9th Meeting of the UNCTAD Advisory Group on: "Developing skills, knowledge and capacities through innovation: E-Learning, M-Learning, Cloud-Learning"

10 December 2013
Room XVIII (floor -1, CICG)

Organized by:
Human Resources Development/TrainForTrade Section,
Knowledge Sharing, Training and Capacity Development
Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD

Aide-mémoire

CICG, Rue de Varembé 17, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

I. Background

The UNCTAD Advisory Group on Strengthening Training Capacity and Human Resources Development was established in 2001, following a recommendation endorsed by the 38th session of UNCTAD's Working Party on the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme Budget. Its mission is as follows:

- To examine the evolution of UNCTAD's training and capacity building activities in order to determine elements that need to be strengthened, developed, or modified in the context of the organization's strategy;

- To put forth proposals to enhance the work carried out by UNCTAD in this area and increase its access to financial resources required for the development of technical cooperation projects in the field of training and capacity building.

Since its inception, the Group has held eight meetings, namely in December 2002, January 2004, February 2005, March 2006, November 2007, June 2009, October 2009 and October 2011. The first meeting dealt with the newly-defined TrainForTrade human resources development strategy, the development of an institutional framework, cooperation with within UNCTAD, and the resources required to carry out the planned activities.

The experts who took part in the second meeting examined the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the field of training. They discussed the methods of delivery for distance learning courses, as well as an online platform for UNCTAD training resources—two options considered by UNCTAD at the time.

In 2005, the Advisory Group examined the use of distance learning in the least developed countries (LDCs) and analysed the related benefits and difficulties for the beneficiary countries.

In 2006, a small group of beneficiary countries, universities, donor institutions, and regional organisations examined training and capacity building issues in the field of international trade and investment for African LDCs and regional organisations.

In 2007, the focus was placed on implementing innovative responses to the building and sharing of knowledge in the field of trade and development.

Two meetings took place in 2009. The first one, held in June 2009, focused on "state of the art" initiatives by Geneva-based international organizations and universities - in both developed and developing countries - for the implementation of distance learning courses and activities. The second one covered building knowledge and skills on trade-related policies through training courses for developing country officials. It took place on 22 October 2009 in Geneva.

In 2011, the meeting focused on best practices in distance learning and the exchange of field experiences relating to e-learning from various United Nations institutions.

In 2012, the special event on Information and communication technology for knowledge sharing was organised during UNCTAD XIII in Doha. The use of Mobile and Web 2.0 technology being the way forward for the online applications was discussed at this special event.

a. E-learning and International Organizations

The use of networks, ICTs and other available tools to support training and research in developing countries allows many countries to better address the challenges they face to access, understand, and use information and research in the area of trade. Moreover, these tools and approaches have also helped countries adapt generic knowledge to local contexts and improve capacity of domestic

knowledge, contributing to their sustainable economic development and integration into the global economy.

The 2011 advisory group meeting focused on best practices within UN organizations and agencies with regard to new technologies (such as web 2.0, mobile learning) and techniques adapted to developing countries.

During this year's meeting, participants will examine some of the current initiatives developed or implemented by international organizations and/or universities in the field of distance learning. Following the interactive round tables, all participants will have the opportunity to engage in an open debate.

b. UNCTAD's potential in this field

The TrainForTrade programme has 12 years of experience in implementing distance learning activities. In 2001, the first UNCTAD distance learning strategy was designed and validated; the strategy was updated in 2004[1] and in 2010[2]. A Moodle[3] platform is currently used to manage the delivery of the different course deliveries, which are available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, as well as other languages such as Khmer and Lao.

Tools like "chat" and "forum" on the Moodle platform are sometimes used in combination with video-conferences over IP[4], as is the case for the "Port Training Programme" in Angola, which uses experts from Portugal and Geneva.

The distance learning strategy implemented by TrainForTrade has successfully permitted the simultaneous delivery of courses in several developing countries; for example, the delivery of the course on Legal Aspects of E-commerce in 19 countries at the same time, with a total of 210 participants and the support of local technical tutors in Latin-America.

TrainForTrade is continuously testing new tools to improve its distance learning courses; in this sense, some work has been done to convert part of the TrainForTrade courses into Mobile learning format. New tools like Wiki and an "instructor's database" have been set up to improve south-south collaboration within TrainForTrade's network. The next step could include the use of social media and mobile learning.

TrainForTrade is also currently running an e-learning project on the Legal Aspect of E-commerce in West Africa where some participants requested that the video presentations for the course be compatible with tablets and smartphones. This is exactly the perfect example of the technology available in West Africa.

II. Meeting objectives

The objective of the meeting is to advise UNCTAD on the implementation of innovative solutions for the building and sharing of knowledge.

Within this framework, the specific objectives of the meeting are:

---

[1] UNCTAD/TrainForTrade (2004) Strategy for implementing a distance learning process in UNCTAD for strengthening training capacities in international trade in developing countries
[2] UNCTAD distance learning strategy (2010), the UNCTAD way of using technology to train people
[3] Moodle: http://www.moodle.org
[4] Skype: http://www.skype.com

- To examine the innovative electronic approaches being adopted by international organizations, training institutions, and research centres in order to build and share knowledge in the field of international trade and development;

- To identify how successful these approaches have been in addressing the needs and challenges in the field of e-learning faced by developing countries and countries in transition;

- To identify best practices and how they could be further implemented, by UNCTAD in particular.

III. Dates and working languages

The meeting will be held at the CICG, Room XVIII (floor -1), Rue de Varembé 17, CH-1211 Geneva (Switzerland), on Tuesday, 10 December 2013. The working language will be English (interpretation will not be available).

IV. Participants

The following participants will be invited to the meeting:

- International organizations carrying out knowledge-building and knowledge-sharing programmes;

- Learning and training institutions in charge of research and training on international trade and development.

V. REGISTRATION

Our contact information is as follows:

Mr Dominique Chantrel,
HRD - TrainForTrade Section
Knowledge Sharing, Training and Capacity Development Branch
Division on Technology and Logistics
UNCTAD
Office E-7023
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Tel.: +41(0)22 917 5512
E-mail: trainfortrade@unctad.org