FACILITATING EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION

A GUIDEBOOK

The "Capitalization of Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development" project is implemented by CTA in different parts of the world, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and with financial support from IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development. This project aims to facilitate the adoption of an experience capitalization process in rural development initiatives, where it can help improve the analysis, documentation, sharing, and the adoption and use of lessons and good practices – as an approach for continuous learning, improvement and scaling up.

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

About CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and is funded by the EU. For more information on CTA, visit **www.cta.int**

About IFAD

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) invests in rural people, empowering them to increase their food security, improve the nutrition of their families and increase their incomes. IFAD is an international financial institution and specialized United Nations agency based in Rome, the UN's food and agriculture hub. Since 1978, it has provided US$18.5 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached about 464 million people. For more information on IFAD, visit: **www.ifad.org**

Disclaimer

This work has been made with the financial assistance of IFAD. However, it remains under the sole responsibility of its authors and never reflects CTA's, the European Union's nor IFAD's opinions or statements whatsoever. The user should make his/her own evaluation as to the appropriateness of any statements, argumentations, experimental technique or methods as described herein.

Copyright notice

FACILITATING EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION

A GUIDEBOOK

FOREWORD

Since April 2016 and for three years, CTA implemented the "Capitalizing on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development" project – working together with FAO and IICA, and with the financial support of IFAD. During these three years, this project worked with many organizations in different parts of the world. Its purpose was to empower these organizations with the tools and the skills needed to identify practices which can be brought to scale, to describe and analyze them in detail, and to share the lessons they teach. More specifically, this project aimed to facilitate the adoption of an experience capitalization process in rural development initiatives.

As part of these efforts, the project ran a series of training workshops, and helped participants start their own capitalization process, all of which ended in a short publication with key lessons and recommendations, and in an "action plan" that would guide and support the adoption of these lessons, and all future activities. CTA is very happy to see that these products are now being widely shared, and is extremely proud of the results. The most interesting result, however, is that many of those who joined our project as participants are now playing a larger role, and they are facilitating new capitalization processes. We believe that this is a key element in the adoption and institutionalization of the approach.

This guidebook is meant to help these new facilitators. It builds on the many interesting resources which are already available, but it builds more specifically on the experience accumulated by the project, and on the lessons and insights drawn by all those who were involved in it – both as facilitators and as participants. It is their work which has shown what works and what can be presented as a recommendation that others can follow and adapt. Our special thanks go to Laura Eggens and Jorge Chavez-Tafur for putting it all together, and to the large team involved: Merche Rodriguez, Shalini Kala, Yennenga Kompaoré, Krishan Bheenick, Sophie Treinen, Federico Sancho, Peter Bury, Savior Mbele, Gilbert Tarimo, Marygoretti Gachagua, Emmanuel Gbakie, Prudence Ayebare, Violet Nyando, Nelson Tukundame, Edson Natha, Eva van Heeswijk, Ana Tumi, Ivan Kulis, Pankaj Shrivastav, Marta Araujo, Ismail Moumouni, Gorgui Alioune Mbouw, Marga Janse, Marilyn Minderhoud, Botir Dosov, Helen Gillman, Karen Hampson, Fernanda Arraes and Bhawana Luthra. Their help, ideas and insights have been invaluable.

Many thanks too to those who joined the discussions on facilitation, both online and during the meeting we had in Rome in October 2018, and to the participants of all our workshops. We look forward to hearing about the processes you will be facilitating and supporting!

Dr Ibrahim Khadar
Manager, Learning Monitoring & Evaluation Unit, CTA
E-mail: khadar@cta.int

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that everybody working in development initiatives shared what they have learnt in the field, from their own work. And imagine that these people took these practical lessons to improve the way they work. We believe that an incredible amount of knowledge is being generated all over the world, and sharing this can help to improve the impact of (rural) development activities in different regions, contexts and moments.

In 2017 and 2018, as part of the IFAD-funded project "Capitalization of Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development", CTA, FAO and IICA organized training processes in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific to support local development professionals in such efforts. These local professionals have become "experience capitalization champions". They discovered the ins and outs of the methodology, and have adapted its use to their local situation.

This facilitation and training guide is meant to assist these "champions", and others who are familiar with the experience capitalization approach, to support similar training processes independently and help get many processes started. Maybe you have been asked to facilitate such a process, or maybe you have decided yourself that experience capitalization is a necessary activity in your organization. Either way, this guide is intended for those who have taken up the role of facilitator of experience capitalization processes and/or trainings.

This guide will not teach you about experience capitalization itself, nor will it go much into general facilitation techniques – there are excellent resources that cover these topics, to which references

The project

The "Capitalization of Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development" project is being implemented in different parts of the world by CTA, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and with financial support from IFAD. This project aims to facilitate the adoption of an experience capitalization process in rural development initiatives, where it can help improve the analysis, documentation, sharing, and the adoption and use of lessons and good practices – as an approach for continuous learning, improvement and scaling up.

The project supported individuals and organizations to build their skills in experience capitalization. Processes have taken place in East Africa, West Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. English-, French-, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking communities of experience capitalization practitioners are one of the results of this project.

Why experience capitalization?

Experience capitalization is an approach that allows people to systematically analyse and document real-life experiences, in a participatory way. This creates knowledge, which can be shared and used to generate change, both internally and in other initiatives.

So why do we think it is important to support experience capitalization processes? This will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter on preparation, but in brief: we have seen that the approach has helped organizations and individuals to use lessons from past experiences to improve their current and future work; improve their critical analytical capacities and adopt a more reflective attitude in their reporting; and easily and confidently share the results of their work.

are made throughout this guide. **This guide focuses specifically on how to help organize and support an experience capitalization process:**

• how to prepare it;

• how to involve different stakeholders;

• what to pay attention to during face-to-face or online training sessions;

• how to encourage the adoption of key insights from the process; and

• how to support the institutionalization of the experience capitalization methodology.

The guide is based on the practical experience of the facilitators involved in the experience capitalization project. It offers practical recommendations for facilitators, insights on what has worked well (and what has not), and suggested exercises. In this guide you will find tools that we have used along the way, which you are free to adapt and use in your own facilitation.

FACILITATION, TRAINING AND PROCESSES

What does it mean to "facilitate" an experience capitalization process? Why do we need a facilitator at all? The answer is simple. As you know, experience capitalization is a participatory process where different people are involved – and a group works better when it is steered and supported. To facilitate is to make an action or a process easier.

So the primary use of facilitation in an experience capitalization process is to support the discussions which help capture experiences and draw specific lessons from them, and to encourage the adoption of these lessons.

As a facilitator, whether you work with colleagues or enter the process as an out-sider, you have **different roles to play**:

• You are responsible for **keeping the whole process on track**, and keeping the focus in the process.

For more on what it means to facilitate experience capitalization, see:
http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/facilitating-an-ec-process/

Throughout the guide we refer to the FAO online course on experience capitalization, which can be found here: http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/course/EXCAP. FAO will ask you to register, for free, before accessing the course. The resources section of this course offers many suggestions for further reading – on the approach and on facilitation.

- Of course you **share certain information**, like the methodology or theories on experience capitalization. You clarify, answer questions and share your experience – which may be broader or different than that of the participants.

These roles do not apply only for face-to-face meetings, but in online processes as well

- You help to **bring in multiple perspectives**, rather than having to agree on one particular vision. This involves skillful use of the diversity in the room, building trust and possibly resolving conflicts.

- You make sure that the **right people are participating** in the process, from the beginning, and that the group includes all the necessary skills and knowledge.

- You **plan and manage time**. Think of the timing of the entire process, and the timing of sessions and exercises.

- You offer **support in editing and the dissemination** of the written products.

- You support the **mainstreaming of the approach** in the organizations.

Institutional support

You are reading this guidebook, which probably means you have some interest in facilitating experience capitalization processes. Perhaps you already have a concrete plan to start such a process. You might have initiated this plan yourself, or maybe somebody has asked you to be a facilitator in an experience capitalization process that others are organizing. Either way, somebody probably has given you (and your team) the **legitimacy to be facilitators**.

And this is good: with this legitimacy, you are able to **generate the necessary motivation** among participants. Moreover, with this legitimacy you are likely to **receive institutional support** from whomever is helping you organize this process. With their support, you will be able to build the environment that allows for learning to take place. Establishing this environment involves not only arranging the logistics of various meetings, but also creating a culture of learning, supporting the collection of information, encouraging the adoption or expansion of innovations, and supporting the steps needed to institutionalize experience capitalization within an organization.

Learning from others

"As a facilitator, I was able to tell them about the experiences of other participants. They often had no idea§ what others were up to and upon learning about many interesting experiences, the need to share their own experiences became even more clear. Looking back, it helps if someone is interested in your results. This role of a facilitator might be even more important than you think."

MARYGORETTI GACHAGUA, KENYA

Facilitation, training or mentoring

We talk about your role as a facilitator, but technically you will also at times be a "trainer", a "mentor" or a "manager".

"Facilitation" means that you **support a process that is owned by the group** – in essence, the facilitator does not have any vested interest in the outcome. But in guiding an experience capitalization process you might also **have the responsibility for certain outcomes** like specific products or the improved capacities of the participants – and then you become a bit more of a "manager".

The facilitator is concerned with process rather than content. But in many cases you will also be **providing participants with new information** on the methodology or tools and techniques – like how to run an interview, for example – putting you in a position of the more knowledgeable person. So you can also see yourself as a "trainer".

Because as a facilitator you will often be **part of a long-term process where you familiarize people with the approach** more and more, you can also consider yourself a "mentor", where you are available for longer-term support. As a "mentor", you are likely to have more impact than as a "facilitator" only.

Some parts of the process will require a more "facilitating" approach, encouraging the exchange of opinions and experiences and knowledge of all participants. When we start talking about the suggested methodology though, "training" seems more relevant – we give participants a specific tool to experiment with, to see if it benefits them in their work.

In short, "training" and "mentoring" (as well as "managing") is part of your facilitating role, and this will largely depend on the phase of the process that you are in. But because your overall role is that of facilitating, throughout this guide we will talk about you as the "facilitator".

Facilitating a process

It is important to highlight that facilitating in experience capitalization means **more than just facilitating a workshop**. Experience capitalization involves different moments, in different places, and with different arrangements of people. And there are many ways to design this process – the time it will take, the types of meetings you include, etc. (you will read more about this in the next chapter on **Preparing a process**). Facilitators play a big role throughout the whole process, and not just during one meeting. The role of the facilitator is also to link these different moments within the whole trajectory, and help it to run smoothly, so as to reach the objectives of the process.

THIS GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook will take you through the different elements that a facilitator encounters when supporting an experience capitalization process.

It can be very useful for facilitators to exchange ideas amongst themselves - sharing tools, programmes and reports

Which qualities does a good facilitator have? For some do's and don'ts of facilitation, have a look at lesson 2.1 of the FAO learning module on Experience Capitalization, here: http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/Course/EXCAP.

In addition to this guidebook, CTA has prepared an online toolkit for facilitators – here you can find PowerPoint presentations, examples, infographics, and other resources that can be of use in the facilitation of experience capitalization processes. The toolkit is available here: http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/toolkit/

First, we look at the steps for **planning and preparing such a process**: an essential first phase. This is where we think about the purpose of running an experience capitalization process in a specific situation, how to best arrange the entire process, and how to decide who is involved – and ensure that they stay involved.

We then quickly go into facilitating the experience capitalization itself: the **implementation** phase. There is much to say about implementation, and you will find that this chapter covers the bulk of the guidebook. You will find advice on how to **start working** with those who will be participants of the experience capitalization process, including a bit of theory. The chapter also covers every step in the experience capitalization approach, such as the **selection** of a case, **setting boundaries**, **describing**, **analyzing** the case, and **drawing conclusions**. It talks a bit about the steps to facilitate the **collection of information** necessary for the process, as well as how to **document** what has been learnt. Finally, this chapter explains how, as a facilitator, you can help enable the **adoption** of the lessons learnt, in order to actually bring about change in the way we implement development initiatives.

A next chapter puts special attention to an increasingly relevant way of facilitating, which is **facilitating processes online**. Online facilitation is not separate or an addition to the facilitation of an experience capitalization process, but often an integral part of it.

The final chapter takes experience capitalization to the next level, focusing on how you can facilitate the long-term adoption of the approach itself in projects and organizations. We call this **institutionalization**.

You could fast forward to the sections relevant to you, although we recommend going through the entire guidebook at least once first. Because experience capitalization is a process, each step follows a previous one, and there is a logical sequence to implementing each of the different phases described here.

This guidebook is a comprehensive collection of the experiences of facilitators, and therefore for some it may be a bit bulky. We therefore encourage you take from this guide the bits that suit your purpose, your region, your colleagues and partners. Simplify or translate the sections relevant to you, add your own personal flavour to it, and share those ideas with others.

Facilitation tools

"A common observation is that participation can be stimulated with the use of participatory tools or games. But the main lesson here is to consider that these are only tools. More important is to have the will and attitude to stimulate participation. There is not a set of tools to apply in every case. It is necessary to adapt them while the objective of the session or meeting. Before selecting or using a tool, it is necessary to clearly determine the objective to reach by using this tool."

ESTEBAN TAPELLA, ARGENTINA

1

PREPARING A PROCESS

Before actually *doing*, we start by *planning.* The first step the facilitator takes, the preparation phase, is meant to design the whole capitalization process. In this phase you prepare a roadmap for the entire learning and communication cycle, starting from a clear identification of the benefits which those initiating the process want to obtain from it.

When starting a new capitalization process, remember that this needs to focus on the steps which are necessary for generating and sharing new knowledge in a particular way. But we also want to facilitate the adoption and adaptation of these ideas in order to generate change. This all starts with a comprehensive planning process.

In this chapter you will find information on how to:

- Identify the overall purpose of the experience capitalization process;

- Decide what to take into account when planning the different steps;

- Select the right participants for the process; and

- Assemble the most suitable facilitation team.

Try to think ahead when considering the purpose: probably, it is more than doing a workshop or creating a document. Think about what will happen to the knowledge generated?

There can be **many different reasons** for individuals and organizations to start an experience capitalization process. As a facilitator, you will play an important role in identifying the purpose(s) of the process together with those who initiated or want to organize it.

PURPOSE AND FEASIBILITY

The very first step as a facilitator is to **talk about the end goal(s)**, and to determine whether these goals are feasible with the available resources, people and time.

For example, some organizations are more interested in **building the capitalization skills** of those who will regularly use this approach in their work, while others may be more focused on **creating shareable products** like an article or a video. Some might want to look at the **institutionalization** of the approach, and others may want to **improve writing skills** only or simply **provide a setting for writing** together. But also try to think beyond these immediate results: what do you want to achieve in the long-term with such a process? Experience capitalization offers us the opportunity to use the lessons learnt from experience, and improve practices and draft better projects – thus to **adopt the lessons** we have learned.

Of course, different people will have different interests, and thus different purposes. The wishes of the management team **might not match** or may clash with the needs of staff that will be part of the training process. As a facilitator, you will need to communicate the consequences of such differences to both parties: if people expect different outcomes, this will likely complicate the successful implementation of (parts of) the process and may confuse the final outcome.

Don't expect that all stakeholders will already have a clear idea of what their

It is about raising the questions

"Since I was introduced to the experience capitalization process in Goa, I am continuously thinking to take this approach to the field level staff of the projects I work in, because in my view the real experience lies there. We can use this whole methodology to capture *their* experience. With this approach, we translate the project vision to its end point of delivery and at the same time learn from the actual ground and improve our project activities accordingly."

ANIL MAIKHURI, INDIA

Time planning

"A challenging aspect can be to fix a time for the whole exercise. In general, this is not easy. Facilitators need to work hard with organizations to freeze dates, and these always keep changing for different reasons. And they need to consider sufficient time for preparation, including advance discussions to familiarize participants with the project(s), involve local stakeholders and the community, prepare secondary data and information, etc."

SHALINI KALA, INDIA

purpose is! In many cases, it is up to you as a facilitator to tell them more about the methodology and the potential outputs of a full process, and also to create a space for them to think and discuss. It is easiest to think about immediate outputs like a written article, but the facilitator needs to encourage stakeholders to think about what they want to achieve with such publications in the long term as well.

PLANNING

With a clear purpose, you (probably in collaboration with the organizing party) can start **designing the more concrete implementation steps of the process**. This includes defining *who* will participate, which *activities* will need to be included in the process, how much *time* you can schedule for each part, how much will need to be invested *financially*, and who else might support you in *facilitating*. As the following examples show, these practicalities will differ, depending on the overall purpose you defined first.

1. **Who needs to participate?**
    Consider how many participants are

necessary and how many you can accommodate, which type of function they have, and the heterogeneity of the group. Are you planning only *one* process, or several happening simultaneously?

e.g. If you want to end up with nicely written stories, include a communications person or other people who have some experience writing. If you want to institutionalize the methodology in your organization, include people who have some influence in its project cycles. If you want to produce many stories, you will want many participants, but if you want to focus on learning, less might be more manageable.

2. **Which activities or elements make up the whole process?**
    Consider the options for face-to-face meetings or online communication, the balance between working and discussing theory, and the amount of times to get together and what to do in between. And don't forget activities that go beyond the generation of knowledge: how can you support the

Make sure to take into account what has already been done in the organization or region with regards to documentation, experience capitalization or knowledge management

Before planning and implementation, take a look at the organization's knowledge management and communications strategy. If such strategies do not exist, this might be a good time to start thinking about them

adoption of new knowledge, and the institutionalization of experience capitalization?

e.g. Sometimes it will be more efficient or feasible to hold only one workshop, cutting out much of the theoretical bits. Or quite the opposite: it is possible to hold a training session looking at theory alone. Some might choose to have a series of one-day sessions over a certain period. Or another approach might be not to include any writing at all, looking only at how to draw lessons from practice. It could also be an option to hold part or even all of the interactions online.

3. **How much time is needed to complete the different parts?** A key step here is to consider how long each activity should ideally take, how much time you will need for preparation and publishing, and how much time participants can make available while dealing with their daily work.

    e.g. If you want to publish stories, this requires time for editing. If you want to build capitalization skills properly, you might need more than one training week. How much time is available? How much time can you make available among the required stakeholders? Accommodating participants in a location away from their daily routine also influences the time they have available for the event.

4. **Are the required funds available for such a process?** Consider the costs of organizing face-to-face meetings, publication and dissemination costs, whether there are funds to go and collect more data, etc. Often we are not able to cover all costs ourselves, so the challenge is to find out how much it will all cost *and* to secure the necessary funds.

