

# INASP's face-to-face training evolution

## Last decade shows move towards learner-centred approach

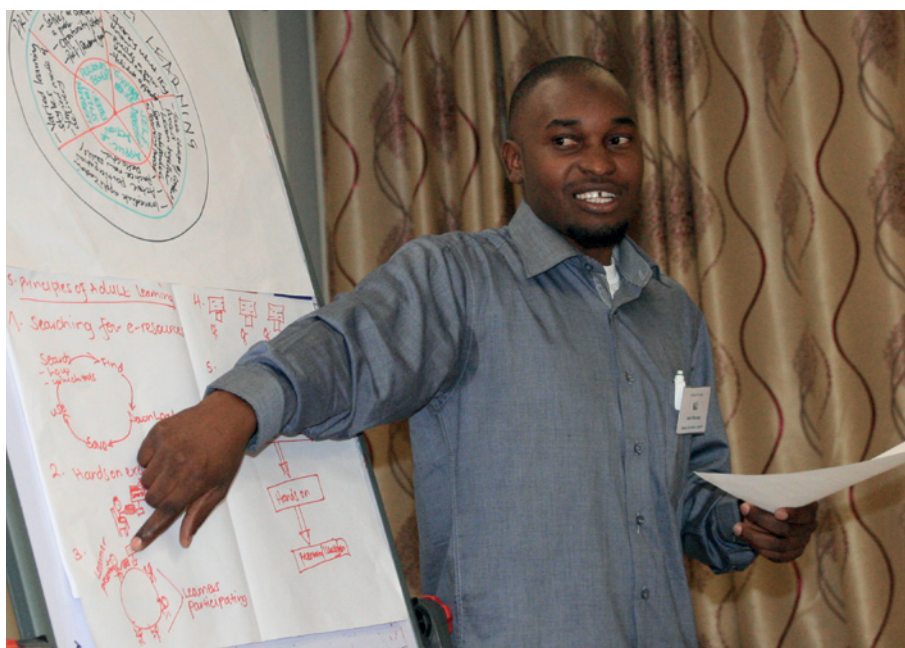
**This article reflects on the changes INASP has implemented in designing, delivering, monitoring and evaluating training approaches over the last 10 years. It looks at what adjustments have been made, why, and what has been learnt. It also looks at plans for developing training approaches in the future.**

INASP has always had capacity development at its heart, often much of it supported through training events. This in itself is not that extraordinary – many organizations working in international development develop, deliver and support training workshops in an effort to build the capabilities (knowledge, skills and approaches) of partners in the South to address the challenges they face. INASP, however, works to distinguish itself by continually reflecting on, learning from, and improving its training provision.<sup>1</sup>

Examples referred to here are drawn mainly from two areas of INASP's recent work: strengthening the capacity of library consortia and developing skills in evidence-informed policy making. However, similar themes and concerns run through all INASP's areas of training.

Interestingly, although INASP's ways of working have been adjusted over the years, the underlying approaches remain largely the same. INASP is committed to providing training that is based on content developed by subject experts, and workshops that are:

- Participatory, and develop capacity to train peers/colleagues (i.e. training of trainers);



Participants at a Network of Trainers event for librarian trainers in Ghana in February 2015 were able to adapt their training workshop content and strategies to make them more learner-centred.

- Aim towards post-workshop change; and
- Contribute to learning and development.

Below we look at each of the main approaches that lie at the heart of INASP's work to developing capacity through training.

## INASP approaches to developing capacity through training

### Techniques and training materials that foster participation

Even in the earliest references to training events in INASP's literature, there is a strong emphasis on participation. Attending a training event does not mean the same as participating in it. Participatory training means that everyone is involved and encouraged to be active.<sup>2</sup> To this end, INASP supports trainers and strengthens their skills in the use of participatory techniques and produces training materials that encourage participation.

For a long time, INASP training materials consisted of sets of



PowerPoint slides with trainer notes, and a series of practical activities designed to encourage workshop attendees to participate in the workshop and develop new skills by practising them. However, INASP was aware that creating training materials that encourage participation does not in itself guarantee a participatory approach to training delivery (and vice versa). The same session can be facilitated in a number of ways (i.e. if a trainer was more comfortable with a lecture style delivery of content, s/he could use that approach in training).

