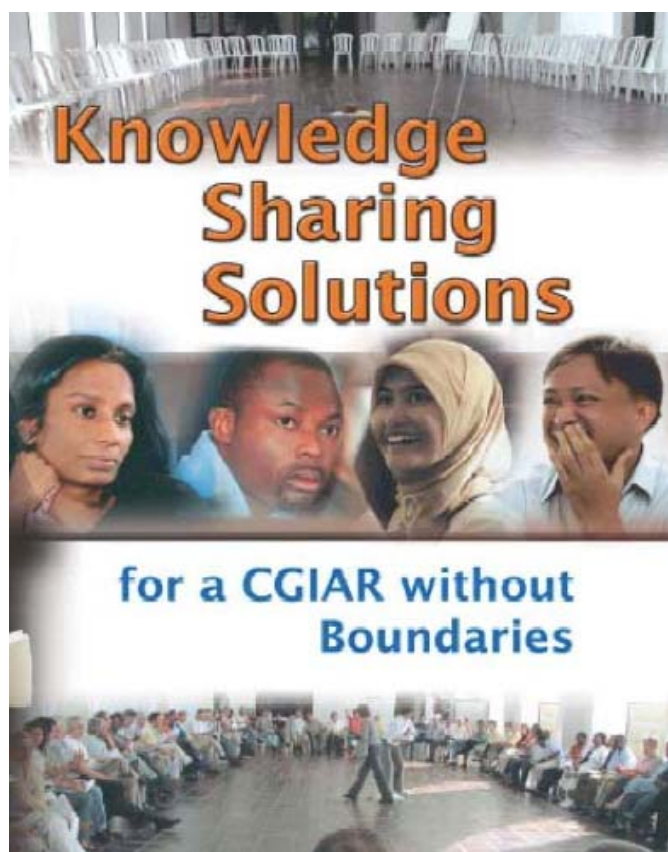


The CGIAR Knowledge Sharing Project, 2004-2006:

Phase 1 Evaluation Results

Report of an Independent Ex-Post Impact Evaluation



May 2009

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www.re4d.net

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Acronyms

AGM	annual general meeting
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (International Center for Tropical Agriculture)
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
COP	community of practice
CSO	civil society organization
HR	human resources
ICT-KM	Information and Communication Technologies and Knowledge Management Program of the CGIAR
IKS	Institutional Knowledge Sharing Project of ICT-KM
ILAC	Institutional Learning and Change
IM	information management
IT	information technology
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
KM	knowledge management
KM4Dev	Knowledge Management for Development
KS	knowledge sharing
KSinR	Knowledge Sharing in Research Project of ICT-KM
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
PRGA	Participatory Research and Gender Analysis Program of the CGIAR
WIG	Wheat Improvement Group of CIMMYT

Executive Summary

“The real power of KS is that it demonstrates how you can make superior decisions and have more buy-in for those decisions. You can do better work if you systematically involve more people in decision making and if you’re open and transparent about that, listen to people, and take their voices into account.”

Nathan Russell, Senior Communications Officer CGIAR Secretariat

Background

The CGIAR’s Knowledge Sharing Project is part of its Information and Communication Technologies and Knowledge Management (ICT-KM) Program. Its first phase, from 2004 to 2006, was designed to foment a knowledge sharing culture within the CGIAR. Coordinated by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the project design originally centered on the development of comprehensive knowledge management (KM) strategies in CGIAR centers and programs, together with complementary studies and capacity building.

With support from Bellanet International Secretariat, the project design was reviewed and then shifted in the direction of introducing knowledge sharing (KS) approaches into major center events in order to involve large numbers of managers and staff and foster capacity building. During the two-year project period, and among other activities, four CGIAR centers were actively involved in testing KS approaches and tools.

The project had four main objectives: (1) to review experiences with KS, (2) to generate commitment to introducing KS approaches and tools, (3) to support the development and implementation of KS strategies, pilot activities, and support policies, and (4) to facilitate access to KS tools and techniques.

To build on the interest and gains generated by Phase 1, the second phase was launched in early 2007 to offer CGIAR centers new opportunities to develop, apply, evaluate, and share innovative approaches to making their work more effective. Entitled Improving CGIAR Effectiveness, this two-year initiative comprises two main components: Institutional Knowledge Sharing (IKS) and Knowledge Sharing in Research (KSinR).

In July 2008 the Institutional Knowledge Sharing (IKS) Project commissioned RE4D.net to conduct an independent evaluation of the first phase of the project. This study assesses the results of the four pilot activities, illustrates the systemic impact of the project, and presents lessons distilled from the combined experience of KS professionals in six CGIAR centers.

The study used semi-structured, open-ended telephone interviews to gather feedback from 14 CGIAR staff and consultants who were involved in the first phase of the KS project or undertook similar initiatives at the same time. This anecdotal feedback was then categorized, allowing for a meaningful analysis of the benefits of the KS project and the challenges it faces. The evaluation study was conducted by Bernhard Hack, of Research & Evaluation for Development (bernhard.hack@gmail.com; www.re4d.net).

Key Conclusions

1. More meetings

All centers organized meetings using KS tools and methods and continue to do so. But not all managed to build on the initial gains and some have again turned to more traditional formats for their annual meetings.

2. Improved effectiveness

Three-quarters of the respondents were convinced that KS approaches had, on the whole, improved the effectiveness of center activities and processes.

3. Uncertainty over KS time savings

KS practitioners tend to believe KS can save time but are hesitant to make that claim. Some anecdotal evidence points to time savings because of better-run meetings. However, to date the time saved remains un-quantified.

4. Buy-in to KS?

A definite claim that KS improves buy-in on all occasions cannot be made. On the one hand, a badly facilitated meeting can easily alienate people from KS tools and methods, leading to their rejection. On the other hand, a successful intervention may lead to more participation and ownership.

5. Increased collaboration

Almost three-quarters of practitioners agree that KS has contributed to increased collaboration at their centers and beyond.

6. Management support

KS enjoys relatively good management support throughout the CGIAR, individual experiences notwithstanding. More needs to be done, however, to demonstrate the utility of KS to senior management in order to get their buy-in.

7. Cooperation between change initiatives

The various initiatives that promote innovation, learning, KS, and change in the CGIAR have to some extent been competing with each other. Practitioners involved in those initiatives are by and large in favor of more coordination regarding their roles in system-wide organizational development.

8. KS strategies, policies, and procedures

Few centers have explicit KS strategies. Most KS practitioners prefer to integrate KS into communications, human resources, and IT strategies as part of an overall business plan. It is questionable whether a separate KS strategy is desirable.

Recommendations

1. Common front for change initiatives

The various initiatives promoting innovation, learning, KS, and change in the CGIAR should develop a common advocacy strategy enabling them to insert key messages into organizational development processes. The aim of this strategy should be to generate commitment at the top end of the hierarchy to those interlinked issues in order to increase impact.

2. Show benefits better, specifically for senior scientists

The challenge for the KS community is to lower the threshold of KS for first-time users and to change the perception of KS as time-consuming. Furthermore, senior scientists are a powerful constituency with the potential to obstruct new KS initiatives. They often have little to gain from KS and other participatory techniques because they already have a voice and a network. To increase senior scientist buy-in and therefore impact the impact of KS, the KS community needs to make more obvious to senior scientists the benefits of the initial investment.

3. Work on definition

The KS community should invest time to define the fundamental concepts of knowledge sharing so as to create a specific body of knowledge on KS and establish it as a separate discipline.

Key Lessons

1. When introducing KS, start with a small project and with people willing to experiment. Getting early wins and finding the right people in the right context is important.
2. A successful intervention needs funds as well as explicitly mandated staff with the right skills and enough time to do the work.
3. Without a specific focus, a KS initiative will grow beyond what is feasible to manage. Setting the initiative's scope is important.
4. KS enables us to pay attention to how we interact with each other and creates spaces where people can be heard.
5. Formulating strategies using KS principles, tools, and methods allows staff to engage in the process and gives them a sense ownership of the results. This in turn ensures continuity in institutional cultures and facilitates the management of change.
6. To successfully communicate KS principles and methods to scientists, practitioners need to show how KS can contribute to their research organization's objectives.
7. KS works best when applied simultaneously at the grass roots and the leadership level. Senior management buy-in is critically important for integrating KS principles, methods and tools into meetings.
8. KS tools are not enough. To be successful, the KS Project needs champions to advocate for it and

continue the work.

9. It is important to build institutional capacity in KS principles and methods. In-house expertise will increase effectiveness of meetings and lead to mainstreaming KS within the institution.

10. KS works best when it is integrated into the organization's overall business plan, alongside communications and other activities, not as a separate department.

Background and context¹

The CGIAR took an important step toward improving knowledge management when it created the ICT–KM Program. Its strategic plan envisions “a CGIAR without boundaries, an internationally distributed, unified, and open knowledge organization.” As part of its effort to realize that vision, the program embarked in 2004 on a number of projects one of which was aimed at fomenting a knowledge sharing (KS) culture within the CGIAR. Coordinated by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the project design originally centered on the development of comprehensive knowledge management (KM) strategies in CGIAR centers and programs, together with complementary studies and capacity building activities. Once under way, the project design shifted in the direction of introducing knowledge sharing (KS) approaches into major center events in order to involve large numbers of managers and staff and foster capacity building.

The project had four main objectives: (1) to review experiences with KS, (2) to generate commitment to introducing KS approaches and tools, (3) to support the development and implementation of KS strategies, pilot activities, and support policies, and (4) to facilitate access to KS tools and techniques.

The project’s activities were coordinated by CIAT and supported by the Bellanet International Secretariat. Representatives of the Training Resources Group (TRG), and Bellanet. Before the KS Project, the team needed external support in KM and KS. Initially it was assumed TRG would be the main source of such expertise. During implementation it became clear that Bellanet could be a more cost-effective partner in developing capacities for KS within the CGIAR. As a result, TRG’s involvement in the project was scaled back, and Bellanet’s involvement expanded. Eventually Bellanet’s Allison Hewlitt took on a coordinating role in the project.

