

Project Report: Weekly Online Workshops and Sessions

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Introduction

As part of its commitment to supporting and building technical capacity within the community, Sudan Network Operators Group (SdNOG) implemented a comprehensive training initiative spanning six (6) months. The project goal was to deliver weekly online workshops and sessions covering a wide range of technical and career-focused topics. This initiative was launched primarily in response to the exceptional circumstances facing Sudan, and, is an extension of SdNOG's dedication to community support and capacity building.

The background to this project

The ongoing conflict in Sudan, has resulted in a fractured, and geographically dispersed, Sudanese technical community being. Meeting in person is no longer possible, yet the need to stay connected, share knowledge, and support each another has never been greater. At a time when many community members felt isolated and disconnected, SdNOG recognised that bringing people together was not only necessary for technical engagement, but also primarily important for like-minded human contact. The weekly workshops became a way to recreate a sense of community, continuity, and mutual support, ensuring that learning and collaboration, as well as simply socialising, could continue despite the challenging circumstances.

A key realisation upfront, was that building and sustaining Internet infrastructure requires a wide range of skills and perspectives. There is no single path or uniform skill level that fits everyone. We expected to host participants from different backgrounds, work environments, and stages in their careers with varying schedules and availability, but yet all eager to participate. Inclusivity, the principle that "No one should be left behind" is fundamental to our ethos.

We initially thought we would follow the traditional mentality, and arrange workshops by subject matter, and/or increasing orders of difficulty. This approach was quickly and intentionally rejected. We believed that such structuring could unintentionally exclude parts of the community, or cause participants to disengage if a particular track did not align with their interests or availability. Instead, SdNOG made a deliberate decision to offer a broad and diverse mix of workshops across different topics and skill levels, in what might seem like an almost random schedule. This ensured that:

- Every session could appeal to someone in the community;
- Participants could join at any point without feeling left behind;
- No group felt excluded based on experience level or background;
- By avoiding firm sequencing, the program encouraged continuous engagement and reduced the risk of participants disconnecting for extended periods.

Project overview

- Project Duration: 6 months
- Frequency: Weekly online workshops and sessions, every Saturday
- Delivery Platform: Zoom (Sponsored by Global NOG Alliance)
- Target Audience: Students, recent graduates, technical professionals, and technology enthusiasts
- All the sessions were open, free and anyone could join, or watch the archived recordings later.

Workshop structure and content

The program was delivered through an approach that integrated theoretical foundations, practical sessions, and career guidance. The large majority of sessions included hands-on practical exercises, best-practice recommendations, and invaluable career roadmap sessions.

Delivery methodology

- Interactive presentations
- Live hands-on demonstrations and exercises
- Open discussions and Q&A.
- Sharing learning resources and references
- Open mic: It was common practice after every presentation to hold an “open mic” session, where participants could connect, socialise, share experiences, provide feedback, or simply say “hello” to each other. Rather than being a formal presentation, it was a chance for other participants in the session to share their insights, ideas, and provide inspiration for the group. These sessions were intentionally not recorded; whilst we wanted to build an archive of technical material for later re-use, we were also aware that many members of our community are less comfortable speaking freely, when they know they are being recorded. Accordingly, once we stopped recording, we fully expected participants to be more vocal. It is notable that many of these “open mic” sessions lasted for many hours after the formal presentation. We view this as especially meaningful, as fostering connections is one of the key goals of the SdNOG community.

Statistics

- Total number of sessions: 27 sessions
- Total training hours delivered: ~80 hours
- Total attendees: ~700 participants
- Average attendance per session: 22-30 participants
- Hands-on practical sessions: 23 sessions

- Career roadmap sessions: 3 sessions
- Targeted sessions for students and new graduates: 1 session
- Sessions duration time: 2h-4h
- Local (Sudanese) trainers/Arabic sessions: 25
- Foreign trainers/English sessions: 6

Source: <https://docs.sdnog.sd/books/activities-calendar/page/workshops-schedule>

Community impact

We believe that this initiative contributed to increased technical awareness, strengthened practical skills, and clearer career direction for participants. It also ensured continuity of learning despite connectivity challenges and ongoing instability. In addition, the program played an important role in developing locally produced technical content delivered by local trainers. Creating domestic technical capacity has always been a long-term goal of SdNOG, and we are proud that the figures above, show that there is a wealth of Sudanese technical talent that is ready and willing to support the growth of our community. We are especially encouraged to see many first-time trainers; often graduates of earlier SdNOG technical training programmes, step forward to contribute. From the onset, the workshops were designed to be open and accessible. SdNOG actively invited speakers and participants from both Arabic-speaking, and non-Arabic-speaking communities, reflecting the belief that the topics discussed are not specific to Sudan alone, but are relevant to the global Internet community. All sessions were delivered online and shared widely, allowing not only the Sudanese community but also participants from other NOGs and regions to benefit. This openness strengthened collaboration, knowledge exchange, and cross-community learning. This increased engagement reflects growing trust in SdNOG as a reliable platform for learning, collaboration, and professional development, and we are always eager to welcome new members to our community!

We believe that this project represents a global first, as SdNOG is the first Network Operators Group (NOG) worldwide to deliver a sustained, weekly online training program of this scale and duration under such challenging circumstances.

Community Feedback and Future Recommendations

As part of the project evaluation, feedback was collected from participants throughout the program. The feedback highlighted strong appreciation for the initiative and provided valuable recommendations for future development. The key points are summarised below:

1. Program Continuation and Expansion

Participants strongly expressed the desire for SdNOG to continue this program, with more sessions over a longer period and an increased focus on advanced-level topics.

2. Focus on Emerging and High-Demand Topics

There was significant interest in additional sessions covering current and in-demand areas, particularly:

- DevOps and Cloud Technologies;
- Network Security;
- Artificial Intelligence (AI).

3. Certified Training Opportunities

Many participants recommended that SdNOG explore opportunities to collaborate with external organisations or training providers to deliver certified courses. Access to structured training programs with recognised certifications would greatly enhance participants' career development.

4. Certification Exam Support and Vouchers

Participants also highlighted the need for support in accessing certification exams. Providing exam vouchers or discounts would be highly beneficial, as many community members are actively working to obtain certifications, build their careers, and access learning materials.

Access to Learning Materials and Recordings

All workshop materials, presentation slides, and session recordings are publicly available on the SdNOG Wiki at <https://docs.sdnog.sd/books/activities-calendar/page/workshops-schedule>.

This ensures long-term access to the content, supports self-paced learning, and allows a wider audience to benefit from the knowledge shared during the program beyond the live sessions.

Acknowledgements

SdNOG extends its sincere appreciation to all trainers, volunteers, organisers, partners, and participants who contributed to the success of this initiative. Their commitment and collaboration were essential to the continuity and impact of the project.

Special thanks are extended to the [Global NOG Alliance](#), which generously provided access to its Zoom platform, enabling SdNOG to host, record, and stream all sessions delivered as part of this program. This support played a critical role in ensuring the accessibility, continuity, and quality of the weekly workshops

Conclusion

This project demonstrates SdNOG's commitment to sustainable capacity building and community empowerment. It highlights the importance of consistent, high-quality technical education and establishes a replicable model for other NOG communities worldwide.

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