
ACTIONING SUCCESS THROUGH EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION: THE KENAFF CASE

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Following the experience capitalization training process that CTA started in East Africa, the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF) asked its two selected trainees to select two other colleagues in order to help them introduce the approach to all staff members and help institutionalise it. Despite some challenges in maintaining the initial momentum, the processes for documenting success stories have improved and new monitoring and evaluation tools have been developed, all of whom are helping capture more information and share lessons and recommendations.

Cover A brainstorming session at KENAFF

CTA, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), organised a series of experience capitalization training workshops for organisations based in East Africa. These took place in November 2016 (Nairobi), December 2016 (Kigali) and March 2017 (Arusha), and involved representatives of those organisations running different agricultural and rural development initiatives. The workshops were planned to introduce the approach and show participants how to run and

support an experience capitalization process. I was one of the beneficiaries of this process, having been selected, together with my colleague Daphne Muchai, to represent the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF).

KENAFF is a non-political, member-based organisation of Kenyan farmers, which represents the interests of farming families. The Federation envisions a vibrant agricultural sector with improved livelihoods, promoting agri-businesses through targeted interventions. Its strategies are focused on lobby and advocacy, targeted capacity building and training, farmer empowerment and the promotion of cohesiveness between sector stakeholders. To strengthen its impact, KENAFF works with a network of like-minded partners and coalitions locally, regionally and internationally.

KENAFF's journey

KENAFF's experience capitalization process began when two senior management staff were asked by the East Africa Farmers' Federation (EAFB) to attend the CTA-organised workshops. This small team — the general manager for external relations, policy, lobbying and advocacy (myself) and the general manager for institutional development and institutional strengthening (Daphne Muchai) —



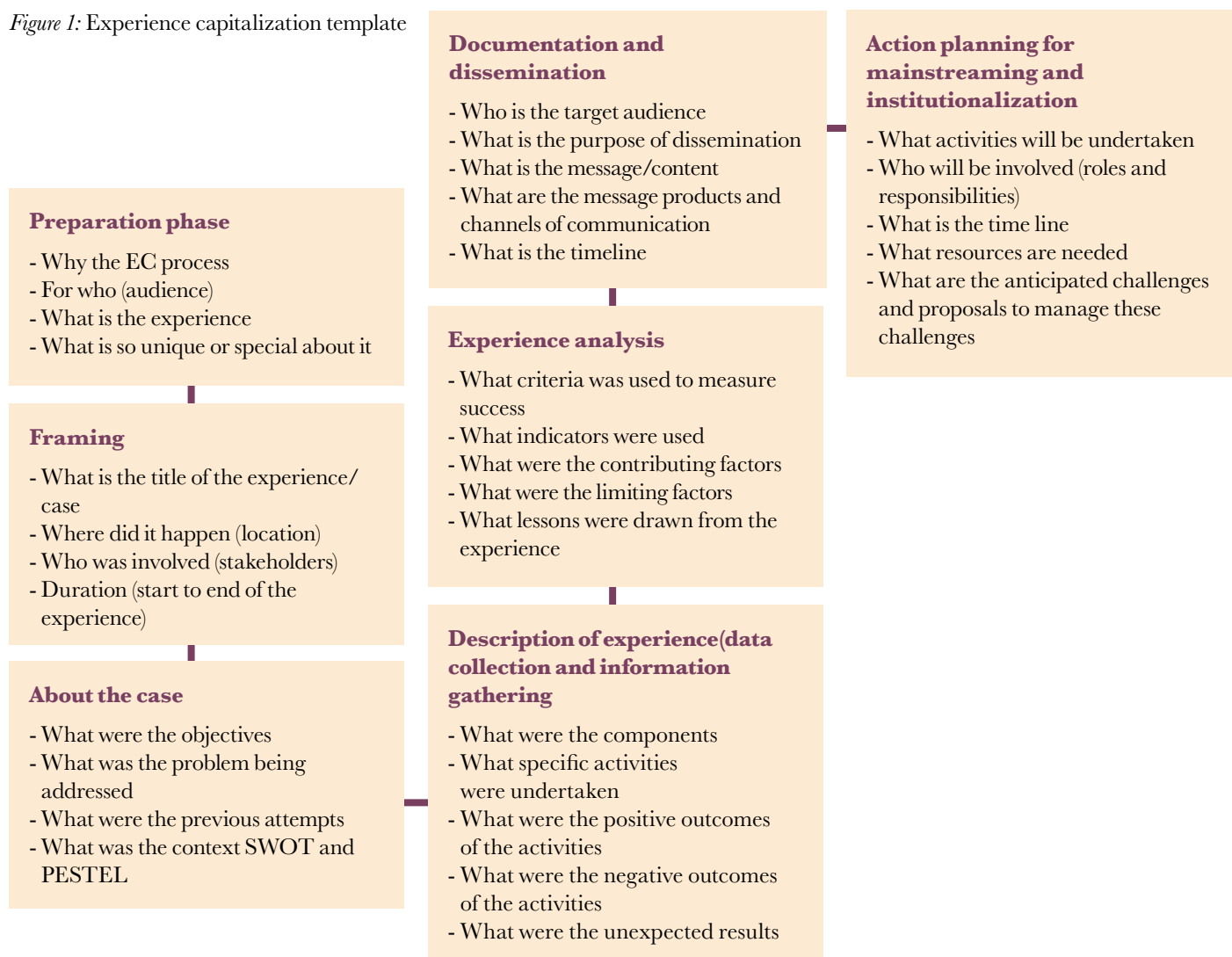
was taken through the whole process of identifying an experience and completing a set of steps which included framing the case, planning the process, gathering and organising data and information, conducting a thorough analysis of the information gathered, documenting a short article and disseminating the lessons learnt. The process considered the use of a template that allowed us to systematically fill in details in a logical manner. This was accompanied by peer review sessions that helped refine the templates (see Fig. 1).

The capacity building process used the online FAO/IMARK experience capitalization learning module (<https://tinyurl.com/yyq3mtj5>). This is a step-by-step web-based training course describing the entire

experience capitalization process, including reflective questions that help understand all concepts.

As a team, we drew up an action plan for mainstreaming and institutionalising the experience capitalization approach at the individual and organisational level, acting as “champions” and/or facilitators. This can be seen as the most interesting outcome of the entire learning process. The purpose was to embed experience capitalization knowledge and practise within KENAFF. This involved the deliberate effort to facilitate a process which would help insert the approach in the organisation, becoming part and parcel of the standard organisational operating procedures (embedded in the design of all systems, structures and procedures).

Figure 1: Experience capitalization template





Above Together with Daphne Muchai, the original champions

Institutionalization at KENAFF

The mainstreaming and institutionalization process began with a comprehensive back-to-office report to the KENAFF CEO, who later allowed the report to be shared with the entire KENAFF staff during a monthly staff meeting. This provided a general idea of what an experience capitalization process and the whole approach is all about. In the meeting we all agreed that the experience capitalization approach could be instrumental in supporting the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) department in collecting relevant information that can support the KENAFF management team make informed decisions. As “champions” we were asked to select two additional key staff members: one who is in charge of the KENAFF membership and partnerships; and another one working as programme implementation

coordinator for climate-smart agricultural technologies. These two colleagues were selected as they were working with many KENAFF members and stakeholders, and the managers thought that the adoption of experience capitalization would then trickle down to the field officers whom they were supervising. The now four KENAFF “champions” were also part of the technical team that is responsible for reviewing all KENAFF publications and the preparation of awareness-raising materials, and for supporting the M&E team collect data and information using KENAFF’s key performance indicators.

