

Selected Pages from....

**Training Modules
Sustainability and Resource Mobilization for
Networks**

**Designed for IDRC's
Partnership and Business Development Division**

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Training Modules Sustainability and Resource Mobilization for Networks

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Key to Icons

Throughout these modules, three icons identify different kinds of learning tasks:



Group Discussions:

Chances for the large and small groups to discuss key issues.



Small Group Work:

These are “hands-on” tasks in which smaller groups work together to engage with the content more concertedly before debriefing with the large group.



Individual Reflection Tasks:

Chances to reflect quietly as individuals on key questions.

Design Considerations for Training Modules on Sustainability and Resource Mobilization for Networks

These “master” training modules on sustainability and resource mobilization for networks are based on two reviews of IDRC evaluation documents on networks. The first was my own, which drew out issues of sustainability for networks (Wind 2004). The second, by Ingrid Schenk (2005), looked at governance and coordination questions. Lisa Burley, of IDRC’s PBDD team, saw ways in which the papers could be used in workshops for network coordinators and members on resource mobilization. I’ve designed these training modules in line with the explanations she gave for the anticipated workshops.

I also had to include many of my own assumptions about how the training might unfold. The following pages outline some of my assumptions on how the workshops will be organized and facilitated, and how these modules could be used and adapted. The assumptions are organized according to the “who, why, when, where, what, what for, and how” of the workshops.

Who? The intended participants

The intended participants for this training will be network coordinators and members from around the world. There will be at least one workshop held for networks from Latin America. The networks represented in the workshops will vary greatly in purpose, theme, size, age, type of membership, degree of formality and institutionalization. All have partnered previously with IDRC. The workshops will be conducted in common languages (either English, Spanish, French, or other languages as appropriate). The workshops will include between 20 and 30 participants.

The training will be facilitated by an outside trainer/facilitator who will bring his/her own content, add and adapt any these materials as best fits the participants, the venue, and his/her own style.

Why? The situation that calls for the workshops

One-third of IDRC’s funding goes to networks, and the Centre would like to help networks develop their capacities for sustainability and resource mobilization. Networks differ significantly from the institutions that the Centre has traditionally supported. Their distinct strengths and potentials require different approaches for sustainability and resource mobilization.

Participants in the workshops want to find out more about resource mobilization approaches, strategies, and opportunities. They wish to leave the workshop having formulated elements of a strategic plan for resource mobilization for their own network.

Some networks will have to balance the conflicting resource needs for their networks versus their home institutions.

When? The time frame for the workshops

The training will take place in several workshops throughout 2005 and 2006. The workshops will last between 3 and 5 days, with an average of 6-7 hours per day. Participants would work on resource mobilization for their own networks between sessions. In some cases, these workshops may be part of a longer process of training and mentoring on resource mobilization.

Where? The location and venue for the workshops

The workshops will take place in Latin America, and potentially other continents as well. In some cases, workshop participants will be invited on a geographic basis, in other cases, by thematic basis.

These materials include a variety of learning tasks, from large group discussions, small group work, and individual reflection. They would work best in a venue that included space for participants to sit at tables big enough for 6-8 people with binders and other materials, plus the ability to see power point projected slides or flip charts. It would be helpful to have open space in the room for some of the hands-on learning tasks.

What? The Content of the Workshops

The training materials in this package address issues of resource mobilization within the broader context of network sustainability. These materials cover:

- definitions and conceptual approaches to sustainability and resource mobilization for networks;
- concepts, strategies and examples of factors affecting sustainability, including:
 - internal factors - ownership, dynamism of interactions, open versus closed networks, approaches to membership
 - external relations and contextual factors - credibility and engagement strategies,
 - on-going relevance – adaptability, and
 - financial sustainability – long-term donor commitments, diversified donor base (see table below for a full listing of topic areas)

It is my understanding that these materials would be used in the context of workshops that would systematically address other aspects of resource mobilization. For instance:

- leading network members in contextual and/or SWOT analyses of their own environments, as it relates to resource mobilization;
- linking resource mobilization with strategic planning;
- identifying potential stakeholders, and developing skills for cultivating donor relationships; and

- covering a more complete list of resource mobilization tools and skills.

