale Keeling - is an independent journalist and Director of the Fiji Independent News Service

Marcia Langton - teaches Anthropology and Aboriginal Studies at Macquarie University

Ofelia Lopez - works for COMADRES (Committee of the Mothers of the Disappeared in El Salvador) in Melbourne.

Aviva Lowy - is media officer for UNSW

Garth Nettheim - Chairperson of DTP and Professor of Law at the University of NSW

Peggy Nightingale - is Director of the Professional Development Centre, UNSW

Jose Ramos-Horta - is Executive Director of the DTP, a journalist and was East Timor's representative to the UN for over 12 years.

John Scott-Murphy - DTP Coordinator, has experience in foreign policy, human rights and development

Tony Simpson - formerly a lawyer with the Aboriginal Legal Service and is an advisor to Greenpeace

David Weisbrot - NSW Law Reform Commissioner and Associate Professor of Law at UNSW

Adrien-Claude Zoller - Director of International Human Rights Service, Geneva

John Scott-Murphy
Coordinator, 20 Feb 1992