PRIORITY 3

DOCUMENTING EXPERIENCES, RETAINING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Guidance on Documentation

Putting knowledge to work to achieve rights and results for children

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Guidance produced for the implementation of UNICEF's Global Knowledge Management Strategy

Priority #3. Documenting Experiences, Retaining Knowledge.
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1. Overview: Identify Documentation Needs

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Purpose

The purpose of documenting lessons learned and good practices are to share and use knowledge derived from experience to:

- Promote the replication of desirable outcomes (learning from good practices and successes).
- Avoid the recurrence of undesirable results (learning from failures).
- Enable the scale-up and replication of proven practices and interventions.

What needs to be documented?

- Stories of change.
- Evidence-based practice or intervention.
- Innovative approach or intervention with anecdotal – and where applicable, data-driven --- evidence on its benefits.
- Successful or failed implementation of a programmatic priority, as defined in a CPD or ROMP.
- Tacit and explicit knowledge from departing staff.
- Tacit and explicit knowledge from staff and partners during opportunities for stocktaking (e.g. mid-term programme reviews, ROMPs, CP evaluations, CP planning)
- Experiences of failure and success in general for learning.

Background work:

- Before investing in documentation, consider the **extent to which the example contributes to new learning and knowledge** rather than confirming conventional wisdom or topics that have already been extensively documented.

  Here are some sample questions to ask, which will lead you to identify "what to document":

  - What was learned about the project?
  - What was learned about communication during the implementation?
  - What was learned about budgeting?
  - What was learned about procurement?
  - What was learned working with partners?
  - What was learned about what went well?
  - What was learned about what did not go well? (challenges)
  - What was learned about what needs to change?
  - How will/was this incorporated into the project?

- By determining the **effectiveness and impact of the practice**, you can decide which method and format to use for the documentation.

  - **Assessment of effects.** Analyze the existing evidence base to assess results – use formal results monitoring and reporting systems (Strategic Monitoring Questions, Results Assessment Module, COAR, MICS, etc.), evaluations, and/or even anecdotal evidence to guide your analysis.
  - **Is it a success?** If the results are positive and the impact is well demonstrated and consistent over time.
  - **Is it a failure?** If the results are negative or non-complying with initially established goals.
  - **Is it scalable?** If the results can be replicated in a similar context in a different country.

- **Emerging or Promising Practices?** If not yet formally evaluated, what are the expectations and circumstantial evidence so far that justify the documentation effort?

  How do we identify practices?

  There are several paths to identifying potential practices or interventions to be documented. One important aspect to highlight is mapping and monitoring the implementation of the relevant interventions in your office. It is crucial to enable an environment rich in reflection, discussions, and regular consultations with KM focal points and colleagues involved in potential practices to be documented.

  Below are a **few suggestions**:

01 Peer-to-peer exchanges between colleagues.

02 For projects/initiatives, use the weekly or monthly **technical planning** or progress review meetings.

03 Regular consultations with **KM Focal Points in CO** or sections to monitor the implementation of practices.

04 For the **HQs and ROs**, systematic and frequent **consultations with the field.**

05 **Storytelling** and **advocacy articles.**

06 **Map of relevant practices** through evaluation and monitoring results (SMQs, COARs, RAM, etc.)

07 Programmatic **field visits**

08 Consultations **and feedback with external partners** and representatives of beneficiaries

09 **E-discussions / workshops** based on the activities of the programme

What product will it become?

Depending on the results, the targeted audience, and available evidence, you can decide on the best format that fits your documentation needs – see more on the "Do's and Don'ts for Documentation" for tips on when to use these formats. Note: you might use a few approaches to document the experience to share with different audiences. See other methods from the Knowledge Exchange Toolbox or the Knowledge Management HUB.

