

SMALL GRANTS, BIG REWARDS

The first two years of INASP's small grants scheme—2007-2008

2009

In its first two years, INASP's small grants scheme has grown to support well over one hundred training events in developing countries across the globe. Thanks to local leadership, the scheme has reached beyond the usual audiences and centres of excellence to raise awareness of – and foster expertise in – many areas of communication and publishing.



Developing of a botanical database, Tanzania

Launched in 2007, the small grants scheme was originally set up to award funds for training to institutions in partner countries. The scheme was developed to provide support for in-country identified and initiated activities

and, once accepted, organisation and design would be carried out by the applicants. This demand-led, country-owned method is the key to the project's ongoing success. Many of the plethora of events have been innovative and low-cost, but the main advantage has been that the events can be tailored to suit the particular needs of their associates, and to target the people who would most benefit from the training.

Following successful trials in six African countries in 2007, INASP extended the small grants scheme in 2008 to cover all of its partner countries at that time. The scheme's focus initially was training in diverse areas of ICT including web development, bandwidth management and optimisation, and use of electronic journals. When it was extended in 2008, the scheme also branched out to include other areas of work such as library development and publishing support. This has led to a host of activities, from research projects and policy development to library marketing and training in scientific writing. The following list illustrates the

diversity of activities.

Capacity Support

Sustainability

- Consortia development and strengthening
- Curriculum development
- Policy and strategic development
- Research projects

Skills

- E-resources - searching, usage, monitoring/evaluation, and dissemination, including subject-specific databases
- ICT technical - bandwidth management and optimisation; web design; maintenance
- Digitization and automation training
- Writing skills in various disciplines, including for journal editors and researchers
- Library marketing, customer care skills
- Project management
- Training of trainers

Networking

- Peer exchange and experience sharing visits, stakeholder meetings
- Subject-specific focus of training to facilitate network development
- Knowledge and learning forums
- Virtual support centre

Added extras

A huge benefit of the small grants scheme has been to provide INASP with an invaluable and detailed snapshot of the training needs across our partner countries. This will help us to plan increased and better-



E-resources workshop, Uganda

The fact that it was the first training event at our institution and the fact that we had no prior experience in organizing and facilitating such event, the whole process and implementation was a learning process to us....

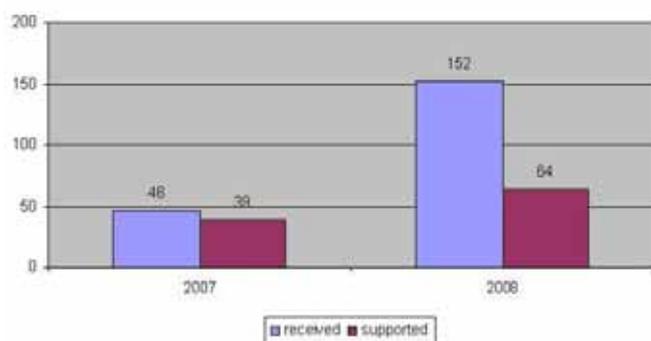
Small grants workshop participant

The event was an eye opener to the institution...we learnt from each other.

Small grants workshop participant

targeted support through our other schemes in the future. Our network of Country Coordinators has proven to be very important in assessing the viability of proposals received. Another unexpected benefit of the small grants scheme has been to shed light on areas of poor communication, for example, several grant applications have been made for events or services which were already available. These applications will help us to pinpoint regions where people are less aware of our activities and address the problem.

As a part of the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii), one of the key aims of the small grants scheme is to support sustainable and equitable development. The small grants have generated a great opportunity for in-country growth that is designed and maintained nationally. Organisers themselves have also benefited from the process of applying for small grants and running activities. For many, the experience



Small Grant Applications 2007-2008

of writing funding proposals and evaluating and reporting the success of their events has been invaluable. In coordinating these activities, organisers have also forged links between local institutions which they – and we – hope will foster greater collaboration in future.

Growing popularity

In the scheme's first year, 39 out of 46 applications for small grants were accepted, and applications more than tripled in 2008 with 152 (of which 64 were supported). Many of these grants have supported more than one

We wish to thank INASP for coming up with the small grant programme that has decentralized training activities and set up outreach programmes.

Small grants workshop participant

activity – in total, 135 events have been staged in a wide range of geographical and technical areas. INASP currently accepts applications for small grants twice yearly, with deadlines usually falling in January and July.



Strengthening Online Resources and NepJOL publications, Western Nepal

Rave reviews

Feedback about the scheme has been very positive. In particular, participants have valued the chance to establish local support networks that they hope will continue to develop and bear fruit in the future. People have also valued the opportunity to take part in training that might be unavailable to them if it were based in the usual institutions.

Teething troubles

Every new project has its glitches, and following the success of the first two years of the small grants scheme, INASP must now address the few teething problems that are emerging. Firstly, we must consider how to continue to allocate fairly the limited funds and staff time available to the growing number of strong applications. We are also keen to encourage applications from a broad spread of countries – some currently make far fewer proposals than others, possibly through a lack of awareness of the scheme. Finally, there is often the risk of overlap between nationally planned events and longer-term activities organised by INASP. We need to address this potential problem to avoid duplicating work or expenses.

In the future...

Overall, the first two years of the small grants scheme have been very positive and have contributed significantly to meeting the needs of INASP stakeholders. Following the first phase of 2009 applications, over 20 of the 64 submissions had been approved. Based on our experience so far, and to ensure that we continue to make the best use of funds, we have updated the application form and criteria. This should help us to assess applications for grants more thoroughly and efficiently. It should also help us to focus on more innovative events and avoid duplication of existing work, so that activities supported by the scheme complement individual projects developed by our country partners.

For more information on the the small grants scheme and application process, contact us:

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