KariaNet: Knowledge Access for Rural Interconnected People:
A Regional Knowledge Network for the Near East and North Africa

Devolution Study

Heather Creech
Ziad Moussa
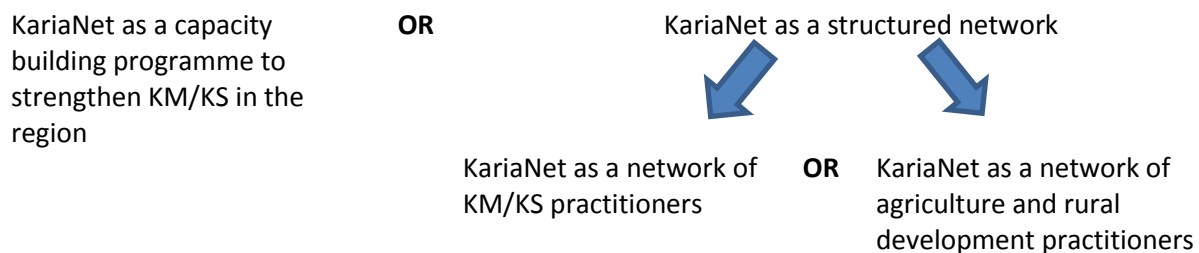
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Executive Summary

KariaNet: Knowledge Access for Rural Interconnected People: A Regional Knowledge Network for the Near East and North Africa was founded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in 2005 to enhance the effectiveness of development projects and programmes that serve the rural poor. KariaNet is in its second phase, with a primary focus on sharing knowledge and innovation to enable rural and agricultural development practitioners to improve the performance of projects across the region. Central to phase two is planning for the longer term sustainability of KariaNet. The "KariaNet Devolution Study" has had as its starting premises that a) KariaNet would no longer be hosted through the MENA regional office of IDRC after 2013, and b) that financial support from the founding partners would no longer be provided. The Study was therefore designed to:

- Secure evidence and consent for the future of KariaNet among the key stakeholders and participants in KariaNet, and
- Ensure that the knowledge and capacities that have been fostered by KariaNet have mechanisms for continuing to be developed in future, regardless of whether KariaNet itself, as currently constituted, continues.

Two network and evaluation specialists were contracted to undertake the study. The international specialist reviewed the rationale for devolution, the views of the founding members, the experience of other IFAD and IDRC networks and communities of practice, and four major approaches to network development that other international networks have taken:

- Devolution – narrowly construed as moving to another operating host/model
- Dematerialization – moving entirely to virtual platforms and operations
- Involution – taken back into a founding member and becoming a line activity of that member
- Decommission – winding up the network and moving on.

Knowledge management (KM) and knowledge sharing (KS) are the core tools being deployed by KariaNet. The international specialist drew attention to different views of KariaNet that could be considered in determining the future of KariaNet:

KariaNet as a capacity building programme to strengthen KM/KS in the region

OR

KariaNet as a structured network

KariaNet as a network of KM/KS practitioners

OR

KariaNet as a network of agriculture and rural development practitioners

The regional specialist ground truthed the study by exploring regional capacity and receptivity to options for KariaNet's future, drawing from KariaNet's country knowledge mapping, national events, a survey and selected interviews.

A range of options was developed through an initial consultation in Cairo with selected stakeholders (December workshop). Options were further developed and presented to a larger stakeholder group in April 2012; strengths and limitations for each were explored in detail by the group, with nearly

unanimous consensus emerging among the stakeholders themselves on the following option for the future of KariaNet:

Establish National Networks on Agriculture and Rural Development with a regional secretariat hosted by an existing organization to coordinate activities.

Model: Up to ten national networks to be fostered during KariaNet's phase 2, anchored by a champion agency in each country, each with a membership engagement strategy and workplan for mobilizing agriculture and rural development knowledge and learning for improving national level projects. A regional secretariat (with a full time coordinator) to be hosted by an organization in the region to coordinate activities across the region, monitor and support the growth of the national networks, maintain the KariaNet website and related resources, provide KM/KS capacity building and coordinate thematic, cross regional exchanges of knowledge and expertise on agriculture and rural development.

Advantages: Stakeholders felt that this option's strength was the national involvement and ownership, together with a clear focus on both agriculture and rural development and on KM/KS. They suggested that this model might attract local donors as well as government support for each of the various national networks, plus regional donors support for the coordination function. In addition to the national networks, thematic groups (food security, natural resource management, etc.) were considered an advantage. Capacity building of those involved would be possible in this option. In particular, participants noted that this option might lead to positive policy influence at the national level, and that coordination of rural development projects in the region would be more likely.

Limitations: Participants recognized that this option is the highest cost option, with its need for coordination and capacity building. The group acknowledged that this model is highly dependent on the performance of the national networks, and that each national network will need to have communications strategies to secure and sustain participation.   Also, it was noted that there are in general fewer donors supporting work in rural areas, and that the national governments might support this approach but not every national government will be able to provide funds for its national network. In addition, it should be noted that the culture of KM/KS needs to be strengthened within the region for this model to succeed, requiring continued KM/KS capacity building.

Guidance for IDRC and IFAD

One of the most important messages in this study is that the stakeholders in KariaNet believe strongly that KariaNet should be grounded in the national level. However, this means that KariaNet must therefore be adopted at the national level, and the organizational arrangements at the national level will be very important. KariaNet will need not only a business strategy for both the regional coordination and national networks, but also a strong communications strategy for both regional and national engagement.

There are strong signals that this model may succeed. Bearing in mind that the stakeholders in the April workshop by and large represented the national government agencies participating in KariaNet, they agreed that the annual operating costs for a national network might range from $80-90K, and that these costs would be underwritten by the national department that would anchor and champion the national network. In other words, there is a willingness to pay for the national component of KariaNet.

The stakeholders further suggested that an operating budget for regional coordination and ongoing KM/KS capacity building might be calculated at 10 per cent of the operating costs for each of the

national networks – or approximately $80K to $90K. An alternative approach to developing an operating budget will be to cost out specific components, possibly including:

- Salary for a regional coordinator
- Costs for website hosting and maintenance
- One annual meeting to bring stakeholders together
- Travel for the coordinator to selected national network events

There is not an immediate willingness for the national networks to contribute to the costs of regional coordination. Therefore some consideration will need to be given during the balance of Phase 2 to resourcing support for regional coordination. Based on IFAD's input to the April meeting, it may be possible for IFAD to consider continued support to KariaNet beyond phase II, which might not mean significant or new financial support but could deploy other regional resources related to capacity building.

Furthermore, based on stakeholders' discussions of the other options, there may be the potential for the regional coordinator to introduce the sale of KM/KS capacity building services to other clients in the region. Stakeholders repeatedly noted the need for building up the KM/KS culture across the region and the growing interest in KM/KS approaches. In several of the options discussed, the opportunity for fee-based KM/KS services was noted as a potential revenue source to support operations. The authors of the study caution, however, that it may take up to two years for the regional coordinator
- To ensure that the national networks are sufficiently stable that they require minimal support, freeing up the coordinator to take on KM/KS services for others
- To generate sufficient revenues from such services to offset his/her salary and travel costs
- To secure annual sponsorships to underwrite the costs for an annual KariaNet event.

Final observations

At the conclusion of the April workshop, the KariaNet stakeholders clearly shouldered the responsibility for the future of KariaNet, recognizing the need to remain "credible" in the eyes of the founding partners, IFAD and IDRC, and noting the importance of success with the national networks as the basis for seeking support for regional coordination and capacity building. This level of commitment, and in particular the commitment to underwrite the costs of the national networks, suggests that there is the energy and buy-in across the region for KariaNet to continue. Based on this, the authors of the study would encourage the KariaNet secretariat to proceed with the next steps, to prepare a profile for Secretariat services and request groups within the region to submit bids to deliver those services. A "twinning process" should be implemented for the balance of Phase 2, in which the current Secretariat works closely with the new Secretariat, with particular attention paid to developing the business and communications plans, and working with IFAD on the possibility of continued support of the network.

A. Introduction

1. Context

According to the project documentation:

> The **overall goal** of KariaNet II is *to enhance the effectiveness of development projects and programmes that serve to enable the rural poor to overcome their poverty*. Its **primary objective** is *to develop sustainable mechanisms, using action research and learning, for sharing knowledge and innovations among rural and agricultural development projects in NENA, that enable them to improve their performance.*

KariaNet was piloted in 2005 as a multi-stakeholder partnership between IFAD, IDRC and IFAD-financed projects in the NENA region. From 2005 to 2008, two projects in each of the five participating countries, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia, were selected to be the founding core of the network. KariaNet's pilot phase tested tools and practices that could advance learning and the exchange of experiences and knowledge assets among IFAD-financed projects, towards an overall goal of improving projects' performance.

KariaNet 2 has been designed to:

- Reach more members in MENA region;

- Implement research projects and community projects to ensure that Knowledge Management and information products on agricultural development reach a broader audience in MENA;

- Develop and test a business model which will allow the devolution of KariaNet II as a sustainable and viable network.

KariaNet 2 continues as a multistakeholder initiative, with full participation of IDRC and IFAD stakeholders, with an active steering committee and a Secretariat hosted at the IDRC Cairo office. Activities include: developing national knowledge maps of rural development research, activities, and stakeholders; holding national workshops designed to strengthen capacity for knowledge sharing; building national networks by bringing institutions together to find shared interests, promote knowledge exchange and lay the ground work for synergy and collaboration in rural development; and research into good practice in general for knowledge management and knowledge sharing.

Stakeholders from the KariaNet 1 countries -- Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia --continue to demonstrate both interest in, and capacity for, sharing knowledge on rural development activities. Whether that interest and capacity is sufficient for the devolution of KariaNet as an independent and viable network, will be explored further in the balance of this study.

A note on terminology: Throughout the paper, the terms knowledge management (KM) and Knowledge sharing (KS) are used together. They are not necessarily interchangeable terms, but using them together acknowledges both the structured capitalization of knowledge, its storage and retrieval of KM AND the human processes and cultures for peer exchange and mutual learning that constitute KS.

2. Achievements of KariaNet Phase 2 to date

[Provided by H. Laamrani, Senior Programme Officer, IDRC/KariaNet]

<u>What was achieved over last year?</u>

The overall purpose of KariaNet is to integrate learning and knowledge management into development practice in MENA. The project has expanded in scope and geography from the first phase to include 10 countries from the region represented by a wide range of actors and thematically focused along-side practices in KM-KS on food security and rural enterprise development.

After one year from the inception workshop, KariaNet managed to capacitate its regional members on KM-KS tools and methods and building online KM communities. Those two workshops were the first milestones of the capacity building platform. The outcomes of the different trainings need to be consolidated through the different national networks and regional thematic activities.

KariaNet website is now revamped and functioning in three languages and the social media platforms are updated by national, regional and international news and information. Networking activities emerging from the different virtual tools are still moderate, but were actively enhanced by the different national inception workshops that took place in all the countries with the exception of Syria and Yemen for security reasons.

But trying to foster networking activities, doesn't necessarily lead to having a functioning network, and this was sensed in the thematic discussions that had limited participation. Different explanations can be placed, but as a corrective measure, thematic-focused and context-specific discussions are being tested once again with a restraint group and seem more productive in terms of knowledge sharing.

From the beginning, it was important to look at the real picture of the status of KM-KS in the region and more specifically in each of the countries participating in KariaNet, so knowledge mapping studies were undergone at the national level (with the exception of Syria) that encompasses a database of experts and policies related to KS-KM and that lead to the following findings:

1- Demand lies within government: The main stakeholders in / beneficiaries of KariaNet's KM/KS work are in governments in the MENA region.
2- Information management and extension are the two pillars for KM-KS in the region
3- There is limited expertise and competencies in KM-KS in the region
4- There is a growing interest for KM-KS and buy-in at the national level.
5- There is a broad consensus on the need for coherence in agriculture information management and dissemination at the national level
6- There are limited bright spots: CRP2 (Morocco); the Jordan Centre for Agriculture Information (AGRIS) which incorporates the National Agricultural information system (NAIS); Ministry of Agriculture with its extension and education department (Lebanon); & sector-wide approaches ("regroupements inter-professionels" and "approche filière") with associated KS mechanisms In Algeria and Tunisia.

Research in knowledge management was found to be timid in the region so KariaNet is supporting after a competitive call for proposals, three action-research aiming to enhance the research capacities and competences in KM-KS; innovate in validating existing or developing new KM-KS tools and methods; and inform and influence policies through research based evidence on KM-KS in agriculture and rural development in the context of the countries of the MENA region.

The three action research projects on KM in the MENA supported by KariaNet are:

1. American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA): Evaluating knowledge-sharing methods to improve land utilization and improve food security of Palestinian small farmers- link to (former) IFAD engagement

2. Egypt ICT Trust Fund: Managing Agriculture Knowledge through Localized Community Expert System- link to an existing national network

3. École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique d'Alger (ENSA): The system of technical innovation along the value chain of growing vegetables in greenhouses in Biskra: the dynamics and limits of a new model of knowledge production and sharing

3. Objectives for the KariaNet devolution study

As Phase 2 evolves, the sustainability of the regional network has been explored and discussed on several occasions. The KariaNet study will propose a scenario for the devolution of the network and ensure incremental appropriation. The objectives for the study include:

- Secure evidence and consent for the future of KariaNet among the key stakeholders and participants in KariaNet.
- Ensure that the knowledge and capacities that have been fostered by KariaNet have mechanisms for continuing to be developed in future, regardless of whether KariaNet itself, as currently constituted, continues.

This assignment is not an evaluation of KariaNet operations or outcomes against standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The assignment has been designed to provide evidence based guidance to the central stakeholders of KariaNet: IFAD, IDRC and the membership, on how best to transition the Network into a new phase of operation, which will no longer have the financial support of IDRC or possibly of IFAD. The basic premise for a new phase would be that KariaNet would continue in some form but with a different hosting arrangement or operating model, and a different financial model, with a strong emphasis on:

- Maintaining a focus on mobilizing knowledge on rural development among the members to improve their own effectiveness and to secure better results nationally and regionally,
- Strengthening ownership of the Network among the current members,
- Growing the membership and sustaining the Network.

4. IDRC and IFAD understanding of "devolution" and "sustainability"

Based on IDRC's 2009 study of the devolution of its international secretariats, it would appear that IDRC's general understanding of devolution is as follows:

> Devolution involves the passing of substantive and managerial control of an activity housed within the Centre to an external agency[1].

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[1] Armstrong and Khan, p24.

A useful rationale for devolution was drafted as part of the devolution strategy for the IDRC-initiated Poverty and Economic Policy Network (PEP-net): "That it is **healthier** and more **efficient** that a network of Southern researchers be managed by Southern-based institutions. In particular, it is expected that Southern-based institutions would be more in tune to the needs, priorities and characteristics of Southern researchers. In turn, it is likely that the implication and sense of ownership of the network by its member researchers would increase. Indeed, sensitivity to this issue among other potential donors implies that the potential for **resource expansion** would increase substantially if PEP was managed by Southern-based institutions."

IFAD does not appear to have a similar general definition and rationale for devolution, although IFAD informants also confirm that devolution involves the transfer of responsibilities for an activity to an external agency. Searching through IFAD documentation, the following benefits of devolution of structured networks have been recognized: [2]

- International / regional recognition for the network
- Ownership of the mission of the network by the membership rather than the network being seen to be a "project" of IFAD
- Potential access to a wider range of national and international resources for the activities of the network

A key requirement for devolution is of course an assessment on whether the activity will be sustainable once devolved. A useful definition of the sustainability of collaboration was prepared as part of a review by IDRC of 20 years' experience in supporting research networks: "sustainability means that a network continues to function until it achieves its goals, or until its members are no longer willing or able to continue, or until it becomes irrelevant"[3]. Willard and Creech (2006) suggest that sustainability has four dimensions: time, relationships, resources, and relevance.

The following framework is excerpted from Willard and Creech, 2006.

