Akvo Really Simple Reporting

— Adding updates

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58 views

Completion of Construction Work at Rintada

23-Feb-2011, by Karthik Chandan, VJNNS, via web

Following Activities were conducted:
- Rintada Cover plates for tanks
- Rintada Digging channal
- Rintada Discussion with villagers regarding committe roles
- Rintada Donor of the Land

Completion of Construction Work at Rintada Photo credit: Apalanaidu, VJNNS

What is an update?

A project update is traditional reporting made simple, visual and immediate.

Every project in the Akvo Really Simple Reporting (RSR) system has its own web page, showing the facts and details of the project at its start; location, background information, plans, pictures etc. Once published, this part of the site remains constant and becomes part of the project's historical record.

Each project also has its own updates page, a sort of "blog" for the project. An update can be a brief paragraph, a photo with descriptive captions and/or a project movie. Partners can add updates to projects through a simple web interface and via SMS.

Why updates are important

- Transparency
- Visibility
- Time saving
- Increased funding
- Learning

Sharing development activities in the field increases the visibility and impact of what you do while greatly reducing time and resources spent reporting on your work afterwards.

Both professional funding organisations and individual donors want to know how their money is spent. Governments need to show citizens how their tax dollars are used on international development. In the past this was difficult, if not impossible for individuals, while professional and government funders had to rely on thick paper reports at the project's completion, and perhaps later field visits. Field teams had to spend a significant proportion of their time producing all of this paperwork, which may never have been read. Now, through project updates, an individual donor or taxpayer can see their money at work in a school in Malawi and a funder can find out how construction work is going in India, all within hours of the events happening. Doers can learn from others in their field, to everyone's benefit.

Putting what you do online expands your audience. The newest updates are featured on both the project's own home page in Akvo *and* on the Akvo home page itself. If an update catches an Akvo staffer's eye, he or she may blog or tweet about it or mention it on Facebook. And if your project is more visible, so are you.

If you regularly update your projects in Akvo RSR, potential new partners and donors will more easily find you and see how you work. And how you might work well together. Transparency increases confidence and trust; visibility builds reputation and contacts.

Increase your visibility with update tools

All updates to a project can be seen on its updates page in Akvo RSR. Use the URL to this page in emails with partners to keep them abreast of news; or use the Permalink tool to get the URL to a particular update you want to highlight in an online document.

On your website, and your partners' websites, embed an Akvo Widget with updates to demonstrate project progress. As updates are added, the widget will automatically post the latest news on that website. This keeps your content fresh and interesting.

Create updates that help tell the project's story

Taken together, updates tell the story of the project. Stories are powerfull because they provide meaning and context. Plus we all like a good story don't we? A good update need only be one or two sentences and a picture, or even just a picture with a caption. This ten-minutes task is easy to fit into the busy work schedule of most people. And these days, it doesn't take much longer to record a three or four minutes of video on-site with your phone, upload to a video provider, and embed the video in an update. Video "really" brings a project's story to life!

Imagine you are in the field teaching people how to drill a well. Your project update might be a short description of what you covered and how much progress you made. Minutes after sending, the information will appear on the project update page and any website with an update widget.

Some simple guidelines:

- Tell the project's story - what is happening now?
- Be specific; include detail in your descriptions.
- Use natural language, not jargon.
- Don't worry too much about the quality of the language it doesn't need to be perfect.
- Showing people if possible, include a picture. Use the caption to explain briefly what is happening in the photographs. Preferably the photo should be sharp and have a good resolution (1280 x 960 pixels is ideal).
- Descibe the technology used, and talk about the social and human aspects.

Let the beneficiaries of your project speak. Before the project starts, interview someone who will benefit from it. What's her current situation?

Later, do a follow-up interview with the same person. What changes has she seen? How will they affect her life? Be brief don't try to be complete. It works better to have a steady stream of short updates than one long one with lots of text. A good picture and a pithy caption work best of all.

How often should I write an update?

We recommend an update every two weeks or so.

If the project is on hold for some reason, say so and explain why - this is information you want to capture and hold on to, perhaps for learning purposes or just as part of the project historical record. If this sort of information is shared, organisations can learn from each other's instead of repeatedly facing the same problems.

Can anyone place an update on a project?

If you work for one of the project's partners and have an Akvo RSR account (see below for how to get an account), you may add updates to that project.

You can't add updates to projects you don't work on. But Akvo partners with Akvo RSR accounts can add comments to any project on the system. So if you want to compliment a partner, give them advice or have an idea that might help them, feel free to leave a comment (remember to be positive and constructive; negative advice is rarely listened to).

How do I ... ?

To create updates you need an Akvo RSR account. If your organisation is already registered with Akvo, this is a very simple process. If your organisation is not registered yet, please contact us at **partners@akvo.org**.

... create an Akvo RSR account

1. Click **Register** on the top right-hand corner of the Akvo home page **www.akvo.org**. The account set-up page will open.

2. Select the organisation you belong to and click **Continue**. If your organisation does not appear, it has not been registered with Akvo. Please contact us at **partners@akvo. org**.

3. Enter a username, your first and last name, a password and your email address (twice to verify). User accounts belong to a single person, so use your own name for the username. There is no limit to the number of people who can register with one organisation. Click **Register**.

4. A confirmation email is sent to the email address you provided. Click on the link in the email to confirm your request.

