

Scoping Report on Exchange Institutions for Knowledge Sharing

StEPPFoS Deliverable Report: D1.5



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<p>Abstract</p>	<p>This report adds to the deliverables of Work Package (WP) 1 of generating Evidence to support the development of consortium activities, under the StEPPFoS Project. The overarching goal of WP1 is to synthesize and document evidence that will support the development of Consortium activities, laying a foundation for the entire project's success. The report nonetheless aims to explore the capacities, networks, resources, and institutional mechanisms that currently exist to promote knowledge exchange and learning across diverse thematic areas and stakeholder groups. The report ultimately contributes to StEPPFoS's broader objective of building a robust, well-connected evidence ecosystem that supports timely, relevant, and actionable knowledge for policy and practice across Africa's food and nutrition ecosystems. The data collection for this report was achieved through an online rapid survey administered to StEPPFoS consortium partners who are both PANAP and non-PANAP members identified for the expansion of the PANAP network. A total of all 16 partner institutions participated in the survey, achieving 100% response rate, across eleven (11) countries. – Ghana, Germany, Kenya, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia and Uganda. Among these institutions, the results show the work focus to be primarily on research or policy research, with a few institutions focusing on only policy formulation or implementation. Institutions demonstrated strong engagement in research, multi-stakeholder dialogues, digital platform development, capacity building, and policy advisory services. While many have established communication and advocacy strategies, critical capacities such as digital infrastructure, evidence synthesis, and fundraising remain underutilized. Knowledge exchange is facilitated through diverse channels including workshops, publications, and digital hubs, yet limited implementation of robust monitoring and evaluation (MEL) systems constrains feedback and learning. Recent scholarship underscores the importance of addressing accountability gaps and tracking impact. Institutions are beginning to adopt participatory and digital tools, including AI and virtual reality, signalling a shift toward interactive and user-centered dissemination. However, engagement with civil society and the private sector is still limited. Barriers such as weak data protection, digital exclusion, intellectual property concerns, and cultural mismatches hinder effective exchange. Recommendations include co-designing MEL systems with users, enhancing trust through participatory design, and improving inclusivity through culturally responsive communication. Preliminary evidence shows promising progress in policy translation, suggesting that scaling successful practices could enhance the overall impact of StEPPFoS.</p>
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Knowledge exchange, scoping, capacity building,</p>

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The information contained in this report is to feed into the deliverables of Work Package 1 of the StEPPFoS project. The overarching goal of WP1 is to synthesize and document evidence that will support the development of Consortium activities, laying a foundation for the entire project's success. Specifically, WP1 aims to:

1. Identify existing gaps in institutional capacity for policy impact analysis;
2. Examine gaps in research-policy linkages; and
3. Explore synergies and trade-offs between economic and agri-food research and policies.

Knowledge exchange institutions play a critical role in fostering collaboration and partnership between academia/research, businesses and public policy organisations as well as facilitating uptake of research evidence for policy analysis and implementation. This deliverable (D1.5) is presented as results of Task 1.2 of the StEPPFoS project, which is explicitly different from D1.6 which is a result from Task 1.3., and hence different surveys were conducted to produce the two different deliverables. Deliverable D1.5 presents findings from a rapid scoping study conducted to identify and assess capacities of exchange institutions with the potential to support and advance the knowledge-sharing objectives of StEPPFoS. The overarching aim of this exercise was to explore the capacities, networks, resources, and institutional mechanisms that currently exist to promote knowledge exchange and learning across diverse thematic areas and stakeholder groups. Specifically, the scoping study sought to:

1. Map institutions actively engaged in evidence sharing and translation in the food and nutrition sectors.
2. Assess their institutional capacities, digital infrastructure, knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and collaboration networks.
3. Identify opportunities and challenges for enhancing inter-institutional learning, co-creation of knowledge, and policy influence.
4. Document emerging trends, such as digital transformation, participatory design, and inclusive knowledge dissemination, shaping the knowledge ecosystem in the food and nutrition sectors in Africa.

The insights gathered through this scoping study offer a foundational understanding of how knowledge flows within and across institutions and what structures are needed to strengthen these pathways for effective knowledge exchange and sharing. The report ultimately contributes to StEPPFoS's broader objective of building a robust, well-connected evidence ecosystem that supports timely, relevant, and actionable knowledge for policy and practice across Africa's food and nutrition ecosystems.

This task is being led by CSIR with the collaborative support of partners such as AFAAS, ASARECA, CORAF, UNIVE, Unifelix, LWERIC, FANRPAN, FARA, ECDPM and UoH.

1.2 Study Approach

The report adopts a descriptive study approach to access the capacities, networks, resources, and institutional mechanisms that currently exist to promote knowledge exchange and learning across diverse thematic areas and stakeholder groups. The descriptive study design allows for a broad understanding of current structures and practices, providing insights that can inform the future expansion and strengthening of the PANAP network.

1.2.1 Sampling Approach

The study targeted all 16 institutions under the StEPPFoS consortium, including both PANAP and non-PANAP members identified for potential integration into the expanded PANAP network. Given the small and clearly defined population, a census approach was employed rather than sampling, ensuring full representation and comprehensive data coverage across all consortium partners.

1.2.2 Data collection

The data collection for this report was achieved through an online rapid survey administered to StEPPFoS consortium partners who are both PANAP and non-PANAP members identified for the expansion of the PANAP network. This approach enabled the efficient gathering of standardized information across multiple countries within a short time frame. Although initial responses were slower than expected, follow-up reminders were sent and the response period was extended to ensure full participation. Ultimately, a total of all 16 partner institutions participated in the survey, achieving 100% response rate.

The structured online survey allowed each institution to provide accurate and validated data at its own pace, ensuring reliability and completeness. This method also facilitated the collection of quantitative and comparable data, supporting the generation of frequency distributions, tables, and charts for systematic analysis. In contrast to FGDs, this format ensured consistency, minimized subjective interpretation, and simplified statistical processing.

1.2.3 Data analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to summarize key patterns and trends across institutions. Frequency tables, percentages, and charts were used to present the results, highlighting the distribution of institutional capacities, resources, and collaboration mechanisms. The visual presentation of data enhanced the clarity and interpretability of findings.

1.2.4 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the study's objectives and data use. All information collected was treated with confidentiality and individual identities were anonymized in reporting to ensure privacy and data integrity.

1.2.5 Limitations

While the study achieved full participation from all 16 institutions, the small sample size reflecting the limited number of consortium partners, may constrain the generalizability of findings beyond this specific network. Nonetheless, the complete institutional coverage ensures that the results accurately represent the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders within the consortium and Africa's agriculture and food systems.

1.2.7 Structure of the report

Following section 1 which introduces the report, there are 7 other subsections that presents the findings and provide some conclusions and recommendations. The breakdown of the various sections is given as:

- Section 1: Institutional background and context
- Section 2: Institutional structure, capacity and mechanisms
- Section 3: Knowledge exchange approaches and tools
- Section 4: Collaboration and partnerships
- Section 5: Challenges and Barriers
- Section 6: Impact and effectiveness
- Section 7: Future prospects and recommendations

2 Institutional Background and Context

The study was conducted with input from 16 partner institutions of the StEPPFoS consortium across eleven (11) countries. – Ghana, Germany, Kenya, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia and Uganda.

2.1 Key Focus of Institutions

Among these institutions, the results further the key focus of the institutions. As seen in figure 1, institutions primarily focusing on both research and policy were reviewed to be 50% of all institutions. While 5 out of the 16, 31%, were strictly research and academic institutions and the remaining 3 (19%) only focused on policy.

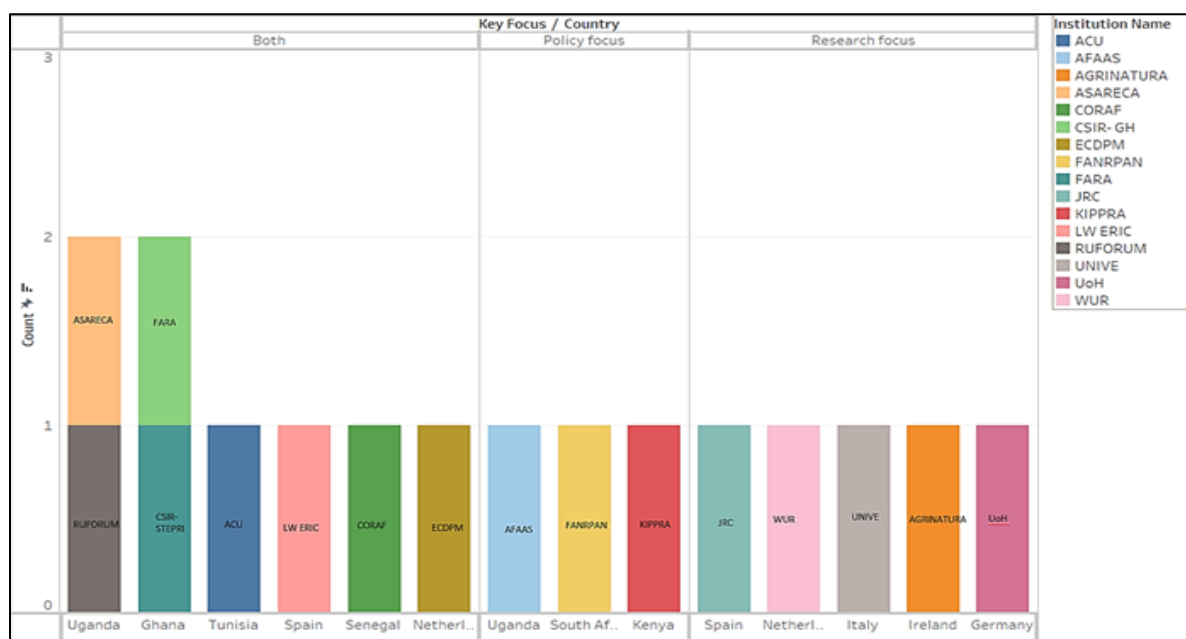


Figure 1: Key Focus of Institutions in the StEPPFoS Consortium

2.2 Roles of Institutions in Knowledge Exchange Initiatives

In investigating the scope of the institution for exchange programmes, the study also analysed the organization's role in knowledge exchange and sharing, the primary goals and key stakeholders involved in knowledge exchange initiatives.

