

DOING THE KNOWLEDGE II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Knowledge Sharing Strategy builds on a set of proposals presented to the Management Board in “Doing the Knowledge”¹ in August 2000. Since then, DFID has made steady progress in building the “enabling environment” for knowledge sharing (KS). It is now time to embed knowledge sharing in DFID’s working practices, focussing on the incentives that drive this and the services and systems to support it.

Part 1 briefly sets out the background and key concepts. 85% of large UK organisations now have Knowledge Management strategies. The purpose of DFID’s knowledge sharing effort is to maximise our collective knowledge resources to help meet the MDGs and our PSA/SDA targets. The challenge is in two inter-dependent parts: (i) how we develop a **learning culture**; and (ii) how we share knowledge externally in ways that **deepen and broaden our engagement with key development partners**. A lot of good knowledge sharing is already happening in parts of DFID. We need to “mainstream” this.

Sharing knowledge in ways that **build a learning organisation** will require tackling issues on a broad front, and the gains will be incremental. **Part 2** suggests how we encourage knowledge sharing behaviours through supportive incentive structures that recognise and reward good practice; by providing sufficient and structured opportunities for staff and departmental reflection; and by removing barriers and disincentives to sharing. We can also pay attention to mentoring, and transferring and “harvesting” knowledge when staff change posts.

Knowledge sharing activities should focus on mission-critical information that reflect DFID’s “**knowledge value system**” (**Part 3**). Access to information from and about research, for example, is a key part of this. Departments and offices should consider where their contribution to corporate knowledge matters most and organise to reflect this. DFID is good at using the knowledge held within advisory groups and future arrangements for knowledge management within PD will seek to build on this. Our reorganised regional directorates and policy units are also providing a tighter framework within which to direct knowledge flows. ICSD/ISSD’s Knowledge Team and Knowledge Officers in PD and regional units (where these exist) will work together more closely. ICSD will also develop a greater normative function to help departments and individuals know *how* and *what* to share.

DFID’s information systems need to provide effective vehicles for information flows in our dispersed structure (**Part 4**). They should also aim to “**show what we know**” by capturing explicit knowledge, signposting expertise and providing fast organisation-wide access to information “common goods”. The latter should include not only intellectual knowledge products for policy-

¹ <http://insight/info/informationmanagement/imc/doingtheknowledge.htm>

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makers, but also a range of procedural know-how tools. While InSight is performing well as a corporate communications vehicle, users need help to exploit it as a knowledge sharing system. Looking forward, QUEST offers potential to integrate information capture seamlessly within staff working practices; thereby improving the quality and quantity of information available for sharing. But we should beware seeing any information system as a knowledge sharing “solution”.

Getting people connected (Part 5) is key to transferring tacit knowledge, whether face-to-face or via a range of “connectivity tools”. Managed networks are improving the way we pass knowledge around DFID and move it outwards to influence policy and practice. However, some DFID staff are not yet able to access the full suite of connectivity tools (e.g. inSight discussion groups), while others need support to use them better (e.g. video conferencing and e-mail). The variable performance of our systems across locations is another connectivity constraint. The experience of the World Bank and BP suggests that providing staff with equal and consistent IT access across sites provides significant returns for knowledge sharing.

DFID's objectives are as much about influencing decision-making through our expertise, research and good practice as our spend. **Part 6** of this strategy considers where **outward-facing knowledge sharing techniques** can “add value” to the way we utilise information and knowledge externally, and provide an enabling environment for others to engage and inform us. Departments and country offices should bear in mind the links between knowledge sharing and capacity building. Centrally, DFID's website can be developed to deepen and broaden our partnership with key stakeholders. There is interest from users for “extranet” facilities enabling us to communicate, consult and work with key partners on shared projects and products.

It will be important to capture gains and benefit flows in ways that keep knowledge sharing momentum going. **Part 7** proposes ways of gauging DFID's progress and capacity in this area using qualitative proxy indicators. It also recommends an organisational framework for taking KS forward, which relies on more structured collaboration between the ICSD/ISSD's Knowledge Sharing Team, PD and regional Knowledge Managers/Officers, involving HRD and interested external stakeholders where appropriate.

PART 1 THE BACKGROUND

The Knowledge and Communications Committee (KCC) has asked Information and Civil Society Department (ICSD) to prepare a Knowledge Sharing (KS) Strategy for DFID. This paper is part of a strategy set. It complements DFID's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy and feeds into DFID's e-Business Strategy, which will be revised in November this year. This paper has benefited from contributions from a range of DFID staff and key external stakeholders.

