

Documenting change: An introduction to process documentation



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Photo: Participants in a WASHCost process documentation training meeting in Ghana 2009 (taken by Peter McIntyre).d



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Documenting Change: An Introduction to Process Documentation

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Executive Summary

Process documentation is a process which helps project staff and stakeholders to track meaningful events in projects/ programmes. These insights are not only useful in themselves but they also allow for more effective innovation to take place, facilitate taking processes to scale allowing their adaptation to other locations and contexts, and contributes to paving the way for wider development goals to be achieved.

Documenting change is a vitally important activity for learning from and improving upon the work carried out in development initiatives. While collecting information and analysing key activities and outcomes of a project do provide initial insights, documenting how a change process unfolds (and not just their outcomes) can provide strong (and new) insights for practice and learning. This is achieved in highlighting factors that lead to an initiative's outcomes.

Process documentation is a method of collection, collation, analysis and communication of experiences in contextually-appropriate ways. This set of activities is guided by a certain programme logic or 'theory of change': a representation of the underlying ideas and assumptions about how change is expected and/ or foreseen to take place in each initiative. Hence, process documentation is an attempt to identify and bring to the fore the factors that affect the change process that the initiative aims to contribute to, whether these factors were expected or otherwise. To be more effective, process documentation must be considered a shared effort across the full spectrum of project participants. An integral element to enriching development interventions, process documentation is not an afterthought, nor a specialist activity merely conducted from the sidelines or at the end of a project cycle.

Over the past ten years, process documentation has become central to the work IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) does with partners. The main reason for this is that IRC aims to develop new concepts and methods to help the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector to move towards its goals. Effective process documentation is fundamental to this as it provides the key to understanding and disseminating tasks, outputs and outcomes of such innovation, allowing others to use or adapt as required. This paper provides consolidated lessons learned across a range of IRC projects and describes the resultant and emerging understanding of how process documentation can promote learning and action through joint reflection and analysis. In addition, it offers tools used to collect and present observations that stimulate reflection, learning and sharing.

Despite the different ways in which process documentation has been undertaken by the projects documented in this paper, the main findings toward strengthening the process are shared by all:

- Build on a number of existing methodologies and narrative approaches to improve learning and contribute to monitoring and/or communication.
- Provide an integrated approach to documentation and learning that allows for the regular practice of observation, data collection, analysis and their continued improvement.

- Aspire to be particularly useful for initiatives that aim to contribute to social change in complex environments, involving multiple actors and interests.

The lessons, concepts and tools presented in this paper are relevant for project designers, managers and field staff members involved in conducting monitoring and communications tasks. This paper may also be of interest for donors as it provides an example of enhanced forms of documentation that enables more effective monitoring, evaluation and sharing of lessons.

1 Introduction

“Planned intervention is an on-going, socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of an already specified plan of action with predictable outcomes” (Long, 1995, p. 127).

Development work involves complex processes of social change and institutional transformation. Most often, the road followed is not straight – as intended in the initial intervention design – oftentimes ruts, bumps, curves, dead-ends, as well as new routes emerge along the way. Change is a non-linear and unpredictable process.

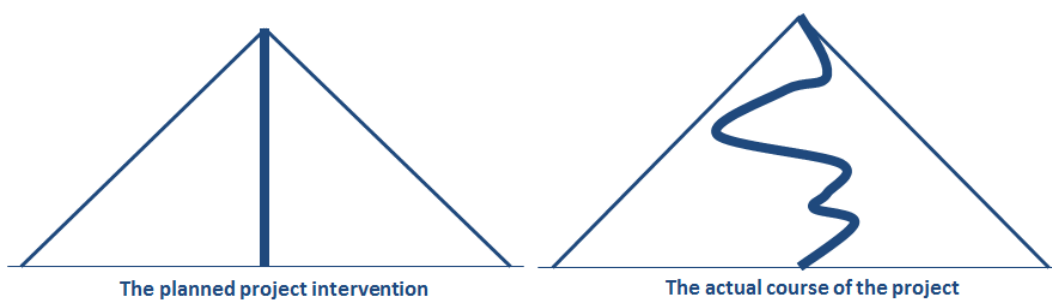


Figure 1 Most interventions follow a “bendy, bumpy road”

Planned recurrent documentation and reflection during the course of an intervention – rather than at its completion – can help surface unforeseen issues, providing new insights into initiatives (also referred to in here as interventions). By recording stories of change about *how* things were done, what worked, and what did not, individuals involved in an intervention can learn, improve upon the intervention and share lessons with others. Understanding this process and adapting development interventions based on findings is crucial to achieving broad development goals more realistically and effectively.

In IRC’s experience, process documentation is a valuable activity, especially when used as part of a process for multi-stakeholder learning and action research¹. This is best illustrated in learning alliances². Process documentation helps unravel the relationships between the many actors involved in development initiatives and their perceptions. It triggers systematic reflection and debate on how the ‘real world’ context has an impact on interventions (or inputs) and what they achieve (the outputs, outcomes and eventual impacts).

¹ Action research is research carried out by practitioners (undertaking actions) supported by researchers (to analyse and document actions) within ‘real world’ settings (Butterworth, McIntyre and da Silva Wells, 2011, p. 339).

² “Learning Alliances [are] sets of connected stakeholder platforms typically located at the different levels...designed to optimize relationships, breaking down barriers to... learning.” (Butterworth and Morris, 2007, p.3). Practitioners/research users and researchers set priorities jointly and work in close collaboration.

The way that IRC has conceptualised and used process documentation has developed over time, with experiences feeding into successive projects. In each project the definition and application of process documentation was re-examined. All have in common that process documentation is used to help project staff "... to track meaningful events in their project, to discern more accurately what is happening, how it is happening and why it is happening" (Schouten et al., 2007, p.1).

The objective of this document is to provide insights into what process documentation is, how it should be carried out and who should undertake it, using the experiences gained from current and recent programmes.

The document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 presents key elements of process documentation and related approaches.
- Section 3 describes the process documentation work carried out in five programmes in which IRC has been/ is involved.
- Section 4 provides lessons learned, practical guidance and simple tips for applying process documentation.
- Selected resources are highlighted at the end of the document, as is a comprehensive reference list and three appendices presenting:
 - An example process documentation plan
 - Examples of overlapping areas between process documentation and other programmatic activities
 - A sample job description of a process documentation specialist



Process documentation at work in WASHCost

Photo by: Peter McIntyre.

2 Process documentation and related approaches

The term ‘process documentation’ has been used for some time to describe documentation approaches within project interventions. For example, process documentation is mentioned in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program-South Asia’s (1999) *Process Monitoring Manual* as having been conducted in 1978 as part of a learning approach:

“Process Documentation is a tool for providing an agency that adopts a new intervention strategy continuous information about problems and issues emerging from field activities. The information fed back into decision-making is a major source for improving strategies, rules and procedures, thus helping the agency become more participatory and responsive” (UNDP-WSP 1999, p. 19).

Process documentation is generally understood to be a term for using a set of tools for *documentation and learning* during the course of development interventions. It will include attempts to capture the factors (expected or otherwise) that affect the change process that the intervention is aimed at. Process documentation is guided by and provides feedback on a certain programme logic or ‘theory of change’, i.e. the underlying assumptions and explicit ideas about how change is expected to take place in a given initiative.

Process documentation has become a vital part of IRC’s work with its partners and there is a growing body of experience within the organisation underpinning the theory and evolving practice³. The outputs of process documentation have varied, depending on their function in the project cycle – whether they fed planning, implementation, monitoring, and on resources available. As such it is a collection of practices commonly used consciously and systematically to observe and analyse developments that may influence progress in a project or intervention.

The approach as developed in IRC has incorporated and drawn on the experience of many other agencies; this includes process monitoring concepts developed by the German technical co-operation agency (GTZ, 1996), work on agricultural knowledge systems (Röling, 1990; Veldhuizen, Waters-Bayer and de Zeeuw, 1997), participatory learning and the Most Significant Change method (Davies and Dart, 2005), change management theory (Orlikowski and Hofman, 2005) the concepts of ‘systematization’ (Phartiyal, 2006; Selener, Purdy and Zapata, 1998; Van der Meij, Hampson and Chavez-Tafur, 2008), ‘theory of change’, and the communication for social change approach (see for example Figueroa et al., 2002). It has also drawn on a topic paper about process documentation by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Annie E Casey Foundation, 2003 as cited in Schouten, 2007).

