This case study examined the influence of knowledge management in the State Peer Review Mechanism in three states: Anambra, Niger and Ekiti. The study team tested the hypothesis “The design and effective implementation of the State Peer Review Mechanism has been materially aided by knowledge management inputs”. The three phases of the case study were a desk review, collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and report writing. Quantitative data related to knowledge management roles and activities, while qualitative data related to outcomes.

State Peer Review Mechanism:
Knowledge management support to a federal initiative

The State Peer Review Mechanism, a flagship initiative of the Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF) designed with support from the State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC), provides states with a means of sharing knowledge and experiences of successful and innovative practices to accelerate development. Knowledge management – sharing, learning and applying best practices – is fundamental to the State Peer Review Mechanism and includes strategies and processes for assessing, identifying, capturing, disseminating and using knowledge generated by the reviews.

Support for knowledge management provided by SPARC helped the NGF Secretariat become a policy hub providing robust data and quality reports for state governors and for the State Peer Review Mechanism. Support included providing a knowledge management adviser for the NGF Secretariat, and helping develop an intranet, and a communications strategy and plan. SPARC also helped make the NGF website more interactive and useful for disseminating information.

Has the State Peer Review Mechanism been productive?

Respondents surveyed for the study gave examples of knowledge management inputs that they perceived had been important in the State Peer Review Mechanism, though they did not necessarily label them as knowledge management. Information and communications that respondents found useful included media announcements, jingles and publicity, orientation workshops for stakeholders, reports and documents. These knowledge management inputs contributed to accountability, participation, gender-sensitivity, social inclusion, a non-threatening process, and credible state self-assessment reports and state plans of action.

Without these inputs, many respondents felt there would have been communication gaps, mistrust and conflict.
Support for knowledge management infrastructure, the content management system and improvements to the NGF Secretariat website, "made all the difference in transforming the NGF Secretariat from an administrative secretariat to a policy hub".

In all three states, the knowledge management inputs at all stages of the peer reviews – preparation, review, technical review visit and validation, and peer learning – were fundamental to success. Respondents agreed that the inputs encouraged active participation, improved accountability, identified knowledge gaps and helped develop benchmarks. The Ekiti State Peer Review Mechanism report, a knowledge tool, substantially helped Ekiti State Government to implement its medium-term expenditure framework. States and the NGF Secretariat are also now working to fill gaps in data and to make data more widely available through the NGF content management system and library.

Challenges

Barriers to knowledge management in the State Peer Review Mechanism were:

- State technical teams did not clearly understand the part that knowledge management plays
- Teams did not have a member assigned to knowledge management
- Civil service bureaucracy impeded flows of information
- Poor report writing skills hindered communication
- State-level primary data and documentation were often not available
- Communication with community stakeholders often did not match their needs and levels of understanding.

Sharing knowledge and showcasing the findings from the State Peer Review Mechanism are still challenges. Although Niger, Anambra and Ekiti States have active websites and social media, the NGF Secretariat currently takes the lead in sharing knowledge and experiences emerging from peer reviews. States have also yet to appoint staff to liaise with the NGF Secretariat.

Findings

The study found that respondents believed that knowledge management – various information and communication strategies – deployed during the preparatory stages of the State Peer Review Mechanism contributed to buy-in, credibility and the participation of both state and non-state actors. Though some respondents did not refer specifically to 'knowledge management', they were, in practice, drawing on knowledge inputs that were important to peer reviews.

Respondents stated that knowledge management contributed to the success of peer reviews in improving accountability, allowing states to compare achievements, enhancing communication, breaking down official secrecy, permitting public criticism, improving participation and identifying knowledge gaps. Overall, knowledge management undisputedly added value to peer reviews.

Lessons for the future

- Incorporating knowledge management in the State Peer Review Mechanism catalyses awareness, learning, inclusion and participation
- Promoting knowledge management is important
- State governments need support to set up knowledge management infrastructure for capturing learning and good practices.

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