

Approach Paper

Knowledge Generation and Dissemination in the Inter-American Development Bank Group



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I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 **The IDBG has increasingly placed knowledge generation and dissemination as one of its core mandates.** The IDBG, like other multilateral development banks, was created under the premise that it would mostly finance specific expenditures related to investment projects; as such, little attention was placed on knowledge generation and dissemination during its first decades of existence. Following the 8th capital increase (1994) the role of knowledge activities in the IDBG was enhanced with the creation of the Office of the Chief Economist, the Inter-American Institute for Economic and Social Development (INDES), and the Sustainable Development Department (SDS). However, it was not until the Realignment of the Bank in 2007 that the Bank explicitly sought to increase its capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge. The 2010 9th General Capital Increase (IDB-9) and the New Institutional Strategy aimed to strengthen the institutional framework to deliver knowledge products. The new framework sought to improve the funding strategy, as well as the operational and accountability arrangements of knowledge production and dissemination in the institution (see Box 1.1).

Box 1.1. References to Knowledge in the Bank's Institutional Strategy 2010-2020

"The IDB places innovation and knowledge at the center of its work to accelerate development. [...] This not only requires that the IDB continues to generate relevant technical knowledge and apply it with rigor, but also that it try, test, and reiterate innovative approaches and adapt them to country realities to solve development problems."

"This powerful combination of learning and innovation will catalyze the IDB's work to improve lives. [...] Having an innovative culture is about redefining the rationale of the Bank from scalable efficiency to scalable learning that can be directly applied to the Bank's operational work, and contribute to broadening and refining its portfolio of interventions and knowledge products. This approach to innovation must continue to provide avenues for exploring new ways to address challenges, enhance knowledge exchange and management systems, and build knowledge networks with other development agencies and international organizations."

"To promote the adaptation of successful development approaches, it is important to strengthen the Bank's capacity to learn and to disseminate what it has learned. This calls for increasing the efforts to generate knowledge of what works and what does not, based on rigorous evidence—which, in turn, requires continuing to evaluate projects throughout their life cycle. Furthermore, so that innovation can permeate throughout the institution, the IDB needs to create a new culture where collaboration, diversity, experimentation, and practice are the main ingredients, resulting in better solutions, processes, and products. This effort should not occur only within the Bank: much of the systemic impact of the Bank comes from its knowledge being used by our counterparts to adapt or scale up successful Bank financed projects and to change and improve policy. For this reason, the Bank will continue strengthening its strategic communication capabilities at all levels."

Source: IDB Update to Institutional Strategy 2010-2020, p. 4.21 - 4.23

- 1.2 **This evaluation will focus on the IDBG's institutional arrangements and performance in generating and delivering knowledge products.** The Oxford Dictionary defines knowledge as "facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject." In the context of a MDB like the IDBG, the knowledge generated, acquired, and disseminated by the institution should aim to improve the design of development interventions (policies and programs), including those supported directly by the institution and those implemented by Bank clients. From various IDB, IIC, and MIF strategic documents, OVE identified several objectives associated with the "knowledge bank" agenda, including i) improving the effectiveness of IDBG's lending program and policy dialogue, ii) responding to specific client demands,

iii) filling knowledge gaps and identifying emerging development challenges in the LAC region, iv) fostering a culture of learning in the institution, and v) disseminating lessons and best practices.¹ These objectives are expected to be achieved through both the financing and sharing of knowledge.

- 1.3 **This is the second OVE assessment of knowledge production in the IDBG.** In 2006, OVE evaluated the production and dissemination of studies at the IDB (RE-323) and found that programming had generally been weak, quality control had been sporadic, storage and dissemination needed attention, and production incentives had been ad-hoc. More recent evaluations have also covered aspects of knowledge at the IDBG, but there has not been a comprehensive assessment since 2006. In addition to being a stand-alone report, this evaluation will also help inform the final evaluation of IDB-9 commitments.

