



**Knowledge Management for North-South Partnerships:
Promoting the Canada-Latin America Connection**

Report on a project
funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC-Canada)
November 2008 to June 2011

Report prepared by
Project Coordinator Mario Torres Ph.D.
with collaboration of Jose Blanes M.A. and the Research Team

CERLAC Report

August 2012

CERLAC REPORT SERIES

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CERLAC

8th Floor, York Research Tower
York University
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M3J 1P3

Phone: (416) 736-5237

Fax: (416) 736-5688

E-mail: cerlac@yorku.ca

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Project partners:

Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet)
Centre for Intercultural Communications (UBC-CIC), University of British Columbia
Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC), York University
Centre for Sustainable Community Development (SFU-CSCD), Simon Fraser University
Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (CEBEM) La Paz / Ottawa
Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID), McGill University
International Secretariat for Human Development (ISHD)
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR NORTH-SOUTH PARTNERSHIPS: PROMOTING THE CANADA-LATIN AMERICA CONNECTION

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the account of an experience aimed at innovating knowledge management in support of development. The experience was guided by the belief that knowledge can be shared and expanded through the use of integrated virtual pedagogical, information and communication tools, contributing to bridging the North-South knowledge divide, and thus supporting the work of development professionals and practitioners. The experience targeted the communities of knowledge and practice constituted by academics, graduate students and, in particular, front-line development personnel. It consisted in the implementation of a project entitled “North-South Knowledge Partnerships: Promoting the Canada-Latin America Connection”, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC-Canada)¹, and carried out as a partnership made up of a number of Canadian university centres, a Canadian NGO network, and a Bolivian research and training centre. The central component of the project, which was carried out from November 2008 to June 2011, was to test a ‘structuring model’ for collaborative knowledge management.

This document is destined to an audience of higher education institutions (HEI), development agencies, and individuals interested in improving higher education training, knowledge updating of development professionals and practitioners, and building a bridge between knowledge production and community development. The document describes how the experiment unfolded, main findings and outcomes; it also discusses how the proposed model might contribute to building

¹ The project’s budget was CAD 497,991 for a 24-month period. Partners contributed CAD 111,786 in-kind. The project was extended for another 8-month period and supplemented by CAD 76,446. Total funding was CAD 574,437 for a 32-month period (November 2008 – June 2011). Total budget including in-kind was CAD 686,223. Activities began on November 01, 2008 and completed on June 30, 2011. The project was developed with the cooperation of Gisele Morin-Labatut, IDRC Senior Program Specialist, Canadian Partnerships Program, who accompanied it until her retirement in March 2009. Subsequently the project was followed by Dr. Luc Mougeot, IDRC Senior Program Specialist in the same program.

communities of knowledge and promoting North-South partnerships, its relevance and significance, its implementation, and whether there is a niche for innovative knowledge management that focuses on updating the knowledge and skills of professionals in LDCs and on training of graduate students on development issues.

2. NORTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION IN THE EMERGING GLOBAL ECONOMY

Globalization, the emerging knowledge economy, economic integration processes, and free trade agreements have created a new context for knowledge transfer. The usefulness of academic, business, or policy-making knowledge and experience in national or local matters depends now to a large extent on the capacity to put them in the wider context of regional and international collaboration and exchange in science, technology and trade. Otherwise, that knowledge and experience may become parochial and, eventually, irrelevant for development. This is one of the reasons for testing innovative North-South partnerships based on better sharing and use of information, communication, and online learning technologies.

Changes in how the global knowledge economy operates have had profound implications on national and, particularly, local territories. “The world economy is ...changing in two fundamental ways. First, ideas have become the engine of productivity and the currency of global success. Innovation determines the wealth of nations and their capacity to provide a high quality of life for their citizens. Second, today’s business models are driven not by geography, but by investment decisions and information technology. Companies are moving toward global supply chains...”² Rapid changes in the knowledge base of social services provision, industrial production, and trade practices, make it imperative for professionals, technicians, administrative staff, entrepreneurs, and program operators to update regularly their knowledge on issues that cut across common interests in North and South. In addition, in the age of globalization,

² Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada’s International Policy Statement, <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/ips/ips-overview3-en.asp>

goods and services production chains can be fragmented among many territories and countries across the world. Given these new realities, developed and developing countries need – in order to compete successfully in the global knowledge economy – knowledge and skills to support policies, programs and projects that increase the capacity to foster economic growth and development.

In this context of competition and rapid changes in knowledge, open communities of knowledge and practice, i.e. people who interact with each other online for educational purposes, are important: they constitute a means of adding mutual value to the knowledge base of diverse regions and countries, particularly to LDCs. Built on exchanges, forums, courses, shared knowledge databases, and communication tools, they help to strengthen relations for professional training – an increasingly universal area of skills – and regional and international cooperation.

Learning not only by doing but also by interacting makes it possible to share and develop global and local knowledge applicable to diverse realities. This can contribute to bridging the North-South development gap through more collaborative and collective modalities for knowledge production based on learning partnerships. Nowadays, this objective is more attainable than before given the revolution brought about by information and communication technologies (ICT). More productive and sustainable partnerships for knowledge sharing and development in a new globalized environment are more likely to emerge if these partnerships are promoted on the basis of a knowledge system that combines information, communication, and innovative online learning supported by the Internet.

Professionals and technicians constitute a key clientele because they have limited opportunities to return to the classroom once they have completed formal education. There are strong indications of the existence of an unmet demand of short-term courses for professional updating: (1) information for Latin American and the Caribbean region (LAC) shows that hundreds of thousands of students graduate each year from higher education institutions (see Table 1), most of them from provincial and small institutions; (2) most higher education institutions are more interested in

graduating people than in professional updating; (3) courses to fulfill specific knowledge needs of development personnel are scarce; and (4) there is the opinion, obtained repeatedly from diverse institutions and academics across the region, that graduates have very limited or no opportunities for professional updating³. Putting together these elements of information, it is possible to assert – despite the absence of statistical data about demands for professional updating and of articulated demands coming from various professional sectors – that there is a niche for meeting the potential demand for knowledge updating in varied topics, coming from professionals and practitioners who work on development issues in local governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), grass-root organizations (GROs), and development projects.

The flow of knowledge requires – at the minimum – information about what sources of knowledge exist. This information is limited in the case of the flow between Canada and Latin America. Canadian sources of relevant knowledge for mutual development are not sufficiently known in Latin America. As well, the knowledge about development aid, and activities involving Canadian and Latin American partners undertaken by NGOs, universities, and research centres remains fragmented, despite efforts deployed by governments and industry to bring about closer relations. In addition, few countries in the region, apart from Bolivia, are a priority for the Canadian official development assistance. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Canadian-Latin American partnerships are relatively few, and that the potential for mutual benefit is not sufficiently utilized. However, globalization of communications, facilitated by the development of ICTs and user-friendly software, have opened new avenues for collaborative knowledge management, while the Internet provides easy access to communication, interaction, information, and learning.

³ Members of the Ibero-American Network of Graduate Programs on Territorial Policies and Studies (RIPPET) indicated in discussions at RIPPET's conferences that there is gap in knowledge about how to produce and deliver short online courses for professional development despite the interest generally expressed by alumni in updating their knowledge and skills. Government agencies and universities consulted agreed on the need for online training given difficulties in meeting higher education and professional updating requirements. Experts consulted at the Evaluation Workshop of Phase I of this project agreed on the need for professional updating in the context of very dynamic knowledge changes at the global level.

TABLE 1
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES
FIRST LEVEL UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

First level university Graduates	1995	2000	2001	2005	2006	2007	2008
Agricultural sciences	22287	25701	26152	33382	36917	41456	44091
Humanities	41904	56018	61574	100837	113013	118091	125595
Engineering & Technology	114466	159535	175081	212461	225961	252864	253485
Medical Sciences	90759	123727	131799	183423	204895	224558	262815
Natural & Exact Sciences	30739	48615	51071	83481	88066	89180	96623
Social Sciences	392567	559486	607457	895117	925563	954450	1011236
Total	692725	973084	1053136	1508703	1594417	1680601	1793847

Source: Red de Indicadores de Ciencia y Tecnología. <http://www.riicyt.org>

3. THE 'STRUCTURING MODEL'

ICT-based knowledge management for North-South collaboration is a challenge. There are cultural differences, institutional constraints, technical limitations, and language barriers to be overcome. In addition, reaching development professionals and meeting their knowledge updating needs is a daunting task. Mailing lists are not publicly available, and professional associations list only their members and not the entire profession. Knowledge needs are not publicly articulated either. The main sources of information are the experience of experts, their informal networks, opinions expressed through mass media in the context of discussions of government policies or actions, and personal contacts. Research activities indirectly touch upon the problem when reporting deficiencies in program implementation, failure of interventions or lack of capacities. The issues usually mentioned relate to information, communication and human resources shortcomings, as well as institutional and policy practices.

The concept of a 'structuring model' emerged from the work of the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (CEBEM) during the late 1990s and early 2000s. During those years CEBEM, with financial support from IDRC, accumulated experience in three areas: design and delivery of in-classroom and online training for professionals; mass communication through electronic newsletters; and organization of a virtual library and various databases. CEBEM also gained experience in online

training by delivering over thirty short online courses on local development, territorial planning, community forestry, and environmental development, to development professionals across the region. This experience demonstrated that development practitioners and professionals express their need for continuous education, and that the Internet was very accessible in LAC. It also revealed a potential niche to CEBEM and its various partners in Canada and Latin America, for meeting knowledge needs by producing and delivering short, targeted online courses. Canadian professors and graduate students interested in LAC indicated their interest in producing courses in Spanish. The delivery of courses in English was also an option to explore for course participants who could read English-language written materials and write in the language of their choice. Bilingual tutors could provide additional support. Geographical and time differences could be overcome by using virtual tools. Both instructors and participants could come from diverse cultural backgrounds and countries. North-South knowledge partnerships could be promoted on these bases.

In addition to practice with online courses, experience was developed with other important virtual tools. One was CEBEM's newsletter, REDESMA (Red en Desarrollo Sostenible y Medio Ambiente), which was, and continues to be, a space for gathering and redistributing news coming from diverse sources. At the time the idea of the 'structuring model' was born, this newsletter already had over 40,000 subscribers from several countries.

The newsletter was being used, *inter alia*, to advertise CEBEM's courses. Initially focused on environmental issues, REDESMA became emblematic of CEBEM's work in Bolivia and the region. Another resource was the experience of creating and managing databases. The subscribers to the newsletter and the participants to CEBEM's online courses led to the creation of a database on LAC researchers, academics and practitioners on topics related to environment and natural resources management, local development, and intercultural relations. Other valuable available capacity included creation of websites, organization of a virtual library, production of a virtual journal (Revista REDESMA)⁴, and design of online mechanisms for self-registration. CEBEM also had a small team of young professionals which included a Webmaster, a web developer, online education tutors, and a librarian. Last but not least was the large number of professionals known to CEBEM who could serve as instructors for the courses.

The model was built as an integrated conceptual, methodological and pedagogical structuring system. Such a system would facilitate, through the articulation of e-learning platforms, electronic dissemination tools, and databases, the incorporation of diverse collaborative teaching and learning tools and sources of knowledge from Canada and LAC. Thus, the model was formulated to identify (a) a niche of intervention, (b) effective online learning processes, and (c) a path for mutual learning and knowledge sharing based on the use of ICTs. And, very importantly, the model was oriented to structure 'existing' resources. In this sense, the model did not propose to innovate in a particular way each one of its individual components, but rather in the way these components may be combined and used for knowledge management in support of development.

