



Learning from promoting and
using participation:
The case of international
development organizations
in Kenya

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About IKM Emergent

In April 2007, a five-year research programme was approved for funding by the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS), part of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programme, Emergent Issues in Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) and International Development, will be known as the IKM Emergent Research Programme.

The objective of the programme is to improve development practice by promoting change in the way the development sector approaches the selection, management and use of knowledge in the formation and implementation of its policies and programmes. It aims to achieve this by:

- raising awareness of the importance of knowledge to development work and its contested nature;
- promoting investment in and use of Southern knowledge production of all types and origins;
- creating an environment for innovation, supported by research on existing and emergent practice, for people working in the development sector to raise and discuss means of addressing these issues; and
- finding, creating, testing and documenting ideas for processes and tools which will illustrate the range of issues which affect how knowledge is used in development work and stimulate thought around possible solutions.

Colophon

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About the Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK)

Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK)

PAMFORK is a networking and consulting organization that provides development solutions based on practical experience and local realities in Kenya. As a leading organization, we are known by our performance, innovations and adaptability to changes in our operational environment to ensure that we deliver the best value for our clients and partners. We work with our partners and clients to ensure that they achieve desired livelihood outcomes for their beneficiaries/target groups.

At inception, the network was formed as an all-inclusive network of practitioners (both institutional and individual) of participatory development and its purpose was to promote methodologies for community organizing and mobilizing in order to achieve sustainable and equitable development. PAMFORK has from the time of formation undergone transition to provide facilitation and consultancy services to partners and members on poverty and change while still retaining its original mandate. PAMFORK works in partnership with other organizations and networks both nationally and internationally in executing its mandate. Currently, PAMFORK is a national network of practitioners and researchers of participatory processes working to strengthen citizen voice, influence policy making, enhance local governance and transform institutions.

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Our Vision

To be a lead organization committed to social change that contributes to people-driven development and sustainable livelihoods in Kenya.

Our Mission

Promote appropriate methodologies to deepen the understanding of theory and practice of participatory development. To accomplish this we work in action learning processes with civil society (CBOs, NGOs, FBOs) and public sector organizations, providing advice, facilitation, action research, implementation, sharing of experience and training.

Participatory methodologies

PAMFORK has been very involved in the development and application of participatory development approaches and this has come to guide all of our work. These approaches build on best practice in pro-poor development focusing on a set of principles and a framework for understanding people's needs, priorities and livelihoods. We have undertaken a range of work in developing participatory approaches to sustainable development. We are a Kenyan network of expertise on participatory development and sustainable livelihoods, innovating in the way we operate and aiming to practice internally what we preach in terms of participation, empowerment and social change. We are reflective practitioners, seeking to implement action learning in our work. We have developed a set of innovative tools and practical experience of promoting sustainable livelihoods, linking community and policy levels, using participatory and empowering approaches.

Action research

We integrate action learning with the focus areas of our content (practices) across the main areas of participatory development and sustainable livelihoods. Our research approach is action oriented, based around key gaps in development practice, and where we pilot and implement our learning. This is institutionalized within our work and happens via formal research projects. We design and conduct action research in the development sector. We develop participatory methodologies/tools, experiment/pilot test them with partners/clients and draw lessons and best practices before promoting their wider use.

Capacity building and training

Building capacity is an essential component of ensuring sustainability. Having developed innovative approaches if these are to be implemented, it is essential that the capacity is developed of those who need to use them. Learning-by-doing is built into all PAMFORK work, as part of action learning. Training is a critical component for mainstreaming developed participatory methodologies within the programmes of our partners/clients. We provide training and facilitation skills based on adult learning methodologies. PAMFORK has been involved in a wide range of experiential training around our core themes. We carry out assessment of institutional capacity, design and delivery of capacity building interventions for civil society and public institutions and development of partnerships and networks for targeted capacity building. We also develop training and educational materials, and design and deliver organizational development programmes for both public and civil society organizations.

Resource Centre

PAMFORK initiated a Resource Centre (RC) for development literature with a particular focus on participation in 1998. The RC was initiated as a means of actualizing PAMFORK's objective of being a centre for the latest literature on methods, tools and best practices in Participatory Reflection and Action/Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) for the benefit of development organizations in Kenya. The

resources in the centre include printed and audio visual materials from Kenyan and worldwide development practitioners. Relevant and current resources are regularly acquired and stocked in the RC, particularly in the areas of participation methods and tools for local level development, action research, human rights and poverty reduction etc.

PAMFORK has kept abreast of core development approaches and issues relevant to Kenya's and developing countries' situation by partnering with reputable local and international organizations involved in development management, research and documentation. The resources gathered from these partnerships have equipped PAMFORK's RC, making it better suited to disseminate, promote and offer support to members on a needs-based arrangement in order to promote, mainstream and harmonize proven approaches, tools and practices for local level development.



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Abbreviations and acronyms

AED	Academy for Educational Development
ALIN	Arid Lands Information Network
ALPS	Accountability Learning and Planning System
AMREF	African Medical Research Foundation
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCF	Christian Children's Fund
CKC	Community Knowledge Centres
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation
CPMES	Corporate Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWG	Community Working Groups
DI	Development Initiatives
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
IASC	Inter Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IIRR	International Institute for Rural Reconstruction
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPPQR	Inter Peer Programme Quality Review
KCDF	Kenya Community Development Foundation
LAN	Local Area Network
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PALS	Participatory Action Learning System
PAMFORK	Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya
PDA	Participatory Data Analysis
PEACE II	Peace in East and Central Africa Phase II
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Reflection and Action/Participatory Rural Appraisal
RC	Resource Centre
REDCO	Regional Development Consultants
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SHG	Self Help Group
SMC	School Management Committee
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
SWAps	Sector Wide Approaches

Preface

This paper, written by Stephen Kirimi and Eliud Wakwabubi, is offered to the development community in Kenya and elsewhere not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. It is intended as a contribution to a continuing process of thinking about how we can do development better: that is, to make sure that the time, effort and money invested in development work has the best possible impact on the lives of those who are the intended beneficiaries of the process. As has long been argued, processes which are built on the involvement of all those who are involved in the planning and management of development interventions, rather than being imposed by external dictates, benevolent or otherwise, are more likely to work and to be sustainable. But participation is far more than just a part of a project methodology. It can, and indeed does, empower poor communities. It is also a source of knowledge and learning for the organizations which invest in it. However, such learning does not come about automatically. There is a need, often lacking, for systems and processes to promote reflection on the material gained from participatory interaction with communities as well as for making the material known about and available to others, within the investing organization and beyond, who might be able to use it to better understand their own work. This wider dissemination of learning from participatory processes seldom happens or happens smoothly, as this report demonstrates.

The report itself is the outcome of an initial piece of work which was presented to a workshop attended by many of those who had responded to the authors' research questions. The workshop further developed the issues raised and in turn contributed to this version of the report.

This working paper is one of two which IKM has commissioned to look at what happens to information derived from the participatory methodologies for project planning, implementation and evaluation, which an increasing number of agencies seek to employ. The working papers are the first step in a process of working, together with those who have participated in the research and others who may be interested in learning about current practice, reflecting on it and seeking to improve it. If you would like to be involved in the process of how to understand and apply the lessons from these papers, please get in touch with either of the joint publishers - Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) and the IKM Emergent research programme - directly.

Executive Summary

International development organizations invest heavily in projects and programs targeted at community development and poverty eradication. Most of these organizations, especially those that operate at an international level, strive to achieve their goals by promoting the use of participatory approaches and applying various participation tools as a means to maximize impact. The enormous investment over the years produces different results in different organizations. It is expected that the organizations draw useful lessons to enable critical reflection, learning and action. This study reveals an emerging trend adopted by international organizations to learn from their interventions. Clearly, different organizations have different approaches when it comes to knowledge generation, storage, retrieval, learning and the whole management process. This study captures brief case studies of good practices, innovations and lessons in participatory development among international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kenya. Furthermore, it generates recommendations emerging from discussions and interactions with key informants of select international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in Kenya.

Generally, there is a tendency for INGOs *not* to document learning owing to various work cultures and institutional challenges. The organizations prioritize the implementation of planned activities at the expense of reflection, learning and action; even though the latter would drastically improve the quality of implementation. Those that do endeavour to document learning from their work do not seem to have deliberate and systematic mechanisms for encouraging the retrieval and use of the information, both internally and externally. This phenomenon leads to an extensive loss of vital information that could otherwise be used to enhance organizational impact. Perhaps this would explain why poverty eradication is still a mirage in spite of the increasing volume of development aid and the number of INGOs carrying out various interventions. Organizations in grant-making in particular do not have a deliberate strategy for processing and applying lessons emerging from their involvement in development work. The grant-making process would, on the other hand, benefit a great deal if organizations were to become learning organizations.

There is, however, a small group of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) with innovations to ensure that they learn and promote learning among their staff to enhance their programming focus and effectiveness. Some have put in place sharing and learning platforms and have created incentives for documenting learning cases and publishing them in international journals. Alternative documentation would in this case ensure that the lessons are fed back and benefit local communities. Other organizations have adopted different approaches to learning and are able to change their strategies based on lessons learnt during implementation. Overall, there is a great wealth of knowledge among INGOs that goes untapped due to poor information and knowledge management practices as well as a range of disincentives to document learning. The findings indicate the need for INGOs to rethink knowledge management i.e. generation; retrieval and sharing. This will ensure that

knowledge created at any level is made available to the relevant stakeholders to enhance development effectiveness and thereby promote practical synergies between knowledge management and learning; and by so doing become learning organizations.

1.0 Introduction and background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Most international development organizations operating in the global south have for many years implemented or promoted projects and programmes using the participatory methodologies that seek to learn from poor people and to ensure the sustainability of development interventions. They have not only embraced but institutionalized participatory development approaches to ensure that the target communities get involved in decision-making and implementing activities for maximum effect. In this process a lot of knowledge is generated. This study reveals that an enormous amount of knowledge exists within International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) which, if managed well and shared extensively, may actively contribute towards the poverty reduction agenda. The unfortunate discovery is that this knowledge is not only inaccessible to most people but that it is also stored in formats that are not user-friendly. Learning is therefore hampered by the way knowledge is stored and made accessible by organizations to both internal and external audiences.

