



Economic Commission for Africa

# **Network Facilitation Training**

April 2007

Knowledge Management Team, UNECA



ECA Knowledge Management

# **Community of Practice**

Revised April 17, 2007

UNECA

NOTE: This is a draft document prepared by ECA's Knowledge Management Team for the Network Facilitation Training on April 26, 2007. This is for internal circulation only.



## Table of Content

ECA Communities of Practice.....	2
1. Communities of Practice.....	2
1.1 Purpose of Community of Practice .....	3
1.2 Building a Community of Practice.....	4
2. Community of Practice services .....	7
2.1 Expert Roster .....	7
2.2 E- discussion forum.....	7
2.3 Help Desk/ Query.....	7
2.4 Consolidated replies .....	8
2.5 News updates .....	8
2.6 Upcoming events .....	9
2.7 Publications and Resources.....	9
3. ECA's Communities of Practice.....	10
3.1 ECA's Community of Practice members.....	10
Reference: .....	13
ANNEX 1: Sample E-Discussion .....	14
ANNEX 2: Sample Consolidated Reply.....	19
Network Facilitation .....	23
Guideline for E-Discussion on ECA Community of Practice .....	30



# ECA Communities of Practice

## 1. Communities of Practice

The concept of ‘communities of practice’ plays an influential role in current theory and practice of knowledge management. Knowledge Management is not simply distributing documents or combining databases. In essence the most important part of knowledge management is now sharing ‘tacit knowledge’ or as Richard McDermott<sup>1</sup> puts it the undocumented and hard-to-articulate knowledge. It is more of a person’s idea, thoughts and insights rather than the documents. No one can really manage this kind of knowledge which resides in peoples head it can only be shared through conversation and interaction with others. What can be done though is to manage the environment in which knowledge can be created, discovered, captured, shared, distilled, validated, transferred, adopted, adapted and applied. For creating an environment within which knowledge rapidly flourishes we need<sup>2</sup>:

- The right **conditions**: a common reliable infrastructure and the organization be willing to become entrepreneurial;
- The right **means**: a common model, tools and processes;
- The right **actions**: where people instinctively seek, share and use knowledge; and
- The right **leadership**: where learning and sharing is expected and role-modeled.

One of the best ways of sharing tacit knowledge is through a community of practice. Content and interactions are at the heart of any community of practice. A community of practice (COP) has been defined as “...peers in the execution of ‘real work.’ What holds them together is a common sense of purpose and a real need to know what the

---

<sup>1</sup> McDermott, R. (2000), ‘Knowing in Community: 10 Critical Success Factors in Building Communities of Practice’ at <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowning.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> Collison, C. & Parcell, G (2004), Learning to Fly - Practical Knowledge Management From Leading and Learning Organizations, Capstone Publishing,  
[http://www.12manage.com/methods\\_collison\\_knowledge\\_management.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_collison_knowledge_management.html)



other knows.” Launching new joint activities, carried out by ‘task teams’ operating outside the existing divisional structure will clearly create new incentives to establish communities of practice *within* ECA, and this will be supported through the introduction of new collaboration software.

Communities of practices can exist depending on the various needs of the members of the community. For instance, members could get together in a community to build their capacity around a particular discipline (Trade, Regional Integration, Macroeconomic Policy Analysis, etc...). These communities stress improving individual and business performance through sharing knowledge and good practices. Another example of a community of practice is one whose members get together to complete a particular task by pooling knowledge and translating it into actions that improve business results (drafting manuals, guidance notes etc...). One important point to note is that a Community of practice can have different needs at different times and may shift their needs throughout their ‘lifetime’ from just capacity building through sharing knowledge and good practices to working on a particular task. CoPs could also complement the large conferences by both generating ideas for the conferences, and by continuing the networking and dialogue that takes place during the events.

### ***1.1 Purpose of Community of Practice***

Community of practice contribute by fostering learning, stimulating interaction, promoting awareness among new members, developing common understandings, identifying and sharing good methodologies, tools, projects, etc and building a network of experts in the specific area of interest<sup>3</sup>. They also facilitate effective exchange of information, experiences, expertise, knowledge, skills and problem solving among individual members, discussion of

---

<sup>3</sup> UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre. 2004. *Establishing a Community of Practice: A resource handbook* (draft).  
<[http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=comm\\_practice](http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=comm_practice)>



substantive issues, promote professional development, address individual questions and generate the type of knowledge that members need in their daily work.

## **1.2 *Building a Community of Practice***

The following are key steps involved in setting-up and sustaining a community of practice.

1. **Conceptualization/Planning:** identify a focus area for the community of practice based on an assessment of needs of partners and clients. Based on the needs assessment formulate broad preliminary objectives, and agree on an action plan. Identify potential members of community of practices from partners and clients. Consider a broader membership to introduce diversity. Other existing networks, communities of practice and institutions should also be mapped to create partnership and this will also lead to interesting joint activities.
2. **Common understanding:** hold a face-to-face-start-up workshop with potential members and sensitize them on key principles of knowledge management and CoPs, reach a common understanding of the community of practice vision, objectives and functions and agree on working modalities, leadership, facilitator, facilitation team. This will also help in building relationship and trust with members of community of practice.
3. **Implementation:** based on the agreed on visions, objectives and working modalities the facilitator will expand the network, carry out the mapping, the agreed workplan, and moderate/facilitate discussions on the electronic platform. An e-mail distribution list of potential members will be established and a launch e-mail will be sent. Electronic platforms will provide the infrastructure, tools, processes, and procedures that will facilitate the community's interaction and

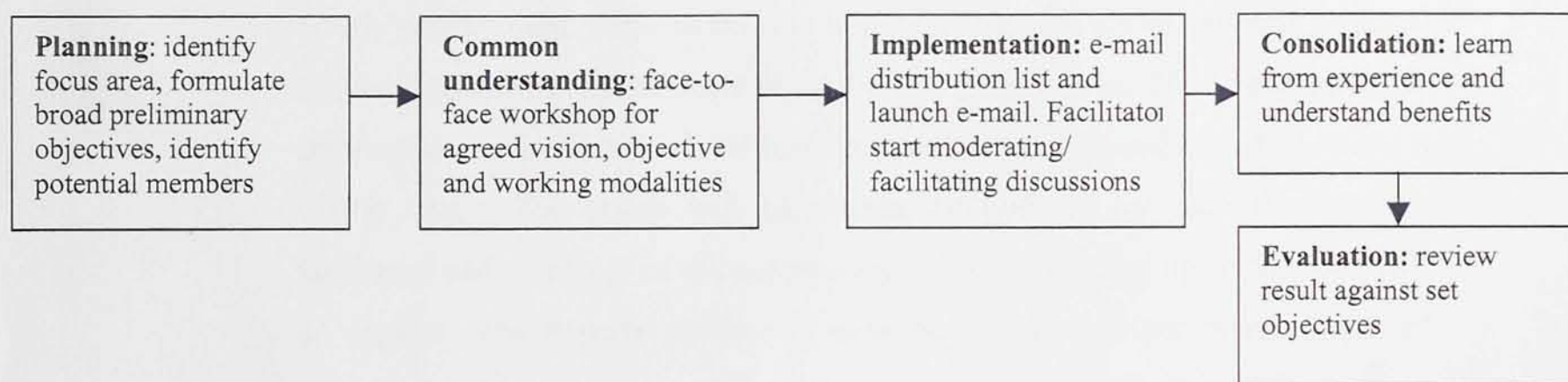


collaboration and opportunities for ongoing interaction between network members to solve problems or share codified knowledge. Some of the components in this step include: the selection criteria of members and invitation process; the application chosen to support community development and knowledge sharing; the collaborative tool used to support the virtual community; the personal data for member profiles and seed content that will populate the community at launch and during the initial community development stages; the materials and resources to familiarize community members with accessing and using the application.

