

KNOW-HOW
3000

Good Practice *IN DETAIL*

Skill set for efficient and effective staff achievement of organisational and project goals



HORIZONT
3000

AUSTRIAN ORGANISATION
FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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Battery Operated Systems for
Community Outreach
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List of Abbreviations

BOSCO	Battery Operated Systems for Community Outreach
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
CE3	Education for Entrepreneurships
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
TA	Technical Assistance
B.O.D.	Board of Directors
KPA	Key Performance Areas

Imprint

Experience in Detail
“Skill set for efficient and effective staff achievement of organisational and project goals”

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1. General Information

The Battery Operated Systems for Communication Outreach (BOSCO) Uganda works in solidarity with residents of northern Uganda to recover from decades of conflict and displacement due to a Civil War. The organisation intends to help communities to turn isolation and aid-dependency into self-advocacy through the use of innovative and collaborative Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the entrepreneurial uses of micro-scale electricity. BOSCO Uganda initially started by implementing ICT & Development Centres in rural northern Uganda (currently 42) with the intention to implement internet connectivity directly by the organisation. Since 2012, the organisation is working in the sectors of sustainable provision of energy in off-grid locations as well as entrepreneurial education where BOSCO Uganda runs its own ecosystem for social and economic development. In addition, the organisation is also growing in the field of research.

This experience called “*Skill set for efficient and effective staff achievement of organisational and project goals*” was conducted from 2016 until 2018 at 5 different connectivity, electricity and “Education for Entrepreneurships” (CE3) sites in the Acholi and Lango sub-region. This experience reports mainly the activities undertaken within the organisation to support capacity development among the staff in managing project needs.



Figure 1: Location of the experience

This good practice can be relevant for other organisations working in the same area because it shows that data hub training and establishment provides strong evidence of data

collected, which can be refined and used for decision making and service delivery. In the case of BOSCO Uganda, for example Quick-Book training improved the openness, transparency, financial discipline and timely reporting of the staff which later transformed into better service delivery that had positive impacts on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.

Moreover, it shows that Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) supports log frame development within the organisation, staff capacity in understanding project needs, data collection tools, project management and proposal writing.

A Technical Assistant (TA) is helpful to support restructuring the improvement of processes and policies within the organisation like meetings, development of work procedure manuals, staff appraisals, checklists for field staff, timesheets, work plans and above all B.O.D. members with professional expertise for departmental development.

At last, this experience also indicates the importance of knowledge sharing among the staff who participated in workshops and trainings.

2. Context of the Experience

Northern Uganda is a region that underwent over two decades of Civil War ending around 2007. This conflict resulted into a breakdown of hitherto strong cultural safety nets, slowed economic growth, led to poor educational institutions and negative physiological impacts on the livelihood of the population in the region. Productivity, acceptance and adoptability of innovations remain a challenge in the area due to mistrust, lack of confidence and low level of exposure, especially among the youth who has grown up in this challenging environment.

Working in this region, BOSCO Uganda observed untimely submissions of reports, a lack of transparency in financial reporting, slow service delivery and delayed financial requests, a lack of evidence to support all the thematic areas of work and poor asset inventory management among their own staff.

Results were outdated organisational policies and poor adherence to such documents by the management of the organisation, resistance



from staff to submit timesheets, work plans, checklists and reports as staff did not appreciate the usefulness of such submissions. The organisation was challenged to implement proper project monitoring, accountability, learning and evaluation, and there was only sporadic knowledge transfer without any system among the staff.



3. Main Characteristics of the Experience

Facing these challenges, BOSCO Uganda implemented practices to improve their work and the use of its resources so it could be translated into better evidence based accountability.

To implement such practices, BOSCO Uganda drew lessons from failures and successes in its former implementation of projects, some of which were:

- Challenge in reporting
- Reluctance and resistance to submit monthly work plans, timesheets and accountabilities
- And a lack of evidence to support the thematic work of BOSCO Uganda

During this process, BOSCO Uganda could count with the support of a HORIZONT3000 Technical Advisor (TA) that teased out gaps in efficient and effective management that later on translated into the need for capacity building, institutional policies, procedures and documentation. These capacity gaps were realized when the staff was exposed to trainings and learnings from workshops organised by HORIZONT3000, while others came from the participation in the KNOWLYMPICS 2017¹ and from BOSCO management and HORIZONT3000 through project evaluation and audits.

Due to the challenge of documentation during the implementation of the CE3-Program, especially in relation to reportings for benchmarks and deliverables, BOSCO Uganda came to the conclusion that their staff needed capacity improvement.

Further audit findings and recommendation for improvement in timely delivery of financial request and disbarment contributed to the evolution process. The TA identified organisational gaps that included capacity buildings and operational gaps such as staff timesheets, work procedure manuals, work plans, basecamp, google calendars, weekly morning briefings and checklists. Moreover, the need to restructure organisational charts, B.O.D involvement in the implementation of policies and a better description of personal roles and Key Performance Areas (KPA) were revealed.

The KNOWLYMPICS 2017 added to BOSCO Uganda's resource basket to support external capacity building where internal staff could not provide the skills. Capacity improvement has mainly been through intra-learning but where internal skill sets are lacking, external consultancy is sought. Incidental learnings have been encouraged to be documented and shared.

