

KNOWLEDGE DEMAND ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

Bronte Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe

Wednesday July 24th 2002,

Participants introduced themselves, their organisations and their role within it, and identified their main frustration in accessing and applying the information they need in their professional lives:

FRUSTATIONS

- The Internet is still a maze
- Inadequate access
- Don't know what is available 'out there'
- Who holds what information (we need an overview of knowledge resources)
- Where is information stored?
- We have access to information but it's not the 'right sort'
- Expense (especially connections to the Internet)
- Problems in getting gender disaggregated information (doesn't exist)
- Information is at the wrong level for the communities with whom I work
- Knowledge that I need for my work at a community level doesn't exist
- Out of date information
- Not practical enough for my teaching needs
- Equipment (for access to the Internet)
- Unsuitable packaging to meet the needs of different users
- No access to 'confidential' information or that which is regarded the property of the consultant or their client
- Information overload: time consuming to get through it to the useful stuff
- Information we need isn't available
- Good books not available and undigestable
- Valuable information is stored in places which are not known about or accessible and not digitised
- Lack of 'how to' experiences

Each participant reviewed a recent decision they had made which required them to look outside of their own knowledge and experiences. They listed sources of information that had been useful to them, and identified what role, if any, the World Bank and DFID information had in informing their decisions. Based on this exercise, a list of factors/principles that makes information appropriate to users' needs, and demand-driven, was drawn up.

MAKING INFORMATION USEFUL

- Accessible with known author(s)
- Regularly updated
- Appropriate to the specific environment in which it is to be used
- Applicable to the users (i.e. adds value)
- Offers solutions and addresses pertinent issues
- Meets the competence of the user
- Language is appropriate (simplified and localised)
- Source information can be validated
- Accurate
- Knowledge generated by a 'credible' author (credible doesn't always equal 'big' or 'well known')
- 'Branding' of information to suit different audiences (i.e. appropriate packaging)
- Layout should be attractive and clear
- More locally-generated knowledge, with easily identified origins
- Make grey literature more widely available e.g. through nominated one institution in each country to assemble and market this store of information
- Structural linkages to get knowledge into communities in packages that are appropriate to their needs and capabilities

- Research should be demand driven and involve local people in its design if it is to produce results that are of use to them and meet their needs
- Ensuring intended audience has the capability and resources (or **access** to them) to make good use of the information
- Linked websites including a variety of levels of information provision (e.g. abstracts as well as full documents)
- Information alone does not bring about better decisions: practitioners for example need an enabling policy environment to do their jobs properly
- Knowledge and experience held in people's heads is not in the public domain and therefore of limited access to most people: it needs to be documented
- Extension to new areas of research
- Marketed to the intended audience
- Specify to which audience the information is intended
- Include 'bottom up' approaches'

MAKING INFORMATION DEMAND-DRIVEN

- Access to the author to ask questions of clarification or dispute content/analysis
- Communications with existing and potential users (e.g. sending abstracts of information which they can order)
- Electronic and printed subscription lists to discussion groups and/or news updates
- Commissioning incentivised information needs assessment surveys

The following kinds of information disseminated by the World Bank and DFID in particular, were identified at plenary as being useful:

WORLD BANK	DFID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database and statistics • Infrastructure, financing and management • Access and mobility • SSATP website, journals (road safety and infrastructure) • Transport and Poverty toolkit • Transport sector review document • Working papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty/livelihoods and transport • Road safety • Transport newsletter • Catalogues • Guide for Heavy Good Drivers (Africa Highway Code)

MAPPING WORLD BANK AND DFID INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

The group brainstormed the range of communications mediums used by the two institutions to disseminate information as follows:

- A Grey literature
- B Newsletters
- C Manuals (e.g. training)
- D CD-Roms/DVDs
- E World Bank Working Papers
- F Video
- G Websites
- H Databases
- I Posters/Tshirts/promotional material
- J Workshop/seminars
- K Advisors/Technical experts
- L Libraries
- M Radios
- N Brochures
- O Country Reports
- P Evaluation Papers
- Q Policy papers

- R Distance Learning (Satellite)
- S Video conferencing
- T Networks

The participants divided themselves into four groups to review these products, and to rank their accessibility and usefulness from the perspective of practitioner/trainers, government planners, information brokers and researchers.

DFID INFORMATION ASSESSMENTS

By PLANNERS

Accessibility	High		Posters/Tshirts/Promotional Material	
	Medium	Databases	Newsletters Distance Learning(Satellite) Workshops/Seminars	Websites
	Low	Grey Literature Manuals (eg training) Working papers Video		Country Reports
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
	<i>Usefulness</i>			

By PRACTITIONERS AND TRAINERS

Accessibility	High			
	Medium	Brochures Advisors/Technical Experts CD Roms/DVDs	Networks	
	Low			Websites Newsletters
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
	<i>Usefulness</i>			

By INFORMATION BROKERS

A c c e s s i b i l i t y	H i g h			Newsletters Websites
	m e d i u m			Manuals (eg training) CD Roms/DVDs
	l o w		Country Reports Video	Workshop/Seminars
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
		<i>Usefulness</i>		

By RESEARCHERS

A c c e s s i b i l i t y	H i g h		Newsletters Radios	Databases Country Reports Evaluation Papers
	m e d i u m	Manuals (eg training)	Workshop/Seminars	
	l o w	Advisors/Technical experts		Grey Literature CD Roms/DVDs
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
		<i>Usefulness</i>		

WORLD BANK INFORMATION ASSESSMENTS

By PLANNERS

Assessibility	High			
	Medium		Newsletters Working Papers Databases Workshop/Seminars	Video Websites Advisors/Technical experts
	Low	Posters/T-shirts/promotional material		Manuals (eg training) Grey Literature
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
	<i>Usefulness</i>			