4. **Consolidation:** The “Community” will learn from its initial experiences in collective problem solving and knowledge creation in the start up stages. The members are focused on creating a sense of community and creating value. During this stage, the community matures through a continuous cycle of development, evaluation, and growth with the support of a facilitator. CoP members understand the benefits of working together and move towards more active collaboration. This would be a reality check for efficiency and effective as perceived by other partners - to focus their energies, review their workplan and membership. The members now take responsibility for the community. The early days of the community's implementation are spent just getting to know who is in the community and testing out the functionality of the community site. Profiles are filled out and members begin to find similarities in interest areas. Facilitation continues to play a key role in helping members see the benefits of their participation and ensuring that the community site is functioning properly. Individual needs and contribution styles of members are identified, and an expertise network begins to develop. Members participate in various activities that are focused on areas of

interest and build on the functionality of the community's collaborative tool.

5. **Evaluation:** Review results of the community of practice against objectives set in the action plan and also the learning achievements and knowledge generated. If need be face-to-face meeting of the members to re-adjust the priorities of the 'Community', will take place on an annual basis.





## 2. Community of Practice services

Based on the plan of action prepared by focal points of ECA's various communities of practices, the online community platform will have the following common tools which member can use.

### 2.1 *Expert Roster*

In this section members will be able to get information about national, regional or international experts or other Institutions/Organizations. The Roster provides information on professionals with substantial knowledge and expertise within a CoP's area. The roster will be constantly updated by both the network facilitator and members of the community ensuring best and up-to date referrals of experts. The experts roster will also be linked to other communities of practices of UN agencies and partner and client organizations creating a much bigger pool of 'proven experts'.

### 2.2 *E- discussion forum*

Through the e-discussion forum members of communities of practice will have a chance to engage in an in-depth discussion and exchange on emerging issues and common challenges in a particular knowledge area. E- discussions usually run for 3 to 6 weeks and are generally organized by a set of sub-topics and guiding questions. Each sub-topic is closed by a summary, which states several concrete recommendations to feed into future thinking and implementation. Optionally, a network member or an outside guest moderator can moderate e-discussions. Annex 1 shows a recent UNDP E-discussion on 'Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger'

### 2.3 *Help Desk/ Query*

All queries will be sent to the help desk e-mail, which will first go to the network facilitator. The network facilitator will "approve" the query before

sending it out to all members. This allows the facilitator to ask the person who is sending the message for any clarifications that may be needed, edit the subject heading to make it clearer, and generally make sure that the exchanges are running smoothly. Members will then respond to queries based on their knowledge and experience. The responses to queries will then be summarized as consolidated replies.

## **2.4 Consolidated replies**

Consolidated replies are a synthesis or summary of responses to a member's query and are also supported by researched materials. They provide a comprehensive summary of responses to any given question, query or discussion that takes place on the community of practice in a user friendly format designed to make key information available at a glance. The consolidated replies are then archived for future use by members of the community of practice. An example of a consolidated reply from UNDP's networks shows that it usually contains information regarding who launched the query, what it was, who responded, and the summary of responses (the filtering and quality control aspect, also an aspect of knowledge building), and list of related resources. Annex 2 shows a UNDP draft layout of Consolidated Replies for a community of practice

## **2.5 News updates**

This section will deal with providing members of the community with timely information whenever there is a critical mass of new information to announce (but at least once per month). The News Updates will notify members of the new materials & features posted on the online community platform, including news, feature articles, case studies, best practices, community of practice announcements (open queries, closed queries and new members), new and interesting resources and much more.



## **2.6 *Upcoming events***

A calendar of ongoing and archived events will be available under this link. It will provide a list of recent and future events. Members will also be able to download any reports that came out of past events if available.

## **2.7 *Publications and Resources***

This section will provide members with an electronic library, with a variety of relevant papers, books, publications, reports, and so on. A search engine will allow members to easily search publications and resources for the information they are looking for. This section will also provide a database of best practices, which includes a collection of case studies and lessons learned from development projects both within the region and outside.

### 3. ECA's Communities of Practice

The Community of Practice focal point and their respective team will have the ownership responsibility of the content related to each thematic area. They will be supported by the Network facilitator per the terms of reference of her/his functions.

#### 3.1 *ECA's Community of Practice members*

ECA's communities of practice are open to its staff; member states; UN Agencies; Research Institutions; think tanks; RECs' sub-regional Inter-Governmental Organization (IGOs) and institutions; Continental organizations such as the AUC, NEPAD Secretariat, Global Coalition for Africa; Academia and Civil society organizations (within and outside of Africa). Subscription is voluntarily. Members will be invited to join a community of practice by CoP focal persons and Communication Officers at first. Members need to sign up with the community of practice in order to get a username and a password to access the community of practice. ECA's communities of practice members will be expected to:

- Actively participate in community of practice activities such as e-discussions, asking queries or responding to queries;
- Serve as moderator if need be;
- Use the CoP for its intended purpose to share knowledge among all members;
- Upload relevant materials for use by members.

Common features of community of practice members include:

- Members have common professional interest, ambition and motivation and participate in the community as it provides value;



- Members are connected to people with common professional interest from different organization in different countries who do not have regular day-to-day contact;
- Members believe they will achieve their goal more effectively through collective effort and are thus willing to engage in mutual support to reach common aim;
- Members are linked not only by electronic networks, but also through regular face-to-face meetings;
- Members share a sense of responsibility for a given task, output, or result in their area of practice or to more generally advance their practice or discipline;
- Members have a sense of trust and ownership within the community and are thus willing and able to frankly share what they know, respond to requests, and collectively solve problems;
- Members' knowledge and expertise is enhanced through membership;
- Members choose to participate due to the "value added" in performing their jobs, the excitement of building new ideas, and the satisfaction of relationships.

Participation in a Community of practice fall under three primary categories:

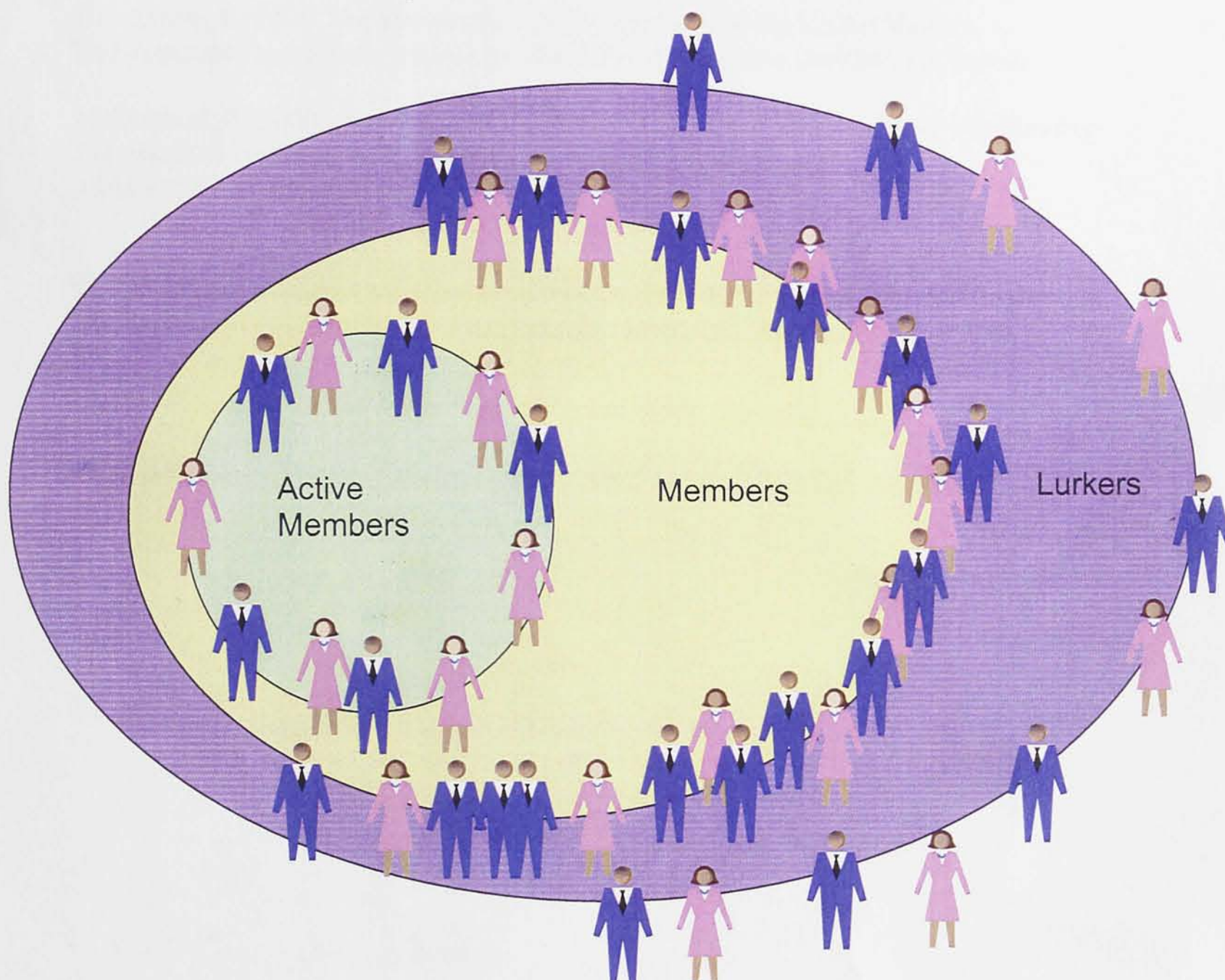
- Casual surfers or "lurkers" seeking knowledge. These are members who listen but add little. Lurkers often get great value without taking away from the core contributor's interaction. Many lurkers say that they use the community to find out who is working on what or learn about the field and make contact later.<sup>4</sup>
- People who will join and use the community of practice for more advanced research but rarely interact or contribute. These are the majority of the membership and they participate only occasionally;