Online or face-to-face?

In planning an experience capitalization process, one of the choices to be made is whether you will facilitate face-to-face events or opt for online facilitation. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. In this decision you will need to consider whether there is time and money to organize face-to-face meetings. But in terms of impact, which approach will be more effective? What about the immediateness? Online events can often be organized much faster. But to create an atmosphere of trust and engage with people who have never met, an initial face-to-face event may be essential. And how many people can you reach with each approach? How could you combine the two? It is up to you as a facilitator to try to find the right balance.

e.g. If you want people from different regions to exchange experiences, is it possible to gather people physically? If you want to build skills properly, how many training activities are feasible? If you want to publish, is there money for publications?

5. **Is there sufficient facilitation support?** Consider the size and skills of the group, the skills necessary to lead to the envisioned outputs, and the language and cultural background of the facilitation team members.

    e.g. If you want to work with written products in the language of the participants, at least one of the facilitators needs to be fluent in that language. If you want to publish, it may be necessary to get an external

editor. *If you want to build skills properly in a bigger group, there may need to be multiple facilitators.*

6. **What are the necessary logistics?** Consider the venue, lunch, accommodation, stationary, audio facilities, translators, laptops, projectors, printing, travel arrangements, etcetera, for a face-to-face event, or online platforms and connectivity for online interactions.

   e.g. Obviously, if you want a face-to-face meeting, much of the above needs to be arranged. If you want to work in English when many of the participants are not comfortable writing in this language, you will need to invite translators. If you are arranging a workshop in a different country, local logistics support may be easier.

7. **How will you keep monitoring the progress of the whole process?** Since you are responsible for keeping the process on track, consider how you will monitor progress, if adaptations are necessary, and if you are reaching the goals you have set at the start. Importantly, monitoring your progress will be of tremendous use when you intend to repeat the process.

e.g. If the long-term institutionalization of an experience capitalization approach is an objective, regularly evaluating and reporting on the progress will help improve the process next time, and to embed it in regular work activities.

There are, of course, practical limitations that you will encounter once you start planning: not enough money, not enough time… It is important, as a facilitator, to **manage the expectations** of the different stakeholders: "*this* is how much time the process will take", "*this* is the support we will require", and "*these* will be the outputs". *You* will be held accountable if they expect more than is possible with the available resources and people, or if their expected timeframe is not feasible. And if you have clear agreements, it will be easier for you as a facilitator to keep the group on track.

Taking into account the purpose and the available resources, you start designing the process. We have used different models in the past. In the CTA project, the process included:

- two face-to-face four-day workshops;

- online support before, in between and after the workshops;

- a "learning by doing" approach;

- writing and rewriting during the workshops;

- publishing the written articles; and

- accommodating most of the participants.

This design had positive results, but it is certainly not the only way to do it. Which choices you and the organizers make, all depend on what is possible and desirable.

No uniform approach

As practitioners of experience capitalization, we have many ideas about the added value of the experience capitalization approach. Yet there is no uniform answer to how it could be an added benefit in each person's actual working environment. This is why we ask participants to try out the approach, in their own organizations, to find out where this approach might be useful and how they could incorporate those parts in the future.

In planning activities, timelines and logistics, take into account that we are all human: arranging informal spaces like social events or allowing sufficient time for travel will go a long way in improving motivation

Getting local support will solve many potential logistical issues, and allow for adaptability during implementation

As a facilitator you do not only manage the process during these events, but you make sure that the whole **process keeps going** at the best pace. This is a long-term process: we need to make sure that it is not totally delayed, and that people lose momentum and lose interest.

A group with shared interests, with members who are working on the same issues, might be more likely to adopt each other's innovations, or help spread such innovations further

PARTICIPANTS

Surely the most important element of experience capitalization are the participants: those who put it into practice. Who will join you? There are several factors to keep in mind. Two of these are absolutely necessary:

1. Most importantly, you want participants who **are motivated** to join.

2. The second absolute necessity is that you invite those who **have the relevant knowledge** or information: somebody who has been directly involved in the experience from which the team wants to draw lessons.

And then there are many variables to consider, based on your defined purpose and available resources:

(a) **Gender and age balance:** women and younger people can be underrepresented in settings like workshops, especially in the agricultural sector. You can make an effort to explicitly encourage their participation, to create a better balance in the group.

(b) **Position in their daily work:** consider what you need, in terms of skills (e.g. writing or analytical skills), practical knowledge (i.e. working in the field), and authority (i.e. who is able to bring the message further). Think of technical staff, communications and knowledge management officers, team leaders, research officers, etc. If you want the participants to further spread experience capitalization in the organization, consider whether this person is likely to become a "champion". If institutionalization is your objective, it helps if there is a person present with the mandate to make changes in the organization.

(c) **Experience "owners" or outsiders:** participants can include those who know about an experience,

Peer-to-peer sharing

"Encouraging participants to interact with each other is one of the key principles of the experience capitalization approach, because each participant brings his or her knowledge to the workshop, and to the process. Writing, drawing, recording, analyzing a given intervention… in each of these steps we seen an individual's own perspective. But the added value is in the interactions. One way or another, each one of the participants is present in your own process as well, following you step by step."

FABIO DOS SANTOS SANTIAGO, BRAZIL

but also those who can help during the process. For example, we have often included communications or knowledge management staff who have not been directly involved in an experience, but who work together with field staff to analyse and write about the experience. However, since the methodology focuses on learning from practice, an experience capitalization process needs to include people who have actually been part of the experience. Moreover, people who are part of an (ongoing) experience will have more opportunities to implement changes based on the lessons learned.

(d) **Different types of stakeholders:** you could invite people with different perspectives on the experience, like technical staff, beneficiaries, team leaders, etcetera, depending on the role they play in an initiative. Working together on one case will

enrich the capitalization process. But is it important to keep in mind power imbalances in such groups, making sure all participants get space and feel comfortable voicing their opinions. This can be quite a challenge!

(e) **Heterogeneous or homogenous groups:** including participants from different countries or working on different themes can give participants exposure to different types of experiences, while people working on similar themes and in similar settings might help each other in a different way. For example, groups working on the same theme might have more opportunities to adopt new innovations from their peers. Also, a shared language is essential for communication and learning in the group.

(f) **Level of experience with similar approaches:** some participants may have no previous experience with knowledge management, evaluation, or writing, while others do. Both can be an advantage: the enthusiasm to learn might be greater among the first, while the ease in understanding the approach is likely to be higher in the latter. Peer-to-peer learning among participants with varied experiences can support the learning process. Nonetheless, having large differences complicates facilitation and might reduce the value of the workshops for individual participants.

(g) **Working in groups or individually:** when you invite participants you need to consider whether you want many persons to work together on the same "case" (or "experience") – you will end up with less "stories" at the end, but the capitalization process will be more participatory.

To ensure that the selected cases are intersting and that participants get the most out of their analysis, it helps if at least one of the facilitators knows the cases relatively well

Having a few persons from the same organization may be useful: they can keep each other motivated, give feedback and help fill in missing details when they get stuck

A "champion"

Some people learn about experience capitalization and are "hooked". They are convinced of the benefits, they make an effort to introduce (parts of) the approach in their work, and inevitably share with others why this approach can be such a useful tool to improve development inititatives. We call these people champions. Chances are that you yourself are a champion of experience capitalization, considering that you are reading a guidebook about how to support others with this approach. Champions are also supported, encouraged and mentored. More on this will be discussed in the chapter on institutionalization.

Applying to join

To ensure that the right people participate in the process, in some cases it has shown to be useful to ask potential participants to send in an application. Such an application does not have to be very extensive, and could include, for instance:

•   Name, function and organization (unless you are working within one organization, of course);

•   A short motivation for joining the process;

•   An indication of a possible experience to focus on, preferably within a given theme or themes that you define beforehand; and

•   How they expect to use the methodology (in the long term).

Of course, this is going to take a bit of time for potential participants, and for you to read these applications. But it is one way to help you select participants who are motivated (since they took the time and effort to apply) and it gives you, as the facilitator, an overview of who will be part of the group and in which areas they work.
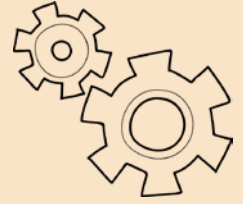
Despite all your good intentions to select the most optimal group of participants, in reality sometimes choosing who will join is out of our hands. Time limitations, the interests of different people involved, other engagements, internal politics: all this and more can mean that you will work with a group that you have not put together yourself. In such cases, it helps to at least gather as much information about them as possible, to anticipate how you can best adapt and prepare.

Expectation management

Different participants come to a workshop for different reasons: it may be true that some of them come simply because they have been asked to do so. At the same time, others may want to come and learn about the methodology. Other people are there to write, mostly. It is important to know this in advance, so you can **steer the process to suit the different interests** (within the limits set by your overall purpose and available resources, of course). If participants expect something completely different from what you have planned, it might be necessary to talk to them.

Asking about expectations and what participants want to achieve can be part of the application procedure running online before a face-to-face meeting, or in person at the beginning of a workshop, or during preliminary meetings, if these take place.

In addition, to keep participants motivated and to get the most out of the process, it helps if participants reflect on their own motivation for joining – see more on this in the next chapter on Implementation.

It helps to **have a clear vision of the general purpose** of the process, before and during the meetings. If expectations change, **to what extent can you adapt** and still stay within the limits set beforehand? For example, half-way through a workshop in Mozambique,

participants all indicated that they wanted to spend considerably more time writing and preparing a document. Of course this meant cutting out other sessions. However, because the organizers clearly considered written outputs the most important payoffs of the process, we were able to oblige.

Similarly, it might be useful to **reflect on the selection of the cases beforehand**. Participants may need to discuss with their teams first which cases are prioritized for capitalization, depending on the purpose of the capitalization process. Often, when the purpose is *learning* about experience capitalization in general, the way of looking at the case is more important than the choice of the case itself.

FACILITATION TEAM

In some cases it will be enough if one facilitator guides the whole process. This means that **one person will need to have all the necessary skills** to facilitate experience capitalization processes: presenting theory and assignments, encouraging participation, giving feedback, managing online communications, arranging logistics, monitoring group interaction, editing, communicating with organizers, taking photos, managing time, etc.

At times it will be too much for one person to manage all of this, so we talk about a facilitation team. The number of co-facilitators that join of course **depends on the size of the group, the set-up of the process and its expected duration**. Sometimes it is enough to have logistical support from one person. We have also worked with people specifically appointed to focus on editing. Perhaps most important is to take into account the **language**: is the facilitator fluent in the language of the participants? Is it necessary to get a translator, or a second facilitator from the region?

Co-facilitating

"Looking back, 'facilitating' meant helping people get together, giving them the right tools to progress together within a given period of time, and also working together towards the production of a set of articles that could then be shared with others. Having one person who can go through the whole process with all participants is positive in terms of coherence and continuity. But I think that having a co-facilitator was also very useful. The main facilitator acted as the pilot, while the co-facilitator could serve as a 'tourist guide', giving additional bits of information and providing advice every time when we reached a strategic place. From what I saw, I think that it is always useful to have someone who can help steer the process, and make sure that it all remains on track."

YENNENGA KOMPAORÉ, BURKINA FASO

The facilitator roles can be taken on by staff or outsiders to the organization. They can be an expert on experience capitalization, or rather an expert on facilitation. It also helps to have at least some knowledge on the area of work of participants. They can be international or local, offering different perspectives and contacts. Preferably, there is a **combination of these different characteristics within the team**.

Whatever the constellation of the facilitation team, it is important that everyone is aware of the division of roles and responsibilities and that communication within the team remains open. There should be a shared vision of the process within the team, and clarity about the timing, steps and intended outcomes of the process.

Co-facilitation committees

In face-to-face meetings as well as online, some facilitation tasks can be delegated to participants. In several workshops we appointed participants to form "co-management", "documentation" or "social media" and "animation" committees. This both increases the participation and ownership of participants and eases the burden on the facilitation team.

In the co-management committee, 2-4 participants help in keeping track of time and their fellow participants, and they provide feedback to the facilitation team at the end of the day which can help shape the rest of the meeting. In addition, they give a short recap of the day the following morning: no full summary but just a "flavour of the day" or key insights. This is preferably done in an entertaining way such as a quiz, newscast, a song, an interview, using photos, etc. Having them do the recap at the beginning of each day helps break the duality between "trainers" and "trainees".

The documentation or social media committee members take photos during the event, and if desired, share photos or short messages about the event on social media as PR. They can also can help with taking notes on flipcharts, or any other type of "documentation" work required.

A third committee is the animation committee: they identify when the energy in the group is low and an energiser is necessary. They lead the energiser or appoint someone else to do so.

For an online group, there are other ways in which you can engage participants as co-facilitators, like providing summaries of discussions or other specific inputs.

Giving participants responsibilities of keeping the time, for example, or taking photos or keeping track of the group's energy level, helps foster a more active attitude among some participants. Some participants naturally take these tasks up, and encourage others to do it too.
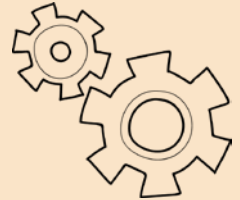
2

IMPLEMENTATION

The facilitation team is assembled, the meetings have been arranged, the participants have been invited: it is time to put experience capitalization into practice. With a solid plan in place, we move on to the implementation of the full experience capitalization process. This chapter concentrates around the process that you will be in together with all "participants", or with those who will be running the capitalization process.

The structure of this chapter follows the steps of an experience capitalization process. But, as you know, all these steps are linked: they feed into each other, and you will probably need to return to previous steps every once in a while.

As you may have noticed, this chapter takes up the bulk of the guidebook. This is where the "actual" experience capitalization work is done. That being said, the preparation phase and steps towards institutionalization are essential parts of the full process as well! Because we take a long-term perspective on experience capitalization, we are not just talking about one process. Throughout this chapter you will also find references to how to implement experience capitalization while focusing on its long-term impact.

Also, even though there is a separate chapter on online facilitation, much of what you will read in this chapter can be adapted to work in online training sessions as well.

In this rather large chapter you will find information on how to:

- Start the process with participants;

- Support the selection of a good case for experience capitalization;

- Help participants clearly delineate what to focus on during the capitalization process;

- Guide the collection of information necessary for the process;

- Facilitate the systematization of information as part of a "description";

- Support people when analyzing what has worked and what has not, in their particular experience;

- Draw conclusions within the experience capitalization process;

- Facilitate the documentation of the lessons learnt; and on how to

- Support the adoption of the lessons learnt to actually generate change in practice.

STARTING THE PROCESS

2.1

You have a clear idea of what the intended goals of the process are, you have invited all the participants to join, you have arranged all logistics, and you have put together a good team of facilitators. Now, let's start the actual process!

FIRST CONTACT

Whether you facilitate this process online or in face-to-face meetings, or with a combination of both, often the first contact you have with participants will be through e-mail. You will likely send them some information on how to prepare, what to bring (in case of a face-to-face meeting), and show them where to find resources that can help them prepare. Some of the **preparatory activities** we have been giving participants are:

(a) **Introductions.** Especially when you work with a group of people where members do not know each other, introductions can start via e-mail. This e-mail exchange aims to get people interested and active, and also gives the facilitators and other participants an idea of the group members. Participants (and facilitators!) can send brief texts about themselves to the whole group, for example including:

- Name, organization, function

- Country/region

- Previous experience with similar approaches (like documentation, writing, capitalization, knowledge management, other forms of learning from practice)

- Thematic areas of work

- Anything that is relevant and/ or interesting for the group to get to know each other!

Note: Do not be surprised if not all participants reply with extensive e-mails immediately. Some people are shy, some people are busy (actually, most people are busy), some people are a bit unsure in the beginning of the process. Like with any type of participation, you can encourage participants to a certain extent.

(b) **Case selection.** Although you will probably spend some time in the group sessions on how to select a case for experience capitalization, participants can start thinking about which experience is interesting, unique and relevant enough to spend time on in the process. This also allows them to collect and bring sufficient information (like reports, comments from colleagues, partner organizations or beneficiaries, etcetera).

(c) **Look for examples.** If the process you are facilitating includes the

Facilitate adoption

One of the bigger challenges of the facilitator is to help participants go beyond the generation of knowledge. Completing the process of experience capitalization means you help facilitate the exchange of this new knowledge in order to generate change. This means facilitating the communication between people who know about the experience and others who are interested in learning. Experience capitalization is directed at change – as a facilitator you must keep in mind that you are not just facilitating a documentation process but are constantly aiming towards this change.

creation of a knowledge product, like an article, a blog, a brochure, a radio programme or podcast, you can encourage participants to start looking for knowledge products that they have found appealing. You can use this to analyze what works well in terms of content and style (see the section on **Documentation** later in this chapter).

(d) **Share resources on the methodology.** One very useful resource to share is the FAO online learning module on experience capitalization (see the link on page 8). Here participants can already gain some insights on the methodology, its potential benefits, and much more. Much of the module will probably be covered in the sessions you will facilitate – but repetition of new information is rarely a bad idea. In some processes we have made it compulsory for participants to go through (parts of) the learning module before the start of a first workshop. We recommend to look at lessons 1.2 and 3.1 (this should take about one hour), and also lessons 1.1, 3.2 and 4.1-5. PDF files of the different lessons are available – you could send (a link to) these files directly to the participants.

(e) **Online folder with resources.** You can create a space online (e.g. Google Drive) where participants can already find all the necessary documents, like PowerPoint presentations, the workshop programme, PDF files of the learning module, examples of knowledge products, etc. During the process you can keep adding to this resource library. **Make sure you have only**

Pre-workshop conversations

If you plan to meet with a group in a face-to-face event like a workshop, it may be useful to start pre-workshop conversations with the group online. You can start engaging and talk about challenges and interests and thoughts about a specific case or theme, for instance. Experience capitalization facilitators have used the Dgroups platform, e-mail or an online learning platform like Moodle in the past.
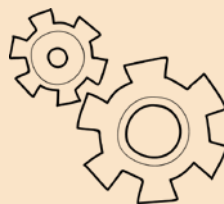
one, clearly organized space for online sharing, to avoid confusion!

(f) **Bring PR materials.** Since the meetings in the process are an opportunity for meeting new individuals and organizations in one's field, you might want to encourage participants to bring or send any communication materials about their organization or project (which you can conveniently use as examples in exercises throughout the process!).

Starting preparations and reflections online, before meeting face-to-face, allows you to cover more content and do more exercises. Whether participants will actually do the necessary preparation of course depends on their available time and internet access. If you want participants to spend time before a workshop, their supervisors (if applicable) will need to be aware of the extra time required of their staff.

FRAMING THE PROCESS

When you begin working with a group, whether in person or online, it is usually a good idea to start with a general reflection about the entire process. We often first discuss the **objectives** of the activities and meetings, give some **theory** on experience capitalization and its relation to knowledge management, and provide an **overview** of what the full process entails.

What are the objectives and expectations of the process you are in together? Everyone has a personal motive – to improve their practices, to reach a larger number of persons, etc. Having participants define their own reason for taking part in the process, from the very beginning, enhances learning and often helps them stay motivated throughout the entire process. "Why are you here?" is a simple yet useful question. "How can can experience capitalization be of use in your current organization or

Looking to the future

First ask participants to discuss, in pairs, what they are missing in terms of knowledge development and exchange in their current work situation.

Then ask participants to envision what they, as individuals, and their organization would be doing in terms of experience capitalization in 10 years' time, and why this is important. Let them write this down.

Finally, ask them to share what this long-term goal means for their own participation in the process they are currently involved in. This can be shared in groups of 4 (combining two pairs).

This exercise helps to get participants motivated from the beginning and for starting to think about institutionalizing approaches like experience capitalization, embedding knowledge management in their current work. Having the future vision on paper will help them periodically reflect on what the end goal is. Sharing their final thoughts about their participation fosters a sense of commitment to such participation, since they have openly expressed their thoughts to several other people.
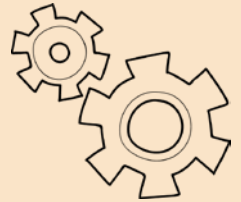
A definition

Experience capitalization is a **systematic**, **iterative** and **participatory** process through which an experience is **analyzed** and **documented**. This creates knowledge, which can be **shared** and used to generate **change**.

project, or in your life more broadly?" One exercise for this reflection is **Looking to the Future**, on the previous page.

In this context, it is useful to **explore the organizational context** in which the capitalization process is taking place. Which other knowledge management activities have already taken place? Has something already been documented about interesting cases? Partly you may have already looked at this in the preparation phase, but it might be very relevant to look at this with all participants as you actually start the process.

In addition, it can help the entire process and the commitment of the participants if the **experience capitalization exercise is linked to an existing activity or requirement** in the

organization or project. For instance, it may be a team is busy preparing reports, so including experience capitalization at this particular moment works well. If experience capitalization has an *immediate* purpose, it more easily gets fed into existing processes.

THEORY AND STEPS

Often at this stage it can still be somewhat unclear to participants what exactly experience capitalization is. What do you do? We believe that the best way to learn about experience capitalization is to practice it. Therefore, we often do not spend much time presenting theory during a workshop. In some specific cases it will be necessary to look at the theoretical background behind experience capitalization, like when participants are already familiar with similar methods or if they work in related fields like monitoring and evaluation or research. But you may still want to focus only on **the essential issues**, such as:

• **A definition** with some key elements explained (the one used by the CTA project is shown here, although many different definitions exist! The important elements are underlined.)

A collective definition

Many times participants have some idea of what experience capitalization is, even if they do not have a clear definition at hand. Before giving the exact definition, you can get participants to call out words that they associate with experience capitalization. You can write these on a flipchart, highlight important answers, and add other words where necessary. Often you will see that many of the essential elements have been mentioned already. This exercise allows participants to show what they know (acknowledging their expertise) and also helps see how similar (or different) are their ideas from those of the other participants and facilitators.
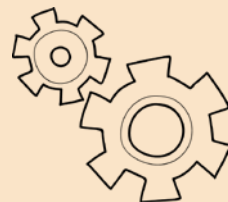
As we go through the steps, try to remember what was it like when you were a participant in another workshop or process: which parts were the most challenging? This will help you decide where to put more emphasis as facilitators

- **The basic principles** (i.e. participatory, multi-stakeholder, gender sensitive, etc.)
- **Potential benefits** that different people might see with an experience capitalization process.

You have probably learned this bit of theory in a workshop or in the online learning module, so we will not go into detail here.

CLEAR STEPS

The experience capitalization process consists of a number of steps. We noticed that it is very important for participants to know which steps have been taken already, and what is still to come. **Introducing the whole process in the beginning is essential.** And then throughout the process, we need to clearly **weave together the different steps**, the logic in the process. Why go from one to the other? How are they linked? Why are we asking them to take each step?

While there can be variations to the steps, essentially this is the full list:

1. **Selection and framing**
2. **Setting the boundaries**
3. **Gathering information**
4. **Description**
5. **Analysis**
6. **Conclusions**
7. **Writing**
8. **Sharing**
9. **Adoption**

Learning by doing

Experience capitalization is not easily learnt by just listening to theory. We like to encourage "learning by doing". Time and time again we have seen that participants only really start to see the workings and benefits of the methodology once they have gone through a capitalization process. Of course some explanations will be useful, but we have seen the best results when there are sufficient exercises and practical work in between bits of theory.

"Institutionalization" could be part of this list: mainstreaming the approach in an institution can be a logical step following the implementation of an experience capitalization process. Because it is technically not part of the process but a way to ensure the replication of the process, institutionalization is covered in a separate chapter in this guidebook.

As you know, experience capitalization is an iterative process, so sometimes **new information will send you back to an earlier step**. Some steps thus also happen in parallel: gathering information for instance often takes place at multiple moments in the process. Nonetheless, for the purpose of facilitating (especially when there is a training component to your facilitation), you must lay these steps out to the participants very clearly.

In the following pages, we will go through all the steps and talk about facilitating each one of them.

All the steps are discussed on the CTA website: http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/steps/

An excellent guidebook on experience capitalization in French was produced by F3E: https://f3e.asso.fr/wp-content/uploads/guide_capitalisation_experiences_f3e_2.pdf

Refresh your memory using the learning module, the CTA website and find teaching aids like PowerPoint presentations in the Toolkit: http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/toolkit/

SELECTION

2.2

Here you are moving from the *process* to a concrete "case" or "experience". Whereas earlier you may have asked participants to reflect on their reasons for joining a specific group, now you are looking at the general objective for starting an experience capitalization process. Do you see the difference? At the same time you will be talking about the objectives of the experience you chose to describe and analyze. See the box **Different "objectives"**.

When we start an experience capitalization process, the first step is to select the experience you focus on. As a facilitator you have the important task to steer participants in the right direction when they make this selection. As you

have learned yourself, it works well to select a **concrete experience**, one that has taken place **in the past**, that is not too broad, and importantly, that is **unique, interesting and new**.

Also, you want them to select a case that is **relevant**. Sometimes you may want to focus on **a specific theme** (e.g. CTA wants participants to focus on rural development activities, and preferably on agricultural development). The advantages of focusing on one or several themes is that it makes it easier to exchange ideas among participants, to create coherent communication products and to adopt each others' lessons and innovations. This is useful, but it may also mean more work for the facilitator. If you want to limit the

Encouraging participants to work on cases within the same theme can help the group become more effective in terms of discussions and following up on lessons learnts

Project managers

"The selection of a case to be analyzed should also be done by the project managers. But this is not to say that they do this on their own. We need to include those who know what was planned at the project level, what was done, what went well and what went wrong. But in the end, it is the project managers who have to make sure that the capitalization seeds fall into fertile soils."

EDSON NATHA, MOZAMBIQUE

Defining these objectives is essential when we take into account the idea of adoption: the idea is that the results from the experience capitalization process will be used in one way or another. Establishing this focus early on could be useful to keep returning to it throughout the process

themes of participants' cases, you already need to take this into account when inviting participants.

To guide participants in the selection of their case, we ask them to think about the relevance of the particular experience they want to focus on:

1. Firstly, **what is their objective for doing an experience capitalization now?** The answer to this question may be different for everyone. For a communications officer it may be sharing (critical) success stories; for an M&E officer it may be getting qualitative data to add to the existing numbers; for technical staff it may be trying to improve practices; or for a programme manager it may be planning for a more cost-efficient new phase of a project. And the reasons may also differ based on the type of organization you work in, the timing, the political context, etc. Whatever their objective is, it will help in deciding which experience is the best one to select.

2. Secondly, **who do people want to reach** with the results of the capitalization process? Are these policy makers or farmers? Again, the answer to this question will help decide what the best experience is to capitalize upon.

3. One final idea to use in the selection of an experience can be to **think about its Unique Selling Point**, or the USP. In selecting a case, it is important that participants focus on the unique contribution of their particular experience, **its main differentiating aspect**. Encourage them to think about how relevant, interesting and new it is to a particular audience.

Different "objectives"

We are working with "objectives" or "goals" or "reasons" at different levels in a short period of time, so it is important to differentiate between them. We have talked about:

(a) The reasons why an institution may want to start a process – e.g. IFAD wants to gather success stories from the field through experience capitalization workshops.

(b) The reasons why a participant wants to join the process – e.g. Jessie wants to strengthen her capitalization and writing skills so she can more easily share what she learns in her work every day.

(c) The objective for doing an experience capitalization now – e.g. Jessie wants to look at her agroforestry pilot project because there will be a follow-up project in the near future, which can learn from the pilot's successes and challenges.

(d) The objective of a specific initiative or experience – e.g. The agroforestry pilot project intended to improve the biodiversity and increase incomes for farmers in Vanuatu.

To make these thoughts clear and accessible, as a facilitator you can ask participants to **write them down**. Putting each person or group's ideas on cards and making them public, for example, makes it easy to share and record these answers for later.

This is also the moment that you and/or the participants decide if they will **work individually or in (small) groups**.

This is a discussion we have been having for years: is it better if they work individually, producing more stories and giving everybody the opportunity to write, or rather work in groups, with the opportunity to gather different perspectives and opinions? There are **advantages and disadvantages to both options**. Working in groups usually takes longer, and we end up with fewer outputs. But when working individually the less experienced or capable participants cannot get the support of their peers. Also, when working individually, there are many cases and stories to follow and keep track of, which may be difficult for one or two facilitators.

Even if participants work on individual cases, the task of the facilitator is to find a way in which participants are related (e.g. working on the same theme, in the same geographic area, same type of work, etc.), so they can get input from others in the group both in terms of content and methodology.

A "pitch", around the fire

Participants decide, individually or in their group, which case to focus on. Before moving on, they can (briefly) present their case and what makes it so special to one or several peers. They "pitch" their idea, and the "audience" is invited to be critical: is this really new and interesting? Are they curious to find out more? Limit these pitches to 1-1.5 minutes, and set a time limit for the (plenary) feedback as well.

In this way, the whole group gets to speak about their own case early on in the process, and hear about the other ideas as well. It challenges them to really hear what the audience might find interesting. Note that a first version of this pitch may have already been shared earlier via e-mail, but may need some adaptations.

One way to implement such a pitch is using a make-shift "fire place", to create an informal space that represents the communal sharing of stories (or "sitting under the tree", or "meeting in a bar", etcetera). Such a setting focusing on short storytelling has proved a very effective instrument to aid participants to frame their experience in a compact manner. It contributes to team spirit and it allows all the participants to share their experiences with the group, allowing for questions and answers as well. In between stories you can encourage energizers like singing.

The fire place can be used at different moments for various short presentations, like with the analysis in a later phase as well.
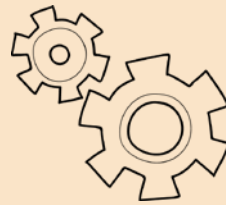
SETTING THE BOUNDARIES

2.3

After selecting a case, we ask the participants to **narrow their experience and set clear boundaries around what they will be focusing on** within this particular experience capitalization process. For many it is tempting to want to talk about everything their project does as they start describing its activities – unfortunately, this would make the experience capitalization a long and arduous exercise. More importantly, describing *everything* makes it very difficult to be concrete and make a good analysis.

NARROW & FRAME

As participants start a capitalization process, you, the facilitator, must guide them through this narrowing process. It helps to explain to participants why this step is necessary (see box **Why this step**). When setting the boundaries, we ask people to think about the following, concerning their chosen experience:

1.   **What/title** *(What is the case you have selected?)*

> Helps to make it clear in one glance what the focus of the capitalization is.

2.   **Location** *(Where did the experience take place?)*

> Helps to specify exactly which communities, districts, offices, etc. to look at – and to ignore, for the moment, all other locations.

3.   **Stakeholders** *(Who was involved in the experience?)*

> Helps to specify exactly which people (community members, men/women, implementing partners, donors, beneficiaries, etc.) to look at – and to ignore, for the moment, all other stakeholders.

4.   **Starting date and duration** *(When did the experience take place?)*

> Helps to specify exactly which timeline to look at – and to ignore, for the moment, all activities that happened before or after the selected experience.

5.   **Objective(s)** *(What was the objective of the intervention)*

> Helps to understand the frame in which the experience took place – what was

Why this step?

"Setting the boundaries" around the chosen experience helps to focus. It identifies what to include in the capitalization process, and what is best left for another time. It also helps to understand the setting in which the experience takes place, because of course, the experience does not take place in a vacuum.

Working on paper or digitally?

When participants are working on their own cases, they can put their work on large flipchart papers or directly into their laptops. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Working on paper often makes it easier to brainstorm and think outside the box, and it is easy to present to the rest of the group. When several persons are working on one case, working on paper is more inclusive. On the other hand, when people work individually, have much to write and intend to put parts of their work in a (digitally written) article later, typing on the laptop might be the better choice.

intended (so not necessarily what actually happened). The objectives can be used in the Analysis phase as well, to remind what was originally seen as the main purpose for implementing these activities.

6. **Problem(s)** *(What were the problems that the intervention tried to address?)*

Showing examples

Examples of other people's work help participants develop their own capitalization exercise. You can consider sending an example, like the one in the Toolkit available online, or going through it together. You could also discuss and fill out a (real or fictitious) example together in plenary. Take care to emphasize that the example is just that: it is not a perfect capitalization product, and of course it has been done in a different context.

> Helps to understand the frame in which the experience took place, and is directly linked to the objective(s) under point 5. The problems that were identified in this specific location, in this specific period of time, inspired specific activities with the mentioned objectives.

7. **Previous attempt(s)** *(What was done before to try to solve the problem(s) identified?)*

> Helps to understand the frame in which the experience took place: what came before? Which other attempts were made in response to these specific problems? These attempts can also serve as inspiration later in the Analysis phase, to compare what may have gone better than in such previous interventions.

8. **Context** *(Which social, environmental, political or economic factors shaped the setting in which the experience took place?)*

> Helps to understand the frame in which the experience took place, and what may have influenced the design, implementation and outcomes of the activities. The context is very likely a part of the Analysis, and helps to understand why the implementation and outcomes came to be as they were.

Often we work with these points in the form of tables (see the box **Tables**), like the one shown here. There have also been cases where facilitators have used other tables, drawings or simply lists. In the end, as long as it helps to set the boundaries in a clear way, the exact way to do it can differ.

It might be necessary to go through all the columns a few times: in plenary, but also when participants are working on their individual cases. We usually let people work on their own, as we walk around to support them. But depending on the group, it might also be an option to fill out the tables all together.

Tables
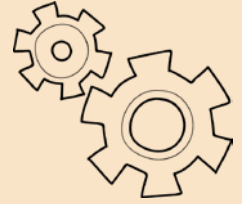
Because experience capitalization is an iterative process, it is highly recommended to write down these different steps. Most often we use tables, like the one shown here. Of course, it is possible to just write a list – so why our preference for tables? Tables are a very visible way to organize information. This allows people to discuss, and helps the facilitator see if participants are on track. This is why, especially when people are working in groups, it might be more useful to put such tables on big flipchart papers rather than directly on the computer.

Also consider showing some examples of filled out tables, both "good" and "bad" tables, to demonstrate what works best to get to the most interesting bits of the experience (also see the exercise **"Good" and "bad" sample articles** in the section on **Documentation**).

SETTING THE BOUNDARIES

What	Location	Stakeholders	Starting date & duration

Objective(s)	Problem(s)	Previous attempt(s)	Context

Use of tables

"The tables we compiled with all participants provided readily available information. In fact, we were a little surprised about how much information we all had about different aspects of our project that we might ordinarily have missed – gender issues, the changing climate, as examples – and all of this really helped us to identify our areas of interest."

EMMANUEL GBAKIE, SIERRA LEONE

Giving feedback: individual or in plenary

For several steps in the process, like setting the boundaries, making a description and completing an analysis, participants will be working individually or in their groups. Because each step builds on the next, it is useful if participants get feedback on each step. You can decide how this will take place.

Facilitators often go around as people work, checking for questions and asking to see some of the work. In addition, presenting two or three cases in plenary helps to identify the common mistakes made – this is often considered very useful. When people present their boundaries, descriptions or analysis, ask them to present it as if they are talking to a friend or partner – not go through all the columns in a boring way.

Some participants are shy to share, but remind them that receiving feedback, either from you or from their peers, only helps them improve. Often it can be difficult to convince the first person or group to present, but after a while everybody wants to present their case! Then it becomes a matter of time management: it would be great to go through every case together, but often this takes too long.

You can also consider other ways of giving feedback: peer-to-peer, for example, or that participants submit their work to you on paper or digitally to check, if you have the time.

PAY ATTENTION TO...

Some of the common difficulties we have seen participants have over the years, with regards to setting the boundaries, are that:

1. **The selected case is too broad.** You can recognize this as they specify the starting point and duration (e.g. a 10-year project), the location (e.g. working in many different provinces) or in the selected case itself (e.g. a full project, rather than just a component). In this case, it will either take a long time to do a detailed analysis or, sadly, the capitalization process will be too superficial and not give any new lessons. Encourage them to pick the most interesting part of a larger project.

2. **The selected case takes place in the future.** Occasionally participants want to write about an activity that has just started or that they intend to start, possibly because it is a current event or because the participant wants to write to gather (financial) support.

3. **No end date is specified.** If the activity is ongoing, the end date is today. The idea is that we learn from real-life situations that have taken place, so even if the project or activity is ongoing, the capitalization process focuses only on what has taken place in the past.

4. **The difference between context and problem is not clear.** The "problems" are the issues the intervention is trying to resolve. The "context", on the other hand, covers those issues that influence your experience, but that you cannot do anything about.

The tables displayed here, as well as in the sections on the description and analysis, can be found (with more explanation and examples) in the facilitators toolkit (http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/toolkit/). Other versions of the tables are found, for example, in the ILEIA manual on documentation.

