Training on the Basics of Community of Practice

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SKIM Project

SKiM
Strengthening Knowledge Management
for Greater Development Effectiveness
in the Near East, North Africa,
Central Asia and Europe

ABOUT THE PROJECT

GOAL: Develop effective and long-term knowledge management-related capacities in target countries

OUTCOMES:

► Improved understanding of KM capacities of the key rural institutions in 3 (+2) target countries

► Effective learning systems established and embedded in organizational processes with strengthened human and institutional capacities to manage the systematization of good practices

► Improved knowledge exchanges among stakeholders based on increased adoption of good practices and knowledge transfer for increased SSTC, replication and scaling up

PERIOD: JUNE 2018 – JUNE 2022 (4 years)
TARGET COUNTRIES:
① MOLDOVA ② MOROCCO ③ SUDAN

Overview

1. What are COPs?
2. The key factors of COPs
3. Types of COPs
4. Essential elements of COPs
5. Benefits of COPs
6. The challenges of COPs
7. The barriers of COPs
8. Examples of successful cases

What are COPs?

CoPs are a group of people who share a passion, a concern or a set of problems regarding a particular topic, and who interact regularly in order to deepen their knowledge and expertise, and to learn how to do things better.

CoPs are characterized by mutual learning, shared practice, inseparable membership and joint exploration of ideas (Mohajan, 2017).

The key factors of CoPs
(Botha et al., 2008)

- Learning is a social phenomenon,

- Knowledge is integrated into the culture, values, and language of the community,

- Learning and community membership are inseparable,

- We learn by doing and therefore knowledge and practice are inseparable,

- The best learning environments are created when there are real consequences to the individual and his/her CoPs

Types of COPs

(Agrifoglio, 2015)

1. **Demographic** (young or old, small or big, short lived or long lived)

2. **Organizational** (spontaneous or intentional, inside boundaries or across boundaries, unrecognized or institutionalized)

3. **Individual** (co-located/distributed, homogeneous or heterogeneous)

4. **Technological** (in this category, it is possible to distinguish face-to-face and virtual communities based on the degree of reliance on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Wenger et al., 2002)
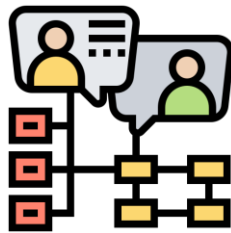
Essential Elements of COPs

(Wenger et al., 2002)

1. **Domain** = The common ground (i.e., the minimal competence that differentiates members from non-members) and outlines the boundaries that enable members to decide what are worth sharing and how to present their ideas

2. **Community** = The social structures that encourage learning through interaction and relationships among members

3. **Practice** = A shared collection of resources such as, stories, experiences, tools, cases, documents, and problem-solving methods, etc.

The *domain* provides a shared focus; *community* supports and builds relationships that enable learning; and *practice* grounds the learning and knowledge in what people do.
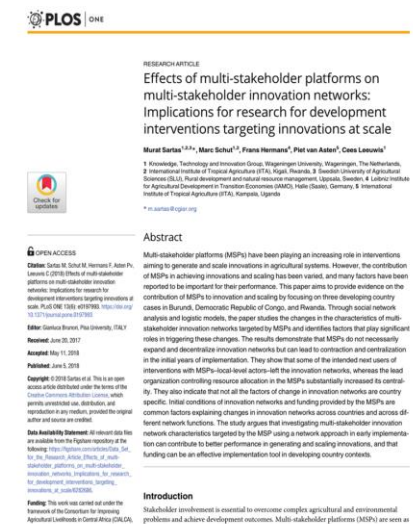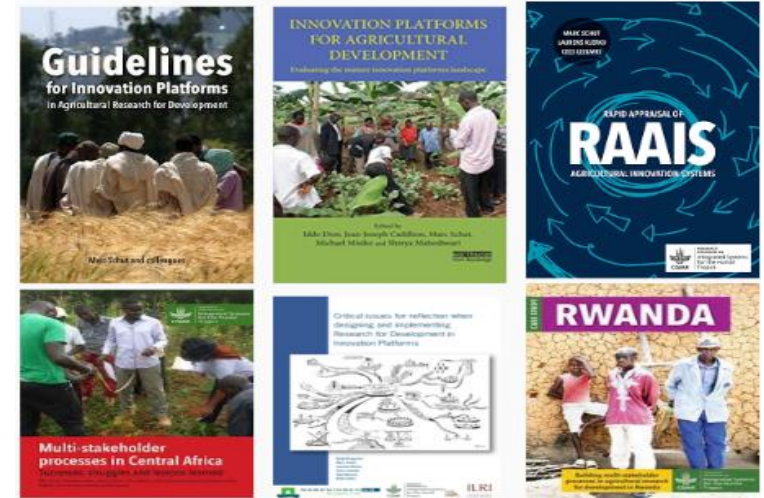
Benefits of COPs