1.2 Background

Kenya is located in East Africa and has the largest economy in the region. The country generally has a good climate that supports farming and agricultural activity in about one third of the total area of the country. It also draws large foreign earnings from tourism. The above notwithstanding, Kenya's poverty levels have steadily been rising with more than half the population now living below the poverty line. Even though there was tremendous socio-economic improvement following the elections of 2002, this was mainly with regard to increasing the size of the economy and not necessarily the quality of life. Most of Kenya's over 30 million people live in the rural areas where rural poverty stands at about 60%. The input of international organizations in all sectors has for a long time cushioned the impoverished populations against extreme and adverse economic effects. These international development organizations have supported local development agencies, specifically building their participation capacity as the most sustainable way of developing communities. In Kenya, there are about 6,000 registered Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), of which around 2,000 are international agencies. In addition, there are over 10,000 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) through which the international organizations work to reach the grassroots communities.

1.3 Problem statement

A large number of international development organizations (in this case referred to as International NGOs that operate in more than one country) operate in Kenya. These international NGOs have embraced and institutionalized activities and development interventions that promote and use participation. However, they focus less on learning from experiences resulting from the promotion and applications of participation. Consequently, the role of participatory work in influencing wider development knowledge

and decision-making is rendered ineffective or less effective. Rarely do they learn from the outputs of participatory work.

The effectiveness of efforts to eradicate poverty by development agencies has time and again been the subject of heated debate by critics. No doubt, there has been tremendous gain resulting from the input of these organizations that may have increased participation levels and thereby enabled communities to take charge of their lives. Additionally, there is little in the public domain on how participation is working, or has worked, in Kenya. Secondly, it is not clear whether the rising poverty trends are as a result of unapplied learning, either on the part of the supporting development organization or on the part of the community. Generally, existing knowledge is either insufficient and therefore fails to properly inform poverty reduction interventions or it is not appropriately stored and has no mechanism for easy retrieval for sharing, either internally or externally, with interested users.

1.4 Research Goal

The goal of the research was to establish the extent to which international development organizations learn from promoting and using participation in their programmes.

1.5 Rationale

There are several critical knowledge and information gaps that this study aims to bridge. The overall problem is that inadequate research, documentation and communication for development affect the quality of participation in development programs among the international development organizations.

Many good/best practices by the international organizations go unnoticed and have not facilitated either action or learning within the organizations. There is little learning and sharing of the vast knowledge and experiences from one organization to another and also by other development actors. Key and emerging programmatic themes such as social protection, governance/human rights, value chain development, business development services, microfinance, HIV and AIDs, etc., are not well linked or grounded on concepts of citizen participation. Grassroots development practitioners implement programs without any conceptual or theoretical underpinnings. This is an indicator of the absence of critical learning which acts as a barrier for implementing best practices and emerging innovations (in processes, tools and methodologies) in order to realize key, internally recognized development outcomes.

In 2001, a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) was done in Kenya by the Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) and the African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF). The Participatory Poverty Assessment and other current PAMFORK research findings generally attribute poverty and inequitable resource distribution in communities to the exclusion of the poor and marginalized from development processes and inhibited learning among local and international development agencies.

Respondents noted that although the government has an idea of participation, most programmes tend to limit it to the formation of committees. Citizens' participation in governance for development at the local level is a critical concern, yet organizations involved in governance programmes do not seem to have systems for documenting, storing and applying learning in their interventions.

Against the above brief situation analysis and problem statement, this study aimed to revitalize participatory learning and change for international development organizations in Kenya. In the recent past, opportunities for development workers in Kenya to convene with the purpose of sharing knowledge to strengthen their interventions and program design have been very rare. There is a tendency to concentrate on implementing development programmes that are completely disconnected from participatory learning. This study was therefore a unique intervention seeking to rekindle the urgency and sustainability of entrenching participatory learning and sharing within the programmes of international development agencies in Kenya.

The study was done at a time when Kenya as a country was undergoing political changes which necessitated the active involvement of development agencies, both local and international. The post-election violence that rocked the country in the earlier part of the year 2008 leading to the internal displacement of thousands of people and the eventual establishment of a coalition government, made this study critical in informing the development efforts of international organizations in particular. There have been major socio-economic disruptions and realignments. Some parts of the country need total reconstruction and the concept of participation has never been more relevant than it is now. Knowledge generated through this study is therefore useful to organizations as they seek to make their interventions more relevant to the needs of their target groups and also in ensuring sustainability by scaling up best practices within and across international development organizations.

1.6 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were to:

- i. Establish the extent to which participatory development lessons are being applied, or not, by the international organizations by examining and documenting evidence of such applications.
- ii. Compile learning through case studies of good practice on how learning from participation has changed, or changes, international development organizations.

1.7 Research Questions

The following were research questions for the study:

- i. Which participatory development lessons has the international NGO generated/identified from its work?
- ii. What is the nature of the knowledge products produced by the international NGO?

- iii. What is the international NGO doing to ensure the wider use of its knowledge products?

1.8 Research methodology

The study started with a literature review to establish the prevailing status of existing published and grey literature on participation and the extent to which it is being applied by international development organizations in Kenya. It involved desk research to review key documents (reports, strategy papers) and websites. This helped to give a picture of the current practice of storing and sharing participation information in international development organizations and whether (and how) they publicize the results of participatory processes internally. Key informant interviews with leaders of international NGOs were then used to capture cases of best practice in documenting, storing, retrieving and disseminating participation knowledge and lessons using a Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) guide (see annex). Lastly, the findings were shared in a workshop, which added further insights into the report and agreed that the findings were a true reflection of the insufficient learning from promoting and using participation by INGOs.

2.0 Participatory development lessons emerging from the programmes of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)

2.1 Introduction

Participatory material is defined as the output of international organizations documenting the results of their programmes as they either work directly with the poor or as they promote inclusion of the poor in development processes using interactive methods, tools and approaches for purposes of internal and external learning and storing generated knowledge. Participatory material exists as either grey literature or as publications, photos, drawings, songs, drama and video. The learning within international organizations is captured within the materials that they produce and/or publish. These focus on disseminating results, impacts, best practices, innovations etc. achieved or experienced from programme implementation. International organizations noted that they cannot easily categorize the materials they produced/published. To them this is not necessarily an issue. Their focus is not on organizing participatory material so that it can be shared, but rather on the results achieved by implementing different interventions. The international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that were interviewed noted that the focus of documentation is on progress reports to donors, best practices from the field, evaluation findings, tools and methodologies that empower the poor, innovations, workshop proceedings, field visit reports/findings and case studies.

Community participation is an important goal for all international non-governmental organizations. They work to ensure that community participation is part and parcel of the development processes. They advocate the participation of excluded and vulnerable groups in the Project Cycle Management (PCM)

from the design phase through to monitoring and implementation. They lobby national governments to allocate resources to people-centred processes and needs at the community level. They ensure the engagement of people and that their voices are heard. Participation to them is a process of realizing citizenship. This is done through promoting the use of people-centred participatory methodologies which they have developed on their own or which have been developed by other peer international organizations. This is illustrated by the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) case study below:

*Participation is key to the **Christian Children's Fund (CCF)** which is a child-centred agency across the world focusing on youth and child participation. To CCF, participation is about including youths and children in processes that affect them. The Christian Children's Fund builds their capacity to participate in community and policy processes and have livelihood outcomes. The Christian Children's Fund focuses on children within the education sector and targets them through clubs and supporting structures that allow child participation such as student councils, committees, and clubs of different interests. The Christian Children's Fund mentors them into leadership by enabling them to take up responsibilities such as being monitors, prefects and committee leaders. The Christian Children's Fund also connects school clubs with School Management Committees (SMCs) to jointly develop school plans and to respond to the needs of the children accordingly. The specific programs of CCF include, among others, enabling youths to participate in development interventions, youth groups, voluntary savings, and HIV and AIDS at the village, community and national levels.*

Documentation is a challenge to most organizations. Key respondents from 16 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) noted that documenting lessons learnt as a result of applying participatory methodologies was not a major concern for the majority of INGOs. Their major concern was documenting lessons learnt in programming in their quarterly and annual reports for purposes of accountability to their donors, but not for learning. Therefore, the majority of the INGOs are weak in documenting lessons that emerge as a result of using participatory processes and methodologies. However, a handful of international non-governmental organizations, 4 out of 20, have used knowledge from their work and interactions with communities to change the tools and methods that they use, specifically their planning, monitoring and evaluation tools as illustrated by the case of Plan Kenya which commissions evaluation studies to dig out the lessons learnt for implementation. It currently includes aspects of evaluating the level and degree of participation and participatory methodologies in the Terms of Reference (ToRs). Consultants selected to carry out evaluation studies are requested to deliberately evaluate the level and degree of participation at different levels of the programme implementation.

Learning from participatory processes was found to be weak in the majority of the INGOs with only 4 out of 20 acknowledging that they learn from participatory processes and use the same to influence their donors, local partners and beneficiaries. The case of Pact Kenya was particularly outstanding in learning from participatory processes as a result of long-term interaction with communities as illustrated below:

Pact Kenya has documented a participatory approach for the Peace in East and Central Africa Phase II (PEACE II) as result of long-term interactions with communities. The approach has been recorded in a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Manual. PEACE II is a USAID-funded regional conflict management program covering the border areas of the 'northern arc' of Kenya and its neighbours – Somalia, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan and Uganda. The PEACE II Program seeks to contribute to the enhancement of African leadership in managing conflict in the Horn of Africa and improve the ability of communities and community-based organizations - especially peace committees - to respond to conflict in the border areas of this region.

The Peace II Program started by conducting a baseline survey that was followed by stakeholders' conferences in the Somali Cluster. During the stakeholders' conference, 19 hotspots, which are also called 'peace corridors', were identified. Peace corridors bring together communities that share borders. The 19 peace corridors were further sieved and reduced to 11 and they stretch from the Mandera-Belet-Hawa boarder down to Hulugho-Kobio in Ijara district. Using the PLA Participatory Approach, Peace II's local partners facilitated community members in the various peace corridors to design activities that were translated into Community Action Plans (CAPs) for implementation.

