

Sustainable Land Management / TerrAfrica Knowledge Base

How-to complete manual for administrators

updated 17 September 2008, Géraud Servin

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1 What is the Knowledge Base

1.1 In a nutshell

The [Knowledge Base](#) is an Internet-based tool that facilitates the access, the exchange and methodical accumulation of key knowledge to implement [Sustainable Land Management \(SLM\) in Africa](#). It has been developed by the [TerrAfrica Partnership](#)¹.

The Knowledge Base is freely available to any stakeholders seeking information on SLM in Africa, at any level. Typical users include representatives of national SLM task force, civil society, research and development organizations, among others.

The Knowledge Base contains a large [selection of information resources](#) related to SLM in Africa. These resources comprise the most relevant information available for African countries and partners to scale-up SLM. Information comes in different formats including text documents, multimedia documents, maps, statistics, websites, etc. The [initial screening](#) of these resources was done on the [basis of quality and relevance](#) but new resources can be easily added by registered users of the Knowledge Base.

In addition to these information resources, the Knowledge Base provides a number of [user-friendly interactive tools](#) allowing SLM stakeholders to form virtual communities, exchange knowledge on any SLM issues and strengthen cooperation for optimal development impact. In particular, the Knowledge Base tools allow users to: 1) build different user communities (thematic, geographic) using restricted or public discussion boards, 2) exchange and upload information, 3) develop a common understanding and knowledge on any SLM related issues.

The Knowledge Base is managed through a [decentralised system](#) that enables members to create user-defined [country and thematic workspaces](#) according to the specific needs and objectives of a country or a topic.

The Knowledge Base is **not** an exhaustive repository of documents nor a utility for socializing. It is not a news aggregator about SLM events. Rather it is designed to be a user-friendly tool to connect SLM stakeholders, foster collaboration and promote the scaling-up of SLM practices across Africa.

1.2 Objective

Knowledge resources on SLM are difficult to access, fragmented, incomplete and insufficiently operational for many partners working on SLM issues in Africa. Lack of access to knowledge serves as a barrier to improved land management. In response, a methodical and regular effort is being made to [collect, package and customize the existing information](#) so that it can be used at various levels of SLM implementation; from community planning up to national policy-making and financing.

Because of nearly continuous consultations required of land management stakeholders, it is necessary to [facilitate the sharing and implementation of this knowledge](#) in an open, user-friendly manner. To meet these demands, a state-of-the-art knowledge management approach is needed to establish a dedicated Knowledge Base, whose [overall objective](#) is to:

1 TerrAfrica has been developed as a multi-partner platform and a primary vehicle for consultation and action with the direction and support provided by a group of African governments, [NEPAD](#), [the World Bank](#), [the UNCCD's Global Mechanism \(GM\)](#), [the UNCCD Secretariat](#), [the GEF Family](#), [IFAD](#), [the FAO](#), [UNEP](#), [AfDB](#), regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as multilateral organizations including [the European Union](#) and [the European Commission](#), bilateral donors, civil society and scientific organizations including [FARA](#) and [CGIAR](#) centers.

- Provide one-stop access to key information on complex issues related to rural land management in Africa.
- Exchange numerous data and information on cross-cutting issues among different users at various levels.
- Build consensus and foster alignment on action, understanding, and enhance monitoring of results and impact.

1.3 Users

The Knowledge Base is open to all stakeholders involved in mainstreaming and scaling-up SLM in Africa. It does **not** endorse any particular technique or process relating to the SLM agenda. The Knowledge Base does not represent the views of any particular member of the TerrAfrica partnership. Its sole purpose is to serve as a "public good" to facilitate the mainstreaming and scaling-up of SLM practices across Africa.

From the KB's point of view, there are six categories of users:

1. **Visitors:** can access all the information resources made available on the platform either by [browsing through the chapters and sub-chapters outlining the SLM vision](#) or directly by [searching through the database using multiple criteria](#). In addition visitors are welcomed to enter the [forum discussions](#) and see "what's going on". Finally they can and ask a question or send comments to an administrator by filling a simple [contact form](#).
2. **Registered users:** have additional privileges compared to visitors. They can use the interactive tools to [add a resource](#) to the KB, participate to a discussion in the forum, or [edit their own profile](#) in the [directory of registered users](#).
3. **Workspace registered users:** are registered users having access to a [country and thematic workspaces](#) which contains additional resources (documents and forum discussions) specifically tailored to meet the needs and priorities of a country/topic-specific invest programs or a working group dealing with a specific SLM topic.
4. **Workspace administrators** are responsible for building up a [country/thematic SLM workspace](#) by identifying and registering country/topic-specific and -relevant resources, and decide if a resource is meant to be **public** (shared with everyone) or **private** (shared with all the members of the country group). He/She is also responsible for helping the group of workspace registered users who have access to the country/thematic workspace. For each country/thematic workspace a website usergroup and a forum group is created e.g. Ethiopia, Ghana, Local Knowledge, Monitoring and Evaluation.
5. **International administrators** are responsible for the good working of the KB as well as creating a true community of users committed to SLM. They have additional responsibilities and privileges to manage the KB's contents and assist the registered users and workspace administrators.
6. **Back-end administrator** has access to the core of the system (i.e. the back-end) used to manage the website (i.e. the front-end). He/She can change many parameters and settings "behind the scenes". Its main role is to provide technical support to the national and international administrators, maintain the server performance and fix the glitches and bugs. He/She does not play an active role on a daily basis. Only an administrator with strong skills in Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and a good understanding of Typo3, the open source Content Management System used to develop the website, should be given the privileges to work in the back-end (in addition to an FAO staff member).

The table below (see Table 1) summarises, for all the main functions, the different privileges held by each type of users.

Function / Users' privileges	Visitors	Registered users	Workspace registered users	National admin.	International admin.	Back-end admin.
Browse and search all information resources, view forum discussions, register your profile, contact an administrator	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interactive tools: post messages in the forum, add a resource, edit your profile, view directory of registered users	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country and thematic workspaces: browse the private and public resources stored in folders, participate to a private forum discussions.	No	No	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Country and thematic workspaces: add resources organised in folders	No	No	No*	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Review and publish a resource, receive emails sent by users (e.g. "Ask an administrator")	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Edit: text of static pages (e.g. about/help), menu and pages titles, hierarchy's chapters and sub-chapters, users profiles and passwords, security settings	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
* Access to a country/thematic workspace is unique e.g. a workspace administrator/registered user belonging to the Ethiopia workspace can't access the Ghana workspace and vice-versa.						

Table 1: Users' privileges for all the main functions

1.4 Security architecture, settings and relationships

The following table and illustration are particularly important for the Back-end administrator as they define the security architecture and settings of the whole system. The table below (see Table 2) outlines for each user group described above what are the corresponding website usergroup and forum groups used in the back-end to administer the security settings and privileges. Only one country (Ethiopia) has been used as an example to keep it simple. Please note that workspace's administrators and registered users belong to the same website usergroup. However the administrator's property is indicated, in the BE, in another field (i.e. MSN Screen Name) as "country_admin".

User groups	Visitors	Registered users	Workspace registered users	Workspace admin.	International admin.	Back-end admin.
Website usergroup	Not applicable	TER_Registered_Users	TER_Ethiopia	TER_Ethiopia	TER_Administrators	TER_Administrators
Forum groups	Not applicable	TER_Forum_Registered_Users	TER_Forum_Ethiopia	TER_Forum_Ethiopia	TER_Forum_Administrator	TER_Forum_Administrator

Table 2: Correspondence between website usergroups and forum groups

The figure below (see Illustration 1) outlines the security settings and relationships between the website usergroups, the forum groups and users in a synthetic way. Again only one country (Ethiopia) has been used as an example to keep it simple. Please note that the usergroups are independent from one another, thus simplifying the management of security since there is no parent/child cascading relationships to deal with.

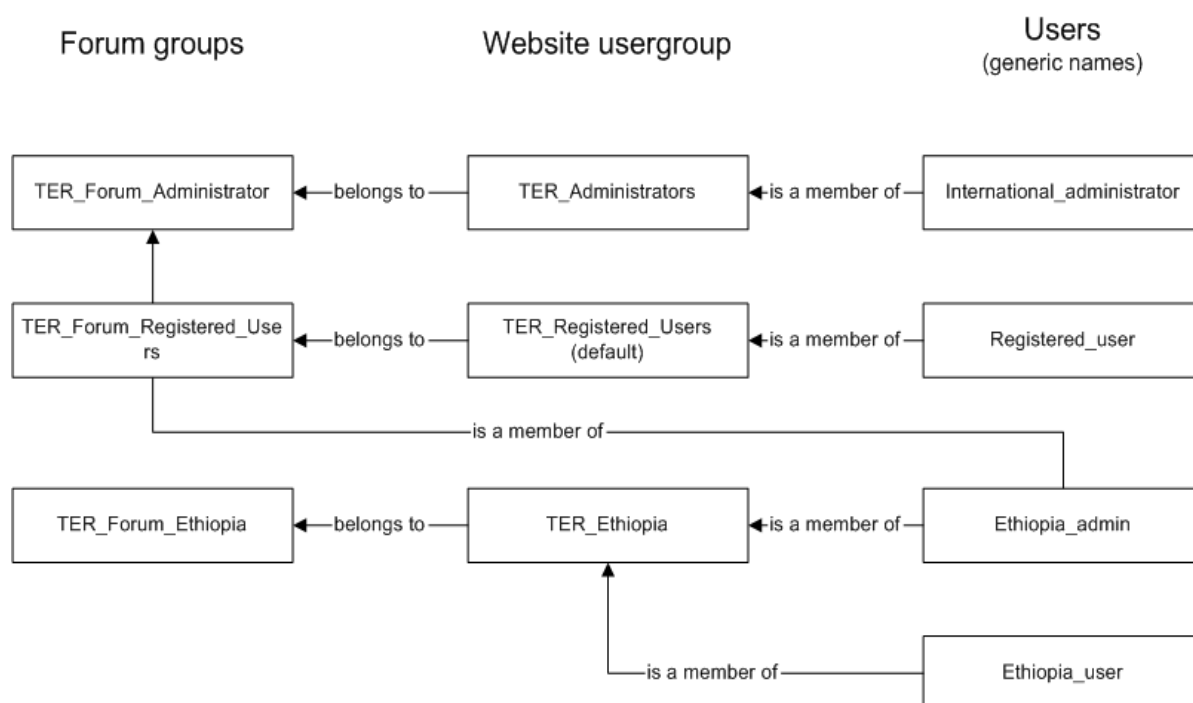


Illustration 1: Security settings and relationships

1.5 Main knowledge resources

There are three different ways to access the knowledge resources:

- **Browse by the SLM vision:** the information resources have been organized hierarchically in chapters and sub-chapters based on themes developed in the shared SLM vision. **Summaries of key available knowledge** have been prepared for each of the 4 chapters and 12 sub-chapters:
 1. **Demands on and threats to Africa's land resources: the rationale for SLM**
 - The increasing demand for land goods and services
 - Land degradation
 2. **Building on data and experience**
 - Lessons learned, case studies, projects and programmes implemented
 - Directories and portals
 - Maps and statistics
 - Multimedia (photos, videos and audio)
 3. **Sustainable land management - the basis for the new vision**
 - Concepts, principles, frameworks and approaches
 - Basket of technologies and techniques
 - Extension and training
 - Challenges in up-scaling and mainstreaming SLM, knowledge gaps and barriers
 4. **TerrAfrica: strengthening implementation of SLM**

- Vision and guidelines
- Diagnostics and investment frameworks
- **Search by country, keywords or free text:** find information using a simple free-text search or by more advanced options such as searching by country, TerrAfrica activities, list of keywords, etc.
- **Country and thematic workspaces:** contain public as well as restricted resources used by working groups to organize efforts towards program-based approaches to SLM, such as by preparing and implementing SLM investment frameworks. These are managed by a **workspace administrator** and are accessible only to selected workspace registered users.

