



CGIAR Challenge Program on
WATER & FOOD

Andes • Ganges • Limpopo • Mekong • Nile • Volta

CPWF Learning Systems Efficiency

Survey Results

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Introduction

The Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) ended in December 2013 and officially closed end of April 2014. As part of its legacy the CPWF continues to document its approach to research for development (R4D), including what lessons and recommendations can be gleaned. The program sought to assess CPWF experiences and contribute to the emerging understanding of learning based approaches to R4D including how comprehensive learning systems can be constructed around R4D projects.

While a critical account of the program's experience of developing a learning system is needed, this survey is only the first step in that process. The 'learning systems' assessed here includes all M&E arrangements, reflexive space and activities, knowledge management, research on innovations, and policy engagement activities. The list of learning systems included in the survey is not exhaustive but includes the major aspects associated with the approach.

This report sets out the methodology and structure of the survey followed by the results with some light interpretation and conclusions.

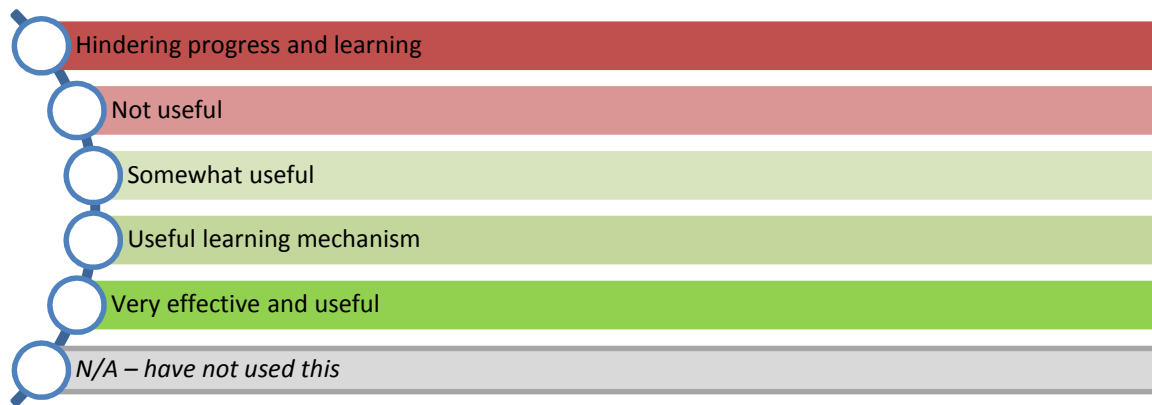
Methodology used to survey effectiveness of CPWF learning systems

The survey contained a total of nine questions grouped into three broad areas: 1) monitoring learning systems; 2) reflexive spaces and activities; and 3) knowledge sharing mechanisms. Annex 2 contains detailed survey questions abbreviated below.

- 1) General information about the respondent;
 - Q #1. Determined the respondent's level of involvement with CPWF
 - Q #2. Determined which region(s) respondents were involved with
- 2) Rating the efficiency of three learning system categories plus additional comments;
 - Q #3. How useful did you find select monitoring learning systems?
 - Q #4. How useful did you find select reflexive spaces and activities?
 - Q #5. How useful did you find select knowledge sharing systems?
 - Q #6. Use of any of these tools beyond your CPWF work
 - Q #7. Other mechanism and tools used and not listed above?
- 3) Closing remarks and open comments.
 - Q #8. Other comments and feedback
 - Q #9. Optional: contact details.

The rating question offered a scale of five responses indicating the level of usefulness of the respective learning system with one choice for respondents to indicate if they had not used the tool at all. Responses were categorized on a continuum from *hindering progress & learning, not useful, somewhat useful, effective learning mechanism, and very effective and useful*. The rating scale is presented in the figure below.

The survey was intentionally brief, taking from five to fifteen minutes to complete, depending on respondents' interest in detailing the open ended questions. The expectation was that a brief survey would generate more responses than a longer more complex version.



The survey was designed, implemented and managed through Survey Monkey. The initial survey instrument was pre-tested and refined for clarity. The sample was 250 CPWF colleagues whose names and contact information were on record from CPWF project contracting documents. Respondents fell into the following, (non-mutually exclusive) categories: Program (management) Team; Basin Leaders; Project Leaders; and Project Team Members. An electronic link to the survey was sent within an introductory e-mail (see annex 1). The original survey invitation was sent on July 25th with a final response date of 9th August 2013.

Responses and Respondents

One hundred of the 250 recipients (40%) submitted a response to the survey, not all were complete. Nearly all Program Team, Basin Leaders and Project Leaders responded. Roughly 25% of the Project Team Members and associated CPWF colleagues responded. Responses were received from all six basins with the Andes and the Nile slightly under-represented. The survey was only offered in English.

