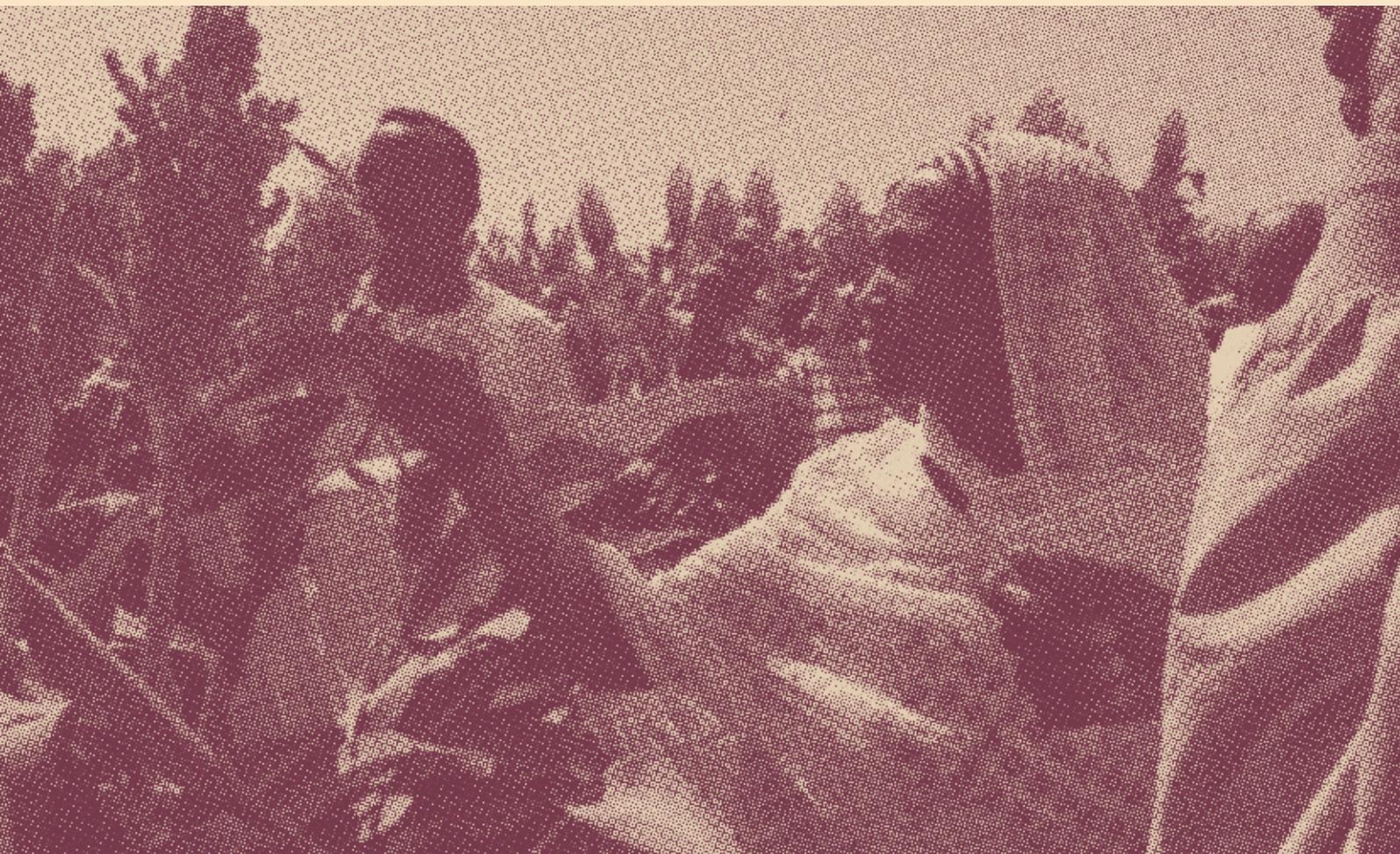


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# EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION FOR RESULTS-BASED PLANNING, REPORTING AND MONITORING

*Seblewengel Tesfaye*



The BENEFIT Partnership in Ethiopia is using an experience capitalization approach to improve the way it plans and reports the collaboration efforts that it is promoting. A few critical reflection tools regularly seen as part of the capitalization approach have also been tried to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation processes are more meaningful and results-oriented.

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*Cover* Participants at the BENEFIT collaboration field day in the Amhara region

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*Right* Collaboration review meeting, Bishoftu Pyramid resort

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The BENEFIT Partnership covers a portfolio of five agriculture programmes funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. All activities are coordinated by the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, in partnership with Ethiopian universities, agricultural research organisations, government offices at different levels, NGOs, public enterprises and private companies.

During the first phase, the programmes under the BENEFIT umbrella worked independently of each other. When the second phase started, it was agreed to work closer together and one of the collaboration strategies that was decided was to focus on a specific geographic location and on strategic crops. It was expected that this would help achieve better results in terms of crop productivity and market linkages, and also in terms of a better agricultural policy environment.

However, autonomy is at the centre of all BENEFIT activities, and it was difficult to build linkages and work together as they had not been designed to do this. Thus, although focusing on programmes in one specific location was an interesting idea, implementing and monitoring this idea was difficult, especially when trying to list and review the progress made and the lessons learned – and it depended on the willingness and interest of those working in each programme.



### **Experience capitalization**

The experience capitalization approach was introduced to the BENEFIT partners in a workshop organised by CTA and the Netherlands' Embassy in September 2017, in Addis Ababa. The purpose of the workshop was to produce high quality “change stories” and to share them online (see <http://www.foodsecurityethiopia.nl/>). We were interested in articles that would describe positive impacts and developments as a result of the EKN-funded agriculture projects in Ethiopia. I got the chance to participate in this workshop and I found that reaching our objective was not going to be difficult – many of these “change stories” were soon online. But I also saw that this approach could also help us monitor and evaluate, and in this way support, our efforts to work together.

Inspired by the training, I revised BENEFIT's collaboration planning and reporting templates to see if we could adapt them on the basis of the experience capitalization principles and steps. Some of the major activities I subsequently undertook were advocating for the concept, and sharing and presenting it to the management team. After receiving feedback and the approval of the management team to use the method for the collaborative initiative, I presented and discussed it with other concerned colleagues towards the end of 2017, asking for their opinions and additional feedback. Since then, we have been using an adapted version of the process we followed in Addis Ababa, and our collaborative intervention planning and reporting has become more and more results-oriented. This has made the whole M&E process easier and more meaningful.

The first test came when we had to prepare the 2017 report presenting the collaborative intervention efforts. Using the experience capitalization approach, we were able to analyse the steps we took towards a stronger collaborative model, and what we saw was very encouraging. To make this initiative even more productive, we also revised the collaboration initiative planning tool. The collaboration planning process for 2018 was conducted using the new revised version. Familiarisation approaches were used to present the amended tool to the staff who would implement it. The management team played a significant role by setting an example, and facilitating internal workshops and meetings.

### **Institutionalization success and challenges**

In my view, in addition to asking good questions about the planning and reporting tools, the involvement of the management team inspired other staff members to be more engaged in the process. This did not prevent us from overlooking some of the steps of the experience capitalization planning/reporting approach, and this proved to be an obstacle in our journey – but one we could identify and try to solve.

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An understanding of all the critical reflection tools is important for ensuring the experience capitalization process can be strategic and results-oriented. The “six thinking hats” tool, for example, works like a role play and helps experts and managers to comment on a given situation without reservations. This activity was implemented during the 2018 review workshops and during the 2019 collaborative planning process, with success. A results-oriented planning and reporting process was completed with the use of experience capitalization in a collaborative M&E system. Furthermore, the experience capitalization approach clears the way for the collaborative steps without creating friction between the partnership programmes.

It is always useful to have a refresher on the experience capitalization concept during the annual collaboration workshops, to reinforce its importance. But the use of the experience capitalization planning and reporting template has already been institutionalised as a BENEFIT M&E collaboration tool. One of the key factors has been the combination of the experience capitalization planning and monitoring tool with critical reflection tools during implementation. This has helped participants engage in many discussions and draw specific lessons from the documents that have been presented and shared, and this has benefited all partners.

The next step is to work together to strengthen the way we track progress, complementing the planning and reporting processes. Increased facilitation of the critical reflection methods is also required to maximise the planning and implementation potential of all programmes.



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