

# Report on the online Phase 1 of the

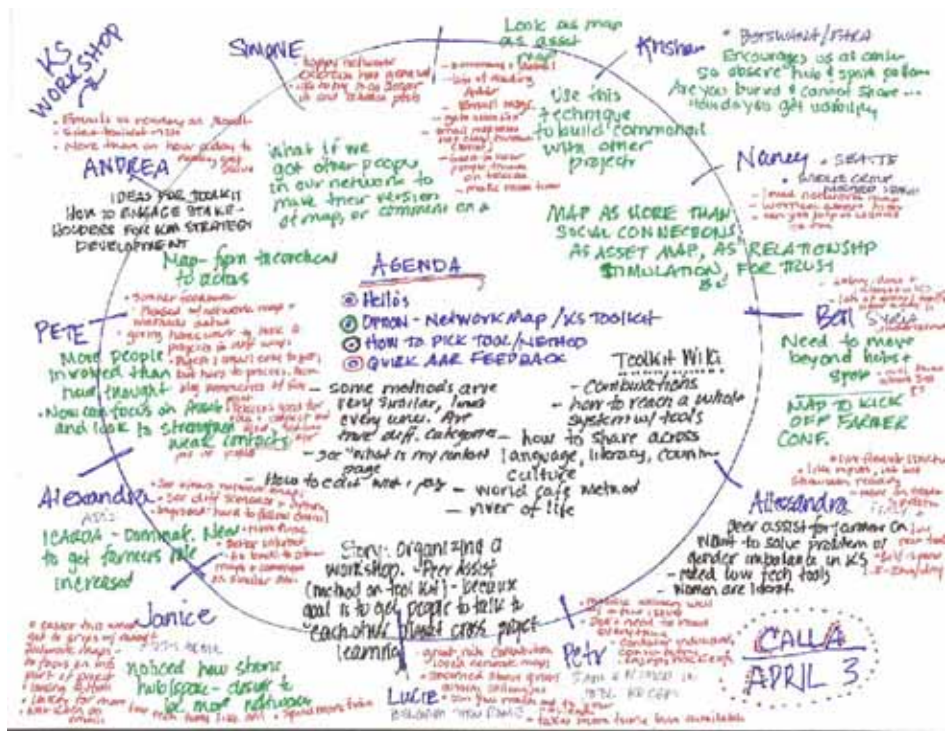
## Knowledge Sharing Workshop

*Collaboration for excellence:  
opportunities for discovering, understanding, and applying  
innovative knowledge-sharing approaches for impact*

24 March to 18 April

### Executive Summary, Workshop Results and Evaluation

Simone Staiger-Rivas, Leader, Institutional Knowledge Sharing Project  
The KS Workshop Team: Nancy White, Lucie Lamoureux, and Petr Kosina  
All the KS Workshop Participants



Notes from a workshop conference call, Nancy White

*“It’s what we, the participants, make of it—contacts, the Toolkit, links, and so forth, which are all there for us to pick up and use—that leaves one with a good feeling like the end of the course is just the beginning.”*

Andrea Pape-Christiansen, ICARDA

## Executive Summary

The ICT-KM Program and its Institutional Knowledge Sharing Project developed a knowledge-sharing (KS) workshop as part of its activity plan. The workshop, divided into three phases, aims to scale up use of knowledge-sharing practices, tools, and principles by CGIAR staff and their research partners. This document reports on phase 1, which was held online from 24 March to 18 April 2008.

The expected result overall was for participants to understand and appreciate the role and value of KS in research and institutional arenas; discover how to apply KS concepts and approaches; and interact effectively with CGIAR staff and research partners. The workshop was designed for researchers, HR managers, communications officers, IT managers, and others interested in learning about effective and interactive communications. The workshop methodology was based on Action Learning principles and offered a systemic approach to KS. All course materials and contents had been developed in an open-access environment and are considered as forming a global public good.

The workshop had 37 active participants from CGIAR centers, FAO, and FARA. A team, composed of ICT-KM and CGIAR staff and two consultants, was in charge of the overall workshop design and the event's facilitation.