1.6 Interactive tools

At the moment the KB is a directory of ca. 600 resources, 80% of which are documents. The **interactive tools** in the Knowledge Base can be used to find information resources and communicate with other **registered users** or with **administrators**:

1. **Forum discussions:** any visitor can browse forum discussion but only registered users can post messages, share documents, send comments, etc.
2. **Add a resource:** any registered user can add a resource (text, documents, multimedia documents, maps, statistics, websites, etc.) by submitting a simple form. The submission will be reviewed by an administrator before publication in the Knowledge Base.
3. **Register/Edit your profile:** joining the Knowledge Base community is completely free and easy with a simple form to fill. Once registered the user can always update his/her profile to reflect some changes. They have the possibility to post messages in the forum, browse the community directory or add resources.
4. **Directory of registered users:** they can browse this tool to discover who are the other registered members of the Knowledge Base community and use their details to contact them directly.
5. **Ask an administrator:** anyone can send comments, suggestions or questions using a simple form. The administrators will be informed by email and answer the users within the next 48 hours.

2 How-to interact with the Knowledge Base

2.1 Relationships between resources and users

The KB contains two types of resources: **public** and **private**. Public resources can be accessed primarily through the browse and search engines. They can also be found inside a country/thematic workspace's folder. Private resources can be accessed only through the country/thematic workspaces' folders, they do not appear in the browse or the search engines.

A resource can have three different **status**:

1. **Draft:** this is the **default status** of a resource which has been added by a registered user. Every time a resource is submitted; an email is automatically sent to all the international administrators. It is up to them to change that status in "Reviewed & published" or "Reviewed & rejected".
2. **Reviewed & published:** if the resource proposed by the registered user met the KB relevance and quality criteria the international administrator must change the status of the resource to "Reviewed & published". The resource will automatically becomes visible on the web site.
3. **Reviewed & rejected:** if the resource proposed by the registered user does not met the KB relevance and quality criteria the international administrator must change the status of the resource to "Reviewed & rejected". The resource is stored in the database (it is not deleted) but

it will not appear on the web site. The international administrator should also contact the registered user directly to explain why the resource was not published (using the KB quality and relevance criteria) or eventually ask further explanation about the resource. It is considered as a good practice to establish that dialogue between instead of simply rejecting something the registered user took time to submit and thought valuable.

It is important for the administrators to understand the relationship between the resources and the users i.e. who can view or edit what (see Table 3 and Table 4). The minimum security setting applying to a record is indicated in brackets "(security)". Please note also that one country group does not have access to the resources owned by another country group. Table 1 and 2 have been simplified for the country groups, using only one generic account.

Public resources (access from browse, search & workspaces)	Visitors	Registered users	Workspace registered users	Workspace admin.	International admin.	Back-end admin.
Draft	No	No	No*	No*	Yes (security)	Yes
Reviewed & published	Yes (security)	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Reviewed & rejected	No	No	No*	No*	Yes (security)	Yes

* Access to a country/thematic workspace is unique e.g. a workspace administrator/registered user belonging to the Ethiopia workspace can't access the Ghana workspace and vice-versa.

Table 3: Edit and view privileges for the public resources

Private resources (access from workspaces)	Visitors	Registered users	Workspace registered users	Workspace admin.	International admin.	Back-end admin.
Draft	No	No	No*	Yes* (security)	Yes	Yes
Reviewed & published	No	No	Yes* (security)	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Reviewed & rejected	No	No	No*	Yes* (security)	Yes	Yes

* Access to a country/thematic workspace is unique e.g. a workspace administrator/registered user belonging to the Ethiopia workspace can't access the Ghana workspace and vice-versa.

Table 4: Edit and view privileges for the private resources

2.2 Visitors are welcomed

The table below (see Table 5) present a synthetic overview of what the visitors can do with the KB.

What	How	Comments for administrators
Browse by the	The resources' classification is based on the story line proposed by	The hierarchy's structure and the

What	How	Comments for administrators
SLM vision	<p>the TerrAfrica vision. It is presented according to 4 main chapters, divided into 12 sub-chapters using a tree-view that can be browsed.</p> <p>For each chapter and sub-chapter a "summary of knowledge", taken from the TerrAfrica vision paper, is proposed.</p> <p>Within each sub-chapter, key resources (i.e. "best of the best") are listed first by alphabetical order. The total number of resources per sub-chapter is also indicated by a number in bold (e.g. "< 79 >").</p> <p>The following information is provided for each resource: title, description, corporate author, publication date (year), uploaded file(s), URL(s), free keywords, chapter hierarchy.</p>	<p>knowledge summaries are managed by the back-end administrator.</p> <p>Key resources are highlighted in the list with a red background and an exclamation mark icon besides its title. In comparison the other resources (non-key) do not have an icon besides their title and just a simple grey background.</p> <p>Visitors can see (and search) only the public resources with the status "Reviewed & published".</p>
Search by country, keywords or free text	<p>Use any of the following search e.g. country, advanced options or free text (the operator OR is used with words inserted with a space between them) to find resource(s).</p> <p>The advanced options are the following: TerrAfrica docs, type, chapters, keywords, date, title, author, order by (author, date, popularity, title).</p> <p>Regarding the order by function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By default : resources are sorted first by key resources (alphabetical title from A to Z) and then the other resources (non-key) are sorted also by alphabetical title (from A to Z). • Author: resources are sorted first by alphabetical author (from A to Z) and then by alphabetical title (from A to Z). • Date: resources are sorted first by chronological date (from most recent to less recent) and then by alphabetical title (from A to Z). The resources with no date (e.g. web portal) are listed at the end. • Popularity: resources are sorted first by popularity (most popular to less popular) and then by title in alphabetical order (from A to Z). • Title: resources are sorted by title in alphabetical order (from A to Z). 	<p>The country, chapters, keywords, date and author options are based on a dynamically filtered list of all the resources that are recorded in the KB.</p> <p>By filtered it means that, for example, if a country is not on the box list there's no resource which has been associated with this country.</p> <p>By dynamic it means that these list are automatically updated by being linked to the existing contents of the KB. Again with our country example, if a new country is associated with a resource it will immediately appears in the search option. The opposite is true, if a country is removed from the KB, the country won't show any more in the list (if at least one resource is not associated with it).</p>
Forum discussions	<p>The forum is the place where you can have electronic discussions about the KB.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The forum is organized in 4 levels: 1) category (e.g. TerrAfrica - vision, country tool and guidelines), 2) conference (e.g. Vision paper), 3) thread (discussion) and 4) post (message). 2. Search the forum discussions using keywords in the post text and subject or just inside the subject. 	<p>Visitors can view and browse through all the public discussions that are being held but they can't participate to it.</p> <p>They'll not see the private discussions and thus will not even be aware of them.</p>
Register your profile	<p>A simple form allow any visitor to register an individual profile in less than a minute.</p> <p>Right after submitting the completed form the visitor will receive an email with his/her unique username (email address) and password</p>	<p>Registration is open and automatic i.e. anyone can register and there's no need for an administrator to "approve" it.</p>

What	How	Comments for administrators
	(the one you choose on the form) allowing him/her to log in the system and start using the interactive tools.	If a registered user forgot its password an option, at any login screen, can automatically send it back to him/her by email.
Ask an administrator	Anyone can send comments, suggestions or questions using this simple form. The administrators will be informed by email and will answer the users in the next 48 hours.	All the international administrators (TER_Administrators) will receive the email and they should decide who should reply to it either by nominating someone or establishing a (monthly) rotation among them.

Table 5: Visitors how-to synthetic overview

2.3 Registered users' benefits

Typically the registered users are individuals who have a professional interest in SLM and who sees benefits in joining the TerrAfrica KB community. They can do everything the visitors can do but they also have access to additional functions described in the table below (see Table 6) once they've logged in the KB.

What	How	Comments for administrators
Forum discussions	<p>The forum is the place where you can have electronic discussions about the KB.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inside a conference you can: a) start a new thread or b) reply to a previous post inside a thread. 2. If you click on watch conference or watch thread, you'll receive emails every time a new message is posted. <p>It is possible to attach a file (.doc, .xls, .pdf, .jpg, etc.) to a message.</p> <p>Before you start contributing to a forum, you need to decide which discussions you want to join. Read through some of the existing archived posts of discussions that interest you, and check which are relevant. Look at the frequency of postings to check if you will be able to keep up with the pace of discussion. When you have decided which discussions you would like to participate in, here is a general guide to the steps you would normally follow:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open the web page where the discussion is hosted. 2. Register your username and password to get access to the discussion. You will probably need to give an e-mail address which is useful for automated alerts, e.g. if you choose to be e-mailed when there are new replies to your posts. 3. Log in using your username and password. 4. Read the existing postings for the thread you are contributing to. If it is a very long thread, just read the latest ones. 5. Post your comment using the web form, which is usually located at the bottom of the list of postings or found by clicking on a "post" link. 	<p>The forum can contains public and private discussions. With the right security privileges, registered users can view and enter private discussions. Otherwise they'll not even see it.</p> <p>For each country workspace a private forum has been created to allow country/topic-specific discussions. Only the workspace administrator and the registered users belonging to that country can view it and participate.</p> <p>These security settings are managed by the back-end administrator.</p>

What	How	Comments for administrators
	<p>6. Log off.</p> <p>Some forums might be useful to read, but you may not want to contribute. This is informally known as lurking in a discussion. This is perfectly acceptable if the topic interests you but you feel you don't yet know enough about the subject yourself to contribute.</p>	
Add a resource	<p>Any registered user can add a resource (text, documents, multimedia documents, maps, statistics, websites, etc.) by filling a simple form.</p> <p>Up to 4 files can be uploaded with a maximum size of 10Mb each. Keywords can be added freely if the ones in the box list are not appropriate or not enough. A resource can be associate with 1 or 2 sub-chapters of the hierarchy.</p> <p>The submission will be reviewed by an administrator (all the international administrators will automatically receive an email alerting them that a resource has been added) before being published in the KB. The administrator can decide to contact the registered user directly if the resource proposed does not meet the KB's relevance and quality criteria.</p>	<p>The number of compulsory metadata has been kept to a minimum (title, description, corporate author, URL, chapter hierarchy). in order for the form to be easy and quick to fill, thus avoiding discouraging the registered users. Indeed it becomes quickly counter productive if you have 20-30 fields to fill, long list of options, etc. and if it takes 5 to 10 minutes to do it.</p> <p>Linking a resource to more than 2 sub-chapters would create too many duplicates in the tree structure. Usually it is best if a resource is linked to only 1 sub-chapter but having the possibility to link it to 2 sub-chapters provides some flexibility while at the same time keeping it under control.</p> <p>Otherwise users would have the tendency to link a resource with as many sub-chapters as possible thus making the hierarchy irrelevant (all resources linked to all sub-chapters).</p> <p>The size limit for uploading files can easily be changed by the back-end administrator. This limit should be stipulated on the form.</p>
Edit your profile	<p>Using the same form as for the registration, the registered user can update all the data (name, address, email, etc.) of his/her profile.</p>	<p>The changes will be immediately reflected in the directory of registered users. At one point the international administrators could review all the contact details and contact all the registered users by email asking them to complete/update their profile (adding a picture for example).</p>

Table 6: Registered users how-to synthetic overview

2.4 Country/thematic registered users' interest

A workspace registered user has a focused interest in resources directly related to a country or a thematic group to which he/she belongs to. He/She can access a country/thematic-specific knowledge base containing additional resources (documents and forum discussions) specifically tailored to meet its needs and priorities. The workspace registered user has all the benefits of a registered user described in the previous section.

