

PAN-COMMONWEALTH THIRD COUNTRY TRAINING PROGRAMME

WORKSHOPS ON ENHANCING ENTERPRISE COMPETITIVENESS

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

September 2006



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	List of acronyms	
	Executive summary	p. 4
1.	Introduction Purpose of the review Consultancy deliverables The consultant:	p. 6
2.	The review process Scope of the review A note on methodology A note on the questionnaire survey	p. 9
3.	Assessment against the Logical Framework	p. 14
4.	Trends in SME development thinking: Assessing the relevance of workshop topics and content	p. 16
5.	The workshops' impacts on participants and their institutions: Overview	p. 28
6.	Detailed review of the workshops: Content and methodology; usefulness and relevance	p. 33
7.	A note on Singapore	p. 60
8.	Recommendations	p. 63

APPENDICES

Appendix A	The questionnaire sent to workshop participants, and related communications
Appendix B	Detailed analytical reports
Appendix C	Recent thinking on SME development: Selected references
Appendix D:	Terms of Reference for the Consultancy

Acronyms

ComSec	Commonwealth Secretariat
GoS	Government of Singapore
ITIS	International Trade Institute of Singapore
MFA	Singapore Government Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SASD	Commonwealth Secretariat – Special Advisory Services Division
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 2000 onwards, the Commonwealth Secretariat – Special Advisory Services Division (SASD) - and the Singapore Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) have collaborated on the Singapore Third Country Training Programme to deliver a series of capacity building training workshops, focusing on SME competitiveness. SASD's Enterprise and Agriculture Section (EAS) has coordinated the programme, developed programme content and played a major part in delivering the training courses.

By the end of March 2006 fifteen training workshops had been held, in which three hundred and eighteen senior public and private sector officials from Commonwealth member countries had participated.

The purpose of the review was to:

- Evaluate the training programme vis-à-vis the logframe to ascertain the appropriateness of activities, outputs and goals achieved
- Assess the relevance of the topics content of the training workshops in relation to the subject of SME competitiveness, given the advances that have been made in the area of SME development
- Assess the extent to which the programme has contributed to human and institutional capacity development by examining how the workshops have impacted on participants and strategic planning and actions of the institutions they work for
- Make recommendations for areas of improvement in relation to the overall purpose of the programme, selection of relevant topics and the workshop design.

The review process commenced with attendance by the consultant at a training workshop in Singapore (March 2006), using the opportunity to observe the training at first hand and hold discussions with GoS officials and others who have been involved in the programme as service providers. Thereafter the consultant spent three days at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, examining records, and meeting with various officials, chiefly with the Advisor responsible for the project.

For the purposes of the evaluation, the topics and content of the training programme were then assessed against a literature review of current trends in development thinking, with a particular focus on SMEs.

To obtain the primary information necessary to evaluate the impacts of the programme, a questionnaire was designed and sent to all participants. Eliciting responses was an iterative, time-consuming process. In the event a very satisfactory response rate (26%) was achieved.

It proved not to be feasible to evaluate the training programmed against the logframe, as both Goal and Purpose were set at too high a level of generality. It is indeed questionable whether a logframe is applicable to a training programme – impacts need to be evaluated in much more direct and indeed basic terms.

The questionnaire-based survey in fact showed very positive impacts on the ways in which participants' professional capacities have been enhanced. To a quite remarkable degree the benefits derived from the workshops have matched the expectations of the

sending institutions and individual respondents, and enhanced their ability to carry out their professional responsibilities.

As to the choice of topics and content, the review concluded that these had been well chosen and well designed. The survey confirmed this conclusion, as the relevance of the topics and the course content were both strongly endorsed by participants in the workshops.

However, apart from 'competitiveness' the conceptualization of the programme does not seem to have been underpinned by a strong and coherent approach to development. The review suggests that serious thought should be given to adopting an 'enabling environment' approach to inform the training programme. Without prescribing or limiting the choice of topics for workshops, such an approach could provide intellectual coherence as well as introducing additional practical dimensions into the programme as a whole.

Respondents to the review questionnaire were virtually unanimous that Singapore is a good venue for the workshops, and that exposure to the Singaporean experience had been valuable in various ways.

On the basis of the review, the following recommendations are made:

1. The training programme should continue, preferably for a further five-year period in order to allow for the development of a longer view that would facilitate planning.
2. The workshops should continue to be offered in partnership by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the GoS MFA.
3. Nevertheless, consideration should also be given to the possibility of mounting supplementary regional workshops, to concentrate on more specific regional experiences, concerns and issues.
4. Serious thought should be given to adopting an 'enabling environment' approach as a guiding thread in taking the training programme forward.
5. Consideration could be given to including the following topics in the programme for future workshops – without necessarily excluding any others – within the overall agenda of promoting SME development and competitiveness:
 - Strengthening local institutions
 - The role of the private sector in development (including the initiation of business linkages with SMEs)
 - Public-private partnerships and complementarities
 - Tools for assessing the business environment for growth, particularly the impacts on SMEs (analysis of regulatory compliance costs, and administrative barriers; regulatory impact assessment; regulatory implementation issues, monitoring and evaluation)
 - Business environment reform at the sub-national level
 - Gender-based barriers to SME growth
 - Responding to globalization, and taking advantage of it.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past six years, from 2000 onwards, the Commonwealth Secretariat – Special Advisory Services Division (SASD) - and the Singapore Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) have collaborated on the Singapore Third Country Training Programme to deliver a series of capacity building training workshops, focusing on SME competitiveness. SASD's Enterprise and Agriculture Section (EAS) has coordinated the programme, developed programme content and played a major part in delivering the training courses.

Fifteen training workshops had been held by the end of March 2006. Well over three hundred senior public and private sector officials from Commonwealth member countries have participated in these workshops.

The training programme had its origins in a one-off Pan Commonwealth event held in the Caribbean in 1999, a competitiveness workshop aimed at complementing the technical assistance work of the Division. The event was attended by 240 delegates from across the Commonwealth, including Ministers of Trade and Industry.

Feedback after the workshop suggested that participants wanted more such opportunities in order to expose greater numbers of senior public sector staff to the challenges of enterprise competitiveness. A proposal was presented to the GoS who saw the merit of including the enterprise competitiveness workshops as part of the Third Country Training Programme¹.

The format and content for each workshop has remained essentially the same although new themes have been introduced since 2003.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The SME training project is part of the Investment Programme² established under the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan. The objective of the Investment Programme is to help create the enabling conditions that will facilitate the mobilization of investment resources and help build capacities needed to produce competitive goods and services. SME development forms part of a number of other strategies, and complements these by focusing on policies to improve the business environment for enterprises and advising on ways that members can support SME development with more direct supply side

¹ Singapore has an extensive technical assistance programme with education and training as the main product. The programme is operated by the MFA and is seen as an outreach to assist others as well as a way of publicising Singapore and its achievements and making friends. The MFA uses a range of mainly government agencies to deliver the training programmes, working in a non-competitive environment. Delegates' satisfaction with the overall Singapore experience is measured through a detailed questionnaire at the end of every training course. The MFA uses this as the primary source of information on the relevance of training courses and the quality of the agencies' efforts.

² Programme 6.

measures. These include strategic advice on clusters, network development, market access, capital mobilization and training.

ComSec sees the training project as complementing the normal technical assistance provided by EAS while meeting its objective of building capacities within member states.

According to the Terms of Reference for this review, this assumption “needs to be subjected to an independent evaluation to determine the impact against set objectives and guide future planning”.

SASD as a division of the Commonwealth Secretariat is obliged to ensure that its investments are value for money and meet corporate objectives as determined by the Strategic Plan.

This review is part of a larger effort to evaluate all Pan Commonwealth training programmes.

CONSULTANCY DELIVERABLES

The deliverables specified in the Terms of Reference are:

- i. Evaluation of the training programme to date vis-à-vis the logframe to ascertain the appropriateness of activities, outputs and goals achieved.
- ii. Assessment of the relevance of the topics treated so far and the content of the training workshops in relation to the subject of SME competitiveness, given the advances that have been made and the rapid changes that are occurring in the area of SME development.
- iii. Assessment of extent to which the programme has contributed to human and institutional capacity development by examining how the workshops have impacted on participants and strategic planning and actions of the institutions they work for.
- iv. Recommendations for areas of improvement in relation to the overall purpose of the programme, selection of relevant topics and the workshop design.

THE CONSULTANT: SBP

In March 2006 the Commonwealth Secretariat engaged SBP to undertake the review on the basis of a short-term consultancy.

SBP is an independent private sector development specialist company based in Johannesburg. It is registered in South Africa as a Section 21 not-for-profit company.

SBP³ has extensive experience in development work in sub-Saharan Africa. Concentrating on the development of a policy, regulatory and operating environment

³ See www.sbp.org.za

conducive to business growth in Africa, SBP's core work streams comprise research and policy advocacy, the promotion of strategic partnerships in the public and private sectors, and the facilitation of practical business development programmes, with a strong focus on SME development.

The review was led by SBP's Director of Policy Programmes and Research, Professor Douglas Irvine.

CHAPTER 2

THE REVIEW PROCESS

The consultant was required to:

- Evaluate the training programme to date vis-à-vis the logframe to ascertain the appropriateness of activities, outputs and goals achieved;
- Assess the relevance of the topics treated so far and the content of the training workshops in relation to the subject of SME competitiveness, given the advances that have been made and the rapid changes that are occurring in the area of SME development; and
- Assess of extent to which the programme has contributed to human and institutional capacity development by examining how the workshops have impacted on participants and strategic planning and actions of the institutions they work for.

On the basis of this review, the consultant would make recommendations for areas of improvement in relation to the overall purpose of the programme, selection of relevant topics and the workshop design⁴.

Scope of the training programme

Up to March 2006, the training programme had mounted 15 workshops, in which 318 people had participated.

Dates	Topics	Participants
2000 22 – 27 May	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Asia and the Pacific	18 (10 countries)
2001 21 – 25 May	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	38 (20 countries)
2001 29 May - 1 June	Corporatisation of government agencies and services	21 (17 countries)
2002 22 – 27 March	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	17 (17 countries)
2002 5 - 9 August	Innovations in trade, investment and finance policy to cope with economic downturns	14 (14 countries)
2002 12 -16 August	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	20 (20 countries)
2003 24 – 28 February	Corporatisation of government agencies and services	13 (13 countries)
2003 11-14 August	Innovations in trade, investment and finance policy to cope with economic downturns	12 (10 countries)
2003 27 – 31 October	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	14 (13 countries)
2004 29 March – 2 April	Developing services for international competitiveness	22 (18 countries)
2004 16 – 20 November	Enterprise competitiveness in small state economies	28 (15 countries)
2005	Business development services strategies	23

⁴ See Appendix D: Terms of Reference for the Consultancy

14 – 18 March	for enhancing SME competitiveness	(16 countries)
2005 26 – 30 September	SME cluster development strategies for enhancing enterprise competitiveness	30 (14 countries)
2005 5 – 9 December	Globalisation for the new economies and challenges for Commonwealth Developing Countries	24 (18 countries)
2006 22-28 March	Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector in Commonwealth countries	24 (18 countries)
Total number of participants		318

Scope of the review

The Consultant was required develop an appropriate methodology and plan of work.

The Terms of Reference provided for the consultant to attend the workshop, *Enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs in the Tourism Sector in Commonwealth Countries*, 22 – 28 March 2006 in Singapore, using the opportunity to see at first hand one of the training workshops and hold discussions with GoS officials and others who have been involved in the programme as service providers.

Following the workshop in Singapore, the consultant spent three days at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, consulting records⁵ and meeting with various officials, chiefly with the Advisor responsible for the project.⁶

For the purposes of the evaluation, the topics and content of the training programme were then assessed against a literature review of current trends in development thinking, with a particular focus on SMEs.

To obtain the primary information necessary to evaluate the impacts of the programme, a questionnaire was designed and sent to all participants. Eliciting responses was an iterative, time-consuming process⁷.

In the event 84 detailed responses were secured.

This represents a response rate of 26%, which experts in survey design consider very satisfactory for a survey relying on a questionnaire mailed to a targeted set of respondents, to be self-administered and then mailed back⁸.