GATHERING INFORMATION

2.4

To learn from an experience, we first need information about this experience. Many times the first information we access in an experience capitalization process is the information in our heads. When you are working with a group of people, this is often where you start: participants start filling tables or in other ways **organize the information or ideas they already have**. This is also why it is so important to invite the right people to join the process: we need people who have been part of the experience!

Don't forget: information can be collected from people, but also from existing documents

DATA COLLECTION

When the available information is organized in tables, for example, it will become clear that the information stored in one or a few individuals' heads is not sufficient. They will see which data and opinions are still missing. As a facilitator, encourage people to search further than their own brains. The capitalization process will become richer if they gather more information. The first step before starting with data collection is exactly this: **identify which information is needed, and where to find it**.

Talking to participants about data collection can take very different forms, depending on the group you are with. If you are working with researchers or M&E officers, it is probably not necessary to go into details about how to conduct an interview. When you are with a group of practitioners who work with communities regularly, it might be a bit too much if you discuss in detail how to talk to farmers. You can probably take advantage of the different data collection skills in the group, and have participants give their input. Often the group already knows a lot, when put together!

Collecting information

"We use different methods for collecting information in the field. But the questions may need to be adapted if they are misunderstood. Or the time schedule may need to be changed if we face practical hurdles in the field such as inaccessible roads. Flexibility is key to putting our plan into action!"

HARI SHARMA NEUPANE, NEPAL

If it is necessary to improve the group's knowledge and skills on data collection, these are some of the **data collection topics** you could discuss:

- Primary and secondary data
- Qualitative and quantitative information
- Interviewing
- Focus group discussions
- Surveys
- Observation
- Photography / video / audio-recording

Managing participation

Because the participation of different people is essential in experience capitalization, one of your tasks as facilitator is to make sure that everybody has the space to voice their opinions. The facilitator is the "guardian" of the discussion, making the different contributions from the group visible and understandable to all. You want to encourage inputs and contributions from everybody – not just throughout the workshops, but in the whole process.

- You can achieve this by creating an environment of trust. The group gives the facilitator authority, and you must use that authority in as neutral a manner as possible.
- Depending on the group, working in smaller groups or pairs may encourage shyer people to engage more than in plenary.
- Also, you can actively give some people the floor, by asking questions directly or encouraging them to present their work.

- Triangulation
- Do's and don'ts with different methods

The problem is that we do not have unlimited time to collect all the information that we want. During a workshop it is impossible to collect all the information for all the cases. As a facilitator, you can therefore help participants prepare the conditions that will help them collect additional data at a later stage – for example by discussing how to collect information, or by agreeing on a moment when participants can share information with each other.

GOING TO THE FIELD

If you have the possibility of going to the field with your group, this often adds value to the process. It may not be a way to collect all the data for all the different cases in your group, but it has **several functions**:

1. It is an opportunity to **practice data collection techniques**;
2. It is an opportunity for the group to better understand the experience capitalization approach by **looking at one concrete case together**;
3. It shows that different **people can have different roles**: some are better analytically, some are better at talking to farmers, and some are better in taking photos;
4. It helps participants (especially those from other regions) to **understand the local context**;
5. As a **social event**, it draws participants closer; and
6. Particularly in longer meetings, it **gives people a break** from the classroom.

Of course, "the field" does not have to be a literal "field". Depending on the available options in the area, it is useful to visit a

Nowadays more and more recording tools are incorporated into our mobile phones: an audio recorder, a camera... So why not use them?

Point 5 and 6 may seem less important, but do not underestimate the importance of networking and of a pleasant atmosphere for the learning and sharing process!

Make sure you schedule some time to collect and discuss the observations made in the field: whether these are observations about data collection or the intervention you visited

place where one or more of the participants' work takes place in practice: this can be a dairy farm, a collection centre for a cooperative, an experimental farm, or anything else you can imagine! Some of the points to take into account when you decide where to go to include:

- **The distance from the workshop location** – you don't want to spend half a day in the bus!

- **Connection to the group** – it helps a lot if one of the participants knows the location well, so they can introduce the case and help establish connections in the field. On the other

hand, take into account the effect of their presence in the field: will other stakeholders involved in the case, like the beneficiaries, still feel free to voice their own opinions with "someone from the project" present?

- **Variety in stakeholders to visit** – because experience capitalization is a multi-stakeholder approach, it makes sense to practice this in the field as well: allowing participants to get different perspectives on this one case.

What to do "in the field"

Going to the field is not just about going out and having fun – it will become tiring very quickly if participants do not have a clear purpose in the visit.
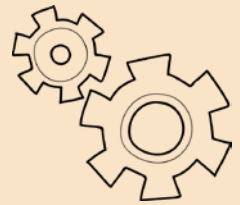
1. If you want to **practice data collection techniques**, ask people to try out different techniques – using their phones, for example, as recording device. You observe them in action, you can ask other participants to give feedback to their peers on how they collect data, or you can even film them as they talk to people. The important bit is to discuss what they and you have observed about their data collection skills: what have they learned by practicing it?

2. If you want to **focus on the experience capitalization methodology**, you can divide the group and look at different types of information – for example one group looks at challenges, the other at results, the other at factors for success, etc. The group can then join all their combined knowledge afterwards in one big "table" on the wall, providing them with the opportunity to collectively learn about experience capitalization and the different steps involved.

3. If you want to **focus on the analysis** in particular, which is the most challenging part of the whole experience capitalization process, the field visit offers an excellent opportunity. Before setting out, small groups decide which criteria and indicators to focus on in the field. Once in the field, each group looks for the "why" and "why not": what works and what does not *with regards to their chosen criteria*. The answers can be written on cards and stuck on a wall, so the whole group can discuss. Because the analysis is the most difficult part for most people, doing it together, on a case that everybody is familiar with, makes it easier to understand some concepts.

DESCRIPTION

2.5

The next step is to gather and organize all the available information: the description. Usually this step is "easy", because people have been doing this for years as they write reports. As you know, the description means saying what happened, and showing what the results were. Again, make sure you explain why this step is necessary (see box **Why this step?**), and how it fits in the bigger process.

ORGANIZE

To organize or systematize the information we mostly use tables. Tables provide a clear overview of all the potentially relevant information. As the table on the next page shows, the idea is to list the activities that have been carried out, and **link (positive and negative) results to each activity**.

So what is the use of each column?

1. **Activities** *(What was done in response to the problem(s) identified in the boundaries?)*

Why this step?

In the description, systematizing or organizing all the available information on an experience helps to see what is there and what is still missing. It is the basis for the next step, analyzing why the activities have led to certain results.

> Helps to clearly list everything that happened, within the boundaries set in the previous step. It shows what actually took place, not what was planned. If necessary, the activities can be grouped in "project components", for example.

2. **Positive results** *(What were positive outcomes of the activities?)*

> Helps to clearly see which positive results (outputs, outcomes) each activity had, and so to argue why this was a successful experience.

3. **Negative results** *(What were negative outcomes of the intervention?)*

> Helps to clearly see which negative results each activity had, and so to argue in which ways the experience may have been improved.

4. **Unexpected results** *(What were outcomes that you did not plan for?)*

> Helps to pull the person doing the capitalization away from the narrative she or he has about the experience as how it "should have been", and towards what actually happened. Often this is where valuable and interesting insights are hidden! Unexpected results can be both positive and negative, both short- and long-term outcomes. They were not intended, but can nevertheless have been important.

Sometimes, rather than tables, facilitators have used **timelines**. This can be useful, but when you use a timeline you must make sure that participants do not only

DESCRIPTION

Activities	Positive results	Negative results	Unexpected results

focus on the activities. The results – both positive and negative, long-term and short-term, expected and unexpected – are equally as important!

Remember that a lot of data and information is generally already available in project reports

Ideally, participants **build on what's already there**, the many documents that have already been written, like annual reports, project proposals, or possibly even articles. This is why, as the facilitator, you make sure that participants come to a meeting with these documents.

See the section on **Setting the boundaries** for thoughts on feedback mechanisms, showing examples and the choice to work on paper or digitally. These issues are relevant for all the steps in the process.

PAY ATTENTION TO...

Some of the common difficulties we have seen participants have over the years, with regards to the description, are:

1. **A lack of details.** We try to encourage participants to say as much as possible while describing a case (e.g. not just to say that we did a workshop, but to try to show when were these workshops, how often did they take place, how many participants were there, in what time of the year did they take place, for how long did each take place, etc.). This is because the more details we give, the easier it is for the reader to understand and the easier it will be to see where this experience stands out. Also, it will help in the analysis phase to see what could have contributed to or influenced the results seen in the field.

2. **Describing what was planned, not what actually happened.** At times people revert to the work plan that was made before anything was implemented, and forget to look at reality: in experience capitalization

Timeline rather than table?

An example of a timeline that worked well used the analogy of the river. Participants were asked to write down or draw the activities in one colour, the positive results in another colour, and the negative results in a third colour. This also made it possible to see which type of information was missing.
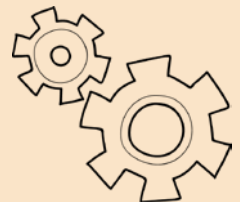
we look at what happened in reality, whether it was planned or not.

3. **A lack of evidence.** Providing statistics, anecdotes and quotes helps give credibility to what has been described – yet often people forget to include this.

4. **Fear of negativity.** Many times participants are hesitant to include in their description the parts that did not go very well, and in particular where those challenges or negative outcomes were caused by something they did or neglected. This fear makes sense: especially when others will be reading along, nobody wants to risk blame or reduced support in the future. Help people overcome their fear by, firstly, recognising that it is not easy, but also explaining that we often learn much more from failure than from success. This is a learning opportunity! Also, what is put in the tables does not necessarily have to be shared with a wider audience. And finally, adding some challenges helps to add credibility: nobody is perfect, and the reader will know this too.

5. **Long-term impact vs short term results.** It is easier to list the immediate results from an activity, and sometimes participants stop their description of outcomes here. Remind them that it is also very interesting to include the long-term effects of the activities and of their work.

Describing one person's perspective

One of the tricks a participant suggested was to focus on a case study in the description: to describe a project or an activity by focusing on one individual person. Many times it becomes easier to say what the whole project was about if we just pick one random person, and we say what did he or she do, and what did he or she achieved.
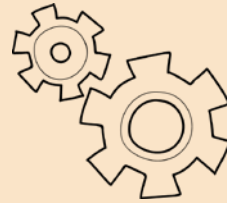
Tables with a purpose

"The moment we move from the tables to a written piece, the criteria and indicators are put to the test. The worksheets allow us to give meaning to the project. Conversely, they may also lead us to the conclusion that we miss the elements that help us give a strong opinion, or draw a significant set of lessons. This means that if the tables do not help you complete the process, then they need to be modified."

CARLOS HENRIQUE DE SOUZA RAMOS, BRAZIL

ANALYSIS

2.6

After the description we do the analysis. This is **the most important part** of the experience capitalization process, because clearly understanding an experience (why it was a success or why not) is the only way to **generate lessons and recommendations**. But the analysis is also the most challenging step. We are all very good at describing, but critically analyzing is not always easy. Therefore, you will play a crucial role here as a facilitator. You need to challenge participants, over and over again, to be critical and to think beyond the standard explanations we give for success (or failure).

What is the difference between describing a case and analyzing it? Instead of measuring results, or of comparing them to what was expected, an analysis aims to **discover the reasons behind these results**. To put it very simply, it is basically giving an opinion about the experience and saying if it has been good or bad, and why this is so. This may sound childish, and not very academic, but that should not be a problem. This step is complicated enough in itself, so throwing in some easily absorbable words and examples helps us understand the big difference between a description and an analysis. And then, of course, it is crucial

Why this step?

Without the analysis, experience capitalization would really just be a description of what happened: a list of events and results. There is no new knowledge generated. Analyzing – reflecting on what happened – is what makes the capitalization process something to learn from. It is how we get to "lessons learned" and to the recommendations we can give based on our experience.

to come to the next part where you argue why it is good or bad.

Most importantly, as a facilitator you want to make sure that, at the end of the day, participants get the idea of **asking why, and asking why again**. If they get stuck, have them look at their other tables again: look at the activities, at the way they were implemented (a specific strategy?), the context, key stakeholders, unexpected events, etc., to see what were the factors that determined that the experience was "good" or "bad".

For more information on the analysis see unit 4.2 of the FAO online course on experience capitalization.

The 5 "Whys"

One of the roles of the facilitator when conducting the experience capitalization process is to stimulate reflection on the causes behind good practices, innovations or failures. With the 5 Whys we start from the observed effect, and ascend to the root cause by a succession of "Why?" questions, allowing people to go deeper into the analysis and to better understand the cause-and-effect relationships.
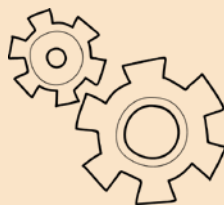
There are two ways to use the 5 Whys:

(a) As tried in Senegal, people asked themselves the *same* question five times (for example, "Why did so few young people participate?"). Asking the same question again and again would challenge people to think from different perspectives, and provide different answers to the same question. Without a doubt, there are many different reasons why so few young people participated.

(b) The second way is to ask "why?" in response to every new answer given, until the root cause is identified. This may take fewer or more than five Whys. So after the first answer to the question "Why did so few young people participate?", which may be "Because young people moved away from the village", the second question would be "Why did so many young people move away from the village?". A next answer may elicit a third Why-question.

The 5 Whys can be combined with other analysis tools, and can be integrated in a framework that looks at criteria and indicators as well.

(With thanks to Gorgui Alioune Mbow, Senegal)

Because the analysis is not the easiest to facilitate, it helps if we as facilitators **provide people with a clear framework to guide it**. One such framework we often use breaks down the analysis into three steps: selecting criteria, identifying indicators, and looking for contributing and limiting factors. We will expand this framework in detail in the next pages. But of course this is only one way to do an analysis. Another example is the method of **The "5 Whys"**, described in the box above. There are many other ways, some of which can be found in lesson 4.2 of the FAO learning module on Experience Capitalization.

STEP 1. CHOOSING CRITERIA

The first step in such an analysis is to define for ourselves what we consider a "good" or "bad" experience, or to put it differently, what "success" or "failure" means for us. It becomes very difficult to say whether an experience is "good" or "bad" in general because it *depends*. Is the experience "good" or "bad" in terms of economic impact? Or in terms of environmental sustainability? Or in terms of cost-effectiveness? This is why we start the analysis with choosing criteria.

Criteria are the "lenses" we use to look at the experience. Using these

Perspective matters

"Looking back at the objectives of the project and at its beneficiaries can help us improve the analysis and, therefore, to draw better conclusions. This is clearer if we pick a sentence like 'the weight of the fish raised from an average of 65 grams to 250 grams, due to the supplements of imported animal feed.' A team from an ecological production project may see these results in a very different way than those fighting malnutrition – or the fish farmer. And they are all correct."

MARTA ROCHA DE ARAUJO, BRAZIL/THE NETHERLANDS

criteria will allow us to look very concretely at what happened, and why. There are many ways to measure success. For example, do we consider the rehabilitation of a swamp a success when it increased the incomes of community members? Or when it was done in an environmentally sustainable way? Or when both women and men had equal control over the land and the financial benefits?

In many cases, the criteria people choose to judge whether their experience has been "good" or "bad" are personal: some care more about economic impact, others about environmental sustainability, and yet others about replicability. But often **the criteria people choose are similar to those in this list**:

- Economic impact
- Social impact
- Environmental impact
- Socio-economic sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Replicability
- Cost-effectiveness
- Inclusiveness
- Gender sensitivity

As a facilitator, you can let individuals think of their own criteria, or give them a list to choose from. The advantage of giving a list like the one above is that it eliminates the uncertainty of what criteria could be, and it saves time. On the other hand, it takes away from the creativity an individual can use in the experience capitalization process – perhaps their chosen criteria are very different from what we, as facilitators, can imagine.

A focus on adoption

When selecting criteria, it helps to consider the end goal of the capitalization exercise: who do you want to use the ideas you have generated about the experience? And in order to convince them to use your ideas, what do you think are important criteria for them? How can they assess whether they would adopt your ideas?

It is about raising the questions

"For me, the analysis was most important to strengthen critical thinking skills in my project team. Experience capitalization is not merely about writing a case study, it is about raising questions, developing a vision among all those who are involved in a certain project or any other form of development activities. The approach, and especially the analysis, taught me to look at my project differently, and I passed this on to staff at field level. Therefore, this whole process has had an effect on what we do in the project."

ANIL MAIKHURI, INDIA

The choice of criteria for the analysis can be taken from **earlier steps in the process**:

1. Looking at the **objectives for starting the project or activities** (e.g. they intended to create a cooperative that exists beyond the project implementation, so "sustainability" could be a good criterion to judge whether the experience was "good").

2. Looking at the **reasons for doing an experience capitalization process right now** (e.g. they want to learn from their experience with cooperatives to upscale the pilot project, so "replicability" could be a good criterion to judge whether the experience was "good").

3. Looking at **general goals in the organizations/projects** where participants work (e.g. organizations with a strong focus on gender equality may want to use criteria such as "inclusivity" or "gender sensitivity" to judge the experience they are capitalizing).

In some situations we let the whole group build a list of criteria together, writing down what the group considers interesting criteria on a flipchart, from which they can choose a few for their own case. This has the advantage of allowing for group creativity, but still containing the options to choose from. It also gives you the opportunity to discuss in plenary what makes a good criterion, and what is less suitable as criteria.

STEP 2. IDENTIFYING INDICATORS

Now, because criteria are quite abstract, it is not directly easy to see what allowed the experience to become "good" or "bad". This is why the second step is necessary: identifying indicators for each criterion. These **indicators are the observable characteristics of the criteria**. They are concrete, and can be seen when we go to the field, talk to the people involved, read the reports, etc. A farmer is probably not going to say "this experience was environmentally sustainable", but is more likely to say something like "the project

Indicators can be quantitative (e.g. percentage of women in leadership roles) or qualitative (e.g. increased awareness on gender roles in the community)

increased our awareness of good soil management" or "the training encouraged us to use local resources".

This is why, after choosing criteria, we ask participants to **identify a few indicators *per criterion***. Every criterion can be made more concrete in different ways, depending on the context, and depending on what exactly the criterion means to the people doing the analysis. For example, "economic impact" as a criterion might be represented by "increased household income" in some cases, and "lower expenditures on chemical inputs" in another.

In the analysis, indicators are not used to *measure* how successful the experience was after all: this has already been done in the description under the "positive results". Rather, indicators are ways to point out *where to look* in the next step: finding out *why* the experience was successful.

