

Knowledge Management and Learning (KML) Framework

*“Someone who only knows what he has learned and not how he learned it, still has a lot to learn”
Swieringa, J. & Wierdsma, A., (1992), Becoming a learning organization, Addison Wesley)*

I. Preamble

CARE International is a humanitarian organization working in more than 70 countries around the world. CARE’s vision is to seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. CARE International in Pakistan (CIP) is implementing various emergency and development programs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Baluchistan and Sindh since 2005.

Under its 15 year Long Range Strategic Plan (LRSP) - 2011-26, CIP is working to positively change marginalized women’s lives in Pakistan by focusing on Health, Education, Economic Empowerment and Emergencies. This framework outlines the way in which CIP will use appropriate processes for knowledge management and learning to inform and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its work in these areas. By proactively identifying the questions we need to answer in order to support the advancement of the LRSP and 5 year program, CIP will be able to take a more forward looking and targeted approach to learning. Lessons, learning and evidence from projects, activities, research and external sources will be focused around these targeted learning questions in order to build up detailed and coherent ‘answers’ that will be applied to future practice and influence policy, thus increasing CIP’s overall impact.

II. Background

An internal session on Knowledge Management and Learning was conducted by the Program Development and Quality Unit in consultation with John Lakeman, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager at CIUK. The session concluded that CARE is somewhere between being an atomized and an adaptive learning organization, where at one end people and teams operate independently from each other, keeping knowledge to themselves and constantly reinventing the wheel, while at the other end it promotes the exchange of knowledge, creating a more informed and informative work environment. It was therefore felt that by improving our systems for KML we would gain in the following ways:

1. Create a culture of knowledge sharing, innovation and learning that leads to improved programmatic outcomes;
2. Reduce ‘information leakage’ from the organization (e.g. lost files and institutional memory);
3. Reduce existing transaction costs (less time spent chasing important information) and create space for new transactions (strengthened collaboration and sharing);
4. Create the right environment for innovation and the development of new ideas and approaches;
5. Reduce duplication of data storage and version control across CARE membership (documents reside in one location only); and
6. Improve the quality of our collective knowledge and information base.

Various ideas were shared and comments on how to improve the present system were also discussed. In the light of all these ideas, desk research and individual consultations with the management team the following Knowledge Management and Learning Framework has been drafted.

III. Objectives

1. To improve the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of CIP’s work by providing a targeted and proactive approach to capturing and applying learning and knowledge based on the requirements of CIP’s 15 Year Long Range Strategic Plan (LRSP) and 5 Year program
2. To promote an understanding and sense of personal responsibility within each employee that KML is key to organizational success

IV. CiP's Understanding of Knowledge Management

"Knowledge is information that changes something or somebody - either by becoming grounds for actions, or by making an individual (or an institution) capable of different or more effective actions" (Peter Drucker¹)

Successful knowledge management (KM) is achieved when an organization consciously and comprehensively gathers, organizes, shares, analyzes and applies its knowledge to achieve organizational vision.²

The three foundational pillars of Knowledge Management include:

- KM Culture
- KM Standards
- KM System

KM Culture: Developing a knowledge management culture means shifting the aspirations of people from the concept of *"need to know"* towards *"need to share"*, and *"able to apply"*. It is a drive towards recognizing knowledge and learning as a core organizational value. An organizational responsibility being to create an environment that fosters that culture and clarifies the value of knowledge sharing and application. The culture must recognize the realities of information overload and competing priorities of demands. Creating that space involves understanding implications of a robust KM environment from the perspective of costs (time, resources, skills, etc.) versus benefits (efficiencies, effectiveness, impact) and negotiating realistic expectations that foster ownership and behavior change.

KM Standards: To streamline the knowledge management process (information generation, information collection, information analysis, information dissemination) standards must be put in place. This will not only help in systematically disseminating the information but will also enhance organizational capacity to learn. The standards will allow formulating and capturing the relevant knowledge of our staff, and organize it into information that is easy to share and practical to apply. The Knowledge Management guide, SOPs and protocols will help in achieving this aim (see Knowledge Management Guide Annex 1).

KM Systems: Appropriate systems will connect the staff to each other, and enable them to share information in ways that facilitates learning. Systems and platforms including the website, shared drive, database and library will bolster the KM Culture and facilitate transfer of information (see Knowledge Management Guide Annex 1).

V. CiP's Approach to Learning

CiP is interested in both programmatic (what we do) and implementation (how we do it) oriented learning. By analyzing what we need to learn and putting in place systems for 'forward' or proactive learning on specific need-based learning questions CiP hopes to become more strategic and successful in its learning approach. As the seven domains (objectives) of the LRSP are long terms goals that will not be changed during the 15 year period, learning will be focused at the pathway level. By identifying priority learning needs in order to help move along pathways to reach milestones and breakthroughs, CiP will be much more targeted in its approach.

Definitions

Learning: The process of gaining knowledge or understanding (and therefore an important part of knowledge management). A continuous cycle of learning is required in the development sector where achieving social change relies upon responding to, and making sense of, the uncertain and unpredictable.

