



Ideas on the Move

Weighing up the benefits of INASP's cascading training methodology

INASP, June 2010

Sustainable development is one of the driving forces behind INASP. Meeting the needs of our country partners is not simply a quick fix, but a long-term activity that focuses on building capacity in-country. The cascading training methodology focuses on building the skills of trainers and specialists with the intention of training others within their country, region or institution. The ripple effect of this method allows our activities to extend far beyond the initial workshop.

Training trainers and creating specialists

The cascading methodology involves developing the skills of an initial group of participants to train others on the same subject. Often referred to as 'Training the Trainers' (TTT), this approach has been favoured by INASP over the past decade. This method lends itself to a variety of subjects and techniques and has been applied at institutional, national and international levels – reaching large numbers and creating networking opportunities in the process. As this method enables training skills to spread or ripple, it has the potential to reach all staffing levels as the subject focus, complexity and technique can vary to suit the target group, location, time and available resources.

This methodology works through a series of workshops or training activities. Whilst this can be at various levels, country level cascading has been that most commonly adopted by INASP. Following nomination of the most appropriate person in their home country, each potential trainer first attends a workshop, often a pilot in the series, as an observer or participant. Following this, they act as assistant or co-facilitator at a workshop, usually in their own country. Finally, they take on the role of lead facilitator, often in another country. Each additional workshop is conducted on the same basis, cascading from one country/location or from one faculty/campus to the next.

INASP has designed training courses to meet the needs identified by our country partners or those deemed necessary to keep the research community up-to-date with developments. Whenever possible, existing local experts have developed and/or delivered training. While this is not always possible, it has become increasingly common. Where there is no known local expert, then an external expert facilitates the initial training. For various reasons, one area where this has recently been the case has been bandwidth management. However, this is expected to change as more of the workshop participants go on to facilitate their own workshops and capacity grows.

Feedback has been very positive on this approach. Not

Training of Trainers

Developing participant skills so that they go on to train others. This method aims to achieve sustainability through strengthening capacity and networks.

Advantages

- increases the impact of a single workshop
- enhanced capacity of participant/institution/country/region/network
- allows for customised training appropriate to the knowledge base or local environment
- customisation of materials using locally relevant examples
- potential to reach a wider audience
- cost-effective and sustainable
- flexibility in duration, content, participant knowledge and interest
- provides networking and peer assist opportunities

Disadvantages

- mixed quality of training
- continuation/sharing of skills may not ensue as anticipated if:
 - there is a lack of national/institutional support
 - there is a loss of momentum or commitment

only have many events been enabled as a result, many of them have continued to cascade long after INASP's involvement and often without our knowledge until after they have taken place.

Follow-up has indicated the training was effective as participants were not only confident in their ability to train at both formal and informal levels, but in some cases they had already led training events. In these cases training has been extended to different institutions and internationally, as well as to colleagues within their own institution.

Availing of existing expertise and courses

Rather than start from scratch with each workshop, making use of existing expertise and courses is an easy

Project planning and management workshops

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 familiarise themselves with the course content and delivery techniques in preparation for future facilitation.

The workshop includes both theory and practice sessions through short presentations, group work and plenary discussions. Participants are invited from different institutions reaching a wide audience with similar interests. Learning, delivery methods and techniques used are participatory, interactive and engaging and feedback is instantaneous. On the last day of the workshop participants are asked to fill out an evaluation form.

Group work was particularly useful and enabled participants to translate theory into practice, learn from each other, share experiences and establish new networks.

The first workshop was facilitated by Agnes Namaganda from Uganda and John Mwangi from Kenya. 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, and Francina Makondo, Zambia, was co-facilitator.

After four and a half days of intensive work, participants gained knowledge and skills on what it takes to plan, implement and manage a successful project. Feedback from the Tanzanian workshop was very positive. Comments included:

“ I will re-write and improve on existing projects and be more systematic when planning and managing projects, and I will write quality proposals”

“I will be able to conduct a similar workshop for interested groups”

Alice Nkhoma-Wamunza, PhD

Head, Research & Publications and Special Collections
UDSM Library

follow-on from, or to, cascaded training. By sponsoring our country partners to attend selected training events, there is the opportunity to get a variety of experiences and learning that might not otherwise be available.

This approach was used in 2008 to build teams of trainers who would then transfer (or cascade) new skills in-country. This also had the potential benefit of

Creating specialist training groups

Subject Focus

This area focuses on developing the skills of a few to provide subject specialist trainers for a region, country or institution; the emphasis is on the subject rather than the training skills.

Advantages:

- little lead time required as there are existing materials/resources
- allows for timely adoption of new developments
- provides networking and peer assist opportunities
- subject expertise is readily available nationally, institutionally and regionally to support others
- ability to localise materials to meet identified needs

Disadvantages (as in Training of Trainers plus):

- content can be too general without scope for localisation and tailoring
- can be expensive depending on course choice
- investment in an individual may not lead to the transfer of skills

assisting in regional presentation. The focus subjects were information literacy (IL) and institutional repositories (IR), areas highly relevant to INASP and where capacity building is much in demand. In this case, INASP requested applications for sponsorship and those selected attended a well-established and recognised IR course (Pretoria) and IL course (Cape Town). These events have allowed for the ensuing close relationship of the group which has supported and encouraged their onward transfer of skills.

By the end of 2009, five of the six attendees from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia had IRs set up at their home institutions. Additionally, the participants have been active in running national-level IR workshops. In Tanzania alone a series of five regional IR sensitization and Needs Analysis workshops were run, with participants from 19 institutions. KNUST University in Ghana, University of Nairobi and the University of Malawi are now looking into the possibility of hosting national repositories.

INASP training materials:

www.inasp.info/training

The cascading methodology:

www.inasp.info/travelling-workshops

INASP events:

www.inasp.info/events