

CARE USA Knowledge Sharing (KS): Assessment and Recommendations

SUMMARY

ADP/Accenture consultants joined with CARE in FY06 (from February to May), visiting sites in the regions of Latin America and Caribbean, East and Central Africa, and Asia to identify existing Knowledge Sharing successes and challenges. The purpose of this Assessment was to develop a Knowledge Sharing approach for CARE, by identifying specific areas of intervention and activities that would increase effective sharing of knowledge throughout the organization. All Knowledge Sharing at CARE should ultimately contribute to improving our programs and interventions.

What is Knowledge Sharing at CARE?

Knowledge Sharing at CARE aims to create an organizational culture that prizes learning and sharing and that learns openly with others who fight poverty.

Knowledge Sharing includes both, **connecting people** and **collecting information**. Based on our findings, we believe that connecting people is the most effective way to share knowledge. We learned this during our interactions with CARE's Country Offices and regions, and through our conversations with other organizations.

What is the value of Knowledge Sharing for CARE?

- a. Improves program quality and reduces duplication of efforts
- b. Creates an environment that enables reflection and fosters innovation
- c. Increases cost-effectiveness

Key KS Findings from Assessment

Current Situation

- Knowledge Sharing is working at CARE. Some current Knowledge Sharing activities are providing significant value, but only to small groups of employees.
- The lack of consistent and organizational Knowledge Sharing has caused many lost opportunities for innovation and improvement in program quality as well as duplication of efforts.
- Individuals are learning positive and negative Knowledge Sharing behaviors from their managers.
- Too many initiatives are rolled out to COs without an integrated plan (or clear priorities), and individuals across the organization feel overwhelmed with their current workload.
- Many processes, methods, tools and technologies are used to support the current local KS but these items are not built from a global perspective, hindering a better connection across the different levels of the organization.

CARE's culture focuses on personal interaction

- We communicate and interact most successfully through verbal, face-to-face and informal communications rather than by written, formal documentation.
- Language is often a barrier that prevents Knowledge Sharing across the organization.
- Some social cultural elements, such as gender, hierarchy, ethnicity are also challenges for Knowledge Sharing.
- People need a safe environment to start sharing their experiences, especially to discuss learning from failures. People feel that there is not always openness to constructive criticism and feedback in the organization.
- Although connectivity (Internet/email) is a challenge in some of the places we work, in some cases we are also challenged to take full advantage of our available technology.

CARE's decentralization creates Knowledge Sharing challenges

- Employees often do not understand how valuable their knowledge is for the organization, or how to best share their knowledge.
- Individuals have difficulty understanding how to apply what others say to their context.
- Lack of accountability at different levels of the organization affects any KS efforts.

CARE's global actors are not clearly defined

- People are not clear whose role it is to leverage and scale up local knowledge more broadly through the organization. Who is a global player at CARE?

Recommendations

1. Create and implement a Change Management Program to instill KS behavior in the organization.
2. Develop a comprehensive Knowledge strategy aligned to the overall CARE strategy.
3. Identify and engage Knowledge Sharing champions.
4. Pursue action steps around top priority program processes through the PROSHARE pilot (Program Division) and other Knowledge Sharing pilot projects.
5. Strengthen competencies in CARE USA's Performance Management process to encourage staff to integrate knowledge sharing behaviors into their everyday jobs.
6. Document processes, tools and guidelines to support KS and make them available to the wider organization

The complete Assessment, as well as other Knowledge Sharing documents and resources, are available on the CARE Academy website (www.careacademy.org). Click on Learning Resources/Knowledge Sharing.