¹ Reference: CI KMWG Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 2

² Reference: CI KM Road Map for Vision 2020

Targeted Learning Questions: Specific questions based on what we need to learn in order to achieve CiP’s goals. These should be identified based on priority knowledge needs in order to achieve milestones and breakthroughs along CiP’s pathways. A small number of targeted learning questions should be identified each year along with tools, resources and responsibility for gathering lessons, data and evidence to provide ‘answers’ to the questions.

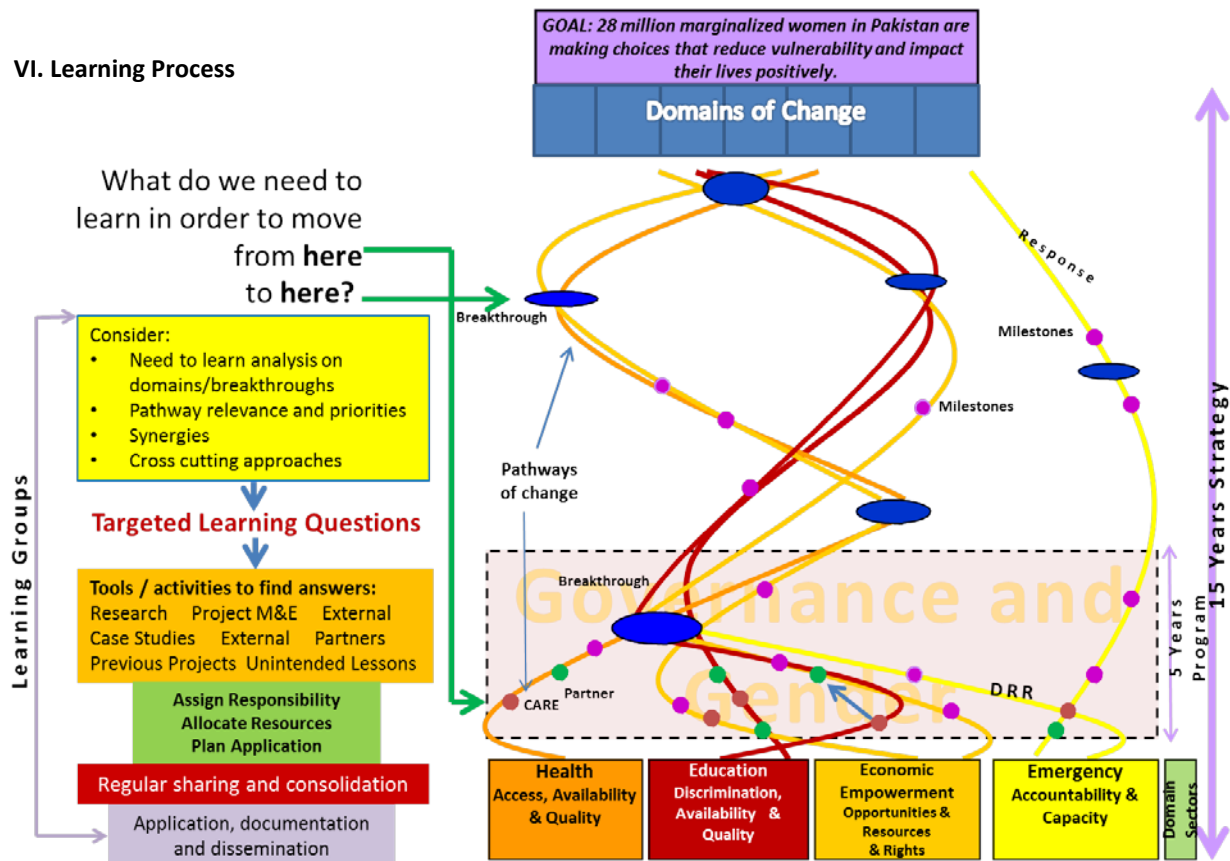
Lessons Learnt: What has actually been learnt, the results of learning or the ‘answers’ to the targeted questions.

Unintended Lessons: Lessons which are not targeted or predefined but which emerge during implementation of a project or activity and provide useful information to improve future action. These may be derived from sources such as monitoring data, evaluations, anecdotes, case studies or external sources.

Application: When lessons and evidence gathered is used to inform policy or improve practice. For example, using lessons from the field and specific research generated on the positive impact of life skills training to develop a brief to advocate for the use of such training within government institutes.

Successful Learning: Demonstrated when lessons are applied resulting in a visible change in what we achieve e.g. by incorporating the lessons learnt, or ‘answers’ to targeted learning questions, CiP is able to improve efficiency and/or effectiveness and therefore demonstrate greater impact.

VI. Learning Process



Steps 1-3 are carried out as part of an annual learning workshop. Steps 4, 5, 6 and 7 take place on a regular basis as agreed.

