



Knowledge for Forests

How KNOWFOR partners are using design, monitoring, evaluation and learning for understanding knowledge uptake



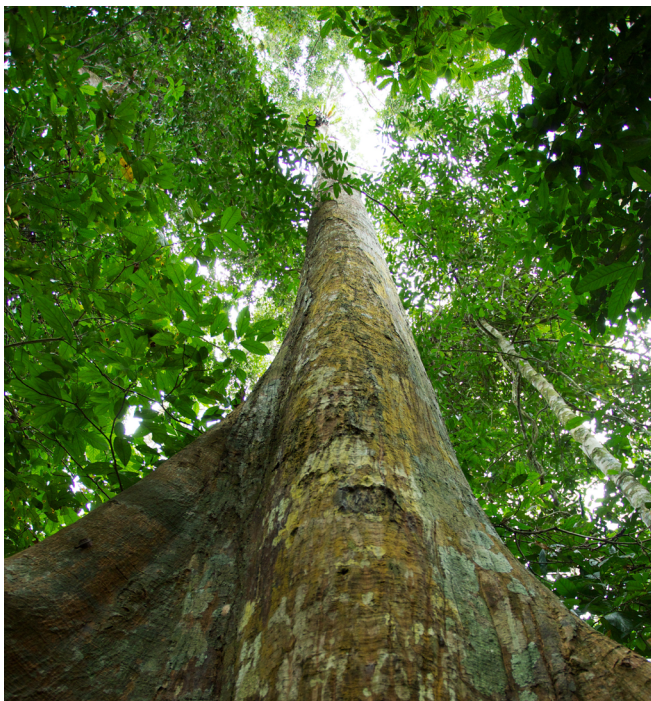
Background

KNOWFOR, a DFID-funded partnership between the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Bank Program on Forests (PROFOR), grew out of the need to reform how knowledge uptake projects are designed, monitored and learned from.

Recognising a gap between the supply and uptake of knowledge by practitioners and decision makers in the forestry sector, KNOWFOR partners have been working to develop customised internal approaches to design, monitoring, evaluation and learning (DMEL) for their projects.

These approaches aim to inform organisational management as well as promote a wider conversation on linking short-term, localised interventions to long-term, broader social, economic and environmental benefits.

KNOWFOR partners targeted staff and partner training, as well as new tools, systems and human resources to support DMEL at an institutional level. The investments have already led to improved understanding and early practice changes among activity managers.



Case study: factors for successful investment in DMEL

KNOWFOR partners undertook a study to assess which factors helped or hindered successful uptake of new DMEL approaches, focusing on: (i) internal systems and culture, (ii) individual practice change, and (iii) external factors influencing effective DMEL.

The case study investigated the internal change processes, cumulative outcomes, and partner assessments of the value of KNOWFOR's contribution to DMEL from mid-2013 to mid-2015. It examined the uptake of new approaches to DMEL across KNOWFOR projects and organisations and collected partners' shared experience of using and encouraging others to use the KNOWFOR DMEL tools and approaches, and new ways of thinking about DMEL more generally.

The study used a participatory approach to maximise the opportunities for KNOWFOR partners to engage with and reflect on how their own information was being used.

The approach drew heavily on collaborative outcomes reporting (COR): a framework for reporting on the contribution to long-term outcomes using mixed methods (online surveys, document reviews, and semi-structured interviews with partners) in combination with participatory planning and analysis processes. In the final stages of the study, KNOWFOR partners met to review the evidence, draw conclusions about progress and discuss options for future investment in DMEL.

Key findings

In developing and implementing enhanced approaches to DMEL for knowledge uptake projects, partners identified a set of key enablers and constraints to the development and implementation of improved DMEL approaches:

1. KNOWFOR partners created enabling environments, invested in the process, developed capacity, and endorsed new approaches. Many partner interviewees and workshop participants indicated that these steps are essential in fostering open learning cultures.

For project staff ... they now realize this is something demanding but in the end very useful and profitable in the medium-long term. (Interview informant)

If this is going to work, if we want to be able to tell the story of impact, we will need to keep working on these approaches. If in three years, people forget about what we started and talk about something new, it will all have been a waste. (Interview informant)

2. KNOWFOR partners improved internal DMEL practices through the strength of early adopters encouraging its use by other project managers. Then they can internalise, learn from, and adapt approaches to suit their specific needs.

It forced me to think 'down the road' and also to anticipate and prioritise key contacts and outputs. (Survey respondent)

The most useful measure is the change in language being used in discussions and the way people are taking monitoring and evaluation concepts into account in their planning. (Interview informant)

3. KNOWFOR partners engaged with external professional learning networks to continue the uptake of DMEL practices beyond KNOWFOR.

KNOWFOR has raised a lot of questions and challenged us to do things differently. The type of interaction we are developing in KNOWFOR is useful. Focus is on process of uptake more than results, which is very useful. (Interview informant)



Sustaining success into the future

KNOWFOR partners have achieved significant changes in organisational attitudes, understanding and practice since 2013.

However, partners are still in the early stages of a cultural shift in relation to DMEL. When asked to assess the progress to date (years 1-2), partners ranked the achievement highly (7-9 out of 10), but much lower (a score

of between 3 or 4 out of 10) when asked to consider the longer-term achievements as a whole (years 5+).

Continued work and investment is needed through KNOWFOR and internally within partner organisations to translate these early achievements into sustained and ingrained DMEL practices.

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