

VIRTUAL STRATEGIC PLANNING PROGRAM AFRICA I

Final Report

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August 2007

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Acronym List

AED- Academy for Educational Development
ARFH- Association for Reproductive and Family Health
CHAM- Christian Health Association of Malawi
CLM- Center for Leadership and Management
ESAMI- Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute
FP- Family Planning
GEN- Global Exchange Network
IMC- International Medical Corps
LMS- Leadership, Management and Sustainability Program
M&E- Monitoring & Evaluation
MACRO- Malawi Counseling and Resource Organization
MSH- Management Sciences for Health
RCQHC- Regional Centre for Quality of Health Care
RH- Reproductive Health
SO- Strategic Objective
SP- Strategic Plan
SWOT- Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat Matrix
UAC- Uganda AIDS Commission
USAID- United States Agency for International Development
VSPP- Virtual Strategic Planning Program
WOST- Weakness, Opportunity, Strength Threat Matrix

Executive Summary

The Virtual Strategic Planning Program (VSPP) is a USAID-financed virtual blended-learning program that uses technology and content that has been designed and implemented by Management Sciences for Health's Leadership, Management and Sustainability Program (LMS) for the purpose of supporting and guiding managers and their teams in developing a strategic plan for their institutions and enriching their experience by virtue of a process of sharing with other participating teams. Using learn-by-doing techniques, the VSPP, structured around six modules, helps the teams to build or update their plans for addressing multiple complex challenges identified in their current environment step by step. By linking strategic planning to operational planning and monitoring and evaluation, the VSPP also enables teams to immediately obtain improved results.

On this occasion, the LMS Program successfully organized and facilitated the first VSPP in Africa, from April 2 through August 16, 2007. This included 13 weeks of program instruction, a 3 week coaching period in the middle of the program, and 3 weeks for teams to complete their final plan. A total of 70 individuals from 10 teams participated in the VSPP. Teams were from five Anglophone African countries (Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, and Namibia) and Afghanistan.

The information contained in this report is compiled from the following sources: the After Action Review, held on August 24, 2007; the end-of-program evaluation surveys completed by participants during the last module of the VSPP; comments written by participants in the online VSPP Virtual Classroom¹; and the strategic plans developed by the participant teams. This report includes the results of the program, success factors and lessons learned from this offering of the VSPP as well as recommendations for future programs.

Participants were actively involved throughout the program, which was seen in the lively discussions in the Virtual Classroom and the submission of assignments, which were generally of high quality. 7 of 10 organizations completed and submitted a final strategic plan and complied with all of the program requirements. 73% of participants completed the final evaluation at the end of Module 6. The participants evaluated the VSPP highly, both qualitatively and quantitatively. 98% of participants (51 out of 52) said they would recommend the VSPP to other organizations. As one participant said,

“Strategic planning is mandatory for any organisation that needs to get ahead. The English saying is all so true: If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. I recommend that this program be promoted worldwide.”

The VSPP positively impacted the participants and their organizations. 77% of participants were able to effect change in their organization. 8 of 10 organizations are now moving forward to implement their strategic plans. The VSPP methodology has proven simple enough to enable teams to create high quality strategic plans over which they have great ownership, as they have

¹ The Virtual Classroom is a feature on the VSPP Web site where participants can communicate freely by posting and responding to discussion threads. Participants and facilitators can also post additional reading materials and links for continued learning.

created the plans themselves with feedback and encouragement from the facilitators. As one participant said,

“...You can straight away go and utilise the skills you learn here to develop a Strategic plan of an organisation. You don't need to leave it to Consultants, it has been de-mystified”

The lessons learned from this VSPP centered on the strength of the VSPP team, made up of MSH and Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute staff, and the dedication of the participants to complete the assignments. The quality of the facilitation and support from the entire VSPP team is essential to a successful program. 91% of participants said the facilitator feedback was very good or excellent. 91% also said the availability of the facilitators was very good or excellent. This provides teams with the encouragement and support that are vital as they progress through the modules of the program.