What is Knowledge Management?

1.1 Knowledge Management (KM) is an amalgam of concepts from management theory, good HR practice and information science. KM is about managing knowledge assets proactively and properly, in the same way as organisations seek to handle their financial assets and human resources.

1.2 According to the British Standards Institution (BSI)² 85% of large British organisations now have KM strategies. The organisations surveyed identified benefits ranging from more informed and evidence-based decision making, to retaining an institutional memory and helping to bring new staff on. DFID prefers to describe this set of issues as Knowledge Sharing because this recognises the two-way flow of knowledge and how we assimilate ideas from outside.

1.3 One useful way of categorising knowledge, in the context of how it can be managed, is to distinguish between *tacit* knowledge, the expertise and experience that individuals carry around in their heads – and *explicit* knowledge, which can be easily captured and recorded. The latter requires high quality information management systems, staff awareness of these tools and the ability to use them. The former is largely a question of organisational culture, and how staff learn, share and co-operate laterally as well as hierarchically. **While information systems should be catalysts and enablers for knowledge sharing, developing a culture of KS is at the heart of any successful strategy.**

Analysis of Progress and Constraints

1.4 This paper builds on proposals put to DFID's Management Board in August 2000 in "Doing the Knowledge". Since then, steady progress has been made in building a framework and "enabling environment" for knowledge sharing. Drawing on external good practice, we have introduced Knowledge and Information Management as a core competence; highlighted Knowledge Sharing in DFID's Values Statement; set up the Knowledge and Communications Committee (KCC) to provide strategic oversight for KS issues, and made the layout of the London office more conducive to team-

² British Standards Institution: Knowledge Management: A Guide to Good Practice, 2001

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working and informal information exchange. A lot of good knowledge sharing is already happening in DFID.

1.5 But there have also been constraints. Developing a concrete programme of action with which to follow Doing the Knowledge¹ has taken time. We have learned that successful knowledge sharing is less a question of setting up discrete “projects” than integrating sharing and learning into DFID's key business processes and staff work practices. “Mainstreaming” knowledge sharing is far-reaching challenge, and getting the incentives right to promote a culture of knowledge sharing is not an area of “quick wins”.

1.6 We have also learned that communicating a clearer “vision” for knowledge sharing is key to successful mainstreaming. This strategy seeks to redress this, and the new Director of Information will have a key role along with the KCC in championing KS at the highest level, and ensuring that momentum is maintained in implementing this strategy.

1.7 ICSD also needs to be much clearer about the core, “enabling” functions and support services it provides to departments and users to support them in mainstreaming knowledge sharing. To take forward this work in an integrated fashion, ICSD and ISSD will form a joint **Knowledge Support Team** (KST). We shall also work in a more structured fashion with Knowledge Managers in Policy Division and the Geographical Policy Units, as this paper later makes clear.

Approach and Structure of this Strategy

1.8 The purpose of our KS efforts is to marshal our knowledge resources more effectively to help meet the MDGs and our PSA/SDA targets. For the purposes of this strategy, we divide this challenge into two broad areas (which in reality form something of a continuum):

- (i) how we exchange knowledge internally to **build a learning organisation**; and
- (ii) how we manage our **knowledge resources and relations** externally, by sharing what we know with others, as well as listening to and learning from them.

1.9 **Building a learning organisation** will require tackling issues on a broad front. **Parts 2-5** of this strategy present an internal programme of action in four areas where we hope to deliver important and lasting organisational returns by:

- finding more ways to “lock in” learning;
- understanding the knowledge “value system”, and how to make the most of it;
- ensuring that our information systems show more of what we know, and are user friendly to KS;

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- connecting people, face-to-face and via communications tools.

1.10 As highlighted above, some aspects of this agenda will require departments to take the lead in mainstreaming knowledge sharing and learning. In other areas the **Knowledge Support Team (KST)** will provide a core “enabling” function and support services to users, working closely with PD and Geographical Knowledge Officers (where the latter exist).