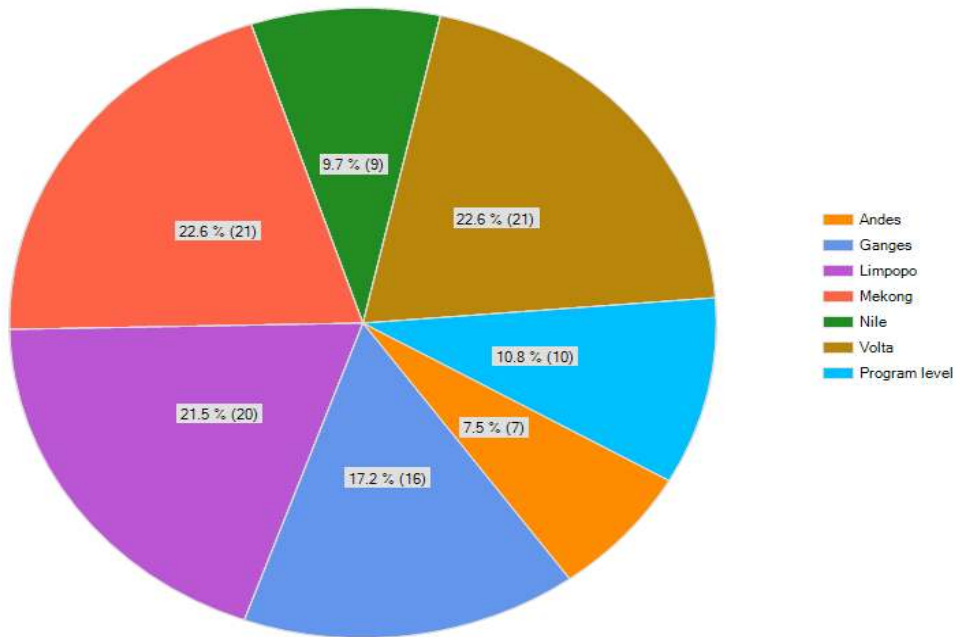
Question #1: Level of involvement with the CPWF

Self-identification of role or affiliation showed responses as follows: Program Team (8/9), Basin Leaders (6/6) and Project Leaders (27/30), with nearly 25% of respondents being project team members and associated CPWF colleagues (50/210).

Question #2: Which region have you been involved with?

The following chart shows the respondents' participation by region. The question allowed for more than one answer to be given.

Which region have you been involved with?



Effectiveness of the CPWF Learning Systems

In the assessment of CPWF Learning Systems, only responses from people who indicated that they had used the tools were included in the analysis to the exclusion of those inexperienced with the tools.

Question #3. How useful did you find select monitoring learning systems?

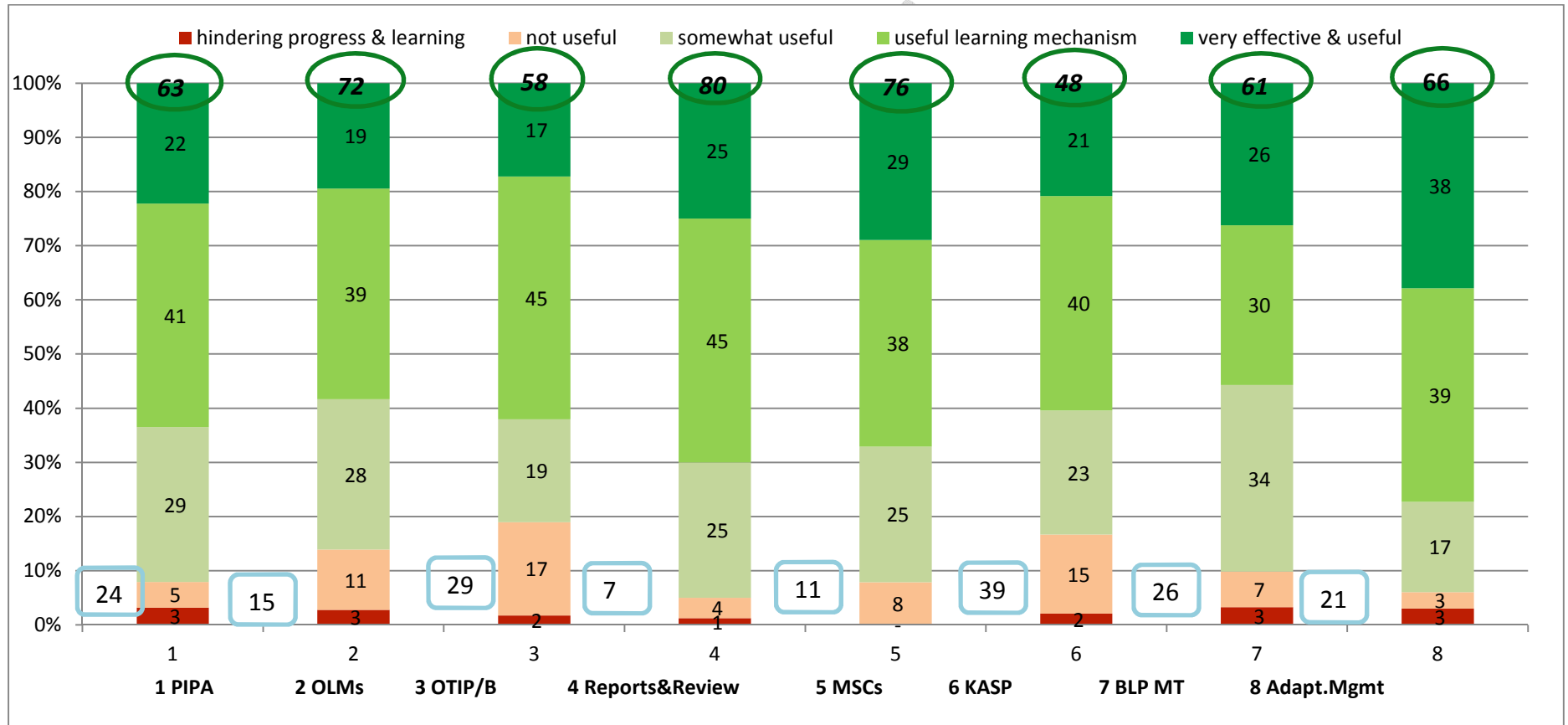
A total of eighty-seven (87) respondents assessed a total of eight (8) monitoring learning system tools listed in the table below. Frequencies for each, and for those not having experienced the tool, are presented in the table below. The graph below the table presents percentages for each ranking category for the eight tools identified in this question.