The first step is to identify local partners and help build their capacities. Peace II advertises a Request for Applications (RFAs), selects civil society organizations that meet the criteria, and then takes them through PLA training. The PLA training on PEACE II takes 10-14 days. After this training, selected Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are assisted in finalizing their proposals in line with Peace II's standard proposal template. The second step is for the trained CSO to conduct PLAs in their hotspots. Each trained community develops a Community Action Plan (CAP) that is geared towards resolving cross-border conflict(s) between the communities across the borders. Funding for projects is done at two levels. The first is to the CSO (partner level funding) for the social mobilization of communities while the second is directly channelled to communities through the selected Community Working Groups (CWG). The Community Working Groups are composed of 8 members, 3 each side of the border and 2 from the implementing CSOs, again from each side of the border. The Community Working Group works hand-in-hand with an engineer recruited by the Peace II Program.

Lessons and results from the promotion and use of this approach include:

- 1) The traditional way of disbursing funds through partners is not only bureaucratic, but can also lead to interference with funds that are designated for community projects. As a result, the Peace II Program's design requires local partners to implement activities only to a certain level, after which the community has to take over. Thus, the role of partner has been shifted from service delivery (implementer) to the animator (promoter) of change.
- 2) The end-of-project evaluation is carried out in partnership with donor partners, Peace II, the Civil Society Organization (CSO) partner and the Community Working Group.
- 3) Through the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approach, Peace II and the local partners are able to design exit strategies that ensure sustainability after the completion of peace dividend projects.
- 4) The basic tenet of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is that projects never fail, but enterprises do. For instance, constructing a health centre will not fail but operationalizing its enterprise is what actually fails.
- 5) Donor partners receive Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) progress reports and reports on other activities from start to finish. Donor representatives are also motivated by the results of the PLA and may pay visits to the communities and consult with them if they so wish. Lastly, PLA has been institutionalized within the PEACE II Program at different levels: donor, Peace II, local partner and community level.

2.2 Major findings

The documentation of lessons emerging from promoting and using participation varied across international organizations. The majority of the international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) - 16 out of 20 - did not prioritize documentation but rather focused on service delivery. They noted that donor support is targeted at service delivery and documentation was only a tertiary priority. Within such organizations, learning from promoting and using participation was quite weak. Key respondents from these international non-governmental organizations noted that their core mandate was not to publish but to deliver services. Therefore, information and knowledge management was not a priority area for

investing their time and resources. Such organizations also noted that they fill this gap by using knowledge products generated/published by other organizations because they do not want to reinvent the wheel. These INGOs felt that they are more skilled in service delivery and less on documenting their own experiences and hence failed to realize that effective learning is generated from one's own experiences complemented by the experiences of others. Even fewer international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) - 4 out of 20 - have prioritized the documentation of lessons, best practices and experiences emerging from their work.

Some international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have decentralized their structures, systems, operations and activities as a result of the lessons they have generated from their work. Responsibility for determining and carrying out programmes resides with the country Directors. Consequently, most organizational learning required for innovation and adaptation originates at the country level as illustrated by the case of the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) below:

*It is **Christian Children's Fund (CCF)** global that produces publications, not the country level programs. Communication within the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is still centralized. Currently, all CCF publications for public dissemination are approved by the communications unit at their headquarters. Publications are stored within the global website. There are efforts at the moment to encourage country programs to produce their own publications. The Christian Children's Fund has institutionalized both internal and external learning. As a result of these learning processes, CCF has transformed itself in various forms through a document called Mainstreaming CCF's Enhanced Program Practices & Systems, Decentralizing Management Decision-Making and Support. Following the successful piloting of Bright Futures, CCF has begun to mainstream the approach across its programs worldwide. This mainstreaming involves several major changes to how Bright Futures' roll-out will be managed. This document explains these changes, clarifies what we are trying to achieve, and attempts to identify the space that exists for adaptation to the pilot model as we work towards the defined goals. Specific changes highlighted in the document broadly include:*

- *Decentralizing management decision-making and support.*
- *Goal-posts that national offices and regions should strive for within a decentralized management environment.*
- *Standards and requirements that should be upheld by all of us.*
- *Adapting the approach so that it fits local contexts.*

The majority of the INGOs - 14 out of 20 - work through local partners and so transfer the responsibility of documentation to the partners. These 14 INGOs do not implement programmes directly. They strengthen their partners so that they can implement projects. However, these partners have limited capacity and resources to carry forward the documentation process. International organizations build the capacity of local partners to use participatory methodologies and document results emerging from the use of such methodologies. In this way, they do not produce or publish but let their local partners carry out the documentation and publication processes as illustrated by the Pact Kenya case study below:

*Regarding publishing, it is not the role of **Pact Kenya** to publish the results of their work. Sometimes the role of publishing is delegated to their partners, who are only guided by the technical people at Pact Kenya. But given the fact that Pact Kenya is a capacity-building development agency, its activities are designed to strengthen organizations to function better and design their interventions in a way that addresses the basic needs of the people and to fight for their rights. This is done by ensuring that Pact Kenya and its partners learn from their own experiences internally, as well as externally from others.*

Another set of INGOs (16 out of 20) leave the responsibility of documentation to their international headquarters. Staff from the international headquarters are sent to programme implementation areas to carry out the documentation exercise. Documentation is done according to thematic sectors. These sectors include education, relief and rehabilitation, food security, economic development initiatives, etc. The frequency varied across organizations but largely depended on the needs of their donors (18 out of 20) and seldom on the organizations' own needs. One key respondent noted that "*we only document because our donors require us to do so. If we were to be given a choice, we would not document since we never use the final documentation outputs*". For other organizations (2 out of 20), it depended on their own, or their partners', needs. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) is a good example that reflects these observations through the following case study:

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) manages grants and does not implement programmes. It is a regional office and is managing programmes that broadly make social change efforts more effective. It therefore manages grants for these programmes as a tool for institutional development. Technical assistance is its core mandate and is designed to create or strengthen the development interventions of its partners to effectively address the needs of their target groups.

Publishing is the mandate of AED global and so AED in Kenya does not do any publishing. Staff members who were interviewed explained that publishing locally is too expensive. Stories from the field are therefore submitted to AED global in the United States for publication. To promote learning, AED supports institutional capacity building, where they support partners through training and on the use of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools and processes as a basis for learning. Some publication roles are delegated to their partners through electronic newsletters. Though their core mandate is to build learning organizations, internal learning is still very weak. Globally, AED is a social change organization that helps communities to identify the right priorities and opportunities to take their programmes, policies and practices in valuable new directions. It has created learning websites such as www.communityyouthmapping.org, www.glpnet.org as the Global Learning Portal where teachers use the portal to share lesson plans, discuss best practices and debate with stakeholders globally on issues such as HIV and AIDS, health education and literacy. The AED website, www.aed.org has a site feature for project impact stories, an in-depth listing of publications and tools, and an easy expert locator. From the home page, a user can browse all the main programme areas or topics in which AED works: education, environment, HIV and AIDS, leadership and democracy, and youth. Each of these main topics leads to a page with more detailed listings of expertise globally. Publications are available in full text format. Visitors can also browse by the major approaches AED uses in building the skills and capacity of individuals, communities and institutions globally. These include communications, gender, partnerships, social marketing and behaviour change, research, technology applications and training.

Another set of INGOs (18 out of 20) did not have established units/departments for documentation and knowledge management. This means that nobody takes responsibility for documentation. Some argued that their current engagements did not allow them the time and space to document lessons resulting from their work. Consequently, the wealth of valuable learning they come across gets lost and, in due course, forgotten, leaving nothing behind for future reference.

Attempts to share knowledge with local communities were limited. Only 1 out of 20 INGOs attempted to share knowledge with local communities through interactive meetings, participatory video and drama. In another set of INGOs (19 out of 20), knowledge sharing was delegated to people who could read and write. The Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) was the only organization that had gone beyond this by establishing Community Knowledge Centres (CKCs) in collaboration with their partners with ICT

equipment to enhance information access, content creation and skills development among rural communities as illustrated by the case study below:

The Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) is an information exchange network based in Kenya. Its role is to publish and disseminate information on a wide range of topics on livelihoods issues focusing on agricultural production techniques, environment and market information. It also supports the exchange of information among community development workers through documented experiences in books, videos, CD ROMs and their flagship journal, The Baobab, which has been published 3 times a year since it first appeared in 1988. The Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) has also taken advantage of the revolution in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to enhance rapid information exchange and content creation among communities through innovative projects such as knowledge infrastructure with its partners such as Oxfam Novib, the Open Knowledge Network (www.openknowledge.net), the Online Information Service for Non-Chemical Pest Management in the Tropics (www.oisat.org) etc. With regard to learning and knowledge sharing, ALIN has invested in building the skills of community development workers to document and share their development approaches through workshops, meetings, field-based training programs and exchange visits.

There was no clear understanding of the whole concept of information and knowledge management. Several organizations (12 out of 20) noted that they do not perform this role in theory, when in practice they were doing it.

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that do have a publishing programme draw lessons and experiences from their own work in order to improve the quality of their work. On the other hand, a large number of INGOs (14 out of 20) are stuck in their normal ways of doing things. No restructuring has taken place based on previous documented experiences. They have not learnt how to learn and their sources of learning are limited due to very little interaction with peer organizations. Those that do draw lessons from their work (6 out of 20) have undergone radical transformations that have modified their activities and programme to be responsive to the needs of their target groups, as illustrated by Plan Kenya in the case study below:

Plan International is a global charity that was initially occupied first and foremost with service delivery. The structure at this point in time was top-down. Programmes and activities were designed from the top and implementation was executed by the country level offices. Country level staff did not have a voice in decision-making. At this point in time, *Plan International* was very bureaucratic. The organization has, however, evolved and moved with development dynamics as a result of internal learning processes. Currently, *Plan* is blending service delivery with capacity building. All the interventions have been redesigned to become rights-based, focusing on inclusion, participation and empowerment. Participatory methodologies and tools have also undergone changes. For instance, the Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was too conventional but has now been redesigned to allow target groups to participate in the process of monitoring and evaluation. Initially, programmes were designed by *Plan International* staff and implemented without any participation of the communities in the design and planning processes. Getting the views or the voice of the community was not key at that point in time. Today, *Plan International* involves community members in the design of community development plans. In addition, country strategic plans are developed after *Plan International* has carried out a situational analysis, which is done together with community members.

