



Developing information-resource skills trainers in Vietnam

Single subject, focused training, equipping local trainers

Over a period of three years, INASP worked with partners in Vietnam and Sweden to develop a pool of 22 skilled and confident master trainers at 10 Vietnamese universities that run medical education programmes. The aim was to ingrain online information usage and access across the sector. The trainers have gone on to train more than 1800 doctors, researchers and staff in Vietnam in how to access up-to-date online health information.

In Vietnam, as in many low-income countries, health professionals have access to a wide range of free online health information resources. However, despite improvements in connectivity, health professionals and researchers still make only limited use of these. In 2005, INASP delivered its first training workshop with a focus on accessing online health information resources in Vietnam. Greater availability of e-resources (through access programmes such as HINARI and INASP's PERii and SRKS programmes), improved IT infrastructure and a greater emphasis on medical and health education, have created a huge need for e-resource skills that could not be adequately addressed by one-off training workshops.



The Haa Lu Temples of Kings

INASP worked with the Hanoi School of Public Health (HSPH) and the International Network for Online Resources and Materials (INFORM) to create a national-level, intensive training programme on online information access and use for health librarians, researchers and professionals. It was designed to support librarians at higher

education institutions to run and deliver high-quality, high-impact online-information training to health researchers, practitioners and students.

Ultimately, the programme aimed to get online information access and usage ingrained across the health research and education sector in

The project partners

The 'Developing Capacity for Health Information Access and Use' programme ran from 2008 to 2011. This programme was conceived and organized in collaboration with the Hanoi School of Public Health (HSPH) and the International Network for Online Resources and Materials (INFORM). INASP acted as the project coordinator and programme manager, and contributed to the training activities. HSPH was the Vietnamese coordinating, mentoring and driving force within the programme, and INFORM was the lead training, mentoring and content expert. The programme was supported by Atlantic Philanthropies, which is dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people.



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Vietnam, and to enable participating universities to take full advantage of existing online information resources.

Taking a new approach

The programme was a concerted effort to influence the training capacity of an entire sector in a single country over the long-term and this required INASP to modify its usual approach. The trainers became more intensively involved with participants, focussed on a

single sector, worked within a single country, and ran the training over several years, including dedicated post-training support and mentoring.

As might be expected for such an ambitious programme, INASP and its partners also devoted much more time than usual to pre-training planning. While the programme was formally launched in March 2009, with an opening ceremony at the HSPH, this was the culmination of extensive organizing and planning around buy-in from institutions; selection of the right participants; deciding whether to combine training in online information resources with training skills or whether it was better to focus initially on participants becoming familiar with the topic before delivering training of trainers; how master trainers could be supported after the initial workshops as they began to deliver their own training.

In-depth recruitment process

Finding the right people to serve as master trainers was essential, so considerable time and effort was invested in the recruitment

“I have become member of a big family with other master trainers and libraries... We can talk, discuss and share together, ready and happy to help each other...”

process. INASP and its partners sent out formal invitations and project documents to target institutions, inviting their commitment to the programme and then the nomination of suitable participants. HSPH and INFORM then visited the institutions, speaking to the leadership about the programme, and then conducting interviews with the nominated candidates, over the course of a week. While most candidates were suitable, in a couple of cases, institutions were asked to reconsider. Leaders who were interested in participating made a formal commitment in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding during the official launch of the programme.

Tailored participatory training

The programme partners delivered three training workshops over a



Participants were encouraged to work in teams to develop their skills



three-month period, involving a mix of teaching methods and bolstered by mentoring from the lead trainer and feedback from both trainers and peers. The first training was an intensive two-week workshop that familiarized participants with online health resources and how to use them, while also helping to build a sense of support and community among the group. This was delivered by Martha Garrett from INFORM, who also developed the Source Compendium, a handbook covering topics such as finding and accessing different types of resources, and information on specific topics and for different professional purposes. The Compendium was provided in English and Vietnamese, and aimed to provide a sourcebook tailored to what was accessible in Vietnam, to



Workshop training in using and accessing online resources

optimize participants' access and use of online resources. Six weeks later, INASP's Rebecca Bailey and Martin Belcher delivered the second workshop, which focused

on developing participants' training skills. This gave participants a chance to learn how to deliver face-to-face participatory training while experiencing this type of training themselves. The final workshop combined the content discussed in workshop one with the delivery skills covered in workshop two, and participants planned what they would do with their new skills when they got back to their institutions.

Three regional pilot workshops were planned (one in each region: North, Central, South) to take place in the following months. Training was delivered by the most experienced and confident set of master trainers in the region, at their institution, with real participants, and was observed by the other master trainers from that region plus Martha. Martha met with the trainers and observers before the workshop and again after, to debrief and discuss together how they could make improvements in subsequent workshops.

