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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present chapter is twofold: (1) to investigate the characteristics of the FAO-sponsored EFTM communication network and its constituent members, and (2) to comment on the importance of these communication network patterns in the effectiveness of the EFTM activities.

1.1 Inspiration for this study

The present chapter is radically different in scope from the other chapters of this book, and the story of its inspiration is equally unusual and perhaps worth telling. The inspiration for investigating the characteristics of EFTM network members came to author Singhal at about 4 a.m. on a Thursday morning in the last week of August 1996 in the Hotel Grace, Beijing, China, where the third EFTM network meeting was under way. This meeting was Singhal's first exposure to the EFTM network. Having spent three days with the EFTM network (Monday to Wednesday), Singhal was struck by the formal-informal, visible-invisible communication network patterns among EFTM members. While they came from a dozen different countries², and represented a diversity of disciplines and occupations, it appeared that the lives of many members had crossed and run contiguous to the lives of other network members.

Intrigued by the role these seemingly innocuous communication network patterns can play in organizing, maintaining, and sustaining development initiatives (such as EFTM) and encouraged by Dr Ronny Adhikarya, the founder of FAO's EFTM network, the author created in the early hours of that Thursday morning a small survey instrument, which was then refined, pretested and administered to the EFTM network members a few hours later. The method of conducting the present investigation was based on the "firehouse" tradition of conducting research, that is, without much prior thought and planning, and we acknowledge the limitations of this research strategy. Nevertheless, we hope our modest effort here is useful in understanding the role of network relationships in organizing development and social change.

1.2 Communication network and structure

A communication network consists of interconnected individuals who are linked by patterned flows of information (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981). The study of networks helps illuminate communication structure, the differentiated elements that can be recognized in a system (Rogers,

1995). For instance, the communication structure of a network can reveal which individuals are more or less influential in the system. This communication structure is usually so complex that even in a very small system of individuals, the members of it do not completely understand the communication structure of which they are a part (Rogers, 1995, p. 308). In the next sections, we will be illuminating several characteristics of the EFTM communication network structure. The kind of data we collected allows us to focus more on the characteristics of the EFTM network structure, as opposed to analysing communication flows between network members, as is done in the more traditional communication network studies.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our investigation of the characteristics of the EFTM network structure was guided by several research questions:

1. What is the degree of association among EFTM network members? How long have EFTM network members known each other prior to the formation of the network?
2. To what extent do the network patterns of EFTM network members overlap with members of other FAO-supported networks? To what extent do members of the EFTM network belong to other FAO-supported networks?
3. To what extent do EFTM network members have an opportunity to renew their relationship with each other? To what extent have EFTM network members met each other outside of EFTM meetings?
4. How do EFTM network members rate the strength of their professional relationship with other members of the network?
5. How do EFTM network members rate the strength of their personal relationship with other members of the network? To what extent do EFTM network members share their personal matters with other members of the network?
6. What are some of the "invisible", informal communication network patterns among the members of the EFTM network?
7. What meanings do EFTM network members ascribe to their involvement and participation in the network? How has involvement in the EFTM network benefited the members professionally and personally?

3. METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

Our method and data collection procedures included: (1) a structured survey of EFTM network members, (2) informal conversations by author Singhal with EFTM network members about their relationship with other network members, and (3) personal, participatory observations of author Singhal, who is a member of the EFTM network. Prior to administering the survey, a list of EFTM members was compiled by the author with the help of Dr Romy Adhikarya. The survey was administered to EFTM network members in Beijing, in August 1996, where 17 of the 25 EFTM network members were present. The survey was mailed to the remaining eight participants of which four completed the survey by mail. Our present analysis is based on the responses of the 21 completed surveys.³

In aggregate, EFTM members displayed a high degree of association with each other. Many network members have known each other for many years. Table 1 displays the total length of association that each EFTM member reported with all other network members. Ronny Adhikarya, Adhikarya has known the other 20 EFTM network members is 165 years, with a median length of association with each network member spanning nine years, and a mean length of association of 8.25 years (Table 1). Adhikarya has known two members, Dr Sulaiman Yassin and Dr Soedradjat Martaanidjaja for over 22 years, and another eight members for over ten years. Considering that the EFTM network was officially constituted with the first meeting in Kuala Lumpur in June 1994 (only two years prior to our data collection), most network members were known to Adhikarya for a long period of time before he introduced them to the network. Obviously, these were able individuals, who had earned Adhikarya's confidence.