STEP 3. ASKING "WHY"

Next, we try to reflect on **why the initiative became a success** (**or failed** in certain ways). This last step is the most important one, because this is where we can draw lessons from. Basically, what we try to find out is this: what happened that helped to meet the criteria, and what happened that prevented meeting the criteria?

Per criterion, using the indicators as focus points, we look at all the factors that contributed and all the factors that limited better outcomes. **Such factors can include**:

• **The approaches** followed;

• The actual **implementation process**;

• Participation or **attitudes** of different stakeholders;

• The specific **context** or setting;

• etcetera... be creative!

Using examples

The analysis takes time: to explain, to work on individually, and to understand. It helps to explain the concepts and the steps multiple times, using different examples. You can use the example of an actual development project (including the criteria, indicators and contributing and limiting factors), but you can also try to use simple objects like a pen, a camera, a pair of sunglasses, etc.

For example, you can use these objects to show that what is "good" or "bad" is different for each person, and that whether is it good or bad depends on the criteria you use to judge it. My reasons for buying a certain pair of sunglasses may be different from yours – some use the price as the most important factor, while for others fashion is more important, and for yet others it is the filter in the lens.

Sometimes we use the example of cooking. If we want to make a good soup, what does "good" mean? And next: how do you measure whether it is actually "good'? Which indicators do you use? And how did you manage to cook a good soup, what are the factors for success? In this way you can use an everyday activity which everybody understands to explain the steps of the analysis.
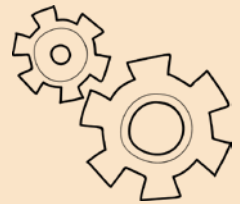
Important in asking "why" is to **be critical and inquisitive**. Encourage people to look beyond the first answer they give. Often, **the reasons behind the reasons offer more interesting and new insights**. For example, if someone says, "we found that the activities were successful in terms of gender equality, because both men and women are part of the association's coordinating committee," then try to find out more! *Why* is it that both men and women were participating? Further answers could be:

"The service providers held a gender awareness meeting at the start of the project", or

"The first beneficiaries were women who encouraged other women to participate as well", or

"The government has promoted equal participation in politics, creating a culture that is positive towards women in political positions".

And even for these answers, you could dig deeper. What contributed to this first gender awareness meeting? Or how come women started encouraging other women?

STEP 4. DRAWING LESSONS

Finally, we can **look at all of the "reasons why" and reframe the most important ones as lessons** that can be drawn from this experience. For example, using the example above, of men and women participating in an association's coordinating committee, a lesson could be: "in order to reach gender equality in the association, and to help

The bar/kitchen table

In the analysis and in the writing phase it can be useful to create a space where participants can individually discuss their ideas and main storyline. In Mozambique, the facilitation team created such a space in the form of a "kitchen table" and "bar". In a serious but informal way, "gathering around the kitchen table" often leads to lessons drawn in a participative manner.

A table in the corner of the room, some chairs and a sign saying "kitchen" or "bar" (whichever option suits your group best), is enough. One of the facilitation team members sits there and helps participants develop their analysis by looking at the most relevant parts of the experience. In Mozambique this was done in (maximum) 30-minute conversations, which started with the question: "What is the clue of the experience you are capitalizing and why did you select this experience, and not another one?" We recorded the conversation in our mobile telephones, which proved very useful at the writing and editing stage. In an informal setting the reflection process often flows easily, and people use a different language and humor, and show insights that may enrich the analysis and the final article.

(With thanks to Marta Rocha de Araujo, Brazil)
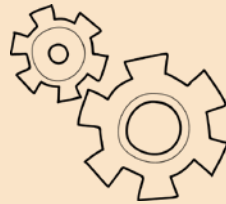
both men and women be part of the coordinating committee, it has shown to be essential that people are made aware of gender issues from the very beginning. Also, it helps if women reach out to other women to include them as well."

This reframing of the other bits of the analysis analysis helps draft a conclusion, in the next step. It prevents some important thoughts from getting lost.

COMPLETING THE ANALYSIS

In short, what do we look at, in the analysis, and why?

1. **Criteria** *(The "lenses" with which to look at your experience and decide whether the experience was successful or not)*

> The criteria are a way for us to define for ourselves what we consider "success" or "failure". They give the focus for the analysis.

2. **Indicators** *(How can you measure or observe the criteria in real life?)*

> Pointing out real-life ways to measure your success helps to look in the right direction to find out why the criteria was met or not.

3. **Contributing and limiting factors** *(What are the reasons behind the positive results? Why is it that (even) better results were not possible?)*

> This is where the real lessons come from: what helped achieve success, or what limited success, in terms of one specific criterion?

4. **Lessons** *(What are the key issues with regards to this particular criterion?)*

> Helps to make it very concrete, looking at the lessons that can be drawn directly from the analysis, per criterion.

Again, using a table to do the analysis will **help to see the correlation between specific outcomes and how these outcomes came about**. If we focus on one specific criterion at a time, we can make a clear argument to show how a contributing factor actually contributed to reach "sustainability", "inclusiveness", or any other criterion that was chosen.

Some participants have the tendency to analyse an experience by using many different criteria, but then they end up with a superficial or unfinished analysis. Make sure they start with one or two criteria and go through the different steps.

ANALYSIS

Criteria	Indicators	Contributing factors	Limiting factors	Lessons

It takes plenty of time to do a good analysis using only one or two criteria. If they have time, they can continue with others.

PAY ATTENTION TO...

Some of the common difficulties observed by facilitators with regards to the analysis include:

1. **Confused researchers.** Especially with researchers in the room, it is possible that a discussion emerges regarding the definition of an analysis, with some researchers saying that it is a "logical reading of data". In the context of an experience capitalization process, we are not analyzing a broad range of data, but an *experience*: one case. It helps to disconnect this from the academic understanding of what an analysis is. Criteria are used to help focus the reflection. Indicators are used to help connect reflection to reality. "Why" and "why not" are used to understand how results and process came to be "good" or "bad".

2. **Confused M&E experts.** Also, the terms "criteria" and "indicators" are possibly used differently in M&E, academic research or other aspects of people's work in development projects (for example, using "criteria" for selecting beneficiaries). Sometimes it has been necessary to explicitly mention that these are not the same meanings as we use in a capitalization workshop.

3. **Cause vs consequence.** In facilitating the analysis we need to make sure that participants see the difference between a cause and a consequence. In the analysis we are interested in looking at the causes:

why is it that things happened in a particular way? What contributes to this, or limits it? Sometimes the word "why" confuses some participants, because it can lead to both the causes and the consequences. For example, "why was my project gender sensitive?" can elicit two responses. Some people would answer that it is because women attended the workshops, pointing at a consequence. Others would say "Because we convinced men of the importance that women would also join", identifying a specific cause. We are looking for *causes*. This is a commonly made error in the analysis. Most of the time, the consequences (like "50% of the attendees were women") are already mentioned in the description as results. And we do not repeat this.

4. **Superficial analysis.** Many times, participants are happy when they can give one reason behind the success seen in the field (e.g. "the experience had economic impact because the activities were demand-driven and focused on the needs of the community"). However, often there is much more interesting knowledge to discover when they dig deeper. Many times, the facilitator is really needed to encourage people to look further than the first reason which is given. *Why* did this take place? In the example, *how come* that the activities were demand-driven? What caused this? What contributed to this?

Often you will see that going through such a "chain" of Why's is easier when we look at negative experiences: why did we not have such great impact? Because we failed to look at the demands of the community. And why did we fail at that? Why? Why?

CONCLUSIONS

2.7

The analysis flows naturally towards the conclusions: here we **summarize the main lessons learned**. These can be rephrased into the best **recommendations for replication or improvement** of similar initiatives. Don't forget to make some time available in the group to look at this step after the analysis, because the conclusion is where everything comes together.

Even though it comes at the end, a conclusion is often what we read first in a document because it summarizes the most important insights. More specifically, this is the moment to remember the Unique Selling Point of the experience and **highlight what makes it special**. This is why when writing the conclusions in an article, we need to make sure that it reflects all the main issues that are covered in the rest of the story.

The conclusions include **recommendations: opinions that participants have formed based on their own experience**. The analysis allows people to look at what they have done in the past, and give opinions on what to do differently or the same next time – these are recommendations. Note that these recommendations can be directed at others who might want to replicate the experience, but also at oneself in order to improve in the future!

It is possible to include in the conclusions what we do not know (yet), and what still needs to be investigated further

In an experience capitalization process, thinking about and writing down the conclusion is not only a wrapping-up of the lessons in the previous step, but it is the beginning of the re-packaging process by which participants turn the tables they prepared into a shareable document. This is covered in the next step, **Documentation**.

Why this step?

The conclusion is the step where we make very explicit the lessons that the analysis has generated. It shows clearly, and briefly, what the experience has taught us. Putting this clearly and briefly helps to communicate to others why they need to pay attention to this particular experience.

Write it down

Because the conclusions nicely summarize all that is most significant about the experience, it is worth writing it down. Participants can exchange and review it, and a written conclusion can also serve as the starting point when writing a story about the experience. It serves as a reminder of the key elements that need to be included when sharing the capitalized experience.
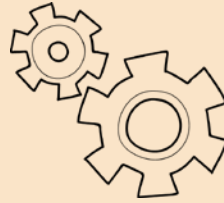
Meeting "Bill Gates"

One way to draw out the most important lessons about an experience in a fun way is the "Bill Gates" exercise. One participant is appointed to be a celebrity like Bill Gates or Oprah Winfrey (or another celebrity, whatever fits in the local context!). They represent a person with little time, a general interest in improving the lives of rural people, and with money to invest – if they can be convinced. In an elevator-pitch type set-up, another participant practices summarizing the Unique Selling Point and most important lessons, to convince the celebrity to take an interest in their experience. You can give them one minute, possibly as "Bill Gates" walks from one corner of the room to the next, to highlight the most important lessons that arise from their capitalization process. Discuss what went well in pitching their key insights: keep it short, make it interesting, and show that the generated knowledge is really new.
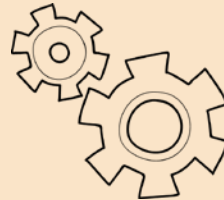
Optionally, you can ask all participants to do a similar "pitch" in pairs after the exercise, to practice telling their own highlights in brief.

DOCUMENTATION

2.8

In this section we focus on written documents as products of the capitalization process, but of course there are many more options like video, posters, radio programmes, etcetera.

If we want to share the lessons learned in the capitalization process, these lessons need to be written down in a way that is readable to others. This is most often an individual process, but still, as a facilitator you offer significant support. **You support the participants by**:

- Organizing the **time** they spend on writing;
- Offering **exercises** that help them improve their writing skills;
- Giving **feedback** on their writing;
- Organizing **peer review** sessions;
- (Possibly) **editing** their articles.

Many people are hesitant to write. They may think that writing is only for the few people who have a natural talent for writing, or whose job it is to write. As a facilitator, you can encourage people and show them that **everybody can try to write**. A good exercise to start this is **Writing as an art**. You will find many more exercises in this section, all them meant to encourage participants to write or to improve what has been written. Many of them also serve as breaks between the individual writing sessions.

Even though people often feel they will need to spend full days writing, this is actually not the most efficient way to write well. As a facilitator you will need to take this into account. Think about how much time you schedule for writing sessions, and what kind of exercises you can have as a break – thinking that these could also help improve the text they are writing. Usually, after two hours of writing individually most participants start to lose focus.

Why this step?

The tables – or the other tools used for organizing information – that have been the focus of the process until now are very useful. But they are often not the best way to share the lessons learned with outsiders. Writing is an essential step towards sharing – whether the final communication product is a written article, a video or a radio programme. In any case, a written text is the basic input for other types of products: a podcast, a video, a radio programme, a policy brief, a "comic", etc. Having a final product can also help convince management or donors of the value of experience capitalization and help towards institutionalizing the approach.

Writing as an art

One of the exercises we often use to introduce the idea of writing style and tips is a drawing exercise. Two volunteers stand in front of the group, where one draws the other on a big piece of paper. After much giggling and a bit of embarrassment, a third volunteer who might be a bit better at drawing draws the same model.
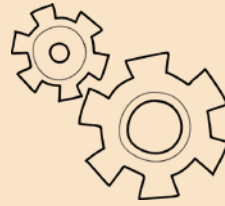
Besides offering some light entertainment, this exercise illustrates that writing, like drawing (or playing football, for that matter), is an art. This means that some people are naturally more talented to do it well, while other might need to develop their skills. But even if they are no Picasso or Messi, this does not mean they cannot draw, or play football, or write. What helps to develop their skills is:

1. Practice;

2. Watching other writers/artists/football players;

3. Some tips and tricks.

This exercise can help overcome some of the fear of writing that comes from a conviction that "I am not a writer". Everyone can write. It also illustrates that people have different writing styles, like everyone has different drawing styles.
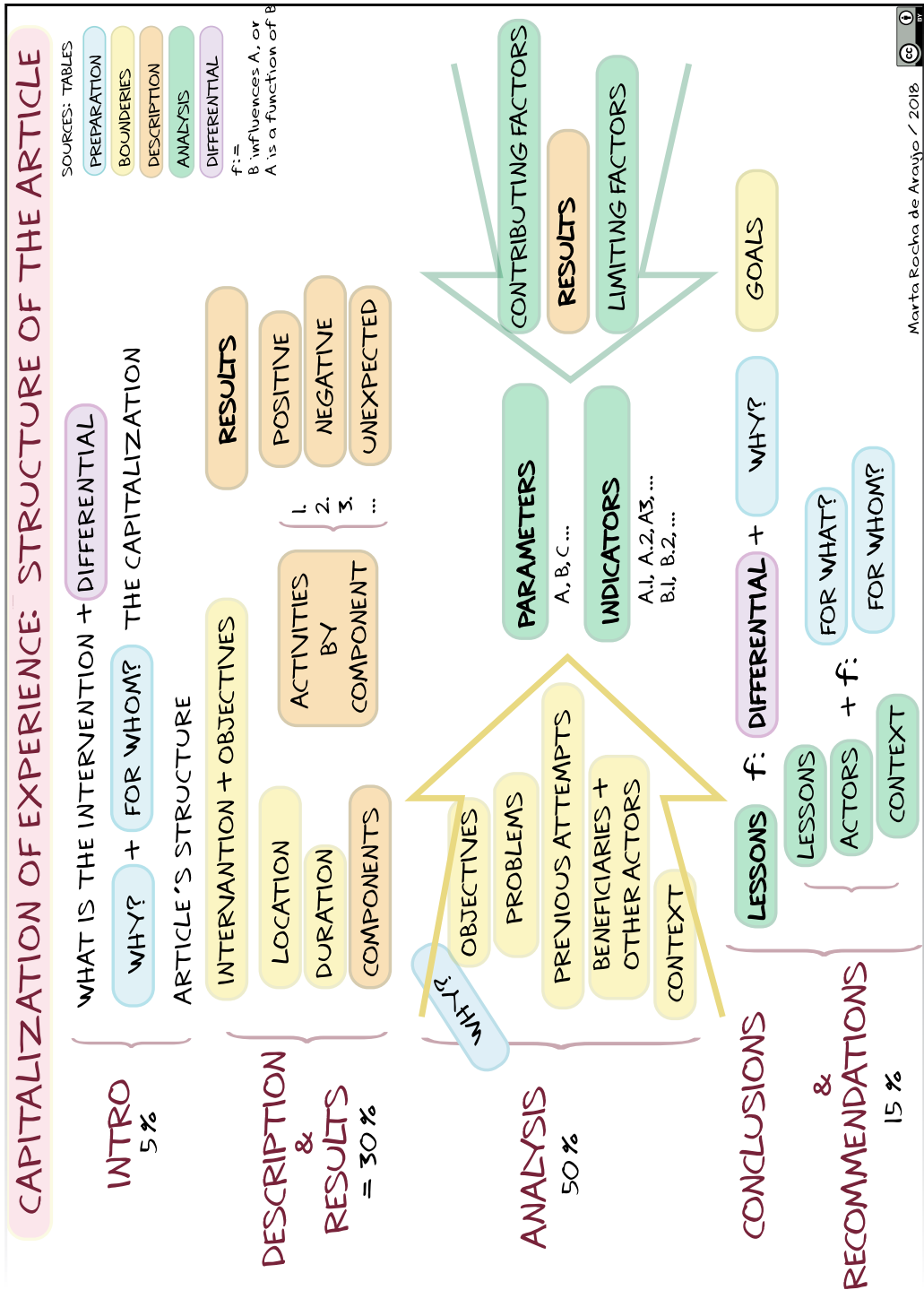
This can lead you into discussing some of the tips and tricks that help writing an appealing and readable text.

FROM TABLES TO ARTICLE

The tables created as part of an experience capitalization process are the "mother document" for many different types of knowledge products (written or otherwise). But the step from "organizing and analysing information" to "writing an article" is not always straightforward. As we organize our knowledge (in the form of tables, timelines, drawings, etc.), we start to categorize information: we look at project activities for example, which are different from the results, and from the factors that contribute to positive or negative results. How do we join these different categories of information into one flowing story? Some people are able to do this instinctively, but for most of us, it helps to **create a clear structure first**.

One of the structures that can help is the one on the next page. In a clear overview, it presents how the columns of the tables (for instance, "context", "objectives", "activities", "criteria" or "limiting factors") fit and add to the full story. It helps to create this overview first, as a general structure for an article, and then ask participants to use the information they have gathered in the first part of the process. This could take the form of a **draft table of contents**, which is then "filled" as they start writing.

Depending on the purpose of the writing exercise, you might want to impose a few restrictions to the format of the article, like the number of words or the style. If you intend to publish, there needs to be a **word limit** that suits the publication.

CAPITALIZATION OF EXPERIENCE: STRUCTURE OF THE ARTICLE

SOURCES: TABLES

PREPARATION
BOUNDERIES
DESCRIPTION
ANALYSIS
DIFFERENTIAL

f:=
B influences A, or
A is a function of B

WHAT IS THE INTERVENTION + DIFFERENTIAL

WHY? + FOR WHOM? THE CAPITALIZATION

ARTICLE'S STRUCTURE

INTRO
5%

INTERVENTION + OBJECTIVES

LOCATION
DURATION
COMPONENTS

ACTIVITIES
BY
COMPONENT

1.
2.
3.
...

RESULTS

POSITIVE
NEGATIVE
UNEXPECTED

DESCRIPTION
&
RESULTS
= 30%

WHY?

