Innovations in Knowledge Sharing and Learning in the Africa Region

Retrospective and Prospective

Knowledge and Learning Group
Africa Region
The World Bank
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Knowledge and Learning Group
Africa Region
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Sharing knowledge and learning from each other as well as from our clients and partners to improve the quality and impact of our assistance has been and continues to be a major area of focus and activity in the Africa Region. The present retrospective and prospective updates an earlier paper (September 1998) and traces the Region’s recent experience with innovations in knowledge sharing, learning and quality enhancement. It describes the steps undertaken to learn from and help clients enhance their own capacity to integrate knowledge into development activities. It also outlines the remaining challenges. The lessons learned from this experience provide insights that will be of interest not only to staff in the Region but to other parts of the Bank as well.

We have made good progress along our knowledge journey: more regional staff take advantage of innovative collaborative learning opportunities to update their intellectual capital; more staff share their experiences with their colleagues than before; more staff document their development experiences and make them available to colleagues in the institution as well as to our clients and partners; and our portfolio quality indicators have improved dramatically. Our clients, while telling us that they value our staff’s knowledge of international best practices, would, however, like us to do better in fitting that knowledge in the local setting by learning more about what works on the ground and the role that local knowledge systems can play in devising optimal approaches to basic development problems.

We have also identified lessons and new challenges. Much more remains to be done to build on our achievements and to promote the knowledge sharing and learning culture that underpins the Africa Region’s Renewal. We need to share our experiences more systematically. We need to seek the best institutional advice available and use it to
improve the quality of products and services. We need to develop behavioral competencies that are critical to operate more effectively in the increasingly multi-sectoral environment of development work and to play the role of “knowledge broker” for our clients. And, we need to do much more to scale up successes and to help clients to better monitor development outcomes and track progress in moving towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Above all, we need to keep in mind that Africa wants to enhance its own capacity to use knowledge from global as well as local sources to enrich the development process. Our basic challenge is therefore to help enable African countries to both reach back into their past and stretch forward towards the future — the Region and the Bank are well-placed to play the role of broker, enabler and partner. A related critical challenge is to work collaboratively with our clients, using existing knowledge-based products, and developing new ones as well as services that provide effective learning and knowledge exchange platforms. These will have to be focused especially on helping to strengthen the kinds of strategies, policy, institutions, and infrastructure that will enable our clients to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the knowledge-based society of the 21st Century to reduce poverty in Africa.

Callisto Madavo
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INNOVATIONS IN KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND LEARNING IN THE AFRICA REGION
I. Introduction

The Africa Region has made steady strides towards realizing the vision of an institution that intermediates advice as well as money, the “Knowledge Bank.” Knowledge sharing and learning behaviors have been gaining ground since 1995, when the Region started its “knowledge journey” by investing in innovative tools and initiatives to help staff to share and learn more efficiently and effectively. For example, today 100 percent of the country desks rely on the Live Data Base, with a marked improvement in both timely reporting and enhanced regional data analysis capabilities. In addition, the Africa Region has been consistently above Bank averages and ranked at the top on several of the indexes related to knowledge sharing behaviors monitored through periodic staff attitude surveys. Moreover, in terms of enhancing the quality of operations, knowledge sharing and learning efforts have clearly been instrumental in helping the Africa Region turn around its portfolio and register significant improvements in the quality at entry indicators (from about 50-60 percent satisfactory in the mid-90s to nearly 90 percent in 2001).

Finally, the Region’s investments to develop new knowledge-based products and learning services and reduce the transactions costs in the knowledge sharing and learning chain through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) are having a positive impact on clients. For example, a large majority of clients consulted through the Region’s pioneering client feedback survey tool are satisfied with the staff’s knowledge of international “best practices”. Similarly, clients have welcomed the shift to multi-sectoral approaches and collaborative development instruments as useful platforms for providing them with knowledge products that help enhance client capacity to use global and local knowledge systems to enrich the development process. And, the clients are increasingly demanding the Bank’s support to help develop country
capacities to use ICT-based knowledge sharing and learning tools and initiatives such as the Global Distance Learning Network, the Development Gateway, and the World Links for Development.

Despite this progress, there is an unfinished agenda. The key challenges are: to enhance client capacity to harness knowledge for development and benefit from the growing opportunities to reduce poverty made possible by the knowledge-based society paradigm of the 21st Century; to further mainstream knowledge interaction into our daily work so that new ways of sharing and learning reach a broader group beyond the early adopters and pace setters; to scale up the successes; and to enhance staff’s behavioral competencies to bring value to the client by better brokering knowledge from a variety of sources and by better adapting global good practices to the local settings.

This paper has been prepared to help disseminate the Africa Region’s experience in innovations in knowledge sharing and learning. It is a sequel to another paper, which was prepared in 1998 by the present author and which reported on the experience during the pioneer phase of the Region’s knowledge journey. Specifically, the present paper tries to answer the following questions: what was the context for innovation? what were the main features of the strategy? how to measure impact to date? what challenges lie ahead? and what are the main lessons learned?

1 “Knowledge Sharing and Innovation in the Africa Region, a Retrospective”, Knowledge and Learning Center, Africa Region, September, 1998; available online: http://www.worldbank.org/afr/pubs/km_rtosp.pdf
II. Context for Innovation

What is new about knowledge and learning in the Bank? Knowledge of development practices has been at the core of the Bank’s business all along, and represents the institution’s competitive advantage. But access to institutional knowledge and sharing of that knowledge among staff has been sub-optimal in the past. There have been many examples of knowledge sharing, but also of knowledge hoarding behavior (e.g., in the 1997 staff attitude survey only 37 percent of Bank staff believed that “best practices” are widely shared among colleagues). In addition, some of the accumulated knowledge has often walked out the door when staff retired or left the Bank. Moreover, the Bank was not doing enough to maximize its potential development impact through sharing knowledge in a form and manner that clients could use productively, and exploiting new technologies to make knowledge accessible to clients and partners in an easily useable and timely manner. Similarly, in the past, staff learning was mostly focused on traditional training seminars, where learning was separated from the daily business; and there was not enough learning from clients and partners.

The new element is a stronger focus on: how to make good knowledge behavior more widespread; how to use modern technology to help capture our knowledge of successful development practices and failures, and share this knowledge more efficiently and more effectively across the institution as well as with our clients and partners; how to develop the internal capacity to respond more effectively to the growing demand from our clients to assist them to be competitive in the knowledge economy and bridge the digital divide; and how to link learning to our daily work in a virtuous circle of “learning while doing and doing while learning.”
In the Africa Region this shift began in 1995, sparked by the Region’s review of how it could get better results on the ground. The review concluded *inter alia* that we needed:

- to know more about which practices work better and which ones did not work as well
- to identify more efficient ways to share knowledge about such practices among staff
- to give clients the “best” institutional advice based on those practices.

A convergence of circumstances made it possible to begin realizing these objectives: a Technical Department already helping staff synthesize and share knowledge in the “traditional” way; a small team of “knowledge champions” determined to push through the resistance to change and design more efficient sharing tools using modern technology; and a regional and departmental leadership with vision, readiness to “knock down trees” along the change path, and willingness to protect the innovators.

Progressively, the Africa Region came to the realization that knowledge was a strategic asset that should be leveraged to a much greater extent than in the past. In a nutshell, knowledge would, alongside money, increasingly become a second currency for the institution. This trend was inevitable given the important changes that where occurring in the Bank’s operating environment:

- The Bank was in transition from interacting primarily with a limited number of stakeholders in any given client country (e.g., the Office of the President, the Minister of Finance, etc.), to interacting with multiple stakeholders, including NGOs, civil society and private sector. The Region, therefore, had to increasingly relate to networks of people as compared to a few individuals. Working with networks is more complex and involves greater challenges in finding the right approaches and channels to transmit knowledge.
- Internal evaluations showed that the quality at entry indicators of the Africa Region’s portfolio were substantially below Bank averages. Insufficient use of lessons of experience in the design and implementation of projects was a key factor contributing to low quality indicators. Therefore, to improve quality, we had to share and learn better and apply not only what we know as individuals but also what we know as an institution.
- The progressive shift towards multi-sectoral approaches to addressing development issues (e.g., the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF); the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), programmatic lending, etc.,) would put an additional premium on knowledge because these new approaches are much more knowledge-intensive than the traditional single sector projects and programs.
Finally, with the introduction of a matrix organization structure, sharing knowledge became more important than at anytime in the past, because a well functioning matrix system depends on the efficient and effective flow of knowledge in the organization—i.e., knowledge is the fuel that powers a matrix-based organization.
III. Strategy

A. Pioneer Phase

At the time of the launch of the knowledge journey in the Africa Region an established framework for such activities did not exist in the Bank. Accordingly, the regional knowledge champions studied the practices of external industry leaders and consulted like-minded colleagues within the Bank. This process led to a simple organizing framework which gradually evolved to guide strategy. The framework is presented below with its four components: what we know and don’t know; how to find knowledge; how to learn to learn; and how to learn and share.

The basic thrust of the initial strategy was to “just do it.” The approach was to start small, but bold so as to produce quick demonstration effects. There was a deliberate decision not to await the perfect design before moving on. Instead, a phased approach was emphasized, including learning through pilots and building on early lessons to adapt the tools and processes. The initial focus was on “what we know we know” (i.e., the lower left quadrant of the framework) so as to get “quick wins.” This meant emphasizing in the first stage the “supply side” (i.e., capture the institutional knowledge in a manner that could be easily retrieved), and investing at a later stage in enhancing the quality of the knowledge objects and the user-friendliness of the knowledge sharing tools. It also led to targeting primarily the staff, but in parallel also testing external demand as well.

Gradually, the focus evolved to include issues related to all four quadrants in the matrix. This evolution coincided with the establishment of the thematic/sector Networks, which made it possible to leverage knowledge more effectively across the institution. For example, the Networks became the principal force in nurturing communities of practice and the thematic groups. In some cases, the the-
The advent of thematic groups also enabled regional staff to play a role in the development of communities of practice across the institution, and thus contributed critically to breaking down the former “knowledge silos” that existed within unit boundaries. Not only did regional staff participate in the thematic groups, but several of them also became thematic group leaders with responsibilities to promote the sharing of experiences and learning across unit boundaries.
The other important elements of the Africa Region’s strategy to promote knowledge sharing and learning were as follows:

**Establish a focal point** to catalyze, facilitate and coordinate the knowledge-related activities. This role was assumed initially by the front office of the former Technical Department (TD). Then, in July 1996, the Knowledge, Networks and Information Technology Center (KNIT) was established as part of the Africa Region Renewal Program, which pioneered a matrix structure in the institution. This regional unit evolved progressively into the Knowledge and Learning Center (KLC), and later into its current structure as the Knowledge and Learning Group (within the Africa Region Quality and Knowledge Services [AFTQK]). The KL Group currently consists of about 20 staff and short-term consultants organized in three clusters (Monitoring and Evaluation, Informatics and Business Solutions, and Knowledge and Learning Services), which are focused on developing modern knowledge-sharing and learning tools and providing support services to the front line operational teams.

**Broaden the initial team of innovators and use the early adopters to help raise awareness among staff and managers about the benefits of modern approaches to facilitate knowledge sharing and learning.** Initially, the structure of the former TD was used to “appoint” the next circle of champions. Typically, the senior advisors in the key sectors/thematic areas were asked to serve as “practice leaders” in their respective areas. A few of the “practice leaders” were in fact among the early adopters of the new tools and were instrumental in getting the word out about the benefits of these tools. Many more eventually grew into the role, evolving from “champions by appointment” to “champions by conviction.” Together with the staff of the TD front office, the “practice leaders” constituted the core team that implemented the first stage of the strategy. This consisted of developing prototype tools and processes as well as raising awareness among staff and managers through town hall meetings, workshops and presentations to country and sector unit staff. In the subsequent stages, more and more staff and managers in operational units became pace setters and role models for sharing and learning, and thus contributed to the progressive emergence of a more sharing and learning culture. This culture is still evolving and taking root as a critical part of the way teams work and the way units manage their main business processes (e.g., quality assurance).