The data reveals that organizations most actively contribute to knowledge exchange by demonstrating varied but complementary roles in advancing the scope of knowledge exchange. The most prominent role is research and evidence generation (38%), indicating that organisations prioritize producing data and insights to inform policy and practice. This is followed by facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues and capacity-building programs, each at 25%, reflecting a strong emphasis on participatory learning and the development of practical skills. Digital platform development (18%) points to a growing shift toward tech-enabled access and dissemination of

knowledge, supporting broader engagement beyond traditional boundaries. Academic teaching (5%) plays a more limited but foundational role in shaping future knowledge systems. This distribution suggests that while evidence remains the cornerstone, effective knowledge exchange increasingly relies on inclusive processes, human capital, and digital innovation.

The analysis in Figure 2 also reveals strong representation in research and evidence generation, with nearly all institutions except FANRPAN actively involved in this function. This is followed by training and capacity-building programs, provided by 10 institutions, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues, carried out by 9 institutions. Meanwhile, digital knowledge platform development, while less common (6 institutions), reflects a growing trend toward technology-enabled knowledge sharing and broader access. Three institutions, KIPPRA, AFAAS, and ACU, stand out by actively engaging in all four knowledge exchange functions. Indicating comprehensive capacity and could serve as strong hubs or exchange centres within the StEPPFoS consortium. On the other hand, AGRINATURA, UoH, UNIVE and FANRPAN demonstrates the narrowest engagement, contributing niche roles in research and evidence generation and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue.

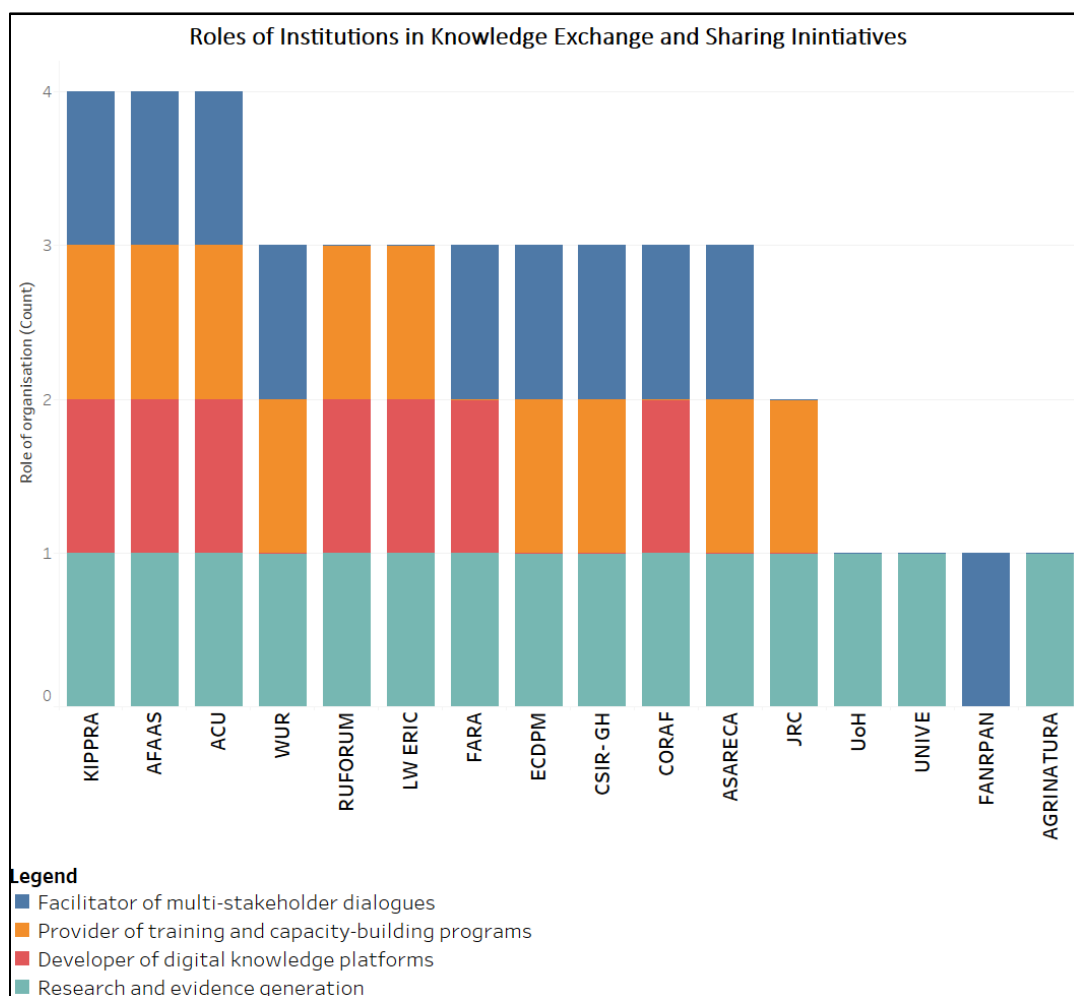


Figure 2: Roles of Institutions in Knowledge Exchange programmes

2.3 Primary Goals and Stakeholders Engaged in Knowledge-Exchange initiatives

Moreover, organisations in knowledge exchange initiatives pursue a range of goals each contributing to broader development and learning outcomes. The leading goal or objective according to the results is facilitating evidence-based decision-making (29%), highlighting a strong emphasis on grounding actions and strategies in credible research and data. Enhancing stakeholder capacity and skills and strengthening networks and collaborations follow at 25% each, suggesting a dual focus on empowering individuals and fostering collective engagement for institutions. Influencing policy development and reform (23%) also emerges as a key goal, reflecting the intention to shape systems through informed advocacy. Finally, promoting innovation and best practices (21%) underscores efforts to spread effective solutions and encourage adaptability. The relatively small variation in percentages suggests that organisations view these goals as interlinked and mutually reinforcing, underscoring a comprehensive and balanced approach to knowledge-sharing.

Nonetheless, the results of organisations’ preferences of stakeholders for knowledge exchange activities often target researchers and policy makers. With relatively lower inclusion of civil society and non-governmental organisations, gender groups and the local communities. As Researchers and academics lead at 31%. Policymakers and government agencies (19%) and private sector and industry leaders (17%). While women and youth groups (13%), civil society organizations and NGOs (10%) and local communities and grassroots organizations (10%) receive comparatively less engagement (Figure 3)

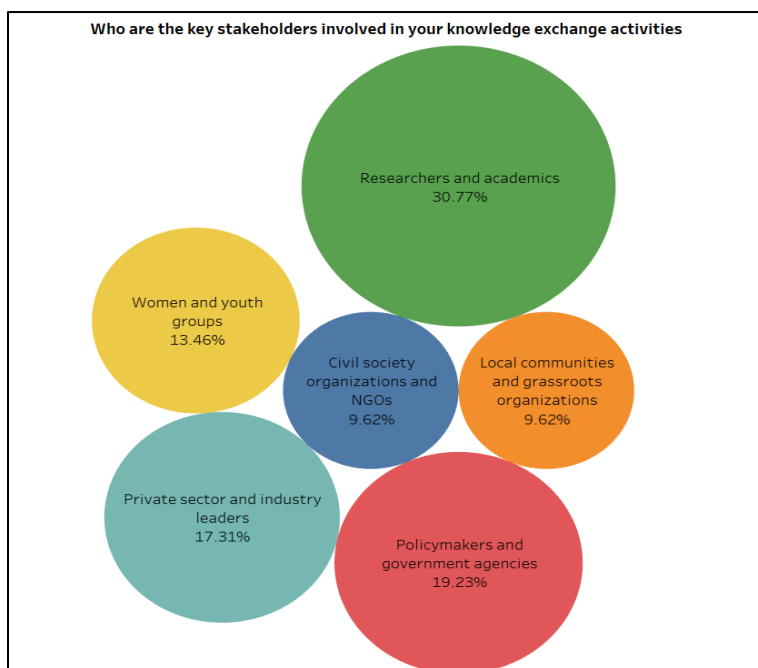


Figure 3: Key Stakeholders engage in knowledge exchange programmes

The results on the scope of knowledge exchange initiatives reveals that organisations adopt approaches that primarily emphasises research and evidence generation. Although priorities are also given for activities like multi-stakeholder dialogues and capacity building. With the goal focus on supporting evidence-based decision-making, strengthening skills and networks, influencing policy and promoting innovation in a mutually reinforcing way. However, stakeholder engagement shows a clear preference for researchers, policymakers and industry leaders. With less emphasis on civil society, marginalised groups and local communities.

3. Institutional Structure, Capacity and Mechanisms

This section explores how institutions can support StEPPFoS as knowledge exchange centres by examining their structures, platforms, governance and strategies for effective knowledge sharing and dissemination.

3.1 Institutional structures, governance strategies and effective knowledge dissemination

Institutions noted to use a diverse mix of structures and platforms to facilitate knowledge sharing for the engagement. Particularly, workshops and seminars (26%) are the most frequently cited. This is followed closely by publications such as reports, policy briefs, and journals (24%). Conferences and symposia (21%) also play a key role, often serving as high-level platforms for presenting findings and fostering cross-sectoral dialogue. Digital platforms and knowledge hubs, as well as communities of practice and networking events (both at 17%), highlight growing recognition of the importance of ongoing collaboration and tech-enabled access to information.

