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A HANDBOOK ON REMOTE WORK

Prepared by
THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT NETWORK (DFID)

ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT NETWORK

The KM Network is a professional network of Knowledge management, monitoring, evaluation, learning and communication teams across DFID programmes. PDF Bridge inherited management of the network from PDF II. The network holds lunch-time meetings with monthly capacity building sessions. The network seeks to spread process learning across programmes and to strengthen capacity of the MEAL/KM teams.

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UNDERSTANDING REMOTE WORK

Remote work describes a situation where professionals work outside of a traditional office environment. It is based on the concept that work does not need to be done in a specific place to be executed successfully. It is commonly called 'work from home' (WFH).

The global pandemic[1] has organizations reevaluating work patterns and adjusting as a mechanism for resilience.

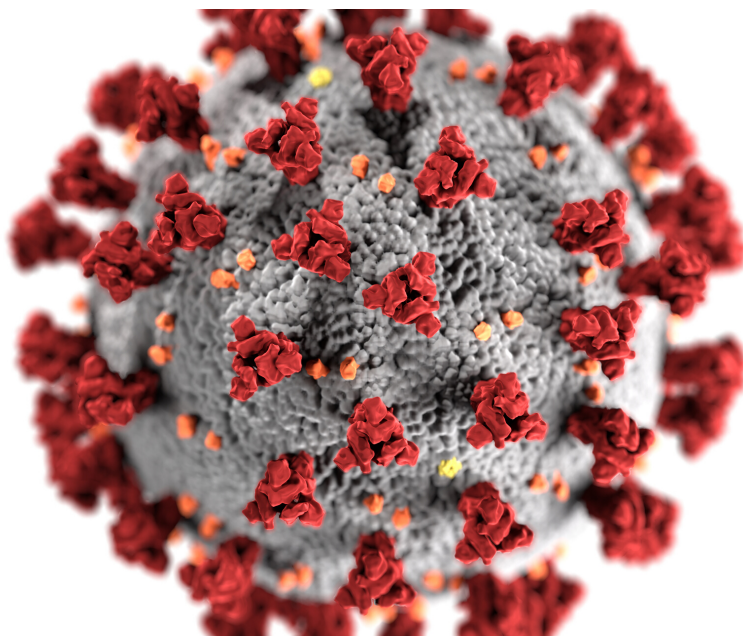
Think of it this way: instead of commuting to an office each day to work from a designated desk, employees now have to execute their projects and surpass their goals from a convenient location away from their regular work spaces. Working away from crowded or regular office spaces have become the new normal induced by the pandemic with people having the flexibility to design their days with more focus on delivery, output and impact so that their professional and personal lives can be experienced to their fullest potential and coexist peacefully while working from home

Some scenarios where workers could be asked to 'work from home' include, physical offices being under construction, considered infected, government-imposed restrictions limiting access to a physical office or by choice.



[1] [HTTPS://WWW.WHO.INT/EMERGENCIES/DISEASES/NOVEL-CORONAVIRUS-2019/EVENTS-AS-THEY-HAPPEN](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen)

Workers could also be required to work from a remote location where they are caught up in a crisis and are unable to return to physical office locations. In this case, it is an emergency and adequate preparation is usually not made. Remote work takes away commute time and for workers in cities rife with traffic jams, this is considered an advantage.



The coronavirus pandemic has placed extraordinary demands on organisations to transition to remote working. Therefore, to ensure that staff are primed to continue to deliver on tasks optimally, necessary investments need to be made to support the process. In addition to infrastructure requirements, efforts need to be made towards keeping teams motivated and productive. The down side of remote work however, is increased risk of cyber-attacks; additional measures may have to be taken by organisations to secure knowledge assets.

The aim of this handbook is to support donor funded organizations from a knowledge management perspective to transition to remote work by facilitating effective processes and procedures that will keep the organization functioning optimally.



THE TRANSITION - PREPARING TO WFH

To remain connected to other members of a team while working remotely, the following will be required: agreed structured time, internet access, connection devices, phone credits, and an allowance to cover the cost of power .

