

**Leland Initiative: Africa Global Information Infrastructure
Gateway Project (698-0565)**

Strategic Objective 3: End-User Applications

**Internet for Development Applications and Training:
USAID/Ethiopia Trip Report**

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Prepared for:

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Executive Summary

At the request of the USAID/Ethiopia mission, a team of facilitators from the RRS/Leland Initiative SO3 project traveled to Addis Ababa to facilitate a series of Internet Awareness trainings. The trainings were intended to impart a basic knowledge of the Internet and how to use it, and to help participants plan for using the Internet to help achieve their development objectives.

In addition to the four facilitators from R&RS, Afework Temtime, an FSN at USAID/Ethiopia with whom the training team had worked on a TDY in Washington, was an integral member of the training team, and handled most of the local logistics for the training.

The Ethiopian trainings served as a pilot for the training design and materials used in the trainings, in order to determine their effectiveness and any improvements that need to be made for presentation in the other African countries participating in the Leland Initiative.

A total of 65 representatives from approximately 50 different USAID/Ethiopia development partners participated in the first four two-day trainings. Participants were grouped roughly according to their sectoral interests in order to maximize the benefit of common interests and shared experiences within each of the groups. Two trainers from the Ethiopia Telecommunication Commission (ETC), the only full ISP in the country, participated in the trainings, and the ETC system operator observed several sessions in one of the trainings. Most participants had some experience with personal computers, though the skill and experience levels of participants ranged from highly experienced system operators to people who had not previously used a computer, keyboard or mouse.

Additionally, at the request of the Leland Project Manager, a special fifth training was held September 28-29 in order to allow 21 additional people to participate, including a representative from the Eritrean Office of the President, two media professionals from the Eritrean Ministry of Information and several FSNs from USAID/Eritrea, US Embassy/Eritrea and Peace Corps/Eritrea.

The training covered an introduction to the Internet and hands-on learning experiences and practice with basic Internet tools. In addition to the technical components of the training, participants were guided through the process of developing an information use analysis for their organization leading to the development of an action plan for introducing and using the Internet in their organizations. Because time was short, fully developed action plans were not required or expected from participants. Participants were expected to develop a set of action goals, and to provide details on how they would achieve at least one of those goals. This process was successful, and each participant was given a taste of the action planning process. This experience, combined with the guidance and case studies provided in the participants manual, should provide participants with the background necessary to follow a structured process to plan creatively for the use of the

Internet in their organizations. Many participants included as part of their action plans a goal to train others in their organizations in the use of the Internet.

At appropriate intervals throughout the training, participants were apprised of the importance of the Internet as a networking and informational tool, as opposed to an isolated technology. They were encouraged to establish more formal networks among themselves in order to assist each other in using this important tool and discovering the benefits of collaborating using this technology. Methods for doing this were discussed, and each participant received contact information on all participants in his/her group. A comprehensive list of all participants will be developed and shared as one of the next steps.

The primary technical challenge encountered during the training was consistently slow Internet access speeds and frequent lack of any kind of connection to the Internet. This was beyond the control of the USAID/Ethiopia system operators. Adjustments in the training schedule and techniques used were necessary in order to accommodate these problems.

The trainings were extremely well received by both the participants and the USAID/Ethiopia mission. Evaluations indicated that the participants felt that their participation was worthwhile and that they had gained much useful experience as a result. The chief critical comment of the participants is that they would have preferred to have more time devoted to all of the sessions. Participants from ETC were so pleased that they decided to model their future Internet trainings on the Leland training.

A main contributing factor to the success of the trainings was the high level of technical and logistical support provided by the USAID/Ethiopia Acting Chief of Mission and Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, the systems staff and by the USAID/Ethiopia mission staff in general. Without this level of support the trainings would have been impossible to conduct at the USAID mission.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned for Future Leland SO3 Trainings

- *Conduct trainings at a facility specifically equipped for this type of training.*

The USAID staff, especially the computer system staff, were exemplary in the level of support and expertise they provided to the training. Nevertheless, because the facility and Internet connection were not designed specifically for training groups of people in Internet use, the facilities were inadequate for this particular purpose. The training was definitely a burden on the system and staff of the mission.

- *System support personnel should be on-hand at all times to solve any system problems that come up.*

We were fortunate to have the complete cooperation of USAID/Ethiopia computer system staff at all times, including the Sunday that would have normally been a day off for them.

- *At least one of the training facilitators should be technically competent to respond to questions and needs beyond the scope of the immediate training, and to work effectively with the computer system staff.*

This expertise is required both in setting up the facility for the particular training and in order to resolve questions and problems that arise during the course of the training.

- *This training design could be done effectively with a total of three facilitators. Ideally, at least one of the facilitators should be a host-country national.*

Our working rapport with Afework Temtime was one of the chief factors contributing to the success of the training.

- *The action planning process is at least as important to Leland SO3 as the technical skills transfer.*

The action planning process made this training a solid development activity. Participants frequently asked how they could convince their ministry heads, supervisors, etc. of the usefulness of using the Internet in their work, and how it would help them to achieve their organizations' development goals. The action planning process provides clear steps for conceptualizing the integration of the Internet into an organization's activities.

- *Facilitators must be fully prepared to conduct any aspect of the training without a live connection to the Internet.*

Fortunately, the facilitators were able to make the most of prevailing connection conditions (and participants were understanding and cooperative). A variety of options should be available to the facilitators, including pre-recorded substitutes for live connections and the flexibility to rearrange sessions when necessary.

Next Steps for Leland SO3 in Ethiopia

- *USAID/Ethiopia should appoint a Leland Coordinator.*

Having a knowledgeable local person available to work with development partners and the mission will speed progress and help with identifying opportunities among development partners.

- *Ethiopian Internet users should organize users groups in order to foster mutual support and learning and to continue encouraging the Government of Ethiopia to open up to competition the Internet access business.*

Various methods for doing this were discussed with each training group.

- *Explore and implement ways to close the gap between mid-level managers' knowledge of the value of the Internet and that of upper management.*

Most of the training participants were in mid-level management or technical support positions. As in most hierarchical institutions, mid- and lower-level staff do not always have sufficient influence to bring about desired innovations. By taking steps to ensure that upper-level managers also receive the benefits of the training, either directly or indirectly, the effects of the Internet on development could be realized more quickly.

- *Assist with the development of two pilot projects with the potential for wide impact on development in Ethiopia.:*

Proposals for support of the following two projects are being developed:

Trade Information Center in the Ministry of Trade and Industry
Work with the BESO project and the Ministry of Education.

- *Some mechanism should be devised to follow up with participants progress on implementing their action plans.*

Options for this include:

- Set up a listserv or interactive forum for people to share their information and experiences on further development and implementation of their action plans.
- Conduct a follow up training specifically to develop action plans for organizations.
- Conduct a follow up training to develop a specific action plan for a large project.

- *Consider offering other types of more specialized training.*

Some possibilities include:

Publishing on the Internet (including HTML)
Customer service, support and training for ISPs.

- *Continue to work closely with the Mission Director, Afework Temtime and other USAID mission staff in Ethiopia to identify further needs.*

The Training Team, Logistical Support, etc.

The facilitators for this training were: Linda Leonard, Vice President, Academy for Educational Development and Research and Reference Services Project Director; Anne Langhaug, Research Manager/Research and Reference Services; Arif Ansar, Evaluation Specialist/R&RS; David Wolfe, Senior Project Advisor; and Afework Temtime, Information Specialist, USAID/Ethiopia.

Support provided by the USAID/Ethiopia staff could not have been better. In addition to having the complete cooperation of the Acting Chief of Mission and the Deputy Acting Chief of Mission, the entire computer system staff and many members of the support staff also provided constant assistance. Additionally, several program managers provided invaluable background and advice on how best to approach some of the training areas.

The computer system support staff made sure that there was always someone available at the trainings to help out when there were problems with individual computers or with the network. This was invaluable, and clearly enhanced the level of training that was possible.

Afework Temtime, Information Specialist, USAID/Ethiopia not only served as a member of the training team, he ensured that our needs for logistical support were handled effectively and promptly.

Participants

All people invited to participate in the training were selected by USAID/Ethiopia. The R&RS/Leland Team provided recommendations to the mission regarding the type of people most likely to benefit from participation. These included: information specialists, communications specialists, computer staff, public relations staff, information officers, Internet champions (staff with some knowledge and interest in what the Internet can do for development, and the enthusiasm and influence to help introduce it to others), individuals who will be providing service or answering non-technical questions or providing staff training on the Internet.

Actual participants ranged from government ministry officials to clerical staff and from computer systems managers to administrative staff. Relatively few of the participants were in upper level decision making positions.

Though none of the trainings had exclusively participants with only one common interest, the general sectoral composition of the trainings was as follows:

Group 1 (September 16-17): Agriculture and multi-sectoral

Group 2 (September 18-19): Education

Group 3 (September 22-23): Education, Economic Development

Group 4 (September 24-25): NGOs

Group 5 (September 28-29): Government of Eritrea and FSNs from Eritrea and Ethiopia

The Training

Each of the trainings followed the schedule as planned, with a few general changes, and modifications when necessary to accommodate the prevailing training conditions.

Less time was consistently required for the Opening Session and the Overview of the Internet. Most of the excess time was used in the first hands-on session, E-Mail. This was a good use of the extra time because most participants had some experience with e-mail, and it allowed participants to get comfortable with the hands-on style while learning more in-depth techniques and uses for e-mail than they were familiar with previously.

The training team had the opportunity to try a variety of ways to facilitate the sessions, and each training group was somewhat different in their level of experience and prior technical and information competencies, current access to the Internet, etc.

In general, as indicated in the written evaluations, the majority of participants were more interested in getting hands on technical training on the Internet than in the process for action planning and introducing the Internet to their organizations. However, formal and informal feedback indicated that the action planning sequence was both appreciated and much needed, as there were a number of questions and comments regarding how participants could demonstrate to managers at their organizations that access to the Internet would be worth the expense and effort.

In general, the technical training (Internet tools, etc.) seemed to work best when kept uncomplicated. A good example of this was with training in how to find specific information on the Internet: participants who are not professional researchers need to understand first why they would want to do something (use a search engine, for example), then how to do it, and then be given a chance to pursue their interests on their own. Training in more sophisticated search techniques can be confusing and counterproductive at this stage.

Challenges Faced

The primary technical challenge of the training was in providing adequate demonstrations and practice time with a very slow and sometimes non-existent Internet connection. System administrators indicated that the mission shares a 128 kbps VSAT with USAID missions in 5 countries. Response to all Internet services was consistently slow, which made some of the hands-on sessions difficult to conduct effectively, but each training group got enough of a taste of what full Internet access is like to maintain enthusiasm. System staff had to make frequent telephone calls to the Washington gateway to determine the current problem.

The slowness and losses of connection provided opportunities to emphasize efficient use of Internet resources through well constructed searches for information, off-line composition of e-mail, etc. This was particularly pointed out in the search practice session of the last training group, when there was no connection at all. We were still able to conduct one of the most successful "Search for the Stars" games thanks to one of the system administrators, who allowed us to use his personal Ethiopia Telecommunication

Commission (ETC) account. For this session, teams had to spend most of the time working together to develop effective search strategies, which they then applied during the 10 minutes each team was given to conduct their searches.

Outcomes/Action Plans

One of the primary purposes of the training was to assist and encourage the participants and their affiliated organizations to plan for the use of the Internet to achieve their development goals. In addition to the technical components of the training, each participant was guided through the process of developing an information use analysis for their organization, examining their needs and current information communication practices and finally in developing an action plan for introducing and using the Internet in their organizations. Because time was short, fully developed action plans were not required or expected from participants.

Participants were expected to develop a set of action goals, and to provide details on how they would achieve at least one of those goals. This process was successful, and each participant was given a taste of the action planning process. This experience, combined with the guidance and case studies provided in the Participants Manual should provide participants with the background necessary to use a structured process to plan creatively for the use of the Internet in their organizations. It was emphasized that action plans are developed by and with the people who will be implementing them, and there is also an approval process involved.

This process was distributed throughout the training, and it was effective when presented in this fashion. The concept was to intersperse the technical sessions with the processing sessions for variety and to let the process evolve as participants' knowledge and experience with the Internet increased. The sessions were also planned so that technical sessions with heavy use of the Internet would be held in the morning, when it was anticipated that the Internet and/or access to it would be faster than later in the day.

The basic process can be summarized as follows: The purpose of the organization was determined in the Opening and posted prominently as a reminder about why we were doing this. Participants were provided with a form to comment on how they could use each aspect of the Internet and the training in their work settings. Participants examined how their organization used information (information use analysis in the Role of Information in Development). They were then asked to think beyond their organization's current capabilities and to imagine how they might change their programs if the barriers to communication were eliminated (as is possible with the Internet). Then they were asked to turn these ideas into solid, practical goals that fit into the overall purpose of the organization. Participants then went through the process to develop action plans to achieve these goals.

Participants Notebooks and Other Materials

The material in the Participants Notebook was intended to provide participants with access to resources to learn more about the Internet and how it could be used on their own. Worksheets included in the Notebook that were used in the action planning process

were duplicated and used as handouts so that participants could repeat the process as necessary within their work units and with other groups.

The materials in the book were much appreciated, but because of the volume of material, the notebook proved awkward to use. Future editions will be made more accessible, through the use of tabbed dividers and other organizational features.

Each participant was also provided with a floppy disk that contained many resources for finding and using Internet content, as well as to guide participants in further learning and exploration of the Internet.

Evaluations

Evaluations were conducted at the end of each training day, and informal feedback was solicited throughout the training.

The trainings were extremely well received. Evaluations indicated that the participants felt that their participation was worthwhile and that they had gained much useful experience as a result. The chief comment of the participants is that they would have preferred to have more time devoted to all of the sessions.

Conclusion

The overall objectives of the training and of the individual sessions were accomplished, as indicated by the participants' feedback, the facilitators' judgment and comments from USAID/Ethiopia staff. Each participant has an understanding of what the Internet is, some practical hands-on experience with using it, and the tools and knowledge to learn more on their own. Moreover, participants have walked through the process of discovering what can be done with the Internet, and how they can plan to harness it in order to achieve their organizations' development goals. They will be able to apply this knowledge in developing action plans for introducing the Internet to their organizations.

Please refer to the **Recommendations and Lessons Learned for Future Leland SO3 Trainings and Next Steps for Leland SO3 in Ethiopia** at the end of the Executive Summary.