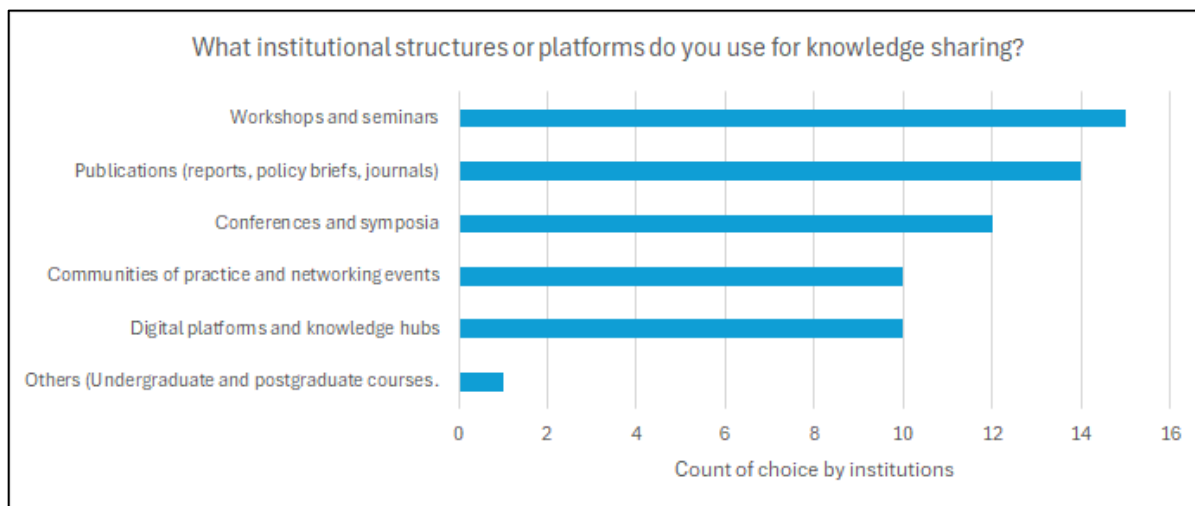


Figure 4: Institutional structures or platforms used for knowledge sharing

The results as show in Figure 4, shows no clear preference for institutional structures used in knowledge exchange initiatives. Indicating a balanced mix of approaches used. As well, the high use of digital platforms and knowledge hubs show a growing preference for employing technology to enhance collaboration, often constrained with travel and participation costs.

Additionally, a clear preference emerged in the governance and management of knowledge-sharing platforms, with 62% of organisations indicating that platforms are internally managed by dedicated teams. Meanwhile, 31% of organisations adopt a collaborative management model involving partner institutions. However, less conventional governance approaches, such as outsourcing to third-party service providers (8%) and community-driven models (4%), remain

uncommon. These governance preferences closely mirror the institutional orientations identified earlier where organisations primarily emphasize evidence generation, capacity development, and policy engagement. The reliance on internal and partnership-based governance also reinforces the structured and expert-led nature of knowledge exchange efforts.

Nonetheless, to ensure effective knowledge dissemination and uptake, organisations apply a range of strategies that balance reach, relevance and responsiveness. The most widely adopted approach is multi-channel communication (32%) such as social media, newsletters, and webinars, to widen access and visibility. Engaging stakeholders through participatory approaches follows at 26%, underscoring the importance of co-creation and interactive exchange. Tailoring content to audience needs (21%) also features prominently, pointing to a strategic emphasis on relevance and contextualisation of information. Meanwhile, capacity building and training for end-users (19%). Feedback loops and monitoring impact was observed at 15%, which suggests that fewer organisations systematically track the uptake and outcomes of their dissemination efforts.

3.2 How Institutions Can Facilitate Knowledge Exchange for StEPPFoS

Findings further indicate that institutions have the capacity to support StEPPFoS in a variety of areas, reflecting a broad readiness to contribute across multiple functions. The most commonly cited area is policy dialogue and advocacy (24%), underscoring the emphasis on influencing decision-making through informed discussion. This is closely followed by knowledge dissemination and communication (22%), highlighting a strong commitment to effectively sharing information. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) (13%) indicates a focus on tracking progress and improving impact. Economic modelling and policy analysis (11%) reflects analytical strengths that support evidence-based strategies. Rapid evidence synthesis and technical assistance and advisory services each account for 9%, suggesting emerging but important roles. Smaller shares for digital infrastructure and platforms (7%) and resource mobilization and fundraising (4%) point to growing but less prominent areas of support. The types of support proposed emphasize facilitating informed policy processes, effective communication, and rigorous evaluation. These selections align with broader findings that organisations primarily focus on research and evidence generation, alongside multi-stakeholder dialogues and capacity building.

In more detail, as seen in Figure 4, knowledge dissemination and communication, as well as policy dialogue and advocacy, are widely supported, with many institutions including AFAAS, KIPPR, FARA, CORAF, ACU, ASARECA, AGRINATURA, FANRPAN, and LW ERIC playing active roles in these functions.

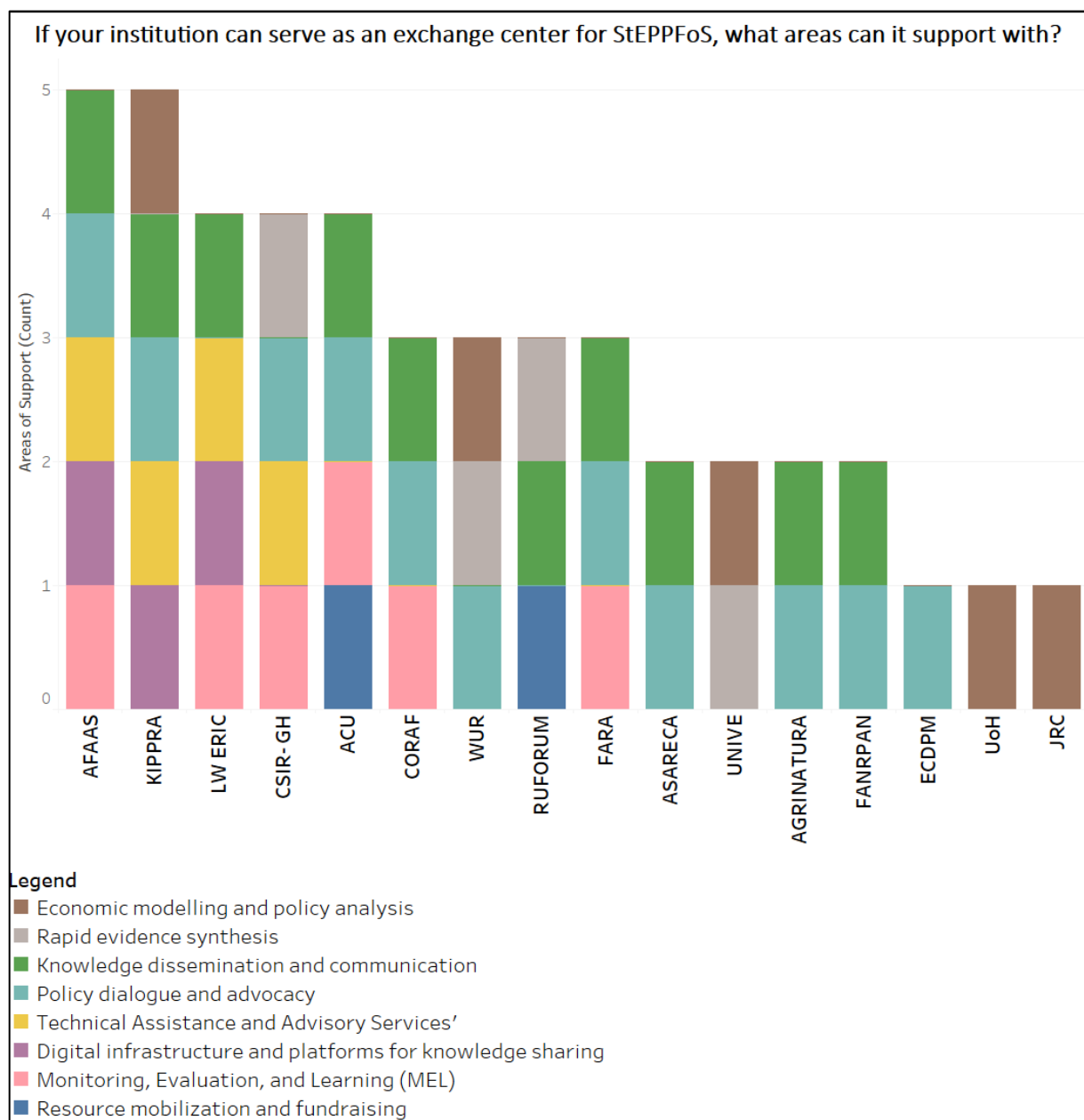


Figure 5: How institution can serve as an exchange centre for StEPPFoS, what areas can it support with

Technical assistance and advisory services also feature prominently, notably at AFAAS, KIPPRA, CSIR-GH, LW ERIC and FARA, reflecting the capacity to provide expert guidance and support. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) is recognized as a vital area, with AFAAS, LW ERIC, CSIR-GH, ACU, CORAF, and FARA offering significant contributions. Meanwhile, economic modelling and policy analysis expertise is a more specialized support area, offered by institutions such as KIPPRA, WUR, UNIVE, UoH, and JRC. Rapid evidence synthesis nonetheless was noted by CSIR-GH, RUFORUM, UNIVE, and WUR. But Digital infrastructure and platforms for knowledge sharing appears less widespread but is present three institutions including AFAAS, KIPPRA and

LW ERIC. While resource mobilization and fundraising is the least represented capacity across institutions, with only two like ACU and RUFORUM indicating engagement. Overall, the collective strengths suggest that StEPPFoS exchange centers can expect robust support in communication, policy advocacy, advisory services, and digital knowledge platforms, complemented by targeted analytical and evaluation capacities.

4. Knowledge Exchange Approaches and Tools

This section explores the practical methods, tools and innovations, institutions use to facilitate effective knowledge exchange. It focuses on identifying what approaches are considered most effective, how organisations ensure relevance and accessibility of shared knowledge, and highlights any innovative practices adopted to enhance reach, engagement, and impact.

4.1 Methods for Facilitating Knowledge Exchange

Institutions identified a range of effective methods and tools for facilitating knowledge exchange. The results highlight a mix of participatory, institutional and digital tools. Participatory workshops and field visits account for 29%, highlighting a strong reliance on experiential and context-based approaches. Policy dialogues and roundtables make up 25%, suggesting that structured engagement with stakeholders remains central to shaping and sharing knowledge. Webinars and online learning modules (21%) underscore the role of digital platforms in providing flexible and scalable knowledge delivery. Knowledge hubs and repositories represent 19%, reflecting the value of centralized resources for information access. Social media campaigns and online communities, at 13%, indicate growing interest in interactive and audience-driven engagement methods.

