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### *News and Events*

AFTIDEV (Africa, Technologies, Information and Development) has a public debate on the issues related to information technology transfer and communication of these tools. Based on reference documents, this bilingual forum (English, French) is taking place over a period of two months and is structured around nine themes dealing with social use of information and technology transfer in Africa.  
<http://www.aftidev.net/>

The Global Knowledge for Development is an online discussion that examines the impediments to harnessing knowledge and information as tools for development at local, national, and global levels. It discusses case studies, best practices, and other examples of activities that have expanded access to information and knowledge among the poor.  
<http://www.globalknowledge.org/discussion.html>

(More info on [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org))

## ***Advancing the policy and practice of capacity building in international development cooperation***

### ***Information and Capacity Building***

The issue 7 of capacity.org focuses on a rapidly-emerging issue in development - the challenge posed to individuals and organisations by new information and communication technologies (ICTs). The focus of this issue is not, however, on the technologies themselves, but on the institutional capacities needed to make effective use of them.

Beyond the technical challenge to get 'connected' to new tools, the biggest challenge for most of us is to adapt ourselves and our organisations to life as part of increasingly 'rich' information environments, in terms of the sheer quality of information that is now available and accessible at the click of a mouse. The days when information resources were carefully guarded and hoarded are fast disappearing. Coping with the explosion of information forces us to drastically reduce our role as 'collectors' of information specimens, and instead to learn the skills of 'selectors', choosing to scan only that which is the best and most relevant to our situation.

The contributions to this issue all relate to this general aim and seek to illustrate ways in which perhaps abstract notions are implemented on the ground. The focus throughout is on the capacities of organisations and individuals to gain access to useful information and knowledge, and to make effective use of it. The link between better information and knowledge capacities and more effective institutions or greater development impact is assumed, but not tested.

The first contributor to this issue, Peter Ballantyne from ECDPM suggests that organisations need to look closely at their skills in developing relationships and networks as a way to mobilise the capacities of various partners in networks. The second contribution from Andrew Mancey introduces a sustainable networking programme in Guyana, noting some of milestones reached and the achievements made. Finally, Gertrude Ngenya describes the activities of a regional information centre and network on local government issues in Southern Africa.

We hope that the ideas in this issue will encourage readers to share their views as well as their own experiences and visit the website which presents additional material.

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***Issue 7***  
October 2000

# Managing Relationships: A Key Information Management Capacity

This millennium year could almost be the year of 'information', and especially information technologies. Already, we have seen discussions of the information society and the digital divide reach the highest levels - in the EU Summit in Lisbon, the World Economic Forum in Davos, the G8 meeting in Okinawa, and in the UN General Assembly in New York. The world is full of pronouncements and special initiatives to widen access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially in poor countries and among vulnerable groups. Development agencies of all types are taking up the challenge. In the European Commission, there is even talk of something called 'e-development.'

Amid all the grand words and big speeches, we should remember that action on the ground is going to need a massive injection of skills and other capacities that make the technologies and the applications usable and relevant. We are sure to see many more initiatives and project to train and educate individuals so they can participate in a digital world, and many efforts by organisations to re-orient and re-invent themselves to become 'players' instead of 'spectators.' Beyond skills and training, however, what capacities should we seeking to develop?

## Alliances

A recent e-discussion (<http://www.oneworld.net/thinktank/water/strcon.htm>) focused on the need for policy makes in the water and sanitation sector to be able to tap into 'streams of knowledge,' and especially the resource centres that regulate and monitor them. One of the most exciting notions discussed is that individual resource centres need to join or form 'alliances' to achieve their knowledge-sharing and capacity building objectives.

This notion of alliances is an increasingly critical part of the capacity building challenge in the information management domain. It recognises that organisations are nowadays unable to achieve all their aims and objectives alone. This is especially true in the information area where the sheer quantity of new knowledge is overwhelming. Scaling up and achieving a necessary critical mass to address a problem or issue is best done through cooperation and partnerships. Here, capacities are mobilised and directed, rather than only being built.