³ These include the projects highlighted in this document: EMPOWERS, WASPA Asia, SWITCH, RIPPLE and WASHCost.

Some key points from the conceptual underpinnings of process documentation are summarised below.

Box 1 Contributory approaches

Process documentation builds upon a number of existing methodologies and experiences:

Process Monitoring is used by GTZ⁴ as a management instrument: making a conscious effort to observe processes and their progress in order to reflect, learn and improve interventions. Participation of the actors involved and promotion of responsibility are seen as the guiding principles.

According to the GTZ handbook (GTZ, 1996), “Process Monitoring” comprises four basic activities:

1. Process selection
2. Observation
3. Reflection
4. Action

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation, where the identification and collection of change stories is followed by a systematic selection of the most significant of these stories, a process that encourages reflection on impact of a specific project/programme (Davies and Dart, 2005).

Systematization (from the Spanish *sistematización*) is an evaluative and participatory technique of documentation that has been promoted among the IFAD family by FIDAMERICA, IFAD’s network in Latin America. The methodology enables the description and analysis of the situation before project intervention, after project intervention and the process of change, with the help of a facilitator. It also aims to build project and partner capacity in documentation of project lessons (Phartiyal, 2006).

Source : Own elaboration, 2011.

The aim of this document is to consolidate lessons from a range of projects and illustrate how they made use of process documentation. Methods and tools for process documentation are presented and the potential contribution to learning through joint reflection and analysis is discussed.

2.1 Why document?

The outcome of change sought by the promoters of an initiative can be frustrated by a range of vested interests, entrenched attitudes and active resistance. Recording and reflecting on the struggle over interests, resistance and outright or subtle protest is useful for learning, revealing hidden agendas, encouraging open debate from people with different viewpoints and ultimately for adaptive management (IRC, 2004). Process documentation can help to ensure continuous focus on critical questions that lead to deeper insights behind what is obvious or planned. Documenting both processes and results enables replication or adaptation of a particular approach and strategy so that change can be scaled up beyond the initial scope of a specific project.

⁴ GTZ is the German society for technical cooperation in international development, now called GIZ: ‘Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit’.

It is important to ask a number of questions:

- Why should process documentation be carried out?
- How can process documentation help improve the interventions described?
- How can process documentation pave the way for improved subsequent interventions, as well as help others who have not been directly involved?

Benefits of process documentation

Effective and well-planned process documentation can contribute to development interventions in many ways. Process documentation can have many aims and benefits. It can:

- Help project staff and other stakeholders track meaningful events in their project, discern more accurately *what* is happening, *how* it is happening and *why* it is happening.
- Set a project in its local context and the reality of people's lives.
- Stimulate public debate about key obstacles and opportunities for change.
- Improve the quality and impact of a project.
- Contribute to the collection of qualitative information to fill out the story behind the figures.
- Encourage learning from mistakes and create opportunities to celebrate impact.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Lead to closer relationships with stakeholders and give them a voice.

Source: Adapted from Schouten et al, 2007.

In EMPOWERS, process documentation was used to capture stories that illustrated water governance reality and the challenges faced by community members. The story *Madiha's life made easy – it's all on the record for EMPOWERS* presented in Box 2 (see next page) describes life in an Egyptian village and presents some of the risks of traditional water handling practices. This type of field story (presented in Arabic to an Arabic-speaking audience) was proven useful for raising awareness and generating discussion both within and beyond the EMPOWERS' project learning alliances.

Box 2 Storytelling in EMPOWERS

“Life in Kassab village in Egypt is changing as traditional methods of collecting and storing water are replaced by a cleaner and easier supply to taps at home. The first pilot project of EMPOWERS supports families to connect water pipes to their homes, through loans to spread the cost of connection. EMPOWERS is a partnership of fifteen organisations allied together to improve the long-term access to water by communities in Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza.



Madiha and her family used to drink water from the “zeer”, the water container well known all over rural Egypt. It is mainly for storing water for drinking and cooking but is neither practical nor safe. The quality of water is not always good because Madiha either gets it from neighbours with a water connection or from the canal. Madiha’s family was one of the families that benefited from the loans given by EMPOWERS for making in-house water connections. Her life and those of her children have become much easier. She has tap water and she doesn’t have to worry every morning where and how to get water. She uses the tap water to drink, cook, clean and for bathing her children, faster and with a better water quality.

Although Madiha has to pay back the loan to the village Community Development Association (CDA), she and her husband are happy that they could pay a little amount every month instead of paying it all at once. This also gave them the opportunity to buy a modern stove where they can cook their food and bake their bread.

The family still has water problems, for example in getting rid of the wastewater. They dump the water in front of their house which creates an unhealthy environment. The village lacks an appropriate system for sanitation and solid waste management.”

Source : IRC, 2006 : <http://www.source.irc.nl/page/30724>

Process documentation has been applied in a range of ways in different projects: as an activity to increase learning and dialogue; as input to communication materials and as a monitoring method. In EMPOWERS a broad range of uses and benefits of process documentation were identified. These are presented in Box 3.

Box 3 What process documentation can do: Lessons from the EMPOWERS project

As Rania Al-Zoubi, responsible for process documentation of the EMPOWERS project in Jordan explains: “Did the process documentation in EMPOWERS make a difference? Yes, for internal learning it has been very important. Why? Because it helped to reflect immediately on what was going on in the project. You do not wait for two years to look back and reflect, but you do it while you are implementing. You are continuously searching for causes. You are continuously trying to understand what exactly is going on. Technical implementation teams do not normally do that. Process documentation made reflection an explicit and continuous activity in EMPOWERS. It made learning more mature. Because we did it as a team, it also contributed to the team building, to having



common ground. And yes, it did encourage debate in the country. Our reports did, our newsletters and stories did and the film did. They showed the missing link between communities and governorates. They showed that local solutions contribute to solving national problems. They also showed that there are lots of projects, but no coordination. In the governorate they do not know what is going on, because projects are still implemented through the national line ministries, and this lack of coordination is replicated at governorate level. These are issues that have come onto the agenda. This was not only because of process documentation, but documentation certainly helped to grab attention for the causes of water problems. Because of that, it was good that process documentation, as well as direct project implementation, was a part of the EMPOWERS project.”

Source: Schouten et al., 2007, p. 33.

Over the years in the projects described in this document, the main focus of process documentation has shifted from broad documentation and stakeholder engagement objectives (in the EMPOWERS project) to a focus on providing information for monitoring, and communication products in RiPPLE and WASHCost. For WASHCost, process documentation is further expanded to include activities such as the speedy recording and dissemination of discussions and debates in words and pictures or video to enable participants present in these forums to revisit their experience, and allow those who were not present, to gain insight into discussions that took place. See, for example, the WASHCost meeting reports at <http://www.washcost.info/page/1288>.

Process documentation should not be seen as conceptually complex. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (cited in Schouten et al., 2007, p. 13):

“In many ways, process documentation of a social change movement serves the same purpose as an individual keeping a diary of his or her life. A diary allows daily reflection on events and factors framing those events in addition to creating a historical record. Over time, a diary, like process documentation, will reveal recurring themes and patterns that help or hinder progress towards transformation”.

2.2 What should be documented?

Capturing and analysing processes of change requires observing (watching and listening), asking questions (especially by interviewing stakeholders about their perceptions) and learning (about the local context and the effects of that context on the intervention and its outcomes). Before all these are to take place, process documentation requires having a good understanding of the change processes that an intervention aims to support or bring about. More specifically, to decide what should be documented and how, a process of reflection – on what the expected changes are – needs to take place.

The expected changes and underlying assumptions about how the change will be achieved through the intervention are called the ‘theory of change’⁵: an expression of the expected/apparent relationships between actions and hoped-for results. These provide direction and focus for process documentation.

⁵ The term ‘theory of change’ is used by many to mean different things, but the key issue here is that process documentation is guided by and helps examine or adjust the underlying assumptions about how an intervention will lead to social change.

Making the theory of change explicit is the first step in developing a process documentation plan, as described in Box 4. It provides a clearer picture of what the initiative aims to do and how this is expected to happen. Reflecting on the theory will reveal who the key stakeholders are, which processes are expected to lead to which changes and can also reveal gaps or questions that are relevant to observe and document.

