# Knowledge management and social learning: exploring the cognitive dimension of development

## Sebastião Darlan Mendonça Ferreira and Marcos Neto

The emergence of the discipline, knowledge management, is a new phenomenon. In the field of management, it arose in the beginning of the 1990s and in the development field, its application is even more recent. Its potential in development is not sufficiently well understood but the number of organizations that are giving it great importance is growing every day. It is realistic to expect that in the near future it will be much more important than it is now. Knowledge management has its origin in the evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT), the increased importance of knowledge as a source of value for companies, institutions and societies, and the advancement in cognitive theory. Although these are the most known trends, the contribution of new approaches in the field of development should not be underestimated.

Knowledge management began to influence the development community, namely the group of institutions (public and private, national and international) whose mission is promoting development of impoverished countries, in the second half of the 1990s, with the initiatives of the World Bank, the United Nations, the Global Knowledge Partnership, and some other international institutions (King and McGrath 2004). Knowledge management currently is mainstreamed in a great number of development institutions in Northern countries and it is likely that soon it will be important also in Southern development institutions.

Most of the concepts and tools developed by knowledge management academics, consultants and think-tanks, currently in use, are still heavily influenced by knowledge management's origin in the realm of private corporations and institutions of developed countries. In development, knowledge management has different challenges. In development, it is important to cross social frontiers, create opportunities in socially open spaces, work in conditions of scarcity of resources and manage knowledge as a public good. These particularities of development challenges should influence the future of knowledge management for the development community.

# Knowledge management and development

As discussed above, the concept of knowledge management is spreading rapidly in the community of development agencies. This use of knowledge in development has two main aspects:

- How development agencies can learn faster and use their knowledge for doing a better job. In this case, learners are development professionals in developed countries and in countries in which agencies work.
- How to improve social learning and knowledge as a dimension of development, and how to use learning and knowledge as factors for achieving development objectives. In this case, the learners are the social actors and development practitioners, mostly in poor countries.

Both aspects are very important. In this article, we are focusing more on the second aspect, namely knowledge as a dimension of development processes. Development itself should be understood as a social learning process in the sense that: each country and community needs to find its own way to achieve development; the responsibility for the future needs to be assumed mainly by local/national actors; and future successes need to be based in lessons from past experiences, both successes and failures.

It is generally accepted that sustainable economic growth is related to technological innovation (Lewis 2004). New approaches to development are considering that sustainable development might also be considered as a learning process, creating local knowledge and/or assimilating and adapting external/global knowledge (Stiglitz 1999). Analyzing 'development as freedom', Sen (1999) threw light on various aspects of the nature of development processes and greatly enriched our understanding of development and the challenges of less developed countries.

It is also important to discover the cognitive dimension of development. One way to explore the cognitive dimension of development is thinking of development as a social learning process that contributes to people taking explicit control of their own development experiences, using those experiences autonomously to solve their problems and develop their own future. The freedom of people to assume their development as learning should be understood as a constituent part of development, as a right and, at same time, as an instrument for promoting development. Development as learning should be understood as a process in which people have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and draw lessons from their achievements and failures, and as a way of taking control of their experience and life. Development as learning should be understood as an opportunity of mobilizing people's intelligence as a valuable resource (for overcoming scarcity and for achieving development in a sustainable way); and also as a way to mobilize knowledge local resources for reducing external dependence and improving sustainability.

# Characteristics of knowledge in society

The recent evolution of knowledge management, mostly in business and in Northern institutions, suggests that it is possible to reach new levels of using learning and knowledge in development. To understand how to manage knowledge in relation to the

development processes, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of knowledge in society.

