Supporting a Community of Trainers

Can a Community of Practice help address trainers' need for continuous, easily accessible, and context-appropriate support?

Gerdien ten Cate
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Analysis of a research, carried out by the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), determining whether a Community of Practice can be of support to ICT4D (Information and Communication Technologies for Development) trainers in addressing their challenges and needs.

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ABSTRACT

In this report Gerdien ten Cate analyses research carried out by the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) from April to July 2005, designed to identify the information needs of computer and internet trainers who provide services to development projects and organisations. In this report the trainers are referred to as ICT4D trainers, where ICT4D stands for Information and Communication Technologies for Development. An online survey and focus group discussion carried out among the trainers sought to answer the question,

"Can a Community of Practice (CoP) help address the trainers' need for continuous, easily accessible, and context-appropriate support? If yes, how should the evolution of a Community of Trainers (CoT) be supported by the involved actors?"

The author reviews the key concepts surrounding Communities of Practice and presents the findings of the survey in detail. She concludes that a Community of Trainers could be a meaningful and feasible vehicle for addressing the ICT4D trainers' challenges and needs. However, it was also recognised that success of the Community will depend on ever-changing social, cultural and economic factors. Based on the findings, the author recommends specific steps that can be taken to increase the chance of success of the Community of Trainers.

INTRODUCTION

"There's a saying in the circle of my friends that goes: 'Two people exchanging apples still end up with one apple each, and two people exchanging ideas always end up with more ideas." (Survey participant from Zambia, April 2005)

Background

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be seen as supportive tools in a person's daily work practice. ICTs can contribute to sustainable development when they support existing development activities in areas such as education, governance, health, livelihood opportunities and environment.[1] In international development contexts this idea is often referred to as ICT for Development (ICT4D) or ICT-enabled development.[2]

An essential step towards the use of ICTs for development purposes is building capacity. ICT trainers have important tasks: they have to find a balance between the technical side of ICTs and the practical relevance of the tools for people working in civil society and development organisations.

The rapid development of ICTs and the often varied training audiences, make ICT4D training a challenging experience. Appropriate technologies and resources are not always easily accessible and the training audiences are often totally inexperienced with ICTs (e.g. farmers in rural remote areas).

Problem Identification

In the ICT4D training context, the lack of qualified trainers appears to be major problem, because:

1. For many technically skilled people, delivering ICT training is a first job after graduation from university or technical school. These trainers often leave their jobs after a relatively short period when they are offered better opportunities (better-paid, higher status etc.) in other jobs.
2. Due to lack of financial and human resources, development programmes often require existing staff to take on training activities in addition to already heavy workloads.

Both situations lead to training activities being organised and delivered by persons who lack formal training themselves.[3]

Many international organisations working in the field of ICT undertake activities designed to build the capacity of ICT trainers in the South. The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), for example, has a programme of "Train-the-Trainer" workshops[4] which allow trainers to learn together and share their experiences. Unfortunately, face-to-face workshops are expensive and they may not always address specific challenges and needs in the time available. After face-to-face workshops, some trainers network informally by e-mail, telephone or Instant Messenger. However, these contacts decrease over time unless they are nurtured.

In 2001, several like-minded organisations founded the ITrainOnline[5] (ITO) portal to assist civil society organisations (CSOs) and other actors in developing countries to confront the challenges posed by ICTs. The portal intends to connect people and know-how with the needs of ICT learners and trainers, including annotated links to

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[1] See www.iicd.org/about, http://www.bytesforall.net/SDC_ICT4D/view, http://www.globalknowledge.org/ict4d/index.cfm?menuid=43, http://www.iicd.org/articles/iicdnews.2004-09-30.6202541139

[2] See http://www.capacity.org/Web_Capacity/Web/UK_Content/Navigation.nsf/index2?ReadForm

[3] See http://www.itrainonline.org/articles/123

[4] See http://www.iicd.org/TTT

[5] See http://www.itrainonline.org

training resources covering areas such as basic ICT skills, multimedia, web development, open source and resources for trainers. Part of the site is dedicated specifically to the needs of trainers. It focuses on aggregating and describing freely available resources around training skills, training content and materials. The target audience for this section of the site is ICT4D trainers - persons who execute training in ICT-enabled development contexts. Those could include people who execute their training in development projects on behalf of ICT training organisations they work for, but also people who work for development organisations that are involved with ICT training.

While ItrainOnline offers a wealth of free online resources for trainers and the general public, to date, the space for interaction is limited. This led to the idea to expand the ItrainOnline Trainers' section with an online space in which trainers can interact and share their knowledge, experiences and expertise – an online Community of Practice. This idea is at the origin of the present study.

METHODOLOGY

In order to identify important issues related to Communities of Practice in general and their implications for development contexts specifically, a review of concepts and ideas was the first step in this investigation.[6] The review revealed possible needs and challenges that should be taken into account for the Community of Trainers' evolution. This review was followed by a survey and discussions with the ICT4D trainers themselves.

Survey
Face-to-Face Meeting
The process of consulting with ICT4D trainers regarding their needs began with a "Train-the-Trainer" workshop organised in April 2005 by IICD and hosted by ColdReed Training in Lusaka, Zambia. Participants, mainly African trainers affiliated with IICD's programme, provided feedback on a draft version of the online survey.

Online Survey
An online survey was administered in May 2005 to explore the ICT4D trainers' context and challenges and their interests in and capacities for joining a Community of Practice. The 65 people who responded to the online survey were asked if they wished to join the subsequent Focus Group discussion. The 53 who said yes were sent an email stating the goals, requirements and expectations of the group. Of these, 20 went on to participate in the Focus Group.

Online Focus Group Discussion
In order to better understand the survey results, to validate them and to address more complex issues, an online Focus Group Discussion was conducted in May/June 2005.

Participants
According to the initial idea of maximizing exchange and learning, the Community of Trainers (CoT) would consist of a diverse group of trainers from as many different organisations and countries as possible. However, due to limitations in time, language and contact information, the respondents were gathered mainly from within the networks of IICD (International Institute for Communication and Development) and INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications), two ItrainOnline partners that have extensive ICT training programmes in developing countries.

- 30 IICD-affiliated trainers who participated in the Train-the-Trainer workshops 2003 and 2004 were approached by e-mail. Trainers from Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania and Bolivia were involved;

- 16 IICD-affiliated trainers from Train-the-Trainer workshop 2005 were approached face-to-face during the workshop. Trainers from Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda and Ghana were involved;
- Several other IICD-affiliated trainers from the same countries were approached by internal contacts via e-mail;
- 36 INASP-affiliated trainers from Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Nepal and Pakistan were approached by a training programme staff[7] at INASP to get a more diverse respondents group. INASP is an organisation comparable to IICD in its aims to help local organisations make appropriate use of ICTs. Furthermore, INASP also uses a Train-the-Trainer approach in building ICT training capacity. IICD and INASP differ in terms of expected deliverables and levels of support for their affiliated

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[6] *Gerdien ten Cate's theoretical overview of online communities has been considerably shortened in this version of the report. – editor.*
[7] *See http://www.inasp.info/training/, for more information contact Sara Gwynn, sgwynn@inasp.info*

trainers.

