EDITORIAL

Knowledge in the Sustainable Development Goals and an introduction to this issue

The year 2015 has been an important one for international development with two international conferences taking place which will set new agenda for international development up to the year 2030. These changes will also affect the knowledge for development agenda. The first of the international conferences, 'Financing for Development' took place in July in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July. The aim of the conference was to agree on the financial and non-financial means of implementation that will support the post-2015 development agenda and, in particular, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These SDGs were then agreed at the UN General Assembly in September 2015 in New York, USA. They comprise a new holistic international development agenda for the 2016-2030 period. Although there has generally been a positive reaction to the new Goals because of the way in which they integrate social, economic and environmental issues and because they are now just as applicable to developed as well as developing countries (Cummings, 2015), they fail to recognise the key role of knowledge to all aspects of international development. Knowledge and information are mentioned on what seems to be an *ad hoc*, instrumental basis. The international agreement on the SDGs, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development' (UN Department of Economic and Financial Affairs, 2015) mentions 'knowledge societies' in the preamble:

> *The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy.*

But there is no further reference to what a knowledge society entails, despite the fact that knowledge and information are mentioned as they contribute to life-long learning in 'Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' Knowledge receives a further mention in the way it contributes to agricultural productivity in 'Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.' Traditional knowledge is only mentioned once, and as it relates to seeds:

> *Goals 2.5. By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge…*

Against this background, the first Community Note in this issue, 'Agenda Knowledge for Development Conference, Fall 2016 in Vienna, Austria' (Brandner and Oster), describes an international initiative launched by the Austrian Knowledge for Development (K4Dev) community to draft a set of 'Knowledge Development Goals' which are designed to complement the UN development agenda embodied in the new SDGs. Under this initiative, ideas and proposals put forth by a wide variety of stakeholders will be gathered, distilled and published in an 'Agenda Knowledge for Development,' complemented by a conference in October 2016. The ideas and experiences of members of KM4Dev could make a key contribution to this initiative and this Note has been included to inform members of KM4Dev about it and to encourage their involvement. The other papers in this issue, and the work of KM4Dev more generally, testify to the importance of knowledge to international development.

Contributions to this issue

This non-thematic issue of the journal comprises four papers, two community notes and one case study. Both the first and third papers in this issue represent the outputs of CGIAR research, namely the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) respectively.

The first paper, 'ICTs in knowledge management: the case of the Agropedia platform for Indian agriculture' (Kiran Yadav, Rasheed Sulaiman V, N. T. Yaduraju, Venkatraman Balaji and T. V. Prabhakar) reviews the experience of Agropedia. By March 2014, Agropedia had close to 8500 registered users and 33,062 published resources and 24 crop knowledge models. A total of 35 institutional Agropedias and a mother Agropedia had also been created. Based on this experience, the authors consider that sharing knowledge across the agricultural knowledge system in India is no longer a technical challenge but is rather constrained by social and organisational barriers. Without institutional and policy changes to address these barriers, they argue that ICTs cannot contribute significantly to knowledge sharing. They also consider that knowledge sharing among Indian farmers should be encouraged by incentives.

The second paper, 'Engagement and accountability in transdisciplinary space in Mongolia: principles for facilitating a reflective adaptive process in complex teams' (Arren Mendezona Allegretti, Jessica L. Thompson and Melinda Laituri) explores how reflective adaptive processes (RAPs) facilitate communication in transdisciplinary research. Based on a case study of the socio-ecological complexity (SEC) project in Mongolia, the paper develops stakeholder engagement and accountability indicators for research teams and organisations. Based on literature and SEC experiences, it provides lessons learned and principles for facilitating RAPs across transdisciplinary research teams and to support transformative learning.

The third, 'Data sharing and use of ICTs in agriculture: working with small farmer groups in Colombia' (Fanny Howland, Luis Armando Muñoz, Simone Staiger-Rivas, James Cock, and Sophie Alvarez), considers Colombian fruit farmers' capacity to collect information and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by ICTs. Three cycles were designed to understand the attitudes, skills, and current practices of fruit growers and to define the necessary conditions for effective information sharing. The authors establish that farmers understand the usefulness of record keeping but data collection is often imposed externally, and not useful enough to manage production. Farmers, overall, were positive about information sharing and understand the benefits of using information from a wider environment, shared through an ICT platform, but shortage of skills in using these technologies is a serious limiting factor to expansion to a broader scale.

The fourth paper, 'Mainstreaming as a knowledge process: new lessons from mainstreaming gender, disability and sexual diversity' brings together the knowledge and experiences from existing literature and from three cases on mainstreaming. It demonstrates how capacity development and knowledge co-creation at NGOs can be a lever for the inclusion of marginalised groups in society. The lessons learned may help development practitioners to reinforce and strengthen their emancipating work.

Other contributions

The case study, 'Weaknesses in monitoring practices in relation to performance and accountability principles: promoting joint monitoring could be a solution in developing countries', (François-Xavier de Perthuis de Laillevault) considers monitoring capacity in the education sector to meet the demands for evidence-based data to meet performance and accountability principles supported by the Open Government partnership. It is based on a case study of a developing country that illustrates the limits of monitoring practice, characterized by a lack of financial and human resources and an uncompleted decentralization process. It concludes

with recommendations to promote joint monitoring processes and practices to improve monitoring capacity. Next, the Community Note 'Can participatory communication be taught? Finding your inner *phronēsis*' (Ricardo Ramírez, Wendy Quarry and Fred Guerin) reviews current lessons in building capacity in participatory communication. It focuses on the notion of practical wisdom, called *phronēsis* by Aristotle. Practical wisdom gives a name to the capacity development outcomes sought by development professionals, namely practitioners who are able to adjust methods, media and strategy to ever-changing contexts.

This issue of the journal is dedicated with all respect to the memory of one of authors in this issue who very sadly passed away during December 2015.

Sarah Cummings

Editor-in-Chief, *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*

References
Cummings, S. (2015) Policy coherence in the post-2015 development agenda. ROSA News No.48, 2-7 http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/file/08/07/2015_-_1658/rosa-news-48-july2015-english.pdf (Accessed 1 December 2015).
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015) Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York, USA. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication (Accessed 1 December 2015)