



Smooth Sailing at IAF Asia Conference

By Prabu Naidu, IAF Asia Representative

245 people from 20 countries set 'sail' during the 9th Annual IAF Asia Facilitator Conference in Singapore from 31 Aug to 1 Sep '06 with the theme: "The Art and Mastery of Facilitation - Sailing the Seas of Facilitation."

Some of the highlights of this conference were:

- Seamless Workshops Registration - Concurrent, pre & post conference workshops registration was available on-line from the beginning of conference registration which started six months ahead!
- Streamlined Registration Process - Registered delegates literally 'sailed through' to their seats with their conference badge and bag waiting for them!
- Accommodation Sharing Service - Overseas delegates were able to get connected via email broadcast of their interest to share accommodations.
- 'First Time Delegates' received a guide a week before the conference covering information on the host country, conference attire, available internet services and hotline mobile numbers to call for help. The conference administrative slide show provided informative details before the Opening.
- Opening festivities were punctuated by energetic cultural dance performances by students from FUNics Productions who then stayed to draw caricatures of delegates. The S\$152 they collected went to Singapore Cheshire Home (SCH). In addition, the SCH offered a selection of handicraft gifts made by their residents for delegates at prices lower than gift shops at the airport! All sales proceeds collected went to SCH.
- IAF Members Only Cocktail Party experimented with a concoction of the Singapore Sling with guidance from their very own bartenderess-facilitator!
- Members of the Singapore Association for the Visually Handicapped (SAVH) were on-site to provide head and shoulder massages and foot reflexology to keep delegates energized between workshop sessions. SAVH received a total donation of more than S\$750 from conference attendees.
- Workshop buddies dressed in eye-catching orange life jackets provided logistical support to workshop facilitators.
- A video recording of the conference was produced capturing glimpses of how workshops are facilitated and, more importantly, the planning and organizing that goes behind each phase of the conference for distribution as part of sharing how to manage an IAF conference.
- Scholarships were awarded to eight recipients; two of these scholarships were funded by IAF Europe in a commendable expression of inter-region support! In addition, the conference sponsored the fees for eight country reps from Asia to this conference.
- The IAF CPF event prior to the conference saw eleven facilitators attain their designation as Certified Professional Facilitators. These eleven new CPF's join nearly 400 other CPF's around the world.
- Ninety delegates attended five pre-conference and five post-conference workshops.

Here is a sample of what conference delegates and workshop facilitators said about the conference:

"Brilliant organization; great sessions; and great attention to detail by the committee. Congratulations! You score top marks." *Delegate*

"I really enjoyed all the sessions I attended – fabulous interaction and great groups! This conference had wonderful logistics support – great well trained buddies and terrific organization."

Delegate

continued on page 2



Also In This Issue

- Facilitating the Wisdom of Crowds
- Method of the Month
- Thread: Process Maps
- IAF Calendar
- New CPFs/Assessors
- New Members
- IAF in Europe

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Smooth Sailing at IAF Asia ...

continued from page 1



“Please accept my sincere thanks for the skilful and heartfelt way you and the team looked after those of us who were facilitating. I felt much kept in touch and very supported and it was a delight to see such a tight team in action! Well done, all of you! This was a conference to be proud of! Best wishes from New Zealand.” *Mary-Alice Arthur*

“Facilitation is certainly coming of age in Asia with this great conference. I have appreciated immensely the support show to us presenters by you and your team as well. An amazing result!” *Tom Schwartz*

“I’d rate this as the best Facilitation Conferences I’ve been to and this is the 6th I’ve attended.... The Conference Venue was excellent and the quality of the Workshop Presenters simply world class.... It means that KL in 2007 has a very hard act to follow.... Congratulations to all concerned on an outstanding team effort.” *Keith Ryall, CPF*

“It is clearly equal to or better organized than any IAF conference I have attended and know how well this reflects on you. Thank you for your hard work.” *David A. Wayne, Ph.D, IAF Past-Chair*



“Thanks, to the entire Singapore team for all your good efforts towards creating a conference that will stand out in our memories as one of the best organized ever in the history of IAF global conferences.... There will be much to pass on to other IAF conference organizers in terms of best practices.... Don’t be surprised if you get lots of emails asking you how you did this or that.” *Ann Epps, IAF Conference Strategic Initiative Coordinator*



Facilitating “The Wisdom of Crowds”

By Jim Troxel

After I had been facilitating group decision-making sessions for a number of years, I was asked by a client, “How do you know that the group’s decision is better than the individuals, especially the smartest guy in the room?”

