

## **Editorial**

### **Effective knowledge sharing for development in Africa**

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with Chief Editors, Julie Ferguson and Sarah Cummings*

The Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community of practice ([www.km4dev.org](http://www.km4dev.org)) publishes a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal in the field of knowledge sharing for development, the 'Knowledge Management for Development Journal' (KM4D Journal) at [www.km4dev.org/journal](http://www.km4dev.org/journal). This issue of the journal deals with *effective knowledge sharing for development in Africa*.

The team of guest editors are all part of the Global Development Network's (GDN) programme on Knowledge Sharing for Development for the Africa Region which aims at enhancing the knowledge management and research dissemination capacity of research institutes and networks in Africa by providing training and skills building in knowledge management.

### **About this issue**

The eradication of poverty is at the heart of all development efforts in Africa. For policies to have positive outcomes for poor people in developing and transition countries they need to be informed by a local understanding of development problems and solutions. However, national producers of knowledge may face problems in communicating this understanding and knowledge to national, regional and international audiences due to limiting factors, such as lack of access to the Internet, closed institutional cultures, lack of resources and capacity to share knowledge. At the same time, potential end-users of knowledge may have problems accessing locally generated knowledge due to factors such as atomised availability, lack of time, variable quality and the wider availability of Northern knowledge.

There are a number of strong and effective African institutes whose work is successfully shared but there are equally many, if not more, that are constrained by traditional academic values, political sensitivities, lack of resources, language or insufficient networking. This issue of the *KM4D Journal* deals with the role of knowledge sharing (KS) in reducing poverty in Africa, the challenges that African institutes face with KS and how to overcome them.

This issue has five papers, four case studies, an interview, and a book review. The article by Friederike Knabe and Jacqueline Nkoyok highlights women's local knowledge in food production systems and environmental sustainability and discusses the increasing difficulties, resulting from continued degradation of the environment, in securing their families' food requirements.

Zenobia Africa and Martin Nicol present the peer review methodology that is used by municipalities in South Africa to assess the developmental thrust of the new, post-Apartheid local government system. The paper illustrates the value which sector-specific learning networks bring to local, district and metropolitan municipalities as they confront development and equity challenges.

Jacques Tshibwabwa examines the challenges faced in sharing knowledge about the electoral process in DR Congo. He explores the players needed to carry out the process and the means to do so efficiently.

Jules Bayala, Mahamadi Dianda and Marlène Elias discuss the main impediments to the spread of knowledge about the shea plant in Africa and call for a system of knowledge sharing, including a central database on the socio-economic and biophysical aspects of the resource, to facilitate communication between the actors involved in shea-related work.

Ednah Karamagi presents the experience of the CELAC Project – Collecting & Exchange of Local Agricultural Content – that works in close partnership with government and civil society to improve farm output and the livelihoods of women farmers in Uganda. This is done through knowledge sharing and information management of local agricultural content using various ICT mediums.

The paper by Rose Oronje discusses the specific challenges that the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) faces in its knowledge sharing efforts and suggests some possible solutions to address these challenges.

The paper by Sabine Hage shows the possibilities of networking as an instrument of successful knowledge management for local economic development in South Africa.

Astrid Szogs and Lugano Wilson present the case of the Tanzanian Industrial Research and Development Organization (TIRDO) and explore its role as a potential mediator between the foreign sector and local companies. They demonstrate how knowledge, gained through cooperation with Multinational Enterprises, could be shared with local companies and re-implemented in the local context.

Tony Pryor, Anna van der Heijden and Lars Soeftestad compare the experiences of the FRAME project and the Community-Based Natural Resource Management Network (CBNRM Net) from the perspective of users, project coordinators and donors, describing successes and ongoing challenges such as cultural and language differences, the

limitations of relying too heavily on ICTs, and regional differences in the interpretation of key concepts and willingness to share information.

An interview with Kingo Mchombu explores whether effective KS can help reduce poverty in Africa and examines cases where KS did have an impact on improving the livelihood of communities.

Sibrenne Wagenaar reviews the book by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs entitled ‘The World Café, shaping our futures through conversations that matter’ where they examine how the capacity to talk and think more deeply about the critical issues facing our communities, our organisations, our nations, and our planet can be enhanced and how the mutual intelligence and wisdom we need to create innovative paths forward can be accessed.

Finally in Community Notes Chris Burman summarises a discussion of the KM4Dev community on ‘academia and development.’

We hope you enjoy reading the contributions in this issue and look forward to your comments and feedback.

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*Guest Editors, Effective knowledge sharing for development in Africa*