

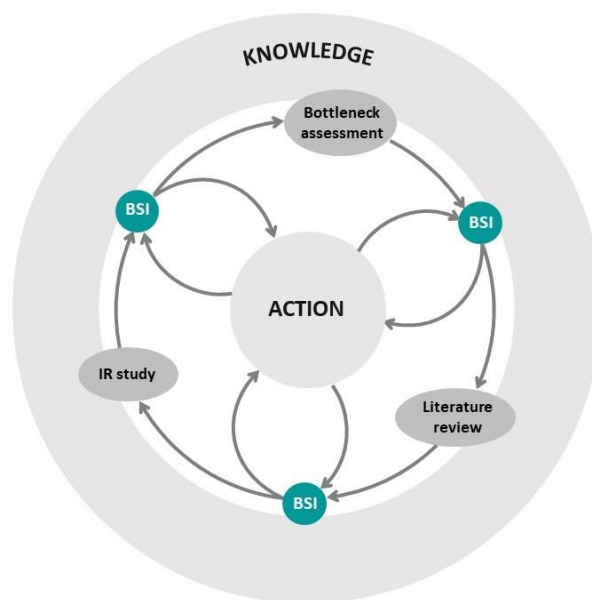
BOTTLENECK AND SOLUTION INVENTORY

OBJECTIVES

- Understand what a bottleneck and solution inventory (BSI) is and its importance
- Understand how to create and populate a BSI

What is a bottleneck and solution inventory (BSI)?

The first activity to begin assessing the system is the BNA, through which bottlenecks at various levels are identified and prioritized. The bottlenecks and the work to address them need to be thoroughly monitored in a bottleneck and solution inventory (BSI), which takes a systems perspective and helps ensure that the bottlenecks at various levels are considered throughout the implementation period.



Objectives of a BSI

The BSI documents:

- the bottlenecks that are preventing the program from achieving its objectives
- the factors that are creating those bottlenecks
- the efforts that have been made to address them
- the experiences and outcomes from those efforts, and
- the next steps.

The BSI can be considered detailed progress tracking tool.

How to create and populate a BSI?

Before creating a BSI, you can reflect on the following questions to help you determine the best medium for the BSI:

- Who would have access to the BSI?
- Who would collect and update the information for the BSI?
- What would be the level of description for the bottlenecks that would be entered into the BSI?
- How would data be analyzed and used and who would use the BSI to address issues?

In this guidance note, an exercise is presented to help you understand how to fill in the BSI. While the main framework for the BSI can be derived from this exercise, there is flexibility to adapt to your context.