During the two-year project period, and among other activities, four CGIAR centers actively tested KS approaches and tools. Pilot initiatives at CIAT and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) resulted in the centers organizing and conducting their annual staff meetings differently, while the pilot at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) contributed to the better integration of a team of scientists who share knowledge and information and work towards common goals. The pilot initiative at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) helped the center launch its own project on KS in research.

The KS Project aimed to demonstrate how centers could, by creating opportunities for large numbers of staff to connect with one another, draw more fully on the collective knowledge of their staff and, as a result, plan and execute their work more efficiently.

The second phase of the KS Project was launched in early 2007. It offers CGIAR centers new opportunities to develop, apply, evaluate, and share innovative approaches to making their work more effective. Entitled Improving CGIAR Effectiveness, this two-year initiative comprises two main components: Institutional Knowledge Sharing (IKS), with the objective of scaling up the achievements of Phase 1, and Knowledge Sharing in Research (KSinR), with the objective of scaling out KS activities within the CGIAR and its research partners.

¹ Staiger-Rivas, Simone. Evaluation of Knowledge Sharing in CGIAR Centers – A study proposal, May 2008 (Annex 4: TOR).

Methodology

The evaluation study used semi-structured, open-ended telephone interviews to gather feedback from 14 KS practitioners directly involved in the first phase of the KS project. This anecdotal feedback was then organized and analyzed so as to shed light on the benefits and challenges of the KS Project.

The interview questions (see Annex 3) were designed to probe for different kinds of benefits associated with the projects' overall objectives that practitioners might find in their KS work. During the analysis, two groups of issues identified by respondents emerged. On the one hand, there were general concerns about KS, such as definitions, implementation path, and common obstacles. On the other hand, interviewees also raised several issues regarding how KS can add value to an organization – issues that need to be addressed to make KS work. These were termed 'dimensions of added value' and include, among other things, increased effectiveness, buy-in, collaboration, and impact on policies.

As a next step in demonstrating impact, the KS Project might consider a more elaborate social impact assessment. This would involve partnering with CG centers, NGOs, government agencies, and extension workers to track client groups and control groups to better understand what difference the KS Project has made. Such an undertaking would include a full analysis of the literature and require multiple years of primary data gathering. The present study did not have the resources for that; it aims only to solicit and analyze feedback from the CGIAR KS community involved in Phase 1 of the project.

Part 1. General Issues

Defining KS: The Need for Semantic Consistency

Respondents offered a range of personal definitions or descriptions of KS, marked by a low level of semantic consistency. The only common element here was that all interview partners seemed to prefer process-based definitions. Here are four examples, in some instances paraphrased:

KS is... access to know-how

In the context of an organization, KS is having access to know-how, or whatever it is you need to know, when you need to know it. It is not about sharing everything we need to know. What I want ultimately is to be connected to people who are going to help me do my job better because they have experience, know-how, insights, and ideas that can contribute to doing my work better, when I need these.

... a core function of research institutions

It's self-evident to me that people have knowledge on different levels. They have personal knowledge, technical knowledge, history, and a 'practical applications' kind of knowledge. KS is a core function in today's world that organizations, especially research organizations, should be practicing, as a regular part of the way they do work.

... designing processes that allow knowledge to flow

KS is about putting into place very appropriate and effective mechanisms to really allow for flow of knowledge in multiple directions. That flow can be through designing and targeting particular outputs to make sure that people get knowledge from you. It's about designing processes to allow you to capture knowledge from others. But it also includes things like learning, capacity building, and collaboration. Knowledge can flow without it being defined as exchanging knowledge but through interacting with others and learning together.

... the unwritten aspect of communication

I see a clear relation between science communication, information management, and KS. Different people define it differently of course, but for me KS is that aspect of communication that is usually not written – what is not in the articles, in the books, in the publications of the centers. It is what's really happening between people. What happens in meetings, formally and informally, in training courses, which I also consider a KS channel of course, in teleconferences... for me, that's KS. Information management is where we can use the Internet tools, databases, repositories, blogs, and all these wonderful tools. KS is what is happening when people get together in one room, or on the phone, or through a video conference, or whatever.

Conclusion

While KS practitioners themselves are quite clear about what KS means for them and what goals they work towards, the major differences in their definitions are striking. In the absence of commonly agreed on foundational concepts, KS remains contested and there is still a lack of conceptual clarity as to what KS actually is and involves.

Recommendation

The KS community should invest time to define the fundamental concepts of KS that would help create a dedicated body of knowledge, establishing KS as a separate discipline.

1. Pilot Projects: An Effective Implementation Path

The KS Project team used pilot projects to introduce KS tools and approaches to four CGIAR centers. The centers' reviews of their pilot projects range from positive to mixed. With hindsight, CIAT and CIFOR staff report a positive experience for their centers as a whole, while staff at IWMI and CIMMYT seem to have had mixed feelings. This contrasts with the participants' evaluations of the pilot meetings: overall, feedback was positive. For more on the individual centers' pilot experiences with implementing KS and their lessons learned, see Annex 1.

Based on the initial assumption that ambitious KS strategies for centers would be too top-down, a more grass roots oriented strategy was chosen. It focused on organizing major events that would get attention and win the buy-in of management. Additional entry points were training events that happened simultaneously across the centers. Identifying good practices and making them available, as well as identifying and nurturing champions of KS, worked well in most centers. Building significant in-house capacity reduced reliance on external consultants, saving resources and contributing to continuity.

An inherent limitation was the small number of pilot projects, significantly increasing risk of failure for the KS Project. However, this was addressed in the second phase of the project. Several interviewees expressed a wish to see many more KS pilots throughout the CGIAR system.

Conclusion

The KS Project's multipronged strategy of sparking curiosity about KS – by trying new ways to organize meetings, by identifying best practices and making them available, and by identifying and nurturing champions – worked out well.

Challenge

Besides the pilot-based approach, the KS team might consider introducing another tool broadly across the CGIAR. Twitter is a good candidate as it has major potential to effect change. In spirit, it is close to Open Space, the most widely used KS method during the pilot projects and the most successful.

Lessons learned

When introducing KS, it is best to start with people willing to experiment. It is important to find the right people in the right context and to get early wins.

2. Communicating KS Effectively

One issue mentioned by several interviewees was their decision not to use the term 'knowledge sharing' during the KS pilot activities. What is often perceived as the 'soft' language of KS, with its background in the social sciences, has, they say, the potential to alienate biophysical scientists.

To get around this problem, KS practitioners say they often use substitute names for KS such as 'effective communication' and 'two-way relationships'. They use language that scientists are familiar with, translating the aims of KS into objectives meaningful to in the research context. Practitioners also use other terminology such as 'improving collaboration', 'enhancing research delivery', 'widening the learning spectrum', 'monitoring and evaluation', 'feedback loops', 'improving impact and interaction with stakeholders', and 'making research more demand-driven and appropriate to local contexts'.

Conclusion

The 'soft' language associated with KS can constitute a problem in any communication with researchers. KS practitioners have learned to use language that researchers are more familiar with.

Lessons learned

To successfully communicate the rationale and benefits of KS to scientists, practitioners need to show how it can contribute to the key objectives of their research organization.

3. Current Performance Appraisal System: A Disincentive to KS

While the CGIAR Performance Assessment System isn't the subject of this report, it was pointed to so frequently during the interviews that it merits mention here. There is widespread agreement among KS practitioners that the CG's system of appraising the performance of staff members constitutes one of the greatest obstacles to the adoption of attitudes conducive to KS.

At the heart of the matter is one of the indicators of a scientist's performance: publication score. This is the number of peer-reviewed articles published every year in high ranking journals. It is said to be a perverse incentive, inducing researchers to protect information and release it only when it is absolutely final. Furthermore, the restrictive nature of the list of journals approved by the CGIAR Science Council puts many papers authored by CGIAR scientists out of the reach of their target audience: scientists in developing countries, many of whom work in institutions that cannot afford journal subscriptions.

Another systemic problem is the CGIAR's impact assessment methodologies. These are almost exclusively econometric in nature yet not applicable to every type of research important to agriculture and natural resource management in developing countries. Some interviewees believe this leads researchers to search out those kinds of research projects to which econometric analysis can be applied, thus limiting the scope of work undertaken.

Conclusion

Performance appraisal methods, in their current form, constitute a serious structural disincentive for knowledge sharing. Furthermore, they limit the potential impact of the CGIAR system because key knowledge products remain inaccessible to its main target group.

Recommendation

KS practitioners should open a dialogue with CGIAR senior managers on modifying the performance appraisal system, with a view to recognizing the value of a wider range of knowledge products. This review should deal with the value of training materials and grey literature, and put them on an equal footing with journal articles.

Part 2. Making KS Work: Dimensions of Added Value

4. KS Champions and Systemic Change

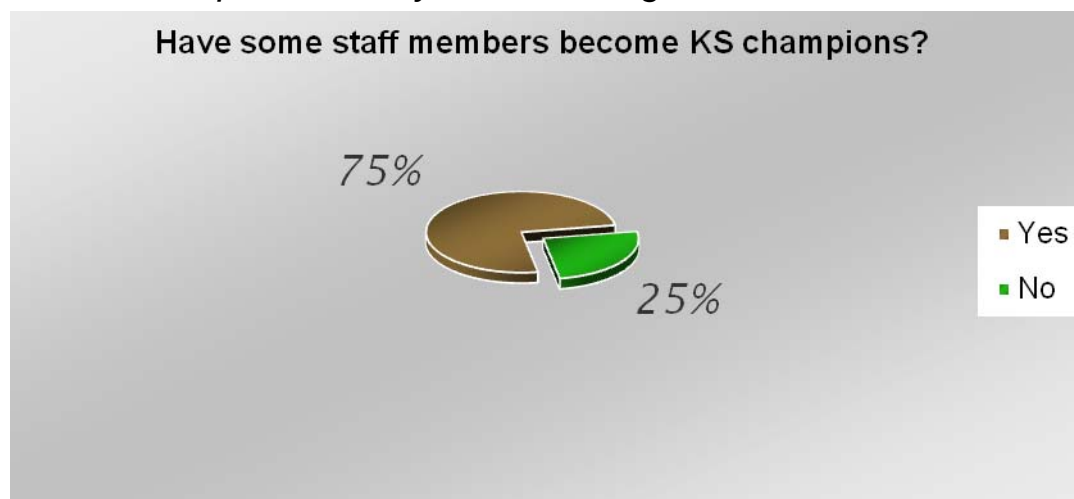


Figure 1

In three out of four centers, respondents said some staff had become KS champions. The following are considered as such by the interviewees:

CIAT	CIFOR	IWMI	CIMMYT
Simone Staiger-Rivas	Michael Hailu (now ICRAF)	Nadia Manning	Petr Kosina ²
Boru Douthwaite	Yemi Katerere		
Nathan Russell (now CG Secretariat)	Fiona Chandler (now CGIAR Alliance)		
	Feby Litamahuputty		

KS ‘travels’ throughout the CGIAR and beyond. As its practitioners and champions take up new and often more influential positions, they bring their working styles with them and continue to advocate for KS. For example, Nathan Russell, formerly the KS project leader at CIAT, now works from the CG Secretariat. Another example is Fiona Chandler who was at CIFOR at the time of the KS pilot and proved to be an ardent champion of KS. She has since moved to a key position at the Alliance Executive in Rome, potentially a strong advocate for KS.