1.11 **Applying knowledge management techniques to broaden and deepen our engagement with external partners** is an equally important prize but an area where less corporate work has been done to date. However, it is somewhat artificial to draw a “hard line” between internal and external knowledge sharing; indeed these are inter-dependent and mutually re-enforcing activities. **Part 6** of this strategy looks at how we can “add value” to the way DFID shares knowledge externally. It considers the case for applying knowledge sharing techniques to strengthen and deepen our partnerships, build the capacity of key stakeholders and collaborate more closely with them.

1.12 **Part 7** sets out the means for gauging DFID's progress for learning and sharing knowledge, and recommends an organisational framework for taking this strategy forward.

BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

PART 2: "LOCKING IN" LEARNING

"Knowledge Sharing must be mainstreamed in a way that people cannot deliver without doing it properly"

- 2.1 DFID needs to develop a culture that encourages individuals to:
- (i) discover ways to share what has been learned by providing the right incentives;
 - (ii) continuously ask "what do I/we need to know in order to be more effective and how should I/we go about acquiring that knowledge?".

2.2 EvD has recently commissioned a wide-ranging study into personal needs in DFID in relation to performance management, of which better knowledge sharing is a key component. In the meantime, there are a number of immediate enabling actions we should take to help such a culture emerge take.

Action Point 1: Make the Most of the Performance Assessment System

2.3 Line managers hold the key to instilling a knowledge sharing mentality by leading by example, by encouraging and supporting staff time devoted to this and ensuring greater recognition and reward for good practice. How we use the new performance management and bonus allocation system as an entry point will be critical, since rewards for good KS are scant at present. All types and grades of staff should be included: for example, more junior staff with cross-cutting support roles often have access to knowledge that can help unlock or interpret professional silos. The Performance Assessment framework provides new opportunities to:

- (i) integrate knowledge sharing objectives into the Personal Development Plans, where possible cascading these to other team members. (A distinct KS objective would typically include: identifying and consulting with others inside/outside DFID working in similar areas; sharing work and placing relevant knowledge in the DFID domain.)
- (ii) reward those individuals, teams and networks who demonstrate good Knowledge and Information Management behaviours (in relation to the Core Competence) and, through the Team Recognition Fund, wider contributions to organisational learning.

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As part of this, Directors should publicise widely the Team Recognition Awards they make.

- (iii) clarify expectations between individuals and line managers about the value of time spent contributing to networks, discussion groups and using inSight to keep up-to-date with office-wide policy developments. For example, a number of brigaded advisers in Health and Population Group have negotiated time with their line managers for professional updating and contributing to central policy work.

Action Point 2: Roll Out Mentoring

2.4 One-to-one transfer of expertise has an invaluable role in individual learning. Some effective mentoring is already taking place within DFID, both with internal and external mentors (see Box below). HRD is developing plans to “roll out” mentoring organisation-wide. The scheme is due to launch in October and mentoring activities will be encouraged as part of broader development opportunities for both mentor and mentee.

Feedback on the Advantages of the Economists' Mentoring Scheme

- Access to a more senior member of staff who has a broad knowledge of DFID is useful in building understanding of the organisation as a whole and where you fit into it.
- For a new economist finding their feet, it can be useful to air concerns openly with someone who is not in your direct line management.
- Ability to look way beyond your current post and complement future ideas already discussed with your line manager.

2.5 A number of DFID staff are involved in mentoring external groups in a capacity building setting. External KS issues are discussed at Part 6.

Action Point 3: Formalise and Structure Learning

2.6 We have made progress in tightening the focus of our retreats as knowledge sharing opportunities. But we need to move between and beyond retreats to embed sharing and learning in our working practices. CAPS and the new Directors Delivery Plans are key reflective moments in our business planning cycles, which potentially offer “space” to consider strategic learning needs, and the review mechanisms to ensure action is carried through. ActionAid is harmonising its learning and country planning mechanisms (see below). How we formalise and structure lesson learning is also closely linked with our information systems. These issues discussed in Part 4.

Action Aid “Shared Learning” Initiative

In 10 pilot countries ActionAid is developing “Shared Learning Strategy and Action Plans” framed by country programme objectives. Each learning plan sets out the country programme's knowledge assets and needs. These plans are then shared among countries

programmes to identify compatible sources of expertise and need within ActionAid, as well as areas where new knowledge should be acquired.