The results were then analysed. The resultant information underpins this report.

⁵ Including internal Back to Office Reports, Workshop Feedback Surveys done at the time of the workshops, Alumni details, etc, as well as project files containing the Project Appraisal, Logical Framework and Budgets

⁶ Mr Roland Charles, Advisor (Enterprise Development), Special Advisory Services Division.

⁷ This process is described below.

⁸ Personal communication from the Managing Director of MarkData, South Africa's leading social survey company.

A note on methodology

As indicated above, the review process was required to assess “the extent to which the programme has contributed to human and institutional capacity development by examining how the workshops have impacted on participants and strategic planning and actions of the institutions they work for”.

We must note several methodological problems and limitations in this assessment.

Any attempt to assess the training workshops’ impacts on institutional planning and practice – over a period of years, and in many different countries – is highly problematical. The attribution of direct causal links can be hazardous where a number of influences may be at work, and it would be impossible to estimate the relative weight of any one factor without a thorough investigation of a kind well beyond the scope of this review⁹.

We have had to rely on a self-administered questionnaire to assess the workshops’ impacts on the individual participants and their institutions. There was no way to verify the objective truth of their responses. Even with the best will in the world, the lapse of time may have clouded some memories. Nor can we know whether all of the most pertinent information has been reported.

It is also important to stress that this report relies on only a portion of the total number of people who participated in the 15 workshops over the years. By definition they are not a representative sample because they have differentiated themselves by responding to the questionnaire – and we cannot reliably extrapolate their responses to the population as a whole.

However, as noted in Chapter 5, there is a remarkable consistency between evaluations made by participants immediately after the workshops, and the retrospective evaluations yielded by the questionnaire.

It is also useful to note that the responses to the questionnaire come from a wide range of countries, and cover all the workshops.

Participants from the following countries responded to the questionnaire:

Bahamas	3	Ghana	1	Mozambique	1	Solomon Islands	2
Bangladesh	4	India	2	Namibia	1	South Africa	1
Barbados	3	Jamaica	2	Nigeria	1	Sri Lanka	6
Botswana	2	Kenya	5	Pakistan	1	Swaziland	1
Brunei	1	Lesotho	2	Papua New Guinea	1	Tanzania	4

⁹ The Commonwealth Secretariat estimated the Level of Effort of the consultancy at 20 person days.

Cameroon	2	Malawi	4	Saint Lucia	2	Tonga	3
Dominica	1	Malaysia	3	Samoa	3	Trinidad & Tobago	1
Fiji	2	Maldives	1	Seychelles	4	Uganda	2
The Gambia	2	Mauritius	7	Sierra Leone	1	Zambia	2

The following table shows the response rates per workshop:

Dates	Topics	Participants	Responses to questionnaire
2000 22 – 27 May	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Asia and the Pacific	18 (10 countries)	3 (17%)
2001 21 – 25 May	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	38 (20 countries)	9 (24%)
2001 29 May - 1 June	Corporatisation of government agencies and services	21 (17 countries)	5 (24%)
2002 22 – 27 March	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	17 (17 countries)	3 (18%)
2002 5 - 9 August	Innovations in trade, investment and finance policy to cope with economic downturns	14 (14 countries)	5 (36%)
2002 12 -16 August	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	20 (20 countries)	3 (15%)
2003 24 – 28 February	Corporatisation of government agencies and services	13 (13 countries)	2 (15%)
2003 11-14 August	Innovations in trade, investment and finance policy to cope with economic downturns	12 (10 countries)	2 (17%)
2003 27 – 31 October	Enterprise competitiveness and public policies	14 (13 countries)	2 (14%)
2004 29 March – 2 April	Developing services for international competitiveness	22 (18 countries)	9 (41%)
16 – 20 November 2004	Enterprise competitiveness in small state economies	28 (15 countries)	5 (18%)
2005 14 – 18 March	Business development services strategies for enhancing SME competitiveness	23 (16 countries)	10 (44%)
2005 26 – 30 September	SME cluster development strategies for enhancing enterprise competitiveness	30 (14 countries)	10 (33%)
2005 5 – 9 December	Globalisation for the new economies and challenges for	24 (18 countries)	7 (17%)

	Commonwealth Developing Countries		
2006 22-28 March	Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector in Commonwealth countries	24 (18 countries)	9 (37%)
Total		318	84 (26%)

A note on the questionnaire survey

The Commonwealth Secretariat provided contact lists for all participants in the workshops. The information was not always complete, and as the lists had not been updated, the contact details were not necessarily current.

In order to ensure that we would make contact with as many potential respondents as possible, we adopted the following procedure:

- An initial e-mail or fax was sent to all listed participants in the workshops, informing them of the survey, requesting their co-operation, and asking them to confirm their contact details
- Those who did not reply were sent a reminder
- If they still did not reply, we tried to track them via telephone calls to their work numbers
- Those who replied were mailed a questionnaire, with their personal and professional details already filled in (with a request to update these if necessary)
- Those who had not replied to our enquiries were then also sent a questionnaire
- Finally, reminders were sent to all who had not replied by the due date.

A copy of the questionnaire, and the related correspondence, is provided in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 3

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The Terms of Reference specify, as one components of the review, an “evaluation of the training programme to date vis-à-vis the logframe to ascertain the appropriateness of activities, outputs and goals achieved”.

From the records consulted, it appears that two logframes have applied to the training programme: one in the first two or three years, followed by a later version:

PROJECT NUMBER: PXCWG046

PROJECT TITLE: Enterprise Competitiveness and Public Policies in Commonwealth Countries

Stage	Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Means of Verification	Assumptions
GOAL	To develop capacity in Commonwealth developing countries to realise the benefits of globalization.	Increased trade and investment flows involving Commonwealth developing countries, especially small states.	Information on manufacturing outputs, trade statistics, inward investment and development assistance.	Recovery in the World economy in the medium term.
PURPOSE	To strengthen the skills of government officials to be able to develop national competitive strategies.	More emphasis on formulating National Competitiveness Strategies in CDC's. National Legislation to support Competitiveness Strategies.	Production of White Papers on Competitiveness and Industrial Policies. Letters from EIDD points of contact. Requests for assistance for Competitiveness Strategies. New Legislation.	Government Officials have requisite technical background. Political and macro economic stability.

PROJECT NUMBER: XCWG065

PROJECT TITLE: Executive Pan Commonwealth Programme on Enhancing Competitiveness in Commonwealth Countries

Stage	Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Means of Verification	Assumptions
GOAL	To contribute to enhanced competitiveness of Commonwealth developing countries	Progress of countries in International Competitiveness as indicated in Global Competitiveness Yearbook.	FDI flows evidenced in UNCTAD annual reports.	Recovery in the World economy in the medium term. Global political stability.
PURPOSE	To strengthen the capacity of government officials to develop national competitiveness strategies.	Formulated National Competitiveness Strategies in CDC's. National Legislation to support Competitiveness Strategies.	Production of White Papers on Competitiveness and Industrial Policies. Requests for assistance for Competitiveness Strategies. New Legislation.	Government officials have requisite technical background. Governments support initiatives required. Political and macro economic stability. Trained staff allocated to relevant ministries.

In both cases the Goals, and even the Purposes, are set at a very high level of generality.

In the time available, it was not feasible to investigate the OVIs – and even if that had been possible, it is likely that that this would not have yielded much useful information.

It is in fact highly questionable whether a logframe of this sort is applicable to a training programme – its impacts would need to be evaluated in much more direct and indeed basic terms.

Chapter 5, which deals with the workshops' impacts on participants and their institutions on the basis of the questionnaire survey, shows that there have been very positive impacts on the ways in which participants' professional capacities have been enhanced.

CHAPTER 4

TRENDS IN SME DEVELOPMENT THINKING

Assessing the relevance of workshop topics and content

The review process was required to assess “the relevance of the topics treated so far and the content of the training workshops in relation to the subject of SME competitiveness, given the advances that have been made and the rapid changes that are occurring in the area of SME development”.

To provide a frame of reference for this assessment, current trends in thinking around SME development issues are outlined in the following section.

In addition, Appendix C lists a selection of references on the topic, which we trust will be both interesting and useful to the Commonwealth Secretariat, particularly as a background to further development of the training programme.

Current thinking on SME development concentrates on three key points of intervention:

- the development of strong and locally appropriate institutions
- making markets work for the SME sector, and
- the private sector provision of services and support to SMEs.

Based on these key points of intervention, different donors are currently using a number of approaches to the development of SMEs, including:

- the ‘enabling environment’ approach
- ‘making markets work for the poor’ (MMW4P) and
- the development of the Millennium Goals by the United Nations.

Points of intervention

Institutions

The term ‘institutions’ is broadly used to include not only governing, regulating or facilitating commercial or statutory bodies, but the laws and norms under which they operate. Key institutions include property laws, and the general rule of law. Producing strong, predictable institutions is considered by many to be a key task of government in promoting SME development. Institutions must be developed with the specific context of the operating environment in mind and need to be congruent with the local beliefs and practices to be effective. The transference of a ‘Western’ model of institutions on to non-Western contexts is therefore not necessarily effective. For example, some countries in East Asia have seen their economies thrive despite flouting the rules of the Washington consensus.

A good fit between what is provided by an institution and what is demanded by markets in a particular country at one time will not necessarily continue to be so after a period of time. Institutions need to be able to modify to changing economic conditions. There will always be an ongoing tension between the need for change and the pressure for stability.

No neat recipe exists for the development of strong and effective institutions. Institutions develop slowly and in a complex manner as a result of the actions of many agents. However, whatever reforms are chosen to develop institutions, a level of buy-in needs to be obtained from participants involved in reforms. Sustainable reforms in institutions are related to cultural and attitudinal change, and 'development' in general needs to be understood as an essentially political process.

An important aspect of reforming institutions includes an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing regulations (an arena in which donor agencies can play an important part). It should be stressed that improving the investment climate is not necessarily about deregulation. It is about reducing the wrong kind of legislation and increasing the right kind. Legislation at the local as well as national level needs to be examined. In developing new legislation and interventions, designers must take care to create a fit with local practices. Intervention needs to incorporate a bottom-up pattern in the rules (i.e. which resonate with the local context), and then sell the rules to different levels of government – or other relevant stakeholders, including the general public.

Whilst the emphasis in thinking around institutional reforms highlights the fact that local interventions and initiatives are usually more successful than external ones, 'local' may include large regions or associations across a number of countries, which can develop mutually understood and mutually beneficial regulations and practices.

There is some debate about whether to institute piecemeal reforms or to create 'a big push' for major change across the board. Given the extent to which institutions are interrelated, change in one institution is unlikely to succeed fully if other relevant institutions are not also undergoing reform. Some kind of compromise between large scale buy-in for reform and more gradual and piecemeal actual change provides a possible middle ground. A 'big push' is more feasible if change is driven internally rather than externally.

The setting of standards may act as important guidelines and even incentives for the development of institutions¹⁰.

¹⁰ For example, the European Union (EU) provided a guiding economic model for countries with a common historical heritage, such as the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. Reform was then rewarded by entry into the EU.

Countries can also influence each other by borrowing ideas and models, with adjustments to fit local needs.

Markets

Markets are an important vehicle for feedback and accountability on the part of citizens¹¹ and can therefore play a role in the development of democracy. The extension of markets to include more SMEs and the poor deepens democracy by extending the feedback and accountability mechanism. However, markets which work to develop the citizens of a country are dependant on the social contracts of a particular society, the effectiveness of regulatory institutions, and the provision of appropriate infrastructure.

Infrastructure includes the provision of market information to agents in the market. The ICT sector can play a major role in SME development by increasing productivity, increasing the efficiency of internal business operations and connecting SMEs more easily to local and global contracts. Mobile communication has also proved invaluable to entrepreneurs.

Creating a good investment climate is vital in supporting the strength and reach of markets. Investment climate may be defined as “the policy, institutional, behavioural and physical environment – current and expected- that influences the perceived risks and returns associated with investment”¹². Investment climate refers not only to Foreign Direct Investment, but also to domestic investment - local citizens’ willingness to save and develop enterprises. Citizens need to trust the government enough to invest in the future. Local institutions needed to generate positive long-term expectations for both foreigners and citizens.