II. KNOWLEDGE GENERATION IN THE IDBG

- 2.1 **The realignment of the Bank in 2007 introduced organizational and staffing changes to increase the Bank's capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge.** The Bank eliminated SDS and gathered all sector experts (most working in the pre-realignment regional departments) together under the newly-created Vice-Presidency for Sectors and Knowledge (VPS). The Research Department (RES) also became part of VPS. VPS divisions support the Vice-Presidency for Countries (VPC) by preparing loans and technical assistance for clients, generating sector knowledge, and designing the Bank's agenda for research. The Vice-Presidency for Countries also produces country-specific knowledge as well as knowledge products in support of IDB programming and country strategy work. A dedicated knowledge department (KNL) was also created under VPS to develop the Bank's knowledge and learning strategies, with important focus on capturing and disseminating knowledge. The number of new staff with master and doctoral degrees and the number with experience in academic research have both increased since the realignment, as have the number of technical specialist positions in both headquarters and country offices.²
- 2.2 **Organizational changes have been complemented with changes in the institutional tools and processes to originate and deliver knowledge products.** These include the programming process for Economic and Sector Work (ESW) and Corporate Input Products (CIP), the knowledge and learning planning

¹ Both the realignment and the IDB9 agreement called on the Bank to include knowledge and capacity building in its operations (IDB-9 report AB-2764. Annex 1, page 2, and Realignment of the Bank to take on its strategic challenges. GA-232. Page 24). These documents also called on the Bank to provide client-specific services, including the option of fee-based services. In particular, the IDB-9 agreement asked the Bank to fill knowledge gaps by "becom[ing] a point of reference in the policy debates on key development issues important to the region (...)" (IDB-9 report AB-2764. Annex 1, page 21). Knowledge generation is also an important part of the vision for the new IIC, as one of the overarching objectives is to develop a private sector culture that "constantly increases its capacity to create and disseminate knowledge" (Delivering the Renewed Vision. Organizational and Capitalization Proposal for the IDG Group Private Sector Merge-Out. CA-556, CII/CA-165). This vision includes the use of knowledge products, services, and activities to help develop a systemic approach and have impact beyond that of an individual project. Knowledge products should also increase the effectiveness of interventions by helping identify market failures and design instruments to address them. For MIF, learning and dissemination of lessons is embedded on its mission to test, extract lessons, and scale up interventions to increase access to finance and markets and the capabilities of small businesses.

² See OVE's Evaluation of the Results of the Realignment, RE-451-2.

process, and revised processes for TC funding. New mechanisms to improve the quality and dissemination of knowledge products include the Studies Committee and other review mechanisms, and the approval mechanisms determined in the Publications Manual (AM-331) and the OPEN knowledge initiatives.

A. Knowledge products and spending in IDBG

2.3 IDBG produces many types of knowledge products³ and supports different types of knowledge sharing arrangements:

- Through **knowledge development work**, the Bank delivers economic studies, macroeconomic assessments (including Independent Assessments of Macroeconomic Conditions – IAMCs), country specific analytical work (including integrated diagnostics of Country Development Challenges - CDCs), impact evaluations, databases, conferences, and diverse types of publications.⁴ Several of these activities are often grouped together under one ESW product, aiming to address a common need with a common budgeting code and a set of related deliverables, mostly intermediate knowledge products.
- Through **learning and collaborative knowledge management work**, the IDBG delivers sector strategies, action plans, sector framework documents, staff training (including PM4R training), and knowledge-oriented CIPs, among others. CIPs include staff learning and training events, operational and non-operational diagnostic reports, library and knowledge management services, sector knowledge weeks, internal reports and reviews, open knowledge (dissemination strategies and blogs) and data, search engines, knowledge portals, studies and evaluations, and country briefings, among others.⁵
- Funding for the activities described above is complemented with grant financing for **research and dissemination technical cooperation (TC)**, which also provides resources for impact evaluations, studies, guidelines, policy briefs, toolkits, dissemination activities, and training, among others. A percentage of **client support TC** funding also supports knowledge generation in countries at the specific request of Bank clients.