The following was done to conduct the good practice:

- **Need assessment, identification and realization:** internally, staff and (top) management can identify knowledge gaps that need capacity development
- **Recommendations from project evaluations, audits & document reviews:** this is done externally by a consultant to supplement the gaps identified internally and who then will make recommendations
- **Meetings and activity planning tool:** this supports regular sharing from both staff and management/B.O.D meetings. The activity planning tool keeps track of planned activities with key challenges and support areas required
- **Staff appraisal, work log and timesheets**
- **Technical Advisor Toolbox:** these are tools available on the [KNOW-HOW3000 Internet Platform](#) for TAs to improve organisational processes and procedures. Tools can be adopted and used also in the absence of a TA
- **Training in MEAL & Data hub:** all trainings should portray the immediate and long term benefits for the staff and the organisation to be effective

¹ The KNOWLYMPICS - Knowledge Sharing Games are held every two or three years with the intention to motivate the HORIZONT3000 project partner to document and share their (project-) experiences.



4. Stakeholders and Partners – Roles and Responsibilities

The **main beneficiaries** from this experience were:

- BOSCO Uganda staff & management
- BOSCO Uganda Board of Directors
- ICT-Centre beneficiaries
- Schools and organisations benefiting from BOSCO Uganda

Involved in the realization of the good practice were:

- **BOSCO Uganda staff:** staff skills improvement to realize project activities in a timely manner
- **BOSCO Uganda management:** motivation and retention of staff to achieve project and organisational goals in an efficient and effective way
- **BOSCO Uganda Board of Directors:** policy development, education and its implementation for consistent aspiration of the values of the organisations
- **ICT-Centre beneficiaries:** proper record keeping, self-marketing, improving self-esteem and improving communication skills of the beneficiaries
- **HORIZONT3000:** provided funding support, trainings and workshops and organisational development through TA placements



5. Resources

The resources needed to implement this experience were:

Human Resources:

- **Consultant:** this defines a person rich in a particular knowledge. Resources that may be required here include consultancy fee, stationeries and food for the participants in case the training is arranged for longer hours or days
- **Technical Advisor Presence:** this is normally catered for by the funding partner

Financial Resources:

- **Fund:** this will be required when there is a need to hire an external person to conduct training in a given field of knowledge. Funds can also facilitate knowledge exchange visits if they are applicable

Methodology:

- **Contents and Methodology:** this includes materials both online and offline, PDF documents or reference materials for a given field of knowledge. Most of the contents were provided by an open sources software like the servers at the BOSCO Main Office



6. Impact of the Experience/ Practice

At an **organisational level**, processes and structures got improved in terms of job description and policies, skills have been improved in areas of log frame development, timely reporting and accountability.

Moreover, **revolving loan schemes** have been adopted by the ICT-centres as a result of staff project management skills. This had a positive impact on the livelihood of the beneficiaries due to the accessibility to financial support so they could improve their businesses, agriculture and other social endeavours.

The TA present was using the **Tools** from the [KNOW-HOW3000 Internet Platform](#) and identified opportunities for staff capacity improvements. The use of weekly and monthly planning meeting as a tool to improve efficiency, consistency and experience sharing showed that projects need to be sustained and owned by the community members and beneficiaries. Coupled with the presence of the “Entrepreneurship Essential Module” and a number of potential micro businesses by the ICT-centres, beneficiaries promoted creative thoughts of revolving fund managed by themselves. By such intra and extra staff capacity building, the stage was set for a self-learning process by the staff that has continued even after the TA absence. This has further strengthened the staff self-confidence to be more innovative and creative in their work environment



7. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Lessons learned from this experience were:

- Staff capacity development is a process and there are multiple ways to improve it. It should not be rushed as intake and application takes time
- Staff needs to know the objectives of the skills enhancement trainings at organisational level at all times
- Exchange visits for staff to share and improve the knowledge acquired through a systematic documentation process is important

If someone finds himself/herself in a similar situation, a mind-set transformation of the recipient is important, so that the skills can be imparted with clear objectives and with the guidance of somebody to drive the learning process. Also, a mobilization of resources for the continuity of the learning process is essential, as it is not a one-time activity. Every experience step - incidental or planned - should be documented.



8. Challenges

The **challenges** of this experience were:

- Limited funding was hindering complete knowledge management (acquisition, organisation and dissemination)
- Staff turn-overs had huge effects on knowledge retention and dissemination

To address these challenges, it was important that the staff capacity development was co-funded with the financial program that BOSCO Uganda is benefiting from HORIZONT3000 and the KNOWLYMPICS 2017 award². Skill development to improve project management, accountability and documentation was done. Future proposals will include votes for staff capacity improvements.

Through continuous and proper documentations instituted from the learnings, new staff gets orientation and learnings in order to retain the knowledge shared within the

organisation. This as well helps to bridge the gap of staff turnovers.



9. Sustainability

For the sustainability of this experience it is important that:

On an institutional level

- Staff capacity development objectives need to be enhanced at organisational level at all times
- Clear leadership on the achievement of the learnings
- Availability of resources to help the experience implementation
- Systematic documentation to allow knowledge management

On a socio-economic level

- Transformation can be realized through the transfer of skills from staff to the different ICT-Centres beneficiaries during the project implementation



10. Experience Sharing/ Up-scaling

To replicate such an experience the adaptability, willingness and ability to transform the learning into action by the staff has to be present. There needs to be a structure in place with clear roles and responsibilities to achieve the learning objectives. Systematic documentation, fund availability and the opportunities for exchange visits are the key factor in knowledge management. Summarily, the ability to practice knowledge management, to retain and sustain the good practice within an organisation is crucial.

Other groups, institutions or organisations interested in this good practice are community-based organisations who are partnering with BOSCO-Uganda like Peace Together Uganda, Gwokke Keni People living with HIV/AIDs & Orphans & Vulnerable Children's Network. It could be interesting for any other organisation interested in knowledge management and organisational learning.

² BOSCO Uganda won a prize worth 500 Euros during the KNOWLYMPICS 2017