This case study investigates the hypothesis that knowledge management (KM) has helped technical work streams to document activities, extract useful knowledge and share it using innovative platforms, thus making it easier for state governments to take up services and achieve their technical targets. Evidence for the study was collected through a desk review of KM tools, interviews with state partners and staff in Abuja, Enugu State and Lagos State, and an online survey.

Knowledge management for sharing lessons

KM is vital to the State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability’s (SPARC’s) aim of improving public sector performance management. The SPARC KM strategy seeks to ensure that both tacit and explicit information and knowledge is captured, stored and made accessible to stakeholders, and that useful lessons are distilled so that they can be transferred to other settings.

Has knowledge management helped to document and share learning?

The KM work stream has produced many different tools which have enabled stakeholders to generate, capture, share, store and apply knowledge. Most KM tools have enabled peer to peer learning among states and work streams. Within individual states, Communities of Practice have been the most useful tool for peer to peer learning. KM tools such as the Revenue Projection Tool developed by SPARC have also aided effective service uptake and have helped state partners to achieve their targets. The Innovation Diary tool – used by team leaders to capture the most important project related events or thinking on a weekly basis – was less successful, however.

Challenges

Despite the generally positive results of this case-study, challenges remain:

- KM is still seen as the responsibility of the KM Team rather than an integral part of technical work streams
Not all state governments have allocated resources to KM
Even some popular tools are not used as effectively as they might be
The goal of capturing tacit knowledge remains elusive.

Findings

KM activities are discussed below in terms of the various stages in the SPARC KM cycle.

Knowledge Creation
All the work streams have created technical knowledge through such means as briefings for state Information Officers and Public Relations Officers, the Public Financial Management Database Users' Guide and the Revenue Projection Tool.

Knowledge Capture
All reports, manuals and guidelines are collated electronically, archived and uploaded onto SPARC's intranet, The Fountain. The Innovation Diary tool was specifically created to enable the capture of tacit knowledge in real time, in particular factors that have been critical to the success of an initiative. It was used in Enugu, for instance for mandate mapping, but in general this tool was not successful, because some stakeholders did not understand its purpose and others found it difficult to use.

Knowledge Storage
The Fountain, the SPARC Resource Centre and the SPARC Flickr account have enabled programme staff, state officials and other partners to collate and archive information. State officials find The Fountain and the SPARC Resource Centre especially useful.

Knowledge Sharing
Events such as the regional Heads of Service Summits, tools such as electronic versions of the Human Resource Management Suite, Short Messaging Services and videos have all enabled stakeholders to share information. For state officials and SPARC staff, Communities of Practice brought considerable benefits, including enhancing technical knowledge and self-confidence; and the Governance Share Fairs were popular fora for sharing information.

Knowledge Application
SPARC and its partners have promoted governance reforms throughout Nigeria by disseminating and demonstrating tools and guides, such as the Revenue Forecasting Tool. Also, some state government officials have implemented ‘take home’ ideas they learned about during Governance Share Fairs. The ASK helpdesk, which was set up recently, has the potential to support non-SPARC states in replicating SPARC innovations.

Lessons for the future

Stakeholders have identified several learning points:
- SPARC should assist state governments to develop their own communication strategies
- SPARC should make its own tools available to officials in partner states
- A web-based forum for stakeholders should be developed
- SPARC should continue its system of frequent internal reviews in order to learn from programme experience
- KM needs to be integrated into all technical work streams and a formal procedure for doing this should be developed
- The KM Officer's responsibilities could be expanded to include in-house support to technical work streams
- Some partner states need to allocate more resources to KM
- SPARC should learn from the experience of the Innovation Diary and find a more effective way to facilitate blogging
- Lessons on the uptake of governance reform knowledge, for instance through Share Fairs, should be distilled and documented.

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