The 'structuring model' (or 'CKD model' as it will be referred to from now on) was formulated with three components: a philosophical orientation, three types of virtual tools, and two objectives⁵.

- a. Philosophical orientation: collective building of knowledge and participative learning:

⁴ Website Revista REDESMA

<http://revistavirtual.redesma.org/vol11/index.php>

⁵ http://ccd-ckd.cebem.org/who/index_eng.php

The model looks at structuring the relationships among partners, individuals involved in online courses and forums, and members of networks, supported by an integrated system that combines a virtual learning platform and portal with information resources and communication tools. It includes complementary types of knowledge provided in the virtual classrooms, the databases and newsletters. A central concern is the promotion of a constructivist educational philosophy of knowledge creation: learning not only by doing but also by interacting makes it possible to share and develop global and local knowledge applicable to diverse contexts. In this way it is possible to contribute to bridging the North-South development gap through more collaborative and collective modalities for knowledge production based on partnerships.

- b. Virtual tools:

The model proposes the combined use of online short-term courses; directories, databases, and virtual libraries; and mass communication means, in order to create synergies among them as sources of knowledge, and give support to communities of knowledge and practice.

Online courses can be the primary means of professional updating. They may be aimed at feeding existing networks and communities of knowledge and practice in Canada and LAC. Graduate students and postgraduate fellows may serve as instructors if appropriately guided by professors and online education tutors. *Directories* of experts with special attention to members of graduate training programs, regional networks, and research programs make it possible to identify communities of knowledge and practice. *Opportune communication* is critical, and the model therefore proposes a communication strategy based on existing newsletters as a way to reach development professionals and practitioners.

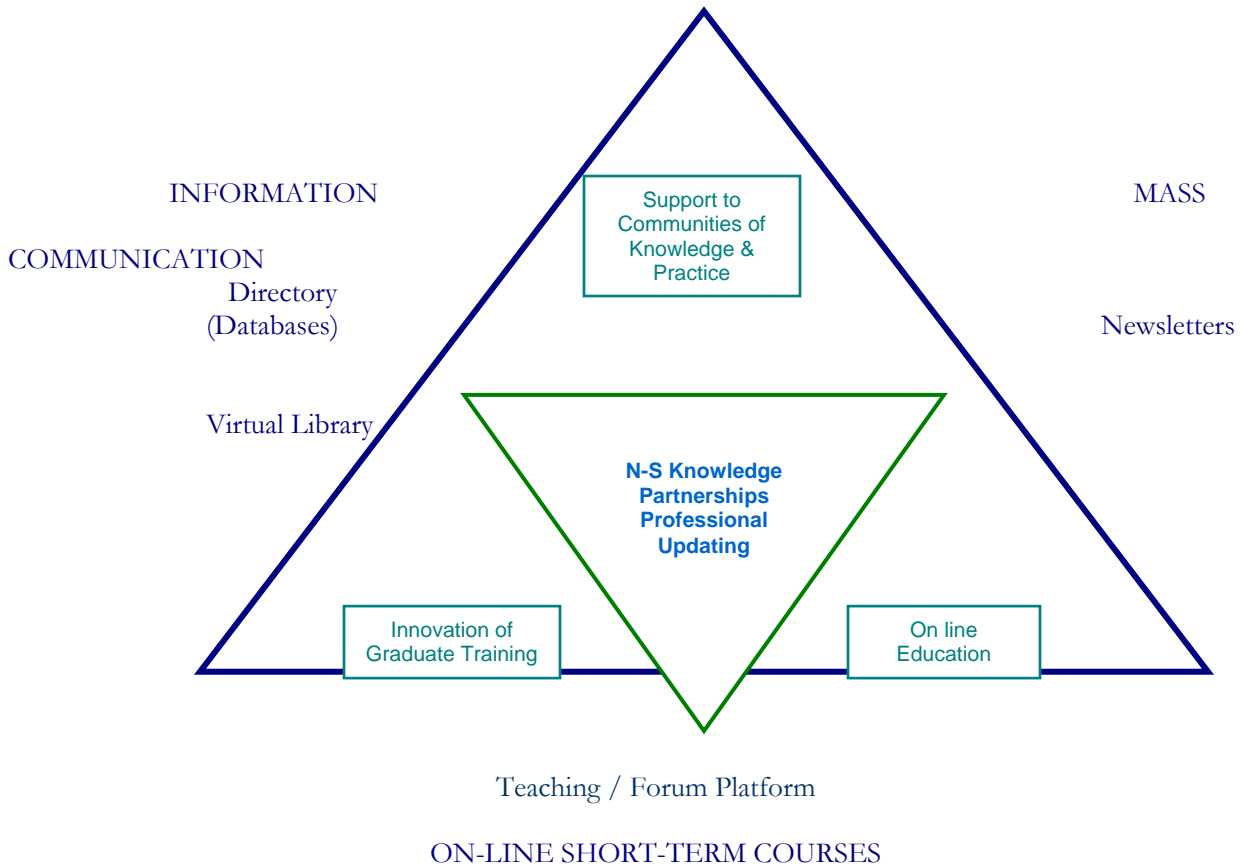
- c. Objectives: North-South Knowledge Partnerships and Professional Development and Updating:

The model proposes to convene Canadian (North) and LAC (South) universities, research centres and NGOs in activities that combine

information and communication technologies with online pedagogy. It also addresses the challenge of encouraging academic and non-academic institutions to form learning communities and to contribute to greater dissemination and use of existing knowledge for

development in a globalized world. The model seeks to respond to information and training needs that are not being met in the region, in particular, the demand for short internet-based professional development training courses.

FIGURE 1 THE COOPERATION, KNOWLEDGE & DEVELOPMENT MODEL (CKD)



4. TEST OF THE MODEL

On the basis of the model an experimental project was designed. The model was tested by building an integrated structure (LAC-Canada Portal) that housed and supported collaborative products and services including a virtual library, online teaching tools and courses, dissemination tools, discussion forums, and links to a wide variety of other existing resources. In order to take the experiment forward, using the CKD model as a *heuristic guide*, objectives, expected results, partners, and beneficiaries were

identified for a two-phase project. Phase I (2007-2008) allowed the partners to produce tools, and gain basic experience. Phase II (2009- 2011) saw consolidation of results, a test of the model with diverse partners and audiences, and the establishment of a solid base of results and products⁶.

⁶ Although this document is focused on Phase II, it includes consideration of activities since the inception of the initiative.

Phase II objectives were to promote and further develop support to North-South and South-South knowledge partnerships based on participatory and constructivist management of information and e-learning pedagogy. Specific objectives were (1) to consolidate a model of collaboration supported by a Portal that provides tools and resources for communities of knowledge and practice; (2) to enhance and promote collaboration for the design and delivery of short online courses for professional updating; and (3) to provide short-term learning opportunities to Canadian and LAC graduate students, professors, and practitioners⁷. Expected outputs and results are described in Table 2.

⁷ An additional objective was to contribute to furthering dissemination, through online courses and seminars, of the Social Analysis System (SAS²). SAS² offers a model for collaborative inquiry and social engagement that helps actors, managers, consultants and academics to support diagnostic thinking and strategic actions in their communities and workplaces and to understand and manage complex and unpredictable situations. It seeks to bridge gaps between civil society and the academic world by showing how to incorporate effectively the contributions of action research into processes of knowledge production, problem-solving and decision-making (<http://www.sas2.net/>).

TABLE 2 OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND RESULTS

OBJECTIVES	EXPECTED OUTPUTS	EXPECTED RESULTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consolidate a model of collaboration supported by a Portal and organizational arrangements that provides opportunities, space, tools and resources for the activities of communities of knowledge and practice. 2. To enhance and promote modes of collaboration for the design, exchange, adaptation, and delivery of short on line courses for professional updating and development in no less than four major thematic areas related to sustainable development. 3. To provide short-term work and learning opportunities to Canadian and Latin American graduate students, postgraduate fellows, professors and practitioners interested in collaborating in development-related issues across regions, thematic areas or types of organizations. 4. To contribute to furthering the development of the Social Analysis System in Latin America through capacity building and application of the approach to new problems and situations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An integrated internet-based information and communication service for Canadian and Latin American audiences including a virtual library; a consolidated newsletter; and a set of inter-related directories with information on selected institutions, experts, training programs, virtual libraries, development projects and newsletters pertaining to the major thematic areas in both Canada and Latin America. 2. A mechanism allowing project partners to upload information to the databases and newsletter, forming the basis of an increasingly self-administered system; related training offered by CEBEM. 3. A series of 20-25 new online non-credit professional development courses produced by Canadian and Latin American project partners experimenting with different modes of collaboration. 4. Training of up to twelve Canadian graduate students in virtual education and their subsequent participation in the courses as tutors and co-producers with university professors, the organization of thematic areas, and the creation of databases. 5. Delivery of short-term training courses to approximately 450 professionals in LAC. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training: Online learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training for updating of professionals - Training of graduate students 2. Information on knowledge sources 3. Communication for the expansion of audiences 4. Support to learning communities 5. Visibility of Canadian universities in LAC 6. Cost recovery

Two major groups of beneficiaries were targeted: individuals and institutions engaged in, or interested in experimenting with, learning communities and communities of practice across geographic, disciplinary, and occupational boundaries; and professionals and technical personnel interested in expanding or updating their knowledge and skills in one or more focus themes of the project.

The first Canadian partner, the Centre for Intercultural Communication (CIC) at the University of British Columbia, was interested in developing closer links to the LAC region⁸. CIC's willingness to attempt to overcome the challenge of potential language and cultural barriers was a key element for collaboration with CEBEM, and for testing the proposed model. At the end of Phase I, enough results had been accumulated to explore the interest

of other potential Canadian partners in addition to CIC-UBC. After some months of discussions, the following centres and networks agreed to participate in the experiment and to submit a joint proposal for support for Phase II: the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC-York U.); the Centre for Developing-Area Studies (CDAS-McGill U.) renamed Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID); the International Secretariat for Human Development (ISHD-York U.); the Centre for Sustainable Community Development (CSCD-Simon Fraser U.); and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet). All these partners have a recognized track record on development studies, contacts in Canada and LAC, on-going research activities, training programs on LAC, graduate students conducting fieldwork for their theses in LAC, publications, access to rich library resources, and online newsletters.

⁸ The role of Professor Peter Booydroyd from UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, and Centre for Human Settlements, was key for obtaining CIC participation.

It was expected that the partners would give more breadth and depth to the experiment, access to resources and students, and help in selecting and supervising graduate students that would be course and forum instructors⁹. CEBEM brought to the table its experience with online education aimed at professional updating as well as its extensive network of contacts in Latin America, several of which were approached to participate in the production of online courses. These included the Centro de Estudios Superiores Universitarios (Universidad Mayor de San Simon), the Universidad Mayor de San Andres, the Instituto de Ecología (Universidad Mayor de San Agustin), and PROGEO network in Bolivia; the Centro de Estudios en Relaciones Internacionales (Universidad de Rosario), Universidad de Buenos Aires and Universidad de Río Cuarto in Argentina; Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Mexico; and Universidad de La Mancha in Spain.