My colleague Daphne and I, as the original “champions”, took our colleagues through the experience capitalization process and helped them complete the templates we had learned to use. We also introduced them to the FAO/IMARK online module. EAFF representatives who had also been trained by CTA supported us in the initial stages of mainstreaming the approach. EAFF also encouraged KENAFF to contribute to the online communities that CTA established for those who had joined the different workshops in other parts of the world, sharing our new experiences. KENAFF worked together with EAFF to complete the case studies that we started during the training workshops so as to have them in the booklets published by CTA.

As a result of the trainings, there are improved processes for documenting success stories, and many of these have been published in the KENAFF bulletins. The M&E department also developed new tools for collecting data on project/programme implementation, with an inbuilt tracking system that linked field data to the KENAFF headquarters’

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central repository. The tools allowed the real time sharing of data, allowing for reviews and for questions and the request for additional information. This has helped the KENAFF field teams improve their analytical skills, providing a more complete picture of the situation in the field – especially when compared to previous reporting processes. The KENAFF teams provide more of the reasons behind the changes seen in a community, as well as explaining any variances in results observed, instead of only considering the targets and showing what was achieved. We can see that, with the adoption of the experience capitalization approach, a section on “why these results?” is now part of the reporting template.

The two team members who joined the first capitalization training workshops have since moved to other organisations. This slowed the momentum that had been slowly building up. In 2017 there were also changes in the KENAFF management team, with a transition period that saw a new CEO and only a few consultation sessions to discuss the experience capitalization process. Attempts are being made to resume these consultations, asking managers to support new processes with the new staff. We think this is particularly necessary as there has been a huge turnover of staff, including in the M&E department.

Lessons learnt

Our experience has shown that to successfully mainstream an approach like experience capitalization it is necessary to actively engage all team members. This should include managers (as experience capitalization supporters) and the technical teams (as experience capitalization practitioners). Trying it out, and continuously reviewing the process allows it to become embedded in the day-to-day activities of the organisation, providing for regular feedback on what is working well and what needs to be improved.

Secondly, we have seen that facilitation is a key element, and that there is therefore a need to have committed “champions” who dedicate time to ensure that the experience capitalization process is being implemented on a continuous and progressive basis. These “champions” act as experience capitalization trainers and facilitators. By doing this, more and more team members join a process whilst other staff continue to deepen their understanding and application of the approach.

Last but not least, it has become clear that having experience capitalization integrated into the existing systems minimises the fear of managers and the Board of Directors of introducing unbudgeted cost lines that would strain the organisation. In the case of KENAFF, experience capitalization has been part and parcel of the organisational monitoring and evaluation process. In this way, it has then become embedded in the M&E activities and budgets.

Above Taking colleagues through the experience capitalization process

*Right From a back-to-office
report to the KENAFF
CEO to a recurrent practice*

Way forward

The experience capitalization process requires commitment in terms of resources, most importantly staff time. However, there are many conflicting interests at the organisational level, and setting aside time for starting a new exercise can be challenging. Most projects have many case studies that can be capitalised on, but this means there is a need to determine guidelines on which ones to prioritise. This challenge has seen many staff struggling to frame their cases from a pool of many potential cases, with some biting off more than they can chew.

The focus of every capitalization initiative should be on the processes and not so much on punctual activities. This is what gives answers to the questions of “why” and “how”. The problem is that many experience capitalization practitioners prefer reporting on the positive aspects only, and not on those which have had a negative effect. This is a mistake, as it is the latter which provide more useful lessons. We have learnt that experience capitalization is not a stand-alone component or department in an organisation. Staff who try to treat it this way find it difficult to adopt. There is also the challenge of staff turnover which creates knowledge gaps and shocks in the organisation – particularly if those who are leaving were championing the approach.

Experience has taught us that it is crucial to engage new staff members, and to facilitate new training workshops. On a personal basis, I am committed to introducing the approach to my current employer. I am sure we will be able to share many success stories soon.



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<http://experience-capitalization.cta.int>

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