

CREATIVE LEADERSHIP CONVERSATIONS:

coaching approaches for personal and community development



IDF – Cameroon Project - FINAL REPORT -

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Date: October 3, 2011



Table of Contents

<i>Facilitator's Personal Reflections</i>	3
<i>Project Recap</i>	4
Background	4
Broad goals	4
Measurable objectives and deliverables	4
<i>Summary of Project</i>	5
Pre-Training	5
CLC Coaching Workshop	5
Mid-point Interview	5
Follow-up workshop	6
<i>Results and Impact</i>	6
Meeting the deliverables	6
Self-Assessment Analysis	6
Interview Results	7
Observations on Uptake, Retention and Challenges	8
<i>Lessons Learned</i>	9
Curriculum, Activities and Tools	9
Methodology, Preparation and Delivery of Training	10
Organizational and Participant Readiness	11
Monitoring and Evaluation	11
Intercultural Aspects of Coaching Training	12
Sustainability Plans	13
<i>Recommendations</i>	14
Promotion of Coaching the Global Village	14
Adaptation to CLC model	15
Participant Targeting and Engagement	15
<i>Further Opportunities</i>	16
<i>Financials</i>	17
Budget (Estimated vs Actual)	17
<i>Appendix: Self Assessment Questionnaire</i>	18

Facilitator's Personal Reflections

Any good coach would ask, at the end of a project: what have you learned and what had the greatest value for you? This project is no different.

I am tremendously proud to have had the opportunity to play a role in a Coaching the Global Village project – to have been able to find a local Cameroonian organization poised to take part and for Patrick William's support in making it happen. I had not anticipated that the connection made in early 2010 would yield a project that would, for myself, bring about this level of experience in sharing coaching in an intercultural context.



I found the CLC toolkit to be a sound package that has a great flow for training new coaches and has the various built-in tools and activities that provide great avenues for learning. While the basic principles and the models (EQ, Mindset, etc) were familiar to me from both my own training and personal development, I had not previously participated in a CLC training. As a result, the format of the CLC toolkit required that I engage in further research to then be able to tailor for delivery to IDF. This offered me a chance to re-study the information, find my own interpretations of applications relevant to the local context, and consider various ways to adapt the toolkit to fit. While the final project report makes several references and recommendations to cultural adaptations, these are meant to enhance the solid foundation on which the toolkit is built, and show the flexibility needed for its practical application.

Coordinating the project, developing the facilitator's and participant's manual, adapting the activities and delivering the training - plus developing the additional tools needed to tailor to the local context - has brought me a very high return on investment for my time and effort. It would be difficult to quantify the number of hours I was involved in the project.

I have grown as a coach and facilitator in the process – this has tremendous value for me. The process even provided me with an additional opportunity to better understand Cameroonian culture, find avenues for exploring ways to address cross-cultural issues and adapt the tools to ensure a greater likelihood of mutual understanding. It also allowed me to test different methods and tools in a practical context.

Bringing the toolkit to life with IDF – one of the organizations that has impressed me the most during my two years in Cameroon –also provided the opportunity to use some of the experience of delivering this training as a learning lab for my own future endeavours.

How I handled the request to cut the follow-up workshop to half a day – and this, when participants had arrived 30 minutes late – is one example of the personal learning I have done in seeking to make this project succeed. There are various ways I could have handled this challenge, but my confidence in my preparation for this workshop, knowledge of the materials from having lived them for these past several months, and focus on the ultimate goal of the project were enough to pull through. I used every principle in the CLC toolkit and felt, in the end, that I could lead through example. Few of my colleagues in Cameroon have said they could have achieved this under the circumstances. Then again, few of them have had the opportunity to work so closely with the tools to make them able to.

There is no doubt in my mind that my coaching skills and practice will improve as a result of having engaged in this project with Coaching the Global Village and IDF. I have attempted, in this report, to record and analyse as many of my own learnings and observations in this project while also looking to providing avenues for continued development of the CLC toolkit and Coaching the Global Village's future projects.

Without question, I would be greatly interested in engaging further with Coaching the Global Village in any way I can contribute.

Project Recap

Background

In January 2011, upon the recommendation of Catherine Shih, a VSO volunteer placed at Integrated Development Foundation (hereafter IDF), an introductory letter and proposal was sent to IDF in answer to their request for coaching training of staff, board members and community volunteers.

After meetings and correspondence, it was agreed that a training of 8 initial participants – who would then become trainers to others in the organization – would take place in May 2011, with follow-up interviews and workshop within 3-4 months thereafter.

The proposal was approved with the curriculum – Creative Leadership Conversations toolkit – and funding provided by Coaching the Global Village.

Broad goals

The project sought to increase the coaching and leadership skills of the participants in four main areas:

1. Increasing and improving the quality of dialogue within their work areas through the use of coaching tools and approaches;
2. Empowering and motivating the participants then empower and motivate others to take the lead in local development efforts;
3. Increasing the sustainability of local decision-making: drawing out local solutions to locally identified problems and challenges; and
4. Encouraging co-creation of goals and intentions for the community members by the community members.