The text, discussion questions and suggested learning tasks in these training materials might be slotted into parts of the steps listed above.

What for? Achievement-Based Objectives

Achievement-based objectives define what the participants will have done with the content to personalize and demonstrate their learning. Specific objectives for each module are described on page 6. Overall, using these materials, by the end of the training, participants will have:

- **Described** their own networks' roles, purposes, and optimal lifespan;
- **Documented** their own expectations for the sustainability of their networks;
- **Used** factors of sustainability to describe and assess their own networks;
- **Reviewed** strategies for making networks sustainable, and **decided** which strategies would be most useful in their context; and
- **Prioritized** strategies to use for their networks' financial sustainability.

How?

The workshops will use a variety of visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning tasks that allow participants to receive information, critically engage with that information on the basis of their own experience, and adapt whatever relates best to their contexts.

Much of my approach to these training materials comes the dialogue education approach taught by Global Learning Partners (www.globalelearning.com). I have found the principles and practices GLP teaches (based on the work of Dr. Jane Vella) to be practical and effective in facilitating structured, participatory, and accountable adult learning.

These modules include many examples and illustrations from a wide array of IDRC-supported networks. Some examples refer to networks that are small, formal and purely research oriented. Others include both researchers and NGOs who work together on policy advocacy. Some are large, some small; some dispersed, others are institutionalized. I assume that facilitators will choose examples that are most applicable to workshop participants, and solicit examples from participants either before or at the workshop itself. Facilitators will have to assess whether they ought to reveal or mask the identity of the networks described in the materials. Because I don't know which modules facilitators will use, I have sometimes included the same example to illustrate different points in different modules.

Throughout the written materials, shaded boxes indicate that the text corresponds to a power point slide. I would recommend that the workshops use the powerpoint slides as they would a flip chart, and to lean more heavily on the written materials that can be

provided as handouts in binders. These materials are more expansive than the slides, and they leave space for participants' notes, comments, rebuttals, reflections, and plans for how they will use the information.

The written materials are designed for both facilitators and participants to work from the same binder – there are no separate facilitators' notes. Each learning task is fully spelled out. This should facilitate editing and translation, and it promotes transparency in the learning design.

I have added some ideas for cognitive and affective learning tasks throughout the materials. Training ought to include psychomotor tasks as well, but I have not included many of these, as facilitators will have to determine what kind of psychomotor activities will be most appropriate to the learners and venues of the workshops.

Overview of Content	Learning Objective
By the end of the session, participants will have...	
1. A definition and key roles of networks	Reviewed IDRC's broad definition of networks. Reviewed 6 roles that networks play; graphically depicted the roles their networks play; and compared their networks with others represented in the workshop.
2. Sustainability for networks	Debated whether sustainability is necessary or important for networks.
3. Dimensions of sustainability: 3.1 Time 3.2 Financial 3.3 Procedural and Structural 3.4 Relational	Examined four dimensions of sustainability for networks, and assessed how the dimensions relate to their own networks' experience. Considered the optimal lifespan of their networks. Roughly documented their networks' budget and main funding sources. Considered aspects of procedural and structural dimensions of sustainability in light of their own experience
4. Networks versus institutions	Distinguished networks from institutions, and debated the advantages and disadvantages that networks have for generating resources and achieving sustainability
5. Sustainability made personal	Defined "sustainability" for their own networks.
6. Factors affecting sustainability	Reviewed categories of factors that affect the sustainability of networks
7. Factors for sustainability: Internal relations	Reviewed definitions of, and strategies to develop, shared ownership and mutual trust; shared their own strategies for increasing ownership and trust in their networks; identified how networks have used ownership and trust toward resource mobilization; and

