



HARVARD Kennedy School

MOSSAVAR-RAHMANI CENTER
for Business and Government

Request for Proposals:

Advice on planning and designing a website for the Company- Community Dialogue Facilitators Forum

Date of issue: 19 June 2012

Contact:

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1. Executive Summary

This Request for Proposals (RFP) requests proposals from contractors to provide technical advice on planning and designing a website for an online community of practice and public web presence for the Company-Community Dialogue Facilitators Forum (CCDFF or the Forum). In Section 2 of the RFP, we define the scope of the technical advice we seek, which is divided into two stages: first, to advise us on a sustainable web strategy and website development plan for a website to achieve the Forum's objectives, and, in a second stage, after the Forum has approved the strategy and plan, to design, develop and build the Forum's website. In Section 3 of the RFP, we describe CCDFF's background, Steering Committee, members, purpose and activities. In Section 4 of the RFP, we outline the profiles of CCDFF's two broad audiences: (1) its members, who are facilitators of company-community dialogue, and (2) users and potential users of facilitator services. The Forum's initial audience, its members, is concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, and the remainder are geographically widely dispersed. We hope that it will expand more fully in Asia over time. User scenarios of Forum members are included in the Appendix. In Section 5 of the RFP, we describe – from our layman's perspective – the functions and technical attributes we would like the website to have, which include a non-public members' portal with capacity for threaded discussion among up to 500 members, as well as a publicly-accessible portal with a searchable database holding fairly detailed professional profiles of up to 500 individuals and organizations. Lastly, Section 6 sets out the RFP's terms and conditions.

2. Scope of services

2.1 Project definition

All interested parties are invited to submit a proposal in response to this RFP to provide CCDFF with technical advice on its website design, which is divided into two stages. Stage 1 of the project is to advise us on a sustainable web strategy and website development plan leveraging existing software as a solution and using open-source, license-free software to meet or exceed the desired technical and functional attributes of the website for Forum members to easily and effectively communicate confidentially with each other and openly with the public. After the Forum's approval of the sustainable web strategy and website development plan, and at its discretion, stage 2 of the project is to design and develop the Forum's website by implementing the website development plan determined by stage 1.

2.2 Response to this RFP

We invite you to submit a proposal indicating the following:

- project approach, methodology and plan, including a timeline;
- resumes of staff, showing related project experience;
- pricing with fees and expenses.

2.3 Deliverables

The deliverables of stage 1 of the project (the sustainable web strategy and website development plan) are:

- Guiding principles for the Forum's sustainable web strategy;
- Functional, technical, and design specifications for the website;
- Website map and wireframes; and
- Recommendations to implement the strategy and website development plan, including estimated cost.

The deliverables of stage 2 of the project (website design and development) are determined by stage 1.

2.4 Selection and evaluation process

An evaluation committee composed of members of the CCDFF Steering Committee will evaluate offers received within the submittal deadline. After the initial review and evaluation of the offers received, the evaluation committee may contact selected respondents for additional information or requests for clarification.

CCDFF will choose the proposal with the best value as determined by the evaluation committee.

Selection will be based on a range of factors, including but not limited to:

- a creative approach that uses free and open-source software, and that leverages existing software as a service;
- sustainability, i.e., low set-up and maintenance costs, and administration by one or more non-expert administrators;
- ease of use in developing countries where internet connectivity may be slower, and hardware or software may be dated; and
- pricing.

2.5 Submittal deadline and schedule

Please submit your proposal by 6 pm EST on 6 July 2012 by email to Lien De Brouckere (CCDFF Project manager) at lien_de_brouckere@hks.harvard.edu.

CCDFF expects to contact respondents with any inquiries in the two weeks following the submittal deadline. We expect to award the contract within a few weeks of that. This schedule is only indicative and subject to change.

2.6 Questions

Questions about the RFP are welcome by email until 6 pm EST on 26 June 2012. If you intend to respond to this RFP, and wish to see the answers provided to questions from other respondents about the RFP, please email the Project Manager with a request to be kept informed of answers to questions about the RFP by 6 pm EST on 26 June 2012.