- Additionally, a link to the survey on ItrainOnline (ITO) allowed trainers affiliated with other organisations, or who are not affiliated with any ICT4D support organisation, to join.

Biases
Regarding the investigation, it should be noted that due to the chosen methodology, as well as the perspective of the investigators, certain biases appeared:

- Using online investigation tools may have attracted only trainers with relatively high access and connectivity to communication technologies;
- Direct invitation to trainers who are affiliated with only two international organisations may have given a distorted view of the actual situation;
- The mainly voluntary participation may have caused that only people who were interested and had the time joined (e.g. more managers than trainers joined).

Communities of Practice

In this section, concepts and ideas concerning online Communities of Practice are provided, to obtain a better understanding of what those communities are about, and what should be taken into account for the proposed Community of Trainers.

Definition
A Community of Practice (CoP) is:

"A group of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better". (Wenger, 1998)

In a Community of Practice, people meet, share and interact around an area of knowledge of major interest to them. A Community of Practice may exist under very different names like "knowledge networks", "thematic groups", "learning communities", "best practice teams", just "networks", or may even exist informally, without having any name at all. More important than the name is the sense of connection and mutual support that leads to ongoing learning and access to resources.

The community's assumed benefits for its members are help with challenges, access to expertise, confidence, fun and meaningful work, which in time could lead to personal development, reputation and professional identity. The organisations for which the members work, can benefit from the Community of Practice, because of its ability to solve problems, save time and reuse resources, which in time could lead to better strategic capabilities, innovation and new strategies.

According to Community of Practice theory, a CoP needs to be structured by the three criteria:

- Domain: the area of shared inquiry and key issues
- Community: the relationships among members and the sense of belonging
- Practice: the body of knowledge, methods, cases, tools and documents

However, it should be realised that "structure enables as it constrains," meaning that for a CoP to be effective, it must maintain a certain degree of autonomy, flexibility, and responsiveness. (Bond, 2004)

The activities within a CoP should be seen in light of social learning and social exchange theories, which emphasise the importance of social interactions, relationships and trust and the practical/contextual side of learning and sharing. People together always know more than one person on his/her own. However, because the value of what is exchanged and the return on the exchange are not readily anticipated, social exchanges of knowledge, experiences and expertise depend on lasting bonds and trust.

The possibilities of meaningful use of ICTs – like participation in a Community of Practice - depend on people's technological capital, including cultural, social and economic capital. Those capitals are intertwining and complex, which makes it difficult to identify them. Furthermore, although they could be seen as indicators for the CoP's dynamics, it is important to realise that they never can predict how the community evolves, as within the CoP, new contexts, interests, challenges and (sub-) cultures can emerge.

A CoP cannot be forced to come into existence by external actors, but has to emerge from the inside, from certain interests and needs among its members. Therefore, in case of an external supported CoP, like the Community of Trainers (CoT), members should be involved from the start to create local appropriateness and the sense of ownership and trust needed for meaningful participation. The existence of different member roles in the Community of Trainers is important to

make participation interesting and to create the right dynamics.

CoP technologies should support the sense of belonging and togetherness in the community in which people are not in physical nearness. They should be designed for use and learning, for evolution, for closeness at hand and from a users' perspective. Actual use cannot be predicted beforehand as it emerges within the CoP.

Role of External Support
Communities of Practice appear in many different sizes and shapes. There is an important distinction to be made between:

- Communities of Practice that emerge from a core group of people who share a passion
- Communities of Practice that are externally supported from the start

Emerging CoPs
Communities of Practice can emerge from a core group of people who meet informally to explore their common passion. When those people actively share their experience and expertise with others of similar interest, other people can be drawn into the group. In such cases, members generally take on roles because they care deeply about the practice and the community's success. Leaders are not chosen, nominated or selected, but emerge from the ranks of the impassioned. Likewise, core CoP members fulfil most or important roles when the CoP is in its infancy, collectively insuring that all community responsibilities are met. However, as a CoP grows, roles tend to become more formal. Communities that evolve in this manner present a challenge: the time from the initial meeting of a core group to a fully functioning CoP can take years.

Created CoPs
Created CoPs derive from an identified potential by external actors. In such cases, the prospective members may not recognise their shared interests and/or the potential of the CoP themselves. Or they may not know how to organise and manage the CoP. When communities are helped to come into existence (like the proposed Community of Trainers), roles are often established and staffed. Sponsors are located, leaders and a core team are deployed to help and plan its launch and members are invited to the community at an official launch or kickoff celebration. Additionally, technologists, administrators, content managers and facilitators are enlisted to provide the support needed to sustain the CoP and help it mature. Created communities may grow faster than emerging CoPs, because of the external support available. However, they often also face more challenges in building trust and active participation than CoPs that emerged from a shared passion.

Member Roles
In both emerging and created CoPs, it is important that different members have different roles to enhance and support participation. It is assumed that exactly the combination of different levels of experience, knowledge and expertise will make participation interesting and will allow the emergence of the desired dynamics of supply and demand in the CoP. Below is a list of possible member roles. Not all communities require people to fill every role. In many communities several roles are assumed by one person.

• Experts	keepers of the CoP's knowledge domain or practice and serve as centres of specialized tacit knowledge for the CoP and its members.	
• Core members	persons that have key areas of experience or expertise, or have a keen interest in performing a function for the online community.	
• Community members	take ownership in the CoP by participating in its events and activities. As the CoP begins to coalesce, they become more actively involved in the CoP's practice.	
• Leaders	provide the overall guidance and management needed to build and maintain the CoP, its relevance and strategic importance, and its level of visibility.	
• Sponsors	(generally not part of the CoP) help secure needed resources, nurture and protect the CoP, and ensure its exposure.	
• Facilitators/ moderators	encourage and energise participation by interacting with the CoP, by endorsing ideas, and by directing knowledge requests to the appropriate experts.	
• Content managers	search, retrieve, transfer and respond to direct requests for the CoP's explicit knowledge and content.	
• Mentors	members who help new members navigate the CoP and adopt its norms and practices.	
• Admin/ Events Coordinators	coordinate and plan online or face-to-face CoP events or activities.	
• Technologists	oversee and maintain CoP technology and help members navigate its terrain.	

(Fontaine, 2003)

It is important to realise that many Communities of Practice have difficulty maintaining trust and participation because of the lack of transparency ("If I put something in to the CoP, I'd better see that I'll get something out of it!") and a lack of common context and purpose ("What's in it for me?"). This may especially be valid for created CoPs (like the proposed Community of Trainers) and therefore, in those CoPs, members should be involved from the start as much as possible to build a sense of ownership early on. Identifying and/or supporting members to fulfill certain roles is important. However, it should be realised that, in the end, it is a conscious or unconscious decision of the members themselves to have those roles.