5. RESULTS

For the most part, all activities were completed and anticipated results obtained in the course of the 32 months of project implementation; the quality of the outputs was deemed quite acceptable. A Portal was created (<http://ccd-ckd.cebem.org>) that integrated a database of Canadian and LAC experts and universities offering graduate studies programs, information on selected Canadian projects and funding agencies, data on networks, links to diverse newsletters, and access to CEBEM's virtual library and other online libraries. A series of 22 online courses for professional development were delivered a total of 41 times (Table 1). 5,501 individuals indicated interest in participating in the courses and of these, 717 actually completed one or more courses¹⁰. Canadian and LAC instructors produced 12 and 10 courses respectively. 19 instructors participated including six Canadian graduate students, who designed six courses, and two Canadian professors. Six regional forums were organized. The newsletter was reaching over 140,000 subscribers by the end of the project.

⁹ Each partner had a program of work that included activities such as data gathering, course production, graduate students selection, mutual access to newsletters and websites, and participation in workshops and forums.

¹⁰ The project gave training to 539 LAC professionals using CEBEM's platform; CIC-UBC gave training to 178 professionals. Total is 867 professionals if participants to SAS² four workshops are also added.

5.1. Training for updating of professionals

The potential of virtual education for knowledge updating of professionals and practitioners is unique, offering good virtual platform software that permits a high level of interaction among students and between students and instructor, easy circulation of written and visual materials, and organization of internal forums. It may also provide access to online libraries, databases and communication with specialists, and easy recording and filing of discussions and conclusions for later use. The possibilities may be endless. However, it is not a substitute for a good pedagogical methodology; in the hands of inexperienced or unprepared professors and tutors, it becomes inefficient, as is the case with traditional teaching methods. Virtual education has special advantages over traditional classroom education in the case of professionals and practitioners, due to its characteristics:

- easy adaptation to schedule of personal activities; for example access to the virtual classroom is possible after working hours and any day;
- easier contact with other professionals with useful experience, despite differences in cultural or geographical settings;
- absence of rules and practices normally imposed within the framework of national educational institutions;
- short, modular courses require relatively low registration fees, something that is important for professionals in provincial or rural areas; and,
- great potential to reach communities of knowledge and practice.

The characteristics of the courses that were designed and delivered during the project were congruent with the learning philosophy of the model. Courses were designed with the idea that the learners (or participants) would be professionals or experienced practitioners, interested in knowledge updating rather than academic credentials. Courses were therefore 'non-credit' and relied completely on the interests of participants. Overall, around 80% of registered learners completed their courses. The courses delivered a Certificate of Approval after fulfillment of all activities, including a final work or exam if they were required, or a Certificate of

Participation when the participant did not complete all course requirements. In some cases, it was observed that participants were interested in course discussions or materials only. Other characteristics were the following:

- short duration: courses lasted a maximum of seven weeks, including a week devoted to learning how to move in the platform environment;
- very close follow-up of participants and active exchanges with them;
- a pedagogical approach focused on ensuring feedback among participants;
- no course was free: the usual fee was US \$150; scholarships were available, and the minimum payment was set at US \$50.

Courses were delivered on the Moodle platform, which proved to be satisfactory. Participants (instructors and learners) who were new to e-learning and e-teaching did not experience any particular difficulties in understanding and using Moodle options and mechanisms. There were no significant problems either for reading materials, writing comments or communicating. In some cases discussions were quite lively, which proved the platform offered a good environment for the exchange of ideas.

Courses were delivered under four focus themes: Intercultural Relations; Local, Regional and Territorial Development; Virtual Education; and, Human and Social Development¹¹. The definition

¹¹ Intercultural relations. This theme attempts to meet knowledge needs of professionals working in intercultural relations, conflict resolution and social adaptation in diverse environments. For example, one case is the situation of indigenous populations dealing with processes of decentralization and globalization in urban areas, mining exploitation developments, or life adaptation in immigration areas. Other case is the handling of work relations in multicultural contexts.

Local, Regional and Territorial Development. These concepts are used to define the set of social, cultural and economic processes that promote the economic dynamism and improvement of life quality of the population in a territory (metropolitan area, urban centre, region, province, or municipality). To do so, it is necessary to train institutional and human resources with relevant information and knowledge in order to facilitate local populations to define priorities, to exploit comparative advantages, and to participate in globalization.

Virtual Education. This theme is addressed to examine issues involved in delivery of education to professional working on development. In the new context of economic competitiveness and rapid changes in

of each theme was ample enough to accommodate diverse topics. This selection of themes did not respond to a previous theoretical or policy analysis. It responded to expertise and interests of CEBEM's members, and the interests of the partners. Given that the philosophy of the model is promotion of partnerships and communities of knowledge whatever the substantive area of work, the selection of specific course topics inside each theme was related to the proven expertise and interests of instructors. The filter was not the content but the quality of the proposal. In this sense, the project relied on the expertise of instructors – specialists, professors and graduate students.

Added value is a key issue for knowledge partnerships, and the project pursued this in mutual learning and sharing knowledge sources. It was expected that Canadian partners would produce online courses that integrate the most recent pertinent issues at the global level, the experience in the developed world, and the experience in other regions. LAC specialists would contribute courses with regional perspectives and experiences pertaining to the theme, indications of the most pressing issues emerging from the South, and identification of opportunities for collaborative research, training, and policy advice activities. In this way it was expected to obtain cross-fertilization of ideas, complementarities of knowledge, and mutual learning.

An analysis was made of the characteristics of the audience for a sample of four courses (see Tables 4 to 6). Results indicated that courses reached the target audiences over a wide range of types of professional work and disciplines. The dominant category depends on the topic. Thus, a more 'technical' course like "Energy, Development and the Environment" attracted professionals from the private sector while others more oriented towards social issues – "Gender Leadership and Social Vulnerability" – had more participation from the

knowledge, open learning communities are needed as means for adding value to the knowledge base of diverse regions and countries.

Human and Social Development. A theme developed in collaboration with the International Secretariat for Human Development of York University. It examines relevant topics about human and social development and poverty reduction. Emphasis is placed on local communities, policies and globalization, concertation between public administrators and social actors, participation of the most marginalized, and the process of mutual learning among policy makers, professionals and academics.

NGO and GRO sectors. The courses were not aimed at academic discussions but to exchanges among practitioners and not surprisingly, academics and researchers were not the dominant group. Some courses were delivered a second and even a third time. In general, audiences have been smaller for more academic courses, whereas topics that were more cross-disciplinary in nature, such as food security, attracted larger and more diverse audiences.

Audiences were concentrated in the Andean region. Participation from other areas like Southern Cone, Brazil, Central America and the Caribbean was limited. One explanation is that course enrolment mirrors the geographical reach of the newsletter used for course advertising. However, this trend was changing in later courses, as the proportion of participants from the Andean region decreased overall. On the other hand, results indicated that the project reached its target audience of development professionals and practitioners. The mechanism used to reach the target – REDESMA newsletter – worked well, although it still needs to expand its reach.

The collaboration of Canadian partners was significant throughout. CERLAC, CSCD, CDAS-ISID, and ISHD sponsored production and delivery of online courses and contributed in-kind with professors' time – except in one case. Each partner received funds to pay graduate students' work on data gathering, organization of forums, and course production, depending on each one's plan of work. CERLAC and ISHD added funds obtained from internal sources for data gathering and course production. Most LAC courses were initiated from CEBEM, although some LAC institutions sponsored courses – PROGEO, Instituto de Ecología (Universidad Mayor de San Andres), and Universidad Católica Boliviana¹².

The pedagogy did not present any particular problems. Results in terms of learning appear to be good. One course “Best Practices” in Migration, Remittances and Development Projects” published online the final papers prepared by participants. This practice may be an important incentive to

participants. The online course “Social Economy: Theory and Practice” resulted in 17 documented experiences of social and solidarity economy from Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico and Mali. The course on “Women and Food Sovereignty” delivered by an ISHD graduate student was the most popular of all courses, with 30 participants.

Some LAC participants had difficulties reading English and did not benefit fully from courses delivered in English. There is no easy solution to this problem because translation to Spanish is very costly in terms of time and resources. The difficulties of participants in reading English documents led instructors to offer, when possible, equivalent or comparable reading material in Spanish; in this case, participants were advised ahead of time when the most recent or more appropriate literature on the topic was in English. One option to deal with English literature was to have bilingual instructors and tutors, which gave good results, but represented a heavier workload. Few Canadians participated as students.

In the special case of SAS², the combination of ‘in-classroom’ and virtual formats made it possible to reach audiences beyond Bolivia. Application of SAS² to analyses and diagnoses, social actors’ roles, and planning processes facilitated closer contact with the community of practice. On the basis of this experience, the SAS² web page expanded further the opportunities for discussion on methodological approaches, qualitative and quantitative tools, and epistemological perspectives

(<http://isp.cebem.org/>).

¹² SAS² workshops counted on support from NGOs, universities and private sector companies. San Cristóbal Mining Co, University of San Simón (Cochabamba), Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, Swisscontact Foundation, NGO Senta, NGO Health Network Procosi.

TABLE 3 ONLINE COURSES BY CANADIAN AND LAC PARTNERS (2009 – 2011)**I. CANADIAN COURSES**

Name	N	Institution	A	B
1. "Introduction to International Development"	4	CIC – UBC	n.d	85
2. "Education & Development"	2	CIC – UBC	n.d.	19
3. "Evaluating International Development Work"	2	CIC – UBC	n.d.	33
4. "Labour Migration & Displacement"	2	CIC – UBC	n.d.	32
5. "Facilitating Online Across Cultures"	1	CIC – UBC	15	9
Sub-total	11		15	178
6. "Best Practices" in Migration, Remittances and Development Projects	2	CERLAC – York U.	184	33
7. "Social vulnerability, sexual and reproductive citizenship, health and rights. Concepts, problems and practices in Latin America"	2	Department of Sociology Université Laval / ISID	403	31
8. "Thinking Contemporary Latin American: 'Neo-liberalism', 'Shift to the Left', 'Populism' and other continental dilemmas"	2	CERLAC / ISHD – York U	390	26
9. "Energy, Development and the Environment"	1	School of Urban Planning / ISID McGill U	177	16
10. "Social Economy: Theory and Practice"	1	Department of Geography / CSCD – SFU	274	22
11. "Women and Food Sovereignty"	1	ISDH – York U	126	30
12. "Self-determination and Indigenous Autonomy in Latin America and Canada"	1	CERLAC – York U	128	19
Sub-total	10		1,682	177
TOTAL CANADIAN COURSES	21		1,697	355

II. LATIN AMERICAN COURSES

Name	N	Sponsor Institution	A	B
1. "Leadership from a Gender and Intercultural Perspective"	2	PROGEO	643	48
2. "Environmental Health"	3	Instituto de Ecología - UMSA	779	47
3. "Ecological Economy"	3	Instituto de Ecología - UMSA	604	50
4. "Participatory Planning and Design of Communication Strategies"	3	Universidad Católica Boliviana	431	70
5. "Climatic Change: causes and impact of a growing phenomenon"	2	Instituto de Ecología – UMSA	521	39
6. "Controversy on the Quantification of the Social Economy"	2	Universidad de la Mancha – Albacete	182	35
7. "Intercultural Communication as a Tool in the Work Environment"	2	CEBEM	270	23
8. "Cities and Urban Space Process of Transformation"	1	CEBEM	148	18
9. "Introduction of Systems of Social Analysis"	1	CEBEM	84	17
10. "Guide of Tools for Territorial Analysis"	1	CEBEM	142	15
TOTAL LAC COURSES	20		3,804	362
TOTAL ALL COURSES	41		5,501	717

n.d. No data

A. Individuals interested in the course. At the time a course is advertised, the first step is to pre-register interested individuals. The next step is to send to them complete information about the course. On this base, individuals who decide to take a course proceed to register and pay fees.