5. After you confirm your account request, the Akvo staff will review your request. This can take a couple of days. You will be notified by email when your request has been approved.
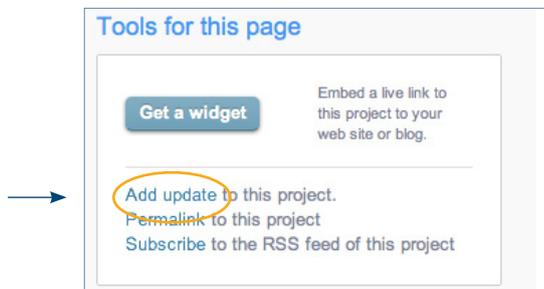
... create an update online

1. Sign in to Akvo RSR by clicking **Sign in** on the top right-hand corner of the Akvo home page.
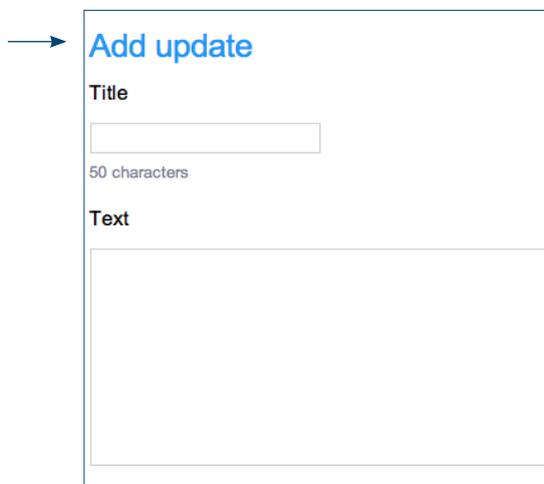
Sign in

2. On the next page enter your username and password, and click **Sign in**. Click **I forgot my username and/or password** to have either reset in Akvo RSR.

Please sign in

I have an account

Enter username

Enter password
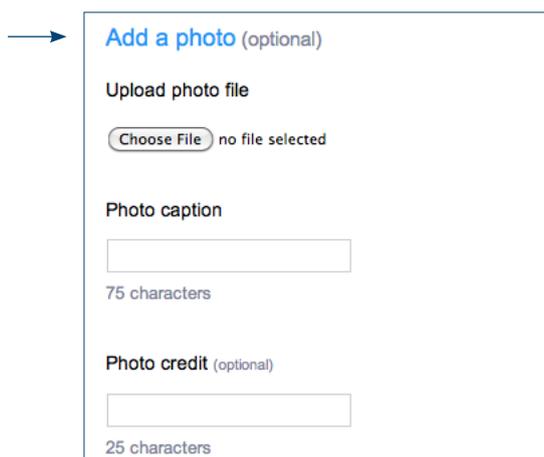
Sign in

I forgot my username and/or password

3. Go to the project you want to add an update to; if your organisation is a registered partner you will now see a link **Add update** on the project page in the 'Tools for this page' section and on the Updates page. Click **Add update**.

Tools for this page

Get a widget   Embed a live link to this project to your web site or blog.

Add update to this project.
Permalink to this project
Subscribe to the RSS feed of this project

4. Enter a short summary title of 50 characters and the text of your update.

Add update

Title

50 characters

Text

5. You can upload a photo with caption and photographer credit.

Add a photo (optional)

Upload photo file

Choose File   no file selected

Photo caption

75 characters

Photo credit (optional)

25 characters

6. You can embed a video from You Tube, Blip or Vimeo. Paste the video URL, add a caption and video maker credit.

Embed a video (optional)

Paste video URL

Supported providers: Blip, Vimeo, YouTube.

Video caption

75 characters

Video credit (optional)

25 characters

7. Decide whether the photo and/or video will appear at the beginning or end of the update.

Text placement

If you added a photo and/or video...

◉ Keep text above photo/video
◯ Keep text below photo/video

8. When you are done, click **Add update**. The update will be posted and is now visible on your project page and any website with an update widget.

Add update

... add a comment

1. You must be signed in to Akvo RSR to leave a comment. If you are on the project home page, clicking **Add comment** will prompt you to sign in.

Comments   See all ▶

Add first comment ▶

Akvo Ref: 47

2. Type your comments in the text field, and click **Submit**. Your comment will now appear on the project page.

Who to contact for assistance?

For questions about how to place updates and how to get an account, please contact **support@akvo.org**

Examples

The Akvo system is quickly filling up with great updates. Below, we list a few of our favourites. Click on the blue links to go to the Akvo website and get the full story on the project. Or go to the Akvo homepage, and see the most recent ones.

http://www.akvo.org/rsr/project/170/updates/

Project 170 - Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation/Hygiene practices for Poor Tribes, India, by VJNNS
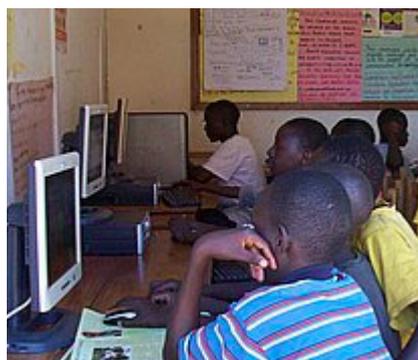

http://www.akvo.org/rsr/project/274/update/839/

Project 274 - Daily visit of Child care worker supports family, South Africa, by Buffalo city Leiden

Project 194 - Mobiles and computers for child health, Uganda, by Health Child

http://www.akvo.org/rsr/project/194/update/814/

Project 213 - Helping teachers use ICT for teaching, Uganda, by CFSU

http://www.akvo.org/rsr/project/213/updates/