To adequately prepare to work from a remote location the following should be put in place;

a. A policy:

Some organizations have policies that specify what to do when working out of the designated office space provided by the organization. This may need to be updated to cover remote work triggered by unforeseen circumstances so that protocols are already in place should the need arise.

b. Work tools:

Request for your work tools including but not limited to a functional laptop, internet access router, jotters, pens, phone credits, work related software (Ms Team, Zoom, Skype, Google Hangout, Webex etc.)

c. Training:

Ensure you are up to date with the required training on work tools and systems. Most Knowledge Management/Learning/IT Units are set up to provide necessary trainings/guidelines on how to use organisational systems and digital tools like Microsoft Teams, Webex, Skype etc

d. Cloud storage:

Knowledge Managers could check with the IT team on cloud storage and conduct training on how to access, store, retrieve and share information.

e. Other tools:

Use tools such as Task Lists on Outlook to keep track of work and deliverables.

f. Optimize Emails, WhatsApp chats, Skype and MS Teams chats to be inclusive.

THE TRANSITION - PREPARING TO WFH

It is important to note that there is no one size fits all model for transitioning to remote working, each organization should contextualize this based on its peculiarities. General principles include establishing mandatory online hours for all employees, setting up mechanisms to promote productivity and team rapport which may include output-focused targets and performance standards, notifying necessary stakeholders of the change in operations and addressing any questions they might have.



REMOTE WORK BEST PRACTICES

Working from home can often blur the lines between work time and relaxation which could make it difficult to achieve work-life balance. It's important to draw up some guidelines on how you can achieve quality remote work without your personal life suffering or vice versa. A few tips below might help:

1. Create a routine and stick to it – it allows you stay focused during working hours and to relax during downtime. Ensure your family knows about your routine so you can get their support in keeping to it.
2. Connect with your team – do regular check-ups on your team members which could be daily or weekly. You could use that time to discuss project updates, highlights, concerns and maybe very importantly what's going on in their respective lives (for instance, how they are coping with isolation, lockdown, etc.). If possible, introduce a 'happy hour' time where colleagues just connect on other things except work.
3. Take advantage of your most productive hours – for some people, their most productive hours could be during night time or early in the morning. Use these hours to deliver your best quality work.
4. Stay updated on the tech world – technology is obviously the game changer in this crisis period and new ones are springing up everyday while companies are upgrading existing ones to meet current needs. Find what works best for your team and introduce it.
5. If it works for you, create different workspaces at home to avoid boredom. Sometimes, the time employees spend in colleagues' offices and conference rooms during meetings or workshops make the office workspace more appealing than their work cubicle at work.
6. Investing in remote data collection using telephone interviews and/or online platforms such as Kobo Collect.
7. Above all, stay grateful and positive – amidst all the chaos that a crisis brings, staying positive is the only way to remain sane and to be hopeful for the best to come.



MANAGING EXPECTATIONS REMOTELY

DONORS

As international development organizations and implementing partners, we have donors/clients whose mandate and strategic goals direct the work we do at various levels. As such, when working remotely, it is imperative that their expectations are managed effectively and efficiently. One proactive step towards this is communication before, during and after the WFH period. Donor funded programmes should initiate discussions with the donors outlining in a contingency plan protocols put in place to ensure continued high-quality work delivery. A good rule of thumb is to highlight the organization's learning and adaptive programming approach in response to events that occur during the WFH period, and a commitment to share learnings or innovations that improve implementation.

It is important to note that in event of a pandemic, the priorities of stakeholders may change significantly. Therefore, donor programmes need to be flexible and adaptive in designing its interventions that align with the identified priorities. Finally, keep the communication line open with the donor taking care to respond to donor's changing priorities in an effective and efficient manner.



MANAGING EXPECTATIONS REMOTELY

PARTNERS AND BENEFICIARIES

Most engagements involve direct engagements with governments at the national or subnational level or direct engagements with citizens. Government policy and rhetoric concerning the operation of DFID programmes focus on an approach that encompasses shared responsibility, partnerships, effective community involvement through informed communication and consultation, engagement through devolution of 'appropriate' authority to communities, and empowering individuals and communities by building their capacities to participate. The lessons pulled together from different engagements on WhatsApp groups, phone calls and feedbacks show that these five things rank top as factors of success in managing stakeholders remotely;