B. Participants registered in the course

N Number of times a course was delivered

TABLE 4 Courses “Energy, Development & Environment”, “Social Economy: Theory And Practice”, “Women And Food Sovereignty” & “Social Vulnerability, Sexual & Reproductive Rights”

Distribution Of Interested Individuals (I) And Participants (P) By Type Of Professional Work

Type of Professional Work	Energy, Development & Environment		Social Economy		Food Sovereignty		Social Vulnerability Sexual & Reproductive Rights	
	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Private sector (1)	25.8	46.7	6.4	19.0	16.4	3.8	11.4	28.6
Director / Executive NGO	5.2		7.2	9.5	5.5	3.8	10.9	
Officer of foundation (2)	5.9	6.7	2.6	4.8	3.6		6.6	7.1
Officer / member NGO (3)	9.2	13.3	28.7	4.8	27.2	34.6	28.2	21.5
Community organization			14.7	4.8	6.4	15.4		
University Professor / HEI		1,3	3.0	4.8	6.4	3.8	13.3	21.5
Researcher	7.2	6.7	4.9		10.9	19.3	4.7	
Local authority / municipality	12.5		5.3		0.9		9.0	7.1
Ministry officer / employee	3.9		7.6	42.8	8.2		5.0	
Other government institution	6.6		6.8		7.3		2.7	
Project manager (4)	6.6		3.4	9.5	5.4	7.7	6.2	7.1
University student	2.6	13.3	0.7		0.9	11.6	2.0	7.1
Other			8.7		0.9			
Total (percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	152	15	265	21	110	26	256	14

- (1) Managers of private enterprises, self-employed workers, consultants, advisors
- (2) Members / officials of NGOs who operate as national foundations
- (3) Includes administrators, general coordinators, program coordinators, members
- (4) Includes individuals who are operating a program or project

TABLE 5 Courses “Energy, Development & Environment”, “Social Economy: Theory And Practice”, “Women And Food Sovereignty” & “Social Vulnerability, Sexual & Reproductive Rights”

Distribution Of Interested Individuals (I) And Participants (P) By Country

Country	Energy, Development & Environment		Social Economy		Food Sovereignty		Social Vulnerability Sexual & Reproductive Rights	
	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Andean Area (1)	89.2	79.9	66.0	90.4	71.2	50.0	80.0	81.1
Southern Cone (2)	6.2	6.7	5.5	4.8	9.3	7.6	8.4	6.3
Brazil			19.9		0.7			0.9
Mexico	2.2	6.7	3.0	4.8	8.7	23.2	5.5	6.3
C. America (3)	0.6	6.7	3.0		1.4	11.5	2.4	
Caribbean (4)	0.6		1.8				0.9	
USA					0.7			
Europe (5)	1.2		0.8		8.0	7.7	1.9	6.3
Total (percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	177	15	271	21	138	26	326	16

- (1) Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela
- (2) Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay
- (3) El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama
- (4) Cuba, Dominican Republic, Aruba
- (5) Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, U.K.

TABLE 6 Courses “Energy, Development & Environment”, “Social Economy: Theory And Practice”, “Women And Food Sovereignty” & “Social Vulnerability, Sexual & Reproductive Rights”

Distribution Of Interested Individuals (I) And Participants (P) By Discipline

Discipline	Energy, Development & Environment		Social Economy		Food Sovereignty		Social Vulnerability Sexual & Reproductive Rights	
	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Communication	1.8		4.2		2.3		7.0	7.1
Agricultural sciences	23.9	13.4	11.4	19.0	29.4	23.5	3.0	
Education	1.8		5.0	4.8	2.3		8.6	
Law	2.9		6.1	9.6	0.8		9.6	14.4
Public Administration	0.6		7.3		1.5		0.3	
Social sciences	15.8	20.0	22.5	33.2	19.9	26.8	20.6	42.8
Business Administration	4.7		4.6	14.2	3.0	3.8	3.3	7.1
Psychology			2.3		3.8	11.5	13.2	21.5
Social Work	0.6		7.3	4.8	2.3	3.8	6.0	
Health Sciences (1)	1.8	6.7	1.9	4.8	7.7	3.8	17.2	7.1
Biology	4.7		1.9	4.8		3.8	2.0	
Chemistry	6.3							
Engineering sciences (2)	13.4	26.6	4.2	4.8	3.0		2.2	
Regional development (3)	19.3	33.3	8.7		17.0	23.0	1.7	
Other disciplines (4)	2.4		12.6		7.0		5.3	
Total (percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	171	15	262	21	130	26	302	14

- (1) Odontology, Obstetrics, Nutrition, Public Health
- (2) Engineering, Civil Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Architecture
- (3) Includes Environmental Engineering, Environmental Studies, Geography
- (4) History, Planning, Philosophy, Conflict Resolution, Secretary Studies, Statistics, Informatics, Library Sciences, Linguistics, International Relations, Tourism, Human Resources, other disciplines

An evaluation was done at the end of each course by administering a questionnaire asking participants to grade – as excellent, adequate or insufficient – knowledge of professor, academic coordination, bibliography, and usefulness of course. Additional comments were invited about self-performance, and instructors were asked to give their opinions and recommendations. Participants’ evaluations rated

courses as generally satisfactory and useful, and indicated that their knowledge needs and learning objectives had been met. Majority of 61 students from a sample of 6 courses qualified the knowledge of the instructor, academic coordination, and usefulness as excellent or adequate. Significantly, a key finding was that participants indicated that partial ‘scholarships’ facilitated registration.

TABLE 7 EVALUATION OF COURSES BY PARTICIPANTS (Percent)

Course aspect	Excellent	Adequate	Insufficient	Total
Knowledge of the Instructor & Academic Coordination	58	36	6	100
Usefulness	48	49	3	100

Data for 61 participants from a sample of 6 courses

5.2. Training of graduate students

Two self-administered short modules were produced with materials from a series of three courses originally produced by CEBEM during Phase I. This basic training in online education techniques and the use of Moodle platform provided ten Canadian graduate students with a basic conceptual orientation prior to serving as instructors as they could not, given time constraints, take longer courses¹³. Guidelines for course production and a complete course model were also made available, as were support and advice from CEBEM's tutors. In this way, courses were produced, teaching materials were selected and uploaded, discussions and forums were organized, and participants were guided throughout the duration of the online course.

The training was successful and courses were delivered with good results as indicated by the participants' positive evaluation. Good support from tutors was essential for course performance. Canadian graduate students produced a set of demonstration courses suitable for distribution throughout the region. The experience indicated that delivery of courses by graduate student as instructors is feasible *even when they may not be already familiar with online education*

TABLE 8 CANADIAN GRADUATE STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Name	Institution	Course / Activity
Evelyn Encalada Grez	Centre for Intercultural Communication (CIC) University of British Columbia / ISHD – York University	Course: “Labour Migration & Displacement”
Gretchen Hernandez	Centre for Sustainable Community Development (CSCD) & Dept. of Geography, Simon Fraser University	Forum: “Aboriginal / Indigenous Community Economic Development Forum for LAC –Canada exchange” Course: . “Social Economy: Theory and Practice”
Christian Krelling	School of Urban Planning, McGill University	Course: “Energy, Development and the Environment”
Pedro Marcelino	Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC) and International Secretariat for Human Development (ISHD) – York U	Course: “Best Practices” in Migration, Remittances and Development Projects”
Itzela Sosa	Department of Sociology, Université Laval	Course: “Social vulnerability, sexual and reproductive citizenship, health and rights”
Paulo Rabecca	CERLAC / ISHD / York University	Course: “Thinking Contemporary Latin American: ‘Neo-liberalism’, ‘Shift to the Left’, ‘Populism’ and other continental dilemmas”
Irma Molina	ISHD / York University	Course “Women and Food Sovereignty”
Catherine Tegelberg Erwin Blanco	CSCD – Simon Fraser University	Work on line directories, participation in online courses
Allee Attoe	ISHD – York U.	Assistant for production of on-line
Katarina Jurik	CERLAC	Work for online data base
Catalina Ponce de Leon	CERLAC	Work for online data base
Kathryn Roswell	CIC-UBC	Work for online data base

¹³ In addition, another 3 graduate students participated in data gathering for databases on Canadian specialists and research centres.

5.3. Information on knowledge sources

The internet-based structure and organizational framework materialized in the CKD website (<http://ccd-ckd.cebem.org>) which gives access to diverse Canadian and LAC sources of knowledge, online education tools, and newsletters.

The purpose of the databases and directories of Canadian specialists, research centres, training programs, newsletters, networks, journals, development institutions, donors and development organizations is to make information about them more widely accessible throughout LAC¹⁴. Information existed but was scattered across various unconnected websites, which made it difficult to explore opportunities for Canada-LAC collaboration. The directory of Canadian specialists on LAC-related development covered all disciplines, whereas the directories of Canadian university research centres and graduate programs were restricted to the four focus themes of the project. The data were collected from 70 Canadian universities. In the case of LAC resources, information in all directories is restricted to the four focus themes. In spite of this thematic restriction, the database on LAC resources is probably one of the most extensive of this sort; and in the case of Canada it is the most complete registry of specialists on LAC. These directories have a search engine, and a menu of key words in Spanish and English facilitates searches¹⁵. They constitute a tool with important potential for the organization of forums, production of courses, exploration of research interests, and identification of communities of knowledge and practice.

Databases face challenges: awareness of their existence, appropriateness of format, easy searching of information, and regular updating. These challenges have been dealt with by using diverse means:

- Communication about the existence of the databases through the REDESMA

¹⁴ It was attempted to include sources of knowledge produced by the Canadian productive sectors. However, a very preliminary page could be developed only. This is a task to be done in the future; it could be identified a huge pool of knowledge produced by diverse production companies, networks, research centres, professional associations, and projects.

¹⁵ http://ccd-ckd.cebem.org/pages/can/menulista_eng.php

newsletter, resulting in increasing visits to the databases. However, a complementary strategy which could not be carried out in the course of the project was to obtain collaboration from other newsletters in order to disseminate information about the existence and usefulness of the directories.

- Clarity of presentation: No test has been done to determine if the current presentation is the best possible; however, no user problems have been reported in this respect.
- Inclusion of the search engine and system to facilitate self-registration: Preliminary tests indicated that the search engine was working well.
- Updating of information: Obsolete information is a permanent challenge for any database. The project created a mechanism that allows individuals to update information about themselves; on this basis, a reminder will be sent through the newsletter for updating personal information.