**Do not await formal budgetary allocation to start the innovation process.** Initially, the “knowledge champions” did not receive a formal budget allocation for “knowledge work.” Nevertheless, since the regional leadership encouraged them to innovate, the champions essentially financed the knowledge start-up activities from overtime and looked for some ad hoc allocations.
for specific initiatives. For example, when the team proposed to develop one of the first innovative tools which later evolved into the Live Data Base, most regional managers did not support the proposal. However, showing great vision and propensity to take risks, the Regional Vice President at the time encouraged the team to go ahead anyway. With the help of an imaginative Chief Administrative Officer the team “found” some resources as seed money for its startup activities. However, as soon as the initial visible prototypes emerged, more managers began recognizing the potential of modern tools and services in support of knowledge sharing and learning. It then became possible to obtain formal budgetary allocations for knowledge-related activities. Thus, by FY 97, and before there was an institutional special allocation for “knowledge management” under the Strategic Compact, the Africa Region was already investing about 2–3 percent of its budget on activities related to the promotion of knowledge sharing. Regional funding of such services and initiatives has continued at similar levels ever since, and at times has been supplemented by knowledge and learning resources of the Institutional Services Group (ISG), the Networks, and the World Bank Institute (WBI). Lately, the Learning Board and the learning budgets of regional sector units also provide task teams with critical support in promoting new ways of doing business.

Pioneer user-friendly knowledge sharing and learning tools and processes that could help make work easier, enhance product quality, improve service to and partnership with clients, and point the way on knowledge interaction Bank-wide. This strategy resulted in a number of pioneering “first generation” ICT-assisted tools and initiatives such as the Live Data Base, African Development Indicators, Best Practice System, Country Home Pages, “Good Practice Infobriefs” and “Findings”, Country Feedback Survey, Connectivity for the Poor, and the New Product Fund (see Annex 1 for details). Some of these tools and services served as models for subsequent development of similar/adapted tools and approaches by other units in the Bank. For example, the LDB (developed in partnership with DECDG) became the Bank benchmark for data storage and retrieval, and has since been rolled out in some other regions. The Best Practice System provided pointers for the development of the knowledge bases managed by the Networks. The New Product Fund experience and lessons learned served as pointers for the Bank-wide Innovation Marketplace. And, the success of “Findings” and “Infobriefs” publications in disseminating good practices and lessons of experience (in a synthesized and user-friendly way) not only internally but also to clients and partners provided a model for the emergence of several similar publications in
other parts of the Bank (e.g., “PREM Notes,” etc.).

B. Scale up Phase
The lessons learned from the pioneer phase of the knowledge journey provided several important pointers for the subsequent direction of that journey. As a result, the strategy was adjusted and refined to better capture and share explicit and tacit knowledge in the organization, and to share that knowledge more effectively with clients. As with the previous phase, the approach was more like “strategy by emergence” than “strategy by design.” Thus, the strategic focus continued to evolve towards its current priorities:

• Improve operational quality and effectiveness
• Promote effective sharing of knowledge with and learning from clients and partners
• Enhance client capacity to access and make effective use of knowledge for development.

To help meet the above challenges, new collaborative partnerships were developed with other Bank units (especially WBI) as well as with institutions in client countries and with partner organizations. Several new tools and processes were designed and implemented to further promote knowledge sharing and learning behaviors. At the same time, some of the tools and approaches that had been developed in the previous phase were either replaced with a new generation, or “retired” when better alternatives became available in the institution. The main elements of the strategy that evolved in the second phase are described below.

Leveraging knowledge to enhance quality. The first Retrospective suggested that to get better results from the knowledge initiatives, it was necessary to use “… the quality enhancement process as the key driver to integrate knowledge sharing into the main business…”

Responding to this challenge, the knowledge team oriented the strategic focus of knowledge sharing and learning initiatives towards enhancing operational quality. For example, a Road Map was developed to help staff and managers better leverage knowledge and learning into the core business processes. The Road Map outlined the roles of different players and the steps they could take in helping change behavior and improve the quality at entry indicators (see Annex 2 for the key questions and principal roles for Regional and Network staff in leveraging knowledge). A critical element of the Road Map was a set of steps to facilitate people-to-people learning or tacit knowledge transfer during the quality enhancement process (e.g., ensuring that teams de-brief and prepare a record of lessons — see further section below on debriefing).

The Road Map had a major impact on understanding the critical links between knowledge sharing, learning and operational quality enhancement.
As a result, it was decided to merge the previously separate regional functions of Knowledge, Learning and Quality into one group. This proved to be one of the most effective organizational moves in the Africa Region after the Renewal Program:

- It encouraged the knowledge team to apply the “quality lens” to better adapt its tools and services to help improve quality;
- It made it easier for the regional quality advisers to “think out of the box” and apply the “knowledge lens” to find new and better ways of getting operational teams to leverage institutional knowledge in their daily tasks (e.g., through quality enhancement reviews);
- It offered a practical platform for regional teams to seek knowledge and advice from the Networks, giving the latter the opportunity to provide demand-driven knowledge services “just-in-time, just-enough” to make the matrix work for quality (see Box 1).

The Road Map and the organizational changes that followed spawned additional innovation as the hitherto separate knowledge, learning and quality teams started operating with a “common compass.” For example, a Quality Portal was developed as a one-stop platform for teams to access knowledge online for all aspects dealing with operational quality. All regional knowledge and learning sites were brought under one roof and

Box 1
Innovative features of Zambia Public Expenditure Review

| Quality process tapped into Bank knowledge base |
| Brainstorming for innovative design with PREM Network input |
| First Quality Enhancement Review of a PER |

| Regional QK Fund enabled team to “buy brains” for better quality |
| Helped team overcome task budget constraint |
| Network knowledge resources leveraged task team, “just-in-time” |

| Multi-sector approach with macro-micro links |
| Public expenditure analysis |
| Strong links to growth and poverty reduction |

| Enabling client ownership through knowledge brokering |
| Client involved in collaborative design and drafting |
| Task team provided guidance, knowledge and coaching |

| Establishing building blocks for PRSP and HIPC |

The Road Map and the organizational changes that followed spawned additional innovation as the hitherto separate knowledge, learning and quality teams started operating with a “common compass.” For example, a Quality Portal was developed as a one-stop platform for teams to access knowledge online for all aspects dealing with operational quality. All regional knowledge and learning sites were brought under one roof and
linked to quality elements. This further reinforced the strategic objective of embedding the knowledge initiatives into the core business process and reinforced the enabling power of modern technology. The process of designing the Quality Portal also demonstrated the value of synergies as the effort required the input of the quality and fiduciary teams (for the substantive aspects) and the knowledge team (for learning techniques and technology solutions).

These initiatives, together with greater managerial attention to issues of quality as well as better portfolio performance monitoring, helped the Region dramatically improve the quality at entry scores (see section on results below). The basic elements of the approach followed by the Africa Region (i.e., linking knowledge, learning and quality “under one roof” to get maximum synergies) was later adopted and further adapted by some of the other regional units and Networks in the Bank.

**Learning from clients** was another important lesson/challenge raised by the first Retrospective. The paper argued that: “…knowledge is not the exclusive domain of the technologically advanced societies, nor should it be allowed to move in only one direction. Local communities have over many centuries accumulated a body of knowledge of their lands, natural resources and environment. Indigenous knowledge is the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities, especially the poor. The challenge is to learn more about such practices from our clients, share it among the development community and apply it in projects supported by the Bank and its partners. This would give a new meaning to empowering the poor: not as recipients of knowledge but as contributors and subjects of their own history…”

To address this challenge, and in response to the call of the Global Knowledge Conference (Toronto, 1997) to development partners to learn from knowledge embedded in local communities, the Africa Region launched the Indigenous Knowledge for Development Program (IK Program) in partnership with ISG and several NGOs and regional institutions. The IK Program’s main objectives are to promote the exchange and use of indigenous knowledge systems thereby enriching the development process.

Among its achievements to date, the IK Program has identified over 200 effective local practices using IK systems, helped enhance client capacity in several countries to develop national strategies for using IK in development programs, promoted the exchange of traditional knowledge among local communities in a few countries, and raised awareness internally and externally about the importance of IK in the development process. For example, in the Iganga District of Uganda, traditional birth attendants in villages have been linked to the modern health service delivery system. This innovative approach to using indigenous knowledge systems and simple technology
has helped the citizens of Iganga to achieve a 50 percent reduction in maternal mortality (see Box 2).

The IK Program is also helping to enhance the capacity of local institutions to identify, disseminate and integrate IK practices in the development programs of client countries, and is supporting task teams to integrate IK practices into Bank-supported projects and programs. As a result, over a dozen projects in the Africa Region now have IK components. The IK Program has also become a suitable platform to better respond to the voices of civil society. For example, in response to the call of the civil society groups at the Second Global Knowledge Conference (Kuala Lumpur, 2000) to promote development of local content and disseminate it in local languages, the IK Program launched the Bank’s first websites in local languages in Wolof and Swahili.4

Finally, in the context of the IK Program, the Region has also brokered several South-South as well as North-South learning exchanges, such as:

- Local community-to-community exchanges in Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda;
- Learning seminar which brought together a Tanzanian NGO using indigenous practices to successfully combat the opportunistic diseases associated with HIV/AIDS and scientists from the National Institutes of Health and George Washington University in the United States to help with scientific validation of IK practices;5
- Learning tour which brought policy makers and project leaders from East Africa and their Bank staff project counterparts to sites in Sri Lanka and India to learn together from local communities about the successful integration of IK practices in early

Box 2
Traditional birth attendants and health workers partner to save lives in rural Uganda

In the Iganga District of Uganda, a UNFPA-supported project (RESCUER) seeking to reduce maternal mortality equipped Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) with modern communication technology. This involved the installation of a solar-powered VHF radio communication system that included fixed base stations at the Primary Health Center, mobile ‘walkie-talkies’ for the TBAs and ambulance vehicles. Improved communication and transportation links between the TBAs and the health posts resulted in increased and more timely patient referrals as well as the improved delivery of health care to a larger number of pregnant women. Getting connected bridged the perceived gap between traditional healers and public health providers. A notable impact of the project was that maternal mortality reportedly declined by more than 50 percent over the period of three years i.e., about three-quarters of the applicable Millennium Development Goal for 2015!

Capturing and disseminating tacit knowledge. The first Retrospective also called for “tools that deliver value to the front line...” and which “…not only deal with direct sharing of knowledge, but are also aimed at supporting broader collaboration and teamwork” such as “…de-briefing tool to provide ‘how to’ solutions to teams going on mission, and to capture lessons when the teams get back.” The challenge was how to capture and disseminate tacit knowledge, which is highly experiential, especially difficult to catalog and document, quite ephemeral, and exceedingly transitory, especially in the case of those retiring from the institution. Therefore, tacit knowledge retention and sharing is a key challenge for a learning organization.

Responding to this challenge, the Africa Region designed and developed its pioneering Debriefing Program. The objective of this program is to enhance the quality of Bank service to clients by helping to capture tacit knowledge and the operational learning experiences of Bank teams, partners and clients and by disseminating this knowledge to teams for re-use in their operational work. The platform allows the three perspectives (staff, client, partner) to be brought together, producing an effect that is greater than the individual parts. The potential strength of the debriefing process (and one of its most innovative and instructive elements) comes from the possibility of triangulation of the three perspectives on the same issue.