Nonetheless, to ensure relevance and accessibility in their knowledge-sharing practices, institutions largely complement user-centered content design (33%) with multi-format dissemination (27%) and inclusive engagement strategies (27%). Indicating a prioritization to diversify communication styles while reaching a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Translation and localization of content (13%) show some consideration for linguistic and cultural adaptation, although this area appears less emphasized. These practices reinforce the earlier emphasis on participatory methods and digital tools by ensuring that the knowledge exchanged not only reaches its audience but is also meaningful and usable across different contexts (Figure 6)

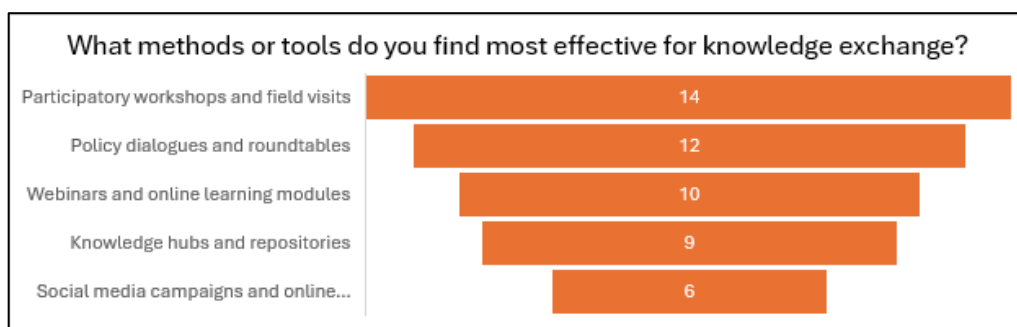


Figure 6: Methods and tools for facilitating knowledge exchange by institutions

4.2 Innovative Approaches Used for Knowledge Sharing

In advancing innovation within knowledge-sharing, institutions report adopting several emerging approaches that align with broader trends in technology and community-driven engagement. Crowdsourcing knowledge from communities is the most cited (27%), reflecting a strong move toward participatory and bottom-up methods that leverage local insights. Use of AI and machine learning for content curation and interactive digital storytelling both account for 20%, indicating a growing application of advanced technologies and engaging narratives to personalize and contextualize knowledge. Virtual and augmented reality experiences (16%) show experimentation with immersive tools, while other formats such as policy briefs and video impact stories (16%) demonstrate continued use of creative, impact-oriented media.

Institutional analysis of innovative knowledge-sharing approaches highlights that Crowdsourcing knowledge from communities, emphasizing participatory approaches to harness collective insights, is widespread across multiple organizations, including FANRPAN, FARA, RUFORUM, AGRINATURA, ASARECA, CORAF, ACU, and others, signaling a strong commitment to inclusivity and bottom-up knowledge generation. Although more than half of institutions do not employ this approach. The use of AI and machine learning for content curation are embraced by several organizations, including FANRPAN, FARA, RUFORUM, JRC, and AFAAS, reflecting a focus on leveraging advanced technologies to tailor and optimize information delivery. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences feature prominently as immersive tools for engagement, with FANRPAN, RUFORUM, WUR, and KIPPRA among those utilizing these technologies to enhance knowledge interaction. Interactive digital storytelling, which offers dynamic and engaging ways to communicate knowledge, is practiced by institutions such as FANRPAN, FARA, WUR, KIPPRA, and UNIVE. Notably, FANRPAN stands out by actively applying all four innovative approaches, positioning it as a leader in pioneering diverse knowledge-sharing methods. In contrast, some institutions like UoH, CSIR-GH, ECDPM, and LW ERIC show no engagement with these innovative tools, indicating potential areas for future capacity development. (Figure 7)

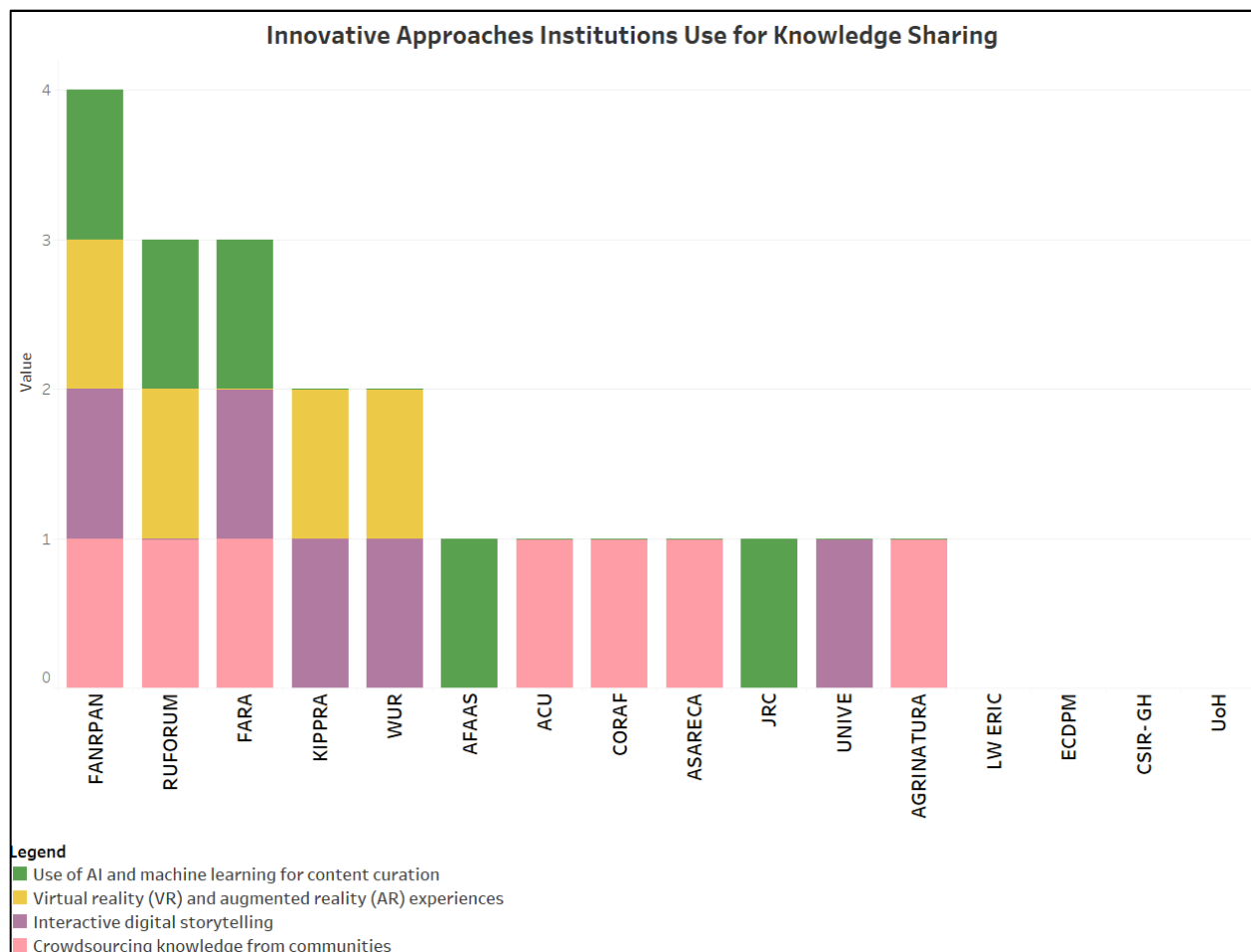


Figure 7: Innovative Approaches Institutions Use for Knowledge Sharing

The results as shown in Figure 7 on the innovative approaches and tools employed by institutions for knowledge exchange show that institutions are increasingly adopting emerging technologies such as AI-driven content curation, virtual and augmented reality, and interactive digital storytelling. At the same time, they continue to value participatory methods like crowdsourcing, which centre community perspectives. Indicating a growing commitment to innovation which goes beyond traditional dissemination approaches.

5. Collaboration and Partnerships

In understanding the collaboration and partnerships institutions typically engage for knowledge exchange programmes, the study analysed which organizations, institutions collaborate with for knowledge exchanges, how cross-sectorial facilitation are done and the role of international networks or partnerships in their knowledge exchange activities.

The results also show that Institutions overwhelmingly collaborate with academic and research institutions (28.6%) and government agencies and policymakers (26.8%), reflecting a strong emphasis on formal knowledge generation and evidence-based policy engagement. International organizations and donors (21.4%) also play a prominent role, often providing strategic alignment with global agendas and supporting capacity development. In contrast, collaborations with civil society organizations and community networks (14.3%) and private sector actors (12.5%) are less prominent. This distribution suggests that while institutions prioritize structured and top-down knowledge exchange partnerships, greater inclusivity especially toward grassroots actors and industry stakeholders, remains an area for growth.

An institutional analysis showed that all institutions collaborate with academic and research institutions, indicating a universal emphasis on formal knowledge generation and technical expertise. Collaboration with government agencies and policymakers is nearly as strong for institutions engaging these actors, with ECDPM being the sole exception. Reflecting a widespread commitment to evidence-based policy influence. International organizations and donors are also significant partners, offering alignment with broader development agendas and capacity-building support. In contrast, fewer institutions engage civil society organizations and community networks or private sector actors, suggesting a relative underutilization of grassroots and industry perspectives. Overall, only a subset of institutions such as AFAAS, FANRPAN, KIPPRA, RUFORUM, UoH, and WUR, demonstrate consistent engagement across all five stakeholder types (Figure 8).