---

<sup>4</sup> McDermott, R. (2000), 'Knowing in Community: 10 Critical Success Factors in Building Communities of Practice' at <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowning.shtml>



- People who will interact repeatedly and contribute knowledge. These are a small percentage of the members and are active community of practice members. These members are not always world-leading experts on the topic. What makes them effective is their heartfelt caring about the topic and the community.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure1:** Participation in a Community of Practice

<sup>5</sup> McDermott, R. (2000), 'Knowing in Community: 10 Critical Success Factors in Building Communities of Practice' at <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowning.shtml>



## Reference:

Collison, C. & Parcell, G (2004), *Learning to Fly - Practical Knowledge Management From Leading and Learning Organizations*, Capstone Publishing,  
[http://www.12manage.com/methods\\_collison\\_knowledge\\_management.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_collison_knowledge_management.html)

Henderson, K. 2005. The knowledge sharing approach of the United Nations Development Programme. *KM4D Journal* 1(2): 19-30. [www.km4dev.org/journal](http://www.km4dev.org/journal)

McDermott, R. 2000. *Knowing in Community: 10 Critical Success Factors in Building Communities of Practice*. <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowing.shtml>

UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre. 2004. *Establishing a Community of Practice: A resource handbook* (draft). [http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=comm\\_practice](http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=comm_practice)

UNDP. *Community Knowledge Center Manual*. [www.ckc-undp.org.jo](http://www.ckc-undp.org.jo)

[www.intranetstoday.com/Articles/Default2.aspx?ArticleID=5499&IssueId=182](http://www.intranetstoday.com/Articles/Default2.aspx?ArticleID=5499&IssueId=182)

## ANNEX 1: Sample E-Discussion



### MDGNET

## LIST of the e-Discussion Contributions: 'Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger'

Find e-Discussion Background and reading materials at **e-Discussion Webpage:** [AMR Concept Note](#) and [e-Discussion Announcement Message](#)

### E-Discussion 'Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger'

The four-week-long moderated e-Discussion on 'Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger' was a part of a larger process of global consultation – ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) – that aims to assess the progress in implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

The AMR process will identify development challenges and strive to improve global cooperation, coordination and coherence of efforts to meet the development objectives. The AMR will also highlight success stories and promising innovations to achieve development goals. In the case of MDGs in particular, these successes are shadowed by increasing poverty and hunger which jeopardize the achievement of the other MDGs.

In that regard, knowledge shared by practitioners and policy experts about country-level actions to reduce poverty and hunger will be indispensable in informing the global discussion, providing policy guidance and contributing to efforts to speed up implementation of the goals.

#### Launch Message:

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We are pleased to invite you to take part in a four-week-long moderated **e-Discussion: 'Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger'**. This e-Discussion is a part of a larger process of global consultation – ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) – that assesses the progress in implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. The [Concept Note](#) outlining the AMR process and providing background to the thematic focus of this year's AMR was shared with you in the [message sent from Mr. Kemal Dervis and Mr. José Antonio Ocampo](#) earlier this week.

Our focus of the next four weeks will be 'Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger'. Halfway to the 2015 deadline to meet the MDGs, we are painfully aware that millions of people still live in extreme poverty and deprivation, in the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia in particular. Despite initial progress, hunger is again on the rise in some regions, notably in some regions of Africa and Asia. If we cannot overcome poverty and hunger, we cannot hope to reach the other development goals. Efforts to achieve the MDGs must be redoubled. To this end, the AMR process will highlight success stories and promising innovations, identify problems still requiring solutions, and strive to improve global cooperation, coordination and coherence of efforts to meet the development objectives. The knowledge shared by practitioners and policy experts about country-level actions to reduce poverty and hunger will be indispensable in informing the global discussion, providing policy guidance and contributing to efforts to speed up implementation of the goals. Therefore, we look forward to drawing on your expertise and experience. Your views,



positions, and ideas will contribute to focusing the substantive part of the AMR process and will be channeled to the Report of the Secretary-General on this same topic.

The thematic focus of this year's AMR is broad. Therefore, we thought it might be helpful to indicate some priority areas for our discussion together with questions that can guide our interaction. Please, feel free to choose and address any of the priority areas and related questions based on your field of expertise, experience or interest. Please, select from the following:

**Reduction of Jobless Growth:**

- What national policies would assist developing countries to break the trend of jobless growth and generate youth employment in particular?
- In what ways can the broader international community support these efforts, including through trade policy?
- What are the existing useful diagnostic tools and methodologies used for identifying the constraints/challenges resulting in less optimal job creation and jobless growth?

**Innovative National Policies to Reduce Rural and Urban Poverty:**

- What national strategies and mechanisms work to reduce persisting rural poverty?
- Should rural-to-urban migration be discouraged? How can the urbanization of poverty be prevented?
- To what extent does the increase of asset ownership and access to financial services improves financial security and employment opportunities of the poor?

**Global Governance of Trade:**

- What are the critical changes that need to be made in the global governance of trade to enable equity and fairness in the international trading system?
- What innovative policies and strategies can countries use to ensure that the benefits of globalization are both inclusive and equitable, disproportionately benefit the poor and effectively shield them from its perils?

**Short-term Response to Long-Term Solutions to Hunger:**

- How can developing countries shift from short-term responses to hunger and food insecurity to long-term solutions? To what extent can biotechnology contribute to this end?
- What steps can developing countries take to mitigate and adapt to climate change, which threatens to affect food production?

**Scaling-Up the Response:**

- What are emerging opportunities and approaches for countries to increase fiscal space available for development through domestic resource mobilization?
- How can the international community best scale-up its financial support for the MDGs, and improve the effectiveness of aid?

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank all contributors for stimulating and substantive input and express appreciation for a very active participation in this month-long e-discussion. We do welcome reactions to the individual contributions, to the Summary and/or suggestions for future topics for e-discussions.

A special 'thank you' goes to the e-discussion guest moderators Nora Lustig, Donald Lee and Duncan Campbell who took time away from their schedules, prepared the e-discussion and guided it with their interventions.

