



## Scenario-Based Training for Senior Mission Leadership

### Facilitator's Guide

Scenarios assist in training personnel for handling complex situations, thinking through problems and working out responses before challenges occur, and identifying crisis-prevention measures. Scenario-based training creates a unique dialogue platform; it fosters development of alternative points of views, exploration of unexpected or controversial perspectives, and dialogue between different institutions and entities.

An effective scenario-based training requires trust in the value of the training and those facilitating it. Participants need to understand the learning benefits before investing time, energy, and attention in a training. Facilitators are key to clarifying the objectives of the training, guiding its unfolding, and making the most of each participant's experience, expertise, and background. The facilitator's role is to foster creative thinking, team work, and complex thinking throughout the training. Their main purpose is to help participants make sense of the exercise and ensure that it is useful for coping more effectively with their own work and reality.

The following guide aims to provide key considerations for facilitators before, throughout, and after a scenario-based training. Its organization follows the three phases of a training:

1. **Preparation:** Familiarizing participants with the context and objectives of the broader training, minding the audience, managing expectations, and framing mind-sets
2. **Facilitating the exercise:** Fostering collaboration and critical and creative thinking
3. **Debriefing:** Guiding self-assessment and evaluation of the training

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### Familiarizing through Understanding of the Context, Needs, and Learning Objectives

In this first step, the facilitator clarifies the aim of the exercise and expectations, both from the trainers' and participants' points of view.

#### Setting the Context, Needs, and Objectives

Scenarios are commonly part of a broader training program. Beyond familiarization with the scenario, a facilitator must understand the context of the training, the needs of the client requesting the training and those of the participants, and the learning objectives

of the exercise. Before beginning the scenario, the facilitator should have a discussion with both the clients and the participants to clarify their goals for the training and any caveats such as time constraints and specificity of objectives. The facilitator thus lays the foundation for a training based on common goals and understanding.

### **Questions**

- What is the context behind the training program?
- What is the objective of the training program?
- What is the benefit of a scenario-based exercise?
- What are the expectations of both the broad training and the specific scenario-based component?
- What are the needs, objectives, and priorities of the clients and participants?  
How does the scenario fit into this?

### **Understanding the Audience**

Understanding the audience is central to ensuring that facilitators tailor scenario-based learning to the participants. Facilitators should highlight the composition of the training audience and point to its complexity. The exercise should draw on participants' diverse range of experiences, expertise, and backgrounds as strengths of the training and highlight the mixture of ranks, professions, institutions, cultures, and languages. The facilitator should focus on engaging each individual to their full capacity. Likewise, the facilitator should also be mindful of whether participants have volunteered or been selected or appointed for training, as well as whether participants have professional stakes in the exercise. The facilitator should be aware of whether the participants will be professionally assessed during the exercise, whether a report will be made to their employers, and whether the training is meant simply as a means to gaining a deeper understanding of specific issues without explicit expectations, sanctions, or rewards for their performance.

### **Questions**

- How diverse is the audience in terms of age, gender, profession, rank, language, institution, nationality, experience, and expertise?
- How large is the audience?
- How do the participants' needs and priorities compare?
- What are their constraints in terms of skills, experience, and time?
- What do they already know? What are their areas of expertise?
- Do they have preconceptions or stereotypes about the topic at hand?
- Are there any risks involved in the training?
- What is their initial mood (e.g., challenging, welcoming, resistant, skeptical)?

## Managing Expectations and Framing Mind-sets

An effective training requires trust in the value of the exercise and those who facilitate it. The facilitator should discuss with the participants how this specific experience is likely to help them cope more effectively in their work. Each participant should be asked to articulate their understanding and expectations with regards to this specific training.

The facilitator should make sure to explain that their role is to accompany the participants as the scenario unfolds and help them make the most of the exercise. The facilitator should also be sure to utilize the audience's expertise and experience. A clear distinction between a trainer/instructor and a facilitator should be emphasized. A trainer/instructor is comparable to a professor, providing content and material to students; a facilitator, on the other hand, accompanies participants through the exercise, raising questions that draw on their experience and expertise.

These discussions are a learning opportunity whereby each participant clarifies their vision of the scenario and confirms their understanding of the setting. To frame the participants' mind-sets and lay the groundwork for a common understanding of learning outcomes, the facilitator should highlight the following leadership values and competencies.

<b>Core Values</b>	<b>Core Competencies</b>	<b>Managerial Competencies</b>
Integrity Professionalization Respect for diversity	Communication Teamwork Planning and organization Accountability Creativity Client orientation Commitment to continuous learning Technological awareness	Vision Leadership Empowerment of others Management performance Trust building Judgment Decision making

Source: UN HR Handbook [ST/SGB/1999/15](#)

Earning and fostering participants' trust is key. The facilitator should always take a few minutes to clarify their credentials and expertise. They might find it useful to stress their institutional authority or professional ranking as well as their field experience to either inform or reassure the participants about their competence and credibility.

The main challenge of the second phase is to make sure the participants stay focused on the scenario and make the most of the exercise.