Several of the teams in this VSPP offering were located in separate offices and/or had to travel to the field often. This led to delays with some of the assignments for several teams. However, the majority of the teams showed great dedication and overcame the challenges they were facing in terms of distance and competing priorities to successfully complete the program. During recruitment, the VSPP Program Manager discussed the requirements of the program with each of the teams. The teams also had to complete a registration form that confirms their commitment. This is very important, as it ensures to the extent possible, that the teams are aware of the demands of the program and will be prepared to make the necessary commitments. As one participant said,

“We usually have very tight schedules... it was very hard to get all team members together all the time. The greatest lesson I learnt was -perseverance pays! We managed to work consistently to the end, sometimes putting in several hours during weekends and in the evenings, to the chagrin of colleagues with families. Sorry folks, it was very necessary, now we can all resume having fun uninterrupted. It was worth the effort!”

The VSPP's success comes from being able to support teams to overcome the challenges they face through a systematic review of where they are, where they want to go, and how they are going to get there. The VSPP also assists teams to plan to make sure they get to where they want to go. This support is the key success factor to the VSPP. Through the quality of the VSPP facilitation and support teams and the participants of each other in the Virtual Classroom, teams are able to come together to set aside the time needed to complete strategic plans.

Background

VSPP OBJECTIVES

The VSPP is organized and implemented with a view toward:

- Providing initial or refresher training to management and executive teams from health organizations, with an intended focus on reproductive health organizations, in the many proven concepts, practice exercises and tools involved in the area of strategic planning.
- Facilitating the exchange of strategic planning experiences, perspectives and practices among management and executive teams from health institutions operating in a number of Anglophone African countries and Afghanistan.
- Contributing to the initial design or updating of the strategic plans of the participating health organizations.

Each of the six modules provides useful and easy-to-understand and -manage concepts, practical exercises, techniques and tools – all providing proven benefits – for each stage of the strategic planning process, as well as an opportunity to exchange information with teams from organizations in a variety of countries that are currently addressing interesting challenges and experiences. The work in each module builds on products that were created in previous modules, so it is essential that teams keep up with their assignments. The modules include:

Module 1 Beginning the Program: This module provides an overview of the VSPP. It guides participants through activities that will help them get to know and feel comfortable using the VSPP website and communicating with the facilitators and other participants.

Module 2 Introduction to Strategic Planning: This module is an introduction to strategic planning and why planning is important. It differentiates between the types of planning (strategic, tactical and operational). The module also provides lessons learned in strategic planning.

Module 3 Where are we?: In this module, teams conduct an analysis of the current situation for the organization. Using the SWOT matrix, the teams analyze trends in their macro and micro environments.

Module 4 Where do we want to go?: This module guides the teams to explore the future of their organization. They revise or create a mission and a vision for their organization. Using the themes from the vision, they also create strategic objectives.

Module 5 How can we get there?: During this module, teams create strategies for their strategic objectives from Module 4. Using the WOST matrix, teams select strategies that work to take advantage of strengths and opportunities and minimize weaknesses and threats.

Module 6: How do we make sure we get there?: For strategic plans to be successfully implemented, they need to be linked to operational plans and monitored and evaluated. In this module, teams create a results matrix which details intermediate results and indicators for each

strategic objective. This matrix is then used to guide teams to work with the whole organization to tie the objectives set forth in the strategic plan to the activities in the operational plans.

Each module is structured around its own theoretical framework, group reading assignments, group work, and exchanges between participants and the facilitator, both through the website “Virtual Classroom” and by means of e-mail. The expected result is a strategic plan for each team participating in the program.