3. About the Company-Community Dialogue Facilitators Forum

3.1 Background

Mining, oil and gas, forestry and public infrastructure projects often carry a high risk of negative impacts on the human rights of local communities, which in turn can generate or exacerbate local conflict. It is through systematic and meaningful dialogue with local communities that the companies involved in developing and operating major investment projects can best understand how they might impact local communities, and then identify effective and sustainable ways to mitigate those impacts. Yet meaningful dialogue of this kind is challenging.

Often companies and communities need to look outside their own circles to find the individuals who can help them develop and conduct an effective dialogue: individuals who bring a recognized neutrality and can be trusted by all involved; who can help those involved construct the ground rules for dialogue and articulate the issues and interests that need to be addressed; and who can help the trust-building process that will provide for sustainable future relationships that include respect for human dignity and rights.

Over the past five years, the Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative (CSRI) at the Harvard Kennedy School's Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business & Government (M-RCBG) has conducted a range of research projects related to dispute management and resolution between companies and communities. In the course of this work, one substantial and fundamental gap has repeatedly been highlighted: while the desire and demand for experts who can assist in company-community dialogue is growing, the field of such experts remains too small, too little known, and too hard to access. The Forum is designed to address this gap by building the number and capacity of facilitators in the sphere of company-community conflict who come from and work within the countries, cultures and languages where the needs for their skills arise. Through its activities as a civil society platform for networking, training, good practice reflection, peer support and collaborative action, the Forum will help build wider

awareness across business, government and civil society of the benefits of facilitated dialogue for better company-community relations.

3.2 Steering Committee and members

[CSRI](#), in partnership with seven organizations with expertise in dispute resolution,

- the [Africa Centre for Dispute Settlement](#) (ACDS), University of Stellenbosch Business School, South Africa;
- [Cambio Democrático](#), Argentina;
- [Conflict Resolution Group Foundation](#) (CoRe), Philippines;
- [Consensus Building Institute](#) (CBI), USA;
- [Futuro Sostenible](#), Peru;
- [Meta-Culture](#), India; and
- [RESOLVE](#), USA;

is building a global professional network of experienced facilitators of company-community dialogue, called the Company-Community Dialogue Facilitators Forum. Representatives from each of the eight organizations together constitute the Forum's Steering Committee, and CSRI is the Steering Committee's administrative hub.

Forum members will be individuals or organizations with experience as independent facilitators of company-community dialogue. The Forum's membership is being built from the ground up on a regional basis by the Steering Committee. The four regions where the Forum's activities will focus are: Sub-Saharan Africa (led by ACDS), Latin America (led by Cambio Democrático and Futuro Sostenible), Southeast Asia (led by CoRe), and South Asia (led by Meta-Culture). To date, close to 100 facilitators have expressed interest in Forum membership. The Steering Committee will approve facilitators for membership in the Forum.

3.3 Purpose

The Forum's purpose is to support more effective dialogue and dispute resolution between companies and communities around the world, with a focus on the extractive, natural resources, agribusiness and public infrastructure sectors. As a result, the Forum aims to:

- Build a global professional network of individuals and organizations with direct experience as independent facilitators of company-community dialogue processes;

- Expand the pool of expertise by peer-learning, capacity-building, case study development, training, partnering and mentoring among Forum members;
- Develop public learning materials for awareness-raising and do outreach on the benefits, opportunities and experiences of company-community dialogue facilitation;
- Provide access to the profiles of experienced company-community dialogue facilitators for those persons (companies, institutions, governments, NGOs, community members) seeking independent support in managing or preventing conflict between companies and the communities their activities affect.

The Forum is and will remain a non-profit, non-commercial initiative.

3.4 Activities

The Forum's activities will be both online and in-person, however, the Forum is still in its first development phase and has not yet launched any activities for its members. CCDFF's first planned activities for 2012 are regional convenings of experienced facilitators in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and South Asia. In those convenings, facilitators will discuss their needs and interests in capacity-building within the network, and identify priority outreach activities appropriate to the challenges in their wider regions. Eventually, the Forum's in-person activities may include:

- conferences on substantive topics, such as new standards or developments; good practice and lessons learned; strategic networking; and building capacity for the Forum to be member-led; and
- trainings and workshops on substance and skills.

4. Audiences

CCDFF has two broad audiences: (1) its members, who are facilitators of company-community dialogue, and (2) users and potential users of facilitator services. During this initial phase, the Forum is primarily concerned with its members. If members cannot effectively communicate and participate in the Forum's online portals, the Forum will be of little use or interest to users or potential users of facilitator services.