<p>7.1 Shared ownership and mutual trust</p> <p>7.2 Selective versus open approaches to membership</p> <p>7.3 Dynamism of connections and interactions among members</p> <p>7.4 Institutional versus Individual membership</p> <p>7.5 “Circles of Participation”</p> <p>7.6 Wrap up</p>	<p>presented an assessment of how such strategies apply to their own networks.</p> <p>Related the categorizations of selectivity and openness to their own networks, and proposed ways of building on these characteristics for resource mobilization.</p> <p>Generated strategies that could enhance dynamic connections and interactions within of their networks</p> <p>Compared the advantages that networks have, depending on whether their members are individuals or institutions; brainstormed ways networks could adapt to garner more advantages of individual/institutional membership, and identified which adaptations might best fit their context.</p> <p>Assessed the concept of “circles of participation”, and determined whether, and how the concept could be helpful for the functioning of their own networks.</p> <p>Reviewed factors of sustainability related to internal relations, and prioritized the strategies identified as relevant to their own networks.</p>
<p>8. Factors for Sustainability: External relations and contextual factors</p> <p>8.1 Credibility</p> <p>8.2 Constructive engagement and communication with stakeholders and targets</p>	<p>Reviewed and brainstormed strategies to establish, maintain, and improve network credibility.</p> <p>Selected relevant communications and engagement strategies and sketched out an initial implementation plan.</p>
<p>9. Factors for Sustainability: On-going relevance</p> <p>9.1 Network adaptability</p> <p>9.1.1 Strategies for maintaining relevance</p>	<p>Reflected on the degree of flexibility or adaptability of their network, and two key reasons for that degree of flexibility or adaptability.</p> <p>Reviewed ways in which IDRC-supported networks have tried to maintain relevance, particularly with respect to strategies to achieve flexibility and adaptability.</p> <p>Prioritized which strategies would be most, and least, important for their network</p>
<p>10. Financial Sustainability for Networks</p> <p>10.1 Securing long-term and flexible donor commitments</p> <p>10.2 Diversifying the network donor base</p> <p>10.2.1 Marketing strategies for networks</p> <p>10.3 Revenue generation</p> <p>10.4 Minimizing network costs</p> <p>10.5 Conclusion: Reviewing and prioritizing</p>	<p>Reviewed four key factors that contribute to a network’s financial sustainability.</p> <p>Practiced petitioning donors for long-term and flexible funding commitments;</p> <p>Reviewed reasons and targets for diversifying their network’s donor base</p> <p>Examined marketing strategies</p> <p>Applied revenue generation ideas to their own contexts.</p> <p>Compared cost minimization strategies to their own networks</p> <p>Appraised the relevance and priority of all strategies for financial sustainability from this section, and determined which ought to be implemented in the short-term.</p>

1. A Definition and Key Roles of Networks

Networks: A Definition

IDRC uses this definition to describe the research, policy, advocacy and other networks with which the Centre works:

Networks are formal or informal social arrangements among individuals and institutions allowing them to interact directly to:

- build relationships, work jointly, enable learning and/or mobilize action;
- engage in exchanges which add value to how they think or what they do;
- raise the profile and use of research results; influence policy communities; build research and policy capacities; or advocate for a new research agenda; and
- maintain their autonomy as participants.

What do networks do?

Stephen Yeo of the Centre for Economic Policy Research describes six roles that policy research networks play. These roles can be helpful in characterizing networks, and in assessing their effectiveness and impact. The six roles are as follows:

Roles of Networks

1. **Filter:** Networks help members decide what to pay attention to. This can be important especially for those who deal with information overload, or appreciate a considered opinion on which sources of information are important and relevant.
2. **Amplifier:** As amplifiers, networks take a given message and present it in ways that allow it to be understood and absorbed more quickly and easily.
3. **Investor / provider:** For producers of research, whether in universities or policy research institutes, the 'investor' role is important. This role includes the provision of resources to carry out research.
4. **Facilitator:** The facilitator role has a variety of aspects, including the organization of conferences and meetings, and the publication of working papers and policy briefs. This role provides services which make it easier to do research.

