

ONLINE TRAINING FOR TEACHER IN NEPAL

Information sheet

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CONTEXT

Distance or Virtual learning is a good alternative or addition to physical trainings for teachers: it can help reaching more of them, outside of class time, among other interests. But it cannot be organized in the same format as a physical training: there are many specificities, some limitations and also some new options coming with the distance. Teachers also need to be prepared to make the most of this new way of learning. This makes it a powerful tool to keep at hand to face crisis situation, but also to add to usual training actions.

***Bikalpa** (Nepal) is used to organizing a teachers' training twice a year, on various topics. In September 2020, during Covid-19 pandemic, they have organized a first Virtual Training on the topic of "Learners autonomy", reaching no less than 110 teachers – a much larger number than when they organize in situe trainings.*

The following steps and advices are related to a virtual training with a big group of participants, but most of them are also useful for sessions with less participants. With large groups, **Bikalpa** has adopted specific methods, such as creating smaller communication groups, and limiting question/answer during the online sessions.



What is important to organize a virtual teachers' training

- 01 Choose the right format;
- 02 Prepare the participants and communicate well;
- 03 Organize everything in details;
- 04 Keep the attention of participants during the session;
- 05 Connect with the situations teachers face everyday;
- 06 Answer participants questions and allow them to give feedback.

Resources mobilized

- 01 5 people for each session to avoid technical problems and communicate with the participants;
- 02 Adapted visual supports (such as PowerPoints) to share during sessions;
- 03 Viber groups to communicate with participants before, during and after the sessions;
- 04 A facilitator in charge of each 50 people group to deal with logistics, reroute questions, and more generally help the participants to participate to the sessions.

Steps

Choose the right format

It is not the same thing to spend an entire day in a room with people, or an entire day in front of a computer or smartphone screen. That is why the format of a teachers' virtual class is different than the one of physical ones. Virtual classes can be organized on several shorter sessions rather than a single long one. This can be handled by participants because they do not need to take time to move to a site. It will facilitate attention. It can also be organized at times where participants are most free, including outside of teaching times.

To choose the format, **Bikalpa** has communicated with the teachers, to understand what time and days would be more suitable for them – being careful not to overlap with a period of exams or a holiday. They have decided to create a “garland format”, which means that instead of giving a one day training at once, they have created 4 shorter training sessions, each one on a different subtopic, but related to the other ones.



Day 2: 17th September, 2020 - EVENING

(Learners Autonomy in the class - Project work in learning)

S.No	Time	Activity	Responsible	Remarks
1.	5:00 p.m.	Playing photos and music	Technical team	
2.	5:00 p.m.	Welcoming and Recap/ reflection	Kalpna Ghale	
3.	5: 15 p.m.	Self-directed learning -Learners Ladder	Stella Tamang	
4.	5: 45 p.m.	Introducing Project Work in Learning	Sanu Amatya	
5.	6:15 p.m.	Break	-	
6.	6:20 p.m.	Understanding Project work in	Stella Tamang	

An example of schedule/cue sheet for Bikalpa's first Virtual Teachers' Training in September 2020.

Prepare the participants and communicate

Distance training is not yet a habit for every teacher. Participants can face different problems, going from technical ones to organization ones (misunderstanding of the schedule...) or comprehension. As they are not with the instructor to solve them, good preparation and good communication is crucial to allow them to follow sessions in good conditions.

Bikalpa has used two strategies to ensure that every teacher would be able to follow sessions

01 They have created Viber groups (equivalent of Whatsapp) including up to 50 teachers and facilitated by a teacher facilitator ; these groups were a good way to communicate the links for the sessions, gather attempts, and help solving various problems before and during the session;

02 They have organized a “preliminary session” the day before the training. This session was an opportunity for the teachers to discover the platform, receive instructions on how to participate, understand the rules and limitations for participation... It allows them to focus completely on the content as soon as the training really begins.

With these two strategies, participants were ready to participate to the 4 sessions without being discouraged after the first problems and the sessions were smoother.

