KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOL
EFFECTIVE HANDOVERS
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS IT?
The Effective Handovers tool gives guidance on how to ensure that critical knowledge is not lost as people leave or change posts across the organisation.

It gives suggestions for sharing knowledge between you and your team, colleagues in similar positions and guidance on how to make the handover process more seamless and effective.

It can take as much as six months’ time for a proper handover from someone leaving to the successor. However, this time is not available in most cases. Therefore, the tool describes the minimum needed, with additional options if time allows.

WHEN CAN I USE IT?
The effective handovers tool is useful for every Plan International office, and for any position and at all operational levels of the organisation. It can be used for:

— Preparing for (temporary) leave: making sure to retain crucial knowledge as much as possible when someone leaves. This includes job changing, retirement, maternity or paternity leave, phasing out of Programme Units.

— Organising a handover: a proper handover reduces the risk of knowledge loss, and improves follow-up on projects and tasks.

— During induction: a proper induction shortens the time a new employee needs to become productive.

— Situations with a high turnover, for example in an emergency context.

Plan International Knowledge Workers

Every Plan International employee can be seen as a Knowledge Worker. Their main capital is knowledge and their job is to “think for a living”. A considerable amount of time is spent on searching for information/knowledge. Knowledge sharing strengthens the business and makes your work and your colleagues’ work easier. So if you care about Plan International, your colleagues and your work, you can apply your common sense to use natural opportunities in your daily activities to share your knowledge formally or informally. This tool helps you think about the crucial knowledge sharing moments during your time at Plan International.
OVERVIEW

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE HANOVERS?
Effective handovers ensure that knowledge is not lost when you or one of your colleagues leaves a position through retirement, changing of jobs, or temporarily such as secondments or during an emergency response. Waiting to carry out an exit interview, as an employee heads through the door or changes post, is not the most effective way and is almost too late.

Instead, knowledge exchange and sharing should began on day 1 and continue throughout an employee’s time within Plan. It is considered good practice to capture and embed knowledge within a team and within the organisation through continual knowledge exchange, and to ensure proper handover and follow-up when people leave.

What kind of knowledge are we talking about?
— Although the focus may differ based on your position and office, in general we can say that the most vulnerable knowledge to be lost or hard to handover is:

— Organisational knowledge: knowledge that is linked directly to how Plan International operates (procedures, policies, systems, structures) and how this plays out in your team.

— Network knowledge: your knowledge about the people around you and the knowledge they have; colleagues as well as external partners.

— Position-specific knowledge: the knowledge that is only relevant for your specific position and role. What to do when?

— Project or programme knowledge: your technical knowledge about ongoing projects or programmes you are involved in.
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every Plan International employee —
First of all, every employee shares a responsibility to share knowledge with colleagues and managers.

Team — If you work in a team, the team also shares responsibility for continual knowledge exchange and effective handovers. A well-functioning team captures knowledge from every team member. So if someone is leaving, the team can introduce the successor to important procedures, projects, contacts and systems. The team can also take over specific tasks and project responsibilities if there is no successor when someone leaves.

The person leaving ("leaver") — The person who will be leaving a position is primarily responsible for making sure information is stored correctly and accessible to those who need access, and for ensuring that knowledge is properly shared with the team and/or successor.

Successor — The successor is the one who will either fill the entire position of the one leaving, or take over one or more specific tasks, projects, etc. The successor’s main responsibility is to follow up as effectively as possible using his/her own specific skills attitude and know-how. If there is no successor, it depends on the situation who will take over tasks, project responsibilities etc. Ideally, this should be team members.

Line manager — The line manager should ensure a smooth succession in terms of arranging and managing the main processes around this: appoint people to introduce the potential newcomer, arrange with the IT department for smooth transition regarding IT systems and user rights and arrange with the HR department for correct handling of all other procedures. The line manager should also provide leadership in relation to the team, successors and leavers for their responsibilities, and provide support. He or she will provide support on the use of tools and techniques to support continual exchange and knowledge retention. The line manager is integral to a successful handover process.

HR department — The HR department’s primary responsibility is the regular procedures surrounding succession: a standard exit-interview.
PREPARATION AND PLANNING

There are three key phases that relate to how we handle succession: preparing to leave, the handover and induction.

Preparing to leave — If you know well in advance that you will be leaving, you, your line manager and the wider team should start to prepare for this as much as possible. If there is little time left, there is still plenty that can be done to manage this transition period. It's important to remember that the sooner the process is started, the more successful it will be.

We recognise that we don’t often have the luxury of time on our side when it comes to people leaving. All the steps below should be carried out, but if you can’t make it in the first period, it will fall over to the second, etc. Ideally, you should start around three months ahead.

As soon as it is clear that you will be leaving:

— Start thinking about doing a handover so you become more alert about what your successor should know when doing your job and tasks.

— Go through the handover notes format (see template) to be aware of what you should be looking out for in the next few weeks/months.

— Identify the crucial, unique knowledge needed to fill out the handover notes, and differentiate this from the non-crucial and non-unique knowledge that is also known by direct colleagues. This process should involve a discussion with your line manager to identify the priorities and to clarify how the handover process will be managed.

— Ensure all your crucial and unique information is stored correctly, following Plan International policies and on shared drives.