5. **Convenor:** The convenor role is important for both research producers and research users. For research producers, convening involves the ability to identify and bring together ‘the right group of researchers’ to plan and carry out a research project. For research users, convening involves whether the organization, process or network is perceived as ‘the place to look’ and ‘the people to consult’ on a given policy issue, and whether it has the ability to bring together the right policy-makers and researchers to discuss a particular policy issue. This is not merely a question of filtering (which might just mean offering a good working paper series) but involves the ability to command an audience in the policy community and private sector.
6. **Community builder:** Networks also play an important role in building and sustaining research communities (which are themselves networks). Networks can set standards and develop shared values. In one example, a policy research network can set standards for the quality of research, or even that research is done at all. Standards setting is a classic example of a public good with important externalities: networks can help create this important public good, which benefits both the research community and the users of research. The community building role is particularly important in situations where a strong “research culture” is not present, or where there is no tradition of good researchers engaging in policy research. In these situations networks can have a strong demonstration and peer effect on individual researchers, helping to create an expectation that researchers should do research, and that some of this research should be relevant to policy.

Taken from Stephen Yeo
Creating, Managing and Sustaining Policy Research Networks
Draft. May 2004

Policy research networks will vary in the extent to which they perform each of the roles listed, and the priority placed on the different roles may well change over the life of the network. Networks which aim for other goals besides policy research may have other roles.



In the large group, **discuss** these questions:

What do you find helpful in IDRC’s definition and Yeo’s categorization of network roles? What is not helpful?

To what extent do the six roles cover the functions of your network?

What functions does your network provide that are not covered by these six?



Join with others from your network, and **consider** the main roles that your network plays.

Take coloured post-it notes¹ that correspond to the colours of the six roles of networks listed above. **Use** other coloured post-its for additional roles you wish to add.

Write the name of your network on a piece of paper, and arrange the post-its underneath according to the degree to which your network plays those roles. You might use only one or two post-its, or you might use six or more. If you wish, reduce or change the shape of the post-it to denote the extent to which your network plays the different roles.

Post your results on the wall.

Compare your network's roles to those of other networks in the workshop. What similarities and differences do you see among the networks represented?

¹ Alternatively, you could use coloured markers on white squares of paper, or use symbols to label each role.

2. Sustainability for Networks

These modules use “sustainability” as a larger framework in which to situate, conceptualize, and strategize issues of resource mobilization. They examine sustainability for networks in a very limited way. For instance, they do not talk about the sustainability of relationships among network members, nor their research products, nor the impacts of their research. Rather, they address the sustainability of the network mechanism itself – i.e., the formal or informal social arrangement of individuals or institutions.

But is sustainability for a network necessary or important? “Sustainability” has a moral connotation in development circles – as in “sustainable development”.

However, networks are a program delivery mechanism. To assume that a network must be sustainable might confuse a process for its impact. Improved livelihoods, environmental integrity and other development goals ought to be sustainable; networks that work toward those goals need not be. However, for those networks that require more time to ‘gel’, to undertake collaborative activities, to establish a credible track record, and to meet their objectives, achieving some level of sustainability is important.



Do you agree that networks need not be sustainable?
Has your network planned for its own end?



Debate! In groups of four, **argue** in favour or against the following two quotes:

Is Sustainability Necessary?

“...[The] comparative advantage of knowledge networks, in comparison to their more fixed [institutional] counterparts, is their capacity to come and go.”

Janice Gross Stein and Richard Stren,
Networks of Knowledge: Collaborative Innovation in International Learning,
University of Toronto Press, 2001

“[Networks] are evolutionary, not sustaining per se; they do their work and disperse; members move on to other things either collectively, individually or in different groupings.... networks are transient and voluntary and their results should link with existing systems and structures.”

IDRC Evaluation Unit
IDRC Support for Science and Technology Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean
IDRC 1996

We’ll **hear** 1-2 key arguments from both sides in the large group.