Box 4 The main steps in process documentation

Developing a structured and focused way of capturing the change process requires taking several steps. These include:

- Identifying the theory of change and operational assumptions behind the initiative.
- Capturing systematically information related to the theory of change and operational assumptions.
- Organising information in such a way that stakeholders can reflect and learn about the process.
- Analysing information by looking at common themes, trends and patterns and placing findings in the context of the project and the project's theory of change.
- Disseminating information in a format (and at a pace) that is useful and comprehensible.
- Using the findings to improve the approach, strategy and adjust theory/assumptions about change.

Source: Own elaboration, 2011.

In the projects described in Section 3, process documentation is not a stand-alone activity but links to monitoring, communication and/or public relations and advocacy. The relation between these different areas of work need to be agreed and in most cases, responsibilities and scope of work need to be negotiated. In WASHCost, work was done on unpacking the links between process documentation, impact assessment, monitoring and learning. This is described in Box 5 and further explained in Appendix 2.

Box 5 How does process documentation relate to monitoring?

In WASHCost, the relation between process documentation and other approaches has been clarified as follows:

- **Impact assessment** relates to long term behaviour and policy change, resulting in improved planning, improved implementation and ultimately improved cost efficiency and service levels. Beyond the five years of the project, impact assessment could include ex-post evaluations.
- **Monitoring and learning** focuses on the achievement of project milestones and is an on-going process throughout the five years of the project. This process addresses project management requirements (reporting on activities, milestones and other deliverables etc.) and facilitates team learning and reflection on end goals or outcomes.
- **Process documentation** is one of the activities subsumed within WASHCost's communications strategy. This covers a range of activities including: documenting key meetings, interviewing key actors in the research and learning alliance processes, and keeping track of events and happenings that hinder or favour progress in the project.

Source: Adapted from Le Borgne, 2008.

2.3 Who should document?

Process documentation includes various activities: planning documentation, collecting information, analysing and consolidating information for different audiences, disseminating documentation outputs and facilitating the learning process enriched by documentation. Many of these tasks benefit from a multi-stakeholder approach that also involves individuals and institutions outside the project's scope. As such process documentation is most effective when treated as a collective activity. Owing to the broad representation in participation, very specific skills are required for process documentation. Appendix 3 provides a sample job description of a process documentation specialist in the EMPOWERS project, also referred to as Country Information and Communication Officers. In EMPOWERS, Country Information and Communication Officers were responsible for process documentation undertaking the following tasks conducting interviews, taking photographs, making video sequences, developing newsletters and briefing notes, and maintaining country web pages. Country Information and Communication Officers were supported by a Regional Information and Communication Officer who helped sharing information and key lessons.

In broad terms, three groups are seen to be responsible for documentation activities: insiders, direct stakeholders and outsiders. In relation to their respective participation and contribution, each have their own pros and cons:

- **Insiders** are members of the project team. Documentation is carried out by field staff or specific team members who have responsibilities for communication, monitoring or process documentation. Insiders contribute to learning within the project team, but are required to maintain sufficient 'distance' in order objectively validate lessons learned and reflect on the process critically and independently.
- **Direct stakeholders** play a prominent role in the project and/ or are direct beneficiaries of a development intervention. Involving direct stakeholders in processes stimulates learning and reflection helps in building relationships that ensure diverse stakeholder groups voices to be heard. Often, there are competing interests. It is necessary to ensure that processes are facilitated appropriately to arrive at collectively validated process.
- **Outsiders** are individuals and keen observers without a direct stake in the project and its outcomes, for example journalists, professors, artists and dramatists or others who are familiar with the context and hidden dynamics, and who can help people better articulate their stories. 'Outsiders' such as journalists can provide an independent and critical distance and have experience in looking 'behind the scenes', but may be difficult to manage, while their outputs may not be easy to use within the project for learning with stakeholders.

In choosing who will carry out (specific parts of) process documentation work, attention must also be given to detailing the role of a model process documentation specialist and their required competencies.

The role of a process documentation specialist is to look critically at processes and seek ways to influence them within the complex dynamic of development interventions. This is not always an easy task and benefits from experience, particularly as process documentation specialists are effectively 'everybody's biographer' and is required to have the capacity to absorb and facilitate multiple viewpoints.

The following is a list of qualities to seek in a process documentation specialist:

- Is non-judgmental and can listen to many perspectives without an expert hat on.
- Can ask questions that stimulate critical thinking.
- Can dig below the surface or beyond the obvious and/ or 'politically correct' answers.
- Is able to stay objective while also seeing the big picture, placing learning in context of the larger vision.
- Is culturally aware and conversant with the realities of the team's dynamic, most especially during pressured and tensed situations.
- Has good understanding of the change process the intervention is aiming to achieve.
- Is trusted by stakeholders, but can report findings without bias.
- Can synthesise large volumes of information to identify key lessons.
- Is skilled at communicating messages in positive ways.
- Has the technical know how to operate a camera, video, flip camera, as well as edit materials gathered.

Source: Adapted from the Annie Casey Foundation, 2003 (cited in Schouten, 2007).

Furthermore, a process documentation specialist will have the competency to write and transform large amounts of information into stories that are focussed, pertinent and stimulating: writing is a key skill of a process documentation specialist. Typically, the support of outsiders may be called in for other skills, for example taking photographs and simple videos, producing a newsletter, developing a website, making brochures, posters and murals to ensure that work is closely related to the initiative's overall communication efforts.

Finally, the process documentation specialist should be willing to acquire good understanding of the concepts and processes that that the intervention addresses, such as 'concerted action', 'integrated urban water management' or 'empowerment'.

3 Process documentation in practice

In this section, five projects with IRC's participation are examined in detail. The examination of each is structured as follows: a brief project description; followed by a presentation of individuals and/ or organisations involved in project-specific process documentation; the timeline or period when process documentation took place; how the activities were conducted; what type of support was provided; what were the competences required; what were the respective outputs of each; and what challenges were encountered.



Process documentation training in SWITCH
Photo: IRC

3.1 EMPOWERS (2003-2007)

Euro-Med Participatory Water Resources Scenarios (EMPOWERS) in Egypt, Jordan, West Bank/Gaza (2003-2007) aimed to expand the poor's access to water through improved water resource management. It was the first IRC project that used a learning alliance approach and pioneered process documentation. The main aim of process documentation in EMPOWERS was to uncover hidden obstacles to more equitable water resource management by examining deep-rooted structures, beliefs and attitudes. It was also seen as a way to engage project stakeholders, and to stimulate public debate about key obstacles and opportunities to improve upon water governance. Process documentation focused mainly on the context and processes of decision making and concerted action, and on changes in behaviours, attitudes and level of empowerment of project stakeholders. With full-time process documentation specialists (called Country Information and Communication Officers in the project) and a strong focus on documentation, EMPOWERS allowed process documentation work to take a route of its own, with little conceptualisation. Theorising process documentation happened at the end of the project when the teams sat together and reflected on the role process documentation had played. Process documentation allowed those most involved in the project to step back and reflect on trends, patterns, opportunities and warning signs and to adjust their approach. Project leaders were highly committed to the learning process through documentation. Trainings on photography, conducting interviews, making videos and writing stories were organised.



Documentary shooting in EMPOWERS
Photo: EMPOWERS

May Abu-Elseoud, Information and Communication officer of EMPOWERS in Egypt explains the kinds of outputs produced:

“We used many different methods for disseminating EMPOWERS stories: a printed newsletter, a website, we produced items for television and a 30 minutes documentary film; we made photos which we gathered in photo albums for the website. One of the most rewarding dissemination channels was a wall-newspaper. This included ‘cut and paste’ extracts from newsletters, other news snippets and community contributions. It was a cost-effective method to spread the project news in the villages. The wall-newspaper could usually be found hanging in the office of the village Community Development Association. We made four of them” (Schouten et al, 2007: 22).

From the process documentation work of EMPOWERS, a story book was produced entitled *Doing things differently: Stories about local water governance in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine* (Abu-Elseoud et al., 2007); a process documentation guide (Schouten et al., 2007), several documentary films; and an article on the effect of process documentation on building the capacities of project stakeholders (Abd Alhadi et al., 2006).