Action Point 4: Induction, Handover and Exit Arrangements as Standard

2.7 Several departments have developed induction briefing to complement the corporate induction training TDU offers. DPD's induction pack available on inSight is one of several good practice examples. But induction is also a two-way learning process: we can be more systematic in tapping the knowledge and experience of those joining DFID from outside, SAIC on development attachment or simply those moving in from other parts of the office. The findings of such knowledge "entry interviews" can be captured and shared.

2.8 Our arrangements for knowledge transfer at handover between post-holders are typically weak. For programmes with influencing objectives, breaks in continuity can result in loss of momentum, intelligence and key contacts.

2.9 DFID recognises that preparation for post is not done particularly well. It is common for staff to take up overseas posts with little or no knowledge of the socio-political and economic background of the country. At present TDU is developing a more structured programme to help prepare staff for their overseas posts. Options being explored include: extended briefing from country experts in the UK; detailed briefing in post; cultural awareness training; guided reading and structured tutorials. Pre-posting familiarisation visits are already in place, and have been welcomed as central to the informal aspects of post induction. The World Bank Africa Region operates a Debriefing Service (see below) to tackle these issues (see below).

The World Bank Africa Region (with its significant budget dedicated to knowledge sharing) operates a Debriefing Service to harvest knowledge and lessons after assignments, particularly aspects that are not usually recorded. Facilitated interviews following a prepared questionnaire are conducted with relevant staff using a video cam or tape recorder. The output of this 2-3 hour session is edited into "knowledge nuggets" for specific themes and made available via the intranet. So far Country Sector Managers have been targeted, as well as people changing sectors and such processes such as the PRS.

Action Point 5: Remove Disincentives and Barriers

2.10 On-the-job learning is DFID's main skills development activity. But pressure of work a common reason for staff opting out of such sharing and learning activities as seminars and networks. HODs and line managers therefore have a key role in creating an environment in which staff can learn and countering the perception that learning is a luxury rather than an entitlement and a contribution to departmental and DFID objectives.

Space to Think

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The Treasury's remedy to this problem has been to make "space" for thinking and learning by operating a nine-day fortnight in which the tenth day is meeting-free. In DFID Bangladesh, running meetings effectively has been key to safeguarding thinking "space", and guidelines have been developed covering meeting skills and pre and post meeting work (see <http://insight/bangladesh/>)

2.11 Our own and other organisations' mistakes are also learning opportunities. There could be a better system in DFID to flag up inefficiencies without the need to attribute blame. For this to happen, we need to create a greater culture trust where our weaknesses can be discussed in a "safe" and supportive environment.

2.12 Departmental boundaries have traditionally been seen as a barrier to knowledge sharing. The current restructuring of PD will seek to redress by this by introducing more flexible team-working structures. Over time, it may be right to broaden aspects of this to the rest of DFID, particularly where short term lending and borrowing of staff between departments and country offices is concerned.

BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

PART 3: RECOGNISING THE KNOWLEDGE "VALUE SYSTEM"

3.1 Our decisions about sharing and handling information internally need to reflect a knowledge "value system". This means individuals and departments exchanging "mission critical" information, not populating websites for the sake of it. It also means being sufficiently staffed and adequately resourced to capture and filter published knowledge and information from outside and channel it effectively through DFID. And it means paying attention to *how* we present and share knowledge and information with colleagues as well as *what* we share.

Action Point 1: Clarify Departmental Roles and Function in relation to Knowledge Sharing

3.2 All departments and country offices need to be clear where they can contribute to corporate knowledge sharing, and what the needs and expectations of others are. For example, our regional policy units and reorganised geographical directorates provide a framework for synthesising experience and lessons and cascading these to country programmes, as well as feeding back country intelligence to central policy makers. The box below provides some questions departments and country offices may wish to consider in making their knowledge sharing functions more explicit (for example in the context of CAPs and Directors Delivery Plans). It also shows two examples of work that is already responding to the corporate sharing agenda.

Useful questions for departments to ask in shaping knowledge functions

Who are our key internal audiences?
What synthesis and knowledge sharing function should we provide? e.g. should we act as effective network "hub" or provide "help desk" facilities?
Should we serve a challenge function for others?
Do we have systems to encourage "joined up" thinking within and between professional groups? How can we "add value" to country programme work and vice versa ?
Should we designate an individual responsible for synthesising knowledge and information, as well as handling it administratively (see Action Point 2 below)
What are the benefits of our country programme staff spending time working on joint assignments with London based colleagues?
What examples of good practice, lessons learned and emerging responses to new policy environments would others benefit from (eg PRS process, NEPAD) and how best to present these?