According to *Plan*, participation is an elusive and a populist concept. It is one thing to get ideas from communities but it is quite another thing altogether to implement those ideas. As noted earlier, *Plan International* was very welfare-focused. This 'welfarist' approach meant that there were no tangible outcomes to be realized at the beneficiary level since the predetermined priorities were not what the community needed. Participation in priority identification was not critical in this approach. For instance, the focus was simply on constructing schools and water tanks, etc. These development interventions were not in tandem with the needs felt by the target communities. There were other needs and issues that were more pressing, but they were ignored and therefore not addressed. Consequently, all their development activities were not what the community wanted.

As a result of this gap, *Plan International* has adopted a rights-based programming approach. This approach requires a rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to ensure that *Plan* remains transparent and accountable to its target communities. A new M&E framework is being implemented to promote accountability and learning within *Plan*. This has been built from what *Plan* called Corporate Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems (CPMES). The rationale for developing the new system is based on the lessons emerging from the case studies that were compiled by *Plan* global. The major lesson was that the existing M&E system was conventional and traditional and did not have the participatory element/component. It did not adequately include the voice of the community. In the CPMES, it was not a requirement to do a participatory situational analysis, but within the context of rights-based programming, it is compulsory. It requires communities to do their own M&E and make their own development decisions. The new system recommended broader inclusion. The Participatory Action Learning System (PALS), which corresponds to ActionAid International's ALPS, has been adopted as a result of the lessons learnt from the case studies collected by *Plan* global. Before PALS, *Plan* implemented the Inter Peer Programme Quality review (IPPQR) as a module that supported M&E.

Plan International recognizes the importance of participation. One of the best practice participatory methodologies implemented by *Plan International* in Kenya is the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) where community members are disgusted about defecating openly. Communities are taken through processes of mapping areas where open defecation is done. They are requested to collect faeces and show them to the people. This has been a very successful participatory development project and the lesson *Plan International* has learnt is that processes that are participatory bring better results and empower communities to address their own problems with all the key features of sustainability.

There was variance in the ways international organizations acquire knowledge and manage the information. Explicit knowledge is captured by a Management Information System (MIS) while tacit knowledge remains in the heads of their staff members.

The majority of the INGOs (12 out of 20) had cultures that encouraged learning, while other cultures inhibited learning. Other INGOs (4 out of 20) focused on using knowledge to become more effective by focusing on innovations and promoting the use of best practices. Within others (16 out of 20), individual learning was seen as a hindrance to organizational learning especially if individual staff members did not have the attitude, skill and motivation to learn. SNV Netherlands has transcended this challenge by initiating incentives that encourage their staff members to document and share lessons emerging from their work as illustrated by the case below:

Currently, SNV is working with over 25 partner organizations in Kenya. To ensure learning among its advisers working in different regions in Kenya, SNV has deliberately been organizing learning events called 'monthly home days' where all its development advisers working in the field meet and exchange their sectoral experiences and lessons and listen to each other in order to draw lessons to inform their future programming. The specific sectors include education, water, livestock, and tourism. Within each of these sectors, a good practice must be produced. SNV is very familiar with the practice of knowledge brokering and networking and this forms the basis for measuring the performance of all its advisers. Each adviser is required to document a case study each year. SNV has put in place an incentive mechanism that rewards advisers whose case studies are judged to be the best. Such case studies are also published in renowned international journals.

A number of INGOs (13 out of 20) focus their learning on identifying strategies/mechanisms to enable them to work more efficiently and effectively by addressing actual or perceived problems/challenges within their operational environment. These INGOs concentrate on monitoring and evaluating the activities they are implementing. Within some of these INGOs (6 out of the 13), knowledge had been accumulated through evaluation studies but had not been put into practice. These organizations carry out comprehensive evaluation studies, the outputs of which sit on their shelves and the findings are never acted upon. Fifteen (15) out of 20 INGOs do not engage their staff in forums where they critically reflect on deeper issues that affect the performance of their programmes.

Humanitarian organizations implement activities on their own as if they were competing with each other. Learning would synergize their interventions. The majority of the INGOs (13 out of 20) produce monthly, quarterly and annual reports for accountability purposes but not for knowledge generation and sharing (there were only 7 INGOs that produced reports for both accountability *and* knowledge sharing) as illustrated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) case study below:

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is an international humanitarian organization that implements refugee programmes in Kenya. At the country level, documentation is in the form of grey literature. Publications are produced at the headquarter level in Geneva. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) produces only end-of-year results of their programmes at the country level. These results are circulated internally where lessons and experiences are shared with local staff, partners and externally to donors. Most of the documentation outputs and reports produced are stored within the LWF's Kenya and global headquarters, and website. It was, however, difficult to determine the actual number reaching the field projects and eventually being used to improve new projects. At the field projects, LWF collects a lot of information that includes lessons from best practices, as they implement their activities with refugees and hosting communities. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a member of a number of INGO fora in which participation is actively promoted. These include the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), Sphere, and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP). The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) also adheres to standards, principles and codes of conduct developed with peers in humanitarian work, including guidelines issued by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UNHCR, ICRC and NGOs in Disaster Relief, and the various humanitarian clusters – all of which emphasize and promote the participation of disaster affected populations. To counter-check the adoption of participation approaches, peer reviews, projects and programme evaluations are often carried out collectively with donors and with representatives of the affected communities with whom LWF works. A lot of this information is still at the level of grey literature for the internal consumption of LWF staff. It does not result in any formal publications and is not shared with external partners. There is much to be documented for the last 17 years that LWF has been implementing refugee programmes in Kakuma and, much more recently, in the Daadab Refugee Camps in Kenya. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Kenya is now an authority in refugee programming owing to its long and wide experience. However, there are no widely shared publications to show this.

All INGOs interviewed receive funding from a number of donors. Demands for accountability of donor resources affected how these organizations learn. They focused on generating reports demonstrating how well donor resources were put into use rather than documenting and learning from innovations, best practices etc. that can lead to greater impacts on beneficiary communities. The majority of the INGOs (16 out of 20) did not prioritize documentation for learning from their beneficiaries but focused instead on using donor resources to deliver services. Fewer INGOs (4 out of 20) have gone beyond this barrier as demonstrated by the case of ActionAid, which has been transformed through its Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS). The motivation was for ActionAid to be more accountable to its beneficiary communities. Financial accountability is currently done at the community level.

Key respondents from 16 INGOs noted that their staff are either overworked or do not set aside time to reflect in order to adopt new approaches. In addition, there were no incentives for staff to encourage them to participate in reflection, share experiences, read documents, critique other people's work intra and inter-organizations. There is no time to reflect and learn. Fewer INGOs (4 out of 20) have effectively addressed this challenge, for example, Plan Kenya has created a conducive environment for learning through its own internally initiated participatory learning processes. It brings its staff together in yearly conference workshops to facilitate individual and organizational learning.

Organizational learning was adaptive in one (1) INGO where individual staff members and management question basic assumptions that the INGO holds about itself and the environment as illustrated by Pact Kenya and generative in 3 INGOs where individual staff members and management question how the INGO is perceived both internally and by external partners/stakeholders as illustrated by the case of ALPS in ActionAid. There was neither adaptive nor generative organizational learning in 16 out of 20 organizations. INGOs' directors' meetings are organized where they brainstorm on how weak areas can be improved, about their failures and successes, and how to generate lessons for programming in the context of adaptive organizational learning. The generative organizational learning is illustrated by the ActionAid International case study below:

ALPS is the **Accountability, Learning, and Planning System** of ActionAid International. ALPS in both the first edition and this updated version – is designed to:

- Deepen our **accountability** to all our stakeholders, particularly to the poor and excluded people with whom we work;
- Ensure that all our processes create the space for innovation, **learning** and critical reflection, and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy;
- Ensure that our **planning** is participatory and puts analysis of power relations and a commitment to addressing rights – particularly women's rights – at the heart of all our processes.

The core elements of ALPS are:

Principles: ALPS seeks to strengthen accountability to the poor and excluded people and to strengthen commitment to women's rights. It emphasizes critical reflection and promotes transparency. It requires a constant analysis of power.

Attitudes and behaviours: ALPS can only be effective if ActionAid staff, volunteers, activists, trustees and partners hold attitudes and behave in ways that fit with our shared vision, mission and values.

Organizational policies and processes: ALPS integrates cycles of appraisal, strategy formulation, planning and reviews. ALPS also includes auditing processes to further strengthen the accountability of the system. ALPS requires transparency in all that we do; this is described in the Open Information Policy.

ALPS applies to the whole of ActionAid and forms the basis for its partnerships:

- ALPS applies to the whole of ActionAid International including affiliates, country programmes and all parts of the international secretariat. All staff, volunteers and trustees should refer to it as the core requirement of key accountability procedures and processes.
- ALPS also forms the basis of our partnership with other organizations. While it is not expected that all our partners will subscribe to ALPS in its entirety, ActionAid will not be able to enter into partnership with any organization which states or practices values and principles inconsistent with those mentioned in ALPS. In addition, all partnerships related to the flow of financial resources from ActionAid, particularly those who manage long-term Development Initiatives (DI), should enable ActionAid to deliver against the requirements of ALPS.
- ALPS sets out minimum core requirements and standards. Boards and managers can go further (e.g. do more reviews than required) and staff are encouraged to innovate with new processes but should adhere to the core principles, attitudes and behaviours set out in ALPS.

The overall custodian of ALPS is the Chief Executive who will seek approval of the International Board of Trustees for any substantive changes to the system. In the spirit of increasing accountability to the poor, our partners and other key stakeholders, ALPS requires countries, regions, themes and functions to carry out a set of participatory review and reflection processes on an annual basis. In essence, ALPS asks us to work with stakeholder groups to:

- Assess what has been done
- What has been learnt
- And, within this analysis, articulate what will be done differently in the future.

Source: ActionAid International, Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS).

Four (4) out of twenty (20) INGOs were drawing feedback from their target groups. These organizations have changed the way they work as a result of this as a way of being accountable to their target communities. They thus acknowledge the fact that communities have unique needs.

Very few INGOs (1 out of 20), such as the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), work to raise the learning capacity of their partners or of other development agencies.

The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) is an INGO that promotes and facilitates organizational learning for other international and national development agencies using participatory development approaches. The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) is renowned for its write-shop approach that enables organizations to learn from their work and experiences. As a result of its work on organizational learning, IIRR has published toolkits, manuals and books on different themes such as food security and livelihoods, sustainable agriculture, gender and climate change.