Table 1 EMPOWERS

EMPOWERS See: http://www.empowers.info		Focus of process documentation: To reveal underlying social and cultural patterns, particularly those that could become obstacles to the project objectives; and to stimulate public debate about key obstacles and opportunities to change water governance. Overall aim of process documentation was to enhance the ability of project to meet its objectives. Process documentation work focused on changes in decision making, power and gender issues at village and protectorate level in Jordan, West Bank and Egypt.		
Who?	When?	How?	Outputs	Challenges
<p>One dedicated process documentation (PD) specialist in each country team.</p> <p>Some villagers and officials were asked to keep diaries of change and their reactions or take pictures.</p> <p>Concepts and on-the job training and support were provided by IRC.</p> <p>Also intensive support on producing the storybook and process documentation guide.</p>	<p>Throughout the four year project, from the beginning.</p> <p>The PD specialists were particularly active around key meetings and the most significant project interventions.</p>	<p>Interviews; meeting minutes/ reports; photos.</p> <p>The PD specialists gave feedback to the project team members at team meetings about how the project was going.</p>	<p>Minutes, web-stories, newsletters, photos, videos, and in the longer term, documentary films. The project delivered four books and a legacy website with materials from EMPOWERS and post-project.</p>	<p>Ambiguous position of PD specialist in the team at first.</p> <p>Sensitivity of information: it was not always possible to write openly about observations.</p> <p>Bringing the whole into a coherent story book.</p>

It is worth noting too that IRC Associate Joshka Wessels shared her expertise on film making and digital video training in the *Process documentation for learning alliances and action research workshop* held in the city of Lodz, Poland last 1-5 July 2007, supported by the SWITCH project, IRC and EMPOWERS (See the Source Bulletin article on the outputs of stories by participants on film, photos and writing at <http://www.irc.nl/page/44697>).

Process documentation in the EMPOWERS project generated several documentary films including *Nor Any Drop to Drink*, a film produced by Joshka Wessels, featuring stories of the various stakeholders was awarded a special prize at the *Green Wave – 21st Century International Environment Festival* in Bulgaria in May 2007. The film was commended for its “... compelling presentation of the difficulties in the equal use of rare resources and the influence of climate change relating to global warming, which causes drought in crop-growing areas.”

Several challenges were faced. Initially the position of the Information and Communication officers within their teams was ambiguous. It took some time for the teams to acknowledge the value process documentation and Information and Communication officers had to contribute towards the project. Second, the project had very ambitious targets for social change. Set against this challenging context, it was not easy to report on and write openly about observations. Finally, compiling the wide-ranging stories and other process documentation products into a coherent story book was an immense challenge and was resource-intensive.

3.2 WASPA Asia (2005-2008)

The Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) Asia programme in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (2005-2008) aimed to address the practical problems of wastewater management for use in agriculture in its project areas, including policy and institutional aspects. Initially, the project referred to process documentation as ‘process monitoring’ and followed a route that is more in line with formal monitoring. Departing from a specific theory of change, process monitoring identified and selected domains of change worth investigating, as well as indicators to help assess these domains. During the course of the project, the teams concluded that they needed narratives to give more substance to the results. The focus shifted to ‘change stories’, which described changes in key stakeholder groups and provided qualitative information (see Evans, Varma, da Silva Wells and Jinapala, 2009, and <http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/WASPA/ProcessMoni.htm> for stories from Kurunegala, Sri Lanka and Rajshahi, Bangladesh).



Farmer collecting water from the drain
Photo: NGO Forum Bangladesh

Process monitoring involved five steps, and areas of change for tracking were identified during WASPA-Asia's start-up workshop (Table 2).

Table 2 The Process Monitoring Framework in WASPA

Step	Explanation and Examples
1 Select change processes to be monitored - how stakeholders perform their roles and how they relate to each other. They should be decided with Learning Alliance members.	Understanding of WASPA concept among stakeholders; attitude towards WASPA concepts; changes in practices of stakeholders; development of relations between learning alliance members; interest or motivation to be part of learning platforms.
2 Define indicators and guiding questions to monitor change processes.	Do stakeholders appear interested in the Learning Alliance? Indicator: regularity of meetings, attendance levels, contribution and follow-up.
3 Define sources of information and data storage – change processes can be best captured through observations.	These need to be captured in a structured way: records of meetings and workshops; semi-structured interviews; questionnaires; joint site visits; informal discussions.
4 Finalise process monitoring framework.	Combine steps 1-3 into a clear framework.
5 Analyse and report – weekly analysis and detailed analysis at logical points in the project.	The plan for analysis and reporting will include: what, how, when, who and format.

Source: Smits and da Silva Wells, 2006.

A baseline process monitoring report was written at the start of the project. This was intended to be repeated twice per year and reviewed by the country teams. In practice, it was only reviewed at the end of the project because the focus shifted to change stories that were updated every three months. The aim of process documentation was to continually review – with stakeholders – their views about the issues being tackled by the project and participatory action plans that were developed and implemented. It also enabled review of the project's progress in line with the expectations of the team and of the alliance members. Process documentation drew on observations from field visits, extracts from reports and meeting minutes, training reports and focus group discussions, facilitated team reflections (three times during the project) and interviews.

The broad change process to be documented was identified as the capacity of stakeholders to relate with and have an impact upon issues of sanitation, wastewater management and re-use. The indicators were identified as: **knowledge** (stakeholders' ability to explain links between sanitation, wastewater and agriculture) and **empowerment** (stakeholders' ability to explain their understanding to other stakeholders or take action). IRC facilitated three training workshops, a one-week intensive practical work with Bangladesh team, regular follow up (editing, questions) on the change stories and a one-week analysis workshop at end of project. Although process documentation was a team responsibility, it was primarily undertaken by two junior team members with writing skills. Both were also responsible for minute taking.

A one-week analysis workshop at end of project was conducted along with an exercise to review the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in relation to the use of process documentation in the WASPA project (see Table 3).

Table 3 SWOT analysis for process monitoring in the WASPA project

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple and flexible. • Captures key changes in mind sets and attitudes, not just physical outputs. • Can be an effective project management tool (if used properly). • Can support institutional memory within the project. • Can combine an insiders’ view (project team) and outsiders’ (reviewer) view, to generate discussion and insights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on researchers observing and documenting changes – some may be missed or over-emphasised. • Methodology may not be considered robust enough. • It can take a considerable amount of time and needs resources. • Requires people who are familiar with and committed to the methodology. • Needs a clear understanding of the context and steps taken.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If used well it can provide useful information as the project progresses, which enables the team to react to current situations and adjust plans as needed. • It could be used in project proposal formulation so that donors also review the project on attitudinal changes not just physical outputs. • It can foster better relationships between team members and stakeholders and increase stakeholder involvement (motivation of being heard through change stories). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the team does not fully appreciate the potential benefits of monitoring and reflection it will not be implemented adequately. • It must be implemented from the start to ensure a baseline as a poor (or absent) baseline makes it hard to monitor change. • It can interfere with relationships between stakeholders and project team members if not done in a supportive and positive manner. • If external documents (e.g. meeting minutes) cannot be collected it is difficult to determine changes in working practices of stakeholders. • If changes are not accurately or regularly recorded it is difficult to support observations with further data.

Source: Varma, Evans, da Silva Wells and Jinapala, 2009.

IRC gave support in the form of three training workshops, a one-week guided work to the Bangladesh team on ‘spotting the story’ and story development; and regular follow up (editing, asking questions) on change stories. A one-week analysis workshop at end of the project focused on the whole project, also evaluating specific process documentation issues. During the evaluation process, it was found that providing support from a distance in undertaking process documentation work was a challenge. As a result, process documentation received a slow start in the project mainly owing to weak ownership and understanding by country teams of the value of process documentation; prioritisation of other project

work; and high project staff turnover. The change stories helped the teams discuss and understand changes, lessons and obstacles. But, these were not actively shared with other stakeholders until the end of the project. However, photos taken in the field, depicting waste water use by farmers were helpful in getting alliance members to acknowledge and discuss issues of wastewater management and sanitation.