Good practice

Africa Policy Department (APD) mission is to "synthesize experience and knowledge within Africa Division, Whitehall and internationally to promote consistent and mutually reinforcing strategies towards Africa's development". APD uses its inSight pages as a key tool to deliver its objectives. APD found that it needed to stimulate demand among country programme staff for information resources and support services. APD therefore developed its site in parallel with a number of Knowledge Networks, including an e-mail discussion group on SWAPS,

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which seek both to “push” information to members and “pull” them to the APD site in for future updates on policy and good practice guidance.

DFID Eastern Africa's Uganda Office has recently produced the first in a series of “Lessons From DFIDEAU”, internal notes outlining lessons from the country programme. The first note covers the DFIDEAU's experience of the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Support Credits instrument, which is being used in Uganda as a shared donor instrument for general budgetary support. The note is designed to inform staff in other DFID country programmes using or considering PRS instruments. DFID Uganda does not yet have an inSight connection; so the material was shared in hard copy. IT access issues are at 2.4.

3.3 Advisory groups are the institutional home to DFID's main knowledge “brokers” and intermediaries. Contributors to this strategy felt that DFID was good at utilising the knowledge held within advisory departments; and that building on this collective knowledge capacity would be central the on-going restructuring of Policy Division. KST is working closely with PD Knowledge Managers/Officers and the Policy Change Management team to contribute to new arrangements for knowledge management that will help PD to fulfil its long-term responsiveness and multidisciplinary objectives, as well as meet key short-term communication needs in the wake of the restructuring (eg connecting and orientating PD customers. More structured arrangements for on-going collaboration between KST and PD Knowledge Managers are planned (see also Action Point 2 below).

Action Point 2: Dedicated Roles Support the Knowledge Sharing Process

3.4 One commonly used indicator of an organisation's KS maturity is the extent to which dedicated specialist roles support the sharing process in relation to key business objectives. As seen above, Policy Division employs a number of in-house and external Knowledge Managers/Officers responsible for a wide range of functions, including helping external knowledge and information to flow around DFID, library services, developing and populating information systems and ensuring we make intelligent use of the stock of information and data they hold. A recent Output to Purpose Review of PRISM highlights that dedicated human resources have been central to generating knowledge about the bilateral programme portfolio through analyses and syntheses using the PRISM data as a starting point.

3.5 As seen at 3.2 above, whether departments and offices need specialist Knowledge Managers/Officers is largely a reflection of their role within DFID's knowledge value system. However, the introduction of QUEST, DFID's new Electronic Document and Records Management System will require all staff to change the way they handle information administratively, and will have particular implications for those currently managing information on others' behalf (notably inSight Departmental Content Managers, Records Liaison Officers, Registry and Postroom staff). The QUEST team's initial view is that a new Information Manager post, typically at B2 level should be created to service departmental information management needs.

Action Point 3: Provide Guidance for Corporate Knowledge Sharing

3.6 In an environment of information overload, *how* we share knowledge is as important as *what* we share. KST will develop its normative role to assist departments and staff in identifying and sharing knowledge “assets” and packaging them appropriately for key audiences. Guidance will cover such issues as accessibility, timeliness, relevance, style and target audience and will include advice on contributing to DFID’s website as well as inSight (see also Part 6). Similar guidance produced by BP to help staff manage knowledge assets is shown below.

BP's 10 steps to create a knowledge asset are:

1. Is there a customer for the knowledge - avoid knowledge 'graveyards', think about potential future customers.
2. Are you clear what your knowledge asset is really about - scope, name etc.
3. Is there a Community of Practice relating to the subject - assets need to be owned.
4. Is there existing material upon which you can base your knowledge asset - evaluation reports etc.
5. Look for the general guidelines - distil the general, but provide some context.
6. Build a checklist illustrated with examples and stories - use imagery, sound etc to make it interesting.
7. Include links to people - remember the tacit knowledge, use photos to encourage contact.
8. Validate the guidelines - check them out with CoP members and seek additions and amendments.
9. Publish the knowledge asset - use relevant media to suit audience.
10. Keep it alive - initiate a feedback and ownership process. Sustaining a knowledge asset is more difficult than creating it in the first place.

