

FSN FORUM DISCUSSION
**SHARING INNOVATIVE AND FLEXIBLE CAPACITY BUILDING PRACTICES FOR
 DEVELOPMENT**
 FROM 18TH MARCH TO 30TH APRIL

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Duration:	10.03.09 to 30.04.09
Number of participants:	16
Number of Contributions:	30

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

Dear all,

My name is Umesh Chandra Pandey and I am working for the School of Good Governance & Policy Analysis (<http://www.sushasanmp.in/>) as Knowledge Management Director. I started my academic career initially as a physicist, with a MPhil in Environmental Sciences and then a PhD in Physics in 1999. I completed a Post graduate Diploma in distance Education (PGDDE) and have been working in distance and open learning and actively involved in research and development activities in this field for 18 years.

Agriculture Development has come to a sharp focus as the deadline to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is approaching fast. **Capacity building** of huge population involved in agriculture for acquisition of skills and knowledge aimed at better agricultural productivity is now a major issue confronting us which has implication for meeting almost all the 8 MDGs. The situation is complex as most of the population which requires to be targeted is socio economically most disadvantaged, politically marginalized and living in geographically inaccessible areas.

It is a gigantic task confronting us as despite massive expansion in conventional systems of education the situation continues to remain grim. Conventional ways and means of imparting

education have proved to be economically non viable and developing countries can not afford to make financial commitments of required scale.

There is a clear-cut realisation that we need to have a major shift from traditional teaching learning practices. Innovation and flexibility should be the hallmark of any alternative system of education.

There is now an almost consensus that **Open and Distance Learning (ODL)** systems with a focus on **Innovation and Flexibility** are the only indispensable tools to meet this challenge keeping in view of the resource constraints of developing countries. Being a distance educator it interests me a lot to **devise innovative ways of imparting education to the disadvantaged people**. Such innovation and flexibility can not be a one time affair but should be a ongoing process.

I feel that keeping in view the MDGs we need to deliberate on effectiveness of such **alternate ways of capacity building and share experiences in a big way**. I wish to refer to a very interesting key note address entitled "Distance Education and Development" delivered by Prof A W Khan Asstt Director General UNESCO in ICDE conference at New Delhi (<http://www.ignou.ac.in/ICDE2005/Keynote/AW%20Khan.pdf>). The key note address talks about innovative concept of community based knowledge networks. I feel that we need to innovate in a big way to create **community based learning systems** which is so important from the point of view of MDGs

I hereby wish to invite the attention of the community members about this vital issue of **devising innovative and flexible ODL practices** specially keeping in mind the MDGs. It will help the community members to share experiences and practices and replicate them elsewhere.

Dr U C Pandey

Director (Knowledge Management)

School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis

India

III. LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution by Joseph Opio-Odongo, Kampala, Uganda

Dear Umesh,

I salute you for introducing this very important subject.

A **people-centred, flexible and innovative approach to capacity development**, in my opinion, is an essential element to ensuring sustainable development.

In this regard, thought I should share with Forum members a piece that I had shared with colleagues at UNDP earlier.

This piece of insight is entitled Give us a Chance, the original is available at

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=742&nocache=1

Best regards.

Joseph Opio-Odongo
Director, Sustainable Development Services (SDS)
P.O. Box 23221
Kampala, Uganda

Contribution by George Kent, University of Hawai'i, USA

Friends –

I would like to support the views presented by Umesh Chandra Pandey about the potential of distance education to support agriculture. Since he also spoke about the importance of community-based learning systems, I would like to offer some thoughts relating to homestead food production. I am talking about small-scale food production intended mainly for home consumption rather than for sale.

While little systematic research has been done on homestead food production, there is a lot of knowledge about it in the heads of people who actually do it. With or without documents, effective sharing of methods for homestead food production requires a human touch. People who have succeeded could help their neighbors get started. Others could facilitate them in doing that.

To help neighbors help neighbors, **small networks of people could be created locally**, linking together those who want the knowledge with those who have the knowledge and are willing to share it. It can begin informally. Then **local organizations** could help people share their knowledge and ideas about homestead food production through visits with individual homesteaders and through workshops and other sorts of meetings. Meetings could be held in which not only information but also food is shared.

These local organizations in turn could be supported by larger, perhaps **national organizations**. What starts as a neighbors-helping-neighbors approach could be extended within nations, and then go across national borders.

The **Internet** could be an important asset in building homestead food production networks. The Internet is not available to all people, but it is available in practically all countries. Local nongovernmental organizations could serve as the bridge between the Internet and people in their own villages. The Internet could be used to form networks of supporters of homestead food production at little cost. Email is the most obvious, but it is also possible to voice and even video communications (for example, using skype.com), at least for those who have good Internet connections.

Localities that had sufficient resources could create their **own websites**, tailored to their own local circumstances and using local languages. National **and global websites** could help to coordinate the activities, and provide links to documents and other websites that seem useful. The websites would be nodes in the networks.

Websites of the sort described here, specializing in user-friendly information for homesteaders, could be used by existing NGOs that are interested in homestead food production. For example, the network could work with the World Food Garden website, at www.worldfoodgarden.org and Aquaculture Without Frontiers at <http://www.aquaculturewithoutfrontiers.org/> There are many other existing sites that might be drawn into the network.

The **linkage of modern technology with the old-fashioned neighbors-helping-neighbors concept** could help to promote local empowerment on a whole new scale. Much could be

accomplished at little cost (e.g., to pay facilitators), but how that modest funding could be obtained remains a puzzle. Maybe some interested NGOs could get the network going.

Aloha,
George

+++++

Professor George Kent
Department of Political Science
University of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
USA

Contribution by Umesh Chandra Pandey

I wish to bring to the notice of community members some innovative ideas like **Village knowledge Centres and village resource Centres** initiated by M S Swaminathan research foundation in India.

A link of the concerned site is as below:
<http://www.mssrf.org/ect/index.htm>

Please enlighten us if any such initiatives have been tried elsewhere also .

I am sure that members would like to give their inputs on these lines.

Regards

Dr U C Pandey
Director (Knowledge Management)
School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis
India-462011

Contribution by Joseph Opio-Odongo

Dear Umesh,

Something similar to what the Swaminathan Research Foundation is promoting in India is happening in Africa. It is known as the **Local Level Integrated Information Systems (LIIS)** that is supported by the UNDP's Capacity Development Group at its regional outfit in Dakar, Senegal. Uganda, Kenya and Ghana are the participating countries.

You can go to the following link to a news report on how the initiative is enabling community empowerment for sustainable livelihoods in Uganda..

<http://www.panafrica2000network.org/index.php?option=news&task=viewarticle&lang=eng&sid=9&Itemid=85>

In a nutshell, the information system enables communities to:

- Be informed on the key issues of interest and concern to them
- Use the information to engage in evidence-based lobbying and advocacy so that they can influence local and national policies

- Use the information to initiate development programmes aimed at achieving sustainable livelihoods

It is about recognizing the potentials that communities have in shaping their destinies and then enabling them to own, operate, and manage an integrated information system that provides the essential information for strategic actions to achieve sustainable livelihood goals as collectively envisioned by them.

Regards.

Joseph Opio-Odongo
Director, Sustainable Development Services (SDS)
P.O. Box 23221
Kampala, Uganda

Contribution by Anne Bruntse from the Global Farmer Field School Network

Dear all,

Thanks very much for keeping me in the loop of the FFS information sharing. Further to Mr Umar Chandra Pandey's thoughts, let me also contribute with a so far very few experiences from Kenya:

www.infonet-biovision.org is a farmer information platform under construction but with already quite a lot of useful farmer information. Please feel free to visit the site. We have started an awareness campaign of introducing farmer groups to the use of this internet site through internet cafes etc. Very simple 1/2 hour training to access and use. First training took place just before Christmas 2008.

Coming back to the place in March 2009 and revisiting some of the trained farmers, we find all smiles: 1 farmer is happy about the termite information as it has got him started on a new income generating activity - to assist other farmers get rid of termites without use of chemicals. Another group of tomato growers had found new blight resistant varieties as well as directions on organic field management, and had set up their own research plots - we had to visit, and they looked great! A third youth group had found much needed information to use botanicals instead of agro chemicals for their nursery and were experimenting with them. All this in less than 3 months of simply becoming aware of available information.

As we continue the community training and awareness creation, we shall also be monitoring new farmer innovations emanating from this exposure. So far it looks really promising.

You are hereby all invited to **try similar introductions at any FFS within a not too great distance of internet connectivity** and let us know what happens. Farmers only need to know information is available and they will seek it as far as we can ascertain at the moment.

Our technical partners Avallain are also developing a **field kit** consisting of a small OLPC computer with a screen that is readable in bright sunlight, powered by a solar panel, which can also recharge mobile phones. The whole package weighs less than 3 kg and is very portable and costs about US\$ 400. This kit is creating a lot of excitement in Kenya at the moment. Infonet is installed as an off line version, which can periodically be updated, and there is a text mail system inbuilt as well as the normal computer functions such as word processing etc.

Will be happy to give further information to anyone interested.

Best regards
Anne

Anne Bruntse
Regional Coordinator www.infonet-biovision.org
BioVision Office, ICIPE
Nairobi, Kenya
www.biovision.ch | www.infonet-biovision.org

Contribution by Gertrude Buyu from the Global Farmer Field School Network

Dear Anne,

I am a FFS Trainer and would like to own one of the portable small computer with solar charging system. I travel to remote areas and would like to always carry it along. How do I get one asap?

Thanks and congratulations!
Gertrude Buyu

Contribution by Joseph Opio-Odongo

Forum members who are interested in additional information on LIIS and the related Information and Learning Network (ILN) , visit the following sites:

<http://www.iln-africa.net/index.php/site/overview/P3/>
<http://www.iln-africa.net/>

Joseph Opio-Odongo
Director, Sustainable Development Services (SDS)
P.O. Box 23221
Kampala, Uganda

Contribution by Pamela Dlamini, from World Food Programme Swaziland

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for the information(on the website) you shared with us. I am in a field office in Swaziland World Food Programme and struggling to get our cooperating partners to come up with FFA projects that will be sustainable and at the same time assist our food insecure but eager to work communities. I am not even sure of the kind of help I need but think a good start would be to link with some one who has actually done this. The main constraint that our partners site is lack of funding for non-food items that may be needed. Please help.

Kind regards
Pamela

Contribution by Gangadhara Swamy, from the Christian Children's Fund, India (CCF-India)

Dear All,

Capacity building is one of the most important activity in any development program. It includes changing the mind set of the community, to improve their capacity and skills and improve their knowledge.

I would like to share some of the important things in capacity building.

- 1) Understanding the education level of the community, their cultural back ground, their acceptance level and social relation ship within family, in the community at village level.

- 2) The training module and sessions should be prepared based on the area wise conditions, it should be in participatory way with more visual models and examples and stories. Language should be very simple
- 3) Training should be in residential mode with some entertainment, may be with some morning yoga classes or prayer.
- 4) Training along with some exposure visit is very good, at the end of every important session there should be reflection.
- 5) The trainer or facilitator should understand the learning, hearing levels and their mood; he has to change according the condition.

Coming to FFS, as mentioned by some of our friends, under capacity building we have concentrate on 2 types of different activities viz

- 1) Participatory Technology development (PTD): Building the capacities of the community to innovate, explore suitable technologies: It should include following things a) Documentation of Indigenous technical knowledge (ITK). b) Initiating the PTD process to find solutions for exiting problems (It includes 6 steps)
- 2) Farmers field school (FFS): It is one of the best method in extension programs done. Through this method proven technologies can replicated in any area. It is being a season long training conducted at the field level help the community for discovery learning.

Hence both these methods should be followed in the capacity building.

With regards

B.P.Gangadhara Swamy
Program Coordinator-Livelihood and Microfinance
CCF-INDIA

Contribution by Umesh Pandey

Dear Joseph and B.P.Gangadhara Swamy,

Thank you very much for contributing for this important discussion. Can you please let us know any impact assessment studies on these initiatives. Please also let us know whether any Open and Distance Learning(ODL) based University/organisation has taken initiative to collaborate with such activities to offer structured academic programmes in your country. Please enlighten us about **what sorts of initiatives have been taken and how community has responded to such programmes.**

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) which is the largest open university in India has taken a range of such initiatives in collaboration with Non Governmental Organisations with the objective to **enhance the reach of it's academic programmes in remote and rural areas.**

Community radios, telecast, videoteleconferencing and other satellite based delivery mechanisms for capacity building are also being used in a big way in India. Interested members can see the details on IGNOU's web site at <http://www.ignou.ac.in/profile/02/59-63.htm>..

I look forward for the response of esteemed members of the community on these lines and request to enlighten us about **impact assessment** studies if carried out in your countries.

Regards

Umesh

Contribution by Umesh Pandey

Dear all,

Universities which are practicing Open and Distance Learning systems all over the world have done a variety of **innovations to take their educational programmes to the grassroots**. In India Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) which is the biggest University of the country has been trying a variety of such ways and means in collaboration with NGOs, Government departments and welfare organisations.

I have also noticed from the proceedings of ICDE conference proceedings that Open University in China has tried a very innovative way of sensitising the farmers through **loud speakers**. Members can see a very interesting paper on IGNOU's web site at http://www.ignou.ac.in/icde2005/PDFs/theme2pdf/theme2_177.pdf

Members are requested to kindly enlighten the community about what kind of **collaborations are taking place between universities and other grassroot based organisations for enhancing the reach of the academic programmes** of the Universities in other parts of the world .

Regards,

Dr U C Pandey
Director (Knowledge Management)
School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis
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Contribution by Ananya Guha

I am Ananya S Guha, and I have joined the newly established IGNOU Institute For Vocational Education And Training at Shillong India. The emphasis of this institute will be on vocational education to take it not only the youth but the general population as well. One such important feature could be **vocational education in agriculture**. This kind of capacity building for farmers would certainly raise their vocational knowledge as well as help them in income generation. It is here that **distance education** which is not at all impervious to change could play a pivotal role. Further, methods such as the **community radio** could help in agrarian practices. So could the **television**. There can also be an integration of technologies, including the **mobile** with low cost technology such as the **radio** playing the role of the catalyst. I look forward to comments from members.

Universities tying up with NGOs and similar organisations perhaps started with open universities, because the concept of openness itself inheres in change, and flexibility. In addition to the IGNOU other state open universities in India such as the Yashwantrao Chavan Open University in Maharashtra took up agrarian courses in a big manner and introduced the concept of **mobile study centres**. This was taking education to the grassroots. The concept of education is undergoing a sea change in India. Gone are the days where study or taking admission to courses were for the young. Now it is continuous, not only **continuing education**, and education for the adult and working people. This change has been necessitated because education has been declassed and taken to the masses, the classes have been subverted in this process of change. And gradually this is percolating to conventional education, where colleges are encouraging vocational education in the spirit of autonomy. Education today in India, at least higher education is **libertine** and to a great extent ' **free** '.

Ananya S Guha

IGNOU Institute For Vocational
Education And Training.

Contribution by Ananya Guha

Continuing with the discussion on capacity building I think **flexible education** sometimes synonymously described as open education, distance education has contributed in no small measure in making education synonymous with capacity building in the areas of trades and vocations. For too long the word 'professional' challenged our senses, as if being professional by which we meant IT experts and Management graduates was the greatest contribution one could make to education, and in it. The term **capacity building**, could also be specious. What 'capacity' are we talking about? The word is vague. What we actually mean is lived reality, studying or pursuing a vocation by which we can experience a sense of pragmatism.

I happened to interact recently with an institute by the name of Central Institute For Plastic Engineering And Technology. Our university collaborated with this organisation for a three week programme on plastic processing. The learners were processing plastic products as part of their learning which is education in action. Once they learn that they can sell their products, and some of them get immediate placement in the organisation, then it is knowledge and the oft tuoted, knowledge based economy.

The truth is, friends, that **education today is subversive**, it does away with age old notions of degrees, which in countries like India got linked with the market and jobs. Yet the irony was that the degree holders could not get jobs. This not only increased unemployment but also a seething anger.

This is **capacity building: learning to do, and application oriented knowledge**. It is here that flexible education is playing an arcane but pivotal role. Hats off to it!

Ananya S Guha.
IGNOU Institute For Vocational Education And Training
Shillong, INDIA.

