



Final project report

Global Learning for Local Impact

The development of a Blended
Learning Program

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Summary: This project is a joint project between the international NGO, The Constellation for AIDS Competence (the Constellation), and the Norwegian Centre for Integrated Care and Telemedicine (NST), co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Constellation fosters local responses to HIV/AIDS through an international network of facilitation teams. The project aim was to strengthen the Constellation by improving the training of facilitation teams, in terms of quality of the training and number of facilitators trained. The Constellation and NST have developed Blended Learning as an Internet based training program to support the teams in their face-to-face interaction with communities. The Blended Learning program contains six modules. It was developed and tested in English and versions have subsequently been produced in French and in Spanish. The program has been introduced to several partners and some have already started up.

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Preface

As part of the 46664 Arctic Concert in Tromsø in June 2005, an international workshop on e-health support for HIV/AIDS management was organized by the Norwegian Centre for Integrated Care and Telemedicine. In the course of the workshop, various concepts for sustainable telemedicine and e-health service and distance training for HIV/AIDS health management were discussed. This project is a development of one of the proposed actions from the workshop based on an agreement between the international NGO, 'The Constellation for AIDS Competence' and the Norwegian Centre for Integrated Care and Telemedicine, University Hospital of North Norway.

Without the support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the many coaches and coaches-to-be all around the world who have shared their experience and knowledge, we would not have been able to develop this Blended Learning program. We would also like to thank WHO for hosting the final work shop in Geneva, January 2010. Thanks to all of you. Now we have only to make it happen!

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Summary

This project has its origins in one of the workshops held during the '46664 Arctic Concert' in Tromsø in June 2005. It is a joint project between the international NGO, The Constellation for AIDS Competence (the Constellation), and the Norwegian Centre for Integrated Care and Telemedicine, University Hospital of North Norway (NST). The Constellation has been the project manager and the NST has been the focal point for the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs which have co-funded the project.

The Constellation proposes a process (AIDS Competence Process) to foster local responses to HIV/AIDS and the exchange of lessons across the globe through an international network of coaches. In order to expand this approach and to maintain its quality, the Constellation and the NST have designed a Blended Learning Program (BLP) that combines local training with a wide range of online tools for learning, communication, and collaboration. The project aim was to strengthen the Constellation for AIDS Competence by improving the training of facilitation teams, in terms of quality of the training and number of facilitators trained. The Constellation and NST have developed Blended Learning as an Internet based training program to support the teams in their face-to-face interaction with communities. The Constellation will also use the Blended Learning Program to improve the number of its new coaches and their quality.

The project has been delivered according to the project plan, on time and within budget. The Blended Learning program contains six modules. It was developed and tested in English and versions have subsequently been produced in French and in Spanish. The program leads a group of students through a program that gives them the knowledge and experience to facilitate the AIDS Competence process. They are accompanied in this process by an experienced Constellation coach. A total number of 20 facilitators have been trained, which is, for different reasons fewer than envisaged in the original plan. The learning platform for the Constellation is based on the open source LMS ATutor. The platform runs on infrastructure (physical servers, database and other server software) provided by the NST. All software used in the infrastructure is open source, and the constellation platform has a dedicated database.

The program has been introduced to several partners and some have already started up. Blended Learning will be mainstreamed in Constellation activities and four key steps will be taken to ensure its sustainable use over time. In both partnerships of the Constellation, as well as internal capacity building efforts within the Constellation network, the use of Blended learning is a high priority in 2010.

Introduction

In order to expand their approach and maintain the quality of the AIDS competence process the Constellation and the NST have developed a Blended Learning Program. It is, however worthwhile to start with a description of the organization which came into existence on 8 December 2004. The inspiration for the organization was the idea that the current way of dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic was not working, with the conviction that solution lay, not with medical and commodity interventions, but with the resources of the communities themselves. In a nutshell, this is the starting point of the idea of AIDS Competence.

The challenge for the Constellation was to convert the idea of AIDS Competence into a practical methodology that communities could use on the way to AIDS Competence and to develop a group of individuals who could help communities on the journey to AIDS Competence. That practical methodology has evolved into what we call 'The AIDS Competence Process'.

The word to emphasize in that last sentence is 'evolved'. The AIDS Competence Process was not available as a complete product on the 8 December 2004. And it is not available as a complete and final product at the time of writing. It is developing and changing in the light of the experiences of the people who use the process and the people who facilitate the use of the process.

However, when the Constellation for AIDS Competence came into existence the essential elements of the AIDS Competence process were in place. And they have not changed. The tool that a community uses to analyze their current situation is 'The Self Assessment Framework'. There was a conviction that communities needed to learn and to share from their experiences at events that we call Knowledge Fairs. There was a conviction that those experiences could be organised and documented in Knowledge Assets. And these elements have been explored and tested with communities around the world.

What happened in the years after the foundation of the Constellation was that those elements were developed into a coherent process through the application in the field by a variety of different people working in a variety of situations. Those people were the Constellation coaches. As they met and worked with each other on different projects, experiences and ideas were exchanged and some shared understanding of the process developed across what is essentially a virtual organisation. But the Constellation had no mechanism, and no desire, to impose a standard methodology across the organization.

