15 August, 2011

Dear Friends,

We hope that you enjoy this week's addition of the Newsflash! We have dedicated this week's Newsflash to the concept of organizational learning. We hope that these resources contribute to your deeper understanding of what organizational learning is and how easy it is to apply it to your daily work.

Sincerely,
Firelight Team

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(Call for proposals) Taqeem Fund for Evaluation in Youth Employment invites youth employment projects to submit evaluation proposals
(Call for proposals) How to apply for Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Responsive Grants
(Call for nominations) UN-Water invites nominations for the second edition of the 'Water for Life' UN-Water Best Practices Award
(Article) What is Organizational learning?
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(Call for proposals) Taqeem Fund for Evaluation in Youth Employment invites youth employment projects to submit evaluation proposals

The Fund for Evaluation in Youth Employment was founded by the Youth Employment Network (YEN) with financial support of Jacobs Foundation, Silatech and the Danish sponsored Africa Commission. The fund offers financial support to organizations working for the welfare of youth and providing them opportunities for employment. Every year, the fund invites proposals asking youth employment projects to submit evaluation proposals.

Deadline for submission: September 5, 2011

For more go to: http://yenclinic.groupsite.com/main/summary

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(Call for proposals) How to apply for Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Responsive Grants

If your organization is planning a regional or international workshop or an exchange visit to another NGO or project, but you are in need of grant support, then one of the best possible options is applying for the Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Responsive Grants.

The Commonwealth Foundation is an inter-governmental organization supported by Commonwealth governments to provide support towards strengthening of civil society for sustainable development, democracy and intercultural learning within the commonwealth countries. It has grantmaking programmes for NGOsspecifically for supporting activities that involve intercultural exchange: such as short training courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, cultural festivals, exchanges and study visits in other Commonwealth countries.

For more go to: http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/

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(Call for nominations) UN-Water invites nominations for the second edition of the 'Water for Life' UN-Water Best Practices Award

'Water for Life' UN-Water Best Practices Award was started with the aim to create awareness about the importance of water among the common people and to promote and support efforts to fulfill commitments of the international community in this regard. The award process is managed by the United Nations Office to Support the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015/UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication (UNW-DPAC) and the UN World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).

Deadline for submission: September 30, 2011

For more go to: http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterforlifeaward.shtml

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(Article) What is Organizational learning?

The world seems to be changing faster and faster—from the technologies available to us, to the increasingly global scope of our interactions. Moreover, the problems facing us as a global community seem to be growing ever more complex and serious. How do we navigate such change and address these problems—not only in our work lives but also in our families, communities, and schools?

We believe that organizations—groups of people who come together to accomplish a purpose—hold an important key to these questions. The field of organizational learning explores ways to design organizations so that they fulfill

their function effectively, encourage people to reach their full potential, and, at the same time, help the world to be a better place.

For more go to: http://www.pegasuscom.com/aboutol.html

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(Article) Building a Learning Organization

For organizations wishing to remain relevant and thrive, learning better and faster is critically important. Many organizations apply quick and easy fixes often driven by technology. Most are futile attempts to create organizational change. However, organizational learning is neither possible nor sustainable without understanding what drives it.

A learning organization values the role that learning can play in developing organizational effectiveness. It demonstrates this by having an inspiring vision for learning and a learning strategy that will support the organization in achieving its vision.

Leadership: The leadership of a learning organization is committed to the importance of learning and clearly communicates that learning is critical to organizational success. The leadership recognizes the importance of providing the motive, means, and opportunity for learning: (i) the motive being the "why?"—the purpose and reason for learning; (ii) the means being the "how and what?"—the models, methods, and competencies required; and (iii) the opportunity being the "where and when?"—the spaces for learning. Leaders take an exemplary leading role in creating and sustaining a supportive learning culture.

People: A learning organization needs people who are intellectually curious about their work, who actively reflect on their experience, who develop experience-based theories of change and continuously test these in practice with colleagues, and who use their understanding and initiative to contribute to knowledge development.