The Program uses videotaped interviews based on a series of open-ended questions in an informal setting to distill “stories” as told by the practitioners. The focus is less on “what” the task was, and more on “how” problems were solved. Moreover, the process allows the debriefee to also learn from the questions, which sometimes may be as important as the answers. The results are then synthesized into short clips by themes that emerge from the stories during the debriefing process. The synthesized clips of typically about 2–5 minutes each are disseminated on line, enabling task teams to access the knowledge and lessons of earlier institutional experiences “just-in-time, just-enough.” Thus, someone wishing to learn from previous experiences in a certain area can access the information needed without having to listen to the entire interview or read a full report.

The Program has already added to the institutional knowledge base with a library of over three dozen debriefings of about 1–2 hours each, including in strategic priority areas such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), Poverty Reduction Sector Credit (PRSC), Community Driven Development (CDD), HIV/AIDS. A rich knowledge base is thus being developed to help guide task teams on what works “best” in terms of effectiveness of development programs on
the ground with respect to a particular context, a specific cultural, historical, technical, economic setting, not an absolute best.

This innovation has been useful in facilitating understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by the new development thinking reflecting CDF/PRSP principles, where the implementation process is still not clear-cut to many clients and staff. In particular, debriefing offers a suitable mechanism to capture emerging design and implementation “how to” of new products and approaches where the institutional implementation experience is not very extensive and teams do not have well-established markers guiding their work in sometimes unchartered terrain. For example, the PRSP and the PRSC (itself one of the new development support products pioneered in the Africa Region) have become new learning platforms. They are not only well-suited to better share knowledge with clients, but also to help staff share among themselves and learn while doing. Yet, initially there was very little knowledge available to teams on how to design such products and how to benefit from the collaborative learning opportunities that they provide.

Several debriefings of individual staff as well as clients involved in designing the first set of such products captured early experiences and tacit knowledge of the pioneers involved in these innovative processes. The debriefings helped identify useful pointers that need to be followed in defining objectives and applying and interpreting the principles that are set forth in a PRSP process. These “markers” will have to be interpreted and adapted in different contexts.

This knowledge was then disseminated Bank-wide to further inform the evolving process and provide valuable learning opportunities for other teams and managers who would embark on similar tasks. For example, lessons captured during some of the debriefings were disseminated as key learning material for the Bank-wide Country Directors Learning Group — such information was unavailable from another more traditional source.

Finally, the Program has spawned further creativity and opened up additional innovative opportunities for sharing and learning. For example, debriefing of a leader of the PRSP process in Mauritania provided an opportunity for the client to think out of the box and adapt the concept to their own needs. Thus, the client developed a debriefing-based technique to capture the perceptions of beneficiaries as a part of the monitoring of PRSP process outcomes. In response to the client’s request, Africa Region staff provided the client with additional technical advice, and shared the debriefing methodology and technology platforms. This collaborative learning enabled the Africa Region to help enhance client capacity to capture and use critical knowledge linked to poverty reduction. Most importantly, this adaptation
by the client of the debriefing process will help add to the evolving development thinking the perspective of not only the client but also the beneficiaries. Another innovative by-product is the transfer of the debriefing methodology and platform to other Bank units. The Africa Region has collaborated with the East Asia Region and the Quality Assurance Group (QAG) to help them develop their own methodology and capacity to conduct debriefings, thereby reinforcing the practice of sharing across institutional boundaries to further enhance organizational learning.

Feedback from debriefees and users of the debriefing library confirms the value of the program in facilitating sharing and learning. For example, the feedback suggests that seeing a human face and hearing the voice of the knowledge source from a debriefing not only increases the credibility of the information, but is also a powerful networking facilitator. Tacit knowledge is highly people and context specific and susceptible to loss, especially when staff leave the organization. By facilitating people-to-people links, the debriefing approach to knowledge retention has the potential to: (i) help preserve context, while allowing staff to learn from experiences of colleagues when the knowledge source is still around; (ii) help transfer knowledge to new staff coming to the organization (e.g., in a debriefing, a senior manager challenges viewers to contact him for further exchange, thereby demonstrating the new sharing culture and leading by example); (iii) nurture potential future channels of access to tacit knowledge that is embedded in the minds of staff who retire or leave the institution; (iv) create a network of resource persons who could provide “safe” advice on demand; and (v) capture the invaluable viewpoints of the client and the beneficiaries for staff to learn from.

Developing new knowledge-intensive products and services. The first Retrospective argued in favor of re-focusing the Knowledge Bank’s “core product” as primarily a transfer of know-how, which is backed by resource transfer. The thrust of the argument was that: “the essence of a Knowledge Bank is an institution that intermediates ideas/advice before money; where projects/loans are primarily instruments for the transfer of knowledge (the main objective) and the transfer of resources (secondary objective). Thus, if we are to become a Knowledge Bank, we need to define our main product more in terms of advice (i.e., our greatest source of competitive advantage) and less in terms of lending (i.e., our gradually eroding source of competitive advantage in the light of the growing importance of the private sector flows in the resource transfer equation). Yet, the widely accepted definition of our main product emphasizes the project/loan, not the advice. More importantly, the current internal processes and incentive systems sometimes send mixed signals re-
Box 3
The Knowledge Economy has created new employment opportunities in Ghana

In Accra, hundreds of young men and women are involved in the knowledge economy, earning about $300 a month, i.e., more than ten times the average national income. These young “knowledge workers” work in new enterprises set up with foreign investment:  
  • at ACS Inc., they are connected to the U.S. by satellite, processing data for Aetna Insurance;  
  • at JIT Inc., they provide more complex web-based applications for clients such as Schlumberger

The information revolution offers young Ghanaians a real chance to leap forward into the knowledge economy in ways they never could have dreamt of just a decade ago!

regarding the importance of quantity of lending and the resource transfer objective vs. the knowledge transfer objective and the impact of advice. Under such circumstances, there is a staff perception of knowledge management as an “add on” or the “flavor of the month.” As long as this situation persists it will be difficult to mainstream knowledge interaction and make it a seamless part of our daily work. Re-focusing our product along the above lines would help change the internal incentive structure and have a number of additional related effects:  
  • Focus services more on helping clients improve their overall public expenditure programs;  
  • More financing of time slices of sector expenditure programs instead of projects;  
  • Spend more time listening to clients and learning about local practices;  
  • Better adapt our institutional advice to local conditions…”.

Progress has been made in responding to these challenges. There is a new emphasis on ESW products to generate new knowledge and collaborative learning opportunities to share with clients. New multi-sectoral approaches such as the PRSP process and new programmatic lending instruments such as the PRSC are much more knowledge intensive. They also provide suitable platforms for knowledge transfer and collaborative learning, while also transferring financial resources. In addition, the Region has made a special investment in raising staff and client awareness of the opportunities that the knowledge-based society of the 21st Century offers to help solve Africa’s development problems. While Africa is still the least connected continent in the world and knowledge-intensive industries and services are relatively under-developed, several emerging success stories point to the potential of knowledge-services in transforming the lives of Africans (see Box 3).
To help raise staff awareness of the new opportunities and enhance staff capacity to use knowledge-based products and services for development, a workshop was developed in partnership with WBI. This was followed by a distance learning technology-enabled policy forum on using knowledge for development for policy makers in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. Planning for similar capacity enhancing activities is underway to respond to growing client demand for such services. Moreover, the Region established a Knowledge Economy (KE) Fund in FY02 specifically earmarked for support to task teams in promoting innovative approaches to help clients develop programs that leverage knowledge and ICT for development (see section on innovation funds for some of the initiatives).

Growing client demand for more knowledge intensive products even in the absence of any Bank lending are pointing to new ways of working and more innovative approaches to respond to clients’ needs. One of the latest manifestations of this demand and the Region’s response is the growing number of teams that have been engaged in “knowledge brokering.” For example, in the case of the telecommunications reform program in Mauritania, the Bank team succeeded in helping the client leverage about $100 million in foreign private investment (~ 10 percent of GDP), with the Bank’s input essentially limited to brokering knowledge of good practices in other countries (see Box 4).

Another good example of this new way of doing business is the case of Eritrea where Bank teams have been helping the authorities in developing a road map for realizing a vision of a “learning society”. As in the case of Mauritania, these services have essentially involved knowledge-based products and service. For example, acting as knowledge brokers (and supported by financing from the KE Fund), a Bank team advised the Eritrean authorities to undertake a ma-

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**Box 4**

**Brokering knowledge to help Mauritania attract foreign investment**

In the context of the dialogue on telecommunications reform $350,000 in Bank staff time and $1.5 million in IDA disbursements from mid-1998 to mid 2000 were leveraged to:

- Attract $100 million in private investment during 2000/01  
  — equivalent to 10 percent of GDP
  — from 5 to 75 lines per thousand inhabitants
- Create 300 micro-enterprises and over 2,000 informal sector jobs  
  — for prepaid card and handset sale, telephone repair, etc.
- Establish institutional framework for regulation and privatization of all utilities.
The major reform of the telecommunications sector without any associated Bank lending (see Box 5).

The Mauritania and Eritrea stories have another important dimension — “knowledge adaptation” — which is of critical relevance to the effectiveness of Bank staff’s enabling role in transferring knowledge and helping clients in using that knowledge to solve development problems. The challenge for staff is to enable clients to adapt a good practice or process to make it more realistic (i.e., best suited) in the context of prevailing local technical and institutional capacity as well as regulatory frameworks. In that sense, the objective is not to find and transfer a “best global practice,” rather the challenge is to find the right combination of technical and institutional parameters of a practice that will have the optimal impact in a specific country context. The ability to facilitate such adaptation is likely to become one of the most critical elements of success for Bank staff in the effective delivery of new knowledge-intensive products and services.

The two charts on page 20 convey both the magnitude of the challenge as well as the range of opportunities. They show the client perception of the importance of knowledge as well as how effective Bank staff performance is in the same knowledge-related areas of country dialogue (e.g., staff knowledge of international best practices; staff’s ability to adapt their knowledge to country needs, etc.). The chart on the left reports on the average scores from over three dozen client feedback surveys conducted in African countries over the past five years. The other chart shows the scores for Mauritania on the same indicators.

The most striking elements in these two charts are: (i) the difference in the magnitude of the “knowledge adaptation gap” as perceived by the client; and (ii) the difference in the number of scores that fall in the lower right quadrant (i.e., the area that records what is most important to the client and where Bank staff is perceived to be least effective). What explains the relatively very

Box 5

Brokering knowledge to facilitate Eritrea’s vision of leaping to next-generation Internet-based networks

Bank supported the process by:
- Helping Eritreans directly observe and share cutting-edge ICT applications from Andra Pradesh state in India.
- Fostering knowledge-intensive dialogue with weekly use of videoconference and without lending services
- Brokering knowledge exchange with Chinese institutions and operators which are playing leading role in developing networks based on Internet protocol
- Brokering a learning opportunity for Eritreans to see first hand the latest techniques under development in the Silicon Valley.
small knowledge adaptation gap in the case of Mauritania? Why are none of the knowledge-related elements in the lower right quadrant in the case of Mauritania?

Debriefings of Bank staff as well as client leaders involved in Bank-supported programs in Mauritania and Eritrea shed some light on these issues. The debriefings reveal the following important observations:

- Client perceives high value in Bank staff providing knowledge broker services;
- Client and staff confirm the critical importance of staff behavioral competencies in delivering effective knowledge services. These competencies include, listening and hearing, curiosity, intellectual humility, flexibility, patience, etc.;
- Client’s perception of a relatively smaller adaptation gap in the case of Mauritania was associated with a real, tangible outcome (i.e., record tender proceeds and investment levels in the telecommunications sector) that was generated through a highly customized solution involving brokering of knowledge and adapting it to the local context;
- This customized approach was further adapted by a neighboring country (Mali), which itself went on to attain a highly successful outcome in the telecom sector liberalization process;
- Similarly, in the Eritrea case, the Bank team helped design a highly customized solution which played a critical role in bringing about the turnaround in client response.