These workspaces are built around the same structure (see Table 7):

- Short text providing some **background** related to the country/thematic workspace;
- The **list of folders** which contains private as well as public resources;
- A direct link to a **private forum**;
- The **contact details of the workspace administrator** should they need help.

What	How	Comments for the administrators
Country and thematic workspaces > introduction	<p>A short introductory text briefly describes what is the focus of the specific workspace. For example: "This section is specifically dedicated to the Ethiopia workspace. It contains public as well as private resources which can be accessed only to the registered users belonging to the Ethiopia workspace group."</p>	<p>This text should be edited in the back-end to reflect the country needs and priorities.</p>
Country and thematic workspaces > browse the folders	<p>Once the workspace registered user is logged in the system he'll have automatically access to the specific country/thematic workspace to which he/she belongs to. He/She will not be able to enter the other country/thematic workspaces.</p> <p>Ethiopia workspace 1</p> <p>This section is specifically dedicated to the Ethiopia workspace. It contains public as well as private resources which can be accessed only by the registered users belonging to the Ethiopia workspace group.</p> <p>Folders</p> <p>2test folder published 2test folder published in addition</p> <p>Forum discussions (private)</p> <p>Private discussions can be held inside the forum using the private forum for Ethiopia</p> <p>Contact the workspace administrator</p> <p>The workspace administrator is responsible for building up this country/thematic SLM workspace by identifying and registering country-specific and -relevant resources, and decide if a resource is meant to be public (shared with everyone) or private (shared only with all the members of the workspace group). He/She's also responsible for administering the registered users who have access to this workspace.</p> <p>For any question please do not hesitate to contact: Ethiopia workspace administrator Mr Géraud Servin Email: geraud.servin@fao.org Tel: +32 2 204 0747</p> <p>Clicking on one of the folders will open a new view with a simple list of all the public and private resources associated with the folder.</p>	<p>The list of folders is generated automatically by the system but the three other sections of the country and thematic workspaces can be easily updated by the back-end administrator.</p>
Country and thematic workspaces > private forum discussions	<p>The private forum discussions works identically than the public forum discussions (see Table 6). The only difference is that it can be seen only by the workspace registered users and their workspace administrator.</p>	<p>Even if the international administrators and the back-end administrator can also access it, their active participation should be discouraged to guarantee a the privacy and "independence" of the country.</p>

What	How	Comments for the administrators
Country and thematic workspaces > contact the workspace administrator	<p>The workspace administrator is responsible for building up country/thematic SLM workspaces by identifying and registering country/topic-specific and -relevant resources, and decide if a resource is meant to be public (shared with everyone) or private (shared with all the members of the country group). He/She's also responsible for administering the workspace registered users who have access to the workspace.</p> <p>The workspace registered users should be able to contact their workspace administrator directly by using his/her contact details.</p>	<p>The static text can be easily edited using the back-end interface.</p> <p>Keep it simple by indicating the name, title of the workspace administrator and how can he/she be contacted (email, telephone, fax, etc.)</p>

Table 7: Workspace registered users how-to synthetic overview

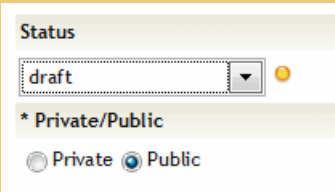
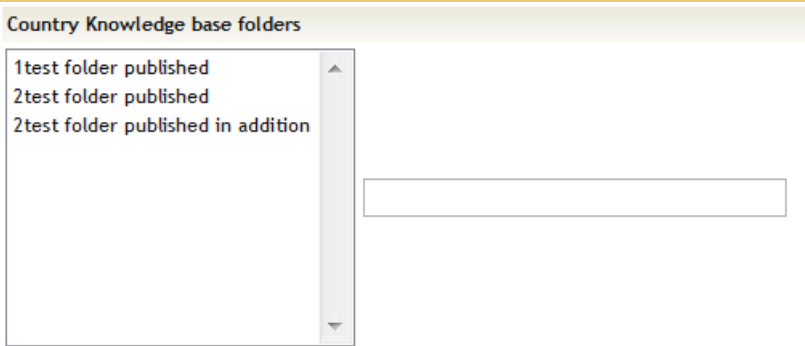
2.5 Workspace administrators' responsibilities

A workspace administrator is responsible for building up a country/thematic SLM workspace by identifying and registering country/topic-specific and -relevant resources, and decide if a resource is meant to be public (shared with everyone) or private (shared with all the members of the country group). He/she is also responsible for administering the workspace registered users who have access to the workspace.

The workspace administrators' commitment is one of the most important success factor of the KB and the country/thematic workspaces. They should be responsible for performing the following tasks:

- Develop the "**modus operandi**" of the country/thematic workspace, which includes norms, agreements and accountability. It must be adapted to the SLM vision, country needs and priorities and updated to reflect any major change.
- Define the country/thematic workspace relevance and quality criteria for adding new resources.
- Research, identify and register new knowledge resources.
- Control the quality of the resources added, based on the criteria. Focusing on quality, more than quantity, should facilitate that task.
- Entry and engagement (welcoming) processes which help workspace registered users (members) become active participants.
- Support sociability, relationship and trust building.
- Support discussion and dialogue (foster communication).
- Support divergent, convergent and task-oriented group processes (help get work done).
- Anticipate and work with conflict and abrasion to both allow emergence of new ideas and protect people from harassment.
- Work with full understanding of diversity in learning style, culture and personal styles.
- Understand and make visible group participation cycles and "rituals" in the online environment.
- Summarize, harvest, weave and support appropriate content and connections.
- Provide basic help as needed with the tools.
- Ensure the country workspace forum' space is kept "tidy" and navigable.
- Reply to e-mails inquiries.

The workspace administrator has all the privileges of the workspace registered user as well as others (see Table 8).

What	How
<p>Add a resource</p>	<p>There are two additional options the workspace administrator can use compared to the registered user:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He/She must decide if the resource is meant to be private or public. A private resource is visible/accessible only inside a unique country/thematic workspace i.e. only by the registered users which belongs to the country/thematic workspace group. A public resource will be visible/accessible inside but also outside the workspace. The workspace administrator should directly update the status of the resource to "Reviewed & published" in order to publish it immediately on the website.  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. He/She can assigned workspace folders that will be use to classify the resource according to the country/thematic priorities. These folders will be visible and accessible only inside the workspace and will contain all the public and private resources which were tagged with the folder(s).  <p>The organization of the workspace folders can be changed by editing the resources which are associated with them. It can be quickly done if there are few resources and few folders but it will be extremely time-consuming if you have 10-100 resources in multiple folders. The folders should thus be carefully selected at the beginning and they should neither too specific nor too generic.</p> <p>If the number of folders/resources is getting too large to be easily maintained by the workspace administrator, you should contact the back-end administrator to discuss the development of a more appropriate technical solution.</p>

Administrators only

The workspace administrators have access to this restricted area which contains 4 sections:

1. How-to manual for the administrators: The manual is a complete reference document explaining: 1) What is the KB; 2)How-to interact with the KB; 3) How-to achieve the KB's objectives; and 4) How-to further develop the KB and its community.
2. Add resources to the country and thematic workspaces: Workspace administrators can add information resources using a customized "add a resource" form.
3. Discuss at the administrators private forum: All the international and workspace administrators can discuss among them about their experiences, issues, solutions, etc. at the administrators private forum.
4. Request technical assistance: The Back-end administrators can be contacted directly for technical assistance (bug, server down, forum security settings, etc.).

This private space is dedicated to the KB's international and workspace administrators. It is not visible or accessible to the other registered users and visitors. That page contains some text and hyperlinks that can be edited using Typo3 back-end management system.

What	How
	<p>The manual should be posted as a .pdf and updated on a regular basis. A sub-manual could also be created specifically for the workspace administrators.</p> <p>The "add a resource" function is just an hyperlink to the form. The "private forum" function is also a simple hyperlink to that specific private forum.</p> <p>The contact details of the Back-end administrators should be indicated clearly.</p>
Request access to a country/thematic workspace	By default, each new registered user stored in the system belongs to the common group of registered users. Thus he/she will not have access to any of the country and thematic workspaces. In order to grant him/her the security privileges to access a specific country/thematic workspace; the workspace administrator should contact the back-end administrator by e-mail (cf. the "administrators only" page) and ask e.g. "could you please provide to Mr/Ms J. Doe or Ms Jane Doe access to the Ethiopia workspace".

Table 8: Workspace administrators how-to synthetic overview

2.6 International administrator's function

The administrators' commitment is one of the most important success factor of the KB. They should be responsible for performing the following tasks to keep the KB and its community alive and active:

- Develop the "**modus operandi**" of the KB, which includes norms, agreements and accountability. It must be adapted to the KB vision and community needs and updated to reflect any major change.
- Define the KB relevance and quality criteria for adding new resources.
- Research, identify and register new knowledge resources.
- Control the quality of the resources added, based on the KB criteria. Focusing on quality, more than quantity, should facilitate that task.
- Entry and engagement (welcoming) processes which help members become active participants.
- Support sociability, relationship and trust building.
- Support discussion and dialogue (foster communication).
- Support divergent, convergent and task-oriented group processes (help get work done).
- Anticipate and work with conflict and abrasion to both allow emergence of new ideas and protect people from harassment.
- Work with full understanding of diversity in learning style, culture and personal styles.
- Understand and make visible group participation cycles and "rituals" in the online environment.
- Summarize, harvest, weave and support appropriate content and connections.
- Provide basic help as needed with the tools.
- Ensure the forum' space is kept "tidy" and navigable.
- Reply to e-mails inquiries.

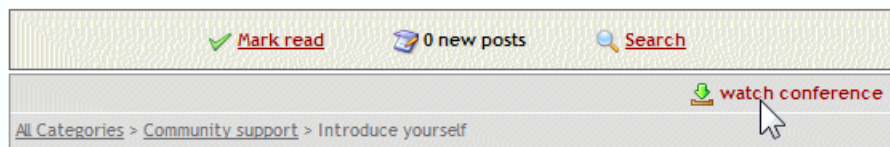
The first group of international administrators could be composed of one staff member from the following organisations: World Bank, FAO, NEPAD, CGIAR as well as someone from an NGO. It is strongly recommended to have at least one full-time international administrator supported by additional international and workspace administrators who can dedicate a substantial part of their time (20% minimum that is 1 day per week) to that task.

An administrator can do everything the visitors and registered users can do. It has also extra privileges described in the table below (see Table 9).

What	How
Review a new resource submitted	<p>All the international administrators will receive an email every time a new resource is added by a registered user. It is their responsibility to review the quality and relevance of the submission before its eventual publication on the website by changing the resource' status to "reviewed & published" or "reviewed & rejected". In the latter case the resource will be not be deleted but it will not appear on the website. Only the international administrators will be able to view them.</p> <div data-bbox="734 533 1029 734" style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>The administrator can decide whether or not the resource should be a key asset, using a check box. He/she can also leave a comment for internal purposes (e.g. this resources will be soon updated or the website is "down" and should be checked later). The comment will be only visible to the international administrators when they edit the resource on the website.</p> <p>International administrators can also edit all the resources in the KB at any time (e.g. spotting a typo, visiting a wrong URL, checking the quality of some records, etc.). Besides the title of each resource they can see two icons. The little green pen is for editing the resource and the little trash bin is for deleting it.</p> <div data-bbox="466 990 1284 1272" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> </div> <p>Once the resource is "reviewed & published", its title will automatically appear on the homepage in the "Latest Resources" box on the right. This box will always shows the five latest resources added/edited in the Knowledge Base.</p> <p>If the registered user added a new corporate author, a new date or a new keywords, these options will immediately and automatically appear in the search page under the relevant options drop-down lists.</p>

Forum discussions > monitoring and facilitation

One of the most time-consuming responsibility of the facilitator is monitoring and facilitating the discussions held in the forum, especially if popular topics are often commented. Please refer to section [4.1.Facilitating and hosting a virtual community](#) for more information on the subject.