4.1 Members

The following profile of Forum members is based on a set of user scenarios the Steering Committee has drafted, which are included in the Appendix.

Volume: An initial group of 100 to 200 individuals or organizations, possibly growing to 500.

Profile:

- Education: Most are university-educated, some are published authors.
- Profession: Social workers; senior officers of NGOs working on environmental or human rights issues; practicing lawyers; professors. All have been active in their field for at least five years, and often bring ten or more years of experience to the table.

Geographic location:

- Almost half of the facilitators who have expressed an interest in joining the Forum live and work in Sub-Saharan Africa, about 20 per cent in Latin America, and the remainder in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Europe and Northern America.
- Facilitators live and work in urban areas or in rural areas with weekly (or monthly) visits to large cities.
- In-person meetings and activities generally take place in large cities. Many facilitators also travel within their region or to other regions of the world to participate in conferences.

Language: Local language of their region, especially Spanish in Latin America and French in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Confidentiality: Given the nature of the field of practice, confidentiality of discussions among members is essential.

Internet habits:

- Frequent users of internet services (in their language) and connected to social networking sites;
- May use slower, perhaps dated hardware and software, that may not have the latest browser;
- While some facilitators may have broadband and blackberries, even then electricity supply in either urban or rural settings in several of these regions may be subject to disruptions;
- In some locations bandwidth may be limited due to the high volume of users on a single connection, or users may only use a netbook that makes content-heavy websites difficult to load. This discourages these users from using sites requiring downloads of video and audio.
- Facilitators have a preference to be notified by email of discussions or events, and would like the option (but not requirement) to log into a website in order to participate.

4.2 Users and potential users of facilitator services

The Forum responds to the need to improve access for users and potential users of dialogue facilitator services to skilled dialogue facilitators, i.e., the need to identify individuals or organizations with experience in facilitating company-community dialogue in a particular geographic area. As a result, users and potential users will look to the Forum in order to:

- To find a facilitator experienced in a particular region, with particular language skills.
- To learn about what company-community dialogue is, who has done it, what its benefits are, and who in their region has experience with this.

Profile:

- Representatives of companies with extractive, natural resources, agribusiness or infrastructure projects, who are typically community relations officers, CSR officers, or in-house counsel;
- [National Contact Points for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#), who are typically officers of an OECD member country's ministry of finance, foreign affairs or foreign investment;
- Officers in international institutions, such as the World Bank, Ombudsman offices of international organizations, and the [UN Peacebuilding Support Office](#);
- Civil servants of local, regional or national governments, typically of countries where the company's activities take place;
- Officers of local, regional, national and international non-government organizations and advocacy groups;
- Representatives of local communities affected by a company's activities.

Geographic location: Dispersed globally.

Language: English or their local language.

Internet habits: Generally experienced users with fewer barriers of low-bandwidth access.

5. Desired functional and technical attributes

The Forum's website should have (1) a password-protected members' portal with capacity for threaded discussion among up to 500 members and (2) a publicly-accessible portal with capacity for a searchable database holding profiles of up to 500 individuals and organizations.

5.1 Members' portal

The Forum's online activities are a means for members, who are scattered across the globe, to meet and learn from each other, with in-person meetings supporting their online interaction where possible. For members, the online activities may also play a role both to prepare for and participate in the in-person meetings, and to continue their relationships and learning in the periods between the in-person meetings. Given this, the members' portal should be a non-public, confidential space where members can:

- search and view a repository of learning and training materials, including case studies and guidance on best practices, to further their skills;
- partner with other facilitators in their region or globally on initiatives;
- find a mentor in their region or globally;
- send a message quickly and easily to a group of their peers when they have a question or a request for specific expertise;
- start a conversation with their peers, continue the conversations they started when they met each other in person, or read and search in an archive of the online discussions. The Steering Committee would like the ability to moderate the discussions. Members should ideally be able to participate in the discussion solely by using email, if they so wish;
- search and view a repository of academic articles to learn about new standards or developments;
- be contacted by the member of the Steering Committee located in their region about a relevant case study, an upcoming conference or meeting of interest;
- find out about the next training or event in their region on a Forum calendar;
- draft or post an article, case study or research paper, and solicit comments and feedback from their peers;
- design a conference program or workshop materials, in collaboration with peers;
- draft a presentation to present at a meeting or training, or draft a paper with peers; and
- hold virtual meetings or webinars.

