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Seven Principles of Successful Knowledge Management: Lessons Learned in Building a KM System in Support of Adaptive Management

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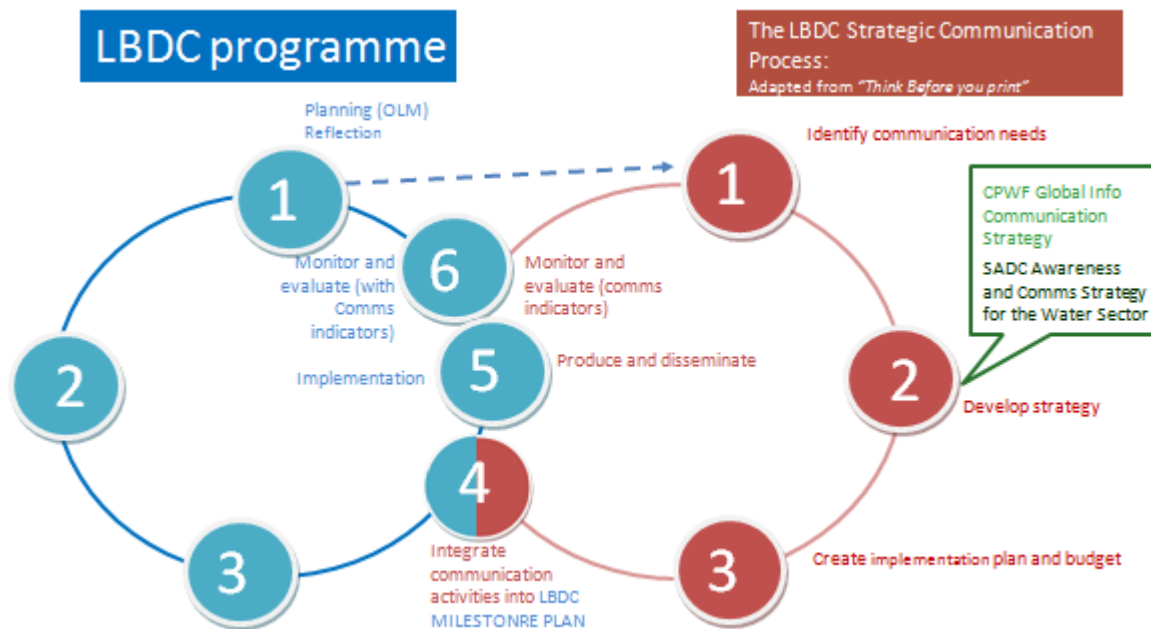
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Key Message

In theory, Knowledge Management (KM) has a critical role to play to support learning, programmatic improvement and adaptive management. The CPWF is learning that there are seven key principles that can help realize this potential.

Summary

Five of our draft principles are listed below. What makes them exciting and useful is that they are derived from practical experience of both success and failure. They are relevant to other research-for-development initiatives where KM can play a crucial role.

Principle 1: Build KM on theory of change. Being explicit about how projects and programs think their research will affect the knowledge, attitude and practice of intended users is the starting point for monitoring, evaluation, communication and stakeholder engagement.

Principle 2: Keep theory of change simple. The logic models that express theory of change must themselves be simple enough to communicate to project and program implementers and stakeholders who will use them. Tables with many columns, while logically elegant and complete tend to confuse everyone but the author.

Principle 3: Make KM participatory. The ‘targets’ of KM need to be intimately involved in the design and development of KM processes and products. The medium is the message—it is not only the content of the message that has implications but also the process used to develop it and get it across.

Principle 4: Begin KM when research starts, not at the end. Internal knowledge sharing is often a good starting point to build capacities and develop researcher skills to identify key messages to communicate to an external audience .

Principle 5: Integrate the disciplines that make up KM, and new tools can help. Successful KM must break down the traditional boundaries between information managers, data specialists, evaluators and communicators. New media and information management tools can work across traditional boundaries to help this process happen.