The international administrators should turn on the "**watch conference**" option of the "Community support" category. They'll received an email everytime a new message is posted on the "Introduce yourself" and "General questions and help needed" conferences. Thus they'll be able to welcome "officially" to the community a new registered user introducing himself as well as provide necessary technical support. It is really important to actively support the registered users, otherwise the community will quickly collapse.

Ask an

All the administrators will received the message posted. They should organized themselves to decide who'll reply

What	How
administrator > reply	to it within 48 hours. They might want to set up a simple calendar rotation (on a weekly or monthly basis) or another simple rule to handle that task, the important thing being to reply to all inquiries within 48 hours. Nowadays, with the help of our modern communication tools, there's nothing worst in terms of public image and reputation to ignore a user's comments.

Table 9: International administrators how-to synthetic overview

2.7 Back-end administrator

The system's **Back-End** provides all the tools and functions to manage the website that can be called, in comparison, the **Front-End**. Only one of the international administrators, with strong skills in Information Technology (IT) and a good understanding of Typo3 (the open source Content Management System used to develop the website), should be given the privileges to enter and edit the BE. You'll find a below (see Table 10) a screenshot of the BE; main sections of interest are highlighted in red.

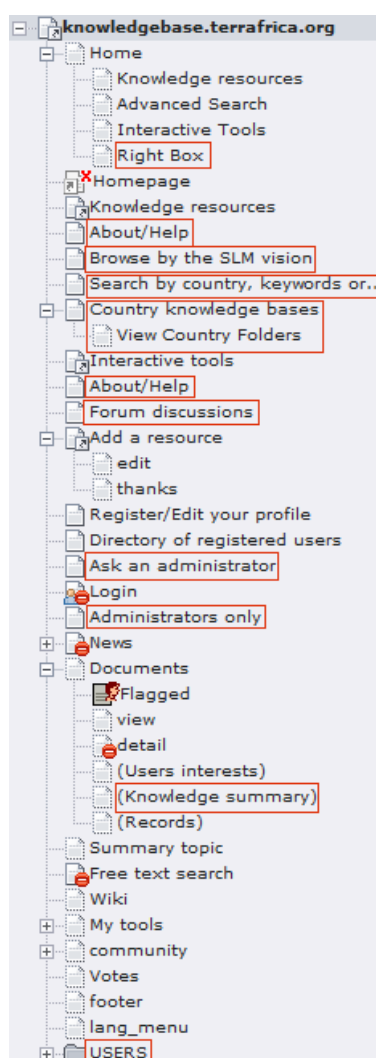
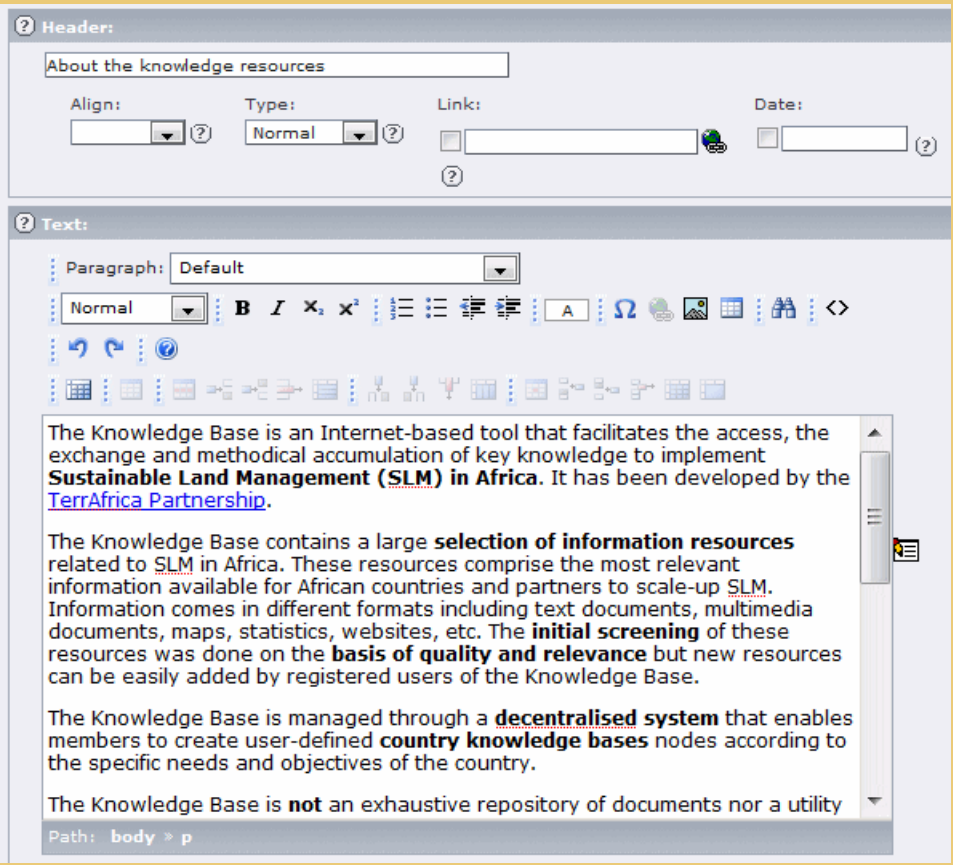


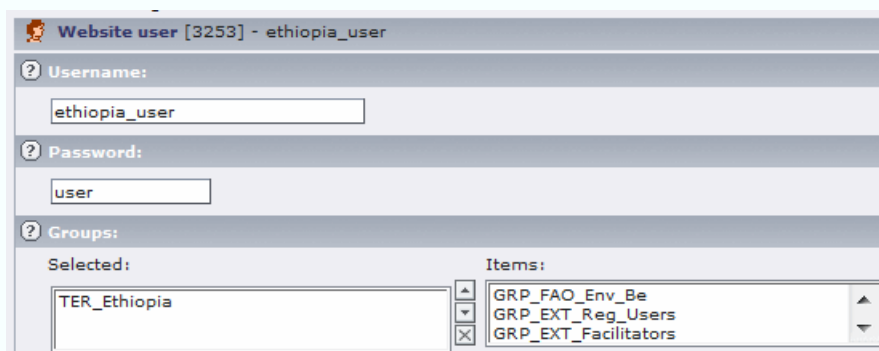
Illustration 2: Main menu of Typo3 back-end interface

These sections are explained in a consolidated manner in the table below (see Table 10):

What	How
<p>Edit text in static pages</p>	<p>A simple html editor allow the BE administrator to easily made some text changes for all the text sections of all the "static" pages of the Knowledge Base. Most of the time the BE administrators will have to update the "Right Box" (which contains the text displayed inside the bottom right box called "Highlights" on the homepage) and the two "About/Help" (one for the "Knowledge resources" and the other for the "Interactive tools"). One the changes are made and saved they'll be immediately reflected on the front-end i.e. on the website.</p> 

Country and thematic workspaces > grant access to a registered user

By default, each new registered user stored in the system belongs to the "TER_Registered_Users" website usergroup (see Illustration 1). When the workspace administrator contact the BE administrator to provide to a registered user access to a specific country/thematic workspace; the BE administrator must go to the "USERS" section in the BE (see Illustration 2) and edit the registered user record "Groups" field to: a) remove TER_Registered_Users, and b) add the proper usergroup e.g. TER_Ethiopia in the screenshot below.



Each workspace registered user should possess the security privileges of the website usergroup and forum group

What

How

associated of the country to which he/she belongs to. Using our example the user will have access to the private forum for Ethiopia since TER_Ethiopia_Users belongs to TER_Forum_Ethiopia. To provide access to all the relevant public forum it is necessary to grant read and write access to TER_Forum_Ethiopia.

Forum discussions > create new discussions

The BE administrator can easily manage the structure of the forum i.e. the number and order of the categories and conferences. The first four categories listed below are hidden and will not appear on the website. The Typo3 icons used to manage the forum are self-explanatory: yellow pen for editing a record, + sign to create a new record, light bubble to un-hide, etc. Little tip boxes will appear when you browse your mouse pointer over any one of them.

Forum Categories (8)			[Ref]
Category title			
Demands and threats on Africa's land resources - t...			2
Building on data and experience			4
Sustainable land management - the basis for the ne...			3
TerrAfrica - operationalising SLM in SSA			2
TerrAfrica - vision, country tool and guidelines			4
Community support			2
Administrators forum (private)			1
Country workspaces (private)			5

Forum Conferences (24)			[Ref]
Conference name			
The increasing demand for land goods and services			
Land degradation: a major threat			
Lessons learnt from past successes and failures, c...			
Directories and portals			
Maps and statistics			
Multimedia (photos, videos and audio)			
Concepts, principles, frameworks and approaches			

Forum discussions > change security settings

For each **conference** you can control its security settings (cf. Illustration 1) as follows:

- Grant anonymous READ access? This option is YES by default in order for the visitors to be able to view and browse the discussions.
- Grant anonymous WRITE access? This option is NO by default. Thus only registered users can post messages and participate to the discussions.
- Forum group(s) allowed READ and WRITE access to this conference. For the time being only 2 groups are defined: 1) **TER_Forum_Administrator** which includes all the administrators and 2) **TER_Forum_Registered_Users** which includes all the registered users by default. All the **public forums** are open to these two groups.

In the screenshot below TER_Forum_Administrator, TER_Forum_Registered_Users as well as TER_Ethiopia and TER_Ghana are given read and write access.

What

How

cf Forum Conferences [93] - Vision paper

Hide:

Category to which this conference belongs
TerrAfrica - vision, country tool and guidelines

Conference name
Vision paper

Conference description
To discuss and comment the draft version of the TerrAfrica vision paper

Allow users to edit their posts?

Grant anonymous READ access?

Grant anonymous WRITE access?

Forum group(s) granted READ-ONLY access to this conference

Forum Groups

Forum group(s) allowed READ and WRITE access to this conference

- TER_Forum_Administrator
- TER_Forum_Registered_Users
- TER_Forum_Ethiopia
- TER_Forum_Ghana

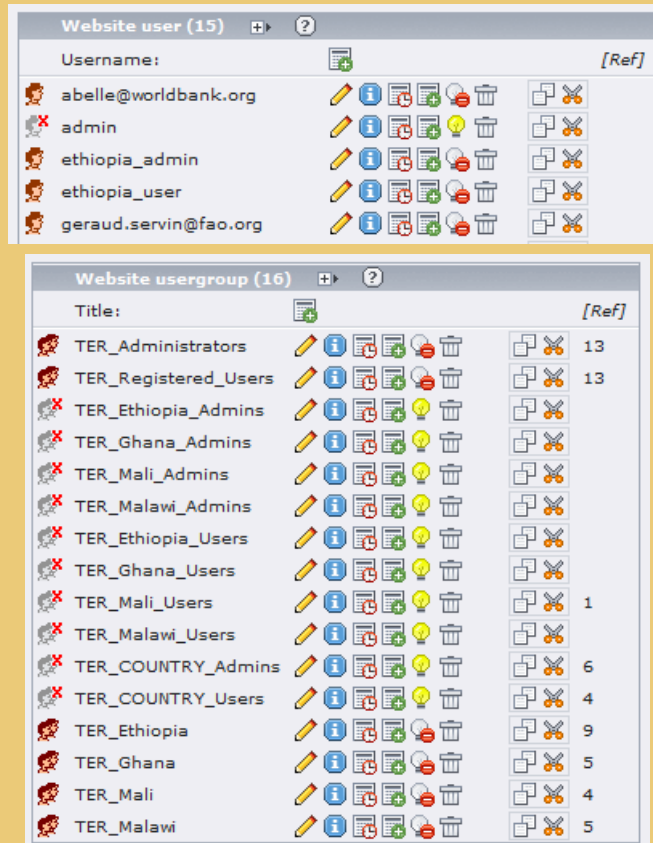
- You could also create a **private forum** just for a specific country/thematic workspace's administrator and its registered users. In that case you'll have to follow these steps (Ethiopia is used for this example):
 - 1) Create a new group of forum group: TER_Forum_Ethiopia (see Forum discussions in the BE).
 - 2) Create one corresponding **website usergroup**: TER_Ethiopia (see USERS in the BE).
 - 3) Create relationship: TER_Ethiopia "belongs to" TER_Forum_Ethiopia (see Forum discussions > Forum groups in the BE).
 - 4) Assign all registered users and the unique workspace administrator to TER_Ethiopia (see USERS in the BE) and remove their relationship with TER_Registered_Users.
 - 5) Grant read and write access to this new group (TER_Forum_Ethiopia) on the new private forum (see Forum discussions > Forum Conferences in the BE).
- Forum groups allowed to include attachments in posts. All the groups are allowed to attach files to their post by default. The system works allow common files to be attached such as .doc, .xls, .pdf, .jpg, .zip, etc. If an extension is not allowed please contact t Mr [Giorgio Lanzarone](#), FAO Information Management Officer, to authorize it.

