

*Intergovernmental Council of the Management of Social Transformations
(MOST) Programme
Meeting of the Bureau
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 14-15 March 2017
Agenda Item 2*

Analysis of Issues Relating to the Organization of MOST Schools

This document is submitted for the consideration of the MOST Bureau and provides information and lessons learnt in relation to the MOST Schools carried out in 8 Member States since the previous meeting of the MOST IGC.

A total of 238 professionals and students, representing diverse categories of stakeholders, participated in MOST Schools that were directly relevant to assisting participating Member States in developing capacities that may contribute to attaining several Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 international agenda for sustainable development.

MOST Schools reported a positive user experience rating, with 77 per cent of participants assigning high marks to the training received. Women, representing three quarters of participants, were main beneficiaries of these MOST Schools.

Action expected of the MOST Bureau: proposed actions to support MOST Schools in paragraph 5.

1. Since the previous meeting of the MOST IGC, a total of 238 professionals and students, representing diverse categories of stakeholders, participated in the eight MOST Schools that were successfully carried out in Mongolia, China, Indonesia, Russia, Cuba, El Salvador, South Africa and Lebanon.
2. Those MOST School were directly relevant to assisting participating Member States in developing capacities that may contribute to attaining several Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 international agenda for sustainable development, in particular SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduce inequality), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies) and SDG 17 (means of implementation and partnerships).
3. Overall, the main key achievements of the eight MOST Schools were the following:
 - 3.1 Structured and focused dialogues were facilitated – in highly contextual frameworks – for the benefit of more than two hundred stakeholders from social groups that are crucial for public policy decision-making processes: researchers, policymakers and representatives from civil society.
 - 3.2 Positive user experience rating, as per the results of the evaluation forms, where 77 per cent of participants assigned high marks to the MOST Schools.
 - 3.3 Participants explicitly acknowledged the value of the training format of MOST Schools that allows participants to take greater responsibility for their learning. Participants appreciated the benefits from exchanges that demanded intense intellectual activity coupled with personal experience.
 - 3.4 Women, representing three quarters of participants, were main beneficiaries of these MOST Schools.
 - 3.5 Direct contribution to the education of Master Degree and Ph.D. students that participated in the training. According to the statements made by those students, group discussions facilitated learning gains and contributed to a better conceptual understanding of critical issues related to the preparation of their thesis.
4. Four lessons learned have been identified based on the standard survey applied to participants and taking into account the assessment of local organizers. These lessons learnt could eventually inform the preparation of future capacity development exercises of this type and could assist as well in improving the guidelines for MOST Schools:
 - 4.1 The identification of the key local organizers of MOST Schools requires a degree of flexibility considerably higher than the level originally anticipated. Experience has shown that, in most cases, the MOST National Committees and/or National Commissions for UNESCO did not play a crucial role in organizing the schools (with a few exceptions). Other institutions, especially universities and academic networks have led the design and implementation of schools.
 - 4.2 The specific branding of MOST Schools in countries needs to take into consideration local cultures and customs. There are cases where the term “school” is not the most appropriate term to identify this capacity development initiative.
 - 4.3 Initial high expectations in relation to the use of a “Training of Trainers” format must be revised. Experience indicates that local organizers have opted not so much for a pedagogical function but for a more operative function focused in facilitating knowledge brokering services related to ongoing policy debates.

4.4 Although funding arrangements have been dissimilar, the initial anticipation that MOST Schools could be organized almost at no cost to UNESCO has not been fulfilled. This only happened in one case (China). Actually, there were several cases where UNESCO covered a substantial share of the costs of schools. Nevertheless, experience indicates that MOST Schools could be organized in such a way that UNESCO would only have to cover around 25 per cent of costs (between 6,000 USD to 10,000 USD, depending on the size of the school) because local organizers have contributed with critical resources, usually under the form of in-kind contributions. This provides evidence that schools can be organized at a low cost per user to UNESCO. For instance, the recent MOST School in Beirut (7-9 March 2017) had a cost to UNESCO of approximately 204 USD per participant, which represents a good example of “value for money” in achieving good and measurable results.

5. The Bureau of the MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC),

Taking note of the positive experience of the MOST Schools implemented from July 2015 to March 2017,

5.1. Welcomes the progress made in expanding the geographic scope of MOST Schools and takes note of the encouraging acceptance of this modality of capacity building among beneficiaries,

5.2. Requests the IGC MOST to invite Member States to take into consideration the restricted budget framework of the Regular Programme of UNESCO and to make an appeal for additional support to the implementation of the MOST Schools,

5.3. Invites the IGC MOST to consider the revision of the Guidelines for MOST Schools at the 14th meeting of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme.