Editorial
Like a duck to water: the *KM4D Journal*

Julie Ferguson and Sarah Cummings

> *In November 2004, a small group of members of the Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community of practice and others related to the field met in The Hague to discuss the possibility of starting an (e-)journal in the field of knowledge sharing in a development context. This idea came from a perceived need to capture and share, more formally, the knowledge and experiences being generated by diverse knowledge management approaches, South and North, and specifically by the KM4Dev community.*

This is how we introduced the new idea to the KM4Dev community in December 2004. When at the end of April 2005 guest editors of issue one and two conducted an After Action Review, something that had somehow disappeared off the radar came to light. Read the first paragraph again: 'a small group of KM4Dev members and others … met in The Hague *to discuss the possibility* of starting an e-journal…'

In fact, the *possibility* of starting the journal was never actually discussed – because all of a sudden, we were discussing the first issue, and the journal simply *was*! Here was a huge opportunity to capture worldwide knowledge on development issues, just waiting to be shared. It became apparent within a matter of weeks that the perceived need to 'do more' with the knowledge in the KM4Dev community was indeed justified. A quick market scan illustrated that there was a gap in the formal literature in terms of knowledge management/knowledge sharing for development, enabled by information and communication technologies (ICTs). Dozens of people turned out to be eager to fill this gap.

Feedback started pouring in, both positive and critical; others committed articles and offered peer support, eager to get involved with the new initiative. All in all, the community took to the idea of a community journal like a duck to water – albeit a very swift duck swimming in rapids. Barely six months later, issue one lies here in front of you, with issues two and three already on track: we proudly present the 'Knowledge Management for Development Journal' to be known as the *KM4D Journal*.

KM4D Journal

This new e-journal will offer practice-based cases, analysis and research concerning the role of knowledge in development processes, and will provide a forum for debate and exchange of ideas among practitioners, policymakers, academics and activists worldwide. It is an *open access* journal and is available on the INASP Journals and

Newsletters (INJOL) online platform at: http://www.km4dev.org/journal. Although
focusing on the KM4Dev community, it aims to be a 'broad church', facilitating
cross-fertilization between knowledge management and related fields, including
information management.

The journal has three new editors-in-chief plus an Editorial Board. The Board is
currently being formed but we envisage that will ultimately comprise 20-25 Board
members. The majority of the board members will be members of the KM4Dev
community who are international experts in this field.

We envisage that most issues, like this one, will be produced by Guest Editors. This
means that any group of colleagues, interested in a specific subject area, can propose a
thematic issue and compile papers on this theme. In this way, the second issue of the
journal to appear in September 2005 will be focusing on 'Approaches to promote
knowledge sharing in international development organizations' and will be edited by
Guest Editors: Lucie Lamoureux, Nathan Russell, Simone Staiger-Rivas, Doug
Horton, and Allison Hewlitt. Why have we chosen this decentralized construction?
We have chosen it because it provides the greatest opportunity for participation in the
journal by members of the KM4Dev community and others.

Another crucial element is the peer review process for this journal. Instead of a double
blind, peer review process, we have chosen a 'peer support process' in which the
reviewer will be made known to the author. We have done this for two reasons: firstly
because most of the papers will be pre-selected, based on a 'call for papers'; and
secondly because we aim to assist potential new, inexperienced authors with a greater
degree of support and assistance than they would normally receive in a traditional
peer review process.

This first issue

As a journal building primarily on the knowledge in the KM4Dev community, this
first issue of the *KM4D Journal* takes community learning as its theme. Building on a
September 2003 collaboration between Sarah, Julie and Lucie, this issue focuses on
ICT-enabled communities in the field of international development, moving away
from an anecdotal analysis of these communities towards a more vigorous, evidence-
based and outcomes-based approach.

Since the 1990s, the role of networks or communities, made up of development
professionals and their organizations, has received increasing attention. Such
networks, including 'communities of ideas', 'communities of practice' or
'communities of purpose' have been used to upgrade the quality of development
activities the impact of these development organizations; to facilitate a collective
learning process; and to contribute of a 'shifting up' of development activities to
national and international audiences.

As a result of increased adoption ICTs and particularly e-mail and groupware, existing
and new networks have taken to online interaction and a world of virtual communities
has grown exponentially over the past 10 years. Many development organizations are
investing in these communities; but the cost-benefit from these investments is by no

means clear. Further, issues of inclusion and exclusion remain important in the wider
development community. Barriers to access include language, gender and poverty.
Technology both exacerbates and, at the same time, can be applied to help overcome
these barriers.

In this context, contributors from North and South, including practitioners and
researchers, share articles, stories, cases and notes on challenges, failures, lessons
learned and successes pertaining to ICT-enabled communities, and their contribution
to development processes. *Sarah Cummings* and *Arin van Zee* set the scene with a
discussion of the terminology; *Nancy White* and *Siobhan Kimmerle* provide insightful
guidance on getting the most out of communities of practice for development
purposes. *Gerd Junne* and *Willemijn Verkoren* analyse the role of virtual communities
in conflict prevention. *Gita Swamy*, illustrating how UNDP knowledge networks
responded to the tsunami disaster, presents an exciting complement to this analysis.
Hebron Mwakalinga addresses the question 'are online communities delivering?',
analysing community learning in an international knowledge network of primarily
developing countries. *Anne Hardon* shares a candid study illustrating the ups and
downs of designing knowledge networks, whilst *Rohit Ramaswamy, Graeme Storer*
and *Romeck Van Zeyl* identify sustainability factors for communities of practice. How
does community learning contribute to the development process in the specific geo-
political context of the Middle East and North Africa? The latter is analysed by *Erik
Caldwell Johnson* and *Ramla Khalidi-Beyhum*.

Last but not least, the *Community Notes* section includes first, an interview with our
fearless KM4Dev moderator, *Lucie Lamoureux*, disclosing the ins and outs of the
KM4Dev community, and second, an analysis of a recent discussion thread by
Michael Gruber. This discussion thread on the best 'location' of knowledge
management in a development organization generated a lot of interest on KM4Dev.

All in all, we hope this first issue of the *KM4D Journal* offers a positive learning
experience. We invite you to help us develop *KM4D Journal* to meet your needs as a
medium for enhancing community learning and for more effectively capturing
knowledge shared on KM4Dev. Please feel free to share your comments and discuss
the ideas presented in the journal; we think there might be an appropriate forum for
doing so on – well, use your imagination.

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Guest Editors, Supporting communities in development – tools & approaches