The above list of functions is largely based on survey responses and informal conversations by Steering Committee members with facilitators, where facilitators have said they would look to the Forum:

- above all to share and discuss best practices and case studies;
- and also to participate in or organize conferences with other individuals or organizations in their region; to learn about initiatives started by other facilitators in their region; to participate in trainings or workshops in dialogue facilitation tailored to the company-community dispute context; to participate in online discussions with other experts on topics of interest; to partner with other facilitators in their region or globally on initiatives; to find a mentor in their region or globally; and to promote their field of practice to potential users in their region.

When asked about what they want from a website to support the Forum, facilitators responded that they want:

- publicly-accessible contact details of experienced facilitators;
- publicly-accessible publications of general interest on dialogue facilitation in company-community disputes;
- publicly-accessible case stories, which may be written accounts or video testimony; and
- a password-protected discussion area for exchange and to plan activities, as well as a calendar of events.

5.2 Publicly-accessible portal

This portal is the Forum's public presence, which increases its visibility and provides the public with access to information about the field of company-community dialogue facilitation and the Forum's members. The publicly-accessible portal should have:

- A searchable roster of Forum members, where members can elect to display a public profile with their name, thumbnail picture, organization, contact information, region in which they work or have worked, languages, areas of expertise (e.g., stakeholder engagement, dispute resolution), and a short summary of their relevant experience.
- General information and recent news about the field of facilitating company-community dialogue, such as case studies, success stories, benefits, and experiences. This content will largely be text-based, but may also include videos, such as the video at http://baseswiki.org/en/Video/Tintaya_Dialogue;
- Buttons for Forum members and other public users to share activity on the publicly-accessible portal with LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites;
- The potential to be linked, perhaps as a sister site, to an existing website on company-community grievance mechanisms and dispute resolution,

<http://baseswiki.org/>, with a view to ensuring synergies between the two. The BASESwiki site was also developed by the Harvard Kennedy School and is currently in the process of being reviewed in collaboration with another organization; and

- Pages with news, general information about CCDFF, a description of the Steering Committee, the Forum's background, FAQs, and contact information.

5.3 General technical goals

Language: Both the members' portal and the publicly-accessible portal will be in English, with the capacity for profiles and content to be entered and displayed in English, Spanish or French.

Maintenance: The website should support non-technical central management (e.g., to approve facilitators for Forum membership).

Search: A robust search engine, for both Forum members' profiles and for other content on the site.

Support: A how-to guide for members on using the functions on the members' portal, and a helpline for technical support.

Statistics: A reliable statistics gathering mechanism.

Content: CCDFF will provide the content, including text, images, documents, and existing multimedia for the publicly-accessible portal of the website. Members will generate the content for the members' portal.

6. Terms and conditions

6.1 Issuance of this RFP

Issuance of this RFP does not compel M-RCBG to purchase. M-RCBG reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, wholly or in part; to waive any technicalities, informalities, or irregularities in any proposal which does not materially affect the integrity or effectiveness of the RFP process. M-RCBG further reserves the right to analyze proposals in detail, and to award contracts, which we in the exercise of reasonable discretion, believe to be in our best interest. M-RCBG also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP.

This document (RFP) is neither a contract nor an offer to contract. M-RCBG is not responsible for any proposal preparation expenses, submission costs, or any expenses incurred in negotiations.

6.2 Ownership of Materials

Ownership of all information, materials and documentation submitted pursuant to the RFP shall belong exclusively to M-RCBG. M-RCBG reserves the right to use

any or all ideas presented in any proposal submitted in response to the RFP and to request any additional information necessary from any and all suppliers to supplement this request without obligation to inform other respondents.

6.3 Inquiries

All inquiries related to this proposal must be directed, via email, to the listed contact. If deemed appropriate, inquiries and responses may be shared with all suppliers. Phone calls will not be accepted.

6.4 No Contact Policy

Contact regarding this RFP with any Harvard University representative other than the person named as the contact on the first page of this RFP is discouraged.

6.5 Advertising

Advertising by a bidder or any subcontractors in connection with this RFP is prohibited. This restriction includes articles in any trade journal, daily paper, magazine, websites, billboards, or work trailers. Any advertising referencing the Harvard name must receive prior approval by the Office of the Provost as well as M-RCBG.