**Guest Moderators:**

- Nora Lustig, Director Poverty Group Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP



- Donald Lee, OIC, Social Perspective on Policy Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, UNDESA
- **Duncan Campbell**, Director, Policy Integration Department, ILO

### **CONTRIBUTIONS were received from:**

1. [Camilo Ceita](#), Assistant Country Director, UNDP Angola
2. [Nikhil Seth](#), Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, UNDESA
3. [Max Ooft #1, #2](#), Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Suriname
4. [Margret Vidar](#), Human Rights Advisor, FAO
5. [Ruby Sandhu-Rojon](#), Country Director, UNDP Burkina Faso
6. [Daniel Kostzer](#), UNDP Argentina
7. [Ram Shankar](#), Senior Assistant resident Representative and Recovery Manager, UNDP Maldives
8. [Dag Ehrenpreis](#), UNDP IPC Brazil
9. [Robert Cherry](#), Research Associate, Brooklyn College, The University of New York, USA
10. [Massoom Farhad](#), Programme Officer, UNDP Afghanistan
11. [Robert I. Lerman](#), Professor of Economics, American University, Washington, USA
12. [Nora Lustig](#), Director, Poverty Group, Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), UNDP
13. [Vladimir Mikhalev](#), Policy Advisor, UNDP Regional Center Bratislava, Slovakia
14. [Fayyaz Bagir](#), Senior Advisor on Civil society, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Pakistan
15. [Bipul Chatterjee](#), Deputy Executive Director, CUTS International, India
16. [Donald Lee](#), Officer-in-Charge, Social Perspectives on Development Branch, UNDESA
17. [Luke Wasonga](#), UNDP Regional Service Centre, Johannesburg
18. [Diego Recalde](#), RASC Panama
19. [Yusuf Gumaa](#), Senior Economist, UNDP Kenya
20. [Zakir Hussain](#), Research Associate, Ministry of Labor, India
21. [Peter Whitney](#)
22. [Oscar T. Brookins](#), Professor of Economics, Northeastern University, Boston, USA
23. [Clara Ikekeonwu](#), Professor of Linguistics, University of Nigeria, Nigeria
24. [C. Kenrick Hunte](#), Professor of Economics, Howard University, New Orleans, USA
25. [David Abbott](#), Pacific Regional Macro Economic & Poverty Reduction Advisor, UNDP Fiji
26. [Amitava Mukherjee](#), Regional Advisor, Poverty Reduction, UNESCAP, Thailand
27. [Matilde Gomes Mendes](#), SNV, Guinea Bissau

To view these contributions, please visit the [full list of individual contributions](#).

### **INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN FULL:**

[Camilo Ceita](#), UNDP Angola wrote:

#### ***Breaking the trend of jobless growth***

Dear Network Members and Colleagues,

I have chosen this theme due its importance to eradicate poverty and hunger. I am from a country where the economic growth is a fact due the oil and diamond incomes. However, those two sectors are capital intensive and do not, really, create jobs and allow a better income distribution within the population. In addition to that, the credit for the economy is only about 5% it means that there is not, yet, an enabling environment for investment.



How can it be reverted? The solution can come through the Private Sector as an effective way to Reduce Poverty. There are many encouraging results all over the world that demonstrate that the private sector has significantly contributed to economic growth, job creation, increasing incomes of the poor and ultimately poverty reduction. Private sector involves multinational corporations as well as micro, small and medium enterprises (including the informal sector). Even the poor entrepreneur in suburban areas or in the village can be an important and integral part of the private sector. Within the private sector in developing world micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), on average, make up over 90% of enterprises and account for 50-60% of employment. The prevalence of MSMEs is more pronounced at the lower income level. In fact, many poor households rely on micro and small enterprises as their only source of income. The promotion of MSME is considered essential for making progress towards achieving the MDG of halving the fifth of the planet's people living on less than a \$1 day by the year 2015. However, for that is necessary that the government of Developing Countries can understand the importance of the sector and how useful it can be to "breaking the trend of jobless growth".

There are some constraints for MSMEs as tools to reduce poverty. We talk about the confrontation with various issues that hinder its growth. Various studies have cited constraints that include:

- i) lack of an enabling environment with restrictive laws and regulations and unsupportive or biased policies favoring more the bigger and formal businesses;
- ii) Macro-economic impediments (e.g. peace and political instability, lack of transparency and accountability, unsound macro-economic policies);
- iii) Lack of access to credit, training and other support services;
- iv) Cultural and gender issues; and v) the negative attitude regarding the informal sector.

The Commission on Private Sector Development cited three major structural challenges that confront the private sector in all developing countries, to varying degrees, namely:

- i) Micro enterprises and many small and medium enterprises operate informally;
- ii) Many small and medium enterprises have barriers to growth; and
- iii) A lack of competitive pressure shields larger firms from market forces and the need to innovate and become more productive.

The constraints faced by the private sector are multifarious and requires multifaceted approaches to overcome them. The Commission recommends that addressing the constraints to unleash the potential of the private sector will require programmes tailored to the needs of individual countries.

For this, we can count on several mechanisms that are being created to make diagnosis and analysis that can allow countries to go, sure, in this direction. The MDG country diagnosis, Peers review mechanism; etc. Developing countries in particular African ones, need urgently to revert the situation. They own of the most powerful development tools the youths. What they need is just to give them the opportunities and show them the good way to move forward.

Regards

**Camilo Ceita**

Assistant Country Director  
Poverty & Human Security  
UNDP-ANGOLA

**Nikhil Seth, ECOSOC wrote:**



***What steps can developing countries take to mitigate and adapt to climate change, which threatens to affect food production?***

Dear Colleagues,

I'd like to address a subject that I find both fascinating and frightening.

The recent report of Working Group 1 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (February 2007) ominously states that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level." Changes in precipitation amounts and an increase in extreme weather including droughts and heat waves are among those that have been scientifically observed and accepted as fact. Perhaps most alarming is the expectation that warming will continue even if greenhouse gas emissions are stabilized.

I sincerely hope that the recent reports and analytical studies will turn our energies to what can be done to mitigate the impact and reverse the negative trends before we reach the critical point where that is no longer possible.

In many respects the challenges are really serious and seemingly damaging for the future of our planet. It is becoming increasingly certain that the next several generations (at least) will have to grapple with the repercussions of humanity's actions. Much of the change is weather-related, such as increasing unpredictability, extreme weather events and shifting of climate zones. This is relevant to our e-discussion inasmuch as such climate change is certain to impact agricultural production as well as the rearing of animals and fish for human consumption. It is likely that regions will be affected differently, some benefiting and others suffering. The end results are highly dependent on the capacity to adapt.

There are programmes under the UNFCCC. The Global Environment Facility has established funds, such as the Least Developed Country Fund and the special Climate Change Fund, which could support activities, including agriculture.

The UN system is working where they can. For example, FAO is working to reduce the impact of climate variability and climate change on food security. UNEP is working on innovative financing with its Finance Initiative. But are these current support efforts sufficient? What more could we do to speed up the efforts? What else could we do, in particular to reach out to farmers to increase their capacity for adaptation? Are there mechanisms for exchanging information on good practices and relevant technology?

I would be grateful for any thoughts and knowledge you can share from your experience in this area.

Yours sincerely,

Nikhil Seth

Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**Fayyaz Baqir, UNDP Pakistan wrote:**

Dear All,

I would like to attach a brief on Pakistan's extremely successful experience in addressing the question of jobless growth through activation of government system and participation of beneficiary community ([Activating sustainable development through Government](#))

Fayyaz Baqir

Senior Advisor on Civil society, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Pakistan



### Benefits of HIPC:

The HIPC initiative aims to provide countries that have reached completion point with enough **debt relief to reach a level of debt sustainability**. As described above, this has been defined as a Debt-to-Export ratio  $\geq 150\%$  and Debt-to-Revenue ratio  $\geq 250\%$ . According to a World Bank report "[Financial impact of the HIPC initiative: first 22 country cases](#)", debt relief through the HIPC initiative has led to a significant reduction of the burden on HIPC economies, providing a solid basis for HIPCs to exit from unsustainable indebtedness and strengthen their development efforts. The [World Bank Enhanced HIPC webpage](#) states that nominal debt service relief of more than US\$ 56 billion has been approved for the 28 countries that have reached decision point, reducing their Net Present Value of external debt by approximately two-thirds. Of these countries, 19 have reached the completion point and have been granted unconditional debt service relief of over US\$37 billion. Poverty reducing expenditures are expected to rise from less than twice that of debt-service payments to more than four times, financed in part from resources freed by HIPC debt relief. For a previous network discussion on the use of HIPC funds, see [Consolidated Reply: Cameroon/ Use of HIPC Funds](#) (April 2002).

