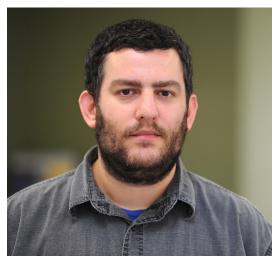# Community capacity: Research & preliminary insights

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Who we are

By Guillaume Paumier (Own work)
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Asaf Bartov

- Longtime Wikipedian
- "Senior Program Officer, Emerging Wikimedia Communities"

By Myleen Hollero (Myleen Hollero Photography)
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Sati Houston

- Short-time Wikipedian :)
- "Grants Learning Strategist, Learning & Evaluation"

Why research "community capacity"?

Our Idea	Our Plan	Our Goals
Talk is cheap. Capacity building has been a long-standing topic without enough action	Interview community members across 16 communities/countries[1]	**Build a baseline** of capacities
Doing it right matters. We want to listen, analyze, propose, get buy-in, only then (maybe) act	Aim to understand: ○ Environmental context ○ Community structure & norms ○ Capacity needs	**Identify challenges, gaps & opportunities** ○ Both across and within communities **Build community capacity & effectiveness** by improving avenues for support, mentorship, and partnership

[1] Interviews were conducted with 32 community members across the following communities / countries: Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, India (English, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu) and the Arabic community. Still coming: Brazil.

Preliminary insights:
What we heard across communities

Strength: Encouragement and growth of new editors

Personalized welcomes and notes

"[From my own experience] when I created my first article, **people were celebrating it over social media**, saying 'Hey, we have this new contributor writing [articles]'."

Malayalam Wikimedian

Mentorship

"No formal mentorship, but **4-5 more experienced editors will watch newbie contributions, and make recommendations or give tips**... This has **evolved into an on-going practice**, with new editors doing this for other new editors."

Marathi Wikimedian

Recognition

"In the Ukrainian community, instead of barnstars, images of wikizguschivka (condensed milk) are posted on user talk pages... **Once a month an actual can [of condensed milk] is sent to… the newbie with the most contributions.**"

Ukrainian Wikimedian

Off-wiki engagements

Experienced editors have been organizing regular editing meetups aimed at younger and newbie editors, with refreshments and a relaxed, social atmosphere. Complements more formal projects by Wikimedia Indonesia.

Indonesian "Wiki ID" group

New editors retention and growth

Challenge: Creating "living", evolving policies

- Prevalent **practice of looking across wiki communities for examples**, especially for policy definition and implementation

- **Policy was cited as one of biggest challenges** across communities, with a spectrum of issues, e.g.
  - Unsuitable policies
  - "Dead letter" policies
  - Difficulty changing policy even after agreeing change is needed

- Key issue raised was that assessment and reassessment of policy is **very difficult,** and in some bad cases, leads to **demotivation** of the community

Need: On-wiki technical skills and off-wiki skills on building awareness

On-wiki: Technical skills

- Majority of communities **reported minimal technical capacity** (e.g. bots, graphics), relative to community size
  - Only 3 communities described robust capacity

"A lot of the **technical content/material** (even for wiki markup) is **not [available] on Afrikaans**."

South African Wikimedian

- Contributors to English WP reported **poor socialization** of existing tools

Off-wiki: Building awareness

- Despite growing internet population, there remains a **general lack of awareness** about Wikimedia projects

- Majority of communities reported minimal or predominantly **reactive** interactions with traditional media
  - Proactive interactions were reported by communities with chapters

"We do not try to reach the press or make them write articles about us. We don't try to correct mistakes they make."

Turkish Wikimedian

Based on these (and more) insights, we will develop a few key solutions

- Broad initiatives that span **across communities**, e.g.
  - **Toolkits & training materials** focused on skill development (including translations!)
  - **Training events**, by other Wikimedians, WMF, local professionals (e.g. conflict resolution, public speaking)
  - **Technical tool building**, according to identified, shared needs

- **Community specific** initiatives, e.g.
  - **Facilitated dialogues** on policy-making and policy review
  - **Close mentorship** supporting a specific project (e.g. building a strategic plan) or advising on complex, ongoing issues

Next steps

- Want to keep updated & engaged? Sign up for updates! https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Community_Capacity_Development_Framework

- Engage with the "Community Development Framework" (published on Meta by June 1st)

- Preliminary conversations with specific communities, looking for mutually agreed plans of action