A particular challenge is to keep databases on-going beyond the lifespan of the project. In this regard, the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) and CERLAC indicated interest in participating in the maintenance and further development of the databases. CALACS has a clear mandate to this purpose and CERLAC's research and training activities would benefit from regular maintenance of the information collected so far. The databases have potential for exploring development of thematic communities as well as for expanding contacts and membership beyond the social sciences fields. A comparison of databases with similar ones indicates that the project's databases are more complete in terms of data and range of disciplines included. They are also a good complement of others that report only programs on Latin American studies.

5.4. Communication to increase audience reach

The initial plan was to produce a newsletter to disseminate information about Canadian activities, projects, conferences, and publications related to LAC. Some issues were delivered, with English

translation, but this was not sustainable. At the time, CEBEM was already producing REDESMA, a newsletter created in 1997, which had become a very popular resource for advertising diverse professional and academic activities in Bolivia and beyond. It seemed more appropriate to take advantage of this resource and include in REDESMA news about Canadian activities – using the original language of each news item, either English or Spanish, and inserting a Google translator.

REDESMA has become a tool for information management and dissemination on development information in LAC. The newsletter reports events conducted by networks, universities, agencies, NGOs, governments and any other actors interested in development, with special emphasis on the four thematic areas. The newsletter is constantly evolving space in which information circulates, serving as a valuable resource for diverse communities of knowledge and practice.

The challenge was to reach and include relevant information about knowledge communities from the North – in particular from Canada – and other regions. The newsletter still has a limited audience in Canada and the North. It was hoped that more active collaboration from Canadian newsletters would increase REDESMA's reach in the North, but results have been disappointing so far. Insufficient importance was given to this dimension of information exchange. Possible reasons may have been that the project was a very new initiative and that news was in Spanish – despite the option to use the Google translator. Notwithstanding these limitations, the newsletter was a very powerful tool for advertising Canadian courses, forums, and calls.

Thus, CIC-UBC advertised a number of its courses; ISHD made use of the newsletter for a global call for the production of a repository of initiatives of women-led initiatives; and CCEDNet and CSCD-SFU made very successful calls for the organization of North-South Forums. Recently, reciprocal arrangements have been made with CERLAC's LACYORK-News. Other Canadian partners have yet to take full advantage of the relative large audience that REDESMA has in the region (over 140,000 by June 2011).

Although fifty percent of subscribers were from Bolivia at the end of the project – down from seventy three years earlier –and the rest was mostly concentrated in the Andean countries, this concentration has been decreasing slowly as more subscribers from other LAC areas have been registering. The expansion of subscribers has been the result of gradual dissemination of information about existence of the newsletter among peers, the quoting of the newsletter's content by other newsletters, and the value of the information provided. Currently, the newsletter – whose subscription is free – is partially funded by the production of special issues requested mainly by Bolivian institutions and for which CEBEM charges a modest fee. REDESMA is completely supported by CEBEM's own resources and re-distributes news and information contributed by institutions and professionals subscribing to the newsletter.

Data about type of professional work, country of residence, and discipline for a sample of subscribers who indicated interest in the online courses delivered by the project is given in Table 11.

TABLE 9 NUMBERS OF SPECIALISTS, RESEARCH CENTRES AND GRADUATE PROGRAMAS BY COUNTRY REGISTERED BY CKD PROJECT

Country	Type of Data Base			Country	Type of Data Base		
	Specialists (1)	Research Centres (2)	Graduate Programs (3)		Specialists (1)	Research Centres (2)	Graduate Programs (3)
Canada	568	616	50	USA	14		
Afghanistan	2			France	2		
Germany	8			Guatemala	7		
Argentina	98	2	18	Netherlands	1		
Austria	0	1		Honduras	2		
Belgian	1			Italy	3		
Bolivia	1138	6	3	Kenya	1		
Bosnia	1			Mexico	48	6	16
Botswana	1			Nicaragua	4		
Brazil	11	2	17	Norway	1		
Cameron		2		Panama	2		
Cape Verde	2			Paraguay	7	2	
Chad	1	1		Peru	222	4	3
Chile	14		15	Poland	3		
Colombia	128	4	19	Dominican R.	9	2	1
Costa Rica	26		3	Russia	1		
Cuba	10		1	Sweden	2		
Ecuador	78		7	Switzerland	1	1	
Egypt	1			Uruguay	12	3	1
El Salvador	1	1	2	Venezuela	11		2
Spain	17						
Total					2,459	653	158

(1) 'Specialists' are persons who have worked, work or have interest in Latin American issues in any field of the sciences or humanities.

(2) Research centres in all sciences and humanities in the case of Canada and in the focus themes only in the case of LAC.

(3) Graduate programs in Canada and LAC on the focus themes only: Local, regional and territorial development; Intercultural relations; Human and social development; Virtual education

TABLE 10 VISITS TO PROJECT WEBSITE BY COUNTRY
(As of June 30, 2011)

Country	2009		2010		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Bolivia	15,948	27.2	18,788	25.8	22,895	22.7
Peru	6,156	10.5	11,069	15.2	11,818	11.7
Colombia	5,629	9.6	7,428	10.2	12,121	12.0
USA	1,700	2.9	5,097	7.0	5,185	5.1
Mexico	4,046	6.9	5,097	7.0	12,087	12.0
Canada	4,222	7.2	4,660	6.4	5,589	5.5
Ecuador	1,818	3.1	3,350	4.6	3,603	3.6
Venezuela	4,515	7.7	3,058	4.2	5,353	5.3
Argentina	4,339	7.4	2,476	3.4	5,387	5.3
Spain	879	1.5	1,311	1.8	1,917	1.9
Other	9,381	16.0	10,486	14.4	15,051	14.9
Total	58,632	100.0	72,820	100.0	101,006	100.0

TABLE 11 PROFILES OF SUBSCRIBERS TO NEWSLETTER

Type of professional work	%	Country	%	Discipline	%
Private sector(1)	14.7	Andean Area	76.5	Communication	5.4
Director / Executive NGO	9.0	Mexico	5.5	Agricultural Sciences	12.7
Officer of foundation (2)	5.2	Southern Cone	7.2	Education	5.7
Officer / member of NGO/ GROs (3)	25.2	Brazil	4.3	Law	6.8
University Professor / HEI	7.7	Central America	2.7	Public Administration	1.7
Researcher at university / institute	6.2	Caribbean	0.8	Social Sciences	21.6
Local authority / Officer at municipality	7.0	USA	0.2	Business Administration	4.2
National ministry officer / employee	5.1	Europe	2.8	Psychology	5.4
Other type of national government institution	5.1			Social Work	4.1
Project manager / operator (4)	4.0			Health Sciences (5)	5.8
University student	3.8			Biology	1.9
Grass-root organization	3.8			Engineering Sciences (6)	5.4
Other	3.2			Regional development (7)	13.4
				Other disciplines (8)	5.9
Total	100.0	Total	100.0	Total	100.0
Sample N (9)	1,215	Sample N (9)	1,447	Sample N (9)	1,491

- (1) Managers of private enterprises, self-employed workers, consultants, advisors
- (2) Members / officials of NGOs who operate as national foundations
- (3) Includes administrators, general coordinators, program coordinators, members
- (4) Includes individuals who stated they were operating a program or project
- (5) Odontology, Obstetrics, Nutrition, Public Health
- (6) Engineering, Civil Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Architecture
- (7) Includes Environmental Engineering, Environmental Studies, Geography
- (8) History, Planning, Philosophy, Conflict Resolution, Secretary Studies, Statistics, Informatics, Library Sciences, Linguistics, International Relations, Tourism, Human Resources, other disciplines
- (9) Differences in total sample size are due to incomplete information

Profile by discipline reflects the concentration of CEBEM's and the project partners' activities in the areas of social, environmental, and regional development sciences. Health, engineering, and natural sciences have limited coverage. Profile by type of professional work indicates the newsletter reaches individuals in the NGOs, GROs, public and private sectors; the academic sector has limited coverage.

A comparison with other newsletters showed that REDESMA's design was not so sophisticated as those with more important institutional resources. However, it proved to have a good presentation and to reach diverse communities of practice. An interesting characteristic of REDESMA is the Google translator, which most others do not have.

5.5. Support to communities of knowledge and practice

A community of knowledge¹⁶ (or knowledge community) is defined as a group of individuals (professionals, educators, practitioners) interested in knowing about a problem, how to deal with it, and in learning together and from one other. Such groups are fluid and not tied to particular processes of institutionalization. Participation in networks, subscription to journals and newsletters, reading of books and reports, participation in advocacy activities, have been means used for individuals to get acquainted, and have helped communities of knowledge to emerge and thrive. The ICT revolution has allowed these communities to

¹⁶ The terms knowledge community, community of practice and (online) learning community are defined and used in various ways in the specialized literature. A learning community is more often defined in the context of higher education. Such communities have become the template for a cohort-based, interdisciplinary approach to higher education. An online learning community is a social and collaborative network using a shared Web-based space. Online learning communities are promoted as environments conducive to communities of knowledge and practice (or simply communities of practice, CoP), which are generally recognized as serving to identify, create, represent, and/or distribute knowledge within and/or between populations (see www.en.wikipedia.org for further information and references).

become virtual and globally accessible. The project results indicated that communities of knowledge and practice exist but as *loose* systems of knowledge exchange among individuals, with varying levels of intensity over time, depending on discipline, topic or practice¹⁷. These communities could be detected through courses and forums. Thus, in the course of the project, the organization of online forums made it possible to contact people, know about their interests, and identify topics of interest for mutual learning or research. The system of pre-registration in online courses made it possible not only to know about potential demand but also to get acquainted with the existence of people from diverse disciplinary and institutional backgrounds interested in the topics proposed by courses, individuals who were part of ‘communities’ accessible through virtual communication means such as, for example, a newsletter.

The experience with forums was very productive in terms of approaching communities of knowledge and practice. The project supported five virtual LAC-Canada forums organized by CCEDNet and CSCD-SFU. These were developed in collaboration with a community economic development instructor from Nicola Valley Institute (an Aboriginal College in British Columbia) and participation of SFU graduate students. Results showed that the format was useful in overcoming geographical distances and language barriers, and in engaging in beneficial exchanges of information, ideas, models and strategies for indigenous-directed community development. An online forum on “Aboriginal/Indigenous Community Economic Development” yielded nine publishable case studies. The cases demonstrated socio-economic development initiatives generated and managed by indigenous communities in Canada, Bolivia and Ecuador. English and Spanish language summaries of main points and findings were distributed to interested people through the forum participants’ networks.

Another virtual forum on “Training in Intercultural Communication in the Work Environment: Latin America–Canada–USA–UE–Asia”¹⁸ was organized

¹⁷ Communities of knowledge and learning communities may be characterized also as ‘scattered’, ‘fluid’ systems of knowledge exchange among people.

¹⁸ “Training in Intercultural Communication in the Work Environment” (http://ccd-ckd.cebem.org/pages/topint/index_eng.php) Sponsors

in May 2010 by CEBEM. The purpose was to conduct a wide consultation about the major issues related to the topic in order to develop courses and research¹⁹. Over 460 interested individuals responded the call from 14 countries in Latin America and from some other countries beyond, which required the organization of three successive forum groups. The forum attracted consultants, NGOs members, academics, and people from the public sector (See Table 12). Participation from Bolivia was massive given the political importance of the issue in Bolivian politics. The forum produced proposals for research and training on the topic and a online short course²⁰.

were CIC-UBC, CSCD-SFU, ISHD-York University, and three German organizations: Centre for Cultural and General Studies (ZAK), Supporting Association of Postgraduate of Regional Planning Institute (IfR) e.V., and German Evangelic Working Committee for Adult Education e.V

¹⁹ Ana Rosa Lopez de Cardenas led the forum. Specialist in Social Communication for Development, M.A. in Political Action and Citizen Participation in the State of Law (Madrid, Spain), M.A. in Regional Science and Regional Planning and with complementary studies in Applied Cultural Science (Karlsruhe-Germany); (http://www.cebem.org/cmsfiles/personas/2010_CV_LOPEZ.pdf).