Measurable objectives and deliverables

The project sought to provide coaching tools and approaches to increase the participants' effectiveness at the local level in empowering the local community, increasing self-sustainability and local leadership. This would, thereby, contribute to the reduction of dependence on solutions and assistance from outside actors wherever possible.

Objectives of the project included:

- Increased effectiveness of the participants in using coaching tools and approaches in their work.
- Increased engagement and effectiveness of the participants as empowerment agents in local communities.
- Increased leadership of the participants in participatory and co-creative approaches to local decision-making.

Deliverables of the project included:

- Coaching approach training for 8 participants.
- Each participant will receive a total of 20 hours of training, as well as one follow-up on-site visit by the facilitator.
- Each participant will engage in a self-evaluation of their skills prior to the training, and at two further points in the follow-up process.
- A report following the 2 1/2-day initial training and 1-day follow-up review will be produced on the successes, lessons learned and recommendations of the curriculum and delivery.
- A final report covering the entire span of the project, including successes, lessons learned, recommendations of the project design, curriculum, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

Summary of Project

The project took place between April and September 2011, involving one facilitator and seven participants.

Pre-Training

One month prior to the scheduled workshop, a formal letter of invitation was sent to the participants selected by IDF. This letter also provided instructions explaining the self-assessment questionnaire that was attached to the letter. The self-assessments were completed and returned by participants and tabulated by the facilitator prior to the workshop.

For facilitation purposes, a facilitator's manual was prepared, detailing the objectives of each session, logistical needs, overview and process of the session and instructions for the various activities. A participant manual was also produced which included the schedule, notes on the various CLC concepts and exercises sheets to be used in workshop activities.

CLC Coaching Workshop

The workshop took place from May 27 to 29, 2011 with 7 participants participating. One additional person was scheduled, but could not attend due to illness. The participants included 3 women and 4 men holding various positions within IDF as staff or volunteers (including one VSO international volunteer).

Day One of the workshop covered all of the aspects of "Initiating" – Relationship, Identity, Values – plus the first two aspects of "Exploring" – Listening and Inquiry. Activities included defining a coach (participatory drawing), Social Identity Mapping of the organization and individual, Mindful Walking, individual work on the Tree of Life and a paper folding challenge (explaining the differences between hearing, listening and interpreting information). Participants also engaged in 3 time-defined coaching practices.

Day Two consisted of introducing the concepts of giving feedback before engaging in the aspects of "Enacting" – Visioning, Goal Setting and Accountability. Participants engaged in a Night-and-Day assessment, completed an acknowledgement wheel, role-played Situation-Behaviour-Impact scenarios, completed a Life Journey Map for the organization and engaged in future self exercises using various tools including SMART objectives. An additional 3 one-to-one coaching practices also took place.



Day Three included a recap of the previous two days as well as further discussions on leadership in coaching by connecting the previous work done to the concepts of Emotional Intelligence, Mindset and mental models. As an accountability exercise, each participant wrote a letter to themselves and engaged in some personal reflection exercises in addition to group discussions. One additional one-to-one coaching practice took place.

Mid-point Interview

In August and September, five one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants. Unfortunately the two remaining participant interviews could not take place due to availability.

The interviews took, on average, about 45 minutes. The purpose of each of the interviews was to check-in on the participants' progress, answer any questions they had, and to gauge their:

- Retention of the coaching principles
- Use of coaching in professional capacity
- Use in personal / day-to-day capacity
- Self-evaluation (what's going well, what is challenging, what needs more work)

Each of the participants interviewed discussed openly their challenges and successes. Participants shared several anecdotes about their experiences using coaching during the two to three months between the training and the interview.

Follow-up workshop

The follow-up workshop was the final component of the project and took place on September 19th 2011. This was scheduled for a full day of knowledge-sharing and skills building, however, the coordinator for IDF requested at the beginning of the session to end at lunch time because of other urgent business by the organization. While the content of the workshop was fully covered, this necessitated a reduction in the amount of discussion time and condensed some of the activities.

The workshop consisted of a review of the core CLC principles through participant knowledge and experience sharing. This was followed by a short introduction to the principles of Emotional Intelligence with a particular emphasis on the importance of EQ within teams, in leadership, and in coaching and the importance of self-assessment and management. Participants also completed a self-assessment exercise on EQ, in addition to completing the post-training assessment.

To lend a hand towards greater capitalization of this training, participants engaged in a brainstorming session aimed at creating a simplified action plan for developing a coaching culture within IDF going forward.

Results and Impact

While the full impact of the coaching training on the participants will take some time to materialize fully, results and impacts to the change process are already becoming visible. The manner and extent to which adoption of coaching and creative leadership conversations were adopted is demonstrated below.

Results and impacts were measurable both quantitatively and qualitatively as appropriate, however the strength of the anecdotal evidence provided by the participants is indicative of the increasing adoption of the training.

Meeting the deliverables

Although the workshop had been designed and planned for 8 participants, one was unable to attend (due to illness) for the first days of training and therefore could not continue. The follow-up workshop was also reduced as three participants could not attend.

In terms of delivery of the training, participants received in excess of 20 hours of training and support. Each of the participants who were interviewed and attended the follow-up training also completed their pre- and post-training self-assessments, providing insight about their changes in competencies over the course of the project.

The present report constitutes the final deliverable, including an analysis of the successes, lessons learned and recommendations to Coaching the Global Village.

Self-Assessment Analysis

The self-assessment were presented to participants to gather information that would provide supporting quantitative analysis to the observations and anecdotes for this final report. These assessments focused on participants' knowledge of coaching, understanding of its principles, retention of the coaching training and its practical application. Each participant was asked to fill out a

pre-workshop self-assessment and, at the end of the project, answered the same questions in the post-workshop questionnaire. The results of the questionnaires are by no means considered scientific as the survey size was too small and the questions may not have been interpreted the same way in both instances. Some of the questions also left greater room for interpretation than intended.

The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions to be answered using numbered rating scales. The questions reflected statements dealing with the CLC concepts as well as directly connecting with the goals and objectives of the project. Eight questionnaires were collected at the beginning of the project and five at the end.

In the comparing the pre- and post- assessments, four areas stand out as indicating the greatest change:

- ⇒ To the question “how comfortable are you challenging other people to think differently”, respondent answers in the post-workshop assessment increased in value by 2.9 points - from an average of 2.5 to 5.4 - where 1 is not at all comfortable, 4 is somewhat comfortable and 7 is very comfortable. The most frequent response in the first questionnaire was “2”, versus in the post questionnaire of “6”. This would suggest a greater understanding of the value of open and challenging dialogue and the use of inquiry.
- ⇒ Knowledge about coaching approaches also increased from the first survey to the second from 1.88 points (I have heard of coaching) to 4.0 points (I know many ways coaching works). This is a strong indication that participants started from a low level of knowledge about coaching and now are more comfortable with the approach. None of the respondents selected “7” – “I know coaching very well” – which, with some humility, leaves necessary room for improvement.
- ⇒ To the statement “I believe I have answers to people’s problems”, the results decreased by 2 points on the 7-point scale – indicating that participants agree more with the statement after the project than they did before. This question was used to ascertain the level at which participants would understand and adhere to the co-creation concepts and employ strategies to create ownership of the solutions in the person they are coaching. This may indicate also that some participants interpreted the question differently - to mean that coaching could be the answer to problems, rather than the directive approach of providing the answers.
- ⇒ The statement “I feel like a leader in the community”, in the aggregate showed no change. However, when reviewing the answers from each individual assessment, revealed a shift for most of the participants – whether because of a different interpretation of the statement, or due to changing mindsets. One participant rated themselves the same in both instances, two increased their level of agreement with the statement, and the other two lowered them.

Other changes found in the comparison of the questionnaires may indicate an acceptance of conscious incompetence or that the pre-assessment indicated an over-confidence in coaching abilities. Furthermore, changes in the number of respondents and the possibility that participants with lower literacy skills may have held a different interpretation of the statements, may account for the variances in some of the results.

Interview Results

The focus of Interviews conducted in late August and September was to examine and assess, on an individual basis, the retention of core CLC principles and their use by participants in professional and personal/day-to-day capacities.

Through these interviews, participants shared various experiences of successes and challenges in using coaching. The following are synopses of some of the information shared:

- ⇒ One participant has been using a coaching approach in his men’s church group. Instead of lecturing the men on a particular topic, he is using questions to draw the teachings from the participants. From this approach, he saw an increased engagement and participation from the other men in the group.

- ⇒ Two of the participants mentioned that they were engaging in self-coaching to develop a more goal-oriented approach to their work and lives in general. One of them has been doing a personal life journey map.
- ⇒ Developing the buy-in and understanding of others in using coaching in their activities was raised as a challenge.
- ⇒ A participant related several anecdotes of using coaching skills when working in the sensitization of teenage pregnancy. They used the tools and concepts from the workshop in discussing future/life planning and in working towards self-improvement strategies for girls.
- ⇒ Several participants observed that coaching requires more time. They commented that they sometimes wished they could coach their co-workers, but that due to time pressures (perceived or real), they often had to observe a directive stance.
- ⇒ The difficulty of building relationships and trust was mentioned several times. This was especially felt to be a challenge with hard to reach groups (ex: the Mbororo peoples), and women in traditional/conservative Muslim households. (nota: this subject was discussed at length at the follow-up workshop as a result and several insights shared)



- ⇒ In explaining his increased use of listening and inquiry, one of the participants mentioned that his family has noticed a change in his behaviour. He said that he was dialoguing with his children much more and that, as a result of seeking to understand their behaviour rather than only reacting to it, he was “yelling at them less and beating them less”.
- ⇒ One participant spoke about using inquiry as a means to engage in dialogue instead of taking another person’s statements at face value. As an example, the participant helped a younger person decide to stay in school instead of dropping out by discussing the reasons for making the decision and the possible solutions.
- ⇒ Similarly to above, a participant spoke about feeling now like they have the ability to ask children about their interests instead of dictating to them what their future should be. This, he said, was useful to teach others as it can lead to a greater emphasis on education and appropriate choices for children (i.e. based on desire and abilities, rather than traditional avenues like government “concoors” – job competitions)
- ⇒ One participant has worked increasingly on using coaching to encourage others towards greater self-sustainability – and away from the hand-to-mouth practices – by engaging in dialogue about making provisions for health, saving for children’s education, ensuring shelter and other longer-term needs.
- ⇒ In group settings, one of the participants has been consciously working on feedback delivery by employing more positive statements that could improve the group dynamics.

Observations on Uptake, Retention and Challenges

Actual uptake and retention of the information shared during the workshops is difficult to quantify, however, insights may be gathered observationally and anecdotally. Three areas of observations demonstrate the uptake, retention and challenges for coaching within IDF and by the participants.

Coaching knowledge:

- Participants were requested to participate, and became fully engaged, in discussing the development of mainstreaming coaching into IDF’s other projects and programs. Willingness to explore ways to instil a coaching culture within the organization is an indicator of uptake or the key messages of the training and its value for continued personal and community development.

- The requests made by the participants for continued support and training (both for themselves as individuals and for the wider organization) also indicates a desire to remain engaged in their own development and that of coaching within the organization.

Retention and increased usage:

- The participants indicated in the interviews and in discussions during the follow-up workshop that they perceived a significant change in their listening and inquiry skills. Some indicated that they were now listening differently and were more willing to engage in dialogue – a change from their previous behaviour.
- The concept of visioning (discussed under Lessons Learned below) is one that the participants discussed as truly important and identified it as an area needing greater sensitization with their colleagues, partners, beneficiaries, other community members and their own family. The tools and ideas surrounding visioning appeared to have a great impact on the participants.

Challenges and growing edges:

- In the follow-up workshop, the participants discussed their continued difficulty with the ideas surrounding presence and being truly focused when engaging in coaching activities. Most of the participants indicated that they had practiced or used mindful meditation or centering techniques after the initial workshop. In contrast, the participants said they were more cognizant of their lack of focus and therefore more prone to try to retain a presence in various situations., including then coaching or in dialogue.
- From outside observations, giving feedback effectively and in a forward-looking manner (i.e. as a gift) has not yet become engrained in their practice. This continues to be attached and confused with accountability and reporting. The prevailing cultural behaviour of directness and authority creates a challenging situation that is observable in training and during other interactions (see more under lessons learned section).

In discussions with the participants, it is clear that some of the activities and the use of tools have left a stronger mark on their understanding of coaching. For instance, the Life Journey Mapping exercise was referred to repeatedly and has already been used in settings outside of the project. The Tree of Life exercise was also mentioned as a tool participants would like to introduce to others for values identification and visioning

Lessons Learned

The following provides reflections on observations, realizations, and challenges arising out of the training sessions and discussions.

Curriculum, Activities and Tools

The CLC methodology offers a well-developed sequence to present coaching and leadership skills - each one building on the previous and allowing for a good flow in the activities. The most effective tools used in the training with IDF were those that were very visual and requiring small group participation.

Some of the tools used to illustrate coaching skills were not available for this project such as visualization and image cards. These may have worked quite well for the participants who seemed to be much more visual learners. Further evidence of this is that not all of the participant exercise sheets were as easy for the participants to use, even those that were not as heavily text-based. Some of the exercises may simply have been a bit too far out of people's comfort zone such as those which were less directive and required introspection (more explanations on this to be found under intercultural aspects).

For the activities that required teamwork such as the Life Journey Map of the organization or creativity as with the Tree of Life, more time should be allocated for this work. These more hands-on activities

were both more active and participants were keen to spend more time on them. However, due to overall time constraints, more time could not always be provided.

Providing participants with examples was a good way to explain some of the activities, such as the Social Identity Map, Tree of Life and Life Journey Map. However this had the drawback of giving something for the participants to copy versus being inspired from. For example, some of the Social Identity Map elements that came out onto the participant's sheet were identical to the ones in the example when it would have been unlikely had the example not been provided. Rote-learning in the education system means that people develop a greater comfort with copying examples than in creating new ones. In contrast, by presenting an example of a Life Journey Map which was for a person, but asking the participants to draw one for the organization, the level of thinking and richness of content was much more representative of their own ideas.



In addition to the above, selecting to work on a Life Journey Map for the organization meant that participants could see this being used in a different context. The use of this tool to demonstrate the life of an organization or community group can be an effective empowerment tool. Also, this proved an effective way to reduce the likelihood of people not being fully open and honest about sharing their history or vision for the future as this might indicate ambitions not related to or conflicting with that of the organization. The fear of possible retribution or withdrawal of other opportunities may have prevented participants from truly expressing themselves. This was mitigated later on in the "Future Self" exercise which was entirely personal, asking participants to only share what they felt comfortable sharing with the group.

There were also several specifically designed coaching practice sessions in the initial workshop. These were spaced apart through the three days to allow participants to learn from each session. The space for the meeting was adequately enough for each coaching duo to hear each other without disrupting others. Each session was followed by a group debriefing. Participants usually openly shared their experiences and challenges faced in the coaching. However, in some cases it was difficult to know if the coaching had taken place or whether the participants fully understood the instructions (i.e. coaching each other in turn, etc). This may require more structure in the future, or including additional facilitators, to give the opportunity to observe the coaching duos so as to give feedback during and after if needed.

Methodology, Preparation and Delivery of Training

The facilitator managed the project with significant assistance from the VSO volunteer placed at the organization and from IDF's coordinator.

Using the toolkit as a guide, the training required the development of a detailed facilitator's manual to ensure that all of the concepts would be covered and that each would serve as a building block onto the next. This is made extremely easy by the CLC toolkit. However, it was essential to develop the activities in relation to the local context and availability of materials.

A participant's manual was also produced and included the graphics from the toolkit (Initiating, Exploring, Enacting) and a description of all of the 9 basic elements to give participants additional information. The manual also includes 11 pages of exercise sheets related to the training activities such as Social Identity Map, My Future Self, SMART Goals and Be-Know-Do. Some of these exercises were done individually at first and then incorporated into group discussions that proved helpful for the people with lower literacy skills. Others were done in pairs to increase the level of exchange between the participants.

Transferring some of the tools onto flip chart paper in advance of the workshop proved to be very useful. Not only did it help with ensuring good flow, it also helped to keep the charts on the wall for a longer duration. Some of the participants would return to the flip charts during breaks and take down

additional notes. These could also be more easily referred to in later sessions which helped to connect ideas.

The biggest challenge occurred during the follow-up workshop. Although organized and planned to be a full day, it was requested to cut it down to half the allocated time. This meant a great deal of flexibility, condensing of the material and of its delivery. Essential elements were covered nonetheless.

In addition, the tip cards could not be printed and laminated prior to the workshop, therefore only paper printouts of the cards could be shared. This did not prove to be a difficulty as the participants could easily follow along and have discussion in relations to each piece. Many comments from this discussion are found in this report and corrections were made to the cards after the workshop. Cards were then printed and sent to IDF for distribution to the participants.

Organizational and Participant Readiness

Commitment and willingness of the organization proved essential, as was having a strong advocate for the use of coaching tools. Very few organizations would turn down an offer to learn about coaching or in any training regardless of need or value, but the desires might not run deep enough to fully engage the participants.

The pre-training self-assessments asked participants to state why they were interested in participating in the Creative Leadership Conversations. Every one of them indicated a desire to increase their skills, capacity and ability to do their work. In an environment where people often times attend workshops for the “per diem” or because they have been told to, this was both refreshing and very important. The participants indicated a commitment to learning and to participate actively. Although there were some moments of discomfort in the learning process, all of the participants demonstrate a strong presence when in session.

Participants who have less education or experience may have found some of the coaching concepts more intimidating and may not absorb as much information in as little time as others. This workshop included 2 persons with North American secondary education, and others with little formal education. Literacy levels were also vastly different, as were English language skills. Some of the information has to be translated to French to ensure comprehension. This made the delivery of the materials at times challenging for the facilitator. Situations like this can be mitigated by doing more small group work where appropriate, and, most especially, using more visual tools and adapting the language level.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Built into the training process were several monitoring and evaluation elements. These included self-assessments, post-training evaluations and opportunities for feedback during the training, the interviews and in the follow-up workshop. As far as process is concerned, the amount and variety of monitoring and evaluation data was sufficient to analyse how the training went and areas of changes needed.

However, it is clear from the discussions with the participants that some felt they could have benefited from greater monitoring of their coaching abilities in between the training dates. This monitoring was said to be more on the individual uptake of the coaching principles (i.e. “am I doing this right?”) rather than the M&E of the training process. The individuals’ interviews were aimed, in part, to provide this support. Additional assistance and coaching would have been quite difficult to provide, however, due to distances and communication challenges.



Intercultural Aspects of Coaching Training

There were various challenges to sharing the CLC model and sharing coaching knowledge. Mainly these were due to differing attitudes and behaviours which are entirely expected in an intercultural environment such as this. The topics below represent the most prominent instances encountered and some of the solutions found to address these differences.