² While Petr Kosina answered “Not directly” to this question, other KS practitioners actually see him as the KS champion at CIMMYT without whom no continuity could be guaranteed.

The downside of project leaders and KS champions moving on to other positions is the threat this poses to the continuity of KS activities at individual centers. At CIFOR, all project leaders left just before the end of the project and handover could have been smoother. Mentoring new staff is essential. While ensuring continuity is a challenge, it also is one of the most effective ways to spread KS approaches throughout the CG system.

Enrica Porcari, head of ICT-KM, said that within those centers where interventions were successful there was significant buy-in and replication. Champions moved to different centers and became agents of change in those two new settings. According to Porcari, this replication is the only way to proceed. Box 1 illustrates how KS spreads, reaching more CGIAR centers and partners.

Conclusions

All four pilot projects produced champions who subsequently carried on KS work in their own centers.

While it is hard to grasp the contribution KS has made to systemic change in the CGIAR, emerging anecdotal evidence suggests KS techniques and approaches are proliferating throughout the system. The influence of KS champions who take up new, often more influential positions in the system may provide part of the explanation.

The movement of champions to other positions poses a challenge to continuity. Nevertheless, it also appears to be one of the most effective ways to spread KS throughout the CG System.

Challenges

Conduct a network analysis of KS practitioners in the CG system, illustrating their distribution over time.

New staff need to be mentored well to ensure the continuity of KS at the centers.

Lessons learned

Tools alone are not enough. To be successful, the KS project needs its champions – both for advocacy and the continuity of work.

It is important to build institutional capacity in KS skills. In-house expertise will increase effectiveness.

Mentoring new staff is the key to KS continuity.

Box 1. The CSO Forum

“Early on at the CG Secretariat I saw a lot of opportunities to apply the same approaches we worked with in the KS project in larger CGIAR processes that encompass all the centers. Just a couple of months after I arrived at the secretariat, I heard about efforts to engage with civil society. The NGO Committee that existed proved to be a failure. So we were looking for another approach and decided to have a CSO forum at the next annual general meeting, in December 2006 in Washington, D.C. A colleague in the secretariat had written a strategy, which seemed to me a perfect opportunity to apply KS techniques. I began making the case with colleagues that we should organize the CSO forum along the lines of what we did in the pilots. The CGIAR needed a success, something that would make an impression and make us

look better with donors. Then I brought Simone[Staiger] and Allison {Hewlitt} in to facilitate it and formed a team with some other colleagues in the secretariat. Before the forum we had a very fruitful online exchange and during the forum we used several KS tools. And it was exceedingly successful at convincing donors that there was a turnaround, that there were many strong partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs). That was a major short-term success and it had an effect on the secretariat. They still think KS, they willingly consider approaches apart from conventional types of meeting organization. It definitely had an effect on the way the secretariat does things.”

Nathan Russell

5. More Meetings Designed Using KS Tools

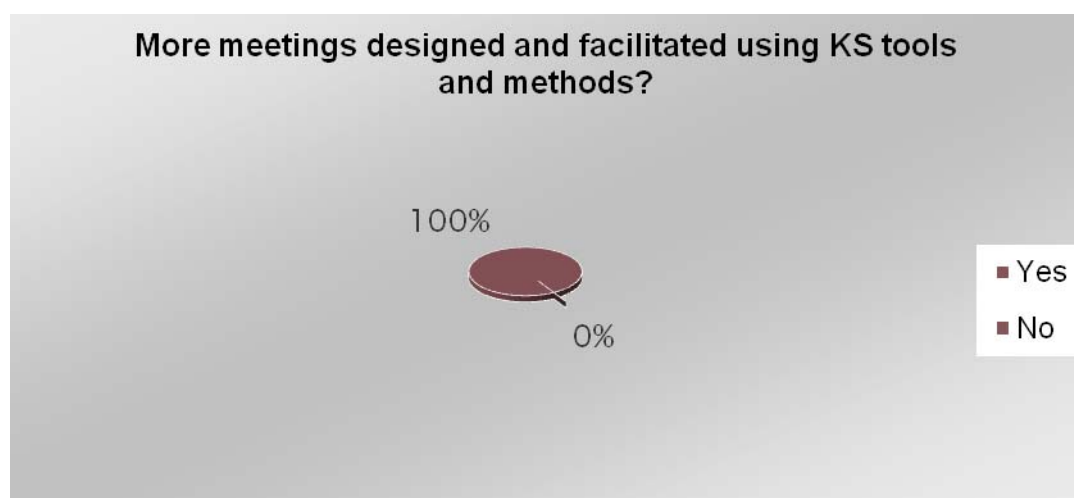


Figure 2

Those who answered this question replied positively, without exception. In fact, all the pilot centers conducted further meetings using KS approaches. CIAT had already staged three of its Knowledge Sharing Weeks. At CIFOR, the use of the Open Space method was considered a “huge runaway success (Fiona Chandler)” and was repeated twice more, each time building on the results of the previous events. Other KS tools are used in regular staff meetings.

Furthermore, KS champions like Simone Staiger-Rivas have facilitated a range of meetings, deploying KS approaches within and outside the CGIAR.

The trend, however, is not uniform. At CIMMYT, for example, the last annual general meeting (AGM) relied almost exclusively on PowerPoint presentations. The exception was a panel discussion.

Conclusion

All four centers with pilot activities have organized and continue to organize meetings using KS tools. However, not all managed to build on the initial gains and some have again turned to more traditional forms of meetings for their AGMs.

Box 2. The Greening of CIFOR

“One of the groups in Open Space – it was actually very junior staff – took the lead. They developed an activity called ‘Greening of CIFOR’, basically encouraging environmentally friendly behavior. So they came up with guidelines and procedures, entirely driven by the staff. It has become very effective and very powerful. Now they are including corporate social responsibility elements, such as being carbon neutral.... It now has a budget allocated to it and there is a working group that has continued advancing these things.... That would never have taken place if it wasn’t for Open Space.”

Michael Hailu

6. KS Improves Effectiveness

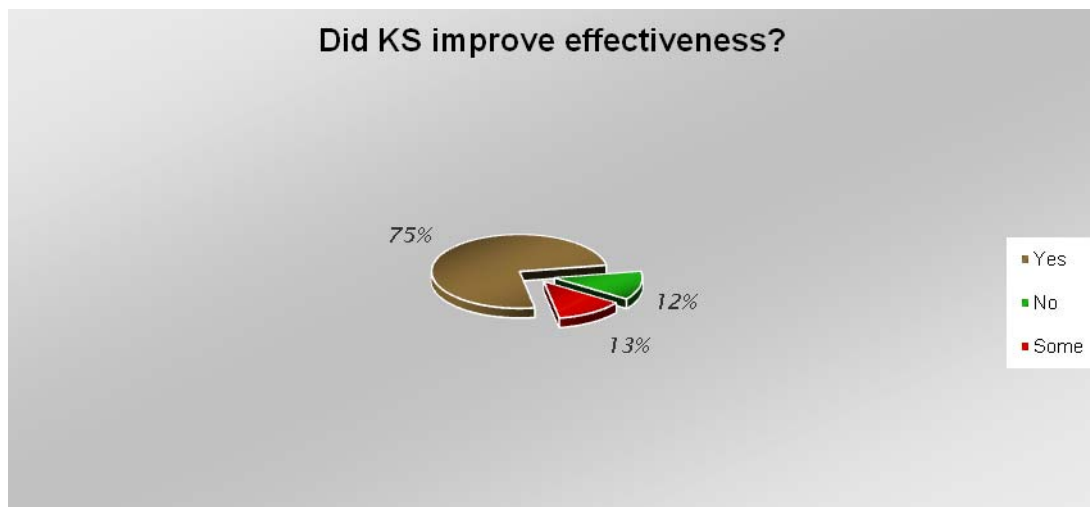


Figure 3

Three-quarters of the respondents were convinced that KS approaches improved the overall effectiveness of center activities and processes (Figure 3). In the interviews, this topic was broken down into three dimensions: saving time and resources; improving buy-in and ownership; and greater collaboration.

Yemi Katerere of CIFOR said that, since the adoption of KS, staff are better prepared for meetings, better informed, and more likely to contribute. This has improved efficiency and effectiveness. Also, having an input into agenda setting leads to a greater sense of ownership.