In practice then, new approaches to information and knowledge sharing are emerging. These are often based around resource-sharing, joint action, and networking, and involve different organisations working together, sharing their expertise and capacities, and helping one another. What is more, these approaches are typically 'inclusive' in nature, with the participating organisations taking on roles and responsibilities, becoming real 'actors' in development rather than spectators. This parallels widely

accepted development thinking that puts actors and institutions at the heart of development actions.

However, recognising that all organisations are potential actors and partners in an information activity, instead of being just customers, is a revolution. It forces us to re-think our own approaches, to re-consider the capacities and skills we need to develop, and to pay much more attention to the webs of relationships our organisations need in order to perform.

## Relationships

What do these joint approaches look like? My first example is from the Horn of Africa and is called 'Mesob' (<http://www.mesob.org>). This was launched in 1999 by the InterAfrica Group as a platform for networking and joint action among different development actors in Ethiopia. While the acronym stands for 'Mutual Enhancement for Space and Operations Building', it has lovely local symbolism. According to the web site, the mesob is the woven table on which meals are traditionally served in several areas of Ethiopia. It is a platform from which all can eat. While the network is still at an early stage, it already acts as a vehicle for information sharing, on for example HIV/AIDS, in Ethiopia. It has the potential to enhance the capacities of the actors involved and to encourage each of them to contribute and share their expertise. Less tangibly, it becomes one of the ingredients in an institutional 'web' that surrounds, and links, and glues the different actors together, fostering an enabling environment, and creating a 'capacity' on which all can draw.

My other example is from the Philippines. Here, a project - CODE-WAN (<http://www.codewan.com.ph/>) was set up to promote use of the Internet by civil society organisations. The web site provides a fascinating account of the project's history and evolution, including the problems that were faced. In terms of capacity building, the partners focused on "community site building" as a way to involve the various members of the project, producing six community web site, on issues like women, human rights, poverty, and local governance.

These are but a two examples of a growing trend by organisations to work together to address information management challenges in situations where capacities are scarce. Some other examples are discussed in an ECDPM InfoBrief ([http://www.oneworld.net/ecdpmpubs/infobrief3\\_gb.htm](http://www.oneworld.net/ecdpmpubs/infobrief3_gb.htm)).

While these collaborative approaches seem to hold much promise for hard-pressed organisations wishing to invest intelligently in 'knowledge' and information systems, they are not necessarily easy to implement, nor do they come naturally. Building joint projects or initiatives requires a high level of 'cooperativity' - skills and attitudes

and organisational culture - among participants, and a willingness to learn, to compromise, and to see and understand the views and concerns of the others.

Over and above the 'normal' information handling skills (databases, web sites, programming, publishing, libraries, etc.) therefore, today's organisations need the capacity to engage in relationships effectively. These relationships will usually be polygamous and several affairs will be conducted at any one time. In our development sector, we can expect these relationships to be public and, as much as possible, to result in public goods. Managing the quality of the relationships and keeping the different partners interested in the activities of any offspring becomes a major preoccupation that may, ultimately, be as important as any information tasks inside the organisation.

### Challenges for Capacity Builders

Each and every organisation therefore faces a challenge to enhance its 'information' capacities and to weave a web of relationships on which it can depend and with which it can address its goals more effectively.

For organisations in developing countries, a key element in this situation is the international community, which is preparing itself to provide assistance in this area. Some of the challenges for the international 'capacity builders' in this area were discussed at a recent workshop ([http://www.oneworld.net/ecdpm/pmb/b11\\_gb.htm](http://www.oneworld.net/ecdpm/pmb/b11_gb.htm)).