Table 4 WASPA Asia (2005-2008)

WASPA ASIA		Focus of process documentation:		
See: http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/waspa		Initially to monitor changes on agreed indicators and provide feedback on the project strategy.		
		The focus gradually shifted more on description, reflection and analysis related to selected stakeholder groups and lessons on intervention process: changes in stakeholders' problem perception, behaviour, understanding of stakeholders' roles, ability to take action regarding WASPA issues; and challenges and lessons around WASPA concepts and particularly the Learning Alliance (LA).		
Who?	When?	How?	Outputs	Challenges
<p>Junior team members with some communication responsibilities and interest in photography/writing.</p> <p>Support by team/field staff and IRC.</p> <p>Consortium member IWMI also carried out interviews.</p>	<p>A baseline process monitoring report.</p> <p>Change stories that were updated every three months.</p>	<p>Observations extracts from reports and meeting minutes, facilitated team reflection, interviews.</p>	<p>Products for LA members, products for learning within team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change stories. • Guidance note on PD. • Paper critically reviewing learning alliance and WASPA concepts. 	<p>PD was competing with more pressing issues with clear value.</p> <p>Staff turnover.</p> <p>Providing enough support at a distance.</p> <p>Moving from story/photos to analysis.</p> <p>Managing different versions of documents and large volumes of photos.</p> <p>Sharing outputs during the project.</p>

3.3 RiPPLE (2006-2011)

RiPPLE was a research programme to advance evidence-based learning on water supply and sanitation financing, delivery and sustainability, and to improve equity in access to water and sanitation for the poor in Ethiopia and the Nile region. The project consortium was led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)⁶ and action research was undertaken in the context of a learning and practice alliance. Process documentation was used to complement monitoring and communication activities: conduct interviews of Learning Alliance members and of trainees; inform blog posts by consortium members and partners on the intranet or on the public website; maintain a wiki describing the research process across the various pieces of research; compile emails indicating the state of the partnership consortium; and inform project management.

RiPPLE positioned process documentation somewhere between communication and monitoring with additional links to capacity building, internal learning and project management. RiPPLE took a pragmatic approach to process documentation: it was seen to provide a focus for continual critical reflection (informed for instance by action reviews and interviews). It constituted informal monitoring while contributing to formal monitoring outputs, and providing useful communication materials.

Support was given in the form of skills training on writing, video and photography. The Media and Communication Officer responsible for process documentation also participated in the training provided by the SWITCH project in Lodz, Poland. Owing to limited resources, process documentation was simple in design and was not highly labour intensive. Where possible, process documentation activities ‘piggy-backed’ on other activities. No separate process documentation reports were developed in the RiPPLE project. In practice, the project had limited focus on process documentation work and giving priority to process documentation work among many other communication duties was a challenge.

Table 5 RiPPLE (2006-2011)

RiPPLE (2006-2001) See: http://www.rippleethiopia.org	Focus of process documentation: An approach to track meaningful events in a project, to discern more accurately what is happening, how and why? “PD enables deeper learning through continual critical reflection... informal monitoring... and identification of patterns and factors that may influence the course of the project” (RiPPLE Process documentation strategy). Process documentation in RiPPLE specifically focused on: influence/impact of project on policies and practices (including capacity building, communications); research methods and processes in the different regions; how multi-stakeholder platforms worked; how members exchanged information; and project management and partnership dynamics.			
Who?	When?	How?	Outputs	Challenges
The Media and Communication officer, with help of team in charge of	Prior to compiling M&E reports and as	Interviews; blog posts on intranet or on website.	Interviews, blog posts, email series for project	Prioritising PD work among many other

(Table 5 continued on next page)

⁶ Overseas Development Institute, Britain's independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues.

interviews (comprising Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) team members, local project platform coordinators and communication team members).	and when required, around key moments and meetings.	Also originally planned: questionnaires, meeting report tracking, use of communication tools, MSC stories, wiki on research methods, meeting minutes, email tracking.	management and partnership assessment, collected quotes and stories of change. Process documentation strategy, Communication strategy specifying place of PD.	communication duties. Ambiguous definition of PD. PD was competing with other demands.
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3.4 SWITCH (2006-2011)

SWITCH was a multi-country research programme, implemented and co-funded by the European Union and implemented by a consortium of 33 partners from 15 countries. The overall goal of SWITCH was to catalyse change towards more sustainable urban water management. Process documentation and monitoring and evaluation were treated as two different activities, with corresponding briefing notes (available at: <http://www.switchurbanwater.eu/>) and updated in *SWITCH in the City: putting urban water management to the test* edited by Butterworth, McIntyre and da Silva Wells, 2011).

The briefing note on process documentation was inspired by EMPOWERS. It describes process documentation as "... a systematic way to capture what happens in a process of change and how it happens, to reflect and analyse why it happens, using a theory of change, and to organise and disseminate the findings" (Schouten, 2007). Process documentation training was provided to learning alliance facilitators in the second year of the project (see below) on story writing, the use of photo stories, and film to capture stories and the intervention process, but process documentation was not initially budgeted or planned for, despite IRC pushing for it to be included in the project design. In some cities, project teams developed good relations with journalists who regularly reported on human interest stories related to the project.

The main focus of process documentation work were the City Assessments, undertaken in 2008 and 2010 to document progress of city Learning Alliances against their objectives, the learning alliance approach as described in key project documents, the monitoring and evaluation framework and the project's generic 'theory of change'. The City Assessments were undertaken by teams of peers (for example the facilitator of the Birmingham Learning Alliance worked together with researchers and the facilitator in Hamburg to assess the progress of the Hamburg Learning Alliance). Ongoing documentation by alliance facilitators (minutes, notes, progress reports) supported in the assessments. A presentation on the main findings and approach is available as an output of the 3rd Scientific Meeting at http://www.switchurbanwater.eu/outputs/pdfs/GEN_PRS_BH_Session1_City_assessments_summary.pdf.

IRC provided intensive (face-to-face) support during the city assessments and limited support at a distance during the rest of the project, mainly as part of the quarterly learning alliance reporting, by giving written feedback on progress reports and some phone/ email coaching. IRC also did process documentation in the project consortium with a focus on changes in the way researchers and others involved in the project described the objectives and value of city learning alliances.

Contribution to learning in the SWITCH project and beyond

Three EMPOWERS specialists on process documentation shared their experience with the SWITCH team and other interested WASH professionals in a process documentation training in Poland in 2007. The training provided an introduction to process documentation concepts and tools, with hands on work on photography, writing and video production. The writing group produced an 8-page supplement with the national newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* showing how the SWITCH project are trying to promote learning and change for better water management in the city of Lodz. The photography group produced a photography exhibition exploring peoples' lives in Lodz and how they relate to public spaces and water. It aims to show how rehabilitation and restoration projects around water could be made more socially inclusive. The film group worked with the National Film, Television & Theatre School based in Lodz to produce a short film *Sokolowka River Back to Life*. It tells the story of how the city is trying to restore one of its rivers.

Table 6 SWITCH 2006-2011

<p>SWITCH</p> <p>See: http://www.switchurbanwater.eu</p>	<p>Focus of process documentation:</p> <p>Process Documentation focused on two levels: a) Tracking change in the project consortium: focus on changes in understanding among researchers and others involved in objectives and value of city learning alliances (LAs); and b) Tracking the interventions in each city: focus on the theory of change, understanding how the LA helps promote change in stakeholders and water management.</p> <p>The main question was: How do LAs, research and demonstrations affect change in project cities? Process documentation focused on issues of governance and changes relating to how stakeholders interact, specifically how they value the LA, what does it take to establish/keep an LA going and what challenges come with it?</p>			
Who?	When?	How?	Outputs	Challenges
<p>At consortium level: IRC staff with support from Natural Resources Institute and a PHD student.</p> <p>At city level: learning alliance facilitators with support from IRC staff.</p>	<p>During three Scientific Meetings.</p> <p>During facilitated 'City assessments'.</p> <p>On-going documentation by alliance facilitators.</p>	<p>Interviews, joint analysis during city assessments, writing.</p>	<p>City assessment reports.</p> <p>Synthesis report of city assessment workshops (2008, 2010).</p> <p>Book with city stories and guidelines for Learning Alliance process.</p>	<p>Training was provided, but PD was not planned or budgeted from the start of the project.</p>

3.5 WASHCost (2008-2012)

WASHCost, a five-year learning initiative, is focused on exploring and sharing an understanding of the true costs of sustainable Water Sanitation and Hygiene services. Since 2008, WASHCost has developed new methodologies to better understand and use the costs of providing water, sanitation and hygiene services to rural and peri-urban communities in *Ghana, Burkina-Faso, Mozambique and India (Andhra Pradesh)*.

Building on past experience, in WASHCost process documentation is defined as *“an approach that tracks events and happenings, discerns underlying reasons and highlights issues that need action”* (Verhoeven, 2009).

Process documentation aims to describe the events and developments that led from one set of monitoring indicators to the other: from inputs to outputs and from outputs to outcomes. It is seen as a way to improve the effectiveness of the interventions and pick up unexpected or emerging developments.

