Evaluation of the Multisectoral Team Learning Program: Phase 3

The Challenge
The World Bank's mission is simple: to help reduce poverty. The causes of poverty are complex, and the Bank's approach to accomplishing its mission has, over time, become more comprehensive and community-driven. Operational priorities that flow from the Millennium Development Goals affect staff and clients working in multiple sectors (see Box 1).

In response to these operational priorities, teams that accomplish the Bank's work need to become more integrated across sectors and themes. Often, this need for teaming and integration extends beyond Bank staff to include clients and counterparts. This integrated, multisectoral approach may not come naturally even to the best Bank teams.

World Bank Intervention
Now in its fourth year, the Multisectoral Team Learning program (MTL) aims to make Bank teams work together more effectively and build both client and staff capacities to address the complex challenges of reducing poverty. Each MTL team works with a Team Learning Coach (TLC), and selected teams participate in the Outward Bound program. Task team leaders (TTLs) receive additional guidance, training and other support tailored to meet the particular needs of the different regions. MTL also includes a knowledge outreach component that provides desk and online support on team-building and learning.

To participate in MTL, a team must be nominated by its Region and selected by the MTL administrators. Both the Region and the MTL administrators share program costs. Length of participation in MTL can vary. This evaluation covered only "full-service" teams, meaning teams that had access to all the services of MTL. In FY05, the MTL administration plans to provide for fewer "full service" teams in order to expand coverage. The program is implementing more flexible and immediate services that meet each team's particular needs, and the number of MTL-assisted teams is expected to increase.

Underlying Assumptions
The underlying assumptions of MTL are:
- Participation in MTL promotes increased use of team-building, action-learning, and partnership practices, which are particularly useful in multisectoral work.
- Teams that learn to function better across sectors have higher job performance and engage more broadly and responsively with counterparts and partners.
- Through improved team functioning, Bank/borrower teams can improve the quality of their operational plans and strategies, processes, products and services.

Evaluation Methods and Instruments
The World Bank Institute Evaluation Group (IEG), at the request of the Learning Board, undertook an evaluation of MTL in three phases. Because the program incorporated many kinds of learning components, the evaluation approach used a constellation of methods that provide a rich understanding of

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Box 1. World Bank priorities
- Improve delivery of basic education and health services.
- Provide social protection for vulnerable populations.
- Promote access to services/infrastructure.
- Protect the environment.
- Support and encourage private business development.
- Promote reforms to create a stable economic environment.


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1. Outward Bound is a 50-year-old organization that teaches leadership and team skills using experiential learning techniques, with the goal of building high-performance teams. Outward Bound programs use active exercises to demonstrate and teach effective problem-solving, decision-making, risk-taking, creativity, conflict resolution, communication, leadership, trust, and ability to manage change.
program activities and outcomes from several perspectives (see Figure 1). IEG completed the first two phases of the MTL evaluation in FY02 and FY03. In the third phase, IEG brought in new methods, along with new third-party perspectives, to elaborate on key findings from the previous assessments:

- An expert panel rated the work products1 of MTL and comparable non-MTL teams on quality, relevance, and likely effectiveness. These Quality Assurance Group–like ratings were “blind reviews,” that is, panel members were not told whether products came from MTL or non-MTL teams.

- Evaluators conducted face-to-face interviews with clients and counterparts in the countries where MTL teams worked. IEG selected countries and counterparts to visit based on: (a) time elapsed since the start of MTL participation, (b) availability and willingness of clients and counterparts in government, NGOs, or donor organizations to participate, and (c) level of client engagement in the MTL team-building and facilitation process.

In addition to these three main approaches:

- IEG evaluators and MTL administrators participated in a series of informal discussions.

- IEG tracked MTL and non-MTL teams’ use of resources and length of time to complete project milestones using data from SAP (the Bank’s business process software) and the Business Warehouse.

Participants and Response Rates

Because the scale of the MTL program is relatively small—only about 60 teams, overall in FY02-03—the numbers of both team products and participating Bank staff are small, making tests of statistical significance difficult. Despite this limitation, the evaluation produced rich and useful information based on the variety of perspectives taken in gathering the data, and the care with which the evaluation was tailored to the specific, multifaceted nature of this program. Specifics are:

- Experts blind-reviewed 21 products (12 from MTL teams and nine from non-MTL teams).2

- Project milestone dates as extracted

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3. Work products rated by the expert panel included Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) documents, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Credits (PRSPC), and Analytical and Advisory Activity (AAA) reports. Relevant work products to be rated were obtained from MTL teams directly. For equivalent non-MTL products, Bank websites and the Business Warehouse were used as sources. The expert panel developed a questionnaire for each type of product and at least two panel members provided ratings on each product.

4. One product was eventually left out because it was not a final report.
from SAP and the Business Warehouse were reviewed for 26 multisectoral project (MSP) teams, of which 13 were MTL teams.