Here, participants emphasised the importance of the relationship between organisations from the North and the South. For donor agencies and development actors who seek to build information and knowledge capacities in developing countries, the biggest challenge is the shift in the roles expected of them. As the Irish minister for overseas development assistance recently argued, "capacity building ... is about changing the relationship between the donor and the recipient ... It means that donors are less benefactors and more like strategic partners in development [IAAC. 1999. Report of the national forum on development aid. - <http://www.iaac.ie/>]. Simply providing advice or money or delivering assistance to a recipient is no longer sufficient. Effective development requires that recipients and donors work together as partners, jointly identifying the issues, tackling the problems, and sharing responsibility for the results.

As in the new information and communication approaches being developed on and around the Internet, the nature of the relationship is a critical element in managing and delivering development assistance. Mastering the skills needed to maintain effective relationships is here also a critical capacity - for both partners.

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### Related Sites

[http://nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks/kno\\_inf.html](http://nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks/kno_inf.html)

This page is an online resource guide for those seeking to improve the use of collaborative and learning-based approaches. It provides a special section on knowledge and information management.

<http://www.bellanet.org/>

Bellanet fosters inter-agency collaboration through more effective use of information and communication technologies.

<http://www.idrc.ca/acacia/>

The Acacia Initiative is an international effort to empower sub-Saharan African communities with the ability to apply information and communication technologies to their own social and economic development.

<http://www.iicd.org/cdp/>

The International Institute for Communication and Development's capacity building programme strives to build the capacity of its developing country participants to harness the power of information and the means to communicate it through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

<http://www.infodev.org/>

InfoDev is a global grant program managed by the World Bank to promote innovative projects on the use of ICTs for economic and social development.

<http://www.inasp.org.uk>

INASP is a co-operative network of partners aiming to improve world-wide access to information. It seeks to enhance the flow of information within and between countries, especially those with less developed systems of publication and dissemination.

<http://www.kabissa.org/about.html>

Kabissa is a space on the Internet for the African non-profit sector. It works with African organizations that seek to take fuller advantage of ICT's, and in particular the Internet, in order to achieve their own objectives.

*(More info on [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org))*

# ***Building a National Information and Communication Network***

The Sustainable Development Networking Programme (Guyana) began in July 1997, less than a year after Guyana had its first permanent international Internet connection, when most users were home users and private enterprises. The SDNP is a UNDP programme with projects in about 30 countries, many of which started well before that in Guyana.

In general terms the aim of SDNP (Guyana) has been to promote access to development-related information, with the Internet as the primary means for achieving this. This has involved working with many key development actors (stakeholders) in Guyana: Government ministers, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, funding agencies and the education sector. They were generally slow to experiment with this new service. Difficulties due to lack of computer hardware or phone line were significant but could not be addressed directly by the project. Most stakeholders overcame such difficulties eventually - schools being an exception to this.

The main activities have been providing Internet access, obtaining local information, building web sites and related training. The large majority of local web sites including most government web sites have been hosted by the SDNP (Guyana) web server (<http://www.sdn.org.gy>). Its activities are of the type called for by those concerned with the 'digital divide', for example the UN Secretary General in a report to ECOSOC.

The project is guided by a committee of stakeholders from public and private sectors which meets approximately every two months.

## **Reflections on the Process**

Reviewing the development of the project since 1997 reveals that stakeholders have usually followed a pattern in terms of their use of the network.

Initially they were offered free Internet access and were visited by the coordinator who explained what the Internet was and how it might benefit them. Some, a minority, soon took up the offer while others did so later. A few did not do so due to inadequate computer hardware or phone lines. Offers were made for training if needed.

This was often followed by a learning period during which the service was used irregularly, sometimes not by senior staff but by secretarial staff. As knowledge of the technology spread through the organisation, use increased and acquired more acceptance as a routine service. Use of faxes declined.

With some stakeholders the point has been reached where senior management have begun to see the value of a web site. However the conceptual and organisational difficulties associated with structuring a web site and deciding on the content have often proved to be a major challenge. There also appears to be a reluctance to make information public on the part of government agencies which may be partly a hold-over from Guyana's past.

