

MY JOURNEY

Wisdom Machacha's journey from workshop attendee to travelling facilitator

Wisdom Machacha, 2009

Training is an important part of development, be it personal, organisational or national. However, training is only effective when kept up-to-date and in a sustainable manner. Using a cascading methodology, INASP's training encourages personal development and teaches individuals the skills they need and also gives them the resources necessary to teach others

As promoting sustainable and equitable development is one of INASP's key principles, working with facilitators from a wide range of countries, backgrounds and expertise is essential. To best achieve this, INASP employs a cascading, or travelling, methodology. This means working with professionals within Partner & Network countries to gain, and pass on, the experience and knowledge necessary for effective organisation and facilitation without the need for external expertise.

Whenever possible, INASP's workshops follow this methodology as it has proven to be particularly effective for University libraries and research institutions. Success has been seen on both national and international levels as well, with workshop facilitators organising and conducting workshops in countries other than their own, sharing and passing on what they have learned.

Through the ICT capacity building programme and the application of this methodology, I have personally benefitted greatly, acquiring new skills and building strong networks both nationally and internationally. I believe this approach has helped me to develop the technical skills I have today which, in turn, have helped me play an important role in ICT projects in both Africa and Latin America.

My first association with INASP was my attendance at the Association of African Universities meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, 2005. As most of the themes to be discussed at this conference were ICT related, Professor Rukudzo Murapa, then Vice Chancellor of Africa University thought it important that one of his Senior ICT personnel be in attendance. I was nominated to play this role.

It was during one of the break-away sessions that Prof. Murapa introduced me to Martin Belcher, Head of ICT Training for INASP. I had a chance to brief Martin about some of the projects I was involved in, such as my role as the Cisco Academy Manager at Africa University and my involvement in the design of an Intranet for the



A workshop, facilitated by Wisdom, in Mozambique, 2008

Universities consortium in Zimbabwe. Following the conference we exchanged contacts and kept in touch.

A few months later, Martin invited me to Nairobi, Kenya to participate in an ICT Capacity Development Planning Workshop. It was at this workshop, together with other ICT Directors from Universities across Africa and some European experts, that we outlined training needs of ICT Staff in Universities. Aside from technical solutions to bandwidth management and organisation (BMO), an appropriate supporting policy environment is essential. A key agreement in this meeting was that Senior Managers and ICT Directors within Universities also needed training in the areas of ICT Policy Formulation to support BMOs.

Following this, I attended two more workshops held in Zambia and another in South Africa. These were attended by ICT directors, technicians and engineers from Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A key benefit from these workshops was the development of a network. This network included people facing similar problems and similar experiences. This network of peers has proven extremely helpful. We have helped each other with technical problems and give each other hints on jobs and consultancy opportunities.

Following these workshops, I had the opportunity to co-facilitate a policy workshop in Zimbabwe, alongside Dick Elleray, AfriConnect. My colleague, Clive Maromo,

co-facilitated the technical workshop. Our selection as co-facilitators was great experience, gaining the skills and experience to conduct further workshops. I had a second opportunity to do this in Rwanda in May, 2006.

In October that year, I facilitated on my own for the first time in Makele, Ethiopia. I facilitated an ICT policy formulation workshop and also played the role of a co-facilitator for a BMO technical workshop. This was a very enriching experience. I successfully led the workshop and also received very valuable feedback from the participants - helping to improve both the content and my delivery style. Following my experience, I wrote a proposal for a small grants project entitled Linux Skills Development workshop. The proposal was successful and the workshop was held at Africa University in Zimbabwe. I managed the workshop, inviting Clive Maromo to facilitate and another Africa University colleague, Mike Chisina (Systems Administrator) as co-facilitator. The materials were developed by Africa University staff.

The workshop was very successful and completed on a low budget. Costs were kept down largely because we did not need to fly in facilitators from Europe and participants were within driving distance of the venue. After the small grants project, I facilitated another workshop with Mike Chisina – a BMO technical workshop in Zimbabwe focusing on women working in the area of ICTs.



Wisdom in Ecuador, 2008

In March 2008, I took part in the first INASP BMO workshop conducted entirely in Spanish - facilitating an ICT policy workshop in Ecuador. As a fluent Spanish speaker with BMO Policy experience, I was selected to cover the policy workshop, while Dick

Elleray conducted the technical section.

When I left Zimbabwe to work in Mozambique, I observed similar bandwidth related challenges existed here as in many other countries, especially in the central and northern areas of Mozambique. I wrote a project proposal for a Linux Administration and Network Design Workshop (LAND), a BMO Technical Workshop and an ICT Policy formulation Workshop. The proposals were approved and two of the workshops having been held (LAND and BMO) with the ICT policy formulation workshop being planned. The workshops were well attended and the work was a great success with the majority managing to deploy the Open Source Software Tools they were given at the workshop. Collaboration between ICT Technicians in Mozambique has also improved with a network of ICT practitioners developing very quickly.



Wisdom with participants at a workshop in Mozambique, 2008

Many of the technicians and engineers who have gone through this INASP capacity development program have managed to get high-level well-paying jobs in the private sector. While this movement has, to some extent, caused brain drain from academia, a solution to this problem would be to hold similar capacity building workshops on a regular basis. This would help train new staff, who would not only replace those who have moved on, but create a more stable ICT environment with more opportunity. Through building networks and the infrastructure, ICT within institutions has the potential to be a more attractive inviting, innovative and lucrative career position.

The peer network formed by earlier workshops is rapidly expanding. Even those who have left universities to work in the private sector continue to call on their academic-based colleagues.

INASP's ICT capacity building has had very positive impact on the skills development at many Universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These programmes have improved the skills of ICT personnel and also enhanced service delivery by ICT departments. With resources permitting, these workshops should continue and be spread to more universities in the developing world. My experience with INASP is an example of effective and sustainable ICT skills development.

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For more information on INASP's cascading methodology, visit the website:
www.inasp.info/cascading-methodology

For information and applications for the small grants programme, visit:
www.inasp.info/small-grants