

Evaluation of WLE Knowledge Management Communications Products and Services

Introduction

In December 2014, the WLE knowledge management and communications team surveyed its direct clients to understand how WLE's communications products and services are perceived and used. The survey is part of the WLE CKM team's M&E efforts.

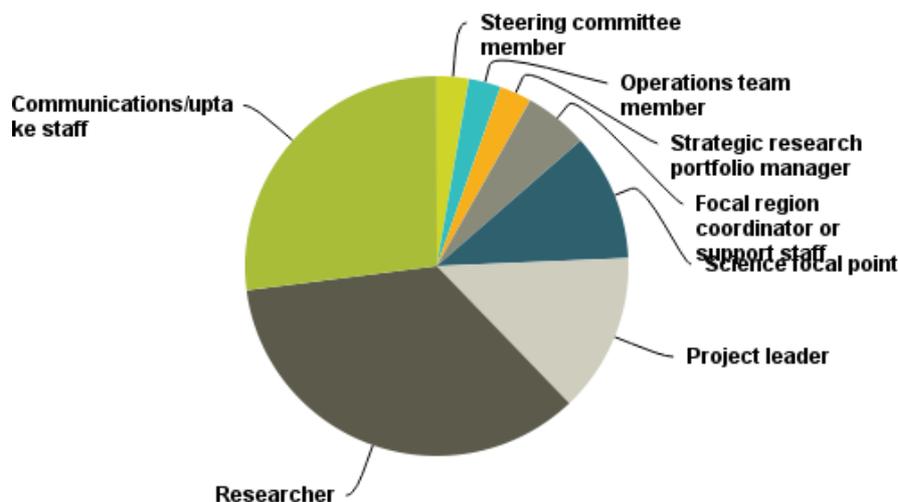
We surveyed the operations team, the management committee, the steering committee, the science focal points, the focal region leaders, the project leaders and the communications and info focal points. We also asked the science focal points to forward the survey to a few researchers within their center. We received a total of 37 responses.

Respondents

Respondents were distributed across partner organizations and functions. Most respondents indicated IWMI as their primary affiliation, whereas we received no responses from FAO, IITA, ILRI, or ICRISAT.

Q4 What is your primary function within WLE?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



Use of and satisfaction with services in 2014

The services *most frequently* used by respondents were

1. help with a blog post (62%)
2. help with a brochure, flyer, or other publication (30%)
3. help with branding (27%)
4. help with a website update (24%)
5. help with social media updates or campaign (19%)

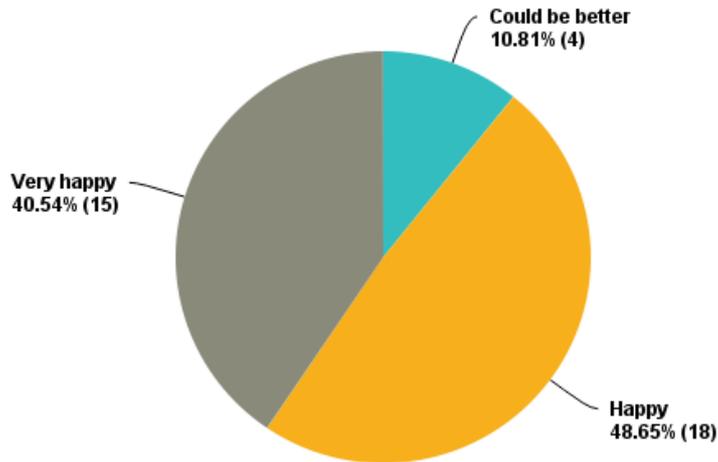
The services *least frequently* utilized were

17. help with a book (5%)
18. help with an article or opinion piece (5%)
19. help with a R4D learning series brief (3%)
20. help with a journal article (3%)
21. help with graphic design (3%)

Overall, satisfaction with the WLE CKM team was high among respondents:

Q6 Overall, how happy are you with the support you have received from the WLE communications and knowledge management team?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



Select comments include:

“At a regional level, we tend to get isolated and work to manage immediate deadlines. A strategic outcome oriented approach with some clarity on how regional comms can support IWMI and WLE goals would be helpful.”

“Would be good to have more details of what communications materials the WLE team is working on sometimes.”

“Overall the communications is doing a good job. The main area for improvement is with regards to covering the whole portfolio of WLE. There still appears to be a bias to the areas that the comms team is familiar with from CPWF.”

“The comms team is excellent. My only comment would be to see them promote more their WLE affiliation when they are speaking or engaged in the multiplicity of activities in which they are involved.”

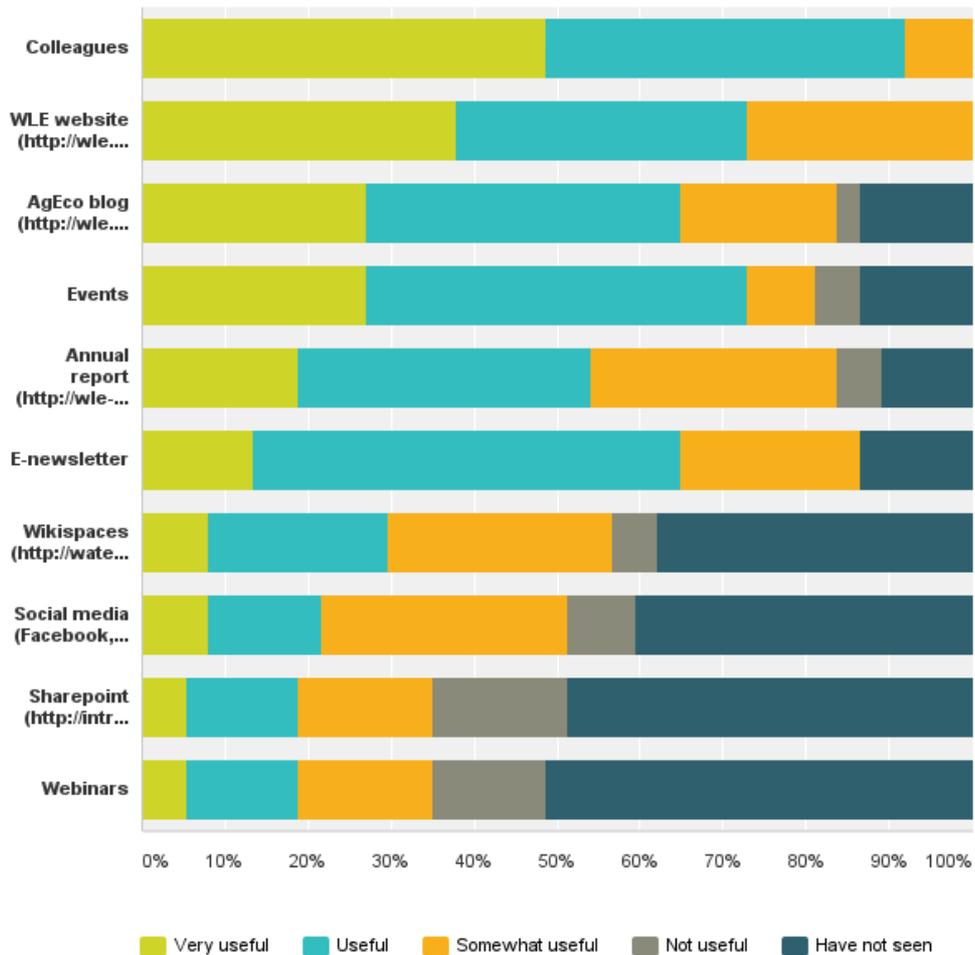
Further, a couple of respondents commented that they have not yet had much chance to work with the WLE CKM team.

Perceived usefulness of comms products

Considering the sources and products for keeping informed about WLE updates, activities, and planning, respondents rated colleagues the highest, the website second highest, and webinars the lowest.

Q7 How useful do you consider the sources below for keeping you informed about WLE updates, activities, and planning?

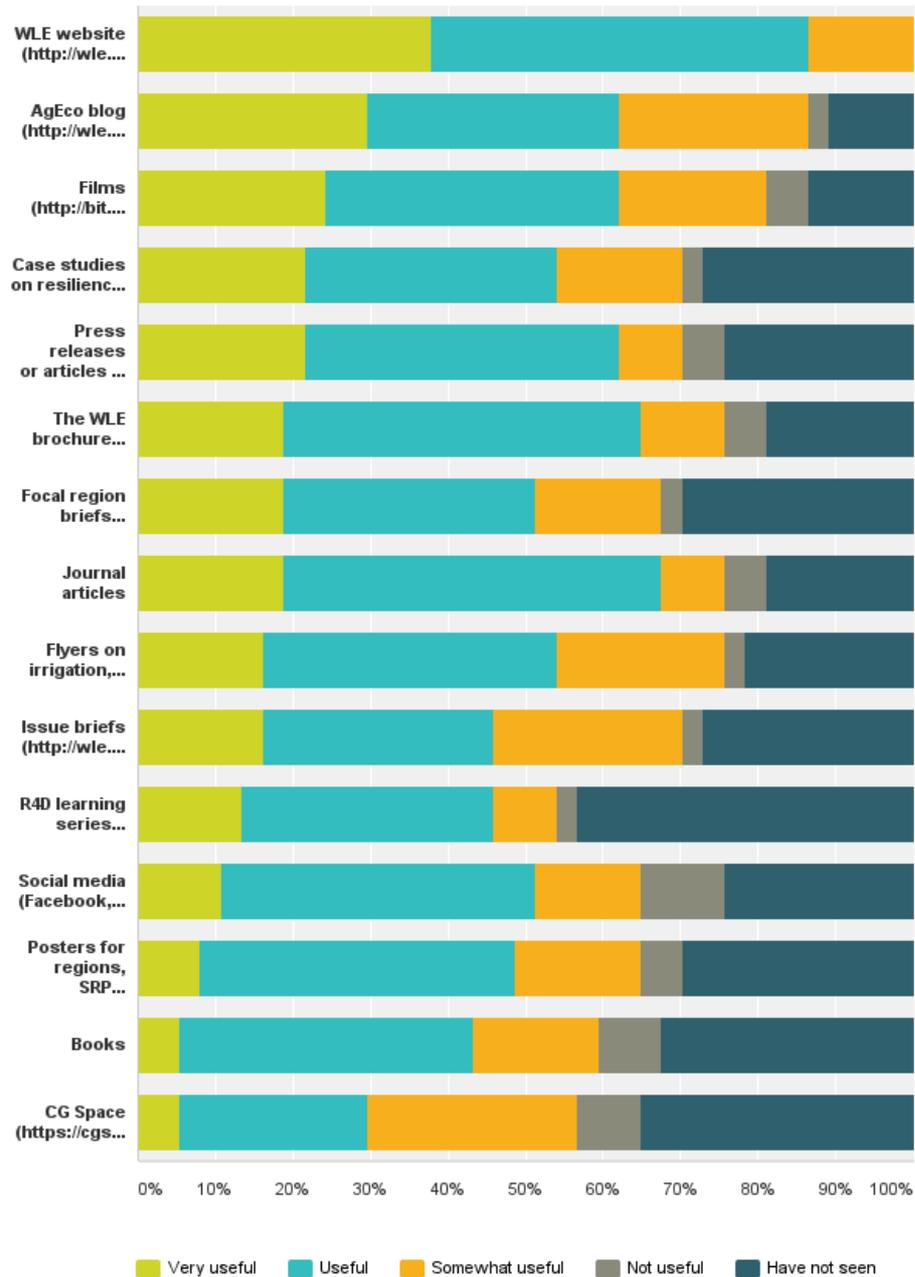
Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