Encouraging true participation requires trainers with strong skills in facilitation and participatory training, not just activities that are designed to encourage this, and so our training approach has developed to foster this way of working.

#### **Maximizing the impact of INASP activities: developing trainees' capacity to train others**

##### *Using a travelling methodology to develop trainers' skills*

Much of the early training delivered by INASP to library consortia adopted a travelling methodology,<sup>4</sup> elements of which are still in place today. The aim of this methodology was not only to build the skills of librarians in technical aspects of their roles, but also their ability to pass these skills on to others, as trainers themselves.

This approach to training meant that each workshop had two facilitators – a lead facilitator and an assistant facilitator – as well as an observer. The lead facilitator had greater experience in the subject area and/or in delivering training and was not necessarily

from the country or region where the workshop was taking place. The assistant facilitator, as well as having some subject knowledge, would be from the country where the workshop was being held and therefore understood the context in which participants were working. The observer would be from the next country where the workshop was going to be held, so they could see the workshop in action and discuss the delivery of the future workshop with the two facilitators. They would then become the assistant facilitator for the workshop in their own country, and so on.

As one facilitator, Alice Nkhoma-Wamunza, explained, “I was one of a few that participated in, co-facilitated and facilitated workshops on Project Planning

and Management. My experience began as an observer at the first workshop in Kenya. It is during this time that observers familiarize themselves with the course content and delivery techniques in preparation for future facilitation... The first workshop was facilitated by Agnes Namaganda from Uganda and John Mwangi from Kenya. [In] the second, Agnes Namaganda was the lead facilitator and I was co-facilitator. The first two workshops prepared the ground work and gave me the opportunity to practise the skills and techniques I had learned. I was the lead facilitator for the third workshop, which took place in Tanzania.”<sup>5</sup>

As well as allowing the workshop to travel from country to country, being honed and tailored with each delivery through supported

#### **Post-workshop feedback confirms usefulness of practical tasks**

As part of its participatory approach, INASP has always encouraged learning by doing within its workshops. As many of the workshops focused on the learning of practical skills, the importance of learning by doing has been valued enormously. This is captured in the post-workshop feedback question asking ‘What was the most useful part of the workshop and why?’ A common answer to this question is ‘the practical tasks’:

**“The practical aspect of the workshop as it gave participants a hands on feel”** (Systems Librarianship workshop, Zimbabwe)

**“The opportunities to practise, since that was when we could apply what we learned”** (Project Proposal and Development Writing workshop, Cuba)

**“Practical scenarios on licensing terms and conditions”** (Negotiation Skills, Bangladesh)

**“The practical tasks, since I think they allow us to better assimilate the content”** (Monitoring and Evaluation of Electronic Resource Use workshop, Honduras)

Training materials have always included practical activities whereby workshop participants practise, reflect back on and then experiment with what they are learning. The underlying belief is that performing hands-on tasks, reflecting on that experience and then planning what to do better next time makes it more likely that participants will further develop and retain their new skills.<sup>3</sup>





During 2006, 21 workshops with over 350 participants in countries including Nepal (pictured) were held as part of the Bandwidth Management and Optimisation programme, which covered topics such as network traffic monitoring and analysis and web caching.

practice and observation, this approach was also used within individual countries to 'cascade' workshops from one institution to another.

This methodology worked well when the workshops INASP was offering library consortia were limited to a few topics, and when many of INASP's partner countries were at relatively similar stages in their training requirements and therefore needed a workshop on the same subject area. As needs evolved and countries requested workshops on a wider range of topics, it became more challenging to use the travelling methodology.

INASP's training offer evolved to setting up multi-year activity plans with some partner countries, matching their needs to a fixed set of capacity development activities on offer. This also provided an opportunity to reinvigorate the travelling workshop approach and strengthen links between

countries which had similar needs and were therefore following a similar training plan. Building in direct experience of delivering specific workshop materials and approaches, with people circulating between different roles (observer, assistant facilitator, lead facilitator) has therefore had a resurgence in the past couple of years. Many trainers have found this phased approach very helpful in building their confidence to deliver training. This complements the recent emphasis on peer support – encouraging supportive relationships with opportunities for reciprocal learning between individuals and organizations.<sup>6</sup>

### Developing more effective 'training of trainers' formats

Although INASP has supported elements of 'training of trainers'<sup>7</sup> in many workshops for a long time, there was also a tacit assumption

that after participating in a skills workshop, participants would then go on to share their new skills with others. The aim was not just to develop the capacity of participants, but that of others who (it was assumed), they would go on to train. In reality, sharing skills with others when you are relatively new to them yourself, and may not have any background in training or teaching, can be a real challenge. Realising the implications for this on some aspects of its work, INASP responded in two ways:

- Incorporating 'training of trainers' pedagogical skills into a broader range of workshops alongside the specific subject knowledge, such as within
  - In-depth health information training in Vietnam<sup>8</sup>
  - Evidence-informed policy-making training workshops
- Development of dedicated pedagogical training to develop learner-centred library training in Uganda and Ghana (pilot project).



These slightly different tactics have both had their successes. What remains a challenge is the need for trainers to continue their learning after the initial 'training of trainers', in whatever form, has finished. Contributing to lasting change in any development situation is often the ultimate aim but is also the most difficult to achieve. To that end, we continue to experiment with peer learning and support mechanisms such as communities of practice for trainers.

## Ensuring greater reach: making training resources freely available online

INASP has always ensured that the training materials that we develop are available on our website for download and use under a Creative Commons licence,<sup>9</sup> sometimes in multiple languages.<sup>10</sup> This openness characterized - and continues to characterize - INASP's approach to materials development and sharing. There is a strong belief that there is no point in developing high-quality training materials in order for them to stay hidden away and only used by INASP. Initially those wishing to download the materials needed to first register on the website (providing some basic contact information, organizational affiliation and, optionally, how they intended to use the materials). This step of registering enabled INASP to follow-up with those who had registered and downloaded training materials in order to gain an insight into their broader reach, beyond those workshops that INASP was delivering or providing funding for.

With INASP's move to a new website provider and platform came the decision to abandon



Attendees prepare for a group discussion during a 2009 workshop in Ghana, organized by one of the INASP-sponsored professionals who attended the UNESCO Train the Trainers in Information Literacy Workshop in 2008.

the requirement to register before downloading materials. As technology had moved on and with more information freely available on the internet, it was thought that needing to register could put people off exploring the materials. INASP wanted to ensure that its materials were available and accessible with minimal barriers.

INASP has always been keen that materials are adapted and contextualized so that they are relevant to wherever the workshop is taking place. As mentioned earlier, many of the materials took the form of PowerPoint presentations, with trainer notes and accompanying activities which encouraged adaptation to local context. Case studies and concrete examples from local contexts are very powerful when used in a workshop, making the content more engaging and easier for participants to relate to and therefore retain. Where training materials are used by our partners, we encourage the adaption of content to suit local needs.

## Moving to learner-centred training to improve quality

Recently, there has been a shift in both the development process and format of some of our training materials as INASP has explored putting more of an emphasis on a learner-centred approach. Whilst INASP always promoted specific approaches to its training and values participation, it did not have one consistent methodology to ensure the overall quality of training across the organization. INASP therefore began a process of questioning its approaches and examining how the different factors contributing to training effectiveness were orchestrated.

As part of this, INASP decided to investigate a learner-centred approach to training and learning, which we felt had the potential to provide the highest level of training quality and consolidate INASP's reputation as a valued training provider. While not simple to define, mainly due to the number



of different terms and meanings associated with the approach, the following description of learner-centred education has been useful to INASP:

“A pedagogical approach which gives learners, and demands from them, a relatively high level of active control over the content and process of learning. What is learnt, and how, are therefore shaped by learners’ needs, capacities and interests.”<sup>11</sup>

In order to advance INASP’s understanding of and expertise in this approach, a learner-centred training specialist was recruited in 2014. Since then, much work has been done on developing the learner-centred capabilities of individuals who train others on behalf of and/or in collaboration with INASP, including in the previously mentioned pilot; providing learner-centred training workshops for partners; and integrating learner-centred training skills sessions into regional skills workshops facilitated by librarians trained through the pilot.

