

KariaNet Inception Workshop for Egypt

Cairo, December 22nd 2011

Facilitator's Report

1. Introduction

The KariaNet inception workshop took place on December 22nd 2011 at the Flamenco Hotel in Cairo. It was attended by around 40 participants representing research institutions, NGOs, private sector, IFAD-funded projects, development practitioners and governmental bodies.

The objective of the workshop was three-folded:

- 1- To network and meet with the widest number of partners and projects working on KM-KS in rural and agricultural development in Egypt.
- 2- To discuss the development of the KariaNet national network in Egypt
- 3- To identify the needs and contributions of members of the national network in terms of KM-KS capacity building and learning priorities and to draft a budgeted work plan for the coming 6 months

The facilitator was positively impressed by the mix of participants (academia, government, IFAD funded projects, ...) and their genuine enthusiasm to work collaboratively towards establishing a national KariaNet structure in Egypt. It might have been possible to further enrich the workshop if a better gender balance was achieved (not more than 20% women amongst the audience, although those who were present were highly vocal) and if more young professionals were present since the vast majority of the attendees was mid to senior-level professionals.



The workshop had two working sessions of roughly 150 minutes each. Participants were divided randomly into 3 groups discussing simultaneously a set of common questions regarding the operationalization of the network. The questions debated by the groups are debated in the table below. The outcomes of the group work were then discussed in plenary and debated until consensus was achieved.

<p style="text-align: center;">Guiding questions for the morning session</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Guiding questions for the afternoon session</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are the members of KariaNet in Egypt? 2. Who is the focal point of KN in Egypt (org. and ind.) 3. What is the governance of the national network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who should manage the network under what kinds of rules and regulations? • Membership structure: who can join the network? Closed or open network? Institutional or individual membership? • Who decides on the annual workplan and activities? • M&E 4. What are your suggestions to sustain the National KM-KS network? 5. What are the network needs and contributions to KariaNet in terms of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Capacity-building in knowledge management and knowledge sharing b. Innovations in KM-KS c. Any other networking activity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. To identify a list of activities with their timeframe as a priority for the coming 6 months and their budget. 7. To think about the network direction & implementation for the 2 years to come.

2. Outcomes of the discussions

The focus of the morning session was about the constituency and the governance of the network. Although the working groups were divided in a totally random manner, yet the plenary discussion revealed more than 90% convergence in the outcomes of the discussions which made it relatively easy to reach consensus regarding the points detailed below:

2.1 To the question **“Who are the members of KariaNet in Egypt”**, participants were unanimous that it should reach to the broadest range possible of stakeholders which includes but is not limited to researchers, national KM/KS networks, interested individuals, NGOs, rural development projects, line ministries, research centers, private sector and trade unions.

Although various networks exist at the national level, there are evident niches for KM/KS in the areas of rural development, food safety and food security in which KariaNet could fill an evident gap.

2.2 To the question on **“who can be a possible focal point for KariaNet in Egypt”** there seemed to be a consensus that the Agricultural Research Center (ARC) at the Ministry of Agriculture is ideally positioned to carry that task¹. However, it was

¹ This consensus might be the result that ARC had helped in the organization of the workshop and extended the invitations to participants in collaboration with the Regional KariaNet team

clearly pointed that there needs to be a dedicated technical and administrative team within ARC who should be clearly mandated to carry that task.

KariaNet should also be managed in a way that consolidates the ongoing efforts for decentralizing agricultural information and knowledge by not staying Cairo-centered but rather opening up to the interesting work taking place at the various governorates levels through IFAD-funded projects and others.

2.3 To the question about **“the governance of the national network”**, a classical structure was proposed that involves a general assembly who constitute the ultimate decision making body, with an elected executive committee which oversees the day-to-day operation, a scientific committee that provides additional intellectual leadership on issues and questions to be addressed through the network and a national coordinator.

With regards to the membership of the network, it was proposed to open it to individuals and institutions, so that it operates as an open yet moderated network. Membership should be based on the endorsement of a charter that the network should develop about the roles and responsibilities of its constituency as well as the eligibility criteria for joining the network.