6.6 Multiple Offerings

A supplier may submit more than one service offering if appropriate. At least one of the offerings must be complete and address all questions and instructions in this RFP. Additional offerings may be presented in an abbreviated format.

6.7 Substantive Nature of Responses

Responses that are not substantive may be considered non-responsive. Suppliers must address all questions and sections of this RFP in the format specified. Responses in general terms or terms that differ from this RFP are not acceptable.

6.8 Rejection of Responses

M-RCBG reserves the right to reject any and all responses. The supplier will absorb all costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of the proposal.

APPENDIX

User Scenarios of CCDFF members

User scenario: Latin America

Carlos is a long standing dialogue builder, who has worked in the dialogue initiative for mining in Peru for the past ten years. He has a diploma in sociology ,and is frequently contacted by the media when an community-company dispute emerges. Previously, Carlos was engaged in NGO platforms fighting bad practices in his region. Recently, his network received a grant to launch capacity-building training courses about different community-company mining processes. The platform he belongs to has been an active multilateral dialogue forum, where company managers and government officials usually participate as individuals. Given the exacerbation of disputes in certain circumstances, Carlos has been confronted and criticized by individuals belonging to his platform, but he is also highly recognized for his efforts to avoid polarization.

Carlos is committed to finding ways to launch dialogue processes to resolve conflict and recently has helped other NGOs and networks in other countries with launching similar dialogue processes. Carlos and his platform, which includes NGOs and professional facilitators, have had very limited impact on emblematic conflict and actors, despite their effort to promote dialogue among parties. The approximation to local communities has had varying degrees of success for training and dialogue promotion, including community monitoring in brown field areas. Nevertheless, the group remains an important reference for media and for creating cooperative approaches with government agencies responsible for environmental and natural resource governance. Members of Carlos' platform, himself included, have rarely been able to be accepted or called to intervene as mediators. Only one or two of his platform's members have been exposed to facilitating or mediating community-company dialogue, which sometimes included government bodies specialized in dealing with environmental grievances.

Carlos and the platform are linked by decentralized networks, although most of the meetings and activities are in large cities. In general, platform members are active internet users; mostly in Spanish. But there is a persisting gap between the activity and the visibility of community-like bodies. Despite Carlos' success of being active for more than 10 years - the voluntary process has achieved to get some company as well as cooperation source funds- a diverse range of perspectives currently exists between members. Some grassroots members have avoided his platform and assumed a stronger incidence position about the current policy and rights-based demands from communities, opposing mining.

Giving this public exposure to criticism and media, transparency is a key issue for Carlos in order to maintain his credibility. Given the onset of various processes in South America, many of them having access to different information sources and manuals on mediation, it is possible that they will have a preference for new sources based on the availability of resources in their language (Spanish), as well as an lessons learned from natural resources-based conflict. For Carlos, it would be of great value if the Forum gives him access to information about identifying best practices, new standards and improved regulatory frameworks as a result of successful and failed conflict mediation. It is worth to say that in the case of Peru, the Humala administration is implementing a conflict prevention system (started in the Garcia mandate) to encompass the challenging trend of conflict reported monthly by Defensoria del Pueblo.

Carlos may be primarily interested in connecting with dialogue practitioners from the South American region to exchange their processes and lessons from their initiatives. In these collectives, it seems highly feasible to identify individuals in the wider region that are practitioners in the field community-company facilitated dialogue. Then, an open access forum seems to be of value for all those networks if it can provide key and focused information on intercultural mediation, improved dialogue facilitation (currently most of the so-called dialogue processes are a result of crisis and failures). Given their diversity and limited exposure to English language, it can be very useful for their colleagues to have access to video testimonies, especially if they reflect community empowerment and concrete results of facilitated dialogue processes.

User scenario: South Asia

Ravi Kumar is a social worker and an activist who has worked for the past twenty years in the areas of tribal rights and forest conservation in India. He has a MSW from a leading Indian University and has authored several papers on the subject. For most of his career he has fought against the corporations and companies that buy up or lease forest land for industrial or commercial use. He and his colleagues at the Forest Life Institute (FLI) distrust any moves by governments and businesses to 'rationalize' or 'improve' environmental and natural resources management as backdoor attempts at privatizing this vital commodity, land. They also view any attempt at private-public partnerships as ways to keep tribal communities, who are the rightful inhabitants of the forests, out of the decision-making process.