There is no doubt that the prime drive to establish a Blended Learning program was to enable the Constellation to be able to reach out to a wider audience at a lower cost than our traditional way of working. But there is also no doubt that the members of the Constellation recognized the need for a description of the AIDS Competence Process that was recognizable throughout the organisation, that was based on the experience of the organisation, but that was not imposed on the organisation. The Blended Learning program was seen as one of the vehicles that could hold together the processes and the methodology of the organisation.

We hope that this introduction begins to make clear that the development of the Blended Learning program was much more than the documentation of a methodology that was fixed or evolving slowly.

It was, and is, one of the important mechanisms by which a new and rapidly growing organisation explored and documented the way in which it went about its work. It was a task of exploration, not a task of documentation.

This document is a report on the two year (January 2007 to December 2009) project that has been co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The role of the Blended Learning program in the work of the Constellation has evolved during its development. This evolution will be discussed in detail in the report, but the Constellation now sees a broader role for Blended Learning in its business plan than was originally envisaged.



ACP Learning event, the Philippines.

Our approach

The Constellation has developed blended learning as an Internet based training program to allow teams to introduce the AIDS Competence process to communities. Our intention is that the program reflects the way in which we aspire to work. As a result, the program is distinctive in a variety of ways:

- The team is the basic unit for the program. You cannot take it as an individual.
- The heart of the program is the experience of facilitation as the team works with a community to apply the AIDS Competence process.
- The team learns through reflection upon those experiences. We support that reflection in a variety of ways: blogs, forums, e-mail, chat...We also use more light-hearted quizzes and games through the program.
- A Constellation coach accompanies and supports the team as it goes through the program.
- We have based much of the more formal content of the program on videos and stories taken from the Constellation's experience.

Most importantly, our priority has not been simply to produce facilitators and coaches who are able to deliver the AIDS Competence process as a process. Rather, our concern has been to ensure that they can deliver our process in a way that is consistent with the way in which we seek to work with communities. We characterise this way of working and way of thinking by the acronym SALT. The S stands for Stimulate, A for Appreciate, L for Listen, Learn and Link, and T stands for Transfer and Team. SALT is the mode of interaction with communities, and is practiced in each step of the process. The initial part of the program introduces this approach in considerable details. But in addition, in each of the modules where the students look at each step in the AIDS Competence process there is a 'digression' that explores our approach in a different, sometimes less serious ways.



Something to Learn. Something to share. Building the river diagram in Chiang Mai, Thailand

What we learned from the development of the Blended Learning program

In the course of the development of this program, we have had to learn a seemingly endless amount of details about e-learning. In addition, we have come to understand the communities with which we work more deeply, we have come to understand how our process is used and we have come to understand how we as an organization are changing. These large issues are discussed below.

Who owns this course?

It took us a very long time to understand that this is not a training program. The heart of the program is the experience that the SALT team has with a community. The relationship that develops is a real one, i.e. that relationship is not an exercise and must not be treated as one. In practice, what does that mean? Well, at the outset, we set up six modules and we thought that it would take six months to work through the modules. Then the test groups told us that this way of looking at the world was inconsistent with our approach. This program could only move forward as quickly as the relationship between the SALT team and the community progressed. The pace of the program would not be determined by us, it would not be determined by the program participants, it would be determined by the pace that the community was comfortable with.

That basic idea should have been obvious to us at the outset. It was not.

Do we REALLY understand our process?

When we set out to build the Blended Learning program, our idea was that it would be an opportunity to work on some parts of the process that needed a little more polish. In those areas where we had a lot of experience, the task was to document our practice. Where there were inconsistencies in approach, this was a good opportunity to iron them out. In some areas, we needed convert a good idea into a practical and useful methodology.

That expectation has been fulfilled, but the challenge to our process has been more fundamental than we had foreseen. The requirement to organize material in a consistent and coherent way has provided us with a challenge. The requirement to present real examples from the field that were consistent with the methodology has provided us with a challenge. And the requirement to collect comments and opinions on their experiences of the process has provided us with a challenge.

We talked with coaches in detail about how they saw particular aspects of our process. People gave us their opinions on the basis of their experience and that has enriched and will continue to enrich the Constellation. We can characterize a rather deeper difference in terms of emphasis. Some coaches saw a particular aspect of the process as particularly important and wanted to place emphasis there, usually because of the coach's background in other organisations. These differences led to discussions and on nearly all occasions those discussions have been productive. There is no doubt that this debate is continuing and will continue.

During the project, we have noticed that organizations that work with the AIDS Competence methodology change their internal ways of working. Thus, the process not only leads to competence in dealing with the particular problem of HIV/AIDS, but also impacts the organisation in a much broader fashion. This process of change has not been highlighted in the current version of Blended Learning.



SALT team visiting a home in Mozambique

We were changing as we were writing the program

As people have worked with the AIDS Competence process, they have seen that the approach that they were using could be applied to a whole host of other issues that communities were facing.