Research question 1 asked: What is the degree of association between EFTM network members? How long have EFTM network members known each other, prior to the formation of the network?

4.1 Association with network members

4. RESULTS

Our method was not free of limitations. As mentioned earlier, our data collection strategy was a "firehouse" strategy to capitalize on the presence of 17 of the 25 EFTM network members in Beijing, 1996, and hence did not have the benefit of detailed planning and foresight. Another limitation revolves around the issue of recall. Several members found it difficult to recall the exact year when they first met other network members and also how many times they had met them previously in international meetings. Indeed, certain EFTM network members had known each other for over 23 years and had met over 20 times. To overcome this problem, respondents were encouraged to provide a range in case they were unsure of when they had met or how many times they had met, and the lower value was included in the analysis to err on the safe side. So, if anything, our data represent a somewhat diluted measure of the actual strength of the EFTM network characteristics.

In the unstructured part, respondents were asked to answer two questions: (1) What does participation in the EFTM network mean to you and how has it benefited you professionally and personally? and (2) What are some "invisible" relationships between you and other network members which may not have been tapped by the structured part of the survey instrument? For instance, the respondent may have gone to graduate school with other respondents (as was indeed the case with several participants), or shared a common mentor and so on. Most past investigations of communication network structures have not usually incorporated such open-ended questions, which, as we will show later in the chapter, can provide rich insights about the network structure.

The survey questionnaire was divided into a structured and an unstructured part. In the structured part, participants reported on the EFTM meetings they had previously attended and listed the other FAO-supported networks to which they belonged. Each respondent answered six questions about their relationship with other network members, including when they first met; the total number of times they had met; their rating of the strength of their professional relationship; their rating of the strength of their personal relationship; whether or not they had talked about personal matters.

EFTM Network Members	Σ Length of Association with other EFTM Members (In Years)	Mean Length of Association with an EFTM Member (In Years)
Romy Adhikarya	165	8.25
Chye-Hean Teoh	131	6.55
Sulaiman Yassin	123	6.15
A. Saifian Mohd. Noor	99	4.95
Ho Nai Kin	93	4.65
Abdul Halim	88	4.40
Soedrajat Martamidjaja	73	3.65
Tim Wentling	63	3.15
Wiboon Boonyatharokul	62	3.10
Mariam Rikhana (Ms.)	55	2.75
Joseph Mbindyo	52	2.60
Li Xiaoyun	45	2.25
Alfredo de Torres	41	2.05
Narinchai Patanapongsas	35	1.75
Nicanor Austracio	33	1.65
Tomas A. Cabuenos	21	1.05
E. S. Malindi	20	1.00
Chen Jianhua	17	0.85
B. P. Bimoli	14	0.70
Efren Oro	14	0.70
Arvind Singhal	13	0.65

Mean of Means = 3 years

Table 1: The high degree of association between EFTM network members

The overlapping involvement of EFTM network members in other previously-initiated FAO-supported networks was greatly beneficial to the conduct of EFTM activities. The fact that all four networks were initiated by Dr Ronny Adhikarya, and led by him, provided an informal cohesive structure to the conduct of EFTM activities. Members knew each other, were familiar with each other's ability and skills, and felt they were part of a larger purpose and team. Such an overlapping network structure created trust, support, efficiency and transparency in EFTM activities (and in the other three FAO-supported programmes).

