

## **Editorial**

### **Approaches to promote knowledge sharing in international development organisations**

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with Lucie Lamoureux*

The Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community of practice ([www.km4dev.org](http://www.km4dev.org)) has recently launched this peer-supported e-journal in the field of knowledge sharing for development. Whilst the journal's first issue was about tools and methods to support communities in development, this second one deals with *approaches to promote knowledge sharing in international development organisations*.

The decision of our group to guest edit this issue grew out of our involvement in the Knowledge Sharing (KS) Project of the Information and Communication Technology – Knowledge Management (ICT-KM) Programme of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Through that experience we became excited about the potential of KS to help international development organisations and their partners shift to a more demand-driven, interactive and collaborative approach that centres on social learning, innovation and capacity development.

We have come to believe strongly in the benefits of communities like KM4Dev, and we are happy to join in its effort to create spaces for sharing knowledge on KS.

#### **About this issue**

International development organisations and their national and local partners are creating a wealth of knowledge that can help the poor build sustainable livelihoods. However, this knowledge, for one reason or another, is often retained by individuals and groups and is not widely shared within or among organisations.

A great deal has been written about approaches to promote KS and KM in general within the private sector – particularly in multinational corporations. In contrast, there is much less documentation on approaches that have been developed or adapted and applied in public and non-governmental organisations. This issue of KM4Dev presents papers on experiences with KS in international development organisations, with the goals of highlighting strategies and approaches used to foster KS in diverse settings and presenting their results.

This issue contains three papers, four case studies, an interview and a story. The article by Jaap Pels and Frank Odhiambo describes how KM is being introduced to project partners in Africa and India through a distance-learning module. It provides

the rationale for the module – to transform information on KM into action - and describes the main activities within the module.

Kim Henderson shares practical experiences that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has gained in establishing and implementing communities of practice, or CoPs (referred to as knowledge networks within the organisation). It describes how knowledge networks have contributed to cultural change within UNDP.

Michael Barrett, Bob Fryatt, Geoff Walsham and Somya Joshi offer a critical review of the benefits and limitations of global knowledge strategies and consider the implications for new ways of working at the World Health Organisation.

In our case study, we discuss the opportunities offered by major meetings for introducing KS attitudes, methods and tools into development organisations. This paper draws on our experiences with two pilot initiatives to introduce KS into major meetings in research centres affiliated with the CGIAR. It outlines the approaches employed, the challenges faced and the results to date. The value of ‘yellow pages’, or ‘know-who directories’, has been widely discussed among KM practitioners. In a case study, Mark Winslow provides insights into how potential users of such a tool evaluated it in a large, complex and highly dispersed organisation, the CGIAR.

Daan Boom leads us through the process of establishing a KM framework at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a crucial part of its effort to become a learning organisation. Andreas Jensen from Danida introduces us to Train4dev, which provides a framework for discussion of KS by donor agency staff involved in the transfer of best practices or in training and competence development. The case study takes stock of this initiative and outline trends and ways forward.

Steve Song reviews an ODI (Overseas Development Institute) working paper by Ben Ramalingam, which synthesizes research on knowledge and learning in the development sector. The working paper also identifies key questions for examining related strategies and systems in development agencies.

An *Interview* with Phineas Kadenge of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) considers its KS strategy and looks at how the ACBF introduced KM into its medium-term plan and at the focus of this strategy.

Finally, in *Community Notes*, Mark Steinlin summarises a recent discussion of the KM4Dev community on designing knowledge sharing-friendly office spaces.

As guest editors, we hope you enjoy this issue of the journal, and we look forward to the many fruitful discussions that will be stimulated by it.

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