OBJECTIVES
PROBLEMS
PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS
BENEFICIARIES +
OTHER ACTORS
CONTEXT

PARAMETERS
A, B, C...

INDICATORS
A.1, A.2, A3,...
B.1, B.2,...

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

RESULTS

LIMITING FACTORS

GOALS

ANALYSIS
50%

CONCLUSIONS
&
RECOMMENDATIONS
15%

LESSONS f: **DIFFERENTIAL** + WHY?

LESSONS
ACTORS + f:
CONTEXT

FOR WHAT?
FOR WHOM?

Marta Rocha de Araujo / 2018

This structure can be found in the Facilitators Toolkit at http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/ toolkit/. With thanks to Marta Rocha de Araujo, Brazil.

This could be 500 words for a shorter article or an online publication, or 2000 words for a longer article. Keep in mind that whatever the end product is intended to be, very long articles are less likely to be read by readers with little time.

In terms of structure, participants can also be creative, and do not have to adhere to a standard format or template. Some creativity makes it more interesting to read, too. As long as participants understand (and show) the difference between a description and an analysis, they can be mixed in the text – no problem. As a facilitator, it helps if you check whether the text flows, and whether the authors have added enough of both parts to make the text interesting.

However, in whatever order the content is put, try to encourage participants to **write mostly about the analysis**. It is much easier to write the description (this is what we have been doing in reports for years), but the analysis is more interesting because it brings new knowledge. Participants should try to cover approximately 40% of an article with information and ideas coming from the analysis.

Starting to write can become much easier if people identify their main message first: **the essence of their article**. This has been identified as they drafted their conclusions in the previous step. Remind participants to start from here: there is no need to start from scratch, because the main storyline is already in front of them.

Adding a personal story

One extra writing assignment, to help make the story more personal, is to ask participants to write about a real person. Let them pick a photo of a beneficiary or colleague, and write a case story about this person to illustrate the article. This can become a box or special section in their article.
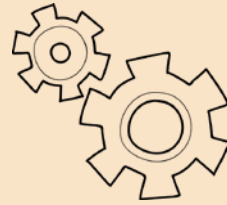
Getting to the essence

"Not all the information that seems important to collect in the field is relevant, and it doesn't have to be included in a final article. Sharing the key elements of one's experience helps one to distillate what is relevant and what is not. This way, even if slowly, the essence of your story seeps through. And the good thing of having collected more than enough is that we always have a set of tables with information, and we can always write another article…"

GLORIA NYAMUZUWE, MOZAMBIQUE

Oral stories or "pitches"
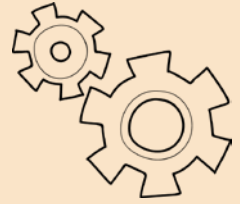
Writing is relatively new in human history, so it makes sense that almost everywhere we hear that "we have an oral culture: we might not write very well, but we are very good in _telling_ stories". One way of encouraging people to write is to start with these oral stories. Ask them to tell a short story, a "pitch", if you like. Give participants a limited time (four minutes is enough) to tell the main storyline of their capitalization process, in the most analytical way possible. You can record what they say, and give the recording to the storyteller. We just have to put it on paper to be able to reach more people. This way you make a participant see that the difference between talking and writing is not so big.

This exercise also encourages thinking about what the "essence" of an article is. It helps participants focus on the key message they want to send out, whether in a short two-minute pitch or in a ten-page document. It also offers an opportunity for the whole group to learn about everybody's work and provide some feedback on the content of the story. It also allows people to see links between their own cases and those of others.

You can consider rating the stories, giving the best pitches "popular awards" based on the rating of other participants and "judges awards" based on the rating by facilitators.

The exercise becomes more fun and people often open up more easily if you create an informal storytelling setting, as has been described in an exercise in the "Selection" phase. We have used a make-shift "fire" to sit around, or sitting beneath (a real or imagined) tree, for example. At times participants contributed songs or dances to break the formality of the workshop. You can come back to this storytelling setting at different moments to hear from different people, or listen to many groups in one sessions (with some breaks in between).

This exercise has worked quite well in the past, and it does not need to take up a lot of time to hear from many different people. Other participants can give comments. Was it exciting? Was it interesting? Was it appealing? And most of all, was it complete? Does it convey the most important message they want to share?

You will see that some naturally tell a good story, and you may notice that they mention aspects of their case which has not been written down in the tables or an article. This shows exactly why this exercise can be very useful. It can bring out new information they forgot to include earlier, or that they felt was not "suitable" for a written article. Often these bits of information make the story much more interesting to read.

You could also use this exercise to show how certain techniques used in storytelling are important in written work as well. For example, when telling a story one might engage the audience by using questions, examples, or with an informal tone of voice. These are techniques that can be very useful in writing as well.

Requirements for writing

"The first step is to ensure a conducive environment, or one that puts us in a better position to write. This includes, among others, having the necessary time and resources (especially in terms of information), together with the necessary support of our colleagues and of those directly involved in the case we want to share. Equally important is to have an open and critical attitude towards this case"

MERSHA YILMA, ETHIOPIA

The rest of the article is made by building the argument towards that storyline.

FACILITATOR AS EDITOR

During the writing phase, **your role might include editing** the texts of participants. If you do not feel very comfortable correcting text, it may be that your task as a facilitator is to get external support for the editing work. We are expecting a lot from the facilitators, but they do not have to be super humans who do everything!

Because editing takes time, with bigger groups it pays off to have two or more editors. As an editor you review drafts and provide feedback on content, structure and style – before, during and after the writing process. Even though peer feedback is truly valuable, a detailed review by a professional editor of all the articles at the different stages is essential to improve the quality of the text, as well as to improve the writing skills of the participants. Keep in mind that it is easier to review many articles during the workshop or another short period of time if the articles are shorter.

Your role as a facilitator is not limited to editing the text during writing sessions. If one of the intended outputs of an experience capitalization process is to publish the written material, whether online or in print, you will probably have a large role to play in **managing the publication process**:

- You might be editing the final drafts of articles;

- You may be the contact person for the layout or printing company;

- You will keep the participants and organizers up to date on the progress of the publication;

- You may need to provide the organizers or publishers with additional information, like the authors' contact data and photos; and

- You may need to write or ask someone to write an introduction to the collection of articles.

COMMON ISSUES WITH WRITING

Writing is not easy for many people, especially if they have not had a lot of practice. Some common issues that the facilitator can help them with are:

1. **Fear of sharing.** Many people are hesitant to share drafts for feedback because the writing is not "perfect" yet. Remind them that feedback is the best way to improve it. And that, in truth, the text will never be "perfect". Prevent them from wanting to keep writing forever.

2. **Time writing at home.** When people are busy with their daily work, it is often difficult to set apart time for writing. If during the process you are facilitating participants are expected to work in their own time, expect some potential struggles here. You may need to spend some more time on motivating participants to keep going.

3. **Fear of starting.** It can be very difficult to put the first words on paper. One exercise that can help with this is to do 10-15 minutes of "freewriting": just let them write whatever comes to mind, without concerns about grammar, content, or style. Nobody will read this, but it helps to get the process started.

4. **Too much time for introduction and description.** Many participants start writing following the order of what is presented as a final text: the introduction first, then the description, etc. The disadvantage is that they might spend most of their time, energy and space on these parts, leaving very little for the analysis and the conclusion – the more interesting bits. Remind them to move on from the description or even to start with

Reading and editing texts takes a lot of time. Remember to plan this, and to ask your co-facilitators for help

The publishing process

What do you need to take into account when you decide to publish written articles? In the steps below you see that you will probably work with different professionals to finalize the product. Check with them beforehand which inputs they need and how much time they will take, and plan ahead.

Editing: a final draft will often still need editing by a professional editor, who helps to make the language flow, who can point out where crucial information is missing, and who can cut out superfluous words and text. The editor also ensures consistency among texts written by different authors, in terms of length of the article, units of measurement, etc.

Proofreading/language check: depending on the editor in the previous step, it might still be necessary to have a native speaker check the final text.

Layout: a graphic designer will use the final text, as well as photos, images and graphs, to create a goodlooking high resolution document that the printing company can use directly to print (or that can be put online). Note that you will also need to schedule in time to check the layout before sending it to the printer: is all the text inserted correctly? Do the photos match the text? If you publish directly online, an external graphic designer is not always necessary, but it certainly helps if you add photos.

Print/web: depending on how you plan to spread the final publication, either a printer will print hard copies or the web-specialist will publish the texts on one or more websites.

Collect the work

If you need to follow up with the writings – like preparing them for publication or showing all texts to those organizing the capitalization process – you want to ensure you have the texts with you. Make sure that when you leave the meeting venue you have collected everybody's work. We have seen so many times that people promise to send (a better, finished version) later, but never do because they simply lack the time back home. Better collect what is there, and anything sent later is bonus.

the analysis. Experienced writers often write the introduction at the end!

5. **Missing details and extras.** When you collect articles, remind participants to add the necessary details, like their names, some essential information about the author, a title for the article, (high resolution) photos (with captions), etc.

6. **Language troubles.** Sometimes people are asked to write in a language that is not their mother tongue. This can bring up additional insecurities about being able to write well, and may limit the clarity of the text. It may be possible to team them up with others who are more fluent in the language of writing, to offer additional editing support or to work with a translator. Particularly the latter option will take up significantly more time and money, though.

High resolution photos are necessary if you want to publish them in print, while for online publishing low resolution photos are fine

A focus on "why"

"As the first drafts started coming into my mailbox I wondered: how to put all the available information together? It was important to remember our interest in drawing lessons – and that finding lessons implies looking at reasons, more than at facts. The essence of the approach was brilliantly summarized by one of the participants: 'I thought I came here to tell what I did. Now I understand I have to tell why.' What we needed was to make use of what we had: a set of tables with different parts, all of which contribute to the analysis."

MARTA ROCHA DE ARAUJO, BRAZIL/THE NETHERLANDS

Creating a "persona"
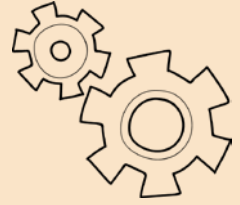
As you know, thinking about the *audience* is one of the most important parts of writing: it influences what to include in the article and what the most suitable writing style is. An exercise that can aid participants in thinking about the audience in a concrete way is asking them to create a "persona". This means imagining and writing down the key characteristics and priorities of a (real or invented) person who they want their article to reach. You can ask them to discuss their persona with a neighbour.

A next step could be to read their own article again, or that of a neighbour, with the perspective of this "persona". Ask them to really try to embody that person, including their background, their interests, their annoyances, etc.

This exercise works well because it helps authors get closer to their intended audience, and it helps the participants empathize with what their target audience would want to read. What makes this person's heart beat, what gives them pain? As one participant once said, "be like a friend to him". This shows the essence of the exercise: as an author you do not want to push the contents of the article on someone, but you want to show them what they would be interested in.

Simple texts

"When writing, it is very important to think for whom, and for which purpose, I am writing. I value simple texts because there are more people in the world who prefer simple texts, and who find it difficult to understand complex documents. If they are the ones who will be reading what we write, then we need to strive for simple texts. But I was also asked to prepare a document that would go to the donors, and therefore required a formal tone. Although I personally prefer to be direct and practical, I sought a balance between the two styles."

DIRCE OSTROSKI, BRAZIL

Peer review

Another exercise which works well is to do peer reviews. A peer review means that participants give comments on the writing of another participant. Most of the times we are writing for people who are just like ourselves. So if we like the article of our colleagues, probably the article is well written for its intended audience.
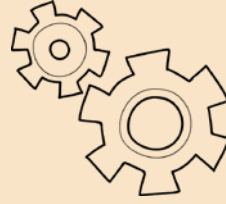
You can print a few copies of the draft articles or have participants share the writing digitally. Practically, printing takes a lot of time, more than you might think (take into account opening times of printing facility and their capacity). Also, you can consider the financial and environmental costs of printing. However, most people find reading from paper more pleasant, and it is easier to write comments in the article itself.

Another choice to make is whether you want to do reviews in pairs, in small groups or with the whole group. The feedback is more personal in pairs or small groups, but on the other hand getting feedback from people with totally different perspectives can also be useful. Also, by reviewing many different articles people can learn about different writing styles. It might also take more time. For plenary peer review, one approach is to print two or three copies of each article, and have all participants pick, read and comments multiple articles, writing their comments on the printed copies.

As part of this process, ask participants to comment on the language used (is it readable and appealing?), to say whether the content is complete and understandable, or if the stories are interesting, relevant or unique. It is possible to do a brief plenary discussion on what they learned from doing a peer review, and what makes one article better than the other. The peer review exercise is very effective because it:

- Provides comments from peers on the article; but more importantly also

- Lets the reviewer learn from other people's (good or bad) writing;

- Is a way for the reviewer to look at articles and experience capitalization from a different level; and

- Allows participants to practice and learn about giving feedback.

Additional resources on writing in the context of experience capitalization are the FAO online module on Experience Capitalization, unit 4.3, and a few of the documents in the facilitators Toolkit (http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/toolkit/) – here you can find some sample articles written by participants in the past, writing tips, and infographics on structure and writing.

"Good" and "bad" sample articles
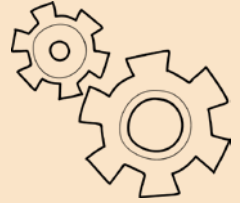
Reading other people's work is an excellent way to improve one's own writing: we can copy what we like, and avoid what we don't like. As a facilitator, you can provide participants with this opportunity to learn from other writers. Encourage them to reflect critically on what they like or don't like about the writing style, but also to think about which information they feel is missing to make it a really good article.

You can give participants exceptionally "bad" article to prove certain points, such as:

- an article which has absolutely no analysis;

- an article that is full of formal language, jargon and acronyms;

- an article where the content does not flow correctly;

- an article full of uninteresting or irrelevant information;

- an article that does not convince the reader of its uniqueness;

- an article with long, boring sentences; and

- an article that talks about theory, but not about a real-life case.

On the other hand, you can of course show an article that flows nicely, is entertaining, convincing, etc., or show an article that you have, for different reasons, liked very much. Better yet, you can ask participants to find and bring such an article that they found themselves, and ask them to explain why is it that they found it so appealing.

Reading such examples together is useful because it allows you to discuss the common mistakes and brilliant choices that authors make. You can note down all the comments on a flipchart to remind participants not to make the same mistakes.

A very interesting sourcebook for communication training programmes is the one published by FAO: "Communication for Rural Development": http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3492e.pdf

Another useful resource is the interactive guide on writing effectively called Writing for Change, prepared by IDRC: https://www.idrc.ca/en/book/writing-change-interactive-guide-effective-writing-writing-science-and-writing-advocacy

DISSEMINATION AND ADOPTION

2.9

A lot of work has been done in the process so far. But this is an excellent time to remind the group that our work does not end with the publication of an article. Often we get so caught up in tables and writing that we forget **why is it that we are doing this work: for improving practices in development initiatives** – both those of others and our own. In order to achieve that, **the lessons need to be shared, and eventually adopted** by the target audience.

In the work that has been done over the years on systematization, capitalization and documentation, this focus on adoption has been missing. Therefore, we want to put particular emphasis in this guide on "what happens next".

Why this step?

In order to see concrete results from an experience capitalization process, we need people (whether within the same organization or beyond) to adopt the lessons learned. Sometimes this happens spontaneously, but often it does not. Part of adoption is out of our control, but we can try to create conditions that help it takes place. An important element is to choose how to disseminate the lessons.

THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE

As a facilitator, **your role may be needed at different levels**. What your influence as a facilitator is on adoption might be difficult to determine. Because adoption is something that is largely not in the hands of those sharing information or ideas, it is probably even more elusive for you, when you are one more step removed from the end users. But what *can* you do?

- You can support participants to think about **how to best disseminate** their newly generated knowledge;

- You can support participants to think about how to **create the best possible environment for adoption** (e.g. through advocacy);

- You can support participants in **creating a realistic and comprehensive adoption plan** to encompass the points above;

- Depending on how close you are to the case and organization, **you might play an active role in the above** – in the production and dissemination of communication products, in advocating for adoption or in other ways helping to build an environment which enables others to adopt the lessons learned.

DISSEMINATION CHANNELS AND TOOLS

If people want their new knowledge to be used by others, it needs to be shared in some way. In the previous step, participants have made a start by writing it all down. Going back to earlier steps, you may recall that we have already been thinking extensively about who the target audience of the experience capitalization process is. You can help people reach their target audience by supporting the **design of a thorough communications strategy**.

Not all products take a lot of work to make: a poster with photos and some explanatory text, a simple video that you edit yourself – challenge people to look for simple solutions as well

A communication strategy can include different products and channels: partici-pants can write an article or a blog, make a video, produce a radio programme or podcast, use Twitter or other social media channels, create a policy brief – and these are only some of the many possibilities. As a facilitator you support them in this process: by helping them **imagine the many possibilities**, by **narrowing the options** to suit their objectives, and by **supporting the creation and spread of the desired products**.

Of course, due to time and financial limitations, you and they will need to select which products are a priority at that moment. At different times you will have the time, resources and expertise to produce different products. Sometimes the circumstances of a meeting will limit the possible communications products, and there will be many cases when the organizers have a specific product in mind (e.g. they want to produce one booklet with articles in a similar format).

But the first step is for participants to choose: **which format and dissemination channel is the best for me to reach my audience, and to support my audience in actually *using* the lessons drawn?** It might help to go through this with participants explicitly: thinking about a particular

Reaching the audience

Crucial in any attempt towards adoption of lessons is to take into consideration the intended audience. As a facilitator, it is never too early to pay attention to the audience. Encourage people to think about the characteristics of their audience: when is the best time to reach them, what is the best way to get information to them, what is the best method to support the audience in adopting lessons, etc.

audience, what kind of story would you need to write? Or what kind of product would you need to produce? You can look at examples of different products together – possibly products that participants have brought themselves – and discuss what makes different formats appealing and *useable* for different types of stakeholders. Talking about the dissemination or communication strategy helps to get people to focus on that they are writing because they want something to happen with their stories – they want others to *adopt* their lessons.

ADOPTION ACTION PLAN

Unfortunately, many efforts to share information end up generating few effects. Many of us have the experience of writing reports which then end up on a shelf without having been read by more than one or two persons. With a focus on the adoption of the lessons learnt, as a facilitator you can help people overcome this risk of producing only "dead" information. You can **support them in initiating social change** by letting others in their organization and outsiders **adopt, adapt and expand the use of the lessons and recommendations shared**.