To what extent did members of the EFTM network belong to other FAO-supported networks? Figure 1 shows that many EFTM members also belonged to other FAO-supported networks. Of the 21 members of the EFTM network who responded to our survey, five belonged to all four networks (EFTM, PFTM, SEC, and Microcomputers), 11 belonged to three, three belonged to two and only two members belonged to just the EFTM network. So more than 90 percent of the EFTM network members (19 out of 21) belonged to at least one additional FAO-supported network. In this sense, EFTM network members display a high degree of communication proximity, defined as the degree to which two linked individuals in a network have personal communication networks that overlap (Rogers, 1995, p. 308).

Dr Ronny Adhikarya had, in previous years, launched and consolidated at least three other networks of individuals and institutions, who implemented specific FAO-supported initiatives in several developing countries. Each of these networks, akin to the EFTM network, furthered activities in the realm of agricultural extension, education, and training, focusing on a particular topical activity. These included: (1) the PFTM network, which was involved in developing population education training modules for use by agricultural extension workers in various countries; (2) the Strategic Extension Campaign (SEC) network, which developed and implemented strategic agricultural extension campaigns in various developing countries; (3) the Microcomputers network, which developed and implemented programmatic efforts directed at using microcomputers in agricultural extension, education and training in various developing countries.

Research question 2 asked: To what extent do the network patterns of EFTM network members overlap with members of other FAO-supported networks?

4.2 Overlapping networks

In essence, many EFTM network members had been associated with each other for a considerable period of time. The founder of the network, Dr Ronny Adhikarya, knew the EFTM network members several years in advance of launching the EFTM initiative. Adhikarya carefully selected key "known" individuals and institutions, whom he knew were able, trustworthy, collegial, and uniquely placed to deliver the goods. Clearly, the careful selection of network members and the relatively high degree of familiarity among them, has helped contribute to the effectiveness of the EFTM initiative.

The network member who reported the lowest degree of association with other EFTM members was the author (see Table 1), whose involvement with the network only began with the third EFTM meeting in Beijing in August 1996, when the present data were collected. Even so, Singhal had met 12 of the other 20 EFTM members prior to arriving in Beijing through his involvement in other FAO-supported networks.

EFTM Network Members	Σ Frequency of Renewing Relationships With Other EFTM Members (In Times)	Mean Frequency of Renewing a Relationship With an EFTM Member (In Times)
Ronny Adhikarya	216	10.80
A. Saftian Mohd. Noor	199	9.95
Wiboon Boonyatharoku	169	8.45
Chye-Hean Teoh	155	7.75
Sulaiman Yassin	128	6.40
Tim Wentling	116	5.80
Abdul Halim	111	5.55
Mariam Rikhana (Ms.)	92	4.60
Soedradjat Martamidjaja	92	4.60
Alfred de Torres	89	4.45
Nicanor Austracio	72	3.60
Li Xiaoyun	62	3.10
Ho Nai Kin	57	2.85
Joseph Mbindyo	52	2.60
Tomas A. Cabuenos	50	2.50
Narinchai Patanpongsa	49	2.45
B. P. Bimoli	42	2.10
Chen Jianhua	40	2.00
Arvind Singhal	33	1.65
Efren Oro	33	1.65
E. S. Malindi	20	1.00

Mean of Means=4.5 Times

Table 2: The high frequency of relationship renewal among EFTM network members.

Table 3: Number of EFTM meetings attended by each network member

EFTM Network Members	Number of EFTM Meetings Attended* (Maximum = 3)
Romy Adhikarya	3
Alfredo de Torres	3
Sulaiman Yassin	3
Abdul Halim	3
Tim Wenting	3
Chye-Hean Teoh	3
Mariam Rikhana (Ms.)	3
Wiboon Boonyatharokul	3
Li Xiaoyun	3
Efren Oro	2
Soedradjat Martaanidjaja	2
B. P. Bimoli	2
Chen Jianhua	2
Nicanor Austracio	1
Arvind Singhal	1
Joseph Mbindyo	1
Ho Nai Kin	1
Narinchai Patanpongssa	1
A. Saffian Mohd. Noor	1
Tomas A. Cabuenos	1
E. S. Malindi	1
	Mean=2.05

Note: *Meetings in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (1994); Bali, Indonesia (1995); Beijing, China, (1996).