One area where the Constellation has been applying the 'Competence' approach with great success has been malaria. You can find more details of the work that we have done to date at www.malariacompetence.org. In 2010, we will be starting a two year project with Roll Back Malaria to extend the approach to six additional countries in West Africa, and as part of this project we will be collecting material to develop a specific Blended Learning program on Malaria Competence.

During 2008 and 2009, we were gaining lots of experience around the topic of 'competence' around the issue of malaria. But could we and should we begin to integrate this new thinking into Blended Learning on AIDS Competence? This was a tension running through most of 2009. We decided that in order to avoid confusion the Blended Learning program was about AIDS Competence. In the French version of Blended Learning, we have used a couple of video clips from the world of malaria where they seemed particularly appropriate and where they were much better than anything else we had.

But the tension is not going to go away. We will need to confront the issue when we consider developments in 2010. Are we moving to a program dealing with Malaria Competence? Or are we dealing with a much broader issue that we now call Community Life Competence.

Results – what have we delivered

The project has been finalized according to the project plan, on time and within budget. A total of six modules has been developed in English, Spanish and French and are available publicly. 20 facilitators have been trained, which is less than originally planned. One of the reasons for this is that the content development took longer than anticipated. The pilot groups contributed to the content production which again was determined by the pace of each community. For the Constellation this was valuable feedback, which influenced on the further development of the Blended learning program.

Another reason for delay is that the project and the NST in particular, underestimated the importance of understanding the working process. The e-learning part of the Blended learning program depends on face to face meetings and the pace of the communities. To obtain a balance between these two factors, it took longer time than expected in the development of the program.

The most significant obstacle to progress occurred at the start of the project when Farellia, a resident of Madagascar, found that the time taken for the Belgian authorities to process her application to work in Belgium for a year was far longer than she had anticipated. During this time, Farellia found reliable communication with Europe was difficult and that working on the NST platform was impossible. This made progress much slower than we had planned. On the other hand, it was a good learning experience for the project to see how the platform had to be developed in order to work successfully in low resource settings.

The structure of the Blended Learning Program

The program leads a group of students through a program that gives them the knowledge and experience to facilitate the AIDS Competence process. Groups of students who take the program go through a set of cycles of learning so that they can facilitate communities to use the AIDS Competence Process. The students read and listen to videos, they work with a community and they

reflect on their experiences (both as individuals and as a group). Throughout this process, an experienced Constellation coach supports and stimulates the team.

The program is made up of **six modules** in addition to an introduction.

Module 1 deals with the fundamental idea of 'Local Response'. Local Response asserts that communities have the capacity to deal with the issues that they face. The role of the Constellation is to stimulate Local Response.

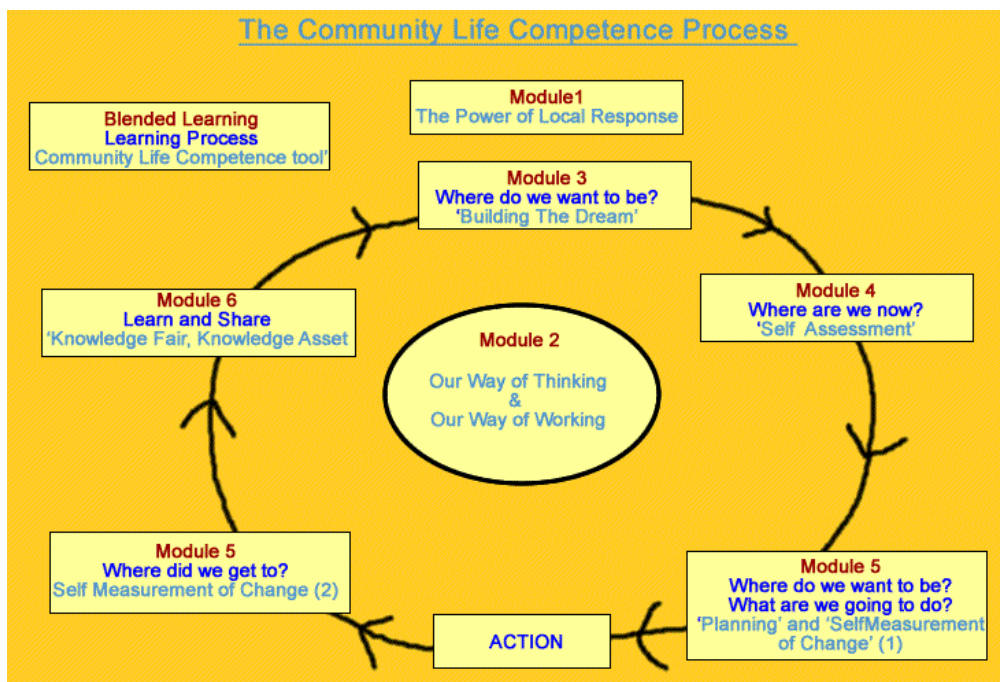
Module 2 introduces our 'Way of Thinking and Way of Working'. This WoW & WoT is captured through the acronym SALT. SALT describes the way in which we stimulate Local Response. The next four modules step through the AIDS Competence process in detail:

Module 3 deals with 'Building the Dream' and describes how to facilitate a community as it builds a description of the ideal destination of AIDS Competence.