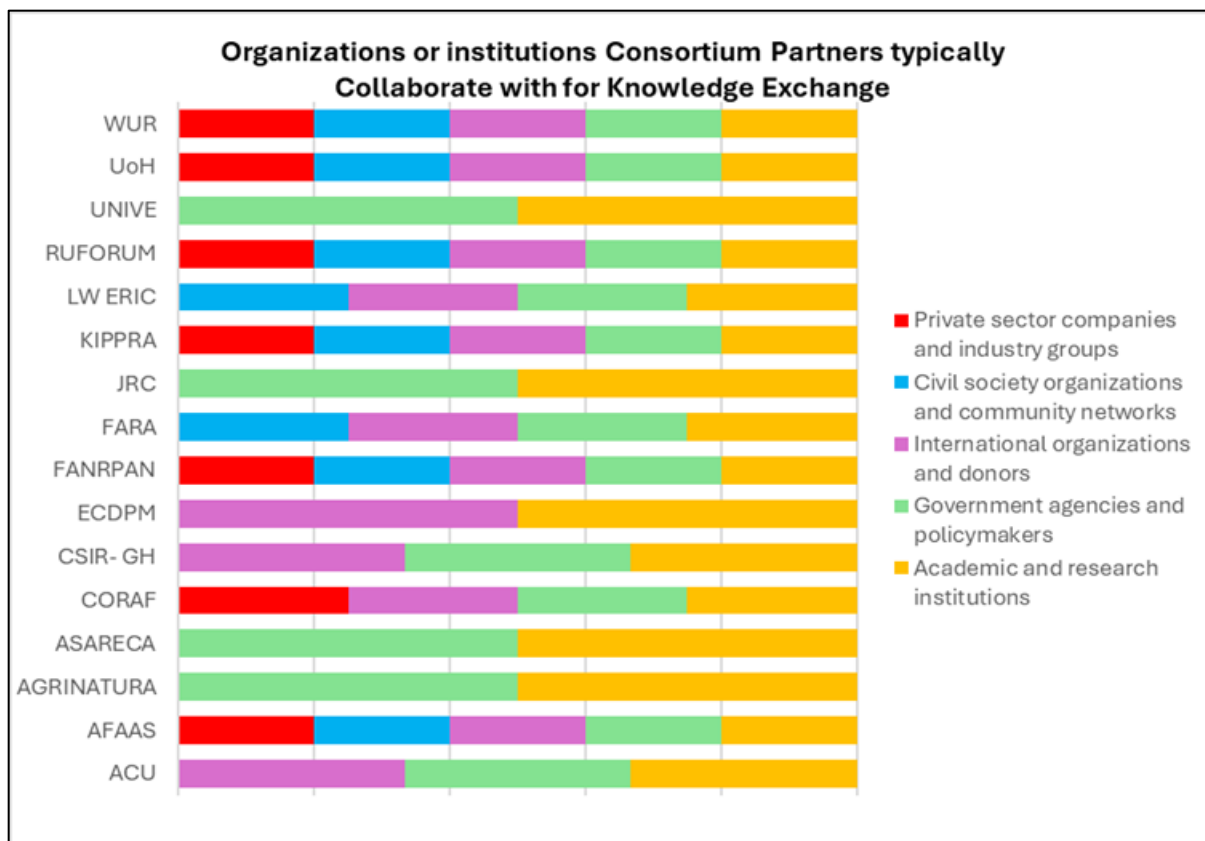


Figure 8: Organisations or institutions Partners collaborate with

To operationalize these collaborations, institutions primarily rely on collaborative learning events and workshops (33.3%) and multi-stakeholder platforms and dialogues (30.6%), reinforcing their preference for participatory and dialogic formats. Joint research and evidence synthesis (27.8%) further highlights the importance of co-producing evidence across sectors. Meanwhile, public-private partnerships (11.1%) are least utilized, indicating a limited integration of private sector knowledge systems. These methods reflect a deliberate strategy to balance structured dialogue and research co-creation, although more diversified mechanisms, particularly with non-academic actors, could improve the breadth of cross-sectoral learning.

In supporting institutional knowledge exchange, international networks are most valued for enabling cross-regional collaboration and learning (35%), highlighting their role in contextualizing best practices across borders. Equal importance is placed on facilitating global knowledge transfer (25%) and providing funding and resource support (25%), underscoring their dual role in knowledge mobility and financial capacity-building. Only 15% see these networks as instrumental in influencing global policy and advocacy, suggesting that while international actors are essential in technical and operational dimensions, their role in shaping strategic narratives and global positioning is underleveraged. This distribution complements earlier findings that institutional

focus tends to remain rooted in research and practice, with less emphasis on broader transformative change.

6. Challenges of Knowledge Exchange Facilitation and Outreach

6.1 Challenges impeding facilitation of knowledge exchange within organizations

As institutions responsible for knowledge exchange between project partners and stakeholders, including policy makers, there are several challenges that could impede the facilitation of that agenda. Some of these challenges as enumerated by consortium members include issues of intellectual property and data security, inadequate digital infrastructure, resistance to knowledge uptake by the end-users and language and cultural barriers as presented in Figure 9.

Intellectual property and data security issues

Among the key challenges identified by respondents, a significant proportion (55.6%) cited concerns related to intellectual property (IP) rights and data security as major constraints to effective knowledge exchange with stakeholders and project partners. This highlights a critical gap in the enabling environment for collaborative innovation and evidence use. Inadequate IP protection can deter stakeholders, especially private sector actors and research institutions from sharing proprietary data, innovations, or unpublished research findings, for fear of misuse or lack of recognition. Similarly, weak data security frameworks can create vulnerabilities, risking breaches of confidentiality and reducing trust in the system. These concerns can lead to fragmentation, siloed research, and reduced openness to co-creation and multi-actor collaboration. We are particularly witnessing these in most policy making institutions and other data-driven institutions where there is the lack of willingness to give out data for research purposes.

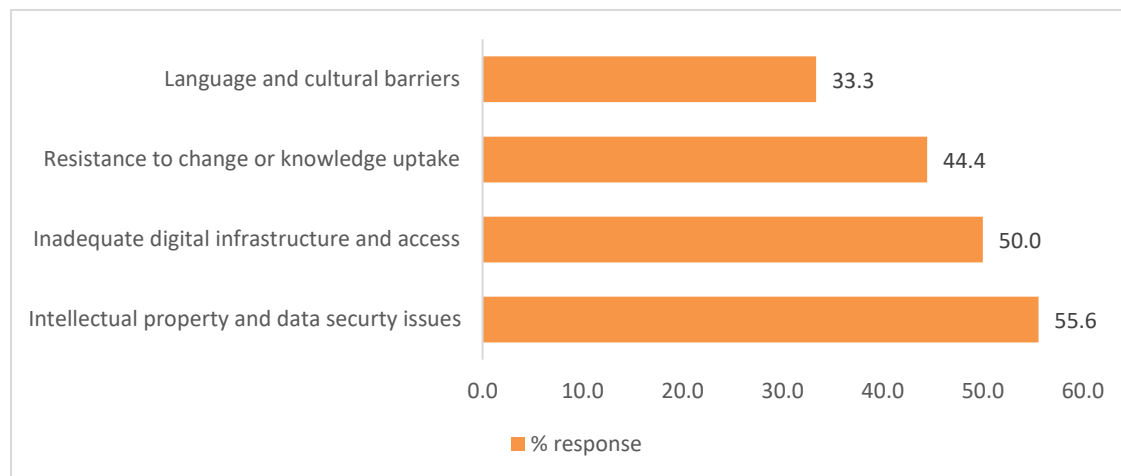


Figure 9: What challenges do you face in facilitating effective knowledge exchange in your organization

The implications are that, without clear protocols for data ownership, use, and protection, the pace of innovation slows, and the credibility and uptake of evidence is weakened. For knowledge exchange systems to be effective, particularly in a data-driven policy and development landscape, institutions must invest in well-defined IP regimes, secure data infrastructures, and

clear guidelines for ethical data sharing. Strengthening these elements will promote transparency, build trust, and ensure that innovations and research outputs can be scaled and replicated while respecting contributors' rights and safeguarding sensitive information. Addressing IP and data security challenges is essential to unlocking the full potential of evidence-informed development and fostering a culture of responsible and open collaboration, which are essential to facilitate knowledge exchange among consortium members.

Probing further on how the institutions address issues related to intellectual property, data security or confidentiality, almost 89% indicated that they develop and follow ethical guidelines and compliance standards. This suggests that to improve trust, research subjects' protection and overall data security, a significant majority of the consortium partner institutions adopt ethical guidelines, even when there is no properly instituted data security or clearly defined intellectual property policy to protect researchers, research subjects and research users (policy makers in our context). However, we also find that despite the issue with intellectual property, there are about 67% of the institutions who adopt intellectual property agreements and licenses to facilitate knowledge sharing and protection.

We further found that 61% and 50% of the institutions practice data anonymization and secure data platforms with restricted access, to address issues of confidentiality and data protection, respectively. These are very essential to ensure that exchange institutions are dedicated to promoting openness and protection of stakeholders in their quest towards knowledge production and dissemination. It builds confidence and strengthens confidentiality among project partners.

Inadequate digital infrastructure and access

Closely linked to the challenges of data security and intellectual property protection, 50% of consortium partners also reported inadequacy in digital infrastructure within their respective institutions. In the current era of digital transformation, where knowledge exchange and collaborative innovation are increasingly mediated through digital platforms, the lack of adequate digital infrastructure represents a significant barrier. This includes insufficient internet bandwidth, limited access to reliable digital tools and platforms, outdated hardware, and weak data management systems. A poor digital infrastructure not only constrains the timely and efficient sharing of knowledge among consortium partners but also undermines the ability to engage meaningfully with external stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, and community actors. Inadequate infrastructure can also restrict participation in virtual capacity-building sessions, delay feedback loops in collaborative research, and reduce the visibility and reach of research outputs.

For institutions aiming to promote evidence-informed decision-making and strengthen policy engagement, investment in robust, secure, and inclusive digital infrastructure is no longer optional, it is essential. Without such foundational systems, even the most well-intentioned knowledge exchange strategies risk being ineffective or exclusionary. Addressing these infrastructure gaps should therefore be prioritized in institutional planning and donor support, ensuring that knowledge flows are not only possible but also equitable and resilient in the face of future disruptions.

Resistance to change or knowledge uptake

An important challenge that impedes effective knowledge sharing, as reported by approximately 44% of consortium partners, is the resistance of knowledge users to uptake shared insights or to change their actions based on new evidence. This form of resistance is a well-documented barrier in the research-policy interface, where efforts to influence decision-making often encounter institutional inertia or competing political and programmatic agendas. In many cases, governments or implementing agencies may already be committed to a particular course of action, making them less receptive to external recommendations, even when backed by evidence.