I delivered a much practiced line about the power of bottom-up thinking. But the query did haunt me, and I began a pursuit to find data that helped prove my belief. I had always taken it on faith that the “power is with the pen”, as IAF-member Michael Wilkinson is fond of saying.

An item on the GRP-FACL listserv piqued my interest. It was a study performed by Princeton University researchers on the decision-making process used by the US Federal Reserve Bank to determine interest rates. Essentially the study demonstrates that “groups can make intelligent decisions quickly and better than their smartest members”.

I ran across this idea again recently in reading James Surowiecki’s *The Wisdom of Crowds* (2004, NY: Random House). Citing numerous studies, the author’s thesis is that any group trying to make a decision, on the average, will consistently come up with a better answer than any individual in the group could provide. Further, under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them. Even if most of the people within a group are not especially well-informed or rational, it can still reach a collectively wise decision. When our imperfect intelligence and judgments are aggregated in the right way, our collective intelligence is often excellent.

Surowiecki cites, for example, how Google’s search engine uses the linking behavior of the entire Web to determine the relevance of search queries. And, how the open-source movement believes that the bottom-up method of software development is more effective than when elite designers dictate what code should be written for the Microsoft-dominated computer. He then cites more familiar examples such as juries, automobile and pedestrian traffic patterns, and the popular TV quiz show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” (Clue: always ask the audience.)

Is the “least common denominator” (LCD) thinking at play with the Wisdom of Crowds as some have claimed? LCD is the idea that in order to achieve harmony and consensus (in an attempt to avoid conflict), some groups will settle for the second (or third) best possible solutions. Possibly. But Surowiecki suggests under certain conditions, the best thinking does come from the group as a whole. He has identified four conditions that help ensure that groups can think better than the best individuals in the crowds. I contend that if facilitators account for these conditions in their facilitation engagements, they will increase the likelihood of better decision-making results.

1. **Diversity of Opinion.** For a group to be wise it needs a “diversity of opinions”. I call this the Principle of Inclusivity. Every good decision-making group needs to be as inclusive of the perspectives surrounding the issue under consideration as possible. Inclusiveness helps guard against “groupthink”. Generally, therefore, the bigger the group, more accurate it becomes, relegating expertise to a secondary role.

2. **Independence.** The idea of independence is like the Principle of Autonomy. For a group to be wise, group members’ opinions can not be easily determined or influenced by those around them. This guards against herding and information cascades. Surowiecki has discovered that the best way to enable autonomy is to have group members share the opinions simultaneously as much as possible. This helps to get people to pay less attention to everyone else, so they can be better at preserving their own independent thought. This idea goes against much of what I regard as a critical component of good groups, namely the capacity to listen and learn from one another. Surowiecki fears, however, that too much listening might persuade individuals away toward the loudest or most vocal member of the group, thereby lessening their independence of thought which is necessary for groups to be wise.



Jim Troxel is a founder and partner in Millennia Consulting in Chicago and serves on the adjunct faculty for DePaul University’s School for New Learning. He has recently become The Global Flipchart editor.

continued on page 4

Facilitating Wisdom of Crowds

continued from page 3

The Method

By Jan Coerts, Peter Bootsma and Jon Jenkins

Four Conditions for Making Crowds Wise

- *Diversity of Opinion*
- *Independence*
- *Decentralization*
- *Aggregation*

“I contend that if facilitators account for these conditions in their facilitation engagements, they will increase the likelihood of better decision-making results.”

3. Decentralization. I call the author’s condition of decentralization the Principle of Interchange. Surowiecki notes wise groups are ones where people are able to specialize and draw on their own local knowledge. He asserts the often stated maxim that the closer to a problem one is, the more likely that person will have a good solution to it, thereby increasing the scope and diversity of opinion. The key is to get this decentralized local wisdom exchanged with one another.

