

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION  
**SHARING INNOVATIVE AND FLEXIBLE CAPACITY BUILDING PRACTICES  
FOR DEVELOPMENT**  
FROM 18TH MARCH TO 30TH APRIL 2009

Proceedings available at  
[http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS\\_Innovative\\_Flexible\\_CapacityBuilding\\_4\\_Dev.doc](http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS_Innovative_Flexible_CapacityBuilding_4_Dev.doc)

## **I. ISSUES RAISED**

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Forum members were invited to share insights and experiences on innovative and flexible capacity building practices for development, in particular Open and Distance learning practices.

The need to differentiate learning, education and capacity development also emerged during the discussion.

## **II. OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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### **A. Suggested approaches for capacity development**

- It's essential to adopt a **people-centred, flexible and innovative approach** in capacity development. This entails 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 (J. Opio-Odongo)
- It's important to **tailor capacity development programmes to community priorities**, especially because certain innovative practices are "imported" (E. Mutandwa, A. S Guha)
- **Participatory approach is important and effective.** Some ingredients of participatory training methods include (G. Swamy):
  - o Understanding the education level of the community, their cultural back ground, their acceptance level and social relationship within families, at the village level
  - o Using visual models, examples, stories and simple language
  - o Using some forms of entertainment. The trainer or facilitator should adjust the training based on the learning, hearing levels and the mood of trainees
  - o Theoretical parts should be combined with practice, reflection and exposure visits

### **B. Good capacity development methods/practices and suggested practices**

- Village knowledge Centres and village resource Centres initiated by M S Swaminathan Research foundation in India (<http://www.mssrf.org/ect/index.htm>) (U C Pandey)
- Local Level Integrated Information Systems (LIIS) supported by the UNDP's Capacity Development Group. The initiative involves Uganda, Kenya and Ghana. It enables communities to (1) be informed on the key issues of interest and concern to them; (2) use the information to engage in evidence-based lobbying and advocacy so that they can influence local and national policies and (3) use the information to initiate development programmes aimed at achieving sustainable livelihoods (J. Opio-Odongo)

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

- [www.infonet-biovision.org](http://www.infonet-biovision.org) is a farmer information platform in Kenya, still under construction but already with a lot of useful information and positive results. An awareness campaign for introducing farmer groups to the use of this Internet site through Internet cafes etc. has been started. It requires very simple 1/2 hour training to access and use. The initiative invites similar introductions at any Farmer Field School (FFS) within a not too far distance of Internet connectivity (A. Bruntse)
- Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), India has taken a range of initiatives in collaboration with NGOs to enhance the reach of its academic programmes in remote and rural areas. Community radios, telecast, video teleconferencing and other satellite based delivery mechanisms are being largely used (see further information at <http://www.ignou.ac.in/profile'02/59-63.htm>) (U.C Pandey)
- An open University in China has an innovative way of sensitising the farmers through loud speakers (see [http://www.ignou.ac.in/icde2005/PDFs/theme2pdf/theme2\\_177.pdf](http://www.ignou.ac.in/icde2005/PDFs/theme2pdf/theme2_177.pdf)) (U.C Pandey)
- Participatory Technology development (PTD), applied in India: building the capacities of the community to innovate and explore suitable technologies. It should include a) Documentation of Indigenous technical knowledge (ITK) and b) Initiating the PTD process to find solutions for exiting problems (G. Swamy)
- Farmers field school (FFS): it is one of the best methods for extension programmes in India. Through this method proven technologies can replicated in any area. It is a season long training conducted at the field level (G. Swamy).
- Open universities in India (Indira Gandhi National Open University, Yashwantrao Chavan Open University in Maharashtra etc) use many methods to reach the grassroots level: distance education, mobile study centres (A. S Guha)
- Continuing education/training in India for the adult and working people, through many channels : community radio, mobile phones, television (A. S Guha)
- 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 methods are being tried: info-bus concept, whereby info-buses literally traverse rural areas and act as mobile information centres; national radio and television programs, which are run by the Ministry of agriculture. Most programs focus on the youths, who have advantages concerning modern technologies (E. Mutandwa).
- E-learning courses offered by FAO: All the courses are available for free and are aimed at professionals in various fields related to food and agriculture. They also contain “resources for trainers” which can be customized to local training needs (see a short list of courses from FAO in the References section) (D. Melvin). The Food Security e-learning courses are being translated into Spanish (M. Flores).
- Using knowledge networks: this method is recommended in particular in the area of homestead food production. Knowledge networks could be built starting with small local networks of people. Local organizations could participate through visits with individual homesteaders and through workshops and other sorts of meetings. These local organizations 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.

Modern technology such as the Internet could be combined with this old-fashioned neighbors-helping-neighbors. 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. Many existing websites (such as World Food Garden website, at <http://www.worldfoodgarden.org/> and Aquaculture Without Frontiers, at <http://www.aquaculturewithoutfrontiers.org/> ) could be drawn into the network (G. Kent)

- **Share e-learning resources at the international level.** Customization and translation of training materials into local languages can enhance the outreach of e-learning programmes. It will be useful to have a web - based repository with links to all free resources (U. C. Pandey, A. S Guha)

### C. Different definitions of capacity development by participants

- Knowledge and experience (own and borrowed), are capacity cornerstones. Applying, validating and evaluating the credibility of such knowledge and experience represent capacity. Unleashing this motive force behind shared visions is capacity building (J. Opio-Odongo)
- Capacity building includes changing the mindset of the community, to improve their capacity and skills and improve their knowledge (G. Swamy).
- Capacity building entails learning to do, and application of oriented knowledge (A. S Guha)
- Capacity development is much more than learning. Its essential components include (U. Jonsson):
  - **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.
  - **Access and Control of Resources:** Capacity must 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 three types: (1) *Human Resources*, (2) *Economic Resources* and (3) *Organisational 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 climb 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

### III. REFERENCES

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- "Rural Internet — not online but still connected" (B. Neves)  
<http://www.scidev.net/en/features/rural-internet-not-online-but-still-connected.html>
- Distance Education and Development (U. C Pandey)  
[http://www.ignou.ac.in/ICDE2005./Keynote/AW\\_Khan.pdf](http://www.ignou.ac.in/ICDE2005./Keynote/AW_Khan.pdf)
- Give us a Chance (J. Opio-Odongo)  
[http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no\\_cache=1&r=742&nocache=1](http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=742&nocache=1)
- Information about the Local-Level Integrated Information Systems (LIIS) project (J. Opio-Odongo)  
<http://www.panafrica2000network.org/index.php?option=news&task=viewarticle&lang=eng&sid=9&Itemid=85>  
<http://www.iln-africa.net/index.php/site/overview/P3/>  
<http://www.iln-africa.net/>
- On-line course on the human right to adequate food (G. Kent)  
<http://www.transcend.org/tpu/>
- FAO's Food Security E-learning Courses  
[http://www.foodsec.org/DL/dlintro\\_en.asp](http://www.foodsec.org/DL/dlintro_en.asp)
- FAO's Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK)  
[http://www.imarkgroup.org/index\\_en.asp](http://www.imarkgroup.org/index_en.asp)
- Right to Food e-courses  
[http://www.fao.org/righttofood/kc/dl\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/righttofood/kc/dl_en.htm)
- Codex Alimentarius e-courses  
[http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity\\_elearning\\_codex\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity_elearning_codex_en.asp)
- eGyanKosh- a National Digital Repository to store, index, preserve, distribute and share the digital learning resources developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions in India (U. C Pandey)  
<http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/>
- Education for rural people initiative  
<http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/>
- FAO's capacity building portal  
<http://www.fao.org/capacitybuilding/?lang=en>