The insights from the debriefings further suggest that the Bank teams working on Mauritania and Eritrea have been relatively more successful in using behavioral competencies in the context of new support platforms such as the PRSP or knowledge broker services. This has enabled the teams to do business in a way that brings value to the client, especially by working collaboratively with the client on finding realistic (i.e., best suited) solutions that have client ownership. These reflections also point to the future agenda for the Knowledge Bank in terms of the potential areas of action to
prepare staff to play the emerging role of knowledge broker and helping clients adapt knowledge to local contexts.

**Leveraging ICT to enhance internal knowledge sharing and learning.** Recognizing the enabling power of modern technology, the Africa Region invested aggressively to leverage ICT for higher operating efficiency and effectiveness. This involved developing internal ICT-assisted sharing and learning tools and business solutions (e.g., regional internal and external web portals, multi-media platforms, Quality Portal, etc.) and linking the Bank’s field offices in Africa to the institutional network in the context of ISG’s Bank-wide programs. The content mix of the regional web-based platforms has followed the evolutionary patterns for such services in other enterprises. For example, initially, the web platforms (internal and external) were essentially focused on conveying “who we are and what we do.” Subsequently, the focus moved to conveying “what we know” by disseminating lessons of experience and good practices. For example, the Best Practice System tried to promote sharing of lessons among staff. Similarly, there was an attempt to put more knowledge into the public realm. For example, in the case of “Findings” and “Infobriefs” as well as the IK Program, all of the information is available for external use as well (i.e., there is no additional information behind the firewall!). Lately, the challenge has shifted to conveying “how we can help to solve your problems,” which points to the future agenda.

The promotion of e-platforms in the Region and in the Bank (e.g., e-mail and the Intranet) were especially useful in nurturing a sharing culture by making it easier to reach larger members of communities of practice. Initially, the major challenge in the Region was to overcome resistance to change and use of modern technology. For example, in the early days of promoting web-based tools, only an estimated 10–20 percent of regional staff used the web. One approach to promoting greater use was to disseminate critical information which was of personal consequence to staff only online. For example, during the Africa Region’s Renewal, information about the re-assignment of staff into newly established units was disseminated only through the Intranet. The web use rate jumped to nearly 100 percent when staff had no other choice in finding out where they would be assigned. Many staff who were “pushed” to use the online resources for the first time subsequently overcame their initial resistance to change; and thereafter the adoption rate kept growing steadily. A similar “push” technique is also being used by the Debriefing Program (e.g., news about a new debriefing is shared with key experts/leaders in a related thematic group, who in turn are relied upon to disseminate the information to other colleagues in the community of practice). See also section on measuring results below for the recent patterns of web use.
The initial communication constraints with staff in the field have also been largely overcome with over two dozen field offices linked to the institutional network via broadband satellite connection. This has enabled the Region to provide staff (whether they are in Washington or field offices) with relatively easy access to institutional information systems, thus facilitating knowledge sharing and learning among staff as well as collaborative learning activities with clients via distance learning technology. Nevertheless, with the growing use of multi-media dissemination platforms (e.g., video streaming for the Debriefing Program), there is a second generation issue in accessing video streaming from the field offices. To deal with this issue, the Region has used CD-ROM for dissemination and is developing a “media mirror.” This will allow field staff to view all debriefing, town hall, mentoring, and other videos at full quality, with great ease, and with no burden on scarce satellite bandwidth.

**Leveraging ICT to enhance client capacity and empower knowledge networks.** The Region followed a two-pronged strategy on leveraging technology to better serve client needs. The first prong involved supporting client efforts to build capacity to use modern technology for sharing and learning. One of the earliest initiatives was the Africa Virtual University (AVU), which was a pioneering effort at using distance learning technology. A creative idea that was the brainchild of an enterprising staff, it enabled Africans to have access to world class higher level instruction without leaving their countries. Since the launch of its pilot phase in 1997, AVU has provided students and professionals in 17 African countries over 3,000 hours of interactive instruction in English and French. More than 24,000 students have completed courses in technology, engineering, business and the sciences and over 3,500 professionals have attended executive and professional management seminars on various topics. The AVU has since been spun off to operate as an independent entity. The underpinning concept of the AVU has since been scaled up Bank-wide into the Global Distance Learning Network (GDLN) to provide collaborative learning platforms to clients using modern technology. About 20 GDLN centers are in place or under implementation/planning in Africa. These centers will be able to respond to a growing demand for video-conferencing courses (e.g., in FY02, before the start of the GDLN center, more than 2000 in Burkina Faso attended training courses via the video-conferencing facilities of the Bank country office).

Another innovative idea in this area was the AfricaDev, with the vision to provide a one-stop window to knowledge on African development issues. The concept was developed through the prototype stage in collaboration with ISG. Further development was not pursued when the Bank launched work on the Development Gateway
Several of the Africa Region knowledge initiatives (e.g., IK) figure prominently on the DG. In addition, Country Gateway initiatives are underway in half a dozen countries in Africa with collaborative support of the Africa Region, the InfoDev and the Gateway Foundation to further enhance local content dissemination capacity and to enable local knowledge networks. To increase awareness on the use of ICT in development efforts three workshops were conducted in Uganda and Burkina Faso. Planned activities for the Country Gateways in Africa range from addressing poverty and health issues (Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda), to facilitating access to education and knowledge (Mozambique, Rwanda), and promoting dialogue on development policies and programs among local communities, civil society, donors, and representatives of the public, private, and academic sectors (Namibia, Uganda, Tanzania). See Box 6 on Namibia’s experience.

Finally, the World Links Program (WorLD), which was launched in 1997 by linking a school in Uganda with a school in Wyoming, has since connected over 400 schools in Africa with schools in other parts of the world, providing students with platforms for cross-cultural knowledge sharing and learning. (See also Box 8.)

The second prong of the strategy involves supporting clients in developing ICT strategies and using informatics to enhance the operating efficiency of Bank-supported projects and programs. Some Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) have already started to recognize the importance of ICT as an enabling factor in development programs. An emerging good practice in this regard is the Ethiopia CAS, where the role of ICT is central to realizing some of the CAS objectives, and a proposed Capacity Building for ICT Project is under preparation. Similarly, in several sector portfolios there has been increasing attention to en-

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**Box 6**

**The Namibia Development Gateway**

The Namibia DG is a creative “everybody wins” model for involving local university students, NGOs, and the private sector to establish a knowledge sharing platform and to strengthen learning networks. In a partnership with a local university, the DG provides information technology students with hands-on training that counts towards class credit. Students in turn design and develop websites of NGOs working on development, and the university recognizes these efforts by counting them as a class work. The local private sector takes part in the initiative by sponsoring the design of these websites through contests and other incentives. Once they are completed, the sites are hosted on the Namibia DG. In exchange, the NGO contributes content based on local development experience to the DG by promoting, maintaining and moderating a community learning network on a particular development subject.
hancing the implementation of informatics components of projects and programs (e.g., public sector reform projects in Ghana, Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, etc.) to further support more effective project implementation as well as strengthening local knowledge networks.

**Innovations to empower clients to monitor development outcomes.** The objective is to scale up the systematic use of knowledge tools and services to enhance client decision making for improved governance and impact monitoring in support of PRSP/PRSCs, MDGs and other sector operations. Several new tools and approaches were developed and some rolled out to the client institutions to facilitate this process. These include:

- **Live Data Base (2nd generation),** which builds on the initial LDB platform with more efficient and effective features that are particularly well suited to the needs of institutions in client countries, such as the ability to present data at sub-national level and at higher levels of frequency (e.g., monthly and weekly time series). The LDB platform has been rolled out to a dozen institutions in Africa (e.g., AfDB, SADC Secretariat, Development Bank of South Africa, Statistical Office of Mozambique, etc.).

- **Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ),** which serves as a tool for monitoring service delivery and allows clients to obtain a poverty profile and monitor the needs of different population groups with a simple, easy to use and quickly administered tool (e.g., in the Nigerian State of Lagos, the client administered the tool and synthesized the data on the poverty profile in about four weeks). (See Box 7.)

- **Household Survey Data Bank,** which contains easily retrievable information on more than 200 household survey statistics in Africa and is arguably the most comprehensive source of household data on Africa in the world. This is another tool which was initially developed with the requirements of World Bank staff in mind, but has subsequently been adapted and installed for use in client countries. A related CD-ROM product is the Survey Data Analysis Package designed to address the problems of survey data documentation, preservation and dissemination.

- **Client Feedback Survey,** which helps track client perceptions of the quality of Bank service in support of development outcomes.

- **Other tools and services,** such as public expenditure tracking and community service delivery surveys, financial management and sector information systems, and participatory impact monitoring tools which help assess progress also on good governance dimensions of development.

In addition to developing innovative tools, there has recently been an effort to develop a road map that describes the elements of an M&E strategy for the Africa Region to enhance client ca-
capacity for M&E. While not losing sight of the importance of project-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E), the main thrust is on helping countries move progressively to PRSP-focused systems with the emphasis being on outcomes. Some of the elements include, linking poverty reduction goals to spending priorities, designing and undertaking country M&E assessments to examine the incentives and disincentives for establishing or enhancing a national M&E framework, the institutional framework within which the M&E system will or will not operate, and the related capacity enhancing issues.

Innovations in organizational learning. The first Retrospective called for the development of new tools and platforms that maximize “learning through sharing and sharing through learning”. Considerable progress has been made in this area with the launch of several initiatives, including:

- **Assuring the Quality of Bank Operations in Africa.** A pioneering case study-based series of workshops to enhance staff competencies in designing and implementing projects of high quality. One of the modules is focused on knowledge sharing and learning as critical factors in quality enhancement. Over 350 participants have already availed themselves of this learning opportunity. The workshop series includes an e-learning module that provides staff additional learning opportunities through a CD ROM, a website as well as a network of workshop cohorts.

- **Team Leaders Learning Lab Series** designed to enhance teamwork and the behavioral competencies that are
critical in working in a multi-sector environment. Over 80 team leaders in the Region have already taken this training.

- **Cross-regional Learning Tours.** In March–April, 2002 the Africa Region Private Sector and Infrastructure sector family launched a pioneering effort at cross regional learning in a multi-sector environment to better understand development success factors in other regions and how they could apply to Africa. About 30 staff from various sectors participated in a learning tour of selected sites in Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Facilitated with reflective learning techniques, the group identified good practices (e.g., in supply chain management, skills development, etc.), explored what adaptation would be needed to make these practices relevant in the African context and identified opportunities for application of the learning in operational contexts.

The debriefing methodology was used to capture learning in a reusable form as synthesized video clips disseminated on-line. Some of the learning and networking nurtured during this tour are beginning to find their way into operational work. For example, a follow-up event was organized for some gemstone operators in Thailand to visit Zambia and discuss FDI opportunities there. As a consequence of this exchange, some policy changes and business deals are in the works in Zambia that could create new employment opportunities and keep a larger portion of the value added chain in gemstone exports in Zambia. Similar learning tours have been organized or are planned, including with the participation of clients.

