

Training on Network Management

Background

Since, the beginning of 2009 Skat offers a course on Network Management using as conceptual framework the GTZ handbook "Work the Net". Initially, the course was developed in Spanish under the mandate of the GTZ in Latin America to build the capacities of members of two of their networks: Latin-American Network for the prevention

"The course methods adjust to different participants located in different places and time zones. The E-learning platform allowed us meeting new peers from other countries and exchange valuable information and experience" (Course participant 2009)



and control of soil and water pollution and the HIV/AIDS Latin American network. The course is offered using an E-learning platform in partnership with an organization called SBA (owners of the e-learning platform). So far the course has been offered for participants to pay a fee, but many participants from developing countries have not been able to cover the costs (mostly participants from Europe and the US have been benefiting from the course). The need to fund raise partial scholarships for participants living and working in developing countries has become evident.

Rationale, why offering a network management course?

Knowledge networks are starting to have a significant importance in the development cooperation because they contribute to the vision of sustainable development by connecting sectors, organizations and professionals leading to more coordination, coherence, and innovation and by building a stronger knowledge base between organizations and experts. This project will contribute to the strengthening of networks to fulfil their role in the development cooperation.

It has been observed that in many cases, little designing or planning is involved while setting up networks, leading sometimes to the loss of time and resources. Thus, there appears to be a considerable scope for improving the management of existing networks. Additionally, not very many people are aware of the different aspects necessary to successfully manage formal networks such as: how to plan activities in complex systems like networks; how to find a balance between organisations working together (networking) and still keeping their independence; and how to establish an effective communication mechanism that will allow a disperse range of organisations to share information and knowledge.

Network facilitators especially from developing countries have the need to strengthen their capacities, skills and knowledge for "network management": setting up governance structure of networks, communication strategy of networks, strategic planning, funding and the use of knowledge management techniques.

It is expected that with this project more "networks from developing countries" take part of the course and increase their capacities in network management.

By offering the course twice this year, it became evident that there is a demand for such training (more than 20 people registered in both cases, but only few could pay the whole fee).

How is the course being implemented?

The course is implemented in an E-learning modus, which means that participants work remotely (in their place of origin) using a computer. Different e-learning tools are used: theoretical inputs, free and guided chat sessions, on-line discussions, case studies and exercises. Participants would require a good Internet connection and e-mail access.



In order to guarantee that a learning process takes place, the course will



be moderated by two tutors: the technical tutor, who is an expert on the topic of "Network Management"; and an administrative tutor, who will be in charge of the administrative follow-up of the participants in a systematic manner.

The course will be a balance between theoretical and practical inputs, giving participants the opportunity to apply in practice what they have learned in theory. It is conceived as very interactive and exchanges and learning among participants and with tutors will be

actively supported.

In order to assure participants' motivation, the course will apply follow-up mechanisms to monitor time spent and completion of each session by participants; participation on discussions and chats; and returned exercises. Tutors will respond participants' requests and questions on regular basis via e-mail or on discussion forums. It will be expected that each participant work between 6 – 8 hours a week. The course duration will be of ten weeks.

The course material will be uploaded in electronic formats on the platform. In addition, a documented bibliography on each subject and a glossary will be provided.

Currently, participants are requested to pay 1'691 CHF and the course has the capacity of having more than 25 participants. If partial (50% or 70%) scholarships are available, more participants would be able to participate and they will be required to contribute with the rest of the fee (co-financing). The scholarships will be offered based on needs. Participants, who can afford paying the whole fee, would not be offered a scholarship. A budget of approx. 20'000 – 30'000 CHF will be required for supporting at least 25 participants on partial basis.

COURSE CONTENTS

1. **Basic Concepts on Network Management**

- *Theoretical input on: Management, Knowledge Management and Networking*
- *Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the three topics and share experiences*
- *Exercise 1: Based on a set of pre-established questions participants will have to analyse the development of an existing network*

2. **Network governance and structure**

- *Theoretical input on: Strategic framework, network governance structure and the role of the network facilitator*
- *Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the theoretical input and share experiences*
- *Exercise 2: Based on a particular Case Study, participants will be asked either to develop the organisational chart of the Network clarifying roles and responsibilities or to establish the Network guidelines and membership rules.*

3. **Communication and Networks**

- *Theoretical input on: Principles of communication and communication strategy of a network*
- *Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the theoretical input and share experiences*
- *Exercise 3: Based on a particular Case Study, participants will be asked to propose a Communication Strategy for the network*
- *Online – exercise: Drawing on experience with virtual communication tools, participants will share their experience and discuss about virtual communication tools for networking such as e-mail, chat, forums and video – tele conferences*

4. **Principles of Network Planning**

- *Theoretical input on: Planning in complex systems, time and risk management for networks*
- *Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the theoretical input and share experiences*
- *Exercise 4: Based on a particular Case Study, participants will be asked to develop an operational plan for the network*

What are the expected results?

One of the most important expected results of the project is that the majority of participants live and work in developing countries.

Additionally, the e-learning network management course will allow all participants to:

- Become aware of the importance and meaning of network management
- Become familiar with concepts on how formal networks can be managed
- Understand structures and processes of formal networks
- Become familiar with methods and instruments for managing formal networks
- Understand the critical factors that can warrantee the success of formal networks
- Strengthen networking skills

Next Steps

The following next steps will take place:

- Promotion of the next e-learning course on network management	Feb/March 10
- Registration to the E-learning Course and application for scholarships	March 10
- Revision and preparation of the course	Feb/March 10
- Fundraising for scholarships	From Jan 10
- Selection of participants and allocation of scholarships	Mar/April. 10
- Implementation of Course	April/June 10
- Evaluation of course	July 11

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