

## Pulling Down the Barriers!

At its launch back in January, InfoSpring was focused on the topics of sustainable agriculture, food security, climate change, and natural resources. Given the breadth of potential development topics we felt it necessary to erect some temporary barriers to ensure some commonality among the initially small community. We think this was a successful strategy as the site has generated a wealth of knowledge and experiences around these topics.

As the site evolves and membership grows (1140 members and counting!) we are seeing the range of questions posted on InfoSpring expand. Recently topics such as the prevention of disease epidemics, community health practices, and gender quotas in parliamentary elections have been discussed. It was always the Forum's philosophy to let demand drive this project and we are happy to facilitate this expansion of subject matter. While agriculture, food security, climate change, and natural resource management remain our most "tagged" topics, increasingly popular tags include "monitoring and evaluation," "disaster management," "gender," and "health."

This change has prompted the Forum to reach out to practitioners in a broader range of sectors in order to ensure in-depth dialogues in a variety of subject areas and add further value to the community.

### Featured Questions

By giving people the ability to share knowledge with practitioners throughout the world, InfoSpring aims to facilitate not only discussion, but action. The following questions highlight how InfoSpring can be of practical use and effectively bring practitioners together.

- [Ben from UK asks about the effectiveness of pilot projects.](#)
- [Boima from Liberia gathers information about alternative livelihoods for rural communities around protected parks.](#)
- [Cathy from Kenya sparked a great discussion on REDD that led to an event being planned in Nairobi](#)

According to Ben, the answers he received in response to his question about pilot projects will be useful in considering how to "facilitate the scaling up community-based adaptation initiatives." These questions also illustrate how a growing InfoSpring community is a stronger InfoSpring community.

### Info Spring Survey Results

Thank you to everyone who helped our evaluation process by completing a survey. We were delighted to have 154 members complete the survey, representing around 15% of the total.

We have prepared a short report summarizing the results and wish to share it with everyone. [Please click here to download the report.](#) As ever comments and feedback are welcome!

### Help Your Community Continue to Grow

One of the best ways to spread awareness about resources like InfoSpring is by tapping into existing, trusted networks. Therefore, who better to spread InfoSpring to the wider community than members who are active and have contacts in the field?

**Please tell your friends and colleagues about our site and invite them to join!**

## An Evolving Concept: From Chapters to Networks

The Forum's experiment with the "chapter model" in Liberia this year has produced some very interesting results. Blogs from meetups held at rural locations in the north and west of the country appear on the "chapters" page of [www.devprac.org](http://www.devprac.org). The five Liberian Fellows, all of them practitioners with deep roots in Liberia's development community, have demonstrated the value of informal meetups in creating horizontal communication channels among front-line practitioners who would not otherwise be connected.

Our original goal was to form similar chapters in other countries, each with strong local leadership, and to provide them logistical and financial support under the Forum's umbrella. Unfortunately, our limited financial resources won't enable us to execute this plan. Instead, we've looked at ways to encourage and guide the establishment of practitioner "networks" that can be financed by sources within the country itself. Our ideas are laid out in a short paper that offers guidelines for planning and organizing these locally supported networks. [Click here to access this document.](#)

In Kenya, building on the high level of interest displayed by more than 50 participants in the reception hosted by the Forum (see last month's newsletter for details), a team of self-starters has begun to act on these recommendations. Because of InfoSpring's wide and diverse membership in the country, and positive responses from front-line practitioners working at provincial and district levels, there is an excellent opportunity to build a vibrant, decentralized network. With more than 40 years involvement in Kenya, I am excited by this locally driven initiative and am committed to actively support and advise the network planning team.



Tony Barclay  
Founder and president

### HOT QUESTIONS ON INFOSPRING

Below are some questions that need answers or have sparked interesting discussions – please feel free to jump in!

#### From India:

[Is there any experience where forest communities participated in a REDD/REDD+ project and gained substantial and sustained benefits?](#)

#### From Lebanon:

[How can the salts and other elements be removed from wells to improve water quality and reduce the taste and smell of rust?](#)

#### From Liberia:

[How can NGOs and MFIs better cooperate to assist in helping to alleviate poverty?](#)