7. KS Saves Time and Resources

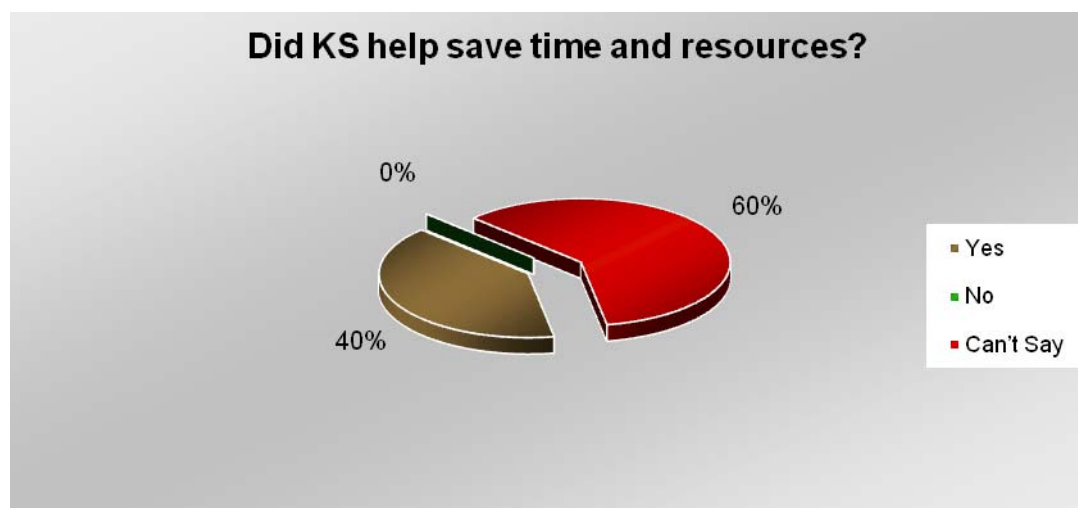


Figure 4

In contrast with the largely positive responses to overall effectiveness, only 40% of respondents could confidently claim that KS helps to save time and resources. While it is interesting that nobody said it would not save time and resources, the majority found that they can't say for sure. In this context it is also frequently mentioned that researchers tend to resist the initial investment of time required to familiarize themselves with KS tools.

There is, however, emerging anecdotal evidence about this kind of efficiency. Respondents frequently mentioned that KS saves time because people come to meetings better prepared. At CIAT, for example, online forums, blogs, and listservs are used to discuss relevant issues electronically beforehand. Thus, people are free to focus on problem solving during the actual face-to-face meetings. This saves time and leads to better decisions, a significant change compared with the situation before the start of the KS Project.

Another factor outside the scope of this evaluation that nevertheless merits mention as a contribution to time saving is the increased number of trained facilitators available in the CGIAR thanks to training courses conducted by the KS Project. Meetings are becoming more efficient and effective, reducing the time needed for debate, and allowing participants to reach consensus more easily. The problem remains, however, that these benefits are largely invisible to most staff.

Conclusion

KS practitioners tend to believe new knowledge sharing tools and methods can save time but are hesitant to make that claim. While some anecdotal evidence points to time savings because of better-run meetings, the amount of time saved has not been quantified.

Challenge

The challenge, then, is to lower the threshold of KS for first-time users and to change the perception of KS as time-consuming. The KS Project needs to make more obvious the benefits that result from the initial investment.

8. Does KS Improve Buy-In, Engagement, and Ownership?

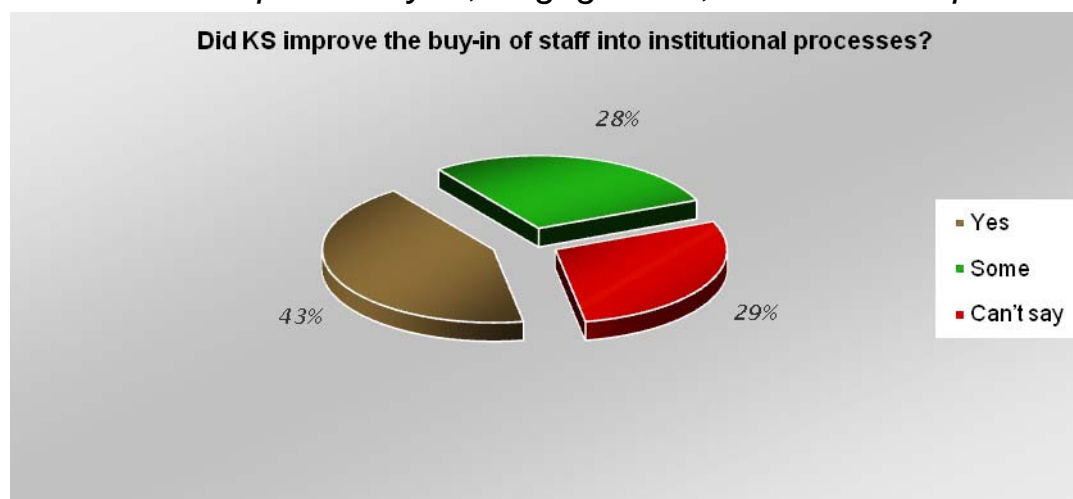


Figure 5

Opinions as to whether KS improves buy-in, engagement, and ownership are divided, with nearly half saying unequivocally that it does. Those positive responses, combined with the responses of those who thought KS approaches made at least some contribution to improved buy-in and ownership, constitute nearly three-quarters of the total. A little less than one-third of respondents were unwilling to make a claim either way. Interestingly, nobody replied negatively. See Figure 5.

CIFOR is involved in the second phase of the KS project. This continuity has helped to foster and mainstream KS in the center. A recent and positive example of how KS can improve buy-in is CIFOR's strategy process. Management was keen on the idea of wide participation. All staff should be able to say they had a chance to contribute to the strategic plan. According to CIFOR's Program Development Unit Administrator, Feby Litamahuputty, this has led to more enthusiasm about staff involvement in the process.

Conclusion

A definite claim that KS improves buy-in on all occasions cannot be made. On the one hand, a badly conducted meeting can easily alienate people from KS tools and methods, leading to their rejection. On the other hand, a successful intervention may lead to more participation and ownership.

Box 3. At CIMMYT top-down KS fails to generate buy-in among breeders

In Mexico the pilot project focused on KS in the inception workshop of a new thematic interest group – CIMMYT's Wheat Improvement Group. The aim of this gathering of wheat breeders was to clarify priorities, to form a well-integrated team, and to use the collective wisdom of the group to solve some of the key scientific issues confronting wheat improvement. Participants reported a positive experience and continued to use KS tools such as Dgroups in their work. However, KS practitioners report reluctance on the part of the breeders to engage with the new approaches. With hindsight, it appears the introduction of KS at CIMMYT was a top-down process, with little staff ownership. Without real buy-in by the breeders, no strong conclusions were produced and design for follow-up was missing. The group eventually dissolved and the annual meeting reverted to the use of traditional slide presentations. As a result, KS at CIMMYT now takes a very different approach: it is much more bottom-up and integrated.

9. KS Brings about Greater Collaboration

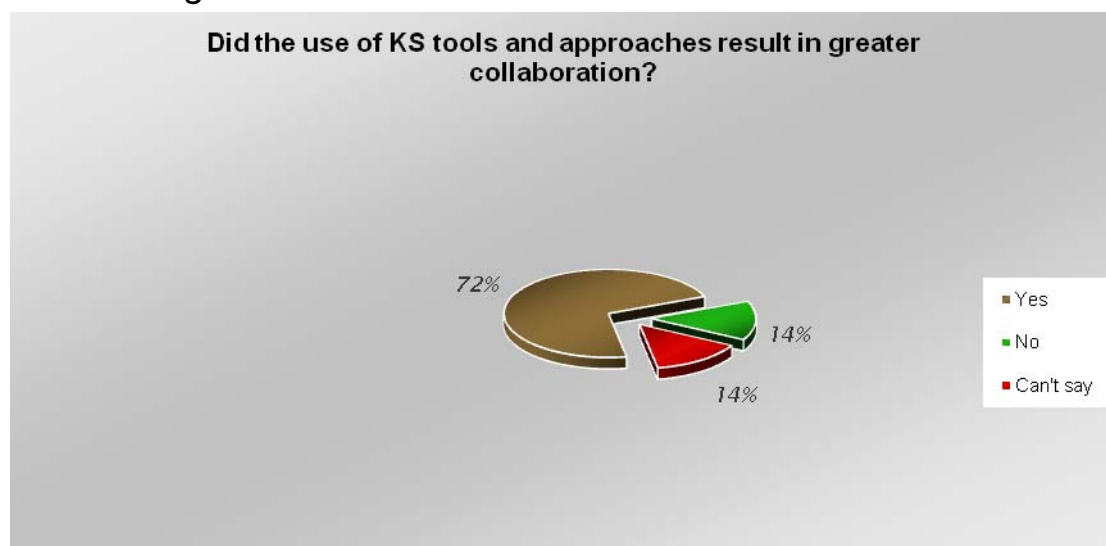


Figure 6

Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that KS brought about greater collaboration, with 14% disagreeing and 14% being undecided. Respondents are generally positive about the impact of KS on collaboration within their centers. Similar sentiments prevail regarding collaboration across centers and partnerships outside the CGIAR:

Respondents are also quite aware that the Science Council indicator of ‘increased number of partnerships’ is contested. Several pointed out that it should be about the quality of partnerships, not their number. Petr Kosina of CIMMYT said that proactive KS should enrich the networks and involve many more organizations. Networks, then, should be evaluated for the effectiveness of the collaboration they make possible, not the number of contracts signed. The focus should be on identifying trends in multistakeholder special projects, over 10 to 12 years. This may illustrate both the impact of KS and the impact on KS, as the need to ensure better communication rises with the number of partners involved.

Conclusion

KS practitioners largely agree that KS has contributed to increased collaboration at their centers and beyond.

Box 4. Strengthening CIFOR through collaboration

“One of the things that has emerged from the meetings is that people want more cross-program interaction. So they have been challenging the program to have fewer parallel sessions so that people can have this. And that definitely has happened. For example, we've had some plenary workshops and some in parallel where people had to choose. I would say for sure it has improved collaboration. It has improved people's knowledge of what is going on in the organization. It has improved the links between the different components of the organization. People have a better sense of the kind of things that are working – the successes and the lessons emerging from them.... From my perspective that's made for a stronger organization.”

