# Skill-building and a culture of experimentation for WikiArabia

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## **CCD: A successful pilot**

#### The hypothesis:

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- There are certain community capacities all thriving Wikimedia communities need developed.
- Some Wikimedia communities have under-developed capacities, or plateaued and aren't developing a particular capacity.
- WMF can usefully assist a particular community to build a specific capacity, and to "level up" or overcome an obstacle.



# The pilot years

- Conducted qualitative research (~20 community interviews)
- Selected (emerging) communities for pilots -- **Brazil** (communications); **Tamil** (on-wiki tech skills); **Ukraine** (conflict engagement)
- Developed curriculum
- Delivered in-person in-country training with experts
- Evaluated and wrote <u>final report with recommended next steps</u>
- WMF did not make a decision following the pilot; defaulted to piloting some more, and acting on the recommendations within the *pilot*-level budget.
  - E.g. month-long Wikidata and technical training trip in 8 cities in India.



## So, does this work?

Short answer: yes!

Longer answer: yes, and it has additional beneficial side-effects



# Key lesson

This "high-touch" approach works: communities appreciate attention and customization to their context. Communities successfully "leveled up".



## Key lesson

#### In-person, in-language, in-country training is effective and engaging



## Key lesson

Materials are significantly re-usable. Needs are often shared across communities.



## Some side effects

Trainings developed for CCD were **repeated** at international conferences (Wikimania; Wikimedia Conference), regional conferences (CEE Meeting; Wiki Indaba) and national ones (India, Ukraine, Bulgaria).

Material is being re-used by others, e.g. the Wikidata training has been recorded at high-quality for online use; the Facilitation Skills training was delivered by a colleague at a Learning Day event.



# Some quotations

- "The **quality and depth of the training** by experienced WMF staff can't be matched by outsiders."
- "Very few people can come to the international events.
   We need WMF to come to communities in their own countries, and ideally in their own language."



# Some quotations

"I was aware of Wikidata, but **found it complicated, too confusing** to understand beyond interwiki. **Now I think it is the future** of Wikipedia. My mind was blown. **I was inspired and started contributing massively**."

"I attended lectures about [Wikidata], but not one had engaged me and made me actually want to contribute. [...] I was **finally persuaded** that I should invest time and go to actively contribute to Wikidata"



## But does it scale?

Yes, it scales. Not like Visual Editor scales across communities, but **across time**. It sows seeds that keep on giving. It builds capacities that are then maintained by the active community. Effective capacity building "stays built".

Once the **initial obstacle** or lack of awareness/knowledge is overcome, the community continues **organic growth**.



## But does it scale?

Capacity-building is a high-investment activity (limited in time and specific in scope). But it is a good investment when effective.

Crucially, it **fulfils a need not met by any other process**. **Technological innovation cannot be the only tool deployed by WMF in support of the communities it serves**, as it does not address the variety of needs and obstacles those communities face in their natural growth and activity.



## So now what?

## This strategic pilot was successful and the model proven.



# We're now working on:

- Community Capacity Map
   Online learning platform
- 3. Empowering proven trainers
- 4. Learning request channel



# **Community Capacity Map**

Mapping needs and potentials for investment in capacity-building [[m:CCM]]



# CCM: why?

- The pilot relied on <u>personally observed</u> needs and staff assessments. This <u>cannot</u> be comprehensive and equitable, long-term.
- Self-assessment is **inclusive**, **participatory**, **equitable**, **and potentially insightful**, for both the orgs/groups and WMF.
- Having an overview of strengths and needs across the movement allows WMF to **allocate resources wisely** and effectively (e.g. regionally)



## CCM: how?

- Every org, group, or community is invited to self-assess on any number of Wikimedia capacities.
- There are <u>guidelines</u> to assist in self-assessment
- In addition to the current capacity level, we are interested in the <u>robustness</u> of the capacity
- Assessments can be done in meetings, online, all at once, or gradually.
- Once enough information is collected, decisions about investment can be made.
- Over time, capacity and robustness <u>changes</u> (growth and decline) can be **tracked**.
- There is <u>a cool tool</u> to ease input, developed by User:Edgars.



# **Online learning platform**

A structured, self-service learning platform (cf. MOOCs) with video and written tutorials and modules. • Translatable, private, using Wikimedia accounts.



# Benefits of learning plat.

- Translations learn in your own language
- Structure learn a course of modules to master a skill-set (e.g. "batch uploads" or "public speaking"
- Tracking track your progress; optionally, be discovered by people needing your experience (e.g. "who speaks Arabic and knows how to reconcile data with Wikidata?")



### **Empowering proven trainers**

Effective training depends enormously on the ability of the trainer and quality of training materials
We want to empower (cultivate, fund, support) people who are not only experts at a topic, but have also proven to be effective trainers.
This plan is not budgeted yet. More details next year.



#### Learning request channel

We are designing an online channel (details still to be decided, but it will probably be on <u>Wikimedia Space</u>) where you would be able to request support for any kind of learning: from requesting a whole pre-conference like Learning Days for your event, to just requesting help on how to accomplish something



#### Learning request channel

There will be a guaranteed service level (response within N days), at least some multilingual support, and responses will range from online resource links through video calls for mentorship, to whole funded events.



# Quick discussion: What skill-building is most needed in WikiArabia communities? **KIMEDIA** FOUNDATION

#### Toward a culture of experimentation



## Change is healthy

• In the early years, we made up the rules as we went

- Later, many rules have become less changeable
- But wikis thrive on change and adaptation
- When the stakes are high, determining *which* change is desirable becomes harder. And we argue in circles.
  E.g. should we change how we discuss notability? (if so, how?) Should we change how we welcome newbies? (how?) Should we accept oral citations?



#### **Experiment!**

- Disciplined **experimentation** is a method of exploring possible change towards desired results Discipline is key:
  - Goals
    - HypothesesTimelines
  - Evaluation
  - Post-experiment action (or reversion)



**Goals:** increase retention of new contributors **Hypotheses:** 1. failure saps motivation; 2. conflict saps motivation; 3. recognition boosts motivation; 4. recognizing good contributions is easier than preventing failure/conflict.

**Experimental action:** systematically identify "promising" newbies (e.g. using **Quarry**, find new contributors who have made substantial edits in the last three months and are still editing) and leave a note of appreciation on their talk page.

- **Timeline**: six months
- **Evaluation**: compare retention of appreciated users to baseline rate of retention (measured in advance)
- **Post-experiment action** (or reversion): if the evaluation shows a significant increase in retention, make it a permanent practice. If not, stop, and look for some other action to achieve the goal.



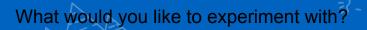
- **Goals:** increase coverage of undercovered topics; increase diversity of viewpoints covered
- Hypotheses: 1. Information on Wikipedia should be verifiable. 2. It is difficult to cite oral knowledge without a permanent representation. 3. Reputation matters **Experimental action:** identify a **partner** already capturing oral knowledge, review their curation practices, and, if suitable, declare their material citeable on wiki. Timeline: 12 to 24 months



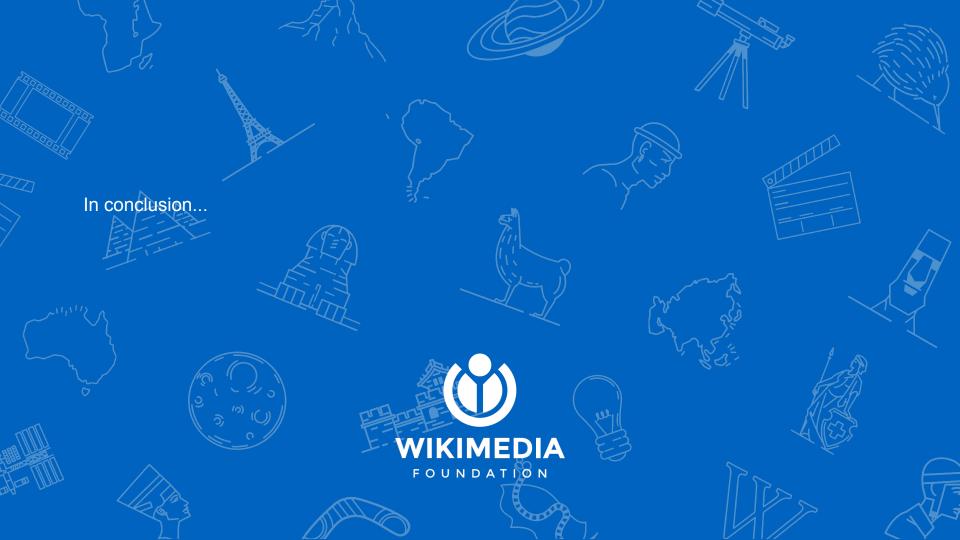
**Evaluation:** 1. compare coverage of topics the partner covers to baseline coverage. (Has there been significant increase beyond the expected organic one?); 2. Count instances of patently false information discovered to have come from the partner's materials, and compare to traditional sources (e.g. newspapers) **Post-experiment action** (or reversion): keep the partner

citeable, or revert all the citations; possibly seek another partner









#### We are here to help!



The Wikimedia Foundation, and the Community Development team, are interesting in working with all of you on ways to build skills and capacity. Talk to us!
Discuss the idea of experimentation in your communities. If there's appetite to try, we can support you with tools, analysis, and advice!



# THANK YOU

Keep in touch!

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