Editorial
Capacity building for networking

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

The Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community of practice (www.km4dev.org) publishes a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal in the field of knowledge sharing for development, the 'Knowledge Management for Development Journal' (KM4D Journal) at www.km4dev.org/journal. This issue of the journal deals with *capacity building for networking*.

The team of guest editors working on this issue has over the past years been actively involved in capacity building for networking, as coordinators, facilitators, coaches, or advisors. Having been in contact with each other for quite a while, we have all been thinking about capacity building and networking in our various projects and initiatives. The catalyser for this special issue on capacity building for networking was a workshop on the 'Management of international networks for knowledge sharing', which took place on the 25-28 April 2006 in St. Gallen (Switzerland). The workshop, organised by the two Swiss organisations, Skat and Helvetas, brought together 45 participants from all continents.

The motivation for this workshop was based on our experience, that networking practitioners should have more and better opportunities to share their experiences how they manage and facilitate networks. We are convinced that more capacity building is required, so that networks can achieve a real impact for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The results of this workshop are available at www.threads.ch. Two contributions ensuing from the workshop can also be found in this special issue: the Harambee case study and the dialogue between Peter Bury and Ndala Duma, which provide insights in the everyday life of networking practitioners. However, we did not want to limit this special issue only to the workshop participants, so this issue includes contributions from other authors working in the field of knowledge management for development, who share their thoughts on the theme. As a result, this issue contains contributions ranging from analysis of what kind of capacity building is needed, to insights in capacity building programmes for networking from a grassroots perspective, as well as from the perspective of networking practitioners.

About this issue

Networks are acknowledged as effective information, communication and coordination mechanisms in development cooperation. Considerable work has been done in international cooperation to support the establishment and management of

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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. In order for networks to work in a more effective and efficient way, to achieve a higher impact and to become more sustainable, capacity building is often essential. This issue addresses the question of how capacity building for networking can be made more effective and what capacity building strategies and approaches are required to allow networks to perform better.

This issue consists of three papers, three case studies, a dialogue, a book review and a story, as well as the regular KM4Dev Community Notes feature. Geographically, contributions have been submitted form various regions including Latin America, Africa, India and Europe. The papers and case studies cover a wide range of topics related to capacity building for networking, including challenges networks are facing and that require capacity building; social network analysis as a tool to analyse the situation and to identify starting points for capacity building; descriptions of three capacity building programmes for networking; a practical case of how a network contributed to capacity building; and last but not least, a contribution giving an overview of various formal and informal approaches for knowledge sharing capacity development.

Boru Douthwaite, Andrea Carvajal, Sophie Alvarez, Elías Claros, L.A. Hernández, and Louise Clark present two case studies conducted by CIAT (Centro International de Agricultura Tropical) and Imperial College (London). The cases studies investigate how the networking capacities of farmers in Colombia and Bolivia can be strengthened. A precondition to do so is a thorough understanding of the local situation through social network analysis (SNA). First results of this early exploratory research show that SNA helps to visualize networks and enables the actors involved to identify measures to strengthen their networks.

Joitske Hulsebosch, Bénédicte Marcilly and Loeki Schaeffers present in their paper the experiences of the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) in building the capacity of multi-stakeholder networks in the field of information and communication technologies for development in nine countries. The paper addresses the multiple role of IICD as advisor, funder and facilitator of these networks and concludes with lessons learned after five year of capacity building.

Rick James and Chiku Malunga summarise the results of an applied research project undertaken by INTRAC among four civil society networks in Malawi. The research project aimed to understand the development of the civil society networks over the last four years, assess their contribution to poverty reduction and economic growth issues, and appraise their current strengths and weaknesses in articulating a voice for civil society. The authors identify a number of challenges where more capacity building is required, such as working more efficiently and effectively in terms of achieving network goals, and strengthening committed leadership.

Andres Pablo Falconer and Dalberto Adulis present the case of *Redes*envolvimento, a capacity-building programme for networks for development proposed and implemented in Brazil by ABDL (Associação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento de Lideranças). It introduces the justification and rationale of the programme as well as its main features, and describes the implementation of the first edition, carried out

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between July 2005 and July 2006. The authors summarize the achieved results of the programme and present the main challenges in adapting more traditional training models to capacity building for network organisations.

Riff Fullan, Allison Hewlitt and Jacqueline Nnam present a case study on the Harambee Project which is designed to support increased capacity among the project initiators and a range of Africa-based networks and communities, to coordinate and facilitate the interactions of their respective constituencies. The project focuses on three main areas of intervention: supporting network coordinators, developing capacities related to network coordination, and filling gaps in existing training and research-oriented resources. The authors describe what has worked and what has not been as successful, and draw their lessons learned.

Lawrence Narteh, Mark Winslow, Ousmane Youm and Shellemiah O. Keya describe in their case study the mechanisms employed by ROCARIZ, the West and Central Africa Rice Research and Development Network, to establish multi-country, issue driven 'task forces' that decentralize the international research agenda to the national agricultural research programmes. The authors highlight five approaches that have been crucial to increasing knowledge sharing and improving capacity building.

Ndala Duma and Peter J. Bury present the notes of an online chat about their experiences with capacity building for networking on resource centre development in the water sanitation and hygiene sector. The dialogue reflects views from a Northern and a Southern practitioner, both involved in a Resource Centre Development (RCD) programme of the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre.

Jhumpa Ghosh and TK Omana share a story on the art of video making, how it was introduced to newcomers and then used to enrich their work with local communities in India.

In the KM4Dev 'Community Notes' section, Lucie Lamoureux summarizes discussion threads on developing the capacity of knowledge sharing approaches and techniques. Formal and informal ways of capacity development are described and a number of practical examples in application are given.

Finally, a 'Letter to the Editors' from Helen Gould of Creative Exchange discusses some of the themes raised in the 2005 issue of the journal on 'Understanding the role of culture in knowledge sharing: making the invisible visible' (*KM4D Journal* Vol.1, issue 3).

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue and find some insights that might inspire you in your work.

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