The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) works across 16 projects in Africa, Asia and America on such issues broadly covering socioeconomic and institutional development. Regarding institutional strengthening and organizational learning, IIRR knowledge management staff with its partners identifies the most significant change through write-shops. Through this intervention, IIRR targets organizations that want to learn from their work and experiences in a workshop set-up. Participants jointly recount significant changes that they have achieved in a one-week workshop where they also brainstorm on best practices and agree on what should be changed. The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) then helps their partner organizations to publish the best practices. Some of the most popular publications brought out by IIRR include:

- Chain Empowerment: Supporting African Farmers' Access to Markets (2006; reprinted 2008). See: http://www.iirr.org/index.php/publications/books/chain_empowerment/;
- Trading Up: Building Cooperation Between Farmers and Traders in Africa;
- Sustainable Agriculture Extension Manual for Eastern and Southern Africa.

To institutionalize learning internally and externally, IIRR identifies and selects two new learning points/areas per year. Publications are thus based on the learning areas and their purpose is to replicate best practices or to initiate pilot projects based on the innovations that have been identified and judged to be effective in addressing the needs of the people. Some of the publications are driven by clients, who want particular successful methodologies documented.

The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) publishes on behalf of partners through write-shops. It has a team of editors and artists that capture what people are saying. Editors put words together to capture the achievements and what they want the world to know. The International Institute for Rural Development (IIRR) then publishes for the partners. Write-shops are demand-driven and are customized according to the needs of the clients. People themselves define the content of what they want to publish and IIRR brings in the expertise of writing. Write-shops are based on how many clients are there. The skill is marketed. Write-shops are designed to help organizations document best practices. A lot of organizations do good work but no one gets to know them. Change is relative and has different perspectives. In write-shops, IIRR brings people together with an independent person to merge the different points of view and agree on what is the most significant change. This makes knowledge a common perspective on the results of the programme.

2.3 Methods of learning

Key respondents noted that there are cases where project priorities developed by INGOs are not aligned with those of local communities due to the failures of the INGOs to adopt a bottom-up approach to learning. Those that have adopted bottom-up learning approach have taken a long time to align their priorities to those of the communities or their target beneficiaries. They also observed that INGOs carry out a *needs assessment* before entering communities, but were not clear on what they learn since *needs assessments* rarely inform projects and activities implemented by these INGOs to the desired extent. Due to power and poverty relationships at the time of carrying out the *needs assessments*, communities do not raise any questions regarding their priorities because they need the money and the resources controlled and managed by the INGO. For example, they may want the INGO to support activities that protect water resources but the INGO wants to construct boreholes. Some key respondents also noted that there are cases where activities implemented by INGOs are totally different from those indicated in the funding proposal.

- Key respondents also noted that some INGOs are located far away from communities and this makes it difficult for them to learn from their work. The majority of the INGOs have their offices in

Nairobi. Some of these INGOs implement projects through their local partners (NGOs and CBOs) and therefore do not have direct contacts with their beneficiaries. Despite the fact that they are promoting and using participatory approaches, they are not likely to learn from their work as they do not have direct contacts with their beneficiaries. Again, the urgency and relevance of learning is not fully institutionalized. Yet there are some INGOs that learn from their work and interactions with community members through the following methods: Learning from the poor which involves listening to beneficiaries and dialoguing with them. This method of learning was applied by 4 out of 20 INGOs. A good example is the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) which identifies case studies to be documented at the community level as the basis for developing training manuals that address the needs of the people. The focus of these case studies is on natural resources, ICT for development, and best practices for scaling up. The Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) gets feedback from people using published materials. Therefore, regular users evaluate its publications and provide feedback on their value and areas for improvement. All users are registered within the knowledge centres managed by a community volunteer who also continuously monitors those who log in along with the people who take information from the centre. The volunteer also supports documentation and gets feedback from users, especially on training manuals for use by local communities that are found at the knowledge centres for further learning and improvements.

- Learning from practice through reflection and by analyzing their own implemented activities. It also involves learning from their own errors. This method of learning was applied by 4 out of 20 INGOs.
- Learning through staff participation; sharing information internally through regular meetings, retreats and workshops, etc. This method of learning was applied by 12 out of 20 INGOs.
- Learning from external actors where they learnt from experiences from outside, using external specialists as well as consultants. This method of learning was applied by 2 out of 20 INGOs. A good example is when SNV with other INGOs initiated an interagency capacity-building group in the mid 1990s. A number of leading INGOs that were providing capacity development services in Kenya such as the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF), the Aga Khan Development Network, Water Aid, ITDG (currently Practical Action) and SNV Netherlands were part of this group. The purpose was to understand capacity development. The interagency group organized monthly meetings to reflect on their monthly development activities. It also organized a learning retreat on a yearly basis. Initially, this initiative generated a lot of interest. Members of the group generated case studies from their work that were to be shared with the rest. The production of case studies was mandatory for all members. The group also invited external consultants to facilitate their learning retreats and enable participants to draw relevant lessons from their work, and translate them into stories that demonstrated the challenges and successes of their participatory work. Participants from peer organizations were allowed to question the

approaches of each participating INGO. Where weaknesses were identified, recommendations for addressing them were set forth for the INGO to implement them. Participants within the learning retreats were later converted into communities of practice that published a number of case studies. Though this initiative was well funded, it no longer exists. However, its former members are still interested in reviving it, but in a manner that is sustainable.

- Learning from formal training courses through formal processes for disseminating lessons. All 20 INGOs were applying this method of learning.
- Learning through research, where INGOs commission relevant and theme-based applied research. Only one (1) INGO out of 20 was applying this method of learning. A good example is Pact Kenya that has adopted adaptive management as a strategy for organizational learning. The adaptive management is also informed by the research work commissioned by Pact Kenya on different issues/themes. Lessons generated are used to inform projects that Pact Kenya is implementing. Currently, the prioritized area for research is policy governance to identify good practices in Kenya and/or from other countries to make informed decisions. There are cases where Pact also funds research projects not only to inform, but also to strengthen the work of other development agencies. For instance, Pact has funded a research project to establish better ways through which NGOs can collaborate with the government in their endeavours to eradicate poverty. The rationale for this research is based on the fact that the government in most cases ignores or simply bypasses Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) specifically in policy formulation and implementation. Currently, the practice is that the government only listens to the private sector but not the CSOs, whose players do not know or are not informed about the government programmes. The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are caught unawares by the government. The output of this research is to bridge the gap and find ways in which there can be better collaboration between CSOs and the government.
- Learning from monitoring and evaluating their own performance and results, as illustrated by SNV Netherlands which has put in place Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) systems that draw lessons from its work. This method of learning was being applied by 12 out of 20 INGOs. Lessons identified from the findings are implemented within the subsequent phases of their activities. However, the reality of this PM&E system is that it is basically administrative and has been built within SNV's partners' activity implementation cycles to ensure proper implementation of partnership agreements. It is mandatory for SNV to review biannually with its partners what went well and what needs to be improved.

2.4 Applications of Participatory Development Lessons

Sixteen (16) out of 20 INGOs noted that they rarely use the knowledge they generate from working and interacting with communities. These INGOs did not have evidence to show how they are using the knowledge that they have generated or those that claimed that they are applying the knowledge did not

have evidence to show the impact of the applied knowledge. Key respondents recommended establishing systems that monitor how the knowledge that is generated is put to use and then evaluate the outcomes of such applications. If there are outcomes after evaluation, this will provide evidence to show the value of the knowledge generated. Key respondents also noted that it is not possible to apply the knowledge that is generated because their staff, partners and other stakeholders rarely read. Thus applications of knowledge are hampered by the poor reading culture. Two (2) out of 20 INGO have produced guidelines for improving the quality of programming and outputs. However, in one of the INGOs, the guidelines had not been shared with its partners. It was only Plan Kenya that had put in place mechanisms for ensuring the implementation of findings and lessons learnt as highlighted in the evaluation or baseline studies. It has institutionalized mechanisms to ensure the implementation of findings and lessons learnt. Specific instances where knowledge was applied include the following:

- Improve outcomes and pro-poor impacts through implementation of best practices. The quality of services delivered is radically improved.
- Effectively advocate for pro-poor policies using generated knowledge as a basis. It shows that an international organization has a repository of expertise on a particular issue.
- Staff members of INGOs contribute to organizational learning actively by tapping into their own experiences from the field. This has led to improved quality service delivery. They have managed to produce cases studies to be published and shared with donors and other stakeholders, including the media.
- Knowledge generation and management in some organizations have been institutionalized by being incorporated into operational plans with budgets and form the basis upon which partners are identified and selected.
- Communications/knowledge management units have been anchored in some organizations with clear responsibilities, budgets and timelines in which to achieve specific knowledge products.

2.5 Results of applying the lessons

- Programme staff are regularly sharing their experiences and lessons with their partners. There were cases where partners and other stakeholders were requesting information on best practices especially with respect to specific thematic areas where international organizations had comparative strengths.
- Learning has improved fund disbursement to partners through increased participation and allocation of financial resources to the priorities of the target communities.
- International organizations have ensured that their local partners operate using democratic principles and on agreed terms as stipulated in partnership agreements.
- Some international organizations have changed and modified their targeting strategies to effectively reach the most vulnerable groups. In addition to this, it has resulted in better

approaches and programmes that have better development outcomes and greater impacts on target communities.

- Having a concrete output to be shared with partners from knowledge generation activities increases the possibilities of partners putting to use or regularly applying the knowledge product.
- Knowledge sharing had improved teamwork within organizations because of the fact that staff listen and dialogue with each other. This has resulted in better decision-making within these INGOs. It has also led to increased commitment, engagement, synergy and coordination.
- Some international organizations have documented case studies and best practices, some of which have been shared widely while others are stored in their resource centres for reference purposes.
- Some INGOs have uploaded their materials on virtual libraries for wider knowledge sharing. Specific websites have been specifically created for this purpose. Some respondents, however, noted that majority of these websites are not known and it is therefore likely that the knowledge stored there is not applied.
- Some of the international organizations have presented their knowledge products in national and international workshops and at events where they have shared on best practices, innovations, new insights, and experiences with others for scaling up.

3.0 Nature of the produced/published material

Key respondents noted that learning within INGOs is not only based on documented or published material. They noted that learning also takes place through the oral sharing of experiences, oral feedback from the field, staff meetings, and workshops.