A critical underlying cause of this resistance is the lack of early and meaningful engagement with knowledge users during the research conceptualization and design stages. When end-users are not actively involved from the outset, they may view the findings as externally imposed or irrelevant to their context, resulting in limited ownership and weak uptake. This highlights the importance of co-creation approaches and stakeholder mapping in evidence generation processes. Building trust, ensuring alignment with user priorities, and fostering continuous dialogue are essential strategies to reduce resistance and enhance the receptivity of research users, whether in policy, practice, or community settings. Therefore, this is something that the StEPPFoS consortium can take a cue and begin to foster early engagement to reduce the likelihood of resistance.

Language and cultural barriers

About 33% of respondents highlighted that language and cultural barriers impede effective knowledge sharing within their organizations. These challenges are particularly evident when knowledge is shared across different cultural or national contexts, where the relevance or meaning of findings can be lost due to poor contextualization. For instance, a study conducted in one country may not translate effectively in another if local realities are not considered. Even within similar settings, translating research outputs from English to local languages can strip the content of its intended nuance, making knowledge dissemination and uptake difficult. To address this, it is essential to involve local stakeholders early in the knowledge generation process. For European partners conducting research in Africa, and vice versa, strong collaboration with regional partners is key to ensuring that the knowledge produced is contextually appropriate, culturally sensitive, and more likely to be adopted and applied effectively.

6.2 Challenges impeding outreach to target audience

In relation to language and cultural challenges, respondents were also asked about the barriers they face in reaching target audiences and ensuring knowledge uptake. From Figure 10, 66.7% identified the digital divide and limited access as major constraints, underscoring persistent inequalities in connectivity and digital infrastructure across contexts. Additionally, 56% noted that information overload and competing priorities among end users hinder effective

engagement. This is likely due to the proliferation of fragmented and siloed projects that engage the same stakeholders repeatedly on similar topics, leading to stakeholder fatigue. Furthermore, 50% of respondents pointed to low literacy levels and limited technical capacity among end users as barriers to absorbing shared knowledge. Interestingly, only 27% cited the lack of contextual relevance of shared information as a significant issue, suggesting that it is not a very common challenge among the partner institutions.

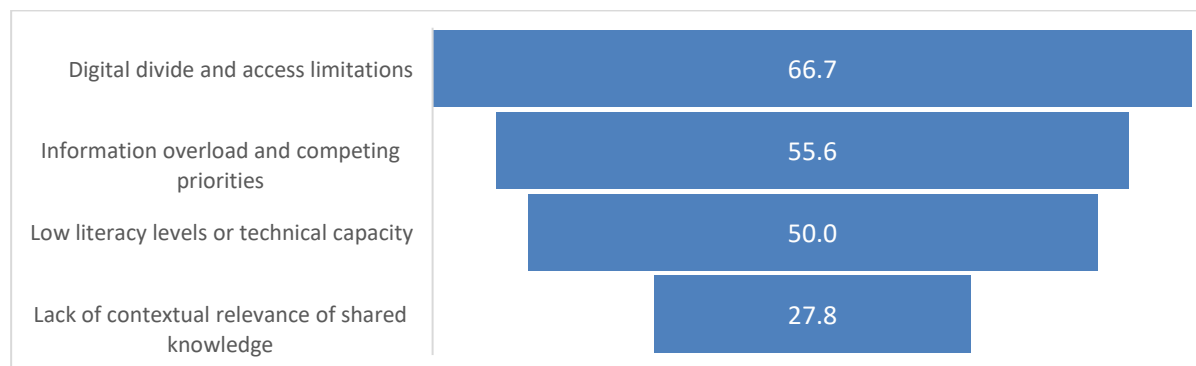


Figure 10: *Barriers in reaching target audience (% response)*

These findings highlight the importance of tailoring knowledge-sharing strategies to the specific capacities, contexts, and needs of intended audiences. Within the StEPPFoS project and more broadly for any user-centered research initiative, it is essential to adopt inclusive and accessible approaches that consider digital access, engagement fatigue, and varying levels of technical literacy to enhance the effectiveness of knowledge exchange.

7. Impact and Effectiveness

In scoping for successful engagement outcomes, we enquired of consortium partners what strategies have worked for them in knowledge sharing and how impactful their knowledge sharing journey has been. This section therefore presents the findings from consortium partners on the successful knowledge sharing outcomes, existing feedback mechanisms and how they can measure the effectiveness of knowledge sharing activities as illustrated in Figure 11.

7.1 Successful knowledge sharing outcomes

Some of the enumerated successful knowledge sharing outcomes reported by consortium partners include policy/reform changes, adoption of best practices, capacity building and skill development and strengthened networks and collaboration as presented in Figure 11.

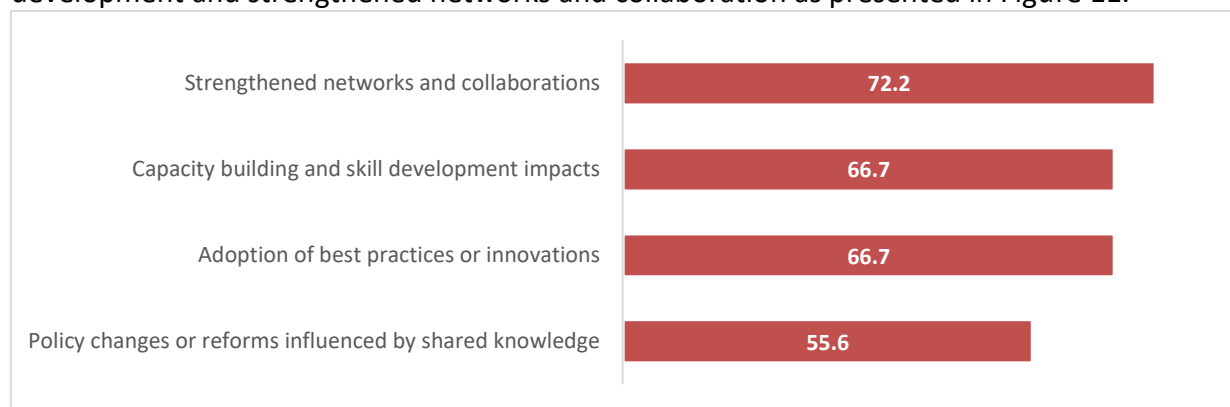


Figure 11: Knowledge sharing outcomes that have been effective (% response)

Strengthened networks and collaborations

Among the reported outcomes, 72% of respondents identified strengthened networks and collaborations as the most successful result of their knowledge-sharing efforts. This finding is particularly encouraging, as it indicates that knowledge exchange activities are not isolated events but catalysts for sustainable partnerships that extend well beyond the life of individual projects. These collaborations have the potential to foster continuous engagement, drive cyclical knowledge-to-policy initiatives, and reinforce the broader evidence-policy ecosystem, particularly in the food and nutrition sectors where many consortium members are active. In many cases, initiatives risk fading once their funding cycles or timelines conclude. However, the emergence of spin-off networks and sustained collaborations as highlighted by majority of consortium partners suggests otherwise. These enduring linkages provide an important mechanism for sustaining momentum, scaling evidence use and fostering cross-institutional learning across Africa. For StEPPFoS, this is a positive signal that the project’s legacy may continue through a robust network of actors committed to advancing evidence-informed policymaking for sustainable food and nutrition security on the continent.

Capacity building and adoption of best practices

Building on the success of strengthened networks and collaboration, nearly 67% of consortium partners reported that capacity building and the adoption of best practices were among the most

significant outcomes of their knowledge-sharing initiatives. This finding reinforces the idea that knowledge exchange serves a dual purpose, not only enhancing the dissemination of evidence but also contributing meaningfully to the empowerment of institutions and individuals alike. These initiatives have helped foster peer learning, introduced innovative methods, and facilitated the alignment of organizational practices with globally recognized standards. As a result, consortium members are better equipped to address complex challenges and fulfill their mandates more effectively. Continuous capacity building and uptake of best practices also contribute to organizational resilience, adaptability, and sustained performance improvements over time.

Policy changes and reforms

In addition to institutional capacity gains, the role of evidence in shaping policy and reform has also begun to materialize within the consortium's work. While policy change is often a long-term process that requires persistent engagement and advocacy, it is encouraging that approximately 56% of the consortium members reported that their knowledge-sharing activities have resulted in some level of policy or reform outcomes. These range from contributing to the development of new strategies, influencing existing policies, or initiating reforms in key sectors. This is a critical marker of progress, as the goal of evidence-producing institutions is to see their work inform real-world decisions. These findings suggest that when knowledge is shared through structured, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches, it has the potential not only to educate and influence but to drive tangible development outcomes through policy and practice. The intention to shape food policies through informed advocacy is gaining prominence in the food policy discourse (Moyo et al 2025; Zougmore et al 2019), with Laar et al 2023 calling for a shift from dialogues to action by African governments to transform their food systems.

7.2 Feedback Mechanisms for Measuring Knowledge Sharing Outcomes

In examining the feedback mechanisms established among consortium partner institutions, the findings as revealed in Figure 12 indicates that regular stakeholder engagements and consultations are the most widely used approach, with 72% of consortium partners indicating this as their primary mechanism. This underscores the recognition among institutions that regular dialogue with stakeholders is essential for nurturing sustainable and impactful knowledge-sharing efforts. These engagements, often conducted through focus groups, community meetings, and technical dialogues, serve not only as platforms for disseminating knowledge but also for refining it based on end-user input and assessing its effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes.

In addition, 61% of the partners reported employing complementary feedback mechanisms such as user feedback and satisfaction surveys, the sharing of case studies and success stories, and web analytics. These mechanisms are particularly important in enhancing transparency, responsiveness, and mutual accountability between knowledge producers and users. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, consortium partners are encouraged to increasingly leverage digital tools and platforms, such as institutional websites, LinkedIn, and Twitter (X), to amplify the reach and accessibility of their knowledge outputs. Web analytics offers real-time

insights into user behavior and engagement trends and can guide institutions in tailoring content to meet user needs.

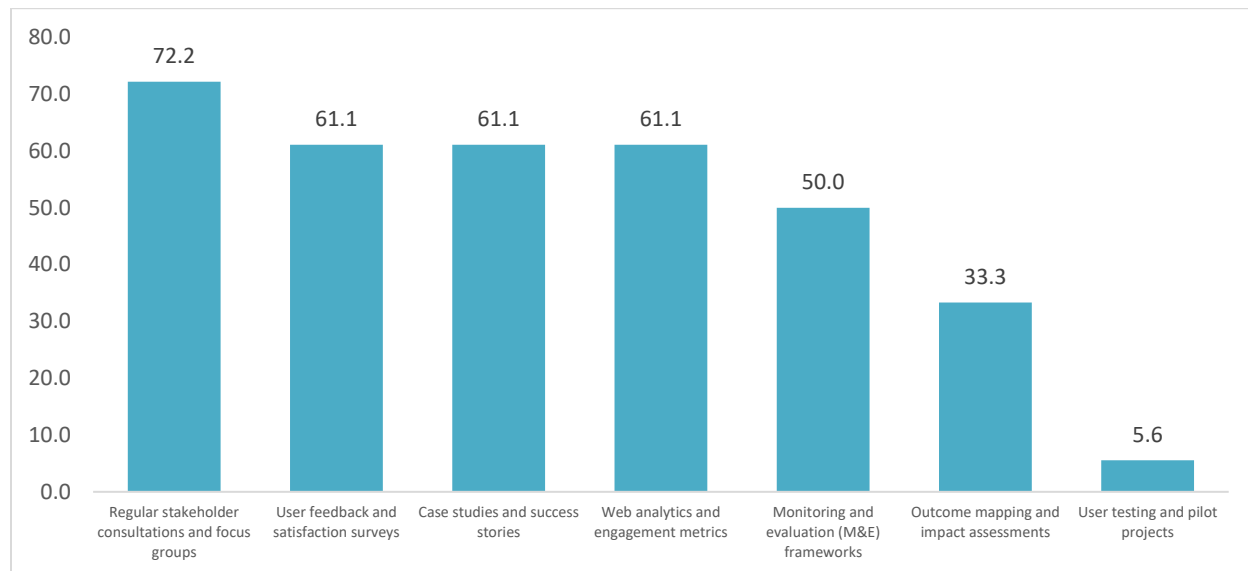


Figure 12: Types of feedback mechanisms used by exchange institutions (% response)

On the other hand, the use of formal Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks as a means of tracking knowledge-sharing outcomes appears less widespread, with only 50% of partners reporting implementation of such frameworks. While this figure reflects some progress, it also highlights a significant gap. To ensure evidence-to-policy efforts are not only well-intentioned but also impactful, there is a pressing need for all consortium institutions to design and implement robust M&E systems. These frameworks should include clearly defined indicators, timelines, and reporting mechanisms to measure the reach, relevance, and impact of shared knowledge.

Notably, only 33% of partners conduct outcome mapping and impact assessments related to their knowledge exchange activities. Even more concerning is the finding that just 5.6% use user testing and piloting to assess the effectiveness of knowledge shared before full-scale dissemination. These low figures point to a broader issue; the limited allocation of resources, both financial and human, towards evaluation components within projects. Without intentional investment in M&E, institutions risk overlooking valuable insights that could inform more strategic, inclusive, and responsive knowledge-sharing approaches.

Going forward, there is a need for a cultural and operational shift towards embedding feedback loops and evaluative thinking in all stages of the knowledge-sharing lifecycle. This would ensure that evidence produced not only reaches the right stakeholders but also informs policy and practice in a way that is measurable, iterative, and impactful.

8. Prospects and Recommended Strategies for Strengthening Knowledge Exchange

8.1 Emerging trends in knowledge exchange and sharing

Emerging trends in the knowledge exchange and sharing ecosystem are reshaping how institutions collaborate, disseminate, and utilize knowledge. Approximately 89% of consortium partners identified digital transformation and virtual collaboration as the most significant emerging trend (Figure 13). This is not surprising, especially in the post-COVID-19 era, where many traditional, manual approaches to knowledge exchange have been replaced by digital alternatives. The shift underscores the importance of agility and adaptability among institutions, as they must stay abreast of rapidly evolving technological landscapes and be proactive in integrating digital approaches into their operations.

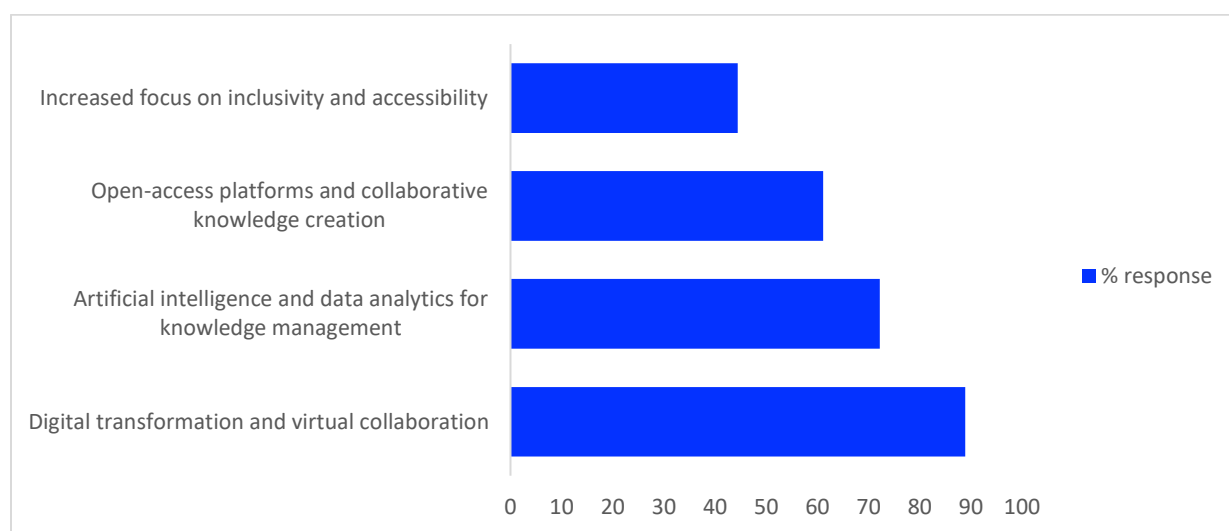


Figure 13: What emerging trends do you see in knowledge exchange and sharing?

Closely following this, 72% of consortium partners highlighted the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Analytics in transforming knowledge exchange. These technologies are not only enhancing the efficiency and reach of knowledge dissemination but also improving how outcomes and impacts are measured. AI and analytics are enabling real-time insights, personalized knowledge sharing, and more robust evaluation methods. Institutions that embrace these tools stand to benefit from improved decision-making and greater responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

Another key trend identified by 61% of consortium partners is the increasing prominence of open access platforms and collaborative knowledge creation. This reflects a broader shift towards democratizing knowledge and ensuring transparency, inclusivity, and shared ownership in research and policy dialogue. These developments are strongly linked to the need for stronger digital infrastructure and capacity building in digital literacy. As such, institutions are encouraged to strategically invest in both hardware (infrastructure) and software (skills and capacities) to remain relevant and effective in a digitized ecosystem.

When asked how they plan to adapt to these emerging trends and evolving stakeholder needs (Figure 14), 72% of institutions reported intentions to invest in digital infrastructure and tools. Similarly, 61% indicated plans to build the digital literacy of their staff. While this is a positive direction, it is essential that all institutions recognize the urgency of strengthening digital capacities if they are to effectively participate in and benefit from the digital evolution of knowledge exchange.

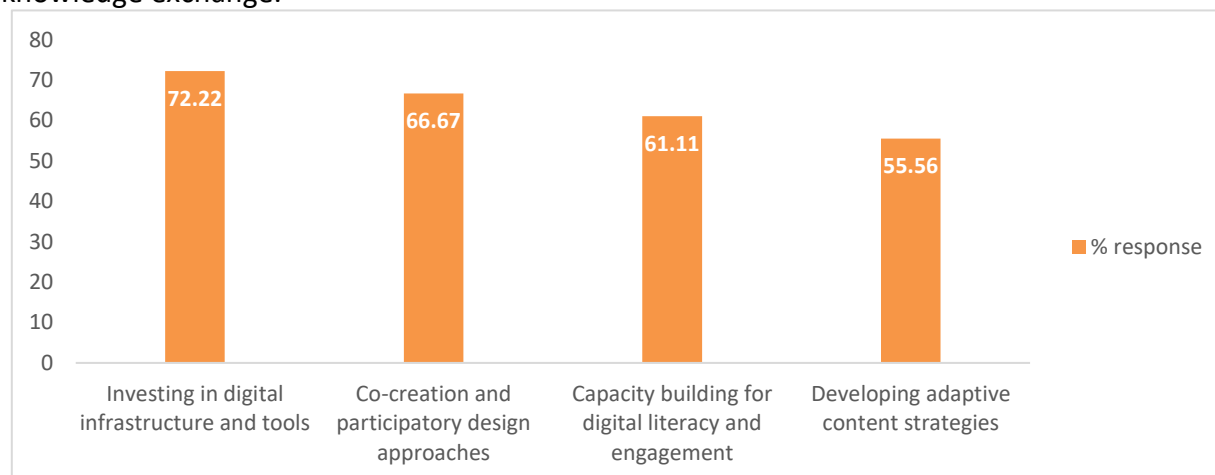


Figure 14: What emerging trends do you see in knowledge exchange and sharing?

Encouragingly, 67% of consortium partners also indicated an intention to adopt co-creation and participatory design approaches as part of their knowledge exchange strategies. These inclusive methodologies represent a shift from traditional, top-down dissemination of information to a more collaborative and iterative model of engagement. Co-creation involves the active participation of stakeholders, including policymakers, community members, practitioners, and end-users, throughout the knowledge generation and sharing process. This ensures that the outputs are not only contextually relevant but also aligned with the real needs and priorities of those they are intended to serve.

By fostering stakeholder ownership, co-creation increases the legitimacy and trustworthiness of knowledge outputs, which in turn enhances their usability and uptake. Participatory design similarly empowers local actors to shape the form and content of knowledge products, ensuring they are accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to specific challenges faced by communities or sectors.

In addition to this, 56% of partners reported developing adaptive content strategies tailored to these emerging approaches and the broader digital and social shifts. This indicates an important recognition that it is not just the platforms for knowledge sharing that must change, but also the way knowledge is curated, packaged, and delivered. Adaptive strategies enable institutions to present content in multiple formats, such as infographics, podcasts, videos, or interactive dashboards, making it more digestible and engaging for diverse audiences.

