

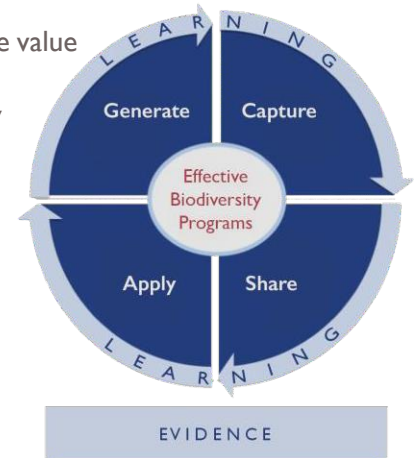
# LESSONS LEARNED FOR EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF THE USAID BIODIVERSITY DIVISION

## Introduction

**Knowledge management**<sup>1</sup> (KM) is the act of curating and sharing knowledge to create value or support decision-making in context for the users of the knowledge. KM is an essential component of knowledge-sharing that often translates to more effective programming by enabling evidence-based decision-making.



**What do we mean by knowledge?** Knowledge can take many forms, from less formal learning events to more complex products that inspire learning. Knowledge-sharing opportunities may include lessons learned, program evaluations and research publications, technical briefs and fact sheets, conferences and other events, and webinars.



**Figure 1.** Biodiversity Division Knowledge Management Approach

## The KM Cycle

Effective KM follows an iterative and integrated cycle to drive learning and contribute to practitioner goals:

- **Generate** – Transform implicit and other knowledge to explicit knowledge that can be recorded, shared, and used.
- **Capture** – Record, organize, classify, and store knowledge.
- **Share** – Connect staff to the knowledge they need when they need it and to each other.
- **Apply** – Use knowledge as the foundation for innovation, decision-making, and adaptive management.

## USAID Biodiversity Division’s KM Approach

The USAID Biodiversity Division worked closely with the USAID Sharing Environment and Energy Knowledge (SEEK) project to develop and implement a robust KM portfolio to enhance biodiversity programming globally. The Division implemented several innovative KM tools, processes, and approaches that generated key lessons learned for each stage in the KM cycle. This document explores these lessons, providing tangible examples of the Division’s efforts to inform future implementers’ work in KM.



**GENERATE: Meaningful engagement with audiences and a design thinking, data informed approach enables implementers to produce a more tailored and effective approach to KM.**

The Biodiversity Division developed its KM portfolio from a strong foundation of **knowledge generation**, working closely with SEEK to connect with key audiences to identify existing resources, current knowledge gaps, and future learning opportunities. The Division invested in a **design-thinking approach** to drive generation of useful resources through regular engagements with technical practitioners, including meetings, communities of practice, and stakeholder engagement surveys to determine what current resources were available to stakeholders to help them program for conservation goals and what resources *did not* exist that were needed. To achieve this, the Division invested in the BiodiversityLinks website and capturing analytics, as well as consistent engagement with the Biodiversity Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Implementing Partners (IPs).

The transformation of the former Biodiversity Conservation Gateway site to BiodiversityLinks provided more accessible KM to biodiversity practitioners. The Division worked with the SEEK project to establish sound tracking processes to track popular pages, total users, total downloads, and other pertinent data points for informing the Division’s KM strategy. Over time, **the analytics told a story** about the types of information users were looking for and helped identify opportunities for enhanced content. It also gave critical KM resources an organized home to be leveraged for programming. These analytics continue to be used to refine the KM approach for biodiversity.

<sup>1</sup> This definition of KM is drawn from the [USAID Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning Policy](#).

In addition, the Biodiversity Division invested in **connecting with CKM IPs** to gain a more intimate understanding of their needs, objectives, and current gaps in technical programming information. The Division achieved this improved understanding through several methods, including a recurring series of meetings where the Division asked CKM IPs to identify barriers to knowledge translation. USAID and SEEK then used the information from these meetings to inform a white paper to compile and share best practices for knowledge translation in USAID programming and support USAID staff, technical assistance providers, and IPs in applying them across biodiversity programming.

**Figure 2.** Top Accessed Resources on BiodiversityLinks

<b>Most Viewed Page Type</b>	Learning and Evidence pages <i>Pages represent 24% of total page views</i>
<b>Most Downloaded Resource</b>	The Biodiversity and Development Handbook <i>2,700 Downloads</i>
<b>Top Mission Project Page</b>	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing in Philippines (IUU) <i>4,000 page views</i>
<b>Top Learning Group Page</b>	Conservation Enterprises <i>3,770 page views</i>



The top three user countries on BiodiversityLinks are the **United States**, the **Philippines**, and **India**.



**CAPTURE:** Incorporating findings and relevant information into an iterative plan for capturing knowledge that resonates with your audience is the foundation of good knowledge capture.

Through analysis to understand target audiences, current information gaps, and opportunities to enhance KM, the USAID Biodiversity Division developed a **plan for knowledge capture**. This plan involved determining how existing and new knowledge should be stored as well as the best formats for creating knowledge products. To help support the curation of a capture plan, the Biodiversity Division worked closely with SEEK to develop a number of **user journeys and personas** to identify best approaches for the target audience. These tools informed new features on BiodiversityLinks, including the creation of **curated evidence collections** in key issue learning groups to support greater use and uptake. They further **helped provide context for BiodiversityLinks analytics**.

