EDITORIAL

Knowledge management for development in Africa

This issue of the *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* focuses on what has happened in Africa in the field of knowledge management for development (KM4D). During the last couple of years, there has been a significant increase in knowledge management interventions in development programmes across the African continent and a strong engagement of practitioners in Africa, members of the Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev)[1] community, to develop national KM4Dev groups. Lately, the following groups have been active: Ethiopia KM4Dev group, Senegal KM4Dev group and Burkina Faso KM4Dev group, and there is also a KM4DESA for Eastern and Southern Africa. The idea of an African issue was developed during the African KM4Dev week. The African KM4Dev Community Week (25-29 March 2013) involved about 30 KM4Dev members originating from, focusing on or living in Africa.

The week culminated in an online event on 28 March 2013 which brought together 15 participants from ten different countries and based across five different locations. The objective of the week, and of the synchronous event, were to bring together the diversity of African KM4Dev networks, to unite, share and learn about each other's dynamics, and to help find a better place for African KM4Dev members in the global community. The week also looked to pave the way for future focused conversations on issues that matter for African or Africa-focused members of the community. The week and related events were hosted by the Addis Ababa/Ethiopia KM4Dev group[2], supported by the KM4Dev innovation fund 2012.[3], [4]

What will you find in this issue?

This issue presents articles in English and French that aim to showcase the implementation of knowledge management in a developing world context, highlighting the successes, the challenges and the potential of investing in strengthening and growing local knowledge management initiatives in Africa. It is based on the premise that:

> *Development is, most of all, the result of the synergy among millions of innovative initiatives people take every day in their local societies, generating new and more effective ways of producing, trading, and managing their resources and their institutions.*
> (Ferreira, 2009: 99)

Some articles relate to a specific region within a specific country, some to a specific country or region of Africa (such as Central and Western Africa), and some relate to the entire continent or link global policies to the African context. The organizations to which the articles relate to range from UN agencies, to universities and researchers, to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and community networks.

The editors' tour of this issue

'Du concept à la pratique: capitaliser des pratiques de partenariat en Afrique de l'Ouest au sein d'un réseau d'ONG françaises' (From concept to practice: experience systemization of partnership among a network of francophone NGOs in West Africa) (article in French) by Jérémy Casteuble considers a network of 10 NGOs who are engaged in an experience systematization process for their partnership practices. These NGOs developed a methodology on how to build collective thinking across the network: moving from practical experiences to a collective approach. In French, knowledge or experience systematization is called 'capitalisation' and you will often see this word in French articles.

Focusing on the technical aspects of knowledge management, 'Introduction pionnière du E-learning à l'université et son rôle dans l'élaboration de nouvelles compétences technologiques: le cas de l'EBAD' (Pioneering introduction of e-learning at the university and its role in the development of new technology skills: the case of EBAD) (article in French) by Djibril Diakhaté proposes an analysis on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) at an African University, a pioneer in the introduction of e-learning in Africa. The author compares data on two type of students, namely those taking the face to face courses and those taking the e-learning courses, to show the difference in ICT adoption by type of student.

What if a massive improvement in African educational institutions was key to knowledge sharing in Africa? 'Fit for the purpose? Juxtaposing global development policy discussions on knowledge sharing with African realities' by John Emeka Akude and Niels Keijzer examines the impact of structural adjustment policies on knowledge infrastructure and what is needed for more knowledge-intensive development cooperation with Africa. It is not only about ambitious

knowledge infrastructure projects but, rather, about providing the essential basics and strengthening the educational systems to create a basis for knowledge production, dissemination, use and sharing.

Experience systematization is the purpose of 'La capitalisation d'expériences à l'épreuve de la pratique' (Testing experience capitalization in practice) (in French) by Sophie Treinen, Alice van der Elstraeten et Frédérique Matras. The three authors guide the reader through the application of the experience systematization cycle: action, reflection, documentation, sharing, adoption and so on. Looking at a project of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Burkina Faso and Niger spanning four and a half years, best practices to test and adapt methodologies to systematize experiences in terms of agricultural inputs management are presented.

The next two articles are the same, examining the final step of the knowledge systematization cycle: adoption. In 'Appropriation de la recherche forestière au Cameroun: causes et risques de l'informalité dans la communication et le partage des connaissances' and 'Forestry research uptake in Cameroon: causes and threats of informal communication and knowledge sharing' by Sandrine Ebakisse, the author links research and knowledge management to understand the conditions whereby communication and knowledge-sharing strategies contribute to research uptake and its adoption. One of the main findings is that there is a predominance of informal relationships between researchers and decision-makers that present a number of risks.

'Communities of practice in competitive settings: exploring the role of market traders' associations in Nigerian marketplaces' by Faith Ikioda considers knowledge sharing practices in informal markets. Informal markets are an integral component of African economies with many formally-educated, unemployed people making a living in this space. Informal markets bring together a large group of diverse people to compete for a livelihood, making them rich sources of knowledge sharing and exchange. The author employs the notion of communities of practice to examine the knowledge management component of informal markets.

If knowledge is being adopted does this mean that it is being institutionalized? Through the example of a project for the promotion of rural entrepreneurship, Thiendou Niang et Hawa Sow Bousso Ndiaye look at how knowledge is being institutionalized in 'Institutionnalisation de la capitalisation d'expériences au PROMER, Sénégal' (Institutionalization of experience systemization in PROMER, Senegal). Institutionalization is here understood as the inclusion of knowledge management activities in work plans and budget, development of methodologies and tools, training, and development and sharing of knowledge products. In order to get the complete magic formula for knowledge institutionalization, the following ingredient has to be added: involvement of all project stakeholders, especially the management unit.

'Gestion (et/ou) capitalisation des connaissances: quelles perceptions et pratiques au sein des Organisations de la société civile de la région Centre du Cameroun?' (Management (and /or) accumulation of knowledge: perceptions and practices within the organizations of civil society in the Central region of Cameroon' (article in French) by Calvin Minfegue is the last article of this issue and the fourth article on knowledge and experience systematization. How do local organizations understand knowledge management? What do they really do when they do knowledge management? Based on data collected from 30 civil society organizations, the author provides key findings on the perceptions and practices of implementing knowledge management in local organizations in Cameroon.

Terraço Aberto (Open Terrace in Portuguese) is a forum for reflective, critical and open debate. Named after the part of the office where the first debates took place, it was initiated in 2009 to provide a space that promotes democratic thinking and peaceful exchange of opinions in a pluralistic society. In the case sudy '*Terraço Aberto*: a space for public debate in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique', Barbara Kruspan, Karin Voigt and Leopoldino Jerónimo explain the methodologies and tools used, as well as the impact of *Terraço Aberto* on development in Mozambique. *Terraço Aberto* encourages a bird's eye view of topics, enabling participants to literally take a different perspective in order to emphasize respect for other opinions, as well as fostering the common understanding that everyone is on the same level and has the same right to participate. *Terraço Aberto* belongs to everyone: anyone interested can participate with free entrance.

Building a collective approach and a common understanding of knowledge management is one of the goals when developing and implementing a knowledge management strategy. Through the lens of Anne Müller, a Knowledge Management Officer, the story, 'How to get a knowledge management strategy off the ground in West Africa'**,** sets out the key steps for the development and implementation of a knowledge management strategy in a large organization operating in Africa, based on the following mantra: colleagues, culture, change and communication.

Charles Dhewa, Kingo Mchombu, Jean Mège and Gwen Wilkins
Guest Editors, Knowledge management for development in Africa