Design Considerations
The lack of physical proximity and social cues in ICT-mediated interaction have an impact on the sense of togetherness within the online community. For this reason, face-to-face meetings will still be meaningful additions. Furthermore it implies that, technologies for CoPs should provide resources for making togetherness more continuous as well as allow meaningful participation in the context of the community's and individuals' activities. (Wenger et al, 2005) Taking this CoP perspective, good technology design would then include:

Design for Ease of Use and Learning
- Look for existing tools in environments available for adoption or with minor modifications.
- Sustained interaction with other CoP members can lead to sophistication.
- Individual and group learning may take place in, around and about technology for CoPs.

Design for Evolution
- Technologies need to support the evolution of the community, meaning that there should be possibilities to use different tools in different ways.

Design for "Closeness at Hand"
- Members may need to use the CoP from their own PC, from a shared PC at work or in a public access area.
- E-mail still appears to be successful, because it integrates community interactions in an already often used tool in social life and at work.

Design from the Users' Perspective
- Find a balance between community and individual perspectives, including different needs, preferences, personal learning goals and familiarity with technologies.

Findings

The survey respondents group consisted of 65 respondents, the Focus Group consisted of 24 participants (20 trainers, 3 project team members and one IICD staff member) and the face-to-face meeting had 16 participants. The findings presented in this section may not provide a representative picture of the ICT4D training group as a whole, because of the relatively small number of participants. However, taking into account the diversity of the group and the fact that the data were gathered within a relatively small amount of time, it is hoped that the results can be used as an indication for the issues faced by ICT trainers involved with development work.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Region

In this investigation, it was assumed, that ICT4D training is executed in non-Western countries and therefore, only trainers from non-Western countries were directly invited to participate. Via a link on the ITrainOnline web space, which also focuses on a non-Western public, an attempt was made to reach the larger ICT4D training public.

Region	
Africa	53%
Asia	26%
Latin America	5%
North America	11%
Europe	5%

The idea behind the question "In which country do you live?" was to identify differences in time zones (which could be important for synchronous/a-synchronous interaction) and to get an impression of possible nationalities, cultures and local contexts. The survey data show a diverse picture, indicating that the trainers live in different time zones and most likely also may have diverse national, cultural and contextual backgrounds. The respondents from Europe and North America accessed the survey via the link on ItrainOnline. From this it could be argued that people in Western countries are also interested in using ItrainOnline and may also be interested in joining the CoT.

Language

To keep the investigation focused and manageable, only English-speaking trainers were involved: leaving Spanish-, French- and possible other language-speaking trainers out of consideration. Although the results therefore may not be applicable to the larger ICT4D trainers group, they did provide some insightful information about the way language may have impact on interaction between people who speak different languages in their daily lives and work practices.

Preferred language for communication with peers/ colleagues	
English	78%
French	11%
Spanish	4%
Other: Russian Nepali	2% 2%
n=46	

The survey results show that for the majority of the respondents, English is the preferred language for communication with peers or colleagues. Even more respondents consider themselves to be "fluent writers in English" (83%). This implies that, although some people may prefer other languages for communication, they still are confident about their own English writing skills.

During the Focus Group Discussion, the level of English writing skills varied. Most of the participants didn't seem to have any problems with communication in English, but for a few of them it did appear to be an obstacle. One of the participants even admitted that: "due to my poor english knowledge,

some time I feel difficult in communication each other" (sic).

Besides, it seemed that participants with better English writing skills posted more and longer contributions than their peers who had "less" English writing skills.

From this it could be argued that, even for a group of trainers who are assumed to speak a certain language, who mention to prefer this language for communication with peers or colleagues and who consider themselves to have fluent writing skills, spoken and written communication between trainers who do not speak the same language on a daily basis may be challenging.

Gender
When social and professional relationships are mediated by technology, it can sometimes reinforce old roles, sometimes change them, but in any case it is not possible to think of new communication technologies as "gender neutral". It could be argued that women's access to information sources and communication channels are crucial if they are to attain democratic participation, respect for their human rights and an equal voice in the public sphere. However, in many contexts, women are more or less excluded from the use of ICTs.

That the ICT4D training context is dominated by men is supported by the survey data. From the total of 39 persons who responded, 72% were male and 28% were female. In the Focus Group (n=24), 62% of the participants were male and 38% were female, and in the face-to-face meeting only 2 out of 16 participants were female. During the Focus Group Discussion, the women were at least as active as the men, if not more so. Taking into consideration the relatively small number of women in this field, and assuming that men and women complement each other in interaction and collaboration activities, it will be important to pay special attention to women's participation in the Community of Trainers.

Work Setting
Type of Employment
ICT4D training is executed in many different organisations and sectors. Trainers may work for government organisations, NGOs (non-governmental organisations), private sector organisations or they may be self-employed. Organisational culture and perception of ICT4D training may differ between those kinds of employment. It was assumed that cross-organisational collaboration can be meaningful when ICT4D trainers from different organisations have complementary or contradicting views. In the same sense, this kind of collaboration can be challenging, when views are conflicting or when very different jargon is used.

Role of Training in Organisation

Type of employment	
Self-employed	15%
Government organisation	34%
NGO	31%
Private organisation	12%
Other	9%
n=62	

Many ICT4D trainers can work in organisations in which training is the principal activity, such as commercial ICT training companies or university computer centres, but also in organisations in which training is a side activity, such as NGOs that introduce ICTs in their work programmes, or community radio stations. Whether giving training is a principal or side activity for an organisation may determine the extent to which trainers are surrounded by support or training expertise of their colleagues and managers. In turn, this may determine the extent and the kind of support needed from sources external to their own organisation.

Is training the principal activity of your organisation?	
Yes	86%
No	6%
Other: now or then	8%
n= 62	

The survey data indicate that the majority of the respondents work for organisations in which training is a principal activity. This could imply that most of the trainers are surrounded by a certain level of support from colleagues and managers, from which the assumption could derive that those trainers may experience less need for external support than their peers who work for organisations in which training is a side activity.

Main Work Role/Level

How can you best describe your main position at work?	
Prof. Worker (not supervising other trainers)	28%
Prof. Worker (supervising other trainers)	21%
Manager/ director/ head of department	48%
Other	3%
n= 62	

According to the survey data, the majority (69%) of the respondents has supervising authority. The data show a strikingly high percentage of managers, directors and heads of department. Reasons for the fact that most respondents have supervising authority, could for example be: supervisors and managers may have had better access to the survey since they have more access to the Internet on their own computers, they may have had more time to join the survey because they may spend more time behind their computers, or they may have been more interested in dialogue on a strategic approach to improve ICT4D training.

In the ICT4D training context, the extent to which a person's job consists of giving training varies. Whereas some people are full-time ICT4D trainers, for others, giving ICT training is only a small part of their daily work. To the question "What percentage of your job consists of giving training?" 39% of the persons who responded to the question (n=62), answered that their job consisted for 50% or more of training, whereas 61% answered between 0 and 50%. This implies that for most respondents giving training is not a full-time job.

The extent to which a person's job consists of delivering training determines the extent to which a person is in the position to obtain knowledge and expertise from practice. ICT4D trainers who give workshops on a frequent basis may have a lot to share with others, because of their ample experience.

