3. KEY PREPLANNING TASKS IN MORE DETAIL

This section contains additional explanation of and instructions for some of the key preplanning tasks identified in section.

3.1. *FIRST, REVIEW THE CHECKLISTS*

The checklists in Appendix C provide as complete an itemization as possible of course planning tasks. They should be reviewed before the preplanning visit and filled in as much as possible during the visit.

The completed checklists, with the preplanning report, constitute the implementation action plan for the course.

3.2. *IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS*

Course delivery is usually motivated by a particular mission or project need, so each version of the course differs somewhat in terms of its emphasis and target audience. In general, participants should:

- represent institutions involved in the delivery of USAID funded assistance; or
- work for government agencies (central or local authorities) with environmental management responsibilities; or
- be knowledgeable resource persons and experts in environmental assessment within the host country that can be tapped for future IEE and EA preparation;
- be proficient in the language of course delivery (English, French, Portuguese), and
- hold mid- to upper-level professional positions, with some expertise in, and responsibility for, project design or evaluation.

USAID MEOs in the region should be encouraged to attend, particularly from countries that are potential hosts of future trainings. The MEO can contribute as facilitator and participant, can bring home knowledge and experiences gained, and, hopefully, initiate a similar course.

3.3. VENUE SELECTION

A conducive venue is essential to learning and an enjoyable course experience. Essential and desirable venue characteristics are set out in this section.

LOCATION

Whenever possible, the course should be hosted away from the capital. If participants are able to "stop by the office" they inevitably end up missing critical course content and are not able to pull their weight in working groups. (If possible, get participants as a group to agree to ban the use of mobile phones as well.)

The venue must be **convenient to case study sites** (typically four) that are a *maximum* of two and a half hours one-way travel time from the venue. (No more than 1.5 hours is best.)

A sufficient number of vehicles must be available in the area to take participants and facilitators to case study sites. These may be USAID, PVO or rental vehicles. Sometimes the venue can provide vehicles. (See box)

Note regarding vehicles

Ascertain well in advance the number and types of vehicles that will be needed for each site.

This requires determining:

- likely road conditions during the course (e.g., will two-wheel drive minivans be feasible, or will four-wheel drive vehicles be required?) and
- the number of facilitators + participants going to each site.

ACCOMODATIONS

Sufficient single rooms for participants and facilitators are required, preferably with hot, running water and in-room toilet and bathing facilities. Sometimes two hotels might need to be used, in which case, a shuttle service should be in place.

If rooms are in short supply and local norms allow participants to share, have them choose their roommates if at all possible. Include a roommate selection section on the RSVP/advance registration form. (See Appendix D for sample.) Be sure to ask for smoking/non-smoking preference if roommates must be assigned by the logistics coordinator.

Lessons Learned regarding venues

The willingness and motivation of the hotel staff to accommodate the needs of facilitators and participants are important factors in choosing a venue, if there are choices available.

If the hotel is somewhat basic, advise participants and facilitators to bring their own towels, pillow case, soap or the like.

If the hotel offers phones and mini-bars in each room, advise participants that the course is not covering the costs of use of telephones and items from a mini-bar.

DINING SERVICES & FACILITIES

Dining facilities must be large enough to accommodate all participants and facilitators taking meals at the same time.

- In some cases the hotel may need to hire extra servers, have buffets, or provide set meals.

- It is important to determine if any participants have special dietary requirements and advise the catering manager. Use the RSVP/advance reservation form for this purpose. (See Appendix D for sample.) *This is particularly important when set meals with no choices are to be provided.*
- Depending on the sophistication and experience of the hotel with serving large groups for a week at a time, it may be important to help plan each day's meals, and to encourage a buffet approach to meal service.
- If the hotel charges extra for breakfast (or for a full versus continental breakfast), it is useful to work out some arrangement so that everybody can have whatever they choose at no extra cost to avoid the hassle of "extra" charges that need to be paid on a daily basis.

MEETING FACILITIES: ESSENTIAL FEATURES

The meeting facility MUST have the following:

1. Sizable meeting room (one can take over a hotel restaurant in some cases) with the following characteristics:

Reliable electricity supply (UPSs may need to be brought to the site)	Sufficient size to accommodate: • All participants and facilitators at tables • Head table • Table for projector • Flip charts on stands
Several electrical outlets (note outlet type and compatibility with equipment. Also note length of extension cord required for distance from outlet to head table)	Curtains or shades for windows so that room can be dimmed for overhead projection.
Adequate lighting for reading, night or day	Air conditioning in the meeting room if needed during the time of year course is given.