The mean score on the strength of professional relationships reported by all EFTM network members was 2.9 (with a score of 2.5 average), showing that once again, in aggregate terms, EFTM network members perceived their professional relations as being strong. Relatively new network members, Mr Bimoli from Nepal and Mr Chen Jianhua from China, whose work with respect to EFTM was based mostly in their home countries, perceived the overall strength of their professional relationships with other members as being relatively weak. In sum, the key EFTM network members who were responsible for initiating, maintaining, sustaining and evaluating EFTM activities, perceived their professional relationships with other EFTM network members as being very strong, a key factor in moving the EFTM agenda forward at a brisk pace.

One of the indicators of an effective network, it may be argued, is the presence of strong professional relationships among network members. EFTM network members indicated on a scale of one to five the perceived strength of their professional relationship with other network members. Dr Tim Wentling, Professor of Human Resource Education at the University of Illinois and an expert in the design of training curriculum and implementation, perceived his relationship with other EFTM network members as the strongest (Table 4), followed by Dr Romy Adhikarya. This is not surprising given that Dr Wentling worked very closely with Dr Romy Adhikarya in designing, monitoring and evaluating the EFTM initiatives that were launched in six developing countries.

Research question no. 4 asked: How do EFTM network members rate the strength of their professional relationship with other members of the network?

4.4 Strong professional ties

In essence, not only had EFTM members known each other for a long time, they knew each other well by virtue of having met several times previously in other international fora. Many of these international fora included meetings or activities of the three other FAO-supported networks discussed previously. Clearly, such opportunities to renew relationships among network individuals promotes professional affiliations, personal friendships and a common vision that is crucial for the organization of effective development.

Table 3 lists the number of EFTM meetings attended by each EFTM network member. A modest but significant correlation was observed between the number of times EFTM network members renewed their relationship with each other and their degree of participation in the three EFTM meetings (Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.496, $p > .01$). Also, as expected, a strong correlation was observed between the length of association among EFTM network members and the number of times they renewed their relationship with each other (Pearson correlation coefficient 0.833, $p < .01$).

Perceived Strength of Professional Relationship with other EFTM Network Members (On A Scale of 1 to 5)	Mean Strength of Professional Relationship = 2.9
EFTM Network Members	
Tim Wentling	4.75
Romy Adhikarya	4.35
Chye-Hean Teoh	3.80
Wiboon Boonyatharakul	3.80
Alfredo de Torres	3.50
Elfren Oro	3.35
Mariam Rikhana (Ms.)	3.35
Sulaiman Yassin	3.10
Narinchai Patanpongssa	3.05
Tomas A. Cabuenos	3.05
Arvind Singhal	2.95
E. S. Malindi	2.90
A. Saffian Mohd. Noor	2.70
Li Xiaoyun	2.55
Abdul Halim	2.45
Ho Nai Kin	2.35
Soedrajat Martaadjaja	2.10
Nicanor Austracio	1.95
Joseph Mbindyo	1.85
B. P. Bimoli	1.60
Chen Jianhua	1.30

Table 4: The perceived strength of professional relationships among EFTM

Table 5: The perceived strength of personal relationships among EFTM network members.

EFTM Network Members	Perceived Strength of Personal Relationship with Other EFTM Network Members (On a Scale of 1 to 5)
Tim Wentling	4.25
Ronny Adhikarya	3.95
Wiboon Boonyatharokul	3.95
Chye-Hean Teoh	3.65
Mariam Rikhana (Ms.)	3.25
Alfredo de Torres	3.20
Efren Oro	3.05
E. S. Malindi	2.90
Narinchai Patanpongsa	2.85
Sulaiman Yassin	2.80
Tomas A. Cabuenos	2.75
Arvind Singhal	2.65
Joseph Mbindyo	2.55
A. Saffian Mohd. Noor	2.45
Abdul Halim	2.30
Li Xiaoyun	2.20
Nicanor Austracio	1.85
Soedradjat Martamidjaja	1.60
Ho Nai Kin	1.50
B. P. Bimoli	1.35
Chen Jianhua	1.15
Mean Strength of Personal Relationship =	2.9

4.5 Strong personal ties

Research question no. 5 asked: How do EFTM network members rate the strength of their personal relationship with other members of the network?