Question #3: How useful did you find the following monitoring learning systems (frequency)?

Answered question	87	Skipped question	7	Total	94
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Answer Options	hindering progress & learning	not useful	somewhat useful	useful learning mechanism	very effective & useful	N/A - I have not used this
Participatory Impact Pathway Analysis (PIPA)	2	3	18	26	14	24
Outcome Logic Models (OLMs)	2	8	20	28	14	15
Baselines with Outcome Target Indicator Plans/Baselines (OTIP/B)	1	10	11	26	10	29
Reports to CPWF & review process, (BDC reports, feedback etc.)	1	3	20	36	20	7
Most significant change stories (MSC)	0	6	19	29	22	11
Knowledge-Attitude-Skills (and Practice) (KASP) survey	1	7	11	19	10	39
Basin liaison persons (Mgmt. Team Representative)	2	4	21	18	16	26
Adaptive Management (systematic approach for deliberately learning from management actions to improve subsequent mgmt. policy & practice)	2	2	11	26	25	21

Question #3: How useful did you find the following monitoring learning systems (percentage)?¹



¹ The columns in the graph show only the rated responses for each tool, i.e. only responses from those who felt comfortable ranking its usefulness. The numbers in the column sections give the percentage (%) of total responses for that particular rating. The total number of respondents that rated the tool is in a green circle at the top of each column; the number in the blue square is the number of people who said they have not used this tool.

Question #3: Comments and explanations on the given rating

OLMs and OTIP/Bs

As much as **OLM** are useful but they appear to be very theoretical and difficult to set adequately at the beginning of the project.

Some tools were not in a 'ready to use' format; some tools were more 'interesting explorations' (**OLM/OTIB/P**): it may be we did not put the correct emphasis on various tools (too little support for example for M&E indicator & baseline: what are meaningful indicators for project AND basin), hence the not-so-usefulness as a project leader. Some tools incl. project reports need MUCH MORE preparation so formats and content is consistent

I found the **OLMs and OTIBs** to be very useful especially to assist team to focus on proposed project outputs and this worked very well with the adaptive management approach.

There is a lot behind these scores: I seem to remember we set up **OTIP/B** but didn't then use them.

Adaptive Management

I am not sure that the **adaptive management** system is 'very effective' as many people are not aware of what it means, but certainly to operate within a system that is willing to adapt to changing needs is very positive.

re: **adaptive management** ... when trying new approach or modifying approaches it would help to have testing periods to assess the effectiveness rather than completely implementing at once.

adaptive management is part and parcel of what we do

Working in close partnerships with actors means that management of research intervention should be very **adaptive**. No problem on my side. But the CPWF remains extremely rigid beyond the use of the concept of adaptive management with limited its interest for research. IPA, OLM, OTIP/B are potentially interesting provided they are being implemented with a learning view (and trained facilitator) during the *****building***** phase of the project - and not to comply to providing "indicators" or management requirement to management team on one hand and on the other hand that it does not mean to micromanage the project or activities lines - but provide overall indication and direction of work. I did not even know that they were basin liaison persons and no idea of what KASP survey is.

Reports, review and feedback

There is little/none **feedback on the submitted reports**

The system for **CPWF reporting** was very useful in terms of potential but it was not well implemented in the Nile. It was not until I became Basin Leader that I actually had access to the **reports - feedback loops** were missing.

Others

As a student, was mentored, and given opportunity to attend workshops, and participate as a young professional.

CPWF was always innovative on these new tools.

These approaches were useful at the beginning, but been under-utilised as the project has progressed.