²⁰ See <http://relacionesinterculturales.cebem.org/progcont.php?id=3807&ids=238&ide=158>

TABLE 12 VIRTUAL FORUM LATIN AMERICA–CANADA–USA–EU–ASIA: TRAINING IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL WORK

TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL WORK	N	%
Private sector for profit organization (1)	65	14.0
Director of Non Governmental Organization	40	8.7
Officer of foundation (2)	21	4.5
Officer of Non Governmental Organization (3)	126	27.3
University Professor / Higher education institution	62	13.4
Researcher at university / institute	31	6.7
Local authority / Officer at local government / municipality	23	5.0
National ministry officer / employee	34	7.4
Other type of national government institution	12	2.6
Project manager / operator (4)	36	7.8
University student	12	2.6
Total	462	100.0

- (1) Managers of enterprises, independent workers, consultants, advisors
- (2) Majority work for NGOs that operate as national foundations
- (3) Includes administrators, general coordinators, program coordinators
- (4) Includes individuals stating that they were operating a program or project

A more visible community of knowledge emerged from the “Global Inventory of Women-Led Initiatives of Social Change”. ISHD launched a call through the newsletter for presentations of cases for creation of a global knowledge bank on the topic, with emphasis on small and marginalized communities. The purpose was to disseminate and integrate real life experiences into development-related curricula, research and practice, service delivery and policy advice. In ISHD’s experience in working with women’s groups, excellent practice often goes undocumented, and many important lessons and opportunities to provide policy advice or improve services are lost. The hope is that this inventory will create an incentive for researchers, practitioners and women’s groups to document and synthesize their work. The call was sent in English and Spanish; 44 proposals were received, 35 were initially accepted and 10 were selected²¹. GROs, NGOs or practitioners submitted cases. The case profiles are being uploaded on a special website created for that purpose in both Spanish and English²².

In addition to these forums, CEBEM experimented the with creation of two self-administered platforms in support of two knowledge communities: *Learning for Conservation* (Red de Aprendizaje para la Conservación – RAC), and *Intercultural Relations*, which hosted the above-mentioned forum on intercultural communication and a course on “Leadership from a Gender and Intercultural Perspective”²³. While these additional resources could still be used more widely, *Learning for Conservation* receives hundreds of visits each month and logged over 9,000 visits in its first year of existence. *Intercultural Relations* will soon reach 35,000 visits after two years of existence. Use of these resources is expected to increase with wider use of Web2 options.

All these experiences suggest that the dynamics of learning communities could be reinforced through online courses and forums. Hundreds of individuals from varied disciplines and professional backgrounds manifested their interest in learning more about specific professional or applied topics, when opportunities arose through virtual means. Participants in courses and forums referred to

²¹ Distribution of cases by country was as follows: Argentina 4, Kenya 1, Bolivia 11, Mexico 3, Canada 1, Paraguay 1, Colombia 2, Peru 2, Congo 1, Spain 2, Costa Rica 1, Uruguay 1, Cuba 1, USA 1, Germany 1, Venezuela 1, India 1. Total 35.

²² See <http://perspectives.apps01.yorku.ca/> and <http://perspectives.apps01.yorku.ca/category/featured-content/>. A

graduate student, Irma Molina, a Ph.D. candidate at University of Toronto was hired to collaborate in this initiative.

²³ See <http://relacionesinterculturales.cebem.org/> and <http://rac.cebem.org/index.php>

books, journals, reports, projects, meetings, conferences and authors, bringing to light pre-existing exchanges, which could be reinforced through more systematic online activities. It was possible to contact learning communities in almost all the topics dealt with by the courses and forums through a combination of communication and online teaching activities. The supply of high quality knowledge products was key to attracting attention and interest of professionals and practitioners.

Although tools and resources were produced to help turn 'latent' communities into 'online' learning communities, this was not enough in itself. The CKD experience indicated that online knowledge communities may be promoted or energized *provided* there is leadership through online training and related activities. Agenda setting, tutorial activities, online resources, timely communication and leadership were required to move a community from a latent to an active state either for brief or longer periods. Involvement of recognized specialists as instructors of courses or forum facilitators – individuals who were very knowledgeable about their professional, research or academic environment – acted as magnets. Intellectual and advocacy leaders, graduate programs, research centres, think-tanks, networks, or NGOs have played this role in the past and continue to do it so. The novelty of the CKD model is that it proposes a path to reinforce that role using a combination of online courses, mass communication, and use of databases.

5.6. Visibility of Canadian universities in LAC

It is not possible to prove whether or not the CKD activities increased the visibility of Canadian universities in LAC. However, it may be reasonable to assume that some increase in visibility has been reached given the number of visits to the CKD website, which went from zero to more than 100,000 between early 2007 and June 2011.

Another possible indicator of increased visibility is the interest in online courses produced by the Canadian professors and graduate student instructors. This was a first time such courses had been given to professionals and practitioners in LAC. Hundreds of individuals had the opportunity to become acquainted with the existence of

Canadian expertise. And there has been a robust demand in LAC to participate in online forums and calls coordinated by Canadian institutions.

The project increased its visibility through its collaboration with two networks: RIPPET²⁴ and CCEDNet. RIPPET is a network of some 40 graduate training programs in Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Spain, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil, with CEBEM as the General Coordination Secretariat. RIPPET's members meet every 18 months to discuss exchange activities, curriculum development, accreditation and dissemination. CCEDNet is a national member-led organization committed to strengthening Canadian communities by creating better economic opportunities and enhancing environmental and social conditions. Since incorporating in 1999, the Network has attracted hundreds of members from across Canada, supporting sustainable, community-driven solutions to local and global challenges.²⁵ CCEDNet organized, as indicated above, five forums with the participation of Canadians and Latin Americans on topics related to intercultural relations and youth. A major contribution of RIPPET was to serve as a space to make contacts and facilitate a project workshop in Manizales. The meeting was organized with support of the Colombian universities – some of them members of RIPPET – and other organizations of the "Eje Cafetero", which contributed to funding the participation of Canadian partners.

The opportunity to participate in the Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research (GACER)²⁶ emerged later on in the life of the project. CEBEM's involvement with GACER's activities included participation in the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, the Global Dialogue, and the Living Knowledge Network meeting at Belfast. Presentations were made on how updating of professionals, as proposed by the model and pursued by the project, can also be a means to create feedback between university curriculum and community needs²⁷. It was argued that online

²⁴ Red Iberoamericana de Postgrados sobre Políticas y Estudios Territoriales (RIPPET) <http://rippet.cebem.org/index.php>

²⁵ See <http://rippet.cebem.org> and <http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/>

²⁶ GACER website <http://communityresearchcanada.ca/?action=alliance>

²⁷ Jose Blanes, CEBEM's director made presentations at the 2010 UNESCO Paris Conference on Higher Education and the 2010 GACER conference at Belfast.

courses as proposed by the model can be an effective way to test theories, approaches, and research results that made the content of university courses while at the same time fulfilling learning needs of local communities.

5.7. Cost recovery

Cost recovery is key to assessing the financial viability of the CKD model. An analysis based on the project’s experience was conducted on a set of 18 courses produced on CEBEM’s platform. Estimates of costs on a Canadian platform were not done but would be higher.

The exercise assumed production of a package of nine six-week online courses (plus one week for introduction), each delivered twice in a 12-month period by a team of three tutors. Costs related to

webmaster, communication, Internet services, administration, LAC course instructor, and five partial scholarships of US \$100 each per course were included. A maximum fee of US \$150 was assumed because, according to previous experience, a higher fee would discourage registration. For this analysis LAC instructors were assumed to be paid US \$3,500 per course produced, and Canadian instructors up to CAD \$5,000. Costs of academic coordination, selection of instructors, and general supervision, were not included. A similar analysis was conducted for the case of training of graduate students. In this case it was assumed that a Canadian graduate student working as course instructor is paid CAD \$5,000, LAC graduate students are paid US \$2,000, and professors of Canadian and LAC universities contribute ‘in-kind’ working hours for selection and supervision of students.

TABLE 13 ESTIMATION EXERCISE OF COST RECOVERY FOR A 9-COURSE PROGRAM

PROGRAM OF 9 COURSES, DELIVERED TWICE IN A 12-MONTH PERIOD *					
	One Course	9 courses (1)	Course Repeated	9 courses Repeat. (2)	TOTAL (1) + (2)
Programming in virtual platform	500	4,500	500	4,500	9,000
Communication by newsletter	150	1,350	150	1,350	2,700
Internet and server services	300	2,700	300	2,700	5,400
Administration	250	2,250	250	2,250	4,500
Tutor	2,000	18,000	2,000	18,000	36,000
Sub total	3,200	28,800	3,200	28,800	57,600
Honoraria to LAC instructor (production and delivery of course)					
	2,500	22,500	1,000	9,000	31,500
Scholarships: \$100 x 5 students per course	500	4,500	500	4,500	9,000
Sub total	3,000	27,000	1,500	13,500	40,500
Overhead 10%					
	620	5,580	470	4,230	9,810
TOTAL	6,820	61,380	5,170	46,530	107,910
COST RECOVERY OPTIONS					
Scenario A: (18 courses x 10 students x \$150 fee) + (18 courses x 5 students x \$50 fee) = 31,500	1,750	15,750	1,750	15,750	31,500
Scenario B: (18 courses x 20 students x \$150 fee) (no scholarships) = 54,000	3,000	27,000	3,000	27,000	54,000
Subsidy required in case of Scenario A	5,070	40,560	3,420	27,360	76,410
Subsidy required in case of Scenario B	3,820	30,560	2,170	17,360	53,910
A Cost of subsidy per participant: 18 courses x 15 students = 270 students					283
B Cost of subsidy per participant: 18 courses x 20 students = 360 students					150

* Costs of general academic coordination, selection of instructors, and general supervision is not included.

Results estimated total costs for a package of nine courses delivered twice in a year at around US\$110,000. However the potential cost recovery could be between 54 and 31 percent depending on the number of participants per course – 20 or 15 – and the total number of individuals that received training – 360 or 270. The conclusion is that online courses as proposed by the model require partial subsidy. Costs might be recovered fully only in case of a course with a high demand; in general terms the target population cannot afford fees higher than US \$150. CIC-UBC found its course fees to be the main obstacle to attracting LAC participants; CIC had to charge full fees according to Canadian rates as it operates on the basis of full cost recovery²⁸. Another conclusion was that training of graduate students could be partially or totally recovered through fees paid by participants in online courses.

It is noteworthy that there exists a potential for partial cost recovery. The model appeared to be more efficient than other models based on ‘in-classroom’ or face-to-face contact. In this sense, the ‘profit’ of the model consists in the fact that (1) it is less expensive than bringing the same number of participants (270-360) from different countries to an “in-classroom” program, and (2) it can generate a small income for graduate students.