3.3 Procedural and Structural Dimensions

Consider these five statements:

Procedural and Structural Dimensions of Sustainability

1. Allowing networks time to become sustainable can sometimes take precedence over producing immediate research results.
2. One IDRC Program Officer has made this claim: IDRC used to take high quality research and researchers and form them into a network. Now, IDRC helps highly qualified researchers come together in a network, and waits for them to produce high quality research.
3. Sustainable networks demonstrate flexibility in adapting to internal and external change. IDRC supported networks have changed their title, their focus, their subject, their methodologies, the products they offer, their governance structures, and their ways of engaging stakeholders. Some networks have had more-or-less continuous incarnations over time.
4. Sustainability is enhanced by having transparent processes for network representation, finances and governance.
5. Some formal networks can become more sustainable if they have an independent status, or at least a stable institutional home.



Arrange yourselves in five groups, one per statement, and **discuss** this question:

“How does your networks’ experience prove this statement to be either true or false?”

We’ll **hear** from each group.

8. Factors for Sustainability: External Relations and Contextual Factors

External Relations and Contextual Factors

While internal relationships are fundamental for network sustainability, external relations and contextual factors are also critical to long-term viability. A network must be able to maintain constructive relationships with outside bodies, including donors, knowledge users, advocacy allies and targets, as well as the general public. It also must be able to adapt to ever-changing contexts.

Two factors within these considerations include:

- Credibility, and
- Constructive engagement and communications with stakeholders and targets.

8.1 Credibility

Credibility: Strategies and Examples

Establishing and maintaining credibility is essential for a network's sustainability. As informal or semiformal collections of individuals or organizations, some networks have had a harder time establishing a credible reputation than a bricks-and-mortar institution.

Some IDRC-supported networks improved their credibility in these four ways:

- ***Producing quality research and/or knowledge products appropriate to target audiences/clients.*** Networks must assess the specific needs and preferences of their targets or users when designing their products and services, strategizing how they will engage, and assessing where they can expand their reach. Undertaking, for example, a “policy topography” before planning policy research and advocacy, can help a network understand how its audience's needs and preferences should shape the networks' activities and outputs.

Red Mercosur and the Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat are two examples of IDRC-supported networks that focus on trade and macroeconomic analysis. They enjoy access to and respect from policy makers. They have fairly secure funding due to the high quality, relevant, and timely research they produce.

- ***Maintaining (and publicizing) high ethical standards for research and dissemination.*** The Gujarat Innovation Augmentation Network is a network in India which documents and publicizes innovations in agricultural and rural production. The network's success is partly attributable to its positive reputation with a broad set of stakeholders. People appreciate the way the network

recognizes and shows respect to the people whose innovations they seek to popularize. The network is clear in attributing credit to local innovators and publishes everything in four local languages to be sure that information is accessible to local audiences. Like-minded organizations not only use and further publicize the network, but they also look for innovations to contribute to its database.

- ***Involving research users in the design of the network.*** The network on Regional Integration in Eastern and Southern Africa hired a consultant who used to work at the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to bring the COMESA Secretariat into the development of the networks' research program. The consultant helped the secretariat, which was originally skeptical of the initiative, to become an enthusiastic supporter.
- ***Actively cultivating a reputation that leads to membership, expansion, institutionalization and revenue.*** The Venezuelan Red Nacional de Desarrollo de la Agroindustria Rural (REDAR) was the youngest, but fastest growing of all members of the Program for the Development of Rural Agroindustry (PRODAR). Interestingly, it did so with very little money. An initial study on the needs and opportunities for strengthening rural agroindustry (AIR) resulted in the formation of a Network Promotion Committee. The Committee, which included many stakeholder groups, spread information about AIR at the national level, held a workshop, and an AIR products fair. This led to the formation of not only a national REDAR, but several state-level REDARs. REDAR Venezuela was successful in linking many of its programs to local development contexts, and bridging between public and private sectors.



Getting sick of hearing all these “best practices”? In pairs, **brainstorm** ways in which you could help your network become thoroughly disreputable! **Write** two of your ideas on 8.5x11 pieces of paper, and **read** them aloud as you **post** them up in front of the large group.

Then, individually, **choose** one idea from the posted papers. Think of two strategies (either from the list above, or something else) that could help re-gain credibility for the network. Briefly **summarize** one of your strategies on a post-it note. In the large group, **read out** your strategy and **post it** beside the relevant 8.5x11 paper.