After many years of research, advocacy, litigation and protesting against the 'corporatization' of natural resources, Ravi is finding that it is becoming much harder to protect community resources and the 'commons' from the increasing belligerence of the government, which is under pressure to increase GDP and provide land for industry and urban centers. In the past ten years, thousands of square miles of forests have been laid waste and the tribal populations displaced. Government's promises of resettlement have been hollow, and most former inhabitants of forest lands have been forced to migrate, and many have resorted to begging and prostitution in the cities to survive.

Over the past few years, Ravi and FLI have also tried bringing together stakeholders from environmental groups, NGOs, academia and other like-minded groups to discuss and strategize how they can stem the systematic and wanton destruction of India's green cover and the human destruction that it creates. However, he finds both business and governments (except during elections) unwilling to listen to reason, and working both legally and illegally to sell concessions to mining, construction and hydro-electric companies. Ravi has also found that courts increasingly see protests and public interest litigation as attempts to stall development and against economic development. This has resulted in a few recent court rulings going against the environmental groups. While Ravi has heard the term 'mediation' bandied about, he does not know how it is different from arbitration and conciliation, and he is suspicious of both.

At an environmental conference in Boston recently, where he presented a paper on tribal rights, Ravi met fellow activists from around the world with whom he shared his challenges. A presentation by Greta Greenberg, a conflict resolution practitioner, caught his attention. Greta spoke about how she had facilitated a complex multi-stakeholder process bringing together NGOs, community members, businesses, academics and local and state government officials to make decisions with regard to access to and the commercial use of forests in West Virginia. Ravi spoke to her afterwards and, despite his initial cynicism, was struck by her story of how bringing businesses and government stakeholders into the dialogue in this case seemed to open up ways of addressing the problem constructively. He is still not certain that this would work in India, with the endemic corruption, but would be open to learning more about how this is done. He is also worried that, as an activist, he might not be able to persuade some of his erstwhile adversaries to join in any group that he tries to convene.

Greta told him about CCDF and encouraged him to join the group to learn about the processes, meet other practitioners and develop skills that can help him convene and facilitate what might turn out to be very intense meetings. She told him this would be mainly an online forum, and that works for him. While sometimes he is away on the field where internet access is unreliable, his office and home have broadband access and he uses a Blackberry. But even in the biggest Indian cities, the supply of electricity is subject to spikes and disruptions and Ravi would prefer not to have to download heavy files.

Ravi is also concerned about confidentiality. If other NGOs were to know of his attempts to reach out to business and governments, they would see him as a traitor to the cause. He needs to get all his ducks in a row before he goes public with his radical idea.

User scenario: Southeast Asia

Mai-Lan worked in a law firm for a number of years in the Philippines, and through various connections she became involved in some local government-community dispute situations. She has now become actively involved in this arena as a facilitator, but she still earns part of her income through traditional legal work. However, her hope is to make mediation a more full-time occupation; she has recently been involved with two or three mediations involving large foreign companies, local communities and local government. Mai-Lan doesn't have a formal qualification as a mediator, but has taken part in a training course organized by an overseas donor and is increasingly called upon for her services in this field.

Mai-Lan would like to read case studies and be able to ask questions about them when necessary; to attend a training program to give her the conflict resolution and dialogue skills; to network with practitioners around the country's capital, Manila, where she works, post case scenarios or problems to generate ideas among experts, and network with other practitioners. Mai-Lan is very comfortable using the internet, including social media. She frequently uses online research, and is comfortable with generating information from a website.

As there are very few practitioners in her own state or even in the region, Mai-Lan is looking to connect with others in the field of company-community or government-community mediation. In Manila where she is based, Mai-Lan has good internet access with reasonable speeds of connection. However, she is out of the office around 30 to 40% of her time in locations where accessing the internet is difficult and where phone connections are usually easier.

Mai-Lan is first and foremost interested in connecting with other practitioners with whom she can discuss general questions and challenges that arise in her work. She is hoping to learn from others' experience and possibly to find individuals in the wider region and globally with whom she could partner for some larger projects she has in mind. Since she can rarely afford to travel on unfunded work, the internet is a useful means for her to connect with others and she already is part of various networks related to other interests, both professional and private. Provided there is a password-protection, she will feel able to speak fairly openly with other practitioners about the field of her work, but will want some assurances that others in the Forum are truly practitioners and respect the privacy of exchanges on the site.