Training workshops in concepts mechanisms were limited for team members

***KASP surveys** were a good idea but the person responsible for designing them picked up the wrong end of the stick. What I saw was off beam.*

I came in late in the process after a lot of these tools had been used. Some of them were not implemented, either ever or regularly...

I have been only indirectly involved in MLS

As project member, I did not directly contribute to any of these systems.

N/A: The reports because I didn't fill out myself. The MSC - don't know how useful it was, KASP survey don't know and BLP in MT didn't use.

The several monitoring tools work in combination so it is not always easy to answer these page

Question #4. How useful did you find select reflexive spaces and activities?

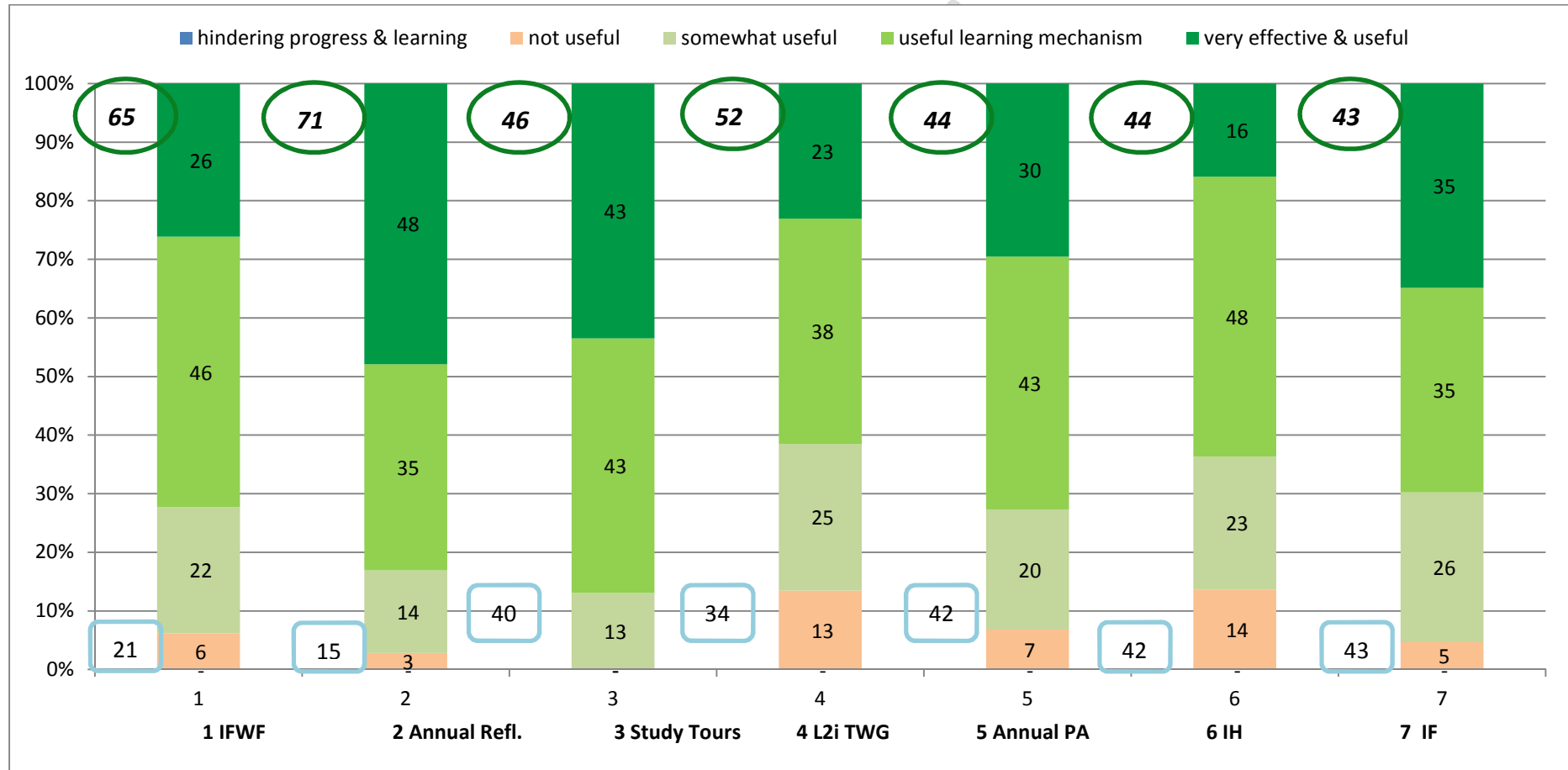
A total of eighty-six (86) respondents assessed a total of seven (7) reflexive spaces and activities listed in the table below. Frequencies for each, and for those not having experienced these are presented in the table below. The graph below the table presents percentages for each ranking category for the seven activities identified in this question.

Question #4: How useful did you find the following reflexive spaces and activities (frequency)?