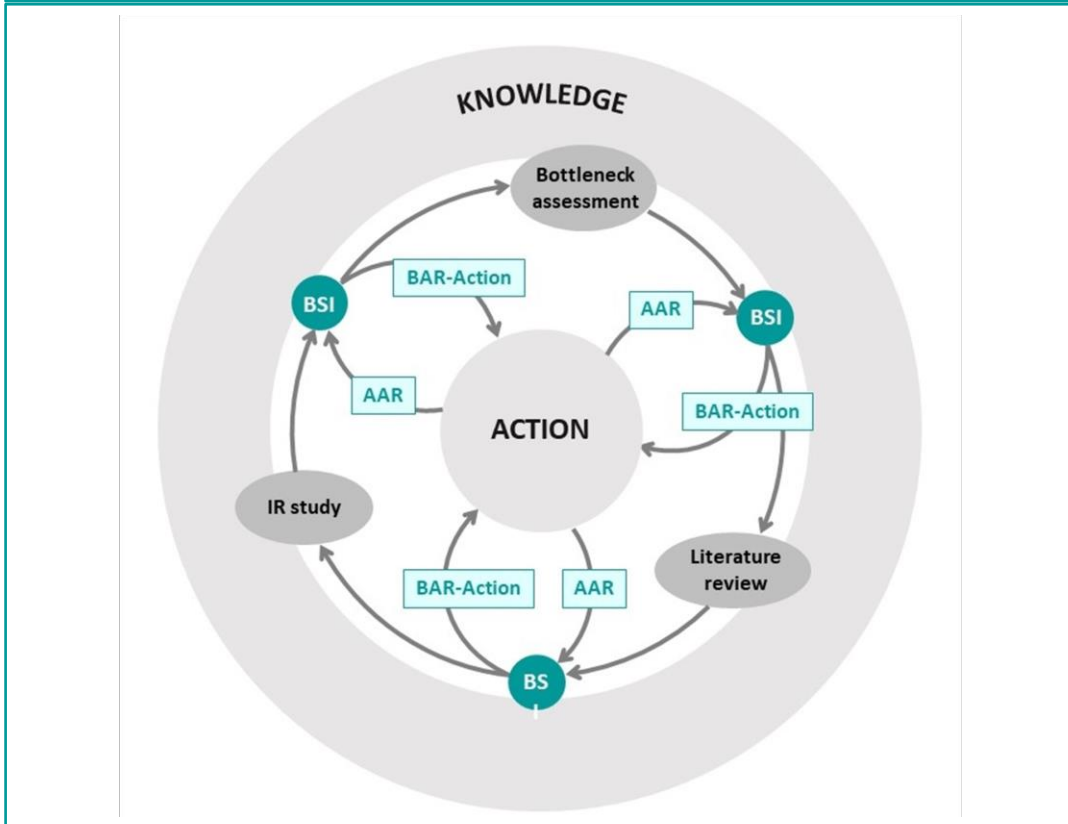
ABOUT THIS EXERCISE	THIS EXERCISE WILL HELP YOU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires limited time to be used (about 30 minutes for each step) • Is simple • Is applicable to many situations and in many contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin populating the bottleneck and solution inventory and articulating solutions that will then be tested • Document the process and actions to allow for deeper reflection • Turns activities and events into opportunities to test and refine thinking

This exercise is divided in three parts:

- **Before Action Review (BAR):** this part involves asking questions to better understand the bottlenecks and make underlying assumptions more explicit in order to test them.
- **Action:** this part involves designing the actions that will take place and carrying them out.
- **After Action Review (AAR):** this part involves reflecting after the actions have taken place in order to generate learnings and envision the way forward¹⁰.

As depicted below (Figure 2), the first two parts of this exercise will be used before taking action. The third part will help you to fill in the BSI once you have tried to apply a solution.

Figure 2: How does the exercise help you to populate the BSI?



Conclusion

The creation and utilization of a BSI is essential to ensure that actions are taken and there is a mechanism by which we can learn from reflecting on challenges in the process and track progress.

Case study: BSI

As there was no previous experience with a BSI, it needed to be created from scratch. Initially, Uganda considered using an existing web platform, but this entailed several technological and conceptual challenges. Instead, a simpler and practical tool was developed based on Excel spreadsheets. Discussions about the BSI also raised concerns about the potential sensitivity of some documenting bottlenecks so explicitly and the negative perception or blame that could arise. Indeed, bottlenecks are problems, barriers or constraints in the system and can be perceived negatively or as blaming when connected to the person responsible for addressing the bottleneck. To minimize sensitivities, it was suggested to refer to the tool as a “bottleneck and solution inventory” instead of as a “bottleneck inventory.”

Before Action Review – BAR

	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
1	What is the bottleneck?	
2	Why is it important to address this bottleneck? Why do we prioritize it?	
3	Who is engaged?	
4	Which levels of the program or system are engaged?	
5	Who should we contact to verify these assumptions?	
6	Goal - What is our intended result?	
7	What challenges might we encounter?	
8	What have we learned from similar situations?	
9	What will make us successful this time?	
10	When will we do the AAR?	

What are the solutions proposed?

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What needs to happen to do that? What products or activities do we need to develop?

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Who will be responsible to create it? To advocate for it?

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Where will we try it?

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When? Are there windows of opportunity? What timelines are expected?

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After Action Review – AAR

	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
1	Who is the most important to get feedback from?	
2	What are the results so far? Are we late?	
3	What are the reasons for these results?	
4	What are/were the challenges? Were those challenges expected?	
5	What have we learned? What will be sustained or improved?	
6	What were the enabling or inhibiting factors?	
7	Were there missed opportunities?	
8	When will we do the next BAR?	