Service and support delivery

Business Development Services (BDS) include all services related to upgrading, advisory services, market access, input supply, infrastructure, technology transfers and technical assistance and product development. These services are designed to help SMEs overcome barriers to market entry, enhance productivity and increase their profitability. Over the last two decades, donors and governments have subsidised the provision of BDS and providers have been a mixture of public providers and NGOs. These interventions have at best been modest, with limited reach and sustainability.

¹¹ Easterly, W. (2006). *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.

¹² Stern, N., Dethier, J.J., & Rogers, F.H. (2005). *Growth and Empowerment: making development happen*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lessons learnt (particularly in the micro finance sector) by donor institutions, governments and other organisations, saw the development of a change in approach from the provision of BDS by the public sector and donors to its provision by the private sector via 'market creation development'.

This approach has three key elements: (a) need-based product development (b) the promotion and marketing of these products and (c) the creation of a market for these products such that it becomes viable for the private sector to deliver these products as a business¹³.

Services for which there is a demand, and which can be supplied on a commercial basis, are offered rather than services that have been identified on the basis of needs assessment and that are donor or government funded. The shift in paradigm to the market approach has meant that intervention programs had to be designed differently. Rather than carrying out a needs analysis, a market assessment is carried out. The outcome of the market assessment process is the design of intervention programs that meet not just a need but a *demand* for such services.

An example of the market creation approach is to link business services to input supply. The supply and the cost of an input includes the cost of training and extension support related to the use of the inputs. For example to reduce the cost of the input to a farmer, the cost of training and extension support is split between the input supplier and the farmer. The inclusion of training and support programmes in the cost of micro loans by microfinance programs is another example. Borrowers pay for the services as they repay their loans.

However, because different services are provided by different suppliers, the transaction costs to the SMEs for getting all the services can become prohibitive. A partial solution is to bundle all the services to a one stop shop where the SMEs can get all the services. Using the radio as a channel for providing BDS is a possible cost effective means of providing information to communities. There has been an increasing use of ICTs in the provision of BDS, including long distance consulting via e-mail and the provision of information and support on the internet. However, many SMEs outside of the developed countries do not have access to internet facilities.

The delivery of market based BDS requires a different institutional framework and a new role for government. Government should:

¹³ Heierli, U. (2000, April). *Market and Development: An Effective Strategy for Poverty Alleviation with and through the Private Sector. Draft of a study of 5 SDC projects in Asia and Latin America.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Business Services for Small Enterprises in Asia: Developing Markets and Measuring Performance. Hanoi, Vietnam.

- promote private sector organisations to deliver BDS via policy adjustments, the removal of red tape and facilitating the licensing process for private sector BDS providers
- regulate standards of performance of service providers
- facilitate the provision of information to SMEs on the business development services available, and
- facilitate and broker links between SMEs and public sector buyers (providing a market for the SMEs).

Through partnerships, the corporate sector can develop and facilitate linkages with the SMEs sector as a commercial and business venture, rather than as part of corporate social investment.

A challenge to the market approach to BDS is the crowding out of private sector provision by ongoing donor and government provision of free business development services. In addition service providers used to provide donor or government funded programs find it difficult to adjust to market forces (which are often more demanding with regard to quality of service provided).

Another challenge is to translate the *need* for certain services and support into *demand* for services that SMEs are willing to pay for. Few of the service providers currently design their programs to meet a demand. Programmes are based on perceived need and tend to be generic.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that there is not yet enough research evidence to justify putting all our eggs in the market services basket, although it has much to recommend it.

Trends in donor aid for SME development

The general trend in SME development is based on the assumption that the private sector is at the heart of the development process, and should be the focus of development. The new approaches mentioned below are influenced by 'New Institutional Economics'.

The Enabling Environment approach

The enabling environment approach is based on the assumption that within the right environment, growth and development will occur.

The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the Canadian International Development Agency support this

approach¹⁴. The DFID review (2004)¹⁵ states that an enabling environment “can comprise all factors external to firms, including the policy, legal and regulatory framework; external trade policy; governance and institutions; physical security; the social and cultural context of business; macroeconomic policies; access of firms to financial and business services; and the availability of physical and social infrastructure services” (p4). A narrower view, also adopted by DFID, is “focused on the extent to which government policies, laws and regulations set the rules of the game for business and influence, positively or negatively, the performance of markets, the incentive to invest, and the cost of business operations. Property rights, regulatory and taxation reforms, anti-corruption strategies, infrastructure investments, support for entrepreneurship and microfinance all fall into this category” (p5).

The enabling environment approach was strongly endorsed in the Conference Communique issued by the International Conference on Reforming the Business Environment in December 2005 (Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprise Development)¹⁶.

The Communique notes that “business environment reform is a multidisciplinary field of work requiring a wide range of competencies, programme partners, processes, tools and techniques”. Emphasising the importance of public-private dialogue (with the private sector as well as government as an active player in reform), the Communique also identifies a large number of key processes and tools in bringing about reforms, including regulatory impact assessment, effective regulation and competition policy regimes, compliance cost studies, and tax and labour reforms.

Making Markets Work for the Poor

This approach is supported by the Swedish International Development Co-operation agency, Germany’s development agency GTZ, and USAID (Select Committee, 2006). Donors seek to facilitate and catalyse rather than intervene directly in markets. The focus is narrower than the enabling environment approach. The aim is to create inclusive

¹⁴ Select Committee on International Development (2006). Understanding Private Sector Development. Report prepared for the UK Parliament. Retrieved 23 July 2006 from <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmintdev/921/92106.htm>

¹⁵ DFID. (2004). Review of DFID Activities in the Enabling Environment. Final report. Retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.enterprise-impact.org.uk/word-files/DFIDReviewEnablingdec04-TC.doc>

¹⁶ Cairo Conference. (2005). *Reforming the Business Environment: Current Thinking and Future Opportunities*. Thematic Overview of the Papers presented at the Cairo Conference, 29 November to 1 December 2005. Retrieved June 2006 from <http://www.businessenvironment.org/dyn/be/docs/5/CairoOverview.doc>

markets which serve the poor by offering them what they need – jobs, opportunities, finance, products – to increase their incomes.

Making markets work for the poor operates in two ways. One is to concentrate on meeting the needs of poor consumers and developing these consumers as a market by offering products poor people want and are able to pay for, for example, single-use shampoo sachets, micro-loans, or accessible education and training. The other is to make markets more accessible specifically to poorer enterprises. Regarding strategies to improve market accessibility and functioning for small enterprises, the two strategies which have been most widely implemented are microcredit and property protection and title.

There is a considerable overlap between the two development approaches just mentioned. DFID for example includes MMW4P in their enabling environment approach.

The United Nations Millennium Project

The UN Millennium Project is not specifically aimed at either private sector or SME development, but is an important part of development discourse worldwide¹⁷. This project combines academics, governments, UN agencies, international financial institutions, nongovernmental organizations, donor agencies and the private sector to create a worldwide network of development practitioners in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Goals include institution building, good governance, poverty reduction, and making new technologies (especially communication) and information available to all. The goals are built on the assumption that “when suitably empowered with human capital, infrastructure, and core human rights in a market-based economy, women and men can secure productive and decent employment through personal initiative” (p.13).

Outcomes of current development approaches and responses

Only partial successes in varying degrees have been experienced across these various development approaches. (The failings in progressing towards the Millennium Goals are the most glaring.) There is much debate about why this is the case, with some people claiming that aid cannot promote institutional change, as institutional development it is generally too idiosyncratic, gradual, path dependant and context specific for models of best practice (especially Western) to work. Others feel that a possible response is to

¹⁷ UN Millennium Project. (2005). *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Overview*. Retrieved July 2006 from <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/overviewEngLowRes.pdf>

debate the applicability of specific parts of these policies, rather than the policies as a whole.

Problem areas and solutions which have been highlighted in the literature with regard to current development approaches include:

- a need for 'congruence' between the formal rules adopted by an institution and the social and cultural norms of an environment. People's underlying belief system has to change along with institutional reform for reforms to produce sustainable development.
- an appreciation of the fact that there is no one optimal design for a market economy. There are various versions of capitalism – and what works in one country may not in another.

The topic of **social capital** has not been touched on but currently forms an important and popular part of the literature on development. Social capital has been identified as a vital resource in development. The notion of taking cognisance of social capital can be incorporated into both the enabling environment approach and MMW4P. However, social capital is hard to create exogenously and it can be depleted as well as enhanced. Intervention in a community by governments or donor agencies may do more harm than good. It seems sensible to say that public or donor intervention should play a facilitating role in supporting existing or emerging social networks, or clusters of economic agents.

Assessing the training programme against current trends

The workshop topics can be grouped together according to five broad themes:

- Enterprise competitiveness and public policies – 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006
- Corporatisation for government agencies and services – 2001, 2003
- Trade, investment and finance policy – 2002, 2003
- Service strategies for international competitiveness – 2004, 2005
- Cluster development, trade and globalisation – 2005

Workshop objectives

The objectives of these workshops are briefly described below. The various workshop programmes are summarized in Chapter 6 of this report.

Workshops on enterprise competitiveness and public policies

- *Workshop 1: 20 - 27 May 2000 Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Asia and the Pacific*

The purpose of the workshop was to provide senior macroeconomic, trade and industry policy makers with tools and methods to manage industrial adjustment

during globalisation. The workshop was taught from an economic/ business studies viewpoint and was strongly orientated towards senior policy-makers dealing with trade and industrial policy, structural adjustments programmes and private sector development.

- *Workshop 2: 21 - 25 May 2001 Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries*

The workshop was targeted at senior-level participants from ministries of international trade, industry, finance and planning, trade and investment promotion agencies and small firm promotion institutions. Its purpose was to strengthen the skills of government officials in developing national competitive strategies. The aim was to provide an overview of best practices for enterprise restructuring strategies and policies to enhance competitiveness during rapid globalisation; and to provide delegates with an understanding of how to benchmark domestic competitiveness performance and design national competitiveness strategies.

- *Workshop 4: 22 - 27 March 2002 Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries*

The detailed programme was not available.

- *Workshop 6: 12 - 16 August 2002 Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries*

The workshop was targeted at senior-level participants from ministries of international trade, industry, finance and planning, trade and investment promotion agencies and small firm promotion institutions. Its purpose was to strengthen the skills of government officials to be able to develop national competitive strategies. The goal was to develop capacity in Commonwealth developing countries to realise the benefits of globalisation.

- *Workshop 9: 27 - 31 October 2003 Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries*

The detailed programme was not available.

- *Workshop 11: 16 - 20 November 2004 Enterprise competitiveness in small states*

The objective of the workshop was to explain the concept and practice of SME competitiveness and assist participants in designing and implementing competitive strategies for their countries. It aimed to enable participants to develop a focused methodology for designing strategies for SME competitiveness by using country case studies, workshop materials, group work and insights gained from the Singapore experience.

- *Workshop 15: 22 - 28 March 2006 Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector in Commonwealth countries*

The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of government officials to develop national competitiveness strategies. The specific goal was to develop the capacity of participants to guide policy making process and craft winning strategies for SME development in the tourism sector.

Workshops on corporatisation for government agencies and services

- *Workshop 3: 29 May - 1 June 2001 Corporatisation of government agencies and services with special reference to Singapore*

The objective of the workshop was to provide practical advice on globalisation and competitiveness strategies to governments of Commonwealth countries, and to demonstrate good practices in corporatisation in the approaches of the GoS and its agencies. The theme of the workshop was to provide a road map for the delegates to assist them in the process of corporatising government agencies into private companies. The programme also aimed to illustrate how corporatisation provides the flexibility to engage in greater regional and global alliances in commercial terms.

- *Workshop 7: 24 - 28 February 2003 Corporatisation of government agencies and services with special reference to Singapore*

As above.

