

## **EMPLOYMENT SECTOR**

### **Knowledge Management/Sharing: Objectives and Guiding Principles as a basis for Policy Effectiveness**

#### *Introduction*

The ILO Employment Sector will promote knowledge management/sharing among its staff, constituents and partners, within the framework of a network-based organisation.

The main objective of knowledge management/sharing within the Employment Sector is to enhance the impact of its work on employment creation at national level by better building on the knowledge already available, strengthen innovation and team work.

In so doing, the Employment Sector will encourage inter-office communication and enhanced cooperation, wider exposure of staff to internal and external dynamics, and cross-fertilization of expertise and experience.

The complex nature of the job of all those involved in employment creation requires up-to-date information on policies and practices to be adopted and used in all contexts with a problem-solving approach. It is recognized that the Employment Sector has a wealth of technical expertise and knowledge which is partially untapped or is not as accessible as it could be to tackle with competence and speed the challenges of every day's work. Through knowledge sharing, concerned individuals will have the opportunity not to become experts in all single disciplines but rather to gain access to the critical information, resource persons and contacts which can guide them to make use of those indispensable working instruments.

In this context, knowledge sharing is a gradual learning process which promotes a Sector-wide organizational culture and identity.

Knowledge sharing is a matter of practice; a practice which should be encouraged. It is also a practice which can rapidly evolve into unnecessary overflows of information. The Employment Sector intends to make an effort in order to systematize the available knowledge in its various clusters and technical fields without creating redundant exercises and extra loads for its staff. With the limited financial resources available, priorities will be established and low-cost initiatives will be put in practice. The purpose of improved knowledge sharing and management is, amidst others, to reduce time and/or other resources allocation, with at least the same if not improved quality of impact.

### Guiding Principles

The main guiding principles of knowledge sharing in the Employment Sector are as follows:

- 1) A sector-wide community of practice should ultimately be affirmed through knowledge sharing. This is a process which requires a gradual approach. Team-building spirit is essential to nurture collective thinking and knowledge. Inter-office cooperation is essential and needs to be fostered with key-initiatives involving Headquarter, Regional and Field offices, Turin Centre, Constituents, as well as the broader academic community.
- 2) Institutional and personal linkages with external partners should be promoted through knowledge sharing and networking. New opportunities can be created attracting institutions, mobilizing resource persons and their knowledge.
- 3) Knowledge and tools need to be systematized and shared appropriately. The recent Sector tools-inventory is a starting point. Knowledge must be brought alive capturing the relevance and the potential impact of each identified tool.
- 4) Moreover, existing tools must be well packaged, disseminated, explained and presented to both the internal and external audience, contributing therefore to building knowledge and partnerships.

### Specific Actions

The Employment Sector will adopt a step-by-step approach to knowledge management and knowledge sharing. A committee has been appointed by the Executive Director in order to guide the process and put in place relevant initiatives<sup>1</sup>. In three consecutive phases, these initiatives will include:

Diagnostic/ Preparatory Phase	Phase I Programme Inception	Phase II Implementation
Identify key knowledge areas / clusters and appoint knowledge brokers who will be responsible for organizing and updating relevant information	Build upon the existing EMP/ENTERPRISE electronic platform / resource centre and set up a knowledge sharing platform for the whole Sector	Undertake a knowledge audit, mapping what knowledge is available and where, to facilitate access to knowledge by Sector staff;

<sup>1</sup> The Committee is initially composed by the following officials: Peter Van Rooij, Susan Hayter, Annette Schut, Jane Barney, Karin Klotzbuecher, Michiko Miyamoto, David Lamotte. Donato Kiniger-Passigli (Coordinator).

Review current tools and build / package a comprehensive presentation box to be kept updated and available for internal and external use	Organize good practices and lessons learned from country and project experience. Present this information in the knowledge sharing platform	Work towards a well defined Sector identity to be reflected into the web-site and the publication programme
Plan and carry out a series of lunch time discussions on relevant themes	Create an electronic directory on competences and skills available. A sort of electronic yellow pages indicating "who's got which expertise"	Engage the field structure and technical cooperation colleagues to document their work and capture their knowledge
Make full use of the Sector newsletter to convey policy messages, signal new tools, and flag issues of relevance	Establish linkages with academia and the world of work, attracting external resource persons into the Sector knowledge community	Make full use of the Sector Documentation Centre which is the repository of the Sector knowledge
Map out existing partnerships and networks, gathering existing information and creating operational linkages	Engage social partners through the offices of ACTRAV and ACT/EMP	
Collaborate and integrate efforts with the other sectors and the DG's Office on knowledge management	Review and propose different ways to provide incentives for knowledge sharing by all staff	Systematically integrate knowledge sharing as part of each and every staff member's job description
Open consultation forum with all staff members	Determine staff training needs to enhance knowledge sharing and ensure, in cooperation with learning coordinators, that such requirements will be met	Ensure performance appraisals to address the knowledge sharing dimension of staff performance