A strong link has been conceptualised between process documentation and monitoring and evaluation. While process documentation specialists for each country were contracted, analysis of success and failures is seen as a team activity as part of formal reporting (monitoring). For more on the relation between process documentation, monitoring and communications in WASHCost, see Appendix 2.

At the start of the project, it was agreed that change in stakeholder behaviour and their use of unit costs in planning would be documented in the form of stories. For example, improved decision-making on based on realistic unit costs, cooperation between Learning Alliance members, and other emerging issues (unplanned change).

To improve support to process documentation specialists (a challenge in other projects), country and IRC staff are paired for one-on-one advice and support. A project group shares experiences, competency training and group planning exercises. Training of country team leaders and in-country training of the ‘Documentation and communication officers’ has been provided by local experts and journalists have been involved.

Box 6 Process documentation examples from WASHCost

The story of Mylaram village in India describes how social norms in this village help ensure that scarce water resources are regulated: <http://www.washcost.info/page/556>.

A short video interview with Mr. Brito Soca, Provincial Director of Water in Mozambique shot at the Stockholm World Water Forum in August 2009 demonstrates that people realize that good quality water comes at a cost. According to Mr. Soca, “After having been in a sharing meeting in Maputo I used some of the information in one

(Box 6 continued on next page)



Photo: Michele Adjei-Fah

my municipalities. Sustainable costing of water services over five years is very important I also organised workshops with colleagues on this topic in my province. People realise that water is beneficial for them and that good quality water costs money"

(Soca, 2009 at <http://www.reporting.irc.nl/page/51241>).

The WASHCost newsletter documents how the project is influencing other projects. For example in Ghana the WASHCost project has facilitated a scoping visit of the Sustainable Services at Scale (Triple-S) project, collaborated on sector news publications with the Resource Centre Network (RCN) Ghana and helped facilitate a SWITCH Learning Alliance meeting

(WASHCost Newsletter 11, June/July 2009).

Table 7 WASHCost (2008-2012)

<p>WASHCost</p> <p>See: http://www.washcost.info</p>	<p>Focus of process documentation:</p> <p>In WASHCost, the guiding definition was: 'Process documentation tracks events and happenings, discerns underlying reasons and it highlights issues that need action.' Process documentation focuses particularly on: LA processes: cohesion, changing ideas about WASHCost by members; Research: stories and anecdotes collected in the field during the research process in order to give context and potentially identify pitfalls in approaches to data collection and the WASHCost data; and Policy/behaviour changes: Changes over time among key WASH decision-makers, tracking WASHCost theory of change.</p> <p>This collective focus was adapted locally by each country team, pending on a country process documentation plan.</p>			
<p>Who?</p>	<p>When?</p>	<p>How?</p>	<p>Outputs</p>	<p>Challenges</p>
<p>Documentation and communication officers acting as PD specialists in each country team.</p> <p>At Netherlands team level, PD was carried out team members.</p>	<p>During or immediately after meetings/ presentations: interviews, photo sessions, videos.</p>	<p>Minutes, meeting reports, interviews, regular newsletter items, process documentation plans (PDPs).</p> <p>In India, an interactive write shop was used to collect and document stories.</p>	<p>Story boxes on the website, newsletter news, diary items, news items, meeting reports, online videos and reports for LA meetings on WASHCost progress (including an early warning system).</p> <p>Process documentation plans and training materials, memo on links between PD, M&E and communications/ advocacy.</p>	<p>Within country teams the concept of PD had to be clarified and how it fits into other parts of the project such as monitoring/ evaluation and advocacy.</p>

3.6 Lessons learned and good practice

The examples from the various programmes described above illustrate that process documentation can be conceptualised in different ways to serve different purposes. It can help to articulate deep-rooted structures, traditions, beliefs and attitudes that may hamper change, give project stakeholders' stories a more prominent place in the project (as in EMPOWERS), provide stories that give more descriptive information about the results being monitored (as in WASPA), enable learning and informal monitoring - on the basis of interviews, observations in meetings and other consciously created reflection moments - (as in RiPPLE) or capture trends and relations between project activities and results (as in WASHCost).

Process documentation has the potential to make a difference: process documentation encouraged conscious observation, reflection and adjustment of the intervention process and methods and contributed to team building. In EMPOWERS, the project teams reflected on progress and stumbling blocks, throughout the process of project implementation (rather than at the end) and built a common understanding. Process documentation outputs (case studies, reports, interviews, newsletters, etc.) also encouraged debate among a wider stakeholder group and helped illustrate key issues that needed to be addressed.

From the analysis in this report, the authors feel that seven lessons can be identified.

- 1. Process documentation provides a structured, focused way of capturing the change process.** This means that in the design stage of a project, teams should:
 - Decide what to track and document
 - Test assumptions and make the theory of change explicit
 - Define resources well and set expectations for process documentation roles and responsibilities
 - Include resources for participation and joint reflection
 - Ensure that links to communication activities and learning are provided
- 2. The prime objective of process documentation is learning during the course of a project. However, institutionalising learning and reflection is a challenge and resources for this are often spent on other activities.** This is best illustrated in Schouten et al. (2007, pp. 20-1):

“Time and methods for reflecting on and analysing information often become lost in busy projects. Project staff thinks in terms of arriving at solutions but the intermediary steps of reflection and analysis are not sufficiently valued. Methods, tools and procedures are therefore needed to ensure that project teams systematically reflect on and analyse the material that has been collected. Internal learning is one of the most important benefits of documenting the change process”.

Limited resources is a common constraint. In WASPA, the teams facilitating the Learning Alliance felt that there was so much work to do to encourage the stakeholders to engage in the alliance and developing Participatory Action Plans that there was limited time for either reflection within the project team or with a wider group of stakeholders.

- 3. Process documentation requires time, skills and resources.** A wide range of activities are included in process documentation and they require a range of different skills. In practice, these cannot be commonly found in one person. This provides yet another reason to involve a team in process documentation. Activities may include: developing theory of change/hypothesis, identifying crucial areas to document, documenting (describing processes and results), analysis, discussing insights, packaging outputs and adapting to various audiences, disseminating products, using lessons back in planning.

The time needed for process documentation varies according to the kind of outputs. In IRC's experience, it can range from one day a week, to monthly team meetings to several dedicated time slots (for example a one-week reflection and writing workshop) during the course of a project, facilitated by an external support team.

- 4. Process documentation is not a stand-alone activity and must be supported by project team(s).** Process documentation should not only be treated as the responsibility of one junior staff member. Process documentation should be a team responsibility. It is important from the onset of an intervention to pay attention to the relation between the documentalist and other members or functional groups in the project that are somehow involved in process documentation.
- 5. Developing a clear process documentation plan at the start of the project can help clarify focus, aims and responsibilities, which helps make process documentation useful and systematic.** The quality of the information gathered depends on a clear understanding of the project's theory of change, an understanding of the stakeholders involved, a relation with these stakeholders that enables collection of observations and verification of information, and time for reflecting and critically processing this information. Over time, process documentation teams get a better sense of how process documentation might be useful in their context, and adapt their practice accordingly.
- 6. Resource allocation for process documentation, as well as the intensity of support provided, have consequences for the kinds of outputs that process documentation is aiming or can be expected to produce.** Process documentation teams need focused training at the beginning of a project and support from time to time during the project, depending on the gap between required and effective competencies.
- 7. The importance of establishing and maintaining trust and the politics of documentation should not be underestimated.** A process documentalist needs to invest a great deal of time and energy in establishing working relationships based on trust. He or she must be transparent in how the information that is recorded will be used and sensitive about how stakeholders are portrayed. Care should be given to the form and manner in which information is communicated. Cultural appropriateness and sensitivities regarding information shared should be carefully considered to help stakeholders genuinely learn and benefit from process documentation.

Source: Adapted from Evans, Varma, da Silva Wells and Jinapala, 2009.

4 Planning and Tips

4.1 Planning

In our experience, and as can be seen from the detailed table in the previous section, challenges relating to process documentation relate to the way in which it is conceptualised in a project, to the available resources and support, and to practical constraints in acknowledging failure, conflict or ambiguity. When starting process documentation, it is important to clarify how information gathering, learning, monitoring and communication activities will be linked and to consider how documentation will be turned into outputs that can be used. The responsibilities and action plan for documentation should be established early in an intervention process, not only for monitoring purposes, but also to ensure that information is not lost or left unrecorded. Process documentation does not necessarily need its own plan if the activity is embedded in other plans for gathering lessons and sharing them (for example reporting, monitoring and evaluation, communications and management plans), but it certainly requires preparation. An example of a format for a process documentation plan is provided in Appendix 1.