(Dalkir, 2005)

- Building loyalty and commitment among stakeholders

- Improving efficiency of processes

- Promoting innovation through better sharing of best practices

- Decreasing employee turnover and attrition

- Generating greater revenue and revenue growth

A CoP offers a valuable tool for organizations in hope to take advantage of its knowledge and information assets (Hinton, 2003).
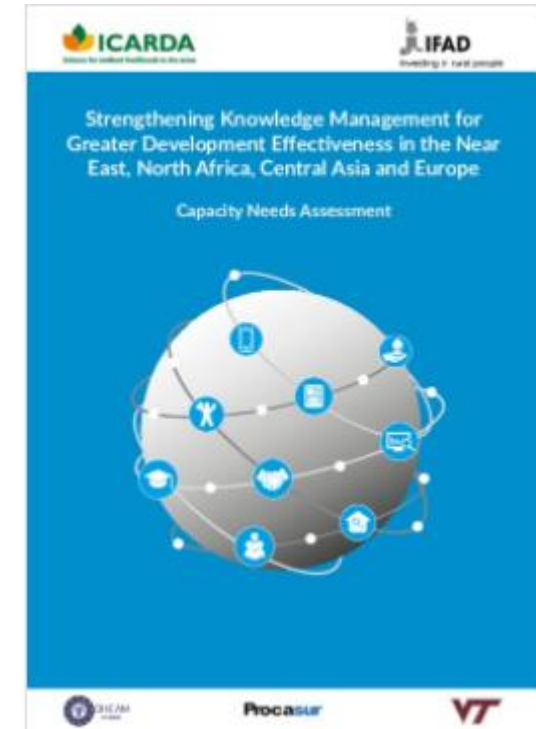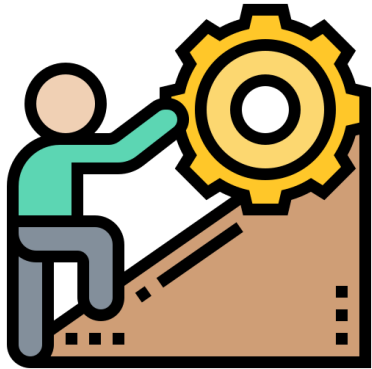
The challenges of COPs

- Wenger and Snyder (2000) noted that "CoPs give you not only the golden eggs but also the goose that lays them the challenge for organizations is to appreciate the goose and to understand how to keep it alive and productive."

- Three major challenges for the implementation of a CoP (Tremblay, 2004)
    - To motivate individuals to participate in the project,
    - To find the means to sustain the interest of participants but also of the organization which supports the learning project through the CoP,
    - To establish a form of recognition of the participation of individuals.

The barriers of COPs

- The lack of a common, shared identity,

- The lack of consensual knowledge,

- The uncertainty factor, geographical distance, cultural factors and loose opportunity for collaboration and sharing informal knowledge (Davidson & Tay, 2003),

- The lack of trust building (Ellis et al., 2004)

Examples of successful cases

The World Bank Case

- At the World Bank, a COP of 20 active members develops and shares knowledge on ''social funds allocation''. Its objective is to develop knowledge about the many parameters that have to be taken into account when providing grants for developing poor and vulnerable Third World local communities. Even though COP members share knowledge across the boundaries of their respective departments, barriers that make the sharing process more difficult sometimes remain because departments compete for budget attribution. To avoid reinforcement of these barriers, the top management continuously encourages the COP to fully legitimize the process of best practice sharing across departments. Top management executives convey their support directly to the COP's sponsor as the COP mediator.

The Swiss Hospital Case

- At a Swiss state hospital, a COP of 10 cardiologists and 20 heart surgeons holds informal meetings every second week. Well-respected heart specialists from Swiss and foreign hospitals are invited, as well as professors from prestigious medical schools. These external experts provide new perspectives for solving the many and unforeseen cardio-vascular problems that occur during and after heart operations. These external perspectives prevent the doctors in the COP from overwhelming one another with the rigid mental schemes that are usually characteristic of the medical unit to which they belong. Usually, these invited specialists and professors give a detailed presentation on a specific part of the human heart. This focused approach provides the COP members with new and specific sets of surgical techniques.