By PRACTITIONERS AND TRAINERS

Assessibility	High			
	Medium	Advisors/technical experts CD Roms/DVDs Brochures	Working Papers Networks Manuals	Workshops/Seminars
	Low	Libraries	Grey Literature Distance Learning (Satellite)	Newsletters Websites
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
	<i>Usefulness</i>			

By INFORMATION BROKERS

A c c e s s i b i l i t y	H i g h		Newsletters Working papers Brochures	Websites Databases
	m e d i u m		CD Roms/DVDs	Manuals (eg training)
	l o w		Country Reports Video Libraries	Workshop/Seminars
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
		<i>Usefulness</i>		

By RESEARCHERS

A c c e s s i b i l i t y	H i g h			Working Papers Databases Country Reports Evaluation papers
	m e d i u m		Manuals (eg training) Video Posters/Tshirts/promotional material Libraries	Grey Literature
	l o w	Newsletters Advisors/Technical Experts	Radios	CD Roms/DVDs Websites Country Reports
		<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
		<i>Usefulness</i>		

OVERVIEW OF PATTERNS EMERGING FROM MAPPING EXERCISE

Comments on the methodology

- Matrix displays patterns of access and usefulness, but doesn't reveal the reasons why the groups ranked each product as they did, and the assumptions made with each one;
- The ranking is relevant for these users only; they did not consider usefulness for the constituencies that they serve (e.g. communities, students that they teach, other civil servants working in Ministries): these user groups should be canvassed independently at another workshop;

General Comments

- World Bank information products are more widely known than DFID materials across all categories of user groups
- Where there is a feedback facility which encourages communications (e.g. link on website, reply address for printed materials etc.) this is seldom used for a number of reasons including politeness (i.e. it seems rude to criticise information), time, and a scepticism that comments will be ignored.
- CD-Roms, videos are considered useful but less accessible than other forms of information;

- A perception that the World Bank communicates to share what it knows, rather than with the ambition of informing others and helping them to do their jobs better. DFID, on the other hand, is seen to communicate with the intention of informing people, but in a way that is directive rather than informative.

DFID Specific

- The only products that all groups could rank were newsletters and CD-Roms (possibly because they had been given out at the workshop);
- None of the groups had received information from the DFID library, or had ever accessed their policy papers;
- The government planners had been exposed to the highest number of products, but found the grey literature, manuals, CD-Roms and videos to be difficult to access and not useful.
- Only the practitioner/trainer group had been exposed to networks, and regarded them as moderately accessible and useful;
- Only the researchers had been exposed to evaluation reports, and found them to be highly accessible and moderately useful.

WORLD BANK Specific

- All users had been exposed to newsletters (SSATP News); manuals (which all users found moderately or extremely useful but planners found them to be very difficult to access); working papers (researchers found to be both highly accessible and useful); and websites (which both researchers and practitioner/trainers found to be highly accessible but not useful).
- None of the user groups had been exposed to policy papers or video conferencing;
- Only the researchers had used evaluation reports and found them to be both highly accessible and useful;
- Access to World Bank advisors was low for researchers, who found them not very useful, but planners ranked them very accessible and moderately useful. Practitioners found these staff to be very inaccessible and only moderately useful.
- Products regarded as very useful but inaccessible were for planners, manuals and grey literature; for practitioners newsletters and websites; for information brokers, workshops and seminars and for researchers CD-Roms, websites, and Country Reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DFID/THE WORLD BANK

The participants made the following recommendations to the World Bank and DFID to ensure that information meets their needs, brings about better decisions and becomes systematically more demand-driven:

- The World Bank should stop telling me what to think, and DFID stop telling me what to do;
- Both institutions should make more efforts to integrate more local experiences in their information, both by generating knowledge through research with the participation of local people (i.e. commission research through on-the-ground consultants and institutions), and by facilitating the communication of information that is locally generated;
- Unlock and make accessible local knowledge that is already documented, but is not digitised or made accessible using any other systems (e.g. lies dormant and unused in university research departments etc.)
- Be more collaborative and partnership-oriented in both operational and information areas of work;
- Tailor programmes to fit each country and ensure information is appropriate to their levels of development;
- There is inconsistency in the circulation of materials (e.g. people become subscribers of an information product and then it suddenly doesn't arrive anymore, without any warning or explanation of why they have been removed from circulation);
- Stop promising much, and delivering little (e.g. given of laborious laborious process to get hold of interesting documents based on an abstract, and be sent the french version while being promised the full english text, which never arrives and maybe doesn't even exist);
- Make better use of local centres of information provision where stakeholders would automatically look for information on transport issues (e.g. university libraries), by making sure core materials are disseminated to them and thereby reach their target audiences;

- Re-think pricing structures of materials and reduce costs of printed materials by using recycled paper, and making them less glossy;
- Segment the markets that you're trying to reach, and package materials appropriately to communicate effectively with them and/or prioritise the stakeholder groups that could benefit most from WB/DFID knowledge;
- Be explicit about the responsibilities of the users to repack, re-purpose and disseminate WB/DFID knowledge to their own constituents and thereby make it more widely available, and provide the funds to assist in this task (especially for the core products);
- Don't assume everyone is on the Internet and remember (for those who are connected) the high costs for the user of printing and photocopying documents;
- Address the problems of people's lack of access to the Internet (particularly in Africa) with a dual strategy of increasing connectivity at the same time as delivering information using appropriate communications media in the short term;
- Don't forget that audio-visual media (e.g. radio, video, cassette tapes) is an important way of communicating effectively with non-literate, non-reading communities (the latter includes people who can and do read but are usually too busy to do so).

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