Workshops on trade, investment and finance policy

- *Workshop 5: 5-9 August 2002 Innovations in Trade, Investment and Finance Policy to cope with the economic downturn*
- *Workshop 8: 11-14 August 2003 Innovations in Trade, Investment and Finance Policy to cope with the economic downturn*

Detailed programmes were not available

Workshops on service strategies for international competitiveness

- *Workshop 10: 29 March - 2 April 2004 Developing service strategies for international competitiveness for Commonwealth developing countries*

The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of government officials to develop national competitiveness strategies targeting the services sector.

- *Workshop 12: 14 - 18 March 2005 Business development services strategies for enhancing SME competitiveness for Commonwealth countries*

The objective of the workshop was to provide a framework for formulating successful Business Development Services strategies (BDS); demonstrate how

successful strategies can further enhance the development of SMEs; and highlight key policies and regulatory challenges affecting strategies for delivering BDS.

Workshops on cluster development, trade and globalisation

- *Workshop 13: 26 - 30 September 2005 SME cluster development strategies for enhancing competitiveness for Commonwealth developing countries*

The objective of the workshop was to provide a framework for formulating successful cluster strategies for SMEs, demonstrating how successful strategies can further enhance the development of SMEs and highlighting key policies and regulatory challenges affecting the strategies for delivering SME cluster initiatives.

- *Workshop 14: 5 - 9 December 2005 Globalisation for the new economies and challenges for Commonwealth developing countries*

The objective of the workshop was to capacitate participants to guide the policy making process and craft winning strategies for SME development in a global economy.

Assessment

Broadly speaking, the topics as well as the detailed programmes appear to have been well chosen and well designed – and, as Chapter 5 shows, the relevance of the topics and the course content have both been strongly endorsed by participants in the workshops.

The workshops covered a range of topics pertinent to SME competitiveness; and the workshop curricula have included both theoretical and practical or experiential components (with an appropriate emphasis on the latter aspects).

There has been a noticeable extension in the range and specificity of topics dealt with in second half of the period under review (e.g. cluster development, service strategies, and tourism) reflecting current focal points, approaches and techniques in SME development.

However, apart from ‘competitiveness’ – and the exposure of participants to the Singaporean experience – the conceptualization of the programme does not seem to have been underpinned by a strong and coherent approach to development.

How well does the programme content fit with the three key points of intervention we identified in current thinking on SME development, at the beginning of this chapter?

These points of intervention are:

- the development of strong and locally appropriate institutions
- making markets work for the SME sector, and
- the private sector provision of services and support to SMEs.

The two workshops on service strategies (2004, 2005) are clearly in line with the third point of intervention; and issues around markets and competitiveness run through the training programme as a whole. But from our reading of the topics covered by the workshops, it would appear that the institutional approach to development¹⁸ - and more particularly the enabling environment perspective - has not featured in the programme to any great extent.

We would suggest that serious thought should be given to adopting an 'enabling environment' approach as a guiding thread in taking the training programme forward.

Without prescribing or limiting the choice of topics for workshops, such an approach could provide intellectual coherence as well as introducing additional practical dimensions into the programme as a whole.

It would certainly provide a useful lens through which to view the specific topic treated in any given workshop, and its relation to the local institutional and regulatory environment in the participants' home countries. At the very least, it would illustrate the importance of basing policies and practical interventions on sound information, as far as possible.

¹⁸ The workshops on corporatisation in 2002 and 2003 had a narrower focus.

CHAPTER 5

THE WORKSHOPS' IMPACTS ON PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS

Overview

The review process was required to assess “the extent to which the programme has contributed to human and institutional capacity development by examining how the workshops have impacted on participants and strategic planning and actions of the institutions they work for”.

In addressing this question, we must note several methodological problems and limitations.

In the time available, and with limited funds, it was not possible to undertake a detailed survey of impacts in the participating countries.

We have had to rely on a self-administered questionnaire to assess the workshops' impacts on the individual participants and their institutions. There was no way to verify the objective truth of their responses - we had to take their word for it. Even with the best will in the world, the lapse of time may have clouded some memories. Nor can we know whether all of the most pertinent information has been reported.

As to the impacts on institutional planning and practice, the attribution of direct causal links can be problematical where a number of influences may be at work, and it would be impossible to estimate the relative weight of any one factor without a thorough investigation of a kind well beyond the scope of this review.

It is also important to stress that we are reliant on only a portion of the total number of people who participated in the 15 workshops over the years. By definition they are not a representative sample because they have differentiated themselves by responding to the questionnaire – and we cannot reliably extrapolate their responses to the population as a whole.

That said, it is clear that the workshops have had a very positive impact. To a quite remarkable degree they have matched the expectations of the sending institutions and individual respondents, and enhanced their ability to carry out their professional responsibilities.

Participants' perceptions of the workshops' relevance

We thought that it would be interesting to compare evaluations provided in response to the review questionnaire with the evaluations for ITIS made by participants at the end of each workshop¹⁹. Among other things, the ITIS questionnaire asks participants to rate the 'relevance' of programme objectives, as well as the 'overall usefulness' of the workshop – that is, of course, before they return home to the realities of their working environment.

¹⁹ As a standard practice, ITIS asks workshop participants to complete and return a comprehensive programme evaluation form on the last day of each course.

The ITIS evaluations

We reviewed a sample of the ITIS programme evaluation reports for six workshops, one in each year from 2000 to 2005:

2000	Workshop 1	22-27 May	18 participants	18 respondents
2001	Workshop 2	21-25 May	38 participants	33 respondents
2002	Workshop 6:	12-16 August	20 participants	19 respondents
2003	Workshop 7	24-28 Feb.	13 participants	13 respondents
2004	Workshop 11	6-20 Nov.	28 participants	28 respondents
2005	Workshop 12	14-18 March	23 participants	23 respondents

Total number of respondents to the ITIS evaluations: 134

ITIS ratings	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	%
Relevance of programme objectives							
Fully	11	13	16	10	19	15	63%
Mostly	6	17	3	3	5	7	30%
Partly	1	3			4	1	
Marginally							

ITIS ratings	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	%
Rating programme against expectations							
Far better	2	4	9	5	2	4	19%
Better	8	16	8	7	20	15	55%
Same	8	13	2	1	5	4	
Worse					1		

ITIS ratings	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	%
Overall usefulness							
Great	9	14	18	7	16	14	58%
Very much	7	17	1	6	9	7	35%
Fairly	2	2			1	2	
Very little					1		
None							
No response					1		

ITIS ratings	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	%
Level of programme							
Too high	1	2	1	2	3	1	
Right	17	31	18	11	24	22	92%
Too low							
Abstain					1		

As can be seen, the ITIS ratings are very positive. The programmes were judged on the whole to be highly relevant (93% - fully/mostly), and the workshops' usefulness gained similar level of approval (also 93% - great/very much).

Review questionnaire evaluations

Three hundred and eighteen people have participated in the workshops over the years. Eighty four (26%) responded to the questionnaire.

It was extremely interesting to find that, retrospectively and in the light of subsequent experience, respondents to the review questionnaire continued to make highly positive value judgements, with 97% saying that the workshop experience had been relevant and useful both for themselves and for their organisations.

The workshop was relevant and useful for the participant	Respondents	%
Strongly agree	55	65%
Agree	27	32%
Disagree	1	1%
No response	1	

The workshop was relevant and useful for the organisation	Respondents	%
Strongly agree	54	64%
Agree	28	33%
Disagree	1	1%
No response	1	

This certainly suggests that the expectations of the sending organisations are being very well met by the benefits derived from their representatives' participation in the workshops. In an open-ended question, the review questionnaire asked the respondents to specify the anticipated benefits which had persuaded their organisations to approve their participation in the programme. By far and away the most common responses were the apparent relevance of the workshop to their professional responsibilities, and the opportunity to increase their knowledge.

Anticipated benefits for the sending organisation (most common responses)	Responses (more than one per respondent)
Relevance to professional responsibilities	49
Increased knowledge	29
International exposure	10
Exposure to Singapore model	3

A very large majority of respondents believe that the workshops have helped to influence changes in policy and practice in their countries.

The workshop brought about positive change	Respondents	%
Yes	66	79%
No	16	19%
Too soon to tell	2	2%

These perceptions are examined in greater detail in the following section.

Building on experience gained at the workshops

A second set of questions in the review questionnaire probed the ways in which participants had applied or built on the experience gained at the workshops.

Respondents were asked whether they had drawn on their experience of the workshop to organise any subsequent workshops of their own, or had applied their experience in other ways, or had subsequently made use of material from the workshop.

The reported applications are impressive, and though drawn from a limited sample provide powerful evidence of the programme's impacts.

Respondents who said they had organised workshops or used their experience in other ways, cited examples that included:

- organising workshops on topics such as the elaboration of a national investment charter, professionalism and quality assurance to boost competitiveness, and the export of services
- organising seminars on topics relating to industrial development, the impacts of globalisation on the economy, and methods to expand and enhance export trade with particular reference to SMEs
- drawing on the experience gained to influence subsequent workshops and discussions
- making inputs into ministerial conferences
- in-house training for relevant staff using workshop materials
- using best practice initiatives to improve the understanding of effective policy making
- reviewing policies and practices
- working with SMEs to encourage the development of strategic plans
- encouraging competition between district units and local authorities in promoting investment in their areas
- organising a project based on the Singapore GEMS project
- drawing on the experience gained to launch a project on industry standards; and
- organising SME fairs in 2002 and 2005.

The NATAS tourism fair provided one respondent with a useful example to improve the planning, organisation and promotion of a tourism fair in her own country, jointly organised by the private sector and the Ministry of Tourism. Another respondent reported that she had brought one of the workshop presenters from Singapore to her own country to present on some of the issues covered, as a means of sharing this

experience and expertise locally, and that further exchanges of this sort were contemplated.

More broadly, respondents had used materials from the workshops

- in policy development. Three people specifically reported that the workshop materials had been useful in developing policies (a) on trade, investment and finance, (b) in shaping a country's economic reform programme, and (c) in preparing for the privatisation of a parastatal. A fourth participant, from a Ministry of Finance, noted that the materials had assisted his ministry in preparing the budget for the Ministry of Trade, resulting in a greater allocation than that department would otherwise have received
- in contributing to a national development strategy
- to inform departmental strategy and planning sessions
- as a source of ideas, in reviewing the effectiveness of policies and activities and developing new economic policies and practices
- in restructuring exercises, directed toward building organisational capacities and service standards
- as a basis for further research and the development of research materials.
- for benchmarking purposes, in undertaking analyses
- in negotiating around trade issues
- to support export development
- as guidelines in dealing with issues with a potential impact on competitiveness
- in sharing knowledge and reading materials with colleagues
- in preparing other presentations (drawing on the structure of the workshop, its materials and techniques)
- in training sessions
- in designing marketing training programmes
- to influence the training for women entrepreneurs in the international market
- in a training programme on capitalisation and technology
- to influence the choice of topics covered by an SME conference; and
- to feed into local university courses e.g. on the business environment, and
- in cluster development. A number of respondents reported that they had drawn on workshop materials in the design and implementation of cluster initiatives in their own regions, or were assisting entrepreneurs to include cluster strategies in business development.

The workshops appear to have had a number of direct and very positive spin-offs, with a multiplier effect on institutional learning, and some significant impacts on policy and practice. As a group, the respondents are perhaps unusually active and responsive professionals; but if their peers who did not respond to the questionnaires were only half as active, the overall impact must be considerable.

CHAPTER 6

DETAILED REVIEW OF THE WORKSHOPS

Content and methodology; usefulness and relevance

In this chapter the workshops are grouped together according to five broad themes

- Enterprise competitiveness and public policies – 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006
- Corporatisation for government agencies and services – 2001, 2003
- Trade, investment and finance policy – 2002, 2003
- Service strategies for international competitiveness – 2004, 2005
- Cluster development, trade and globalisation – 2005.

Responses to the review questionnaire on the content and methodology of the workshops, and their perceived usefulness and relevance, are presented thematically and in some detail.

An analysis of responses to the full range of questions contained in the questionnaires is given in Appendix B.