Module 4 deals with the 'Self Assessment' where the community assesses itself in terms of the 10 practices that lead to AIDS Competence.

Module 5 describes how the community builds an Action Plan that will allow the community to move towards AIDS Competence. In addition, it discusses how the community can measure their progress as they carry out their Action Plan.

Module 6 discusses ways in which communities can 'Learn and Share' at different scales.



The methodology presented in the Blended Learning program is an example of a Deming Learning Cycle (Modules 3 to 6) applied with a particular mindset (Modules 1 and 2). The link between the Learning Cycle, the AIDS Competence process (light blue) and the Blended Learning program (red colour) is shown in the diagram above.

During the period of development of Blended Learning, the Constellation has applied this methodology to a range of situations. We have found that the methodology is particularly applicable to malaria, but we have also used to allow communities to address issues such as diabetes, preparedness for

pandemics, adolescent reproductive health, peace and reconciliation and education. We now describe this more general learning process as the 'Community Life Competence Process'.

Blended Learning in English, French and Spanish

The Blended Learning program was developed and tested in English and versions were later produced in French and in Spanish. The structure of the course is exactly the same in the different versions, generic as it is, but the content had to be adjusted according to each specific language. This means that the videos used in the French version is in the native language, with French speaking experiences. The Spanish version is not yet completed as we want it to become, and is today a direct translation of the English version. As we gain experience working in Spanish speaking countries we will replace English speaking videos with content in Spanish.

The content is firmly based on the experience of delivering programs in the field. We are not seeking to teach in the conventional sense. Rather, we look to stimulate reflection and discussion by the participants based on their personal experience with the content.

There is a relatively modest amount of content that can be considered as formal 'training'. With the exception of the final module, this formal content is not conceptually demanding. However there is a more substantial body of content where the student is required to reflect on stories and videos that present the results of using this approach. And finally, the heart of the program consists of working with a community as it seeks to apply the AIDS Competence process in its own situation. Once again, the heart of the learning process comes from personal and group reflection on these experiences. Throughout the program, blogs, forums and e-mails provide the basis for reflecting on the exercises on both an individual and a group basis. This process of reflection and discussion is facilitated by a Constellation Coach.

The screenshot displays a web interface for a Blended Learning program. At the top, there is a header with a logo of three stylized figures and the text "Blended Learning - English version". Below the header is a navigation bar with buttons for "Home", "Forums", "File Storage", "Blogs", "Photo Album", and "Directory", along with a "toggle side menu" button. The main content area is titled "Students share their experience on Local Response" and includes a "Print Page" icon. The central part of the page features a yellow box with the following text:

EXERCISE: Your previous experience on Local Response

Have you come across Local Response? Are there occasions when you have seen people take action to solve a problem? Are there occasions when you have been part of a group that took action to solve a problem. Perhaps it was at work, where you live, in a group you belong to. You will find Local Response in the most unlikely of situations.

Try to understand WHY people took action on this occasion.

Can you tell your story on the Discussion Forum? Present your ideas as to WHY the action took place. Read the other stories that are there and the explanations. And then together we will try to understand what are the conditions under which Local Response can occur.

On the right side, there is a "Content Navigation" menu with a tree structure:

- Home
 - Course calendars
 - Introduction
 - The tools we use
 - Module 1: The Power of L...
 - The Phayao Story as...
 - More examples of Loc...
 - Why the Constellatio...
 - Students share the...
 - Module 2: Our Way of Thi...
 - Module 3: Building the Dream
 - Building the Dream
 - Why Building the Dre...

The Blended Learning program

The Blended Learning Program in French

When we were planning the Blended Learning program early in 2008, we envisaged a translation into French of the original English version. During 2008 and 2009 our experience of working with the AIDS Competence Process in Francophone countries (with particular emphasis on The Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and Belgium) made it possible to develop and to produce a French version of the Blended Learning program. So although the description of the steps in the process are effectively a close translation of the English version, the stories that are used either to illustrate a point or as the basis of group discussion are taken from 'French' experiences and the videos used for similar purposes are French speakers describing their experiences in French. (There are some exceptions where we have continued to use videos in English either because we believe that they are particularly appropriate or because we have not (yet) been able to capture the experience in French. In this case, the transcript of the video that is given is a French translation of the English spoken in the video.)

The Blended Learning Program in Spanish

The Spanish version of the Blended Learning program is (at the moment) a direct translation of the English version. The videos are the same ones as we use in the English version with transcripts of these videos in Spanish. The Constellation has to date had little experience of working in the Spanish speaking countries and thus we simply do not have content in Spanish. In fact one of the reasons for developing the program in Spanish is to start the process of developing content in Spanish to allow us to enter the Spanish speaking world. The Constellation is beginning to have experience of working in Barcelona and in 2010 we will begin to replace some of the English video material with content in Spanish.

Versions of the Blended Learning Program

Blended Learning is presented in three versions within each language which can be described as follows.