A short paper prepared by the Bratislava regional centre (BRC) [reviewing Kyrgyz participation in the HIPC initiative](#) uses a simple linear regression analysis of the experiences of 18 countries that reached completion stage to estimate the potential level of debt-relief. It estimates that eligible countries participating in the HIPC initiative could expect to receive roughly US\$3m in debt-relief for every US\$10m increase in debt above the threshold for participation.

The World Bank and IMF have suggested that a group of eligible countries, including the Kyrgyz republic, might expect a 31.8 percent decrease in their debt stock. **Applied to the Kyrgyz case**, this would constitute a US\$661m reduction in debt. However the linear regression model employed in the BRC paper has suggested US\$305m as a more realistic figure. This reduction could make a substantial contribution to debt-sustainability, resulting in a possible US\$20m reduction in annual debt-servicing, from around US\$101m to around US\$81 m (an amount far exceeding the Kyrgyz 2004 budget deficit of around \$12m).

However, members did stress that the amount of debt relief in the HIPC Initiative is **in many cases not enough for a real sustainable debt**. This is particularly true when the definition of debt sustainability is expanded and defined in terms of progress on human development. Still, network members indicated that it is always a benefit for eligible countries to join the Initiative, as it can release a significant amount of resources that could be used to support investment in reaching national poverty targets.

**Additional benefits** of the HIPC initiative highlighted by network members, particularly when compared with mechanisms like debt swaps, include:

- **Scale of relief** - The scale of relief is much larger than a typical debt swap.
- **De facto budget support** - Debt relief is *de facto* budget support. The benefits of budget as opposed to project support are, in theory, that it supports the development of capacity within the administration to evaluate and implement spending decisions within the available envelope; and it reduces the transaction costs of the donor-recipient relationship. Debt swaps can also be designed in such a way that they are *de facto* budget support; but this isn't automatic or the norm, as they often are very small and exist outside the main budget, with high transaction costs.

### • Eligibility

#### y for Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) -

Participation in the HIPC program allows eligibility for further benefits through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). Under this initiative, three of the main multilateral institutions (WB, IMF, AfDF) have agreed to cancel 100% of their debt claims on countries that have reached, or will eventually reach, the completion point under HIPC (see the World Bank website for [details](#)). The [World Bank's assessment of the implications of the MDRI for IDA](#) (November 2005) says that Kyrgyzstan is one of four potentially eligible that may qualify as HIPCs by end-2006 under the HIPC 'sunset clause', and which could subsequently also qualify for debt cancellation under the MDRI if and when they reach their HIPC completion points in the future.

### Considerations / Drawbacks of HIPC:

The extent to which HIPC initiative participation leads to debt-sustainability is affected by the costs involved in meeting any conditions imposed on the participating country. The **basic conditions** to reach completion point are:

- One-year successful progress with the PRSP
- Successful IMF PRGF progress (for 6 months following the decision point)
- Good record of macroeconomic stability: a three-year record of adequate policy and structural reforms and macroeconomic stability, as determined by the IFI staff assessment

In addition, the IFIs often specify a set of **special conditions** that vary substantially across countries. These may include requiring the allocation of debt-savings to the achievement of poverty reduction targets and/or other context-specific conditions, including legal or budgetary reform, decentralization, education, health, anti-corruption, or liberalization targets. The [BRC paper](#) provides a table reviewing the various special conditions imposed on countries that have reached completion stage.

Although it is difficult to estimate which special conditions would be imposed on **Kyrgyzstan** under the HIPC, analysis within the [BRC paper](#) predicts the conditions would include initiating an anti-corruption strategy, primary school enrolment targets, while no substantial health, tariff, or privatization conditions are expected. It also predicts that a substantial proportion of the debt-relief might be required to be spent on ensuring progress towards the goals outlined in its PRSP.

Conditionality is viewed by many (including by some of the more progressive bilateral donors) as an ineffective way for donors to have influence, especially in the area of economic policy conditionality. Unless a country is truly committed to a policy choice then either (a) countries fail to implement the policy change, or (b) it proves unsustainable and they reverse it. Some of the specific **concerns raised around conditionality** within the HIPC Initiative include:

- Conditionality imposed by external entities (the IFIs) can effectively undermine **national ownership** in the preparation of national strategies for development or poverty reduction. For example, Tanzania was required to prepare a new PRSP despite the fact that a home-grown National Poverty Reduction Strategy had already been developed. Conditionality also limits the opportunity for a country to develop the capacity to plan and develop policy based on nationally-determined priorities.
- The **costs** involved in meeting conditions may require high human and financial resources, thereby limiting the benefits of the debt relief. The BRC paper advises that care be taken to ensure the cost of the HIPC conditions (such as ensuring progress on the goals in the PRSP) still allows the Kyrgyz government to service its remaining debt, provide other essential services to its citizens, and support development.



## ANNEX 2: Sample Consolidated Reply



February 2006

### Kyrgyzstan/Assessing the implications of applying for HIPC status

#### Query

**Henrieta Capkovicova, UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre**

The Bratislava Regional Centre is helping UNDP Kyrgyzstan review the implications for the Government of applying for HIPC status. We would like to ask colleagues involved in this process to kindly share useful information, particularly:

- Toolkits or methodologies for assessing the costs and benefits of the HIPC initiative for individual countries;
- Examples where the UN / UNDP have been involved in advising countries on whether to apply for HIPC status;
- Examples of successful collaboration between UNDP and governments on the HIPC initiative;

#### Contents

- [Query](#)
- [Summary Response](#)
- [Country Experiences](#)
- [Recommended Resources](#)
- [Individual Contributions](#)

#### Contributors

1. [Mark Collins](#), UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre
2. [Gustave Nebie](#), UNDP SURF Dakar
3. [Paul Ladd](#), UNDP New York
4. [Degol Hailu](#), UNDP Caribbean SURF
5. [Maneka Weddikkara](#), UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo

#### Summary Response

The HIPC Initiative was launched in 1996 by the IMF and World Bank with the aim of helping highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) achieve debt sustainability by reducing their debt burden once they comply with a certain set of criteria. It represents a coordinated effort by a variety of creditors including multilateral institutions.

To participate in the initiative countries must progress through two stages: the '**decision point**' - in which initial eligibility is assessed - and the '**completion point**' in which the participants' progress in meeting the conditions of the initiative is assessed and debt relief awarded accordingly. For more background on the HIPC initiative, see the [IMF Factsheet: Debt Relief Under the HIPC Initiative](#) or the World Bank website on [The Enhanced HIPC Initiative](#).

#### HIPC Eligibility:

Countries considering applying for HIPC status must have a Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) completed at the decision point to clarify whether or not they are qualified to join. This is a technical exercise, requiring future projections of GDP, exports, and debt levels, and is usually undertaken by the IMF and World Bank in collaboration with national officials. [Debt Relief International](#), a not for profit organization, also assists countries in applying for HIPC status and is specialized in the

DSA exercise. [Some examples of country DSA's](#) can be found online through the World Bank website.

Important criteria for eligibility (decision point) include:

- High debt stock: Debt-to-export ratio  $\geq$  150%, Debt-to-revenue ratio  $\geq$  250%
- The preparation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

Once a DSA has been completed, and the country is qualified according to the criteria set by the Initiative, then the next step will be to start discussion with the Bretton Woods Institutions (particularly IMF).

In the specific case of Kyrgyzstan, the "[Heavily Indebted Poor Countries \(HIPC\) Initiative—Status of Implementation 2005](#)" (IMF / World Bank) specifies that it is one of 38 countries eligible for debt-relief under the HIPC initiative (other eligible countries include Eritrea, Haiti and Nepal). Kyrgyzstan remains highly indebted, despite bilateral debt-relief under the 2005 Paris Club agreement and ongoing debt-for-swap initiatives. It has been shown to meet the minimum debt-threshold and has completed the prerequisite PRSP in 2003. It was also deemed likely that the Kyrgyz Republic would meet the third criteria of an adequate record of macroeconomic stability.