4. Aggregation Mechanism. Surowiecki calls for Mechanisms of Aggregation, or in my terms, the Principle of Gestalt. For a group to be wise it needs some means to turn private judgments into collective wisdom and decisions. It needs a way to collect and accumulate in the form of a summation the individual’s wisdom to create collective wisdom.

Surowiecki has a warning for facilitators working with small groups: Small groups can make bad decisions because the influence of others is more direct and immediate and some judgments on certain decisions are more volatile and extreme, skewing the process.

And yet, the opportunity exists, he says, for small groups to be more than just the sum of their parts if they:

- Recognize implicit assumptions within the group members
- Pursue genuine inquiry through meaningful dialogue
- Closely examine the data
- Emphasize dissent over consensus to avoid false harmony
- Guard against starting with a preset conclusion and then needing a means to confirm it
- Avoid premature frame-working or aggregating

Some things a facilitator can do to enhance the prospects of enabling small groups to be wise are:

- Using a “Devil’s Advocate” to guard against premature or artificial harmony or consensus, and
- Assigning “Idea Champions” – whether the assignee agrees with the proposal or not, but don’t select a champion on basis of status or talkativeness.

Welcome to The Method column! We’re pleased that the *Global Flipchart* team has asked us to do a column on methods. We can also bring you some highlights, stories and opinions around facilitation methods. Our two regular topics are “The Method of the Month” and “The Tip of the Month.”

Method of the Month: “Paint the Picture”

We will highlight methods of yours. Mail us at editor@iaf-methods.org if you experienced something funny, sad, inspiring, victorious or completely unexpected when using a facilitation method. Send us a story about how you used or created a method.

This month’s method is the “Paint the Picture” process is used for very complex project and strategic planning where the whole picture of the project situation needs to be understood by all the stakeholders. In these kinds of projects no one individual has a complete overview. Several different disciplines may be involved in one aspect of the project or another. This process can take from half a day to five days.

This is how you do it:

1. Brief the presenters
 - a. No power point or slides are allowed, only drawings made on flipcharts or white boards as the presentation is being done.
 - b. Use no jargon and only language everyone can understand.
 - c. Fit within the time allocated.
2. Put up flip chart paper with the various aspects of the project as titles on the sheets. Have a parking lot and an “other” flipchart sheet. Make sure that there is enough space that all the presentation board work can be seen throughout.
3. As the presentations are being done, have the participants to list Issues, Opportunities, Questions, Suggestions, etc on post-its.
4. At the end of each the presentations or if they are long in the middle, ask participants to put up their post-its on flipchart sheets under the appropriate category names.

The Paint-the-Picture process was used to kick off phase two of a community development project in Serbia. A number of the staff were new and the project had changed target groups, enlarged the target area,

continued on page 5

The Method

continued from page 4

and modified the project goals. These changes were results of the evaluation of phase one. At the beginning of the workshop two people were asked to present the history and plans for the two dimensions of the project. The first presentation took about 2 hours. As the presentation was being done participants filled in post-its with Issues, Opportunities, Questions, and Suggestions. The post-its were preliminarily clustered into potential action areas. The second presentation followed the same procedure. A few of the post-its did not fit and were put into a special category. During these presentations a couple hundred post-its were generated. From the action arenas, an implementation plan was created.

http://www.iaf-methods.org/index.php?module=iafmethods_tool&func=display&iafmethods_tool_id=351

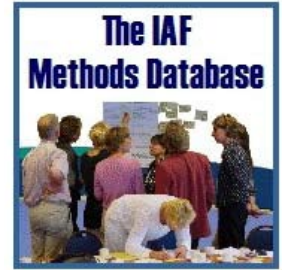
Tip of the Month: Finding Methods — Searching the IAF Methods Database

Facilitators keep an eye out for new ways to tackle, confront, surprise or confound, capture peoples imagination and even achieve results. This month the tip is: How To Find A Method On The IAF Methods Database. Where do you go for inspiration about methods? Read a good book recently? Heard someone interesting? You know other places? Let us know!