Yemi Katerere

10. Management Support

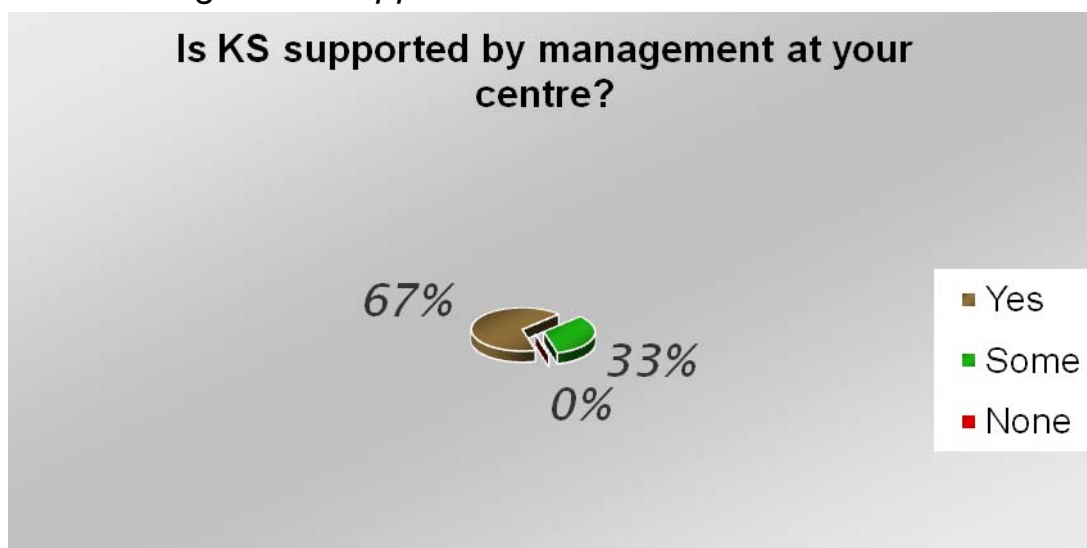


Figure 7

Two-thirds of respondents stated that management supported the introduction of KS approaches and tools at their centers. This snapshot, however, says little about the ups and downs of management support experienced by KS practitioners across the CGIAR.

ICT-KM

The ICT-KM Program enjoys good support from top Systemmanagement but seems to have mixed experiences with the centers, according to Enrica Porcari. Supportive Directors General tend to be those who have come from outside the CGIAR.

Bioversity International

Joanna Kane-Potaka, formerly with Bioversity International, finds that managers are now more open-minded about working together across centers. Such joint efforts are today more widely accepted and officially encouraged.

ILAC

The Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) initiative has seen a lot of support by managers. Jamie Watts feels that managers understand what she is talking about. However, implementation runs up against policy and practice, such as the narrowly designed performance assessments that act as a disincentive to sharing and institutional learning.

IWMI

Nadia Manning of IWMI thinks the initial support from her center's senior management waned because not enough evidence of progress was being shown. Her message is that feedback loops should be put in place because senior managers need to see how KS is benefiting the organization.

CIFOR

Knowledge sharing at CIFOR enjoys support throughout the organization, from top management down through the ranks. Yemi Katerere says that CIFOR management struggled with finding the right formula to bring everybody together and move forward, and KS seemed

to be the answer. “Since we have adopted it we have never looked back. It served us well and we will continue to use it. I would say without any hesitation it proved to be a valuable tool for us.”

CIMMYT

At CIMMYT, KS is used mostly in small meetings. In the absence of a strong management push, KS approaches are introduced from the bottom up, through smaller projects. Management seems reluctant to apply it on a large scale.

CIAT

According to Edith Hesse, there is definitely good management support behind KS at CIAT. In fact, the trend is upwards, with support now being stronger than during the initial pilot phase when the original KS practitioners at CIAT were at times fighting an uphill battle.

CG Secretariat

athan Russell was one of the original KS practitioners at CIAT and now works for the CG Secretariat. He said there should be a two-pronged approach that simultaneously targets both the grass roots and the institutional leadership. At the grass roots, there is a need to identify champions of KS and to invest time and resources in their training, so as to help them gain experience and to build their skills and knowledge. At the same time, a way must be found to secure the buy-in of managers. He felt his team was reasonably successful at the grass roots level of CIAT, but where they succeeded to get the higher-level buy-in was in the CG Secretariat.

Conclusion

KS enjoys relatively good management support throughout the CGIAR, individual experiences notwithstanding. More needs to be done, however, to demonstrate the utility of KS to senior management in order to get their buy-in.

Lessons learned

Senior management buy-in is critically important for the transition from traditional to KS-style meetings.

KS works best when applied simultaneously at the grass roots and the leadership level.

11. Policies, Procedures, and Strategies

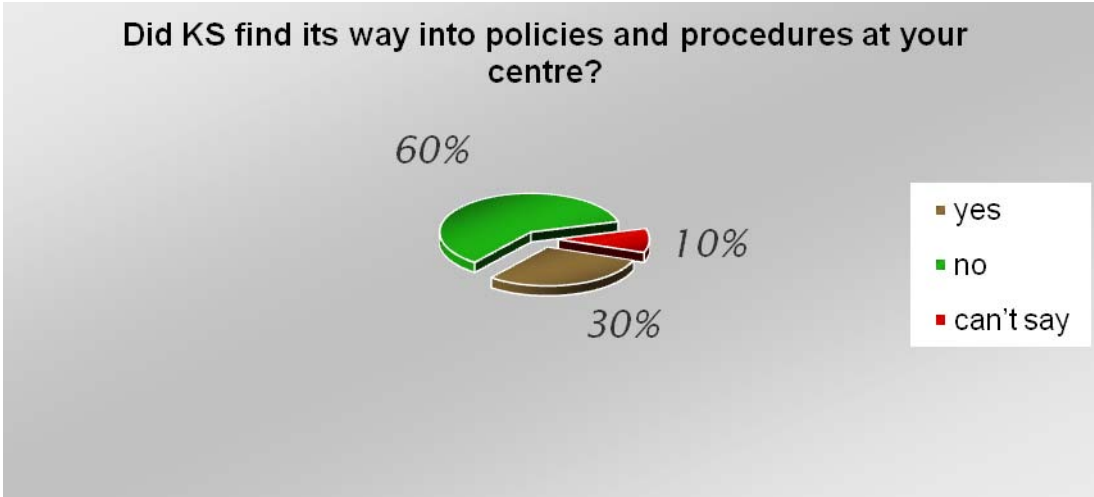


Figure 8

Less than one-third of respondents said KS had found its way into strategies and procedures at their center. Almost two-thirds said KS has still not been institutionalized in the form of concrete strategies at their center. However, KS approaches were used to inform and build strategies in a participatory manner.

At **CIMMYT** a KS and communications strategy is currently being designed. The strategy development process is strongly endorsed by the director general. Furthermore, collaborative research does have a lot of space and always has, according to Petr Kosina.

CIAT does not have a formal KS strategy but is now in the process of drawing up a communications strategy and KS will be an important component of it. Management supports this integrated approach. At CIAT there is also close cooperation between knowledge sharing, communications, and human resources staff.

At **IWMI** knowledge sharing found its way into a major policy at the institute, according to Nadia Manning. The institute decided to become a 'knowledge center' and developed a change management strategy called the Knowledge Centre Initiative. One part of that was the KSinR Project, but the initiative also looked at HR policies, data management, and other aspects. However, it was too broad and had neither the necessary budget nor personnel to support it.

CIFOR does not have a formal KS strategy but has been using KS techniques to craft a new institutional strategy. According to Feby Litamahuputty, the impact from the first phase of the KS Project was mostly on the strategy-formulation process itself. In the second phase, CIFOR has attempted to align all its work domains with the strategy, via annual meetings. Staff and management have also been exploring a framework for monitoring and evaluating the execution of the new strategy. Michael Hailu notes that the various elements that create an environment where KS can succeed, in terms of communications and IT, have been incorporated into the strategy.

Conclusion

Few centers have explicit KS strategies and it is questionable whether a separate KS strategy is desirable at all. Most practitioners prefer to integrate KS into communications, human resource, and IT strategies as part of an overall business plan.

Lessons learned

Building strategies and policies using KS tools lets staff engage in the process and own the results. This in turn ensures the continuity of the institutional culture and facilitates dealing with continuous change and organizational development.

KS works best when it is integrated into an organization's overall business plan, alongside communications and other strategies, rather than being treated as a separate task.

12. *Cooperation between Change Initiatives*

This is a somewhat sensitive issue involving diverse groups and subgroups within the CG system: ICT-KM, ILAC, PRGA, IKS, KSinR, and initiatives on rural innovation, impact assessment, and other topics. These initiatives have evolved in different ways and have often been accused of duplicating efforts. Taking into account the reality of CGIAR centers competing with each other for projects and funding, the scope for collaboration between these various change initiatives in the past was likely rather limited.

However, given the current ‘Change Process’ of the CGIAR and the work of the Alliance, these largely political barriers are beginning to break down. The various groups just mentioned are all part of the reform effort and the diversity of their voices should be considered an asset when they advocate for a less traditionalist agenda. Virtually all of the practitioners that were interviewed for this study expressed a wish to coordinate better, to have ‘a common front’. There is now a major opportunity for a coordinated common intervention in the Change Process to advocate for KS.

“We generally have the same kind of objectives and we need to be better at building coalitions and having a common front,” concludes ILAC’s Jamie Watts. “That’s why I don’t see the advantage of really talking about overlap. I think that there is enough difference and plenty of room for all of us, and what we need to get better at is working really well together.”

Conclusion

The various change initiatives in the CGIAR have to some extent been competing with each other. Practitioners, however, are by and large in favor of more coordination regarding their role in the CGIAR Change Process.

Challenge

The various change initiatives within the CGIAR should develop a common advocacy strategy that would enable them to insert key messages in the Change Process. The aim of this strategy should be to generate commitment at the top of the system in order to increase impact.

Monitoring & Evaluation for Knowledge Sharing

The original objectives of this study also included developing an M&E framework for KS for the CGIAR. Planned project outputs included the development of M&E criteria and indicators. It was suggested that progress markers of behavior be established instead of more traditional indicators, particularly because the KS project's overall goal is cultural change in the CGIAR. This would presumably manifest itself in changed behavior among staff. As much was stated by KS Project staff in their self-assessment:

“In very broad terms, it was expected that the KS Project would encourage people in the CGIAR to do their work differently. The expected changes include more openness and sharing, people seeking out the knowledge, experience and advice of their peers, people more willing to admit and discuss failures and learn from them, more teamwork within programs and centres, and ultimately, more teamwork across the centres. These behavioral changes together would constitute a profound cultural change (Self-Assessment 24).”