1. Workshops on enterprise competitiveness and public policies – 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006

The following workshops²⁰ were grouped together for the purposes of this review:

- Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Asia and the Pacific 22 - 27 May 2000
- Enterprise Competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries 22 - 25 May 2001
- Enterprise Competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries 22 - 27 March 2002
- Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries 12 - 16 August 2002
- Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries 27 - 31 October 2003
- Enterprise competitiveness in small states 16 - 20 November 2004
- Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector in Commonwealth Countries 22 - 28 March 2006

In total, 159 people participated in these workshops. Of these, 34 (21%) responded to the questionnaire.

Workshop Programmes

²⁰ Workshops 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 15

The stated objectives and programmes for these workshops are outlined below, to provide context and background to the evaluative comments in the following sections.

➤ **Workshop 1: 20 - 27 May 2000**

Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Asia and the Pacific

The purpose of the workshop was to provide senior macroeconomic, trade and industry policy makers with tools and methods to manage industrial adjustment during globalisation. The workshop was taught from an economic/ business studies viewpoint and was strongly orientated towards senior policy-makers dealing with trade and industrial policy, structural adjustments programmes and private sector development.

The workshop dealt with the following strategic issues in the context of Asia-Pacific Commonwealth countries:

- A framework for analysing national and enterprise competitive strategies
- Country experiences of managing competitiveness within the Commonwealth (focussing on Singapore as well as Mauritius, New Zealand and the UK).
- Lessons for other industrial latecomers including small states within the Commonwealth.

Under these strategic issues, the following topics were highlighted:

- Recent developments in the world economy and implications for Asia and the Pacific
- The IT revolution and E-business
- The post-Seattle policy priorities
- Elements of national competitiveness strategies (e.g. trade policy, macroeconomic policy, foreign investment promotion, SME development, education and training policy and infrastructure policy)
- Suggestions for effective implementation and necessary conditions for success.

A major focus of the programme was on best practice policies and institutions in the context of Singapore's development experience.

➤ **Workshop 2: 21 - 25 May 2001**

Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries

The workshop was targeted at senior-level participants from ministries of international trade, industry, finance and planning, trade and investment promotion agencies and small firm promotion institutions. Its purpose was to strengthen the skills of government officials in developing national competitive strategies. The aim was to provide an overview of best practices for enterprise restructuring strategies and policies to enhance competitiveness during rapid globalisation; and to provide delegates with an understanding of how to benchmark domestic competitiveness performance and design national competitiveness strategies

The workshop curriculum included:

- A video presentation on the Singapore Cooperation Programme
- National competitiveness strategies – a framework and record

- Multilateralism and national competitiveness: the WTO factor
- Global investment patterns
- Technopreneurship and TechnoGlobalism
- A TOWS analysis of a given country's climate and promotion strategies
- An overview of Singapore's economic and industrial development since the 1960s
- Productivity and international competitiveness
- Preparing SMEs for global competitiveness
- Role of trade promotion organisations : TDB
- Formulating a plan for restructuring a Ministry of Trade and Industry or a Trade Promotion Organisation
- Human Resource development and education
- Governance: the role of the state on promoting competitiveness (Singapore Competitiveness Report), national performance indicators and measures
- Relevance of East Asian competitiveness model for other developing countries
- Case studies: Britain and Mauritius
- Designing a competitiveness strategy for a given developing country

Site tours were organised to Jurong Town Corporation, the Urban Redevelopment Authority Gallery, the Singapore Network Services Pte Ltd., Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Airport Terminal Services.

➤ **Workshop 4: 22 - 27 March 2002**
Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries

The detailed programme was not available.

➤ **Workshop 6: 12 - 16 August 2002**
Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries

The workshop was targeted at senior-level participants from ministries of international trade, industry, finance and planning, trade and investment promotion agencies and small firm promotion institutions. Its purpose was to strengthen the skills of government officials to be able to develop national competitive strategies. The goal was to develop capacity in Commonwealth developing countries to realise the benefits of globalisation.

The workshop curriculum included:

- Globalisation and competitiveness strategies – key issues
- WTO Agenda and implications for developing countries
- Enterprise restructuring for competitiveness – a corporate strategic planning framework
- A TOWS analysis of a given country's investment climates and promotional strategies
- An overview of Singapore's economic and industrial development
- Trends in worldwide flow of FDI and implications for developing countries/ foreign investment promotion in Singapore

- Overview of Singapore's technology policy and innovation system
- Human Resource development in Singapore
- Development of Singapore's national competitiveness strategy – discussion on significant strategies
- ICT revolution and implications
- Relevance of Singapore's experience for other developing countries
- Experiences of New Zealand and Mauritius in economic and trade development
- Designing a competitiveness strategy for a given developing economy

➤ **Workshop 9: 27 - 31 October 2003**

Enterprise competitiveness and public policies in Commonwealth countries

The detailed programme was not available.

➤ **Workshop 11: 16 - 20 November 2004**

Enterprise competitiveness in small states

The objective of the workshop was to explain the concept and practise of SME competitiveness and assist participants in designing and implementing competitive strategies for their countries. It aimed to enable participants to develop a focused methodology for designing strategies for SME competitiveness by using country case studies, workshop materials, group work and insights gained from the Singapore experience.

The workshop curriculum outlined and developed three key strategies known to improve productivity and innovation for SMEs: business linkages, clusters and networks, and innovation; and included presentations on:

- Methodologies to enhance SME competitiveness for developing countries
Singapore's experience which outlined the practises and challenges of SME development faced by Singapore in this sector since independence
- Singapore's experience in dealing with the development of national competitiveness and strategies
- Country SME reports prepared by fellow participants
- Enterprise upgrading and innovation.

➤ **Workshop 15: 22 - 28 March 2006**

Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector in Commonwealth countries

The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of government officials to develop national competitiveness strategies. The specific goal was to develop the capacity of participants to guide policy making process and craft winning strategies for SME development in the tourism sector.

The workshop curriculum included presentations on:

- The challenges and lessons for developing competitive SMEs in the tourism sector
- An overview of the tourism development in Singapore
- Singapore's Tourism Development Strategy – lessons from the Singapore experience and review of Singapore's Tourism 2015 plan
- Marketing and promotional strategies in the travel and hospitality industry; with special emphasis on how to use marketing strategies to improve competition, especially when competing with the bigger players
- Using customer service to enhance competitiveness (sharing the experiences from the Singapore tourism industry)
- The planning and execution of NATAS – case study
- Country reports on SME development in the tourism sector
- SME policies to improve competitiveness in the tourism sector, and key drivers in SME competitiveness
- SME 21 and other targeted SME initiatives for improving Singaporean SMEs
- Human resources in the travel industry – training in the Singapore travel industry
- Presentation by participants on strategies for supporting national enterprise growth and development in the new economy

Site tours were organised to Jurong Bird Park, the NATAS Fair Opening and a visit to the Travel Fair.

Evaluating the workshops: Content and methodology

We begin this section with a brief analysis of the evaluations made by participants for ITIS at the end of each workshop²¹. These evaluations are not directly comparable to the retrospective evaluations of course content and methodology provided in response to the review questionnaire, as the questions asked by ITIS have a different and more immediate focus. However, they do confirm that participants' judgements are very favourable overall, and appear to be sustained over time.

Evaluations immediately after the workshops

We reviewed a sample of the ITIS programme evaluation reports for six workshops, one in each year from 2000 to 2005, with 134 respondents in total:

2000	Workshop 1	22-27 May	18 participants	18 respondents
2001	Workshop 2	21-25 May	38 participants	33 respondents
2002	Workshop 6:	12-16 August	20 participants	19 respondents
2003	Workshop 7	24-28 Feb.	13 participants	13 respondents
2004	Workshop 11	6-20 Nov.	28 participants	28 respondents

²¹ As a standard practice, ITIS asks workshop participants to complete and return a comprehensive programme evaluation form on the last day of each course.

2005 Workshop 12 14-18 March 23 participants 23 respondents

Trainers' performance

This was rated on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – below average, 5 – excellent) across a range of questions (preparation, knowledge of subject, response to participant's enquiries, communication skills, instruction methodology, class interaction, training materials, use of PowerPoint etc.)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	6 trainers	4 trainers	5 trainers	8 trainers	6 trainers	6 trainers
Highest	4.7	4.9	5	5	4.77	4.8
Lowest	3.3	4.6	4.2	4.7	3.95	4.1

Speakers

External speakers were similarly rated on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – below average, 5 – excellent).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	3 speakers	5 speakers	4 speakers	7 speakers	2 speakers	2 speakers
Highest	4.2	4.9	5	5	4.69	4.8
Lowest	3.3	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.43	4

Training methodology

Participants were asked which method of teaching they found most effective in the acquisition of knowledge and skills: case studies, lectures and discussions, or site visits. It is striking how evenly spread the responses are.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Case studies	12	15	6	3	10	12
Lecture discussions	12	18	12	6	18	12
Site visits	14	13	6	6	10	5

Programme design

Participants were asked: "Which topics did you find most useful?" Again these were to be rated from 1 to 5 (least useful to most useful). It was striking that in their responses almost no participants rated any one topic in the full list below 2, with responses mostly clustering to 4 and 5, and with a very good spread across the topics.

Suggestions and comments

The ITIS evaluation form concludes with a section for *Suggestions and comments*, which allows an open-ended response in making "*further suggestions and comments for*

improving/regarding the programme (e.g. course content, field visits, handouts, training facilities, duration, etc.)”.

As might be expected, the responses are very varied, often reflecting personal interests. However, the two comments that come through most strongly are (a) that the workshop programme is too intensive, and if possible the number of days should be increased; and (b) that in addition to the workshops in Singapore, regional workshops would be very useful (e.g. for the Pacific or Africa). This is reinforced by a sense that participants' backgrounds and concerns are too varied (developed and less developed countries/large and small states/widely different regional concerns).

Evaluation by respondents to the review questionnaire

The questionnaire sent to participants asked whether the **course content** could have been improved.

This is an invitation to negative criticism, and it is not surprising that two thirds of the respondents thought that there was room for improvement. However, no strong patterns emerged from the responses, which were sometimes contradictory, and tended to reflect individual interests, preferences or gripes.

Twenty-one of the thirty four respondents said that course content could be improved, while twelve felt that it did not need changing (one respondent left the question blank).

Three respondents noted that they would have preferred a greater use of case studies on business success and analysis of the factors that underpin it. Other suggested improvements included:

- Take into consideration the current world economic situation
- Increase the emphasis on trade liberalisation and the Singapore experience, linking it with the WTO negotiation process and its impact on trade and competitiveness
- Limit papers to two pages focused on important programmes or best practice
- Include more theory around policy formulation and the basics of SME and enterprise development
- Include speakers from the private sector to provide real experience on the ground
- Increase the focus on how to develop actual strategies and test their workability

Two respondents felt that the focus was too strongly on Singapore, and suggested that discussion with reference to other countries, sharing similar levels of development with one another, would have made the content more complete. Countering this, another respondent suggested that, unless a country has a uniquely interesting programme, country presentations were wasted time, and he would have preferred to hear more from Singaporean specialists rather than what is happening in other countries in a similar position to his own.

Three respondents suggested that some presentations were lengthy and boring. Two respondents attending the tourism workshop suggested that it would have been useful to have site visits to local SMEs.

Asked whether the **training methods** could have been improved, nineteen participants stated that no improvements were necessary, ten that training methods could be improved and five respondents did not answer. No suggestions for improvements were provided.

Evaluating the workshops: Usefulness and relevance

Respondents were asked to react to the statements “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*” and “*The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.*”.

The responses, analysed below, were overwhelmingly positive.

As a further check, respondents were also asked to comment on whether participants in general found the workshop interesting and relevant, based on group interaction

Fifteen respondents strongly agreed with the statement that participants found the workshop *interesting*, and another seventeen agreed with the statement. One person disagreed and one person left the response blank. All thirty four agreed with the statement that participants found the workshop *relevant and/or useful* - twenty respondents strongly agreed, and fourteen agreed.

Reasons cited included the opportunity to share diverse experience and learning from around the world (9), the topical and interesting subjects covered in respect of productivity and competitiveness (3), the relevance of field trips (3), relevance of material covered to participants’ roles (2), the opportunity for debate and discussion (1), the opportunity to engage with people from different fields (public and private sectors) (1), and the quality of workshop organisation (1).