- 1. Knowledge in society 'leaks'. When an individual, organization or a social group innovates successfully, the knowledge on which that progress is based becomes visible, at least partially, in the immediate neighbourhood. As time goes on, such progress is understood and copied. Examples from the garment industries in Bangladesh and Peru, and from many other clusters of micro-enterprises around the world, show how knowledge leaks from innovators (individuals, companies and institutions) to a bigger spectrum of society (Easterly 2002).
- 2. Most knowledge is a public good. Once knowledge spreads in society, it has no private owner. In society, knowledge is like air, and every one is free to use it. In society there is thus no reason for hoarding knowledge and there are many reasons for sharing it as widely as possible. Sharing knowledge, in society, is an effective way of multiplying its value with very low costs. This has important implications for the way knowledge creates value in the economic framework of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 3. Although knowledge is a public good and leaks to its immediate neighbourhood, there are important linguistic, social and cognitive barriers for knowledge diffusion across different social groups. These barriers can impede knowledge from being transferred to whoever may need this knowledge. Because of the great complexity and diversity of society, these social barriers are much more difficult to overcome than those that exist in the inner spaces of companies and institutions. Additionally these barriers are often invisible to most people, including policy makers and development programme designers.
- 4. Organizations are playing fields, like chess boards, with clearly defined actors, rules and structures. In society, the frontiers, actors and rules for knowledge management are not well defined. The scope, frontiers and rules for knowledge management are 'ever changing' variables and, in many cases, are unknown, requiring solutions much more flexible and robust to adapt to such fuzzy and changing conditions.
- 5. Unlike in organizations, in society, culture is a given. In organizations, management policies and leadership can shape culture, or influence it greatly. In society, culture cannot be easily changed.
- 6. In developed countries, most organizations do not suffer from resource scarcity, but in poor countries and in most social sectors, scarcity of resources (money, professionals, facilities, technology, etc.) is the norm. It is impossible to achieve sustainability without being realistic about scarcity of resources in poor countries. However, most development programmes do not recognize local bottlenecks and undervalue the importance of resource scarcity.

# Fostering knowledge management at the local level

Implementation of knowledge management for development, taking these six characteristics into account and with the active involvement of local actors, requires fostering of knowledge management at the local level.

Local knowledge, in the sense we are using here, is mostly a modern creation. Local knowledge is the sum of (tacit and explicit) knowledge that living generations are using and recreating in the effort to solve their problems and achieve their aspirations. It is the sum of 'theories-in-use' and 'espoused-theories' (Schön 1983), practical experiences, assumptions, information, and demons (Pinker 1997), together with rules of thumb, beliefs, etc., that people use in their private, social, economic and professional activities.

Most local knowledge has a spatially limited validity. Experiences, from which most knowledge emerges, have local particularities like context, actors and processes. Local knowledge itself has a symbiotic relationship with the particularities of local conditions. In most cases, those particularities are unique and limit the way in which local knowledge can be generalized and applied in different spaces. This explains the well known limitations of best practices replication in development.

Local knowledge is mostly tacit and embedded in the brains of local actors. Normally people are not aware of what they know or of the relevance of that knowledge. They also have great difficulties in identifying, retrieving and expressing what they know. For this reason, it is difficult to achieve effectiveness and productivity in tacit knowledge sharing.

Most local knowledge mixes the facts of experience with myths, old paradigms, cultural idiosyncrasies, linguistic expressions and tacit theories-in-use. This fusion makes understanding and analysis very difficult for outsiders and limits the acceptance of local knowledge by most external actors. Most outsiders have differing cultural traditions, conceptual frameworks and intellectual parameters, restricting real understanding and diffusion of local knowledge. In some cases, prejudices of professionals and institutions of developed countries also operate against the recognition of local knowledge.

Valuable local knowledge is often not locally known nor socially recognized. Local experiences that could inspire others to find ways of getting out of poverty are neither recognized nor valued by local leaders, decision makers or development programme designers. This indistinctness of local knowledge is a problem because the capacity of knowledge for spreading socially depends on its recognition.

Most of the macro conditions (economic, legal, institutional, environmental, etc.) that determine the failure or success of local initiatives are invisible to local actors. They know their places, their problems and nearby neighbourhood better than outsiders, but as the scale increases, their perception of the world becomes fuzzier. For example, small producers in the highlands of Ayacucho, 400 miles from Lima, do not know the market rules and conditions in Lima, based on supermarkets and international commercial markets, which determine the prices and competitiveness of their products.

However local knowledge has some remarkable characteristics:

• It works and is locally validated;

- It is sustainable, economically and socially;
- It is culturally friendly to its neighbours;
- It is an abundant resource in any country; and
- Its deployment and mobilization are not expensive.

In many cases, local knowledge is generated under conditions where to fail is so costly that it is inadmissible. In such situations, people deploy an exceptional creativeness, generating solutions absolutely unexpected in developed countries. All outsiders who have experimented in applying general knowledge to local conditions discover that 'the devil is in the (local) details', and the decisive importance of local knowledge for being successful in a world with high diversity. Additionally, leverage of local knowledge empowers local actors, creates a diversity of partners worldwide and generates better conditions for making development a more horizontal and democratic process.