Time	The life-spans of networks vary. Sustainability does not mean that networks last forever. Longer life spans do not necessarily mean more successful networks. An appropriate time frame for a network is partly a function of its purpose. Ending a network is not necessarily a failure and can often be a necessary step in freeing individuals and institutions to develop new relationships and commit resources to new areas of work. Good practice in closing down networks should be recognized and embraced.
Resources	Sustainability does not necessarily mean that networks are financially self-sustaining. Resources include not only financing, but in-kind support from members and supporters as well. Sustainability requires networks to secure financial and material support from a variety of sources: donors, clients / users, members, hosts, and other stakeholders
Relationships	Quality of network relationships is more important than quantity. Growth of network membership is not necessarily an indicator of

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[2] http://www.ifad.org/english/operations/pl/regional/283-cimmyt/documents/EB-94-52-R-51-e.pdf
[3] Wind, cited in Willard, Creech 2006.

	sustainability. At the same time, sustainable networks do not necessarily have a static membership. Sustainability does not imply the same members continue their involvement throughout the whole life of the network
Relevance	In order to be sustainable, a network must fill a clear niche within the development context. The network must address an issue which is of deep concern to a critical mass of stakeholders. Network topics may be broadly or narrowly defined. What is most important is to articulate how the network fits within the constellation of other related networks. A network needs to undertake work of value to members and external stakeholders. And it must show progress in achieving its stated purpose.

While the desired goal for the devolution study is to find a sustainable business/operating model for KariaNet to continue, the authors of the study have also noted that the conditions for successful devolution and sustainability in a new operating model may not be present.

The timing may not be right; the resources may not be adequate (including inkind support from members); the relationships may not be sufficiently well developed; and the relevance may not be clear. Without these dimensions of sustainability addressed, it may not be possible to devolve KariaNet to another agency. Either it will be difficult to find an agency willing to assume the risk; or if an agency is found, they may find it extremely problematic to fulfill expectations for long term sustainability. Here, the risk is that a locally based agency could be set up for failure by the international founding partners of KariaNet.

Serious consideration should therefore also be given to "decommissioning" or wind up of KariaNet, in a way that recognizes its achievements, values the relationships that have been created to date, and ensures that the significant amount of knowledge already captured continues to be available to all those working on agriculture and rural development in the region.

5. Perspectives of the founding partners on regional approaches to fostering knowledge sharing and knowledge management

IFAD has sponsored the development of regional networks to provide access to information and to promote the sharing of knowledge among the rural development projects and programmes it supports throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia. While several of these were established prior to IFAD's corporate recognition of the importance of knowledge management, some efforts have been made over the years to align these networks with the broader knowledge management strategy of IFAD.

Much ground work has been done at IFAD at the corporate level to raise awareness of the importance of knowledge management practices to the operations of IFAD. Knowledge management officers have been added to the regional divisions; these officers have a vested interest in the development and performance of the regional networks and related knowledge sharing and capacity building activities. These officers note that there have been some successes in Africa and Asia with the incorporation of knowledge management as an activity in new projects, although how this is done varies. Some projects add a communications officer responsible for KM; some assign the KM responsibility to the monitoring and evaluation function; some KM-relevant activities are aligned with how the country programme

managers (CPMs) interact with project directors, including regular group meetings to share experience and challenges. Outcomes from these various activities are similar: some tangible knowledge products (reports, assessment, and so forth) that can be used by Project Managers, and useful processes/techniques that create awareness and increase demand for KM in recognition that it can improve the way that projects function. In Asia Pacific, IFAD recognizes the value of IDRC's methodologies for encouraging knowledge sharing. In Latin America, IDRC informants have noted other innovations in IFAD's KM-related work, in particular the "learning routes" approach with projects in Latin America, which have been designed to stimulate innovation among local beneficiaries (entrepreneurs, farmers associations, and so forth.).

Nevertheless, the inputs from various IFAD interviewees would suggest that there is still considerable room for improvement. There are ongoing challenges on gaining clarity about the role of KM at the corporate level and how that connects to implementation of KM within the projects on the ground. National governments continue to question the funding required to support KM activities. The IFAD knowledge management officers presented a range of views on how to implement KM/KS at the regional level, although all are consistent on the point that the primary beneficiaries are the projects (although these are not necessarily the only beneficiaries). In the view of the knowledge management officers, KM/KS should begin with a view to improving performance of IFAD projects, through process improvement as part of the monitoring and evaluation systems; through provision of technical support gained through access to expertise in thematic networks and discussions; and through other means. The knowledge management officers also recognize that knowledge is not perhaps flowing upwards to the regional level, division or corporate levels particularly well. Whatever may be done on KM/KS at the project or national level, it does not necessarily inform other activities within a region or across regions.

There is also an emerging consistency among the four knowledge management officers interviewed on the difference between KM/KS as a capacity building programme, and the building or fostering of expert networks that provide technical or research content needed by the projects. In many ways, the regional "networks" have functioned more as capacity building programmes than as structured networks, although (particularly in the IFADAfrica case), thematic networks are used to bring in technical knowledge.

IFAD may be at a crossroads in its approach to the regional networks as originally conceived, and the role of KM/KS in the projects. A strategic rethink may be warranted, bringing together all the IFAD staff involved in FIDAmerica, FIDafrique, IFADAfrica, ENRAP and KariaNet. Each of these networks had their own "history" and evolution; some have ended and others are in the midst of yet another transition or transformation. But it is clear from the inputs provided as guidance for KariaNet, that there are lessons to be learned about strengthening or even fundamentally redesigning all the regional approaches to KM/KS.

This has implications for the KariaNet study: While a range of options has been presented in this paper, it might be timely for IFAD to do its own internal reflections on the full spectrum of regional approaches before pushing strongly towards one option or another for KariaNet.

IDRC's interests in KariaNet have been driven by a recognition that IFAD projects are not the only rural development projects in the region. By broadening out the stakeholder group in a regional network, there is an opportunity to realize greater benefits to all working on rural development in the region. Also, in the early days of KariaNet and ENRAP, both IDRC and IFAD recognized the intersection of information and communications technology and how it can foster and support KM/KS more extensively and effectively. This required the need to build capacity for using these new tools; IDRC therefore

introduced a stronger emphasis on experimentation in ICT enabled KM/KS. As these initiatives evolved, concerns arose around project design for KM/KS, including the lack of clear connections between proposed activities and anticipated or desirable outcomes. Both IDRC and IFAD also changed direction somewhat in reducing the emphasis on ICT experimentation and implementation (although in some views, there is still a critical need to address communications infrastructure and capacity in rural development projects.)

IDRC informants expressed some concerns around the generalist "talk" about KM/KS: in their view, there is still considerable, rather vague conceptual thinking on KM/KS. In IDRC's view, there is a need to become more pragmatic; to get back to understanding KM/KS in the context of specific needs and development outcomes.

IDRC does not have quite the same overt attention as IFAD to KM as a corporate strategy. Attention to KM is perhaps more implicit than explicit. Reflecting its history and culture as a research institute which in turn supports research in the South, IDRC has always considered itself a knowledge institution. But in corporate documentation, it is less clear exactly what IDRC staff in general understand about KM and its place in the corporate learning/continuous improvement process. There is an emphasis on information management: proper information management supports IDRC 's corporate objectives, "helping the Centre ensure that knowledge is accessible, used, and shared within research communities, by decision-makers, and the general public, in a timely manner and across geographic regions"[4]. The general job descriptions for Program managers include responsibility for KM, although that is not really defined. The Evaluation Unit has a central role in the continuous improvement process, but this is not necessarily couched in the language/concepts of KM/KS. With the devolution of the Bellanet Secretariat, there does not appear to be an internal champion for KM/KS at IDRC, although former Bellanet staff continue to provide facilitation and training in various KM/KS activities, when contracted to do so by various IDRC projects. IDRC informants to the KariaNet study suggested that what could be interesting would be to get a much deeper understanding of processes that stimulate learning and understanding – tools and techniques and approaches for pursuing networked learning and sharing.

IDRC too needs to give some consideration to its approach to KM/KS and to networking. It has experimented with a wide variety of models and approaches, from communities of practice, to research networks and networked think tanks, to virtual platforms, to knowledge capitalization capacity building. But this experience may not yet be internalized and may not be influencing future project design.

This too has implications for the KariaNet study. IDRC should perhaps also consider its own internal process in what KM/KS and other learning and networking processes have to offer all its projects and how to incorporate these processes more systematically and effectively into project design. In effect, IDRC may need a more consistent solution to how they include KM/KS in project design, with clearer logic paths from activities to outcomes. This in turn may influence the design for the future of KariaNet and other regional activities.

6. Lessons from IFAD's regional networks

While a methodologically sound, evidence based report is desired, there are also administrative realities with KariaNet that must be acknowledged. Most important is the position of one of the founding partners, IDRC, who agree that their support to foster the network is time bound. At the end of Phase 2,

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[4] IDRC strategic plan 2010-2015

IDRC will move on to other priorities and activities. IFAD subsequently has indicated that another phase might be possible, but using a local agency, and possibly with different goals and objectives from KariaNet 2.

The devolution study team have concerns about the viability of successful devolution, no matter what the operating model, in this timeframe. Key informants in the study, both regional and international, have suggested that more time may be needed to foster KariaNet in its current phase, but the administrative reality is that this will not be possible.

Further, the history of similar networks (FIDAmerica, FIDAfrique ,IFAD Africa, ENRAP) suggests that even with the time invested, the regionally coordinated approaches to fostering knowledge sharing among the stakeholders have not (or not yet) evolved into stand-alone regional and national networks as is being posited for KariaNet. The circumstances for each of these networks of course vary considerably; nevertheless the outcomes have some common characteristics. Based on documentation provided for FIDAfrique and ENRAP, participation by the international member of the study team in mid-term reviews of FIDAfrique and ENRAP, participation by the regional member of the study team in the Phase 1 evaluation of KariaNet, and recent interviews with key informants directly involved with all five networks, these characteristics include:

Lessons from other IFAD regional networks	Implications for KariaNet
• <u>Lack of clarity on the difference between "the program" and the "network", or between "networking" and "networks".</u> • With the exception of FIDAmerica, all regional networks in one phase or another invested considerable time and resources in building capacity for KM/KS, in efforts to shift operating cultures in the projects from working in isolation to strengthening performance by sharing experience. • Networking occurred to greater and lesser degrees but this does not necessarily mean that "networks" emerged. In most cases there appears to be some confusion in project design. Activities were planned to support networking and knowledge sharing, but activities were not planned to build and manage structured networks. Actual structured networks did not emerge.	• This distinction between building capacity for and supporting networking and knowledge exchange, versus the actual structuring of a regional and/or national networks, needs to be made clear. KariaNet as a capacity building project is not the same as KariaNet as a structured network, with roles and responsibilities assigned to members, group activities (beyond participating in KM/KS training), delegation of tasks to specific members, and so forth.
• <u>Emphasis on the IFAD project as the primary beneficiary, from IFAD's perspective</u>. • Most of the regional networks considered that KM/KS should be built into the business cycle of the projects: emphasizing continuous improvement, learning,	• There are differences of opinion among those interviewed about whether KariaNet should return to a primary focus on strengthening IFAD projects, from both IDRC and IFAD perspectives. There isn't the same critical mass of IFAD projects at the national level in this region (in some cases, there is only one

monitoring and evaluation. • Also, most of the regional networks learned that the KM/KS activities were most effective when focused at the national level, with particular attention in at least one network to focus on engagement with the Ministries of agriculture. • In all regional networks, however, the project designs became more ambiguous when efforts were made to extend the reach of the regional "networks" to include other beneficiaries. It became less clear what outcomes of the KM/KS activities were intended or how those outcomes would be measured.	project), which immediately makes it difficult to focus at the national level if IFAD projects are the primary beneficiary. • KariaNet is accepting a principle of subsidiary (that knowledge is shared most effectively at the level at which it will be used) and is focusing its efforts at the national level. However, it is taking the broader view, that all stakeholders at the national level involved in rural development and agriculture should be included. But this makes it more difficult to then assess the outcomes of KM/KS activities.
• The need for expert and technical support: IFAD Africa suggests that they have had demonstrable success with their thematic networks, by setting those up as separate and distinct from the "umbrella" KM/KS activities of IFADAfrica. In effect, IFAD Africa is the capacity building program; the thematic networks (each with its own coordinator and membership) are the communities of practice supporting very targeted information exchange on key issues in demand by the projects: Rural finance; water management, and so forth.	• KariaNet appears to be adopting a peer learning approach – where practitioners are being helped to learn from each other. There is somewhat less emphasis on how technical and research experts are brought into the process. Some consideration should be given to separate the KM/KS peer learning function, from the needs driven function for specific technical knowledge and support.
• Time intensive. Developing a culture of knowledge sharing among rural development projects takes time.	• There is considerable difference between KariaNet phase 1 and phase2; the concentrated emphasis on capacity building for knowledge sharing really began with phase 2. Consequently, KariaNet has had less time than IFAD's other regional networking projects to begin to develop a general understanding within key stakeholder groups of KS processes and benefits.
• Requires facilitation. There is evidence from FIDAmerica, IFADAfrica, FIDAfrique and ENRAP that knowledge has been shared among/across IFAD projects within a given region for the benefit of those projects, but that without ongoing facilitation, knowledge sharing begins to drop off.	• IFAD projects do benefit from planned knowledge exchange activities, but such activities do not continue in a self-organized fashion when facilitation is suspended or ended. There is some ongoing KS activity at the national level among project managers and country program managers in a few countries in the ENRAP region, but this does not appear to be systematic or sustainable in the long term, particularly if staff being to

	change.
• The coordinator is key. Deep engagement and ownership by the regional coordinators was not accounted for and incorporated into any transition, whether (as in the case of FIDAfrique), there have been shifts to new hosting organizations between phases; or in FIDAmerica, an ending of facilitated KS support; or in ENRAP, an incorporation of the knowledge back into the regional branch at IFAD.	• The role of coordinator must be seriously considered, in particular where there may be a change in the coordinator. The convening power of the coordinator is based on relationships built over time with stakeholders; it is extremely difficult to transfer those relationships to someone else. This will be particularly challenging in KariaNet, where most of the convening power lies in the current coordinator's own personal networks and "relationship capital" in the region.
• Unclear influence at corporate levels for IFAD and IDRC. Knowledge capitalization occurred but it may not have been as influential at a corporate level in either IFAD or IDRC. All regional networking efforts have produced wide ranging knowledge products, thematic discussions of common interest, manuals on knowledge capitalization processes, and other resources. It is unclear, however, how these have been internalized at a corporate level with IFAD's regional divisions (and in the case of ENRAP, IDRC).	• Whatever option is chosen for the future of KariaNet, some attention should be paid to how the knowledge and experience from KariaNet is brought home to the founding partners.

Summary of observations

A number of critical success factors for the future of KariaNet can be summarized from this overview of the characteristics of IFAD regional networks:

- Recognize the difference between functioning as a capacity building program, fostering informal networks of individuals, and building structured networks.
- Recognize the difference between KM/KS capacity building and the provision of specific, needs-driven, technical/research information for the right people at the critical time
- Delineate the beneficiaries more clearly, and in particular focus at the national levels.
- Get the logic model clear: connecting activities with outcomes more coherently and practically.
- The role of the coordinator, and the facilitation that the coordinator provides, cannot be underestimated. The social capital that the coordinator builds in each phase of these networks is considerably reduced every time the network is moved to a different hosting arrangement or with different key people involved in implementation.
- Consider how to bring the knowledge that is developed and shared at national levels up to the corporate level, to influence rural development activities in other countries/regions.

Again, the readers of this report are reminded that this is not an evaluation of the regional networks. But the writers of this report are observing that in general the regional networking projects may have

been overdesigned. It may actually be better to invest less money in these regional "networks", reduce the range of activities, be more realistic on anticipated outcomes, and as a result, be more effective and efficient in the long run.

7. Four major questions to be addressed in this study

IDRC's guiding principles for successful devolution include:

- Plan early
- Build capacity
- Collaborate and partner
- Develop a transition strategy
- Assure continuity
- Build good governance and management frameworks
- Demonstrate return on investment and secure funding.

The "building capacity" principle is particularly important for KariaNet stakeholders: " in most cases successful devolution and southern empowerment require considerable capacity building that needs to start long before the devolution occurs." The challenge with KariaNet is that there are actually two levels of capacity building:

- the first, to create the open knowledge sharing culture and skills among the target participants; and
- the second, to build the capacity to manage and grow a vibrant community of practice or a more formal, structured network of organizations.

KariaNet is still at the first level; and there may not be time for it to start moving into the second. In other words, KariaNet may not in fact be a functional network, and therefore trying to devolve it as such is problematic.