- Restrictive conditions that call for HIPC funds to be used exclusively on social spending can have a **crowding-out effect**. Preventing an increase expenditure on productive sectors may then undermine future debt sustainability.
- While creditors emphasize debt sustainability and funds use for poverty reduction, the MDGs have not been emphasized to the same degree. Lack of alignment between donors' requirements, poverty reduction strategies, and MDGs is often mentioned as an obstacle to the achievement of the MDGs. For more details on a previous network discussion addressing this issue, see [Consolidated Reply: The role of MDGs in debtor countries' negotiations with creditors](#) (May 2005).
- There has been some debate over whether HIPC initiative might reduce incoming ODA. However, a [UN University study](#) found no evidence for a relationship.

An exception to these concerns might be conditionality that directly seeks to improve the effectiveness of aid (fiduciary conditionality in the area of transparency or anti-corruption, or on other aspects of public expenditure management), an area that seems to be more generally supported by donors and civil society groups.

In addition to conditionality, members highlighted the following concerns with the HIPC initiative:

- **Lack of debt sustainability** - As mentioned above, neither the HIPC Initiative nor debt relief alone can ensure long-term debt sustainability. Debt sustainability also depends upon numerous factors such as countries' export earnings, the amount and terms of new financing, the countries' capacity to absorb exogenous shocks, economic growth, and so forth. Moreover, the IFI's debt sustainability projections are sometimes overly-optimistic with calculations of future economic evolution and/or export income growth sometimes failing to take into account unexpected shocks. As a result, some HIPC countries have once again faced levels of debt that are deemed unsustainable after reaching completion point. For a more in-depth discussion of post-HIPC debt sustainability, see [Consolidated Reply: Post-HIPC countries' experiences in preventing debt distress](#) (July 2005).
- **Time consuming and costly process of participation** - Participation in the HIPC initiative involves lengthy consultation, collection and submission of large amounts of data, a high level of accuracy and compatibility in reported data, and successful completion of PRSP status reports. In Tanzania, the process of negotiation for participating and qualification in the HIPC was found to be a burden to the state machinery both in terms of pressure on capacity and resources. The activities involved in the process require large institutional capabilities and could affect the time it takes a country to reach completion point, as can the number of conditions and difficulty involved. The delay before the stock of debt is reduced can therefore be long (the duration of the interim period for each HIPC participant varies significantly, between 4 to 58 months). In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the BRC paper estimates full receipt of debt-relief through the initiative will take upwards of three years (close to average duration), given expectations of moderate conditions.
- **Limited to multilateral debt** - The extent of potential debt relief through the HIPC Initiative depends on the proportion of multilateral debt, as there is no guarantee that commercial creditors will participate in the scheme. In case of Kyrgyzstan, only 10% of debt owed to private creditors so the effect of their refusal to participate would be slight.

In terms of the **potential role of UNDP**, one member recommended building the capacity of governments to

estimate their

possible debt-relief entitlement and to analyze and cost the possible conditions involved in HIPC initiative participation, as this could greatly enhance the country's position in negotiations with World Bank in IMF and their ability to achieve debt-sustainability through the initiative.

## Country Experiences

**Tanzania** - When Tanzania joined the HIPC initiative in 2001 its multilateral debt was 58 per cent of total debt. The benefit of HIPC, therefore, was very much linked to the proportion of multilateral debt. The IMF and the World Bank (through IDA) made significant concessions. The NPV before rescheduling in 2005 amounted to US\$5.2 billion. For the same year, after HIPC, the NPV totaled US\$2.4 billion. The debt service ratio before HIPC was 13 per cent. After HIPC it fell to 7.3 per cent, of which the multilateral component was only 3 per cent.

However, the costs of qualification were also significant.

- While Tanzania had a home-grown National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS), the requirement for participating in the HIPC was to prepare a new PRSP, which consumed US\$ 0.3 million from government budget.
- The rush to meet HIPC completion point solely focused on scaling-up social spending, which impacted on little increment in spending within the productive sector (a kind of crowding-out effect).
- Interest payment on new debt, negotiated after the HIPC, increased rapidly as a share of total interest payments, implying accumulation of new debt. This is closely related to the fact that HIPC is not front-loaded, which means the stock of debt is not reduced immediately, but after three years and beyond.
- The Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) was extremely optimistic and unrealistic. For instance, to achieve an export-to-GDP ratio of 18 per cent per annum by 2015 (as stipulated in the DSA), non-traditional exports will have to grow by 24 per cent per annum. This would require increased investment in the productive sector, which is not the case as indicated above.
- The negotiation for participating and qualification in the HIPC was, according to interview responses by public servants, a burden to the state machinery both in terms of putting pressure on capacity and resources.

## Key Resource Persons

**Debt Relief International (DRI), London** - Assist countries for applying for HIPC status and they are specialized in DSA exercise. It is a non for profit organization that will surely help. You can contact the Director, Matthew Martin, at [dri@dri.org.uk](mailto:dri@dri.org.uk). You can also visit their website at: [www.dri.org.uk](http://www.dri.org.uk).

**Gustave Nebie**, Poverty Advisor, UNDP/SURF Dakar, Senegal

**Paul Ladd**, Development Finance, Debt and Capital Flows Adviser, UNDP/BDP New York

**Renata Lok-Dessallien** - RC/RR of UNDP Bangladesh, has extensive experience in HIPC initiatives. Suggested by Mr. Hla Phyu Chit.

## Recommended Resources

**World Bank Website on Debt** - Information about the HIPC Initiative and the HIPC Countries. Also includes links to Country Completion Point documents, papers and other useful information. <http://www.worldbank.org/debt>



IMF Factsheet: Debt Relief Under the HIPC Initiative

Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative - Status of Implementation 2005 - IMF / World Bank, 2005

What has 100 billion dollars worth of debt relief done for low-income countries? - N. Chauvin and A Kraay, World Bank, September 2005

Financial impact of the HIPC initiative: first 22 country cases - World Bank HIPC Unit / Debt Initiative for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), IMF, 2001

Debt dynamics and contingency financing: theoretical reappraisal of the HIPC initiative - Nissanke, M.; Ferrarini, B. / WIDER Development Conference on Debt Relief, 2001

Debt issues in Africa: thinking beyond the HIPC initiative to solving structural problems - Geda, A. / WIDER Development Conference on Debt Relief, 2001

The Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative: A Human Rights assessment of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) - Cheru, F. / United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), 2001

How to ensure Debt Sustainability beyond the HIPC Initiative? - Discussion paper by Kathrin Berensmann

Additionality of Debt Relief and Debt Forgiveness, and Implications for Future Volumes of Official Assistance - Ndikumana (2002) UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER).

Debt Sustainability in Low-Income Countries - Proposal for an Operational Framework and Policy Implications - IMF and World Bank, February 2004. Aims at measuring debt sustainability with a set of indicators and thresholds. The proposed framework seeks to guide borrowing decisions of low-income countries in a way that matches their need for funds with their current and prospective ability to service debt, tailored to their specific circumstances.

UNDP Poverty Report 2000 - See the section in Chapter 4 on Linking Debt Relief to Poverty Reduction.

The Debt Relief Initiative and public health spending in Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) - S Gupta; B Clements; MT Guin-Siu; L Leruth, Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, WHO, 2001. Presents estimates of debt relief to these countries, and discusses its possible use for various poverty-reducing programs, including for health programs. Also addresses issues related to monitoring the use and effectiveness of HIPC assistance.

Does the HIPC initiative achieve its goal of debt sustainability? - Gunter, G.B. / WIDER Development Conference on Debt Relief, 2001. Argues that one of the most serious problems of the HIPC Initiative is that it may not achieve its key goal of providing a solid exit from future debt rescheduling.

How much poverty could HIPC reduce? - Dagdeviren, H.; Weeks, J. / WIDER Development Conference on Debt Relief, 2001. Reviews the development of the HIPC Initiative, then considers how much poverty could be reduced through debt relief. Using a simple distribution function and measures of inequality, US one dollar -a-day poverty is estimated for the twenty-three countries.

**Country Examples:**

documents

IMF Country by Country data and publications – On HIPC initiatives in Sub Saharan Africa

The Role of the HIPC Debt Relief Initiative in Bridging the Resource Gap for the Financing of Poverty Reduction Programmes and the Role of SMES in Poverty Reduction: The Case of Uganda - By Michael Atingi-Ego, July, 2002

The HIPC Debt Relief Initiative : Uganda's experience - Muwanga-Zake, E. S. K.; Ndhaye, S. / WIDER

Rwanda's completion document (June 2005).