2.4 IDBG spends a significant amount of resources on knowledge activities. According to Bank systems, in 2016 IDB spending in knowledge generation and dissemination work (excluding client support TC funding) totaled US\$135.7 million—equivalent to 18% of its annual budget (including grant financing through Strategic Development Programs and Trust Funds).⁶

³ Formally, the Bank defines knowledge products as “documents and other media, whether in electronic (including on Bank websites) and/or hard copy format, that share relevant information and knowledge produced by the Bank, and whose copyright belongs to the Bank and are considered Bank property or for which the Bank has secured rights for use and distribution”. Source: Procedures for the Publication of Knowledge Products (AM-331)

⁴ Publications include annual reports; books (commercial and non-commercial); catalogs & brochures; databases & datasets; discussion papers; learning materials; magazines, journals & newsletters; monographs; policy briefs; technical notes; and working papers.

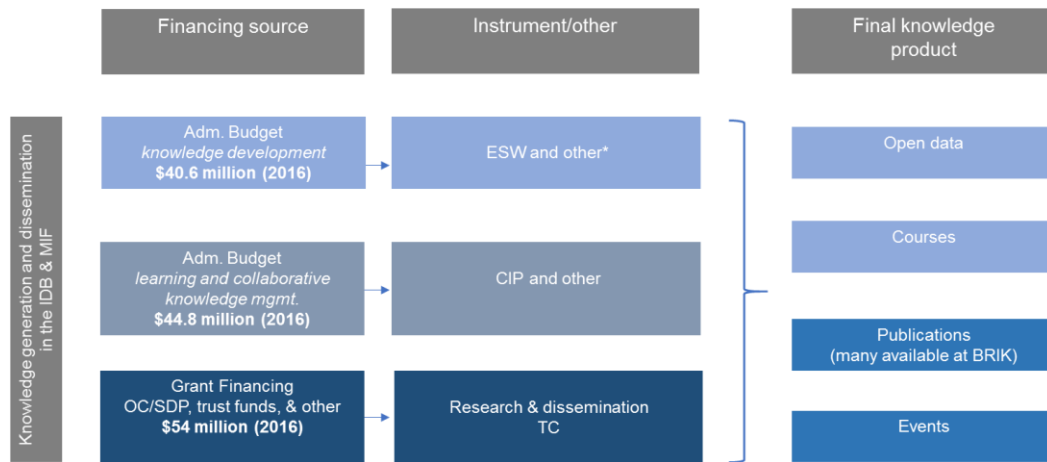
⁵ 2015 Annual Business Review. Footnotes 40, page 47; and OVE’s Administrative Spending Evaluation, footnote 50, page 25.

⁶ Source: RBB Performance & budget analytics, and ORP/GCM reports on TC approvals.

Administrative spending on knowledge totaled US\$84.4 million, while research and dissemination TCs totaled US\$51.3 million.⁷ IIC does not track its spending by main business function, thus identification of resources spent on knowledge generation and dissemination is not possible.⁸ MIF spent US\$3.7 million, or 15% of its administrative budget, on knowledge in 2016 .

2.5 **There is no one-to-one relation between financing source and type of final knowledge product or knowledge sharing activity.** For example, publications may receive funding through learning and collaborative knowledge management, knowledge generation and dissemination work, and/or OC strategic development programs and other TC funding (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Overview of IDB and MIF KGD financing, instruments, and final knowledge products, 2016 (excluding client support TC)



Note: * In 2015 ESW spending totaled US\$22.9 million; US\$12.3 million in non-personnel resources and US\$10.6 million in staff costs, as estimated by OVE using the salary structure from the same year. Source: OVE based on RBB Performance & Budget Analytics; ORP/GCM approval reports; the description of the MBF available at the 2015 Budget and Execution Report; the definition of ESW and CIP from the 2015 Annual Business Review and OVE Administrative Spending; staff salary structure from the 2015 Annual Report; and review of some TC.

2.6 **The main instrument for sharing of publications is BRIK, the Bank’s knowledge repository.** It was created in 2011 to enhance “the visibility and accessibility of Bank knowledge products (KP), both within the Bank and among external audiences,”⁹ following an OVE recommendation.¹⁰ By February of 2017 the BRIK repository had 1,662 working papers, 2,569 technical notes, 1,735 discussion papers, and 419 books, among other publications (see Annex Table 1 for a taxonomy of BRIK KP and Annex Table 2 for the stock of KP by type as of February 2017).