Personal relevance

Eighteen respondents indicated that they ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*”. Thirteen ‘agreed’, one person ‘disagreed’ and one person ‘strongly disagreed’. One person left this blank.

The workshop was relevant and useful	Respondents
Strongly agree	18
Agree	13
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	1
No response	1

To provide some content, respondents were then asked whether the workshops had influenced or changed their thinking and their professional practice.

Influencing individual thinking	Respondents
Yes	30

No	4
----	---

Thirty respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their thinking, while four did not.

Influencing individual practice	Respondents
Yes	30
No	4

Once again, thirty respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their professional practices, while four reported that their ways of working had not been influenced.

However, only one respondent answered negatively to both questions.

Amplifying these responses, six participants felt that their understanding of the formulation of public policy and their analytical skills had improved, enabling better inputs into policy papers and discussions. Two of these reported that they had incorporated some elements of the Singapore model into their work in relation to developing programmes and strategies on trade, planning and development policies and enhancing competitiveness and productivity in public services.

One person noted a new appreciation of the importance of keeping abreast of developments in a dynamic global economy and being aware of making decisions within a relevant and well-understood context. Another had gained a better understanding of the need for government to play an active role in growing the private sector in developing countries, providing direction as well as an enabling environment.

Five people reported that they felt more positive about the impact they could make in respect of small businesses, and better able to provide them with tools to further develop their products and sustain their operations. One respondent noted that his relationship to the business community had improved as a result of better understanding gained through the workshop.

One person felt that the workshop had been useful in providing insight into the challenges facing small island states. Another noted a new understanding of how much can really be achieved by developing the travel and tourism market.

Some responses were very simple and practical. One respondent noted that he is more aware of the need to always try to be efficient in every action and to undertake proper planning to this end. Another noted that, in order to get a point across, he now ensures that it is simple and succinct. One person noted that the importance of an empowered team had become very clear, and another expressed an appreciation of the need to look at options before taking action.

Usefulness to the sending organisations

Respondents were asked to respond to the statement: *“The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.”* Twenty people strongly agreed with this statement, twelve agreed and one disagreed. One person left this blank.

Workshop content relevant to organisation	Respondents
Strongly agreed	20
Agreed	12
Disagreed	1
No response	1

They were then asked whether their participation in the workshop had *helped to influence or bring about changes and improvements in their organisations’ policies or practices.* Twenty five people felt that it had brought about positive changes, seven felt that it had not, and one suggested that it was too soon to judge. One person did not respond.

Workshop brought about positive change	Respondents
Yes	25
No	7
Too soon to judge	1
No response	1

Among those who felt that their organisations’ policies and practices had improved as a result of their attendance at the workshop:

- Six respondents noted that, as a result of ideas and knowledge gathered at the workshop, their Ministries had embarked on policy reforms toward encouraging conditions for economic growth, including the updating of industrial policies
- Two respondents noted that the department was engaging in more effective interaction with policy makers in the formulation of strategies to enhance competitiveness, and small business competitiveness specifically
- One person noted that the workshop had promoted the practice of inter-organisational cooperation and had helped to strengthen these efforts, resulting in improved performance
- One respondent noted that the consultative/committee mechanism is now being more widely used by his Ministry and government
- One respondent noted that innovative methods used by the Singapore Tourism Ministry to disseminate information about local events were now being effectively used by his own Ministry of Tourism.
- One person had applied the lessons learnt in trade policy formulation to propose the development of a think tank to examine the implications of trade liberalisation on the local economy, and this was now taking off.
- One respondent noted that the knowledge of best practices gained at the workshop had informed the updating of departmental work manuals
- Three respondents reported that they have been able to make their organisations more open to the concerns of small businesses, and to develop more effective development policies for SMEs.

Limits on personal and organisational impacts

Respondents were asked to identify reasons for any lack of positive results or significant outcomes both at an individual level, and in their organisations.

Only two respondents felt that the workshop had been of limited use for them personally. One said that while the workshop had provided a learning experience and a good platform for networking, the disparity in the history and level of development of participating countries limited the effectiveness of the training. The other felt that she was not in a position to practice or implement most of the things learnt.

Five of the thirty four respondents gave reasons for a lack of impact on their organisations' policies and practices. One cited the divergence between theory and practice, and the environmental differences among countries. Three people said that the learning from the workshop was not specifically relevant in influencing change because the department was only marginally concerned with small business or competitiveness issues, or because the participant was not involved in policy planning and decision making. Another said that his department has a 'monolithic structure' and is very slow to change.

Brownie points

Respondents were asked to identify **the two best things** about the workshop. Most respondents (15) identified the site visits and exposure to practical local examples of good practice as the highlight. A similar number (14) referred to the opportunity to share experience and knowledge with different countries.

Six people cited the excellent level of organisation and the good atmosphere of the workshops as their best feature. Five highlighted the opportunity to develop an understanding of the role of played by the Singapore government in promoting competitiveness and business growth. Other responses included the quality of the speakers, the liveliness and interaction in sessions, the topics covered, the venue, group work, and the fact that so much was covered in a short time.

Length of workshops

Respondents were also asked whether the **length of the workshop** could have been improved. Nineteen felt that the length should not be changed, while fifteen suggested that it could be improved. The major concern, expressed by six respondents, was that too much was packed into too short a time, making it hard to assimilate all the information. Two respondents suggested extending the course to two weeks, while another noted the need for time to acclimatise and get over jetlag.

2. Workshops on corporatisation for government agencies and services – 2001, 2003

The following two workshops²² are included in this analysis:

- Corporatisation of government agencies and services with special reference to Singapore 29 May - 1 June 2001
- Corporatisation of government agencies and services with special reference to Singapore 24 - 28 February 2003

In total, 34 people participated in these workshops. Of these, only 7 (20%) responded to the questionnaire.

Workshop programmes

The stated objectives and programmes for the workshops are outlined below, to provide context and background to the evaluative comments in the following sections.

- **Workshop 3: 29 May - 1 June 2001**
Corporatisation of government agencies and services with special reference to Singapore

The objective of the workshop was to provide practical advice on globalisation and competitiveness strategies to governments of Commonwealth countries, and to demonstrate good practices in corporatisation in the approaches of the GoS and its agencies. The theme of the workshop was to provide a road map for the delegates to assist them in the process of corporatising government agencies into private companies. The programme also aimed to illustrate how corporatisation provides the flexibility to engage in greater regional and global alliances in commercial terms.

The workshop curriculum included presentations on:

- Globalisation, competitiveness and corporatisation
- The changing organisation: Process re-engineering
- New organisation structure: making the right choice
- Operational issues: financial, legal, human resources, management, information technology, management information systems
- Creating new corporate identity
- Company experience: sharing of the experience of a Singapore agency which has been corporatised
- Role of the regulatory body for a corporatised entity
- Performance indicators and measures
- The road to Initial Public Offer

- **Workshop 7: 24 - 28 February 2003**
Corporatisation of government agencies and services with special reference to Singapore

The objective of the workshop was to provide practical advice on globalisation and competitiveness strategies to governments of Commonwealth countries, and to demonstrate good practices in corporatisation in the approaches of the GoS and its agencies. The theme of the workshop was to provide a road map for the delegates to

²² Workshops 3 and 7.

assist them in the process of corporatising government agencies into private companies. The programme also aimed to illustrate how corporatisation provides the flexibility to engage in greater regional and global alliances in commercial terms.

The workshop curriculum included presentations on:

- Experience of corporatisation in Commonwealth countries – sharing by participants
- Singapore’s experience in corporatising government agencies
- Corporate governance
- Goals and new directions – strategy for growth
- Case study on the experience of the corporatisation of a Singapore government agency
- Creating a new corporate identity
- New marketing strategy and positioning
- Checks and controls for a new corporatised entity
- Role of the regulatory body for a corporatised entity
- Performance indicators and measurement
- Experience in computerisation and IT development; e-government – bridging government services to the people
- Experience in computerisation and IT development; e-government – data sharing and trade facilitation
- The road to the IPO
- Exploring areas of corporatisation in participants’ current organisations
- Presentation by participants on the possible areas of corporatisation in their respective countries.

To achieve a better understanding of how a corporatised company functions, relevant site tours were organised for delegates.

Evaluating the workshops: Content and methodology

The questionnaire sent to participants asked whether the **course content** could have been improved. Two responded that it could be improved, while five felt that it did not need changing.

On the **training methods**, five participants stated that no improvements were necessary, while two said that training methods could be improved.

Evaluating the workshops: Usefulness and relevance

Respondents were asked to react to the statements *“The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally”* and *“The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.”*

The responses were very positive.

As a further check, respondents were also asked to comment on whether participants in general found the workshop interesting and relevant, based on group interaction

Four respondents 'strongly agreed' with the statement that participants found the workshop *interesting*, and the other three 'agreed'. All agreed with the statement that participants found the workshop *relevant and/or useful* - four 'strongly agreed', and three 'agreed'.

It was reported that all participants had rated the workshop highly, and that it had been interesting to share experiences on public service reforms, to appreciate the success factors operating in Singapore, and to consider the relevance of those lessons to home countries.

Personal relevance

Five respondents indicated that they 'strongly agreed' with the statement that "*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*", while the other two 'agreed'.

The workshop was relevant and useful	Respondents
Strongly agree	5
Agree	2

To provide some content, respondents were then asked whether the workshops had influenced or changed their thinking and their professional practice.

Influencing individual thinking	Respondents
Yes	7
No	0

All seven respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their thinking, and had influenced or changed their professional practice.

Influencing individual practice	Respondents
Yes	7
No	0

One person described a new appreciation of the fact that, while competitiveness does depend on macro-economic factors, microeconomic factors at firm level are important and can go a long way in enabling a firm to be competitive. He noted that while firms can't change the macroeconomic environment, their ability to be creative, adaptable and flexible, and the extent to which they focus on the development of their staff, can make a significant impact. Another person noted that in submitting comments on government's privatisation plans, he is better informed of the relevant issues to be taken into consideration. Yet another reported that, since the workshop, her own country has gone through major economic transformation, drawing on the Singapore model, particularly in respect of communications and accommodation services.

Usefulness to the sending organisations

Respondents were asked to respond to the statement: “*The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.*” Six people ‘strongly agreed’ with this statement, and the remaining one ‘agreed’.

Workshop content relevant to organisation	Respondents
Strongly agreed	6
Agreed	1

Asked whether their participation in the workshop had *helped to influence or bring about changes and improvements in their organisations’ policies or practices*, all seven felt that it had brought about positive change. Examples included:

- Changing the perspective from a focus on macro-economic factors to micro-economic factors, resulting in a decision to focus on technical assistance to firms to enhance their competitiveness
- Assisting a participant in her role as founding Director General of a new organisation, and in setting up the administration in a professional manner
- A decision to adopt service charters
- Development of a special section on Investor Service Customer Focus
- Feeding the experience into policy discussions and proposals
- Modifying work practices with improved results
- Development of training programmes for staff.

Workshop brought about positive change	Respondents
Yes	7
No	0

Limits on personal and organisational impacts

Respondents were asked to identify reasons for any lack of positive results or significant outcomes both at an individual level, and in their organisations. No respondent answered this question.

Brownie points

Asked to identify the two best things about the workshop, three respondents highlighted the site visits, while four cited useful content and good presentation of materials. Three people referred to the opportunity to interact with people from other countries and share experiences. Three people referred to the excellent organisation and friendliness of the

Length of workshop

Respondents were asked whether the **length of the workshop** could have been improved. Four felt that the length should not be changed, while three suggested that it should be lengthened.

3. Workshops on trade, investment and finance policy – 2002, 2003

Two workshops²³ were grouped together for the purposes of this review:

- Innovations in Trade, Investment and Finance Policy to cope with the economic downturn, 5-9 August 2002
- Innovations in Trade, Investment and Finance Policy to cope with the economic downturn, 11-14 August 2003

In total, 26 people participated in these workshops. Seven (27%) responded to the questionnaire.

Workshop programmes

The workshops programmes were not available for this review.

Evaluating the workshops: Content and methodology

The questionnaire sent to participants asked whether the **course content** could have been improved.