Step 1: Identify targeted learning questions for the FY which reflect what we need to know in order to make progress along our pathways and achieve milestones and breakthroughs within the domains. This will involve conducting a need to learn analysis to consider current progress along pathways and what we need to learn to move forward. Consideration of the pathways relevance work and priorities, identified synergies across sectors, risks and cross cutting approaches will all be important in defining 3 overall targeted learning questions. This should ideally be carried out during a workshop with key members from SMT, PDQ and projects.

Step 2: Complete the learning agenda (see Annual Learning Agenda Template, Annex 2) by **identifying tools and activities** that can help capture lessons and evidence to ‘answer’ each of the questions. These may include specific pieces of research, building necessary data needs based on the targeted learning questions into project M&E and project design, case studies, previous projects and learning, partners, experts, external sources (peer organisations, government, private sector, other) and identifying relevant unintended lessons. Choice of tools will depend on need, relevance to current work, opportunities for collaboration and resourcing.

Step 3: Once tools are chosen **responsibility** for each should be assigned, **resources** allocated (or possible sources of funding explored) and practical plans for the **application** of the learning should also be outlined. All learning should be applied at the following 3 levels with practical steps outlined from the start for how it will be used:

1. **Our knowledge** (how can this be shared within the organization and add to our overall capacity? Use of KM system, brown bags, updates to frameworks/sector plans/checklists/guidelines etc)
2. **Our programmes** (how can this better inform our programmes? Sharing with project leads and partners, plans for use in existing projects, sharing for use in future programming etc)
3. **Our influence** (how can it be used to influence others? Policy briefs, advocacy campaigns, presentations to donors etc)

Step 4: Learning Groups will be formed and will meet on a regular basis in order to share lessons and evidence and build a picture of information that helps us to answer the targeted learning questions. These groups should include representatives from SMT, PDQ and projects (although not necessarily the same people each time).

Terms of Reference for the Learning Groups could include: Identifying learning questions and learning agenda on an annual basis; Regular sharing of lessons and evidence gathered for each question; Validating and quality checking the lessons and evidence shared by others; Following up with others on progress of gathering lessons and information; Ensuring that learning is documented and applied in practice; Providing opportunities for others to attend workshops, meetings, events, review evaluations, shadowing, exposure visits, joint monitoring visits etc; Encouraging a learning culture (celebrating, acknowledging and supporting learning); Forging synergies across projects and at sector level; Potential for exploring impact measurement; Potential to invite partners/participants?

Step 5: Application, documentation and dissemination of ‘answers’ or lessons learnt under the targeted learning questions. This can be coordinated through the learning groups annually or when sufficient evidence and learning has been collected.

Step 6: Wider **organizational sharing** of ‘answers’ to targeted learning questions. This could be undertaken as part of existing review meetings or CPCM.

Step 7: An **organization wide self-assessment** that assesses the progress made in knowledge management and learning on an annual basis (see KML self-assessment tool, Annex 3).

VI. Challenges and solutions

Key challenges that CIP faces in terms of knowledge management and learning are as follows³

Challenge	Solution
<p>Reactive Approach Previously CIP has had a reactive approach to learning, which leads to uncoordinated efforts with less focus and effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement forward learning process and system as outlined in the KML Framework
<p>Lack of Budget Allocation for Learning Initiatives As CIP is not a mainstream learning organization budget allocated for knowledge management, learning and research and development is limited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure budget for KML is included in all new funding proposals • Allocate funding according to identified learning questions and activities and • Use learning agenda to leverage specific resources
<p>Employee Workload Almost all employees felt they have excessive workloads⁴ and heavy new KML systems would be daunting. KML often falls to the bottom of the priority list.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the new system is simple does not require excessive time, integrating with existing systems/meetings where possible • Including KML budget allocation within projects will ensure it is included in workplanning from the start, allowing staff to manage time more effectively • Including specific KML activities in staff individual objectives will ensure it remains a core part of the work and should not be de-prioritised.
<p>Inefficient Use of Present Knowledge Management System The present technology incorporated to support knowledge management is not widely used by all the employees. Some of the reasons for inefficient usage are the lack of awareness and perception that it will be extra workload.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out an orientation to the KM systems for all staff, focusing on ease of use • Provide specific support as required in use of the KM system
<p>Donor Compliance Donor compliance is often prioritized, making KML for internal purposes seem more effort and less of a priority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate CiP’s targeted learning questions into M&E Frameworks of projects • Include tool and activities for gathering evidence and learning in project activity plans • Meet regularly as a learning group to support and encourage each other
<p>Staff Turn-Over Rate Like any other INGO, the staff turn-over rate is high especially for emergency related projects. Although data handing over policy and procedures are in place but once repeated too often it hinders proper data collection and compilation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff are complying with the KM Guide • Ensure proper handovers are carried out • An on-going system of archiving can help overcome this challenge. • Regular learning group meetings will help foster a culture of learning and sharing that will ensure all knowledge is not held by one person.

³ Findings from Knowledge Management and Learning Session held in June, 2013 in CIP

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