The Internet based-Coach supported Blended Learning Program

This is the version of the program that was envisaged at the start of the project. The groups of individuals work through the program in the secure environment hosted by NST. Access is controlled through password controlled log-ins and a Constellation coach accompanies the group as it works through the program.

The CD based-Coach supported Blended Learning Program

When we started to discuss Blended Learning around the world, and as people tried to access the content, we rapidly discovered that there was a huge group of people who were enthusiastic to use the material but who did not have consistent access to the Internet. . As a result we have modified the material on the 'normal program' and placed it on a CD.

At the time of writing, we are working to run the program in this way with a group of people in Nagaland, in the remote northeast of India. With this group, Internet access is slow and unreliable, but it does exist. So the group plans to work with the material from a CD, but it hopes that it will be able to make use of the Blog and Forum facilities on the NST site.

The Open-access version of the Blended Learning Program.

We have developed a version of the Blended Learning Program that is freely available on the Internet

without password control. The version is essentially the same as the Coach-supported program, but it does not have access to the Forum and Blogs (or the Constellation coaches). Although we are not offering formal support for this version of the program, we will offer any groups that wish to work through this version of the program access to our social network site on Ning¹. Here they can form their own 'group' to work in a private space or they can ask for help and support on the public site.

At the time of writing this site has 435 members and these include a large number of active and knowledgeable members of the Constellation. This group could develop to provide advice, support and encouragement to groups who engage with the Open-access version of the program.

Technical platform

The learning platform for the Constellation is based on the open source LMS ATutor1. This platform allows the Constellation to open unlimited number of participants and groups which can be used for learning programs, collaboration or mini-websites with information to a general public.

Each group can set its own access criteria, and its own language. A group can have the following access levels:

Public: everyone can see all content, everyone can join

Protected: you need to be logged in to see content, but everyone can join / register themselves

Private: you need to be logged in and to be accepted by an administrator to see content.

In addition to the base platform there are three languages installed for the constellation: English, French and Spanish. More languages can be added when needed, and each group can set its own preferred language.

The platform has a number of tools and features that can be configured per 'room'. The most important are:

- Content can be created and edited directly in the platform. You can easily upload video, sound clips, images and animations and have them embedded.
- Tests can be created either to formally test students or to create surveys for the site. Tests and surveys will give you good statistics on the submissions. You can optionally create certificates which can be connected to tests, allowing for custom course certificates upon completion
- Discussion forums can be used to collaborate. You can have unlimited forums, and also restricted access to groups of users within a course.
- Announcements can be made to inform members.
- There is an internal messaging system, allowing users to send private messages to each other.
- A file storage tool can be used to upload and collaborate on files, complete with revision control.
- You can subscribe by e-mail to announcements, inbox messages and forum posts.
- It is possible to download content for offline use.

¹ <http://www.ning.com/> checked 6 January 2010

There are a number of additional features available, but these are the most important ones, and those most frequently used by the Constellation.

Infrastructure

The platform runs on infrastructure (physical servers, database and other server software) provided by the NST. The platform is located at its own (sub) domain: <http://constellation.helsekompetanse.no>

All software in the infrastructure is open source, and the Constellation platform has a dedicated database. This allows the Constellation to move its service to a different infrastructure provider or different domain name easily if need be.

Use of the program today

The program is introduced to several partners. Some of them have already started up, some are about to start. In India, Constellation coach Bobby Zachariah was not confident with organizing Knowledge Fairs and extracting Knowledge Assets. The respective modules in the Blended learning program offered him direct knowledge, experiences and illustrations to develop this area.

In the Philippines the Blended Learning program gives John-Piermont Montila the tools to improve his facilitation skills together with his team in Ilo-Ilo province. John-Piermont Montila from the Philippines was trained during a 2-year process with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Constellation currently has no coaches in the Philippines to support him face-to-face. The Blended learning Program gives him the tools to improve his facilitation skills together with his team in Ilo-Ilo province. Once two other coaches have seen him facilitating the process well, John-Piermont can then become a full Constellation coach.

UNAIDS India funds a one-year process of AIDS Competence in North-East India. Coaches and facilitators introduced Blended Learning, both online and on a CD-rom to the 35 participants from Networks of PLHIV and NGOs from the states of Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram.

Potential member organizations in at least 11 countries will use Blended Learning to transfer the approach at affordable costs with good quality. BelCompetence in Belgium are in the process of starting up their work with a local sub-district of Brussels, Schaerbeek. They plan to introduce Blended Learning as a way to bring community initiatives together and empower women in the sub-district to actively engage in health issues. IndoCompetence will use Blended Learning to transfer Reproductive Health Competence, an adapted version of the process developed with UNFPA. The partners will be high schools and NGOs with English speaking participants for the moment.

Building the Dream

The Dream of the Individual



work of art!

"What is your Dream?" Each person reflects on what they would like to see in their world.

"What is your Dream for the future of your Community?" Everyone thinks about their ideal community.

And finally, "What is your dream with regard to HIV/AIDS for yourself and for your community?"