Two responded that it could be improved, while five felt that it did not need changing. One person suggested that it would be useful to include best practice in performance management and contracting systems.

On **training methods**, four participants said that no improvements were necessary, and three that they could be improved, although no suggestions were provided.

Evaluating the workshops: Usefulness and relevance

Respondents were asked to react to the statements “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*” and “*The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.*”.

The responses were very positive.

As a further check, respondents were also asked whether participants in general found the workshop interesting and relevant, based on group interaction

Five respondents ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that participants found the workshop *interesting*, and the other two ‘agreed’. All agreed with the statement that participants found the workshop *relevant and/or useful* - five respondents ‘strongly agreed’, and two ‘agreed’.

²³ Workshops 5 and 8.

Respondents felt that the usefulness of the workshops was evident in the good mix of lectures and site visits, which allowed learning through well researched lectures and practical interaction with the managers. It was suggested that the course content appeared to match well with what participants were now doing in their home countries.

Personal relevance

All seven respondents 'strongly agreed' with the statement that *"The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally"*.

To provide some content, respondents were then asked whether the workshops had influenced or changed their thinking and their professional practice. All respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their thinking; and all seven said that the workshop had influenced or changed their professional practices – but with widely differing motivations. Four respondents said that the workshops had provided them with good exposure to issues around economic reform, trade policy, and new ways of working in public sector. One person noted that the chance to share experiences with other participants had helped to improve her ideas and to change attitudes. Another noted that the workshop had made him much more aware of the need to ensure that his area of work has a positive impact on his organisation and contributes toward its broader goals, and that the workshop emphasised the value of a positive attitude in getting things done. One person had seldom used her computer prior to the workshop, but is now making use of PowerPoint presentations with positive results!

Usefulness to the sending organisations

Respondents were asked to respond to the statement: *"The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department."* Five people 'strongly agreed' with this statement, and the remaining two 'agreed'.

Workshop content relevant to organisation	Respondents
Strongly agreed	5
Agreed	2

Asked whether their participation in the workshop had *helped to influence or bring about changes and improvements in their organisations' policies or practices*, six people felt that it had brought about positive change, one that it had not.

Workshop brought about positive change	Respondents
Yes	6
No	1

Most respondents said that they were using the knowledge gained from the workshops in their everyday work. Specific examples included use of the experience to influence a country's macro economic reform programme, reference to workshop materials in

developing a departmental strategic plan, and a new appreciation of the programmes in the Ministry of Trade.

Limits on personal and organisational impacts

Only two participants responded to the question asking them to identify reasons if they felt that there had been no positive results or outcomes personally or for their organisation. One said that he could not apply the experience directly in his work, and the other was unable to see how to fit what he had learnt into his organisation's policies.

Brownie points

Respondents were asked to identify the two best things about the workshop. Responses included the topics covered (4), demonstration that change for the better is possible, within a relatively short space of time (2), the opportunity to interact with others from around the world, and the mix of participants (2), group work involving individual country assessments and recommendations, the organisation and delivery of the workshop, and exposure to information on Singapore.

Length of workshops

Respondents were asked whether the **length of workshop** could have been improved. Three felt that the length was fine. One person did not respond. Three people suggested that the training period had been too short and suggested 10 days to two weeks as a more appropriate length, which would have allowed more time for discussion and detail.

4. Workshops on service strategies for international competitiveness – 2004, 2005

The following workshops²⁴ are included in this analysis:

- Developing service strategies for international competitiveness for Commonwealth developing countries 29 March - 2 April 2004
- Business development services strategies for enhancing SME competitiveness for Commonwealth countries 14 - 18 March 2005

In total, 45 people participated in these workshops. Of these, 19 (42%) responded to the questionnaire.

Workshop programmes

²⁴ Workshops 10 and 12.

The stated objectives and programmes for the workshops are outlined below, to provide context and background to the evaluative comments in the following sections.

➤ **Workshop 10: 29 March - 2 April 2004**
Developing service strategies for international competitiveness for Commonwealth developing countries

The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of government officials to develop national competitiveness strategies targeting the Services Sector.

The programme was developed following feedback from past participants and government representatives. The workshop curriculum included the following presentations:

- Overview of the Services Sector in the Commonwealth: issues and challenges
- Globalisation and competitiveness strategies in the Service Sector; overview and key issues
- Framework for formulating competitiveness strategies for the Services Sector
- WTO Service Policy and its impact in the Services Sector
- An overview of Singapore's economic and industrial development experience
- Development of Singapore's Services Sector since independence
- Mindset change and new services industries development
- Overview of Singapore's technology policies and national innovation system
- Singapore's experience in the development of information technology as a key economic and efficiency enablers
- From civil service computerisation programme to e-government action plan
- HRD and Education policies in Singapore and overview of Singapore as an educational hub.

Site tours were organised to Intraco Ltd., CrimsonLogic Pte Ltd., Monetary Authority of Singapore, Singapore Tourism Board, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and Singhealth.

➤ **Workshop 12: 14 - 18 March 2005**
Business development services strategies for enhancing SME competitiveness for Commonwealth countries

The objective of the workshop was to provide a framework for formulating successful Business Development Services strategies (BDS); demonstrate how successful strategies can further enhance the development of SMEs; and highlight key policies and regulatory challenges affecting strategies for delivering BDS.

The workshop curriculum included presentations on:

- BDS and its role in SME competitiveness
- Singapore's SME experience – SME21
- South Africa case study on Government's support on SME development
- Human resource development for enterprise – Manpower 21
- Enterprise upgrading and innovation
- Impact of technology
- Singaporean business and SMEs
- SMEs and business linkages
- Internationalisation of SMEs

- Current donor approaches to BDS projects.

Evaluating the workshops: Content and methodology

The questionnaire sent to participants asked whether the **course content** could have been improved.

Seven responded that it could be improved, while 10 felt that it did not need changing. Two people did not respond. No strong patterns emerged from the responses.

One person suggested that, while Singapore has many lessons to offer developing countries, not much effort was given to understanding the environment in which participants operate. Another said that it would have been useful to have presentations and discussions on the experience of competitiveness in advanced economies such as North America and Japan. One person would have liked more field visits and more exposure to experiences from neighbouring countries, with different approach to Singapore’s in developing SMEs.

On the **training methods**, the results were almost evenly split – nine participants stated that no improvements were necessary, eight that training methods could be improved, and two did not respond. No suggestions for improving training methods were provided.

Evaluating the workshops: Usefulness and relevance

Respondents were asked to react to the statements “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*” and “*The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.*”.

The responses were very positive.

As a further check, respondents were also asked to comment on whether participants in general found the workshop interesting and relevant, based on group interaction

Five respondents ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that participants found the workshop *interesting*, and the other fourteen ‘agreed’ All agreed with the statement that participants found the workshop *relevant and/or useful* - six respondents ‘strongly agreed’, and thirteen ‘agreed’.

Respondents noted good levels of interaction among participants in sharing views and ideas, and the value of sharing experiences from various countries.

Personal relevance

Nine respondents indicated that they ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*”, while ten ‘agreed’.

The workshop was relevant and useful	Respondents
Strongly agree	9

Agree	10
-------	----

To provide some content, respondents were then asked whether the workshops had influenced or changed their thinking and their professional practice.

Influencing individual thinking	Respondents
Yes	16
No	3

Sixteen respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their thinking, two reported that their thinking had not been influenced or changed, and one person was 'indifferent.'

Asked whether the workshop had influenced or changed their professional *practice*, sixteen respondents felt that the workshop had done so, while two reported that their ways of working had not been influenced or changed, and one person was once again 'indifferent.'

Influencing individual practice	Respondents
Yes	16
No	3

For those who felt that there had been an impact on their professional practice:

- Six participants noted that the workshop had provided them with new ideas and inspiration in driving the development of the services sectors in their own countries.
- Three participants noted an improved use of BDS and dissemination of information
- One person suggested that the establishment of a network amongst Pacific Island participants has helped to increase communication and cooperation among these countries
- One person noted that while Singapore is currently well in advance of his own country, the experience and insights gained from the workshop would come to apply as the country followed its own development path
- One person emphasised the importance of capacity building at institutional level in the early stages of development in order to enable capacity building at entrepreneur level as a second stage.

Usefulness to the sending organisations

Respondents were asked to respond to the statement: "*The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.*" Eight people 'strongly agreed' with this statement, and the remaining eleven 'agreed'.

Workshop content relevant to organisation	Respondents
Strongly agreed	8
Agreed	11

Asked whether their participation in the workshop had *helped to influence or bring about changes and improvements in their organisations' policies or practices*, fourteen people felt that it had brought about positive change, five felt that it had not..

Workshop brought about positive change	Respondents
Yes	14
No	5

Examples of positive change included:

- A new focus on services in relation to export development
- An improvement in planning coordination, incorporating views from different units within the ministry in the decision making process
- Consideration of competitiveness issues in development initiatives
- Increased use of private sector bodies to provide support services to SMEs, rather than over-reliance on government
- Use of the experience gained at the workshop to influence staff training programmes.

Limits on personal and organisational impacts

Respondents were asked to identify reasons for any lack of positive results or significant outcomes both at an individual level, and in their organisations.

At an individual level, only two people responded to this question, and both suggested that the duration of the course had been too short to have a significant impact in their ways of working.

At the organisational level, three respondents gave reasons for a lack of impact. These included the large difference in level of economic development between Singapore and home countries, particularly in respect of IT, making it difficult to influence change at the macro-level; limitations in the capacity of individual departments or organisations to influence broader changes; and the fact that issues emerging from the workshop are not necessarily given priority by governments.

Brownie points

Respondents were asked to identify the two best things about the workshop. Nine respondents cited the opportunity to meet participants from all over the world and establish networks with other developing countries. Eight people rated the site visits and practical experience very highly. Four people were impressed by the opportunity to gain an understanding of Singapore's experience and the history of its development. Three people mentioned the quality of training materials used in the programme, and two cited the excellent organisation of the workshop. Two people cited group work and presentations.

Length of workshops

Seven respondents felt that the **length of the workshop** should not be changed, while twelve said that the workshop should be lengthened to 10 days to two weeks.

5. Workshops on cluster development, trade and globalisation - 2005

Two workshops²⁵ were grouped together for the purposes of this review:

- SME cluster development strategies for enhancing competitiveness for Commonwealth developing countries 26- 30 September 2005
- Globalisation for the new economies and challenges for Commonwealth developing countries 5-9 December 2005

In total, 54 people participated in these workshops. Of these, 17 (32%) responded to the questionnaire.

Workshop programmes

The stated objectives and programmes for the workshops are outlined below, to provide context and background to the evaluative comments in the following sections.

- **Workshop 13: 26 - 30 September 2005**
SME cluster development strategies for enhancing competitiveness for Commonwealth developing countries

The objective of the workshop was to provide a framework for formulating successful cluster strategies for SMEs, demonstrating how successful strategies can further enhance the development of SMEs and highlighting key policies and regulatory challenges affecting the strategies for delivering SME cluster initiatives.

The workshop curriculum included presentations on:

- Methodologies of SME cluster development strategies for enhancing competitiveness
- The Singapore experience - approach and lessons in relation to cluster initiatives
- Presentation of 16 country case studies prepared by participants in addition to the Mauritian case study on their cluster initiatives, successes and drawbacks.

Site tours were organised to the Singapore Tourism Board, Technopreuer Park and International Enterprise Singapore where Singapore has actively pursued cluster strategies.

- **Workshop 14: 5 - 9 December 2005**
Globalisation for the new economies and challenges for Commonwealth developing countries

²⁵ Workshops 13 and 14.

The objective of the workshop was to empower participants with the capacity to guide the policy making process and craft winning strategies for SME development in a global economy.

The workshop curriculum included presentations on:

- The Commonwealth's role in promoting enterprise competitiveness in member states
- An overview of the global economy and its challenges
- Globalisation and SMEs: strategies for fostering growth in competitive local and international markets
- Overview of SME policy considerations to meet globalisation challenges and opportunities in Commonwealth member states
- How SMEs in various economies meet the challenges of survival and growth
- Open economies
- East Africa economies
- Country reports on globalisation and SME development
- Singapore's National Trade Policy
- Best practices in trade development and promotion through public-private partnerships, and effective trade promotion support mechanisms
- Building partnerships for enterprise development (private sector, donors, international organisations, regional economic communities and other bodies).