Overview of VSPP Africa I

Marketing:

Our goal in marketing the VSPP was for 50% of teams in the program to be organizations that focus on reproductive health/family planning (RH/FP) issues. Our marketing was successful in attracting applications and we were able to completely fill the program with 10 teams. We had to turn away 3 teams (MSH Rwanda; Community Aid International, Kenya; and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Nigeria). However, we were unable to meet our 50% RH/FP goal, though we achieved 20%. The breakdown of participating teams by sector is as follows:

1. Reproductive Health/Family Planning- 2
2. Health Service Delivery- 2
3. HIV/AIDS- 2
4. Education sector- 1
5. Medical education- 1
6. Social Marketing- 1
7. Health quality improvement- 1

Program Management:

The team responsible for conducting this VSPP consisted of three facilitators –Dr. Héctor Colindres and Kristen Stelljes of MSH and Peter Kiuluku of ESAMI. Cabul Mehta was responsible for overall administrative coordination of the program.

Throughout the process, Hector and Peter provided support to four teams and Kristen to two in preparing their strategic plans, clarifying any concerns and providing suggestions in each stage. In addition, each facilitator shared, on a rotating basis, responsibility for the facilitating and moderating modules.

At the conclusion of the program, team members satisfying the following requirements received a certificate of participation:

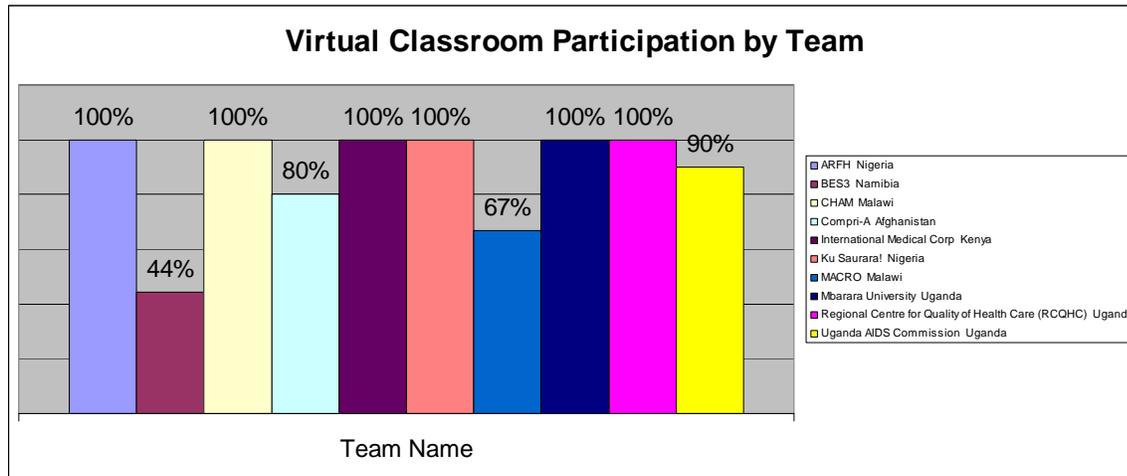
- Active participation in the program as witnessed by having attended on-site team meetings and posted at least once in the Virtual Classroom.
- Submission to the facilitator of all deliverables (products) required for each module.
- Incorporation into each product of any feedback received from the facilitator.
- Submission to the facilitator of the completed strategic plan.
- Completion of the final evaluation on the VSPP website.

PROGRAM RESULTS

Total participants: 70 individuals, including 32 women and 18 senior leaders, belonging to ten management teams from civil society organizations in five different countries of Africa and Afghanistan, distributed as follows:

Country	Organization	No. of Participants
Afghanistan	Compri-A	5
Kenya	Kenya International Medical Corps (IMC)	4
Malawi	Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM)	4
	Malawi Counseling and Resource Organization (MACRO)	6
Nigeria	Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH)	10
	Ku Saurara	4
Uganda	Mbarara University	10
	Regional Centre for Quality of Health Care (RCQHC)	8
	Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC)	10
Namibia	AED/BES3	9

The percentage of participants who logged on and participated in Virtual Classroom discussions, by team, totaled 87%. Participation by team was as follows:



7 of the 10 teams carried out to completion the tasks assigned and **submitted a strategic plan based on** the products generated during the various stages of the program!