**Investing in support of innovative task teams.** In addition to investing in knowledge sharing and learning tools and services, the Region made a strategic decision to support innovation by task teams to better leverage knowledge and learning in daily work, and to develop new approaches and knowledge-intensive products to better serve client needs. Over time, several funds were established to support innovation in emerging strategic priorities. This was in recognition of the fact that in constrained budget environments, task teams may not always dispose of sufficient resources in their normal task budget allocations to cover the incremental costs of piloting innovative approaches. On average about a quarter million dollars a year was allocated for such innovation support. These resources were managed centrally in the Region and earmarked to various priority activity areas. Typically, the resources provided “seed money” for startup of pilots, or leveraged resources set aside by those unit managers who were prepared to take risks and support their task teams in new areas. These interventions were successful in helping develop pilots; they further reinforced a culture of in-
novation when success stories pointed to new ways of doing business. The focus areas and the results achieved are summarized below:

- **New Product Fund.** The first of its kind, this fund supported innovations in new knowledge-related products and services. Some of the products and approaches developed include, the Africa Children’s Book Project, the Africa Nutrition Data Base, the Africa Business Forum and Internet Connectivity at the National School of Medicine in Bamako, Mali.

- **Knowledge for Quality Enhancement Fund** supported pilots in sector units willing to apply the Road Map for leveraging knowledge into the quality assurance process. In one case, the Fund’s resources matched those that the sector unit had mobilized internally to establish a pool in support of quality enhancement activities, such as obtaining the best institutional advice to help task teams in the design of projects. In another case the fund supported high priority innovative tasks which were being undertaken for the first time and where the best institutional knowledge resources would be brought in to help the process (see Box 1 on the Zambia Public Expenditure Review). Another area was support to selected task teams in undertaking quality enhancement reviews that provided a platform for institutional knowledge sharing and learning.

- **Indigenous Knowledge Integration Fund** focused on promoting the use of traditional knowledge systems in the design of Bank-supported projects and programs. Some of the supported studies and activities eventually opened the way to IK components in free-standing projects. These include, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants Project in Ethiopia, Integrated Early Childhood Development Project In Eritrea, Second Agricultural Research and Training Project in Uganda, Lake Malawi Environment Ecosystems Management Project in Malawi, Northern Savannah Biodiversity Conservation Project in Ghana, Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, etc.

- **Knowledge Economy Fund** supported innovative approaches to help clients develop programs that leverage knowledge and ICT for development. Initiatives supported by the Fund include:
  - Telecommunication Reform for a Learning Society in Eritrea;
  - e-Readiness and National ICT Strategy in Ghana;
  - Building Intra-country and regional Knowledge Networks in Mozambique;
  - Developing ICT-based Educational Tools for HIV/AIDS Awareness (see Box 8);
  - Knowledge for Rural Transformation in Uganda; and
  - Development of Country Gateways in a number of countries.

Feedback from teams suggests that these funds have been very helpful in
promoting and enabling innovative ideas that otherwise may not have been pursued. For example, in the Eritrea case, according to the team leader the work may not have taken place had there not been a venture capital style fund like the Africa KE Fund where no specific report or product was sought; instead the focus was on achieving a behavioral outcome (convincing the client to undertake a major policy reform) and using rather unconventional, intangible inputs (e.g., “knowledge brokerage”, facilitation, etc.).

**Partnerships within the Bank as well as with external entities.** To leverage potential synergies across the organization, the Region partnered with other units. Partnerships especially with ISG, the thematic Networks, WBI, InfoDev, Gateway Foundation, OED, OPCS as well as with other regions created mutual learning opportunities that provided valuable pointers for the Africa Region’s knowledge journey. Similarly, several partnerships were pursued with external entities in the context of specific programs and initiatives. For example, the IK Program partnered with several regional and international organizations (e.g., FAO, CIDA, WHO, WIPO, UNDP, etc.), as well as local civil society groups and knowledge and innovation centers (e.g., Uganda National Council for Science and Technology). Similarly, the statistical capacity building program established very strong partnerships with PARIS21, Afristat and country statistical organizations.

**Nurturing a culture of knowledge sharing and learning.** One of the main lessons from the first phase was that systematic knowledge sharing and learning will not happen by itself. Action was therefore needed to develop necessary and sufficient conditions for a culture shift. The various initiatives described earlier provided the platforms and opportunities (necessary conditions) to practice sharing and

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**Box 8**

**ICT-based educational tools raise HIV/AIDS awareness among children**

With support from the Africa Region Knowledge Economy Fund, the World Links for Development Program (WorLD) scaled-up its school-based Internet Learning Center (ILC) initiatives in Africa to target more client groups. In Uganda, the initiative developed material for integrating ICT and resources for community-based HIV/AIDS organizations, youth entrepreneurs, local businesses (e-commerce project) and health professionals (telemedicine project). This initiative builds upon WorLD’s satellite-connected schools project (a 2002 finalist project in the prestigious Stockholm Challenge Awards) in Uganda where schools serve as community-based telecenters serving students during the day and community clients in the after-school hours. In Botswana, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the initiative supported the development of thirty-eight youth-developed websites highlighting exemplary examples of HIV/AIDS community prevention activities for in and out-of-school youth.
learning. As important were efforts to create the enabling environment (sufficient condition) for a culture of sharing and learning to take root in the Region. These included actions to raise awareness, strengthen incentives, and lead by example:

- **Awareness raising.** A variety of venues and events were used to disseminate success stories and to demonstrate how knowledge sharing improves quality of services for clients and staff. These included presentations to sector and country teams as well as Town Halls and Knowledge Fairs. One of the most successful awareness raising events was the Africa Region Knowledge and Learning Week (May 2002). It was the first such event at the regional level in the Bank, bringing together staff and clients in a display of innovation and practical operational solutions involving client success stories in using knowledge for development and how teams use knowledge and learning to enhance quality of service to clients. It provided a platform for staff and clients to learn more about four strategic themes: enhancing client capacity to use knowledge; multi-sector approaches and programmatic lending; challenges of HIV/AIDS and Onchocerciasis; and measuring progress on development goals.

  Another very effective method in raising awareness was sharing success stories that reported on real teams working in real situations with real clients, achieving tangible results. These stories could be re-told several times by different people in different contexts and with varied audiences to spread the messages to an ever larger groups of staff. For example one of the most effective stories was the experience of the people of Iganga (in Uganda) in reducing maternal mortality by using simple technology and local knowledge (see Box 2 above). The story had such a compelling message about the possibility of achieving development goals that it soon spread in different circles, including being repeated several times by the President of the Bank at internal and external venues. The use of narrative (“story telling”) about development successes has been a very effective approach in raising awareness and promoting new ways of doing business.

  Finally, the Region’s experience with knowledge and learning was shared with Executive Directors of the Bank, other regions in the Bank as well as partner organizations (e.g., UNDP, FAO, OECD, AfDB, IMF, the International Red Cross, ECA, Swiss Development Cooperation, etc.). Presentations were also made at leading knowledge conferences (e.g., APQC, Braintrust International, Delfi, etc.) to further disseminate lessons of experience.

- **Incentives.** The first Retrospective argued in favor of “…rewarding knowledge sharing behavior (e.g., give awards for sharing, contribution, and use; link merit increases to
such behavior; sanction knowledge hoarding behavior); integrating knowledge sharing expectations into management practices such as results agreement, overall performance evaluation (as a core competency)...”. The Region and the Bank as a whole have made progress in this area. For example, knowledge sharing and learning is a competency that is now part of performance evaluation of staff and managers. The system of performance and spot awards has also been used to reward innovation and good knowledge sharing and learning behavior.

- **Leadership** is probably the most important single factor contributing to a change in culture. Whether and how leaders “walk the talk” can have profound implications in this regard. Timely and consistent signaling from the leadership that good knowledge sharing and learning behaviors are important to achieve the mission of the organization is a key to nurturing a sharing and learning culture. The Region has benefitted from actions at the corporate level. For example, the Bank is one of the few leading institutions in the world that has “knowledge sharing and learning” specifically mentioned in its mission statement. This has been a key platform from which the innovators in knowledge sharing and learning have drawn inspiration as well as corporate backing.

Another important example is the critical role that the President of the Bank and his corporate team played in articulating a vision of the Knowledge Bank (first raised in 1996 in the President’s address at the Annual Meetings of the Bank and the IMF as a way of taking a more strategic approach to improving our development impact via knowledge — a thrust that was later formalized in the Strategic Compact). In addition, on several occasions along the Africa Region’s knowledge journey, the President of the Bank and some of the Managing Directors have personally shown their support and appreciation for the Region’s activities in this area. For example, the President (i) visited the Knowledge and Learning Week to encourage staff to continue to innovate; (ii) encouraged other Bank units to replicate the Debriefing Program (this led to several stories disseminated Bank-wide through the internal communications network, further spreading the word about the potential role of debriefing in knowledge retention and dissemination); (iii) personally inaugurated the Bank’s first websites in local African languages under the IK Program; (iv) met with the IK team to show appreciation for their work and to encourage them to do more (e.g., produce a booklet on IK for dissemination to the Governors of the Bank); (v) not only found the time to read the Region’s knowledge-related docu-
ments (e.g., the first Retrospective, the Road Map on Quality, an “Infobrief” about IK, etc.), but also took the trouble to send personal feedback notes to the teams. These are examples of behavior by the senior leadership that energizes the innovators, gives them moral support to continue, and sends clear signals that corporate leadership considers knowledge sharing and learning important to the business of the organization.

Finally, at the regional level, the Vice Presidents have played a crucial role in signaling their support for innovations in knowledge sharing and learning (e.g., taking risks to protect the innovators in the pioneering days, and later supporting the knowledge-related activities by allocating resources, finding time to always be present at critical events, talking about success stories, and rewarding knowledge sharing and learning behaviors of staff and middle level managers, etc.). Some of the other managers in the Region have also been especially helpful in leading by example and showing the way to their staff as well as other managers who were slower in adopting new ways of doing business (e.g., by supporting innovation, risk taking, and adoption of new approaches to leveraging knowledge and learning into the quality enhancement processes in their respective units, etc.).

2 See: http://afr/qp/ For the knowledge and learning window of the portal see http://afr/qp/know.htm
3 Several publications have documented the case for using IK in development: Indigenous Knowledge for Development: A Framework for Action”, November 1998; Indigenous Knowledge for Development: Opportunities and Challenges”, June 2001; a monthly publication, “IK Notes”, in three international languages (English, French, Portuguese) and two local languages (Wolof, Swahili).
4 See IK Program: http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/default.htm
6 For the debriefing library on line go to: http://afr.worldbank.org/afiqk/debriefing/library.htm
7 For highlights and translated excerpts from the debriefing (in Arabic) see Voices of the Poor: rtsp://afr-video.worldbank.org/VOP/WBenglish.smi
8 For feedback from debriefees and users see: http://afr.worldbank.org/afqk/debriefing/testimonials.htm
10 For analysis from recent Country Feedback Surveys go to: http://afr.worldbank.org/afiqk/clientsurvey/report99.doc
11 See following cases in the debriefing library: http://afr.worldbank.org/afqk/debriefing/library.htm: On Mauritania: Hasan Tuluy (PRSP in Mauritania—a Country Director’s Reflections; and Role of a Country Director); Mohamed Lemrabott (Mauritania PRSP – Client’s Perspective); Govind Nair, Mohamed Lemrabott, Svetoslav Tintchev (Role of Knowledge Brokers). On Eritrea: Govind Nair and Estafanos Ahekere (Brokering and Learning Between Eritrea, China and Silicon Valley).
12 By flexibility the debriefers do not imply compromising on objectives and principles. Clarity on agreed fundamental objectives (e.g., access, cost, technology etc.), and adherence to fundamental principles (e.g., transparency, due process etc.) are very important. But, privatization per se may not be the only way to achieve the objectives; hence the value of flexibility.
13 Interestingly, the debriefees stressed the fact that they were not talking about a “best practice”, rather they wanted to share a record of ongoing mutual and joint learning processes from which they hoped “good practices” will emerge over time. This perspective is in itself testimony to a new way of thinking about development and the role that Bank staff play in the process.
IV. Measuring Impact

Along the knowledge journey, the innovators faced a critical question: how do you know you are making a difference and bringing value? Initially, the answer was not obvious, since there were no established indicators in the Bank to measure impact in the area of knowledge interaction. Thus, the Region gradually developed some proxy and lead indicators to measure progress. This was especially helpful in convincing leaders of the value of knowledge initiatives when such activity was still seen somewhat outside the mainstream. For example, in 1997, the Region produced a first “report card” on its knowledge and learning initiatives and disseminated it to the corporate leadership in support of the emerging vision of a Knowledge Bank. Measuring impact has focused especially on the following.