6. DISCUSSION²⁹

6.1. Innovating knowledge management: How the CKD model could contribute to building communities of knowledge and promoting Canada-South partnerships

The ‘Structuring Model’ performed well as a heuristic instrument of knowledge management. The model served to articulate along a four-year period North-South activities for mutual learning, communication, and information. Results indicated that the model points to the right direction as it was possible to convene, through online courses and forums, diverse partners and beneficiaries from North and South; make accessible information about diverse sources of knowledge by using the

Internet; apply a constructivist pedagogy perspective to online courses; generate learning opportunities for participants across national boundaries – professors, instructors, graduate students, professionals, and users of databases and newsletters – and approach communities of knowledge and practice. The experiment also showed that application of the model has a number of pre-conditions:

- existence of professors, researchers and specialists with an interest in North-South knowledge sharing;
- openness to learning about ICTs applicable to knowledge management;
- capacity for producing and delivering online courses with a constructivist pedagogical approach;
- capacity for identifying strategic development topics with potential for professional updating;
- capacity for implementing a mass communication strategy in order to reach varied audiences;
- experience in implementing, developing and maintaining website resources that provide access to sources of knowledge.

Although in the short term there has not been enough time to observe changes in practice and impact, it became clear during the course of Phase II that the model could contribute to building bridges between higher education institutions, on the one side, and community and professional experiences on the other. The model can generate opportunities for innovation in higher education, professional updating, and mutual learning among diverse communities of knowledge and practice. The model proved to be useful, making it possible to reach the objectives and outcomes of the project; more importantly, it produced evidence of the existence of an innovative path for North-South knowledge sharing.

The model was based on collaboration and knowledge exchanges between Northern and Southern “thinkers” and “doers”, as a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice, academics and practitioners. As indicated by the project’s external evaluation, this is not only a non-traditional approach to development but it is also a non-

²⁸ Notwithstanding, one participant to a CIC course became a CEBEM instructor and delivered a forum and a course on intercultural relations. CIC with the project’s support provided four scholarships that permitted participation of individuals from LAC.

²⁹ This discussion integrates contributions made by the external evaluation of the project conducted by Claudia B. Marcondes B. Arch., M. Urban Planning between February and June 2011.

traditional approach to “knowledge creation” – different from the usual “teacher-student” approach. As such, its implementation is challenging and more years of experimentation and demonstration will be necessary to establish the practice of working across geographic, thematic and organizational boundaries and to motivate collaboration in the form of ICT-based information sharing, training and collaboration in communities of knowledge and practice beyond external support. The more ambitious long term goal of putting on the agenda of higher education institutions, development agencies, and networks a fully mature ICT-based model for innovative knowledge management remains a work in progress. Nevertheless, within its short timeframe, the project was able to produce – across courses and forums – examples of useful ways to promote and produce social relations based on knowledge-sharing, where researchers and practitioners share their expertise and mutually enhance their knowledge.

Limited economic resources, priorities, and routine institutional practices may be obstacles to attempting innovation practices in academic institutions and NGOs. Dissemination of information about the potential of the model to bring visibility and expand audiences may encourage them to apply the model in the future. Another option is to attract young professionals who may be more open to change and innovation. Actually, there is not single or easy solution for engaging institutions on production and delivery of online courses for professional updating. It is worth repeating that the model, based entirely on ICTs, does make it possible to overcome institutional, geographical, and cultural barriers. Courses, forums, newsletter, and databases are accessible with no limitation except Internet connectivity. Although there were few experiments in which the project fostered the development of a “learning” community beyond the project’s reach, the experience indicates that ICTs in combination with a pedagogical approach can empower communities of knowledge and practice. The critical element is to obtain synergies among training, communication and information activities as the model proposes. The project advanced in this direction although much work is still needed to ensure that course methodology, databases, and means of communication support one another. The challenge has been to overcome the fact that people are used

to conceptualize communication, information and training as discrete, self-contained activities. Current practices are still prisoners of former frameworks such as classroom teaching modalities.

Partnerships are multidimensional and temporal relations founded on the interests of people and organizations. The project suggests that partnerships may be facilitated by the application of ICTs: the model demonstrated that its application allows one to convene people and institutions around activities conducive to establishing potential longer-lasting partnerships. However, the project’s lifespan was too short to instil strong ownership by the project partners. Much more time and investments are needed to build an understanding about what the model is intended to achieve regarding knowledge production, dissemination and management, and to ensure the buy-in of professionals or academics working outside the realm of information sciences and education research. To this end further clarification of language and concepts about “community of knowledge”, “community of practice”, “North-South partnerships” – is required. Most of the project partners were fully involved in the context of their specific roles within the project, but for the most part they did not fully internalize the project model, the “bottom-up,” and “theory-practice” approaches. It was found that most practitioners involved were not necessarily interested in mutual collaboration. The driver for their participation was their own professional development and opportunities of enhancing knowledge in specific topics. The thirty two months of execution of Phase II were not enough time to achieve more definite results. Much work is necessary to motivate long-term collaboration in the form of ICT-based information sharing, training and work in communities of knowledge and practice beyond external support.

Stronger partnerships will bring improvements to elements of the model that are necessary to ensure that the proposed integrated system is better geared towards its goal of promoting learning communities and knowledge partnerships. Online courses and forums were excellent means of sharing knowledge. The experience indicated that ICTs in combination with a pedagogical approach, information and communication tools can indeed empower communities of knowledge and practice. Results from courses and forums indicated that those

communities 'pre-exist'. The challenge is to connect well with them, and offer them a relevant working agenda on the basis of feasible and useful activities. Communities of knowledge and practice need facilitators, people and institutions interested in the creation of agenda, promotion of new activities, and securing lasting impact.

6.2. Relevance and significance of CKD results

All the project objectives proved to be valid because they produced results consistent with the model's philosophy and purpose. However, there were shortcomings due to diverse factors, some of them related to long-term or short-term circumstances. The objectives of the project were pursued through a fairly wide spectrum of activities. The range of offerings was appropriate for implementing and testing the model. The offering, although complex at the outset, was necessary for the appropriate application of the model. Focus on courses without support of a mass communication tool would have prevented effective advertising and visibility. Phase II showed that communication, course production and use of virtual library facilities were mutually reinforcing.

As an experiment, the project was successful. All project objectives produced results consistent with the model's philosophy and purpose. A model of collaboration supported by a Portal and organizational arrangements was set up and provided opportunity, space, tools, and resources for the activities of communities of knowledge and practice (objective 1). As such, an integrated system exists and is functioning but adjustments are necessary to ensure it promotes learning communities and knowledge partnerships. Regarding the objective of enhanced collaboration for design and delivery of short on line courses (objective 2), there have been positive results in course production and delivery. Logistical constraints prevented the production of courses by Canadian and LAC instructors working together; for this to function well, course designers require time and opportunity to become acquainted, and coordinate content, readings and teaching methodologies. Despite these shortcomings, a portfolio of courses was developed in the four focus themes and knowledge was generated. CEBEM expanded its portfolio of online courses and human

resource capacity to administer them. CIC-UBC gained experience working with Latin American partners and is well positioned to continue working in the region. As for the other partners, their graduate students – and Latin American instructors as well – gained much experience and now have courses which can be replicated. Regarding the provision of short-term work and learning opportunities to Canadian and LAC graduate students, professors, and practitioners (objective 3) these were provided mostly at the level of the Canadian graduate students and LAC practitioners undertaking these courses.

The project was successful in bringing together academics and practitioners. Short-term courses for professional updating delivered across cultures were not unduly impeded by cultural and language barriers when conceived and delivered with the appropriate pedagogical methodology. The challenge lay in identifying courses that respond to knowledge needs. The best practice was to proceed with as much previous consultation as possible, or otherwise to accept trial and error as a necessary strategy. The courses delivered from CEBEM's platform were based for the most part on current research and as such they were good ways to bring new knowledge produced in Canada directly to the desks of Latin American practitioners³⁰. While the external evaluation did not establish links between research and policy making as a direct result of the project, it is possible that some of this *Northern* research has helped to advance *Southern* thinking and practices by LAC professionals taking the courses. It is worth noting that the evaluation found some experiments within the courses taught by the Canadian graduate students, in which the project fostered the development of a learning community beyond the project's reach.

Mass communication made it possible to approach communities of knowledge and communities of practice which are, as indicated before, informal and scattered across countries, disciplines and professional areas of practice. Unfortunately, use of databases was limited because they were under construction at the time forums and courses were going on. There is much to be gained if course and

³⁰ The courses produced by Latin American instructors are also on new topics; however these instructors, for the most part, are not necessarily engaged in research. Also, research is not necessarily perceived as necessary to produce knowledge.

forum participants use databases and virtual libraries. Course methodology needs to put more emphasis in the use of databases for discussion and learning purposes. The project's databases have a great potential usefulness for the identification of learning communities, organization of forums, conducting consultancies, and increasing visibility. However, here again, databases *per se* are not enough: coordination with a mass communication strategy and online training is fundamental.

The creation of tools as proposed by the model and wide communication about their existence was not enough to produce long-term interest, collaboration and partnership activities. These tools alone are not sufficient to establish a community of knowledge and practice. It is necessary to focus on common thematic areas about which there is mutual interest in producing and sharing knowledge together. As well, robust leadership was identified as a key factor for promoting learning communities and moving the model forward as a collaborative undertaking that continue to attract new participants. An important area for improvement relates to the need for face-to-face interaction and its role in strengthening partnerships for project implementation, which was put forward by many interviewees. The model proposes an innovative practice that, as is the case with any innovation, requires time to be well understood, and even more time to be adopted. Besides, people and institutions, although motivated, do not always have money or time to participate or invest in innovation.

6.3. CCK implementation experience

An experimental and decentralized project requires flexibility and timely communication especially when there are several partners distributed in a wide geographical area. Phase II needed to foster a sense of ownership among partners and facilitate local coordination and administration. For these reasons, the organization of the project was based on complementary but distinct work plans, accommodating flexible execution by each partner as well as diverse timing and administrative procedures. This worked generally very well. Partners like CEBEM and the ISHD, given their smaller size, were more flexible and faster to respond to emerging opportunities while university centres had to follow more complex procedures. This situation sometimes caused delays, but there

were not many options; the inconvenience caused by this situation was offset by intensive use of ICTs – a key resource for a decentralized project – by the project coordination, something that facilitated close contact and good coordination among partners.

Collaboration in course design and delivery worked well. The level of institutional participation in the delivery of courses was generally good. The engagement of a group of Canadian academics as members of the research team interested in the Latin American region contributed to the credibility of the undertaking and facilitated course production and organization of forums, although by itself it was not conducive to enhanced long-term North-South collaboration. This can be explained by very heavy workloads which made it difficult for these academics to devote enough time to ensure that they could play a really substantive role in the experience of co-generation of knowledge. Actually, this was not a surprise; rather, it reinforced the idea that the future of this sort of initiative must rely on graduate and post-students.

