

**Table 1.** Goals and expectations of participants in the four SCD courses from 2002 to 2008.

Goals and Expectations	2002	2004	2006	2008
Interdisciplinary, multicultural exchange	x	x	x	x
Enhanced understanding of conservation decision-making	x	x	x	x
Communication and teamwork	x	x	x	x
Decision-making skills and tools	x	x	x	x
Positive impact on their own working context	x	x	x	x
Case studies incorporated into practical exercises	x		x	x
Roles and responsibilities of conservation professionals		x	x	
Stakeholder involvement in decision-making			x	x

Another goal expressed throughout all four courses was a positive impact on their own working context, i.e. to use their new knowledge to benefit their institution, training programme or national agencies.

### Mechanisms that guided the evolution of the course

Each subsequent course was improved by reviewing the previous course. There were several formal mechanisms put in place to ensure reliable feedback:

- A course diary. For the first two courses, a member of the ICCROM team was assigned to follow all sessions, to summarize what happened, and to make an assessment of the presentation, interaction, etc.
- Feedback from participants: (i) Participants were given a one page questionnaire at the end of every day (What's new? What went well? What should be improved?). (ii) Participants provided a written evaluation of the whole week each Friday. (iii) Participants held group discussions at the end of the course on its strengths and weaknesses. (iv) Participants were contacted six months after the end of the course with a questionnaire.
- Continuity plus new blood within the design and teaching team. Design teams for each subsequent course included two former participants, any lead teachers that were new to the course, plus the core (and interdisciplinary) teaching team. The core team accumulated specific knowledge of what worked didactically and what did not, as well as bringing new developments in the content of their own specialties.

### Evolution of the course

In 2004, the following changes were made to the course:

- Greater emphasis was placed on communication skills.
- The participants' own case studies became a central focus. Their particular issues and context gained more time and a greater voice