As with monitoring, process documentation can be pervasive and take up a lot of resources. In order to remain focused, process documentation requires a plan appropriate to the context. This plan may be as simple as highlighting the areas in the theory of change where process documentation is expected to play a role. It could also be much more elaborate and feature the **purpose** of process documentation, how it relates to the **project intervention**, which **tools** will be used, **who** will document, what **skills or support** in process documentation are needed, what the **outputs** of process documentation will be and how this will be **monitored**.

Planning how process documentation contributes to learning throughout the project is a key step in making process documentation useful and should make the following issues explicit:

- 1. What is the purpose of process documentation in this project?** Is process documentation for internal project learning, formal monitoring or for communication with a wider group of stakeholders external to the project? How may process documentation outputs link to and contribute to broader communication or advocacy efforts?
- 2. What is the theory of change of the project?** Making the theory of change explicit will give guidance on which processes should be traced, who should be followed throughout the process and where and when this should happen.
- 3. Which tools are needed to document this change process?** Tools are needed for the various elements of process documentation: for capturing the process, for organising the information, analysing the findings and disseminating the information.
- 4. Who will document?** Several people who are more or less closely involved in the project can have a role in process documentation: the project team, a process documentation specialist, direct stakeholders, journalists or other outsiders. Who will do what and are resources available for these activities?

5. **What are the opportunities for reflection?** Stories, photos, short videos and other process documentation products can feed into already planned reflection moments in the project cycle.
6. **What skills are required to conduct it and is skill development needed (training and coaching on writing, video, photography, editing, website development, and analysis)?** Depending on who does what, specific capacity building may be needed. Coaching on story writing or on developing a data management system for notes and photos may be required. Direct stakeholders such as project beneficiaries may need training on how to use a camera or need coaching on keeping a diary. They will need to be briefed on the project and need to be introduced to key stakeholders, sensitive information may need to be managed (this also has to be carefully managed when involving journalists or other outsiders).
7. **What will the outputs be (possible links to communication strategy)? Which products will be produced – both for learning with project stakeholders and possibly for a broader audience?** It is possible to add, for each output, a short synopsis describing the focus and expected content as well as specific objectives that it serves.
8. **How will process documentation be monitored and reported and to whom?** Regular support to process documentation is needed. Other pressing activities often take precedence over documentation and joint reflection when deadlines are tight and project staff is focused on delivering outputs. Project management must support process documentation as an integral part of the project, with deliverables that need prioritising. There should also be a clear identification of the people involved in analysing and acting upon process documentation insights, as these may be sensitive.

4.2 Tools, methods and outputs

In most cases documentation refers to images, written text and audio visual records. Specific tools (photo or video camera, audio recorder, notepad etc.) for process documentation are consciously selected. “Tools are like spectacles: we put them on so that we can see better’ but they ’also restrict our field of vision” (GTZ, 2006): meaning that tools are means to an end, only.

These tools help capture raw data and are eventually packaged or formatted into documentation materials (outputs). A wide range of specific process documentation outputs are available: photos, drawings, maps (visual documentation), reports, manuals, handbooks, letters, diaries, notes, meeting minutes, narrated portraits of stakeholders (written documentation), and sound and video recordings (audio-visual documentation).

A common feature among these outputs is their narrative form. They tell a story to illustrate the events and factors that enable or hamper the change sought. Collecting narratives can indeed provide a rich tapestry that reflects the reality of the messy complexity of social change. Narratives help identify and explore key issues in a more open ended way than through surveys or interviews and can reveal unexpected and important results or make values and themes easier to discuss.

Box 7 Example from IRC practice

In the WASPA Asia project, changes during the project were documented in the form of change stories. This is an easy and accessible way to make visible small changes over short intervals and to show how project interventions made a difference in stakeholders' knowledge, interactions and awareness of roles and responsibilities.

The change stories in WASPA showed the value of stakeholders who championed WASPA initiatives and helped affect change. Change stories can also be a valuable tool to make explicit the knowledge and insights of senior team members and bridge knowledge gaps about the intervention process that may develop because of staff or stakeholder turnover.

4.3 Tips and tricks for setting up process documentation

The on-going practice of process documentation in various projects has revealed insights, tips and tricks and guiding questions to carry out the many activities involved in process documentation. These are presented in this section - the task-focused checklists shown in the text boxes below are not exhaustive but provide that experience has shown to be useful.

4.3.1 Tips and tricks for interviewing

- Concentrate on changes regarding people's perceptions, participation and issues of e.g. empowerment. Share frustrating as well as successful experiences.
- List key people to interview – people representing stakeholders; people with strong opinions (pros and cons).
- Ensure representation of otherwise marginalised groups /individuals.
- Select people who are part of the decision making and concerted action processes, who play a prominent role, or select direct beneficiaries (the people who should benefit directly from the perceived changes in the initiative).
- Do not only interview local people but also engineers, bureaucrats or others playing a role in the processes (of decision making, concerted action etc.).
- Make explicit (for yourself and the team) why you want to interview these people and what outcomes you expect.
- Consider portraying someone from your own team to be able to document changes in her/his perceptions/attitude/behaviour throughout the project.
- Determine the time interval to interview them: every quarter, every month, or after certain crucial events have taken place.
- Make a list of key issues to discuss with the interviewees.

- Make interview protocols and see that you discuss the same issues every time you interview them (perceptions, participation, and attitude) to be able to assess changes.
- Always explain the reasons for having the interviews and what will be done with the material afterwards.
- Record the interview.
- Transcribe or summarise the interview along the key issues.
- Report on your interview experience to the team and what you learned from it.
- Report back to the interviewee.

4.3.2 Tips for observation questions ('what' questions)

Asking questions can help to get a clear picture. Questions can include:

- What happened?
- Which aspects can you distinguish?
- What did you observe?
- How did you feel about that?
- What struck fascinated and attracted you about it?
- Who had the same experience? Who reacted differently?
- Were there any surprises, any unexpected reactions?

4.3.3 Tips for capturing data

This is the most simplistic and manual part of the work but effectively capturing data (by writing, taking pictures, videotaping etc.) provides raw material to develop outputs from.

These are only a handful of questions that can help capture relevant data and eventually provide good story material.

- Should I capture everything I see/hear? How can I strike a balance between carefully observing and capturing data that seem important?
- What is unexpected in what is happening?
- Are there any potential biases in what is being recorded?
- What funny little details are happening on the side?
- Where are the turning points in the situation? What is causing a change in the flow of activities?

- What (who?) is leading to general agreement or disagreement?
- What are the power dynamics in the setting? Who is driving the process and what is the stance (and reactions) of other players?
- What are the key quotes that are coming out?

4.3.4 Tips and Tricks for analysis ('why' questions, 'what next' and 'so what' questions)

Moving from a mass of collected stories or bits of information to meaningful lessons or illustrative stories is a real challenge. There are several methods and tools for facilitating analysis of collected information. A useful compilation of tools, examples and lessons learned is provided by Van der Meij, Hampson and Chevez-Tafur (2008), in which the authors' present work carried out on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to analyse complex information from a variety of sources. In a workshop setting, a given experience is described and then divided into phases on the basis of turning points. Each phase is then analysed in detail, determining the main changes observed, and the causes and consequences of these changes.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) method (see Davies and Dart, 2005) also focuses on jointly discussing, selecting and analysing significant change stories. These stories and specific aspects are discussed and weighed before the selection is made. The discussion is perhaps most important as it helps analyse the drivers of change in the stories.

Analysis is made easier when a clear methodology or framework is developed and questions can be formulated.

4.3.5 Tips for story-writing

A story does not exist until you create it and it makes sense of events. In other words, a story joins up the dots and gives information and it explains it. In order to find a good story one should go to the source to find good elements of a story and look for people that have a direct personal experience with the topic. Be proactive and do not wait for orders. Find people who have a story to tell and go off the beaten track. Good stories are not often in meetings.

The job of a process documentalist means that you tell stories. As a start you can begin by asking yourself the journalistic principles of who, what, where, when, why and how? It is important to simplify and bring clarity so your story is easily understood. Do not use jargon or abbreviations as many people will not be able to understand this. Tell the story with honesty and integrity and do no harm to vulnerable people. Always check your facts and try to explain as well as inform.