EFTM network members also rated on a scale of 1 to 5 the perceived strength of their personal relationship with other network members. The responses were similar to those provided in the previous section (Table 5). A very strong correlation was observed between the respondents' perceptions of the strength of their professional relationships with the strength of their personal relationships with other EFTM network members (Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.958, $p < .01$). Once again, the key principals Drs Tim Wentling and Ronny Adhikarya, perceived the strength of their relationships with other EFTM network members as being the strongest (Table 5); the mean score on the strength of personal relationship reported by all EFTM network members was 2.9 (with a score of 2.5 average), showing that once again, in aggregate terms, EFTM network members perceived their personal relationships as being generally strong. Relatively new network members, Mr Bimoli and Mr Chen Jianhua, perceived the overall strength of their personal relationships with other members as being relatively weak.

To what extent did EFTM network members share their personal matters with other members of the network? An additional index of personal closeness (ranging from 0 to 1) was created for each EFTM network member based on the degree to which they had shared personal matters with other members of the network. This index, perhaps more so than any other measure used in the study, is a function of network members' individual personalities and extrovert/introvert nature. However, despite its biases and slant, this measure yielded some interesting insights. The only woman member in the EFTM network, Ms Mariam Rikhana, who displayed strong overlapping network patterns with members of all the four FAO-supported networks (see Figure 1), scored the highest on this index of personal closeness (0.95), followed by Dr Ronny Adhikarya (0.80), (Table 6). Adhikarya visited the homes of ten EFTM network individuals (50 percent of all members), another measure of his personal closeness with the network members.

Clearly, strong personal relationships between key participants in a network exercise is a significant influence on the conduct of professional tasks. The strong personal relationships between key EFTM network members helped in the implementation and sustenance of this organizational initiative.

EFTM Network Members	Index of Personal Closeness (from 0 to 1)
Mariam Rikhana	0.95
Ronny Adhikarya	0.80
Joseph Mbindyo	0.70
Wiboon Boonyatharokul	0.70
Tomas A. Cabuenos	0.70
Chye-Hean Teoh	0.60
Arvind Singhal	0.55
Alfredo de Torres	0.45
E. S. Malindi	0.45
Sulaiman Yassin	0.40
Li Xiaoyun	0.40
Abdul Halim	0.35
Narinchai Patanapongsas	0.35
A. Saffian Mohd. Noor	0.35
Tim Wenling	0.25
Efren Oro	0.25
Nicanor Austracio	0.20
Chen Jianhua	0.15
Ho Nai Kim	0.10
Soedradjat Martandjaja	0.05
B. P. Bimoli	0.05
Mean Score for Personal Closeness = 0.42	

Table 6: Index of personal closeness among EFTM network members

4.6 Power of invisible networks

Research question no. 6 asked: What are some of the "invisible", informal communication network patterns among the members of the EFTM network?

In addition to the formal network characteristics of the EFTM network (described in the previous six sections), many invisible, informal network patterns characterized the existing relationships among EFTM network members. These informal network relationships usually exert a considerable influence on the interactional patterns of network members and impact organizational outcomes in ways that are often invisible yet important.

Consider the impact of the following invisible, informal relations between EFTM network members on the functioning of the EFTM network. Drs Sulaiman Yassin and Ronny Adhikarya attended graduate school at Cornell University in the United States in the early 1970s. Also, Dr. Yassin attended the same universities as Dr Chye-Hean Teoh for his undergraduate degree (at the University of Malaya in Malaysia) and Ph.D. degree (at Cornell University in the United States). Ho Nai Kin was also enrolled in the bachelors programme in Agricultural Science at the University of Malaya with Dr Teoh and Dr Yassin. Drs Ronny Adhikarya, Joseph Mbindyo and network member Dr Arvind Singhal had a common mentor in Professor Everett M. Rogers. Both Dr Adhikarya and Dr Mbindyo earned their doctoral degrees in communication at Stanford University in the early 1980s. Soon after, Dr Adhikarya worked on an FAO project in Bangladesh, where he worked closely with Dr Abdul Halim. Network members Saffian Mohd. Noor and Dr Chye-Hean Teoh were colleagues at an AET institution in Malaysia over a decade ago. Further, Saffian Mohd. Noor, Dr Soedratjat Maartaamidjaja, and Dr Ronny Adhikarya all spent time at the East-West Centre in Hawaii in the 1970s. Network members Dr Joseph Mbindyo and Dr Malindi had worked together previously in the Malawi PFTM project. Similarly Dr Tim Wentling had worked with Dr Naranchai Patanapongsa in Thailand and Dr Wentling served as Dr Malindi's doctoral advisor at the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign in the 1990s.