Answered question	86	Skipped question	8	Total	94
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Answer Options	hindering progress & learning	not useful	somewhat useful	useful learning mechanism	very effective & useful	N/A - I have not used this
International Forum on Water & Food Series: Vientiane 2006, Addis 2008, Pretoria 2011	0	4	14	30	17	21
Annual BDC reflection meetings	0	2	10	25	34	15
Study Tours	0	0	6	20	20	40
Learning to Innovate topic working group	0	7	13	20	12	34
Annual Peer Assist meetings	0	3	9	19	13	42
Institutional Histories	0	6	10	21	7	42
Innovation Funds projects	0	2	11	15	15	43

Question #4: How useful did you find the following reflexive spaces and activities (percentage)?²



² The columns in the graph show only the rated responses for each activity, i.e. only responses from those who felt comfortable ranking its usefulness. The numbers in the column sections give the percentage (%) of total responses for that particular rating. The total number of respondents that rated the activity is in a green circle at the top; the number in the blue square is the number of people who said they were not engaged in this activity.

Question #4: Comments and explanations on the given rating

Topic Working Groups and Learning 2 Innovate

*The concept of **TWG** in general is good though it was not fully exploited and cross basin learning was not fully considered*

***L2i TWG** somewhat: while I was active in it, useful. On the rest I wasn't a user, so can't really say*

***L2i** only involved Basin Leaders which was a mistake in my view.*

***TWGs** were discontinued; a promise highly flagged not realized, and only resulted in disappointment and dis trust. The IDEA was great, and the function it could provide has been much asked for in the basins. Learning takes time: has to find right balance between individual learning and actually doing the job of R4D*

International Forum Series

***International forums** are great if focusing on cross basin learning and figuring potential areas for collaborations*

It should be important to do another

***International Forum** before closing the project*

*There was very **limited cross-basin interaction** at the **International Forum Series**, i.e., the Pretoria 2011 meeting!*

*The **Pretoria forum** was the only one I attended - too much pzazz and too many people to be an optimally useful internal learning event. Maybe useful for other purposes.*

***IFWFs** although had both positive and negative feedbacks, I think gave the best venue to hear from everyone who were involved in the program*

Other generic comments

For Limpopo River basin, participation of other member states is not satisfactory, capacity building is therefore a necessity!

Only a limited number of persons were associated to most of these instruments. There were no transparent mechanisms for selection who should be involved with what instruments. This limited their impact to the direct beneficiaries.

Some of these were started late and not followed up properly.

My participation in the project team was mostly during the planning stage.

Basin Reflection meetings

***BDC Reflection meetings** are a useful forum, but there is not always sufficient follow up on the learning, at least that I could see*

*The one **basin meeting** I went to was very useful in getting to know the other projects and see how our work related and matched up with the other projects within the basin. It was also a great opportunity to meet people in person which then facilitated communication via email and skype more easily.*

*Particularly loved the **BDC reflection meetings** but their insights were not always systematically followed through though*

*It appears that follow-up to **reflection meetings** varies considerably*

Innovation Funds Projects

*The **innovations funds project** enabled the adoption of a new approach, resulting from research findings, to be tested.*

Study Tours

*I believe **study tour** a good learning and integration mechanisms - provided it is not a "tourist" tour which gathers a very large number of scientists that visit the "good " farmers) but unfortunately was never associated to such study tours.*

Institutional Histories

*Too early to judge re usefulness of **Institutional Histories***

Question #5: How useful did you find select knowledge sharing systems?