8.2 Constructive Engagement and Communications with Stakeholders and Targets

Constructive Engagement and Communications

Sustainable networks have nurtured constructive relations with donors, clients, allies and targets. They have thought through engagement strategies, communication modes and messages, and were aware of the potential negative impacts they might have on others. All research programs and institutions face challenges of engaging with stakeholders, but these can be especially important when the network mechanism was chosen to disseminate research results to a wider audience.

Maintaining constructive external relationships requires well-considered communication strategies. Commentators have suggested that networks should look for communication capacities among the members it recruits, in addition to their research skills. Networks will increase their reach if they ensure that the communications function is dispersed among members, rather than emanating only from the lead organization (Creech and Willard 2001).

The examples that follow show how communications strategies have helped networks to:

- function within politically charged contexts,
- connect with users and funders,
- nurture positive, non-threatening relationships with other organizations which serve overlapping purposes, and
- ensure constructive relations with members' institutions.

The following examples show contexts in which networks needed communication and engagement strategies:

- The Canadian International Scientific Exchange Program, CISEPO, connects academics and health professionals in Canada, Israel, Palestine and Jordan to do cooperative research and capacity building. It builds relationships and cooperation, striving to contribute to peacebuilding in the Middle East. CISEPO must keep government offices up-to-date on its activities in order to maintain officials' interest and good will for the program. Everyone had to learn to negotiate cultural differences. Moreover, researchers involved realized that *“keeping [government offices] informed of CISEPO’s activities and ensuring good name recognition is essential to engender positive responses when they contact them regarding potential projects. As scientists and medical practitioners, CISEPO members have to learn to be politically and culturally astute.”*

Joy Fitzgibbon in Janice Gross Stein and Richard Stren
Networks of Knowledge: Collaborative Innovation in International Learning,
University of Toronto Press, 2001

- Olistica is a network focusing on the social impacts of information and communications technologies in Latin America. It struggled with communication on a couple of fronts: articulating its purpose in understandable terms, and distinguishing itself from another network – Mistica – that operated from the same host institution. Olistica also struggled to overcome its reputation as being “catchy” as opposed to substantive – a criticism that partly grew out of some of the terminology it had coined. This was problematic both in reaching its target users, and in marketing itself to potential donors to diversify its funding base beyond IDRC.
- The African Economic Research Consortium, AERC, has enjoyed secure international funding in part because of its good reputation for policy research and training in economics. It is also deliberate about cultivating positive relations with related organizations throughout Africa. It recognizes that it could be seen as a threat to them. For example, when discussing issues of research and education contexts in Africa, AERC ensures that it does not, and is not seen to be trying to, enlarge itself at the expense of these other organizations.
- A network has the advantage of engaging members from many different institutions and/or knowledge or research systems to carry out its agenda. Network build on these links, but some also jeopardize them in how they operate. Networks often rely on members’ access to their home institutions’ information services, communications technology, administrative functions, and also their reputation and credibility. This can complement members’ roles within their home institutions, but it can also take away from their regular functions. Networks can be demanding – especially for those serving “part-time” as network coordinators, and can undermine members’ ability to fulfill their regular duties. This can ultimately undermine positive relations with that person’s institution.

In fact, two authors have argued that networks might fundamentally undermine universities. In his review of Canadian Centres of Excellence, Howard Clark warns that networks may develop into the key way researchers work, ultimately rendering universities mere “landlords” from which researchers operate. Jeffrey Fine notes that the globalization of knowledge systems and the development of ICTs might force African universities to reassess their structures and functions. They form strategic international partnerships with other knowledge institutions (e.g., business schools) and networks to get paid to offer services locally, rather than carrying out their own programs of study and research.

Howard C. Clark

Formal Knowledge Networks: A Study of Canadian Experiences
IISD, 1998

Jeffrey Fine, quoted in Fredrik Söderbaum
Networking and Capacity Building: The Role of Regional Research Networks in Africa
European Journal of Development Research, Vol. 13, No. 2, December 2001



In groups of three, **read** through the examples above, and **summarize** the communication and engagement needs that the networks had to address. **Identify** the strategies they have already used, and **recommend** new strategies where necessary. We'll hear your recommendations in the large group, and **write** them on a flip chart.



Then, joining with others from your network, look at the communications and engagement strategies on the flip chart. Which three would be most relevant to apply to your own network? **Fill in** the chart below, noting in the network ought to be responsible for implementing this strategy, when it could be done, and what you would need to follow-through on this idea.

Strategy	Who	When	Requirements to follow-through
1.			
2.			
3.			

9.1.1 Strategies for Maintaining Relevance

Strategies for Maintaining Relevance

These five strategies, explained in more detail below, have helped some networks adapt, and remain relevant to their members and contexts:

- Using monitoring and evaluation,
- Keeping the thematic focus sufficiently broad,
- Instituting structures that allow for flexibility,
- Bringing in new people (through small grants programs, shifting people in key positions, and via project involvement), and
- Having network projects to propel member interaction

1. Using monitoring and evaluation

An adaptive network culture and management structure, in which a network can constantly refine its goals, strategies, and internal workings, can help it be sustainable. Building monitoring and evaluation into the network can help the network be a learning organization. Monitoring and evaluation can provide spaces to assess a network's focus, systems, structures, functions and products, and plan adaptations as necessary. Most network *projects* will have evaluation plans structured into their lifecycles, but the *network itself* can also benefit from internal reflection and external critique.

For example, an evaluation of the Central American Industrial Support Network (CAISNET) found that members did not see much value being added by its regional network. The evaluation suggested two options: (a) the national members could refine the regional network's role and restructure it or (b) eliminate the regional network and link the national units via internet without extra regional members or a regional coordination (Paterson 1998:5).

2. Keeping the thematic focus sufficiently broad

Having a broad research agenda can allow a network to adapt easily without needing to reinvent itself. The Coastal Resources Research Network (CoRR) noted that the flexibility which let their network be sustainable hinged partly on having a broad enough research agenda that allowed shifts in research foci to be "steady and harmonious" (Fitzgibbon and Maclean in Gross Stein and Stren 2001). However, breadth has to be balanced with ensuring there is still a tight enough thematic cohesion around which members will communicate and collaborate.

3. Instituting structures that allow for flexibility

Creating flexible organizational structures have helped networks maintain their adaptability. For instance, the Economy and Environment Program for South East Asia (EEPSEA) makes changes to its working groups as needs arise, both dissolving groups that are no longer relevant, and forming new ones to meet new demands (Munasinghe 1996).

4. Bringing in new people

Bringing in new people has helped networks remain relevant (Engel 2004). Networks can be strategic about what themes and capacities it wishes to broaden or deepen, and then seek out new members or associates who will help attain those objectives.

Networks have brought in new people via:

- ***Small grants programs***

An evaluation of the African Technology Policies Studies network urged it to use its small grants program to bring new people into the network. The evaluator suggested that grants should not be awarded solely on the basis of the quality of the proposals received. Rather, grants should instead be given to people who would give the network a presence in new countries, or who would be working in new sectors on new themes to which the network hoped to expand. (Chudnovsky and Makhubu 1996).

There are two caveats to this strategy. First, networks would have to ensure that they maintain contact with the awardees beyond the length of the grant period in order for the expansion to take effect. Second, networks must be aware that financial incentives may be insufficient to sustain new members' involvement. Ideally, people become part of a network because they share its passion and purpose. However, small grants can be used as a way to introduce new members to the network, from which the network could invite them into longer-term participation.

- ***Shifting network membership by changing people in key positions***

Church (2003) gives the example of an advocacy network which underwent a change of personnel in the coordination office. The shift brought changes to the wider network, as people closely associated with the former staff became less active, and people linked with the new coordinators came to the fore. Some networks instituted rotational leadership in order to ensure that power systems and relations between "insiders" and "outsiders" did not become entrenched.