Contribution by Urban Jonsson

Dear Dr Pandey,

I appreciate very much your analysis and work with Open and Distance Learning. I am a very strong promoter of interactive learning using modern IT. My note is, however, about something else. I am very critical of equating *learning* with *capacity development*. This is indeed very common, including in my old organization, UNICEF. But it is wrong. Capacity development is much, much more. The following components are essential for capacity development:

- **Responsibility/motivation/commitment/leadership**: This refers to the acknowledgement by an individual that he/she *should* do something about a specific problem. It means acceptance and internalisation of a duty, and is often justified in legal or moral terms.

- **Authority/Power**: This refers to the legitimacy of an action; when an individual or group feels or knows that they *may* take action, that it is permissible to take action. Laws, formal and informal norms and rules, tradition, and culture largely determine what is or is not permissible. The structure of authority in a society reflects its power relations.

- **Access and Control of Resources:** If an individual accepts that he/she *should* do something and *may* do it, it may still be impossible to act because the person lacks resources. Capacity must therefore also mean that the person is in a position to act, or *can*, act. The resources available to individuals, households, organisations, and society as a whole may generally be classified into the following three types: (1) *Human Resources*, (2) *Economic Resources* and (3) *Organisational Resources*. [Training in any form is basically aiming at the strengthening of human resources]

- **Communication Capability:** The capability to communicate and to access information and communication systems is crucial for individuals and group of individuals in their efforts to claim their rights or meet their duties. Communication is also important in "connecting" various key actors in the social fabric into functional networks able to address critical development issues.

- **Capability for Rational Decision-making and Learning:** Rational decision-making requires evidence-based assessment and a logical analysis of the causes of a problem. Actions should be based on decisions informed by the analysis. After action has been taken, a re-assessment of the result and impact will lead to improved analysis and better action in the next round. Such interactive learning-by-doing relies heavily on the capability to communicate

I hope you agree that as much as learning may play an important role in capacity development, most often it is just one of the necessary actions/interventions required for the development of capacities.

Urban Jonsson
The Owls

Contribution by Edward Mutandwa, from Rwanda

Dear all,

I find the topic raised by Ananya Guha on the use of innovative capacity building practices to be a very interesting one. I would like to corroborate the experiences of India, with those from Rwanda.

In Rwanda, the government has crafted an ICT policy framework, whose main objective is to transform the agricultural sector through increased access to information. Various platforms are being tried and examples include the **info-bus concept**, whereby info-buses literally traverse rural areas and act as **mobile information centres**. Other examples include **national radio and television programs**, which are run by the Ministry of agriculture (MINAGRI).

By and large, these technologies are still in their experimental phases, so effect on food security is not certain, but there is evidence to show that some farmers have started adopting new technologies such as kitchen gardens (a method which intensifies vegetable production on small pieces of land), after participating in various capacity building forums, eg in Rulindo Districts, in Kigali. The main challenges are that most extension workers are not conversant with computer based technology and moreover, they are cultural barriers (most rural people are not educated) to the use of these technologies. So most programs focus on the youths, who in turn, are critical mass for further adoption of environmentally benign methods of production. Community priorities are important in these programs, as it seems that certain innovations are "imported".

Edward Mutandwa
Rwanda

Contribution by Ananya S Guha, from the IGNOU Institute For Vocational Education, India

Yes I think community priorities are very important today. The global and the local go side by side, and there is an inherent 'tension' if I may call it so because of the two. The needs of the

community must be addressed. And agricultural practices are the pivot around which income generation is built in the rural areas, especially in the developing nations. Farmers must be sensitised to the use of technology, the radio will do for a start, and a disaster management system must be evolved for them. Here the community radio can also play a very vital role.

Ananya S Guha
IGNOU Institute For Vocational Education
And Training, Shillong INDIA.

Contribution by Bernardete Neves, FAO's Agricultural Development Economics Division

Hi all,

I find Edward's and Ananya's messages very interesting, for they share innovative information sharing techniques (for food security and beyond).

I read the article " **Rural Internet — not online but still connected**" a while ago and was very impressed- <http://www.scidev.net/en/features/rural-internet-not-online-but-still-connected.html>. It's about innovative ways of bringing the internet to rural communities, thus widening information channels for capacity development.

Regards,
Bernardete Neves

Contribution by Ananya S Guha

A flexible and open method of education is always very welcome. It is pragmatic and suits the needs of any educational system- which brings us to the basic question, what is education? Is it earning a plethora of degrees, which makes a person cocooned in his/ her ivory tower? Is it literacy, numeracy and their likes? Is it reading and writing? Is it capacity building, an oft used term today?