**Previous relevant CRs:**

Consolidated Reply: Post-HIPC countries' experiences in preventing debt distress (July 2005)

Consolidated Reply: Cameroon/ Use of HIPC Funds (April 2002)

Consolidated Reply: Query/HIPC countries debt servicing (June 2001)



A large, solid blue curved shape that starts from the top right and sweeps downwards and to the left, partially covering the white background.

ECA Knowledge Management

# **Network Facilitation**

Revised April 19, 2007

UNECA

NOTE: This is a draft document prepared by ECA's Knowledge Management Team for the Network Facilitation Training on April 26, 2007. This is for internal circulation only.



## NETWORK FACILITATION

Network Facilitators play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of establishing and nurturing a community of practice. A Network Facilitator is the moderator, guide, cheerleader, and traffic cop who ensures the smooth exchange of ideas, nurtures community building, and provides liaison with stakeholders. S/he provides multiple opportunities for members to contribute and share information and experiences, keep members informed by flagging current issues and upcoming activities; and maintaining quality of content. Some of the responsibilities of the Network Facilitator may be shared with others in the network. A network facilitator need not be the "subject expert". Far more important is the ability of that person to involve and include others, and to work behind the scenes to keep the network "on the boil".

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE NETWORK FACILITATOR?

Some of the main roles of the network facilitator include:

- **Providing active leadership to the community of practice.** Network Facilitators can provide much needed leadership by encouraging and motivating members to be active in the community by applying incentives and giving recognition; being an active community of practice member by committing time for both face-to-face meetings and online interactions; mediating potential conflicts (neutral convener); reconciling diverse opinions and promoting mutual respect among members.
- **Serving as public relations manager.** An important role of the Network Facilitator is to act as a focal point for the community, both internally and for those outside the network by representing the interests of the community of practice and its members to the outside world and publicize the community of practice using existing communications media within the organization.
- **Moderating discussions.** The network facilitator may also have the role of moderating e-discussions. This entails guiding and prompting participation by contributing messages at key moments in the discussion while maintaining a certain level of quality and consistency in the discussions. He/she also drafts discussion questions, highlight appropriate resources on an e-discussion



webpage and vet e-discussion summaries to ensure technical accuracy and appropriate treatment of issues. Another important role as a moderator is to invite knowledgeable and experienced persons from inside and outside the community of practice to contribute to the discussion. The role of moderation by network facilitators is not as a form of censorship, but rather as a means to enhance participation by<sup>6</sup>

- Maintaining quality, which has maintained demand for membership;
  - Balancing participation with quality of contributions;
  - Getting to know community members, i.e., who they are, their level of interest and understanding of the issue, its relevance to their work and needs, their areas of expertise (this enables us to follow up with active solicitation and targeting of contributions from particular members to particular initiatives); and
  - Sequencing and managing the flow of traffic on the electronic network and scheduling and coordinating community-building activities.
- **Serving as source of information by providing information to community of practice members.** The facilitator should ensure timely responses to members' queries. In the early stages it is important to demonstrate responsiveness. The facilitator should be prepared to pick up the phone and press for answers behind the scenes. The facilitator should also research and/or collect useful information for the community of practice and its members. S/he should also maintain an easily accessible archive system and community "home page" and be able to flag "burning issues" for attention. Compiling best practices and experiences is an important task of the facilitator.
  - **Directing the development of community of practice** by maintaining network distribution list; building links with other network facilitators from other communities of practice; promoting synergy with other communities of practice and organizing communities of practice meetings at least once a year to renew relationships and introduce any new members
  - **Monitoring the effectiveness of the community of practice.**

<sup>6</sup> Henderson, K. 2005. The knowledge sharing approach of the United Nations Development Programme. KM4D Journal 1(2): 19-30. [www.km4dev.org/journal](http://www.km4dev.org/journal)



## CHALLENGES OF FACILITATION IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

While knowing what tasks a facilitator has in a community of practice surely would help a facilitator to prepare, knowing which tasks are the most challenging would improve that preparation. Furthermore, knowing which tasks are more important than others would also help the facilitator to allocate limited attention in a more efficient way.<sup>7</sup> A study by Tarmizi, H, et al. (2006), reveals that the most difficult tasks that network facilitators with more than 5 years experience face are:

1. Encouraging new members to participate in the community's activities
2. Creating and maintaining an open, positive and participative environment
3. Creating comfort with and promoting understanding of the tools and tool outputs

And network facilitators with more than 5 years experience also felt that the most important tasks are:

1. Building cooperative relationships among members
2. Keeping community focus on its purpose; creating and maintaining an open, positive and participative environment; mediating conflicts and managing community through guidelines and rules (all equally important)

**Encouraging participation** is still the most difficult task, and is recognized as important too.

Some of the pitfalls that network facilitators could fall into include:<sup>8</sup>

- Top-down direction;
- Control by one entity of the organization or section of the community;
- One-way communication;
- Lack of incentives;
- Too many interactions on process and a lack of substantive content;

---

<sup>7</sup> Tarmizi, H, et al. 2006. *Identifying Challenges for Facilitation in Communities of Practice*. Proceedings of the 39th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.

<http://csdl2.computer.org/comp/proceedings/hicss/2006/01/250710026a.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Henderson, K. 2005. The knowledge sharing approach of the United Nations Development Programme. *KM4D Journal* 1(2): 19-30. [www.km4dev.org/journal](http://www.km4dev.org/journal)



- Lack of direction;
- Lack of proper boundaries;
- Presumption that the CoP can do everything and takes the place of organized project mapping or knowledge gathering;
- Reliance on one tool or mode of interaction, e.g., the e-network alone;
- A weak facilitator or no facilitator;
- Failing to recognize member contributions;
- Lack of follow-up – i.e., dismissal of a query if contributions are not forthcoming;
- Unfocused queries;
- Lack of leadership;
- Overwhelming traffic;
- Lack of a sense of belonging to the community (too big); and
- Launching initiatives and not following up.

## ICS' ROLE AS NETWORK FACILITATOR OF THE ECA KM

The main tasks of the Network facilitator will be to perform the following tasks:

- ❑ Direct development of Communities of Practice /Sub-Practice (thematic programme division in ECA and SROs,). This involves promoting community collaboration around division priorities and workplans; facilitating knowledge sharing and development within and across practice communities; facilitating face-to-face events to strengthen community identity both globally and regionally, in collaboration with Division and SRO Leadership, and managing the community's electronic network mailgroups.
- ❑ Support policy development and knowledge sharing through managing the delivery of the community's products and services, such as Consolidated Replies, e-Discussions, Off-Line Query Support, Division News Updates, Division Workspaces as well as Division agenda setting.
- ❑ Build relations with external professionals and institutions, including donors and UN system agencies, in the relevant Division area and in support of knowledge sharing and networking.



- ❑ Promote cross-regional and cross-division collaboration through reviewing regional priorities in light of service line implementation at SRO and regional level; collaborating with Knowledge Services Teams in ECA; and introducing cross-division and cross-regional dimensions to core products and services delivered by ECA.





## Reference:

Henderson, K. 2005. The knowledge sharing approach of the United Nations Development Programme. *KM4D Journal* 1(2): 19-30. [www.km4dev.org/journal](http://www.km4dev.org/journal)

McDermott, R. 2000. *Knowing in Community: 10 Critical Success Factors in Building Communities of Practice*. <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowning.shtml>

UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre. 2004. *Establishing a Community of Practice: A resource handbook* (draft). [http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=comm\\_practice](http://europeandcis.undp.org/?wspc=comm_practice)



A large, solid blue curved shape that starts from the top right and sweeps downwards and to the left, partially framing the text on the page.

ECA Knowledge Management

# **E-Discussion Guidelines**

Revised April 12, 2007

UNECA

NOTE: This is a draft document prepared by ECA's Knowledge Management Team for the Network Facilitation Training on April 26, 2007. This is for internal circulation only.