B. Monitoring of knowledge generation and dissemination

2.7 **Measuring and monitoring knowledge generation and dissemination is currently done mainly by EXR and KNL via quarterly reports to quantify the**

⁷ This is the approved amount for research and dissemination TCs in 2016.

⁸ As a reference, SCF and OMJ spent US\$2.3 million of their administrative budget on KGD in 2015.

⁹ Effective Implementation of the Bank Repository of Institutional Knowledge. Knowledge and Learning Sector. July 2011. SC-174.

¹⁰ See OVE’s Evaluation of the IDB’s Studies (RE-323).

reach of publicly available KP and via KNL's knowledge analytics platform. Quarterly reports measure blog pageviews, blog email subscriptions, publications downloads, and publications most talked about per altimetric measures. Knowledge analytics platforms have specific data for blogs, publications, open data, and courses (MOOCs).

- 2.8 **Through the external feedback system (EFS), SPD seeks to measure partner satisfaction in different areas.** It asks about the type of knowledge partners are seeking and the ability of the Bank to convene partner knowledge-producing groups. The 2015 EFS states that the IDBG meets top partner expectations regarding sector knowledge of the staff but can still improve knowledge sharing, which is perceived as an important role by partners. The type of knowledge that partners seek includes best practice and experiences from programs in other countries, technical knowledge, knowledge on project management, and information on IDB practices and regulations.

III. EVALUATION QUESTIONS, SCOPE, AND METHODS

- 3.1 **The evaluation will analyze the main institutional changes and processes implemented since 2007 to improve the IDBG's generation and dissemination of knowledge products, and it will seek to assess whether the Bank's knowledge-related activities effectively address the IDBG's main strategic objectives.** It will focus on IDBG knowledge delivered between 2010 and 2016 and financed through IDB's administrative budget, OC strategic development programs, TCs and trust funds for research and dissemination, and IIC and MIF administrative spending and grants for knowledge generation.
- 3.2 **Box 3.1 presents the specific questions that the evaluation will aim to answer, organized around the five objectives laid out in paragraph 1.2 above.** To answer these questions OVE will use multiple methods for analysis, including review of strategic documents (including Sector Framework Documents); review of a sample of ESW and CIP products and TCs; analysis of IDBG staffing and budget databases; surveys and interviews with IDBG management and staff and external users of IDB knowledge products; analysis of citations, downloads, and use of BRIK publications, MOOCs, blogs, and other products; technical reviews of impact evaluations (from OVE's IE evaluation); review of knowledge products for IDB programming and country strategy work; and citation analysis of IDBG studies in country strategies, country program documents, and loan proposals.

Box 3.1. Evaluation Questions

1. **To what extent does IDBG's knowledge production improve the effectiveness of its lending program and policy dialogue?**
 - a. To what extent is knowledge produced by the Bank Group linked with lending and policy dialogue?
 - b. What evidence exists that such knowledge is influencing programming, project design, project execution, and project evaluation?
 - c. To what extent do IDBG's operational staff find IDBG's knowledge relevant for the design of operations and/or operational programs?
2. **To what extent does IDBG's knowledge production and dissemination respond to specific client demands?**
 - a. To what extent are specific IDBG studies undertaken in response to client demands?
 - b. To what extent is IDBG knowledge disseminated actively among its clients?
 - c. How do clients perceive the quality and usefulness of the knowledge produced by IDBG?
3. **To what extent does IDBG's knowledge production and dissemination contribute to filling knowledge gaps and identifying emerging development challenges in the LAC region?**
 - a. To what extent do IDBG's strategic documents (Institutional Strategies and Sector Framework Documents) identify regional knowledge gaps and emerging development challenges?
 - b. To what extent is knowledge produced by IDBG aligned with regional knowledge gaps and emerging development challenges identified in its strategic documents?
 - c. To what extent do users of Bank knowledge consider that it contributes to close regional knowledge gaps and to identify innovative development approaches?
4. **To what extent does IDBG fosters a culture of learning?**
 - a. What are the institutional procedures, tools, incentives, and staffing to originate, deliver, and use knowledge?
 - b. What incentives do they create and do they appear to spur greater interest in producing and sharing knowledge in the institution?
5. **How effectively are IDBG knowledge products disseminating lessons and best practices?**
 - a. Are IDBG knowledge products readily available to stakeholders?
 - b. To what extent do they appear to be accessed and used by stakeholders?
 - c. To what extent do IDBG knowledge products have a reputation for quality and relevance?
 - d. To what extent are they influential in mobilizing additional resources for IDBG and its clients?
 - e. To what extent do they influence country dialogue?
 - f. How does the use of IDBG knowledge products compare with those of other multilateral agencies?