3.1 Forms

International organizations did not look upon grey literature as publications and thought that it lacked sufficient evidence for policy-influencing due to the lack of any peer review, yet they did consider it to count a lot in knowledge sharing. Most of the evaluation studies with a considerable amount of key lessons remain at the level of grey literature. In the INGOs that do produce grey literature, most of it is in the form of policies, but not elaborate lessons that can be replicated elsewhere.

The following are the forms and nature of the documentation:

- i. Grey Literature
 - a. Annual reports
 - b. Field reports
 - c. Progress reports
 - d. Articles and feature stories
- ii. Publications

- a. CD-ROMs
 - b. Books
 - c. Occasional thematic papers.
 - d. Briefing notes
 - e. Reports
 - f. Brochures/newsletters
 - g. DVDs
 - h. Journals
 - i. Policy briefs
 - j. Abstracts
- iii. Others
- a. Video documentaries
 - b. Photos
 - c. Graphs
 - d. Cartoons
 - e. Toolkits
 - f. Manuals
 - g. Guidelines
 - h. Posters

3.2 Storage

3.2.1 *Storage within information systems*

Twelve (12) out of 20 INGOs worked based on the ‘tacit knowledge’ stored in the heads of the individual staff members. Respondents recommended that such INGOs should be encouraged to systematically document their experiences and lessons learned for inter and intra-organizational learning. The persistence of oral culture should not be used as a rationale for the lack of systematic documentation of lessons since this has resulted in the failure to store information in ways that enhance further learning.

There was no evidence on the existence of resource centres in the majority of the organizations. Only a couple (2 out of 20) had resource centres. In others, some priced publications that were for sale were stored in display counters. Fourteen (14) out of 20 INGOs were storing their publications in virtual libraries. Storage was thus mostly electronic. One (1) out of 20 INGOs stores their knowledge products in a database. For example, the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) keeps its publications and grey literature in a database for ease of access. The database uses a program called ‘file maker’ which has good features for navigation. Publications and grey literature are stored electronically within the INGOs’ global website *share points*. Most of the stored knowledge products can be accessed by the public,

though there are cases where access to some was restricted to only INGO staff. In some INGOs, electronic storage required a subscription in order to be given a password to access the publications. The majority of the INGOs (16 out of 20) interviewed have created websites with significant knowledge products worth reading. For example, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) has specific websites where published stories are kept. The academy has created a site at www.ngo-connect.org where people can upload information. They also support their partners in their efforts to develop and upload information on websites. Most of the information is electronic. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) has adopted a paper reduction policy as required by their donors. Specific ways of storing knowledge produced within the INGOs that were interviewed include:

- *Electronic tools*: websites, CD ROMs, mailing lists, directories, electronic newsletters, intranets, databases, etc.
- Resource centres.
- Printed documents (books, bulletins, journals and reports).
- Files.

3.2.2 Retrieval within information systems

Some informants noted that information on some INGOs' websites is neither classified nor organized. It is not easy for users to locate appropriate and relevant information that they need. Some respondents recommended 'pointers' that compile existing information and guide users to it. For instance, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) does not have information systems to store their publications. Instead, the publications are stored in the book store with no catalogue and display shelves. It is as if they are hidden. However, IIRR does have a catalogue of all the published materials. In some INGOs, the resulting knowledge products are not described within their information system. While in others, the knowledge products are basically classified into themes such as evaluation reports, progress reports, best practices, new approaches, etc. The public cannot access these reports because each user has a password.

3.2.3. Mechanisms for knowledge management

Some international organizations had recruited knowledge and/or communication managers to coordinate and respond to both internal and external knowledge needs, specifically to synthesize and document programme results, facilitating dissemination and publications and also providing feedback. In some organizations, the communication/knowledge units have been strengthened to take up their role well, while in others, they either do not exist or very little has been done. These units have been strengthened in some INGOs through the recruitment of knowledge management coordinators. Their purpose is to spread the knowledge, consolidate it into user-friendly formats, and to ensure its dissemination in workshops, policy briefs and abstracts.

4.0 Promoting the use of produced/published participatory material

4.1 Internally

Portals have been set up in some organizations to connect staff to knowledge resources and enhance collaboration between them and the global offices. In some INGOs (4 out of 20), study groups have been formed to facilitate learning. For instance, the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) uses the focal groups approach to promote local level networking. It has clustered its members from the same geographical regions into grassroots networking nodes known as *focal groups*. These groups form ALIN's entry points into the community and form the basis of learning and knowledge sharing in their respective areas. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) organizes documentation retreats to facilitate internal knowledge sharing. The Christian Children's Fund (CCF) has created *electronic working groups* with respect to each sector, for instance the education sector *electronic working group* which discusses and generates materials on child-friendly schools. This group has produced 12 modules that have been stored in the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) website as part of the output of the electronic discussion and sharing of knowledge. Plan Kenya organizes an annual programme conference to facilitate internal learning on specific themes that are jointly identified. Plan invites external and academic participants to share what they are doing, especially concerning unique approaches. Participants are grouped into panels that discuss specific issues. Plan Kenya also has a small resource centre for internal use only. Annual reports in the context of Plan Kenya contain consolidated lessons learnt that are discussed during the annual programme conference, after which they are incorporated in the annual strategic plans. Consultants are also requested to produce synthesized reports of evaluation studies to ensure the implementation of findings. Plan Kenya lays emphasis on the production of summarized documents from long evaluation reports to make them more reader-friendly. People read based on the subject and presentation of the document but not based on the length.

During orientation, INGO staff are required to read manuals to enable them to perform their work. In some INGOs (3 out of 20), staff meetings address themes that keep on rotating. There are also management meetings that address issues of accountability, participation and the code of conduct in 6 out of 20 organizations. Some INGOs (2 out of 20) have adopted a policy which requires them to first train their staff on any new knowledge product. Some (3 out of 20) build the capacity of the staff to disseminate the specific knowledge product. Learning starts from within and then goes outside. If you do not understand, you cannot share it. There must be a common ground for understanding to take place. Generally the processes of facilitating internal learning within INGOs includes the following steps:

- *Identifying themes and questions*: identifying themes for discussion during reflection forums and workshops and questions to ask was seen as part of the learning process. Some organizations ensured that these themes were rotated. Organizational staff are requested to think of challenges

they encountered and ways to address them to be shared with others. Success stories are also discussed to form best practices for solving the challenges that were experienced.

- *Organizing and synthesizing experiences, lessons and documentation:* the output of reflection forums and workshops are reports that systematically indicate documented lessons and recommendations for implementation and are to be shared internally and also with other external stakeholders.
- *Mainstreaming:* some organizations had deliberate ways of ensuring that documented lessons and recommendations were implemented by translating them into their annual strategic plans. Recommendations and lessons are thus institutionalized into the programmes of the INGO with resources, both human and financial, being allocated to each priority area.

4.2 Externally

Promoting the use of produced/published participatory material externally was mainly through training, national/regional forums and workshops, advertising knowledge products in papers and through websites, etc. Other INGOs use their donor agencies to disseminate the publications to their partners. These donors are requested to buy the knowledge products of some INGOs, such as the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), and distribute them to their partners. For example, IIRR was contracted by their donor to build the capacity of their partners in East Africa on specific knowledge products. This is a dissemination strategy that ensures wider use of the publications. Other INGOs organize quarterly meetings with donors and partners and deliberate on lessons learnt and future use. Some INGOs are currently setting up blogs for knowledge sharing and getting people to engage. Plan Kenya has been using NGO week to enhance external learning. The NGO week is a public forum where NGOs showcase the results of their work.

Some INGOs promoted the use of such material by establishing workgroups to facilitate knowledge sharing about specific themes. For instance, Save the Children Canada has established child participation working groups in 10 regions in Kenya to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Some INGOs use their partners to spread the knowledge and promote wider usage. For example, Pact Kenya uses one of its partners called Impact Alliance to disseminate its knowledge products. The Impact alliance portal www.impactalliance.org has a lot of materials; some are free for downloading, others require a subscription. Hard copies are sold from the website. However, the website does not contain all the knowledge products from all their partners. Some INGOs have also recruited knowledge management coordinators to consolidate and spread the knowledge and ensure its dissemination through workshops, policy briefs and abstracts. Quarterly reflection sessions with communities and partners where they share unique ideas with them. Relevant documents are also shared during these forums. Some INGOs specifically organize yearly meetings with local/district governmental officials where they share with them

the results of their work. Plan Kenya was particularly successful in this regard where it organizes yearly meetings with 14 district commissioners to share with them annual progress and other relevant information regarding programmes implemented within their districts.

The Arid Lands Information Network's (ALIN) knowledge centres are critical in disseminating knowledge externally. These knowledge centres are electronic platforms modelled along the lines of the national information centre in India. The headquarters of the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) is located at the centre. Other centres are spread out all over East Africa and are connected to a central server at ALIN where content is created and transmitted to the server. ALIN's knowledge manager corrects mistakes in the information that has been submitted and clicks a publishing button to upload the documents and make them available for public access. Currently, ALIN is building a platform that can be queried through a mobile phone. ALIN also disseminates knowledge externally through its flagship journal *The Baobab*, which appears three times a year. *Bloggging* is a system for communicating and reporting between groups of people from different countries, specifically sharing lessons on a particular theme. However, *bloggging* is limited to a number of approved authors whose work is not moderated. Apart from Pact Kenya, other organizations were not familiar with blogs.

4.3 Use within information/knowledge management and learning processes

Despite the presence of search functions, information retrieval was still a challenge due to a lack of good descriptors (metadata) about what a document contains. Most of the information is electronically stored in personal computers in offices. The documents are not printed and so access is limited to the people who are storing them and those who work with them, and their PCs are linked through a Local Area Network (LAN).

4.4 Sharing knowledge

The majority of the respondents (18 out of 20) noted that knowledge sharing is limited among INGOs. There is therefore a need to promote knowledge sharing among international NGOs. They specifically noted that no information or knowledge was shared with the government. Only two organizations shared their information with the government, but the government did not reciprocate. At the moment, no initiative exists that can bring the government and INGOs together to dialogue over issues that are affecting the people. There was no evidence to suggest that international non-governmental organizations were distributing their knowledge products (publications) to their peer organizations and government. It was mostly to donors and partner organizations.