Type of M&E System

Anfocused M&E system [<WHAT IS A 'UTILIZATION-FOCUSED' M&E SYSTEM? CLARIFY OR DELETE.] for knowledge sharing in the CGIAR will have to fulfill the following requirements:

- Take a systems perspective.
- Use a network approach.
- Understand cultural change as social learning Observe behavior not impact.
- Be simple and cost-effective.
- Be transferable and produce generic indicators.

KS Project Objectives

Setting up an M&E framework requires the establishment of criteria against which progress toward certain project objectives can be assessed. Together with the set of criteria and clearly defined objectives, it is possible to develop suitable indicators and then plan what kind of information to collect, when, from what sources, how, and who is responsible for it.

The first problem here is that the KS Project's objectives (see Background and Context section above) are too specific to allow them to be used as the basis for a generic framework transferable to individual CGIAR centers and to the CG system itself. It would be more suitable, then to use the more general goal of cultural change. This broader goal would then need to be further operationalized and translated into concrete workable project objectives, namely the five behavioral changes related to greater staff openness and teamwork, quoted above from the KS Project self-assessment.

Criteria

A second problem pertains to the choice of criteria. Various sets of evaluation criteria appear in the literature. The standard development evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC)

are well established but have historically been linked with evaluation purposes such as upward accountability, performance evaluation, and impact assessment. Furthermore, experience over the last decade or so has shown that evaluation results are rarely used to inform planning and often remain unused. Closing the project cycle would require the evaluation findings to feed into a new round of planning and implementation. Learning could potentially close the gap between evaluation and planning. A learning-oriented evaluation needs a different set of criteria, however. Table 1 illustrates this tension between evaluation for learning and evaluation for accountability.

Table 1. Evaluation for accountability versus evaluation for learning

	Evaluation for Accountability	Evaluation for Learning
Main purpose	Accountability	Learning and improvement
Focus of questions	Were goals achieved?	What worked? What didn't? Why?
Stakeholder roles	Provide information and review the report	Engage actively in all stages of the evaluation
Assumptions about research	Impacts can be attributed directly to research.	Many interlinked factors contribute to change. End results cannot be attributed to specific research investments.

(Source: ILAC Brief 3)

Frameworks that specifically address M&E in learning organizations have been developed to reflect this difference in purpose. Most famously, Peter Senge’s (1990) *The Fifth Discipline* suggests a different set of criteria. Another popular approach is Collison and Parcell’s (2001) Five Competencies Framework. The table below presents three sets of potentially useful criteria for evaluating learning in an organization. A significant body of literature on the subject exists, but it was beyond the scope of this paper to do a thorough review. Suffice it to say there is currently a discussion within the KM4Dev community of practice exploring the use of the Senge and Five Competencies criteria in M&E for knowledge management and knowledge sharing.

Table 2. Three sets of evaluation criteria

OECD/DAC	Senge: Five streams of organizational learning	Five Competencies Framework
Relevance	Personal mastery	Strategy development
Effectiveness	Shared vision	Management techniques
Efficiency	Mental models	Collaboration mechanisms
Impact	Team learning	KS and learning processes
Sustainability	System thinking	Knowledge capture and storage

KS Impact on Three Levels

A further way to structure the search for indicators is to divide the KS system into relatively distinct levels of expected impact³. These correspond roughly to three stakeholder groups: researchers, managers, and human resources staff. A stakeholder-centered perspective is useful because a network approach can add much to the understanding of project impacts. In fact, conducting a network analysis of the spread of KS practitioners throughout the CGIAR system and beyond to illustrate the impact of the KS Project follows directly from the conclusion that champions moving in the system are one of the most effective ways to promote KS. It is also one of the core recommendations of this study for future research.

The following three levels can be applied to CGIAR centers and to some degree to the CG system as a whole.

Project management and implementation

In a time of dwindling core funding, most CGIAR money goes to research projects directly. That in turn means scientists spend a large portion of their time managing projects and their implementation. Significant impacts of KS, then, should be directly manifested in the way scientists execute projects, involve partners in decision making, and communicate and document project goals and outputs. Once behavioral change on that level can be clearly documented, the link between KS and research will be also be firmly established.

Management

The second level is management. KS impact here pertains to transparency and openness, a culture of participation, staff involvement in decision making, and the space given to discussion and the possibility of voicing constructive criticism freely without negative repercussions. The impact on management is also seen in how meetings are run and in the extent to which KS is institutionalized in policies and procedures. The phase 1 efforts of the KS Project have been at this level and the next, human resources units. [**<ARE YOU SAYING THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EFFORT AT THE FIRST LEVEL DURING PHASE 1, NAMELY PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION? PLEASE CLARIFY OR MAYBE DELETE THE SENTENCE ABOUT PHASE 1 OF THE KS PROJECT.>**]

Human resources level

In many organizations KS resides in the human resources unit. Impact on this level means training events are being conducted, staff are becoming champions, and people are being introduced to tools and methods.

Impact & Behavior

The possibility of demonstrating the impact of development research by documenting the unfolding project along a linear implementation chain has been called into question (Smutylo, 2001). If the impact of KS is understood as social learning across a spectrum of stakeholder groups, the complexity of the process quickly becomes clear. As we have seen, the chief goal of effecting cultural change in the CGIAR can be restated in terms of changed behavior. It thus makes sense to use a methodology that focuses on demonstrating contributions by documenting people's behavior – in this instance, how staff do their work differently. Outcome mapping is one such methodology.

³ This is based largely on a conversation with Yemi Katerere.

It also needs to be recognized that the need for quantitative data to demonstrate impact is not going away – particularly in the context of trying to persuade traditionalist ‘hard’ scientists of the utility of KS and to justify their initial investment of time to master KS tools. Therefore, a suitably realistic M&E framework for KS in the CGIAR will have to do two things: document behavioral change over time by tracking descriptive progress markers, and count what can be counted with the help of numerical indicators.

The KS practitioners interviewed for this study were asked two questions about M&E: What indicators would you look out for? And what sort of behavioral change would you like to see? Their answers are summarized in the table below. The next step in developing an M&E framework for KS in the CGIAR is to select the most practical indicators. Some of the respondents conflated behavior and attitude change. More clarity is needed here.

Table 3. KS practitioners’ view of M&E framework requirements

Stakeholders	Desired Behavioral Change	Progress Marker	Indicator
Goal 1. More openness and sharing			
Researchers	Participate in planning and strategy meetings and thus have a sense of ownership	Participate proactively in discussion and decision making	Number of interventions from ‘normal’ staff Number of people with critical interventions
Researchers	Contribute to internal communication systems, see value in them	Engage in intra-net conversations, blogs, newsletters	Number of subscribers Number of comments Number of questions that received a useful answer
Researchers	Voluntarily contribute to external communications	Submit high-quality material for external website to communications department	Website hits Number of staff contributions
Researchers Managers	Work is open to influence of others	Consult others early on in the process	Number of stakeholder consultations conducted
Researchers Managers	Run meetings in a productive way	Encourage facilitation of events	Number of facilitated meetings Type and number of KS tools used Number of follow-up actions committed to
Goal 2. People are seeking out the knowledge, experience and advice of their peers			
Researchers Managers	Makes decisions transparently and not in isolation	Systematically involves others in key decisions	Number of open/closed office doors
HR	Conducts regular training events to enhance facilitation skills & use of KS tools		Number of people trained in KS skills Number of training events conducted

Stakeholders	Desired Behavior Change	Progress Marker	Indicator
Goal 3. People are more willing to admit and discuss failures and learn from them			
Researchers Managers	See value in being connected and are convinced they can do better work in that fashion	Network actively and systematically	Use of social networking tools
Goal 4. More teamwork within programs and centers			
Researchers	Increase their interaction among staff	Take active interest in the work of colleagues	Number of times one unit invites another unit to its meetings Number of people congregating at cafeteria or snack bar
Researchers	Use tools to make teamwork more effective	Use social networking tools Collaborate online Use IT for teamwork	Type and number of KS tools used Number of internal listservs Number of subscribers
Goal 5. More teamwork across the centers			
Researchers	Become involved in projects across centers	Use social networking tools Collaborate online Use IT for teamwork	Number of collaborators in projects over time Number of contracts signed Type and number of KS tools Membership in COPs Number of publications with developing country partners Number of more accessible products created

Future Research

The next step in developing a comprehensive M&E framework for knowledge sharing in the CGIAR should be a discussion of criteria. One can then proceed to map these criteria against project objectives to select the most suitable indicators for monitoring cultural change in the CGIAR.

The KS Project should also consider another means of assessing its impact, namely a social network analysis. This would graphically demonstrate the spread of KS practitioners and practices throughout the CG system over time.

Finally, the Project should also consider carrying out a more elaborate social impact assessment. This would involve partnering with CG centers, NGOs, government agencies, and extension workers to track client groups and control groups, to understand what difference the Project has made. The process would have to build on a full analysis of the literature and have to be undertaken over several years of gathering primary data.

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Annex 1. Pilot Experiences in the Centers

The centers' reviews of their KS experiences range from positive to mixed. With hindsight, CIAT and CIFOR staff report largely positive experiences for their respective centers, while staff at IWMI and CIMMYT seem to have mixed feelings. This contrasts with the participants' evaluations of the pilot meetings, where overall mainly positive feedback was given.

CIAT Knowledge Sharing Week

To break with its tradition of annual meetings dominated by formal presentations, CIAT's KS team experimented with a new format. The Knowledge Sharing Week was held from 29 November to 4 December 2004 and was designed to help staff share knowledge, strengthen relationships, and improve communication and collaboration within CIAT. The week's three objectives were (1) to enhance the integration of headquarters and regional staff activities; (2) to develop a shared understanding of three major initiatives referred to as Research-for-Development Challenges and contribute to their effective operationalization; and (3) to promote effective work planning on the part of project teams and collaborators.

To implement KS Week, the CIAT pilot used, among others, the following KS tools and methods (in italics):

- *Open space* was used by staff to set the agenda of the week, discuss action plans, and advance the R&D agenda of three major initiatives.
- *A research support knowledge fair* highlighted the work of CIAT's support units.
- *Peer assist* was used to help national staff to thematize their relationships with headquarters. The session focused on practical problem solving in small groups.
- *After-action reviews* were conducted during the event by the so-called "barometer team". ...?] Participants also completed a questionnaire at the end of the event. A dedicated *website* and *online event planner* kept people informed of KS Week developments before the event.

