



A project co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), *Research Matters* (RM) supports the effective exchange and translation of sound and innovative research among a wide range of research-users. This newsletter is published on a biannual basis and contains updates about RM's projects, activities and products, with a specific focus on a topic that we believe is of interest to our partners. This current issue concentrates on **Knowledge Management** (see reverse).

RM Web Site Updates @ www.research-matters.net

Thinkpieces – read up on a variety of health systems and knowledge translation topics, including: the RM-produced synthesis, "Towards an Ideal African Health System?"; the GHW-authored, "Making the WHO Work Better" and "A Health Systems Development Agenda"; short synthesis papers on mutual health insurance schemes (mutuelles) in West Africa; papers on community participation in Mozambique, health financing in Tanzania and Mexico, and a synthesis of a West African social protection project...

Videos, Podcasts, Toolkits, Conference Reports, Mapping Tools ...

- RM ACTIVITIES**
- ✦ **ZAMFOHR** – continued facilitation of this cutting-edge national-level KT institute in Zambia.
 - ✦ **REACH Policy** – support for the ongoing evolution of this East African KT process, especially in the development of national nodes.
 - ✦ **NHRS support** – capturing and exporting Kenyan and Malawian experience in designing a national health research system.

Governance Toolkit
This resource provides researchers with a road map to issues of governance and how it relates to health and health systems research. Designed to strengthen individual researchers' capacity to conduct applied research that will both strengthen and monitor the capacity of governments to ensure equitable financing and delivery of priority public health and health care services.

Equity Gauge Zambia
RM produced a 15-minute video on this compelling health research project that seeks to define, measure and promote equity in four different Zambian districts. RM and IDRC's Evaluation Unit have also launched the "Video Voice Zambia," training nurses, district health workers, and community members to use video as a tool to document and monitor the health system itself ...

Towards an Ideal African Health System? Contributions to the Vision
RM's May 2006 *Call for Writers* asked authors to reflect upon the question, "What might an affordable and sustainable 21st-century African health system look like?" Six writers responded to the challenge and their work has resulted in a series of speculative working papers examining past, current and future African health system directions – from the theoretical to the practical, from a 'blue skies' to a ground perspective. RM has produced a 2-page and a 30-page synthesis of the best *contributions to the vision*.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

"Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it."

- Samuel Johnson, from Boswell's *Life of Johnson*

Much has already been written about Knowledge Management (KM) – but how, in particular, does it apply to a health researcher or research institution? Like Knowledge Translation (KT), KM is a broad and complex topic, touching upon such theoretical issues as audits, mapping, capturing, sharing, even force fields and matrices ... While KM typically describes the interwoven assets of human resources and the types of knowledge we produce, the question here is – *how well do you manage your own outputs?* In very specific terms, how organized is your computer? When asked by a journalist or a ministry official, how quickly could you find your key findings or papers or presentations? How easily could you find an email sent by someone whose name you can't recall with a subject-line you're not entirely sure of attached to a document of the utmost importance? How tied are you to proprietary (e.g. Microsoft) software?



Is this your desktop?

KM does not begin or end with a computer. However, organizing your electronic files is *central* to being an effective knowledge manager – which, in turn, is central to communicating that knowledge to those who need to understand it. Fortunately, there now exists a suite of open source and freeware programs to help you keep your files organized and easily accessible. These programs require no special technological abilities – merely the desire to do routine tasks more efficiently.

✎ **Open Source** – a type of software that is free and can be developed or modified by anyone. Open Source software now rivals or exceeds the quality of proprietary software – with the built-in advantages of constant, to-the-minute evolution and freedom from corporate licenses/control. ✎ Check out www.OpenOffice.org

✎ **Firefox** – the open-source **replacement** for Internet Explorer (IE). It is a tremendous improvement over IE and should be considered as *essential*. Tabbed browsing will dramatically change your approach to the internet, particularly for those using a slow or dial-up connection.

✎ **Thunderbird** – the new open-source email browser that can manage email from any and all of your email accounts. Its search feature is so strong that you don't need to organize or even save attachments – just search whenever they're needed and Thunderbird will produce them.

✎ **Google Desktop** – the best (proprietary-but-free) way to search for any file on your computer. As the famous search engine crawls the web, so this program searches your computer, finding words within individual emails, docs and pdfs. This program also enables you to receive constant updates from certain websites, while also allowing you to link together two or more computers. ✎ Check out www.box.net for a free way to store huge files on the internet for easy accessibility and shareability.

What about ...

- ✎ using mobile phones to update a website?
- ✎ open access? What does it mean and how could it impact your work?
- ✎ political/context mapping?
- ✎ the media choices available to disseminate your knowledge?
- ✎ establishing a Resource Centre dedicated to KM/T?
- RM is currently developing manuals designed to guide you through the process of answering questions like these.

Of course, managing your outputs is just the beginning. However, once you can find your important files – once your computer becomes an organized, efficient manager of your knowledge – then it's that much easier to communicate or translate your findings so that your work can make a difference.

Select KM Resources available online

Ben Ramalingam. *Tools for Knowledge and Learning*. 2006
Caroline de Brun, *ABC of Knowledge Management*. 2005

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