— Start documenting all important current actions, contacts etc., using the handover notes format, following documentation policies, and when possible on Planet.

— Arrange/attend regular meetings with your team to ensure they are also ‘up-to-speed’ with your tasks, ongoing projects, etc.

— Where possible, do not start any new projects. If you do, ensure there is someone you can hand it over to and keep them briefed on the progress of the project.
In the immediate week before:

— Fill in the handover notes document (see template) around one month before you leave, since your last weeks will probably be clogged with other stuff.

— Discuss the handover notes with your line manager and determine the best way to file them and make them accessible to others (not only your direct successor), such as through Planet on your team workspace.

— Where possible, the line manager should facilitate contact between the leaver and the successor, if one has been identified.

— Send the handover notes to the successor, if possible, so that he/she has time enough to read through them.

— If it is possible, an in-depth interview with your successor should be done where your successor can ask for additional clarifications arising from the handover notes. If this is not possible, the interview should be had with your line manager or another team member selected in consultation with your line manager.

— If you leave your role temporarily, or stay within Plan International on another assignment, try to arrange a few contact moments with your successor (telephone, mail, Skype).

— Be available for the standard HR (global) exit interview.

— Start reducing your own tasks, and handing them over when possible.

— Categorise, classify and store your documents correctly. Check your personal drives and arrange and move any files that need to be stored to your team’s shared drive, or workspace on Planet.
Handover — This part describes the handover of knowledge and information from the person leaving to the successor, be it for the entire position or specific tasks. If someone will be temporarily or permanently replaced, a proper handover shortens the time the successor will need to get started and be productive. Giving enough time for a proper handover in which both leaver and successor are involved is considered good practice, but may not always be possible. Presented are an ideal and a minimum scenario.

Ideal situation (successor, leaver)
— Have the handover in person, starting with an in-depth interview between leaver and successor, to go through the handover notes and possible additional clarifications, where needed.
— The leaver, where possible, should be on hand to answer any questions or provide any additional information. The successor should feel free, however, to 'make the job their own.'

Minimum scenario (manager, team)
— Ensure successor's availability for handover at start.
— Introduce the successor to the team.
— Get the successor introduced to critical tasks, procedures and contacts.
— Provide the successor with an action list for the initial period of settling in.
— Use the handover notes for general guidance.

Specific for emergency deployment/secondment — There are some situations in which there is no time for a proper handover or induction period. The most common is an emergency deployment, during which there often are no more than a few days to get a handover, if applicable, and get introduced to your new team and working situation.
— Use the handover notes format, limited to sections 1, 3 and 4.
— Or if there is no time at all: use sections 1 and 2.

No successor?
If there is no clear successor, or if there is no overlap period, it is highly recommended that specific tasks and responsibilities are handed over to your line manager or team members that are already knowledgeable about those tasks and responsibilities. Once a successor is appointed, the handover can take place.

References: Van Grijs naar Groen: Borgen van cruciale kennis bij pensionering van medewerkers (From grey to green: Retention of crucial knowledge when staff retires). Co-Capacity B.V., September 2010. 73pp.
Tips: Knowledge Management Standards. Plan International.
1. General information
   — Your name:
   — Position/Job title:
   — Start and end date in position:
   — Office/Location:
   — Who are you reporting to?
   — Who is best aware of your work?

2. No time for handover? Identify crucial knowledge
   — What actions/projects require immediate attention? You can provide further details as highlighted in Section 3
   — Are there any regular or recurring meetings, tasks, reports?
   — Are there any specific commitments that have been made related to your role/current assignment that need follow up? (Such as meetings, funding, collaboration, partnerships, etc.)
   — Do you have any additional recommendations?

3. Key tasks and responsibilities
   As you complete this section, think about the main tasks/responsibilities of your role. You can use your Job Description and Individual Accountability Plan as a reference.
   Here are a few things to consider about each task:
   — Why is it useful, what are the objectives and possible results?
   — How often is this task completed?
   — What are the main work processes involved?
   — Are there any pending actions?
   — What is the crucial information required (documents etc.) and where can it be found?
   — Who are the key contacts/partners involved in this task?
   — What is your experience with this task/responsibility?
   — Are there any critical challenges/issues that you face? If so, how do you try to deal with them?
   — What are the risks involved?
   — How would you recommend getting started with this task?
4. Priority projects/actions requiring immediate attention

This section relates to immediate actions that need special attention during the transition period.

Here are a few things to consider about each priority task:

— Why is it useful, what are the objectives and possible results?
— What needs immediate attention and why?
— Describe the main work processes involved.
— Are there any pending actions?
— What is the crucial information required (documents etc.) and where can it be found?
— Who are the key contacts involved in this task?
— What is your experience with this task/responsibility?
— Are there any critical challenges/issues that you face? If so, how do you try to deal with them?
— What are the risks involved?
— How would you recommend getting started with this task?

5. Key resources

Share any additional resources that may help your successor to carry out the tasks. Include links to where these documents can be found where possible.

Share any key contacts within your network. This may include those working on projects in which you’re involved, subject-matter experts or other colleagues across Plan International who may be of help.

6. Attachments

Attach any relevant documents such as job descriptions, terms of reference for deployment/secondment.