One implication of viewing development as a social learning process is the necessity of strengthening local/national partners for managing (appropriating, adapting and/or recreating) the knowledge they need for their development, reinforcing their self-confidence in their own intelligence and cognitive skills. If we want to promote an active role of local actors in creating their own solutions, it will be necessary to give priority to improving their capacity for managing knowledge; to learning from their experience; to sharing with others; and to acquiring knowledge from the outside world.

However, limitations of local actors and the rules that currently govern development aid reinforce the disequilibrium of power between donors and receivers. It is very difficult to be critical to 'solutions' that come with financial resources attached to them (whether donated or lent), especially in a condition of poverty and scarcity of resources. The result is a culture of intellectual dependence of most local actors. That dependence makes local actors orient and reduce their intelligence to understanding and applying the solutions generated in developed countries, not to combining global knowledge and local experience in a way that preserves their intellectual autonomy and reinforces their own responsibility.

Dependence also shrinks the capacity of people to be adaptive and assertive in applying others' solutions, and also limits their capacity to learn from experience, particularly when they do not feel directly responsible for the solutions. And finally, this intellectual dependence does not recognize the creativity of poor people who are able to survive in difficult and vulnerable conditions. Intellectual dependence is related to the ineffectiveness and poor results of a significant part of the current development aid, the persistence of poverty and acute social problems in most parts of the world, and the annual waste of billions of dollars.

The main conclusion is that, in the future, local knowledge and local actors should have a greater role in development strategies and policies. The challenge is to find ways of redefining the relationship between development agencies, local governments and local actors for organizing development as a learning process.

## The potential of the social learning approach

The way social learning is to be promoted will depend on the objectives pursued, the conditions of the community who is learning and its context. The three elements of knowledge management (use, creation and sharing) will always be present although the form in which they are combined will vary greatly. Some ways in which social learning is being promoted are provided below with, where possible, inspirational examples:

- Tacit knowledge can be harvesting and/or transformed into explicit expressions for diffusion and future use in development. For example, the experience of capturing tacit knowledge for improving natural resources management (Rambaldi and Callosa-Tarr 2002).
- 2. Knowledge sharing can be promoted between knowledgeable people and people who need that knowledge in local communities. For example, the experience of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in matching demand and supply of knowledge for fighting HIV/AIDS in communities. UNAIDS applied (and expanded) a set of practical and simple tools created by British Petroleum (Collison and Parcell 2001).
- 3. Mobilizing local resources by the use of local knowledge as resource for development, increasing the cost/benefit ration and the sustainability of development programmes.
- 4. Enriching the local knowledge environment with strategic knowledge. Strategic planning at local level can be used to give people the opportunity to rethink and validate their beliefs about their particular context and development strategies being applied.
- 5. Rethinking of strategies, theories-in-use, beliefs, old paradigms and of innovative processes. Reflective Practice, an approach for learning before, during and after action, created by Schön 20 years ago, is being increasingly applied by health professional, educators, academics, armed forces, institutions and companies in developed countries. It can be also applied in less developed countries.
- 6. The identification and diffusion of knowledge can be promoted by innovative social experiences. Knowledge fairs can be good mechanisms for identifying innovative experiences in development institutions.
- 7. Knowledge creation can be used to escape poverty traps and to foster development processes. With the support of cognitive methods, people's fragmented knowledge can be gathered and processed by local actors for creating viable solutions and effective policy propositions (Chambers 2002).

- 8. Processes of knowledge sharing can be organized among diverse organizations and people. In most cases, small producers and local institutions are not competitors. The broadening of the channels for knowledge sharing can be an effective way to spread innovations and to democratize competitiveness among local producers.
- 9. Capacity building can support local knowledge management and social learning. Development professionals and experts in knowledge management can help local institutions and professional to adapt cognitive tools to their specific needs and to put in place tailored mechanisms of knowledge creation and sharing

## The experience of CARE in Latin America and the Caribbean

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc (CARE), is one of the world's largest private humanitarian organizations. With its headquarters in Atlanta, USA, it is part of an international confederation of 11 member organizations committed to helping communities in the developing world achieve lasting victories over poverty. CARE's efforts to apply knowledge management for development in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has involved a process that has taken place over the past four years and is not yet concluded.