Coaching in culture of dependency and authoritative rule

Cameroon is often mentioned as a country where the culture takes many turns towards dependency – a prevailing culture that calls for solutions and initiatives to come from the outside. Whereas this may not be true of all individuals and organizations, it is a prevailing obstacle to instilling a coaching culture that demands self-management and self-initiative, and in promoting development in general. In Cameroon, authority and status are very important and social roles strictly observed and solutions, initiatives and directives are seen as generated from above. As such, to break free and suggest self-direction, instead of the normal authoritative and dictatorial approach, is a significant change to promote.

The CLC principles around building relationships and trust requires that there be a certain amount of equality. It is clear from the discussions with the participants that this was understood in principle, but through observation there remains evidence that co-creation will require a deeper change in even the participants themselves. The Social Identity Map, for example, is a good tool to start the process of understanding differences. Additional tools to engage participants in seeing how they can more fully enter the coach's role without judgement or agenda, and aim towards co-creation, would need to be utilized in similar cultural contexts.

Furthermore, activities that would engage the participants in understanding and developing strategies on how they can prepare their clients to own the agenda (which traditionally here would normally fall to the person of highest standing) would be beneficial. The concepts are understood in principle and even appear to be desired tools for change, but are difficult to enact as they contradict cultural norms. It is important to note that in Cameroonian schools, children are not called upon to do much creative thinking. Rote-learning is emphasized in schools from an early age and therefore, as teenagers and adults, co-creation is much more difficult to accept and engage in.

Coaching in a blame culture

Experience and observation has shown that there is a fundamental difference exists between Western and Cameroonian understanding of giving positive or constructive feedback in general. Most Cameroonians are not familiar, in a professional/work setting, with performance evaluations or with the strategic use of appreciative inquiry as a feedback mechanism. Feedback is confused with the reporting of events, assigning blame and is generally done in what would - from a Western perspective – be seen as a confrontational way, usually by an authoritative figure. Feedback from the bottom of the reporting chain to upper echelons is virtually unheard of and might be considered a direct challenge to authority.

Because it is so fundamentally misunderstood, and that the idea of “feedback as a gift” isn't familiar, the entire CLC section on feedback needed to be handled very differently than described in the toolkit. The Situation-Behaviour-Impact model, in fact, was difficult for participants to use effectively. Participants had difficulty understanding that feedback should be given to the person involved rather than reporting on a social problem in the community for which the recipient has little or no control over. Additionally, the “impact” was confused as impact to the outside world rather than on the speaker. Although discussions were held about the negative impact of using statement such as “you always”, “you never”, “your problem is”, participants struggled with the use of language that was more disarming, non-confrontational or in which blame was not assigned.

Extra time was allotted for this section and several role-plays took place, yet the assignment of blame and confrontational language was very difficult to break. The self-assessments reflected participants' comfort in giving feedback, yet this comfort did not reflect the principles of CLC. More individual

coaching on this topic would likely have a deeper effect and a lasting behaviour change as it could address each participant's beliefs, rather than as a group culture.

Body language and eye contact

Being deferential to an elder or a person of higher social standing is important in Cameroonian culture. It is not unusual for younger people or women to avoid eye contact with anyone they feel are of higher status. Therefore, even in practice sessions during the workshops, some participants displayed this differential body language with each other depending on their social status or boss/employee relations. No disrespect was intended and there was no lack of presence or focus as a result.



It would be important in future projects to seek to understand local body language norms and its meaning so that adjustments can be made to how to teach presence. This could be done by advocating an alternative to eye contact that would demonstrate presence and engagement and create the space for effective coaching. This is also likely to change from country to country, or, as in the case of Cameroon, from region to region.

“Foreign concepts” – visioning

In the follow-up workshop, participants spoke about the difficulties of working with people towards a vision. They explained that this is not a concept generally observed in Cameroonian culture – people are not often asked for their vision, nor are students, for instance, instilled with the concept for the building of their own future. Not wishing to risk delving into stereotypes and generalities, further clarifications on this subject were requested and discussed. This led to intensive discussions about the need for cultural change in order to create a safe space to speak about visioning.

Participants explained that, in Cameroon, “teachers do not have a vision for what they want for their own future, so they cannot teach children to have one. Children are not normally asked what they want to be when they grow up, so they do not know what having a vision could do to their goal setting for the future.” The discussion led to participants talking about the need to change the prevailing culture to accept visioning more fully.

This discussion explained, in part, the hesitancy displayed by participants to go out of their own comfort zone in exercises dealing with introspection and, especially, their “Future Self”. Unlike in the case of the elements of feedback, where the training could not as easily break the cultural barrier, the concept of visioning was easily and enthusiastically adopted. Participants expressed a wish to promote the CLC tools to other groups, teachers, students – where ever it may lead to a social change.