*Proxy indicators* (e.g., number of staff using modern tools; number of visits on the web; number of knowledge files queried on the web, etc.). These show that demand for the knowledge sharing and learning tools has grown steadily over the past seven years. Moreover, in some of the more popular services (e.g., debriefing) demand has grown very rapidly. Similarly, the adoption rate (i.e., how rapidly a majority of staff start using new tools) has accelerated over time. For example, in the first year after the launch of the LDB (one of the first tools), an estimated 10 percent of staff were using it. However, in the first year after the launch of the debriefing program (one of the more recent tools), more than half of the Africa Region staff are estimated to have used the service at least once. Similarly, the intensity of use of the online tools and services (i.e., number of knowledge objects that each user consulted per visit to a system) has increased over time. For example, during its active period—1995–1999—the Regional Best Practice System had a user inten-
sity of about 4, while the user intensity of more recent online tools (e.g., Debriefing, Quality Portal, Financial Management, Procurement, Operations Guidelines) has been averaging over 15.

Despite the progress, however, not all staff use all the available tools; and, among the users not all do it intensively and on a regular basis. There is, therefore, an unfinished agenda to get yet more staff to use the tools and to increase the intensity of use. The latest trends are:

• The Africa Region’s Intranet portal is the most utilized within the Bank’s Intranet, averaging nearly 40 percent of all the regional page views Bank-wide, with the next region averaging about 23 percent.1 Similarly, the Region’s portal on the Internet is a popular platform for sharing knowledge with clients and partners. For example, most recently, monthly averages for external users were: about 130,000 visits; about 1.3 million hits to access knowledge objects; and equivalent of about 20,000 (200-page) books of information accessed.2

• LDB: 100 percent of country economists and many country team colleagues use it. A related publication, “African Development Indicators” (ADI) is published annually in print and electronic format and offers the internal and external audiences data on more than 500 development indicators. Demand is robust, with sales to external users growing steadily.

• Debriefing Library: during FY02 (first full year of the service), over 1200 staff used it at least once (measured as the number of distinct hosts or workstations that have accessed the system on-line during the year). About 60 percent of the users were from the Africa Region, equivalent to over 50 percent of regional staff. The remaining 40 percent represent users in other parts of the Bank. This suggests that staff outside the Region are finding value in this knowledge base as well, and is further evidence that sharing and learning across unit boundaries is on the rise in the Bank. Moreover, the user trend by quarter shows rapid growth in the adoption rate over the year (see graph below). Finally, qualitative feedback suggests that (i) staff who have been debriefed find this platform useful for sharing their experiences and contributing to learning; (ii) users of the debriefing library are getting value in terms of helping them design better quality operations.3

• Quality Portal: during FY02 (second full year of the service), over 1000 staff used it at least once. About 75 percent of the users were from the Region, representing more than half of the regional staff.

• “Findings/Infobriefs”: these online publications have consistently been very popular with clients and partners. In the recent years, the relevant site has attracted more external visitors than any other single site on the Africa Region’s external portal (recent monthly averages were: ~16,000 visits, ~100,000 hits to access knowl-
edge objects, and equivalent of 1,000 books of information accessed). In addition, an e-Findings newsletter is available to more than 3,000 on-line subscribers. Moreover, there are ~20,000 hard copy mailings of Findings and Infobriefs per issue (36 issues a year in English and French) to users who do not have Internet connectivity. Qualitative feedback on the value of the publications as well as follow up on the substantive issues therein is another proxy measure of the value of this knowledge sharing tool targeting both internal and external audiences. Finally, these publications have been useful platforms to encourage staff to contribute lessons of experience for dissemination across the institution. For example, to date over 300 staff have formally shared specific lessons of experience through contributions to the “Findings” and “Infobriefs”;

- Indigenous Knowledge: demand for knowledge services from this platform has grown steadily. It is the second most visited single site (after Findings) on the regional external portal. Most recently, monthly averages were: ~10,000 visits; ~40,000 hits to access knowledge objects; and equivalent of about 2,000 books of information accessed. An additional revealing statistic is that the Swahili language version of the IK website receives two and half times the number of visitors to the French version, suggesting a strong client response to dissemination of content in local languages. Finally, the “IK Notes” sub-site also has a very high user intensity rate (each visitor consulting on average about 20 “IK Notes” in
the library), confirming the value of this knowledge dissemination platform.

**Lead indicators** (e.g., measures of quality at entry, efficiency gains, and staff/client satisfaction with knowledge-related services tracked through staff and client surveys). These suggest that the Region is making good progress in nurturing a culture of sharing and learning internally as well as sharing knowledge with the clients, and is doing better than Bank-wide averages on most of the indicators where comparable data exists across the institution. Building on this progress will require more awareness raising through continued dissemination of success stories, consistent signals from leaders about the importance of knowledge sharing, and ensuring that advice based on lessons learned is readily made available to task teams.

The latest trends are:

- **Quality gains**: implementation of the principles underlying the Road Map for quality together with better managerial attention and monitoring of operational quality trends has contributed to a dramatic improvement in quality at entry scores of the Africa Region. In the mid-1990s only about 55 percent of operations in the Africa Region were rated satisfactory (compared to about 80 percent Bank-wide). By 2001, nearly 90 percent of the operations in the Region were rated satisfactory, largely catching up with Bank-wide averages. This suggests that the quality enhancement processes are doing much better than in the past in ensuring that good advice based on institutional lessons learned is systematically sought, given and used.

There are, however, two important considerations regarding this assessment. First, the progress reflected in the averages has not been evenly spread across all units. This points to the need to do more to spread the successful practices across all sector families. Secondly, while progress in quality at entry scores is an important indicator of success, measures of outcomes are even more relevant. Progress in outcome indicators has been a bigger challenge. For example, the trends in outcome indicators between the mid-1990s and early 00s are: from high-50 percent to mid-60 percent satisfactory outcomes; from about 30 percent to about 60 percent in likely sustainability; and from low-20 percent to about 40 percent in substantial institutional development impact.

While the overall trends are positive, much more needs to be done to translate the substantial improvements in the quality at entry scores into similarly impressive scores on outcomes.

- **Efficiency gains**. The LDB is one of the tools that has produced measurable gains in efficiency. With 100 percent of country economist teams using the tool, the Africa Region has made important savings in data storage, retrieval and reporting time equivalent to about $0.5 million annually.

- **Knowledge sharing behaviors**. Over the period of the knowledge journey,
there have been three Bank-wide staff attitude surveys (1997, 1999, 2002). Analysis of the data and comparisons across units confirms the progressive shift in the culture of the Region toward better sharing and learning behaviors. Although changes in the knowledge-related questions in some cases does not allow a trend analysis over time, there is sufficient hard data to support the conclusions:

1. The 1997 survey established the following:
   - 64 percent of staff are satisfied with ability to get knowledge needed (60 percent Bank average).
   - 41 percent of staff believe “best practices” are widely shared among colleagues (37 percent Bank average).
   - ~50 percent of staff give a favorable rating to sharing with clients (40 percent Bank average).

2. In the 1999 survey, the Africa Region scored above Bank averages on all of some 20 indices related to knowledge sharing and learning behaviors. On about half of the indices the Region ranked at the top or the top two of all Bank units.

3. In the latest survey (2002), the Region was again above Bank averages on all indices related to knowledge and learning. For example:
   - 68 percent of staff give a favorable rating to delivery of knowledge or best practices in the form of products and services that meet client needs (64 percent Bank average).
   - 85 percent say they are able to get the knowledge needed to do their job (84 percent Bank average).
   - 79 percent say that their manager supports their learning plans (75 percent Bank average).

- **Adapting knowledge.** As mentioned earlier, the Africa region has been collecting client attitudes through its client feedback surveys. Several survey questions try to capture client perceptions of the value that Bank staff bring in sharing knowledge with clients. Two important messages have emerged from over two dozen surveys: (i) clients are very satisfied with staff knowledge of international best practices; (ii) but at the same time, clients want Bank staff to do better in adapting these practices to the local settings. As indicated earlier, these surveys have identified a “knowledge adaptation gap.” Nevertheless, there are significant variations across countries. In some cases such as Mauritania (see earlier section), the gap is very small. Another general finding of the surveys is that there is a further gap in perceptions on these issues between the clients and staff, with a much higher percentage of staff (than clients) satisfied with staff’s ability to adapt knowledge to local settings. These “blind spots” point to the challenges that lie ahead and suggest that more awareness raising is needed among staff about the importance of adaptation in serving the client well.

- **Brokering knowledge.** This area has come into focus relatively recently. Hence, the various surveys do not pro-
vide insights on this issue. Nevertheless, there are some preliminary pointers in the limited material from the debriefings, especially of clients. As mentioned in the earlier section, these tend to indicate that: (i) clients perceive high value in Bank staff providing knowledge broker services; and (ii) clients and staff confirm the critical importance of behavioral competencies of staff (e.g., listening and hearing, curiosity, intellectual humility, flexibility, patience, etc.) in delivering effective knowledge services. Clearly, more needs to be done to develop better measures of effectiveness in this area.

**Benchmarking.** Another way in which the Region has measured progress is by internal and external benchmarking and peer recognition. This has provided a qualitative assessment of the value of the knowledge and learning tools relative to similar initiatives elsewhere in the Bank as well as in private and public sector organizations outside. The highlights are:

- **LDB:** (i) original LDB platform benchmarked as “best practice” by the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC); (ii) 2nd generation LDB received the “2001 World Class Solution Award” in business intelligence awarded by Data Management Review; (iii) LDB team nominated for the President’s Award for Excellence (1997).
- **IK Program:** (i) one of eleven selected for full funding at the first Innovation Marketplace in 1998; and (ii) IK team nominated for the President’s Award for Excellence (2000).
- **Debriefing Program:** (i) benchmarked as “best practice” in knowledge retention by APQC in 2002; (ii) debriefing team nominated for the President’s Award for Excellence (2002).
- **Africa Knowledge and Learning Week, 2002:** considered a Bank model for such events.
- **“Findings/Infobriefs”:** considered a Bank model for such publications.

Overall, the trends described above paint a positive picture. If these trends continue, and if the issues of adapting global knowledge to local conditions and enhancing staff behavioral competencies to operate as knowledge brokers within multi-sectoral assistance platforms (e.g., PRSP, PRSC, etc.) are adequately addressed, it would be reasonable to expect in the near future continued high quality at entry, higher client satisfaction with staff’s technical advice, and better developmental impact of Bank-supported operations in Africa.

2 A “book equivalent” is a measure of volume of content or “bytes”. It is equivalent to one megabyte of content which is about the information contained in a 200-page book (text only).
V. Future Challenges

The “knowledge journey” that began in the Africa Region in 1995 continues. Despite the Region’s impressive progress to date, there is more to be done to realize fully the vision of a “Knowledge Bank.” What started as a modest attempt to deal with the issues of the lower left quadrant of the knowledge and learning framework, has gradually evolved into a more complex set of activities or “second generation” tools dealing with issues in all four quadrants of the framework as well as addressing the emerging business needs. The challenges that lie ahead are manifold. Addressing them will require: (i) a clear link with the overall regional assistance strategy to further integrate knowledge and learning into daily work and in support of the regional strategic priorities; and (ii) collaboration with key partners both at the country level as well as in the regional context (e.g., AfDB, NEPAD, UNECA, GCA, SADC, etc.).