Action Point 4: Improve Access to Information from Research

3.7 DFID staff need access to the very best, most relevant information from international research in order to inform policy dialogue, contribute to good practice and ultimately evidence-based policy. KST will work with PD Knowledge Managers and the new PD Research Team to explore what improved services should be provided corporately in this area (eg, signposting and profiling such information resources as ID21 research updates, ODI research findings and ELDIS poverty update). This will include ensuring that all DFID staff can tap into the bodies of information and knowledge held by PD-sponsored resource centres from a central point on inSight. Bearing in mind the dynamic relationship between research and policy development, we should also ensure that DFID staff and DFID funded researchers can access information flows about on-going research, indicating what opportunity there is for inter-action. Section 4 looks at how inSight should deliver other products that are important in DFID’s knowledge value system.

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PART 4: INFORMATION SYSTEMS THAT SHOW “WHAT WE KNOW” (AND THAT PEOPLE TRUST)

4.1 While staff behaviours and such tasks as editing, linking and synthesising information are key to improved knowledge sharing, DFID's information systems need to provide effective vehicles for information flows in DFID's dispersed structure. Mechanisms for signposting expertise, exchanging experience and enabling fast, organisation-wide access to knowledge “common goods” are particularly important.

4.2 Our information systems are also enablers for policy making and lesson learning, whether in generating reliable data for performance monitoring or linking to key reference sources.

Action Point 1: Get More from inSight as a Knowledge Sharing System

4.3 inSight has brought vast improvements to our ability to share information and knowledge”. The on-going 1st anniversary review is considering how inSight can be further strengthened. It is clear, for example that inSight is currently exploited more as a “top down, centre out” corporate communications tool than a knowledge-sharing system. The on-going inSight review has highlighted gaps in staff awareness and use of a significant proportion of the information resources available, in part due to weaknesses in the search facilities and the way content is linked and stored. It seems clear that steps to orientate the site towards its audience (rather than its producers) should form the next phase of inSight's development. In the meantime, KST plan to deliver a new programme of outreach and diagnostic support services to departments to help improve awareness of knowledge sharing, inSight resources and the Knowledge and Information Management Competence, as well as cater to departments individual information management needs. A set of training proposals is being developed to put to the KCC in November.

4.4 In parallel, work will continue to provide staff with access to a stock of high-quality, operationally relevant information resources and “common goods” (eg How to Notes, background briefs, briefing by topics, seminar summaries and presentations) via inSight. As part of this, it may be possible to disaggregate and contextualise frequently used aspects of Office Instructions and integrate them on inSight. In addition, the e-Library will continue to work with PD group libraries towards enabling access to new publications lists; the ability to search and retrieve electronic publications (especially journal contents lists and articles, quick guides to key internet sites); and monitor key development research sites for relevance to DFID's electronic library catalogue.

Action Point 2: Create an Integrated Management Information System that People Trust

4.5 DFID has two information systems with knowledge sharing applications - inSight and PRISM. QUEST, our forthcoming electronic document and records management systems will bring a third. We need to exploit the potential of these systems in an integrated fashion and build users' capacity to make the most of the resources on offer (for example by commissioning synthesis studies which draw on "raw" PRISM data).

4.6 QUEST offers potential to integrate information capture seamlessly within staff working practices, thereby improving the quality and quantity of data and information available for sharing. It should also enable users to retrieve information at the time of need, without having to know when and by whom it was created. It may be possible to develop a range of "intelligent" applications for QUEST, including profiling information needs according to staff roles and to introduce workflow adapted to key moments in the programme cycle (e.g. when CAP drafts need to be shared with London and AH based colleagues).

4.7 However, as the recent PRISM OPR highlights, it would be oversimplistic to regard information systems as a "magic bullet" for knowledge sharing and lesson learning. Both activities require the intelligent and structured application of human resources.

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PART 5: GETTING PEOPLE CONNECTED

5.1 Face-to-face interaction through retreats, “brown bag” lunches and seminars is the prime way to share the tacit knowledge that derives from personal experience and expand our personal networks. But as DFID grows, becomes more dispersed geographically and restructures centrally, we need to invest in more structured ways of bringing people together in networks, communities of practice and via a range of “connectivity tools” (video conferencing, telephone, e-mail, electronic discussion groups and even on-line conferencing and white-boarding). As far as possible, this needs to be underpinned by consistent and equal access to IT tools around our organisation.

