Call for Papers

Knowledge Management for Development Journal

Special Issue on ‘Learning from the past: impact of information and knowledge management on individuals and organizations over decades’

The Knowledge Management for Development Journal (KM4D Journal) km4djournal.org is an open access, peer-reviewed community-based journal on knowledge management for development – for and by development practitioners, researchers and policymakers. The journal is closely related to the KM4Dev community of practice. The KM4D Journal is currently inviting papers for an upcoming Special Issue on ‘Learning from the past’ to be published in December 2020. The Guest Editors for this issue are Jorge Chavez-Tafur, Ibrahim Khadar, Rocio Sanz and Sarah Cummings.

Rationale

An initiative that has been a guiding light in development, placing a real emphasis on learning and knowledge sharing, will be going out at the end of this year, and the development field will be all the poorer. (Cummings, 2007)

According to Sanz (2018), established development organizations with more than 30 years of history are going through two distinctive phenomena never experienced before which are affecting their employees and their knowledge management approaches, namely the departure of the Baby boomers to retirement and the employment of the new generation of Millennials. This is happening in a context of high mobility, technology and quick changes where work contracts are defined by their short-term nature, and while consultancies are characterized by increasing high turn-over. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the knowledge economy is actually transforming the demands of the labour market in economies throughout the world (Mangabeira Unger, 2019).

At the same time, organizations themselves are sometimes also being closed down due to changing priorities but also budget cuts. Taking the example of the UK, BOND, the British network for organisations working in international development, has established that almost half of surveyed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were facing closure in May 2020 because of funding challenges related to COVID-19 (BOND 2020), while small NGOs appear to be particularly threatened by the government budget cuts announced in August 2020 (Hodal, 2020). The existence of COVID-19, budget cuts and changing priorities is affecting all sorts of organizations, even well-known organizations with a renowned contribution to the ‘development knowledge ecology’ (Cummings et al, 2011). In this
Special Issue, we would like to focus on the legacy and impact of such organizations and their projects and programmes, but also on how other organizations are coping with personnel changes related to current trends. We would also like to explore how individuals and networks, like KM4Dev, act as a pool of knowledge which remains, even when organizations have closed their doors. At the same time, recent articles in this journal have shown how some organizations are struggling to learn from the past and past knowledge (Hankey and Pictet 2019, Schusterman 2019).

One organization which is closing by the end of 2020 after 35 years of operation is the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union. It has been a leading light in information and knowledge management over these years with initiatives such as the Smart toolkit, experience capitalization, Question and Answer services, Spore and many others. It has had an enormous impact on the professional lives of many knowledge managements as has been recognized by, among others, Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO of African Union Development Agency-NEPAD: ‘Allow me to convey my gratitude to CTA’s staff. Your contribution in boosting agriculture and development cannot be over-emphasised. It is my hope that the knowledge and expertise will keep improving food security and sustainability.’ This Special Issue represents the opportunity to reflect on the legacy of organizations.

Bellanet, closed in 2007, is another organization which has had a systemic impact on the field of knowledge for development. To quote from the previously cited blog post:

*What has Bellanet achieved? Well, I think an enormous amount for a relatively small secretariat. A couple of its initiatives, admittedly with others but that is all the better of course, like the KM4Dev community and Dgroups have, in my opinion, been two of the very best information and knowledge management related initiatives in the whole development field. KM4Dev is the most wonderful community of practice which has inspired my work for years and it is also responsible for the fact that KM4D is now emerging as a recognized sub-discipline in its own right. As for Dgroups [Foundation], a platform of almost 2500 online groups for 96,385 people – about half of whom are from the South – it has facilitated the most enormous amount of knowledge and information exchange over the years, something shown by recent research* (Cummings 2007: unpaginated).

In the same blog post, the author also agrees that while the World Bank is often cited as starting the field of KM4D, Bellanet may have been responsible, while its open, knowledge sharing mindset still continues in many initiatives and individuals. Other, still existing organizations may also have had a systemic impact, not only large global UN organizations but smaller organizations.
Knowledge management for development, and the related fields of information management and communications, represents a broad discipline and practice that also embraces monitoring and evaluation, mainstream knowledge management, and experience capitalization. In the long-term, specific organizations can contribute to the capacity building of their staff but it is not clear how this relates to the capacity of individuals who are moving to other organizations. When individuals are moving around, a network like KM4Dev can play a role by keeping expertise, individuals and organizations in contact.

We are inviting contributions on the following subjects, although other proposals are welcome:

- Which information and knowledge management projects or products have had an impact on individuals, programmes or organizations?
- How can you measure impact of organizations and projects over many years, potentially even after organizations have been closed?
- How can networks lead to retention of knowledge in the space between organizations within knowledge systems?
- What impact have projects, programmes and organizations had on you as an individual? How have they been potentially able to transcend the years in which they physically existed?
- How are organizations working to retain knowledge within the current social and economic trends?
- How do organizations and networks contribute to KM capacity building over time?