For this online phase, a Web-based Moodle platform was customized to enable participants and facilitators to interact and access resources. The KS Toolkit was the center piece of the workshop, around which most activities and discussions took place. Weekly teleconferences, podcasts, and two surveys were also offered to participants as additional communication channels.

After the welcome and introductions, the participants carried out activities and shared discussions on (1) network maps to understand participants' work environments, (2) the question: "Why share knowledge?", (3) the question: "Who are we sharing knowledge with?", (4) scanning for tools that meet our needs (with 9 threads), and (5) exploring different tools and methods (with 19 threads). Continuous individual reflection was also articulated through the creation of 29 workshop learning logs.

The 27 participants who participated in the evaluation survey expressed their overall satisfaction with the workshop as follows: 26 rated the event as either excellent (50%) or good (46%); 23 thought that their initial expectations were met; and 24 felt that the workshop increased their ability to apply KS principles, methods, and tools in their work.

Participants also suggested improvements, mainly to design the event so that more time was provided to take better advantage of the workshop. That is, they felt that the Moodle platform and resources should have been introduced first and participants given more time to become familiar with them.

The KS workshop team believes that the overall design and facilitation was successful and the objective of phase 1 had been accomplished, although the team sees similar opportunities for improvement as do the participants. The team was greatly satisfied with the event, but recognizes that the time put into it was enormous and went far beyond expectations.

# I. Overview of Results and Evaluation

## Background

This document reports on phase 1 of a 3-phase workshop to scale up use of knowledge-sharing practices, tools, and principles by CGIAR staff and their research partners. Phase 1 was held online from 24 March to 18 April 2008. Phase 2, a face-to-face meeting in Africa, will be held in May, and phase 3 will consist of online coaching of participants to implement small KS projects in their organizations. In all, the three phases will take 6 months.

Of the 44 participants who inscribed to the 4-week event, 37 participated actively. Of these, 20 came from the CGIAR, 15 from FARA–RAILS, 6 from FAO, and 3 from a CGIAR partner organization. Of the FARA–RAILS group, 10 participated actively. As an indicator of levels of participation, observed as recorded viewings of posts and materials and active contributions on the Moodle platform (which does not take into account readings of posts via e-mail), there was a variation from the champion level (2 participants, each with more than 1000 records), through very active (10 with 300 to 600 each), active (8 with 200 to 300), regular (8 with 100 to 200), to poor (9 with fewer than 100).

The workshop team included Nancy White (Consultant, Full Circle Associates), Lucie Lamoureux (Consultant), Petr Kosina (CIMMYT), and Simone Staiger-Rivas (ICT-KM/IKS). The team was in charge of the overall workshop design and the facilitation of the online event. Their tasks were as follows:

- Marketing the event
- Contributing to and testing the KS Toolkit
- Designing and analyzing a pre-workshop survey
- Directing individual orientation phone calls
- Customizing the Moodle platform
- Podcasting interviews with KS experts
- Designing and facilitating teleconferences
- Facilitating virtual discussions and activities
- Writing up the weekly summaries
- Following up individual participants

For this online phase, a Web-based Moodle platform was customized to enable participants and facilitators to interact and access resources. The Moodle platform allowed e-mail notifications and subscription to RSS feeds. More than 600 messages were exchanged on the workshop platform.

Weekly teleconference calls provided an additional communications channel. A high-speed conferencing system was used to allow good sound quality, and enable podcasting. Participants in different time zones chose from 12 teleconferences schedules for weekly

calls; they were podcasted to enable those who could not attend the calls to listen to them afterwards.

The workshop's centerpiece was the KS Toolkit, around which most activities and discussions took place. During the workshop, 11 participants signed up on the Toolkit and 166 wiki edits were made in all. The Toolkit received a total of 9908 viewings during the workshop.

Other activities were:

- The establishment of a workshop blog
- Two surveys, one before and the other after the event, to discover participants' expectations and assessments
- Individual phone calls made to 17 interested participants to clarify expectations and give orientation
- Six interviews were podcast before and during the event with KS practitioners and experts for additional input on specific topics of interest
- Participants launched three blogs and one wiki during the workshop

After the welcome and introductions, the workshop participants carried out activities and shared discussion topics on (1) network maps to understand the participants' work environments, (2) the question: "Why share knowledge?", (3) the question: "Who are we sharing knowledge with?", (4) scanning for tools that meet needs (with 9 threads), and (5) exploring different tools and methods (with 19 threads). Continuous individual reflection was also expressed through the creation of 29 workshop learning logs.

