



G20 Issues Paper

Emerging Lessons on Institutionalizing Country-Led Knowledge Sharing

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Background, objectives and structure

As multiple poles of growth and innovation have emerged around the globe, developing countries are sharing concrete solutions to cope with development challenges. Fully recognized by the G20 leaders, knowledge sharing is becoming the third leg of development cooperation, complementing financial and technical instruments. In this changing global development landscape, a number of countries are already **pioneering institutional models** to scale up knowledge sharing, and others have expressed plans and interest in following this path. Responding to this demand by both members and non-members of the G20, the following pages intend to provide **broad, initial guidance** for governments and national stakeholders desiring to institutionalize knowledge sharing at the country level, clarifying some of the key elements to take into account. It might also be useful for external players, such as multilateral institutions, which commit to support country-led initiatives.

This Issues Paper has benefitted from **generous input and feedback** by dozens of policy-makers, practitioners, civil society representatives and academics, and was informed by the Bogota workshop on South-South and Triangular Cooperation on 26-27 September 2011, a pilot exchange organized by the World Bank Institute on 28-29 June 2011, the G20 Working Paper on Knowledge Sharing and existing literature, including a reference paper (see below for references). It is, nevertheless, important to recognize that the **evidence on these aspects is still very limited**. Therefore, this document does not pretend to provide a comprehensive overview of options, but aims to inform ongoing dialogues and to frame future in-depth analysis on concrete steps taken by different countries.

Structure-wise, the Issues Paper is organized around **seven interrelated institutional functions** of knowledge sharing. For each of these functional areas, it describes possible steps in **three different stages of institutionalization**: (i) the first efforts of engaging more systematically in knowledge sharing; (ii) the scale up of ongoing knowledge exchange through more solid capacities and resources; and, (iii) the consolidation of the knowledge sharing agenda as a full-fledged tool for achieving development results. As there is no single institutional path for all countries, these emerging lessons **need to be adapted** to specific country contexts and initiatives, some of which are highlighted in boxes throughout the text.

Institutionalizing knowledge sharing – Emerging lessons

Political leadership is key to scaling up knowledge sharing

In the early stages, ministerial buy-in to knowledge sharing might be ensured and adequately reflected in all relevant policy-making levels. Close communication between policy-makers and practitioners can generate essential synergies around knowledge sharing as a powerful development tool.

In terms of scaling up the policy framework, Indonesia's South-South Cooperation Grand Design, a government-wide strategy based on a broad consultation, incorporates profound policy, legal and institutional changes.

While scaling up, the rationale of the country as a provider and/or supplier of knowledge might be adequately reflected in a knowledge sharing policy/strategy drafted in alliance with all key national players and fully aligned to national development policies.

When consolidating, knowledge sharing would ideally become a full-fledged tool for development, a clear part of all development policies and the foreign policy agenda, and broadly supported by public opinion.

Long-term partnerships are at the heart of effective knowledge sharing

In the early stages, the channels and criteria for selecting partner countries as well as the principles for partnerships should be clarified (such as horizontality, mutual interests, demand-driven approaches, etc). Two to three pilot experiences, ideally drawing on existing bilateral relationships, may help to define various ways to build partnerships in practice.

While scaling up, national practitioners and institutions will ideally be fully included in partnerships, further improving long-term perspectives. Sub-regional, regional and global platforms can be useful for identifying and engaging with more partners abroad.

When consolidating, knowledge sharing can become a strong component in overall external relations, allowing groups of countries to create new spaces around common development interests. Clear roles for policy-makers, practitioners and other institutions such as CSO, academia and local governments might ensure that all players assume ownership and shared accountability.

In terms of consolidating partnerships, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Program (ITEC) shares the country's vast development experiences through long-running partnerships with many national and local institutions.

Institutional structures can evolve around existing capacities

In the early stages, knowledge sharing networks and institutions can be identified in order to build up on existing capacities. A pragmatic debate among all relevant public and private actors, including practitioners and academia, might clarify how to best facilitate and coordinate knowledge sharing at the country level.