Once a web site was constructed and put on-line (often being designed by project staff) there was often a period during which updates were delayed or non-existent. This was usually due to the stakeholder not having staff assigned to that task or a lack of the necessary skills. Other stakeholders, however, employed staff or found volunteers to maintain their web sites.

## **Expected Benefits to Stakeholders**

The project offers training in Internet use and in web site design to stakeholders. This was done in groups of one and two as the project facilities do not allow for training of larger groups. This often led to the involvement of their staff directly in the construction or maintenance of their web

site and significantly increased the institutional capacity of the stakeholder.

Benefits to stakeholders arising directly from their access to the Internet included: Use of e-mail to increase communication efficiency and reduce costs, inexpensive and quick access to important information from other stakeholders and from international sources, and inexpensive means to make information available to others by means of a web site.

It was common for reports produced a few years ago to be virtually inaccessible even at the agency which produced them as only paper copies were kept. Information put on a web site should be available indefinitely unless a decision is made to remove it or the web site.

The proactive development of local web sites has been one of the main aims of the project. This has set it apart from commercial service providers who host few web sites. It has enabled many stakeholders to make important information generally accessible for the first time. One example of this is the 1996 Guyana Human Development Report which was converted into web format and put on-line for the local UNDP office. Other stakeholders such as the Evergreen Nature Study Club, Guyana Energy Agency, Guyana Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Trade and the NGO Forum have been helped to develop web sites. Others were hosted but needed little help in site design such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Iwokrama Rainforest Programme and the Guyana Office for Investment.

## **Some Lessons Learned**

In order for a stakeholder to benefit fully from the network, some elements proved to be essential. The stakeholder needs an awareness at management level of the potential benefits and an openness to innovation. In addition the management must have an understanding of how a web

site can meet the needs of the organisation and be willing to provide the content for a web site and to approve its release. It was often these requirements which were the most difficult to meet.

ICT skills - the stakeholder needs staff with sufficient computer skills to use e-mail and to browse the Internet or those who can learn these quickly. The requirement was usually achievable. The stakeholder may also need web site organisation and web site construction skills. This proved challenging.

Awareness - developing an awareness of the potential benefits and a willingness to exploit them can be a very slow process. This depends very much on the attitudes of senior management to innovation and information technology. It may also depend on their willingness to delegate responsibility to more junior staff who are more familiar with the technology.

Readiness - the readiness of a stakeholder to take a step forward is often more important than issues of hardware and

access. It is important not to expect too much too soon and for progress to be incremental. The benefits become clear sooner or later once the technology is tested.

Free service - offering services which are initially free has been a major facilitator of progress. For government agencies, lack of a budget line otherwise posed a problem.

Institutional capacity - the lack of a position in the organisation for web site management or even for information technology / technical support was a common problem. Creation of a new position is not quickly achieved.

Prospects

Some stakeholders reached the point that the benefits of Internet access were well appreciated and they became ready to pay for the service, whether from SDNP or from a commercial ISP. Some acquired additional accounts with other ISP's since SDNP could not provide them. They therefore reached a sustainable level in terms of their own Internet access.

One of the main aims of the project was to become a financially self-sufficient non-profit organisation. This proved to be difficult in practice partly because it conflicts with the aim of providing low-cost access. The demand for services from potential stakeholders has exceeded the capacity of the project to meet them but expansion has been hindered by the high cost of leased lines (over US\$5000 per month for a 128K line).

The committee of stakeholders which oversees the project has been keen for the project to continue but there is not yet consensus on the way in which it should evolve or how to meet the financial challenge of current telecommunications costs. The uncertainties are added to by impending national elections and by the beginning of a two-year project to introduce competition into the telecommunications sector.