**Figure 3.** Fish Right Mission Page on BiodiversityLinks



In addition, the Biodiversity Division worked closely with its target audiences to meet specific knowledge capture requests. **Mission project pages** on BiodiversityLinks are an example of this in action. Missions directly requested the creation of these pages to house content on the site, consolidate their resources, and contribute to Mission-to-Mission knowledge-sharing in a central place. The final product capitalized on the Division's understanding of its audience's needs, preferred modalities of accessing information, and the design-thinking approach leveraged in generating knowledge. The USAID/Philippine's [Fish Right page](#) is a particularly successful example. The Fish Right project page highlights seven Mission resources and ten videos. In the first two months of its inception, the page garnered 480 views, making it the **fourth most viewed page** on the site.

An important best practice to emphasize during the knowledge capture phase is that **regularly revisiting how knowledge is captured is essential** for ensuring utility to target audiences. In collaboration with SEEK, the Biodiversity Division built in activity milestones throughout implementation to ensure content was accessible on BiodiversityLinks, tracking against analytics. Under SEEK, this translated to regularly updating high-traffic web pages and ensuring resources were available in multiple places on the site.



**SHARE: Effectively sharing knowledge with target audiences must be integrated with knowledge sharing methods that resonate. Tracking, analytics, and direct engagement with audiences helps identify the best methods for sharing.**

After identifying needs and gaps in KM and developing a thoughtful, evidence-driven approach to KM, the Biodiversity Division developed a strategy for sharing critical resources, stories, and knowledge. The Division implemented several approaches and adopted many tools to successfully share knowledge with target audiences. These efforts were amplified by **coordination between SEEK and the Measuring Impact II (MI2) project**, which supported USAID thought leaders, Mission staff, and Washington bureaus to apply evidence-based adaptive management across USAID’s biodiversity portfolio. Where audiences overlapped, MI2 offered **an intimate understanding of its target audiences** to enhance SEEK’s understanding.

The need to deeply understand how target audiences interact with content, what they are looking to interact with, and how best to reach them is critical to ensuring successful knowledge-sharing. To support this understanding, the Biodiversity Division worked closely with the SEEK KM and communications teams to develop a robust target audience matrix and integrate considerations into the Division’s strategic communications plan, messaging framework, and knowledge management plan. This integration helped to **ensure mutual reinforcement in KM and communications efforts**, driving viewership to the BiodiversityLinks platform and other associated KM tools via communications channels and vice versa.

The Division further leveraged analytics to define the best dissemination channels for KM materials. This supported **BiodiversityLinks as a critical knowledge management website** and further provided justification for including links to the site in USAID social media messages, the WildTimes newsletter, and other communications outlets. The Division further enhanced its approach to KM by **recognizing the value of integrating KM with SEEK training activities**. Where appropriate, KM resources were integrated in training to amplify reach and contribute to the Division’s broader capacity-building efforts. The [Biodiversity How-To Guides](#) were a prime example of this, incorporated across trainings and the BiodiversityLinks site to enhance training content and make the resources more widely available.

Collaboration between MI2 and SEEK further enhanced Biodiversity KM efforts. The Division leveraged relevant findings from MI2’s stakeholder engagement strategy and needs assessment to inform approaches to KM under SEEK and supported the dissemination of MI2 work through SEEK channels. The Division disseminated two adaptive management studies completed by MI2: [USAID Wildlife Asia as a case study in adaptive rigour: Monitoring, evaluation and learning for adaptive management](#) and [Adaptive Management in the USAID CWT Portfolio: Current Practices and Opportunities](#). To support dissemination, USAID featured both studies on a [Key Resources page](#) on BiodiversityLinks to appeal to site visitors, highlighting the work’s importance. The [Adaptive Management in the USAID CWT Portfolio: Current Practices and Opportunities](#) piece is **the most downloaded resource for adaptive management** on the site, supported by this KM approach.

Figure 4. USAID Wildlife Asia Piece



**APPLY: Employing best practices across the KM cycle contributes to knowledge application, supporting a holistic approach to KM that meets key messages goals and helps target audiences leverage knowledge.**

The USAID Biodiversity Division worked with the USAID SEEK project and other mechanisms to design, implement, and oversee a robust portfolio of KM resources and knowledge. Division staff built a thoughtful and informed approach using sound KM tools and best practices to generate, capture, and share knowledge in support of conservation programming and contribute to evidence-based programming in biodiversity. The Biodiversity Division is increasingly engaged in application, observing how target audiences interact with and apply the information available to them.

Historically, data points on application can be difficult to generate. To date, information on application for the Biodiversity Division has been largely anecdotal. However, the Division is using BiodiversityLinks analytics to draw some initial conclusions about the success of its efforts:



Engagement<sup>2</sup> with BiodiversityLinks has increased over time, indicating that the platform is an effective tool for sharing and supporting application of knowledge. While viewership on the site has ebbed and flowed, **viewers have consistently grown since the site's launch**. One of the largest jumps in viewership was observed just after the site launch, with an increase of **over 80 percent between January 2021 and February 2021**.



BiodiversityLinks Evidence Collection Pages account for 24 percent of total page views on the site. This may imply **practitioners are accessing evidence-based resources** on specific topics to inform their programming.



The Library Landing Page accounts for a large proportion of site views. This may imply that **viewers are making use of the reference materials provided**, using them to learn and incorporate concepts into programming.

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<sup>2</sup> Engagement here refers to viewership as well as number of impressions, clicks, resource downloads, etc. recorded on the site across pages and resources.