The openness of the discussion at the follow-up workshop – based on the participant's own experiences – was the only indicator that there was a cultural difference in the first place. However, it was also the forum where the need for change and commitment to greater usage of this aspect of the CLC was expressed.

Sustainability Plans

The main challenge for IDF going forward will be to find ways to introduce and maintain a culture of coaching within its programs. While the participants demonstrated a desire to continue and sustain their coaching skills in various aspects of their lives, it remains that, as an organization, the desire to continue building skills will require leadership on the part of the participants.

Although a simplified action plan to this effect was done at the end of the follow-up workshop, it will not be sufficient on its own to ensure sustainability of the development of a coaching culture if the key proponents of it are not leading the way. Sustainability of use will require a “champion” to keep the momentum and passion at the forefront. Had additional time been available Time permitting at the follow-up workshop, this point would have been more greatly emphasized.



On a self-sustainability level, indications are that the training had a significant effect on the participants and has led to positive changes in behaviour and approached in work and personal settings. Participants spoke about wanting to continue in this vein.

Having access to further training tools or opportunities to increase knowledge would also help build sustainability. However, this should not come without a significant investment on the part of the organization – whether monetary or as in-kind contributions – so as to reduce the level of dependency on outside agents and create increased ownership.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided to contribute to discussions on enhancing Coaching the Global Village’s overseas presence and to advance its mission of empowering communities to use coaching techniques in development.

Promotion of Coaching the Global Village

It was necessary in the course of the project to describe and define “Coaching the Global Village” and the Creative Leadership Conversation model as the participants were fundamentally unfamiliar with it. In addition, although the logo for Coaching the Global Village appeared on the Participant’s Manual and on the various other forms and was mentioned repeatedly throughout the project, the organization did not fully stand out in the participants’ eyes.

Ideally, participants should be able to leave the training and recommend it to others – individuals, organizations, stakeholders - by speaking about Coaching the Global Village. In the IDF project, this may be confused with the identity of the facilitator and, by extension, even the facilitator’s normal umbrella organization (i.e. VSO).

It would therefore be appropriate to continue to build and enhance the image of Coaching the Global Village in terms of promotion and branding. Tools that would express Coaching the Global Villages’ brand promise (mission, vision, personality) could include a standard PowerPoint presentations or a short video that puts a face to the organization, what it offers, and what that represents to its partners in communities around the world. Demonstrating this brand promise in this way would go a long way in establishing a lasting presence in the minds of the participants. This is something they can speak to above and beyond the training received.

While promotional materials like pens, hats, and bags would be quite cumbersome to transport to remote training sites along with workshop materials, other options could include decals (stickers) that can be affixed to notebooks purchased onsite. This would be cost effective and easy to transport.

Other materials such as tips cards should reflect the branding of Coaching the Global Village as well, therefore enhancing the visual presence of the organization during and after the projects take place.

These are a great addition to the toolkit and also have the added value of being something “left behind” which can serve as a reminder of the concepts and the organization.

A continued and sustained connection with the trained organizations also functions as a means to promote the brand. This type of ongoing low-key but effective relationship management also provides access to “success stories from the field” which can be used in promotion and ongoing reputation building. There is no doubt that this approach would be welcomed by IDF.

Adaptation to CLC model

The CLC model for the large part is quite universal in methodology and delivery. However, space must be retained within the toolkit for adaptation to the local cultural context. This might include alternative activities to address differences in cultures and facilitator notes on potential intercultural flags to be aware of. In the context of Cameroon, for example, this would include:

Intercultural

Many examples were provided under “lessons learned” about adaptations made to fit the local context. It would be advisable for future projects where the facilitator does not possess significant cultural proficiency to find a cultural interpreter – someone who can preview the materials and activities and offer advice, identify potential pitfalls and highlight areas needing adaptation.

Literacy

Depending on the type of participants in the CLC training, there is likely to be variations on the level of literacy of the participants (see targeting below). In cases of low-literacy or in groups with varying literacy levels, greater use of visual tools would be recommended. Handouts and manuals may not be as effective as experiential learning, and therefore an even greater number of non-literacy-based activities may need to be employed.

Language

Effective cross-cultural proficiency dictates that the use of language in communication be recognized and adapted so as to ensure that what is said is also what is understood. CLC materials shared with the participants may be more effective with reduced “coaching lingo” – i.e. with greater use of simple language. This is also quite helpful in situations where the information has to be translated to another language or if the use of an interpreter is necessary.

Participant Targeting and Engagement



The model for Coaching the Global Village is to bring coaching to communities around the world as a tool for sustainable social change. This would include community-based organizations, community volunteers and relay workers, etc. Therefore, this suggests making the target participants from “the base” or “grassroots”. This, however, would increase the likelihood of having varying degrees of skills levels and language/dialect differences.

People working or volunteering with grassroots organizations can significantly benefit from developing coaching and leadership skills. One way to effectively

target participants and demonstrate the potential value to them, is to address not only the benefits of the coaching approach but of the transferability of these skills to other areas of their lives (church groups, youth mentoring, community support groups, etc). Keeping the activities and exercises relevant to the targeted participants’ lives would further ensure their engagement in the learning. So both in targeting participants and engaging them in the session, it would be recommended to keep the knowledge and skills building timely and relevant to their activities. Adapting certain activities and exercises to demonstrate transferability would be recommended whenever possible in order to increase retention and adoption of the tools.

Further Opportunities

One of the fears expressed by IDF has been that, with the project completed, the organization will be “dropped”. Indeed, this is common of many projects undertaken in Cameroon with outside assistance. Internal sustainability of coaching at IDF remains their responsibility, however there exists an opportunity to continue the partnership and engagement between Coaching the Global Village and IDF which would be beneficial in the long-term.

The first level of this would be by engaging in periodic correspondence that could, for example, include:

- Notices about other projects (creating a link between projects and developing a sense of community between the trained groups);
- Request for success stories from the field (for use in promotional materials and knowledge sharing); and
- Announcements about updated tools/toolkit, etc.
- Follow-up assessments (long-term monitoring and evaluation)

Additionally, exploring opportunities to provide further training or accompaniment of training of others, whether in person or as off-site technical assistance, would be a good opportunity for continued engagement.

In the development of the action plan aimed at developing a coaching culture within IDF, several actions were proposed. These included mainstreaming coaching in other programs/projects, training more staff and volunteers and developing monitoring and evaluations systems to track progress.

In going forward with these actions, IDF identified two main areas where they felt additional support may be needed in the future. These are:

- Monitoring and Evaluation by Coaching the Global Village of coaching progress being made at IDF (i.e. maintaining standards of practice)
- Capacity building through additional skills training, the integration of coaching in other activities (i.e. community health, local economic development, support of orphans and vulnerable children, etc), and in monitoring of coaching work within IDF (coaches’ performance).

In addition to considering these avenues of further support of IDF and continued development of the relationship, these also indicate opportunities for expansion of Coaching the Global Village’s activities with partners in the field.

Financials

The initial budget proposed was based on standards of other projects undertaken in Cameroon by other VSO volunteers. Once in the field, however, it became clear that some of the costs could be reduced and others would be unnecessary. These included:

- One less participant was included in the project
- Meals for the workshop were negotiated and provided at a reduced rate
- Less costly refreshments and coffee break options were provided
- The conference room fees were waived
- Materials costs were negotiated at a lower rate & reused in the follow-up workshop
- Printing of the cards was done at no cost by VSO (as contribution to project)
- Facilitator opted for home-stay instead of hotel and restaurants in most instances
- Travel costs to Bamenda for follow-up interviews were paid through another project
- Most correspondence was done through e-mail rather than telephone

Budget (Estimated vs Actual)

Items	Initial Training	Midway Site Visits	Follow-Up Training	Total Proposed Budget by Category	ACTUALS
Total Materials	67,900	0	35,500	103,400	23,300
Total Participant Costs	108,000	15,000	108,000	231,000	104,500
Total Meals and Refreshments	166,000	0	58,000	224,000	71,300
Total Logistical Needs	105,000	10,000	55,000	170,000	22,000
Total Facilitator Costs	80,000	100,000	50,000	230,000	30,600
Total Follow-up costs	15,000	0	35,000	50,000	30,000
Training Administration					169,500
Total				1,008,400	451,200

	FCFA	USD (approximate)
Budget Proposed	1,008,400	\$ 1,695.00
Actual Costs in Franc CFA	451,200	\$ 960.00
Budget – Actual (in FCFA)	557,200	
Budget - Actual (in USD)		\$ 735.00

Exchange rate at 1 USD = 470 FCFA

Appendix: Self Assessment Questionnaire

Attached are the questions presented in the pre- and post-training self-assessments.

	1 Strongly Agree	2	3	4 Neither agree or disagree	5	6	7 Strongly Disagree
I feel like a leader in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have the tools to help others feel like leaders in their lives or communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel motivated in my work in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I help motivate others to support themselves in their lives or their community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can help people plan how to achieve their goal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to empower community members to come up with their own solutions to problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe I have answers to people's problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In a conversation with someone, I do...

Almost all of the talking 1	Most of the talking 2	Equal amount of the talking 3	Less of the talking 4	Almost none of the talking 5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

When someone asks me what to do, I tell them exactly what I think they should do...

100% of the time 1	75% of the time 2	50% of the time 3	25% of the time 4	0% of the time 5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much do you know about coaching approaches?

I have never heard of coaching	I have heard of coaching	I know some ways coaching works	I know many ways coaching works	I know coaching very well
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How comfortable are you challenging other people to think differently?

Not at all comfortable			Somewhat comfortable			Very comfortable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How comfortable are you giving feedback to people on their ideas or decisions?

Not at all comfortable			Somewhat comfortable			Very comfortable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>