Low-tech methods for high-impact results

One of the most dramatic benefits of the training was the improvement

Rolling out e-resource training to doctors and students

Two librarians from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City, became Master Trainers as part of 'Developing Capacity for Health Information Access and Use'. They have since worked within their institution to deliver a pilot series of regional workshops followed by institutional-level workshops for staff and librarians, and undergraduate and postgraduate students. Each workshop included step-by-step instructions for searching for general and scientific medical information, lectures and practical online exercises.

After the first two workshops, a large number of students asked for more, so the Master Trainers doubled the number of training events they had initially planned. The feedback from these workshops was very positive and word spread quickly. "This resulted in more requests for training, explaining that they needed to know how to search for medical information and were ready to pay for it if necessary," according to the institution's Head Librarian Dr Tran Thanh Xuan. The university's Rector encouraged the Master Trainers to extend the training, knowledge and skills-development to more of the students and especially doctors, who make up the postgraduate student body.

While this has been a big success, it has been time-consuming and costly for the master trainers to run enough one-day workshops to meet demand. Also, it has been difficult to persuade the institution's leadership to integrate contents of the training into the curriculum and to pay for librarians — who are not viewed as teachers — to provide the training. "...However," said Dr Tran Thanh Xuan, "the experience we are gaining in delivering this training may help to change this."

“Although the idea of being filmed was initially greeted with horror, more than 50% [of participants] highlighted filming as one of the most useful elements.”

Martin Belcher

in participants’ presentation skills and confidence. This was demonstrated by videotaping the participants giving presentations before and after the training skills workshop which included a session on presentation skills. The change

was remarkable. The participants themselves could see how they had improved through small changes such as more eye contact and use of hand gestures and movement. Filming was done from a stationary tripod and camera placed in the room. Only in-built microphones were used, because a high-quality microphone would have been too clear, distorting how a training classroom full of trainees would have experienced the training. Once the videos were complete, feedback sessions were held between the lead trainers and the trainee, and then with the whole group but in the absence of the trainee. Finally, the whole group was brought back together for joint reflection.

The use of video was not particularly ground-breaking, nor was it effortless — it required planning and time commitment on the part of the trainers. However, it made a huge impact in the space of only a week, and the lessons participants learned from it have had a lasting effect. Although the idea of being filmed was initially greeted with horror, more than 50% of participants

highlighted filming as one of the most useful elements. It was also highly cost-effective. The video, tripod and wireless microphone cost around £1,000, and they were successfully operated by INASP staff with minimal experience.

Outcomes

As a result of the programme, 22 master trainers formed institutional and subject-based teams of experts at 10 universities in Vietnam. Each of the teams went on to train at least 100 public-health researchers, practitioners and students within their targeted health sector,

How Master Trainers have put their skills and knowledge to use

A neurologist at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC, UMP), requested information about ‘Computerized tomography of thalamus haemorrhage in hypertension’. The Master Trainer used PubMed to find the article and then searched online to find additional medical information that could be useful for patients. He translated the documents into Vietnamese and put them on a clinic website.

A Master Trainer at Can Tho UM is the Deputy Head of Library Services, a faculty member, a practising haematologist, and a PhD candidate at Hanoi MU. At the training of trainers, she learned how to register her interest in the topic of thalassemia with NCBI. Now she is sent links to the latest research related to thalassemia each month, rather than having to do time-consuming individual searches to stay abreast of developments in her field.



All participants and trainers at the opening ceremony



resulting in over 1800 people taking part in training.

Looking back, an evaluation found programme achievements evident on several fronts, most notably in the growing skills and confidence of the master trainers, which enabled them to roll out many more training events than originally planned. The master trainers reported greater awareness of free online health information resources, more confidence in their ability to assess the quality of online sources, and better skills for delivering training. They are better able to do the customer-facing aspects of their jobs, and have forged beneficial links with librarians in other parts of the country.

The evaluation found a stronger recognition by librarians of their role in the field of online information provision and their responsibility for spreading information and knowledge. What was equally important during the course of the programme was the recognition by the institution heads of the value of library services.

Sustaining success

Since the programme ended, an online e-resources training course has been made compulsory (for both undergraduate and doctoral students) at HSPH, and will be a

“I really believe that with the programme, we have ‘kicked off’ our medical libraries system”

compulsory course at an institution that one of the master trainers has moved to (the School of Library and Information Science). In addition, three years after the programme ended participants continue to use the knowledge they acquired about online information resources, namely HINARI and PubMed, and the presentation skills they gained. The Sourcebook Compendium continues to be used in an adapted form, and in some institutions, the

evaluation found less scepticism about the reliability of online health information resources, and more positive attitudes towards librarians.