Selected Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives that were selected by each team are as follows:

Organization	Strategic Objectives
AED/BES3 (Peter)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the minds of our client be seen as their champion for OVC care and Wellness Awareness 2. Have Skilled and Experienced Cadre of Professionals 3. Meet and Exceed Client Expectations 4. Use of Most Update Training Techniques To Ensure Quality Delivery Services To The Client 5. Have The Accountability, Responsibility and Ethical standards
Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) (Peter)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To contribute significantly to the improvement in the reproductive health of individual and couples in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa by the year 2013. 2. To build the capacity of staff in the management of reproductive health programmes in order ensure improved performance in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa by the year 2013. 3. To achieve a qualitative and comprehensive reproductive health care delivery through supportive supervisory activities in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa by the year 2013. 4. To achieve result or impact oriented staff efficiency through thorough assessment and intervention exercises which are evidence based by the year 2013. 5. To maintain a satisfactory relationship with partners and various stakeholders globally by the year 2013.
Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) (Kristen)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To maintain its Christian identity and commitment to the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. 2. To provide professional, efficient, effective, equitable and cost effective technical support services to its member units. 3. To respond to the Units' needs and exceed their expectations in a timely, user friendly, participatory, cost effective and transparent manner 4. Increase sustainability of CHAM Secretariat from 10% to 20% by December 2009.

<p>Compri-A (Hector)</p>	<p>By the end of 2020:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase use of high quality health products and services by Afghan families through expansion of sales and distribution network and innovative communication approaches in Afghanistan by 40%. 2. Enhance health behavior practices of Afghan families by conducting behavior change communication campaigns and integrated training activities by 50%. <p>By the end of 2015:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Position the Afghan Social Marketing Entity as the best social marketing organization in the mind of 50% of Afghans and 70% of international community by establishing extensive and sustainable sales /distribution network, having qualified staff working in a transparent and integrated environment
<p>Kenya International Medical Corps (IMC) (Peter)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Ku Saurara (Kristen)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be recognized as a leader in health communication by 70% of all organizations working in Northern Nigerian states by the end of 2012, through enhancing access to and exchange of reproductive health information using a variety of media. 2. Maintain 80% of youth serving organizations, youth counselors, parents, clinics and service providers in Northern Nigerian states, by the end of 2012, which are committed to providing friendly, reliable, respectful and quality information/services through Inter-personal communication and counseling (IPC/C) training and appropriate client materials and job aids. So that young people have access to reproductive health information and services. 3. Expand (Continuously grow) the organization by covering 80% of Local Government Areas in all Northern Nigerian states based on research and planning by the end of 2012, providing information that reflects the unique and changing environment of adolescent reproductive health. 4. Maintain satisfaction of clients above 90% in all KS supported activities throughout the Northern Nigerian states, by the end of 2012, especially among those that come in direct contact with service providers. 5. Support 90% of partners in reproductive health programming in all Northern Nigerian states, by the end of 2012, in order to have critical mass of quality sites providing youth friendly services through enhancing access to quality reproductive

	health services.
Malawi Counseling and Resource Organization (MACRO) (Hector)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide by December 2007, Counselling and Testing services to 150 000 clients annually, in Urban and rural areas, through improved static and outreach facilities 2. Improve by December 2007, monitoring and evaluation systems in order to improve management and program performance through installation of Integrated Information Management system in order to monitor all programs i.e. financial , human and material 3. To improve by May 2008, quality assurance in counseling and testing system in order to maintain standards of service delivery on continuously throughout the organization's service delivery system 4. Construct and procure by September 2008, VCT tailored buildings and other physical resources to support quality service delivery. 5. To train by January 2008, 200 service providers at MACRO's own National Training Centre annually in order to update and maintain their service delivery skills.
Mbarara University (Peter)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To produce quality and relevant health professions' graduates; doctors, nurses, laboratory scientists, pharmacists and counselors. 2. To improve on the health standards of the communities in the region. 3. To provide human resources for health care within the region. 4. To carry out research and disseminate the findings. 5. To improve the knowledge and skills of practicing health professionals.
Regional Centre for Quality of Health Care (RCQHC) (Hector)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To establish functional facilities/tools towards strengthening of capacity in QoC issues in the region. 2. To establish a core of experts issues in the target region. 3. To provide practical implementation support to facilitate improvement of QoC in the region 4. To demonstrate verifiable progress achieved towards recognition of RCQHC as one of the top three centers of excellence in the region, on African Qoc issues. 5. To strengthen the internal capacity of the RCQHC towards institutional and financial sustainability. 6. To strengthen the internal capacity of RCQHC to deliver technical assistance, documentation and training in the improvement of QoC in the region.

Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) (Hector)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. UAC to be remodelled into a professional organisation to provide appropriate technical capacity at all levels National, District and lower local Government levels.2. Coordinate and harmonize the contributions of the various stakeholders to the National Strategic Plan.3. Provide leadership in sharing of up to date and timely information and feedback on the status of the epidemic.4. Mobilize adequate National resources for the most cost effective HIV/AIDS Interventions.
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Feedback from Participants

Overall, participants were very enthusiastic about the program. This can be most clearly seen in the fact that 51 out of 52 people responded “Yes’ to the question “Would you recommend this program to other organizations?” in the final evaluation.

Participants consistently praised the quality of facilitation and the availability of the VSPP team. They also asked for additional training, support, and follow up in the Virtual Classroom and in the final evaluation. It would be useful to link these graduates into the new program on performance based budgeting, LeaderNet, and other LMS/CLM/MSH activities.

Appendix 1 includes what each team has said they have done to complete and disseminate their strategic plans to date and what they will be doing to link it to their operational plans. Appendix 2 includes resources that participants said would be useful on LeaderNet.

Final Evaluation

71% of VSPP participants completed the Final Evaluation on the VSPP website.

Quantitative highlights from the evaluation include:

- 78% of respondents said they used the workbook as the primary method they used to participate in the program. 22% said they primarily used the website.
- 41% of respondents said the Virtual Classroom was very useful. 43% said it was useful.
- 39% of respondents said facilitator feedback was excellent. 52% said it was very good
- 54% of respondents said the availability of the facilitators throughout the program was excellent. 37% said that is was very good.

Qualitative highlights from the evaluation include:

Has the VSPP helped you to generate change in your organization?

- Two teams included an M&E/Knowledge Management positions in their organization
- “We have really improved in timely completion of tasks, in thinking fast and in reporting skills.”

Was creating a Mission and Vision useful?

- “Yes. Before coming up with the Strategic Plan, many activities were being implemented haphazardly. However, during the process of implementing our Strategic Plan, we will be following a clearly laid-out path for effecting subsequent developmental activities.”
- “Yes, the team involved developed great insight that it is surely possible to improve faculty of medicine to the desired goal. This was great change! then of course what the faculty members are to do e.g establishing alliances, lobbying, publishing and many more.

Has the VSPP provided linkages to your operational plan?”

- “Yes. Very much so. The VSPP just coincided with our mid term evaluation of our SP. Our participation in the mid term review was very much directed by the knowledge we were gaining from the VSPP and now that we are developing our operational plans after the midterm review, we are able to make the necessary linkage to the SP than before.”

Would you recommend us?

- “Yes. Because it has been an eye opener to strategic planning. In most cases people find themselves in a managerial posts without skills an that’s why think most organization fail to meet their stipulated objectives, because people work by trial and error.”
- “Yes, because it helped be to critical in thinking, sit with the team and appreciate contributions done by members as a symbol of unity for the same cause. Now strategic planning exercise is more owned and very much from within to clarify roles, responsibilities and priority areas. I loved it even though time was a big constraint.”
- “Yes. This is because the very nature of this program is such that one comes out with a Strategic Plan (SP) that is developed from First Principles. The fact that the SP is developed by some members from within the organization makes the SP relevant to the organization in question. I am convinced that hiring a "Consultant" from outside the organization to develop a Strategic Plan for an institution is the most inappropriate way of doing things!”