### Setting the Stage and Managing the Process

The facilitator sets the stage for creating a “social ecosystem” throughout the scenario-based training in which participants remain engaged and active. The facilitator must make sure the scenario unfolds in a way that is complex enough for the audience to feel that the exercise is appropriately challenging for their skill level. The facilitator must keep the exercise stimulating while avoiding information overload and overly demanding inputs. Participants should feel confident that their experiences have value and that they can build upon those experiences as part of the scenario-based training. The facilitator should therefore stress that there are no prerequisite competencies outside of participants' own professional background. The sequence and pace of the exercise should keep participants engaged, and facilitators must make participants feel engaged and involved from the very beginning of the exercise. The scenario-based training should unfold at a pace that is not so fast that participants lose track of each phase but that is fast enough for them to benefit from realistic time pressure. Participants should feel like they have time for self-reflection throughout. The facilitator should regularly recall the objectives while also discreetly observing groups and adjusting the pace of exercises accordingly. The facilitator should accommodate questions, concerns, and requests for additional information.

### Fostering Collaboration, Self-Awareness, Creativity, and Critical Thinking

Throughout scenario-based trainings, facilitators must ensure that participants work together, share individual and group insights, and collaboratively engage in creative and critical thinking. The facilitator should encourage participants to:

- **Be aware of tones:** Participants should be encouraged to engage in the exercise with an open attitude and to remain kind, constructive, and tolerant. While they should inform the training with their own professional experience, participants should also avoid reference to seniority or rank during the exercise, as this might recreate power dynamics that cause more junior participants to engage less than they otherwise would.
- **Be aware of labels and phrasings:** Some terms can be ambiguous and mislead participants' understanding or the direction of the exercise if not properly defined (e.g., violence vs. armed violence, terrorism vs. attacks)

- **Be mindful of false cognates in discussion groups:** Facilitators should remind the audience to choose terms or select their lexicon carefully. Same or similar words do not necessarily have the same meanings in different languages or cultural contexts.

Throughout the scenario-based training, the following questions might help foster rigorous discussion and nurture a collaborative dynamic among the participants:

- **What are the key considerations, and how do you rank priorities?** The participants should use the training to identify key considerations that affect their decision making and actions.
- **What trade-offs are you facing?** The facilitator should focus on clarifying the trade-offs linked to decisions and actions taken by the participants.
- **“So what...?” and “What if...?”** should be the two underlying set of questions as the scenario unfolds.
- **What are the implications of the timing, sequence, and consequences of each decision and action?** The facilitator should systematically inquire about each of these things and encourage participants to focus on the process.
- **How can gender be mainstreamed?** Participants and facilitators should adopt a gender perspective throughout the scenario, meaning that they should be mindful, when considering questions and injects, of the fact that gender perceptions and identities will always influence the way events take place and are understood and processed by those involved.

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### Debriefing: Evaluating the Exercise and Self- and Team Assessment

The debriefing is the most important part of training as it is at this stage that the participants must make sense of the experience, reflecting on their learning processes and inputs both as individual participants and as team players. The debriefing has two parts: one focusing on the exercise itself and its learning outcomes, while the second is a self and team assessment.

#### Assessing the Exercise and Scenario

The facilitator should guide the discussion and reflection among participants toward identifying expected versus unexpected processes and outcomes of the scenario-based training. The facilitator should ask each participant to rate and assess the most difficult challenges encountered during the exercise. This can be done by referring to the larger content of the training and to the specific themes presented and discussed. Participants can then relate the exercise to each topic or theme covered in the training or course.

## Questions

- What role did you play?
- What were the expected and unexpected developments during the training?
- What were the key considerations that affected your decision making and actions?
- How did you rank your priorities in decisions and actions?
- What were the trade-offs and stakes in each of your decisions and actions?
- What can you identify as best and worst practices?
- If you were to do the training again, what would you do differently?
- What would be needed to better address these situations?
- How did the exercise relate to real-life challenges?
- What were key moments during the exercise? What were the issues or stakes?
- What were the outcomes or results of your decisions or actions?
- What did you learn from this experience?

## Self- and Team Assessment

Recalling the leadership values and competencies highlighted above, participants should reflect on how they related to the core values and managerial competencies throughout the exercise. Facilitators can encourage them to be mindful of their own inputs into, position within, and contribution to both individual exercises and the training as a whole. Participants should reflect on their own learning processes and how their interactions affected their experience, the experiences of their team members, and their learning outcomes.

## Questions

- How did the exercises call upon your core values?
- What was your role in the exercise?
- How did you utilize your core managerial competencies?
- How did your decisions and actions influence the outcome of the exercise?
- How are the takeaways of the training related to your core values?

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé can be reached at [smartin@ubishops.ca](mailto:smartin@ubishops.ca). Dr. Martin-Brûlé is an associate professor in the Department of Politics and International Studies at Bishop's University and non-resident fellow at the International Peace Institute (IPI). She holds a Ph.D in Political Science from McGill University and currently holds the 2018-2019 Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Peace and War Studies. She is deputy director of the Réseau de recherche sur les opérations de la paix (ROP), as well as an associate faculty member of the Center for International Peace and Security Studies (CIPSS) and the Montreal Center for International Studies (CERIUM). Her book, *Evaluating Peacekeeping Missions: A Typology of Success and Failure in International Interventions* (Routledge 2016), strives to understand the conditions under which peace operations have historically succeeded or failed. She is also a co-author of the first United Nations Field Handbook on Joint Mission Analysis Centres (United Nations, 2018). Her current research focuses on UN peacekeeping intelligence and she recently conducted fieldwork at MINUSCA (Central African Republic), MINUSMA (Mali), MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of Congo), UNOCI (Côte d'Ivoire) and UNMISS (South Sudan). She is the recipient of the 2017-2019 William and Nancy Turner Teaching Award, the highest recognition of teaching excellence at Bishop's University.