Action Point 1: Build and Support Knowledge Networks

5.2 DFID has over fifty managed networks: ranging from informal interest groups to more formal communities of practice (eg the PRS Core Group) which aim to pass knowledge around, move it outwards to wider DFID and external audiences, and influence policy and practice. Networks are key resources for members and non-members alike, who can access the collective expertise of the group via the inSight Networks Database. The number of central networks is expected to increase to reflect the new team structures in PD.

5.3 KST will continue to maintain and publicise the inSight networks database as a gateway to DFID subject expertise. As networks have a longer life and a greater breadth of knowledge and experience than any individual, we shall pursue this in the short term in preference to creating a directory of individuals' expertise. However, we shall keep this closely under review as the new HR database (ie the information system which would hold such information) is rolled out.

Point 2: Provide Consistent and Equal Access to Connectivity Tools

5.4 Until recently, video and telephone conferencing and e-mail were the main connectivity tools linking staff working on different sites wishing to share knowledge and work on common projects. inSight has brought electronic discussion groups, which are used increasingly for “thought leadership”, learning and consultation. While 95% of DFID staff have access to the full “suite” of IT tools, a small number of offices, including some high spending offices in Africa are not yet able to benefit. In general the performance of our overseas systems compares unfavourably to those UK-based. In addition, staff demand for remote and mobile access to our information systems is increasing.

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5.5 The KST will continue to provide advice and disseminate good practice for using our connectivity tools more effectively. But ultimately, DFID's objectives as a learning organisation should more explicitly determine the resources available for and speed at which we implement our ICT strategy. ISSD is currently conducting a bench-marking exercise which will rate our IT provision a range of comparable organisations. This may possibly result additional funds or readjusted priorities.

The World Bank believes that providing consistent and equal access to IT tools across the globe has been a significant factor in its Knowledge Sharing Program. For example, the Bank uses its webcasting service B-SPAN for knowledge sharing as well as corporate communications. Seminars, conferences and workshops attended by leading practitioners and academics in Washington are broadcast live over the internet and recordings can be accessed by the Country Offices via the intranet.

BP similarly reports that its decision to introduce a common IT "operating platform" for its global employees has provided important knowledge sharing gains, resulting in improved competitiveness, as well as morale benefits from greater "connectedness".

PART 6: SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH PARTNERS

6.1 DFID's objectives are as much about influencing decision-making through our expertise, research and good practice as our spend. Knowledge sharing techniques can have a key role in "adding value" to the way we share our knowledge, and providing an environment for others to engage and inform us.

6.2 This section considers the demand for outward-facing knowledge sharing activities and services designed to support DFID programme objectives, and enhance our corporate engagement with stakeholders. It covers outward facing knowledge sharing activities to supporting:

- Capacity Building
- Widening and Deepening Partnerships

6.3 A related agenda is the financial and technical assistance DFID provides directly to enable external groups to access knowledge networks or knowledge as an international "public good"; or to catalyse action around ICTs. While not the focus of this strategy, these are increasingly important areas for country programmes and central departments to consider in PARPs and CAPs; and on which KST is happy to offer views. We understand that an ICT team is to be established as part of PD changes.

Given its leadership role in development thinking, the World Bank is carving a "niche" in promoting access to information about development: not just knowledge collected by the Bank but from Bank partners, NGOs, universities, foundations and other organisations. Providing financial and technical support to selected on-line Communities of Practice likely to have an impact on policy-making in new areas (eg anti corruption) is a key feature of this work. The Bank also provides financial and technical assistance to support client countries capacity to analyse their readiness to take advantage of the "knowledge economy". It also funds the Global Development Network, an initiative linking research and policy institutes that share and apply knowledge about development.

Building Capacity

Action Point 1: Provide Information to Help Partners to Work with Us

6.4 National consultants have an increasing role in supporting CAP objectives. DFID is keen for research institutes from the South to take a bigger share of funds available for research and policy analysis. To engage effectively with DFID, these groups need easy access to DFID policy material, guidance on procedures for working with DFID as a contractor, as well as such capacity strengthening information resources as links to WWW sites and contacts. Working centrally, DFID is contracting out more policy analysis to resource centres.

6.5 Departments and country offices should consider what bespoke information sharing mechanisms will improve stakeholders capacity to engage with them (and in which languages these services should be delivered). This might take the form of a DFID staff member mentoring a local consultant or programme funded group. –Two further examples of knowledge for capacity building are shown below. The KST will also support the development of DFID's website to better respond to the information needs of these stakeholders (see 6.6 below).