- Based on the TTIIs who responded to the TTI survey in the second phase of the evaluation, IEG contacted 43 TTI supervisors, of whom 28 supervised MTL teams and 15 supervised non-MTL teams. Of these, 17 and 7, respectively, responded to the one-page supervisor questionnaire, mostly during face-to-face interviews.

- Visits to seven countries where MTL teams operated included interviews with about 60 local MTL team counterparts and partners as well as several World Bank resident mission staff.

Evaluation Results

1. MTL improved the overall quality of final Bank CAS, PRSP/C, and AAA documents.

Based on blind ratings by the expert panel, the overall quality of both MTL and non-MTL products was high. Still, the panel rated MTL teams’ product quality about 11% higher than the products from comparable non-MTL teams (see Figure 2). This result should be interpreted with some caution because of the small sample size and resulting difficulty in determining statistical significance.

2. MTL teams moved lending projects forward more quickly, particularly between beginning appraisal and obtaining Bank approval.

A review of project milestone dates of MSP teams indicated that, overall, MTL teams completed a project cycle in slightly less time than comparable non-MTL MSP teams. MTL teams moved more slowly at the beginning of the project cycle (possibly because of time spent on team-building and action learning activities), but they moved much more quickly between beginning appraisal and obtaining Bank approval (see Figure 3). Again, because of small numbers, statistical significance of the differences observed could not be determined.

3. Better team characteristics, performance, and behaviors were associated with the use of resources provided by MTL.

Being part of the MTL program was not, in itself, correlated with positive process and outcome indicators. However, in both MTL and non-MTL teams, certain team inputs—in particular, use of a Team/TTI coach; Quality at Entry Assessments; Quality of Supervision Assessments; and use of self-help job tools such as CAS, QAG, and PRSP/C websites—were highly and positively correlated with higher team supervisor ratings of quality of team outputs. Hence, non-MTL teams could and do seek assistance from other Bank resources.

Figure 2: Expert panel ratings of MTL and non-MTL teams’ products

![Figure 2: Expert panel ratings of MTL and non-MTL teams’ products](image)

Expert panel rating
1 = highly satisfactory, 7 = unsatisfactory

Figure 3: Days to complete project milestones for 13 MTL and 13 non-MTL teams

![Figure 3: Days to complete project milestones for 13 MTL and 13 non-MTL teams](image)

5. The selection of countries visited was not randomly determined; of the 75 to 80 MTL teams in FY02-FY03, MTL administrators identified 21 teams that had direct MTL-led engagements with in-country counterparts or clients. Of these 21, five teams were excluded for various reasons. An IEG evaluator visited seven of the remaining 16 countries, based on logistics and resources available for travel.
The number of team workshops, retreats or meetings was highly and positively correlated with better team spirit, cohesion, and sense of purpose as rated by the supervisor. Also, the Outward Bound experience and number of team workshops appeared to promote more effective team leadership. The number of peer gatherings attended by TTLs was associated with better team learning practices, a more appropriate team size and composition, more cost-effective team outputs, and greater effectiveness of the process and delivery of those outputs.

4. The local counterparts and partners of MTL-assisted Bank teams reported improvements in the Bank’s overall in-country engagement.

In the countries visited, the Bank’s local counterparts and partners interviewed reported their overall satisfaction with Bank activities. They also agreed that these activities had improved significantly compared with two years earlier. MTL-supported events were seen as useful, participative, and worthwhile. Donors also noted better coordination and greater appreciation of the MTL teams as partners.

Implications and Conclusions
Based on the evaluation findings, this study highlighted the following points on staff learning:

- Plans to scale back on full-service MTL teams and to provide selected and flexible MTL elements (particularly coaching and facilitation) to more multisectoral teams in FY05 seem like steps in the right direction.

- Certain MTL and non-MTL teaming elements help produce better team processes and behaviors. Particularly useful elements to promote include services of a Team Learning Coach, Quality at Entry Assessments, Quality of Supervision Assessments, and use of self-help job tools and websites.

- Although MTL was aimed at Bank staff, Bank teams are not the only ones that have benefited from the results-orientation and facilitation processes, team-building techniques, and negotiation practices introduced by MTL. Several government and NGO clients have adopted these methods in their own work across sectors and institutions. These “spillover effects” are among the most significant contributions of MTL.

- Full MTL treatment would be best targeted toward large, complex Bank and counterpart multisectoral teams (e.g., CAS and PRSP/C teams) particularly in countries that have relatively less developed capacities and/or are moving away from highly centralized governance structures.

- It is important to expand MTL follow-up activities with clients, and it is similarly important for the Learning Board to initiate closer collaboration with WBI for staff-client learning. In keeping with the Bank learning strategy focused on “taking the game to a higher level,” MTL could be scaled up by use of the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) or similar technologies to disseminate learning experiences more widely; training and/or fielding region-based TLLs and MTL facilitators; broadening clients’ access to Bank self-help websites (for example, websites related to QEA, PRSP/C, and CAS); and opening more joint Bank-client learning opportunities.

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