## Guideline for E-Discussion on ECA Community of Practice

This guideline is adopted from UNDP's guidelines of e-discussions on UNDP Practice Networks.

### WHY HOLD E-DISCUSSIONS?

#### Purpose:

- To pro-actively address topics that present difficulties or opportunities to members of the community of practice, lessening the need to react (within short time windows) to individual 'queries,'
- To reduce the number of topics treated on the community of practice in a cursory, superficial manner thus limiting the need for repetition of similar queries that were insufficiently addressed,
- To collectively learn about an important thematic area for the community of practice, discovering who is working on what and exploring how practice in this area can be improved.
- To clarify ECA's role in a particular thematic area and identify key players (e.g. sub-practices to take an issue forward).

### SELECTION PROCESS OF E-DISCUSSION TOPICS: WHO DETERMINES WHAT IS DISCUSSED WHEN?

Each community of practice should hold no more than four e-discussions per year. Two to three e-discussion themes should be selected using the inclusive planning process articulated below. Community of practice focal points and network facilitators based on their work plan should schedule these e-discussions. One e-discussion per year may be based on an unplanned theme that arises as a priority for the community of practice. The selection of this topic should be based on the indicators outlined below.

- **Methodology for an Annual e-Discussion planning process:**

Selecting topics for an e-discussion should be considered one aspect of a 'Practice setting agenda' process. An initial list of topics should be 'pre-selected' by the



Network Facilitator and shared with key community of practice members for feedback (e.g. Focal points; active members, etc..).

Initial suggestions (of 10-20 topics) should be presented to the Network for a "tally" where network members are asked to vote for priority topics facing their organization or institution. The top 3-4 topics can then be scheduled throughout the year.

This demand analysis should be conducted annually by all interested community of practice at the same time in order to compare potential topics, avoid duplication, coordinate timing, and identify cross-practice opportunities.

- **Allowing for pressing priorities:**

To permit e-discussions on priority areas that may arise within the context of community of practice activities (or individual queries), one e-discussion can be organized per year outside of the planning process articulated above. At least three weeks notice is required to schedule this discussion to allow for adequate planning, member notification, moderator selection, etc. which maximize the quality of the discussion. As there may be competing priorities for this one e-discussion, what follows is a set of indicators to be used by the Facilitator to decide whether or not the topic merits an e-discussion:

- Topic relates in some fashion to a service line within the knowledge area;
- There is interested, dedicated leadership and guest moderation for the e-discussion - including a lead adviser who is committed to using the summary discussion;
- Topic is not duplication of e-discussion held within the last two years on any network;
- Topic represents a potential strategic niche for the knowledge area.
- There is evidence that a number of clients and partners: 1) are working in this area, 2) will be working in this area or 3) would like to work in this area
- At least three weeks is available for planning the e-discussion.



## OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES - HOW TO DO IT?

- **Duration:** E-discussions should be at least three to four weeks in duration
- **How often:** Three to four discussions per network per year
- **Moderator:** A community of practice member and/or an external expert with relevant expertise should be selected as 'guest moderator(s)' by the Network Facilitator in consultation with key community of practice members. Past e-discussions have benefited greatly from having both an internal and external guest moderator. The guest moderator(s) work closely with the network facilitator to guide and prompt participation by contributing messages at key moments in the discussion. He/she also assists the facilitator to draft discussion questions, highlight appropriate resources on an e-discussion webpage and vet e-discussion summaries to ensure technical accuracy and appropriate treatment of issues. Another important role of the moderator is to invite knowledgeable and experienced persons from inside and outside the community of practice to contribute to the discussion. The facilitator should ensure that no more than 2-5 days are required to perform this role.
- **Selection of moderator:** During the selection process for the e-discussion topics, the Facilitator, in consultation with the focal person and key community of practice members, should select and invite persons to perform this role. External experts may be hired or invited to volunteer to serve as guest moderators. Ideally these persons should have an established 'name' in the field and be able to inspire or 'provoke' members to share substantive insights. External experts may be academics, leading consultants and/or experts from partner UN agencies. In previous experience it has been important that Guest moderators have field experience in addition to academic expertise.
- **Timing and Coordination:** Coordination across community of practice begins during the annual e-discussion planning process outlined above. When the e-discussions have been selected, facilitators should coordinate schedules to avoid flooding the networks. All e-discussions should be noted on the community of practice Calendar and facilitators should keep each other notified.



For the unplanned e-discussions which may arise organically out of the activities of each practice, the initiators of these discussions should provide at least three weeks advance notice of their requests, and should expect that the timing of the new discussion will have to be coordinated with what is happening on other networks.

#### BEFORE THE LAUNCH OF THE DISCUSSION:

- Prior to the start of each E-discussion, community of practice and focal persons, and facilitators must have a plan on where the results of the E-discussions will be channeled i.e. Position Paper, Practice Note, pilot project, etc.
- Guest moderator(s) and the network facilitator will create an 'e-Discussion webpage' housed in the Workspace containing an introduction to the topic with carefully written focus questions and text explaining discussion goals and logic and a short 'resource list' so that persons can 'brush up' on their knowledge of the topic before contributing.
- The Webpage will be launched a week in advance of the discussion through an email message from the network facilitator. The launch message should also include a short introduction to the e-discussion and the moderators.
- Framing the question: the guest moderator(s) and the facilitator should work together to craft the different parts of the e-discussion, paying special attention to the questions being posed to members. The different parts (e.g. Part 1, Part 2) should flow together seamlessly but should raise distinct issues. Questions should be substantive, creative and provocative in order to stimulate discussion. Questions should also not be open-ended, but should seek facilitate the discussion around the specific topic of interest, while still allowing contributors to bring out elements in the discussion that may be unexpected but relevant. Discussion questions should invite both comparative experience and policy advice. Experience with previous Network e-discussions show that carefully prepared discussion questions can inspire more thoughtful and pertinent exchange especially when ample time for member's reflection is allowed in advance and during discussions
- In house and external experts (tapped through expert networks explained below) should be personally invited to discuss by guest moderator(s) and/or facilitator.



One option is to 'formalize' this process by inviting "experts" to serve as resource persons to the discussion and thus listing them on the discussion website.

#### AT THE COMPLETION OF THE E-DISCUSSION:

- E-discussions address topics that present either a strategic niche or an emerging opportunity for ECA and thus merit focused exchange of experience and knowledge within and outside of the organization. As such, e-discussions are part of the community of practice development process. Suggestions, experience, resources, etc. collected through E-discussions are invaluable inputs for programming and tools developed by communities of practice and can play a significant role in shaping their substantive focus.
- There is evidence that e-discussions produce a number of 'positive externalities' (e.g. unanticipated positive 'spin offs'), such as proposals for case studies, input to knowledge products, input to project documents, ideas for country level initiatives, development of staff capacities etc. The 'e-discussion team' should take these into consideration when planning the follow up to the e-discussion.
- In addition, it is important that an output is also planned in advance, so that the perception is not that this is a "discussion for discussion sake" and participants know that their contributions will not be 'lost in virtual space' but rather contribute to knowledge area development.
- The appropriate way to decide on the e-discussion output is through a joint decision by an informal 'E-discussion team' - guest moderator(s), the Facilitator (s), focal person(s). The team should decide on a plan to, for example, channel results into a Position Paper, Practice Note, pilot project, etc. The plan should include a timeline and note persons to be responsible for carrying through.
- The 'e-discussion team' should also decide how the discussion summary is to be disseminated, stored, used and updated. One option is to make the discussion summary into a 'Reference Note' drafted by the Facilitator and Research Analyst and vetted by the guest moderators. This Note is a summary of member's contributions to the e-discussion vetted and supplemented with input from the guest moderators and network research team. The Note should strive to be a comprehensive description of experiences and ideas for a given thematic area in a certain period of time. After a given amount of time, this Note should be updated with input or feedback from network members. The reference paper should be



considered a 'starter note' for writing or refining a Position Paper, Practice Note or lead to a capacity/strategy building event (including network contributors). Regardless of whether the 'e-discussion team' opts to prepare the Reference Note or not, e-discussion outputs should be periodically updated with new information and experience and be treated as 'living documents'.