



Strengthening the Competencies of 'Technical' Advisers in state building and peacebuilding contexts.

A. Why a Course on Effective Advising?

Technical assistance (TA) makes up a significant proportion of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Most of that comes in the form of 'expert-advisers'. Donors also often play advisory roles to partner governments or organisations. Yet the record of decades of TA and donor-advising is very variable and overall not as effective as would be hoped. This is the result of the confluence of multiple factors some of which have to do with the recipient institution(s), some with the knowledge and behaviours of the advisers, and some with the way in which development partners handle their relations and the supply of TA¹. Some initiatives have already been taken in recent years to strengthen one aspect of the conundrum: the competencies of the advisers. The International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) for example organises short courses to develop the thematic expertise of SSR advisers. USIP's Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding has developed a course on 'strategic advising' that focuses primarily on interpersonal skills especially in cross-cultural settings. Interpeace, through its International Peacebuilding Advisory Team (IPAT), with its associates Jan Ubels and Nora Refaail, have developed a more comprehensive course. This covers the more classical approaches to effective advising, namely the different roles an adviser can play and interpersonal skills. But it adds further key topics, notably capacity-development, change processes, and inclusive governance and citizen engagement in state building and reform processes. This course is now offered annually as an 8.5 days learning event (with 1 day break), open to 20 civilians and uniformed personnel in advisory roles. But it can also be offered upon request, in somewhat shortened versions and somewhat tailored to the particular needs of the recipients.

B. Shorter Course Options.

At the moment we also offer two options: a full 4 day course and a full 5 day course. With both options the course will cover topics such as:

- 'making the shift from do-er to adviser';
- 'consciously choosing an appropriate advisory role',
- some of the fundamental 'interpersonal skills',
- 'what are organizational capacities and how can organisations strengthen their capacities in the real world?'
- 'medium and longer-term change processes: how do they happen, how can they be catalyzed and guided?'
- 'public participation in statebuilding and reform processes: why and how?'

A five day course allows more time for practicing skills and application, and/or to cover additional relevant topics such as e.g. 'dealing with dilemmas'. The additional financial cost for a 5 day course relative to a 4 day one tends to be marginal.

"It was certainly a practical course with solid application in terms of individual skills and techniques for considering in trying to gain positive change in governance systems."

« I am much more aware of possible roles I can play as adviser and try to convince the partners that I can play these roles to their benefit. I have come to the conclusion that my role as connector may be an important one. »

« I've used the handout on 'learning' and adult learning principles, turning it into a team strategy for 'Getting people onboard with reform' which has become our mode of operating when engaging with stakeholders." Participants in the 2014 course



C. Target Audience and Other Fundamental Parameters.

Target Audience: The course proposed is targeted at individuals for whom 'advising' (with implicit or explicit capacity-development and/or reform objectives), notably to national counterparts/entities/authorities, is an important component of their current responsibility. This includes 'national' advisers. It is also open to individuals who 'manage' the selection, deployment and assessment of such 'advisers'. The course is *not* appropriate for 'political advisers' or for 'political advising' – a course for political advisers is offered by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

Level: The course will be most useful for individuals who already have some real advisory experience.

Number of Participants and Presence: A maximum of 20 participants. Sustained presence from all participants during the full course is required.

Selection process: Our course participants are either nominated by our clients or chosen through an application and selection process. In either case, we ask all participants to provide a CV and fill in an application form. The latter inquires into their motivation, what they bring to and hope to get out of the course, and a short written 'personal challenge' relevant to the core topic of the course. Our current practice is to work with some or all personal challenges of the participants during the course.

Language: The course and course materials so far have always been offered in English. Good command of English is therefore required.

Core training team: Made up of Jan Ubels, Koenraad Van Brabant and Nora Refaeil. This is the core team that has developed and delivers most of the above mentioned longer annual course (some other topical resource people are also brought in). Between them they bring a rich experience from conflict to post-conflict respectively transition settings and peacebuilding as well as developmental contexts, and complementary expertise on the various core topics of the course. All of them are experienced trainers. Koenraad Van Brabant also acts as course director. A 'course coordinator' handles the practicalities before, during and after the course.

D. Pedagogical Approach.

The course seeks to equip people in advisory roles with frameworks to shape that role more consciously, and to deepen their awareness of repertoire options and their own choices. The course is practice oriented and designed to facilitate a personal development experience.

Overall the course is highly interactive and uses a variety of methodologies (presentations, plenary discussions, working in groups, personal journaling). All sessions focus on at least one key framework or skill that has proven to be widely useful for practitioners (9-roles grid, 5 capabilities, Track 6, colours of change, the art of asking questions etc.) Short content inputs during the course are complemented by a series of 'Hand outs' and a reading list. Though time is limited, there will be opportunities for applying and briefly practicing frameworks and skills.

***If you are interested please contact ipat@interpeace.org or call +41 (0)22 404.59.00
www.ipat-interpeace.org***

¹ See Working Paper 1: Value for Money? The record of technical assistance for institutional and governance reform. Interpeace -IPAT - http://ipat-interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/IPAT_CourseEffectiveAdvising_TechnicalAssistance_2014.pdf