The process began with the elaboration of a conceptual framework for knowledge management in a development organization (2001), the development of a methodology for assessing the knowledge processes and its application in three country offices (2002) and the designing of a strategy proposal for implementing knowledge management in the LAC region (2003). After three years of hard work, the institutional reality and practice remained unchanged, requiring a change in the strategy.

The strategy selected by the LAC Regional Management Unity (RMU) was to go to the practical experience of the front line of the organization, aiming to motivate people to experiment with knowledge management in the context of their practice. Based on this, the Latin America and Caribbean Region Management Unit (LACRMU) carried out an experiment to promote social learning in seven countries of the region.

### LACRMU's strategy

The main premise of LACRMU's strategy was that social learning is an emergent phenomenon that could not be designed beforehand but that could be nurtured. This implied giving CARE professionals in the frontline the opportunity to discover the forms of generating and sharing knowledge in their particular contexts. The Bob Dylan conception that 'the answer is blowing in the wind', inspired LACRMU's strategy.

The strategy aimed to support local actors in leading initiatives of social learning in order to demonstrate a great diversity of experiences. These experiences would provide evidence and give key clues about potential strategies and policies for making knowledge and social learning a central element of development approaches.

The driver of this experiment was the promotion of knowledge communities with the purpose of designing and executing knowledge projects. The concept of a knowledge community (von Krogh et al. 2000) is very similar to that of the community of practice (Wenger 2002). It was conceived that knowledge projects should be based on an innovative social experience and should conceive a way of leveraging knowledge through a process of social learning with other social agents. At the same time, LACRMU expected that the experiment would contribute to improving the value of tacit knowledge, promoting reflective practice among participants, and encouraging the migration from teaching to facilitation among development workers.

The main change agents involved were the knowledge promoters with the role of identifying innovative social experiences, facilitating the processes with knowledge communities in their organization, and taking part in knowledge project design. Knowledge promoters were field level practitioners motivated with the idea of using knowledge management for development. As they had almost no experience of using the concepts and tools to be employed, they were prepared briefly with an introduction to knowledge management, particularly social learning, and to the methodology involved in the design of knowledge projects.

### The First Knowledge Fair

The venue for conceiving knowledge projects was the First Knowledge Fair, held in Atlanta during 22-24 September 2004. Participants were invited to present potential knowledge projects, competing for awards to support their implementation. These projects had to reinforce the importance of knowledge as a factor for development. The awards offered by the Fair were: first place: USD25, 000, second place: USD10, 000, and third, fourth and fifth places: USD5000. In addition to these prizes, technical assistance and support was to be provided in locating financial resources for the implementation of the ten best projects selected.

A number of conditions for proposing knowledge projects were set in advance. The knowledge communities should organize themselves voluntarily and they should be based on groups that had previous innovative experiences. Members had to be either individuals in their own capacities or persons belonging to institutions, and should not include only CARE staff. They had to express the intention to improve local development by creating and/or sharing knowledge. Naturally, lessons from past experience were an important basis for the projects but their purpose needed to go beyond that of a 'knowledge museum', intending to generate a real and concrete future impact.

A small group of knowledge promoters, all of them CARE staff, were trained to help identify initiatives, constitute knowledge communities and design knowledge projects. Technical (cognitive) assistance was organized for helping knowledge promoters to support knowledge communities.

At the outset, the organizers believed that virtual tools would be very important in helping knowledge promoters carry out their task of promoting the fair and assisting communities to conceive their projects. A webpage and a virtual forum were created and

offered to the knowledge promoters. However, a short time (two months) was enough to show the insufficiency of those tools. The process for organizing the Fair was redesigned, and the technical assistance was focused on workshops and face-to-face dialogues with knowledge promoters and knowledge communities and on direct presence in field work with communities.

The knowledge promoters, responsible for leading the process at the field level, were CARE professionals who had other operative responsibilities. Supporting the communities in preparing the projects and participating in the Fair represented an additional workload for them. This, in some cases, limited their ability to fully take up their role as knowledge promoters.

## Designing knowledge projects

The main tool for designing knowledge projects was a very brief methodology. The methodology stated that, for conceiving a knowledge project, it was necessary to establish:

- 1. Which knowledge is to be created and/or shared;
- 2. Who should use that knowledge;
- 3. What receptacle should contains that knowledge;
- 4. For what purpose, or what use in development;
- 5. How future users should make use of that knowledge;
- 6. Who will participate in the experience of knowledge creation/sharing;
- 7. Which activities will make it possible to create and to share that knowledge, namely the social learning process; and
- 8. The resources required for implementing those activities.

## Methodological steps proposed were:

- 1. The identification of socially innovative experiences
  Identification of socially innovative experiences was based on a brief reconstruction
  of the experience of the group involved. These reconstructions were also used to
  make tacit knowledge explicit. Each group was supported by a facilitator.
- 2. The conception of knowledge projects (preliminary version)
  For conceiving knowledge projects, it was necessary to have found, during the
  reconstruction above, that the group was generating knowledge that should be useful
  to other groups. It was necessary to identify other groups who could use their
  knowledge, representing potential partners in developing that knowledge. Once the
  potential partners were identified, the next step was to imagine a process of social
  learning with them.
- 3. The making of a short experiment Once the project was conceived, a short experiment was required that should indicate of the feasibility of the project. This experiment should focus on the core activities of

the social learning process imagined. It should be brief, based in local capacities and not expensive

4. The final design of the knowledge project Based on the lessons from the short experiment, the projects were improved in their final version for presenting at the First Knowledge Fair.

#### **Results**

The process demonstrated that there was an abundance of experiences of autonomous and innovative development at the field level. The possibility of implementing high quality knowledge projects was substantial. Despite this, the concept of a knowledge project for stimulating social learning and leveraging the role of knowledge in development proved elusive for knowledge promoters and for others involved. Traditional assumptions about the roles of development organizations operated as a strong barrier to facilitating processes in which people were developing their own ideas.

In the process of project design, the members of knowledge communities were very clear when presenting their ideas for the project but, at the same time; they had great difficulty writing these ideas in the format of a project proposal. In itself, design of knowledge projects by the communities was a process of transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. In all cases, the development of the project required a brief reconstruction and reinterpretation of the experience in which the project was based. The main role of the promoters was helping the knowledge community members reconstruct their experience, and express their ideas about the project. The dialogue, and not the writing of project proposals, was the driver of the processes of project design.

The First Knowledge Fair had very satisfactory results:

- The projects presented by the knowledge communities were ideas with great potential for promoting social learning and for making knowledge a key factor for overcoming poverty.
- The participants, local members of the knowledge communities, were very proud of presenting their ideas at a prestigious event.
- The commitment of the members of knowledge communities was remarkable.
- The presentations on knowledge management were found to be illuminating and motivating: the knowledge management experiences of the World Bank and of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and presentations concerning storytelling for promoting organizational changes, paradigm shift for promoting social learning, etc.

However, the Fair had some limitations in its organization and logistics, but they were not significant for its success. Its impact in motivating and inspiring the participants was found to be remarkable.

The Knowledge Fair and the promotion of social learning were carried out in an institutional context where many professionals were not familiar with knowledge management. By some participants, the emphasis in social learning was interpreted as a

reflection on the need to improve organizational learning and, by others, it was perceived that focusing on social learning meant relegating organizational learning to a lower priority. From this, it appears that understanding of the relationship between social and organizational learning still requires attention.

## Follow-up to the First Knowledge Fair

At the present time four activities are being carried out:

- A team from the Centre for Reflective Community Practice at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT), USA, is finishing an evaluation of the experience of promoting knowledge communities through the Knowledge Fair.
- CARE, the UNDP, *Fundação Municipal Albano Schmidt* (FUNDAMAS) and the Salvadoran Government are organizing a new Knowledge Fair in El Salvador for 2006, combining the approaches developed by CARE and UNDP.
- CARE is organizing a Second Knowledge Fair for the LAC region for next year, 2006.
- Knowledge projects are being implemented, and knowledge communities and knowledge promoters are facing the challenge of making their ideas reality.

#### **Conclusions and lessons**

CARE's experience with knowledge communities, knowledge promoters and knowledge projects is still in its early stages. However, some lessons and conclusions can already be drawn from that experience.