3.3 **OVE will rely on BRIK and other IDBG databases to identify the stock of knowledge products.** The evaluation will put particular emphasis on key IDB knowledge products such as the Development Effectiveness Overview (DEO), the Development in the Americas (DIA) book series, the Macro Report, IDB Working Papers and Technical Notes, knowledge products for IDB programming and country strategy work, and country specific knowledge products, as well as the knowledge generation role, staffing, and budget of key knowledge-producing departments (EXR, IFD, INT, SCL, INE, RES, and Regional Departments in IDB; DSP and INO in IIC; and MIF). It will also review knowledge sharing mechanisms such as TC INTRA, Research Networks, and the Regional Policy Dialogues. It will draw on the findings of other OVE evaluations, including the IDB-9 Mid-term

Evaluation, Results of the Realignment, Special Programs Financed by Ordinary Capital, IDB Budget Trends, and the ongoing evaluation of Impact Evaluations.

IV. TIMELINE AND TEAM

- 4.1 The evaluation will be carried out by Cesar P. Bouillon (team leader), Anna Crespo, Coral Fernandez-Illescas, Juan Manuel Puerta, Agustina Schijman, Florencia Alejandre, Claudia Figueroa, Maria Jose Hernandez, and Patricia Sadeghi, under the direction of Cheryl Gray (OVE Director). A draft report is expected to be distributed to IDBG management for review in December 2017.

Annex

Table 1: IDB Knowledge products included in the Brik database

Type	Description
Annual Reports	Include reports published yearly to provide information about the Bank's work and/or some development issue during a year. IDBG annual reports include the Bank's official Annual Report, Development in the Americas (DIA), the Development Effectiveness Overview, as well as yearly reports related to OII, ICIM and other Bank Departments and funds.
Books	Include books published under the responsibility of EXR that originate in the Board of Governors, Board of Executive Directors (including books written by members of the Board of Governors or Board of Executive Directors in their capacity as such), the Office of the Presidency, and the Office of the Executive Vice President or published by other departments, including EXR, following the quality control and publication procedures described in the "AM-331 Procedures for the Publication of Knowledge Products".
Catalogs and brochures	Include publications designed to provide the public with information of Bank programs, results, goals, or identity and on relevant data or issues in the region (EXR is responsible for the publication of any corporate-level catalog or brochure. For any other content, the corresponding Manager authorizes the publication of Catalogs and Brochures).
Co-publications	Include publications developed and/or published by the Bank along with external organizations (such as other international organizations or academic institutions).
Databases and datasets	Include applications that combine back-end data with a front-end web-based interface where users can query and manipulate data; and, Datasets, which are raw data files, usually accompanying papers. Data contents of any Databases & Datasets shall be approved by the Department Manager. User interface for display of Databases shall be approved by EXR Departments interested in publication of Databases shall contact EXR.
Discussion Papers	Include documents shared with a community of specialists and policy makers (both within the Bank and with external community members). Discussion Papers shall be approved by a Division, Unit Chief, or Country Department Managers in case of VPC.
Learning materials	Include supporting documents for learning events, such as courses or workshops (study guides, class presentation and lectures, class reading materials, audiovisual media, simulations, case studies, methodological guidelines, teaching cases, etc.). Learning materials should generally serve a well-defined pedagogical objective; notes or stand-alone slide presentations (such as PowerPoint) from a learning event or conference would in most cases not qualify as meeting such an objective.
Magazines, Journals and Newsletters	Include periodic publications aimed at disseminating specialized information to a general audience (for example IDEA and the INT/INTAL newsletter). The corresponding Department Manager shall authorize the publication of the Magazine, Journal, or Newsletter.
Monographs	Include briefs on a single subject prepared for targeted audiences or specific purposes, such as presentations at events and policy meetings. They are papers of usually less than 100 pages that are often designed, typeset, and printed in limited quantities, depending on their use.

