



SENSE as a Conflict Management Tool

One of the Institute's core missions is strengthening capabilities of decision makers around the world to manage post-conflict transitions successfully. The Strategic Economic Needs and Security Exercise (SENSE), originally developed by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), is a computer-facilitated simulation that focuses on negotiations and decision-making in a post-conflict environment. SENSE simulates the resource allocation challenges confronting national and international decision-makers. Its sophisticated computer support provides participants with rapid feedback on the results of their time-sensitive decision-making in terms of political stability, social justice, and a foundation for economic progress. But the primary activity in SENSE is negotiation between and among those participating in the simulation. SENSE has been used in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Iraq, and Poland and neighboring countries, as well as the U.S.

Objectives

SENSE has four interrelated objectives, which can be modified depending on the target audience and curriculum:

- Develop the principles of negotiating, cooperative problem-solving, and decision making, which are critical for successful democratic processes;
- Illustrate the interrelationships among military security, economic progress, and the creation of equitable societies;
- Demonstrate the efficacy and efficiency of free market economies; and
- Provide a practical and informative experience with the issues of governance in "transitional" societies.

SENSE and Afghanistan

USIP is now collaborating with IDA and OSD to expand the capability of SENSE further, and to enhance the scenarios to include challenges directly relevant to Afghanistan. The new iterations of the SENSE simulation will be used to train U.S. government officials involved in peace and stability operations activities.

USIP is conducting interagency simulations in the Washington DC area using the existing SENSE scenario, and plans to conduct two simulations later in 2009 with a version of SENSE that more closely reflects conditions in Afghanistan. USIP's experts on Afghanistan are informing the process of updating and modifying the current version of SENSE. The new variant will feature a country model that more closely resembles Afghanistan's agricultural economic structure, as well as including a larger focus on problems such as an ongoing insurgency, illegal drug sector, corruption, and other elements of organized criminality.

SENSE Around the Globe

SENSE has been successfully employed (by USIP and/or IDA) in training programs with participants from Bosnia, Kosovo, the Republic of Georgia, Iraq, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and elsewhere, as well as with U.S. officials. In the U.S., SENSE has been used by USIP and GMU with academic and USG audiences (including DoD (uniformed and civilian), DoJ, DoS, and USAID), as well as

representatives of NGOs, the UN and other international organizations, Washington embassies, and the private sector.

SENSE in Iraq

In 2004, the Institute conducted special SENSE training programs designed for senior Iraqi national security officials. The training, conducted in the Washington DC area, employed a series of formal presentations and interactive exercises designed to:

- refine participants' skills in conflict analysis and resolution,
- master negotiation styles and techniques,
- understand the roles that third parties can play in mediating disagreements.

In those programs, the Institute trained 173 Iraqi officials from key ministries such as Defense (including military officers), Foreign Affairs, Interior (including police generals), Justice (including judges), Planning, and Finance. Based in part on feedback from the Iraqi participants, USIP contracted with IDA to enhance the simulation by scaling the imaginary country closer to Iraqi dimensions and including a significant role for the oil sector in the economy (with pipelines vulnerable to terrorist disruption), as well as additional elements that address managing the risk of inflation in an economy in transition.

In 2005, the Institute conducted further SENSE programs for Iraqis in Jordan, and since that time has sponsored SENSE events in Iraq conducted by Iraqis themselves (programs have been conducted in Baghdad and in various sites in Kurdistan). Participants have included officials of the Transitional National Authority, members of Parliament, a wide range of Kurdish authorities, the Baghdad Provincial Council, and members from all of Iraq's 18 Provincial Councils. Between 2004 and early 2009, a total of some 660 Iraqis benefited from SENSE trainings. The Iraqi NGO Iraq Institute for Economic Reform (IIER) ran SENSE events there from 2005 to 2007; SENSE is now delivered by USIP's Baghdad Office.

SENSE in Poland

In 2006, USIP, in cooperation with IDA, partnered with the Polish Ministry of National Defense and the University of Warsaw's Center for Eastern European Studies Program (CEES) to conduct a series of five-day SENSE Training Workshops at the Polish Academy for National Defense. These programs, whose participants came from Moldova and Ukraine, also enabled USIP to provide the Academy and the University with the permanent capability to conduct SENSE training for a wide variety of audiences in Poland and across the region (the Poles have since trained participants from Belarus, Georgia, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan).

The CEES has since been awarded a SENSE license, and continues to be active in conducting the simulation for Poland's neighbors, as part of a broader program promoting economic and societal reform.

For further information on the United States Institute of Peace, please contact our Education and Training Center/International Programs by e-mail at training@usip.org or by phone at (202) 429-4701, or visit the Institute's Web site at www.usip.org.

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