- ***Inviting new people to participate in network-supported projects, or offering to co-fund one of their projects so that network members can take part.***

Two examples demonstrate this approach. The Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network considered this idea in order to expand its capacities in doing policy research and public advocacy (Copes and Intal 1992). The Latin American Trade Network (LATN) commissioned outside people to write papers, and thereby brought them into the network (Fine et al 2001).

5. Having network projects to propel member interaction

Evidence from IDRC's evaluation documentation suggests that a network will be more sustainable if it has projects – whether research, advocacy, capacity building, or otherwise - that propel members to interact. That is, networks which have projects are more sustainable than purely information-sharing networks.

For example, a member of the Global Urban Research Initiative's (GURI) coordinating unit claimed, *"the network members need deadlines, output, meetings, real activity. They would not communicate the way they do if it was just a matter of information sharing"* (Macleon in Gross Stein and Stren 2001).

Similarly, EEPSEA's evaluation said, *"the idea of national associations of environmental and resource economists in each major country is a good one for in-country networking. The groups working around a common theme or research problem are also mechanisms for networking but they must have a substantive reason for getting together. It is not networking for the sake of networking"* (Bromley and Castillo 2000).

Donors also want to see the network as productive. The Red Mesoamericana de Conflictos Socio-Ambientales was deemed unsustainable because the project leader spent more effort building the structure and support for the network than ensuring it produced useful research products. IDRC's PCR comments, *"The recipient's approach to networking was 'build it and they will come', but did not adequately address the issue of how to populate the network with quality results over time. The support could not be sustained because few tangible results emerged from the project, either in the form of solid case studies or useable conflict management methodologies and training material. The network remained a shell animated by the project leader"* (PCR 050277).



Review the strategies described in the examples above. Use this chart to summarize what you find either interesting or questionable in each. In the second column of the chart, rank the strategies from 1-5, according to their relevance to your network. #1 is most relevant, #5 is least relevant.

Strategy	Ranking of Relevance
1. Using monitoring and evaluation	
2. Keeping a broad thematic focus	
3. Instituting structures that allow for flexibility	
4. Bringing in new people	
5. Having network projects to propel member interaction	

10.5 Conclusion: Reviewing and Prioritizing for My Network

The following table reviews the key issues and strategies that arose in Sections 10 – 10.4, factors related to the financial sustainability of networks. **Review** the sections again, and read over the table below, which summarizes the issues and strategies raised in the training materials. **Insert** issues and strategies that arose from your individual reflections, small group work, and large group discussions.



Then, joining with other members of your network, **decide** on the relevance of the strategies for your network. **Mark** the strategies as either low, medium, or high. Then **place an asterisk** beside the strategies that ought to be implemented in the next six months.

Issues	Strategies	Priority
1. Securing long-term and flexible donor commitments		
Some networks benefit from funding that allows them to develop incrementally, and make maximum advantage of their abilities to be flexible and adaptable.	Convince donors of the need for long-term and flexible funding commitments, using these rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	
2. Diversifying the network's donor base		
Diversification can target other donors, national governments, and private industry. It can help reduce a networks' vulnerability to shifts in donor priorities, prove the network's legitimacy, and let the network access in-kind contributions from a broader array of supporters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential links with the private sector interests • Divide network activities into manageable chunks that donors can take on. • Bring donors and potential donors into the network structure. • Articulate clearly and concisely the network's purpose and function. • Explain who participates in the network, how, and with what impacts • Budget for network overheads within project proposals • • 	

3. Revenue Generation		
<p>Revenue generation can provide important income streams. When pursuing some of these strategies, networks found they had to be careful not to get diverted from their original purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercialize research results • Sell Services • Take on consulting contracts • Collect membership fees and contributions • Administer certification processes • • • 	
4. Minimizing network costs		
<p>As a complement to securing more funding and generating more revenue, networks have also aimed to minimize their costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid expectations for international-level salaries and offices • avoid providing funds for research. • enlist volunteer labour by members • average fixed costs over an increased number of members • • 	
5.		