Site tours were organised to International Enterprise Singapore and the Singapore Industrial Automation Association.

Evaluating the workshops: Content and methodology

The questionnaire sent to participants asked whether the **course content** could have been improved. Nine responded that it could be improved, while five felt that it did not need changing. Three people did not respond. No strong patterns emerged from the responses.

On the SME cluster workshop, two participants would have liked an even greater focus on clustering techniques and case studies. One wanted more site visits. Another person noted that she found it difficult to apply knowledge researched on 'small business' with a capital of US\$ 5-25 million, to small businesses in her own country with a net worth of US\$ 2-10 thousand.

On the globalisation workshop, two participants would have preferred a greater emphasis on the development of national export strategies and more visits to export houses.

On **training methods**, six participants said that no improvements were necessary, seven that training methods could be improved. Three people did not respond. Two people suggested that 'live examples' of clustering from developing countries would be useful, given that Singapore's experience is far in advance of the other participating countries.

Evaluating the workshops: Usefulness and relevance

Respondents were asked to react to the statements “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*” and “*The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department.*”.

The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

As a further check, respondents were also asked to comment on whether participants in general found the workshop interesting and relevant, based on group interaction

Twelve respondents ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that participants found the workshop *interesting*, and the other five ‘agreed’ All agreed with the statement that participants found the workshop *relevant and/or useful* - eleven respondents ‘strongly agreed’, and five ‘agreed’.

Reasons highlighted in respect of the globalisation workshop included the opportunity to exchange information and experiences in solving trade problems. Participants in the SME workshop valued the opportunity to develop their understanding of cluster development, and the extent to which the government could play an active role in driving SME development. However, one person noted that relevance in practice would be influenced by the availability of resources to drive the agenda forward in participants’ home countries.

Personal relevance

Sixteen respondents indicated that they ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement that “*The workshop was relevant and useful to me personally*”, while the remaining respondent ‘agreed’.

The workshop was relevant and useful	Respondents
Strongly agree	16
Agree	1

To provide some content, respondents were then asked whether the workshops had influenced or changed their thinking and their professional practice.

Influencing individual thinking	Respondents
Yes	16
No	1

Sixteen respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their thinking, while one did not.

Influencing individual practice	Respondents
Yes	16
No response	1

Once again, sixteen respondents felt that the workshop had influenced or changed their professional practices.

Two participants attending the SME clusters workshop have subsequently been involved in the implementation of cluster strategies in their own countries. Six people felt that their understanding of the role of SMEs in economic development had improved, and that they were in a better position to develop appropriate SME programmes. One person came away with the realisation that in terms of size and technology the 'small business' sector on her island is a long way from what countries like Singapore call 'small business'.

One person noted that his experience at the globalisation workshop had translated into improved export drive at home, while three people cited an increased confidence in their ability to engage with the issues.

Usefulness to the sending organisations

Respondents were asked to respond to the statement: *"The workshop and its content were relevant to my organisation or department."* Fifteen people 'strongly agreed' with this statement, and the remaining two 'agreed'.

Workshop content relevant to organisation	Respondents
Strongly agreed	15
Agreed	2

Asked whether their participation in the workshop had *helped to influence or bring about changes and improvements in their organisations' policies or practices*, thirteen people felt that it had brought about positive change, three felt that it had not, and one said "not yet".

Workshop brought about positive change	Respondents
Yes	13
No	3
Too soon to judge	1

Eight participants felt that their organisations' service delivery to SMEs had improved, with examples including policy and programme development, the delivering of services to SMEs through clusters, transference of experience to entrepreneurs through training programmes, and more targeted recruitment of business incubator participants.

Three people noted that their experience had influenced their organisations' approach to export strategy.

Limits on personal and organisational impacts

Respondents were asked to identify reasons for any lack of positive results or significant outcomes both at an individual level, and in their organisations.

At an individual level, no participants responded to this question. At the organisational level, four respondents gave reasons for a lack of impact: two suggested that it was still too soon to see results, and that this would play out in the medium term, while the other two participants cited a disjuncture between the ability to introduce new ideas and reforms at unit or team level, and being able to translate this into departmental or organisational change.

Brownie points

Respondents were asked to identify the two best things about the workshop. Seven respondents highlighted the opportunity to share experiences and good practice with participants from other countries, four people cited building networks with people from other countries, one noted excellent class participation.

Six participants praised the quality of the lectures and lecturers. One noted the excellence of course content. Five people mentioned the site visits. Five people highlighted their enhanced understanding of the contribution made by clusters to national development.

Length of workshops

Respondents were asked whether the **length of workshop** could have been improved. Five felt that the length should not be changed, while ten suggested that it should be lengthened. Two people did not respond. Participants felt that it would be useful to extend the course by 2 to 5 days, to allow more time for participants to absorb information and to interact with one another. One thought more time was needed for site visits.

CHAPTER 7

A NOTE ON SINGAPORE

The extensive technical assistance programme operated by Singapore's MFA, with education and training as the main product, is seen as an outreach to assist others, as well as a way of publicising Singapore and its achievements and making friends.

Singapore is unique in several important respects²⁶. There are also striking differences between Singapore's level of development and the situation in many of the Commonwealth Developing Countries that have participated in the training programme. In this context, it is reasonable to ask whether Singapore is indeed a suitable venue for the training workshops.

The respondents to the review questionnaire are virtually unanimous that Singapore is indeed a good venue for these workshops, and that exposure to the Singaporean experience is valuable.

The location of the training workshops in Singapore is undoubtedly successful in publicising Singapore and its achievements.

Respondents' views on Singapore

The review questionnaire asked whether Singapore was a **good venue** for the workshop. Eighty-three respondents thought that it was. One felt that it was 'both good and bad' - Singapore perhaps presents 'too idealistic' a picture, difficult to connect with conditions in developing countries.

Others did not see this as a problem. Many responses described Singapore as 'an inspiration', a model of good practice, a practical example of a success story, which offers ideas and lessons to take back to developing countries.

Respondents noted how impressed they were that a small island state, with no natural resources, has managed to achieve such a high level of competitiveness; and has successfully transformed from an industrial to a services-led economy.

They also appreciated Singapore's convenient location, the safe environment, the country's high level of organisation, friendly and efficient staff and good facilities. A number of people noted the availability of excellent training facilities and easy access to practical examples through site visits

At a deeper level, respondents were asked whether **exposure to Singapore**, and its policies and practices, was relevant and useful. Eighty three respondents answered this question positively (there was one non-response). Again, they said that Singapore provides a model of best practice, with the government demonstrably adhering to sound policy and practices that can be tailored to suit developing countries' contexts. A number of people referred to Singapore as a dynamic nation from which other

²⁶ These include its position as a city state, at the crossroads of international trade; its system of governance; and its strongly focused public policies in developing 'Singapore Inc'.

developing countries can learn: lessons to be derived from Singapore's economic success include the value of human resources development as a primary resource; the deliberate and well structured development of SMEs; and the useful lessons in competitiveness.

The overwhelming majority of respondents were extremely positive about the **site visits**²⁷, and felt that these had been extremely effective in demonstrating workshop themes. A number noted that Singapore's position at the cutting edge of technological advances and innovations demonstrated how new infrastructure and practical IT application in business development could help to improve competitiveness.

Follow up contacts.

Given that another stated aim of Singapore's investment in the training programme is to 'make friends', it is perhaps surprising that follow-up contacts with workshop participants are not more aggressively pursued and maintained – though Singapore appears to be relatively more active in this regard than the Commonwealth Secretariat.

It is to be expected that the recent development of an **alumni website** will enhance the levels of contact with Singapore as well as ComSec.

Follow-up with Singaporean trainers and officials

Respondents were asked whether they had had any subsequent or continuing contact with Singaporean officials or Singaporean trainers. Forty nine respondents reported that they had engaged in no follow-up contact, while thirty five had.

Follow-up with Singaporean trainers and officials?	Respondents
Yes	49
No	35

Of those who had engaged in follow-up, one person had arranged for a trainer to visit his country to participate in a National Tourism Conference and present a paper on Marketing and Product Development; another respondent had requested and received specific course materials, and a third had been in touch to nominate colleagues to attend subsequent workshops. Two people had been invited to subsequent courses. One person had attended a subsequent workshop on export competitiveness, and another keeps in touch to with the liaison officer and about forthcoming programmes.

Another had ongoing interaction in his capacity as Permanent Secretary: yet another was in touch through a pre-existing relationship between his organisation and Singapore, Two received a newsletter regularly from the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Others were in e-mail contact on various matters

One person had approached trainers for assistance in elaborating his country's industrial policies. Another was working on developing a proposal to intensify cooperation with Singapore and to develop mechanisms to interest Singaporean business in opportunities in her own country and was in touch with officials in this regard. Yet another was

²⁷ Only one disgruntled respondent said that he had been 'bored'.

involved in preparing a joint bid with the International Trade Institute of Singapore for the development of a business brand programme in his own country.

Follow up with Commonwealth Secretariat

Respondents were asked whether they had had any subsequent or continuing contact with people in the Commonwealth Secretariat. Forty eight respondents reported that they had engaged in no follow-up contact, while thirty six had done so.

Follow-up with Commonwealth Secretariat?	Respondents
Yes	36
No	48

Five had participated in other workshops organised by ComSec. One person has arranged for ComSec to present at an SME conference in his country. Another complained that there had been no response from ComSec officials to his request for further information on clustering as discussed at the workshop. Other respondents mentioned email contact about various issues.

One person noted that the Secretariat was involved in a review of his country's Fiscal Incentives Regime based on Singapore's experience Three respondents are receiving strategic, policy, or project advice from ComSec.

CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS

The final requirement in the Terms of Reference for this review is to provide “recommendations for areas of improvement in relation to the overall purpose of the programme, selection of relevant topics and the workshop design”.

On the basis of the review, we make the following recommendations:

6. The training programme should continue, preferably for a further five-year period in order to allow for the development of a longer view that would facilitate planning.

All eighty four respondents to the questionnaire were unanimous in endorsing the continuation of the workshops. The positive impacts noted in Chapter 5 support this recommendation.

7. The workshops should continue to be offered in partnership by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the GoS MFA.

It should be noted that it did not fall within the consultant’s brief to evaluate or make recommendations on the nature or terms of this partnership.

However, it is clear that workshop participants value their exposure to the Singaporean experience, and the lessons to be derived from it.

8. Nevertheless, consideration should also be given to the possibility of mounting supplementary regional workshops, to concentrate on more specific regional experiences, concerns and issues.

4. Serious thought should be given to adopting an ‘enabling environment’ approach as a guiding thread in taking the training programme forward.

This approach would provide intellectual coherence as well as introducing additional practical dimensions into the programme as a whole.

It would provide a useful lens through which to view the specific topic treated in any given workshop, and its relation to the local institutional and regulatory environment in participants’ home countries. It would also serve to underline the importance of basing policies and practical interventions on sound information, as far as possible.

5. We hesitate to make firm recommendations on specific topics for future workshops, but – without excluding any others – would suggest that consideration be given to the following possibilities within the overall agenda of promoting SME development and competitiveness:

- Strengthening local institutions
- The role of the private sector in development (including the initiation of business linkages with SMEs)
- Public-private partnerships and complementarities
- Tools for assessing the business environment for growth, particularly the impacts on SMEs (analysis of regulatory compliance costs, and administrative barriers; regulatory impact assessment; regulatory implementation issues, monitoring and evaluation)
- Business environment reform at the sub-national level
- Gender-based barriers to SME growth
- Responding to globalization, and taking advantage of it.

6. Finally, on a very practical note, we suggest that thought be given to extending the workshops' timeframes by a day or two.

Many participants report that the agenda is too crowded, and that they find it difficult to get over jet-lag.

At the very least, participants travelling across a number of time zones should be given a day or two to adjust before a workshop commences.