Organize everything

Unlike physical training, which gives more room to adaptation/ improvisation, virtual training requires a more structured approach, with very good control over the timing, materials, and participation. This helps anticipating and avoiding major risks of virtual training, which include:

- **Avoiding technical problems leading to interrupt the session**

Bikalpa has avoided most of technical risks, such as power or connection problems, by co-hosting zoom sessions: Bikalpa team was hosting the session from the office, while the instructor (resource person) was co-hosting from their own house or office. Course materials had been provided to Bikalpa before the session. That way, when one of the two hosts lost connection, the other one was able to continue.

- **Avoiding timing problems resulting to loss of attention, or inability to deliver the contents**

The sessions organized by Bikalpa gathered more than a hundred teachers. And each session covered a specific topic. As it was impossible to ensure everyone’s participation and difficult to organize working groups without creating chaos, each question/answer time was delimited precisely. Participation was possible by tchat during sessions, even though some of the questions or comments were managed only after having been sent to the trainer after the end of the session.

- **Avoiding technical stress for the instructors who can focus on their course**

During the sessions, 5 people were mobilized in Bikalpa to support the session: the director (supervising), manager (facilitating), a communication officer for technical aspects, and two facilitators to manage the chat, communicate with teachers, mute and unmute participants... This number might look important but was necessary to ensure smooth sessions for all the participants.

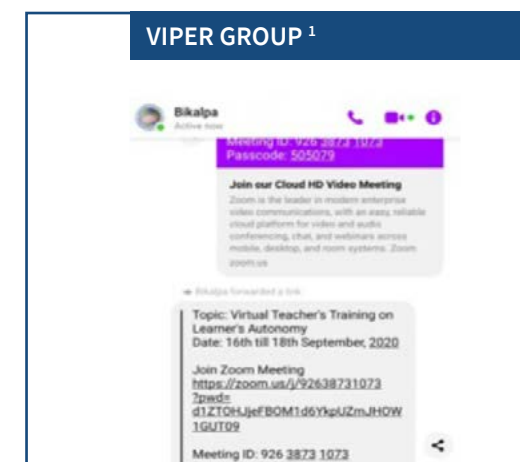
Keep the attention of participants during the session

A virtual session for teachers increases the risk that participants do not keep attention during the training, or lose interest after the first session/the first problem. The instructor has very little way to identify a participant that is losing attention and interactions, including non-verbal, are limited.

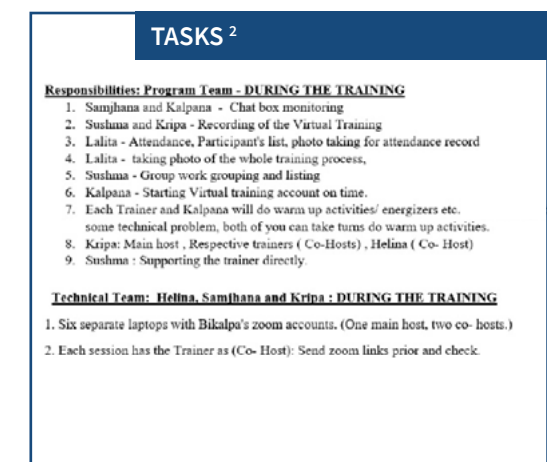
That is why it is important to imagine a dynamic session that will not only provide contents, by varied course materials and facilitation.

Bikalpa has chosen 4 different instructors for the 4 sessions, to keep the interest of participants. Each trainer had access to the content of the other ones to be able to make connections. During each session, Bikalpa animated a warm-up at the beginning (energizer with hand gestures, music, photos of the previous session...) and a few interludes (music, video,...) to alternate with the course.

The course itself was divided into small parts, alternating lecture and questions/answers. And the course material was a combination of written slides, pictures, videos...



1 - A Viber group to communicate with participants.



2- An example of task distribution within the team.

Connect with the situation teachers face everyday

When they come to a training, teachers have likely already faced situations where they had to deal with the topic of the class (in the case of **Bikalpa**: “learners’ autonomy”). Some of them have, in her own way, looked for solutions to address the situation. That is what we call experience.