Here's how you find methods in the IAF Methods Database. First create a free user account for yourself if you haven't done so before. Then login (otherwise queries are empty), go to the Methods section and click the Query Methods link. A query form will appear. Now you have three options:

1. Know the name of the method or a part of it? Type it in the box next to "COMMON NAME" and just press Enter on your keyboard. Feel free to click the "Run this query" button all the way down the query page, but that's just more work. Because many methods have a variety of names, if you do not find it you can repeat the process (delete the Common Name entry) by typing it in the ALTERNATIVE NAMES".
2. Looking for a type of method, say an ice breaker? Scroll down to the box called "Ice Breakers and Energizers", check the box and press return. A list of all the methods listed as Ice Breakers or Energizers will appear. Select the one you would like to see.
3. Now for a combination of criteria, for example 1) a brainstorming method that 2) is easy to do. You check both the "Idea Generating" and "NO SPECIFIC SKILLS REQUIRED" boxes and press return. A list of methods that meet both criteria appears.

That's it for now!



"The Method" is a new monthly column in the Global Flipchart by the team of the IAF Methods Database: Jan Coerts, Peter Bootsma and Jon Jenkins. The IAF Methods Database (www.iaf-methods.org, editor@iaf-methods.org) is run independently under agreement with the IAF.

Quick Notes...

- We have recently learned that *Creating a Culture of Collaboration* is going to be reviewed in *Human Resource Development Quarterly* and *The Nine Disciplines of a Facilitator* will be reviewed in *Negotiation Journal*.
- Did you know that we have a special IAF logo available for use by our members? Go to www.iaf-world.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3280 to find the logo.
- Are you looking for facilitator training. The new IAF Training Directory has lots of information about different training programs. Go to www.iaf-world.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4250 for more information.
- Have you ever thought about writing for Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal? Learn more about the submission process by going to www.iaf-world.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3498
- Registration for the IAF North America Conference is about to be opened. Learn more about the conference at www.iaf-world.org/conference/portland.htm

Listserv Charts Out Business Process Mapping

One of the benefits of your IAF membership is to keep active a vibrant conversation amongst facilitators in identifying the field's best practices through its sponsorship of the GRP-FACL Listserv (GRP-FACL@listserv.albany.edu). Each month in your IAF Global Flipchart we will provide a sampling of what IAF members can find on the listserv. It is compiled for us by Ester Mae Cox, EMGA Enterprises, Madison County, IA (esterm@i-rule.net), an IAF member since 1990.

IAF provides support to this listserv moderated by Sandy Schuman. If you aren't a regular subscriber to this listserv, make it a "gift to yourself" to subscribe and enjoy multiple conversation threads from facilitators globally.

This past month Dutch Driver initiated a lively and robust conversation on the listserv about the role of the facilitator in guiding teams in mapping business processes:

From: Dutch Driver dutch.driver@GMAIL.COM; August 23, 2006

I am checking the group's pulse to discover the methods a facilitator would go about mapping out business processes and/or process flow charts.

From: Lynda Lieberman Baker lbaker@meetingsolution.com; August 24, 2006

My recommended sources are: Improving Performance (Rummier and Brache) and Business Process Improvement (HJ Harrington), and the best little how-to book (60+ pages) is *The Basics of Process Mapping* by Robert Damenlio.

From: Loretta Donovan Loretta.donovan@GMAIL.COM; August 24, 2006

I use Appreciative Inquiry to guide the process of business process development/improvement and casual mapping to visualize the flow of work.

From: Elizabeth Gray Elizabeth.Gray@CLAUSTIN.TX.US; August 24, 2006

I use a business process mapping technique sometimes referred to as SIPOC: Supplier, Input, Process, Output, Customer. Briefly, I,

A. Document basic process information:

1. Fill out a SIPOC Chart with the group—but the Process portion. (This is my favorite part of the whole facilitation: the very first thing I ask them to do is decide on the name of the process, and to define the start and end of the process. This usually generates great discussion and insights.)
2. Throughout the course of the discussion, capture business rules, assumptions, issues on white board or flip chart.

B. Map the Process:

1. Individually, silently brainstorm all tasks in the process. This is hard for most people; they need help and coaching, and coaxing to think of their day-to-day tasks at an abstract level.
2. Report task to group, negotiate, write on sticky notes, affix randomly to mapping

paper—a WIDE piece of butcher or printer-end paper.