Before starting the documentation, search the UNICEF Intranet and global repositories of the good practices and lessons learned (e.g. Covid 19 good practices and case studies, Resources and examples on how to document (KM Hub), …)
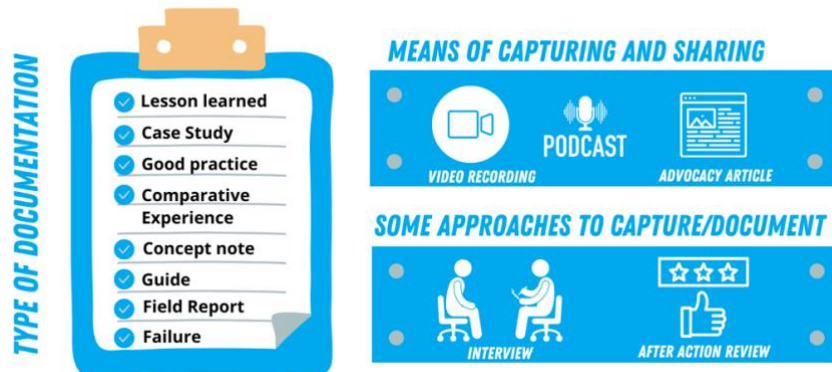
2. Who Will Document? Who steers the process?

AVAILABLE INTERNAL CAPACITIES | **CONSULTANTS** | **TORS**

Will you use available internal capacities?

Once the documentation need has been identified, assess the existing technical capacity, the human and financial resources, and the overarching KM framework in your country and/or region.

- **Is there a dedicated KM Specialist in your CO/RO?** If yes, engage the CO KM specialist and inform the RO KM focal point about the effort (Global list of all UNICEF's CO and RO KM Focal Points).
- **Is there a need for technical knowledge to document the practice?** If not, work collaboratively with the implementing sections and KM colleagues.
- **Is it a section-specific practice in need of technical and thematic capacities?** Request the hiring of a specialized consultant with technical and thematic knowledge.

Is hiring a consultant necessary?

Consultants bring along technical and specialized knowledge and contribute to raising the capacity of the unit to document Practices and Lessons Learned. Estimate the available budget, the expected output, and the timeline for delivery to draft the TOR (check the repository of ToRs here).

What to include in the TOR?

- Clear timeline for the documentation of the identified needs.
- Clear technical deliverables assigned to a reasonable schedule.
- Check the repository of documentation ToRs, the roster of consultants, and LTAs on the Priority #3 Hub page.

3. How To Document? Type of documentation and tools

Why do you want to document? What is the best method?

Defining the goal of the documentation can inform the best method to adopt.

QUICK DOCUMENTATION
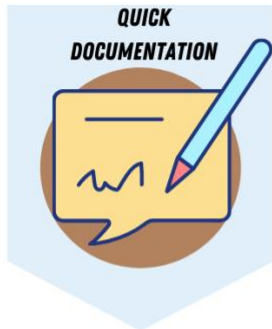
To document during an emergency and time-sensitive situations, raise visibility towards donors and partners, write an article/blog for communications, and describe the implementation of a practice.

EVIDENCE-BASED DOCUMENTATION

To advocate and influence the behavior of partners, NatComs, and the Government to capture good practices and disseminate among other practitioners, inform and improve the quality and effectiveness of interventions, and report on the achievements of Programmes and projects.

PARTICIPATIVE DOCUMENTATION

To capture children's and youth's perceptions, implementing partners, beneficiaries, and other right-holders enable meaningful participation of children, youth, and partners. Important that any engagement with children and youth adds value to UNICEF and the involved youth actors (through capacity building and ownership), guided by a child rights-based approach and the do no harm principle.

Who should be involved in the documentation?

The more parties involved, the better the quality and representativity of the final product. However, keep in mind that this can often generate unnecessary workload, especially during the review phase when all parties need to provide inputs and validate, leading to delays in the consolidation. Also, in some cases, multiple stakeholders' involvement can prompt political or sensitive situations, especially when collaborating with external partners and youth actors.

COUNTRY OFFICE

CO section colleagues involved in the implementation of the practice to be documented (subject matter experts)

REGIONAL OFFICE

RO section colleagues involved in the regional support to the implementation of the practice to be documented (subject matter experts)

UNICEF PARTNERS

UNICEF partners involved in the implementation of the practice to be documented.