Access to ICTs
Working in ICT4D training means dealing with ever changing technologies, while at the same time being bound to the limitations of a development context, such as the lack of appropriate equipment, low bandwidth and power failures.

How often do you use the Internet?	
Never	2%
< 1 hour/week	-
1-< 5 hours/week	4%
5-< 10 hours/week	9%
10-< 20 hours/week	15%
20-< 40 hours/week	28%
40 hours/week or more	41%
n=46	

According to the survey data, getting access to basic ICTs doesn't seem to be a serious challenge for the greater part of the respondents group. The majority stated that they use the Internet 20 hours or more a week and have full access to the Internet via their own computer at work. It appears that 35% have access to the Internet at home and only 12% of the respondents have to share a computer with others at work.

There also seem to be few factors that discourage the respondents in using the Internet. Only 22% of the respondents mentioned "a slow Internet connection" as a discouraging factor

to go online and only 20% mentioned "often interrupted connection". In the specified answers, several respondents mention that the limitation only apply for the home use of the Internet. Furthermore, most respondents consider themselves to be "fast typists" (69%) and "good with short cuts" (88%).

Regarding this rather bright picture, it should be noted that the choice of using an online survey tool may have been determining for the composition of the final respondents group, reaching only the people who have already access to the Internet. Furthermore, participating in the Focus Group Discussion required also a relative high level of connectivity, as participants had to check their email at least once per two or three days to keep up with the discussions.

The fact that some postings in the Focus Group Discussion, started with sentences like "sorry I could not access my mail yesterday as there was some power problem at the main server" and "I was not able to join the group last week because telecommunication activity was out for the last two and a half weeks" indicate that connectivity isn't always trouble-free, even for people with relatively good access.

Activities and Challenges in Daily Work
According to the Community of Practice theory, people collaborate because they share certain interests and challenges in their daily work. As reflected in the former section, ICT4D training covers a broad field, crossing organisational, hierarchical, and physical boundaries. It was argued, that the contextual factors may be determining for the activities and challenges faced by trainers and that variety of context may imply a variety of needs. In this section, activities and challenges of trainers involved with ICT4D training were analysed to find out whether and where a common ground exists among them. Cross-comparisons with the findings in the former section were used to find out whether interesting differentiations could be made.

Within their daily training practice, the respondents seem to be involved in a lot of different activities. From the answers to the question "Over the last three months, what has been part of your daily work?" the following "top-five" of daily work activities could be composed:

Designing ICT training: computer	63%
Developing training materials	60%
Conducting training	58%
Participating in workshops/seminars on behalf of org.	54%
Participating in workshops/seminars as an individual	50%
	n=48

The activities above may not be striking as they seem to be typical trainer activities. Through making some cross-comparisons, an attempt was made to identify whether trainers with different contextual backgrounds (working for different kind of organisations, at different hierarchical levels etc.) may have strikingly different work activities. Some striking outcomes were:

- Library management was a number-one activity for INASP affiliated respondents, but was not to be found in the top-three list of IICD or ITO respondents. This could imply that library management is an interest of only a specific public.
- Designing non-ICT training programmes appeared on the list of ITO affiliated respondents. This could imply that the broader public (assuming that the ITO-respondents represent a broader public) may have professional interests that are not ICT related.
- Designing non-ICT training programmes was only contributed by respondents who are self-employed.

- Providing logistic support was only in the top-three of respondents who work for government organisations.
- Networking internationally was only in the top-three of respondents who work for NGOs. This implies that respondents who work for NGOs may be more internationally directed than respondents who are self-employed or work for government or private organisations.
- Networking seemed to be mainly an activity of managers/directors/heads of department.

It is important to note that the causes of the differences are just speculations. Therefore, to identify what the causes of the differences are, more specific research would have to be conducted.

Challenges

From the open question "Could you please describe a recent challenge that has come up in your work as a trainer" a large variety of answers were derived. Despite this variety however, there appeared to be overlaps and the following categories could be defined:

Challenge	Example	Percentage
Obtaining (appropriate) training programmes/ materials	"To find appropriate training materials"; "Creating training materials for new training"; "I am advising on what training modules to include in a ebusiness workshop for SMEs in developing countries. I seek other programs that have developed similar material so I can ascertain level and relevance of topics to include in the training."	30%
Obtaining (appropriate) hardware/software	"Finding appropriate hardware for students"; "Lack of resources (we did a request for more computers to be bought)"; "lack of equipment for practical training, hasn't been solved yet."	23%
Dealing with varied/specific audiences	"Explaining what ICT is to the rural community, people didn't know what it was. It took me long to explain how ICT can assist them." "To demystify the subject to beginners. This was to introduce what a computer is to community and political leaders."	23%
Time/workload	"The main challenge is to balance work as a trainer and other work situations i.e. time to conduct the training"	12%
		n=41

From the fact that it was possible to categorise the answers to this open-ended question meaningfully and from the fact that all categories deal with training issues, it could be argued that common challenges exist, which is an important pre-condition for the Community of Trainers to come into existence.

No significant differences were found in the challenges faced by by trainers from different organisational backgrounds. Some differences that appeared are:

- Especially managers/directors seemed to perceive obtaining training programmes/materials as a challenge. This could imply that they are/feel responsible for provision of training programmes/materials of their trainers.
- Especially supervisors seemed to have difficulties in dealing with varied/specific audiences.
- Overall, respondents who work for private organisations seemed to face the

least challenges – no challenges regarding hard/software challenges, dealing with varied/specific audiences, marketing or work-overload were mentioned by them. This could imply that private organisations may provide more sufficient support than government organisations and NGOs.

Taking a closer look at the challenges mentioned by the trainers, a distinction could be made between general challenges (like lack of resources, equipment, materials) and specific, context related challenges, like the examples below:

"During a ICT4D Awareness seminar that was organised in one of the remote locations in Uganda, content translation to a local language was such a big problem."

"A decent TTS (text-to-speech) Vietnamese tool"

"Adapting the international resources into Nepali context"

"Designing an ICT programme which is localised."

It could be argued that, whereas support towards general challenges could be provided by general resources, specific challenges may ask for more specific support. It is important to realise that a general stated challenges, like "lack of materials", may also be very specific - the context in which materials are used may ask for making adjustments. The answers to the question "How did you deal with this challenge" made clear that especially in case of specific context related challenges, in stead of material resources (books, articles etc.), other people (colleagues, peers) were involved to overcome the challenge, e.g.:

"Working with others to come up with a better tool."

"Asked my colleagues to provide materials because what I saw in the Internet was not in context to the participants and goal of the training."

"Needed some new ideas on some pedagogic design problem. Discussed with colleagues. A wider community to consult with would have been useful."

The examples indicate a need among the trainers to share practical work issues with others in the same field of work. From this, it could be argued that joining the Community of Trainers, in which sharing practical issues with others is a central activity, could be a meaningful way for trainers to collaborate. The examples also indicate however, that certain challenges may ask for very specific support, which implies that meaningful participation in the CoT could only come into existence when the trainers also recognise each other's local contextual differences.

In the Focus Group Discussion, "Challenges in your Daily Practice" was one of the favourite topics. Even before it was presented as a discussion topic, one of the participants stated the issue of giving training to "I-know-it-all"- participants and asked how others would deal in such cases.

> Question: "My first question is: How does one handle a group of "I know it all" participants?"
>
> Answer: "Good question from my old and good friend, Clare. "I know it all people" can be irritating sometimes, but it can also be fun to have one or two in a group. The trick is how does one manage them for the benefit of a larger group. I would suggest you keep them busy in a calculated manner, so they don't become suspicious that you are picking on them, with loads of questions and activities. They will give off their best where they are most skilled or knowledgeable and should crumble when they can't deliver. At this point they may come up with excuses; accommodate the excuses but only for a little while......My initial thoughts on this, I may come up with some more ....."
>
> Response to answer: "Thanks Jonnie, That's quite interesting. My approach to this was, throw the ball in their coats and when they fail to handle, they turn back to you."

Strikingly, the example also shows that the participant who responded to the question was apparently acquaintance of the participant who asked the question, which supports the idea that "knowing each other" is important for people to interact and share their experiences.

Discussing the challenge-issue in the Focus Group didn't provide more information about challenges as such - the challenges mentioned seemed to be quite similar to the survey answers. However, the participants found it very insightful to find out through the discussion that others have to deal with the same challenges as they do and to recognise that they may share certain professional interests.

Current Use of Resources
A Community of Practice could be seen as a (flexible) collection of varied resources. If nobody uses those resources, they are of little value, no matter how perfect they may be. The extent to which people use (online) resources, may indicate the extent to which:

- they are interested in using those resources
- they are experienced in using those resources
- they have/think they have access to those resources

In this section, the trainers' current use of resources was explored to find out their interests in and experiences with using resources for professional matters, which may indicate their interests to have resources available in a possible CoP.

Actions Taken to Stay Informed

According to the survey results, during the last six months the respondent took different actions to keep themselves up-to-date for their work as a trainer. The five most frequently occurring answers were:

1. Looking for resources on the Internet	94%
2. Reading training related articles	94%
3. Talking to other trainers	77%
4. Using ItrainOnline	62%
5. Advising other professionals	62%
	n=47

From the fact that resources on the Internet got the highest score, it could be argued that the trainers perceive the Internet as a meaningful resource already. The fact that they talked to other trainers implies that besides using material resources, they also see value in personal contact with other trainers. Both imply that the (online) Community of Trainers could be a meaningful addition in the trainers' work practices, because it corresponds to their experiences and interests to use online resources and collaborate with others. The relatively high percentages per resource option show that the respondents seemed to be quite unanimous in using those resources.

Despite the fact that the respondents seem to use similar resources, the cross-comparisons revealed some interesting findings:

- Using ItrainOnline wasn't present in the top-three list of respondents who work for government or private organisations, whereas it was present in case of respondents who are self-employed or work for NGOs.
- Talking to other trainers appeared to be a resource especially for supervisors or managers/directors – in the top-three of trainers without supervising authority talking to other trainers was absent.

It is remarkable that talking to other trainers wasn't on the list of trainers without supervising authority. It could imply that those trainers find talking to others less useful than using resources like the Internet or articles. It also could imply that those trainers are more hesitant to talk to other trainers about their work.

Use of ItrainOnline

ItrainOnline (ITO) could become the portal for the prospective CoP. Therefore, the trainers' current use of the web space was explored, to find out how familiar they are with the web space and how interested they are in the available materials and links.

How often visit ItrainOnline?	
a. < Once a month	21%
b. Once a month	15%
c. Several times a month	28%
f. Daily	9%
g. Never	28%
(n=47)	

The extent to which the respondents visit ItrainOnline appeared to vary and a relatively high percentage of respondents stated to never visit ItrainOnline. Respondents who had never visited ItrainOnline gave as a reason that they had never heard of ItrainOnline before - some of them stated that they are interested and will visit the website in the future.

The majority of the IICD-affiliated respondents seems to visit ItrainOnline less than once a month to never, whereas the majority of the INASP affiliated respondents visit the web space several times a month to daily.

20% Of the respondents who accessed the survey through the link on ItrainOnline never visited ItrainOnline. This is remarkable, regarding the fact that those respondents must have accessed the web space to join the survey, and could imply that those respondents visited ItrainOnline only (or for the first time) for the purpose of joining the survey.

What downloaded/used from ItrainOnline?	
a. Haven't downloaded or used anything	36%
b. Exercises	23%
c. Presentation(s)	38%
d. Hand-outs	40%
e. Links to training-related articles	38%
(n=47)	

During the last six months, 26% of the respondents haven't used or downloaded anything from ItrainOnline. Respondents who have, downloaded handouts, presentations and exercises and used links to training related articles.

Cross-comparisons revealed that:

- While hand-outs seem to be popular among IICD and ITrainOnline respondents, no one from INASP downloaded hand-outs.
- Respondents who work for government organisations or NGOs downloaded mostly presentations, whereas self-employed respondents used mostly links to training related articles.
- Trainers without supervising tasks and managers/directors downloaded presentations and hand-outs, whereas supervisors mostly used links to training related articles.

Use of Online Services
The purpose of the question "Which online resources do you currently use?" was to identify how skilled the respondents are in using certain tools. A large part of the respondents' group appeared to use several online services. As many as 98% of the respondents use email groups like Yahoo-groups or Dgroups. This implies that the foundational (technical) skills to join a CoP already exist among this group. The respondents seem to be less familiar with weblogs and wiki's, which implies that if the CoP will come into existence, using those tools may be less appropriate to start with.

Use of Networks
A Community of Practice is a professional network in which people share

knowledge, experiences and expertise and in which they feel like they belong to a community. Although not all networks are CoPs, all CoPs exist of one or more networks. For some considerable time, networks have been set up for development purposes as they are perceived to be valuable in building knowledge. Whether people are involved in networks, may indicate:

- their interest in networking
- their experience with networking
- their access to meaningful network resources

The existence of networks within the respondents' group was explored and revealed the following:

According to the survey results, the respondents maintain contact with other participants after workshops through various media and for primarily professional but also social matters. The top-five of answers to the question "After meetings or workshops you participated in, what contact have you had with other participants?" consisted of:

1. email contact for professional matters	90%
2. sharing useful information with others	74%
3. asking for information	74%
4. telephone contact for professional matters	57%
5. email contact for social matters	55%

To the open-ended question "Can you mention the job-related networks you participate in?" many different answers were provided. An attempt to categorise the networks resulted in the following division:

Professional subject matter networks, e.g.:	Engineers; IT specialists; management; Linux OSS
Professional association networks, e.g.:	Government working groups

Trainers who participate in professional subject matter networks have (access to) specific knowledge and expertise, which they could share in the prospective Community of Trainers. Trainers who participate in professional association networks not only have (access to) specific knowledge and expertise, but may also be in the position to input ICT4D issues into a larger policy dialogue. This implies that the Community of Trainers could also increase the awareness of the importance of ICT4D in general, as well as input practice-based experience into policy dialogue.

Activities in the CoT
To find out general interests in certain collaboration activities, the respondents were asked to rate (on a scale from 1-5) "How interested would you be in the following venues and activities". Most of respondents appeared to be either "interested" or "very interested" in all activities mentioned.

The top-five of very interesting collaboration activities consisted of:

Exchanging materials	64%
Undertaking collaborative projects	61%
Sharing experiences	59%
Problem solving from peers	59%
Face-to-face meetings with peers/ face-to-face training courses	54%

The interest in exchanging materials appeared to correspond to number one challenge ("obtaining appropriate training materials/programmes"), which implies that the respondents not only face this challenge, but also want to take action to deal with it. The interest in undertaking collaborative projects is interesting and striking, as collaborating with peers may be quite an ambitious activity.

Although in the other sections it appeared that the respondents are familiar with many different communication media, interests in face-to-face meetings with peers and face-to-face training seemed to still be popular. Engaging in debates appeared to be the least interesting activity on the list.

Cross comparisons show that overall slightly less interest may exist among trainers who:

- have no supervising authority
- have jobs that exist for 0-25% of giving training

This could imply that those trainers feel less need to collaborate, but it also could imply that they perceive more obstacles to collaborate.

Discussion Topics
Responses to the open question "What topics would you bring up in collaborating with peers?" can be divided into practical and thematic issues.

Practical issues	
Training skills:	"Handling difficult questions from the trainees" "How the others handled difficult situations"
Technologies:	"Use of mobile agents in managing networks" "Databases, FOSS, Hardware considerations for the Tropics" "Certification/Microsoft/Oracle/Cisco"
Materials/programmes:	"Development of e-learning courseware" "Training methodologies to various categories" " Training methodologies for teenagers"
Thematic issues	
	"Role of ICT in education" "ICTs in Health area, ICT trends and its relevance to the nation's development"

Resources and Tools
In response to the questions "would you like to share or receive?", "in which format?" and "which tools/technical support would you like to use?" the participants were interested in:

- Resource materials: presentations, summaries and in-depth-articles
- Uploading and downloading files (.doc, .pdf, .gif and .ppt)
- Resource persons: to interact with by means of e-discussions, collaborative projects and formal/informal interactions
- Using e-mail lists (asynchronous) and Instant Messenger (synchronous)

All participants expressed interest not only in receiving, but also in sharing their own knowledge and resources.

Member Roles
The idea behind the question "what role would you like to have within the prospective CoT?" was to identify persons who could take on roles such as moderator, knowledge manager, provider of technical support. There was some reluctance to answer the question, both in the survey and in the Focus Group. One of the contributors mentioned that:

"It is important to distribute certain roles, but it should not be overdone....To press someone into a role, will probably not generate the effect that was intended."

At this point it appears to be difficult to identify people who would like to voluntarily moderate or give technical support. Incentives and a more structured approach to filling specific roles may be required.

Obstacles to Participation
To the open question "what might hinder you from sharing your experiences and cases with others?" only 26% of the respondents perceived no obstacles at all. The obstacles mentioned by the other 74% fall into the following categories:

Limited time	"Timing i.e. I may be busy at the college during the scheduled time of the sharing (for discussions/sharing)" "Limited time for group discussion due to stress at work"	28%
Limited access	"Limited resources (in terms of tools of our trade, computers and access to Internet at the village level) - being blocked from participating in the online forums by my network administrator" "Information infrastructures such as no access to emails and Internet or even telephones"	18%
Limited opportunities (funds) to meet face-to-face	"Travel costs" "Facilitation to travel and have face to face discussions" "Funds to meet others" "The most important problem is funds. Some people are far from me in villages, so interaction is difficult"	15%
Insecurity about skills	"Lack of professional development, training skills, methods, etc." "The fact that I have not done training in the last six months. But this could be addressed easily" "Lack of opportunity to develop my ideas" "Language barrier"	13%
		n=39

These obstacles may have impact on the behaviour of participants within the CoP. Trainers with much to contribute may be too busy to participate actively in the community. Those who feel insecure about their own skills may keep quiet, even if their contributions could be very interesting.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions
The review of Concepts and Ideas revealed that Communities of Practice specifically aim to address the need for continuous, easily accessible and context-appropriate support. It also revealed however that for an online CoP to provide this kind of support, certain issues should be taken into consideration. The three principal criteria of a Community of Practice appeared to be: 1. the area of shared inquiry (domain), 2. the existence/building of relationships and a sense of belonging (community) and 3. the production of a body of knowledge (practice). People's capabilities to meet those criteria appeared to depend on cultural, social and economic factors.

In the Assessment part of the investigation, cultural, social and economic factors were explored to identify the ICT4D trainers' possibilities to participate in the prospective Community of Trainers. Below the most important issues for the Community of Trainers are discussed.

Diversity of Contextual Backgrounds
The trainers' contextual background was explored to identify social, cultural and economic implications. The findings revealed a diverse group in terms of country, language, professional context, hierarchical work level and access to ICTs. For the prospective CoT, this diversity should primarily be seen as an advantage, as it allows the emergence of a larger and more solid knowledge base. Contextual background has important implications for the information available to people and their abilities to process this information into knowledge. Therefore, it is assumed that people with different contextual backgrounds possess different kinds of knowledge, opinions and ideas, which when countered and combined can lead to new meaningful insights.

However, diversity also makes the community more complex, as people with different social, cultural and economic backgrounds can have different approaches to work and learning. This implies that in case of a very diverse Community of Trainers, members will have to make more effort to keep the community together. Identified contextual differences that ask for special attention are:

- Western – Non-Western: The majority of the respondents' group is Southern-based. However, there is a Northern group as well that is interested in learning about ICT4D training from a Southern perspective. When deciding who to involve, it is important to realise that members who are not Southern-based ICT4D trainers can add meaningful contributions to the CoT, but also can take away the focus of local Southern contextual needs. Assuming that the Northern-based group has generally better access to ICTs than the Southern-based group, involving Northern-based people could also result in a CoT with a dominating Northern group.

- English – Other: The majority of the respondents group prefers English as the language for spoken and written communication. This confirms the assumption that English would be the most appropriate official language for the CoT. However, there is also a small group of trainers who face challenges to express themselves properly in English. CoPs are based on human interaction and social relationships that can only come into existence when people communicate. It is therefore expected that the group of trainers with less good English language skills will have more difficulties to be involved in the Community of Trainers, implying that there always will be members who prefer their local/national languages for communication and collaboration. Using an international language for communication asks for making efforts to keep contributions plain and clear.

- Good Access – Challenging Access to ICTs: The majority of the respondents group has good access to ICTs. However, there is a small group of trainers

who face challenges to use computers and the Internet. Taking into account that the investigation's character has most likely caused a bias (using online tools), it could be expected that, in real life practice, the group of trainers with less good access is larger. This raises the question whether the focus of the Community of Trainers should be mainly on the group of ICT4D trainers with good Internet access or that it should seek to address prospective members with slower and less reliable connectivity to the Internet. Focusing on the former group may lead to a more active and solid online community. However, the latter group may be in need for the CoT the most to assist them in their work practice.

- Culture: The respondents live in different countries (on different continents), work for different kind of organisations and at different kind of hierarchical levels. This indicates the existence of different cultures (national, organisational etc.). The impact of cross-cultural issues in a CoP appears to be hard to identify beforehand. However, once the Community of Trainers exists, it is expected and therefore should be taken into account that those differences will become visible: members may not understand each others' jargon used, they may not understand each others' work approaches taken and they may be confused by each others' communication styles (formal/informal etc.).

- Male – Female: The majority of the respondents group was male. This reflects the professional (ICT4) Development context which is still largely dominated by men. One of the identified reasons for this is that, in traditional contexts, women are expected to work at home, which decreases their opportunities to get more involved in professional contexts in general and in the ICT4D training context specifically. Working as a trainer implies dealing with irregular working hours, meetings after official working hours and distant travelling. Women's obligations at home (cooking, taking care of kids), may be hard to combine with a trainers' job. It is expected that the online Community of Trainers could get women more involved in their work as trainers, allowing access to the community on times of their choice. Making effort to actively involve women in the CoT will not only create advantages for the women themselves, but also for the Community of Trainers as a whole - women and men can complement each other in collaboration and interaction.

For each of the contextual factors above, the question could be raised how to find a balance in supporting minority groups and permitting the community to emerge in a natural way. To keep a diverse Community of Trainers together, good facilitation and leadership will be very important. However, exactly because of this diversity, it may be difficult to identify leaders and facilitators who can keep the overview within the rather diverse community.

Current Work Situation
The trainers' principal activities include designing ICT training, developing training materials, conducting training and participating in seminars. The trainers face challenges in obtaining appropriate training materials, appropriate hardware and software, dealing with varied audiences and work-overload. Participation in the CoT can help the trainers with their activities and challenges; e.g. it will allow them to find and develop more appropriate materials, it could help them in finding hardware and software solutions, in finding appropriate ways to deal with varied audiences and over time will also save time. The clear overlaps in daily work activities and challenges of the trainers are important for the Community of Trainers to come into existence, because activities and challenges determine the focus that derives from shared interests. Besides overlaps, there are also differences in activities and challenges. This is important for the Community of Trainers as well, because in this way the trainers' contributions will be complementary.

The trainers already have Internet-based resources to support them in their daily work practice and they are already involved in different kind of networks. Both

indicate that the trainers have access to other knowledge bases, which they could bring into the CoT, and that they could promote the Community of Trainers in other networks. It also indicates that the idea of an online Community of Trainers is in line with the trainers' own ideas about networking for professional support.

Interest in the CoT
There is clear and definite interest among the trainers to share materials, undertake collaborative projects and share experiences. Being enthusiastic about sharing with peers is important for the community to come into existence. The trainers' interests in sharing presentations, summaries and in-depth articles (.doc, .pdf, .gif, .ppt), and using email-lists and instant messengers for formal and informal interactions, are indicators for the platform and tools to be used in the CoT. The obstacles perceived by a minority of the respondents group (limited time, limited access to ICTs, and insecurity about skills) correspond to the findings in the other sections: there will be some trainers for whom participation in the Community of Trainers will be more challenging than for others.

The research findings are perceived as meaningful indicators for the trainers abilities and interests to join the proposed Community of Trainers. It is also assumed that making certain choices beforehand – "what will be the primarily target group?" "Whether or not to pay special attention to minority groups?" etc. – will have an impact on the evolution of the CoT. However, it should be noted that they can never predict how the Community of Trainers emerges, as outside as well as within the community, new contexts, interests, challenges and (sub)cultures can evolve. All recommendations provided in the following chapter should be seen in light of this emergence behaviour of the external and internal environment of the community.

General Recommendations
Determine the Shape and Focus of the CoT
Shape - The diversity of the group should in the first place be seen as an advantage. Therefore it is recommended to start the Community of Trainers as one large and diverse community. Because the diversity over time can become challenging, the community should allow the emergence of sub-spaces and sub-communities.

Language - The official language of the Community of Trainers should be English, because this language is spoken and written by the majority of the target group. Effort should be made to support members who experience difficulties in speaking and writing English.

Purpose - The Community of Trainers should have a clear purpose, to keep the community focused. This purpose should be the enhancement of the ICT4D training practice. The focus of the CoT should be on support for challenges experienced in daily work practice by people involved in ICT4D training.

Members - The Community of Trainers should consist of people who are involved in ICT4D training, including ICT4D trainers, ICT4D training managers, and others who could contribute to the ICT4D training practice. Using the term "ICT4D trainer" can be awkward, as not all members may identify with that term.

Activities - The Community of Trainers should have a clear focus on activities such as sharing relevant materials (presentations, summaries, in-depth articles), undertaking collaborative projects, sharing experiences and solving problems with peers. All activities should be related to ICT4D training and especially focus on challenges in local work contexts. Besides core and continuous activities, the community could benefit from temporary events, like online and face-to-face workshops or seminars in collaboration with external experts.

Define Member Roles
In the Community of Trainers each member will have a role (expert, core member, passive member, etc.) and each member will contribute in his/her own way to the community. However, the communication and sharing activities within the Community of Trainers needs to be structured by members who will have specific roles, namely:

- Moderator(s) – who structure and facilitate the interaction and communication
- Content Managers – who structure the produced content
- Technologists - who provide technical support and advice

Because those tasks require particular capacities to perform and require time, it should be taken into account that members may not have the skills needed to fulfil the tasks. Therefore, support should be provided so the members can learn. Additionally those roles may be like part-time jobs, implying that one should think of appropriate "rewards" that could be provided to the members taking on those roles.

Support Insecure Members
In the Community of Trainers, not all members will be equally active in sharing materials, experiences and expertise. This is normal and shouldn't be perceived as problematic. However, members who do not contribute to the CoT because of their insecurities should be supported by all members and especially by the moderator(s). Effort should be made to create an atmosphere in which each member's contribution is perceived as equally important. In case of language difficulties, one should make more effort to understand and make oneself easily understood.

Stay Up-to-Date
The context in which the Community of Trainers might exist will be evolving rapidly and on many different levels: social, political, technological as well as individual and professional. This will have significant implications for the interests, challenges and possibilities of the community. Paying attention to the context of the community on social, political and technological level will both consume resources and, if done well, provide significant value to the community.

Accessible Platforms and Tools
The Community of Trainers should use a platform and tools to allow its members (including those with limited Internet access) to easily access the resources (materials and people). The chosen technologies should be designed for ease of use and learning, for evolution, for closeness at hand and from the users' perspective. The trainers are interested in sharing materials, like presentations, summaries and in-depth-articles and interacting with peers via e-mail lists and instant messengers. Therefore, the tools that are assumed to be appropriate to start with in the Community of Trainers are:

- Communication Tools: Dgroup e-mail list (a-synchronous), Instant Messenger (synchronous). Synchronous tools should be seen as additional tools, as they are less appropriate for trainers with low-bandwidth.
- Content Management Tools: should at least support uploading and downloading files (.doc, .pdf, .gif, .ppt)
- Additional Options: e.g. blogs, wiki's, skype

The initial idea to link into ItrainOnline as a platform seems to be appropriate. However, it is important to explore to what extent it is compatible with other tools and complementary platforms.