A number of INGOs (4 out of 20) have initiated internal learning processes. However, they noted that their staff are overloaded with assignments and therefore do not have the time to reflect and share the knowledge that they have generated from their experiences. Others (5 out of 20) noted that this may or

may not necessarily be the case. They noted that it could also be the attitude at both the INGO and the individual level that is hindering knowledge sharing and learning. Other organizations (16 out of 20) did not prioritize knowledge management and sharing at all in their activities.

Key respondents (18 out of 20) noted that while there is knowledge sharing at the organizational level, a good number of INGOs do not share their knowledge with their target communities/beneficiaries. This undermines the value of a rights-based approach with regard to transparency and accountability. The respondents noted that this is caused by a lack of appropriate, relevant and effective tools that can enable information to be shared with local communities. The attitude and behaviour of staff, especially with regard to documenting and reading, is quite poor and this radically affects how they learn. Both the reading and documentation culture is still weak when compared to the West.

Grey literature is not meant for wider use. It is only meant for internal learning. While publications were meant to be used widely externally, hardcopies are not easily accessible, especially if they are being sold. Publications are also stored electronically on the organizations' websites. This on its own constitutes a wider dissemination, but it largely depends on how well the website is known and marketed to the target audience. This is limited to a specific group of people that has access to the internet. The case of BasicNeeds UK was outstanding in its use of knowledge sharing to influence its partners/collaborators as illustrated below:

BasicNeeds UK in Kenya works for people with mental illnesses and epilepsy within communities. The aim is to ensure that the mentally ill are not discriminated against and that their basic needs and rights are respected through building the capacity of their partners, the mentally ill people, and their care-givers. BasicNeeds learns from its beneficiaries through animation meetings in which consultations with community members are held. Within these meetings, the INGO captures the feelings of the people, and then plans and designs activities with them. The most critical aspect is how to identify people who are mentally sick within communities. Community members are trained to spot particular symptoms/signs using a Participatory Data Analysis (PDA) tool to identify people who are mentally ill and work out their needs; whether they need medical attention or psychosocial support. Participatory Data Analysis (PDA) is part of a qualitative research method where people living with mental disorders are given the opportunity to influence the research process. They do this not only by data generation assisted by a researcher, but also by analyzing this data as a group. This enables them to determine and prioritize immediate actions based upon this collective analysis.

Once mentally ill people have been identified, they are called into a forum where they are organized into groups that are currently not recognized by the government. Legally, mentally ill people are not allowed to be part of a registered Self Help Group (SHG) in Kenya. BasicNeeds UK in Kenya is challenging this legal practice by deliberately mobilizing mentally ill people into savings and credit groups. Other lessons include:

- *Mentally ill people exploit all the options available to them, including witchcraft, and prefer seeking treatment only as the last resort.*
- *Traditional healers discourage mentally ill people from seeking treatment.*
- *Training partners in a participatory manner creates ownership. Mentally ill people are now seeking treatment and, together with other community members trained by the INGO, have taken on the responsibility to plan for and defend their livelihoods.*

The successes of the community mental health project implemented from 2006 to 2008 have led to the replication of the project all over the country with funding from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) which found it to be a unique model and funded it for scale up. BasicNeeds UK in Kenya shared the lessons and successes of the programme with the donor, government, partners and community members. One of the most notable achievements was the ability of BasicNeeds UK in Kenya to influence the government to include the mentally ill people in savings and credit groups, where they are accessing financial services in areas where they are implementing the programme. BasicNeeds UK shares lessons and experiences internally and externally through a global journal on mental illness and through a Microsoft Access-based Database Management System. It produces a global journal on mental illness that contains synthesized information about the situation of people with mental disorders the world over and serves as a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas on mental health and development. The journal provides new developments and analyses emerging trends in the field. The journal is useful, informative and inspiring to all stakeholders in the field of mental health and development - people with mental disorders and their families, mental health professionals, policy-makers, decision makers, students and indeed anyone involved or concerned with, or interested in, mental health.

BasicNeeds UK puts together data from field areas across seven countries to monitor progress and change on a quarterly basis. It classifies and consolidates data according to diagnosis, sex and age and stores the data in a Microsoft Access-based Database Management System with essential protocols. This has enabled the INGO to access, sort and update the data as required. Data is initially entered in specially created forms (data entry screens). This information is stored in Tables. Queries are helpful to retrieve records matching given criteria and they are presented in the form of reports. A special feature of the data and monitoring tools developed is that processes, indicators, and templates have been standardized across BasicNeeds to enable rigour, the consolidation of information and comparative analysis. At the same time, customized features have been developed within some of the tools taking into account specific field situations and innovative features of different field operations which affect data collection, data transfer and data entry processes. Final knowledge products are stored on the website at www.basicneeds.org and disseminated widely through an electronic research newsletter and journal.

5.0 Challenges

Learning is difficult since it is a decision made by an individual. Learning is relative. Africa has an oral culture. Therefore, promoting knowledge sharing through workshops, where people learn together, and through websites and books, can deepen the learning process. Making people share knowledge continues to be a herculean task. Tacit knowledge is stored in people's heads and people are reluctant to write. They have a fairly limited knowledge of existing technological innovations. They still rely on people

working for other organizations. They have no time to write and there are several dynamics of people involved.

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) do not have a central place where materials are stored. The small resource centres they have established are not accessible to the public. Resource centres to store hard copies are still not well developed or equipped and are not accessible to the wider public. In addition, paper publications never get off the ground.

Some international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have generated too much information but knowing where the information is remains a challenge. Consequently, the information cannot be retrieved very easily. Accessing the information once it has been located is easy, but knowing where to find the information is the problem. A lot of documents produced by INGOs are never published on the websites.

There is limited access to the documents published on the website. Although the staff members of the INGOs can access all the documents, the general public only has limited access to the documents. Document access is regulated by the allocation of passwords to individual INGO staff members.

People may not be aware of the resource centre and raising awareness of materials available within resources centres is critical. Resource centres are not public libraries and are therefore not accessible to the public. Some may also not stock relevant knowledge products. The format of the material may also make it difficult to access. There is a need to store materials in a format that can easily be accessed and read. Some people prefer hard copies while others prefer electronic copies. An appropriate mode of dissemination is important to ensure that the knowledge that has been generated is put to use. Existing resources centres may not necessarily be storing knowledge products in formats that are appropriate to the different users. Resource centres established by the INGOs that were interviewed do not have managers and assistants to guide people on how to access stored materials or search for relevant publications.

Generally speaking, INGOs are poor at documentation. Lessons are discussed in many forums but are not documented, yet it is documentation that can ensure that lessons are used. Organizational learning therefore remains a challenge. It needs to be addressed head on through institutional policies that should require staff to take the time to reflect and document the reflections to draw lessons. The skill of writing is lacking or low. The majority of the INGOs interviewed noted this has hampered their capacity to document. Some noted that in some meetings they organize, minutes are taken. Most people are good at talking but not writing. Some INGOs do not have full-time knowledge managers to take up the documentation role. In cases where people or staff are of the same calibre, it is difficult to identify the

person to document. Documentation is delegated to junior staff. It is not a primary expectation of high calibre staff.

Mutual accountability and transparency in development partnerships facilitates learning. Most INGOs have not moved beyond rhetoric to real action on accountability to beneficiary communities. Subscription by the majority of them to various codes e.g. HAP, is only in theory. This tends to be replicated at lower levels where local NGOs do fare well on upward accountability to donors/INGOs but perform dismally on downward accountability to local communities. There is therefore a need to develop a culture of sharing knowledge and information among and between different players in the development process.

Power relations is a key determinant in any learning process. The practice is for the “*lowers*” to learn from the “*uppers*” and the reverse is met with resistance. Currently, there is an unequal power relationship between the international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and their local partners; with the latter being *lowers* and the former *uppers*. This tends to hinder learning by INGOs. The right attitude and behaviour is therefore required by the INGOs before any meaningful learning can take place. This is important if vulnerable and poor communities are to participate actively and influentially in their own development. The attitudes and behaviours include, rather than exclude, all people in the development processes. It is not just good enough to include the marginalized and excluded people in the development process, what is more important is *how* to include them. Below is a list of appropriate attitudes and behaviours required on the part of INGOs to facilitate meaningful learning:

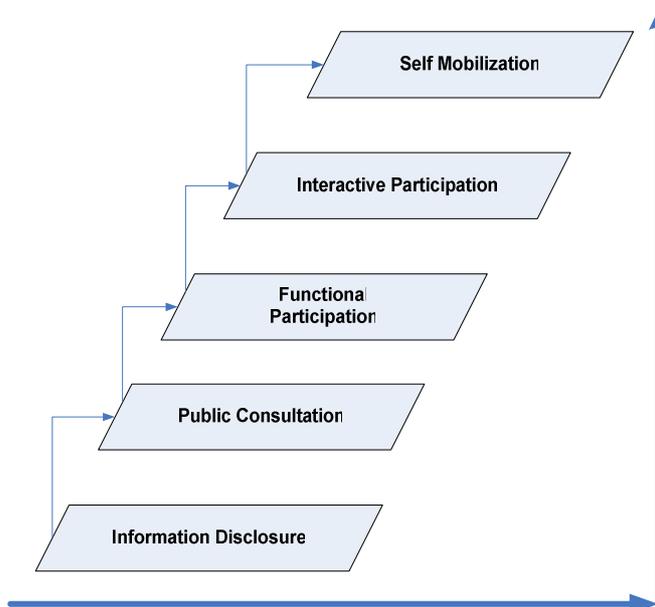
- Trusting communities to analyze, plan, act, monitor, evaluate and reflect.
- Not lecturing or dominating communities.
- Listening to people.
- Learning from communities and sharing one’s knowledge as appropriate.
- Not judging communities; instead challenging harmful practices to help communities see things in a new way.
- Respecting and being friendly to communities.
- Being honest with communities about their intentions and expected outcomes.
- Embracing error and learning from mistakes.
- Not rushing, instead letting things evolve at their own pace.
- Not working *for* communities, instead working *with* them, and better facilitating communities to work for themselves.

The power imbalance creates a chain reaction in which INGOs tend to manipulate local organizations who in turn manipulate communities. Participation is therefore more manipulation and at the lower edge of the participation ladder. Inclusion in development projects does not go beyond tools and processes.