The purists will say that education starts from the school. Can they go to it in countries like India? Children are selling books, newspapers which they should be reading. They are bedraggled, starved children. Isn't this sad? How o how do we ' educate ' them And, we talk of capacity building.

Ananya S Guha

IGNOU Institute
For Vocational
Education And Training
Shillong, INDIA.

Contribution by Luis T. Gutierrez, from the E-Journal of Solidarity, Sustainability and Nonviolence

To FSN members participating in the discussion on "sharing innovative and flexible capacity building practices for development".

The E-Journal of Solidarity, Sustainability, and Nonviolence (SSNV) is launching a new series on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). To get started on this new series, you are invited to a consultation on educational priorities for sustainable development.

A preliminary test version of the consultation form is online:

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=cDNoNGlfcDh6NmQ0WTVPNllqRINSVVE6MA..>

The survey includes questions on each of the eight key themes that UNESCO recommends to include in ESD programs:

1. Gender Equality
2. Health Promotion
3. Environmental Stewardship
4. Rural Development
5. Cultural Diversity
6. Peace & Human Security
7. Sustainable Urbanization
8. Sustainable Consumption

Participants can view the results in spreadsheet format:

http://spreadsheets.google.com/cc?key=p3h4i_p8z6d4Y5O6YjFSRUQ&hl=en

The survey form needs more work to both refine the questions and shorten the form. Specifically, how can we integrate "food security and nutrition" in the questions under part 6, "Peace & Human Security"?

Your participation and assistance would be most welcome.

Take care,

Luis

Luis T. Gutierrez, Ph.D.

Editor, E-Journal of Solidarity, Sustainability, and Nonviolence

<http://www.pelicanweb.org/solisust.html>

This is a monthly, free subscription, open access e-journal.

Contribution by Denise Melvin, from FAO's Agricultural Development Economics Division

Hello Everyone

I would just like to share some information about e-learning courses offered here at FAO. All the courses are available for free (by registering online or ordering them on cd-rom) and are aimed at professionals in various fields related to food and agriculture. All the courses also contain "resources for trainers" which can be customized to local training needs. These include PowerPoint slides, trainer's notes, exercises – all of which can be modified to suit your needs.

The courses have also been successfully used for "blended learning" where part of the course is self-taught (using the e-learning materials) and part of the course is delivered through regular face-to-face training. It is a good way to bring mixed groups up to speed before training starts.

Here is a short list of courses from FAO:

Food Security E-learning Courses:

http://www.foodsec.org/DL/dlintro_en.asp

Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK)

http://www.imarkgroup.org/index_en.asp

Right to Food:

http://www.fao.org/righttofood/kc/dl_en.htm

Codex Alimentarius:

http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity_elearning_codex_en.asp

Contribution by Sam Ebukalin, from Uganda

Dear friends,

Its great to get in touch with you regarding innovation/indeginous knowledge , which is one of the areas we are working on. P'KWI Inc (Popular Knowledge (Wo)men's initiative is seting up a Rural Information System to help link up the innovation producers and Users. A lot is desired in this learning processes and we look forward to sharing a lot with you.

Ebukalin Sam.

Contribution by Umesh Chandra Pandey

Dear Denise Melvin,

Thank you very much for the information about online courses of FAO. Can you let me know whether FAO allows these resources to be used by trainers in other organisations free of cost or any permission is required to be taken by the organisations before using them. I think it would be a good idea if FAO allows them to be translated in other languages for wider use at international level. It will help to reach out to a much wider cross section of target groups.

I think for coallaborative activity of translation of these useful materials in Hindi language some reputed oraganisation in India might get interested. Let us explore such possibilities of international collaborations for enhancing the outreach of such e learning programmes

I request all the esteemed members to **share the possibilities of sharing of resources and expertise at international level**. This type of sharing of resources will greatly benefit the people who need them most.

I also take this opportunity to request the moderator of this discussion to extend the date of this discussion by at least 15 days to allow for more discussion on such possibilities.