Many different types of contributions are welcome (see Appendix 1). Given that nature this Special Issue, we expect more informal types of contributions (thought pieces, stories and life stories, community notes, debates) than usual.

**Your contribution**

We particularly encourage submissions from researchers, practitioners, policymakers and activists from the Global South as well as from organizations promoting the use of information and knowledge management for development. We also encourage submissions from all disciplines, as long as they focus on information and knowledge management processes.

Submissions are welcome in English, French and Spanish. We can offer ‘peer support’ to authors who are inexperienced writers.

**Submission guidelines**

If you would like to submit a paper or another type of contribution, please send a short proposal, including the title of your proposed contribution, the type of contribution (paper, case study etc.) and an abstract (minimum one paragraph – maximum one page) by email to: km4djurnal@gmail.com
Submission deadline for title and abstract: 20 September 2020
Acceptance/rejection of abstract: 31 September 2020
Submission of full paper: 1 November 2020
Completion of peer-review: 15 November 2020
Submission of final version of paper: 15 November 2020
Publication date: 30 December 2020

For further information about the journal, kindly consult the journal website at: km4djournal.org.

We are looking forward to receiving your submission proposals.

Jorge Chavez-Tafur, Ibrahim Khadar, Rocio Sanz and Sarah Cummings
(Guest Editors)

About the Guest Editors

Jorge Chavez-Tafur is a Senior Editor at the Knowledge Management for Development Journal. Until recently, he was Knowledge Management Officer at CTA in the Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. He was the coordinator of CTA experience capitalization project. He was previously Editor of LEISA Revista de Agroecología and Editor-in-Chief of Farming Matters.

Ibrahim Khadar is an agricultural economist with a strong international development background in the field of information and knowledge management. In March 2020, he was appointed as the Director of the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Netherlands, with the responsibility for overseeing the orderly closure of the organisation by the end of this year. Prior to that appointment, he was the Manager of CTA’s Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

Rocio Sanz is a knowledge broker and consultant, specialised on knowledge retention and transfer. She has robust experience on KM and communications, mainly working at the UN and a number of NGOs. Active member of the Core team of KM4DEV, she is also co-signatory of the Knowledge for Partnership Development (K4DP). Her master research at Kent State University was focused on knowledge retention in international organisations with focus on retirement (2016).

Sarah Cummings is the Editor-in-Chief of the Knowledge Management for Development Journal which she founded with colleagues in 2005. She is currently working as Researcher, Public-Private Partnerships and Research Uptake at the Knowledge, Technology and Innovation group at Wageningen University and Research (WUR), The Netherlands.
References:
Bond (2020) Programmes at risk as more NGOs face closure. 6 May 2020
APPENDIX 1

Types of contributions

Articles are refereed through a peer support process. Each submission is limited to a maximum of 6000 words (including notes and references), plus a summarising abstract no longer than 200 words, a short biographical summary of the authors and contact details. Articles can include:

- Theory-focused articles which introduce, or advance or question scientific concepts, models and approaches in knowledge management for development.
- Review articles which review approaches and advance the field.
- Practice-based articles which are based on the application of knowledge management for development. Although they may be focused on practice, they need to have a theoretical basis in the literature of knowledge management and development, and take the theory a step further. Articles may use case examples to illustrate a point, but a theory or premise is at the forefront.

Case studies are generally slightly shorter than papers, with a case example at the forefront serving as a basis for the author’s theories. The case studies should not exceed 4000 words and are subject to peer review by the editorial team.

Thought pieces are an outlet for expressing opinions, sharing new ideas, or presenting philosophical discourses. They should comprise a maximum of 2000 words and are not subject to peer review, although they should be revised in line with the comments of the Editors.

Short stories are short contributions (maximum of 2000 words), with a more personal take than an article or a case study. A short story can address either personal experiences or a newsworthy topic.

KM4Dev Community Notes comprise summaries of discussions which have taken place on the KM4Dev community of practice online discussion forum, or a conference or workshop report which has taken place under the auspices of KM4Dev www.km4dev.org/journal.

Life stories are portraits of figures from the knowledge management for development field, tracing back their crucial moments in the field, lessons learned and trends/observations for the future. These articles should not exceed 4000 words.

Debates are controversial exchanges between two persons about a specific topic in the field of knowledge management for development – for which the two persons disagree. Debates consist of a series of answers to one another, around issues introduced by a neutral voice. These articles should not exceed 3000 words. The summary and details of both authors should be shared. These articles require more preparation time.
Letters are open letters to either the editors or any person (as a reaction to a discussion, document or otherwise). These should not exceed 1000 words.

Annotated bibliographies are collections of publications (books, papers, articles and other written items) that deal with one specific topic. These articles should not exceed 4000 words or 30 references. Each reference should contain full author, access, publisher and publication details.