Challenges and lessons learned

While there have been clear successes of the programme in Vietnam, it was not without its challenges. INASP and its partners have taken a close look at what

Key learning

- Plan sufficient lead-in time and resources for the careful selection of participants who meet carefully established criteria.
- Discuss sustainability in a concrete way at the outset when exploring partnerships with the heads of potential partner institutions, and assess their levels of commitment.
- Consider more solid institutional buy-in, beyond an initial MOU, by providing regular updates to institutional leadership, recognising them as key stakeholders in the longer-term sustainability of the work.
- Work to embed a project within an institution’s existing processes, rather than in parallel. This encourages work to continue more sustainably following the end of funding as it is not viewed as separate or outside but as fitting within institutional strategy.
- Spread an intensive training approach over a long enough period to allow practice and absorption of learning.
- Use methods such as group discussions and video recording to provide feedback and in-depth guidance when developing training skills.
- Replicate the intense mentoring approach adopted in this programme. It appears to have played a significant role in embedding the skills in master trainers, enabling them to continue applying their skills to their work.
- Factor in the potential for turn-over and attrition among participants when designing the programme and discuss succession planning.
- Train participants in advocacy skills so they can discuss and promote the library, and the role it plays, with their institution’s leadership. This might include developing monitoring and evaluation systems to collect evidence to demonstrate the value of the course to their institution’s decision makers and potential funders.
- Ensure that core information resources can be updated at regular intervals. This may require training participants to update documents so that information remains up-to-date and useful.

worked, what did not, and how to improve future programmes for greater impact and sustainable results.

Language and cultural factors

Many health service providers and medical librarians in Vietnam are not proficient in English, which limits their ability to use free online resources. Also, the quality of clinical research in Vietnam is poor because teaching in this area is not of an international standard. As a result, research is poor and the level of Vietnamese published papers is also low, hence the relatively limited number of Vietnamese online medical resources. Limited research in languages other than English is a problem in many countries, and while immediate

solutions are unclear, INASP and other organizations are working to improve research quality in many countries, including Vietnam. In addition, the Vietnamese culture is such that individuals are reluctant to stand out and draw attention to themselves. This posed a big challenge for doing participatory training. One of the key lessons learned was that it is essential to ensure participants are comfortable with the basics of participatory learning before moving on to more advanced training techniques. Something such as basic presentation skills and developing confidence around that, seems to have had a lasting effect on the master trainers – this was cited by trainers as one of the areas still having an effect on them. When the master trainers set about delivering training workshops at

their own institutions, they were also faced with the challenge of getting the participants to engage in discussions. This is a topic that may need to be covered in any training-of-trainers that takes place in cultural environments where ‘standing out’ is less common or acceptable.

Long-term sustainability

Perhaps the biggest challenge was long-term sustainability. While all of the heads of participating institutions expressed their commitment to the training, succession planning was only considered seriously at one institution. The master trainers had differing levels of commitment to carry on the training, and some of the very skilful librarians who were



Vietnam has over 2000 rivers



trained have moved on to other jobs or institutions. In one case, a master trainer moved to a new institution and has been able to roll out training there, but this was not the case in other institutions. Also, financing the training could potentially be a challenge in the future, as it is not seen as something that should be paid for through normal library funds.

Finally, while the Sourcebook Compendium was cited as one of the most useful tools from the programme, its content needs to be updated regularly or it becomes obsolete. This requires time and financial commitment that needs to be considered at the outset of a training programme. ●



There are more than 38 million motorbikes on the roads in Vietnam

Learning in Practice

INASP is putting into practice some of the key learning outcomes from Vietnam in a new Network of Trainers pilot, where they are initially working with two African library consortia to develop networks of trainers in each country. Careful thought has gone into how these trainers are presented. They are associated with the consortia and are referred to as 'Consortium X trainers', rather than as something separate and/or INASP-related. INASP is supporting the consortia as they take greater responsibility for aspects of our work, in this case library skills training for institutional members of the consortium.

The idea of ongoing support and mentoring is a central approach in the Network of Trainers project too, albeit in a slightly different way from the Vietnam project. For this pilot, there will be two face-to-face workshops with an online Community of Practice in between and after the workshops, including assignments for participants to complete and peer support fostered throughout.

Rather than relying on a centrally developed set of core materials, participants in the Network of Trainers pilot will spend time reviewing and updating their own training materials in light of what they have experienced and learned during the face-to-face workshops. INASP always encourages anyone using the materials developed and made available online to adapt these for their own context; having the skills to develop relevant training materials themselves is a clear advantage to making this work more sustainable.

References

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- 5 inasp.info/en/news/details/74/

Evaluation Reports

For further details of the two evaluations reviewing this programme, please see inasp.info/en/publications
Evaluation Lead: Shampa Nath

INASP Team

Rebecca Bailey: Programme Manager for Training & Capacity Support

Martin Belcher: INASP's former Director of Programmes.