A communications plan

One way for people to start thinking concretely about dissemination and adoption is to make a communication plan. This is the place where they identify, for the capitalized experience:
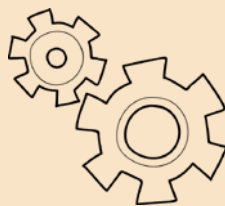
- Which is the **target audience**;

- What is the **communications objective**;

- Which **products and channels** are best suited to reach the target audience;

- The **resources and timelines** required for production and distribution;

- Which people can act as **champions**, taking responsibility to advocate for the adoption of the main lessons drawn; and

- How to **monitor** the effect of the communications activities to regularly check if we are on track to achieving what we want to achieve.

Because we want others to "use" the lessons we have drawn, the communications plan in experience capitalization asks us to think about several factors which are not always part of the standard communications plan. A **communications plan that takes** *adoption* **into account** should include sections which focus on the innovation itself, the external factors and the internal factors, and on how these might influence adoption.

Ask participants to write down all these points, in table-form if they are considering multiple audiences, products or channels. The more concretely they establish the different steps that need to happen, the easier it becomes to identify potential challenges and to implement the plan.

TIP: Making a plan is the first step, but to ensure that the plan is not just hypothetical, you can ask participants to **already take one small action** to set the plan into motion. As they are sitting in the meeting room, give them ten minutes to do one small action: set up an appointment, make an enquiry with a filmmaker, find a platform to publish a blog on, etc. When the first step has been made, the second step becomes much easier!

For examples of simple videos that can help spread the message, see the work of Ramesh Maskey of the Adaptation for Smallholders in Hilly Areas (ASHA) Project in Nepal: a short video on their flexibiogas project (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bUfGs6Q7tw), a video showing the use of a puppet show to disseminate information (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSu51Cyi_OM), and a video on an experience capitalization workshop in Nepal (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CjECRbTeKU).

To help people decide which is the best communication products for their specific target audience and purpose, CTA has developed an online decision making tool: the CTA Decision Tree. After answering a series of multiple choice questions about your purpose and intended audience, the tool gives you a number of suggestions for communication products that may help encourage adoption of the lessons learnt. The tool can be found in the toolkit at http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/toolkit/

Sometimes people go through an experience capitalization process for institutional learning: for people to discover where they **can improve their *own* practices**. When we talk about adoption, it becomes a bit easier if people need to convince only themselves. But most of the time, we also produce lessons for others. So how can we support others in pushing for adoption? We cannot force others to take up our valuable lessons, can we?

When there is **no control over other people's actions**, what can we do? Even if we cannot force others to take up our ideas, we can plan to make sure we **make it as easy as possible for them** to do so. This chapter already mentions one way to do this: developing and distributing the right communication materials and making sure the right people have the right information.

Many extension programmes expect farmers to follow the advice they receive – but they don't. You can discuss with participants why is it that this doesn't take place

But planning for adoption goes beyond thinking about how to share your information. It requires thinking about how people take up new ideas. The so-called **"adoption ladder"** is an analogy for how people take up innovations in phases. In the learning process towards adoption, people generally travel through a few phases: becoming aware, developing one's own ideas, changing attitudes and finally developing a new practice. Considering this, you can see how it is not very likely that offering some factual information to people will automatically lead to adoption. **It might require some more effort, offering people space to use the information to develop one's ideas and plans, and eventually change their attitudes and practice.**

What we can do is start thinking about what might limit or enable adoption, and do the most we can to **eliminate these limitations and create an environment that stimulates adoption**. You can explain how participants can consider:

*   **The innovation itself.** Participants are presenting an experience in a document, so they can consider whether the innovation or general idea is clearly presented or not. They need to think about which parts of the innovation they are presenting: can it be tried in other settings, for example? Is it feasible? Is it something that can be or will be accepted by the target audience we are trying to reach?

*   **External factors.** At the same time, participants need to consider whether what they are presenting links to the general context in which the target audience is found. Does the innovation respond to a clear demand? Does it follow local rules and regulations? Could there be enough resources and inputs for people to adopt (parts of) the innovation?

*   **Internal factors.** Last, participants need to consider the organization, project or institution they expect to adopt their ideas. Are the roles and responsibilities clearly defined within this project or institution? Is there a person who can play the role of champion, as someone who is going to push these ideas? Are there sufficient time and resources? Is there enough information?

Taking these thoughts into account, try to make, or help participants make, an adoption action plan. Such a plan can include the production of communication products like in the communications plan, but it must go a bit further than that. This plan can also consider:

*   Meetings with people in strategic positions;

*   Getting strategic partners involved, like farmer leaders;

- Creating specific opportunities to adapt the innovation to different settings;

- Gathering support (financial or otherwise) for replicating or upscaling;

- Appointing a "champion" who actively steers people towards the intended outcome; and

- The best ways to monitor adoption.

Remember that in a comprehensive and realistic adoption action plan, for all activities it is necessary to specify who the intended audience is, which resources are necessary, and what is the envisioned timeline.

MONITORING ADOPTION

Also, don't forget one of the most important activities in working towards adoption: monitoring adoption; monitoring the process. Monitoring to what extent others are taking up the new knowledge can help adapt the way people communicate the lessons they have drawn, and increase the chances of adoption. What is working? Who is taking up the new ideas? Why are people *not* taking up the lessons learned?

Moreover, monitoring whether lessons have been taken up allows people to **demonstrate (to bosses or donors, for example) that their work is impacting others**.

Monitoring the adoption process can be as easy as **keeping in touch** with the people you shared information with. With some you will have direct contact, with others this will be through the publication channels you used: the radio station that talked about your experience, the magazine that published your article. **Who read it? Has there been any feedback?** You can start asking for

feedback yourself as well, of course, getting in touch with those you know have read your article or listened to your podcast. Remember the three points above, to understand how adoption might be limited: is it the innovation itself, the external factors or internal factors?

Just as important, make sure you or your participants **plan for this step in the adoption action plan**. The results can then be used to adjust the action plan later.

ADVOCACY

Advocating for adoption is also a way of sharing information: in this context it basically means **getting the right information to the right people** so that they take action. How do we convince other people to adopt the lessons and ideas that we generate? This goes back to the communication plan. But it also means that an *adoption* strategy goes beyond producing publications that are shared widely – it can also include talking to certain people personally, and assigning roles to set adoption processes into motion.

As a facilitator, depending on your relation to the organization and the cases, your role in this can take different forms. Perhaps you are one of these key persons who, because of your position, are going to be able to make a change. Perhaps you are the **"champion" who helps to encourage others** of the importance of experience capitalization and who shows them how to incorporate it into their work. Or perhaps you will support another to play such a role.

Most importantly, in terms of advocacy: **we have to provide evidence**. Those capitalizing on their experience are recommending certain actions, but they will also need to prove that these actions can lead to better results. They will need to provide evidence, with arguments coming from the analysis.

Involving "changemakers" or "influencers" is key for successful adoption. What could you, as a facilitator, do to support these changemakers?

Adoption role play
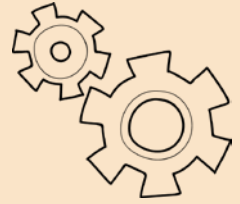
To help people imagine what can happen in terms of adoption, this exercise shows how different stakeholders need different information to be able to "use" the lessons that have been drawn. Choosing one case (from the group, or a different one), you can assign different roles to reflect on how useful the given information is. We divide the group into different roles of potential "adopters": the author's colleagues, potential funders, farmer(s) (representatives), and government representatives. Everyone reads the article, keeping in mind: would I adopt this? What else would I need to know? What would keep me from using this information? Afterwards we discuss in plenary which additional information each adopter-group would need from the author to be convinced and able to adopt the key insights.

Taking on a specific role allows people to really look at an article from the perspective of *using* the information. In addition, this is useful for the participant who gets elaborate feedback from the group. It helps to see what to include in an article to make it more convincing, and what to leave out because it is not relevant. And it can show which additional actions might be necessary, in addition to writing and sharing an article.

For example, as some participants commented, these are some requirements to make an idea presented in a written text more easy to adopt. The whole text:

• has to be well explained, in clear language, with enough (but not too much) detail;

• has to show results and evidence, so that the reader is motivated to take action;

• has to address a clear problem and shows a new solution to this problem;

• has to show that it is possible to try it, that the necessary inputs are available, that it is not expensive – clear arguments to help the reader convince their colleagues/ bosses/partners;

• needs links to other places where readers can get more information;

• needs a description of the context and of the people involved to see if reader's situation is similar;

• has to show what an enabling environment would need to have; and

• has to show that the author is honest about challenges, tackling and addressing real issues.

Focusing on the need to influence decisions that improve children's lives, the Advocacy Toolkit prepared by UNICEF presents many guidelines and examples: https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

ADAPTATION AND FACILITATING LEARNING SPACES

Remember that adoption does not have to be an exact replication of an innovation or of an experience as a whole. In fact, in most cases an exact replica in a different context would not yield the same results. The goal is that the most important lessons are taken, and **adapted to the new setting**. (This is also why it is so important for potential new users to understand the context in which the original experience took place!) The adaptation or modification of the original ideas can also be a phase directly supported by those who shared their original experience, or even by you, the facilitator.

Especially when the potential adopting stakeholders are close to those who worked with the original innovation, facilitating the adoption of a set of ideas might entail **opening up a space for (interactive) learning** – like a community of practice, for example – rather than simply unilaterally distributing these interesting ideas. In such a learning space you can bring together those who are knowledgeable about the original innovation, and people who see value in this experience for their own work. The latter will then explore how they could adapt the original idea to their own context, and then how they could implement this adaptation. Together you can work on hypothetical scenarios in which the new knowledge will be used, for instance, and select where potential adopters can start experimenting with the suggested improvements or innovations.

Practically, this may take the form of "share fairs", "learning routes" or other exchange visits, workshops, or any other way where you bring people together.

It might be one of your tasks as a facilitator to **help identify potential adopters**, the potential users of the generated knowledge. Not everyone will be suitable for this. Some individuals and organizations are recognised as "late adopters": those who prefer to see a majority or practitioners having taken up an approach before they start using it themselves. First, you may want to find and encourage the early adopters who have the means, the enthusiasm and the flexibility to try out a new approach.

Facilitating adoption may not be easy or straightforward, but this does not mean that it is irrelevant. Change is often not easy. Take this as a reassurance, and be aware that this is an effort in which trial and error will take place. Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Adoption of lessons

"Experience capitalization is an important element in a project, and we should always do it not just at the end but all through a project… If we had done such a thorough reflection at regular intervals during the project – after the first quarter, the middle and at the end – we might have been able to reflect better and draw lessons and make some changes. Ours was a good project, but maybe it could have been even better."

EDITH FERNANDEZ-BACA, PERU

3

ONLINE FACILITATION

We often assume that much of the facilitation of experience capitalization processes needs to happen in face-to-face events, like workshops. However, more and more we have the opportunities to communicate efficiently through online media. In fact, online interaction has become an indispensable part of (international) activities. Just think: how much information is shared through e-mails, for example, even between colleagues? In many work environments, online sharing of documents has become commonplace.

Much of what has been described up till now in this guide can be applied to online facilitation as well. But some issues are specific to online facilitation processes.

In this chapter we will briefly discuss:

- The main challenges of online communication;

- How to facilitate an online Community of Practice; and

- What tools to use.

People are not likely to be interactive online if there is no trust, if they do not know each other nor if they feel no immediate need to take part

It seems so easy: instead of talking to a group in person, we can talk to them online and use channels like e-mail. Unfortunately, we often see that it is more difficult than this. As you know yourself, once we return to our office after a workshop our time is taken up by the tasks that await us there. And keeping in touch online costs time which we rarely schedule for seriously. The result, which we have seen all too often, is that the honest intentions to communicate online are not met once we return home.

How do we resolve this if we want to keep communicating, but do not work in offices right next to each other? Some possible ways to help a group communicate effectively are to:

1. **Make and stick to clear and realistic agreements and deadlines**, which are planned with the group.

2. **Accept that communication will be one-directional at times.** You might not always receive responses to your messages, even if you try everything possible to elicit these responses.

3. **Advocate for institutional support to schedule time for online communication.** If the managers or supervisors know that time will need to be spent in the office as well, this can relieve some pressure.

4. **Decide on the most suitable tool together**: is this an online platform like Dgroups, or e-mail, or even Facebook or Whatsapp?

5. **Send short messages that get to the point quickly**, making it immediately clear what the message asks of the recipient. Long and frequent messages can put busy people off.

6. **Try both group and individual messages.** Sometimes it is easier for people to respond on an individual basis, while group discussions can work motivating as well.

7. **Try compulsory assignments to encourage participation.** For example, asking participants to submit a draft to be able to continue benefitting from the programme.

CONTINUING FACILITATION AND COPS

Face-to-face workshops do not have to be the beginning and end of collaboration. Online facilitation allows you to continue processes even when it is no longer as easy to be in each others physical presence. In many cases, facilitators have opted for the development of a "community of practice", or COP, as CTA did. In this case, **this COP is an online community**, where people all over the world can easily **share knowledge about experience capitalization**. The online community helps us, as practitioners and facilitators of experience capitalization, to keep going and continue developing our skills.

A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do, and learn to do it better as they interact. But putting a group of people together in an online platform does not automatically spark enthusiastic online discussions and exchange. Here too, a facilitator has a specific job to do. So **how do we facilitate a community of practice** on experience capitalization?

In emerging COPs on experience capitalization, we can expect **some common barriers**:

A different FAO online learning module focuses on online facilitation: "Building Electronic Communities and Networks". See http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/course/C

- There is no clear understanding of the value added of the COP;

- People difficult to share ideas and ask questions in "public" spaces;

- Membership changes as people change jobs;

- Knowledge sharing is not seen as one of the most urgent tasks in daily work activities; and

- Connectivity issues in many parts of the world limit regular participation (just as having to log in to a specific site, remember your passwords, etc.).

Many COP facilitators plan lots of activities in new groups, hoping to make participants enthusiastic. But they run the risk of overloading members. It takes a lot of time to realize all these activities, and the responses are few and far between. The key is to choose the few activities that have the biggest impact. How to choose the one or two most effective activities? We start at the beginning: defining the purpose of the COP.

Start by defining the purpose

If there is no clear purpose to having the COP, one which is known and agreed upon by all members, you will be working alone. **What is in it for both the members and the "owners" of the COP?** Try to find out why people join the COP and what they would like to see from the group, and why. How can the COP support their work?

For example, an overall *purpose* for a COP on experience capitalization can be to "exchange knowledge and experiences on work done within different country offices" of one international organization. We can decide what concrete *goals* of the COP are to serve this overarching purpose. In this example, members and the COP organizers have decided that the specific goals of the COP are to:

(a) Support members interested in using and promoting an experience capitalization approach;

(b) Be a space where practical experiences can be shared.

Support from afar

"The process in Ghana showed that the work of a facilitator is not limited to a workshop: most of it takes place before and after participants get together. For example, we thought of an online discussion starting every week, covering a specific topic. Planning in advance worked well. With time, participation got a bit weak. Without many responses, it was difficult to say if what we were doing was right. But the exchange did connect participants between themselves, and helped them share information. The online exchanges started before the face-to-face workshop and served a lot to raise curiosity, enthusiasm, and to put the basis for a COP by introducing participants to each other and connecting them."

YENNENGA KOMPAORÉ, BURKINA FASO

Webinars
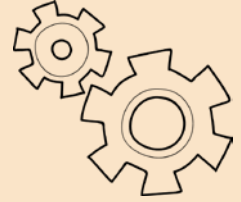
Webinars can be a useful tool to exchange information live, but online. Usually webinars consist of a talk or presentation, which people can follow online, and provides space for questions and answers. Sometimes a webinar presentation is recorded beforehand: this can be useful if it is necessary to prepare more complicated presentations, but it also takes away the personal interaction that makes webinars a more appealing tool. During the presentation you can show slides, images, videos, or your own face – just like in real life presentations. The biggest advantage of a webinar is that people from all over the world can join in a live interactive session. It does not cost much, and the webinar can be recorded and shared with others who were not able to join live. Some sites or platforms, like GoToWebinar, make them easier to organize.

Next: the response

After deciding what the common goals are, try to determine what the desired response from members would be: **what should members *do* to reach this purpose?** So in the example above, how should the members respond in the COP? These could be, relative to the two goals defined above:

(a)   They should share questions and insights on how to do experience capitalization;

(b)   They should post the results from their own experience capitalization processes in their country offices, and are able and willing to use the lessons learned in other country offices.

Finally: the activities needed

Only once you know which responses you intend to bring about, you decide **which activities are suitable**. Remember that in the beginning most of the content will be initiated by the facilitator – members often need more time before they begin sharing. Some specific activities can be:

- Starting discussions on specific topics;

- Sharing resources;

If purposes differ too much, perhaps it is necessary to form more than one COP. It is also possible to have one overarching community, and several (regional or thematic) sub-communities

- Running a poll;

- Requesting inputs created by members, like stories or photos; or

- Giving an overview of upcoming events.

What does the facilitator do?

The facilitator of a COP is the one who adds structure to the COP, or the one who leads the community to reach its goals. The facilitator also ensures that communication goes well, that group dynamics are good. Here are some tips on how to achieve this:

- **Reinforce the common purpose of the COP often.** Include it in the signature of the messages you send, put it in a newsletter, remind people in a discussion post, etc.

- **Concentrate activities.** For example, if activities are duplicated over multiple platforms, try to merge them.

- **Invite members to introduce themselves.** When members "know" each other, it makes online communication much smoother.

- **Make clear library folders for documents.** Try to avoid confusion

and duplication of where resources can be found.

- **Check member needs regularly.** The needs members have of the COP can change, or members can change, so make sure you still know what the group wants.

- **Create a "how to use this group"-page.** Guide participants with communication guidelines, for example, on how to use the COP.

- **Put relevant people in the spotlight.** If you know that certain questions or discussions could use the input of a specific person, tag them or target them explicitly.

- **Invite people to share their challenge or answer**, and *make sure people know* how to get on board.

- **Highlight an upcoming discussion.** Tell members that a specific topic will be highlighted soon, and privately ask key contributors beforehand to take part.

- **Distribute tasks and roles to experts.** If others in the group have expertise on a certain topic, don't be afraid to give them a bigger role in the relevant COP activities.

- **Post only relevant announcements and discussion points.** When posting content like announcements for events, calls for proposals, etc., make clear what the relevance is to the community and its goals.