Edit registered user's privileges

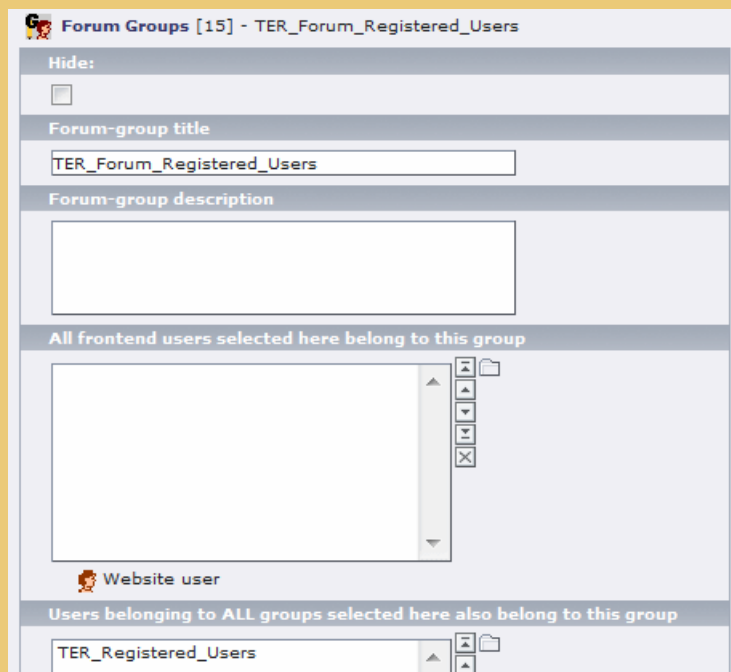
The users privileges are defining what they can do and what they can't on the website, and most particularly on the forum. There are many website usergroups defined, including **TER Administrator** and **TER Registered Users**. The former is meant for the administrators while all registered users belongs, by default, to the latter. By clicking on a username you can view all its details (name, email, address, password, etc.) and the website usergroup to which he/she belongs to.

What

How



It is crucial for the BE administrator to really understand the settings and relationships between the two security groups: the **website usergroup** and the **forum groups** (see Table 1 and Illustration 1). It is more **simple and clear** if these two groups are managed in parallel i.e. each forum usergroup is associated with a similar website usergroup. It is done by linking the forum group (e.g. TER_Forum_Administrator) with the website usergroup (e.g. TER_Administrator) in the forum groups section of the BE as follows:



Thus you can keep track of the security privileges and keep it clear and simple otherwise you risk losing the

What

How

understanding of who is allowed to do what and where.

Access the resources > hierarchy

The resources are classified according to a 2-level hierarchy based on the TerrAfrica vision paper. The hierarchy is composed of 4 chapters which are divided into 12 sub-chapters. This hierarchy can be managed as follows:

Topics (16) +>			[Ref]
Title			
Basket of technologies and techniques			
Building on data and experience			4
Challenges in up-scaling and mainstreaming SLM, kn...			
Concepts, principles, frameworks and approaches			3
Demands on and threats to Africa's land resources:...			4
Diagnostics and investment frameworks			
Directories and portals			1
Extension and training			1
Land degradation			2
Lessons learned, case studies, projects and progra...			3
Maps and statistics			1
Multimedia (photos, videos and audio)			1
Sustainable land management - the basis for a new ...			4
TerrAfrica: strengthening implementation of SLM			3
The increasing demand for land's goods and service...			4
Vision and guidelines			

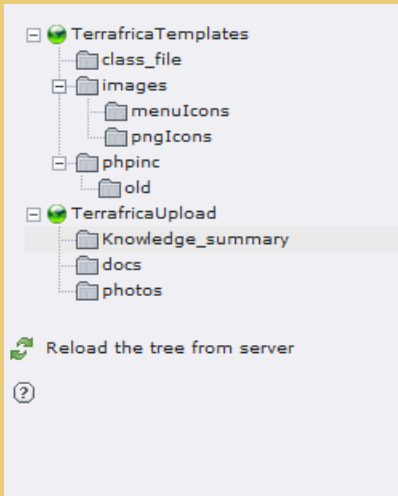
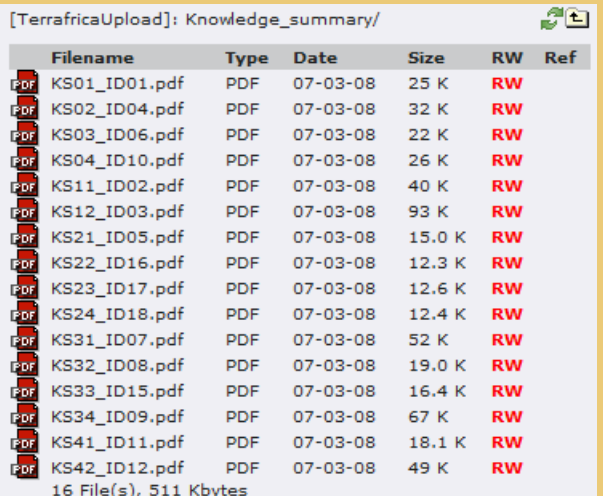
Each chapter and sub-chapter can be easily and quickly renamed. **Deleting or adding a sub-chapter should be considered seriously in advance** as it would have important structural consequences on the KB. Deleting a sub-chapter would mean having to re-classify all the resources associated with; otherwise some resources will no longer appear in the tree view. Adding a sub-chapter would also mean reconsidering all the resources (ca. 600) recorded to see if they should be or not associated with this new chapter. Both options would engender many days of tedious work.

That is why the hierarchy has been carefully constructed. It is **not too specific and not too generic**, at the same time, to facilitate a quick classification of all resources without having to spend hours trying to decide where it fits. If we had use a more complex classification (e.g. more than 2 levels, dozens of chapters and hundreds of sub-chapters) registered users would have burn valuable time just to decide how to classify it. It would also impact the search engine and made it more difficult to find a knowledge resource. Any changes to the existing classification is possible (and technically quite easy) but should be carefully considered before its implementation.

It is important to remember that each classification scheme is relatively subjective. It might not be the best and you might be tempted to change it and spend considerable time in redefining it. Remember that its primary value reside in the fact that everyone uses it, not that everyone loves it.

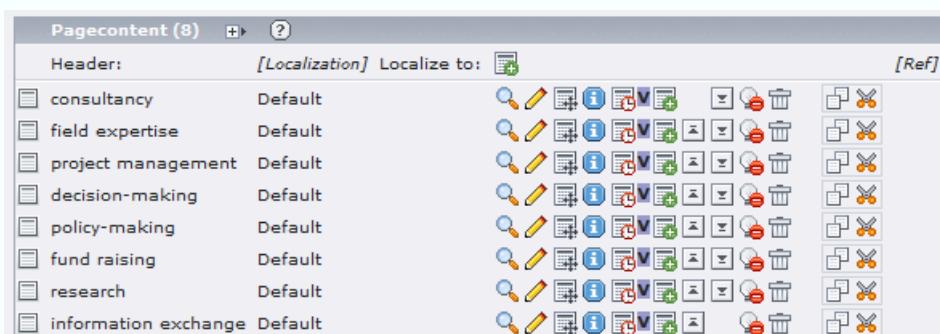
Access the resources > knowledge summaries

A knowledge summary taken from the TerrAfrica vision paper is provided for each chapter and sub-chapter of the hierarchy. It is managed in the "filelist" module of the BE as follows:

What	How
	
<p>Please note that we have used the following naming convention e.g. KS23_ID17.pdf means "knowledge summary for chapter 2, sub-chapter 3, which has the unique ID 17 in the database". The IDs of the hierarchy are showed on the previous screenshot by browsing your mouse over the green icon to the left of the chapter or sub-chapter title.</p>	

Register/Edit your profile > users' interests

A simple list of interest is shown at the bottom of the register/edit your profile form to capture in a rough manner what interest most the registered users of the KB. This list is managed in the BE as follows:



Header:	[Localization]	Localize to:	[Ref]
consultancy	Default		
field expertise	Default		
project management	Default		
decision-making	Default		
policy-making	Default		
fund raising	Default		
research	Default		
information exchange	Default		

Any elements can be renamed, deleted, moved and new elements could be added. As usual any change on the BE will be directly reflected on the website.

Table 10: Back-end administrator how-to synthetic overview

By default the BE administrator is Mr [Giorgio Lanzarone](#), FAO Information Management Officer. It is also the same person who should be contacted by the other administrators if there's a major problem or a bug with the website. The BE can be accessed at <http://typo3.fao.org/typo3/index.php>.

3 How-to achieve the Knowledge Base's objectives

3.1 The basics of knowledge management

In a nutshell, good Knowledge Management (KM) is about getting **the right knowledge, in the right place, at the right time, in the right format**. Five core generic knowledge activities have been identified as most widely used by institutions: identify, create, store, share and use (see Table 11). These activities are typically performed in support of specific objectives and capacity-building activities. The KB will provide the highest added-value to the create, store and share activities.

