41st WEDC International Conference, Egerton University, Nakuru, Kenya, 2018

TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
AND RESILIENT WASH SERVICES

Understanding the knowledge management
needs of SuSanA's stakeholders

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PAPER 2975

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) was established in 2007 as a collaboration of different sanitation actors working towards the goals of the year of sanitation (2008). Since then it has developed into a well-recognised knowledge management platform services the sector as a whole. The platform has continued to grow since inception and in 2017 undertook a study to understand the knowledge management and capacity development needs and preferences of the community it serves. This paper outlines the results of this study and how the platform is using the analysis to further develop the range of services provided to its members. The results of the study have led to the development of key 'personas' that will be utilised to better hone the platform to meet the needs of targeted user groups.

Introduction

The WASH sector is unified in its efforts to address the lack of sanitation affecting the world's population and the practices of open defection that lead to well documented issues including death, diarrhoeal disease, poor education and child stunting (Jenkins and Curtis, 2007). Since 1982 the WHO has recognised the role of human resource development in reaching WASH goals, as Crocker et al. (2016) highlight how this is identified by the WHO as critical for reaching global WASH progress. A WHO report from 2014 highlighted the lack of human resources strategies in the sector and that most countries would benefit from increased staffing and the development of key skills to enable them to be better in their roles (WHO 2014).

In response to the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDG) the targets for WASH have led to an increased demand in skilled practitioners around the world. SDG6 in particular aims to 'expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation related activities and programmes' (UNDP, 2018). Not only do we need to address the Capacity Development (CD) of WASH actors but also recognise the importance of Knowledge Management (KM) of the wealth of information within the sector. Cranston and Chandak (2016) define KM to include:

- Information management: the collection and management of material from one or more sources and making that material accessible to and usable by one or more audiences;
- Knowledge sharing: a set of practices that enables people to share what they know with others in the application of their work;
- Learning processes: both individual and collective or social, focusing less on the "sending" and more on the "receiving", particularly the processes of sense making, understanding, and being able to act upon the information available;
- Communication: in the sense of a meaningful exchange, as a foundational competence for the interactions that are at the centre of learning, sharing and managing knowledge.

As Harries notes (2017) the concept of Knowledge Management (KM) in an organisation is widely recognised as a key goal. Many organisations understand the importance of KM and the value of CD in their staff however doing this effectively and systematically is an ongoing challenge for the WASH sector (Harries, 2017). Increasingly there is a need to ensure that all levels of staff have access to the knowledge and

information to be able to perform their role in a changing environment. All organisations recognise the need to understand how to effectively carry out CD and KM so that the wealth of information from experienced senior practitioners can reach the field personnel and ultimately benefit the communities most in need.

SuSanAs current position as a platform

Since 2007 SuSanA has aligned its self as a key KM platform for sanitation with over 8000 members and 300 partner organisations in 2018 (SuSanAb, 2018) ranging from the private sector, academia, government, INGO and UN bodies. The unifying goal of all involved is reaching the SDG targets and addressing the issues that inadequate sanitation cause for the world's population. SuSanA defines itself as 'an informal network of people and organisations who share a common vision on sustainable sanitation and who want to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG6' (SuSanAa, 2018).

Until 2016, the knowledge and capacity gaps identified in the sector by the SuSanA secretariat informed the platforms work. SuSanA products and outputs were developed to fill these gaps (e.g. through formation of the Working Groups) and to give sanitation a higher profile within the global policy arena. The think tank work within SuSanA has helped formulate the key topics, some of which have contributed to paradigm shifts within the sector (e.g. the sanitation system value chain).

