Forthcoming issue of the *KM4D Journal*: Capacity building for networking

Urs Karl Egger, Georg Buchholz and Marc Steinlin, with Lucie Lamoureux

Vol. 2, Issue 2 of the 'Knowledge Management for Development Journal' to be published in September 2006, will focus on 'Capacity building for networking.' This represents follow-up on the first issue of the journal on the subject of 'Supporting communities in development – tools and approaches.' The forthcoming issue of the journal will also take into account the results of a capacity building workshop on the management of networks for knowledge sharing which took place on 25-28 April 2006 in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Guest editors for this issue comprise Urs Karl Egger, Georg Buchholz and Marc Steinlin in combination with Chief Editor, Lucie Lamoureux.

Background

Networks are acknowledged as effective information, communication and coordination mechanisms in development cooperation. They are catalysts for building relationships and commitment among the multiple public and private stakeholders on local, national, regional and international levels while working towards sustainable development. By creating relationships based on trust, networks lay the basis for sharing information and knowledge and in this way contribute to joint learning and capacity building among members or partners. This helps not only to reduce the repetition of mistakes, but also the reinventing of wheels and leads to more effective and sustainable solutions. Last but not least, networks contribute to joint action. It is often not the information or knowledge that is a problem, but rather the gap between knowledge and action. By building up relationships among the relevant stakeholders many networks function as action facilitators.

Considerable work has been done in international cooperation to support the establishment and management of networks on local, regional and international levels in the developed and developing world and various stakeholders strengthen capacities for networking. However, many networks struggle with similar challenges, for example, the involvement of members, facilitation of communication flows using information and communication technologies, ensuring funding, influencing decision-makers, or achieving and monitoring impact.

In order that networks work in a more effective and efficient way, achieve a higher impact and become more sustainable, *capacity building* is required. There is no commonly agreed upon definition for capacity building, as many definitions are very vague. Within the context of networking, capacity building references are made to a wide range of issues such as strengthening skills, accessing the often-required tacit knowledge of network managers and facilitators managing networks, infrastructure for networking, or available support and services for networks. Capacity building also includes access to the skills and the ability of network members or partners actively participating in a network, making use of it and implementing what has been learned in a working environment.

This issue

This issue of the *KM4D Journal* will address the question of how capacity building for networking can be ensured and what strategies and approaches of capacity building are required so that networks can perform better. The emphasis will be on lessons learnt from both successful and less-successful experiences.

The issue will include papers from networking practitioners in the South and North. The articles and case studies planned for this issue comprise:

Building farmers capacities for networking through social mapping: two case studies from CIAT (Boru Douthwaite, Louise Clarke, Andrea Carvajal, Sophie Alvarez, Elías Claros and L.A. Hernandez of the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, CIAT);

ROCARIZ: A NARS-driven approach for agricultural research-for-development networks in West Africa (L.T. Narteh, O. Youm, S. O.Keya and M. Winslow of the Africa Rice Centre, WARDA);

Uniting through networks: the art of fostering ICT for development networks (Joitske Hulsebosch of the International Institute for Communication and Development, IICD);

Research policy networks in Peru: challenges and opportunities for capacity development (Enrique Mendizabal of the Overseas Development Institute, ODI);

Trying on different hats: Northern NGOs facilitating linking and learning of Southern partners (Bram Langen and Sibrenne Wagenaar of Olive OD&T, South Africa, and PSO, the Netherlands);

Harambee: reinforcing African voices through collaborative processes and technologies (Allison Hewlitt, Jackie Nnam, Jenny Radloff, Riff Fullan of Bellanet International, Bellanet Africa and the Association for Progressive Communications, APC); and

Empowering networks for development (Dalberto Adulis and Andrés Pablo Falconer of the Brazilian Association for Leadership Development, ABDL).

In addition, the issue will also contain an Interview/Dialogue with Peter Bury and Ndala Duma, and a story from the Telesupport initiative on capacity building in using participatory video.

About the Guest Editors

Urs Karl Egger is Knowledge Management Specialist working for Skat, Switzerland; Georg Buchholz is Technical Advisor for IKM working for the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in the ASEAN-German Regional Forest Programme (ReFOP);
Marc Steinlin is Programme Coordinator Knowledge Sharing, Helvetas, Switzerland; and Lucie Lamoureux is Senior Programme Officer at Bellanet and co-Chief Editor of the *KM4D Journal*.