Various *social events*, including an evening of music from around the world, performed by a Colombian group, ensured the event also had entertainment value.

What worked and what didn't

The feedback from the participants' evaluation was largely positive. Participants felt CIAT's Knowledge Sharing Week demonstrated the value of KS and had improved communications and relationships at the center. "Operationalizing the center's development challenges" did not work out very well, participants felt, because of the complexities involved and lack of background information.

Tools that resonated positively with the participants were open space, peer assists, and the knowledge fair. The website and the online event planner were less appreciated. The posters that researchers prepared for the knowledge fair form a collection on CIAT's website. They are heavily used, giving researchers a platform for their work that transcends the original KS week.

CIAT's KS week was well documented in multimedia products and has been repeated three times. Besides the tools mentioned above, CIAT's KS practitioners have added the following to their portfolio: communities of practice, D-Groups, distance education, blogs, wikis,

Google Docs, Google Applications, visioning, RSS, Flickr, and Delicious. CIAT also maintains an active intranet.

CIFOR Annual Meeting

CIFOR's Annual Meeting with the central theme "Working together to make a difference" took place from 19 to 23 September 2004. It had but one objective: to maximize the amount of staff interaction and input in the important issues CIFOR faces today while making sure these interactions happen in a meaningful, productive and professional way. On top of that people should have fun.

The KS Project Team facilitated the development of an innovative program for the meeting. With their help CIFOR's Program Advisory Committee and CIFOR staff of decided on the following tools and methods to be used during the meeting:

- A one-day *knowledge fair*.
- An *open space* session on "Working together to make a difference."
- A *peer assist* session on regional and global issues.
- A *chat show* to talk openly about an upcoming External Performance Measurement Review.
- A *program meeting day*.
- An *evaluation* form filled in by participants at the end of the meeting.

What worked and what didn't

What worked well was pre-meeting announcements and other communications before the annual meeting to maintain staff interest and motivation. Also, opening up the meeting to national staff was considered a major positive change.

Positive feedback from participants included the openness of the meeting and the lively, engaging, and democratic atmosphere; the active involvement of all staff and the feeling of togetherness; the many opportunities for discussion; and the open space methodology, which allowed participants to raise issues they really cared about. There was also positive reaction to a 10-minute video that captured lessons from the meeting and which was shown to staff immediately after the event.

Limitations identified by the participants included the lack of cross-program communication and planning and insufficient time for in-depth discussion. Scientists complained there was not enough science presented and discussed during the meeting.

Open space in particular left a lasting impression on CIFOR staff. It allowed young people to put their issues on the agenda and interact with senior staff. What did not work well, however, was follow-up. Staff who took the lead did not seem to communicate results very well. The project team found they needed to better communicate the idea that taking responsibility and being accountable for planned actions are central to open space.

Other methods in use at CIFOR since the pilot meeting include *world café*, *delfi process*, *full circle*, *after-action review*, *evaluation summit*, and *outcome mapping*. Staff at CIFOR also use several electronic tools such as an intranet and live blogging during meetings, allowing people to comment in real time. These, however, did not catch on very well because regional staff and partners are subject to bandwidth limitations.

IWMI – Knowledge Sharing in Research

Under its previous project leader, IWMI launched an ambitious pilot focusing on KS in research. The project has in turn spawned a host of its own pilots and is now working hand in hand with the Institutional Knowledge Sharing Project. It is part of IWMI's comprehensive Knowledge Centre strategy. Its objective is to enhance the impact of agricultural research by helping to bridge the gap between scientists and end-users of research results. It focuses mainly on increasing the effectiveness and impact of research by enhancing interaction between all stakeholders. Through the project IWMI is identifying, evaluating and documenting innovative KS and communications methods that scientists and their partners can use in research.

Inception workshop

With support of the KS project an inception workshop was organized in Colombo in June 2005. It brought 17 researchers together in order to start thinking about how KS in Research could be done. Participants should reach a shared understanding of KS in research and draft concept notes for projects to integrate KS approaches and tools into current research activities. The inception workshop was facilitated by Allison Hewlitt of Bellanet and Simone Staiger of CIAT who employed a range of KS approaches including:

- *A knowledge fair* in which participants shared experiences and activities involving KS.
- *An open space* session on a range of ideas for enhancing KS between researchers and users.
- *Outcome mapping* to identify challenges and progress markers.
- *A peer assist* session based on issues raised by participants.
- *An after-action review* at the end of the workshop to gather feedback and capture lessons learned.

The participants evaluating the workshop found that the knowledge fair and outcome mapping exercise were most important and interesting to them. They also said they were committed to applying KS approaches to strengthen relationships within research teams and with partners.

KS at IWMI

In order to increase interaction at the institute, various KS approaches were rapidly introduced to the center, including knowledge fairs, open space, and monthly all-staff meetings.

There is a perception within IWMI that KS has been taken too far, focusing on fun elements at the expense of approaches that could really help develop strategic directions for research. This led to a backlash three years down the line when researchers demanded a highly structured, research-oriented meeting, without nonresearch staff. The meeting was planned only by researchers and did not involve the Information and Knowledge Group.

KSinR pilot projects

The KS in Research Project at IWMI started to work with 10 pilots of its own. At this point, the project also moved beyond its originally intended scope. The KS project team did not have the resources to support 10 new pilots.

The pilot projects themselves used the following methods among others:

- Learning alliances

- Outcome mapping
- World cafés
- Consultations for designing research projects
- More inclusive planning meetings for project activities
- Other ways of better interacting with stakeholders.

Several pilots failed early on but some continue to use KS tools and approaches and to carry out consultations with their stakeholders. They developed products other than journal articles and have tried to improve meetings and interactions with their stakeholders. Some of the researchers on those projects have even become champions of KS.

It seems, however, that the initial scope of the project, as conceived by its original leader, was too ambitious. There were too many pilot projects, their focuses tended to be narrow, and resources to support them all were insufficient. The grandeur of the original project idea together with the lack of proper follow-up led to resentment among staff and tainted KS at IWMI. Furthermore, proper documentation and a good M&E framework were lacking, making it difficult to capture and share lessons from the experience.

CIMMYT – Wheat Improvement Group

The pilot focused on KS in the inception workshop of a new thematic interest group – CIMMYT's Wheat Improvement Group. This gathering of wheat breeders took place from 30 March to 2 April 2005 at Ciudad Obregon in Mexico. Its objectives were (1) to clarify how the group will contribute to program priority areas; (2) to contribute to the formation of a well-integrated team of scientists that share knowledge and information and work toward common goals; and (3) to use the collective wisdom of the group to develop plans to solve some of the key scientific issues confronting wheat improvement.

The following KS tools and methods were applied:

- An open *space* approach was used to set the agenda of the first two days.
- Peer *assists* allowed individuals with a specific problem to solicit ideas and suggestions from their peers.
- *Dgroups* intended for online conversation were set up.
- *After-action reviews* were conducted.

What worked and what didn't

The participants' evaluations are largely positive, citing space for everybody to be heard and enhancing the spirit and cohesiveness of the team among the positive features of the meeting. The after-action reviews and Dgroups were considered more helpful than open space and peer assists.

This largely positive feedback contrasts with opinions from practitioners who report significant reluctance on the part of the WIG scientists. KS at CIMMYT seems to have been driven by a top-down process resulting in little sense of ownership by participants. Without real engagement by the breeders, no strong conclusions were produced and design for follow-up was missing. The group eventually dissolved.

Annex 2. Interview questions

Personal Background

- What is KS for you?
- What role did you play during the intervention?
- What role are you playing now?
- What did the intervention change for you?

Change at CG center

- How does the center review its experiences with KS?
- How did participants evaluate the intervention?
- How do you review your personal experience with KS?
- What happened in the KS intervention/pilot experience?
- What worked? What didn't?
- Have some staff members become KS champions?
- Did staff attend capacity-strengthening efforts in KS?
- What were the consequences of those interventions?
- What KS approaches and tools have been introduced?
- Have there been more meetings designed and facilitated using KS tools and methods?
- Has your center adopted KS in other areas of institutional life?

Dimensions of effectiveness

- Did KS approaches help to improve the effectiveness of center activities, processes?
- Did KS approaches help to improve the buy-in of staff into institutional processes?
- Did it help save time, resources, etc.?
- Did the use of KS tools and approaches result in greater collaboration?
- Have there been efforts to develop and implement KS/KM strategies and policies?
- What would you like to see happen in your center?

Support at CG center

- How does your center support the use of KS approaches?
- Did the management at your center support KS?
- Did KS contribute to a culture of participatory decision making?
- Did your center hire new people with technical skills or gap knowledge?
- Were there changes in Medium Term Plans?
- Did KS find its way into policies and procedures?

CG Network / Systems changes

- What new boundaries have been breached, what new collaborations undertaken?
- What resources were allocated to boundary-transgressing KS work?
- Did you get inspired by the KS project?
- Do the various KM/S projects resonate on a systemic level; do they reinforce each other?

Concluding questions

- Are there any lessons learnt?
- M&E indicators: What would you look out for?
- Progress markers: What sort of behavior change would you like to see?
- Would you have a final message to take home for me?