In addition to interaction via ICTs, face-to-face interaction should be seen as an important support for the community's social evolution.

It is important to realise that the assumption that the main CoP technologies are Internet- or computer-based technologies will be complicated by the possible contributions of other technologies - the very technologies that support communities of practice are evolving rapidly. Whereas email lists like Dgroups or Yahoo-groups may have been the only alternative until recently, new possibilities such as Instant Messaging, Skype or mobile phones may become available to members or prospective members. Therefore, it will be important to keep in pace with the development of ICTs themselves.

Recommendations for Participating Individuals and Organisations
For Trainers as Prospective Members of the CoT
To make the Community of Trainers meaningful and sustainable, members should:

- Be actively involved during the whole creation process of the community, to allow the sense of ownership to emerge early on.
- Keep in mind in the value the Community of Trainers could add to your daily work practice, even if the value of what is shared and the return on this value may not be readily anticipated. Have a process-oriented view towards your own and others' learning: don't expect direct results, but aim to work together on meaningful insights.
- Keep in mind what is really important for your daily work practice – think about what the main activities are that should be addressed in the CoT and what should be side activities. Try to keep the focus on the main activities. However, interests and challenges in daily work practice can change over time and newly evolving interests and needs should be communicated to the rest of the community and its facilitators.
- Understand that joining can feel like a time consuming activity, but over time, it can save time, because appropriate resources will be close at hand.
- Act socially within the CoT and make an effort to get to know the other members – joining a community entails more than sharing and receiving - strong relationships will make collaboration easier and more meaningful.
- Be aware of similarities and differences of peers – being receptive to other perspectives and approaches will provide new ideas which could be meaningful for the training profession.
- Be aware of other members' hesitations to share and realise that each member contributes to the CoT in his/her own way.
- Overcome your own hesitations to contribute:
    - Don't feel uncomfortable to ask your peers for clarifications.
    - Don't feel uncomfortable to share materials or thoughts that are not "finished" yet.
    - Don't feel uncomfortable not to share if you don't want to, learning from others is also valuable. If possible, do provide feedback on the usefulness of the help or resources that you have obtained through the community.

- Adhere to "membership agreements" to enhance trust and the sense of belonging, including e.g.:
    - Complete personal profiles by which members make themselves visible to the others.
    - Register and provide information on yourself when requested, in order to help administrators keep by passers out of the community.
- Consider what your role in the community could be. Being a moderator or knowledge manager would not only be meaningful for the community, but also for your own professional development.
- Recognise that joining the CoT isn't about sharing as much as you know. To

prevent information overload, clear answers to clear questions will be more meaningful and easier accessible than extensive documents with large amounts of information.

- Be aware of connectivity and access restrictions – large documents may not be accessible to all community members.
- Realise that only the members can make the community – without its members' participation the community doesn't exist. External support can however be provided if needed – express your needs for support openly, so that the external supporters will be able to provide appropriate support.
- Don't expect too much too soon – the evolution of the community will take some time, and your contributions will create value that you might not anticipate.

In light of the recommendations above, consider whether you are willing to make the effort to become involved in the Community of Trainers and contribute to making it a success and a valuable source of support for yourself and your peers.

For Organisations as Possible Supporters
The Community of Trainers could be a meaningful vehicle to help trainers with their daily work challenges: obtaining training materials, dealing with varied audiences, hard/software related problems and work-overload. Activities within the community will allow knowledge building and knowledge management. For training organisations, participation in the community could help in solving problems, save time and allow the reuse of resources, which in time could lead to better strategic capabilities, innovation and new strategies on the part of the organisation's trainers.

To allow the Community of Trainers to come into existence, the organisations for which the trainers work should:

- Find ways to fit participation in, and the benefits of, the Community of Trainers activities into the organisations' daily work activities. Trainers appear to face challenges including a lack of time and a lack of access to the online community because of the use of shared computers at work. Allocating time slots to access the CoT could help the trainers to overcome such challenges.
- Determine, together with the participating trainers, the organisation's field of expertise which could be shared within the community. Organisations could recognise what kind of expertise already exists in the organisation and what kind of expertise could be improved. Such insight could help the trainers focus their questioning and learning in the community on areas in which they can enhance their own or the organisation's expertise and practice.
- Promote the Community of Trainers among the trainers in the organisation to bring more people with knowledge experiences and expertise into the community as well as to allow the trainers to take more out of it.
- Devise ways to document knowledge within the organisation so that it could be shared within the Community of Trainers. In this way, the organisation could use the community as a vehicle to manage knowledge and experiences – both the organisation's own knowledge as well as systematically access other individuals' and organisations' knowledge, experiences and expertise.

For IICD/ITrainOnline Partner Organisations as Prospective External Supporters
To be able to provide meaningful and sustainable support, IICD and ItrainOnline partners should realise that their tasks for the Community of Trainers could include:

- Support of central roles like facilitators and knowledge managers. At least in

the beginning, it may be difficult to find volunteers among the trainers for those tasks, simply because people don't know what those roles entail. The persons who are going to have those roles may need training to become skilled.

- The provision of "rewards". Those could be "hard" rewards in terms of money, or "soft" rewards in terms of certifications or opportunities to participate in workshops and conferences, for example.
- Provision of platforms and tools. Because there are no ready solutions in the evolving technology market, one should follow this market closely.
- Organisation of interesting events like online workshops or seminars with external experts. At least at the beginning, this will be a task for external supporters.
- Promotion of the community in the ICT4D training context.
- Frequently assess the evolution of the community to identify needs, interests and challenges that may exist.

Because of those tasks, IICD and ItrainOnline partners should reconsider what kind of external support could be provided best by whom. The division of supporting tasks over different ItrainOnline partner organisations will allow the organisations to provide higher quality support, with less effort made. Therefore, it is important for IICD and ItrainOnline partners to explore their own possibilities internally. Each organisation should ask itself what task(s) goes together best with the activities and expertise and skills internally available. When dividing tasks, it is important to assign persons to coordinate the tasks, keep the overview and to ensure that the tasks complement each other. Therefore, frequent contact between the partner organisations will be necessary.

When decided what kind of support can be provided by whom, IICD and ItrainOnline partners should be clear and make sure that, from the start, all involved actors (and especially the members of the community) know what kind of support can be expected from them, to prevent misunderstanding to occur. It doesn't help if expectations are too high or too low. Contact with the training organisations and with the Community of Trainers itself will be very important.

IICD and ItrainOnline partners shouldn't expect too much output from the Community of Trainers too soon. Although the CoT is a created community, which can benefit from external support, the external supporters shouldn't meddle too much in order to acquire better results. Understand that the Community of Trainers cannot be developed from the outside, but has to emerge from the inside and they should ask themselves whether they are willing and capable to provide the support needed even when great success cannot be guaranteed.

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