In terms of consolidating institutional capacity, a National Coordinating Mechanism ensures efficient interaction among national stakeholders in Colombia.

While scaling up, a platform--based on existing structures and connected to focal points/champions in all relevant institutions-- is ideally in place to bring together all relevant actors and take full advantage of existing activities. This platform would require some degree of institutional

continuity and specialized staff. One of its main tasks would be to facilitate the emergence and maintenance of a national knowledge catalogue.

When consolidating, the national platform might act as a fully recognized clearinghouse and international entry/focal point for knowledge sharing which continues to learn and adapt to emerging opportunities.

Development results are the mirror of good design and implementation

In the early stages, straightforward criteria can help in selecting the best implementing institutions at the national and local level, the national knowledge catalogue and the modalities to be used. Result orientation could be reflected in a basic operational toolkit which would ideally be part of the national development planning and implementation system.

In terms of setting up knowledge sharing management, Honduras' South-South Program establishes clear criteria for involving implementing agencies and outlines a menu of low-cost modalities.

While scaling up, the best possible mix of modalities might be included in an updated toolkit, while certain services, for example logistics of knowledge sharing, might be outsourced. Result-based implementation might be fully included in national systems and processes, and tasks among all stakeholders clearly divided.

When consolidating, the national platforms should gather and facilitate all relevant knowledge sharing activities, while a full-fledged operational toolkit might identify result-based modalities proven most successful.

Accountability and learning ensure legitimacy of knowledge sharing

In the early stages, a 'good enough' accountability framework should be embedded in existing national systems. Plans and budget lines for communication and capacity development might be created, at least for the national platform and learning partners such as CSOs and academia.

In terms of scaling up accountability in knowledge sharing, the African Peer Review Mechanism has established a system of interchange that stimulates mutual learning around a variety of institutional challenges, including accountability.

While scaling up, effective and efficient transparency, open access and accountability on technical and financial aspects of knowledge sharing might be ensured, for example through web platforms. Feedback from partners should be fully reflected in all accountability efforts.

When consolidating, peer reviews with other countries and institutions can be useful for adapting and upgrading the national accountability system, in particular in areas such as evaluation, lessons learned/good practices, and dissemination.

Sustainable knowledge sharing requires smart funding

In the early stages, a pragmatic mix of funding sources (such as cost-sharing, donor support, in-kind, etc.) should be pursued. A good idea is to include the knowledge sharing budget in the national development system. To ensure full ownership and encourage maximum efficiency, activities should be based from the start on the principle that all parties contribute to costs.

While scaling up, the lessons learned in funding combinations and actual expenditures (consider overhead and transaction costs) might be assessed. A specific budget line for knowledge sharing could be consolidated and innovative financing such as fees/revenues, private sector participation, or tax exemptions, fostered.

When consolidating, knowledge sharing funding should be predictable and sustainable, within a good mix of sources and expenditures, and create the right incentives for all involved partners.

In terms of consolidating smart funding, Singapore Cooperation Enterprise is a public entity which funds its knowledge sharing activities through the sale of its services and cost-sharing partnerships with international organizations and companies.

External support may add critical value

In the early stages, needs-based exchanges with more advanced peers can be useful for learning how they deal with basic institutional challenges. Multilateral institutions –acting as brokers and facilitators– might support these exchanges as part of their existing programs.

While scaling up, external assistance can help address key bottlenecks related to technological, human resources and methodological capacities, using local and regional resources as much as possible. At this point, dialogue might enable external partners, in particular multilateral institutions, to fully align with the national policy framework.

In terms of scaling up external support, the country-led Ibero American Program to Strengthen South-South cooperation serves as a regional platform for LAC countries to share experiences and jointly establish best practices to up-grade institutional capacity.

When consolidating, it makes sense to participate actively in regional and international platforms that stimulate joint

learning, the establishment of common standards and continuous upgrading of capacities.

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This Issues Paper has been prepared by the World Bank Institute on request of the G20 Development Working Group. The lead authors for this document are Christian Freres and Nils-Sjard Schulz.

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For further information, please contact Han Fraeters at WBI (hfraeters@worldbank.org)

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