The top priorities for action are:

Moving from an internal focus to approaches that empower the clients. In the early stages of the knowledge journey it may have been appropriate to focus on tools, services and processes that served primarily the needs of staff (i.e., within the lower left quadrant of the conceptual framework). More recently, the focus had shifted to sharing knowledge with clients, development partners and other external audiences. The challenge in the next phase of the journey is to help the clients develop and enhance their own capacity to use knowledge to help achieve the MDGs. The focus should be on products and services that help to harness global knowledge, share knowledge and experiences across communities and local networks, and use knowledge more effectively to benefit from the growing opportunities to reduce poverty made possible by the knowledge-based, network society paradigm of the 21st Century.

In developing strategies and identifying entry points there is a need to ap-
preciate the specificities of the emerging network society, where notions of power, geographic boundaries, production processes may manifest themselves in ways that are radically different from the industrial era paradigm. It could be argued that such considerations do not apply in the case of African countries where the challenge is to fight poverty with the most basic interventions, given the generally low levels of knowledge intensity in the production systems, etc. Nevertheless, as the case of the knowledge workers in Ghana (Box 3 above) suggests, the new elements may already be affecting some production processes in Africa as well. That example essentially revolves around a knowledge-based service where labor can be disaggregated in its performance, and reintegrated in its outcomes through networks that perform tasks in different geographic locations — in this case between Ghana and North America. Recognizing these global societal shifts will help in designing products and services that promote the strengthening of those emerging institutions (e.g., local knowledge networks and their links to global networks) that are likely to contribute to enhancing client capacity to operate effectively in a network society.

The key operational entry points as well as some of the emerging good practice examples are:

- CDF/PRSP processes, which are suitable learning platforms that can be used to strengthen existing and promote new networks (e.g., the PRSP process in Mauritania was instrumental in promoting networks of civil society groups, disseminating the objectives of the poverty reduction strategy through the use of modern technology, etc.);
- Country Assistance Strategies to embed knowledge and ICT as key enablers in achieving growth and poverty reduction objectives (e.g., the Ethiopia CAS and the proposed Capacity Building for ICT project);
- Projects and programs that support capacity building and development of centers of excellence (e.g., Development Learning Center Project in Burkina Faso). In addition, projects could be good vehicles for components that promote sharing of lessons among stakeholders. For example, the Third Malawi Social Action Fund is considering a component to establish a Knowledge and Information Sharing System (KISS) to leverage the experiences from community level development actions.
- M&E systems that use modern technology to track progress on development outcomes (e.g., in Mauritania, the debriefing methodology is being applied to monitor perceptions of networks of beneficiaries in the context of the PRSP).
- Knowledge fairs and other awareness raising events at the country or regional level to promote sharing within and across countries, encourage learning from peers and success stories, and strengthen knowledge networks and promote innovation.
For example a country innovation event is planned in Ethiopia. Similarly, knowledge fairs could be organized in the context of regional events that bring together large numbers of policy makers and civil society groups (e.g., events organized in the context of Global Coalition for Africa, NEPAD, etc.). Feedback from client representatives participating at the Africa Knowledge Week 2002 in Washington suggests that there is a strong demand for such opportunities.

**Narrowing the “knowledge adaptation gap”** (i.e., the difference between satisfaction with staff’s technical knowledge and staff’s ability to adapt that knowledge to the local setting). Comparable data is not readily available for other regions to put Africa Region’s indicators in an institution-wide perspective. Follow up with clients on this issue suggests that the gap is due primarily to inadequate listening, insufficient staff familiarity with local practices, and inadequate attention to local cultural realities and institutional constraints. Clients further suggest that one way to deal with these issues is for Bank staff to rely more on local institutions (e.g., research centers, think tanks, consultant organizations and networks of subject matter experts, etc.) to advise on how practices could be adapted to the local setting. Despite recent progress in learning from clients, much more need to be done to mainstream such approaches into the way we work and the dialogue with clients. Managers and staff need to study in particular the successful approaches in adaptation and customization (e.g., the experiences in Mauritania and Eritrea mentioned earlier), identify the kinds of competencies that are needed to replicate such experiences in other country contexts, and finally invest where necessary in enhancing such competencies that are needed to do better customization of policy advice and operational products and services.

**Scaling up the successes.** Over the recent years many success stories have been identified both internally in the Bank as well as among clients. However, internal successes have tended to cluster around certain teams, sectors, countries. The challenge now is to make these practices and behaviors the norm across countries, sectors and teams. Externally, the challenge is to seize the opportunities to scale up, especially in those cases where there is a demonstrated record of effectiveness in achieving important development objectives such as saving lives, especially of children and mothers, educating children, especially girls, and increasing production and trade. This may require working with simple processes, on a small scale, involving basic institutional frameworks (i.e., activities that some teams may not always see as suitable for Bank support). Success stories such as the Iganga case in reducing maternal mortality mentioned earlier (Box 2) are prime examples of the kinds of opportunities
that are available for scaling up, probably quickly and involving relatively modest amounts of lending. For example, the proposed Capacity Building for ICT project in Ethiopia is considering replicating some of the lessons of the Iganga experience.

Developing effective monitoring and evaluation tools and processes to help clients and their development partners measure and track performance with a focus on outcomes. Good progress has been made in designing tools. More needs to be done internally to develop a clear strategy for supporting clients in rolling out tools and processes to strengthen monitoring and evaluation capacity. Specifically, more effort is needed in developing a capacity to provide clients with the following knowledge and learning services:

- **Advocacy** and supporting the promotion of the right incentive structure for M&E to operate in. The establishment of a national M&E system is not a technocratic exercise. It needs to be accompanied (or preceded) by efforts to improve the quality and accountability of public policy making, planning and management. Demand for and use of M&E within the public sector will exist only if performance, accountability and results matter in politics and public sector management. The responsibility to promote active M&E should become a shared responsibility of all country team members.

- **Training** opportunities to promote awareness of the importance of good M&E, including national and regional M&E awareness workshops, PRSP workshops and conferences, statistical capacity-building workshops etc. Such workshops, while traditionally conducted at regional or national levels, can also be conducted at sub-national levels and thereby encourage the involvement and participation of district and community officials.

- **Dissemination** of appropriate tools and processes that have recently been developed, including: financial management information systems for tracking poverty-reducing public spending; public expenditure tracking surveys; LDB; CWIQ; Africa Household Survey Databank and survey CD-ROMs for storing and disseminating household survey data; poverty maps, etc.

Enhancing staff’s behavioral competencies to operate effectively in the new multi-sector environment and to deliver better quality knowledge services such as the knowledge brokering role. In the past, the focus of staff learning programs has been primarily on technical competencies. However, increasingly staff will be challenged in behavioral areas in the context of brokering and adapting knowledge. Therefore, there is a need to continue re-orienting the strategies underpinning the learning programs to ensure that there are adequate learning opportunities in the emerging areas.

Further mainstreaming knowledge interaction and learning while doing into daily work. The Region’s progress in nurturing a culture of sharing and
learning has produced good dividends, especially in enhancing the quality of work. There is a need to build on these efforts so that more and more staff seek knowledge from across the institution and from clients to enrich their work and continue to innovate to better serve their clients. The objective should be to reach a broader group of staff beyond the early adopters and pace-setters. Approaches such as debriefing can help this process by capturing lessons of experience for learning and re-use. In dealing with debriefing, the main challenges ahead include how to:

• Scale up both the use of debriefing as a knowledge tool (e.g., through more integration into the quality enhancement processes) and perhaps also as an internal management/reporting tool (e.g., complement to PSRs, PCRs, or as input into QAG’s quality tracking processes);

• Improve on the methodology to better tease out generic lessons from specific tasks;

• Capture “what not to do” (e.g., “failed” projects, “ineffective” practices, etc.) without “putting teams on the spot” (e.g., keep such debriefings off line or “anonym-ize” them);

• Develop cross-cutting themes/lessons from several related debriefings (e.g., behaviors that lead to transparency which in turn enhance trust in the dialogue with clients, etc.), and feeding these into the emerging learning programs that emphasize behavioral competencies.

1 For a scholarly analysis of the economic and social dynamics of the new network society see Manuel Castells, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (Three Volumes); Volume I, The Rise of The Network Society, 1998, Blackwell Publishers. Castells’ thesis is that “networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture...” and “...the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power.” (p.468).
VI. Lessons

The following highlights the most important lessons which the Africa Region’s experience to date can offer to current and future knowledge practitioners in the Region as well as in other parts of the Bank. Some of these lessons may be of relevance to external partners as well.

It’s a long journey! It is critical to avoid the “quick fix” syndrome. The Africa Region’s knowledge champions had initially assumed that the process would take 3–4 years. Seven years later, that assumption has proved optimistic.

Innovators should be prepared to live “lonely lives,” until their products catch on. In the early stages when few tend to notice the potential value of innovation, the challenge is to guard against the risk of discouragement and to stay the course. Eventually, when the adoption rate rises and new products are seen as low risk ventures many more will join the cause and copy/emulate the original product or approach.

Best compliment to innovators is when others copy them; whether the innovators are given credit should be unimportant.

Continue re-focusing the Knowledge Bank’s “core product” as transfer of know how, backed by resource transfer, where needed. Developing appropriate knowledge-intensive products and services that are not necessarily linked to lending instruments will be a continuing challenge as the Knowledge Bank develops support strategies to help clients better leverage knowledge for development in the knowledge-based network society. It will require in particular:

• A shift away from lending as an end in itself to finding the best solution to a client’s problem, whether it involves lending or not;
• Management tools, budget processes and human resource development strategies that are not driven exclusively or excessively by coefficients linked to lending, but that also value
free-standing knowledge-based products and services such as brokering;
• Incentives that recognize the value of knowledge-based services;
• Investing in learning events that focus on strengthening behavioral competencies needed to operate effectively in multi-sector environments and playing the roles of knowledge brokers and enablers of change;
• Measuring effectiveness of Bank support in terms of its impact on enhancing client capacity to use knowledge to solve development problems.

Adapting knowledge to the local setting and finding new solutions to problems are among the key drivers of client satisfaction. This suggests that providing staff with access to the best global practices in a thematic area may be a necessary but not sufficient condition to bring value to the client. It also requires listening more to clients and understanding better what traditional practices and institutional arrangements work or don’t work and using locally available expertise. This increases the likelihood that Bank advice is perceived by the client as relevant and, hence, is taken and used.

Debriefing is a useful approach to capturing tacit knowledge. It can help identify “how to” pointers. It can also inform “problem-solving situations” that involve attainment of outcomes through behavioral changes which may not be easily measured and/or inputs/processes (e.g., brokering knowledge) that are less tangible than the traditional inputs associated with development finance. Such problem solving situations are likely to become a growing focus of development dialogue as facilitation increasingly substitutes for prescription and knowledge and ideas for money.

Use of narrative (“story telling”) is an effective approach in raising awareness and promoting new ways of doing business. The stories emerging from debriefings are especially effective since they provide operational context, and involve staff and/or clients solving development problems in real situations.

Knowledge sharing and learning are two sides of the same coin. Every knowledge sharing occasion is a learning opportunity; each relationship is a potential learning partnership; most effective learning occurs when knowledge is shared in the context of daily work; knowledge is more valuable if it opens doors for the user towards further learning. There is, therefore, a need to develop tools and processes that maximize:
• “Learning through sharing and sharing through learning”; as well as
• “Learning while doing and doing while learning.”