This vicious cycle has to be broken for any meaningful learning to take place. Below are the types/forms of participation:

- i. *Self mobilization* – people participate by taking initiatives independent of external agencies, particularly if governments, NGOs or private companies provide an enabling framework.
- ii. *Interactive participation / joint decision-making* – people participate in partnership with external agencies at the early stages of project design and throughout its implementation. Affected communities and agencies make decisions together on an equal basis.
- iii. *Functional participation* – people are encouraged to participate as a means to achieve project objectives, especially to reduce costs and comply with procedural requirements.
- iv. *Participation for material incentives* – affected communities are invited to participate in an activity only because they need the material benefit of doing so, e.g. money or food.
- v. *Public consultation* – people participate by being consulted. External agencies define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Consultation carries no obligation to take people's views into account.
- vi. *Information disclosure* - people participate by being told what has already been decided or has already happened. They have no say the activity design or its management.

The first two upper forms as indicated in the *participation ladder* below are desirable while the last two lower down on the *participation ladder* are the undesirable forms of participation.



The Participation Ladder

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Information Silos

To enhance internal learning, some organizations have set up their own information silos; either resource centres or websites to ensure that knowledge is available to their own staff. Even for these organizations, knowledge is not stored in formats that can easily be accessed and used. They are also not tailored to meet the needs of the users. Apart from storing hardcopy documents, there was no evidence for interactive knowledge-sharing events such as training courses, question-and-answer sessions, websites and newsletters etc. Information management within existing resource centres falls short of the required standards and they were not connected to other sources of knowledge and networks outside the organization to ensure comparison and hence optimal utility of the knowledge. This hampers their knowledge brokering role. Establishing an information silo will create a sustainable development information environment. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) should be encouraged to willingly provide information for storage in the information silos so that it can be easily accessed by other users. Information within these silos should be organized and grouped based on themes and regions. Information silos could take either the form of resource centres or websites which group all information relevant to particular topics or regions and can be accessed by all users. The first step would be to set aside a research and documentation fund to support the establishment of information silos.

There is an urgent need to rejuvenate and strengthen existing information silos to:

- create awareness about the urgency and relevance of learning and knowledge management in development.
- act as information brokers that collect and synthesize best practices and field experiences, packaging and facilitating knowledge sharing through newsletters, grey literature, and publications, etc.
- facilitate critical knowledge sharing reflection forums.

6.2 Mainstream knowledge management and sharing in development cooperation

Grounding knowledge development and management in development cooperation is an area that needs to be addressed in order to effectively promote learning. Development cooperation is not working as required due to the failure of donors to learn from the experiences of their aid instruments, for instance: Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps). Lessons and experiences around such instruments should be discussed at donor roundtables to ensure that aid provided to the government does not go to waste. Learning, mainstreaming knowledge generation, management and sharing among donors is necessary to encourage their partners, such as INGOs and the public sector, to learn.

6.3 Continuous training and capacity building

This is a prerequisite for changes in attitude and behaviour to take place leading to organizational learning and change. It involves branding the new methodologies; peer review, reflection and discussion forums. Write-shops and alternative documentation should be explored to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs and nurture the culture of literacy in the South. Most local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) tend to lack the resources, incentive and capacity to document their experiences and package them in user-friendly formats. In addition, a smaller number of organizations could volunteer to pilot a scheme to demonstrate the value of learning over a period of time and the widespread sharing of lessons and good practices. The outcome would include what constitutes a conducive environment for learning. Such a programme should have in-built mechanisms for rewarding individual staff members, organizations, and communities who learn and support learning. A code of conduct on organizational learning and change would suffice as an outcome of this capacity building process.

6.4. Partnerships with institutions for higher learning

Institutions of higher learning that train professionals to work in INGOs could be lobbied to become partners with practising INGOs, in order to create a strong link between academic research and publications on the one hand, and practitioner experiences from the INGOs on the other. If practitioners, due to the nature of their work, are not inclined towards documenting their experiences – or are simply not good at it - then partnering with research, policy analysis and academic institutions could offer a beneficial linkage and enhance learning at the same time. Maybe we are simply flogging a dead horse by '*forcing*' practitioners to write and will not make much progress.

6.5. Learning teams within INGOs

Alternatively, INGOs can be encouraged to create well-trained focal points and learning facilitators to ensure planning, motivation, implementation and follow-up and institutionalize learning within their organizations. These teams should focus on analyzing and documenting various processes, including participation. However, these are often the first to be trimmed during difficult financial times.

7.0 Conclusion

This study has highlighted gaps in information and knowledge management in the context of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and has generated good lessons for use by researchers as well as scholars and practitioners of participation. It reveals, albeit only to some extent, the status of learning among the international development organizations which, for a long time, has been shrouded in mystery. A number of INGOs had gone through unstructured changes occasioned by external forces such as donor funding. They have failed to realize the fact that learning from their own experiences can enable them to plan for organizational changes which will, in turn, enable them to deliver better results. Learning

organizations base their actions on knowledge. While some INGOs present role models in promoting participation, their contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are less effective due to a lack of learning from experiences gained from implementing development interventions. Programmes will continue to be designed and will also continue interacting with new development paradigms which are largely driven by factors other than deliberate reflection on the evidence of past experience. Similarly, other users often do not learn from those knowledge products generated by INGOs, which do exist, due to their confidentiality or their inaccessibility. The institutionalization of organizational learning and change, on the other hand, would ensure that lessons learnt are fed into subsequent project implementation on a continuous basis and hence increase the impact of the development process in target communities.

8.0 ANNEXES

8.1 Key Informants

No.	Organization	Contact Person	Contacts
1.	Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN)	James Nguo	Regional Director, Nairobi, Kenya Tel. +254-20-2731557 Fax +254-20-2737813 james@alin.or.ke www.alin.or.ke
2.	DFID The United Kingdom Directorate-General for International Development	Ada Mwangola	a-mwangola@dfid.gov.uk +254 202 873 222
3.	ActionAid International Kenya	Eric Kilongi (M+E)	Tel. +254-20-4440444/4/9 Fax +254-20-4445843. Jean.kamau@actionaid.org
4.	SNV (Stichting Nederlands Vrijwilligers)	Mary Njuguna, Portfolio Manager	Tel. + 254-20-3873656 Fax + 254-20-3873650 mnjuguna@snvworld.org
5.	Plan International	Stephen Okoth CPME Coordinator	Stephen.Okoth@plan-international.org
6.	Concern World Wide	Christine Nasimiyu, Policy Advocacy and Documentation Officer	
7.	Save the Children Canada	Mathenge Munene	Tel. 0722753910 Mathenge@sc-canada.or.ke
8.	Save the Children UK	Margaret Gwada Senior Programme Manager	Tel. +44 -1032 4444006
9.	AED	Helen Kuloba Peter Irungu	Tel. +254-20-44561368/9 hdalton@aed.org
10.	PACT Kenya	Titus Syengo	
11.	The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR)	Charles Waria, Regional M&E Manager	Tel. 0722492410
12.	Christian Children's Fund (CCF)	Andiwo Obondo, Regional Technical Adviser – Education Sector	Tel. 0720422722 aobondo@ccfkenya.org
13.	Care International	Stephen Waweru	Tel. 0722584067
14.	International Child Resource Institute	Maggie Kamau-Biruri	Tel. 0728-616411, 0725-844422 Maggie@icriafrika.org Hazina Towers, 16 th Floor
15.	BasicNeeds UK	Joyce King'ori	Tel. 0722973181 Joyce.kingori@basicneeds.org
16.	Lutheran World Federation (LWF)	Lokiru Matendo Program Manager	Lokiru-matendo@lwfkenya.org
17.	BasicNeeds UK -Kenya	Ann Kihagi	ann.kihagi@basicneeds.org
18.	Regional Development Consultants (REDCO)	Basra Ali	Basraali09@gmail.com
19.	Pact-Kenya	Davis Wafula	davis.wafula@pactke.org
20.	Save the Children – Kenya	Jimmy Lilah	jililah@sc-canada.or.ke
21.	NGO Council – Kenya	Risper Pete	pete@ngocouncil.or.ke
22.	TAABCO –Africa	Seith Abeka	sabeka@taabco.org

8.2 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Name of Respondent: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Thank you for your time to talk to us. We are conducting a survey of existing literature and grey literature on participation. This will help us better understand the extent of the wider use of participatory material within development organizations and how the whole issue is being addressed by such organizations. We also want to understand the use of participatory material within information/knowledge management and learning processes. The knowledge that you provide us with will help us, your organization, and our international partners of the project to identify and describe good practice and identify areas of concern, or of continuing ignorance, and further actions that IKM, participation communities of practice, or development organizations can take part in.

Core Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
Research Question 1: Which participatory development lessons has the international NGO generated/identified from its work?		
1. What are some of the participatory development lessons have you identified/generated from your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What is your organization's understanding of participation? b) How does your organization promote and use participation? c) What do you consider to be participatory material in your organization? d) Do you produce or publish participatory material internally in your organization? e) If yes, what results (or overall content) of participatory processes do you produce or publish? f) How have you been applying these lessons? g) What have been the results of applying the lessons? h) How did the application of the lessons from participation change your organizations? 	
Research Question 2: What is the nature of the knowledge products produced by the international NGO?		
2. What form do the publications of participatory material take? Please describe them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What do you consider before publishing participatory material? b) Since you started publishing participatory material, how many forms have they taken. (Please list them and describe the rationale for the different forms.). c) How were the resulting materials stored within your information systems? d) How were the resulting materials described within your information systems? e) How were the resulting materials retrieved within your information systems? 	
Research Question 3: What is the international NGO doing to ensure the wider use of its knowledge products?		
3. How is your organization using published participatory material?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What does your organization understand by the whole concept of using published participatory material? b) When does it consider it appropriate to use such material? c) Has your organization experienced challenges or problems that necessitated the use of such materials? d) What other reasons have made your organization use participatory material? e) How many of the publications does your organization actually use and who uses them? f) Specifically, what is the extent of use of participatory material within information/knowledge management and learning processes in your organization? 	

8.3 IKM Working Paper Series

Julie E. Ferguson, Kingo Mchombu and Sarah Cummings (2008) Management of knowledge for development: meta-review and scoping study. *IKM Working Paper No. 1*, April 2008, 45pp.

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