- 1. In poor countries, there are a great number of innovators, knowledgeable people, innovative institutions, experiences and valuable knowledge that can be leveraged for empowering people and local institutions; and for increasing the pool of resources available for development.
- Unidirectional programmes, and most public policies in poor countries, are
  ineffective for identifying and mobilizing local knowledge and knowledgeable local
  people and institutions, and for using them to achieve sustainability in development
  programmes.
- 3. When introducing knowledge management in development, it is necessary to develop a great variety of methods. Such methods should include tools for mapping locally knowledge resources and knowledgeable people; for mapping the spread of knowledge through social networks; and for identifying social, linguistic and cultural barriers for knowledge sharing at local level, and how to overcome these barriers. It is also necessary to identify, recognize and improve the role of local knowledge and

- innovation in successful development programmes, and to improve cognitive capabilities of development practitioners and local actors, etc.
- 4. Most of the most valuable knowledge is tacit. For retrieving and sharing this knowledge, conversations, dramatizations and storytelling are much more effective than writing. It is necessary to develop cognitive methods and tools for enabling knowledge sharing among local institutions, without much abstraction, without much systematization.
- 5. Development programmes and development professionals should rethink and relearn their approaches and methods for establishing a more horizontal relationship with local actors and with development practitioners, overcoming their conventional role as the source of (global, mostly technical) knowledge and sharing the responsibility for co-creating knowledge in a world with a high level of diversity.
- 6. As knowledge management is an emergent phenomenon, development professionals need to develop their sensitivity to identifying emerging patterns at local and global level, fostering those patterns with higher potential and achieving greater effectiveness for making knowledge a key factor of development.
- 7. Knowledge Projects require paradigm shifts for development professionals:
  - To go beyond the frontiers of the development institutions and their projects for finding innovations that social groups are carrying out.
  - To go beyond the past experience to the future process of social learning, from the concept of knowledge as a lifeless object to conceive knowledge as a living process.
  - To go beyond knowledge systematization as a precondition for sharing knowledge to systematization/abstraction as a process simultaneous to, and some times a result of, sharing experiences.
  - Rethinking the role of the development professionals from the main change agent who systematize people's knowledge to the facilitator who helps local groups express and systematize their own experience.
  - To go beyond the replication of (standardized) best practices to the creative
    use of the knowledge of successful (and not so successful) experiences for
    inspiring other people and for shortening their learning curves.
- 8. The initial experience post-knowledge fair suggests that development organizations, like CARE, must find ways to mainstream knowledge projects in the more generic development work if such projects are to be viable, receive institutional support, and leverage.

- 9. It is necessary to do a better job of making sure that development organizations, like CARE, clearly link their organizational learning with social learning, as a way to start leveraging resources for social learning and vice-versa, as well as capturing the attention of all of an organization and not just part of it.
- 10. It is necessary to train knowledge promoters, development practitioners and local experts in knowledge management: in methods of eliciting and expressing tacit knowledge, as well as in reflective practice, knowledge community promotion, knowledge project design, social networking, etc.
- 11. For being sustainable, knowledge creation and sharing must be based in local institutions and actors. It is necessary to develop strategies and methods for capacity building for knowledge management (people and institutions) at local level in less developed countries.
- 12. To be sustainable, social learning requires institutional support in cognitive, social, logistic, and economic resources. Development organizations need to learn how to promote that institutional support for making social learning a new component of development processes.

If we are capable of developing the potential of knowledge management for leveraging local knowledge, and for empowering people and fostering local institutions, the effectiveness and efficiency of development aid will greatly increase, making the objective of overcoming poverty achievable.

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#### Abstract

The article considers the importance of improving social learning and knowledge as a dimension of development, and how to use learning and knowledge as factors for achieving development objectives. Implementation of knowledge management for development, taking the six characteristics of knowledge in society into account and with the active involvement of local actors, requires fostering of knowledge management at the local level. Local knowledge and local actors should have a greater role in development strategies and policies. The challenge is to find ways of redefining the relationship between development agencies, local governments and local actors for organizing development as a learning process. CARE's efforts to apply knowledge management for development in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has involved a process that has taken place over the past four years and is not yet concluded. The example of the First Knowledge Fair held in Atlanta during 22-24 September 2004, and the related development of knowledge projects and knowledge communities, is examined.

#### About the authors



Sebastião Darlan Mendonça Ferreira is an independent consultant in knowledge development and strategic planning, mostly in Southern countries. He has worked for more of 15 years, facilitating processes with people and organizations to generate knowledge for creating new futures. He is the author of five books on themes of development. He has had the responsibility of developing the approach on knowledge management and

of organizing the First Knowledge Fair for CARE LAC in 2004. E-mail: sebastiaomf@hotmail.com



Marcos Neto is a lawyer by training with a LLM in Law and Development from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, UK. Marcos was the organizer and first CEO of CARE Brazil and currently he is a Deputy Director for the LAC region, among his current responsibilities is to spearhead the implementation of the CARE LAC KM strategy.