Core activity	How <i>(freely adapted from the European Guide to good Practice in Knowledge Management)</i>	KB impact
Identify	<p>This is a crucial and strategic step. People and organizations are encouraged to think about what they want to achieve (i.e. SLM in Africa) and the knowledge that is required to make it happen. It should include an analysis, at the international and national level, of what existing knowledge is already available and what knowledge is lacking (so-called "gap analysis"). This applies on the organizational (TerrAfrica) level for strategic knowledge needs and on the personal level (administrators and registered users) for the daily search for required knowledge and information.</p> <p>The identification of existing knowledge is essential for supporting decision taking. Helpful reference points for this exercise are registered users requirements or outcomes from value-adding processes and frameworks. In order to encourage the reuse of existing knowledge, this identification step should often be performed before creating new knowledge. Methods and tools that support this step include: e.g. systematic search strategies, brainstorming, mind-mapping techniques and users feedback.</p>	Low - Moderate
Create	<p>There are many ways to create new knowledge. At the personal and team level, it is often as a result of social interaction i.e. through training, learning by doing, joint problem solving or brainstorming. At the departmental or organizational level, innovation processes are typically aimed at creating new knowledge for products and services while improvement activities focus on internal processes and procedures.</p> <p>Creation can take place within the research & development function, through the establishment of expert groups, such as so-called Communities of Practice (CoPs) and by the recruitment of experts. Always people have to bring in their existing expertise their explicit and tacit knowledge, in order to create new knowledge. However, new solutions and other great ideas are often not recorded for reuse or learning. It is therefore critical examine how best to store such knowledge.</p>	Moderate - High
Store	<p>In order to build up knowledge resources (so-called "knowledge capital" and "knowledge bases"), knowledge needs to be embedded within an organization. Much knowledge is "stored" in people's brains and will often remain there as so-called "tacit knowledge". Furthermore, knowledge can be "stored" in multi-disciplinary team or organizational routines, without even having been explicitly described (e.g. as successful sports teams show us). As long as such people and teams remain accessible, one can say that their knowledge is "memorized" by the organization and available for (re)use. Another way to secure knowledge is to institutionalize it as so-called "structural capital" within the organization's structures, processes and culture.</p> <p>Storing explicit knowledge depends upon some supporting activities like selecting, organizing or categorizing, as well as updating and purging old content. At least over long time periods, preserving stored knowledge looks much like applying because knowledge needs to be modified for current circumstances and changing contexts and issues. However, in order to leverage the potential of this knowledge the next activity of the core knowledge process - i.e. sharing - has to be carried out. Technical tools for storage of knowledge include: e.g. document databases, question and answer systems (e.g. forum discussions), narrative and expertise locators (e.g. directory of registered users).</p>	High
Share	<p>The aim of this step is to transfer knowledge to the right place, at the right time, with the right quality. This means that the knowledge arrives in the right context i.e. where value is created. Sharing can take place in many ways. Knowledge can be added to databases or distributed via documents. This is the so-called "stock approach": people make knowledge available in such a way that other people can find it. But most knowledge can best be transferred from one person to another by direct interaction via collaboration, workshops, coaching, apprenticeships etc. This transfer of knowledge directly between people can be called the "flow approach".</p> <p>Methods and tools that support the sharing of knowledge include: e.g. intranets/portals,</p>	High

Core activity	How <i>(freely adapted from the European Guide to good Practice in Knowledge Management)</i>	KB impact
	databases, collaboration, CoPs, forum discussions, job rotation, coaching, seminars, and training. However, if we do not accept the knowledge provided by our colleagues, partners or suppliers, we often do not achieve the ultimate aim KM, which is the next activity in the knowledge process.	
Use	<p>"If only we knew what we know...we would be three times more profitable!" Knowledge can only add value when it is being used in an organization to achieve specific goals. A lot of knowledge remains under-utilized, so this activity is really about making sure that all effort that is spent in the previous activities pays off.</p> <p>Furthermore, this activity determines the knowledge needs and should always serve as a reference point for the knowledge to be created, stored and shared. While applying knowledge we might discover some further knowledge gaps, as well as acquire new experiences which could represent new knowledge for the organization. Therefore the knowledge processes should continue with further identification and creation, in order to become an integrated KM process.</p>	Low - Moderate

Table 11: Core activities of knowledge management

A feedback loop exists between the main knowledge resources and the interactive tools (see Illustration 3). On one "flow" some of the information created by the registered users with the interactive tools will be stored on the main resources area and thus shared with everyone. On the other "flow" some of the information stored in the main resources area will be used by the registered users to identify and create new knowledge.

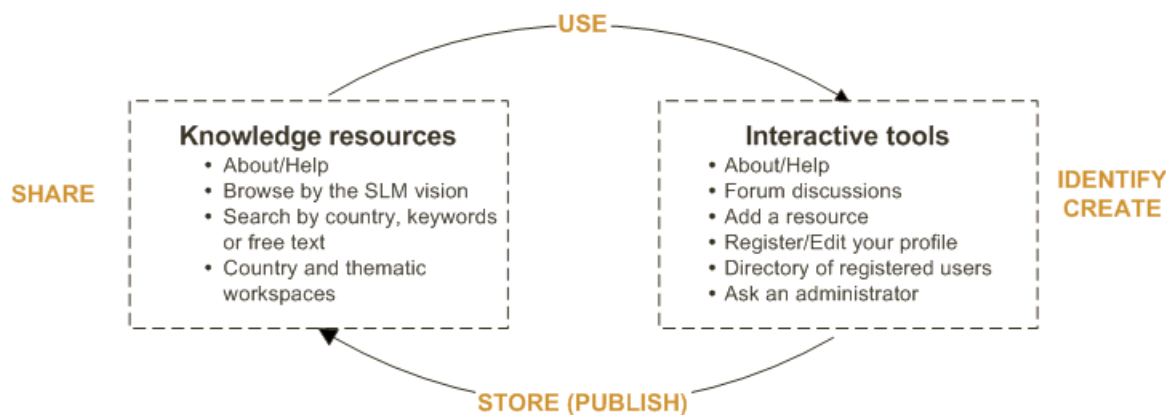


Illustration 3: Feedback loop between the main knowledge resources, the interactive tools and the five core activities of knowledge management

After this brief introduction to KM it is important to remember the main objectives of the Knowledge Base:

- Provide one-stop access to key information on complex issues related to rural land management in Africa.
- Exchange numerous data and information on cross-cutting issues among different users at various levels.
- Build consensus and foster alignment on action, understanding, and enhance monitoring of results and impact.

In the following sections we will see how KM can be used to help the administrators achieving these goals. The KM cycle will be used as a framework for guiding the implementation of the KB and the development of its community of members.

3.2 Identify and create knowledge: quality control

Emphasis should be given on keeping the quality of the resources provided by the KB. Content is critical and the KB should focus on providing a limited number of "best" resources rather than trying to offer an exhaustive list of all materials ever published related to SLM. In short **quality rather than quantity**.

An initial selection of ca. 600 resources was done by the [TerrAfrica Partners](#) and of course new resources can be added by the registered users. As all selection it is by nature subjective. The idea is not to argue about what has been initially selected but to keep monitoring the new resources added in order to maintain a certain level of quality. Each administrator will have to use its experience, expertise and common sense to judge whether or not a resource submitted by a registered user should find its place inside the KB or not.

The administrators could formalize that task by drafting a 1-page document providing some clear criteria to guide the selection.

3.3 Store knowledge: the interaction between the international and national levels

Many resources inside the KB comes from international organisations having an interest in developing and promoting SLM in Africa. Another key complementary element is to translate that knowledge generated at the international at the national level and vice versa, gather knowledge generated at the national level for its integration at the international level. Special attention has been given to identify and register resources that are relevant for countries such as country cases studies, lessons learnt from national and local projects, etc.

Keeping a balance between the international and national level is definitely a key challenge the administrators will have to face. Workspace administrators should be trained and brought on board as soon as possible to keep a steady flow of specific country/thematic-related and relevant resources in the KB. The objective is to reach a proper balance between international resources and national ones.

The resources should be classified according to the existing hierarchy proposed as well as tagged with the country name or using thematic keywords. The use of free keywords provides a very flexible and powerful tool for further classification needs. The workspace administrator could use them to group resources related to a specific subject or geographical area by using the keywords which are then immediately available in the search engine. For example "Cameroon forest" would be a good free keyword to use.

Once these country/topic-specific resources are registered they can easily be found using the search engine and its advanced country and keywords options. In the same line of idea a workspace administrator could develop a country/topic-specific forum to discuss SLM issues specifically related to the country/topic unique needs, situation, environment, etc.

The open source Content Management System (CMS) selected to implement the project ([Typo3](#)) is a decentralized management system. The database is hosted on a single dedicated FAO server but its management is completely decentralized. It means that any registered user or administrator with an access to Internet can use any of the interactive tools or dissemination capabilities (i.e. upload a knowledge resource). The website's design is very light and its structure quite flat in order to provide an access as fast and easy as possible to individuals which do not possess fast Internet communication lines.

It is important to emphasize the fact that the **KB is a decentralized management system**. Each country or topic should have a **workspace administrator** responsible for identifying and registering the "best"

resources related to his/her country/topic. The only difference between an international administrator and a workspace administrator would be their sphere of competence. Basically they have the same duties and responsibilities but the geographical/thematic scope is different, the former focusing on the international level and the latter on his/her country/topic.

The table below (see Table 12) outlines, for each function, the different responsibilities held by each type of users.

Functions / Responsibilities	Registered users	Workspace registered users	Workspace admin.	International admin.	Back-end admin.
Browse and search all resources, view forum discussions, register your profile, contact an administrator	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Country and thematic workspaces: browse the private resources stored in folders, participate to the private forum discussions.	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Country and thematic workspaces: add private resources organised in folders	No	No	Yes	No	No
Interactive tools: post messages in the forum, add a resource, edit your profile, view directory of registered users	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Review and publish a resource, reply to emails, moderate discussions in public electronic forum	No	No	No	Yes	No
Identify potential new registered users, promote and advocate the KB	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Support and nurture the development of the KB community in reaching its goals	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Edit text of static pages, edit menu and pages titles, edit the hierarchy's chapters and sub-chapters, edit forum structure and security setting, manage users privileges, provide technical support to the national and international administrators, maintain the server performance, fix glitches and bugs	No	No	No	No	Yes

Table 12: Function and responsibilities for each type of users

3.4 Share knowledge: adding resources and forum discussions

The fastest and easiest way to share an explicit knowledge resource is to use the "add a resource" function previously described. With a little experience a minute or two is what it takes to fill the form. All the administrators will receive an email every time a new resource is submitted. They'll also receive the same email if an administrator publish the submitted resource or update an existing published resource.

The other main option to share knowledge is by having electronic discussions in the forum. Electronic forums have multiple uses that can be directly applied to the KB. The following section has been freely adapted from the IMARK module [#4.4. Building electronic communities and networks, training and maintenance](#). It provides some guidance to manage web-based asynchronous discussion which can be broadly defined as follows:

1. **Bulletin boards**, usually simple one-page boards where users post information (like events or meetings announcements, new opportunities, requests, etc.) are just like physical bulletin boards. While bulletin boards may include comments from users, they are seldom used for ongoing or complex discussions.

A typical useful board to set up is e.g. a "KB bulletin board" to announce **any news related to the administration and maintenance of the KB** and which is of interest to the community. The international administrators should be responsible for informing on a regular basis the community about "what's going on inside the KB". For example if a new function or a new tool is added a little message can be posted and comments and suggestions can be asked to received some useful feedback from the users.

2. **Web forums** are more complex than bulletin boards, with separate topics with their own "threads" of postings and are more suited to ongoing discussions. The KB requires to be registered to participate. For the moment four topical categories have been created: 1) Vision paper; 2) Country support tool; 3) Policy guidelines and 4) Financial guidelines. "The vision paper" category is the place to discuss the draft version of the TerrAfrica vision paper. A first message has been posted with the draft paper in attachment to start the discussion. Additional threads could be created e.g. for each chapter of the document or for specific sections that needs to be discussed with the users.

Another typical use of the web forum is to provide some technical assistance to assist the registered users in their interactions with the KB. The "General questions and help needed" category should be used for that purpose.

Country/topic-specific forums have been created. They should be monitored and facilitated by the workspace administrators. For the moment they are restricted to the registered users who belong to a specific country/thematic workspace group. Please remember that these security settings are managed by the back-end administrators.

All the web forums needs to be monitored by the administrators to avoid leaving unanswered questions and frustrate those of the registered users that participate. Participation should be encouraged to keep the forum a living and active place. Once again the administrators will have to define and agree upon a "modus operandi" to manage what can quickly become a very time consuming task if the registered users are posting many messages on the forums.

3. **Online conferences** are actual meetings held online asynchronously, with an agenda and various topics for discussion, e.g. to produce policy documents or consensus on an issue. Access may be restricted to members (i.e. the registered users) only or to a sub-set of the members. These conferences can be set up on an ad-hoc basis to respond to specific needs. They're usually **opened for a certain amount of time to a limited number of users** and once they've served their purposed the discussions are closed, summarized and archived. These conferences must be closely monitored and facilitated. They will consume even more time and resources than the web forums.

A typical forum (see [e-Agriculture](#) for example) entry page shows:

- a list of the individual forums available on the site;
- how many discussion topics are in each forum;

- the number of postings in each forum;
- the date and subject of the most recent posting in each forum.

The layout of different forums will vary according to the software used to create them, but most will have the same basic features (see Illustration 4).

Category Title	Threads	Posts	Last Post Info
Featured Forum: Discussions here			
Welcome and Consultation Overview Welcome and overview; Planning for the Future; Purpose and Schedule	3	9	Oct 24 2007, 11:50 PM In: Summary and EConsultation Closure By: Nancy White
The Strategy - "Global Public Goods (GPGs): From Data and Information to Food" This space is for a general discussion around the strategy. The intent is to seek your views to update, improve and validate the strategy. We will provide a summary of the strategy building process, outputs to date, and offer clarifications as necessary. This will lead to a more informed investment plan to work towards achieving the strategy's objectives.	9	37	Oct 10 2007, 05:29 PM In: Standards and Metadata By: Johannes Keizer
User's Needs This space is for contributions and discussion on identifying priority current and potential areas, users and users' needs as they relate to information global public goods (in the CGIAR context). This includes obstacles and methodologies to improve access to and use of the scientific and research outputs of the CGIAR.	6	27	Oct 09 2007, 01:02 PM In: Who are the Users and what are their needs? By: V.Varadarajan

Illustration 4: Example of a typical forum layout

By clicking on one of the broad forum topics, you can see a "threaded" list of discussions around a general theme (see Illustration 5).

Thread Title	Replies	Author	Last Post Info
The Strategy - "Global Public Goods (GPGs): From Data and Information to Food"			
Standards and Metadata	1	Nancy White	Oct 10 2007, 05:29 PM posted 162 days ago By: Johannes Keizer
Challenges: Which are most pressing?	4	Nancy White	Oct 07 2007, 08:00 PM posted 165 days ago By: Nancy White
Strategy Document	10	Kauser A. Malik	Oct 07 2007, 07:57 PM posted 165 days ago By: Nancy White

Illustration 5: Example of a typical forum layout for a general theme

By clicking on a discussion, you can see a "threaded" list of messages (see Illustration 6).

All Categories > Featured Forum: Discussions here > The Strategy - "Global Public Goods (GPGs): From Data and Information to Food" > Strategy Document

Total Posts: 11 - Pages (2): [1] 2

Author: Nancy White
Posted: Oct 07 2007 - 07:57 PM
Subject: re: re: re: Strategy Document

 yahoo  msn

Here are some comments that came in via email from Paul Sillu, ICT Specialist, ABS TCM Ltd, Nairobi, <http://www.eadairy.com> <http://www.abstcm.com>

Generally, information flow between researchers and the consumers have not been effective. The producers of the information had left it at technical level and the interpretation left out thus, the users; farmers didn't find it easy to use. Avenues between the researchers and farmers need to be opened more to ensure communication of feedback to the farmers (since the researches were carried out among them).

Secondly, most of the communications has been top-down, farmers were not considered to be source of good information which researchers could use/ document and help pass them over to other users. For example, ethnoveterinary activities in Kenya revealed that farmers used some herbs to treat animal diseases as opposed to going to the vet shops to buy "expensive" drugs to treat their animals. This exemplifies that the farmers are in custody of some vital information which, if well tapped and communicated among other groups could be helpful.

Access to the research findings in developing nations has been limited to those who are privileged to get the findings. Researchers should create avenues of meeting people and disseminating their findings and soliciting for feedback from the audience. In the for with the audience, they will also get enlightened as to the user needs (education level which affects interpretation of the info, formats, user behaviours and also other unexpressed information needs).

For example in Kenya, in efforts to inform farmers, ABS TCM Ltd. with other partners set up different information centres. These were done at "Successful farmers" homes/ farms. These farmers are always visited by others to learn from them, so the farmer would help in interpreting the info to them. Monitoring of the info needs revealed that farmers were at ease to access these materials from these strategic points. We could also get farmers feedback in form of questions, quest for more information etc.

So the strategy to be set to bridge the info gap between the generators and users of the same need to revolve around the needs of the users. The demographic details of the target group studied and involve the target group also in the study, so that they feel they are part of the whole system.

Author: Nancy White
Posted: Oct 01 2007 - 10:13 PM
Subject: re: re: Strategy Document

 yahoo  msn

Important suggestions, Ekanath. You mention practices here - this might be an area others can chime in.

What are the practices - from any of the stakeholder perspectives, that we might pay attention to? For example, what practices encourage useful participation (with respect to the note "stakeholders (researchers, community, and local /extension practitioner and data manager) should participate equally.") What does that participation look like? What makes it useful to any/all of the stakeholders?

If any one has specific examples or stories to share, that is helpful.

Illustration 6: Example of a typical forum layout for a threaded discussion

A big advantage of **asynchronous** over synchronous discussion is that you can log in on your own time, as well as read existing posts and add to them. You don't have to be online at the same time as the other participants of the conference. This is especially useful when **people from different continents** are trying to communicate. These tools are also better if you have **connectivity problems** as you do not need to be online continuously for long periods (if this is a significant consideration, e-mail tools are more appropriate).

Let's look at other important points and at the limitations of these tools (see Table 13).

Strengths	Weaknesses
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- Several different discussion threads can develop at the same time.
- Participants can pick up threads and start new ones at any time.
- Every posted contribution provides an opportunity for response, thus encouraging active participation.
- Good for geographically dispersed communities, can reduce the need for face to face meetings.
- Do not need to be continuously online for long periods.
- Moderated discussions can be labour intensive.
- A live connection to the Internet is required.
- Delays between postings and responses mean that it can take time for a debate to develop.
- Postings can sometimes get overlooked and go unanswered.
- Multiple threads can make navigating the discussion confusing.
- Popular discussions can generate enormous numbers of postings.
- Open discussions are vulnerable to participants who want to post abuse or off- topic contributions.

Table 13: Strengths and weaknesses of electronic forums

The more important success factor to consider when building a community is trust. There can't be a community if there's no trust between its members. And trust is not easily build virtually and it can be quickly lost. Thus another simple idea is to organize every year or at the maximum every 2 years a **face-to-face seminar** between all the administrators and the more active users. In addition to putting a face on a name, this is the most efficient way to build trust between all the registered users and the administrators, between the administrators themselves. Also the seminar must be use with the clear and concrete objective to review the community's progress, solve problems, fine-tune procedures, guide future developments, exchange ideas, etc.

3.5 Use knowledge to support SLM in Africa

It should never be forgotten that the bottom line of knowledge management practices and the Knowledge Base is to support the TerrAfrica's vision of achieving SLM in Africa. All the knowledge resources that are identified, created, stored and shared are meant to be used. **What is not used is useless**. Whether it is a document, tables with data, a map, a video footage or another knowledge resources; the continuous quality control of the resources submitted by the registered users should follow that principle.

The knowledge generated at the international level and at the national level should be targeted to provide answers to questions and fill the needs. The resources could be used to elaborate national strategies, organized a regional policy-making meeting or develop projects submitted to donors.

4 How-to further develop the Knowledge Base and its community

4.1 Facilitating and hosting a virtual community

Nancy White, one of the world's foremost specialists in developing and facilitating online communities, gave us some useful insights about forum discussions. Many additional resources can be found on her website at <http://www.fullcirc.com/>. The following has been extracted from <http://www.fullcirc.com/community/communityfacilitation.htm>.

Why facilitate online?

Online group interactions do not always "happen" spontaneously. They require care and nurturing: facilitation. The **core of facilitation and hosting is to serve the group and assist it in reaching its goals**

or purpose. Some describe this role as a gardener, a conductor, the distributed leadership of jazz improvisers, a teacher, or an innkeeper. It can be this and more.

Levitt, Popkin and Hatch, in their article "[Building Online Communities for High Profile Internet Sites](#)" wrote, "Communities are organic in nature and site owners can't make them successful or force them to grow. As site owner can only provide the fertile ground on which a community may grow, and then provide some gentle guidance to help the group thrive. Much of the challenge in fostering an online community is social, rather than technical."

Facilitation is a balance between functions that enhance the environment and content, create openness and opportunity, and functions that protect the members from harassment. It involves the sacred rituals around freedom of individual expression while preserving something of "the common good." It is juggling, tight-rope walking, often without a net. The distance to the hard cold ground varies with the community or group goals. The clearer the [purpose](#), the easier it is to craft the facilitation approach. Purpose provides participants and facilitators expectations upon which they can base their actions.

Facilitators foster member interaction, provide stimulating material for conversations, keep the space cleaned up and help hold the members accountable to the stated community guidelines, rules or norms. They pass on community history and rituals. They "hold the space" for the members. Perhaps more importantly, hosts often help community members do these things for themselves. Without someone taking on these responsibilities, it is easy for an online space to get sidetracked, disrupted or simply abandoned. For more specifics on online facilitation, see [Some Considerations for Facilitating Online Interaction](#).

Who is the facilitator?

The online facilitator can be the convenor, online community owner, or someone designated by the community owner. The role may evolve within a group. Small communities may have just one, while large online spaces with many spaces and topics may use teams. Facilitators may be unpaid volunteers in the social communities, where facilitators in online work groups often draw from the team. Facilitators may be a team leader or outside contractor. Online facilitators' most important skills are as a skilled group facilitator and genuine, authentic communicator. In a text environment, that means people at ease reading and writing with care and clarity.

What specifically do online facilitators do?

Facilitators in offline situations have certain established roles providing leadership, focus, stimulation for group interaction, support, team building, refereeing, dealing with problems, timekeeping, responding to member feedback and group regulation. These may also be needed online, but there are also differences due to the primarily text-based nature of the environment. Communication has a few more challenges, plus there are the advantages and disadvantages of electronic tools.

Facilitator approaches depend on the nature of the community. Some communities, such as conversational "salon type" communities, need a very low-key "host." Some need very clear and rapid responses, or distinct leadership qualities. Others need facilitators to help raise the overall skill level of the community to facilitate itself.

In general, there are four frameworks for online facilitation:

1. Understanding of group facilitation as it occurs face to face and online.
2. Knowledgeable about design. Ideally, they are involved in the conceptualization, design and implementation of the online space to ensure that group member needs are accounted for. They participate in pre-assessment and planning.

3. Grounded in the group's purpose with full understanding. They can convey it clearly to group members.
4. Prepared with tools and processes.

Facilitators use their group facilitation skills to enable the group to meet its goals. This involves a group of processes which include:

1. Entry and engagement processes which help members become active participants.
2. Supporting sociability, relationship and trust building.
3. Constructing, adapting and modelling norms, agreements and accountability.
4. Support discussion and dialogue (foster communication).
5. Support divergent, convergent and task-oriented group processes (help get work done).
6. Anticipate and work with conflict and abrasion to both allow emergence of new ideas and protect people from harassment.
7. Work with full understanding of diversity in learning style, culture and personal styles.
8. Understand and make visible group participation cycles and "rituals" in the online environment.
9. Summarize, harvest, weave and support appropriate content and connections.
10. Provide basic help as needed with the tools.
11. Ensure the space is kept "tidy" and navigable.

To get a sense of some of the variety of facilitator roles, you may wish to read first hand from [Hosts on Hosting](#). As you consider your role compared to theirs, you will probably find that you are doing a combination job, utilizing skills from all areas. And it varies over time as a community matures and members start to take on various roles. People have created many metaphors to describe the role of online facilitator that help us visualize the roles.

The role of the facilitator is also very well explained in the lesson #5.1 of the IMARK module mentioned in [#4.4. Building electronic communities and networks, training and maintenance](#).

4.2 Weaving, summarizing and harvesting online interactions.

This section is also directly taken from Nancy White.

Online conferencing often suffers from too much volume and what has been called the "tyranny of recency over relevancy" – in other words, the more recent an event, the more attention it gets, regardless of how important it is.