2. Availability. The room should be **EXCLUSIVELY RESERVED (24 hours/day)** for the duration of the course. (It is not practical to take down flipcharts & maps, etc., that are in use by working groups.)

3. Tables and chairs. If the meeting room is not furnished, it is important to locate a sufficient number of tables and chairs. Furniture should be arranged in a configuration that encourages discussion, preferably with tables in a "V", rectangle, or semi-circle. **School-room type seating should be avoided**.

4. Two breakout rooms or outdoor sitting areas (if weather permits). Typically at least two breakout rooms are required.

5. A lockable room for the computer, printer, supplies and other equipment. This could be one of the sleeping rooms, or a suite rented for the person running the Secretariat.

MEETING FACILITIES: DESIRABLE FEATURES

The following features of the meeting facility are useful and desirable, but not essential:

- The facility frequently handles workshops or conferences, and has appropriate equipment.
- Fax machine and working telephones (or mobile coverage) available. In some cases, a nearby PVO office may be able to offer these.
- Photocopy facilities for emergency on-site reproduction of materials.
- Facilities for participants to exercise (jog, walk, and swim) and for evening diversions like table tennis, darts, socializing, etc.
- Restaurants outside the hotel venue that will cater a special meal, if transport to such a location can be arranged easily, in order to avoid some of the "cabin fever" that arises from eating three meals a day in the same place.
- Place for a welcome reception on the arrival day and place for a party on the final day (or mid-week), with dancing or music or some form of traditional entertainment.
- A relaxing place (preferably not the meeting room) where a screen & LCD projector (probably those used in the training itself) and laptop can be set up to show movies or other entertainment.

3.4. CASE SITE IDENTIFICATION & FIELD VISIT PREPARATION

The field trips are the centerpiece of the course. Through them, participants apply their classroom learning and practice their new skills. Field visits provide hands-on experience in conducting the data-gathering necessary to write a preliminary assessment (IEE or Environmental Review, depending on the focus of the course).

Based on the field visits, participants draft a preliminary assessment (bullet points, not finished text), including a mitigation and monitoring plan. Preparing the IEE or ERR is the core practical skill that the course seeks to teach and requires participants to integrate all the skills learned in the first three days of the training.

Therefore, assuring high-quality field visits must be a high priority for the entire training team.

Visits to the field to identify suitable case sites are an essential part of the preplanning visit.

HOW MANY CASE SITE GROUPS?

12 participants is a maximum for an effective case site group; it is better to have eight to ten participants. A course with 45 people should have four groups; a 25-person course could have two groups, but three is far more preferable.

THE OBJECTIVE: A SECTORAL OR THEMATIC ITINERARY FOR EACH GROUP

A full day is allocated to the case site visits. *Each case site group should have a unique, full-day itinerary that examines the ESDM issues associated with a particular sector (or a closely related set of sectors.)*

Each itinerary should include at least two (and preferably three) sites that together constitute an integrated case study illustrating critical ESDM issues. The site visits should also provide participants with an understanding of *baseline conditions* in the area.

Most itineraries feature one major focus site with supporting sites. For example, a team focusing on ESDM issues in rural health activities might begin by touring a rural health post. Afterwards, the group might visit the nearby incinerator, and conclude the site visit by meeting the district health officer to discuss medical waste issues.

Alternately, a "sanitation group" could visit sites that show (1) baseline sanitation conditions; (2) a sanitation project in process; (3) a sanitation project completed some years ago. Regardless, the preplanning team needs to identify sufficient supporting sites to ensure that the participants can appreciate the impacts of the entire life-cycle of the activity.

In general, the challenge is not in finding sufficient numbers of sites, but in finding appropriate, teachable sites: Two particular issues often pose challenges:

- *Visits to a fully operational project easily result in sightseeing.* Such sites should be chosen when (1) there are serious and real environmental problems that participants can diagnose and where mitigation measures can be a focal point of the discussion; or (2) the site has effective environmental management measures in place, and the implementation and management of these measures

- *Visits to proposed or hypothetical projects can leave participants at a loss*, as they need to make assumptions about specific elements (design of the project). This situation can also be instructive—it can allow participants to assess design alternatives. However, guidance must be provided regarding the assumptions to be made, and facilitators must sure that these assumptions are reasonable and sufficient.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

The box at right provides some key criteria for selecting case sites.

Sites need not be USAID-funded projects, nor need they be projects in planning. They can feature projects already implemented provided participants can “step back” from the present and assess the project as it was at the proposal stage.   It is also possible to posit a purely hypothetical project.

WRITTEN SITE BRIEFINGS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS SOURCEBOOKS

Case site briefings written prior to course delivery are essential to successful field visits. They are included in the field visit module of the participant sourcebook, and the working groups use these briefings to prepare for the site visits.

The briefing should include both information about baseline conditions and the interventions (or potential interventions) that are the subject of the site visit. They define the subject of the IEE or ER that participants will prepare in their follow-on exercises

Instructions for preparing case site briefings and notes for case site facilitators are found in Appendix F. These briefings are prepared prior to the course either by the preplanning lead, the principal trainer, or by local partners.

CASE SITE LOGISTICS

It is not enough simply to identify suitable case sites & write good case site briefings. The following *site logistics* are also critical:

- **Counterparts at the site**. Participants should be met at the site by counterparts (e.g., NGO project staff, government officials) or stakeholders who can provide a walk-through, explain the site and answer questions. Often counterparts are participants in the course. Ideally, a participant at the course can provide a briefing on the site before participants arrive. (see box)
- **Community and/or stakeholder consultations.** Participants should have the opportunity to confer with community members and/or stakeholders at the site, whether regarding the baseline situation, proposed projects, past projects, or projects in implementation. It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT **not to raise expectations** that the case site visit implies that new projects are forthcoming! (see box)

Case site selection criteria

Does the site (whether a proposed project, a project being implemented, a hypothetical project, or an example of the baseline situation) present the potential for non-trivial environmental or natural resource degradation that will affect health or livelihoods of the local community or other communities?

Is the site within a maximum of 2.5 hours of the course venue, and can transport be arranged?

Are community residents and/or other stakeholders prepared to openly discuss their perceptions (through translators if necessary) of the project costs and benefits?

Are there alternative projects or mitigation strategies for the course participants to conceptualize or investigate?

Can sufficient written documentation be generated for course participants to review the basic elements of the project design and its context in advance of the visit?

Ideally answers to all of the above questions should be positive.

- **ATTEND TO PROTOCOL & GIVE PRIOR NOTICE: site visits, and especially counterpart and community consultation arrangements, require that appropriate protocols are observed (e.g., official correspondence, notification of local government/traditional authorities, etc.) VERIFY the necessary protocol during the site visit surveys. Make sure that the site visit is not be a surprise to the community.**

- **Provide a small gift or remuneration, where appropriate.** It is sometimes appropriate to offer the host of a field visit a small gift or some form of remuneration. This may especially be the case when the host is not employed by the public sector or a development partner. (For example, a manager of a micro-enterprise who takes time from his staff to conduct a tour for the group, or an agricultural field worker who leads a tour). For such individuals, time away from their normal responsibilities may mean lost revenue, or working later to make up for time lost.

- **Transport.** Suitable vehicles in suitable numbers must be available. As noted in Section 3.3 (Venue selection) carefully assess road conditions during the initial site survey and note whether minibuses will be suitable, or whether 4WDs will be required. If the course will be in the rainy season, ask whether the roads will still be passable.

  Make sure appropriate vehicle procurement is written into the course budget, and make allowances for possible vehicle breakdowns and for vehicles not being available as promised on the day of the case site visits.

- **Box lunches.** Field visits usually continue through lunchtime, and participants usually take a box lunch. Make sure this is arranged with the hotel well ahead of time. Assure sufficient lunches and drinks for drivers and local case visit guides.

Why community /counterpart participation?

Participation of representatives of the affected community and/or representatives of local or district technical agencies brings reality to the case study. They offer participants an opportunity to inquire about local conditions or ask about the proposed activity and its potential impacts on people and their use of resources.

For example, in a proposal to develop an ecotourism facility, you might consider inviting community representatives who would benefit from the facility, a village committee if one has been formed, the tour operator if one has been identified, a representative of a technical agency with specific expertise in birds or wildlife as appropriate, etc.

3.5. DRAFT BUDGET

Typical line items for a course budget were presented in *TABLE 4: BUDGET LINE ITEMS AND COST ALLOCATIONS* . Two sample budgets templates are included in Appendix B

For the mission or partner, key drivers of variable costs in the budget are:

- Number of participants, particularly when the sponsor is paying for lodging and board.
- How the logistics function is provided (with Mission staff? With a local independent contractor? With a local firm?)
- Whether partners are able to provide vehicles for case site visits as an in-kind cost share.
- The cost share with ENCAP (for example, does ENCAP provide course materials? A co-trainer?)
- Special needs (such as simultaneous translation).

The contracting mechanism chosen may also affect the final budget significantly due to differences in contract handling overhead rates.