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## ***Setting up a Regional Information Centre on Local Government***

A good system of governance allows for the efficient delivery of goods and services and needs a good information management system. The SADC Regional Information Centre on Local Government aims to be a cost effective way to access and share relevant information in the Southern African region. In the past, information sharing between and among institutions and individuals has not been very efficient. Appropriate tools and means to share this information were not properly identified. Efficient procedures and policies were also not yet developed. The abundant information and lessons to learn in enhancing the decentralised process and improving local government systems in Africa - the best, good and bad practices - have hardly been disseminated among stakeholders.

The Information Centre was launched in January 1997 as a collaborative effort between the Municipal Development Programme for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Africa Union of Local Authorities, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

The first phase (1997 - 1999) of the Centre's operations was funded by the European Union and DFID. The European Union renewed its funding for Phase II, (1999 - 2001). Supplementary funding is being sought for the expanded phase II programme.

The objectives of the Centre are:

- To enhance communication, information sharing, networking and mutual learning between all agencies involved in local government in the countries of the region;

- To support local government reform and restructuring in the region and in particular the move towards democratisation and decentralisation;

- To support the process of bringing local government into the mainstream of national development, by facilitating and strengthening partnerships with central government; and

- To support institutional capacity building at all levels of the local government system in the region.

The Centre's information management system has both electronic and physical elements, and links practitioners throughout the region. The network operates through national associations of local government and other related institutions in the region.

### Operation of the Centre

Initially, the Centre sought to link practitioners and to foster knowledge exchange by sponsoring a series of 5 to 8 day study tours. Each study tour brought a mixed group of practitioners from a country and enabled them to visit their peers in another country in the region.

The results of the study tours, together with information from seminars, books, published and unpublished materials, workshop reports, internet and e-mail, forms the basis for the Centre's information activities. The Centre also seeks to build the capacities of the network members by facilitating access to information. The outcomes of this work includes:

Improved service delivery and provision, improved performance, better products and increased participation of stakeholders in local economic development. This enables users to have solutions to common problems and have access to collective responses and solutions devised by others.

Enhancement of relationships between and among actors and users in the region and locally, more twinning arrangements, attachments, collaboration and an increase in the exchange of information, experiences and expertise among the countries and actors in the region.

A 'one stop' centre for information on local government improves communication and efficiency by providing access to high quality and up to date information on various aspects of local governance.

Increased participation by residents in local governance gives them a better understanding of the processes and procedures and encourages participation in voting, policy making and decision making. This will increase consultation and improve governance, transparency and accountability in local governments.

The databases and information sources provide a dissemination channel to a wider audience and allows for the participation of a wider and more informed populace with the ability to make informed decisions that are tailored and are responsive to locally identified needs leading to the formulation of good policies at all levels.

It is cheaper and easier to implement projects and programmes by learning from each other, through sharing resources, expertise and experiences. Network members are able to gain access to

comparative experiences that enable them carryout the democratic and local government reform.

This improves systems of governance and the participation of men and women at local level by making available documentation of good, bad and best practices and relevant material on local government, profiles of outstanding individuals in local government, through the creating of databases, forums for exchanging experiences and creating and maintaining linkages and networks.

### Added Value

The network tries to meet the need for an information collection, dissemination and analysis system on central, local government and other forms of governance and related institutions.

### ***Further Reading***

**Credé, A., and R. Mansell. 1998. *Knowledge societies ... in a nutshell : information technology for sustainable development.* Ottawa : IDRC.**

This short publication (50 pages) is also available in French and Spanish. In summarizing the full-length report of the Working Group (entitled Knowledge Societies), this book focuses particularly on the dangers that will accompany a failure to develop ICT strategies tailored to the specific and changing needs of countries in the developing regions of the world. It will appeal to decision-makers and ICT producers and users, as well as to development professionals, academics, and citizens interested in development issues and the new and emerging information and communication technologies.

[http://www.idrc.ca/acb/showdetl.cfm?&DID=6&Product\\_ID=169&CATID=15](http://www.idrc.ca/acb/showdetl.cfm?&DID=6&Product_ID=169&CATID=15)

**Ballantyne, P., and T. Cullen. 1997. *Cooperating to make information activities more effective.* (ECDPM Policy Management Brief, 6). Maastricht :**

**ECDPM.** This Brief explores why agencies in Europe collaborate on information management projects. It looks at their motives, the management trends and pressures affecting them, and some actions to promote collaboration as a way to improve the quality of development aid.

[http://www.oneworld.org/ecdpmpmb/b6s\\_gb.htm](http://www.oneworld.org/ecdpmpmb/b6s_gb.htm)

**Internet Economic Toolkit for African Policy Makers**

This Toolkit presents a model of the likely impacts of the Internet in Africa and goes on to discuss policy choices faced by countries that hope to expand Internet use within the context of needed telecommunications reform and government-private partnerships involving universities and NGOs. It is also available in five pdf. files and an Excel spreadsheet containing the model itself. <http://www.worldbank.org/infodev/projects/finafcon.htm>

*(More info on [www.capacity.org](http://www.capacity.org))*

It meets the demand for comparative information on the varying levels of the local government reform process by providing mechanisms to exchange and transfer skills, expertise and experiences. This is done through an electronic network, a web site and e-mail links, a library and other traditional means.

The network promotes local, regional and international development through links to other sites on the web and to best/good practices examples and other relevant information. It facilitates the flow of up to date, relevant and comparative information to the process of policy formulation, promoting transparent and accountable systems, better decision making and good governance processes.

The network helps to reduce costs, has a multiplier effect and encourages replication and has helped to bring local government to the mainstream of national development by facilitating and strengthening partnerships and decentralisation.

The Centre enhances communication, information sharing, networking and mutual learning between all levels of agencies involved in local government in the countries in the region. Members of the network are easily able to communicate with each other through the Centre's services.

#### Progress and Lessons Learned

Not all countries in the region are at the same level of development and have capacities to implement reforms, and not all network members have the same capacity to work with the Centre. Capacities have to be built to bring them to comparable levels.

There are problems with the information and communication technologies and infrastructures in most countries in the region. A feasibility study will be commissioned in late 2000 or early 2001 to assess technical and human resource capacity, training programmes and a series of forums to exchange documents and experiences will then commence.

The experiences and lessons learned will be documented and made available to all so that they can be used as a capacity building tool. These will also be used to help guide the process of reform. More effort will be put in fundraising to bring standards to the same level. Firm commitments will be sought from the individual governments to support the National Focal Points. Strong National Focal Points will enhance the Centre's coordination and facilitation roles.

An operational Library with 1,500 publications accessible on an electronic database and a web site, information and relevant documents are already available in the Centre. Some databases have also been created and can be accessed.

Resources to equip and sustain the Regional Information Centre are still being sought. There does seem to be much good will. Among the region's practitioners also, there is a willingness to participate in the Centre's programmes and to share resources, expertise and experiences and learn from each other. There is also support at the highest political level in the region. The network of National Focal Points and a Technical Advisory Committee have been formed and ministers of local government acknowledge the Centre's existence and its contribution to local government reform.

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## Annotation

### **Powell, M. 1999. Information Management for Development Organisations. Oxford: Oxfam.**

Today's organisations increasingly need to face up to the challenges posed by 'knowledge' and 'information' and their effective utilisation. The 'knowledge base' of an organisation and its staff is now seen as a key asset, to be nourished and sustained. In all areas of an organisation's activity, information and communication technologies (ICTs) can transform the way tasks are done, can open up all kinds of new relationships and alliances, and will revolutionise the way that organisations operate and structure themselves. More than the technologies however, human attitudes and skills need to be extended and suitable institutional mechanisms need to be developed and strengthened to foster knowledge sharing, to manage information resources, and to ensure that the institution's memory is maintained.

This poses a huge challenge to the capacity of organisations. They need to move towards learning and knowledge based systems. They need to train and update their staff. They need to plan, install, and maintain all kinds of databases, applications and technical tools. They need to learn how to make effective use of available information and knowledge assets to produce high quality products and services. They need to understand their needs and requirements and the possibilities offered by better information management. Questions abound, and numerous solutions are on offer. One of the best is to invest in an organisation's own people, learning how information management challenges can be addressed.

Addressed to managers of development organisations, this book aims to help them think through a range of ways in which information and its communication can be effectively used and managed. The book considers information management in a holistic way, seeing it as a practice that could make other activities

more effective, if correctly addressed. The author does not provide pre-formatted solutions to directly apply but reflects on information as a resource in and for the organisation. Nevertheless, practical guidance to understand the issues at stake, presentation of case studies and tools to adopt or adapt make it a rather helpful reading. It avoids being too conceptual, only emphasising principles. Although the NGO structure is the most referred to, 'organisation' stands for the context and environment in which information is managed rather than a specific type of structure.

Powell considers information management as a task to enable and support the creation of value out of the knowledge and skills of people working on the front line, allowing them to have access to the information they need but also mainstreaming their knowledge within their organisation. In the specific field of development, he insists that the 'customers' - beneficiaries of the development actions - should be the most fundamental target. When addressing information management, one should be sure that the beneficiaries receive the information they need, and that they have the opportunity to value their knowledge to donors or partners.

Chapter 2 focuses on the production and the value of information, showing why it is important to manage it. Powell reflects on the concept of information society, the empowerment effect of information and its increasing demand in the development field with a view to global change. A more operational part follows on strategies related to information management with short examples of how some organisations have addressed these issues (like the African Arid Land Information Network). A summary of practical issues indicates questions that can be directly applied as guidelines for the manager to analyse the challenges faced in its structure.

The following chapters develop how it can be managed.

Chapter 3 looks at Information management as a personal competence, reflecting on the skills and knowledge involved, and including any additional ones that could be needed. It mostly addresses internal issues but also considers networking and dissemination. Chapter 4 is on organisational approaches where the notion of information architecture is emphasised as a way to analyse information as a complex resource of the organisation. It serves as a practical tool to plan, monitor and introduce ICT. A short practical section guides the reader through the steps needed to elaborate an organisational information architecture.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to practical approaches, including tools to understand and manage information (maps, diagrams, tables, and participatory exercises).

Chapter 6 focuses on the impact of ICT on information management, reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of technology use, including the acquisition of IT products, by looking at functions to which software can be used. The author pays particular attention to the practicalities, illustrating the book with exercises, guiding questions, checklists and figures.

A list of additional resources on the subject is included with a thematic annotated bibliography and list of references (including recent publications but also mentioning older cornerstone books on the subject). Some Internet links are included.

The added value of this book is the good combination of thought and practice which is brought together in a readable style. For those who face the challenge of using and organising information in their day to day activities, this book gives a thorough and practical introduction to the multiple aspects of managing it in all parts of a northern or southern development organisation.

*Capacity.org* was set up by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) as a tool for development researchers, practitioners and decision-makers. As both a web site and a newsletter, *Capacity.org* brings together information, ideas, and viewpoints on capacity building policy and practice within international development cooperation. It acts as a platform for dialogue and provides a channel for informed review and synthesis of the complex issues faced by development practitioners and policy makers.

Focusing on both the "why" and the "how" of capacity building - debating policy questions and learning from practical experiences - *Capacity.org* seeks to "unbundle" the complex of ideas and practices that we call capacity building. In doing this, the editors particularly encourage the exchange of perspectives and experiences from the South, to ensure that the discussions are rooted in reality.

Developed by ECDPM, it is our aim to make *Capacity.org* a joint effort in which all of our various capacities and expertise are mobilised and shared. Interested individuals and organisations can help make *Capacity.org* an effective communication tool for people who seek to alleviate poverty through capacity building. Join us by contributing information, lessons, ideas and opinions, and feedback. Offers to co-finance parts of the initiative or to link related initiatives are very welcome.

**<http://www.capacity.org>**

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