Contribution by Umesh Chandra Pandey

Dear Esteemed members,

Though the capacity building programmes based on Distance mode of education all over the world are gaining more and more importance but still some times the educationists with traditional class room based instructions doubt the sanctity of these methods of instructions.

It is this bias against Open and Distance Learning methods that such innovative capacity building programmes have suffered a lot.

I would request the community members to share the status of sanctity of such programmes in their own countries. Issues involved are important because as long as we establish the sanctity of these programmes in the eyes of employers the targetted population may not get expected benefit.

Dr U C Pandey
Director (Knowledge Management)
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India-462011

Contribution by Denise Melvin, from FAO's Agricultural Development Economics Division, Italy

Dear Umesh,

We encourage everyone to translate and modify the courses to suit local needs. The training resources (powerpoint slides, word documents) are thus left in easy to modify formats. They are free to use and the only restriction is that they cannot be sold or used commercially. Please refer to the user agreement in the e-learning courses (under "Legal") for more details.

Best Regards
Denise

Contribution by Ananya S Guha, from the Institute For Vocational Education And Training, India

I think that the online courses of FAO can benefit the entire global community and can be adapted to local needs. It is in consonance with the dictum of Free Open Source Software(FOSS) which is revolutionising the era of the internet which has mercenary motives, but at the same time furthers altruistic causes, as for example the Wikipedia. These free online courses on food security etc can benefit mankind and further the cause of agricultural vocational education in the developing nations. As my friend and colleague Dr U.C.Pandey has rightly pointed out, these can be translated into various languages especially in heterogeneous cultural situations.

Ananya S Guha
IGNOU Institute For
Vocational Education
And Training, Shillong
INDIA.

Contribution by George Kent, from the University of Hawai'i, USA

In my experience, FAO is pleased to have its e-learning teaching materials used by others outside the UN system, and they are welcome to use them at no cost. I regularly use their lessons on the right to food in my on-line course on the human right to adequate food.

For those who are interested, a description of the current course is available through <http://www.transcend.org/tpu/> Another version of the course is expected to start in September 2009.

Aloha,
George

Contribution by Margarita Flores, from FAO's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Please note that we are translating the Food Security e-learning courses into Spanish.

Regards,

Margarita Flores
FAO Representative, Chile
Deputy Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean
www.rlc.fao.org

Contribution by Umesh Chandra Pandey

Dear Friends,

This initiative of FAO to allow its resources for different trainers and organisations is really commendable.

I think it would be great if we could have a web - based repository where links to all such free of cost resources are available. It would be a great help for the end users of such resources..

Dr U C Pandey
Director (Knowledge Management)
School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis
India

Contribution by Umesh Chandra Pandey

Dear Friends,

IGNOU which is the biggest Open University in India has a major policy thrust for innovative practices in capacity building. Interested members may like to see the activities of its centre for innovations in distance education (<http://www.ignou.ac.in/ncide/index.html>)

IGNOU has taken some great initiatives through innovative use of ICTs. E Gyan Kosh is a major initiative taken by this University under which a national level repository of educational resources has been formed.

The educational materials available at <http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/> is a National Digital Repository to store, index, preserve, distribute and share the digital learning resources developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions in the country. Items in eGyanKosh are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved by IGNOU. These materials are recognised all over the world as best quality materials in the field of distance education.

Dr U C Pandey
Director (Knowledge Management)
School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis
India

Contribution by Denise Melvin

Dear all,

Regarding the translation of the Food Security courses (http://www.foodsec.org/DL/dlintro_en.asp) into Spanish mentioned by Margarita, please see the calendar for the courses below. After translation, they still need to be peer reviewed and

then put into the XML/Flash format - so I am sure at least 3-4 months will pass before each course is actually ready. The FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) is directly responsible for translating them.

Denise

De acuerdo a lo conversado este sería el calendario de entregas:

El 10 de Mayo : 3 cursos traducidos y contextualizados a la región

El 20 de Mayo: 3 cursos traducidos y contextualizados a la región

El 15 de junio : 3 cursos traducidos y contextualizados a la región

El 30 de junio: 3 cursos traducidos y contextualizados a la región

Total 12 cursos.

Saludos

Elizabeth Galdames Ducaseau
Coordinadora Núcleo de Capacitación
RLC FAO- Naciones Unidas