Everyone describes their dream. If people want to describe their dream with a picture, that is fine. Remember this is a vision, it is not a

Building the dream. Screenshot from the Blended Learning Program.

Sustainability plan

Blended Learning will be mainstreamed in Constellation activities and four key steps will be taken to ensure its sustainable use over time. In both partnerships of the Constellation, as well as internal capacity building efforts within the Constellation network, the use of Blended Learning is a high priority in 2010. This is specified in the 2010 plan as well as the Constellation five-year strategic plan 2010-2015. Four steps define the sustainable use of Blended Learning:

- Step 1:** To integrate BL as a part of the Constellation's business offer
- Step 2:** To increase the capacity of Constellation coaches
- Step 3:** To support member organizations to spread the approach at scale
- Step 4:** To inform policy makers and organizations

Step 1: Integrate Blended Learning in the business offer.

In 2009, the Constellation has responded to 13 opportunities for partnerships where the Blended Learning Program was offered in the proposal, in different formats. For 2010, this integration will continue and expand.

Integrating Blended Learning requires a link to the needs of our partners, both technically and financially. Table one shows an overview of this categorization. In some cases, integration of Blended Learning is not possible yet due to language or IT obstacles. If language forms an obstacle, the Constellation will involve the organization in developing the material in its own language as a means for deeper understanding the content as well as further developing Blended Learning in other languages.

If access to a computer forms an obstacle, the Constellation will first propose the CD-rom- version, as recently has been done in North-East India or it will rely on another mix of communication. In DR-Congo, facilitators prefer to combine the Internet version in Internet café's with text messaging. In North-East India, facilitators prefer CD-rom versions and phone conversations. The Constellation will remain flexible in finding ways to combine different technologies for an effective integration of Blended Learning.

Examples

In 2009, a number of partnerships have started the integration of Blended Learning following the above business offer.

GOLD option. UNAIDS Guyana invited the Constellation to build the capacity of Faith Leaders, UN Teams, PLHIV, Health Service Providers and Civil Society Organizations. Limited by the location of Guyana, the Constellation will use the Blended Learning Program to transfer the approach. Two visits will happen in February and April 2010 with coaches.

GOLD + CONNECT option. Hivos, a Dutch NGO that supports over 100 NGOs working on HIV partnered with the Constellation to build the capacity of its 11 key partners in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and India. Blended Learning will be used to achieve a good transfer of the approach and three face-to-face interactions including the Vienna 2010 AIDS Conference will be used for increased connection and exchange between partners.

BRONZE option. Belgium. A group of individuals in Brussels with limited financial means will use Blended Learning to increase their understanding of the approach and local responses.

Step 2: Increase the capacity of Constellation coaches and facilitators

A Constellation Coach has demonstrated that he/she can transfer the ability to apply the Life Competence Approach to a new group of facilitators. Before a person can be nominated as a coach, he/she must have worked in face-to-face events with two other coaches. They are responsible for the nomination of the new coach.

The 65 current coaches of the Constellation have a variety of backgrounds, experiences and knowledge on the approach. This contributes to creativity within teams and coaching teams are always constructed in a way that allows for learning. Each coach has his strengths and areas to improve. Blended Learning now allows each coach to identify those steps in the process and get direct support and background material to improve his/her capacity. On the basis of a Coaches self-assessment each existing and new coach will develop his personal development plan. The Blended learning Program will serve as a key tool to strengthen the skills and practices where the coach wants to improve.

The Constellation has also trained a number of competent facilitators throughout the years who are waiting in the wings to be nominated as coach in the first quarter of 2010. Facilitators from Burundi, Belgium, DR-Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Thailand have the aspiration and potential to become a coach. The Blended Learning Program will allow for distant capacity building and mentoring of these new coaches in ways that were not possible before this project.

A Constellation Facilitator is able to apply the Life Competence Approach. So far, these facilitators were trained during face to face learning events, combined with support visits from coaches. Now, individuals who have gone through the full blended learning program with at least two face to face events with a coach, are potential Constellation Facilitators. The group with whom he/she works throughout the course together with the accompanying coach will decide on the certification based on a fixed set of criteria.

Constellation coaches will be the ones who accompany new groups of facilitators, and therefore the limit of our offer is defined by the availability of coaching days. The new facilitators group, coming from the blended learning program would generate new coaches and contribute to the potential to scale out.

Step 3: To support member organizations to spread the approach at scale

The Constellation's decentralization strategy is built around the organic emergence of member organizations. These can develop from national facilitation teams or in any shape or format, covering a specific geographical area. The essence of this strategy is to respond to all invitations in an affordable way. . The Blended Learning Program now allows them to improve quality of the transfer as well as link local learning to a more global context through the forums and blogs on the platform.

Step 4: To inform policy makers and organizations.

Blended Learning will be used to inform policy makers and organizations about the approach and its results.

The AIDS Competence Process, the role of the facilitator and the dynamics within a community are not easy to explain. Questions such as what really happens during the process, what does your training look like, and how should I explain this to my team, can be answered with the help of elements in the platform.

