

Two and a half years ago, the [Web2forDev International Conference](#) organised by CTA and 12 other development organisations at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, has been the first of its kind to exploring the potentials of Web 2.0 in the context of development cooperation. What has changed since then and has web2fordev had any impact?

### **What is the web2fordev situation in development organizations?**

The production of content by ordinary people around the world has become a widespread phenomenon, which also has found its way within development organisations. So far most organisations seem to have barely started experimenting with Web 2.0 or social media rather than having incorporated these new dimensions in their communication and knowledge sharing strategies and action plans. In some cases the organisations' intranets are getting some social features such as comment sections to better address two-way conversations.

Others are going a step further and open up their communication with social network features or even a public platform. One such example is a website by the European Commission called [Capacity4dev](#), where employees of the EC and the interested public discuss and share issues.

In other cases blogs are being used to communicate in a team or to connect experts around a special topic – suddenly, everybody can publish or at least comment and link people and expertise within an organisation and their external network.

Wikis are set up to introduce glossaries, where everybody can add their expertise. Wikis or other tools can ease [project management](#) by storing all information in one place: documents, events, discussions, plans etc. Some courageous organisations have given up their intranet and instead work in wiki mode and everybody participates in weaving the organisation's knowledge map.

### **Web2fordev = culture change?**

Time has proven that the implementation of a tool is only a mean to an end. Furthermore, embracing web2fordev needs a cultural change involving experimenting in less rigid and controlled environments. It also involves mobilising colleagues, gardening content or facilitating discussions. Not every organisation, department or team is ready for that. Still change occurs and roles are changing. IT departments still decide on the choice of desktop applications, but what happens if complementary or better applications are few clicks away at the doorstep of your browser? Fewer organisations are eager to enforce restrictions on the use of applications like Skype when substantial savings and increased work efficiency derive from their use?

Not every employee is willing to wait that the needed IT or [social media policy](#) is developed and applied. Online tools are there to be used by only a few mouse clicks away. The micro-blogging tool

[Yammer](#)

offers the opportunity for building a community revolving around an organizational email domain address (e.g. @cta.int). It resides outside the organisation, but potentially offers access to all colleagues, only through one's email address.

In conclusion, a lot has happened during the past two and a half years. Web 2.0 is finding its way within organisations, but some resistance and fears linked to working in a less controlled and “secure” environment are still there. Employers’ concerns focus also on staff office time devoted to chatting over private issues on Facebook or other platforms. To this effect some institutions have firewalled access to selected social networking sites.

One important shift, which occurred over the past few years is about the focus of the discussion: less attention is paid to the choice of the applications in favour of how development organisations should deal with communication, knowledge sharing, networking with stakeholders and many more such issues. The [innovation in this sector](#) happens outside of organisations.

Note for the readers: As a follow-up to the Web2fordev International conference IIED and CTA published Participatory Learning and Action 59 - [Change at hand: Web 2.0 for development](#) . . The publication will soon be available also in French. All articles can be downloaded for free.

*Authors: Christian Kreutz (in collaboration with the CTA ICT Innovation Team)*