Considering the resources for helping to communicate WLE's goals, approach, and findings to others, respondents found the WLE website and the AgEco blog the most useful, whereas they found books and CG Space the least useful.

Q8 How useful do you consider the resources below for helping you communicate WLE's goals, approach, and findings to others?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



Interestingly, some of the products that respondents find the most helpful for communicating WLE's messages are also ones that respondents least frequently ask for help with developing. For example, films are considered the third-most useful and press releases the fifth-most useful, yet only 16% and 11% of respondents, respectively, have indicated asking for help with such products during the past year.

Suggested improvements and support for 2015

Comments on how WLE can improve its communications, either within the program or with external audiences, fell into three categories:

1. Improving coordination and communication between the WLE CKM team, focal regions, partners, and researchers. Taking advantage of collaborating on products and projects as well as informing partners and others of what the WLE CKM team is doing was highlighted several times. One respondent pointed out particularly the need to plan better and include relevant partners from the beginning of comms projects and not mid-stream.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities for staff at the central level, at the regional level, and at the different centers and partners was also requested. Finally, one respondent suggested a meeting bringing together all WLE comms/KMU colleagues, and one respondent suggested establishing communities of practice.

2. Lack of knowledge about resources and limited capacity within the program. Several respondents noted that they were not aware that all the comms products and services listed in the survey were available to them, nor aware of how to request or access them. (Interestingly, large shares of respondents reported having “not seen” a number of products or platforms, including wikispaces (38%), sharepoint (49%), R4D learning series (43%), social media profiles (41%), and CG Space (35%.) Providing hands-on education to WLE researchers on how to use the communication tools was also requested.
3. Improving communication with external audiences. Respondents highlight that WLE is not doing a good enough job reaching audiences “outside our own circle”: publications are written in too technical language, many external audiences are not even aware of the WLE program, and our goals, targets, and channels are not clear. One respondent also highlights that not all aspects of the program (i.e., regions and flagships) are equally promoted.

To mitigate these shortcomings, respondents suggest among other measures to showcase science in videos, to focus on cases of high impact, to promote WLE science at major events, to involve external partners in dissemination of for example regional briefs, to increase media coverage, to continue social media outreach and blogging, and to make branding and logo requirements clear to researchers and others affiliated.

Products and projects that respondents anticipate needing help with in 2015 include

- Blog posts (7)
- Videos/short films (4)
- Workshop publications/materials (2)
- Issue briefs (2)
- Organization of events (2)
- Time investment in and support of Ganges comms team (2), including help with publications (1)
- Writeshops (1)
- Website updates (1)
- Press release (1)
- Posters (1)
- Flyers (1)
- Articles (1)
- Support to updating CG Space (1)
- Promotion of WLE-FAO publication: Water pollution from agriculture (1)
- Coordination for efforts with International Year of Soils plans on social media, the web, and at events (1)

WLE CKM priorities for 2015

Based on the survey results, the WLE CKM team has identified five priority areas for 2015:

1. Improving planning and coordination with researchers, centers, and focal regions
2. Making sure that WLE staff and others affiliated are aware of the products and services the WLE CKM team offers and that the CKM team can always be asked for support
3. Making sure that all aspects of the WLE program (i.e., focal regions and SRPs) are equally represented in our communications and are all receiving comms support
4. Reaching out more widely and communicating to audiences beyond the CG community
5. Developing more engaging and interesting communications products, including videos