Information for Capacity Strengthening

The Livelihoods Connect Website sponsored by RLD selects, synthesises and organises information relevant to DFID's work on sustainable livelihoods. It enables users to access insider know-how on DFID's policies, strategies and procedures including guidance sheets in plain English and summaries of relevant practitioner experience and research; draft project documentation and draft presentations; materials on DFID training courses on the sustainable livelihoods approach; and details of DFID's on-going policy development and how to engage with it.

A recent Knowledge Sharing needs analysis in DFID Bangladesh revealed a distinct agenda in relation to strengthening local consultants capacity. It recommended that DIFDB provide space for local partners to meet, work and collect relevant material, as well as access IT facilities for research purposes.

Widening and Deepening Partnerships

Action Point 2: Inform Partners through an Enhanced DFID WWW site

6.6 To date, DFID's website strategy has focused on providing a high quality development awareness tool for the UK public. It is time to extend the content and "reach" of our website to a broader range of stakeholders, particularly partners who contribute directly to the MDGs and our PSA/SDA targets.

6.7 KST will work with departments and country offices to strengthen DFID's website to meet the information needs of such new target audiences as partner governments, other donors, NGOs, national and international research institutes, trades unions and foundations. To avoid duplication of effort it will be important to develop more dual use of material for inSight and the website. KST will provide guidance in this regard. It will also be important to broadening the training currently to inSight Departmental Content Managers to cover the web.

Point 3: Electronic Space to Learn and Collaborate with Partners

Doing the Knowledge II - DFID's Knowledge Sharing Strategy

6.8 There is increasing interest across our business for electronic discussion software enabling staff to communicate, consult and work with key partners on shared projects and products; and several sites where this is already happening supported by others on the international development stage. Subject to staff demand and coherence with others efforts, KST will support the introduction of "extranet" facilities to complement or integrate with e-mail as a collaborative tool within DFID, and provide guidance on facilitating and managing such discussion fora.

PART 7: MONITORING AND CONSOLIDATING PROGRESS

Monitoring

7.1 Knowledge sharing progress is not reducible to statistics on inSight or web hits (although these are useful). We need to develop a range of qualitative proxy indicators to gauge our progress. As part of this, it will be important to capture non-explicit gains and benefit flows in ways that keep KS momentum going.

7.2 The Cabinet Office Knowledge Sharing Team groups its KS activities under the headings below. In each area we have suggested typical indicators that DFID could use:

- **Facilitating knowledge sharing through culture and incentives:**
Extent of uptake/on-going mentoring; recognition and publicity for KS through Team Recognition Awards; recognition for high performing inSight Departmental Content Managers;
- **Effective transfer of knowledge and information around the organisation**
Growth of networks, their outputs and achievements; more effective and flexible team-working; results of ICT Service Level agreements and user surveys; uptake of ICSD/ISSD training and support services by departments;
- **Initiatives to generate new knowledge products, encourage innovative thinking and learn lessons**
Reference to learning mechanisms in CAPs and Directors Delivery Plans; more structured and resourced use of PRISM data; more use of after action reviews by departments; uptake of inSight "common goods" and knowledge products
- **Improvements to access to external knowledge and information**
DFID staff better informed about research (eg through tailor-made and targeted products); new KM arrangements in PD support advisory skills base
- **Capturing knowledge in documents, databases etc**
QUEST and InSight capacity to tag, store and search document content; a DFID taxonomy

7.3 There are a number of ways in which we could gather such evidence, including future reviews of inSight and commissioned Knowledge Sharing Snap-shot studies; informal observation and feedback to KST. Internal Audit Department now use a Knowledge and Information Sharing checklist when visiting overseas offices. KST can also **identify extracts relevant to the knowledge sharing in other formal evaluations.** Peer review by other development organisations could also be considered.

Taking this Strategy Forward

This paper proposes a “mainstreaming” approach to knowledge sharing, with KST playing a central policy development, support and monitoring role. However to ensure continued momentum and fresh thinking on these issues, KST will work closely with Knowledge Managers and Officers in Policy Division, the Regional Divisions and HRD where appropriate.

Key Contacts

Knowledge and Information Sharing
and Internal Communications
Systems
InSight
DFID WWW site
e-library
QUEST
External communications

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