Annex 3. Interviewees

Name	Center at the time of KS Project activity	Now	Interview date
Edith Hesse	CIAT	CIAT	22 July, 2008
Enrica Porcari	ICT-KM	ICT-KM	23 July, 2008
Fiona Chandler	CIFOR	CGIAR Alliance Secretariat	24 July, 2008
Joanna Kane-Potaka	Bioversity International	IWMI	24 July, 2008
Allison Hewlitt	IDRC / Bellanet	Consultant	25 July, 2008
Jamie Watts	ILAC	ILAC	6 August, 2008
Feby Litamahuputty	CIFOR	CIFOR	7 August, 2008
Nadia Manning	IWMI	IWMI	8 August, 2008
Susan MacMillan	ILRI	ILRI	26 August, 2008
Yemi Katerere	CIFOR	CIFOR	27 August, 2008
Douglas Horton	ILAC / IKS	Consultant	27 August, 2008
Petr Kosina	CIMMYT	CIMMYT	27 August, 2008
Michael Hailu	CIFOR	ICRAF	28 August, 2008
Nathan Russell	CIAT	CGIAR Secretariat	28 August, 2008

Annex 4. Terms of Reference

Evaluation of Knowledge Sharing in CGIAR Centers – A study proposal

Simone Staiger-Rivas, May 2008

I. Background and Context

The CGIAR took an important step toward improved knowledge management by creating the ICT–KM Program. Its strategic plan envisions “a CGIAR without boundaries, an internationally distributed, unified, and open knowledge organization.” As part of its effort to realize that vision, the Program embarked in 2004 on a number of projects one of which was a project designed to foment a knowledge sharing (KS) culture within the CGIAR. Coordinated by CIAT, the project design originally centered on the development of comprehensive knowledge management (KM) strategies in CGIAR centers and programs together with complementary studies and capacity building activities. Once under way, the project design shifted in the direction of introducing knowledge sharing (KS) approaches into major center events in order to involve large numbers of managers and staff and foster capacity building.

The project had 4 principle objectives: (1) Review experiences with KS; (2) Generate commitment to introducing KS approaches and tools; (3) Support the development and implementation of KS strategies, pilot activities, and support policies; (4) Facilitate access to KS tools and techniques.

During the two-year project period and among other activities, four CGIAR centers were actively involved in testing KS approaches and tools. Pilot initiatives at CIAT and CIFOR resulted in the centers organizing and conducting their annual staff meetings differently, while CIMMYT’s pilot led to the formation of an integrated team of scientists who share knowledge and information and work towards common goals. IWMI’s pilot initiative helped the center launch its own pilot project on KS in research.

The project activities aimed at demonstrating how Centers can plan and conduct their work with greater efficiency by drawing more fully on the collective knowledge of their staff. By creating opportunities for large numbers of center staff to connect with one another through KS approaches, the pilots aimed to identify practical ways for each participating center to enhance the efficiency of its work.

The second phase of the KS Project was launched in early 2007, to offer new opportunities to CGIAR centers to develop, apply, evaluate, and share innovative approaches to making their work more effective. Entitled “Improving CGIAR Effectiveness”, this two-year initiative comprises two main components: Institutional Knowledge Sharing (IKS), with the objective of scaling up the achievements of Phase 1; and Knowledge Sharing in Research (KSinR), with the objective of scaling out KS activities within the CGIAR and research partners.

II. Project Overview

Rationale

The Project Team of the first phase undertook a self-assessment at the end of project activities, which provides the background for the proposed study and can be considered as its starting point. This self-assessment and the experiences with the current project activities

seem to demonstrate that KS approaches are crucial if we aim to build our work upon the collective knowledge of our staff and research partners. An independent evaluation of those experiences should not only help us to explore the validity of those statements but also serve as an entry point for the development of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for KS.

The project team decided initially in 2004 not to center its activities on development of comprehensive KM strategies in CGIAR centers and programs. In 2008 we are observing that the path of experimenting and building capacities with KS over the past four years has led many centers to consider the formulation of such well informed strategies. An evaluation of Phase 1 experiences could contribute to such efforts.

Scope

We are proposing an activity for the IKS project that aims to do an ex-post impact assessment of the pilot initiatives that were developed in Phase 1. The evaluation will focus specifically on the influence that the high-profile center events might have had on subsequent knowledge sharing activities, principles and/or policies in those centers.

How does each center review its experiences with KS? What were the consequences of those interventions? What KS approaches and tools have been introduced? Have there been more meetings designed and facilitated using KS tools and methods? Have the centers adopted KS in other areas of their institutional life? Have some staff members become KS champions? Did KS approaches help to improve the effectiveness of center activities, processes? Did it help save time, resources etc? Did the use of KS tools and approaches result in greater collaboration? Have there been efforts to develop and implement KS strategies and policies? These are some of the questions that are of interest if we want to be able to document the impact of KS interventions.

The study includes other centers who are using KS tools, principles, and methods, but who were not directly involved in the Phase 1 pilot initiatives (Bioversity International and ILRI, for example). Finally, it would be useful to include the CGIAR Secretariat which has now been incorporating KS methods in its activities for the past two years.

Goal

Scale up the use of knowledge sharing approaches, tools, and methods within the CGIAR.

Outputs

The project will develop and implement an evaluation plan for phase 1 KS activities in the four centers that had pilot projects with the KS project of the ICT-KM Program and two additional centers, as well as the CGIAR Secretariat. The project will include the development of criteria and indicators for an M&E framework.

Objectives

- Assess the project in terms of its original rationale, design & implementation.
- Determine the impact of Phase 1 pilot activities on the direct and indirect clients.
- Identify follow-up actions that would inform allocation decisions.
- Generate lessons that can improve the implementation of ongoing and future initiatives.
- Develop an M&E framework for KS for the CGIAR.

The project activities should result in a written report that should contain a narrative of the evaluation and findings; stories written and in form of podcast and videos; and photos. These elements will allow the IKS Project and the ICT-KM Program to develop different publications (articles, posters, leaflets) for different media and sharing opportunities, like the Web site, blog, toolkit, and newsletter.

Intended users are the ICT-KM Program which will apply the results in planning and use them to adjust future activities, as well as CGIAR center and system office staff that are interested in criteria, indicators, and pathways for monitoring and evaluating KS processes (i.e., the Marketing Group and IT and IM managers). KS practitioners in the development field might also be interested in this study.

Methodology

To deliver those outputs, the ICT-KM KS team will select a consultant to support the design and undertake implementation of the project activities. The consultant will have (in order of importance): extensive experience in M&E; extensive experience with KS tools, principles, and methods; and a good knowledge of the CGIAR system.

The consultant and the KS team will jointly develop the evaluation plan which could contain: questionnaires and interviews, but also feature “most significant change” or similar methodologies. All those activities will be done virtually. No travel will be required to conduct the study.

Possible CGIAR contacts

CGIAR Secretariat (CSO forum): Fiona Douglas, Nathan Russell

CIFOR (annual meeting): Frances Seymour, Yemi Katerere, Feby Litamahuputty, Michael Hailu, Fiona Chandler

CIAT (KS week): Simone Staiger-Rivas, Edith Hesse, Douglas Pachico, Boru Douthwaite

CIMMYT (Wheat Breeders’ Meeting): Petr Kosina

IWMI (KS in Research Pilot Project) : Nadia Manning, July Van der Blink

Bioversity International: Jamie Watts, Brigitte Laliberté, Joanna Kane-Potaka

ILRI: Susan MacMillan

Ford Foundation Mexico: David Kaimowitz

Timeline, Activities, and Budget

Mid-June: Approval of concept and selection of consultant

End of June: Development of methodology

July/August: Implementation

End of September: Report finalized

Budget

The estimated consultancy budget is US\$15,000.

Annex 5. Stories

Traditional ways are suboptimal

“From my experience at CIFOR, and also from what we are starting to do here at ICRAF, a small investment in KS approaches has made a significant impact in terms of institutional change and efficiency. It has gone a long way to helping resolve internal communications, to creating much higher participation. You even wonder how we operated without this before. It is really significant. For most people it is not visible because they don’t know the before and after. But when I look at it, I really wonder: how did we do in the past? And I am reliving that experience right now because we are putting in place these approaches here. It’s already making quite a big difference. But you could see that traditional ways of interaction in meetings are sub-optimal and very unproductive.”

Michael Hailu, CIFOR & ICRAF

Consultations during the strategy process

“In the strategy process we had to do a lot of consultations – internally with staff at HQ, with staff in the regions, with partners, with donors, etc. For example, we went to central Africa to meet with all the regional staff. That consultation required facilitation, the use of different tools, people working in small groups, and advance preparations in terms of setting the objectives and the program. We had to do telephone interviews with some of our key stakeholders, an electronic survey with a large number of our partners, and we held workshops in Indonesia. We had one workshop with NGOs that are based in Bogor and Jakarta, and we had an excellent team of facilitators for that meeting. All this to get a sense from the NGOs in Indonesia about what the issues are and where they think CIFOR should be focusing. I would say, yes, we were able to use many of the tools we had already used in the annual meetings for our strategy process.”

Yemi Katerere, CIFOR

In a changing world we need new tools

“When Simone [Staiger-Rivas] and Nathan [Russell] [introduced new approaches to KS], they had to struggle and were still seen with great skepticism. But I see many positive signs that people are now more aware that, when we are expected to work with many partners around the world, we have to use these tools. We cannot jet around the world and sit in all those meetings. The money is not there, the number of partners is much too high, and the locations of the partners is much more diverse than before. Twenty years ago our partners were the national programs. And then, let’s say 15 years ago, we started to work with NGOs, the private sector, and universities, and not only with research centers located in the same country. As this process has started and is continuing very strongly, it’s so obvious, nobody can deny it: we need other methods and other tools now in order to do our work efficiently.”

Edith Hesse, CIAT

Airlifting the new DG into the AGM

“We had a new DG coming in mid-2006. Her arrival coincided with the annual meeting when we had all these new[KS] approaches. She was very excited and learned a lot about that whole process. So it really helped to educate her about the center, to get her on board, and to give her a better insight into the institutional culture. I would say it was extremely effective. She bought into the [KS] thing right from the beginning and continued it with the same approach. I would say it had a significant impact on institutional morale.”

Michael Hailu, CIFOR

Consultations on the new CIFOR strategy

“We had a major project in 2007, to develop a new strategy for CIFOR. During that period we needed a lot of consultation with staff, with external partners, and so on. Many of the consultations were held using KS approaches. We got a lot of feedback from people who said they felt they have ownership of the strategy. And the CG Science Council has just reviewed the strategy, highlighting the participation aspects of it.”

Michael Hailu, CIFOR

Driving communication, improving contributions

“When I joined CIFOR, I observed how the annual meetings were run. I can tell you they were chaotic and frustrating. People would come here without knowing what the program was, what the agenda was, and with a lot of frustration. Adopting KS, we’ve been able to drive the communication. People come better prepared and they know what is happening. They arrive more excited and are therefore likely to contribute more.”

Yemi Katerere, CIFOR