Challenges and barriers when introducing Blended Learning into the Constellation Business Model

The challenges and barriers can be summarized as *quality assurance* as the number of coaches grow, the *limitations of technology and infrastructure* in low resource settings, technology literacy, content relevant to *culture and language* and basic *funding* to sustain the blended learning program over some time.

One external challenge that we will face in the establishment of Blended Learning is the use of *technology*. We hope that the use of the CD as a medium for delivery will address some of the issues. We are currently exploring this with a group using the program in Nagaland in India. However, we do know that we need to provide help and support to those who are uncomfortable or inexperienced in the use of the tools that we are providing. We will need to be sensitive to these issues and respond to actual needs. A (bi) annual revision of the system will be necessary in order to accommodate for new developments in the technology field and challenges that users have encountered. Not all requests should be and can be met, as some can be conflicting. Also it is crucial that the course and the platform should be running for a time to be able to *monitor and evaluate* the results of the blended learning program over a period of time.

As the number of Constellation coaches increases it may be a challenge to ensure that the new coaches meet the Constellation *quality* requirements. This challenge is met through the general Constellation rule that new coaches are always nominated by two existing coaches who have been working with the nominee in face to face situations in different contexts. SALT as the way of working is a non negotiable criteria for nomination. Also, no Constellation coach works alone. Hence, in the team there is always another coach to ensure that Constellation values and ethics are not violated. Team evaluations are built in the After Action Review at the end of each mission where possible challenges are addressed. Coaches furthermore work with facilitators from the community which helps to avoid 'blind spots', while the 'external' coaches at their turn help to address both strengths and taboos that are not automatically picked up in the community itself.

Participants from the blended learning program will receive a confirmation (certificate) upon finalization of the program. If they have successfully completed the course and have had two face to face interactions with a coach, participants can be nominated Constellation Facilitators. Champions, who on top of that have worked with two coaches in different settings on transferring the approach to new groups of facilitators, are candidates to become nominated as a coach.

Regarding the content development, there is still a way to go to have a wide flavour of examples reflecting the participants' culture and languages. This is something that the Constellation is aware of and encourages new participants and coaches to contribute with their stories.

The danger of drop-out was raised by several participants at the final workshop in Geneva, January 2010. The NST's experience is that those courses which are predictable and regular, with a clear start – stop date, for the users, are those with the lowest *drop-out* rate. Those courses which are open and purely web-based with no face to face meetings with other users, interaction with fellow students and/or mentors or certificates, are those courses where students are more likely to drop-out. This was discussed at the workshop and some spoke warmly about handing out a certificate for those who go through the Blended learning program

Last but not least is the issue of funding. Although the main costs for developing the blended learning program have already been met, there are still costs involved for the participants and for the Constellation to ensure the face-to-face trainings. The Constellation will embed the blended learning program into the partnerships they engage in, and hence offer the course as part of the 'package'. This does not solve the funding issue for individual participants, but as the blended learning is part and parcel of the general training of coaches, it has not first priority at this point in time

So far the blended learning program has not been implemented in full and therefore no monitoring and evaluation program has been developed to measure changes on various levels. This is an area where the partners would like to embark on at a later stage provided basic funding.

Project management

The Constellation has been the project manager of the project, while NST has been the focal point for the Norwegian MFA. The project has been finalized according to the project plan, on time and within budget.

There have been regular project meetings every two weeks. The meetings were conducted via Skype and different members of the team took part according to the topic and as the project progressed. In

the early stage of the project, the meetings focused on the challenges of building content on the platform. Later, the focus moved toward advice from NST on the material in the Blended Learning program. In the later phase of the project, the 'business' or sustainability elements of the program have come to dominate the discussion.

The Skype meetings proved extremely effective in holding together the projects and to ensure good progress. The challenges of working in different locations around the world are still significant, but without the convenience and low cost of Skype, it would have been much more difficult to deliver the Blended Learning project on time and on budget. Needless to say, e-mail and chat were used to a very large degree to deal with issues as they arose on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, the NST and the Constellation have held face-to-face meetings to plan work and to review progress:

- Geneva, January 2007

NST and the Constellation developed the principles and the ideas of the Blended Learning program. Both committed to explore ways to fund a project to bring these ideas to reality.

- Brussels, February 2008

This was the official project kick-off where the project timeline was planned in more detail. The meeting laid out the principles on which we would build the Blended Learning program and we have remained consistent to these principles. The meeting also defined the Blended Learning program as consisting of six modules and specified the material for each module. The final program does contain seven modules, as we introduced an initial module to cover the idea of Local Response in more detail following wide discussions within the Constellation.

- Barcelona, April 2009

This was a mid-term workshop where results of the pilot program was reviewed and plans updated for 2009. The meeting was held in Barcelona to allow us to discuss the results with one of the groups that had taken the pilot program.

- Geneva, January 2010

The final workshop in Geneva 2010, took place after the project had ended. The workshop provided an opportunity for the project to report back to the funders and contributors as well as to plan opportunities for future collaboration. The workshop was hosted by the WHO.