3. Organize tasks using affinity grouping to cluster the activities into major related concepts. [Note: Not by time sequence, yet. This step is necessary to ensure all tasks have been included]. I prefer the silent group sort.
4. Sequence tasks by time, functional roles on a big piece of butcher paper. Usually I first divide the butcher paper into horizontal "swim lanes"—one for each role/person/group involved in the process.
5. Draw lines connecting tasks. Use "magic finger" exercise to ensure no workflow threads left dangling—no matter what path the finger follows, should lead to the end of the process. Validate task completeness, accuracy, and sequence with the group. Verify all suppliers, inputs, outputs, customers identified in the original SIPOC exercise are included in the process flow diagram.
6. [Optional] Solicit a critical review of the process map from other process members who weren't involved in the original exercise and revise the map based on their input(s).

C. Business Process Analysis and Improvement [Optional, but usually the point of the whole exercise]

1. Review the map, identify problem areas. There are a couple of different ways you can do this, I leave that to you. I find that it is usually a matter of going back to the issues that were identified during the documentation and mapping stages, and zeroing in on exactly the when/where/why/how/who of each issue.
2. Communicate conclusions and action plan for improvement.

My outputs from this process are: the SIPOC chart, pictures of the wall process map, a Visio/.pdf electronic version of the wall map annotated with the problem areas and explanations, and a transmittal email communicating next steps.

To access the complete thread including a discussion about icons used, go to: <http://listserv.albany.edu> and click on Archives. The whole thread includes more recommendations for "processes" and references to web sites and books on this topic. The listserv archives will also provide other such methods threads.

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Coming IAF Events

Certification

6-7 October— A CPF assessor assessment event for potential assessors. This event will be done before the CPF assessment event on 06-07 October in Stockholm.

22-23 January 2007—A CPF assessment event in Darby, England.

6-7 March 2007 — A CPF assessment event before the North America conference in Portland, Oregon, USA.

7-8 May 2007—A CPF assessment event in Brussels, Belgium.

If you are interested in participating in certification events, please go to www.iaf-world.org and download the forms and information about the assessment process and submit them to the office as directed on the web site. If you have questions, please contact IAF at certify@iaf-world.org.

Congratulations to Assessors and CPFs!

We are proud to announce the newest Assessors for the IAF Certification process, and the new IAF Certified® Professional Facilitators (from the Baltimore certification event). Another successful certification event was recently completed in Singapore, and another event is going on this week in the Netherlands. We will honor those successful candidates in our next issue.

New Assessors

Theresa Ratnam, CPF, Malaysia

Keith Ryall, CPF, Australia

Tom Schwarz, CPF, Australia

Ng Choon Seng, CPF, Singapore

New CPFs

Virginia R. Adams, CPF, Fort Collins, CO USA

Brenda Blum, CPF, Newmarket, Ontario Canada

Mark Chadwick, CPF, Castle Rock, CO USA

Hugh D. Culver, CPF, Kelowna BC, Canada

Timothy J. Danko, CPF, Mechanicsburg, PA, USA

Dominique Dennery, CPF, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Stephen Farmer, CPF, Midlothian, VA, USA

Eleonore Frauke Pieper, CPF, Allen, TX, USA

Kristin Garrison, CPF, Palm Beach, FL, USA

Wendy Green Lowe, CPF, Idaho Falls, ID, USA

Chris Harsdorff, CPF, Dallas, TX, USA

Conferences

6-8 October 2006 - Europe
A Facilitator's Smorgasbord
SAS Radisson Royal Park Hotel
Stockholm, Sweden

23-24 Oct 2006 - Africa
Weaving People Into Performance
Protea Hotel Stellenbosch
Stellenbosch, South Africa

29 Nov-1 Dec 2006 - Australia/New Zealand
The Naked Facilitator Conference
Deakin, University
Geelong, Victoria, Australia

8-10 March 2007 – North America
Hilton Portland
Portland, Oregon, USA

For registration information, go to www.iaf-world.org and click on the conference of interest.