RO / CO FOCAL POINTS

If present, CO KM Focal Point for technical and capacity support.

RO KM Focal Point for technical support, overview, and guidance.

COMMUNICATION TEAM

Communication team for the dissemination of the final product

YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS

If applicable, youth associations benefitted children and other rights holders.

How should you document it? (before documentation)

1 **INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP INTERVIEW**

Use the existing lessons learned and good practice templates to guide the discussion and collect inputs from the colleagues involved in the practice implementation to be documented (CO sections and RO sections which worked in the activity, implementing partners, etc.)

2 **CONSULTATION**

Alternatively, request the colleagues involved in implementing the practice to fill in Lessons Learned or Good Practice templates.

3 **YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

Where applicable, consult or collaborate with youth associations, children, and other beneficiaries and right holders to ensure their meaningful participation, guided by child rights and do no harm principles.

4 **FOCAL POINT**

Assign a focal point with extensive knowledge of the documented intervention and include their contact details.

5 **REGIONAL OFFICE**

Inform the RO KM Focal Point for their acknowledgment and, if needed, guidance and technical support.

Based on the inputs received during the consultations and interviews, create the first draft of the products.

Recommendations for interviews.

Assign 30 minutes and 3-4 questions for each interview. For group interviews, allow 60 minutes for 3-4 questions and three colleagues maximum. Be strict with time and cut answers short once you have what you need or in case they drift away from the main topic. To document failures, create a welcoming environment guided by learning, not accountability.

Review, validation, dissemination, and use of the products (after documentation)

a) Review of the product

The aim is to verify the quality and ensure that the products reflect the critical aspects of the practices and interventions they aim to document. Once the first drafts are consolidated and before publication, the product needs to be reviewed. Three factors need to be taken into consideration:

1. Technical Review (CO): Review by the section and/or partners that provided the main inputs to produce the draft.
2. Technical Review (RO): Review by the section at the regional level to provide inputs and commentaries (this can trigger another review round with the CO to address issues). For documents that will be disseminated globally and might have potential relevance for the global policy or advocacy, a technical review at the HQ level is recommended.
3. KM/Editorial Review: Consolidation of inputs by KM specialist/consultant or colleagues leading the documentation, review for logic and clarity to ensure document captures key lessons and that they are communicated (check UNICEF Style Book)
4. Accountability/political expertise: Sign-off and approval by Chief of Section, Representative, Deputy Representative, or Regional Director.

To finalize, if needed, use the available LTAs to design or copy-edit the final document.

b) Recommendation for reviews.

It is recommended to enable a communicative environment where all involved parties are aware of all changes to avoid redundant or unapproved edits. Coordinate with all parties, use online documents instead of offline versions, and include all participants in communications.

c) What to do with the final document?

Once validated, think about a dissemination strategy (communication plan) that targets the right audience (Donors, government partners, international development actors, civil society partners, private sector partners, general public, research and the academe, internal UNICEF) based on the level of evidence, political sensitivity, and quality of the products.

d) Building a Dissemination Plan (communication plan):

Depending on your targeted audience (internal vs. external) and chosen format (advocacy article, Lessons Learned, Good Practice, report, etc.), define a suitable platform and the most effective channel for disseminating the products.

1. Disseminate within your KM and practitioner network via email.
2. Disseminate to the global network of KM Focal Points.
3. Post in the Yammer community for documentation and KM.
4. Organize a webinar or brown bag lunch to share/discuss the topic.
5. Request your Dep Rep or Rep to disseminate to their networks.
6. Upload the with keywords, making it searchable by author, country, theme, date, and name.
7. Disseminate to relevant regional and global thematic/technical networks and feature the document in relevant newsletters
8. If for an external audience, work with your Comms to promote the product online and via social media.
9. ShareX (upcoming)

Additional resources and tools:

- Lessons Learned Templates.
- Documentation community of Yammer
- Global repository of lessons learned and good practices.
- Knowledge Exchange Toolbox.
- Dos and Don'ts of documentation
- KM peers and colleagues collaborating on the implementation of Priority #3 of the Global KM Strategy.

Acknowledgment: