



Sector Support Networks ● ●

The Kaizen Company's Sector Support Networks (SSN) transform the nature and impact of development assistance for promising sectors and value chains. Leveraging Web 2.0 technologies, local service providers, and peer-to-peer support, SSNs support the growth of firms and farms, strengthen value chains, and expand promising business or agricultural sectors.

How SSNs work:

The SSN approach creates both *live* and *virtual* networks of individuals through activities, events, and assistance. In-person activities, the cornerstone of the SSN approach, bring together business leaders from all levels of the value chain in sector-wide meetings and smaller roundtables. All events are completely demand-driven, as determined through polls, surveys, and focus groups. Facilitated by local service providers, live events support professional peers in learning from each other, developing desired skills, collaborating on shared objectives, and accessing assistance. For the sponsoring project, SSN live events provide a constant feedback loop of the needs and priorities of a project's end-clients.

SSNs are based on the understanding that:

1. Local firms and farms have extensive ideas and insights to offer one another.
2. Local service providers are *the best able* to adapt and apply international best practices to local contexts, broker deals between local and international businesses, and identify new market opportunities.
3. New technologies can greatly facilitate the transfer of knowledge and opportunities among value chain participants.

SSN Success in Jordan

The Kaizen Company's pilot SSN implementation was awarded a top finalist designation in the *UNDP Capacity is Development* competition. Survey results showed that 82% of SSN members improved their firms as a direct result of SSN participation. International partner organizations provided SSN members with over \$60,000 of free technical assistance.

Virtual SSN support draws from **KaizenConnect.com**. Already containing 4,000+ tools, resources, and learning opportunities supporting management reform from 100+ organizational partners (see link), Kaizen's interactive portal is rapidly adapted to create a unique, bi-lingual web portal for each country or project. This includes a virtual community of practice for each sector or value chain, stocked with relevant resources and opportunities. These can include learning opportunities such as presentations and webinars, as well as deals, discounts, franchise opportunities, and access to buyers and sellers of sector-specific services. The successes, lessons learned, and best practices from local SSN participants are also captured and added to the portal, creating a repository of resources addressing specific local challenges.

SSN members with internet access benefit from the portal directly, while members without internet access benefit indirectly through mobile technology and by attending in-person events. Local service providers leading the in-person events draw from the portal, and adapt and apply resources to meet local needs. Service providers and other SSN members also use the SSN portal to identify and address new market opportunities.

SSNs empower diverse stakeholders to address immediate management and sector-specific issues effecting their businesses, and sectors as a whole. They provide donor projects a means to identify and meet the evolving needs of end-clients, and to build trust. They also provide sustainable linkages to local, regional, and international markets.

Most importantly, SSNs are a fully sustainable mechanism. Kaizen works with one or more local organizations from the onset so that they can assume full leadership of the SSN beyond the life of the donor project. When the sector has genuine market potential, market forces ensure the sustainability of SSNs without additional donor support.