Knowledge: Learning organizations understand that while knowledge is created in the minds of individuals, knowledge development thrives in a rich web of social contact among individuals, groups, and organizations. A learning organization provides creative opportunities for this knowledge to be developed and shared with others through interpersonal contact and access to documentation.

Technology: In a learning organization, information and communication technologies are used, among other purposes, to strengthen organizational identity; build and sustain learning communities; keep staff members, clients, and others informed and aware of corporate developments; create unexpected,

helpful connections between people and provide access to their knowledge and ideas; encourage innovation and creativity; share and learn from good practices11 and unintended outcomes; strengthen relationships; develop and access organizational memory; share tools, methods, and approaches; celebrate successes; identify internal sources of expertise; and connect with the outside world.

For more go to: http://www.adb.org/Documents/Information/Knowledge-Solutions/Building-a-Learning-Organization.pdf

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(Article) The Challenge of Organizational Learning

Reinventing the wheel—this well-worn phrase describes one of the oldest of human follies: undertaking a project or activity without tapping into the knowledge that already exists within a culture or community. Individuals are blessed with a brain that, some of the time, remembers what we've already learned—or at least that we've learned something. But what about organizations?

Disseminating insights and know-how across any organization is critical to improving performance, but nonprofits struggle to implement organizational learning and make it a priority. A recent study found three common barriers to knowledge sharing across nonprofits and their networks, as well as ways and means to overcome them.

KIPP, World Vision, and a host of other nonprofits, large and small, are tackling the challenge of making their organizations as smarty as the individuals who constitute them. In short, they are engaging in the hard work of organizational learning: The intentional practice of collecting information, reflecting on it, and sharing the findings, to improve the performance of an organization.

For more go to: http://www.ssireview.org/pdf/2011SU_Feature_MilwaySaxton.pdf

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(Article) Organizational Learning in NGOs: Creating the Motive, Means and Opportunity

NGOs work in an increasingly demanding environment characterised by growing competition for shrinking aid budgets. They are under pressure to demonstrate that the resources they are given make a visible and lasting impact. This makes them very action-oriented. But most NGOs also realise the need to learn from their own experience and keep up with new practices in the field if they are to remain relevant and effective. To be a learning NGO requires organisations to simultaneously balance the need to take a strategic approach to organisational

learning (at the highest level of organisational planning and management) with the recognition that learning is also an intensely personal process that goes on in the minds of individuals. Clearly, like so many good intentions, organisational learning is easier said than done. While it is tempting to leave organisational learning at the comfortable level of a headline organisational objective, this is not enough for those NGOs who really want to achieve their missions. We need to learn from NGOs that have grappled with the messy realities of implementation and find out more about how to translate good intentions into systematic practice.

For more go to: http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/398/Praxis-Paper-3-Organisational-Learning-in-NGOs.pdf
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(Resource) A Gateway for Capacity Development: Organizational Learning

Feature: Organisational learning for aid, and learning aid organisations Ben Ramalingam asks what aid agencies can do to learn more effectively, especially at field level

Practice: Linking learning to decision making. Charles G. Owusu describes ActionAid's efforts to make systems and structures part of the solution to becoming a learning organisation

Policy: Learning alliances for poverty reduction. C. Shambu Prasad reports on how learning alliances involving farmers and agricultural researchers are speeding up the process of innovation

Tools and Methods: Collective learning for advocacy. 14 organisations recently met to develop a strategy for an advocacy campaign. Julián Portilla and Sylvia Aguilera describe the collective learning process.

Practice: Learning in teams. Moussiliou Alidou identifies the barriers to team learning, and ways to overcome them

Guest Column: Why truth and power don't mix. David Ellerman considers how powerful aid agencies and their Official Truths can distort the search for knowledge

For more go to: http://www.capacity.org/capacity/export/sites/capacity/documents/journal-pdfs/CAP33_0408_OL_ENG.pdf

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We

hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org.