It is necessary to examine how to overcome the obstacle to LAC participation in Canadian courses represented by the relatively high level of Canadian fees. An attempt was made by CIC to adapt two of the four courses it produced (*Introduction to International Development* and *Education & Development*) to a LAC public; however, the fees prevented participation from the region. CIC had to charge full fees according to Canadian rates³¹ and there were no project resources to subsidize Latin American students' participation. On the other hand, although courses offered from LAC were open to Canadians, they did not attract participation of English speaking individuals. This may be explained by the relatively limited number of Spanish-speaking individuals among the potential Canadian audiences of the project, by the fact that the project's newsletters did not reach the intended audience, or by the lack of relevance of the course content. One comment received in this regard was that Canadians might expect that there is not much to learn from the South. It would be interesting to examine all these possible factors

³¹ Notwithstanding, one participant to a CIC course became a CEBEM instructor and delivered a forum and a course on intercultural relations. CIC with the project support provided four scholarships that permitted participation of some individuals from LAC.

Although courses were produced during the experiment within the four thematic areas on the basis of the interests and knowledge of instructors, there is no need to continue operating in this way. A more proactive strategy can be followed up based on open calls in order to develop a portfolio of courses with potential to complement graduate training, implementation of research programs, or policy initiatives.

The issue of accreditation was omitted purposely by the project. This question had been examined in fairly great depth in the course of another earlier experiment, and it was determined that short online courses aimed at updating or complement skills of professionals and practitioners did not require accreditation. It became clear during this project that professionals and practitioners taking the courses were not interested in credits but in obtaining useful knowledge; a Certificate signed by prestigious institutions was deemed satisfactory.

The virtual forums were quite effective to test the level of interest in certain topics and determine the relevance of developing a course, to narrow down agenda setting, or to delineate research interests further. They were an inexpensive way to gather good information and to design subsequent inquiries. The external evaluation indicated that according to the interviewees, there was not enough funding (and insufficient face time) to continue, and pursue issues more in-depth in a subsequent forum. Some key informants mentioned that it would be important that the forums bring the same people together – rather than a different group every time, to ensure on-going involvement and continuity. As well, follow-up with face-to-face interaction was mentioned as an important, albeit expensive option, to build on a previous forum.

The directories were found to be good products and potentially very useful; they were strategically important to both CALACS and CERLAC in particular, helping them to identify potential collaborators/members from disciplines beyond the usual network of Latin Americanists (social sciences for the most part) to involve researchers in other disciplines such as natural, engineering, environmental, and food sciences. It is possible to envisage the emergence of new partnerships and collaborations in international development projects

as funding agencies move towards larger, multi-disciplinary and cross-regional projects. Another potential use of the databases produced during Phase II is to explore the creation of thematic communities among CALACS members.

Much work is also necessary to enable institutions in the South to have easy access or a point of entry to identify Canadian graduates in those specific areas of research where updating is needed. In addition to networking, opportunities may exist to try to enhance the effectiveness of the databases by enabling them to provide people with unique data not easily found on the Internet. For example, the profile of Canadian and LAC graduate students is not yet widely available.

The performance of the newsletter in terms of reaching LAC audiences was excellent despite the fact that REDESMA historically has served mainly Bolivia and the Andean countries. The main problem was to reach Canadian audiences. The external evaluation found that REDESMA was perceived by Canadians as needing a design update and adjustments to be able to compete with other sources of information. This is perhaps why CEBEM's attempts to widen the circulation of its newsletter in Canada has not borne fruit to date. One option to reach effectively Canadian and Northern audiences in general is to use existing newsletters because attempting to produce a multicultural newsletter may be too costly. However, many of the Canadian partners did not have their own newsletter, making it difficult for CEBEM to use them as vehicles to enhance REDESMA's circulation within Canada.

The institutionalization of the CKD model constitutes a major challenge. Although the initiative looked at long-term innovative approaches to knowledge sharing and collaborative learning, institutionalization of the model was not one of the objectives for the life span of the project. Institutionalization would require much more time, experimentation and demonstration. During Phase II the involvement of Canadian graduate students and LAC instructors was usually at the level of their own course. This did not mean necessarily that their home institution was involved beyond the administrative level. On the LAC side, institutional sponsorship by institutions was very limited given that most courses were initiated from CEBEM.

Only a small number of courses, such as SAS² workshops, benefitted from support from NGOs, universities or private sector companies. The strategy implemented by CEBEM given the various constraints of time and funds was to employ as course instructors a majority of Bolivian professionals or consultants with solid experience in the topic area they were teaching. They were not necessarily university faculty members, or affiliated with an institution or engaged in academic research; often, they were part of CEBEM's network in Bolivia and well respected for their work in the course topic. This strategy, despite its limitations, permitted good quality control but does not need to be continued. The incorporation of professors, students and other instructors can be made through wide calls and the collaboration of diverse partners.

The purpose of the project was not to obtain a series of products but to introduce a practice. The model is not expected to yield significant benefits in the short term either. Results indicate that people and institutions can obtain returns not in terms of monetary profit but in terms of visibility, increased research opportunities, and more capacity to reach communities of knowledge and practice, not to mention a limited but significant cost recovery than other partnership models do not necessarily demonstrate. This could make funding of activities inspired by the model attractive to universities, development banks and donor agencies. As indicated earlier, a contribution to graduate student scholarships, graduate training, and a 'reality check' for thesis and research ideas can also prove beneficial.

The existence of partners with common interests and appropriate resources to meet the model's conditions is necessary but not sufficient. Institutional commitment is *necessary*. Personal commitment with this initiative is *essential*. Financial support is *indispensable*. A key element is the involvement of young professors and specialists. They are in the best position to learn and commit to new enterprises, and are more comfortable than their elders with the use of ICTs. They are also the best guaranty that the idea will survive beyond the end of financial or institutional support. A diversified institutional support for sponsoring courses, development and administration of databases, and exchanging information among newsletters is a second fundamental element for

establishing practice. And finally, although no less important, is financial support. There is no substitute to some subsidy. Financing based solely on fees paid by potential participants is not feasible in the current social and economic context.

Five years down the road, it is possible to say that the CKD initiative has tested a model of work and obtained concrete results that support the existence of an innovative path for better North-South and South-South mutual learning, knowledge sharing, professional updating, and innovation of graduate training.

6.4. A niche for innovating knowledge management by focusing on the updating of professionals in LDCs and graduates' training in development issues

The initiative defined in the CKD model and materialized in Phases I and II represents an approach to knowledge management for the potential benefit of countless professionals while attempting to make a bridge between North and South communities of knowledge and practice. As indicated by the external evaluation, the project worked quite well, with several online courses demonstrating that they were effective ways to improve graduate training in development issues while at the same time updating professionals in lower-income countries. The courses were effective ways of providing professionals with a quick overview of the new thinking around their area of practice. They were also short-term, relatively affordable and tailored to the specific needs of the communities; participants themselves helped to identify further areas where courses would be useful to them. As such, it seems that a niche exists.

There is a well-identified need for professional updating in LAC especially for graduates of small and provincial higher education institutions. Professionals from diverse disciplines and backgrounds participated in the courses. Some thousands of professionals expressed interest. There was a good representation by disciplinary background and type of professional work. This diversity enriched courses as diverse participants shared information about varied professional experiences. The enduring demand for courses suggests that they make a difference in knowledge

and practice, and that courses meet a real need. Focus on development practitioners and professionals working in non-academic environments should continue to be the main focus of future activities. Experience and research suggest that the approach and methods tried out in the context of this initiative, including the efforts to encourage and support online communities of knowledge, are the most promising means of obtaining good results in terms of professional and academic training for a wide audience across geographical and cultural boundaries.

Also important to underline is that a niche exists not only for knowledge updating but also for innovating graduate training and expanding opportunities for community-engaged training and research. The model showed a path to professional updating by giving, on the one hand, access to short-term and low cost courses on key issues to professionals, and on the other, opportunities for checking new ideas, approaches and research results to professors and graduate students. There is certainly a niche for improving graduate training. The courses worked extremely well for the Canadian graduates who, through their role as “leaders” in the virtual classrooms, stimulated discussions, tested ideas and concepts with their practitioners/students and fostered the co-generation of knowledge. It should be underlined that generally the graduate students received little supervision from their Canadian professors while designing these courses, although they had access to training modules and assistance from CEBEM staff. The experience added value to their training and professional expertise; gave them the opportunity to discuss with professionals working in the same field concepts, theoretical approaches and development experiences; expanded their professional skills; provided them with opportunities to test their newly developed courses; gave them experience for teaching online courses; and expanded the horizon of professional and academic contacts. The area of virtual education, previously little known to them, was opened up through this experiment. In most cases, the project provided the Canadian graduate students with an already tested and effective online teaching methodology; as well, they benefited from a teaching experience they would not have otherwise. All instructors except two learned for the first time about the potential of online education and courses for professional updating. Some also had specific

gains related to knowledge in their own research topic and commented on the fact that the heterogeneity of the group of learners, with different academic backgrounds, interests and maturity levels provided rich gains in terms of different perspectives and contexts throughout LAC. Moreover, many courses with participation of professionals and practitioners may provide a ‘reality check’ to curriculum content and research initiatives. On the other hand, course participants had the opportunity to learn about the most recent theoretical approaches, research, and policy results. There is no other comparable method to obtain similar results at low cost from a wide audience across geographical and cultural boundaries. What in past years required travel and ‘in person’ meetings, can be obtained now in a virtual room if there is a good pedagogical methodology. It will not be easy, but it is certainly more feasible and accessible than moving people across countries.

While LAC graduate and post-graduate students were not invited to produce courses in the context of the project, this option is one that should be explored in future, as LAC graduate students surely represent as a good a resource as they do in Canada.

There was also another key result. It was demonstrated that graduate training, professional updating, and contributing to community development are not *incompatible but rather complementary* activities. Without a doubt there will be obstacles to overcome. The main difficulty for the graduates was to free time to be able to do their work within a short time frame. The fact that it is necessary to have Spanish-speaking graduates for work in LAC is a challenge for the expansion of the experiment. Matching the research interests of graduates in the North and the professional updating needs of Southern communities will always remain a challenge. To this purpose online courses must be planned carefully in order to address key issues and reach the appropriate audience; this requires more work but will yield more cumulative results and greater impact and usefulness. This notwithstanding, Northern graduates may be able to “co-create” knowledge with Southern professionals. The external evaluation identified one example in which a graduate student instructor was able to further replicate his course in other Southern institutions. And finally, exchanges between community experiences and higher education

training programs for curriculum development may be also greatly enhanced through this sort of activity.

7. FINAL REMARKS

Understanding that we are in a new world of communication, democratization and globalization lead CEBEM and partners to conceptualize a model of knowledge management based entirely on ICTs and existing resources for the benefit of those who implement development policies and programs, work in local governments, collaborate with or within NGOs, or assist community organizations. The model inspired a project which, within two phases over five years, produced results that open up innovative paths for North-South shared learning. This vision may certainly inspire other models different from that of CKD; the model may possibly inspire other, different projects. However, the CKD model was sufficient to demonstrate that building a bridge between academic institutions and communities may be feasible by resorting to graduate students, professors and rich knowledge resources, and by using a pedagogical approach based on varied ICTs. Time and budget limitations did not allow further testing of the model to include NGOs and private sector organizations. Both are also rich in knowledge and experience that undoubtedly could feed online education activities for the benefit of development professionals. In this sense it is hoped that this project report will inspire other similar initiatives; options are almost endless when imagination and enthusiasm are at work to overcome geographical distance, cultural differences and cumbersome institutional practices.