The above list is not exhaustive and the order of priority might change. Other initiatives will be developed according to needs and requests from the members of the Sector "knowledge community". Initially it will be essential to promote face-to-face meetings to create the basis for a sound community of practice.

The Sector management is fully endorsing this initiative and to the extent possible will lend financial and human resources support. It is anticipated that the "knowledge committee" will meet once a week and will elaborate a work-plan to be adopted by the Sector management.

September, 2007

## Annex 1 -

### Terminology on Knowledge Management/Sharing

#### *Information*

Information is "data" (in all its forms from a simple objective fact to a complete database), statistics, facts, text etc. It is found for example in document repositories (libraries and documentation centres), institutional memory (archives), databases. A documentalist and a librarian are nowadays called "information specialists" and their task is to guide the user to the information she/he needs. As many organizations are drowning in information (in all sorts of electronic and non-electronic forms) they need the specialist help of experts to extract the information needed and to avoid an information overload.

#### *Knowledge*

Knowledge is information **with** context and understanding. It should not be seen as a form of "captured information", it is much more. Organisations are drowning in information (and Liebowitz added) that they are starving for knowledge! Knowledge combines the integration of experience, values, intuition, lessons learned, contextual information, and expert insight that provides the potential for informing decisions and improving actions. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organisations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories (best practices and lessons learned) but also in organisational routines, processes, practices and norms. Knowledge is an "applied" product; "used and analysed" information; experience.

#### *Knowledge Management*

KM is a collection of activities, processes and policies like capturing, distilling and systematically organizing knowledge and experience gained from staff, clients, and development partners; making this knowledge, best practices and lessons learned, readily accessible to a wide audience internally and externally; creating linkages between groups and communities working on similar topics; and empowering knowledge generation and learning. In short, helping the Sector know what it knows in order to improve accessibility and to enhance effectiveness. Note that knowledge is not static, it changes constantly. Knowledge management is not just information resource management and is not software dominated but people dominated.

#### *Knowledge Sharing*

This is a term that is very much linked to knowledge management and is very often used as a synonym. Knowledge sharing requires Knowledge Management to succeed. The definition sometimes includes methodology and

software as well for the sharing and reuse of knowledge. It is very much like making the invisible visible . It is a process of improved accessibility. Besides that there is a link to the term Knowledge Culture (People challenges, incentives, performance credit etc.) The subject can be broken up in *Internal Knowledge Sharing and External Knowledge Sharing* (for example using the Intra- Net and the Inter-Net web sites respectively as Knowledge Tools).

### *Knowledge Strategy*

This involves knowing what knowledge and information is needed to support activities. It also involves the creation of an environment, information flows, nomination of stakeholders, finding ways of sharing information and knowledge, identifying tools to facilitate the process and continuous updating (knowledge is quickly outdated).

### *Knowledge Tools*

Examples of Knowledge tools are for example a staff directory (yellow pages), internet pages, platforms and knowledge sharing portals, wikis, blogs and other technologies. Tools can also be a variety of practical enablers for KM like Communities of Practice, before-, after- and during-action reviews, peer assists, coaching and mentoring.

### *Community of Practice*

KM projects appear to be primarily concerned with knowledge that can be quantified and can be captured, codified and stored - I would rather label this as Information Management.

Some knowledge just cannot be quantified and cannot be captured, codified or stored. This knowledge resides in people: not in machines or documents. KM is essentially about people. Communities of Practice are networks of people who provide an environment to develop knowledge through interaction with others. In this environment knowledge is created nurtured, sustained and exchanged. In our case the community of practice would not only be the Employment Sector, but would include active participants from Headquarters staff, Field Staff, Turin Centre Staff, Constituents as well as all kinds of Academic networks.