Very few people “get it” when it comes to knowledge management; but many more will get it if one talks of improving operational quality by more knowledge sharing and learning to solve problems with clients.
Demonstrating the value of knowledge sharing and learning products to users depends especially on:

- Clarity on how to use the services and tools, which need to be user-friendly;
- Recognition by the leadership teams of knowledge sharing behavior; and
- Consistent institutional signals on knowledge sharing and learning as a core competency.

Adoption rate of new knowledge products and services grows overtime, once a critical mass of staff start using them and demonstrate by example the value proposition.

Creative ideas are relatively easy to find; translating them into instruments and services that generate practical solutions is more difficult; maintaining and continuously upgrading the instruments is even more difficult. Investing in modern knowledge-sharing tools is not a one-time decision; it requires a commitment over the long haul to continuously maintain and upgrade the tools. If not, there is a risk that the early users will not return and information “junk yards” proliferate:

- In the case of the LDB, the investment has been over a number of years and has involved continuous upgrading of the features, improvement in the quality of data, as well as “just-in-time” training and technical support to the users provided by a full-time LDB team. These factors have contributed to the remarkable (100 percent) adoption rate of the LDB among the country economists.

Measuring the impact of knowledge services is not optional, it’s a necessity. It is imperative to have metrics (even rough proxies to start with) to be able to communicate benefits to decision makers and users, especially in the initial stages of the process.

Systematic and widespread knowledge sharing will not happen by itself; there is, therefore, a need to:

- Demonstrate how knowledge sharing and learning improves quality of services for clients and staff (e.g., dissemination of stories reflecting good sharing and learning behaviors by individuals, teams and client successes through the “bully pulpit” of senior managers and through knowledge events such as Knowledge Fairs, etc.).

- Make it easy to share lessons learned; for example:
  - facilitate transfer of lessons learned from project and non-project documents to thematic groups (e.g., electronic link from the lessons learned section of the Project Appraisal Document directly to the thematic group space).
- promote systematic recording of lessons learned from client interactions and advice received from institutional knowledge sources (e.g., a mission is incomplete and a statement of expense is not finalized unless lessons learned have been recorded in a form that could be easily disseminated; keeping a record of institutional advice received and whether it was used, and if not, why, as part of the quality enhancement process).

- Make it easy to learn how to use knowledge on-line; for example:
  - develop user guides and how to contact advisory services.
  - organize learning events focused on "how to".

- Encourage staff to embed knowledge sharing and learning in daily work by for example:
  - using the quality enhancement process as the key driver to integrate knowledge sharing and learning into the main business;
  - demonstrating to colleagues and managers how global knowledge was adapted to the local setting to render advice more relevant to client needs;
  - systematically recording and sharing lessons of what works and doesn’t work; and
  - brokering knowledge and client/staff learning opportunities to help enhance client capacity to use knowledge to solve development problems.

Leadership is key. Leaders need to “walk the talk” by for example:

- Modeling knowledge sharing behavior (e.g., leaders producing short summaries of lessons learned after each mission or contact with clients/partners, supporting and/or participating in innovative knowledge sharing or learning events);
- Asking the right questions during mentoring or task review occasions (e.g., what good practices used?, what lessons learned?, how knowledge was adapted?, what alternative knowledge products considered?, how will the task help enhance client capacity?, etc.);
- Communicating to staff clear expectations about sharing and learning behaviors;
- Rewarding knowledge sharing and learning behaviors (e.g., give awards for collaborative learning approaches, knowledge sharing, contribution and re-use; link merit increases to such behavior; sanction knowledge hoarding behavior);
- Integrating knowledge sharing and learning expectations into management practices such as results agreement, overall performance evaluation (as a core competency) and the quality enhancement process.

It’s all about culture! While “tools” and technology to facilitate the sharing, contribution and use of knowledge are useful and necessary enablers, a knowledge journey will not reach its destination unless there is a
change in the institutional culture; it’s not about tools or rules, but about behaviors. This implies the need for action at all levels of the organization to address the key drivers of culture (e.g., values, behaviors, incentives). To be successful, a knowledge journey would have to emphasize the following important elements:

• Knowledge by “emergence” (i.e., facilitating serendipitous practices through the ways we do business) versus knowledge by “design” (i.e., top-down “industry” approach relying predominantly on technology tools).

• An institutional culture that puts a premium on asking good questions to promote more creativity and innovation versus one that values answers (and having to have all of them!).

• Emphasis on how to learn and not only on what to learn.

• Using the knowledge “ecology” approach and not knowledge “management”, in recognition of the fact that:
  - knowledge is a special factor of production. It multiplies when you share it; and it cannot be effectively “managed” using the techniques of the industrial era paradigm that was based on the notion of factor scarcity;
  - in the knowledge era people need to be “inspired” and “supported” rather than “managed” and “controlled” as they were in the industrial era;
  - leading knowledge workers in a learning organization requires competencies that are different from those used to manage factory and office workers;
  - the key to influencing behavior is “managing” the environment (i.e., the ecosystem) within which that behavior occurs (e.g., with incentives and “signaling”);
  - Promoting knowledge “partners” as facilitators versus knowledge “managers” as gate keepers.

• Looking for the “smartest” path between two points instead of the “shortest” distance. Knowledge-based learning organizations are complex ecosystems. Applying linear mental models to effect culture change is likely to lead to unfulfilled expectations. For example, setting up knowledge bases and asking knowledge workers to contribute may not be sufficient to promote a sharing culture. This is because knowledge is embedded in people and not data bases and documents: ‘one will always know more than one can say or put down on paper’; and ‘people may not know what they know until they need to know it.’

• “Learning to share and sharing to learn” to bring value to the client.

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1 Borrowed and adapted from Dave Snowden (IBM), a leading proponent of complexity theory as well as of the role of narrative (story telling) in promoting organizational values.
Annex 1

“First Generation” Knowledge Sharing Tools and Initiatives in the Africa Region (reproduced from the first Retrospective)

Note: some of these tools have been “retired” or merged with other Bank platforms

**Live Data Base** (LDB): targeting primarily the working and briefing needs of the country economists, the tool created: (i) a single electronic warehouse for data on African countries from various internal and external sources; and (ii) a just-in-time “virtual research assistant” for every user. With these innovative features, the tool can in a few seconds calculate key indicators, aggregate or sort data along a variety of dimensions and produce customized reports. Thus, the LDB has evolved into the most authoritative data source in the Region and the largest single data base on Africa in the world with about 1500 indicators for 53 countries covering 35 years. The tool, which was developed as a partnership between the KNIT and the Development Data Group (formerly IEC), was benchmarked in 1997 by the American Productivity and Quality Center and has served as a model for the development of the Bank-wide World Development Indicators (WDI) and live data bases in other regions. Note: this platform was upgraded to 2nd generation.

**Best Practice System** (BPS): representing a prototype of web-based knowledge sharing tools in the Bank, this facility offers regional staff a gateway to knowledge across thematic areas on the Intranet (starting with about a dozen and growing to about thirty thematic sites) as well as a hotline for urgent inquiries. The sector knowledge base includes key documents, innovative/good practices, lessons learned, FAQs, links with internal and external sources of knowledge, etc. BPS is managed as a partnership between the KNIT/KLC (responsible for overall strategy, coordination, technical support) and the practice managers in the sector families (responsible for selection, synthesis and maintenance of the knowledge objects). The BPS experience and lessons learned have served as pointers for the knowledge activities of Networks and other regions. Note: BPS was discontinued, with thematic areas either “retired” or merged with other Network platforms with the establishment of Network-wide knowledge bases.

**Country Home Pages** (CHP): This facility provides regional staff with key country information, including CAS, country at a glance, portfolio status, country “best practices”, country team and resident mission, client contacts, links to client, partners, and news sites. Note: this service was transformed and merged into the Region’s external portal.

**Publications**: “Findings” and “Good Practice Infobriefs” disseminate lessons learned and target not only staff but also a substantial external audience. These monthly bilingual (English and French) publications appear in print as well as electronic format (on the Bank’s Intranet and on the Internet).

http://www.worldbank.org/afr/findings/default.htm

**“African Development Indicators” (ADI)** is published annually in print and electronic format and offers the internal and external audiences data on more than 500 development indicators.

**Connectivity for the Poor**: initiative to promote the use of informatics in Bank-financed projects to help develop local area networks in client countries to share local knowledge and access global knowledge. Note: this service was transformed and merged with efforts to promote informatics and country gateways

**New Product Fund** (NPF): initiative to stimulate “out of the box” thinking has served as a venture capital” fund (about $300,000 a year) in support of new ideas. With a deliberate high tolerance factor for failure, the initiative has been instrumental in helping entrepreneurial staff pursue high risk ideas. These investments have led to the development of several innovative tools such as the Nutrition Data Base. The NPF experience and lessons learned have also served as pointers for the Bank-wide Innovation Marketplace. Note: this fund was discontinued with the establishment of the Innovation Marketplace.

**Client Feedback Surveys** (CFS): pioneered in 1995. More than a dozen surveys completed to date have produced important data to help measure the impact of Bank activities including in the knowledge interaction area.
### Key Questions and Principal Roles for Region and Networks in Leveraging Knowledge into Africa Region's Quality Assurance Process (QAP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Role / Key Question</th>
<th>Team Leader</th>
<th>Lead Specialist</th>
<th>Sector Manager</th>
<th>Thematic Group/ Network Advisory Services</th>
<th>Network Knowledge Manager/ Sector Board</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. What Knowledge/ Advice Needed?</strong></td>
<td>Promote team environment open to seeking institutional K</td>
<td>Advise on relevant global practices &amp; sources of institutional K</td>
<td><em>Assess team’s mentoring K needs</em></td>
<td><em>Provide guidance on relevant global practice for TT consideration</em></td>
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<td><em>Determine risk at entry</em></td>
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<td><strong>2. Are Resources Adequate for QAP?</strong></td>
<td>Prepare realistic cost estimate for QAP</td>
<td>Advise on costs of leveraging best inst. K</td>
<td>Ensure task budget adequate for QAP</td>
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<td>Co-finance incremental K input for critical tasks</td>
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<td><strong>3. When is Advice Given?</strong></td>
<td>Contact identified sources of inst. K</td>
<td>Ensure K sources deliver just-in-time</td>
<td>Upstream &gt; strategic Downstream &gt; operational</td>
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<td><strong>4. How is Advice Given?</strong></td>
<td>Identify method for knowledge transfer to team</td>
<td>Advise team on optimal method for K transfer</td>
<td>Ensure appropriate person(s) used for quality support</td>
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<td>Fund TG input</td>
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<td><strong>5. Is Advice Considered and Used?</strong></td>
<td>Ensure team considers/ uses relevant inst. K</td>
<td>Advise team on relevant inst. K to leverage task</td>
<td>Monitor process by asking follow up questions</td>
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<td>Monitor/ disseminate good practice in using advice</td>
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<td><strong>6. Is Global K Adapted to Local Settings?</strong></td>
<td>Consider IK &amp; adapt global K to local setting</td>
<td>Advise on inst. underpinnings of global K</td>
<td>Monitor process by asking follow up questions</td>
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<td>Fund TG validation &amp; dissemination activities</td>
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<td><strong>7. How Lessons are Captured and Re-used?</strong></td>
<td>Ensure team debriefs &amp; prepares lessons record</td>
<td>Ensure lessons are shared with the Networks</td>
<td>Monitor process &amp; decide task debriefing method</td>
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<td>Fund TG validation &amp; dissemination activities</td>
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<td><strong>8. How is QAP Managed?</strong></td>
<td>Accountable for using best global K &amp; adaptation to local setting</td>
<td>Accountable for bringing best insts. knowledge to leverage QAP</td>
<td>Accountable for overall management of QAP</td>
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<td><em>Resolve issues of TG advice delivery</em></td>
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*Note: columns 2-4 refer to key roles in the QAP with specific accountability: last three columns identify regional & Network K delivery & facilitation roles.*