

Knowledge Management

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The hunter-gathering approach

Hunter-gathering is a process of rapidly collecting and collating information, experiences and contributions. In a workshop setting, hunter-gatherers self-select a topic they are most interested in championing and work together in groups to produce a short report (2-6 pages) by the end of the workshop – groups and topics will be decided upon on the first day. Each day, dedicated time is given for people to collect relevant information from one another. Over the course of the session the groups self-organise collecting contributions and feeding into other topics. Participants are asked to collect information informally through breaks and meals. They may also like to use the opportunity in plenary sessions to take notes on their particular topic and ask questions to presenters that could help them with their reports. Outputs are action-orientated, with groups asked to reflect on what should be done moving forward and recommendations for policy and practice.

The notes produced are not meant to be polished or exhaustive, and they are not peer reviewed. They are rapid explorations into priority topics, which are written and disseminated quickly in the hope that they will trigger further conversations, debate and interest. As such, they are not for citation.

This methodology is very much a work-in-progress. Comments and suggestions to strengthen and develop the hunter-gatherer process and method, as well as content and structure of the notes would be very welcome. Or if you wish to do a rapid exploration into a topic that interests you, please contact us: clts@ids.ac.uk

Knowledge management is the process of creating, sharing, using and managing information. The essence is to have knowledge shared and available for people to learn from and integrate into their work towards overall improved performance. It is done using technologies that provide cross-sectoral learning. These tools include the internet, intranet, publications in soft and hard copies, discussions, workshops, peer-to-peer learning.

1. Objective

The main objective of knowledge management is for overall improved performance and integration of learning into project/programme implementation. The essence is to:

- Find approaches to enable us to learn from our experiences, best practices, failures, which can inform project design and implementation.



- Have evidence of results achieved, failures, innovations, new approaches, best practices and human stories from the field.

2. Problems/ Challenges

The main challenges identified around knowledge management include:

- Poor real time documentation of experiences, learning, failures and human stories by implementers. This may be due to lack of capacity to write, not knowing what to write and share (key learning).
- Low motivation or low motivation for documentation – personal reasons, need to be heard more clearly.
- Inadequate or weak platforms or systems for learning and sharing.
- Inadequate and irregular monitoring which will inform the learning platform.

3. Solutions/ promising examples

In different countries, there are examples of platforms and systems for knowledge management established to inform the sector. Some of these include:

- The Real Time Emergent Learning innovation introduced in the Global Sanitation Fund Programmes provides a platform through which field workers send reports on what they are doing, why, how and the key learning, through different platforms such as social media e.g. Facebook. This is available and accessible to everyone on the platform in real time. Countries like Kenya, Senegal, Benin and Nigeria are using this platform. The challenge reported with this is that some field workers are reluctant to use this platform.
- Holding regular review meetings at project or programme level to share learning. This could be done on a regular basis - quarterly, biannually, annually. Depending on the context, it is facilitated by project managers or government. This happens across countries with experiences from DR Congo, Nigeria, Senegal and Burkina Faso. In Senegal, the review workshops address different thematic areas and come up with recommendations. The implementation of the recommendations is monitored and followed for integration within 6 months of the meeting with supervision conducted every 2 months. There is also opportunity for horizontal sharing among field staff, promising innovations are put together and tried out in other areas.
- In Burkina Faso, there is an annual joint sector review which involves all sector players and a national report is produced. In Nigeria, WASH Clinics are held to share innovations among implementers at the ward and LGA level, government organises the review meetings which are project based.
- Including learning and research as part of programming strengthens the idea of gathering information and promotes learning. In DR Congo, research is a key component of their programming and this is planned and budgeted for. The findings from the research are incorporated into next phase of programme implementation. Examples of research carried out include formative research on motivation for toilet usage and handwashing. The results from the research led to change of approach in implementation.
- Establishment of platforms where stakeholders can share experiences and others can learn from these. In Nigeria, there is a WASH WhatsApp Group which facilitates ideas e.g report of an Education, Health and Care (EHC) activity stimulated new ideas for implementation in another programme. There is also the national annual roundtable conference on CLTS for practitioners across the country, which unfortunately has not been held regularly. This provides linkages and a basis for support from one project to another. Senegal also has an online platform for NGOs in the same region/area to share learning and innovation among themselves.
- DR Congo has WASH Platforms at province and national levels. The WASH platforms have meetings quarterly during which they validate reports and other information from partners. An atlas which comprises of lessons, results, methodologies and approaches of different partners is produced annually by the WASH platform.
- Burkina Faso have thematic groups who document learning and they are supported by UNICEF and IRC with a budget. The thematic groups meet frequently and work on new approaches, innovations, challenges, problems and come up with a report which is shared with the sector. To inform their report, questionnaires are sent out to collect information on the focus thematic area across the country.
- Carrying out exchange visits by implementers from one area/region to the other for cross learning. In Senegal, new innovation from implementation is promoted in other areas and the innovator given the limelight to propagate the idea to others. In Benin, successful implementation tools/approaches from one area are promoted and adapted across other areas. In Nigeria, there is the 'watch my back, I watch your back' initiative, where WASHCOMs go to assess a neighbouring community and provide feedback which informs development of an action plan to implement addressing emerging issues.

- Having a reporting format will aid field workers to capture important learning. In DR Congo, they have an adaptive book with questions that provides a guide for field workers on what to look out for and what information to collect and this is integrated into regular activities.
- Carrying out joint supervision and monitoring of project implementation by the different stakeholders, EA, NGOs, LGAs etc.
- Different partners share their learning and reports through their websites. In Benin, partners include learning objectives in their annual plan, which is published and shared. In Burkina Faso, best practices are collated, published and shared in a meeting with the media which is supported by UNICEF. Also IRC organises a competition on innovation and new approaches where a winner emerges and an award is given as an incentive.
- Engagement of artists to draw pictures/images depicting good sanitation and hygiene practices. This is practiced in Burkina Faso.
- Global celebration days provide a platform for learning and sharing. In Gambia, schools with varying performance on the 3-Star approach are brought together on Global Handwashing Day to share their strategies for success which provides insight to the non-performing schools.

4. Emerging questions

- Are we putting an additional burden on the field workers and others by requesting additional information for knowledge management?
- How can we best motivate implementers to share learning as it happens?
- Are programme managers able and willing to adapt and iterate programming based on emerging learning?

5. Recommendations

- In the short term, field workers should be encouraged to report in a language and format they are comfortable with. In the long term, their capacity should be built to report and document well.
- The field workers should be able to know what is important for adaptation in a different context.
- The staff managing Knowledge Management should have a good overview of the sector and should be able to synthesise field reports into briefs and quality information that will be appealing to readers. It must be practical and well packaged.
- Build trust across the levels by exchanging roles and balance perspectives.
- Co-create stories with the field workers and give them credit.
- Use of participatory methodology such as videos, pictures.
- Development of a knowledge management (learning and sharing) strategy - this is being done in Benin.