

# ALNAP Skills Building Days 2018

## How to Avoid Reinventing the Wheel | Session Notes

### Session Summary Note and Tip Sheet

This Summary Note and Tip Sheet provides a summary of the key learning points from the session on how best to share good practices within and between agencies at the ALNAP Skills-Building Days, on 4-5 June 2018.

The following definition of good practice was used to frame the content of the workshop:

Good practice is a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means in a variety of contexts and that is used to guide quality improvement. Good practices can evolve as improvements are identified (CRS, 2015)

### Summary

The session titled 'How to avoid reinventing the wheel' at the Skills-Building Day provided a space for discussion and exchange on how different agencies ensure that worthwhile monitoring or evaluation practices are recognised, captured and shared across operational contexts.

The session included an exercise where participants were invited to share and discuss which specific approaches, systems and tools they use to collaborate on M&E practices within their own organisations. This document details the results of the exercise in two tables, the first looking at broader systematic approaches and the second at specific softwares and platforms.

The document is intended to act as a reference point for continued sharing of approaches and experiences. Each table includes contact details of individuals who volunteered to further discuss their experiences outside the workshop. ALNAP hopes that discussion and peer-learning on the topic can continue.

## Taking stock and sharing of practices

The following table lists the systematic approaches reportedly used by participants to capture and share M&E information, tools and learnings across their organisation:

Method	Positive aspects	Challenges	Who can share their experience with this?
Online platforms - eg. Intranets etc.	Provides access to many different types of data and information.	Maintenance is not prioritised and platforms can lack guidance on what content is included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Katy Bobin, DEC, <a href="mailto:katybobin@outlook.com">katybobin@outlook.com</a></li> <li>• Amarins Gerlofsma, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <a href="mailto:amarins.gerlofsma@minbuza.nl">amarins.gerlofsma@minbuza.nl</a></li> </ul>
Leadership 'push'	Authority can stimulate action.	This can ensure more sustainable sharing and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christine South, IFRC, <a href="mailto:christine.south@ifrc.org">christine.south@ifrc.org</a></li> <li>• Stuart Kefford, Peer 2 Peer, <a href="mailto:kefford@un.org">kefford@un.org</a></li> <li>• Amarins Gerlofsma, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <a href="mailto:amarins.gerlofsma@minbuza.nl">amarins.gerlofsma@minbuza.nl</a></li> <li>• Julia Mc Call, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <a href="mailto:julia.mccall@minbuza.nl">julia.mccall@minbuza.nl</a></li> </ul>
Weekly staff learning sessions - meetings	Can ensure broad buy-in through short 30 minute sessions, accessible remotely via video. All videos can be easily posted and found on an intranet.	Limited time and scope, with pressure for good quality evaluations at a regular interval which doesn't match the work-stream. Poor tech-connection or facilitators can demotivate staff from engaging in subsequent sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lauren Kejeh, Tearfund, <a href="mailto:Lauren.kejeh@tearfund.org">Lauren.kejeh@tearfund.org</a></li> </ul>

Method	Positive aspects	Challenges	Who can share their experience with this?
Communities of practice - internal or external	There are many layers of opportunity to share practice (such as webinars). It is particularly useful for a decentralised MEAL system and can also bring staff from different departments together.	There can be a lack of structure and upkeep if no individual is responsible for managing and maintaining the site, and sometimes field staff have difficulties partaking due to language barriers and/or internet connectivity issues. Unfortunately sessions are often not well documented, and there can be limited follow-up on practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaby Duffy, WFP, Gaby.duffy@wfp.org</li> <li>Christine South, IFRC, Christine.south@ifrc.org</li> </ul>
Evaluation databases	Centrally accessible.	Lack of quality assurance on published evaluations and not all evaluations are uploaded.	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALNAP evaluation library</li> <li><a href="http://DEC.USAID.gov">DEC.USAID.gov</a></li> </ul>
MEL guides and standards - organisational and systems-wide	These can promote better quality MEL.	Compliance with standards can be difficult to ensure.	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IRC need-assessment handbook</li> <li>CARE Emergency toolkit</li> <li>DFAT website</li> </ul>
MEL trainings - internal or external	Increasing the capacity and motivation of staff.	Trainings can be timely and expensive to organise - especially in-person trainings.	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SAVE MEAL in emergencies simulation</li> </ul>
Grants management system	Key documents can be shared.	Old system that can be cumbersome and 'heavy' to use.	
Secondments and temporary duty assignments across country offices	It is mutually beneficial for shared learning and building relationships, and can be motivating for staff.	It is expensive and offices can be reluctant to release competent staff.	

The following table outlines the different information management platforms reportedly used by participants, to facilitate the systems outlined above:

Platform	File storage	File sharing	Joint editing of files	Comment file	Chat	Elements that contribute to make it working well	Reasons why this is not working well	www.
Dropbox	Y - High	Y	N	N	N	Ability to share folders.	Lack of communication tool.	www.dropbox.com
Yammer	Y - Low	Y	Via Microsoft Office	Y	Y	Easy to use, and a nice alternative to email overload.	With many platforms, in a couple of organisations few people end up posting regularly. Without a clear function over time it can become confusing.	www.yammer.com
Workplace Facebook	N - Low	Y	Via Sharepoint	Y	Y	Easy and familiar interface. You can share live videos. Partners using the platform felt it helped to gather a range of opinions on one topic.	Some offices block Facebook, and updates are not always archived well over time.	facebook.com/workplace Contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hugh Earp, NRC, hugh.earp@nrc.no</li> <li>• Tamara Low, StC, t.low@savethechildren.org.uk</li> <li>• Sonia Moldovan, MercyCrops, smoldovan@mercyCorps.org</li> <li>• Megan Passey, War Child Holland, megan.passey@warchild.nl</li> </ul>

Platform	File storage	File sharing	Joint editing of files	Comment file	Chat	Elements that contribute to make it working well	Reasons why this is not working well	www.
Slack	Y - Medium	Y	Via G Drive	Y	Y	The group video call and screen-share functions work well. Easy to search and you can include reminders.	Very similar to Skype apart from the search function, and it can be difficult to administrate groups in relation to sensitive information.	slack.com
Sharepoint	Y - High	Y	Y	N	N	Large database available for existing documents, and linked to Outlook.	Internet connection is necessary for access and online functions can be slow. The search function is also not very effective.	sharepoint.com
Wiki spaces	N	Y	N	N	N	Useful for hosting an intranet to share lists of guidance.	Wiki is not very interactive or dynamic. The type of platform is largely being phased out by service providers.	