Additional comments:

- “The experience of this program has been exciting at times, enriching, challenging, frustrating at times but I do not regret going through it. I have learnt quite a lot in many ways. Where ever I go, I will use these. Thank you very much to the whole facilitating team. You were indeed very patient and encouraging even when we least deserved it and that kept us going. I have learnt a lot from you too. Keep it up. I would like to be your referee to any organisation.”
- “This program has helped to hone my skills in Strategic Planning, which is important to me as a program manager. The organisation and facilitation have been excellent. Facilitators have been most helpful and walked us through, always appreciating the participants' busy schedules that sometimes delayed progress. Issues were discussed from real life situations and not in a vacuum. So it was easy to associate with the problems and proposed solutions. Sometimes feedback on team work was delayed, but it was required to be able to move on to the next assignment. This is a program I have immensely enjoyed in so many years!”

Highlights from the Virtual Classroom Discussions:

- “First of all, the strategic planning exercise helped me appreciate that the process is very dynamic and helps the team to become critical and analytical in terms of identifying issues of past performance and building those issues into planning exercise. Secondly, it helped me appreciate the need to involve staff from different disciplines to learn from each other, analyze critical factors of organizational issues collectively and propose areas of comparative advantages to direct strategic planning process. I appreciated everybody’s contribution in making the process of planning vivid and realistic. It was indeed an excellent forum to learn about organizational and implementation issues of the given institution as a prerequisite to strategic planning.”
- “First of all, in the past I always thought I had to be a hero. Now I realise that my job is to build heroes. This exercise has specifically showed me how this can be done. “these require us to share the responsibility for developing Strategic Plan”. Secondly, I got to know that Strategic Planning is the continuous process of making present entrepreneurial decisions systematically with the greatest knowledge of their futurity, organising systematically the efforts needed to carry out these decisions and measuring the results of these decisions against the expectations through organised systematic feedback.”

- “Creating the future WE desire NOW has been very inspiring. The WOST matrix and deriving strategic objectives from the Vision statement have been true rewards from the VSPP Programme. Thank you facilitators, Mbarara University and VSPPAfrica for contributing to my future.”
- “Certainly this has been a challenging journey particularly as we have had to do it in between our normal workloads - which are not light! But all in all it has been a very good experience. I personally have been frustrated over the fact that I simply have not been able to put in as much time as I would have liked due to my other responsibilities. All the same I have learnt a lot especially with the SWOT/WOST analysis. As my colleague asked - what next from MSH?”
- “We usually have very tight schedules at UAC, it was very hard to get all team members together all the time. The greatest lesson I learnt was -perseverance pays! We managed to work consistently to the end, sometimes putting in several hours during weekends and in the evenings, to the chagrin of colleagues with families. Sorry folks, it was very necessary, now we can all resume having fun uninterrupted. It was worth the effort!”

Lessons Learned, Success Factors & Recommendations

LESSONS LEARNED

1. By giving participants two extensions that were unplanned, it seems that several teams lost momentum and a sense of urgency with deadlines. Both extensions were seen as necessary to allow the teams to catch up where they should be in the program and met the budgetary needs of the team- a three week coaching period was given after Module 3 and participants were given an extra week to finish their assignments. One team said the extension was inconvenient for their schedule, but successfully completed the program. Another team said it caused them to lose momentum, and they did not successfully complete the program.
2. Even though we had teams whose members are located in separate offices or have to travel large distances with limited access to Internet, the majority of teams completed their assignments and were able to overcome these challenges.
3. By setting strict standards that each person participate in the Virtual Classroom at least once and fill out the final evaluation and that each team uploads all assignments including corrected versions and the final strategic plan, we need to be prepared to give out fewer certificates.
4. Participants really appreciated receiving the budgeting tool developed by David Collins on the last day of the program.