Final workshop in Geneva, 12-13 January 2010

Coordination of Constellation activities

Two members of the Constellation, Farellia Venance and Philip Forth, were responsible for developing the content of the Blended Learning Program. During the two years, they worked with members of the Constellation around the world to develop and to deliver the content.

As mentioned, one significant obstacle to progress occurred when Farellia had to wait a long time to get her application to work in Belgium granted. Communication to Europe was in this time difficult and this made progress slower than planned.

Dissemination

In May 2009 representatives from NST and Constellation presented the project at eLearning Africa conference in Dakar, Senegal². The conference is a yearly event and the largest e-learning conference in Africa. NST and Constellation jointly presented the Blended Learning program. Postcards and a one-page description of the Blended Learning program were developed. Both parties distributed these within their network, and at events like meetings and seminars.

Besides the joint activities, the Constellation has been informing its members and the general public on the development of the modules through its own communication channels: the monthly newsletter, the interactive platform (www.aidscompetence.ning.com), the annual report 2008, the Constellation Calendar and its website. It has shared learning and asked for input from participants on various Constellation events. The potential of Blended Learning has been proposed and discussed to Constellation partners during negotiations with them in 2009, for example with HIVOS and UNAIDS Guyana, but also with member organizations such as DRC Competence (DR-Congo) and IndoCompetence (Indonesia).

NST has during 2008 and 2009 presented the program to the several visitors coming to the NST. The project is described in the WHO CC Annual report for 2007 and 2008. The project was presented at a Norwegian conference on Stigma, hosted by the municipality of Tromsø, 6 June 2008. On 12-13 January 2010 NST and the Constellation organized an open discussion on the blended learning platform, hosted by the WHO Geneva, department of Knowledge Management and Sharing. The aim of the event was to share lessons learned with the development and implementation of the workshop

² http://www.elearning-africa.com/pdf/report/postreport_eLA2009.pdf checked 3 February 2010

and to present the potential of blended learning and the Competence approach. We also learned from suggestions from participants on a way forward for implementing the program at scale.

Participants were representatives of partners and potential partners from the Constellation, such as UNAIDS, WHO, AKDN, the World Council for Churches and the German Red Cross Society, but also Constellation members and friends.

We consider this event as a pre-launch meeting, which prepared us for a virtual launch with partners and friends in the first half of 2010. We foresee an interactive launch where people can access the platform and will be informed on how they can participate in the learning program. The Constellation will use its communication mechanisms such as the website, the monthly newsletter, the interactive platform and press releases to give cachet to the launch, but also after.

Conclusion – way forward

During the final workshop in Geneva the Constellation and NST received valuable inputs from peers, Norwegian MFA and WHO on the roll out of the blended learning program. It helped us to identify the steps via a soft launch to the 'hard launch' of the program as a tool with which coaches will transfer the approach to new groups of facilitators.

The Constellation and NST feel comfortable that we now have a product that is ready to use. It is clear that Blended Learning, the structure of the program and the content will evolve and change, as the Constellation evolves and changes. The meeting in Geneva was very effective in highlighting the directions in which the Blended Learning project will move forward. This section will highlight some of these directions.

We identified following steps in that process:

1. Finalising the platform with videos in French and Spanish
2. Update of the current coaches pool and inclusion of new coaches. A special Membership Meeting will decide on the exact process (Q1).
3. Prepare the Gold Option (a minimum of two face to face events with a coach) as the offer to Constellation Partners
4. Make the freely downloadable version available and communicate mutual expectations
5. Articulate Sponsor Possibilities for interested groups with no funding
6. Prepare Coaches for facilitation of the Blended Learning Program in a face-to-face event. Develop a certificate for those who accomplish the Blended learning program
7. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for the program
8. Launch the program to partners, media and NST and Constellation networks

In 2010, we will accomplish bi-annual meetings to consider update on specific modules as we concentrate on the development of specific parts of our process. In addition, we will always be willing to update the specific videos and stories as we find better examples. The Constellation will organize the update of content through a virtual editor-group.

A major part of the Constellation's internal program for 2010 will be to develop our resource of coaches within the context of Blended Learning. We will require all of our coaches to review their own progress and to develop a personal development plan that will include Blended Learning. We will be

using this review to identify the coaching resource that will be available to us to support the programs in Blended Learning.

We have discussed the way in which we will be updating our offer to partners in this report. The feedback in Geneva showed that we need to develop a more simple structure in that offer. Further we will work on that offer and we will continue to develop it in response to the reaction of our partners. We will also be looking to develop sponsorship funds that will allow us to offer coaching support for teams that do not have adequate resources.

The Blended Learning must be developed so that it moves beyond AIDS Competence to embrace other issues where the Community Life Competence process can be used. We are very confident that in 2010 we will start to develop a Blended Learning program directed towards Malaria Competence. It is inevitable that this will move us toward the development of a Blended Learning program on Community Life Competence.

Perhaps all of this is simply saying that the Blended Learning approach is going to sit at the heart of what the Constellation does and how it does it. If the Constellation is to have an impact on the challenges that it chooses to address, then Blended Learning will be at the heart of the approach that it uses.