Effective Communication for Maximum Impact: How do CSOs Learn?

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Bronwyn Powell
CS WASH Fund
The CS WASH Fund

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Why research learning within CSOs?

The more that you READ, the more things you will KNOW.
The more that you LEARN, the more places you’ll GO.

I Can Read with My Eyes Shut! by Dr. Seuss

Dr. Seuss
You’ll go more places and....

- Association between effective knowledge management and business performance has been demonstrated in many studies*
- Employee satisfaction and retention
- K&L aids innovation
- K&L supports evidence based practice

* See for example: LaValle et al., 2011; Andreeva and Kianto, 2012; Oliver, 2012
1. How do CSOs learn and improve WASH programming and practice to align with evidence-based approaches?

2. What materials, formats and communications mechanisms are most preferred in influencing CSO learning?

3. What materials, formats and communication mechanisms are most effective and innovative in improving CSO WASH program in alignment with good practice?
Methodology

- Literature review (>50 academic and grey sources of literature consulted)
- Literature review mapped against research questions
- Survey questions designed (one for CSOs; and one for other stakeholders)
- 60 CSOs responded to online survey
- 22 other stakeholders responded to online survey
- In total, over 100 WASH sector practitioners were involved in the research
- 14 CSO reps interviewed, and 6 other stakeholders
1. Peer to peer learning

Image sources: http://sanitationandwaterforall.org

Image source: ISF-UTS

68%

‘Discussions within organisation very important’
2. Time for reflection

77% (CSOs)
M&E reports are routinely analysed and used

Image source: http://leadershiptraq.com
Our CEO emphasises his support for transparency, and accountability but encourages learning from failure. When something doesn’t go according to plan, it’s managed without finger pointing.” (CSO participant)

72%
‘Leaders support and encourage learning culture’
4. K&L in work-plans

- 80% K&L in work plans
- 60% Funded for K&L
- 60% Choose their K&L opportunities

- Reading
- Alliances
- Mentoring
- Conferences
- Training
- Evaluations

isf.uts.edu.au
5. Time and funding

'We’re not stuck for resources – we’re stuck for filtering and time” (CSO Participant)
6. Networks

65%
Part of a formal learning alliance and/or CoP

Image source: http://www.europeanfinancialreview.com
Learning enablers (summary)

1. Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning
2. Time for reflection processes
3. Leadership driving a learning culture
4. Knowledge and learning duties identified in work-plans
5. Time to engage with networks
6. Adequate resources (time and funding)
Preferred types of communication

- Conferences, presentations and face-to-face networking
- Reports and working papers
- Fact sheets and case studies
- Toolkits and training materials
- Manuals, field guides and "how to" guidance notes
- Briefing and policy notes
- Social media
- Videos (e.g. TED talks, animations)
- D-groups and e-discussions
- Peer reviewed literature
- Webinars and web forums
- Massive open online courses (MOOC)
Types of communication perceived to have led to the greatest level of improved practice

- Conferences, presentations and face-to-face networking
- Manuals, field guides, and "how to" guidance notes
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Characteristics of good K&L products

tools

guidance

practical

well-curated

dynamic

well-referenced

online

access

cheap

failures

successes

resources

well

sharable

lessons

Evidence-based

Concise

Well-written

Lessons

Presented

Videos

Accurate

Images

Summarised

Lessons

References

Provided

Concise

Well-written

Lessons

Presented

Videos

Accurate

Images

Summarised

Lessons

References

Provided

Concise

Well-written

Lessons

Presented

Videos

Accurate

Images

Summarised
Examples

https://www.ideo.com/work/human-centered-design-toolkit/

http://www.sanitationmarketing.com/sanitation-marketing-blog/sanmark-learning-series#.VwrL3LR4FiE
Take home messages

CSOs developing a learning culture:
• Leaders - important
• Resources - actively identified and budgeted
• Donors - critical role

CSOs producing materials:
• Traditional forms - still relevant
• Face to face learning - valued
• Guidance materials - preferred

Image source: UN Water
Thank you!

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