SUCCESS FACTORS

1. The strength of the VSPP has always been the team. The dedication and quality of the facilitation team and the supporting team members were essential to making the program successful.
2. The great encouragement, hard work and coordination of the manager and the AdCo of the program were essential to the success of the program.
3. The continuous feedback, encouragement and support the participating teams receive greatly contribute to the quality of their products and keeps the teams engaged.
4. Being able to have a launch week where all the facilitators can be together in the same location for training and team building is very important.
5. The majority of teams were dedicated to the program and excelled and completed the VSPP in spite of distance, time constraints, and other challenges.
6. Hector's ability to mentor and coach Kristen and review her assignments was crucial to her success as a junior facilitator.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand, by working in collaboration with other programs such as GEN, the database of potential organizations to be invited to participate in future programs.
2. In order to build upon the new rich text functionality we began to use in this VSPP, facilitators should select and include bibliographic references and links for accessing documents of interest. Editorials should be complemented by special articles that would be posted on the website at the beginning of each new module. The facilitators did this for some modules with success and recommend it be expanded to all modules.

3. Use more examples adapted to the local realities of the team's participants.
4. Explore options to provide continued learning and support for VSPP grads- maybe a section on management topics on LeaderNet? or other virtual programs related to strategic planning such as business plans or planning and performance based budgeting.
5. Have individual participants sign a form saying they will commit the necessary time to the program, even in the face of field work and let them know on the application that other stakeholders will be invited to some meetings (the VSPP team should work with the VLDP team to standardize an approach to gaining team commitment during registration).
6. The VSPP should be a 17 week program, with 2 weeks for coaching after Module 3 and 2 weeks to complete the final strategic plan after the modules end.
7. When the facilitators revise assignments, if no corrections are needed from the team, they should use the ending _COM when they upload their feedback, so the AdCo knows they do not need to follow up with the teams for corrected assignments. If corrections are needed, the facilitators will use the _CORR ending that has traditionally been used.
8. Junior facilitators should be used in the program in order to build bench strength in strategic planning. They will need mentoring and coaching from a senior facilitator.
9. Facilitators who are completely new to strategic planning would require training and preparation in addition to the one week launch period.
10. Improve the website, taking into consideration the following suggestions:
 - In the team file message board, have the last message entered displayed in the screen- since people have to scroll through to get to new messages they are often not read.
 - Put the "new comment" box in the team folder above the 'comment history' box as it is a more natural way for people to use the site. Also include instructions on the Team Folder page.
 - There should be a button that is very visible in the preview mode of the VC so that people don't get lost and forget they need to post the message from preview mode.
 - Be able to post an editorial without a picture- have the picture already be on the site.
 - Course Admin/Facilitators have the functionality to be able to edit text within the website in order to make quick changes to language on site
 - Be able to make sub-folders in the Team Files section within the Team Folders
 - Be able to send emails to VSPP members from within the site
11. Make changes to the modules/course materials:
 - Improve instructions for assignments in Module 3 and 5.
 - Give fuller instructions and examples on how to write the strategic plan and what to include.
 - Come up with a new graphic for pg. 63 to demonstrate the interaction between weaknesses and strengths within an organization
 - Be more clear about what to include in the strategic planning process calendar and link to Sylvia's 7 lessons learned.
 - Include a link to LeaderNet

Impact of the Program

77% of respondents said they have been able to introduce changes into their organization as a result of the VSPP. 8 of 10 teams have completed their strategic plan. The teams are in different stages of approval and dissemination of their strategic plans. There will be a follow up survey conducted with all of the teams in February 2007 and again in August 2008 to determine the extent to which they were able to implement their strategic plans and achieve their strategic objectives.

Many of the participants expressed how much they have learned through the VSPP and how they are now more prepared to actively participate in their organizations and understand them. As one participant said:

“Being part of the team developing the Strategic Plan for our organization has been a very satisfying experience for me. Because we have been developing the document from FIRST PRINCIPLES, I have a feeling that our strategic plan will stand the test of time, and that it will be easy to make the necessary modifications and adjustments along the way should the need arise. I do not think there could be a better way of coming up with a Strategic Plan.”

With 98% of participants (51 out of 52) saying they would recommend the VSPP to other organizations, we can say with confidence that the participants feel they have benefited from the program. We will continue to see the impact of the program in the 6 month and 12 month follow up surveys.