4.3.6 Tips for formatting/ packaging documentation materials to your audiences:

- Use posters, photos and audio material or short video interviews with audiences that have low literacy levels.
- Use simple online materials for reaching a broader audience (blogs, photos and video interviews).
- Wherever possible pre-test materials.
- Ask stakeholders to make a video diary or a written diary for a short period: 'a week in the life of...'. Also think about ways of telling stories that encourage people with low literacy levels (ability to read but also to make sense of visual representation of information).
- Do formal minutes and informal accounts of meetings (for the project team only).

4.3.7 Tips for learning questions

Questions that can encourage reflection throughout the activity cycle and help give meaning to the collected information could include:

- What does that mean to you/specific stakeholders?
- How was that significant, good, bad, characteristic and typical?
- What are the underlying concepts, values?
- What insight or conclusion lies underneath that feeling/judgement?
- Did the process unfold differently from what you expected? What are the differences?
- What might have caused this difference?
- What can we draw from the situation/process?
- How could you apply the insights from this process?
- What will you do differently next time?
- What do you need to know more?
- How can you find out more?

4.3.8 Tips for disseminating information to your audiences

- Make sure that the people that have contributed to your work are duly credited and agree to the publication of the material.
- Do check the sensitivity of your information (with your team) before deciding to make it public and if you are not sure about the meaning of some information, write cautiously about it to avoid unfounded statements.

- If your material is publishable (i.e. not sensitive information), disseminate it as soon as possible, go for frequent updates rather than long cycles of publication.
- If you can, use a blog to share your reflections – it lends itself naturally to process documentation and invites reactions.
- Use a variety of formats and platforms to disseminate information and promote its use: monitoring reports, short updates, stories in newsletters, posts on website, articles in other bulletins, stories in annual reports etc.

5 Resources

IRC and partners have provided training in process documentation for various projects. Some resources are available online. See for example:

- <http://processdocumentation.wordpress.com/>
- Photo-stories from Lodz, Poland at <http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/processdocumentation>
- The SWITCH information sheet on process documentation:
http://www.switchurbanwater.eu/outputs/pdfs/WP6-2_BRN_6_Process_documentation.pdf
- The WASHCost information sheet on process documentation <http://www.washcost.info/page/458>

The storybook from EMPOWERS shows one way in which process documentation can be used; see Abu-Elseoud et al (2007).

Websites

- EMPOWERS - Euro-Med Participatory Water Resources Scenarios
www.empowers.info
- IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre
www.irc.nl
- RiPPLE - Research inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia
www.rippleethiopia.org
- SWITCH - Sustainable Water Management Improves Tomorrows Cities Health
www.switchurbanwater.eu
- WASHCost – Lifecycle costs for sustainable WASH services
www.washcost.info
- WASPA Asia - Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation
www.iwmi.cgiar.org/waspa

Toolkits/ manuals

Knowledge Sharing:

- The ICT-KM Knowledge Sharing Toolkit: a living knowledge repository about knowledge sharing tools and practices and a resource for Knowledge sharing workshops. <http://www.kstoolkit.org/>
- IFAD (2009) Knowledge Profiling: Promoting easy access to knowledge and experience generated in projects and programmes Manual GTZ/IFAD, Rome, Italy. Available at: <<http://www.ifad.org>>
- Ramalingam, B. (2006). Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations. ODI Toolkits, July 2006, ODI, UK. Available at: <<http://www.odi.org.uk>>
- Trayner, B., Wilcox, D. and Kapma, J. (2008) Social Reporting Toolbox: social reporting guidelines for event organisers and social reporters. Community of Practice on Innovation Mainstreaming. Available at: <<http://innovation.esflive.eu>>

Participatory Video Handbook:

- Lunch, N. and Lunch C. (2006) Insights into Participatory Video: A Handbook for the Field. Available at: <http://www.insightshare.org/training_book.html>
- Snowden, D. (1984). Eyes see; Ears hear Memorial University: Newfoundland, Canada. An excellent article on participatory video. Available at: <<http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/cddirect/cdre0038.htm>>

Narrative techniques:

- Story telling guide: SDC *Story Guide: Building Bridges Using Narrative Techniques*. Available at: <<http://www.sdc.admin.ch/knowledgemanagement>>

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Annexes

Annex 1 Process Documentation Plan (example template)

This template has been adapted from the SWITCH training materials and can be used as a template for planning process documentation activities.

Date:

Author(s):

Project:

Issue/theme:

What	Theory of change	[What changes does the project aim to achieve and how will this happen?]
	What are the specific challenges/ processes at hand	[Write in detail what the challenges are.]
	What are the processes this plan will capture	[Write in detail, which change processes you aim to observe, and document with this plan.]
Why	Purpose of the plan	<p>[Describe what you want to achieve; also is it for learning within the project team(s), for learning with a wider group of project stakeholders, for communication with external audiences, to feed into formal monitoring outputs?]</p> <p>If the purpose is for learning within project: describe formats, outputs, methods and events</p> <p>If the purpose is for external communication: describe aim, target groups, formats and channels</p>
How	With whom, where, when can these issues be captured	[Identify key people, and places, events, meetings to go to.]
	Who will do the process documentation	[Who is responsible for information collection (insiders, project stakeholders, outsiders) and how will the information be filed?]

Which tools will be used for capturing the information	[Interviews, photo, video, observation checklist, after action reviews etc.]
How will the information be organised	[In an article, in a case study, in a photo book for the web, in a photo exhibition, in a radio report, in a video film.]
How will the information be analysed	[How and when will the compiled information be analysed and who will be involved.]
How will the information be disseminated and used	[Which channels will be used to share the information? How will it feed back into project learning and implementation?] Your material has to be adapted to different audiences.]
How will this plan be monitored	[How will you monitor whether people feel their opinions have been captured or distorted? Or whether a significant strand of change is being overlooked? And how will you monitor how the lessons are being used?]

(Table continued on next page)

Annex 2 Mapping out relations between process documentation and other monitoring and learning concepts in WASHCost

Based on WASHCost memo on impact assessment, outcome mapping, process documentation and M&E, [internal project document] Le Borgne 2008

Process Documentation (PD) overlapping with:	Examples of overlapping areas
Communication strategy	<p>In the WASHCost communication strategy, process documentation supports two objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster learning and continuous improvement: by documenting planning and decision-making processes in support of improved cost-efficiency and WASH service delivery to poorer groups. • Enable teamwork, by ensuring WASHCost teams share relevant information, including useful materials from process documentation (pictures, videos, some reports etc.).
Learning Alliance (LA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process documentation looks at how the learning alliance effectively links with research activities • The learning alliance and what happens around it: research, behaviour change, results on planning and implementation are key focus areas for process documentation.
Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information collected by process documentalists feeds M&E report and may provide illustrations and graphic materials (pictures, videos etc). • Process documentation contributes to monitoring the link between improved planning and improved implementation. • <i>OR</i> it could also look at how the behaviour of LA members may have changed as a result of capacity building activities (as incentives for buy-in).
Outcome mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process documentation provides data for outcome mapping through: interviews and documentation of changes in the behaviour of LA members towards improved implementation.
Impact assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process documentation could give some indications on how behaviour changes of LA members lead to improved cost efficiency and service levels, through interviews and investigations. • The process documentation work can link the use of WASHCost products with improved cost efficiency.

Annex 3 Job description of a process documentation specialist

This is the job description of an EMPOWERS Country Information and Communication officer with a focus on process documentation as advertised in 2006:

Services provided

Each Country Information and Communication Officer supports EMPOWERS colleagues to document and share information about what is being done, in particular by:

- Conducting interviews, taking photographs, making video sequences.
- Developing newsletters, newspaper articles, a web site, flyers, briefing notes, short video films and other information outputs.
- Editing and abstracting project documents into articles for newsletters and the web site.
- Feeding country information products into the regional information programme.
- Setting up and maintaining country web pages.
- Contributing to the country information plan.
- Filing project documents and outputs.
- Supporting the team in administrative logistical tasks.
- Assisting in the organisation of workshops and conferences.
- Helping with translation of documents and outputs from Arabic into English and vice versa.

Skills required

These tasks require a variety of skills including:

- Good journalistic writing skills.
- Creativity in turning technical documents into information for a wider audience.
- Know how to work with journalists, photographers, graphic designers, video producers etc.
- Organisational capacities.
- Experience in the NGO sector.
- English and Arabic language skills.
- Computer skills in e.g. Microsoft Office.

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