Considering SDG 6, SuSanA aims to address knowledge gaps in a different way going forward. This would be based on the needs of its members, target groups and partners. Some of the needs identified are the lack of evidence on a specific topic, barriers to access of existing knowledge, lack of inclusiveness with all key sanitation stakeholders and the lack of targeted content curation. Figure 1 shows the project model of the sanitation KM environment and the ripple effect in achieving SDG 6.
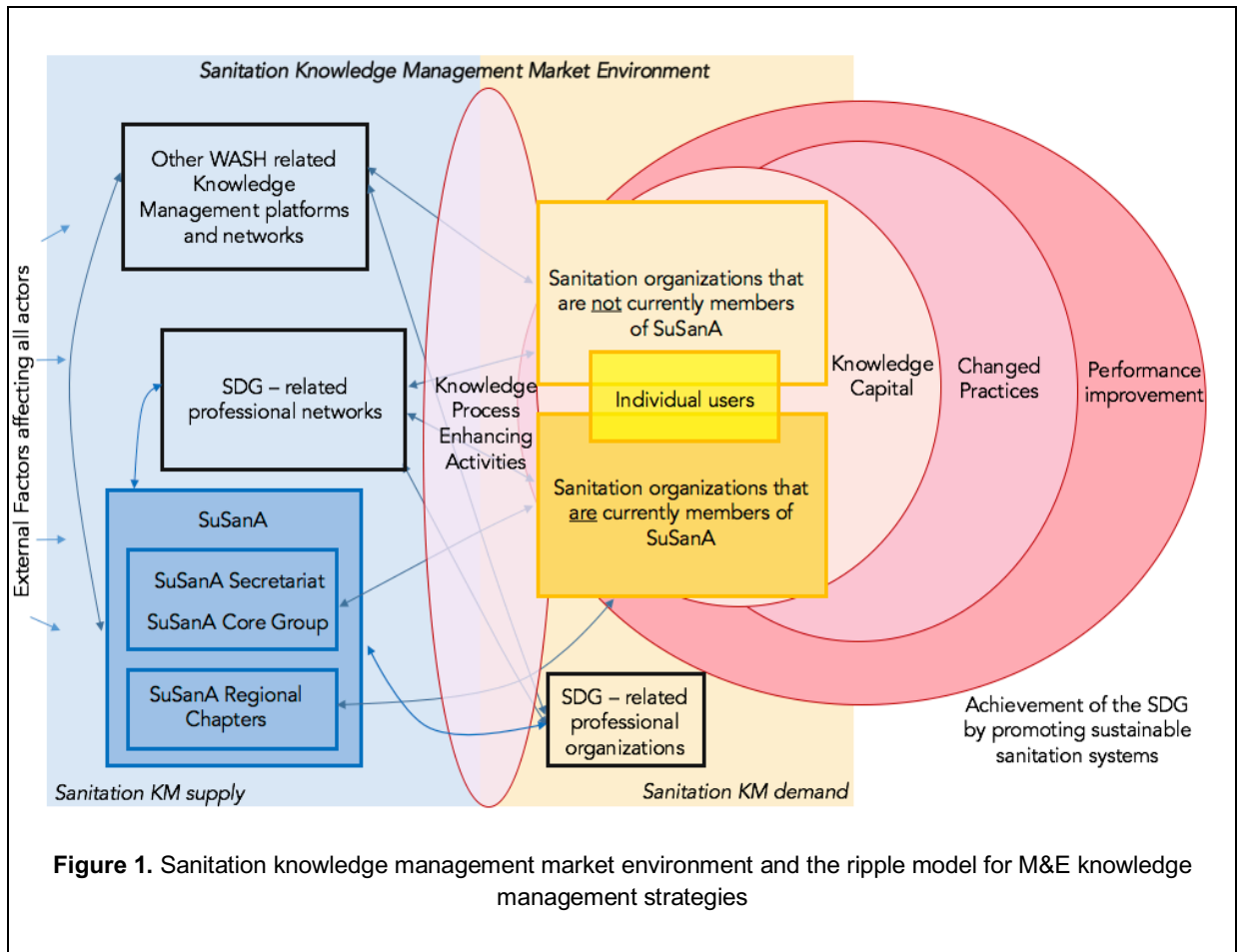
Not only is it important to know the internal characteristic of an organization, but also key to understand the market environment in which it operates, which includes the customers (demand) and providers (supply) with a number of external factors affecting the totality of the industry. SuSanA serves its stakeholders in the Sanitation Knowledge Management Market Environment, which is described in Figure 1. In the figure the left side (in blue) represents the different actors in the sector that provide similar/complementary products and services in the field of knowledge management, including the four areas of KM mentioned above (Information Management, Knowledge sharing, Learning processes and Communication).

Why the study

As part of further development of the platform, SuSanA undertook Market Research to help determine the direction of development of the Alliance and to better understand who SuSanA's target groups (stakeholders) are and how to best serve their needs. The primary objective of the study was to provide actionable information that will guide the work of a three-year organization development effort to improve SuSanA's ability to achieve its mission. The findings of the study are useful not only for SuSanA but for the wider sector to address the CD and KM issues identified. This paper outlines some findings from the sanitation sector survey that SuSanA undertook in the second half on 2017.