Together, the move toward co-creation and adaptive content development marks a progressive transition toward more democratic, inclusive, and impact-oriented knowledge systems. These approaches are essential for ensuring that knowledge not only informs decisions but also drives meaningful change in policy and practice, particularly in complex fields such as food and nutrition security, climate adaptation, and innovation systems. Together, these trends suggest that institutions must not only keep pace with change but must lead in shaping future-ready knowledge ecosystems. Investing in digital transformation, embracing co-creation, and developing adaptive, user-centered knowledge strategies will be critical to enhancing the relevance, accessibility, and impact of knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

8.2 Recommendations for Institutional Knowledge Exchange Strengthening

The findings from this study highlight both persistent gaps and promising opportunities in the institutionalization of knowledge exchange mechanisms across the consortium. A significant proportion of partners provided key recommendations for improving knowledge sharing practices. These recommendations are essential to building more responsive, inclusive, and impactful knowledge ecosystems within the consortium and beyond.

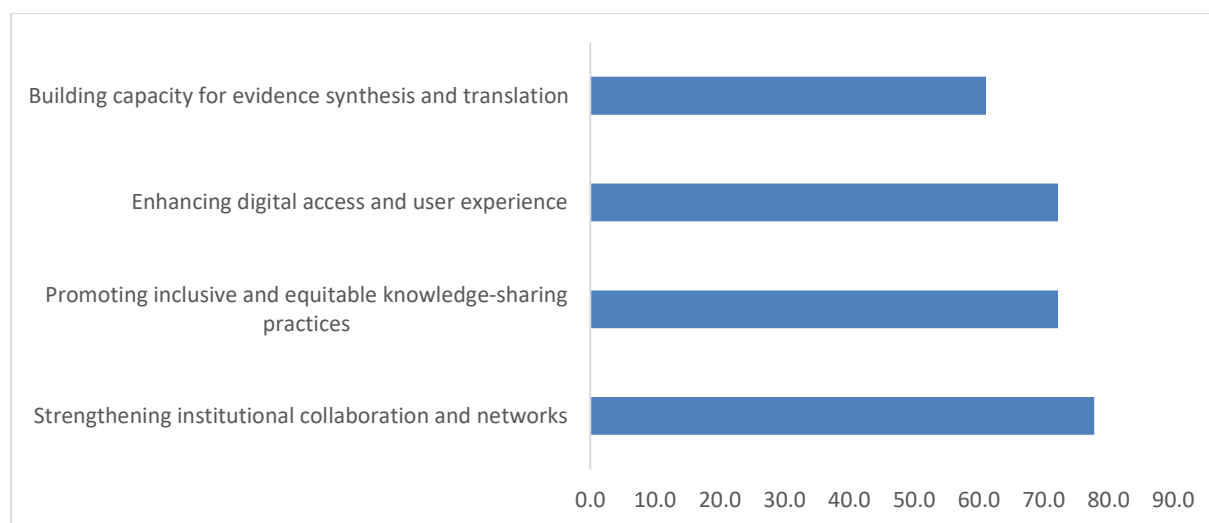


Figure 15: Recommendations for strengthening institutional knowledge strengthening

Strengthening Institutional Collaboration and Networks

The most widely endorsed recommendation is the need to deepen institutional collaboration and cross-sectoral networks, which was pointed out by about 78% of the survey respondents. Effective knowledge exchange thrives in environments where organizations work synergistically, leveraging complementary strengths and avoiding duplication. Strengthening collaborative platforms will not only foster trust and sustained partnerships but also encourage joint ownership of research outputs and shared learning. This could be advanced through structured Communities of Practice (CoPs), regional learning alliances, and inter-institutional Memoranda of Understanding that explicitly integrate knowledge exchange mandates.

Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Knowledge-Sharing Practices

Inclusive knowledge-sharing mechanisms that reflect gender, cultural, linguistic, and sectoral diversity were also cited as a high priority by 72% of the consortium partners surveyed. Meaningful engagement of marginalized groups, including women, youth, and rural communities, is often missing in the evidence-sharing landscape, unless they are originally embedded in programme design. Institutions must therefore adopt deliberate strategies for inclusion, such as co-creation of knowledge products, multilingual dissemination, and participatory forums that accommodate local realities and knowledge systems. Such equity-sensitive approaches not only improve uptake but also validate the experiences of communities often left out of mainstream research and policy processes.

Enhancing Digital Access and User Experience

Digital transformation has so far emerged as a critical area requiring institutional prioritization. About 72% of the respondents emphasized the importance of investing in digital infrastructure, improving user interface designs, and curating user-friendly platforms to support effective knowledge access. This includes building capacity in data visualization, open-access publishing, and digital literacy among staff and stakeholders. In the context of post-pandemic hybrid engagements, institutions that lag in digital transformation risk being excluded from the evolving knowledge ecosystem. Furthermore, partners suggested the need to harness tools such as social media, podcasts, and webinars to reach broader audiences and bridge the digital divide across rural and urban contexts (also see Gregson et al 2015)

Building Capacity for Evidence Synthesis and Translation

The scoping exercise further reveals that 61% of the institutions indicate a clear need for more investment in the technical capacity of institutions to synthesize, interpret, and translate complex evidence into policy-relevant formats. Whilst evidence generation is often well-resourced, the skills required to transform data into actionable insights for decision-makers, such as policy briefs, infographics, and knowledge dashboards, remain underdeveloped. Targeted training in knowledge brokering, policy communication, and rapid evidence assessment can significantly enhance the usability and uptake of institutional knowledge products.

9. Conclusion

This rapid scoping study provides a comprehensive overview of the institutional capacities and challenges that shape knowledge exchange within Africa's food and nutrition ecosystem. Conducted as part of Work Package 1 (WP1). The study identifies key institutions, analyses their strategies and highlights both strengths and gaps in how knowledge exchange initiatives are implemented. The study employs in-depth responses from 16 consortium partners in 11 countries, who have key focus on research and policy engagement.

In assessing the institution's potential as an exchange centre for StEPPFoS, the organizations indicated knowledge exchanges through a mix of research and evidence generation, facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues, capacity building, digital platform development, and academic teaching. Institutions expressed strong readiness to act as exchange centres for StEPPFoS, offering robust support in areas such as policy dialogue, knowledge dissemination, advisory services and monitoring and evaluation. While communication, advocacy and technical expertise are widely developed, capacities related to digital platforms, evidence synthesis and fundraising remain relatively underutilized.

To facilitate knowledge sharing, institutions rely on a broad mix of platforms including workshops, publications, conferences and digital hubs, with many employing dedicated teams and communication strategies. However, fewer partners have monitoring and evaluation (MEL) systems in place to track the actual use and impact of shared knowledge, revealing an opportunity to strengthen feedback loops and learning mechanisms. The need to address issues relating to inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and limited data and accountability mechanisms have been mentioned in several studies (Burgaz et al 2025; Matchaya and Greffiths 2025; Kushitor et al 2022). To ensure that evidence-to-policy efforts are not only well-intentioned but also impactful, a recommendation is made for consortium institutions to co-design and implement robust MEL systems with their end-users.

Positively, partners are beginning to adopt more participatory and digital tools including emerging innovations like AI-generated content, crowdsourcing and virtual reality. These approaches reflect a shift from traditional dissemination toward more interactive and user-friendly methods. While collaboration is largely formal and focused on academic, governmental and international actors, engagement with civil society and the private sector remains limited. Expanding these collaborations and partnerships could enhance inclusivity and responsiveness within the knowledge ecosystem.

Yet several barriers continue to constrain effective knowledge exchange. Concerns over intellectual property, weak data protection frameworks and inadequate digital infrastructure contribute to reluctance in sharing knowledge. Although some institutions have adopted ethical and anonymization strategies, these practices require greater support to become fully operational. Digital infrastructure, cited as a major constraint by half of the institutions, limits participation and slows feedback, underscoring the need for strategic investment in secure and

inclusive systems. Another key challenge is resistance to knowledge uptake. When stakeholders are excluded from the early stages of knowledge production, even the most rigorous evidence may be disregarded. Building trust through participatory design and co-creation is therefore critical. In addition, language and cultural mismatches can reduce the relevance or clarity of knowledge outputs. Co-developing content with local actors and using culturally responsive communication methods can help bridge these gaps.

Finally, although analysis of successful outcomes is ongoing, early findings suggest that some institutions are making tangible progress in translating knowledge into policy. Capturing and scaling these successes will be essential for amplifying the impact of the StEPPFoS consortium.

Looking ahead, fostering continuous learning, promoting inclusive engagement and investing in technology enabled systems and partnerships will be vital to establishing a more effective, equitable and responsive knowledge exchange ecosystem. The Information contained in this report will feed into other Work Packages of StEPPFoS (WP2, WP3)

10. Recommendations for Consortium Partners

Specifically, the following actions are further recommended by consortium members, to strengthen exchange between PANAP and non-PANAP institutions:

There is therefore the need for an overall shift in how institutions conceptualize, manage, and evaluate their knowledge exchange functions. Strengthening institutional architecture, embedding inclusivity, fostering collaboration, and leveraging digital innovations is essential for sustaining impact in the ecosystem. These recommendations could serve as a roadmap for the StEPPFoS project and similar initiatives seeking to position evidence as a cornerstone of transformative policy and practice in Africa’s food, nutrition, and innovation systems in general.

- Supporting collaborative research and joint publications through targeted funding mechanisms.
- Establishing a permanent dialogue platform to connect PANAP and non-PANAP institutions regularly.
- Identifying shared “hot topics” of interest, clarify expectations, and outline mutual benefits of collaboration.
- Using strategic communication approaches, including “marketing science” to compete with misinformation, especially on social media.
- Promoting participatory research and involve non-members in knowledge generation processes.
- Leveraging social media, webinars, and digital tools for wider engagement and real-time exchange.
- Offering open or affiliate membership opportunities to non-PANAP institutions to foster inclusivity.
- Organizing regular roundtable workshops, conferences and dissemination events to maintain active collaboration and learning.

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