Adult training is a lot about how you take in consideration the experience of participants and build new knowledges and practices based on that. But distance learning can make this relation between the trainer and the participants less fluent, especially in big groups where it is impossible to give everyone a space to speak during a session.

Bikalpa has insisted that the instructors refer to concrete examples met by teachers to illustrate each concept they wanted to transfer to the group. Since it was not easily possible to let the participants talk about their own experience during a session (because of potential connection problems, number of participants, limited time...), they used this way to refer to the “reality” of the participants to help them understand how each concept could be useful and used in their daily work, and how it was relevant to their situation. Instructors have chosen these examples from their own experience, as they also work with children.

Answer questions and allow feedback of the participants to keep them involved

As time is limited and they cannot have chitchatting with participants or instructor right after the session, it is important that participants can give some feedback and ask unanswered questions during the session (without disturbing it) or after the session.

This gives feedback to instructors (who can adjust their contents) and contributes in the involvement of participants, without generating too many questions during the session, which could result in losing some participants.

Bikalpa has used different ways to get feedback and questions from participants. During the session, the tchat was used to gather questions – in some cases, the participant was allowed to use their microphone to ask or comment. All the questions that were not answered during the session were then collected, sorted by **Bikalpa**, and sent to the appropriate instructor (depending on the topic they covered). On top of that, a little time was dedicated to get feedback from the participants after each session, in order to improve the next one – where teachers could express exactly what they expected from the next session.

Why is it interesting?

Organizing virtual trainings for teachers is interesting even out of crisis period:

- It allows more teachers to participate in the trainings, without missing class if teachers are available;
- It helps organization such as **Bikalpa** to increase their visibility, reaching new schools;
- It develops new, stronger and more direct communication canals between the organization and the teachers/principals after the session, as they use technologies as Viber or Whatsapp;
- It gives the opportunity to organize a training differently, with smaller sessions.

Attention points

- Do not underestimate administrative problems, such as giving the information to all participants, organize subscriptions;
- Do not forget to have test or preliminary session before the core of the training;
- Anticipate technical problems that WILL happen (connection, material problem...) and send/upload course material in advance on several computers;
- Mobilize enough staff to facilitate sessions;
- Make the participants feel part of the process through communication, feedback before and after sessions;
- Allow constructive criticism to improve sessions and adapt to the participants;
- Do not forget to keep everything coherent and make links between sessions – **Bikalpa** organized a short wrap up at the end of the last session, in order to better link all the topics.

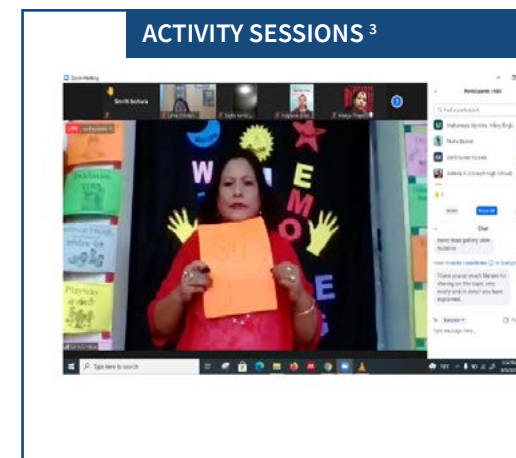
Alternative

To avoid technical problems related to unstable and weak internet connection, it is also possible to plan asynchronous training instead of video conference, that requires every participant to have an internet access at the same moment.

Asynchronous trainings offer an alternative to some logistical and technical problems that **Bikalpa** faced to organize online synchronous training sessions with a big group of participants. This solution has been used by other members of **PARTAGE RISE** such as INEPE. It gives more flexibility to the learners to organize their time.

In return, asynchronous learning affects the relation and the way participants learn. Feedback is less fast and it is sometimes harder (but not impossible) to create a community of learners.

In any case (asynchronous or synchronous), organizations have to weigh advantages and disadvantages in regard of their public, their goals and their capacities and can mix the two approaches.



3 - Varied and in motion activities help illustrating and energize each session.

4 - An example of slides presented as visual material to talk about Self Learning activities.

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French association of international solidarity created in 1973

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