The norm rather than the exception

Even in threads highly focused and on-topic, gems quickly get buried and action items forgotten. Important side topics either dominate, or die. Participants' thoughts and questions go unanswered. Ideas that should be woven together languish. Connections are missed. And when individuals from a group complete their interactions, the work product such as ideas, knowledge, answers often exist in a form unusable by others.

So how do we do it better?

This abundance of text and all its richness create the need for systems to harvest gems of information. These include moments of insight, unanswered questions, action items and decisions. The process requires that members view material prepared to weave ideas, connect people who can benefit from each other's knowledge and experience. It also demands that groups are on the alert to create coherence when the natural flow of the interaction may be tipping towards chaos.

Some useful vocabulary and concepts

- **Harvesting** – The process of extracting information from conversations. Information might include tasks, specific data points, responses to questions, and questions that no one could answer. Harvesting means gathering information as a basis for further study (synthesis comes later).
- **Weaving** – The process of identifying and linking relevant pieces of information, thoughts or comments among conversations that take place at different times, among different individuals, or on different topics. This process helps to build coherence and to connect subgroups at opportune moments. Links among relevant threads support connection of ideas and the people who offered those ideas.
- **Summarizing** – The regular reviews done during online interactions which provide high level perspectives and synthesis of each conversation and the body of work they comprise. Summaries help to reinforce results, ideas and processes and helps build stronger groups. They allow people to catch up if they have fallen behind without being forced to go back and read everything they missed.
- **Holding Questions** – The process of tracking comments or questions that need follow-up or answers but that are impossible to answer at the time they come up. It's useful to raise them again when the timing seems right. Because unanswered questions can make people feel unheard, even if there is no answer available, holding them instead of dismissing them allows a follow up mechanism and lets people know they were heard.

Here are some ideas and techniques for creating recaps and summaries.

Who does the work?

This Harvesting role often falls to the facilitator. In larger communities or diverse, multi threaded situations, this is rarely a realistic option, and the responsibility needs to be spread among more people. It can be hard to get people to voluntarily accept this role because can be a LOT of work! However, harvesting and creating summaries provides a rich learning experience particularly for the harvester. Reading through entire threads at once can provide a new perspective on the conversation.

Purpose

Before you start to harvest, think about the following questions:

- Who will use the summaries?
- How will the summaries be used?
- What action do you hope to come from the use of summaries?
- Are the summaries themselves open to critique and discussion?
- Will summaries be used to check on agreement and understanding?
- Will summaries be a collection of ideas (raw data) or a synthesis and reflection of the discussion?
- Where will the summaries reside? (website, summary page, etc.)
- What format will be most useful to the users (lists, action plan, narrative, story, images, mind map, etc.)
- Should summaries have as much of an objective and detached perspective as possible, or should they convey a stated point of view? Summaries can help us understand each other's perspectives either way.

Timeliness

If you've ever tried to summarize a hot and heavy thread after a week or a month, you know what a

daunting challenge it can be. The longer you delay summarizing, the harder it is. It's a more reliable practice to prepare daily summaries in heavy discussions. Keep notes in a separate word file, email key passages to your self for later reassembly, or use the notebook feature that some web based tools have.

Content

Based on your determined purpose, there are a number content approaches you might take including:

- Summary of discussion that highlights the main points (with or without attribution and links to original posts. The links can be helpful -- especially for people entering later!)
- Action plans and updates
- List of outstanding discussion or action items
- Lists of insights, techniques or issues
- Leading questions for next phase/discussion
- Direct hot-links to key postings (index)
- Story that captures key elements
- Visual rendering such as mind maps or sketches
- Unanswered questions that need to be brought forward.

Sometimes it is helpful to print out a thread and use the highlighter approach. Sometimes getting a different visual understanding on the material really helps.

Some online interaction groups, events or spaces have protocols for members which aids in the creation of summaries and searching for content. Participants can be asked to annotate each of their postings with key words, or to provide a "title" to their post. Then harvesters can more easily skim or search through material for relevant citations.

4.3 Lessons learned from FAO's thematic knowledge networks initiative

The following lessons and recommendations are based on FAO Knowledge Networks review. For more information please contact directly Mr [Stephen Rudgard](#), Waicent Outreach and Capacity Building Branch Chief.

Work started in 2006 on development of Thematic Knowledge Networks (TKNs) as part of the FAO Knowledge Forum. Approximately 15 knowledge networks of different profiles and complexities were supported in 2006/07 in a pilot phase. Internal and external networks were included in the exercise, sponsored by a wide range of Divisions. In order to prepare adequately for further demand for setting up and supporting more networks, experiences and outcomes of the pilot phase were evaluated in a review in December 2007. Focus group sessions and one-to-one interviews were conducted with sponsors, coordinators and members of these pilot networks.

A SWOT analysis was undertaken by the reviewers. The main messages emerging from this analysis of the review exercise were consolidated as follows:

1. Knowledge networking initiatives emerged as one of two different types: i) Implemented according to directives, and ii) Implemented according to an articulated need. The latter were perceived as being more effective than the former.
2. Apart from more formal networks, there are a number of smaller and informal knowledge sharing initiatives at FAO which seem to be thriving mainly because they are informal.
3. Both sponsors (senior officers who are promoting the creation of a knowledge network in their

areas of work) and coordinators (those who facilitate communication and are responsible for day-to-day running of the network) expressed the need for appropriate technology solutions in support of their networks. It was felt by many that currently solutions are too complicated, and in some ways are inadequate or inappropriate.

4. It was felt that the knowledge networks should have been more facilitated rather than directed. Knowledge networks should have been initiated in consultation with expert staff and other actors in addition to being provided with resources and a guiding vision.
5. External communities were mostly characterised with quite active participation, whereas those internal to FAO often had very little participation. On this basis, external networks were perceived as much more effective.
6. Networking at FAO is hindered by hierarchies, complex bureaucratic procedures, and disciplinary silos, all of which obstruct knowledge flows.
7. These obstructions lead to poor motivation among people to share.
8. There seemed to be a lack of understanding at all levels of the organisation for the essence, principles and challenges of knowledge management. Generally, those who were interviewed felt it was their superiors who lacked such an understanding, rather than the other way round.

The above led some of those that were interviewed to say that FAO is not yet a knowledge or a learning organization, but rather an organization with a lot of knowledge. Based on the results of the SWOT analysis and the main messages, the reviewers recommended a set of actions and approaches for the development of existing and future knowledge networks.

The recommendations developed following the analysis were:

1. **Sponsor from top.** Sufficient resources (human and financial) should be provided by managers for creation and sustainability of knowledge networks. Additionally, senior and middle management need to be aware of the importance of networks for knowledge sharing, and provide their continuous support to staff working on knowledge networks. Senior and middle management should also be aware of what the "right" approach to supporting knowledge networking is: apart from supporting knowledge networks with resources. Staff may sometimes also need to be coached and led by example.
2. **Ensure right blend of membership.** Membership should where possible be at least partly external. While the "membership blend" is important, it does not necessarily account for success. Several informal communities of practice internal to FAO do work well.
3. **Support demand.** Networks should be created as a response to a real and articulated need from a community, rather than being created in a top-down way. Management should listen to staff and not simply direct.
4. **Ensure business case.** Consultations should be organized with potential knowledge network members to establish the business case for the network before it is established.
5. **Facilitate continuously.** Continuous facilitation should be provided. More staff need to be trained in online facilitation.
6. **One size does not fit all.** Appropriate methodologies and technologies should be provided for different needs. Resources need to be allocated to train and enable staff involved in knowledge networking, including in aspects of technology.
7. **Recognise staff time.** Staff members should be given enough recognition for their contribution towards the success of knowledge networks. Incentives need to be created to ensure that FAO staff move out of their silos and start sharing information and knowledge.
8. **Promote.** Knowledge networks should be promoted in the Organization. Experiences should be shared among knowledge networks, their sponsors and facilitators.
9. **Monitor and Evaluate.** There should be on-going monitoring and evaluation of knowledge networks. Experiences should be learnt from in order to continuously improve knowledge

networking in FAO.

4.4 Building electronic communities and networks, training and maintenance

Training, operational assistance and maintenance has been taken into account from the beginning of the project. The Knowledge Base was developed to be as intuitive and easy to use as possible. Thus no extensive training would be needed for the visitors and registered users.

Some limited initial training will be needed for the administrators (both at the international and national level) to learn how to administrate and manage (i.e. maintain) the various tools and functions available.

Depending on the future level of activity, the future administrators may need substantial training to learn how to build and nurture a community of practice. It means managing people which is quite more complex than documents, tools or functions. FAO has already conducted two virtual workshops entitled "Introduction to Online Communities" which introduces participants to online communities and how they facilitate knowledge and information exchange.

The workshop is based on the Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) module "Building Electronic Communities and Networks" (see www.imarkgroup.org/moduledescrC_en.asp). It covers the technical, institutional and social issues involved in developing an online community and the wide range of interactive tools and applications for building an online community.

By "virtual" it means that during the 3 weeks of its duration, geographically dispersed trainees can follow the training when they need and at their own pace as well as interact with the group of trainees during synchronous sessions. Regarding costs, being virtual means that they are being reduced to ca. \$1000 per participants compared to more expensive traditional (classroom) cost.

The Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) is a partnership-based e-learning initiative to train individuals and support institutions and networks world-wide in the effective management of agricultural information. IMARK consists of a suite of distance learning resources, tools and communities on information management. IMARK is being spearheaded by FAO in collaboration with over 30 partner and contributing organizations. Mr [Andrew Nadeau](#), FAO Information Management Specialist, is behind it and the right person to contact for more information about IMARK.

The module "[Building Electronic Communities and Networks](#)" is a great free resource. All the administrators are strongly encouraged to register and take a good and close look at it. The module covers the approaches, methods, and tools used to build electronic communities, and covers the various steps and procedures for developing and facilitating electronic communities. The total curriculum consists of 29 lessons, ranging from approximately 15 to 90 minutes duration, grouped into five units, for a total of about 16 to 22 hours of self-paced instruction.

- **Unit 1 - Online communities - new opportunities:** This unit covers the benefits and opportunities offered by online communities to facilitate knowledge and information exchange, and describes the key factors for a successful online community.
- **Unit 2 - Understanding needs and assessing opportunities:** This unit explains how to conduct a needs analysis for an online community, how to develop a team and define goals, and looks at the technical, financial, institutional and social issues involved in designing an online community.
- **Unit 3 - Options, choices, tools and applications:** This unit illustrates a wide range of interactive tools and applications for building an online community, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they affect and the nature of the community.
- **Unit 4 - Designing an online community:** This unit provides guidelines for the design of an online community including introducing online communication in your organization, the professional

roles required, the technical choices to be made, and how to plan for marketing, training and evaluation activities.

- **Unit 5 - Online facilitation:** This unit provides guidelines on how to facilitate an online community and introduces the basic concepts of facilitation, compares traditional and online facilitation, and illustrates a wide range of facilitation tasks and techniques.

4.5 Evaluation, reflection and action

It is hard to predict how much, how often and just how the users will interact or not with the KB. A community of practice is by essence a living organism that will evolve with time. The administrators should closely monitor its development during the first six months and only then perform an evaluation based on users feedback with e.g. a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews or tailored discussions moderated in a specific forum. Once the evaluation is complete the administrators will have the relevant data to plan its next phase of evolution as well as an updated version of the website and interactive tools based on the user needs and requirements.

One of the key real challenge is to **create a true community of users and nurture its evolution**. The KB could evolve from a simple, but efficient, directory of resources related to SLM toward a community of international and national experts committed to support SLM practices in Africa. For more information please refer directly to [#4.4.Building electronic communities and networks, training and maintenance](#).

Another idea would be to develop **personal workspaces** with a simple system of folders and favourites enabling the registered user to build its own KB.