Conclusion

The first VSPP delivered in English and in Africa reached 70 participants from 10 teams in 5 Anglophone African countries and Afghanistan. 80% of the teams successfully completed the program. With 2 new facilitators, Peter Kiuluku from ESAMI, and Kristen Stelljes from MSH, and the experienced facilitator, Hector Colindres, the facilitation team was able to provide continued support and feedback to the teams. This support would not have been possible without the entire VSPP team. Special thanks need to go to Cabul Mehta, the Administrative Coordinator, and Ruby Thind, the site developer and technical support.

The VSPP benefited from the improvements to the site made after the last program and many participants actively participated in the Virtual Classroom. There are a few improvements that could be made to the site for the next offering of the VSPP to make the site more user friendly. Improvements can also be made to the instructions for assignments in the workbooks to increase clarity.

Major challenges for participants during the program included competing priorities, busy schedules, and distance between team members. The 3 week Coaching Period that was added to the program after Module 3 and the extension at the end of the program may have contributed to

some teams losing momentum; however, the majority of the teams were able to overcome these challenges in order to complete the program successfully.

Appendix 1: Linking Strategic Plans to Operational Plans

Please describe what you have done to complete and disseminate your plan and how you have related it to your operational plans or when you will do this.

- COMPRI-A: We will translate the developed strategic plan to the operational plan after establishment of new Afghan social entity.
- KU SAURARA!: We're planning to complete our strategic plan including its dissemination before August 3rd 2007. We want to have inputs from the whole Ku Saurara! team, and we've already share responsibilities in writing the strategic plan.
- CHAM: We have just finished a midterm review of our strategic plan. Using the information learnt during the VSPP we have been able to see the shortfalls in our current SP and now we are busy reviewing our current SP and relating it to our operational plans so that for the remaining two and half years of the current SP, we have a strong SP. This exercise will be completed end of August.
- Mbarara University: The segments of plan have been consolidated. This document will be circulated for comments by Board, management, staff and other stakeholders. Changes will be made to the document following the comments received. When the Board grants its approval of the draft document, a stakeholders meeting shall be held to disseminate the strategic plan further. Current operational plans will be revised in the document.
- ARFH: The strategic plan developed in the course of this program was jointly developed by the ARFH VSPP team and it will not be an official document until the management approve of it as such. The management approval is therefore being awaited before its dissemination. The document is well related to the organizations operational directorates.
- BES3: (no response)
- Kenya IMC: (no response)
- RCQHC: Based on a draft strategic plan which was previously developed, the team agreed to include what came out in the VSPP to complete the Plan. We are beginning our planning exercise in August and we shall use the S/Plan to come up with an operational plan.
- UAC: Through departmental meetings reflecting on specific activities in the organizational workplan and improved on the priority activities in relation to the plan we have done
- MACRO: All segments of plan have been consolidated. The documents will be circulated for comments by Board, management, staff and stakeholders. Adjustments will be made to the document following comments received. Upon Board approval of the draft, a meeting will be held to disseminated the Strategic Plan further. Current operational plans will be revised in line with the new current Strategic Plan.

Appendix 2: LeaderNet Content Suggestions

What kinds of materials should the LeaderNet website contain to be useful for the implementation and achievement of your strategic plan?

- More reference material for reading.
- The discussions in the virtual class room, the finished assignments of our different teams
- Monitoring strategic plans (practical examples - we know the theory but it would be good to get news from others)
- Monitoring, supervision and evaluation materials. Best practices and success stories from other organizations and previous VSPP participating organizations.
- All materials containing different segments of leadership with special consideration for SRH, FP and current issues on care, support, and how the rural dwellers can be reached to educate them on home based care, we also need to look at how africans can better their destinies in their hands by raising funds in addition to what the international donors are giving them. I will also like materials on how the CBOS can be further empowered because they are closer to this category of people
- Potential Funding sources/organizations. Training opportunities.
- Capacity and Leadership development, Monitoring and evaluation of plans, steps on how to win over management to support the implementation of the plan. Management materials on coordination of NACs.
- If possible different ideas from the participating teams could be cross-fertilized to come up with a unified document; taking cognizance of the culture of different nations involved.