Given Mai-Lan's aims, she is looking for an interactive experience. From the capital she can access video and audio content, though even there downloads can take some time due to the large number of users on the broadband connection, so large files are a problem. The time she spends on the site will depend entirely on the value she is getting from exchanges. If it works well for her, she might check in once or twice a week for 30 minutes or more, and would like to receive email updates about activity on the site that is of interest to her.

User scenario: Sub-Saharan Africa

Trevor Nkosi is a Kenyan from Naivasha in the Rift Valley province. He owns a medium-sized farm and employs up to 100 people during peak production periods in good rain-fall years. Productivity and income from the farm are highly variable, depending upon drought cycles and unpredictable political winds.

During his agricultural 'off seasons', and on weekends, Trevor works as an Organizational Development consultant for various urban development programs in and around Nairobi. Several years ago, he had the opportunity to travel to the US and attend a summer institute mediation and peace building training by John Paul Lederach. He later received basic training in mediation, and has been taking advantage of any Kenyan networking opportunities he can find.

At one such event, Trevor met two mediators from Nairobi who had just opened a small shop specializing in land and natural resource conflict resolution. Although Trevor lacked experience and skill in the kinds of site-based conflicts that the two practitioners were specializing in, they were eager to contract with Trevor on certain projects where his cultural and linguistic skills would be beneficial, and to mentor him in natural resources mediation.

Trevor worked on several cases with the two mediators, and learned a great deal. Through that relationship, he was introduced to the CAO (the [Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman](#) of the IFC and MIGA) and worked on his first company-community dispute.

Despite these experiences and his eagerness to do more mediation, the work has been extremely slow, and contracts have been difficult to win. Trevor continues to reach out to his contacts and make known his availability and interest in the field. Particularly in the agribusiness sector, he has a good understanding of the conflicts of interest over land and natural resources, and the socio-political and cultural challenges that are prevalent in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa.

Acknowledging that he could benefit from additional training and mentoring, Trevor is eager to sharpen his skills and connect with others in the field of natural resource mediation – especially company-community alternative dispute resolution, where he sees a huge need in light of the booming agribusiness sector in the Rift Valley. His goal is to partner with more experienced mediators on site-based conflicts in Africa.

Trevor has access to the internet and uses it regularly, but in Naivasha particularly, the connection can be slow or unpredictable and it may take several days for him to receive and respond to e-mails. His connection is far more reliable from Nairobi where he conducts most of his outreach via internet and Skype.

User scenario: Northern America

Nancy Peterson is a founding partner of a large dispute resolution firm based in Chicago. The organization was among the US-based pioneers in community mediation in the 1970s, and in the 1980s it was one of the first to pilot and provide environmental conflict resolution. For nearly 25 years, the firm has specialized in facilitating complex disputes and consensus-building processes involving the public and government agencies, inter-agency conflict; federal rule making and regulatory negotiations. In the past ten years, Nancy's firm has also been working internationally – providing conflict management training to community groups, governments, and corporations, and mediating site-based conflicts on scores of development projects.

Nancy has led this work for the firm, and because of her expertise in international development, she also sits on several boards and panels of the accountability mechanisms of multilateral development banks.

Because of her hectic schedule and the huge demands on her time, Nancy has been reluctant to take on any new 'voluntary' initiatives or projects, and is skeptical that "yet another network" will add value or advance the field. Still, she acknowledges that there is a dearth of practitioners with expertise in company-community dispute resolution – despite the growing demand. In fact, she often finds herself facing a difficult challenge and would love to pick the brain of a colleague to compare notes or ask advice – but really doesn't know who to call. Along that line, she acknowledges an "ever growing need" to identify mediators with the appropriate cultural and linguistic background to manage these site-based conflicts.

From Nancy's perspective, participating in the company-community dialogue facilitators forum would be beneficial, as long as it did not require producing 'deliverables' or documents, or applying to qualify for a roster or an exclusive membership list. Rather, she sees value in a network that exchanges case studies, news and information about events or relevant conferences, a listserv of names to whom she could quickly broadcast questions or requests for specific expertise, and occasional chances to exchange ideas in person or electronically.