Several second or third order network relationships were also present. For instance, Dr Arvind Singhal and Dr Abdul Halim shared a common student advisee, although at different points in time, in different academic programmes and on different continents. Tomas Cabuenos of the Philippines knew Dr Chye-Hean Teoh's wife, who comes from the Philippines (both Dr Teoh and his wife are now Australian citizens).

We have only begun to describe the nature of these invisible, informal network patterns that characterize the relationship between the EFTM network members, and will go no further except to say that this network is clearly a very close, informal network of individuals whose professional associations, personal friendships and collegial ties intersect and overlap in unorthodox ways. Such informal, invisible network ties among professionals obviously contribute to a stronger, more effective network.

4.7 Meanings derived from network membership

Research question no. 7 asked: What meanings do EFTM members ascribe to their involvement and participation in the network? How has involvement in the EFTM network benefited the members professionally and personally?

Several EFTM members emphasized that participation in the network contributed to their professional development, enhancing their knowledge and skills base: "It has broadened my exposure,"

Our investigation points to the important role of professional/personal, formal/informal, and visible-invisible communication network patterns in initiating, implementing, and sustaining collaborating EFT initiatives. Members of the FAO-supported EFTM network knew each other well, and had several opportunities to renew their professional relationships, even prior to the official establishment of the network in 1994. This finding was especially notable in the case of Dr Romy

5. CONCLUSIONS

In sum, EFTM network members feel that participation in the network benefited them both in their professional work and at the personal level. Their skills, knowledge base and professional efficacy were boosted through their interaction and collaboration with other network members. In turn, such personal and professional enhancement contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the EFTM initiatives.

The most telling statement about the overall impact of the EFTM network came from Dr Romy Adhikaraya: "This network has greatly contributed to the advancement of training strategies, methodologies and the smooth implementation of collaborative activities." He further elaborated on the advantages that accrue from having a closely-knit network of capable individuals, working towards a common goal: "The network has facilitated the successful completion of impossible tasks due to the willingness of the network members to go the extra mile.

Several EFTM network members emphasized how participation in the EFTM network boosted their professional efficacy, enhancing their ability to launch new projects and take on bigger challenges. Dr Abdul Halim said: "I could develop EFTM modules for Bangladesh using Bangladesh people at low cost. I was able to motivate policy-makers and bureaucrats about the inclusion of EFT in agriculture extension and regular academic programmes in Bangladesh."

Some EFTM network members emphasized that the network represented an important source of new ideas: "I can now keep up with innovative trends and developments in extension activities," said Dr Sulaiman Yassin. Dr Soedradjat Martaaamidjaja noted: "The network has provided me with new information on educational and training opportunities available in other countries."

Many EFTM network members emphasized how participation in the network had bolstered their professional identity: "It has also helped me to work easily with professional personnel both nationally and internationally," said Dr Abdul Halim. Dr Alfredo de Torres noted that "participation in the network has contributed to my professional development and visibility among colleagues". Dr Sulaiman Yassin emphasized another important payoff of EFTM network participation: "My professional contacts have been enhanced." Saffian Mohd. Noor emphasized another kind of payoff: "It has taken me to many parts of the world."

Dr Tomas Cabuenos. Dr Sulaiman Yassin said: "It has helped me in updating my professional skills, knowledge, and efficiency." Mr. Bimoli echoed a similar sentiment: "It has helped in sharing ideas and experiences, which have guided me to perform my job well". Several members pointed to specific areas in which the network benefited them: "It has generated my interest in the field of communication," said Saffian Mohd. Noor. Dr Narinchai Patanaponsa said: "It has helped me find some good strategies in extension communication".

Adhikarya, who hand-picked other network members based on his prior knowledge of their abilities and skills to implement effective EFTM programmes. Further, 19 out of 21 EFTM network members belonged to one or more of the other three FAO-supported networks, which were also launched by Dr Ronny Adhikarya and, akin to the EFTM network, were focused on agriculture extension, education, and training activities. These overlapping networking patterns provided a synergy of purpose, vision and commitment for the EFTM network members. Moreover, key EFTM network members perceived their professional and personal relationships with other network members as being very strong; many members knew each other well enough to discuss personal matters on a regular basis.

Various invisible and informal network patterns were observed among the EFTM members in a communication structure so complex that despite the relatively small number of individuals in the EFTM network (N=21), members of the EFTM system did not completely understand the communication structure of which they were a part. For instance, several of the EFTM network members graduated from the same overseas-based universities, studied with the same mentors and worked with each other in different countries in different capacities at different points in time. These invisible and informal communication patterns, while fostering trust and credibility, form the backbone of effective collaboration.

It was notable that EFTM network members ascribed various positive and common semantic meanings to their involvement in the network, highlighting the professional and personal advantages that had accrued to them as network members. They were not just "satisfied" with their involvement in the network; rather they were "energized". Clearly, such energy and synergy bolstered the quality of collaboration among network members, resulting presumably in more effective EFTM activities.

What lessons can be learned about development organizing from the present investigation of the characteristics of the EFTM network? What lessons can be transferred to other global networks of individuals who come together to tackle a common social cause? Clearly, there are implications for the selection of network members. Whenever possible they should be selected on the basis of their skills, track-record and their institutional-political positions. Previous familiarity with their work and a sound personal knowledge of their abilities to take risks, innovate, and overcome challenges can be a tremendous advantage, as exemplified by Dr Ronny Adhikarya, who carefully hand-picked the EFTM network individuals based on such criteria. Further, tremendous advantages can accrue to development networks by including academicians, policy-makers, and implementers in the network, as was the case with the EFTM network. They bring diverse viewpoints from the perspective of various stakeholders, each important to the overall implementation of a development initiative. Further, cross-involvement of participants from other development networks, institutions and countries, facilitates in transferring best practices and experiences across programmes, organizations and national borders. This practice of "cross-sharing" of knowledge, skills and agendas is rare in international development organizing and as the EFTM experience suggests, communication networks are central to realizing this purpose.

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NOTES

1. Arvind Singhal is Associate Professor and co-author Krishna P. Kandath is a Ph.D. student in the School of Interpersonal Communication, College of Communication, Ohio University. Kandath helped analyse the data for the present study.
2. The 21 EFTM network members who took part in the present study are citizens of 13 countries of Asia, Africa and North America: Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, Kenya, Malawi, Ethiopia, Australia and the United States. Further, many individuals have lived, studied and worked in each others' countries. For instance, Dr Romy Adhikarya is an Indonesian citizen who has worked in all the countries (except Australia) of network members and lived in Malaysia, Bangladesh, Italy and the United States. Dr Chye-Hean Teoh, formerly a Malaysian national and now an Australian citizen, has worked in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, China and Dominica. The cross-national nature of work carried out by many of the EFTM network members contributed greatly to the intersection of their paths, prior to the launch of the EFTM initiative.
3. The present analysis does not include data from four EFTM network members: Mr Thitirong Rungrawd, Mr Sunan Seesang, Mr Yohanes Mesfin and Mr Ahmad Fuad Muhammad. They were not present at the Beijing EFTM meeting in August 1996.
4. The SEC network was launched in the mid-1980s and the Microcomputers network was launched in the early 1990s. The PFTM network was initiated at about the same time as the EFTM network.