- a. Community ownership of a process; Promote and encourage the ownership of the objectives of a digital engagement by a community member/stakeholder. Let them drive the process of the engagement. Appoint admins from within the organization of the partner/MDAs. Where it is a webinar, develop the objective with members from their teams.
- b. Power of communication; leveraging on tools that they understand & already use while maintaining constant check-ins. It may be necessary to follow up emails with calls and to walk through any challenges where there is a meeting or a webinar being held and you need maximum participation. It is also important to thread conversations. For WhatsApp, using the 'reply' function helps to thread the conversation. Curate conversations weekly or monthly and create a report as every piece of learning becomes very useful.
- c. Spend time researching how different stakeholders are affected; this might provide a better understanding of how the crisis is affecting their businesses and lives and why certain people are more affected than others.
- d. Aligning solutions/needs with stakeholder's priorities; It is important to understand and go back to the Terms of Reference that guides the engagement with the partners and stakeholders to understand needs in order to sell digital engagement in a way that aligns with their needs.
- e. Show empathy; talk to them about their challenges and listen. Have weekly check-ins by voice calls that are not directly related to work.



KNOWLEDGE STORAGE, SECURITY AND SHARING

STORAGE

DFID programmes make use of Office 365. This affords access to a range of products including Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Team, OneDrive, Microsoft Stream and Sharepoint. Sharepoint and OneDrive are recommended storage sites. Use these to work with your team remotely and to back up documents on your cloud server. Recorded events can be stored on your website and cloud drives for accessibility to the public where it is a public facing event.

SECURITY

Work with your IT team to ensure that employees use and practice cyber safe protocols in their work. Review security procedures for systems and passwords, and what to do in the event of a security breach.

SHARING

Video Streaming; Cisco Webex and Teams are great for keeping in touch via meetings. Cisco provides you with visual tools for training your team and retaining the video of the training in Microsoft Teams for replays and as a resource. Microsoft Teams remains a virtual workspace allowing you to share documents seamlessly across teams and with each other.

For more information on MS Teams, refer to;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CH2seLS5WbO>

For more information on Sharepoint, refer to;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odixpcyqOgQ>

For more information on Cisco webex, refer to;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WyywITZEIS8>

Social Media

This is a great time to leverage on social media to achieve and share programme outputs and outcomes.

- Create a social media plan for your programme.
- Ensure daily or weekly posts to engage users and digital partners.
- Curate programme outcomes using a newsletter
- There are scenarios where KM units do not have some tools embedded in their budget. Make
- extensive use of free tools like Canva to create engaging content. Canva has training embedded within the web app.

Here is a free resource on Canva;

<https://designschool.canva.com/>

KNOWLEDGE STORAGE, SECURITY AND SHARING

HOSTING WEBINARS

Zoom, WebEx and Google Hangouts are great tools for hosting webinars to keep in touch with networks and stakeholders in a user-centric manner. Webinars may be used for seminars, trainings or townhall engagements. Zoom appears to be very popular within the Nigerian audience due to the ease of use and simpler integration with Facebook and YouTube making it easier to reach a wider audience.

Planning for a webinar must be done with the same intensity as in-person events. Each webinar must have a Term of Reference with an event plan as well as a budget of its own. It is important to recognize that hosting events digital may reduce but does not eliminate cost in order to be taken seriously.

As Knowledge Managers, it becomes important to create roles for rapporteurs, media consultants and where necessary, moderators. These roles must come with specific assignment descriptions or terms of reference that satisfies the objectives of the webinar.

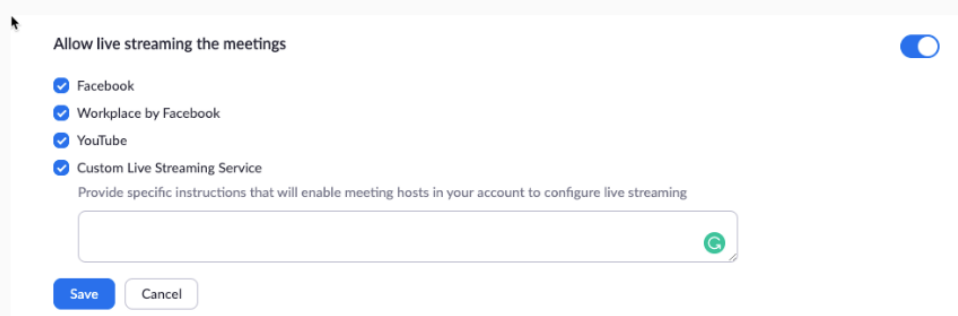
Each webinar hosted must include within the plan a test-run of event. Make plans to attend webinar that have a similar design with the one being planned by your organization in order to take lessons for your own event.