With INASP’s increased understanding of the learner-centred approach, it became clear that its training materials would need to be re-designed so that they could be more flexibly used and adapted by trainers to local contexts, and participants’ existing knowledge and skills levels and their learning needs.

A different format for training materials, in the form of a toolkit, has been trialled with a small number of subject areas. The aim is to offer more flexibility to the trainer in designing sessions around the anticipated and emerging needs of participants, while still being able to meet

the overall learning outcomes as outlined in the toolkit. Content is presented in modules, with a series of activities that can be chosen by the trainer to support participants as they discover and explore the key themes and topics within each module. Some trainers may choose to develop short presentations to deliver the content, and then follow up with practical or discursive activities. Others may make the discovery of the content one of the activities, through group problem solving, for example. The result is to make learning a more immersive and learner-centred experience where each workshop is tailored to the people in the room.

The marked shift from workshops being trainer-driven to learner-centred does require trainers to have greater confidence in their training and facilitation skills than previous formats may have demanded. Working with trainers to develop that confidence and the skills to reflect, adapt, and re-develop workshop content and structure is one of the key challenges facing INASP in the future.

### **Evaluating how participants share and apply learning post-workshop**

There had always been an assumption that participants of training workshops would use the new skills and knowledge that they had learnt on their return to the workplace. In recent years, the need for individuals to be explicitly supported and encouraged to be able to do this has risen to prominence in INASP’s training strategy. This is not only because INASP is interested in influencing change within institutions, but because most learning takes place in the workplace after a training

intervention and this follow-on work is therefore an essential element of effective capacity strengthening support.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, INASP has therefore been placing an increased emphasis on taking time in the final sessions of a workshop to guide and support participants to formulate a concrete growth plan of action. As well as thinking about how they will share their learning with colleagues, participants work either individually or in groups to design a plan of action for when they return to the workplace. Action plans typically cover activities that will put into practice the skills and knowledge acquired during the training, following the principle of learning by doing.

INASP also encourages participants to secure institutional commitment from the organization in which they are based. This could take a variety of forms, such as a Memorandum of Understanding or a letter of support from the participant’s line manager or other senior figure within the institution. This commitment would ideally include supporting the implementation of learning and action plans within the home institution and/or consortium on the participant’s return.

As we will discuss in the next section, the extent to which participants were able to make planned changes is followed up by INASP and our partners as part of its monitoring and evaluation process.

### **Making monitoring, evaluation and learning processes more standardized and rigorous**

INASP as an organization is constantly striving to learn



and improve on its capacity development support, of which training has been one of its main tools. Looking back over the past 10 years, one of the biggest shifts has been in making the monitoring and evaluation of training interventions more standardized and rigorous. This is perhaps due to an increasing concern to monitor and evaluate development initiatives (effectiveness, efficiency and value for money are major concerns of donors' and development discourse), coupled with increased staff capacity within INASP in this area.

In terms of the monitoring and evaluation of training, at the end of each workshop participants used to be requested to complete a paper feedback form. They were asked for their views on the practical logistics of the workshop, which sessions had been most and least useful, suggestions for any changes that could be made to the workshop (in terms of materials, activities, timing etc.), and how they intended to make use of what they had learnt. These forms were posted back to INASP and kept as an electronic record. Each year, an analysis would be made using both quantitative and qualitative data. Conclusions drawn on particular workshops or processes would then feed into the following year's planning.

Over time, the forms were completed more frequently online, making analysis easier and data-inputting more manageable. But it became clear that the large number of free-text answer boxes elicited very little useful information. They were either left blank or it was difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from the data.

For a long time, INASP had been interested in finding out what



An e-resources workshop in Sri Lanka in 2006.

happened beyond the workshops they supported – what did people do with their new skills? This appetite to understand more about what happens after people leave the training room, what constrains or encourages them to apply their new skills, and what INASP could do to support this, together with a feeling that the feedback forms could do more, led to a re-working of not just the forms themselves, but the development of new tools and processes to explore these issues further.

Using the Kirkpatrick model as guidance,<sup>14</sup> INASP developed several tools and processes to track the development of individual skills and how this translates into behaviour change. These tools measure three aspects of training workshops and follow-on activities – reaction, learning, and behaviour change:

1. *Reaction*: what participants thought about the training workshop and about their learning (e.g. participants enjoyed the workshop and believe that they learnt a lot).
2. *Learning*: the increase in knowledge or capacity as a result of the training workshop (e.g. participants know something or can do something that they could not do prior to the training workshop).

3. *Behaviour Change*: the extent to which the participants have applied the learning and changed their behaviour (e.g. participants use their new skills in the workplace).

Some of the monitoring and evaluation tools that INASP developed in line with this are:

- *Facilitator feedback online survey*: facilitators complete this survey to give immediate feedback on how they felt the workshop went (measuring reaction).
- *Participant feedback online survey*: completed by all participants at the end of the training workshop to give immediate feedback on the event (measuring reaction).
- *Pre-workshop and post-workshop skills assessment*: this survey measures skills and knowledge in specific subject areas and is completed by participants prior to and after the training workshop. It is used to assess whether there has been a change in the level of knowledge as a result of participation (measuring learning).
- *Action plans and post-workshop tasks*: the implementation of these plans is followed-up six months after the workshop (when participants report on the changes that they made) as a means of measuring behaviour change.





## A snapshot of INASP training: workshops and trainings held from 1996-2016



This suite of monitoring and evaluation tools is allowing INASP – and its partners who play a role in collecting and analysing this data – to see the effect of its training workshops, understand where challenges remain, and take further steps to adapt its capacity development support in order for it to be more effective.

### Tailoring the learner-centred approach to local contexts and capabilities

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, INASP holds capacity development close to its heart and training workshops are likely to support this for the foreseeable future. While our training and learning workshops will continue to be underpinned by the

approaches outlined above, they will evolve in light of some of the key challenges touched on in this paper.

INASP is working towards further refining its learner-centred approach to training so that it can better fit trainer capacities, local cultures and contexts. In many of the countries where INASP works there are practical and cultural challenges which can limit the adoption and use of this approach. One of these challenges is insufficient training and planning time to use a learner-centred approach effectively. A second challenge is the substantial cultural change required in moving from a trainer-driven approach to a learner-centred approach that encourages high-level critical thinking on the part of participants.

In response to this, INASP intends to promote the adoption of a more 'contextualized and best fit' approach, while continuing to strive towards more ambitious learner-centred practice. In April 2016, INASP will be running a 'training of trainers' workshop for individuals who train on behalf of and/or in collaboration with INASP. One of the proposed outputs will be agreement on a set of principles which help crystalize the 'contextualized and best fit' approach, provide a framework for trainers who work with INASP, and clarify what a learner-centred trainer is, knows and does. These principles are likely to emphasize an active, responsive, reflective and realistic approach to training and learning across INASP.

## Developing a suite of approaches to respond to differing training and learning needs

INASP understands that applying one single approach, such as training or 'training of trainer' workshops, to any one given capacity and/or learning need is unlikely to facilitate sustained learning and change. So it is also investing in other capacity development approaches, some of which are more tailored approaches based on long-term relationships and experience of working with specific countries.

This 'basket' of approaches currently includes: online learning, mentoring, peer support, learning visits, problem-solving workshops and online communities of practice, alongside face-to-face training. There is a definite organizational appetite to understand how we can better combine these different approaches in order to support further learning and ultimately facilitate more significant and sustainable change at the individual, institutional and environment level.

An important consideration for INASP is how ambitious it and its trainers can be in terms of fostering critical thinking skills within the format of relatively short training workshops. These skills can take many years to develop, so INASP is being realistic in terms of what it can achieve. However, as it moves towards more joined-up capacity development approaches and sustained capacity development support, INASP could scale up its level of ambition. To this end, a Capacity Development Approaches Unit has recently been established within INASP, with two full-time staff dedicated to taking this work forward.

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