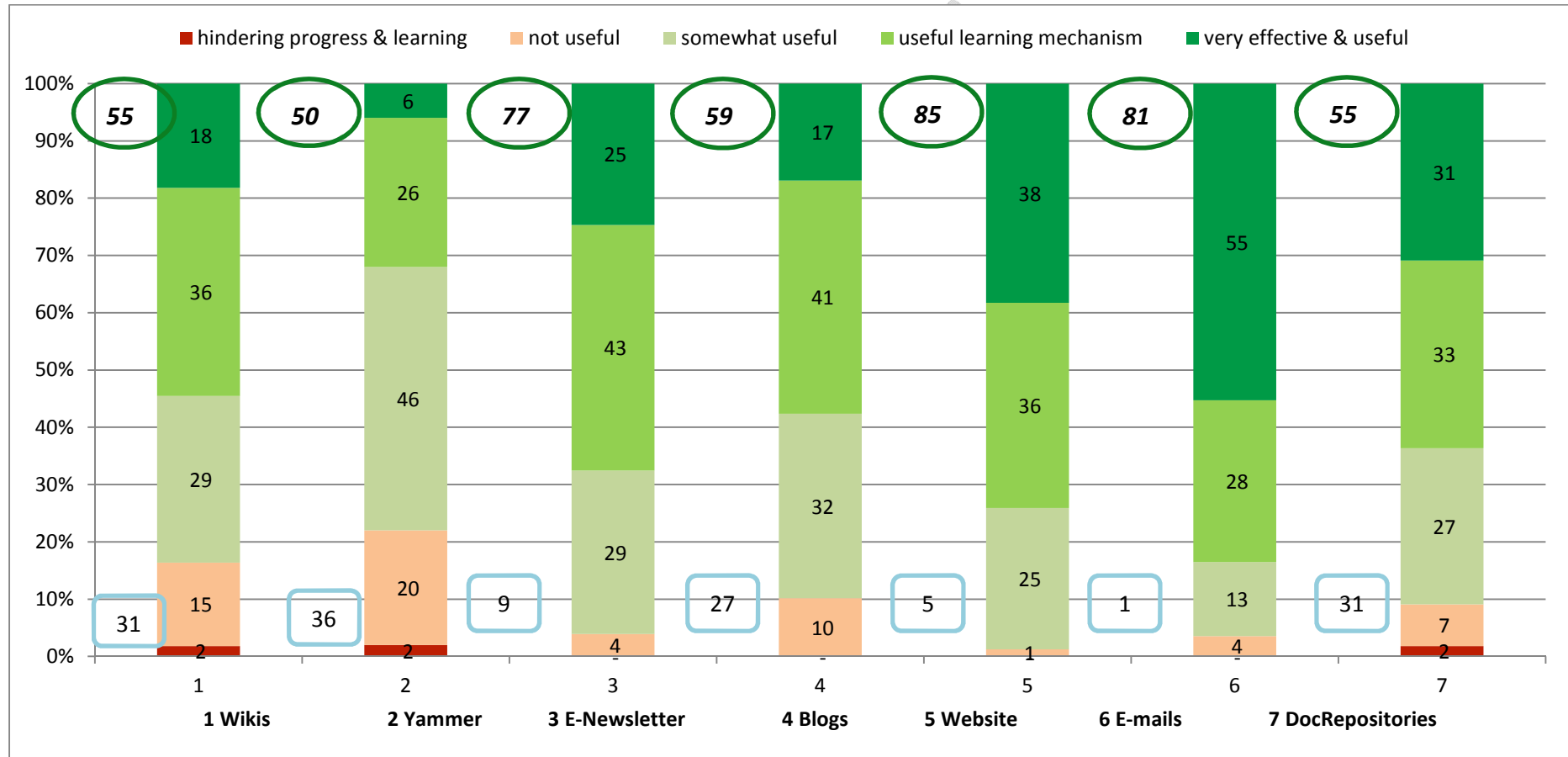
A total of eighty-six (86) respondents assessed a total of seven (7) knowledge sharing systems listed in the table below. Frequencies for each, and for those not having experienced these are presented in the table below. The graph below the table presents percentages for each ranking category for the seven systems identified in this question.

DRAFT

Question #5: How useful did you find the following knowledge sharing systems (frequency)?

Answered question	86		Skipped question	8		Total	94	
Answer Options	hindering progress & learning	not useful	somewhat useful	useful learning mechanism	very effective & useful	N/A - I have not used this		
Wikis	1	8	16	20	10	31		
Yammer	1	10	23	13	3	36		
CPWF E-newsletter	0	3	22	33	19	9		
Blogs	0	6	19	24	10	27		
Website	0	1	20	29	31	5		
E-mails	0	3	11	24	47	1		
CG-Space/CPWF Document repository	1	4	15	18	17	31		

Question #5: How useful did you find the following knowledge sharing systems (percentage)?³



³The columns in the graph show only the rated responses for each activity, i.e. only responses from those who felt comfortable ranking its usefulness. The numbers in the column sections give the percentage (%) of total responses for that particular rating. The total number of respondents that rated the system is in a green circle at the top; the number in the blue square is the number of people who said they did not use this system.

Question #5: Comments and explanations on the given rating

Website

- The **website** of the CPWF provided enough general information, but I wonder whether further pieces could have been written to promote the different project activities online.
- More effort should go into update & revise of **websites** per basin

E-mails and Yammer

- **Emails** are the main communication tool in the project and as such have been useful to keep everyone in the loop. Whether using emails has led to learning that I am less certain off.
- **E-mails** tended to be buried in tons & tons of e-mails we get per day!
- I still find **emails** and **chats** better alternatives to f2f conversations, rather than **yammer**. Complex programs like CPWF need very regular communication. Whether the channels were the right ones or were used rightly is another issue but it was great to have them as an **alternative to e-mails** (and their blind spots).
- Some **Yammer** discussions were quite interesting (2)

Document Repositories

- **CG Space** is a pain to navigate. It's a cemetery.
- CG centre search engines often cannot find **CG space documents**, but they can be found using Google
- **Document repositories** as well as **websites** were very useful to me.

Others

- Liked the **CPWF newsletter** to hear about other basins too!
- The **reporting and documenting mechanisms** were generally very good.
- Overall **internal communication** could have been better. Information seems to be reserved to the coordination and change project team members and project leaders. When transmitted to project members information was not contextualised - assuming that everyone has the same level of initial knowledge and information which was not true since only a very limited number of people had a clear overview of the process.
- As a student (2011/2012), the information was accessible and useful for my Master Project.
- Not really grading them for useful sharing tools and spaces, but not learning mechanisms.
- Duplication and info overflow is almost inevitable with so many systems
- Not sure about these.