### **Evaluations by participants**

In the final evaluation survey, 27 participants expressed their overall satisfaction with the workshop; 26 participants rated the event as either excellent (50%) or good (46%); 23 believed that their initial expectations were met; and 24 felt that the workshop increased their ability to apply KS principles, methods, and tools in their work. All respondents stated that the pre-workshop communications (online survey, website information, e-mail exchanges, and individual calls) helped them understand the workshop's objectives and dynamics.

All the weeks were almost equally useful for the participants, with Week 1 (Welcome and Introductions, Why share knowledge discussion, Network Mapping exercise) being the most useful for 18 respondents. The communication channels and resources were almost equally appreciated with a preference for the weekly summaries and the KS Toolkit. Overall, the Moodle platform got good ratings, but with suggestions for improvement in organizing information. The facilitators were rated as excellent by 19 respondents, and 7 thought they were good.

Participants had mixed reactions to the group's size: 16 found that the group size was just right, whereas 10 found it too big. Interaction among participants was rated as average by

12 respondents, but 23 respondents said they had made useful contacts beyond the workshop. Another 4 said no, mainly because of lack of participation in the event. All respondents found that being with participants from other organizations was either very useful (54%) or useful (46%).

When asked for the workshop's main strengths, participants first highlighted aspects related to participation and interaction such as the group's diversity and energy, the richness of experiences, and the combination of fun and serious interactions. Respondents also appreciated the wide range of tools, methods, and resources available, specifically the KS Toolkit. On the workshop's design, respondents highlighted the event's flexibility, scope, and structure. They appreciated the effective support, availability, and experience of the workshop facilitators. Finally, respondents found the Moodle platform useful, as well as the e-mail notifications, and teleconferences.

Most of the suggestions made by the 27 respondents were to improve the event so more time was provided to take better advantage of the workshop. That is, participants should have more time before the workshop to become familiar with the Moodle platform and the resources offered. Indeed, many felt overwhelmed with the richness of the workshop's environment. Suggestions were also made for participant groups to be smaller.

### **Evaluation by the KS workshop team**

The KS workshop team reviewed the event as follows:

- The overall design and facilitation was successful and the objective of phase 1 was accomplished. Among the things that went well were the adjustable agenda, variety of communication channels, the Toolkit as an “unfinished product” that encouraged contributions, the network mapping exercise and related discussions, collaboration within the KS workshop team, and the podcasts. The team was very pleased with the level of engagement by the FAO participants, and those FARA–RAILS participants who managed to connect with and participate in the event.
- The team also saw opportunities for improvement such as possibly organizing a “Week 0” to orient participants, organizing the Moodle into an easier-to-navigate space, and the need to combine activities and discussion to enable participants to focus more easily on each week's activities. The team believes that the overall design could be adjusted slightly, as Weeks 1 and 2 seemed overcrowded. The teleconference design could also be varied more to make each call different.
- The team is greatly satisfied with the event, but acknowledges that the time put into it was enormous and went far beyond expectations. We recommend developing a document that would allow other facilitators to easily take over and lead this workshop.

Among other issues that the workshop team would like to explore further are the questions of (1) finding the best rhythm in the interaction among participants and facilitators (who had the double role of orienting and supporting participation, and providing expert input), and (2) of increasing interaction among participants. We would also like to focus more on methods related to interpersonal aspects of KS, whereas the workshop quickly focused on technology-related tools. The question is how to tackle process-related KS issues in an online environment?

Finally, we wonder how to deal with participants who are inscribed through intermediaries such as the FARA–RAILS group. Some members of this group participated very little or not at all, thus raising questions about their selection, motivation, and awareness of the workshop's objectives and methodology. This also raises the language issue, as some participants could not benefit from the viewings and postings, nor contribute, as their level of English was insufficient.