The study was designed to better understand who are SuSanA global stakeholders, what their knowledge and networking needs and interests are and how SuSanA can better serve, respond and help cultivate these interests to enable them to be better are providing sustainable sanitation. To identify this, SuSanA broke the study into the following components:

- A KM needs user survey which was sent to the mailing lists within the sector (30,000 emails)
- Structured interviews of 40 individuals
- SWOT analysis
- Comparative survey of 120 WASH KM platforms/networks
- Mapping of 50 organisations that specialise in KM surrounding SDG 6 and those for other associated SDGs
- Performance measurement system for SuSanA

Figure 1. Sanitation knowledge management market environment and the ripple model for M&E knowledge management strategies

Methods

The survey was composed of two sections;
1. Knowledge Management practices and preferences
2. Use and usefulness of SuSanA (this section of the survey was circulated only among SuSanA members).

Table 1. Breakdown of responses to the survey by language					
	Total responses	**English**	**French**	**Spanish**	**Disqualified**
SuSanA members	1492	1192	65	41	194
Non-members	1699	1180	111	98	310

The survey was carried out online in English, French and Spanish and was sent to members and non-members of SuSanA using a number of mailing lists (CAWST, SSWM, WSSCC, SKAT/RWSN and others), the range of responses is shown in Table 1. Users from Sub-Saharan Africa (36%) dominated the survey followed by Asia (31%), global (13%) and LAC (11%., NGO workers and Academia topped the list as survey respondents. Government employees and local entrepreneurs were under represented.

The market study was supported by a user experience study (SuSanA, 2017) to identify ways to improve the SuSanA website functionality. This study was conducted by making SuSanA users perform small tasks on the forum and website, and collected feedback on them. The study found that the majority of users, already utilising SuSanA, primarily used the forum. They had an appreciation of the wealth of information available, but could not always find what they needed or get a direct answer to a question.

Results

The main areas or sanitation work the respondents were engaged with. The majority had a design, construction, operation and maintenance background (29%) which also reflects the largest of the working groups on SuSanA, Working Group 4. The next biggest respondent group was from a capacity development and community health promotion sector (27%). The smallest respondent group was that identifying under policy (4%). This shows that SuSanA attractive to the 'middle segment' practitioners who are connected to high-level advocacy experts and low-level technicians. However, we cannot conclusively say this without a higher percentage of respondents identifying under policy.

The market survey received 3000 responses; half of those were SuSanA members, the total member response rate was 15%. The top preferences to stay up to date in the sector were through emails and newsletters (22%), information on websites (18%) and through information exchanges with colleagues (16%). The least preferred options were reading blogs (4%) and attending seminars (2%). Respondents based in High Income Counties (HIC) (25%) ranked knowledge exchange with colleagues higher than those from Low Income Countries (LIC) (11%), for whom attending sector meetings was ranked much higher. Although obtaining information via social media was not one of the top priorities there was a significant difference between Africa and Asia with those in Asia (11%) preferring using social media much more than those in Africa (7%).

For networking, the respondents preferred to connect to other sanitation professionals through professional networks (28%), conferences (18%) and local meetings (18%) than online forums (8%) or webinars (7%). Most respondents stated privacy/ security reasons (40%) as a main reason for not sharing knowledge on online platforms. Some others did not know the existence of online sharing platforms (35%). The other major reasons where lack of time (27%) and need to keep work information confidential (24%).

The reasons given for deterring sanitation practitioners from finding the information they need for executing their work. LIC practitioners felt internet and the cost of accessing materials where bigger concerns than time. HIC and Middle Income Country (MIC) based professionals mostly responded that they lacked time and that it is difficult to filter through a sea of information.

SuSanA users felt that improvements can be made in areas such as knowledge sharing, platform accessibility in LICs, engagement of specific grounds to understand KM needs and financial support. This clearly calls for target-oriented curation of information, exploring ways to motivate users to share information, focus on regional/ country level information sharing and events and using the platform for financial match making.