Question #6: Which of the tools have you used beyond your CPWF work, i.e. in other projects or programs?

Response Frequency	Learning System Tools used beyond the CPWF
25	Participatory Impact Pathway Analysis (PIPA) Workshop
35	Outcome Logic Models (OLMs)
13	Baselines with Outcome Target Indicator Plans/Baselines (OTIP/B)
58	Reports and review process
29	Most significant change stories (MSC)
14	Knowledge-Attitude-Skills (and Practice) (KASP) survey
13	Basin liaison persons (in Management Team)
37	Adaptive Management
 	
16	International Forum Series
36	Annual reflection meetings
45	Study Tours
7	Learning to Innovate topic working group
9	Annual Peer Assist meetings
3	Institutional Histories
10	Innovation Funds Projects
 	
10	Yammer
20	Wikis
35	E-newsletter
23	Blogs
51	Website
70	E-mails
14	CG-space/CPWF document repository

Any others?

- *Project intranet to post documents, stories, messages and lessons - similar to a wiki*

Please specify in which projects or with which organizations you have used any of the above listed mechanisms/ tools.

CRPs

- *Water Land and Ecosystems CRP*
- *AAS uses these tools but not on my instigation.*
- *WorldFish partnership analysis and WLE partnership analysis*

European funded Projects

- *Some of these tools had been already used in the AMMA-European project in West Africa.*
- *EC Funded Research Projects and WB & ADB Projects*
- *Many different European research projects*
- *IFAD consultancy*

Others

- *Ministry of Agriculture*

- *Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture.*
- *Research projects between universities and NARES funded by local donors. The most common tool is what are called reference group meetings that review progress to date vs the project progress plan.*
- *We use these tools in a range of projects before I got involved in the CPWF projects. I use e-letters to communicate internally about changes made to our institutional monitoring and evaluation system; We use adaptive management as a general approach to all projects, one example is a project on perceptions of tree health; MSC is part of our monitoring and evaluation system and has been used to evaluate project progress in a number of projects; blogs are part of a water governance related project; websites have been developed for a number of projects and emails are used in all day to day activities.*
- *Just wanted to say that I used some of these (e.g. MSC) before CPWF so not necessarily as a result of the CPWF*
- *The tools of MSC , impact pathways etc. are not unique to CPWF although to my knowledge not been tested to such scale in R4D in agriculture elsewhere yet; Variants of the CPWF tool box is available and used in quite a few research-for-impact initiatives in various countries (with somewhat different terminology/phrasing)*
- *As a consultant I have almost no opportunity to use these in other work.*
- *Most other projects I am involved with.*

Response Rates for Those Who Said They Have Not Used a Tool

Out of those roughly 90 responses for each of the three questions, a range between 1 and 43 responded N/A – I have not used this tool (see table below).

	Response count for N/A – I have not used	No. of tools in this category	Average
Q3 monitoring learning systems	172	8	22
Q4 reflexive spaces and activities	237	7	34
Q5 knowledge sharing systems	140	7	20

An average of 25 respondents indicated that they had not used one of the tools in each of the three tools areas. Reflexive spaces and activities were not used by a larger number of respondents (i.e. average 34 for those tools) than the monitoring and knowledge sharing systems (i.e. average 22 for the monitoring learning systems and 20 for knowledge sharing).

Questions #7: Are there any other mechanism and tools that you thought were used that were not listed above and you would like to share some experience and your perception of them with us?

- *Agent based participatory modelling*
- *Bi-monthly PL etc. meetings - good concept but very limited effectiveness because of terrible connections with both skype and webex*
- *Comms peer assists were really great but petered out after BDC comms people kept on changing. It was a great mechanism to get to know more about other BDCs though*
- *Farmer cross site visits,*
- *Field trips, survey*
- *GIS, but it was hard to fully utilize their capacity for sharing spatial information.*
- *In person internal project meetings*
- *Information exchange*
- *Innovation Platforms (3x), set up under Nile were useful,*
- *Internal project meetings - these were the main events that led to learning and adaptive management within the project. We also undertook consultations and learning events with local stakeholders which established a co-learning process within the project.*
- *Internal project planning of activities at CS level (planning matrix) => work of the different teams/project are planned from a CS study perspective. A CS coordinator is in charge of organizing coherency of activities, adaptation, adaptive learning in partnership with stakeholders and scientists (from different project; disciplines) have to coordinate/adapt their activities (and objectives) to CS context and on the ground objectives => this push for real integration **mechanisms** between project on one hand, allows for better interactions with stakeholders and alignment to specific institutional context/demand specificities that facilitates research "uptake" (as CPWF learn appropriation of innovation). This is then adapted annually depending of the development of activities in the field by the different teams/ project/ work package and overall institutional/ political/ environmental context providing a true adaptive management, integrative and transdisciplinary process and monthly team meetings*
- *Nile Science Workshop in 7/2013 was extremely useful. National and Regional Platforms in Ethiopia also very useful.*
- *Papers, CPWF Annual Report*
- *Participatory action research*
- *Social network mapping and analysis*

- Stakeholder involvement
- The project workbooks turned out to be very useful in the long run. If kept up to date, they are a really good monitoring tool that includes milestone plans, OTIBs, OLMs, Gantt charts, etc. Taken together, this was a useful compilation of tools that have been subsequently used by our organization.
- There is a FUNDAMENTAL need to get the tools in place, - also for an admin / practical project-partner level, i.e. 'operationalise the R4D vision'. Otherwise the frustration with all time changes from an admin perspective overtakes the overall objective of doing better RESEARCH for impact (have to be careful that projects do not end up being only 'knowledge facilitating vehicles' with endless meetings internal & external, but also achieve new , innovative science & knowledge and capacity as core

No (16x) Nothing at this point, Nothing to add, essential tools are mentioned

Question #8: Any other comments and feedback that you would like to give?

Sometimes the reporting seems tedious

The communication team should be more proactive and dedicated.

A scale down of the international forum series would provide more resources for actual R4D.

Many of the learning mechanisms were useful in theory - the problem was often that they were not fully implemented, if at all. Or they were implemented in a sub-optimal way.

Although I have not directly filled in reports for the CPWF I have looked at some and wondered whether in some cases the length of the reports hampered the potential for reflection and learning. The CPWF could potentially think of supporting shorter reports that allow quicker turn around maybe every half year to avoid sending out a very large one at the end of a year.

It is amazing how turnover of personnel leads to loss of corporate memory such that earlier CPWF and other related research is unknown to those who are attempting to synthesize CPWF experiences.

Basin coordinator was not always affable and enabling.

The decision not to have the program team co-located in one place greatly affected how this team interacted and learned together.

The technical/scientific knowledge base with CPWF needed improvement.

We can get many more stakeholders from all levels of society interested if we make the language simpler.

Before approval of project - first see the coordinator - avoid like a corrupted and ill behaviour person [...]

Although the CPWF-BDC project started with loads of energy and good approaches (PIPA, etc.), the whole process lost some steam somewhere along the way with the advent of CRP5 and proposed budget cuts and shortening of project duration. After that research became a bit 'mechanical' just to deliver on the deliverables!

A strong partnership has been developed between organisations of different disciplines and enabled to learn new knowledge. This partnership will be instrumental for the benefit of other new projects

Overall, the CPWF is a good learning program

One aspect that is not mentioned I feel is very important in learning: research should be given the chance to not lead to the expected results, to conclusion that its hypothesis was not valid. This is many times more useful for the users of

Found the Basin Leader, effective in guiding the process for resolve some challenges and link us to various resources.

I hope some of these learning tools will be expanded and adapted in the new CRPs.

CPWF program was as eye opener to IWRM and other water related issues.

By far the best thing was having a co-ordinated group of projects and bi-annual reflection workshops.

Since I was just a team member, I do not know to what extent the basin teams interacted with stakeholders at different levels. It is important at all stages of the project and these can assist in developing/improving technologies that can be adopted.

I think it will be very interesting to reinforce our knowledge in terms of tools to make them more efficient in current or future projects.

A lot of thinking went into learning in CPWF but the program was too complex for its duration. Teams were not able to use all these learning instruments (and were not used to them either) in their own BDC, let alone with other BDCs. Shame, though great 'learning' for future programs ;)

It has been a very great experience to be part of this phase II experiment, although at times frustrating. I sincerely hope to post documentation will be one appropriately to be able to inform both national and international R4D processes in various locations.

Presentation of projects that are designed to have a positive impact on resources management in our basins is bringing change as we are facing challenges due to climate change/variability and occurrence of natural disasters. Twinning projects between basins can help basins to learn from each other.

N/A, none and no (8x)

the research results than always insisting in the success stories. Researchers should be motivated to speak out on these issues, and feel this is not a failure of their research, but just a non-expected result.

The usefulness of the different tools used for learning could be increased by a less top down - linear conceptualization of innovation and relationship between sciences and research - users. I share the point of view of Dr Hall that R4D goes beyond implementation of a toolbox: it also means true management for learning itself. I believe the structure of CPWF did not facilitate learning by creating thematic (somewhat disciplinary) management unit in the form of project with no incentive to real integration (except a little bit in the annual reflection workshop). The very top-down functioning of CPWF in practice (from management team to BDC leaders to team Leaders and Team members) also hinders the learning potential of such project.

Of course a less chaotic financial management of the overall process would have been useful, financial tensions leads people to struggle for their money and minimize the opportunities of sharing cost for other or related activities.

In R4Outcomes intervention a lot is related to the specific context of intervention (the Case Study): in this context there should be learning mechanisms at CS (CPWL level research and/or stakeholders workshops at CS level including for presenting and/or discussing results and/or helping to generalize contextualized results to basin level) as opposed to centralised (CPWF institutional) workshop that existed.

Thanks