The annual workplan and activities is then proposed by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Scientific Committee in order to be discussed and approved by the General Assembly. There was also a suggestion to cross-fertilize the workplan and activities by inviting members from other KariaNet networks in MENA countries. With respect to Monitoring and Evaluation, it was suggested that *Monitoring* should be part of the responsibilities of the Executive Committee, while *Evaluation* should be entrusted to an independent Supervisory Committee elected by the General Assembly and whose members cannot be part of the management of the network

2.4 To the question about **“the sustainability of the network”**, there was a fundamental consensus that the network can only sustain itself if can manage to establish itself as a *demand-driven and reactive* network, and where members get a clear added value from taking part in its activities. Being demand-driven clearly entails being adaptive to the rapidly changing agricultural development landscape in Egypt and able to position itself on intellectual and funding niches that arise along the way.

Other operational suggestions included charging a fee-for-service, establishing a portal on which advertisement space can be booked, preparing a paid newsletter (electronic and possibly printed) as well as seeking donor support. Partnerships with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Communication were also pointed out as an essential element for the success of the network.

2.5 With respect to the question about **“the capacity building needs”**, participants highlighted the necessity of holding information meetings in key Governorates to

spread the word about the newly formed national network. With regard to specific capacity building needs, participants highlighted opportunities for a generic KM/KS training, the use of Social Media, innovations in Rural Radio and capturing success stories of innovations at the local level in KM/KS as part of the experience of previous projects and networks in Egypt over the past 20 years.

The **afternoon session** was then dedicated to a first attempt to determine a list of activities for the first 6 months and their budget, as well as the direction and focus of the network over the coming two years. Regarding the two years horizon, the facilitator tried to challenge the attendees by asking them to develop describe in their working group what total success for KariaNet Egypt would look like in 2 years, but this question turned out to be hard to answer beyond some general statements, indicating that it will take a while before potential network members can develop an “owned” vision for the network success.

The suggestions of the working group are provides in the table below:

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Immediate activities (6 months horizon)	Develop the governance system of the network (\$10k) Develop a national strategy targeting all stakeholders (\$50k) Capacity building for knowledge providers (\$30k)	Comprehensive Stakeholder Analysis at country level (20 workshops, \$30k total) Analysis of KM chain in a pilot area or region (\$25k) Compendium of lessons learned in KM in Egypt over the past 20 years (\$30k)	Run high-level workshops like this kick-off workshop in at least 10 governorates (\$15k/workshop) Gather the (rich) experiences in Egypt into one database/clearinghouse (\$50k)
Vision for KariaNet in Egypt within 2 years	KariaNet would have developed a widely used search engine as well as a comprehensive database on agriculture in Egypt	KariaNet is able to develop indicators for the impact of agriculture strategies and policies on food security in Egypt and able to establish an info bank in Egypt and MENA	KariaNet is able to address the endemic problem of linking research and knowledge at the level of research and extension centers with the farmers on the ground

3. Additional remarks by the facilitator

The workshop turned to be an enjoyable exercise with many constructive inputs from the various groups adding on one another, which confirms the need and readiness of the stakeholders to establish a national KM/KS network.

- 3.1 Out of the many useful suggestions that were made, we notice this new spirit of “decentralization” of KM/KS processes, which is new to post-revolution Egypt. ***The new network has hence to break away from being confined to Cairo*** if it was to claim national representativity and this aspect is to be reinforced.
- 3.2 Although it was not voiced-out explicitly, KariaNet needs to bring an added value that goes beyond what existing initiatives had/have to offer (VERCON, RADCON, ARADINA, etc...). ***The challenge would be to look critically at the bottlenecks that these initiatives faced*** (and are still facing), which is feasible but not easy as the MENA region is not used to “taking pictures at funerals” and admitting that reality is not as ideal as what completion reports describe.
- 3.3 **The structure suggested for the network** (general assembly + executive committee + scientific committee + supervisor committee + coordination team) ***is very heavy*** and poses the risk of getting trapped into administrative and legal issues rather than focusing on what really matters: KM/KS
- 3.4 From what appears in this report, the network is spreading itself in all directions by wanting to do everything and in all areas, which poses a serious challenge of the dilution of the efforts and the potential resources. In a next step, ***the challenge will be to determine the niches in which the network wants to build a tradition of excellence*** (food security and participatory rural development were repeated mentioned)
- 3.5 ***It is clear that a single meeting will not be enough to kick-start the network***, and maybe the regional coordination of KariaNet should mandate a group of champions to draft the founding chart and explore lighter structures that can make everyone feels included yet avoid (at least in the early stages of the formation) the administrative hurdles that heavy structures entail

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