Record the webinars hosted by your organization. In sending out fliers, mention that the webinar will be recorded for organizational use and for public sharing. Curate comments posted across platforms that the webinar airs on for your report and as feedback where applicable. Like every other event, after action reviews are important to be able to curate lessons from your webinar. Where possible, build in a feedback form at the end of the event for the audience.

To stream live on YouTube via Zoom, enable live streaming on your YouTube account by verifying the account. Ensure you are using a Pro, Business, Education, or Enterprise Zoom account with a webinar add-on plan.

To enable all members of your organization to live stream meetings on Youtube:

1. Sign in to the Zoom web portal as an administrator with the privilege to edit account settings.
2. Click **Account Management** > **Account Settings**.
3. Toggle the **Allow live streaming the meetings** under **In Meeting (Advanced)**, and enable **Youtube**.



Allow live streaming the meetings ☒

- ☒ Facebook
- ☒ Workplace by Facebook
- ☒ YouTube
- ☒ Custom Live Streaming Service

Provide specific instructions that will enable meeting hosts in your account to configure live streaming

4. (Optional) If you want to make this setting mandatory for all users in your account, click the lock icon, and then click **Lock** to confirm the setting.

PROVIDING TEAM SUPPORT FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE & ADAPTING MUTUAL AID FOR THE REMOTE WORKSPACE

At times of crisis such as the COVID pandemic, teams experience changes which create alarming isolation, fears, and health threatening moments. It becomes important to maintain the unconditional support and freedom to express emotions that unites teams working remotely. Listening, communicating and understanding each other will be the most powerful tools we can use to overcome the current challenges together.

Here are some recommended things to do for a Knowledge Manager;

- Individual check-ins with team members to see if anyone is experiencing a challenge which you have the skills for
- Emotional check-ins with your immediate team
- Maintain a mutual aid catalogue that contains; links, phone numbers to medicare, domestic violence support, mental health support, Fire service, Police etc. and share these with your team regularly.

Here is a helpful resource; <https://bit.ly/mhremotework>



DONOR PROGRAMME LESSONS FROM NIGERIA'S COVID-19 REMOTE WORKING EXPERIENCE

- Expenditure can be cut down by remote work. This period may be a helpful time to evaluate and reassign resources on projects that can be done without physical contact.
- Upholding the regular office routines such as weekly team meetings can bring stability, enhance the team motivation and productivity. This can provide a close substitute to physical contact for team members.
- Extra-ordinary measures such as compulsory daily on-line presence at certain work hours can improve team performance. Collaborative work and technical support to team members could be facilitated at these times as all team members are mandated to be on-line at the same time.
- Understand the limitations remote working poses to your programme; where you can, seek out mitigation measures from similar programmes and donor.
- It might be a good period to test technological models stakeholders have been previously reluctant about especially if this is an option to remain connected to them.
- Review the programmes theory of change and logical framework to determine the larger ecosystem's impact on it. This will provide an evidence base for revising program strategy and delivery models.
- Collaboration across programmes become somewhat easier as travel time is eliminated leaving more chances for participation in events by other programmes. This may foster a way to take forward the inclusion of livestreaming in events by programmes in order to sustain and continue the inclusion of an expanded audience gained during COVID-19.



CONCLUSION

A crisis period is a time to reevaluate the knowledge management strategies of programmes to ensure that the strategy is still user-centered. This involves the use of tools such as after-action reviews, feedback forms and interviews to gain an understanding of stakeholder, partner and donor needs at the time of crisis.

The lessons learned and curated by knowledge management teams in DFID programmes contribute to building resilient programmes and also contributes to improving the effectiveness of the various programme service providers. This document continues to serve as a guide and would be updated as new thoughts, lessons and ideas become available.

CONTRIBUTORS

- Nana Mgbechikwere Nwachukwu
- Ezinne Margrethmary Anyanwu
- Odinakachi Nwachukwu
- Sabrina Nwonye
- Nur Azam
- Rachel Illah
- Yvonne Ekpe
- Sylvanu Abua
- Theresa Okpa
- Habiba Njidda
- Oluwatosin Akomolafe



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United Kingdom Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility

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FACILITY FOR OIL SECTOR TRANSFORMATION