



SHARE-NET NETHERLANDS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: STRENGTHENED KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE AREA OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CoP	Community of Practice
CoPs	Communities of Practice
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
SNI	Share-Net International
SNNL	Share-Net Netherlands
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToR	Terms of Reference

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1. SHARE-NET INTERNATIONAL AND SHARE-NET NETHERLANDS

Share-Net International (SNI) is a membership network made up of a unique and powerful combination of NGOs and private sector parties, researchers and students, policy makers and practitioners, media and advocates. Commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013, it has evolved into the knowledge platform for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) playing an important role internationally and particularly in the contexts of our seven country hubs (Bangladesh, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ethiopia, Jordan and the Netherlands).

Share-Net Netherlands is the Dutch knowledge platform for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and hosted by the KIT Royal Tropical Institute. It has 37 individual members, 25 student members and 31 organisational members from sectors including NGOs, universities, knowledge institutes, governmental and private sector which work in low- and middle- income countries and in the Netherlands with a focus on SRHR. At Share-Net Netherlands, we operate a paid membership – based on the annual turnover of the organisations – and partnership model, but also relies on external investors for financial stability. Share-Net Netherlands' members work together in several Communities of Practice (CoPs) focusing on knowledge management for specific or overarching themes within SRHR.

2. MAXIMISING IMPACT WITH A SYSTEMATISED APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is a collection of systematic approaches to help information and knowledge flow to and between the right people at the right time so they can act more efficiently and effectively to create value for a specific topic or organisation.¹

Our Theory of Change shows how SNI aims to achieve impact and outcomes across the four pathways of Knowledge Management:

- Knowledge generation
- Knowledge sharing
- Knowledge translation
- Promotion of knowledge use

Additionally, it shows the importance of developing the network itself through Communities of Practice (CoPs). Working through these pathways, SNI strives for evidence-informed policies and practices contributing to improved SRHR for all people. SNI has developed a Strategic Plan 2018-2022 which built on the lessons learned and successes of the previous years and envisions strengthening knowledge management to serve members' needs more effectively in working for improved SRHR.

¹ APQC American Productivity & Quality Centre (2019). KM Frequently asked questions; https://www.apqc.org/system/files/K08653_Knowledge_Management_FAQ_2019.pdf

The systematic development of national, sustainable and empowered CoPs on SRHR is a key outcome to maximise the impact of SNI and achieve its goal of making evidence work to improve SRHR.

3. CONCEPT OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The term “Community of Practice” has been used since the 1990s to describe ‘a group of individuals with shared interests that come together - in person or virtually – to tell stories, share and discuss problems and opportunities, discuss best practices, and review lessons learned. Communities of practice emphasise the social nature of learning within or across organisations.’²

Sharing knowledge among individuals and groups with common interests is nothing new but the concept of Communities of Practice involves a stronger focus on social and organisational learning. Rather than understanding a CoP agenda as an additional part of work, we aim to encourage CoP members to integrate the community in their ways of working.

By establishing CoPs, we aim to create a common ground and inspire CoP members to collaborate regarding particular themes and in a cross-cutting manner. At Share-Net Netherlands, we believe that CoPs need to be member-driven, impact-oriented and content-centred.

Our SNNL 2021 Monitoring & Evaluation findings show that according to our members a good functioning CoP at Share-Net Netherlands has

- a clear knowledge demand/knowledge urgency
- CoP members who come together with a joint and strong interest
- a common goal and shared mission
- a dedicated chair within the CoP and/or a strong facilitating role of the secretariat
- a small and strong core group of members
- a welcoming, respectful and safe environment
- reciprocity/multidirectional knowledge sharing
- convenient and recurring meeting times
- (some) in-person meetings.

MAIN AIM

Through moderated CoPs SNI members contribute to, discuss, share, use, and have access to evidence and knowledge-products that are most relevant to their specific areas of work for improved SRHR policies and practices. The knowledge management activities of CoPs are also intended to aid member organisations and individual members in advancing their own agendas and to create synergies so that work is not duplicated but complimented and strengthened.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify, discuss and learn from the main areas of interest and knowledge priorities of the members and current trends and gaps in international development

² Leavitt et al. (2001). – Building and sustaining Communities of Practice, <http://old.apqc.org/pubs/summaries/CMKMCOP>

- Generate new knowledge
- Share, review and disseminate knowledge
- Engage in knowledge translation to promote the use of knowledge by practitioners and policy makers
- Identify opportunities for collaboration within and beyond the CoP, including international partners of SNI where relevant
- Participate, where relevant and possible, in SNI fundraising activities that will contribute to the financial stability of the CoP

4. OPERATIONS OF THE COP

“CoPs can look, from the outside, very different to each other, but what defines a CoP is not what it looks like but what it does, with the emphasis on practice.”³

There is a considerable diversity among CoPs at Share-Net: Some are national and others function internationally in their membership. Some are time-bound working toward one concrete activity, while others have a longer time-horizon. Some CoPs generate funds and commission research or policy papers while others operate on a shoe-string budget. Our member research has shown that some CoPs prefer informal structures (e.g. members joining throughout the year, no clear agendas, flexible support and budget requests etc.), while others give more attention to formal CoP structures (e.g. onboarding of new members at the beginning of the year, meeting agendas prepared by the chair, a clear ToR/work plan/agreements between members).

SNNL respects this diversity in CoP formats and dynamics, as long as CoP-specific agreements are made and their operations adhere to the following values:

1. Transparency
2. Diversity
3. Collaboration
4. Participation
5. Integrity
6. Security
7. Right-based approach

5. MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE COPS

The aim and objectives of CoPs are achieved through the implementation of CoP activities. There are several possibilities for CoP activities:

- Internal learning activities to discuss the main areas of interest and knowledge priorities of the members and current trends and gaps related to the CoP topics, such as
 - Peer-learning sessions
 - Invitation of external speakers
 - Exchange meetings with other Share-Net CoPs
- Activities for generating new information
 - (Small scale) research

³ Simon Hearn and Nancy White ODI 2009. Communities of practice: linking knowledge policy and practice

- Commissioned literature reviews
- Contribution to SNNL/SNI newsletter
- Activities for sharing, reviewing and disseminating information and developments, such as
 - Thematic meetings
 - Round tables
 - Workshops
 - Online discussion groups
- Knowledge translation products and activities that promote the use of knowledge by practitioners and policy makers, such as
 - Briefing papers
 - Policy briefs
 - Concept notes
 - Advocacy materials
 - Fact sheets
 - Contribution to annual bi-annual co creation conference
 - Visuals, infographics, films
 - Social media campaign
- Knowledge activities that provide collaboration opportunities within and beyond the CoP and including international partners of SNI where relevant, such as
 - iCoP meetings
 - Network development meetings
 - Matchmaking events
- Where the CoP engages in larger fundraising activities for the financial stability of the CoP/a more long-term project, Share-Net Netherlands can pay for specific activities of a larger project. The CoP can also use this template to request tailored fundraising support from the secretariat and/or an external consultant.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There is no “one size fits it all” approach to CoPs, but there are a number of common responsibilities and core roles which at SNNL, we identified as important in fostering an active and effective CoP. These are proposed as to inform the set-up of each individual CoP and provide common ground among them.

AS MEMBERS OF THE COP YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Building trust and safe spaces
- Active and inclusive participation
- Shared commitment and responsibility to the CoP
- Identifying potential new members
- Transparency in sharing profile and contributing to common planning
- Role in defining and reviewing the group’s focus
- Jointly identifying opportunities to create added value
- Commitment to sharing knowledge (on Mighty networks and during CoP meetings)
- Committed to being responsive CoP members’ request and inquiries

- Jointly responsible for minute taking and follow up after CoP meetings
- Providing information to Share-Net M&E system

IN THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR⁴ OF THE COP (COP MEMBER/S) YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Appropriate leadership and skilled moderation
- Encouraging participation of members
- Safeguarding CoP ground rules (as agreed by CoP)
- Agenda setting and sending reminders for CoP meetings
- Functions as CoP contact point to CoP facilitator
- Leading fundraising efforts of the CoP where relevant

WE, SNNL, AS SECRETARIAT⁵ HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Oversee the implementation of granted CoP activities
- Coach, supervise and support CoP chair and members
- Convene activity participants (online/offline) by scheduling meetings/webinars or booking venues
- Identify opportunities for overall promotion of the concept and connections among CoPs within SNNL and with the other SNI hubs
- Support CoP-external knowledge sharing, translation and promotion of use of knowledge
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation activities to assess how the CoP is working and whether it is providing value to members

7. BUDGET AND FUNDING

Some CoPs are only set up for a limited time around specific SRHR national or global developments, whereas others that address long-term issues may work around a longer time-line. In either case the funding needs and available budget can fluctuate. The annual available budget that CoPs can request is communicated through the CoP facilitator.

Funding for the CoPs is being generated through several channels, including

- SNNL core operational funds
- Sponsorship from member organisations – financial contributions and in-kind support
- External fundraising

In order to allow for more flexibility and timely reaction to SRHR trends and gaps, SNNL CoPs in 2022 can request CoP support and budget at any time of the year on a first come first serve basis.

⁴ In case the CoP does not appoint a chair for an annual period, it is encouraged to use a rotation scheme for sharing the chairing role among CoP members.

⁵ These processes the CoP facilitator and other secretariat members are supporting by default throughout the year. In case you require additional facilitation or logistical support at any time of the year, please refer to the support and budget request template.