- **Announce the regularity of posts.** For example, plan to post and announce a new discussion point every two weeks. How often you do this depends on the rhythm of the community. *Take care not to overload participants with information!*

- **Try to limit the group to one discussion point at a time.** Too many different discussions lead to

confusion. Of course, one discussion can organically branch off to different subtopics – then try to keep the overview clear.

- **Continue discussions on topics raised during face-to-face events.** The COP can be a place to continue discussions that you were not able to complete in a meeting.

WHICH TOOLS DO WE USE?

Different tools serve different purposes in online facilitation. Here we mention a few, but there may be more options. What is suitable of course depends on your context – the language in which you communicate with your group, the reliability of internet in your region, the type of interaction you plan to do online, etcetera.

Learning online

It has been mentioned repeatedly in this guide: FAO has developed an online course on Experience Capitalization. It is freely accessible after (free) registration. This course has combined much of what has been written on experience capitalization worldwide, and is a comprehensive resource for a *theoretical* understanding of the approach.

As a facilitator, you can make use of this online course in different ways. You can use it as preparation for a face-to-face workshop, for example. You could also support participants online, as they start to implement what they have learned in the course in their daily work.

Communication

If you are facilitating online discussions, it is essential that you select one or two communication channels that are easily accessible and user-friendly for your group. Options to think about are e-mail, Facebook, WhatsApp, Dgroups or Twitter.

It helps for a facilitator to try to get to know the members of the COP – if possible visiting them and meeting them personally

A general website can help sharing information and getting comments, while other platforms like Moodle or GoToWebinar can help you help group members connect in different ways.

Think about who you want to reach and how you expect them to participate in discussions: if you want to reach as many people as possible, and there does not necessarily have to be two-way communication, the website might be a good option. But if you want people to be able to respond quickly and easily, WhatsApp may be more suitable. If you want discussions to be stored and easily accessible later, for example for members who join later, Dgroups may be an easy option.

Sharing documents

The internet offers many possibilities to store and share the documents you may need for facilitating experience capitalization processes. These may include:

• Reading material;

• Photos made during a workshop;

• Assignments done by participants;

• Templates for assignments;

• PowerPoint presentations; or

• Articles or other communication materials produced as a result of each process.

Throughout this guide we refer to online resources, for example. Some useful tools that we have used along the way are:

• **Google Drive:** you can create folders with all types of files, which can be accessed publicly or only by a group of people. Depending on the settings you choose, only you or everyone can add files, and the files can be read-only or can be edited by others as well.

• **Dgroups:** although it is principally used for online communication and discussions (see above), Dgroups also offers possibilities to store files, and for members to add files.

• **Website:** your own website may be a place for participants to download materials, and the CTA website also offers a number of resources that can be freely downloaded.

Online mentoring

"Online mentoring is something that I think is critical to how we interact with participants. It is more than training. In Asia we insisted on article drafts before the concluding workshop and we had a couple of rounds of comments in most cases before meeting a second time. Also, several participants called and wrote to clear doubts, seek advice, or change the topic they were working on. All this required online mentoring and in the end was a good way to ensure that participants came to the second workshop with an advanced level of their written output."

SHALINI KALA, INDIA

4

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

As a facilitator, you guided participants through a full experience capitalization process. They were able to draw interesting and new lessons from their experience, and shared these lessons. Hopefully they were even able to influence others to adopt some of their new insights, and have thus contributed to improving practices in rural development initiatives. Hooray! Mission accomplished! Right? If the mission was to learn from only one set of experiences, at this moment in time: yes, the mission may have been accomplished. But our dreams, and hopefully your dreams, are bigger than this.

An experience capitalization facilitator can encourage and support people to *keep* learning and improving using this approach. The experience capitalization approach, or parts of it, can be integrated into the regular work plan of the organizations you work with. We refer to this as institutionalization, and this is what the last chapter of the guidebook will focus on.

In this chapter, you will find information on:

• What institutionalization is, and why it is important;

• What your role as a facilitator can be in institutionalizing experience capitalization;

• How reviewing the process up until now is essential for successful institutionalization;

• How to plan for institutionalization; and

• Why monitoring the institutionalization process is important.

Much of the work on experience capitalization and similar approaches in the past has looked at how to go through the process itself. Not much work has been done on the concrete ways to mainstream the approach in our daily work. All too often we have seen that the initial enthusiasm about the approach slowly dies down as people return to their day-to-day activities, where knowledge management is not integrated.

WHY INSTITUTIONALIZE?

If experience capitalization is a separate activity, with no links to it in the regular project cycle and without an active learning culture in the organization, it is **no wonder that it remains an "add-on" activity** which slowly dwindles into oblivion when the few people who learned about the approach leave the organization. Even when there is a designated knowledge management officer who is assigned to "do experience capitalization", it often happens that this person operates as an island and his or her work is not understood or supported by colleagues.

Clearly, if we take experience capitalization itself seriously, it is time to take the *institutionalization* of experience capitalization seriously. It is important, but because the focus on it is so new there are **not many recorded precedents to learn from**. This is why, as a facilitator, there is no set of steps you can show people and say, "Look, this is how you institutionalize". What we *can* do is think about what we would see in an organization, if experience capitalization were institutionalized, and then think of ways to get there. So, **what would institutionalization of experience capitalization look like?**

- It would be **part of a regular project cycle** or different programmes within an organization (e.g. it is standard practice to include a case study in every report);

- The **procedures and methods** would be available, presented in a clear way and easily understood (e.g. experience capitalization is part of an easily accessible and readable knowledge management strategy);

- It would be **clear who exactly does what** in the organization in terms of knowledge management, and who would be in charge (e.g. there is a knowledge management officer who coordinates capitalization activities, and relevant staff have time alloted for this work in their job descriptions);

- There would be some **training scheme** that allows new people to become involved (e.g. new staff members are given time and encouragement to go through the online learning module on experience capitalization);

- There would be **encouraging and motivating leaders**, who guide staff (e.g. both the project leader and the knowledge management officer are "champions" and regularly refer to experience capitalization in their daily work); and

- The results of the experience capitalization activities would be **recorded and shared**, at least within the institution (e.g. a short video is made of every relevant activity and posted on the website, or a short summary is given in a monthly lunch meeting).

The facilitator's role

How then, as a facilitator, can you support people to institutionalize experience capitalization? In some cases, the facilitator may be a person with considerable influence in the organization, while in other cases the facilitator may

Institutionalization versus adoption

We have been talking about **two ways to take a long-term perspective** on experience capitalization: adoption and institutionalization. But **these two are not the same**.

Adoption, as you saw in the chapter on implementation, is the step where we look at how to enable the *use* of the lessons that come from one experience capitalization process. For example, when Mrs. Rahel has analyzed her experience with new irrigation methods in extremely dry areas in Egypt, and inspired her colleagues in Tunis to replicate her methods, we are talking about adoption – the Tunisian colleagues are *using* Mrs. Rahel's lessons from her experience capitalization exercise.

Now, when Mrs. Rahel and her colleagues continue to work with experience capitalization and now also start analyzing and sharing their experiences with different intercropping techniques, a second irrigation method, and organizing farmers in cooperatives, and any other activities they are implementing in their department, we are talking about institutionalization.

So "adoption" concerns the impact of one experience capitalization process, while "institutionalization" essentially means repeating experience capitalization processes on a more regular basis. In essence, you could say that institutionalization means adopting the experience capitalization approach!

need to convince many others to get involved. The facilitator may also be an outsider to the organizations that are looking for ways to institutionalize experience capitalization.

In any case, as a facilitator you cannot *force* an entire organization to adopt experience capitalization as part of its institutional processes. Nor is facilitating for institutionalization a matter of just standing in front of a group and telling them what to do. What you *can* do is to:

1. **Show that it works:** inspire organizations to take up the approach by showing examples of its benefits. You can support your group in demonstrating the effectiveness of their own experience with experience capitalization. Sometimes an outsider's perspective (like yours) can be extra convincing.

2. **Help to plan:** support participants when drafting a plan for institutionalization, or getting involved in the planning process within their organization.

3. **Work with champions:** motivate participants to become leaders in their own organizations who motivate and guide staff, making it easier for them to try out the approach. You can give them this guide, for example. You can keep mentoring and coaching them, offering feedback and advice even after the official session has ended. Perhaps they can take part in other activities in a supporting role. Importantly, recognize the efforts that (potential) champions are putting in the scaling up of experience capitalization.

4. **Long-term support:** keep reminding, supporting and encouraging participants and their organizations of the benefits of the approach, returning to them after a

The first steps of mainstreaming

"We have planned an annual writeshop so that the field staff will get together to write stories about the work they are doing, and about the people with whom they are working. Honestly speaking, we haven't been able to institutionalize the capitalization approach. But we recognize that a journey of a thousand miles starts under your feet – and we are slowly making progress."

KARMA WANGMO, BHUTAN

few months and a few years, to see where continued support may be needed.

REVIEWING WHAT WORKED

If we want to convince an institution to take up experience capitalization on a regular basis, it helps to **show that it works**. We have to be able to show the results. The more results we show, the easier it is to convince others. That may sound obvious, but sometimes we do not do enough of this. If you have gone through at least one experience capitalization process, this helps tremendously when trying to show results: you can then not just talk about theoretical benefits, but about **people who have actually experienced first-hand** what the impact can be.

But this first-hand experience is not just useful for showing results. More importantly, it **helps to see what works**, in the specific setting of each institution, and what does not. Like we mentioned before, **there is no recipe for institutionalization**. Every unique institution will need a unique approach. So the more the team tries out experience capitalization, the more they can assess which parts work, what needs to be adapted, where they see the greatest benefits, and what challenges they encounter.

The benefit of working with a group of people from different organizations is that they **can learn from each others' trials and errors with experience capitalization**. It is an excellent opportunity to review the approach in different settings, together. Taking this further, sharing experiences with experience capitalization more widely can benefit even more people interested in the approach. Within a larger group like the Community of Practice, writing about the process itself can inspire people around the world and give them ideas on how to mainstream the approach.

Evaluating the adoption of the lessons from an experience capitalization process, as discussed in the chapter on implementation, is also essential for institutionalization. If you see that the lessons from an experience capitalization process are not taken up by the organization or by others, something is not going quite right. You are not meeting your final goal of generating change. Evaluating where the bottlenecks are can help improve the process.

Debrief: what worked

You can organize a moment with the group to evaluate the experience capitalization process, or the first steps of the process. When each participant has gone through some of the steps in their own organization, they have practical experiences with data collection, analysing, writing, etc. Ask people, in smaller or larger groups, to discuss:
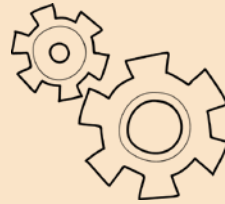
• What happened in reality, which was different from what you expected?

• How did you manage time?

• Were you able to make it participatory, involve colleagues etc? How?

• Were you able to use the methodology properly? What More was needed?

• What were challenges?

• What could you recommend to your colleagues?

This discussion allows people to talk about challenges and share tips.

PLANNING INSTITUTIONALIZATION

One of the most important roles as a facilitator in the institutionalization process is that you can help people **draft a specific plan**. Knowing what has worked in practice, and knowing how their own organization works, people can start to concretely design ways to integrate experience capitalization into their regular work. Brainstorming about possible ways to institutionalize is fine, but without putting a plan on paper these ideas often fade over time.

Such an institutionalization plan should consider the essential elements of the experience capitalization approach as well as the context and the internal conditions in an organization. Again, encourage people to go back to the original purpose for doing experience capitalization.

When setting up an institutionalization plan, consider the following:

• **Draft procedures, and how to set them up:** as a facilitator, especially if you are close to or are part of an organization, you may be in a good position to help your office and colleagues discover how and where these procedures fit specifically in *that* organization.

• **Necessary resources:** many times we think that institutionalization depends on a sufficient amount of resources and time, and again we hear that "we cannot do more because we don't have the money". Of course we need money to organize a workshop or go to the field, but there is more to resources than money. We also need information, external support, and human resources.

- **Institutional support:** colleagues and managers need to be convinced – which will help with the necessary resources! And it helps to have champions in the organization, who will help to keep experience capitalization on the agenda, and support colleagues in implementing it.
- **Consider challenges:** if you have gone through a complete capitalization process, you know where the difficulties lie in your specific context, and you might be able to anticipate such challenges in the future.

Again, like with other action plans, you can invite participants to take one small step to set the plan into motion

As part of this plan, of course, you need to have very clear **activities**, to have **objectives**, you need to have **deadlines**, you need to determine **who is going to do what**, and you need to have **money** for it. And an important part that we must not forget: we have to find a **mechanism to get feedback**, and to get the opinions of those who are involved in it.

Monitoring what works

In planning for institutionalization, but also in the *implementation* of the institutionalization plans, encourage people to **keep monitoring what works**. Is the institutionalization process on track? Are people participating? Are there still sufficient resources to keep it going? Does the model we devised work? As a facilitator, you can enable people to keep track of all this by motivating them, planning for it, and regularly asking for updates. In some cases you will have a larger role, if you are more involved in the organization yourself.

Does the model we presented here work for you and your organization? It might. You might have needed some adaptations. Or

The link to M&E

Embedding experience capitalization in existing monitoring and evaluation departments and activities may be **one of the most effective ways for intstitutionalizing** the approach. Often, M&E is an established part of the organization or project, and an overlap can clearly be seen. Yet there are also clear differences, and their complementarity can make collaboration a win-win situation.

How to make this link? **Show the complementarity** of both approaches:

- experience capitalization's qualitative and subjective approach can help explain M&E's data and give it a human face;
- experience capitalization's focus on change can be useful for validating or adapting an organization's theory of change;
- M&E's data can be used in experience capitalization processes (and vice versa!).

One of the first steps for stronger linkages is to **create a common language** between M&E and experience capitalization, really exploring together where this complementarity lies.

you may have changed the model completely. As a facilitator, we ask you to keep paying attention to the whole process. There is no recipe for institutionalization. There are only the ideas we generate together.

What matters most is attitude

"In institutionalization, the main difficulty that I encountered so far was the perception and attitudes of the staff members: they did not regard tasks related to knowledge management, communications and experience capitalization as a shared responsibility, as it is often not reflected in their job descriptions. So sufficient funds and the willingness to spend is not what matters most for mainstreaming the approach. Rather, I believe, what matters is a greater level of awareness, positive learning attitudes, willpower and commitment, and an openness and flexibility to adopt new things. And most importantly: internalization of the values and importance of experience capitalization—this will help sustain the institutionalization process."

RENUKA RAI, NEPAL

Useful for both sides

"Experience capitalization greatly improved our project's M&E work and project design. We have always had lots of data from the field level, but before we were not doing much with it. Experience capitalization helped make sense of how we could use this data to actually improve the project. On the other side, field staff used to be unsure of why they were collecting and entering all this data for the M&E department. After learning about experience capitalization they understood how the data can be useful at a different level in the organization."

ANIL MAIKHURI, INDIA

World Café: what do we need?
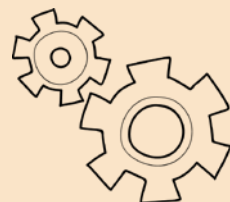
What would we need to create an enabling environment for institutionalization of experience capitalization? One exercise to help plan for institutionalization uses the "world café" approach to look at this.

Select 4-6 topics (depending on the size of the group) to brainstorm on as the groups rotate, drawing on the main requirements for institutionalization. The categories we have used in the past, as discussed in the FAO learning module on Experience Capitalization, are:

•   Resources

•   Capacities and skills

•   Organizational culture

•   Motivated participants

•   Information management

•   Clear processes

•   A common understanding

•   Institutional support

Focusing on each topic, small groups can discuss what they think would be needed, concretely, to create an enabling environment for institutionalization. Different people working in different functions, or in different types of organizations, will have new insights to add. With this exercise, you create a collective brainstorm session where everyone gets to participate, but where the discussion takes place in small groups. This gives people more opportunity to contribute than in a big plenary session, where often only a few of the more dominant voices are heard.

Of course, not everything noted down will be relevant for everyone. But at the end of the exercise the group has built a large repository of "requirements" for institutionalization, which the whole group can use as inspiration for their institutionalization plans. So the more concrete the ideas become, the more useful they are for the group.

There are many ways to institutionalize an approach, but there is no fixed recipe. Keep an eye on the CTA webpage on mainstreaming experience capitalization for case studies on how to institutionalize experience capitalization: http://experience-capitalization.cta.int/mainstreaming/

FINAL WORDS

One of the key ideas behind the workshops which were organized by CTA was that of "learning by doing": starting an experience capitalization process and trying to complete it was seen as a much better learning approach than just sharing theory or discussing what could participants expect back home. Not surprisingly, every process was different, largely depending on the specific context in which each workshop took place, and on the participants who joined. But every process showed the main elements of the approach, and every process helped participants identify the steps or ideas that help us describe and analyze a particular experience in detail. More important, they helped identify why is it that these steps or ideas work.

The information included in this guidebook can be seen as a similar product. Many facilitators have been working with a large number of participants, supporting their work and not just providing a training course. And in this way they have also been "learning by doing", and identifying lessons and insights, and showing what works and what doesn't work when facilitating an experience capitalization process. The previous pages show what these different facilitators tried and learned during the workshops which took place in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and in Latin America.

Yet this cannot be seen as a recipe which needs to be followed in every new case. As every facilitator knows, a "one-size-fits-all" idea does not exist, and this is especially true when talking about knowledge management. Every process will be different, and every facilitator will need to adjust her work to the context and to the participants. She will need to prepare very thoroughly in advance, but she will also have to improvise, and continuously adapt her plans.

This booklet is not a list of rules to obey blindly. It follows the different steps or phases which every capitalization process must include, but in every phase it only includes ideas which can be tried in a specific context or setting, and which will then need to be adapted. It is this specific adaptation which will help every facilitator train, support, motivate and engage all participants, and which will therefore lead to a very successful capitalization process. And it is this adaptation process which will lead to new lessons and recommendations, and which will inspire other facilitators. So please share your ideas and your experience as a facilitator!

Laura Eggens
Consultant, Guava Stories
E-mail: lauraeggens@yahoo.com

Jorge Chavez-Tafur
Project Coordinator, CTA
E-mail: chavez-tafur@cta.int

EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION SERIES

FACILITATING EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION

CONTACT US

CTA
PO Box 380
6700 AJ Wageningen
The Netherlands

T +31 317 467100
F +31 317 460067
E cta@cta.int

CTApage
CTAflash