All of this has led the devolution study team to suggest that some elements of the original methodology be curtailed (such as the country visits). Based on a review of documentation provided by the Secretariat (survey findings, knowledge maps, and reports) and upon the initial workshop, the devolution study team has limited the regional investigation to four determinants:

1. What constitutes KariaNet? Is KariaNet something more than an innovative IFAD/IDRC capacity building project? Is there a sufficiently strong mission, content, social capital among the members, network structure and capacity for it to survive a transition to another modus operandi?
2. Is there a sufficiently strong demand for, or growing culture of, knowledge sharing in the region as a necessary precondition for KariaNet's success? In other words, are there enough people who now understand the value of knowledge sharing, and have both the desire to, and skills to, continue exchanging knowledge on their rural development activities, to warrant putting a coordinating mechanism in place?
3. What are the options for KariaNet's future, based on what constitutes KariaNet, and whether there is sufficient demand for KS to sustain interest in KariaNet?
4. Is there a viable external agency to host KariaNet? If the first two determinants are present, and if one of the options proves viable for KariaNet to continue, then it may be possible to devolve KariaNet as a functioning entity (either a network, or a virtual community, or a capacity building

program), to be managed by an external agency. However, two key criteria for the selection of that agency will need to be considered:

- o does the prospective agency have a knowledge sharing/knowledge management culture and skills (if they do not then the likelihood of success of devolution is limited – that basic culture cannot be built in the year remaining for KariaNet)
- o what experience do they have with managing any type of community of practice or other collaborative activity. If they do not, but if they have a strong culture/orientation to KS/KM, then those network management skills might be developed/mentored/fostered within the year by twinning with or shadowing the current KariaNet secretariat operations.

B. What constitutes KariaNet: what exactly is being devolved, with respect to knowledge, relationships, activities, and infrastructure?

One of the more difficult aspects of the devolution study has been to get clarity on the type of entity that KariaNet is. At the moment, it has all the aspects of a very important and increasing successful program for building knowledge sharing capacity in the region.   It is important to keep in mind that the primary objective is to create **"**mechanisms for sharing knowledge that enable [projects in the region] to improve their performance". In other words, the primary objective for Phase 2 was NOT to create a network per se. And yet, the project design suggests that some type of networked structure will emerge that can be devolved.

1. Definitions and operating models

A few definitions might be helpful at this stage. Universalia has suggested that all groups and networks fall into one category or another:

- Collaboration between groups of *organizations*, or inter-organizational relationships (IORs),[5] such as multi-stakeholder partnerships, strategic alliances, formal knowledge networks and networks of centers of excellence;[6] and
- Collaboration between groups of *individuals*, including bounded networks in which membership is clearly defined, and unbounded networks of individuals in which membership is open to all.[7]

KariaNet as an IOR:

While collaboration between groups of institutions is of course undertaken primarily through individuals, what distinguishes IORs from collaboration between groups of individuals is that they are primarily driven by organizational objectives. They are characterized by "the formality of the relationships (level of endorsement [by] senior management of the institutions involved), resource flows [and] shared institutional risks and liabilities" (Creech, in ADB, 2011). One version of an IOR is a formal knowledge network. Knowledge networks are purpose-driven and time bound. They emphasize joint value creation by all the members within the network (moving beyond the sharing of information to the

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[5] Term first coined by Universalia.
[6] For guidance on IORs, we suggest, inter alia: ADB, 2011; Creech et al, 2008; Creech, Paas & Oana, 2008; Creech & Willard, 2001; Clark, 1998).
[7] Laurie, et al. Untangling Communities of Practice [Draft], IISD, 2012.

aggregation and creation of new knowledge). They strengthen capacity for research and communications in all members in the network. Finally, knowledge networks identify and implement strategies to engage decision-makers more directly, linking to appropriate processes, moving the network's knowledge into policy and practice[8].

KariaNet was set up initially with a strong organizational focus – the initial base was built with the participation of IFAD projects in each of 5 countries. Other members in phase 2 also represent institutions, whether government or international agencies. And yet, KariaNet does not share many of the characteristics of other formal IORs, such as a formal charter or governance agreement, defined roles and responsibilities of members, a shared work plan with members undertaking various tasks to create new knowledge, strategies to engage decision makers into order to secure benefits for others beyond the immediate membership, and so forth.

KariaNet as a Community of Practice:

Communities of practice (CoPs) are primarily a type of collaboration between individuals. Although an organizational mandate may drive the creation, thematic focus and expected concrete results of a CoP, and an organization may provide the time and financial resources needed to support the self-commitment of members (SDC, 2007), they fundamentally remain a voluntary relationship between individuals.[9] In the analysis of regional documentation, the regional expert noted that three thematic "subnetworks" were to be created, that shared some of the features of COPs in that they anticipated voluntary participation on a range of topics:

1. Knowledge Management Systems and Practices in agriculture and rural development
2. Food Security
3. Rural Enterprise Development

Participation was, however, limited. The regional expert notes that the experience of EvalMENA but also the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC)[10] shows that the most successful discussion threads are those started on the basis of the problem to solve rather than sharing the information that is available around it. This view is consistent with good COPs management – that the participants bring to a COP their own need for specific information that will help them solve whatever challenges they face. COPs are based on a principle of value exchange: members bring something into order to gain something that they can use for their own benefit. KariaNet does not, at least as yet, appear to be functioning as a CoP.

KariaNet as a capacity building program

As noted in previous sections (A5, A6), the emerging observation from the other IFAD regional networks is that these are functioning primarily as programs rather than as networks per se, with a strong emphasis on building cultures of KM/KS among the projects and other rural development stakeholders in the regions. As a capacity building program, it is clearer to see what in KariaNet might be devolved to another organization.

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[8] Creech and Willard, Strategic Intentions, 2001.
[9] It may be noted that while a CoP can be fostered by or emerge from an IOR, its essential components may differ from its originating IOR. The relationship between an IOR and an emergent CoP is still underexplored in the literature and in practice.
[10] http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet and www.outcomemapping.ca respectively

1. **Strategic directions and core work program**
   This includes the overall KariaNet strategy, the research into regional prepardedness for KM/KS, including knowledge mapping and capacity assessments, the core methodologies for training in knowledge sharing, including how country meetings are set up and managed, and maintaining contact with participants.

2. **Technical support**
   The external agency would be expected to have the capacity to prepare and revise training materials, facilitate meetings and manage communications, including maintenance of the KariaNet web site and related communications vehicles.

3. **Operations**
   Operating capacity is also necessary, including handling of contracts for consultants, handling travel arrangements for participants in training programs, financial and technical reporting, and monitoring and evaluation.

This suggests that there may be another way to view the devolution of KariaNet, as a program for building skills and capacities for knowledge sharing/knowledge management across the region – more like an ongoing training program, than a network for action learning or policy influence on rural development, agriculture, food security and other issues.

2. International lessons on network devolution and closure

Setting aside, for the moment, the discussion of whether KariaNet is in fact a network or not, it may be useful to look at how other structured networks have approached devolution and closure. These may cast light as well on what, in the end, constitutes KariaNet.

Based on literature and consulting experience with various networks, partnerships and other collaborative ventures, there appear to be four general options for devolution or closure:

1. Devolve the network: Move the hosting arrangements to another institution; either
   a. Hosted within an existing NGO
   b. Or set up as an independent, legal entity in its own right
2. Dematerialize the network: Move the activities of the network into a virtual, self organized community of practice
3. Involution: Mainstream the activities of the network into a founding institution
4. Decommission: Wind up the network

The following are short case notes on each of these options for hosting, devolution and closure of networks.

Option 1: The network secretariat moves from an executing agency to a local/regional organization.

Example: Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN) Secretariat, transitioning from a consulting firm (AECOM, serving as a USAID executing agency) to a permanent home in the Bangkok office of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

AECEN was established in 2005 through support under USAID ECO-Asia's program of work on environmental cooperation across the region, executed by AECOM. The Network supports

environmental governance in the region, by strengthening capacity of national and sub-national government environmental agencies responsible for compliance and enforcement of environmental policies, laws and regulations.

AECEN is a formal network of institutional members with a secretariat that drives AECEN's program of work based on priorities identified through interaction with network members. Staff hired under contract to AECOM support various activities within the Secretariat, including general management of the network's program of work.

Membership in the network consists of 19 national and sub-national government agencies that have submitted formal letters of commitment to be part of the network. Members indicate needs, validate assessments compiled by the Secretariat in support of those needs, identify priorities and engage in the exchange of knowledge and experience through annual meetings, through sharing information with the Secretariat for dissemination via the website and other tools, and through more targeted, twinning partnerships between individual members.

In 2010, the AECEN Secretariat began to work on devolution, based on several drivers.

- Membership is maturing: Several countries where capacity has been built can now serve as mentors to other countries in the network
- Membership is growing, and there is a need to meet their expectations in terms of network services that might extend beyond the scope of the USAID project
- The end of the USAID funding, that will impact the range and type of services currently provided by the Secretariat

AECEN plans to complete the devolution process in 2012. A transition strategy is in place for the Secretariat to be hosted by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). This move will provide the Network with a longer term "home", established institutional support, and new opportunities for funding, including the remaining balance of USAID funding through ECO-Asia.

Success factors for the transition included:

Success factors for the transition included:	Implications for KariaNet
The network itself is well established with a Charter, a set of principles, and formally registered members, who attend annual meetings and participate in various activities of the Network	• KariaNet does not have this level of "network" structure
The host institution is well established with its own "name recognition" and a long standing program of work on environmental issues in the Asia region	• There appear to be a limited number of non-governmental or academic research centres that work across the whole region on agriculture and rural development and that have the high level of name recognition and program of work necessary for successful devolution
Knowledge from the various capacity building activities has been captured for dissemination	• Work is underway in KariaNet to capture this

General considerations for successful devolution

Should devolution to another organization be selected, the devolution strategy will need to take these points into consideration:

- Shared vision between host and network: there needs to be an alignment of interests between the host and the current membership
- Openness and transparency of the process with the members
- Oversight, decision-making and management processes needs to be put in place
- Clarity on fiduciary responsibilities, particularly if there is a transfer of funds to assist with startup with the new organization
- Performance measures, accountability and reporting need to be put in place.

Option 2: Dematerialization: The network evolves into a virtual community of practitioners working in rural development in the region.

Example: West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF), hosted initially by the Free and Open Source Software Foundation Africa (FOSSFA) but now functions as a dynamic virtual community with a listserv and virtual platform.

The West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) started as a consortium of organizations to promote Internet public policy and governance issues across West Africa through a multi-stakeholder process. The Consortium is led by FOSSFA, funded by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). Other members of the consortium include AfriNic**,** Panos West Africa**,** the IISD**,** APC**,** ISOC and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS**)**. Discussions on West Africa issues feed into the UN Internet Governance Forum.

Focusing on eight countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambie, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Togo), the WAIGF hosted a series of regional annual events and national face to face forums to build capacity for debate on the development and deployment of the Internet; and facilitated online dialogues, surveys, and other community building activities. The target audiences included government bureaucrats working in economic development, technical experts, academics, NGOs, and private IT businesses. For the duration of the OSIWA grant, organizers have worked hard to make the WAIGF process a success, but they have run into several challenges:

- Raising awareness of Internet policy as an emerging policy domain important to the region has proven to be challenging, but with surprising levels of participation and engagement at national and regional events
- Funding was short term only
- The organizational model may have been flawed: The Consortium has been supported by the partners who have contributed assistance in various forms, ranging from financial to capacity building support; but the secretariat function may not have been the best fit with the host organization. This model of a consortium without a strong central secretariat with resources proven unworkable.

As a result, the Forum has shifted to a virtual community, supported by a listserv with an online virtual platform. At a regional level, the Forum functions much more as a community of practice or community of interest, with active engagement of a number of key individuals working on Internet policy across the region. The development of national forums is no longer the immediate focus of WAIGF: but several participants in WAIGF are exploring other means for building capacity at the national level.

Success factors for the transition included:	Implications for KariaNet
A very clear area of focus (Internet policy in the South) that has attracted a dedicated group of participants	• KariaNet's primary focus is on the process of knowledge management/knowledge sharing rather than being "issue driven" at this stage. While the current stakeholder group clearly values the skills and tools needed for knowledge sharing, it is unlikely that a virtual community will emerge that is driven by passion for knowledge management per se. For those who do wish to participate in such a community, there are online venues already in place, such as KM4Dev.
Relationships built through a series of both face to face and online meetings	• While country events have been well attended, the online regional thematic discussions have not generated much participation. Building the relationships at the national level might prove more promising.
The presence of an international forum (the UNIGF) that regional discussions can contribute to	• Again, without an issue focus, it is difficult to see how a virtual community might work together to influence other larger fora

General considerations for successful creation of a virtual, self organized community: Should the creation of a virtual community be the preferred option for KariaNet, the strategy will need to take these points into consideration:

- Common purpose
- Core group of active participants
- Subsidiarity (knowledge being shared at the level where it will be used)
- Communications tools

Option 3: Involution. The network is reintegrated with a founding partner.

Outside of IFAD's own experience with taking the ENRAP website and related activities into its Asia division, there appear to be few examples of "involution" –integrating a network back into the mainstream of a founding partner. The closest exemplars are of mergers and acquisitions of networks and partnerships.

Example: Small independent network merged with a larger organization: Green Chemistry Institute and the American Chemical Society

Originally, the Institute was incorporated as a formal, non-profit organization, but functioned as a virtual network of partners and stakeholders, with no physical location or permanent staff beyond the director. Activities included research, conferences, norms and standards development and advocacy.

The Institute was considered to be successful at that scale, but with the sudden loss of the full time director, and with the desire to expand to reach a mainstream community, the decision was taken to integrate with a larger organization, the American Chemical Society. The Society recognized the track record of the Institute for innovative, longer term thinking, and the knowledge and relationships that

the Institute had developed over several years. The process of negotiating and finalizing the integration took approximately a year.

The Institute's intention was to continue as a semi-autonomous entity within the larger host. A Board of Governors was established, drawing from the original partners/stakeholders group, to oversee the strategic plan and to play a strong influencing and promotional role. This board has continued in place; however to all intents and purposes the original Institute is now fully incorporated as a line activity of a division within the host.

Success factors for "involution" include:	Implications for KariaNet
Strong identity for the network prior to involution, with substantial knowledge capital and established relationships	• KariaNet may not have sufficient "critical mass" of knowledge and stakeholders. ENRAP was better established, with a longer period of development, but while it has been "brought back" to the Asia branch at IFAD, future directions are unclear.
Strong external partners (Board of Partners) who continue to be involved in the work of the Institute	• An external stakeholder group would need to be established to ensure continuity of KariaNet
Reputation of the host has also served to provide legitimacy and credibility to the work of the Institute	• The relationship with IFAD as a founding partner works in KariaNet's favour, for bringing KariaNet back into the mainstream of IFAD's NENA division and projects in the NENA region.

General considerations with respect to involution: Should "involution"—reintegration with IFAD and its projects in the region -- be selected, the strategy will need to take these points into consideration:

- Shared vision
- Champion within the parent entity
- Integration with knowledge and activities of the parent entity
- Management arrangements (work plans, etc.)

Option 4: Decommissioning or Wind-up

No examples could be found in the literature, or in IISD's own evaluation practice, of networks that have been successfully decommissioned, although stories can usually be found of disappointing experiences. Consequently there are few criteria established on what constitutes "successful" decommissioning.

Example: Netcorps International: a consortium of NGOS working in ICTs, which disbanded when funding ended

Netcorps was established as a consortium of NGOs, supported by a Secretariat based in the offices of one of the members of the consortium. From 1999 to 2007, the Netcorps program sent over 1700 ICT volunteers to NGOs in developing countries.

The program of work was agreed to in consultation among all parties; an operating grant to the hosting organization was dispersed by the host to each of the partners to be used for volunteer recruitment and

placement, with a portion of the funding retained by the host for the operations of the Secretariat. A common training program was developed, and the members of the consortium met regularly to review proposed placements. Outside of the training program, which was developed by the Secretariat, the members did not share knowledge about lessons from their own groups of volunteers, about how the developing country NGOs were benefitting, about the role of ICT in the development process, or about the collective impact of the Consortium.

Key strengths of the consortium included:
- Negotiated a set of operating principles
- Program efficiencies: The small secretariat served a valuable coordinating function for peer review and dispersal of funds to partners, and reporting to the donor.

Part way through the history of Netcorps, the original donor withdrew and a second agency assumed responsibility for the grant. In 2007, that agency announced that it would no longer be supporting the Netcorps program. Although the members had worked together for 8 years, they saw little value in continuing to promote ICTs in development, without a major donor underwriting the work. Several meetings were held to consider options for the future, but in the end, the host organization simply wound up the accounts and members moved on to other work. Apart from a CIDA evaluation and lingering trail of Wikipedia entries and broken web links, there is no corporate memory left of the program or its knowledge, including all the training materials. The host demonstrated due diligence in ensuring financial accounts were in order and final reports submitted, but little else was considered in the wind up process. A preferred scenario would have been a proactive winding up with due consideration given to the accomplishments of the program, acknowledgement of the relationships build and the retention of its knowledge for others who might work in the ICT4D volunteer sector in future.

Factors contributing to the decision to wind up	Implications for KariaNet
Dependency on a single donor together with insufficient planning to diversify revenues in order to continue	• Same
Lack of shared objectives for the partnership as a whole: Members were given the space to take their own approach to programming. However, the consortium functioned on self-interest (access to the funds being disbursed by the secretariat) rather than shared goal, objectives, targets, outcomes and impacts. The whole did not become greater than the parts.	• As noted under devolution, there is no structured network with vision, goals, objectives and activities developed jointly by the group
Relationships: Netcorps did bring together institutions that had not worked together in the past, but little effort was made to explore what those institutions might have in common besides the immediate work program.	• Unlike Netcorps, there has been considerable effort to begin to build relationships at the national and regional levels. The country workshops, survey and knowledge mapping are important steps in identifying where common interests lie among organizations that may not have connected or shared knowledge in the past. It is unclear, however, whether enough relationship building has

| | been accomplished to sustain KariaNet in a new iteration |

Factors contributing to an unsuccessful decommissioning	What should be considered in ensuring decommissioning is a positive experience
• Lack of knowledge capitalization: lessons learned were not systematically captured and so the tacit knowledge is gone. • Lack of knowledge management: the "explicit knowledge" -- training materials and useful corporate information on this type of programming does not appear to have been saved. • Lack of brand "wind-up": the original domain name lapsed and is now being "squatted" upon by an Asian marketing company.	• Capture and communicate the network's story. • Celebrate achievements. • Use an external broker or facilitator to manage the process professionally. • Acknowledge activities that have resulted from the network. • Make a clean break.

Summary of observations

A number of considerations for the future of KariaNet can be summarized from this overview of other international networks.

- Be clear on what the entity is (a program; a network; etc.) that will be taken through a change process (either devolution, dematerialization or involution)
- There needs to be a strong existing identity, content, services and participants prior to the change.
- There need to be strong, fully engaged partners or champions who go with the entity into its next iteration. In all three examples (devolution, dematerialization and involution) key founders and partners went with the entity into its new form.
- There needs to be an alignment of interests between the new hosting arrangement (no matter how much or how little involved they might be) and the current membership
- There should be openness and transparency of the process with the members or stakeholders who have invested in the development of the entity
- Oversight, decision-making and management processes need to be put in place, even under the dematerialization option, where expectations will be placed on the members to carry the interaction forward on their own. Some structure, however minimal, is needed to ensure continuity of engagement.
- Performance measures, accountability and reporting need to be put in place.

C. Is there a sufficiently strong demand for, or growing culture of, knowledge sharing in the region as a necessary precondition for KariaNet's success? Results of regional research

The following presents learnings from the knowledge mapping reports produced by national consultants for 7 out of the 10 countries covered by the second phase of KariaNet (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon,

Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine), as well as the reports from the national kick-off meetings organized by KariaNet in 5 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Sudan) in view of providing insights for the ongoing devolution study.

Although the knowledge mapping reports were not commissioned explicitly from a devolution perspective, we believe that they provide a fair bird's eye overview of what exists in terms of KM/KS at a national level, as it is unlikely that a successful project or platform that is achieving high impact at the national and/or regional level would have missed the attention of the authors of the reports[11]. The national kick-off reports provide also additional insights on the interested/influential stakeholders at the national level and on the possible direction that the work of KariaNet could take in the immediate future and which will – in turn – influence the planned devolution.

Based on the initial lead questions triggered by the synthesis below, we developed a Survey Monkey questionnaire attached in Annex 1 and which should be circulated to 26 "champions" from 8 countries that were identified from the country analysis and confirmed by the KariaNet management in order to further deepen the analysis and get more clues on the possible direction that the devolution could take.

1. **Finding #1. Demand lies within government: The main stakeholders in / beneficiaries of KariaNet's KM/KS work are in governments in the MENA region.**

It clearly appears from the reports that the key players in 5 out of the 7 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) are the extension departments at the Ministries of Agriculture, as well as the national agricultural research centers that are also affiliated to the government. They both benefit as well from Technical Assistance by FAO and IFAD in KM/KS and other technical or policy areas (rural infrastructure, sector/crop specific assistance, administrative and technical capacity, etc…)

In Lebanon and to a lesser extent in Palestine we find other key players in addition to Ministries and national agricultural research centers, which include some specialized NGO's who developed hands-on experience by collaborating in donor funded agricultural development projects as well as an active presence of the private sector. This finding is not surprising since these two countries are prone to geo-political tensions that weaken the role of the central state and favor the emergence of parallel actors.

It is also interesting to note that all countries have been developing over the past 5 years national strategies aiming at improving KM/KS under the broader context of improving the competitively of their agricultural sectors. The most recent one in Morocco culminated in November 2011 by a Ministerial decision establishing a National Office for Agricultural Extension[12] with a clear emphasis on KM/KS within its mandate. Jordan is also putting in place a reformed body, the Jordan Centre for Agriculture Information (AGRIS) which incorporates the National Agricultural information system (NAIS), the Jordan Documentation Centre, and the National Library for Agriculture Information. Similar efforts were also observed in Algeria and Tunisia who are implementing sector-wide approaches ("regroupements inter-professionels" and "approche filière") with associated KS mechanisms.

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[11] Although we also acknowledge that such a possibility might also exists and we will try to tack-it down in the survey and one-on-one interviews that will complement the findings of this report.

[12] http://www.marocagriculture.com/le-conseil-de-gouvernement-adopte-un-projet-de-loi-portant-creation-de-loffice-national-du-conseil-agricole.html

2. Finding #2: There is the potential for KariaNet to serve a broader client base

It is interesting to note the discrepancy in the notion of "stakeholders" between the Knowledge Mapping reports and the kick-off events.

- **In the Knowledge Mapping reports** and as detailed is the previous section, **the public sector is omnipresent and significantly outweighs other stakeholders** who are mentioned but not analyzed in sufficient detail.
- **In the country events** on the other hand, **the notion of stakeholders is expanded substantially** to encompass *inter-alia* line Ministries (agriculture but also information, trade, rural development, ..), research centers (national research councils, agricultural research centers, etc…), academic institutions (universities, academic research units, …), national and regional communities of practice (funded/driven by IFAD, FAO, IDRC and others…), International development institutions (ICARDA and other CG, GIZ, AFD, …), as well as the private sector, trade unions, researchers and farmer groups…
- The **KariaNet country events reflect a marked interest in KM/KS by a wider variety of stakeholders than what is highlighted in the national Knowledge Mapping reports**. This interest is however more evident in some countries than in others and is reflected in the attendance of country events which ranges from an exclusive attendance by governments and IFAD projects in Sudan, to a relatively shy representation of other stakeholders in Algeria and Egypt, to a more balanced mixed of stakeholders in Morocco and Lebanon (although with governmental pre-dominance)

> **Food for Thought**
>
> It is true that KariaNet is currently built as an open network with its "main clients" being the IFAD and IDRC projects in the MENA region, yet we believe that the devolution should clearly define the "main clients" for the next devolved phase with an equally clear definition of the expected outputs and outcomes that the devolution should be set to achieve.
>
> **All reports highlight the need for KM/KS and the relevance of KariaNet to the regional context** and hence every category of stakeholders is a potentially valid "client". The challenge will be hence to adjust available resources (human, financial, time, …) to the seemingly endless needs of these stakeholders.
>
> The current phase is also stressing the importance of launching national networks with hopefully some experimentation on the set-up and composition of these national networks (a joint public-private partnership in Lebanon, a KM/KS NGO or working group on Morocco, etc..) and **the devolution has the responsibility/challenge of reviewing critically these experimentations somewhere towards the end of the present phase** and to incorporate the best practices in the devolved phase, to avoid having three different setups over the three phases[13]
>
> The MENA region is slowly drifting towards more inclusiveness (governance, decision making, accountability, etc…) and hence an **inclusive devolved KariaNet is highly recommended**, though inclusiveness should not mean dilution of efforts and the creation of parallel independent regional structures

3. Finding #3: It is unclear, however, what knowledge is being shared and by whom in MENA.

This is one of the questions that remains mostly unanswered by the Knowledge Mapping reports, who offer a relatively exhaustive typology of the institutional players and their mandates, but are not conclusive with regards to what is shared, how sharing is taking place and – most importantly – how knowledge is affecting (presumably in a positive manner) the end-users.

Egypt stands out with two national experiences being highlighted clearly in the Knowledge Mapping report (and involved in the ongoing work undertaken by KariaNet at the national level) namely the Aradina portal which is part of the broader Kenana Online portal[14] as well as the VERCON[15] portal which is part of the broader RADCON portal. The later seems idle as we tried to access its content twice[16] but were not given permission to register (the content is only available to registered users)

The focus on national experiences in the Knowledge Mapping reports might have also overshadowed some of the existing regional initiatives on KM/KS, such as the work of the Association of Agricultural

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[13] KariaNet I (2005-2008) worked with 10 IFAD funded projects in 5 countries and was managed jointly by IDRC and IFAD. The current phase KariaNet II (2010-2013) works over the entire MENA countries and has as "main clients" the IFAD and IDRC funded projects in the region.Presumably KariaNet III (if any) which is the subject of the devolution study could very well end-up with a third and different line-up.

[14] http://kenanaonline.com/ and http://aradina.kenanaonline.com/ respectively.

[15] The Virtual Extension and Research Communication Network (VERCON) aims to harness the potential of the Internet and apply it to strengthening and enabling linkages among the research and extension components of the national agricultural knowledge and information system. The overall goal of VERCON is to improve, through strengthened research-extension linkages, the agricultural advisory services provided to Egyptian farmers and in particular to resource poor farmers in order to increase production in food and agriculture with the goal of raising farm incomes. http://www.radcon.sci.eg/ and http://www.vercon.sci.eg/ respectively

[16] On February 27th and March 3rd 2012 respectively from Beirut – Lebanon

Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA)[17] which aims at strengthening cooperation among national, regional and international research institutions and centers and is supported by FAO. Another FAO-led initiative hosted at the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit of the American University of Beirut focuses specifically on communication for Development[18] but the portal has been "closed for maintenance" since September 2011 though its content still appears in the search engines and can be downloaded.

An interesting new initiative is the "Integrated Natural resource Management in the Middle East and North Africa" (MENARID) project executed by ICARDA with co-funding from GEF. Its goal is to establish an integrated knowledge-base approach through crosscutting M&E functions and KM functions for integrated natural resource management and which has as one of its key outputs to develop a user-friendly knowledge management platform for information dissemination, harmonization and exchange of best practices[19]. Another emerging initiative supported by IDRC is the MENA Evaluators Network aiming at promoting the supply and demand for "indigenous" development evaluation in MENA and tackles KM/KS from an M&E angle with a substantial advocacy component[20].

> **Towards a Utilization Focused KM/KS**
>
> Because of limited resources, KM/KS priorities could be defined or refined along an **intended use/user perspective.**
>
> **Users** are those individuals or groups who need KM/KS processes to inform or improve their decisions or actions. *This is distinct from the broader audience* who has a more passive relationship with it than the primary intended users.
>
> **Uses** of KM/KS can be derived from two main sources:
>
> - The *process* itself (networking, gathering regional perspectives, nurturing a learning culture, ...)
> - The *results* shared (upscaling, dissemination, information, replication of best practices, etc...)

There is a broad consensus on the need for coherence in agriculture information management and dissemination at the national level, which – in turn – constitutes an essential milestone for any upscaling to the regional level. From the Knowledge Mapping report, one can clearly tell that the there is a **renewed national interest** in this direction as well as various initiatives being prepared or implemented in the different countries covered by KariaNet.

Despite this renewed interest, **one of the key challenges facing KM/KS in the region in general and KariaNet in particular is how to become use and user driven,** and how to avoid "Empty Shells" these networks, portals and exchange mechanisms with elaborate institutional setups but who have marginal added-value despite the good intentions behind establishing them.

Michael Quinn Patton's work on Utilization Focused Evaluation[21] provides a good entry point to this notion of intended use and intended users. As such primary importance is given to the immediate users of the process rather than the audience at large (the عزيزي المزارع syndrome), and the uses of results

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[17] http://www.aarinena.org/

[18] (http://www.comdev-neareast.org/)

[19] http://ongoing-research.cgiar.org/factsheets/cross-cutting-me-functions-and-knowledge-management-for-inrm-within-the-menarid-programme-framework/

[20] The project is hosted at the American University of Beirut and entertains currently a very active D-group (http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet). Plans are to launch in 2012 a portal on development evaluation under the domain name EvalMENA http://www.evalmena.org/

[21] Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, 4th edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.

become intricately aligned with the KM/KS process along which these results were produced and shared.

Another important aspect is the **format in which knowledge is presented** and <u>which is generally adapted to meet the standards of researchers, extension workers and the specialists in international agencies rather than "grassroots" users such as farmers and other end-user groups,</u> based on the assumption that knowledge at grassroots level is "tacit" and difficult to share. A common dilemma often encountered is whether the sharing takes place at the level of the data itself or at the level of access to this data (in other words whether KariaNet acts as a data repository itself or whether it directs its intended users to the sources of data. In the ICT4D literature this analogy is referred to as "asking for milk but being referred to the location of the cow instead."

Food for Thought

As highlighted previously and while the "intended users" of the current phase of KariaNet II are rather well-defined[22], **it is crucial to define the use/users perspective** as part of the TORs of any planned devolution. Our personal preference is to stick to the KM/KS credo of KariaNet, with a **modular use/uses spectrum depending on the resources available.**

This spectrum can range from a professionally maintained portal hosted by a research institution or an NGO to a regional network of national networks, but from a pragmatic point of view **several operational constraints influence the future of the devolved phase**, especially that there is not a clearly defined institutional champion that emerged from the previous two phases and who can bring the "collective history" of the program forward (although at the individual level there are several champions who can play this role if proper institutional support is identified and secured.

The format(s) of information need to be also reviewed and discussed whether to stick to the current vocation of KariaNet as an ICT4D-inspired model or whether it wants to embrace a wider Communication for Development model involving ICT and non-ICT as this will influence by and large the devolution efforts

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4. Finding #4: There is no issue as yet that has emerged as an anchor for building an ongoing community of practitioners

Under its current design, KariaNet has the ambition of animating three thematic sub-networks along which KM/KS is supposed to be taking place:

1. Knowledge Management Systems and Practices in agriculture and rural development
2. Food Security
3. Rural Enterprise Development

Our last visit to the KariaNet portal reveals that **thematic exchange activities did not properly kick-off although the infrastructure is there** and tri-lingual background messages are prepared and posted for each of the discussion threads[23]. **The google group of KariaNet on the other hand is more active** with some 2-3 posts per week on a variety of topics that are of interest to members (advocacy issues, interesting reports, training opportunities, social greetings, etc...)

When trying to match the thematic focus with the findings of the Knowledge Mapping reports, we find that **the key concern at the national level seems to revolve around improving the linkages and**

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[22] Around 60 projects in the 10 countries funded by IFAD and IDRC

[23] http://www.karianet.org/ar/discussions last accessed on March 9th 2012

synergies between agricultural extension and agricultural research and improving the government's assistance to the national agricultural sector, and hence the KM systems theme is cited much more than the two others themes in the reports (but also in the kick-off meeting discussions)

All reports mention Food Security as an emerging national concern, but refer to it only from a policy perspective, as if it is the "business" of decision makers and international agencies, and despite the very evident reality check that the entire "Arab Spring" was triggered by the despair and frustration of a street food vendor! Food Security seems also to be assimilated to food availability while other key paradigms such as access, equity and quality are overshadowed.

The third KariaNet theme **on rural enterprise development is mentioned in a rather shy manner and only under a micro-credit angle**, probably because of the lack of successful examples and models beyond micro-credit. Still the topic is very much in line with national policies aiming at strengthening the competitivity of the agricultural sector, and with emerging practices revolving around strengthening value chains, urban regeneration of rural areas (inversing migration trends), promoting green jobs and green entrepreneurship, and – indeed – the strategic concerns related to food security could all add considerable wealth to the exchange processes

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Food for Thought

It is very important to analyze why thematic discussions were not able to kick-off "spontaneously" despite the presence of two "heavyweights" (IFAD & IDRC) and despite the presence of presumably more financial and human resources than what would be available to a devolved KariaNet.

There is no easy answer to this question, as barriers could range from logistical (computer and internet access) to technical (logging-in to the website to access the discussion as compared to a push-button reply in the google group) to more broadly having the interest and the drive to share which is also a serious assumption to consider.

The experience of EvalMENA but also the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC)[24] shows that **the most successful discussion threads are those started on the basis of the problem to solve rather than sharing the information that is available around it**.

There is hence a strategic decision to be made prior to the devolution on whether KariaNet continues to maintain a complex tri-lingual IT infrastructure with built-in discussions forums or if it keeps only a website and runs in parallel a google group or a D-group.

Our personal preference goes to the second option (general interest tri-lingual website and a moderated D-group) where the thematic focus would be driven by interest/needs and not limited to the current three thematic areas.

On the other hand, **if the KariaNet constituency believes that thematic areas should be kept** (both Food Security and Rural Enterprise Development are "hot topics" on the agricultural development agenda in MENA) **then an appropriate set-up should be considered as well**

D. Options for the evolution of KariaNet

1. Criteria for selection of the best option

In the first round on brainstorming on devolution in December 2011 in Cairo, the most important inquiry question that the devolution team was asked to consider was **how to build and independent and self-**

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[24] http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet and www.outcomemapping.ca respectively

sustaining network beyond IFAD and IDRC's support keeping in mind that no other organization is supporting capacity building in for knowledge sharing and knowledge management in the MENA region and that the needs are significant (and as confirmed by the knowledge mapping reports).

If we were to cluster the main desirable elements emerging from the analysis above, we can propose six "most desirable criteria" that should be gathered in the most suitable formula for devolution. These are consistent with the IDRC study on sustainability of networks and the dimensions of time, relationships, relevance, and resources. These criteria (for the moment given equal weights) would be:

1. **Timing: The ability to build on the legacy of the first two phases of KariaNet:** it would be highly recommendable if the devolved KariaNet (which presumably will continue operating under the same "brand name") would build on the work which was started back in 2004 by IFAD and IDRC and the "intellectual accumulation" (tacit and implicit knowledge, positive and negative experiences, infrastructure, contact lists, etc...) which has taken place since.

2. **Relationships: Having well defined Boundary Partners[25]:** it appears clearly from the analysis above that the added value from KariaNet lies in its ability to address clear-felt needs of its constituency from a pragmatic and problem-solving approach. As access to information is becoming increasingly "democratized", it is recommended that a devolved KariaNet focuses primarily on groups and organizations with whom it is working directly and where opportunities for influence exists. The choice of boundary partners will depend on whether KariaNet is viewed as a capacity development project (emphasis might therefore be on KM/KS champions in MENA, Knowledge Facilitators in IFAD-funded projects) or a network of agriculture and rural development practitioners (emphasis might be on heads of extension departments in line Ministries, IFAD project managers, university based researchers, etc.)

3. **Relevance: Being needs/demand driven for KM/KS processes <u>OR/AND</u> for results -- knowledge shared on agriculture and rural development:** KariaNet's main innovation or contribution to the agricultural development landscape in MENA is that it is the only project of its kind that gives attention to the process of building capacity on knowledge sharing. KariaNet is also working to build long term networks of agricultural and rural development practitioners for peer learning, knowledge exchange about what is being tested and what is working, in agriculture and rural development. A key criterion therefore is where the level of emphasis should lie, based on observed need and demand in the region. If both can be delivered, then that adds weight to the option.

4. **Resources:**
   a. **Has a workable, long term operating model:** clarity on the difference between capacity development for KM/KS and building and fostering networks of practitioners is an essential criteria. Models that link "network development" to a project with a fixed life cycle should be avoided as this may have been a major shortcoming of KariaNet project design. If KariaNet continues as a fixed phase "project" [involution with IFAD], then the project design needs to consider fixed term outputs and deliverables rather than deliverables like networks that require much longer term operating models.

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[25] Under Outcome Mapping, Boundary Partners are defined as those individuals, groups and organizations with whom the program **interacts directly to effect change** and with whom the program can **anticipate some opportunities for influence**.

b. **Needing reasonable start-up investment:** we depart here from the assumption that a devolved KariaNet should build on what exists and should not therefore need a complex and resources-intensive setup, especially as there are no guarantees that the needed resources can be accessed once IDRC's and possibly IFAD's support ends. The best option going forward may in fact require some start-up investment.

c. **Has a workable business model:** This takes us beyond the startup phase as the devolved structure becomes operational and where we assess its likelihood to develop a business model that can increase its chances to access multiple sources of funding (such as – for example – the ability to offer paid trainings or to provide technical assistance on KM/KS to specific projects and programs) OR that it can run entirely as a volunteer, self-organized community with no financial inputs needed.

These six "most desirable criteria" have been projected to several possible devolution scenarios that were discussed in the December 2011 meeting in Cairo, and that have also emerged from the devolution study research.

2. The options

Some combination of these options might be feasible, but first we present these as separate and distinct possibilities. The first two options posit KariaNet as a capacity building program; the next two consider KariaNet as a network. The fifth option focuses on involution of KariaNet into IFAD, with a reconsideration of the role of KariaNet in the operations and performance improvement for IFAD projects in the region, and for impact at the corporate level. The final option is to decommission KariaNet. In addition, the writers reiterate their suggestions from Section A4, that IFAD should carry out its own internal reflections and reengineering of KM/KS at all regional levels; and IDRC should reflect on how to strengthen KM/KS in project designs across all its projects.

1. **Devolution of KariaNet as a KM/KS <u>capacity development program</u> to another organization in the region.**
   There are three possible variations on this option:

   a. **Move KariaNet's regional KM/KS capacity building services to an external agency working in the region.**
      While there does not appear to be an NGO, social enterprise or research institute that specializes solely in KM/KS skills and services that could assume responsibility for KariaNet, there may be one or more local or regional organizations that have some experience with various aspects of knowledge management, networks management, communications, and capacity building who could take on the responsibility of providing KM/KS support to the agriculture/rural development sector in the region.

      Key features of this option include:
      - Value in transferring KariaNet to another known entity in the region: capitalizes on the recognition factor for that entity, and on the web of relationships that the entity brings to KariaNet
      - Organization has the infrastructure to assume responsibility for KariaNet's intellectual assets and relationships (contacts etc.)

- Organization can receive funds from international agencies to continue KariaNet programming

b. **Establish a new regional entity with KM/KS as its focus that will sustain the legacy of KariaNet**. While there are major private sector companies in the region that offer knowledge management services (such as McKinsey or EMC), there does not appear to be an NGO, social enterprise or research institute that specializes solely in KM/KS skills and services (see, for comparison, Sula Batsu in Costa Rica). This suggests that there may be a niche for a new entity to be created. This option has advantages (clear niche, entrepreneurial, likely to be responsive to need) but also a lot of operational constraints, especially that it has to be constructed from scratch with a significant start up investment and in a relatively very short time, including staff recruitment for the entity.

Key features of this option include:
- If established as a non-profit/charitable organization, most likely can receive funds from international agencies to continue KariaNet programming
- Raises the profile of KM/KS as a viable profession in the region

c. **Graft KM/KS capacity building onto an existing agriculture/Rural development information initiative that offers potential synergies:** This practically means merging KariaNet with another existing initiative, which supposedly resolves the administrative constraints and offers a new lifeline for the project, but with a significant risk of losing the KariaNet identity which has been crafted over the past 8 years.

Key features of this option include:
- Aligns KM/KS processes with existing mechanisms to gather and collate agriculture and rural development information in the region.
- Such mechanisms include the Aradina portal which is part of the broader Kenana Online portal; the RADCON portal, and others.

2. **Dematerialization of KariaNet as a KM/KS** <u>capacity development program</u>

KariaNet evolves into a virtual Community of practitioners on KM/KS: this option would supposedly bring together KM/KS "champions" identified throughout the KariaNet journey and would be open for others would be willing to join as the work progresses. Its main shortcoming is that it restricts KM/KS to an "elitist few" while KariaNet's present vocation is for broader outreach.

Key features
- Provides a space for KM/KS specialists to begin to promote more extensively a regional culture for KM/KS.
- Builds on the success of the KM4Dev community listserv globally, but focuses on regional/national challenges

3. **Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>network of practitioners</u> working on agriculture and rural development in the region, coordinated by an organization in the region**

Establish national networks on agriculture and RD with a regional secretariat hosted by a local/regional organization to coordinate activities: This option makes some sense from an operational perspective as it builds on the current and ongoing work of KariaNet, but is highly dependent on the performance of the national networks which are just starting, and their ability to fly with their own wings (volunteer based, self-organized and self sustained). The added value of the regional coordination is also questioned, especially if there is no over-arching regional program executed by this coordination that supports the networks. It would be difficult to find an organization willing to take on regional coordination pro bono; so a regional program of work on knowledge capitalization (aggregating lessons learned, field research etc.) would need to be designed and funded, with the usual risks of project funding ending and new sources needing to be found.

> **Key features**
> - Four national networks may have some viability to stand on their own at the end of KariaNet 2 (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan)
> - Regional secretariat would assist with knowledge capitalization and sharing across national networks, and link into other existing information initiatives in the region
> - Organization has the infrastructure to assume responsibility for KariaNet's intellectual assets and relationships (contacts etc.)
> - Organization can receive funds from international agencies to continue KariaNet programming

4. **Dematerialization of KariaNet as a <u>Network</u>**

   KariaNet evolves into a virtual Community or communities of practitioners on agriculture and rural development: combining the national networks with a virtual central platform. This option would provide both a place for hosting each of the national networks, but also public spaces that would be open for others willing to join. "Champions" identified throughout the KariaNet journey could be enlisted to facilitate building the community.

   Key features of this option

   - Builds on the national networks
   - Ownership rests with the members of the community, without the need for donor support.

5. **Involution of KariaNet [to IFAD] as both a capacity development program and as a program to collect, aggregate knowledge from the region on agriculture and RD**

   Narrow the focus of KariaNet only to IFAD projects: acknowledges that grounds are not mature yet for a regional KM/KS exchange beyond the strict boundaries of a single donor and its counterparts. There are two possible approaches:

   - The KM/KS function reverts to IFAD HQ; requirements for KM/KS are built into each project in the region; training is managed directly from Rome OR
   - Another local/regional agency is identified to provide KM/KS support (comparable to option 1), only the client is solely IFAD projects.

   Key features

- IFAD approaches this option in a way that integrates regional KM with the corporate mandate for KM

6. Decommission

If none of these options are deemed viable, then the decision should be taken to decommission KariaNet, and to plan for a successful and empowering wind up of the project.

3. Options at a glance, aligned against the criteria

The table below provides a matrix aligning the most desirable criteria to the devolution scenarios, with the authors' judgment about their appropriateness.

1. Devolution as a KM/KS capacity development process						
Option	**Builds on KariaNet's legacy**	**Boundary Partners well defined**	**Demand for KM/KS process support and/or Ag/RD content**	**Viable operating model**	**Need for reasonable start-up investment**	**Viable business model**
likely / unlikely / maybe						
a. KM/KS capacity development work devolved to external agency	Yes	Maybe: Could include IFAD projects; other major ag/RD projects	Need for KM/KS in region has been identified, but unclear whether sufficient demand has been fostered	Comparable to current KariaNet secretariat operations	Twinning period with current KariaNet secretariat; with transition support under Phase 2	Needs initial client base (IFAD projects?); Has potential to attract fees for service if it proves its merit
Critical question(s)	Will this option work towards strengthening a culture of KM/KS across the region? Will national government depts.; other agencies hire services of the agency?					
b. Establish a new regional NGO with KM/KS at its focus	Yes	Challenged to reconcile the interests of a broad range of stakeholders	As above	Significant effort to set up operating model: governance, legal status, accounts, etc.	Funding to get new entity up and running can be substantial	Viable if had a core client (IFAD) to start; would need market analysis to determine potential income, growth projections
Critical question(s)	Is it realistic and possible to build an NGO with a regional mandate from scratch and devolve the KariaNet mandate to it within just one year? Are human & financial resources needed to pull it together readily available?					
c. Grafting KM/KS into an existing initiative	KariaNet would be most likely diluted or absorbed	Unclear if current KariaNet members would continue to benefit	Relative only to the main theme of the hosting organization	Structure already in place	No need for startup support under Phase 2	Highly related to the ability of the hosting body to seek funding
Critical question(s)	What would be the added value for the recipient organization? (more work in exchange of what? Funding? Members? Outreach?...) Is there an extraordinary candidate for it under the current KariaNet landscape?					

2. Dematerialization as a KM/KS project: Community of KM/KS practitioners

Option			Builds on KariaNet's legacy	Boundary Partners well defined	Demand for KM/KS process support and/or Ag/RD content	Viable operating model	Need for reasonable start-up investment	Viable business model
likely	unlikely	maybe						
KariaNet evolving into a virtual Community of practitioners on KM/KS				Champions & friends, ideal group!	Process only	"Lean and Mean" structure	Uncertain: might need mentoring/ transition support during Phase 2	No cost
Critical question(s)			Is there sufficient critical mass of KM/KS practitioners to sustain the community? What is its value added? Can a virtual community capitalize on the work that the KariaNet secretariat is doing in the current phase.					

3. Devolution of KariaNet as a Network with a regional secretariat coordinating activities

Option			Builds on KariaNet's legacy	Boundary Partners well defined	Demand for KM/KS process support and/or Ag/RD content	Viable operating model	Need for reasonable start-up investment	Viable business model
likely	unlikely	maybe						
Regional coordination devolved to external agency				National networks by definition have a wide scope	Demand is being fostered at the national networks level but unclear what the demand for/value added of regional coordination on content	Comparable to current KariaNet secretariat operations	Twinning period with current KariaNet secretariat with transition support under Phase 2	Dependent on traditional fund raising approaches to donors; will be challenging when possibly competing against other regional ag/rd information initiatives
Critical question(s)			Can national networks establish themselves and grow with regional backstopping but without significant continuous investment? What is the added value of the regional coordination unless there is a clear and complementary regional agenda to the work of national networks?					

4. Dematerialization as Network (national networks with virtual community platform)

Option			Builds on KariaNet's legacy	Boundary Partners well defined	Demand for KM/KS process support and/or Ag/RD content	Viable operating model	Need for reasonable start-up investment	Viable business model
likely	unlike ly	may be						
KariaNet evolves into a virtual Community of Ag/RD practitioners				National networks by definition have wide scope	Strongest on content	"Lean and Mean" structure	Twinning period with current KariaNet secretariat with transition support under Phase 2	No cost
Critical question(s)			Can national networks establish themselves and grow without regional backstopping and without significant continuous investment? Can a virtual community capitalize on the work that the KariaNet secretariat is doing in the current phase.					

5. Involution (with IFAD) as both KM/KS capacity building and for ag/RD content

Option			Builds on KariaNet's legacy	Boundary Partners well defined	Demand for KM/KS process support and/or Ag/RD content	Viable operating model	Need for reasonable start-up investment	Viable business model
likely	unlike ly	may be						
Narrow the focus of KariaNet only to IFAD projects			KariaNet is an IFAD offspring	Just IFAD and IFAD projects	May achieve both:	Complete involution untested; alternative is a host in the region with narrow mandate	IFAD to rethink, redesign approach; will require internal resources	Dependent on IFAD's level of support and requirement of IFAD projects to contribute
Critical question(s)			Will this encounter the same challenges of KariaNet I, where the main challenge was its constant ad-hoc status (individuals leaving, projects starting and others ending, etc…) and its exclusive dependence on projects (and their constraints)?					

6. Decommission/Windup

Option			Builds on KariaNet's legacy	Boundary Partners well defined	Demand for KM/KS process support and/or Ag/RD content	Viable operating model	Need for reasonable start-up investment	Viable business model
likely	unlike ly	may be						
			KariaNet's legacy would need to be documented	Relationships would need to be celebrated	Acknowledges current challenges of both building a culture of KM/KS and mobilizing content	No operating model needed	No funding required	No business model required
Critical question			Have expectations been raised in several countries that would lead to disappointment in the founding partners IFAD and IDRC if KariaNet were to be decommissioned?					

E. The preferred option

Options were presented to a KariaNet stakeholder group in April 2012; strengths and limitations for each were explored in detail by the group, with nearly unanimous consensus emerging on the following model for the future of KariaNet:

Establish National Networks on Agriculture and Rural Development with a regional secretariat hosted by an existing organization to coordinate activities.

Model: Up to ten national networks to be fostered during KariaNet's phase 2, anchored by a champion agency in each country, each with a membership engagement strategy and workplan for mobilizing agriculture and rural development knowledge and learning for improving national level projects. A regional secretariat (with a full time coordinator) to be hosted by an organization in the region to coordinate activities across the region, monitor and support the growth of the national networks, maintain the KariaNet website and related resources, provide KM/KS capacity building and coordinate thematic, cross regional exchanges of knowledge and expertise on agriculture and rural development.

Advantages: Stakeholders felt that this option's strength was the national involvement and ownership, together with a clear focus on both agriculture and rural development and on KM/KS. They suggested that this model might attract local donors as well as government support for each of the various national networks, plus regional donors support for the coordination function. In addition to the national networks, thematic groups (food security, natural resource management, etc.) were considered an advantage. Capacity building of those involved would be possible in this option. In particular, participants noted that this option might lead to positive policy influence at the national level, and that coordination of rural development projects in the region would be more likely.

Limitations: Participants recognized that this option is the highest cost option. It needs a higher level of facilitation, there would be a greater burden on coordination and there would need to be major

awareness campaigns at the national level to secure and sustain participation. Also, it was noted that there are in general fewer donors supporting work in rural areas, and that the national governments might support this approach but not necessarily fund it.

The group acknowledged that this scenario is highly dependent on the performance of the national networks. In addition, it should be noted that the culture of KM/KS needs to be strengthened within the region for this scenario to succeed, requiring continued KM/KS capacity building. Further, the regional facilitation and capacity building will require significant financial support. This financial support will need to be estimated and consideration given to options to how those costs will be covered.

Financial support required for this model

The most important message in this study is that the stakeholders in KariaNet believe strongly that KariaNet should be grounded in the national level. However, this means that KariaNet must therefore be adopted at the national level, and the organizational arrangements at the national level will be very important. KariaNet will need not only a business strategy but also a strong communications strategy.

There are strong signals that this model may succeed. Bearing in mind that the stakeholders in the April workshop by and large represented the national government agencies participating in KariaNet, they agreed that the annual operating costs for a national network might range from $80-90K, and that these costs would be underwritten by the national department that would anchor and champion the national network. In other words, there is a willingness to pay for the national component of KariaNet.

The stakeholders further suggested that an operating budget for regional coordination and ongoing KM/KS capacity building might be calculated at 10 per cent of the operating costs for each of the national networks – or approximately $80K to $90K. An alternative approach to developing an operating budget will be to cost out specific components, possibly including:

- Salary for a regional coordinator
- Costs for website hosting and maintenance
- One annual meeting to bring stakeholders together
- Travel for the coordinator to selected national network events

There is not an immediate willingness for the national networks to contribute to the costs of regional coordination. Therefore some consideration will need to be given during the balance of Phase 2 to resourcing support for regional coordination. Based on IFAD's input to the April meeting, it may be possible for IFAD to consider continued support to KariaNet beyond phase II, which might not mean significant or new financial support but could deploy other regional resources related to capacity building.

Furthermore, based on stakeholders' discussions of the other options, there may be the potential for the regional coordinator to introduce the sale of KM/KS capacity building services to other clients in the region. Stakeholders repeatedly noted the need for building up the KM/KS culture across the region and the growing interest in KM/KS approaches. In several of the options discussed, the opportunity for fee-based KM/KS services was noted as a potential revenue source to support operations. The authors of the study caution, however, that it may take up to two years for the regional coordinator
- To ensure that the national networks are sufficiently stable that they require minimal support, freeing up the coordinator to take on KM/KS services for others

- To generate sufficient revenues from such services to offset his/her salary and travel costs
- To secure annual sponsorships to underwrite the costs for an annual KariaNet event.

Hosting services for this model

In the terms of reference for the Study, the authors were asked to consider what, if any, organizations might be well placed to serve as a host for KariaNet, going forward.

For example:

CEDARE – the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab region – is a well-established regional organization based in Cairo. CEDARE has a focus on Knowledge Management – but their view of KM is centered on data management systems, environmental indicators and other environmental assessment tools. They do not necessarily have the history of building capacity for knowledge sharing/peer learning approaches and so might not serve well as a host for a KM/KS capacity development program. On the other hand, they have strong web communications capacity and are well networked in the region, and might do well at hosting a dematerialized community of practice, with modest support.

CARDNE has been suggested as another possibility, but based on an interview and review of documentation, they have limited KM/KS experience, and limitations of their web presence suggest that they would not do well at hosting a dematerialized network. But their institutional profile suggests they might have good convening power and could be a bridge into technical expertise needed by IFAD projects and other rural development projects in the region.

Based on the outcomes of the April workshop, the authors of the study suggest instead that a profile for the services be developed and competitive call for the delivery of those services be implemented.

F. Final observations

At the conclusion of the April workshop, the KariaNet stakeholders clearly shouldered the responsibility for the future of KariaNet, recognizing the need to remain "credible" in the eyes of the founding partners, IFAD and IDRC, and noting the importance of success with the national networks as the basis for seeking support for regional coordination and capacity building. This level of commitment, and in particular the commitment to underwrite the costs of the national networks, suggests that there is the energy and buy-in across the region for KariaNet to continue. Based on this, the authors of the study would encourage the KariaNet secretariat to proceed with the next steps, to prepare a profile for Secretariat services and request groups within the region to submit bids to deliver those services. A "twinning process" should be implemented for the balance of Phase 2, in which the current Secretariat works closely with the new Secretariat, with particular attention paid to developing the business and communications plans, and working with IFAD on the possibility of continued support of the network.

Appendix 1: Key informants

IFAD	
Elaine Reinke	Knowledge Management Officer Near East, North Africa and Europe Division
Helen Gillman	Knowledge Management Officer Eastern and Southern Africa
Zoumana Bamba	Knowledge Management officer, Western and Central Africa
Chase Palmeri	Knowledge Management Officer Asia Pacific
Roxanna Samii	Manager, web, Knowledge and internal communications
IDRC	
Jean Lebel	Director, Agriculture and Environment
Merle Faminow	Program Manager, Agriculture and Food Security
Dominique Charron	Program Leader, Ecohealth
Fred Carden	Director, Evaluation Unit [source of Devolution Study]
Coordinators, evaluators of regional networks	
German Esobar	FIDAmerica Coordinator. Rimisp:-Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural
Shalini Kala	ENRAP Coordinator
Edith van Walsum	Director, ILEIA - Centre for learning on sustainable agriculture. evaluation FidAfrique; KariaNet national networks
International networks informants	
Michelle Laurie	KM4Dev member; KM practitioner and networks evaluator
KariaNet secretariat	
Hammou Laamrani	
Layal Dandache	

Appendix 2: December workshop minutes

KariaNet Devolution Study
Minutes of the kick-off face to face meeting
December 19-20 2011

Venue:
IDRC MERO regional office, Cairo

Participants:

Lead Regional experts on building and sustaining communities of practices and networks:
- Magdi Latif (FAO), Cairo
- Ali Mokhtar, Center for Development Services (CDS), Cairo
- Mohamed Kassem (Radcon), Cairo
- Ibrahim Ahmed (MCIT- Aradina) Cairo

National KariaNet Knowledge mapping experts:
- Youssef Saadani (Tunisia)
- Abir Aboulkhoudoud (Lebanon)
- Abderrahmane Aitlhaj (Morocco)
- Mohamed Kassem (Egypt)

Lead experts:
- International expert: Heather Creech (IISD)
- Regional expert: Ziad Moussa (MENA Evaluators' network)
- Director ILEIA, Ms Edith Van Walsum: Evaluator of FIDA Afrique Network

IDRC and KariaNet Secretariat
- Dr. Karimou Adjibade, IDRC MERO Regional Director
- Dr. Hammou Laamrani (KariaNet Regional Coordinator)
- Ms. Layal Dandache (KariaNet Research Officer)

Day 1: Monday, December 19

Dr. Karimou Adjibade welcomed participants and wished them a successful meeting. In his opening comments, Dr. Adjibade stressed the importance of experimentation in the KariaNet design and how recognizing the experience of others in knowledge sharing is important, both in understanding successes and learning from failures.

Dr. Adjibade also noted that the underlying challenge about the future of KariaNet is very important, as its mandate is to bring about (positive) change through the provision of access to information that can be used to achieve change on one hand, while it needs to grow and establish itself beyond the IFAD-IDRC sphere on the other

1. **Opening Session**

Dr. Laamrani presented the objectives of the study, noting the evolution of KariaNet, from its first phase in building a closed network catering for IFAD projects in 5 MENA countries (2005-2008) before opening the membership of the network to a much broader base of stakeholders, including applied research as part of the KariaNet design and and expanding the network to include the entire MENA region (2010 onwards).

Dr. Lammrani pointed that an important component of the current phase is to determine how to build an independent, self-sustaining network beyond IFAD and IDRC's support and which constitutes the core objective of the devolution study. He noted that all possibilities for devolution are open, as long as it can articulate a workable model and as long as it can determine the capacity building needs as well as the administrative and operational modalities that can secure KariaNet's longer term growth and sustainability.

As such, the study should explore what factors are needed to make a network work; what incentives are needed for participation; what services and value addition does the network provide; what hinders network progress? The devolution should also include shared learning on the functioning of networks.

Dr. Laamrani ended by emphasising that the need for KariaNet is significant as no other organization is supporting capacity building for knowledge sharing and knowledge management in agriculture and rural development in the region, although – at least from an IDRC perspective – he does not have a fundamental objection if the study comes with convincing arguments that the KariaNet adventure should stop when IFAD and IDRC are no longer interested in sustaining it.

2. The Devolution Study: Conceptual Highlights

Ms. Heather Creech, the international expert in charge of the devolution study, presented an overview of current thinking and practice on the sustainability of networks, noting that knowledge sharing and knowledge management through networks can help to increase relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and long term impact of food security, agriculture and rural development activities at the national and local level across the region. Key messages emphasized that knowledge sharing is most effective at the level where the knowledge is to be used (subsidiarity) and that networks go through adaptive cycles of development, maturity, crisis and renewal.

In discussing the purpose of the devolution study, Ms. Creech noted that the emphasis should be on ensuring that the sharing of knowledge and innovation continues across rural and agricultural development projects in MENA. The mechanism for that may be KariaNet in its present format, but there might be as well other suitable approaches that the study will try to explore.

Ms. Creech then presented a draft outline of the approach to the study, as well as the key questions to be explored (provided in Annex 1). The discussion that followed the presentation raised the following points:
- It is very important to analyse and understand the cultural barriers to knowledge sharing (KS) and knowledge management (KM) from a MENA perspective and how these barriers can be addressed.
- Identifying more clearly who are the end users of KariaNet services (researchers? Extension workers? Farmers?) and learning what are their critical needs in order to be addressed through the network
- Ensuring that KS/KM activities are demand driven, complementary and add value to other KM activities and networks in the region
- Exploring what is the return on investment in KS/KM activities and if KariaNet is the best tool for that purpose.
- Focussing on the issue of equity: small scale farmers do not have the same access to knowledge, or ability to use that knowledge, that large scale commercial farms do
- Looking to external successes like Facebook that have had real, positive impact on researchers, and on mobile phone applications that have been successful in flowing information to farmers

3. Roundtable on International and regional experiences in building and sustaining networks (moderated by Mr. Ziad Moussa)

3.1 Ms. Edith Van Walsum: Lessons from the FIDAFrique evaluation

Ms. Van Walsum summarized her recent experience in the evaluation of FIDAFrique, which is KariaNet's sibling for Francophone Africa. Her full presentation is provided in Annex 2.

The attention given to capacity building for knowledge capitalization and web use was among the successes of FIDAfrique that the evaluation could capture, as well as building the awareness, interest and culture of KM in key IFAD projects in the region.

With respect to challenges, it appeared clearly in the evaluation that the limited follow-up to KS/KM activities (beyond training) affected the performance of the project and reflected in a limited number of experiences actually documented and shared, minimal sharing beyond the immediate project sphere and the low use of the project's portal.

The strategy for FIDAfrique should have hence emphasized the need for champions as opposed to the "dormant mass", especially which few champions made most of the network's activities, but they were often under-served due to FIDAfrique's desire of achieving (perceived) equity in serving all its members equally. Another major lesson from the evaluation of FIDAfrique was the importance of giving proper weight to the KS/KM and networking at the **national level** to complement regional efforts. The evaluation also concluded that **the assumptions on how KM/KS impacts on rural poverty (the raison-d'être of FIDAfrique but also KariaNet) should have been made more explicit.**

In applying these lessons to KariaNet, Ms. Van Walsum advised that some thought should be given to **KariaNet's theory of change** – the spheres of control, interest and impact. Other recommendations included: investing in capacity to delivery results; local (decentralized) ownership of the network; reinforce with IFAD that IFAD is itself a core beneficiary of the network, and move the network operations from a culture of "network as a project" to **a culture of KM as a core business activity.**

A key question was put forward: Is there a way to build the network to have both decentralized national(local) learning loops but also to have a central information gathering and dissemination function?

In a written contribution following the workshop, Ms. Van Walsum elaborated further on the FIDAfrique/KaiaNet analogies and which included

- The need to focus in the first place on building and strengthening <u>national level networks</u>: people and organisations experience the highest effectiveness of knowledge

exchange at this level. As one of the participants expressed it: "There can be no regional networks without strong country level networks". This requires decentralised ownership, plus a lean and mean coordinating structure at the regional level.

- The importance of recognising <u>different types of 'actors' in the network</u>: champions, mobilisers, patrons, and also lurkers. It was also recognised that <u>both individuals and institutions</u> are important for knowledge networks: the individuals can push, inspire and influence , whereas the involvement of institutions give credibility, stability, and offer potential for upscaling and replication of successful approaches. Networking strategies need to capitalise on the positive energies of individual mobilisers and champions who can create momentum in institutions.

- So far and within the IFAD supported knowledge networks in Sub Sahara Africa, it is difficult to find a clearly articulated over-arching model of change, or a clear road map towards sustainable knowledge networking and the KariaNet experience can be inspirational in that regard.

3.2 Regional networks

In moderating the regional networks discussion, Mr. Moussa asked the presenters to focus on two simple questions: what was exciting within the network (A-Ha moments and experiences); and what was frustrating/constraining and should be avoided

Mr. Ali Mokhtar, Community of Practice in EcoHealth in MENA (CoPEH MENA)
- Exciting: the growth in the numbers of people participating in the network which grew from 30 to 250 after the core group drafted a charter for CoPEH MENA.
- Frustrating: the growth of the network could not become really demand driven; people wanted simply to benefit from "easy funding" but were reluctant on documenting their knowledge, even with incentives such as provision of technical assistance or fees and as if they were afraid of letting go the knowledge they detained; It was also difficult to sustain the momentum because the project was administered in 2-3 year increments rather than a 5+ years cycle
- Take home messages for KariaNet from the CoPEH experience:
  o *The need to devolve ownership to the members earlier in the life cycle of the network, otherwise they remain reliant on the coordination to do the work*
  o *Visibility of the network is an important driver for participation (proud to be part of it) and;*

- To develop and experiment a business model from the beginning and not wait *until the last* year to start thinking about sustainability

Dr. Mohamed Kassem, RADCON
- ➢ Exciting: Promoting awareness with top management and securing government support for RADCON was very important. Capacity building using a train the trainers model enabled the project to expand and grow very quickly; Many times it was possible to foster synergies between extension and research using the services platform provided by the network
- ➢ Frustrating: stakeholder identification, how to assess and meet the farmers' needs and demands, idle gaps between funding cycles

Eng,.Naglaa Mohammed, Aradina portal
- ➢ Exciting: the adaptive model that enabled the project to shift from a centralized model to a decentralized model; "Intellectual" incentives as opposed to the classical financial incentives such as the ability to "own" a website showcasing their research and their work, getting statistics and rankings (positive competition) The collaboration and support of the Ministry in creating enabling conditions (eg IT support)
- ➢ Lessons for KariaNet:
  - *Opt for an open system that can filter and monitor itself. The more you filter content, the more you risk losing potential contributors and audience*
  - *A clear M&E system is very important with a regular collection of indicators (# users, user evaluations, etc.);*
  - *put communications capacity at the core of the network; consider a range of incentives (the more a member contributes, the more features/services they can access from the network)*

Dr. Madgi Latif, NERAKIN
- ➢ Exciting: creating an enabling environment for people to acquire a KS culture, finding technical solutions (aggregators, cross-referencing systems) to relay information at various levels and counter-balance the lack of material
- ➢ Frustrating: the need for capacity development and for champions who can pilot the work.
- ➢ Lessons for KariaNet: seek synergies with existing initiatives at all levels in order to avoid the duplication of efforts.

4. Progress on National Knowledge Mapping Studies

Dr. Laamrani moderated the presentations of four national knowledge maps

- **Lebanon: Eng. Abir Aboulkhoudoud**
  - ➢ Key challenge: lack of culture for KS/KM, poor collaboration between the NGO sector and the Ministry, fragmentation of initiatives which affects the knowledge value-chain
- **Tunisia: Mr. Youssef Saadani**
  - ➢ Key challenge: Complexity of the landscape and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in rural enterprise and food security.
- **Morocco: Dr. AbderahmaneAitlhaj**
  - ➢ Key challenge: Similar challenges of complexity; also the issue of recognizing not only formal structures but informal structures; lack of coordinating mechanisms and lack in general of capacity for KS/KM, noting the need for an organization to focus specifically on promoting and building KS/KM skills
- **Egypt: Dr. Mohamed Kassem**
  - ➢ Key challenge: Lack of understanding of KM; and noting the orientation to keeping information confidential

5. **Synthesis of Day 1**

Ms. Creech provided a brief synthesis of key issues emerging from Day one:

- ➢ An emphasis on the need to focus KS/KM at the national level, but with some regional co-ordination
- ➢ The importance of passion and commitment of the network coordinator(s)
- ➢ The timing/phasing challenges – the need for longer timeframes and change models
- ➢ The ongoing challenge of building capacity for KS; and in particular for documenting knowledge and experience
- ➢ Whether and how KS/KM efforts can support directly the small scale farmer

Day 2: Fine-tuning the Devolution Study design and methodology

Mr. Ziad Moussa provided a recap of Day 1, and noted that objectives for Day 2 would be to **examine the key questions for the study and explore a range of emerging options for the future of KariaNet**.

Ms. Creech then revisited the key questions for the study presented on Day 1. Workshop participants then expanded upon those questions as follows:

- **What is the vision and what are the objectives for KariaNet or related activities, going forward?**

  – Agriculture and rural development networks are numerous in the region; but the gap lies in building capacity for KM/KS
  – Goal to be the KM/KS multiplier around the region
  – The value proposition of KariaNet is the <u>process of KS/KM</u> – changing people, changing culture to be more open to exchanging information and knowledge

- **What questions should the devolution study explore in more depth?**

  – *Who are the "Boundary Partners" of KariaNet* (the "obvious" are the 24 IFAD projects and 16 IDRC projects in the region, then the broader constituencies that are becoming involved at the national and regional levels
  – What is the *need* (including the appropriate timeframe for advancing KS/KM in the region and the scope of the knowledge to be shared)
  – What are the *special conditions for each country*? What are the individual local needs/circumstances/conditions?
  – How can KariaNet *integrate the end users* (farmers, etc) into KS/KM activities?
  – What are the *major research questions* for an entity like KariaNet? For example, how can mobile phone applications be used to meet the information needs of end users (farmers)
  – What are the *available inputs* to meet the needs? [people and information] and what is *the capacity to access/use the inputs* to meet the need?
  – **What is the competition**? [other sources of inputs to meet the need]
  – What are the *institutional and individual drivers* to use the inputs?
  – What are the *enabling conditions and incentives*?
  – What are the *institutional barriers* to access/use the inputs?
  – More fundamentally, how to shift the thinking *from network to networking practice*
  – What is the *regional coordination* need to support national networks?
  – What is the *experience from other networks supported by IFAD*/others

Next, Ms. Creech tabled a series of possible options for KariaNet's future, and tracked the discussion of strengths and limitations for each option.

In all options, the following must be considered:
- *the challenge of languages and cultures that make regional coordination more difficult*
- *gender considerations*
- *the need for an evaluation framework in the final option: identifying success factors, benchmarks etc.*

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1. Establish a new NGO with KM/KS capacity building as its focus.

Note: Will need to determine:
- Whether there is an existing NGO already active in the KM/KS field and it could be useful to narrow the focus to KM/KS within the Agriculture/Rural development domain

Strengths
- Flexibility
- Business model potential: supporting financially through contracting services
- Pricing of services could be more competitive, more viable
- Focus on integrating changes in people
- Avoids bureaucracy
- Easy to link to end users (NGOs, CBOs)
- The NGO might be more trusted – eg the "clients" would be more likely to use and to pay (vs expecting an international body to support)

Limitations
- Funding, at least in initial years while building client base
- A new NGO will not have a track record necessary to attract clients
- Are there local experts available to create the NGO and provide the services?
- Legal status – who would set it up and run it
- There are not that many regional NGOs that are performing well, due to a variety of challenges in working regionally in MENA, such as :
- Bank transfers between countries for payments for services
- Requirements for local staff to be employed

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2. Establish National networks, and provide modest regional coordination

Note: Will need to determine
   a. *What is needed for each of the national networks?*
- The champions
- The boundary partners
- Thematic areas
- Institutional vs individual membership

- Someone who has the knowledge and the leadership/charisma within an institution
  - In particular, need to consider the special conditions at each national level (Policies, tools, management strategies, capacities, infrastructure for supporting the national network, ...)

b. *What is needed for regional coordination?*
- Transferring hosting to another institution
- What type of institution?
- Would a core team of 3-5 institutions work?
- Website function
- Ability to animate, facilitate and bridge various networks (eg, organize and run annual meeting)
- KS/KM networking expertise, including ability to get tacit knowledge documented and shared

Strengths
- National networks have greater flexibility; both core features in common and unique activities and services can be defined
- Potential for good governance;
- Regional coordination focuses on supporting the national networks; facilitates re: KM training, culture development
- The current KM mapping team could serve as a core team for planning and implementing regional coordination
- Some signs of regional interest and collaboration on KS
- Regional coordination can bridge to expertise outside the region (on good KM practice)

Limitations
- Leadership challenges; need to find good institutions
- Also: people not used to working together across the region – even at the national level
- Challenge of governance – who decides?
- What are the decisions to be made?
- Risk of bureaucracy
- Risk of viability – how many national networks are needed for critical mass that warrants regional coordination?
- Funding/financing both national networks and regional coordination

3. **Grafting KS/KM capacity building and knowledge exchange activities of KariaNet onto other initiatives in the region**
  - KariaNet has experience/expertise in KM/KS
  - Is this an asset that can be transferred to another initiative to provide to KariaNet's "market" or "audience" on an ongoing basis?

4. Narrow KariaNet to focus on IFAD's projects: building KM / KS into IFAD projects in the region on an ongoing basis

5. KariaNet evolves into a virtual community of practitioners (similar to the Outcome Mapping community; KM4Dev community), with an institution or individual in the region volunteering to host the email list/website
 	
   o Is there a need for a structured network of institutional members if in fact only 2-3 national networks emerge with largely 20 individual members as the main participants
   o Would an online community of practice serve these engaged individuals more efficiently?

6. Professional association model, in which individual members pay dues; and elect a governance body who oversee the expenditure of those dues in support of an annual meeting, web communications, etc.
 	
   o Participants in the workshop suggested that based on their experience in other situations, individuals will not pay membership fees
   o Institutions might pay fees, but would need to ensure their full involvement first, demonstrate return on investment ; then might get them to pay

7. Shift the focus to embedding KS/KM training in university education for agriculture, rural development programmes [training materials to be developed]
8. Some combination of options
9. Unknown option still to be revealed

In discussing the options, the following considerations were put forward by the workshop participants as "guiding principles" for the study

> ➢ **The importance and value of the national knowledge maps being created**, the need to update these on a regular basis, by the experts themselves.
> ➢ The need for some type of **regular publication on KM/KS in the region**
> ➢ The need for **formal education/training in KS KM**
> ➢ The realistic timeframe for building a regional network is at least 10 years
> ➢ **Train the trainers approaches** have had some success in the region and could be considered in the evolution of KariaNet
> ➢ The minimum legacy of KariaNet needs to be identified and secured for the future

Also in her post-workshop report Ms. Van Walsum elaborates further on these guiding principles. In her own words:

- Knowledge <u>networking</u>, rather than networks, needs to be sustained. This means that **the culture, not the structure of knowledge networking has to be made sustainable.** This distinction and the choice to focus on knowledge networking has Implications for the devolution model, and for the form and function of the regional coordination entity.

- **It is important for KariaNet to build its own change model** and to design a road map towards devolution. These need to be flexible but there has to be clarity about the over-all direction. What is becoming clear is that in the KariaNet change model, national level networks and active individual members will play an important role in pushing for sustained knowledge networking.

- **It is often better to replicate and adapt a model than try to upscale it** (e.g. the Sudanese showed great interest in the Aradina agricultural information portal developed in Egypt; it inspired them to set up their own portal along similar lines, rather than getting hooked on to the Egyptian portal). This again shows the need for strong national level networks that can share experiences with fellow networks.

- **A regional entity ("host organisation") is needed for network coordination**, support, representation, fundraising, policy advocacy, etc. Its roles and functions need to be further specified in the course of the devolution study.

- **Each national knowledge network needs to choose a focus** (can be on specific themes or value chains). The focus chosen has implications for the membership of the network. These can change over time and so can the membership.

Mr. Moussa then presented an overview of the strategy maps component of Outcome mapping, and how it might be use in the KariaNet devolution study. In particular, this approach focuses on the **clarification of intent**. Ensuing discussion led to the observation that the devolution of KariaNet's administrative and financial functions to another institution, by itself, will not be sufficient to secure the future of KS/KM on agriculture and rural development across the region.

Dr. Laamrani then provided closing remarks, where he noted that **the KariaNet devolution study methodology would be revised based on the outcomes of the worksho**p. In particular, given the value of the national knowledge maps, <u>there would not be a need for additional country visits from the study team</u>. An option for winding up KariaNet would not be excluded, but it would need to be justified. There is an ongoing need, regardless of the future model for KariaNet, to communicate that KS/KM is important. The study will explore not only what might be the "best fit" scenario, but what is needed to implement that scenario. A second workshop

will be held to validate the final "best fit" scenario. The work will be progressing along the following timeline and milestones:

January 2-5 HC, ZM, HL	Minutes of the 1st workshop
January 8-24 ZM	Regional key informant interviews (Skype, phone) • Experience of experts managing regional networks • Other experts, key informants not able to attend the meeting Analysis of regional data collected: • Data maps review, synthesis
January 12 Full devolution study team	Skype conference call • Review of tasks and timelines
January 9-20 HC	Karianet Mid term review input • HC to prepare 2-3 questions for discussion at the 18-19 January Karianet Midterm review meeting External / international key informant interviews (Skype, phone) • IFAD managers of regional networks • IDRC experts (OM community devolution; COPELAC experience, other?)
January 23-27 HC, ZM	Description of 7-8 options (the "long list"), with strengths and limitations • Articulation of statement of intent/need • Preliminary options document circulated for comment
January 31 Full devolution study team	Skype conference call • Review of statement of intent/need • Review of long list and selection of 3 options for deeper examination
February 1-7	Refinement of statement of intent/need Mini case made for each of 3 options
Feb 8-20 Workshop participants Moderated by HC, ZM	Short E-conference to discuss with the workshop participants the draft statement of intent; the long list, and the proposed short list options. Participants will be asked a) Are these the best 3 options to move forward with b) Should we explore one of the other options on the long list in more detail, or some other combination we hadn't considered c) What additional data is needed to support each of the cases on the refined short list • Feb 8-9: presentation of statement of intent; long list of options and the study team's recommended short list:

	comments from participants • Feb 12-13: Option 1; Comments from participants • Feb 14-15: Option 2; Comments from participants • Feb 16-19: Option 3; Comments from participants • Feb 20: Summary, including suggestions for changes to options, combinations of options, etc.
Feb 21-29 HC, ZM	Full case prepared for each of 3 final options emerging from e-conference (data gaps filled, etc.)
March 4-8 Full study team	Workshop to explore 3 options, with election of the final option Final option discussed in depth
March 11-22 HC, ZM	Additional data to be collected to support the case for that option, including country visit if necessary, financial model
March 22 HC, ZM	Draft Devolution plan circulated for comment
March 31 HC, ZM	Final Plan submitted

Appendix 3: April workshop minutes

KariaNet Devolution Study: Regional Workshop
Minutes of meeting
April 3-4, 2012

Venue: Flamenco Hotel, Cairo, hosted by IDRC MENA regional office

Day 1: Tuesday, April 3, 2012

6.   Opening Session

Participants were welcomed by Dr. Hammou Laamrani, Senior Programme Officer, IDRC, and invited to consider a central question over the two days of the workshop:

How can knowledge networks on rural development in the MENA region be sustained?

Dr. Karimou Adjibade, Regional Director, IDRC MENA, opened the session with his thoughts on how knowledge networks can enhance the effectiveness and performance of projects and programmes. Such networks can provide action research and learning for rural development projects, and for the broader community of practitioners and stakeholders working in the region. He then focused the central question to:

How do we organize ourselves to ensure the sustainability of KariaNet outcomes?

He expressed his own hopes for the workshop, that participants would reach some consensus on the best option that will enable the rural communities to benefit from the added value of KariaNet; and, further, that knowledge would be seen to be a real and viable tool for rural communities.

Ms. Elaine Reinke, Knowledge Management Officer, NENA region, IFAD, noted that, from IFAD's perspective, the devolution planning for KariaNet is important, to sustain it beyond the financial support of IDRC and IFAD. She presented her ideal scenario – a KariaNet that is self sustained by its members; anchored in a host that has a vested interest in KariaNet's future.

A "round table" of comments was then solicited, with each participant noting their expectations for KariaNet's future. Comments could be grouped as follows:

- That knowledge management / knowledge sharing (KM/KS) continues to be a relatively new concept in the region, and that many approaches are needed, from building capacity of agriculture extension workers, to delivering short messages by mobile phone directly to farmers.

However, there are regional information systems and related activities that show real promise and KariaNet should work to connect effectively with other systems in the region.

- That KariaNet would build capacities in the region on communications, including the "ability to talk simply about complex science and data;" "the skills to tell the stories of success to the poor," and communications for development thinking, so that science can be used by those who need it the most.
- That KariaNet would help rural development practitioners to share knowledge with each other, of both success and challenges, including how to do knowledge documentation/ systemization/capitalization, and information management. Those who share knowledge gain as much from the process as the recipients of knowledge sharing.
- That KariaNet would provide knowledge on rural development from within the region rather than having to rely on generic knowledge on the Internet.
- That KariaNet would help to bridge the different levels of knowledge needs, between researchers and farmers and producers, noting that much knowledge is lost between farmers and researchers.
- That KariaNet would help with co-ordinating awareness of the many actors and projects on rural development in the region.

2. Presentation on the Devolution study: Heather Creech and Ziad Moussa

Two presentations were made by the study authors. The first presented the rationale for devolution, the views of the founding members, the experience of other IFAD and IDRC networks and communities of practice, and four major approaches to network development that other international networks have taken:

- Devolution – narrowly construed as moving to another operating host/model
- Dematerialization – moving entirely to virtual platforms and operations
- Involution – taken back into a founding member and becoming a line activity of that member
- Decommission – winding up the network and moving on.

This presentation was followed by the research into regional perspectives, drawn from KariaNet's country knowledge mapping, national events and survey, leading to the scoping out of a range of options for the future of KariaNet.

3. Round Table comments on the range of options presented

At the conclusion of the two presentations, comments were invited from the participants. Key observations included:

- That while the first phase of KariaNet may not have shown promise, the current phase is doing so, and it would be a shame to wind it up too soon. However, KariaNet does need to continue within a frame of sustainability.
- That the experience of ENRAP and its exit strategy might be helpful, nothing that the primary objective of the exit strategy was to sustain the benefits created, including the training materials and approaches and the accumulated knowledge on the ENRAP website.

- That a FIDMENA option (more closely aligned to IFAD, comparable to IFADAfrica) might of interest, but that IFAD would have to underwrite it financially.
- That it is important to build the culture of knowledge sharing in the region, and that if the network works on the KS culture then costs will be reduced in future: people will be willing to contribute their time and cover their own costs for participation. However, KS needs to gain in importance for this to happen. More time will be needed to help the KM/KS culture evolve.
- That indicators are also needed to help determine whether the KM/KS culture is starting to change.
- That the potential for duplication with other regional initiatives continues to exist.
- That regardless of the option chosen, the name KariaNet should be retained.

4. In depth consideration of the proposed options

Proposed options were quickly reviewed once again after lunch.

1. Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>KM/KS capacity development program</u> to another organization
   a. Hosted by an existing organization or
   b. Set up as a new organization or
   c. Grafted onto another existing KM/information initiative
2. Dematerialization of KariaNet as a <u>KM/KS capacity development program</u>,similar to KM4Dev[26] [ie: just KM/KS practitioners brought together via a listserv and online resources]
3. Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>Network of agriculture and rural development practitioners</u> coordinated by an organization in the region [ie, a consortium of national networks, coordinated by a regional secretariat hosted by an organization in the region]
4. Dematerialization as a <u>Network of practitioners</u> [ie, a virtual community with thematic lists on agriculture and rural development issues]
5. Involution of KariaNet to IFAD
6. Decommissioning of KariaNet [ie, wind up]

Two options were removed from consideration for the purposes of the afternoon process: the option to wind up KariaNet; and the option for KariaNet to be absorbed back into IFAD.

All the remaining options were left on the table for consideration. Each option was displayed on a flipchart. Participants broke into small groups, and visited each flipchart/option. At each option, the small group was asked to take 10 minutes to discuss and record the advantages and disadvantages for that option. At the conclusion, all groups had reviewed and considered all options.

Review of the options

1. **a) Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>KM/KS capacity development program</u> to another organization: - ie: move to another organization and focus solely on KM/KS training and support, not just in agriculture and rural development but other in sectors as well.**

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[26] KM4D is an international listserv supporting the interactions of KM/KS practitioners around the world.

Advantages: Participants considered that this option carried a certain prestige with its new mandate and new field of work, with the potential for new partners. It would inherit and build on KariaNet's infrastructure, including its functioning network of organizations, its server and domain name. In this option, the potential existed for both seed money and support by institutions needing KM/KS services (such as IFAD, IDRC, government departments of agriculture). Finally, it might have more operational flexibility when no longer bound by IDRC and IFAD rules.

Limitations: Participants believed this option might need additional time to restart with a new focus, and might inherit new problems with its new focus. It might be more difficult to sustain financially. Some felt that the emphasis just on KM/KS might not be in line with KariaNet's vision for supporting agriculture and rural development. The more general focus on KM/KS was of lower priority than the orientation to KM/KS within the agriculture / rural development sector, and it could end up being of marginal interest within the region. It was felt that there was a risk of not having long term commitment from the organization hosting it, and that there would need to be a strong agreement/contract to ensure results. The right organizational fit for the host would be critical; with the risk that the hosting organization might only be interested in the short term funding opportunity to take on KariaNet, rather than sharing KariaNet's values.

1. **b) Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>KM/KS capacity development program</u>: Set up a new organization to provide KM/KS services**

Advantages: The advantages were similar to those mentioned under option 1(a): participants believed this option would be more flexible (not bound by IDRC and IFAD rules), and would provide a unique service for KM/KS in the region. There was good potential for funding through projects and selling services. It would sustain the KM/KS concept and increase the competency of institutions in the region in KM/KS.

Limitations: It would be complex to set up a new organization (time and money; logistics such as getting work visas for staff) and financial sustainability might be difficult. More resources would be needed – it might have a higher cost than giving the work to an existing organization. Some felt that this option was more supply driven than demand based.

1. **c) Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>KM/KS capacity development program</u>:** Graft KariaNet's KM/KS capacity onto another existing KM/information initiative in the region

Advantages: Participants noted the value of a pre-existing infrastructure, contacts, partnerships, established demand, the possibilities for scaling up (resources already being in place) and the reduced risk of failure. In this option, KariaNet would add value to the recipient initiative, but for this to succeed, a prerequisite would be the need for strong synergies between KariaNet and the recipient initiative.

Limitations: In this option, there is a risk that the KM/KS focus of KariaNet would be marginalized when grafted onto another, existing information initiative. Continuity would not be assured, if the priorities of the other initiative took precedence. There would be a risk of overloading the recipient initiative, leading to the failure of both.

2. **Dematerialization of KariaNet as a KM/KS <u>capacity development program:</u> similar to KM4Dev.** Ie, just KM/KS practitioners in the region, linked by a listserv and online resources

Advantages: Although participants valued this as a new concept, few advantages were noted, primarily being the low cost and limited needs for human resources (just a facilitator).

Limitations: Participants questioned the benefit/added value of this approach, and had reservations about the value of these kinds of voluntary efforts. There might be limited participation, with members involved at different levels of capacity and risking the emergence of elites within the network. The difficulty of getting buy-in, and lack of critical mass to make it work would be a significant barrier to success. Most important, the range of languages in the region would make this approach difficult to manage. It would need to be combined with some face to face interaction and research to maintain a flow of new knowledge. Some possibility of setting up a regional subgroup under KM4Dev was mentioned in plenary, but with little take-up from workshop participants.

3. **Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>Network of agriculture and rural development practitioners</u> in the region, coordinated by an organization in the region:** The structure would consist of national networks, coordinated by a regional secretariat based at another organization.

Advantages: Participants felt that this option's strength was the national involvement and ownership, together with a clear focus on both agriculture and rural development and on KM/KS. They noted the possibility to attract local and regional donors as well as government support. In addition to the national networks, thematic groups (food security, natural resource management, etc.) were considered an advantage. Capacity building of those involved would be possible in this option. In particular, participants noted that this option might lead to positive policy influence at the national level, and that coordination of rural development projects in the region would be more likely.

Limitations: Participants recognized that this option is the highest cost option. It needs a higher level of facilitation, there would be a greater burden on coordination and there would need to be major awareness campaigns at the national level to secure and sustain participation. Also, it was noted that there are in general fewer donors supporting work in rural areas, and that the national governments might support this approach but not necessarily fund it. Also (consist with all options), for this option to be accepted in the region, the KM/KS culture would need to be strengthened.

4. **Dematerialization as a <u>Network of practitioners:</u>** a virtual community of agriculture/rural development practitioners, participating in thematic discussions

Advantages: Participants agreed that this was the least expensive option, was self-sustainable and would have a high return on investment. There is already a critical mass of engaged interest (ie, current membership of KariaNet), as well as a high demand for technical, agriculture related knowledge. That there would be no intermediaries was seen to be an advantage.

Limitations: Participants felt that in a virtual network, strategic partners would still be needed, in particular for advocacy on agriculture and rural development. Incenting participation might be difficult,

with the risk of low buy-in. Support for the necessary infrastructure (server, etc.) would need to be found. Most interesting, some felt that this virtual modality already exists within KariaNet, and would continue regardless, so it is not a real devolution option.

Additional comments

The facilitators then went through each set of comments and asked for any additional comments from the group as a whole.

- Again, the issue of the need to change KM/KS cultures was noted, together with the need for incentives to share knowledge; noting that one major incentive is that through the process of sharing, the practitioner becomes more known to her/his colleagues. The need for champions and passion is also critical for successful culture change.
- Given the challenge of KM/KS culture building, that it might still be worth establishing a regional KM/KS Centre of Excellence as a separate initiative, regardless of the option chosen for KariaNet.
- Selling research and KM/MS training services to governments can help to underwrite costs of managing the network.
- That consideration should be given to combining options in order to make a business case, based on a blending of financial inputs:
    o In kind funding
    o Sale of services
    o Small proposals
- That a thematic network on ICTs for connecting local farmers might be worth exploring .
- That some thought should be given to IFAD hosting a NENA website and providing IT support (as it proposes to /currently does for the Asia Pacific region).
- Finally, participants were reminded that ultimately, the objective is to improve the livelihoods of poor people. The future of KariaNet needs to keep in mind how the lives of the poor will be improved through KariaNet's work.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the facilitators asked participants to stand next to the option that they most preferred. Nearly unanimous support emerged for option three:

3. **Devolution of KariaNet as a <u>Network of agriculture and rural development practitioners</u> in the region, coordinated by an organization in the region: National networks, with regional secretariat**

Day2: Wednesday, April 4, 2012

1. Review of Day one outcomes

The KariaNet secretariat team commented on the energy and consensus from the previous day; with the important finding that there is a shared understanding of KariaNet and the workplan. The national level work to date has contributed to the choice of the option grounded in the national networks, even though it may be the more complicated option going forward.

Ms. Reinke from IFAD found it an interesting day with excellent participation, and was glad to see a practical discussion and consensus for the way forward, choosing an option that goes towards a real evolution of a self sustained network. She noted the demand for KM/KS in the region, and the fact that everyone is insisting on going on with this project flags an important lesson for the future: active participation is based on the interest of the target participants.

Others noted that the methodology of the study was very clear, and felt that excellent work was done in presenting the options and guiding the way to the final choice. In general, participants appreciated that everyone was already thinking of the future; that results have already been achieved and there is potential for future success.

Participants suggested that the most important message from Day one was that KariaNet should be grounded in the national level. However, this means that KariaNet must therefore be adopted at the national level. KariaNet will need not only a business strategy but also strong communications strategy. The organizational arrangements at the national level will also be very important.

Participants agreed that the option was not chosen haphazardly, and that it is the boldest and most appropriate option available, being closest to the ideal for the members of the network. Many stepped forward to comment on how they intend to proceed in their own countries, with developing their national workplans. Others noted that if performance at the national level does not work, then it will become very difficult for the regional coordination to continue. The whole process might become academic and not practical in the absence of being grounded at the national level. Several emphasized the need to get information to the farmers. Coming into the workshop, some felt that the biggest challenge would be sustainability and that a virtual network would be the lowest cost and therefore most financially sustainable; but if KariaNet, under option three, can better serve the interests of farmers, then it will be possible to bring the donors on board. Others noted that it will be necessary to depend on national resources as well as external resources.

The challenge will be to create a practical plan that demonstrates value that is fundable, and focused on country and regional needs.

2. Review of the preferred option:

The facilitators walked through the preferred option once again with the group.

Establish National Networks on Agriculture and Rural Development with a regional secretariat hosted by an existing organization to coordinate activities

Focus
- – Agriculture and rural development knowledge
- – Link between science and implementation
- – Coordination of Agriculture and rural development projects
- – Institutionalisation and policy influence at the national level
- – Capacity building on KM/KS

Relationships
- – National involvement and ownership
- – Thematic groups (Food security, NRM, Local knowledge)

Resources
- – Possibility to attract local and regional donors
- – Possibility to get government support

3. Expansion of the option

Participants then broke into two groups to expand on this option. They were asked to describe the operating model in more detail, noting both necessary criteria for success and potential barriers.

On the national networks: A target of 10 active participating networks should be set. There must be main focal points in each country: it should be possible to delegate national staff to work on this, making good use of staff who may be underutilized in government departments. The national KariaNet office should also consider having a coordinating board with contacts/focal points in other ministries, farmers associations, and so forth, as well as a national workplan. Some consideration should be given to the minimum degree of formalization for the national networks, as well as the minimum contribution that each network has to bring to KariaNet: iIs there some specific capacity that each country can bring? Participants noted that this is going to be a challenge, because micro environments are quite different. What is needed is local knowledge to share on local issues--knowledge that will benefit the farmers on the ground.

On the regional host: that organization must have a KM/KS officer, with a KM/KS culture in the organization, and a server and knowledge sharing platform. The regional coordinating unit should offer training on KM/KS – for example, training on best practices in extension services. A governance agreement among the members may be warranted, and participation reinforced with an annual meeting. The regional coordinator needs a clear role and defined responsibilities; the roles of members also need to be defined.

On success factors and barriers: Desired features of KariaNet would be the exchange of local experience on agricultural practices; capacity building; linking and coordination between KariaNet and other projects; and possibly policy influence. Indicators and evidence of the value of KM/KS will need to be monitored and collected over time.

KariaNet will be competing with other networks; there are other countries such as Jordan that have good networks, and KariaNet will need to coordinate and exchange with them. An alliance with regional activities should be considered. It was suggested that IFAD could contribute to training for KM officers, maintaining the website, and so forth. Participants agreed that if this new phase for KariaNet has a good start, a right start, it can continue for a long time.

4. Elements of the business plan for this option

Participants then returned to their two groups to propose an annual budget for the national networks and regional co-ordination, and the revenue sources (how much in grants and from whom, in-kind, sales of services).

Both groups noted that national network budgets will vary widely, due to the specific economic and other circumstances of each country. Nevertheless, there was a promising degree of consistency in the budgets proposed by both groups.

- Meetings and training for KM officers in each institution at the national level: $10K to $20K
- Website and server, $5K to $10K
- Salaries for national coordination: $10K to $20K
- Newsletters and other promotion: $5K to $10K
- Facilities infrastructure $30K: – for some states, computers and Internet infrastructure will be a high cost item; in others, a need for a car and maintenance for getting into the rural regions will be required.
- Logistics, other: $5K to $7K

In total, the annual budgets proposed ranged from $80K to $90K. Both groups confirmed that in many cases, the state would finance this. Sustainability of the network will come from the capacities built; financial sustainability will be provided by the state participants. In some cases, it was noted that the state can provide staffing and facilities, but not additional funding for expenses; not because there is no money but rather because there is no recognized place for KM in the budget and so no resources have been clearly allocated for that.

The main financial needs will be for the regional coordination: participants agreed that an estimate of 10% of a national budget, aggregated across 10 networks, would be a good rule of thumb for the necessary revenues to support regional coordination.

5. Criteria for selecting the hosting organization and terms of reference for a regional coordinator

The final exercise for the workshop was group brainstorming on the criteria for the host and terms of reference for the coordinator. The host would need to be:

- A known organization, with the trust and confidence of regional experts, ministries and NGOs
- Involved in agriculture and rural development
- Must have a commitment and capacity for KM/KS
- Good IT infrastructure and technical support
- Human resources, logistics, and facilities

A job description for the coordinator would include:

- Being known in the region
- Ability to do the coordination among the national networks
- IT literate
- Experience working with donors and raising funds

- Multilingual

Some thought was also given to the process for choosing, with preference given to announcing a call for proposals for hosting, and a call for applications for the position.

6. Final session

In the final session of the workshop, Dr. Laamrani discussed what the next steps might be. Over the next 18 months, KariaNet will work to establish the national focal points, and will build on the willingness of the participants and their organizations to share the cost of the national networks in the next version of KariaNet. One issue that warrants further debate is content: KariaNet will be a knowledge network connecting the region, but more thought should be given to the scope of issues in agriculture and rural development.

He noted that the call for proposals to host the regional coordination for KariaNet will need to be transparent and merit-based, with the network members contributing to the decision on the best arrangement going forward. The decision will not just be donor-based. Timing is also an issue: participants suggested that it might take up to six months to identify the most appropriate host, leaving at best a year to work side by side with the current Secretariat, to build relationships, develop new proposals, and so forth.

He posed the question to the group: "If we all agree that this is the way we are moving – then if we have $50,000 to support the transition, what are the three things to work on for this to happen?" All agreed that the funding should not simply be shared among the countries, but rather it should be used to establish the regional unit, ensure that the regional unit is well connected with the national focal points, and support a few regional activities (such as a meeting, proposal writing and so forth).

Ms. Reinke was invited to share her thoughts on the outcomes of the workshop. She indicated that in her view, the workshop went well, providing much food for thought. For IFAD, the strategic importance of KariaNet is the capacity building element. IFAD wants to see an option in which the KariaNet successes so far are consolidated and sustained. From IFAD's perspective, if there is an evidence base suggesting the potential for long term sustainability; then she will advocate in IFAD for support to help KariaNet realize that potential. KariaNet needs to be anchored in the region for the longer term in order to make the case for this support, cautioning that this might not mean significant financial support or new resources, but rather deploying other regional resources related to capacity building. This workshop is a promising sign that there is evidence for sustainability, and commitment by stakeholders in the region.

She flagged a few points to consider in exploring further IFAD support. There will need to be buy-in at the divisional level. In particular, the Country Programme Managers in the region will need to see the added value in each country. They need a better understanding of what KariaNet is contributing on the ground. As other participants noted, the co-ordination with other knowledge-related efforts in the region needs to be considered; Ms. Reinke suggested that "we as IFAD need to think about the meaning and function and strategic importance of the networks that IFAD is supporting in the region. KariaNet needs to fit into that roadmap as well."

Participants then asked whether it might be worth organizing a meeting in the future to address the issue of regional coordination in more detail. Such a meeting would explore how to coordinate and have partnerships with other activities that IFAD is funding in the region, with FAO, ICARDA and others. Such a meeting might also be a donors meeting, bringing together donors in the region to meet the new host for KariaNet, once selected.

Participants agreed that the workshop had provided a wealth of workable ideas, but also flagged that these ideas are new to the region. There is nothing to date on how to make networks work that is directly relevant to the MENA region. Nevertheless, participants shouldered the responsibility for the future of KariaNet, recognizing the need to remain "credible" in the eyes of IFAD and IDRC and noting the importance of success with the national networks as the basis for requesting future support.

At the close of the workshop, participants were reminded that capacity building for KM/KS is not an end in itself, but rather should lead to improving the lives of farmers and others in rural areas. Ultimately, KariaNet has only two options: to close, or to succeed.