Type	Description
Policy Briefs	Include publications that discuss a development policy issue and outline courses of action, including specific policy recommendations. The author of a Policy Brief shall receive the technical approval of his or her corresponding Manager. All Policy Briefs shall be produced in a single series whose numbers shall be assigned via a web-based system, available through the KP Procedures Intranet Site. The research from which the Policy Brief is developed shall be produced under the auspices and/or leadership of the Bank (that is, the Policy Brief series shall not be a channel for disseminating the academic production of other institutions).
Technical Notes	Include a wide range of sector notes, good practices, project and other evaluations/reviews, documentation of lessons learned, case studies, methodological notes, and other documents of a technical nature. Technical Notes; primary audiences are government officials and other development practitioners. Any Technical Note may be published for external distribution with approval of the Division Chief, Unit Chief, or Country Department Manager in case of VPC. These KPs shall be produced in a single series whose numbers shall be assigned via a web-based system.
Working Papers	Include documents prepared for disseminating research and survey studies that, while conforming to rigorous research standards, need not be a final product, as their purpose is not only to inform but also to stimulate discussion. The audience for Working Papers is largely academic but may also include policymakers and private sector professionals. In keeping with the standards applied by most academic journals, Bank Working Papers shall not exceed 60 pages.

Source: OVE based on BRIK database.

Table 2: Stock of knowledge products (as of February 2017)

Knowledge product	Number
1. Publicly available	10,526
Annual reports	269
Blogs	13
Books	419
Catalogs and brochures	716
Co-publications	100
Databases & datasets	24
Discussion papers	1,734
Learning materials	62
Magazines, journals, and newsletters	685
Monographs	352
Policy briefs	132
Technical notes	2,569
Videos	1,789
Working papers	1,662
2. Not publicly available	882
Discussion Papers and Presentations	141
Reports	92
Technical notes	649
Total	11,408

Source: BRIK

Table 3: General overview of knowledge spending, 2010-2016 (%)

Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
(a) Knowledge development (% of administrative spending) (1)	7.2%	6.1%	5.9%	6.3%	6.2%	6.5%	7.3%
(b) Learning & collaborative knowledge management (% of administrative spending) (2)	6.0%	6.8%	7.2%	7.5%	7.8%	8.1%	8.0%
<i>(a)+(b) Administrative spending on knowledge (%)</i>	<i>13.2%</i>	<i>13.0%</i>	<i>13.1%</i>	<i>13.8%</i>	<i>14.0%</i>	<i>14.5%</i>	<i>15.3%</i>
(c) Research and dissemination TC (% of TC approvals) (3)	18.0%	17.1%	21.6%	31.3%	20.2%	32.9%	24.4%
(a)+(b)+(c) Knowledge spending (% administrative spending, OC/SDP, trust funds and other donor funds)	15.0%	14.1%	15.3%	19.5%	15.9%	19.1%	17.9%

Notes: (1) Knowledge development is one of the Bank's operational main business functions (MBF) and includes: products and activities related to the generation of institutional capacity supporting country and sector work across the Bank. Administrative spending includes operational, corporate, and unallocated expenses for IDB and MIF. (2) Learning & collaborative knowledge management belongs to the Bank's corporate MBF. Includes: products and services whose primary objective is to respond to the Bank's needs in terms of training and human capital development, knowledge management, sector strategies, action plans and tools to support Bank operations. (3) Research and dissemination TC and total TC amounts correspond to each year approvals. This amount considers TC funded with OC special programs, trust funds (multi-donor and single donor), project specific grants, and financial intermediary funds. The value for 2010 also includes TC funded with FSO. The value for 2015 also includes TC funded by INT. Sources: (a) and (b): Budget by MBF from RBB Performance & Budget Analytics, available at <http://hgpabfmp7/EffectivePlanning/#budgetbymbf> . (c) Office of Outreach and Partnership GCM Reports on approvals for each year, available at http://orpreports/EDW_Reports/GCM-Approval-Report-History2.aspx