SuSanA's partner organisations

From the partner interviews, it is understood that the prime reasons for organisations becoming partners of SusanA were to connect with the sector and share their information. Partners also responded that access to information, ability to connect with other partners and keeping themselves updated about the sector were the valuable benefits of being a partner organisation. Partners felt that SuSanA could be improved by modifying the forum, by increasing diversity of the platform by promoting it more among practitioners, by linking organisations to tenders and funds and by providing more region-specific content.

Knowledge gaps that were identified included engaging with the government, finding easily locatable consolidated credible information on various topics, applicable business models relating to sanitation, practical project guidance documents and a directory of sanitation service providers. Partners indicated that KM has to include transparency (What is really happening on the ground?), proper curation of credible information at a regional level, advocacy, connection to financial opportunities and public awareness to support SDG 6. These results highlight the need to develop strategies for in-country activities, promote more inclusivity for global south practitioners within SuSanA's governance structure, provide a safe space for practitioners to share their lessons learnt and ground reality, curate successful business models, and organise and distil information through a combination of online and offline KM.

Creating personas for targeted marketing

The results of the market study and partner interviews were converted into descriptions of 'average' profiles of professionals from specific constituencies that are (potentially) using or engaging with SuSanA. By consolidating the KM preferences, likes or dislikes about SuSanA were identified and adapted from the individual survey respondents, 'personas' representing specific groups of target users were developed. Table 2 shows the 'personas' that were developed:

Table 1. The persons created from the research findings				
Personas	Learning method	Preferred knowledge sharing mechanism	Preferred communication channel	Preferred choice of social media
Government	Workshop conference	conference	email	Twitter
Donor	on the job	professional network	email	Facebook
Implementing NGO	on the job	professional network	colleagues and friends	LinkedIn
Consultant	on the job	professional network	email	Facebook
NGO	Workshop / conference	local/regional meetings	email	Facebook
CBO	Workshop / conference	local/regional meetings	email	Facebook
Entrepreneur	on the job	professional network	websites	Facebook
Academic	on the job	conference	colleagues and friends	LinkedIn

The identified 'personas' provide a fuller picture on SuSanA's priority users and are vital to the long-term outcome of SuSanA in supporting SDG6. They provide a "face" to the user story, creating more understanding of the target audience thus providing guidance in planning and prioritization.

The persona "user tool" concept can be applied in various ways throughout SuSanA:

- Persona-based user profiles: Provide Discussion Forum users profile options allowing them to state interests and needs and, if they wish, to identify with a persona.
- Persona-targeted communications: Tailor emails, Discussion Forum digests and notifications to specific interests.
- Persona-oriented curation of content: Following analysis of user profiles, adapt website content, Working Group thematic discussions, webinars, and meetings to particular user categories.
- Persona-oriented website interface: Develop new interfaces on the website that are geared to the interests of the different personas.

The persona concept will be used to filter information that is presented to users via the platform and will tailor the landing pages and filtered content according to the profile of the user. The personas have different dimensions and are an innovation in the WASH sector for presenting information in a personalised way; it will aim to influence the user to get something specific to their requirements from the platform and their feedback on the information they have used. The feedback would be fed to develop the personas further.

Conclusion

SuSanA with its new developing strategy can now become better aligned to respond to the demands and needs from the users reflected in the survey results. The website revamp - including improved search and find filtering of projects - was put into place quickly and work surrounding curation has been ongoing through 2017. To enhance the quality of the KM products and features within SuSanA for the benefit of its stakeholders, curation has and will continue to be critical in adding value, quality control, detecting trends within the sector, summarizing, synthesizing and distilling information. This involves recommended readings on topics, calendar of sector events, case studies, summaries of thematic discussions on the Forum and top readings for the Working Groups, to ensure there is up to date information.

The Market Study showed that the interest from non-members was significant and this explains the continuous stream of new members to SuSanA. It will be necessary to develop more detailed user profiles in order to make use of the persona profiles as a marketing tool. To ensure that SuSanA holistically reaches its target audience, further mapping of the personas against our member base is required. The increased clarity on the target audiences along with the persona profiles tool will help targeted content and engage users with the topics that interest them. Content development through the library, project database, Working Groups,

Discussion Forum and in-country and regional events will benefit from understanding the user profiles better. The demand driven approaches that SuSanA adopt will have a strong focus on mediating knowledge exchange between policy and research stakeholders on the one hand and the implementers and consumers on the other.

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