John Hawkins, CPF, Holden, MA, USA

Bruce Jacobson, CPF, Boston, MA, USA

Chrystina Katz, CPF, Plantation, FL, USA

Gail R. Kelley Luling, LA, USA

Jessica Mathewson, CPF, Park City, UT, USA

Mary Susan McBride, CPF, Fredericksburg, VA, USA

Kathryn McCarty, CPF, Arlington, VA, USA

Barbara-Anne Mitchell, CPF, Tempe, AZ, USA

Alastair Olby, CPF, Surrey, United Kingdom

Lawrence E. Philbrook, CPF, Taipei, Taiwan

Jonas Roth, CPF, Molndal, Sweden

Stephani Roy McCallum, CPF, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Gary Rush, CPF, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Max Schupbach, CPF, Portland, OR, USA

William Staples, CPF, Toronto, ON, Canada

Lander Stoddard, CPF, Atlanta, GA, USA

Valerie Tonus, CPF, Fairfax, VA, USA

Lonnies S. Weiss, CPF, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Jay Wilson, CPF, Fayetteville, GA, USA

Welcome to New Members!

We offer a warm welcome to our colleagues from around the world who joined or returned to IAF from August 11th through September 10th. (We only list those members who have chosen to be listed in our online membership directory. If you are concerned about having been included in this list, please contact the office via email at office@iaf-world.org).

Australia

Paul Bitetto, Melbourne
Lynn Walsh, Willoughby North

Belgium

Thierry Aerts, Brussels
Monika Borry, Brussels
Tim Roosen, Brussels
Vera van Nuffelen, Brussels
Lieven Vanhoutte, Waregem

Canada

Sheri Hord, London, ON
Peter Sherriff, London, ON
Kim Wright, Vancouver, BC

China

Jessica de Ruijter, Beijing
Xiaomu Guo, Shanghai
Jason Hu, Shanghai

Germany

Helga Brueggemann, Duesseldorf

Egypt

Medhat EL Madany, Cairo

Italy

Guenter Hemrich, Rome

Jamaica

Andrea Francis, Kingston

Laos

Maaïke de Lange, Vientiane

Sri Lanka

Paula Thomson, Kandy

Mexico

John Dixon, Mexico

Netherlands

Hansje Plagman, Utrecht
Diederik Prakke, Ede
Nathalie Vrancken, Amersfoort

Sweden

Lillvor Gothede, Gothenburg
Kerstin Jungstedt, Stockholm

Singapore

Grace Tan
David Kwok
Aie Bee Lau
Alison Lim

Yee Low

Sharon See

Switzerland

Laura Bott Guillemain, Bern

United Kingdom

Sofia Bustamante, London

United States

Tom Courry, Cotati, CA
Cynthia Demnitz, Washington, DC
Jack Everitt, Gainesville, FL
Paul Fisher, Houston, TX
Joseph Foran, Yarmouth, ME
Kathleen Gillespie, Detroit, MI
Claudia Haack-Benedict, Madison, WI
Jody Hoff, San Francisco, CA
Joni Jones, Bloomington, IL
Debbie Nuce, Sugar Land, TX
Avis Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles, CA
Alice Sperling, Albany, OR
Lydia Stevenson, Grapeview, WA
Thomas Stimson, Dallas, TX
Mary Ellen Wolfe, Bozeman, MT



Jim Campbell, IAF Europe Regional Representative

The IAF in Europe

- On September 15 the IAF BENELUX (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxemburg) is hosting their third annual Dutch language conference.
- Speaking of IAF BENELUX, check out their new website at www.iaf.benelux.org.
- Over 200 people are expected at the European IAF conference, 6 – 8 October, in Stockholm, Sweden. Some of the sessions are on Appreciative Inquiry, Sustainable Agreements, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), and Creativity Methods. For more information go to www.iaf-world.org.
- The Brussels Facilitator's Network meets monthly and some of its upcoming sessions include: The Socratic Method and Musical Coaching. For more info contact Jim Campbell at jim.campbell@icab.be.
- Did you know that there are IAF affiliates in Slovenia, Ireland, and Central and Eastern Europe? For more info contact Jim Campbell at jim.campbell@icab.be, the IAF regional representative for Europe.
- We welcome Ms. Trish Wilkinson as the first staff member of the IAF European region. She will work one day a week to further the work of professional facilitation throughout the continent and around the world.