



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

A Review of Knowledge Management in IOM:
Current Status and Future Perspectives

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Executive Summary

Knowledge is an important asset for all organizations. As the lead UN agency on migration with over 65 years of experience in implementing projects around the world, IOM has become an essential reference point for migration-related information, policy, and technical advice. While IOM generates, processes and disseminates extensive knowledge on migration issues at various levels, including through its Country Offices (CO), knowledge-based interventions are uneven; knowledge is 'personalized' and not institutionalized, and there is a need to systematically develop knowledge.

The following review of knowledge management in IOM explores how staff understand knowledge management in the Organization and what efforts have been undertaken since the broad consultations on the issue in 2012. The review also presents a set of actionable recommendations that may inform the development of a practical guidance note, and possibly a strategy, on knowledge management in IOM.

Overall, findings reveal that most IOM staff surveyed and interviewed view knowledge management as important and that there is a need to establish a coherent, systematic approach to managing existing knowledge aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery to beneficiaries and to support continuous learning across the Organization.

Since IOM is a highly-operational agency where knowledge is often vested in 'tacit' forms, any definition of knowledge management that is adopted will need to cover both explicit and tacit forms of knowledge. This will help ensure that knowledge embodied in the minds of individuals and personal experiences will also be used, alongside explicit knowledge, to inform administrative, institutional, and operational work of the Organization.

Although a number of knowledge management efforts have been implemented at Headquarters (HQ) and field offices in the past few years, these have been disjointed in the absence of a clear policy and strategy to guide their implementation. This disjointedness has increased the risk of duplication, which needs to be addressed moving forward, as this results in a waste of money, time and human resources, and can create confusion when it comes to storing, sharing and managing knowledge in the Organization. Importantly, this challenge is not one that is specific to IOM. A review of knowledge management in the UN carried out by the UN JIU in 2016 highlights that the reinvention of the wheel is a challenge that is still encountered by several UN organizations.

Survey respondents and interviewees were also split on the issue of the extent that existing IOM policies and strategies facilitate knowledge management and its institutionalization in the Organization. Nevertheless, data revealed that most knowledge management efforts implemented since 2012 have been effective, with the most frequently reported changes and outcomes produced being enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and reporting of activities, consolidated and improved access to information and data, and improved quality of knowledge produced, stored and shared.

As most knowledge management efforts that have been implemented thus far in IOM have not been funded through any specific funds allocated to knowledge management, very few respondents were able to discuss their cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

Looking forward, a series of recommendations emerged from this review for defining, institutionalizing and operationalizing knowledge management in the Organization and for promoting organizational cultural change by, among other things:

1. Establishing a knowledge management policy and strategy with a vision to guide efforts undertaken;
2. Allocating sufficient human and financial resources for implementing knowledge management efforts;
3. Articulating to staff the benefits of knowledge management and providing them with the moral incentives or symbolic rewards to engage in knowledge management practices; and,
4. Increasing the communication and marketing of knowledge, both inside and outside the Organization.

While knowledge is power (Sir Francis Bacon 1597), all IOM staff should consider and use it to empower the Organization to be referenced as the lead UN agency on migration. Creating a feeling of belonging to 'One IOM' and promoting a culture of knowledge sharing is key for advancing in the way that knowledge is stored, shared and managed. Improved knowledge management, in turn, can help staff to develop projects more cohesively, adapt and utilize existing tools, save time and resources, and add value to their everyday work on various migration issues.

ACRONYMS

AVRR – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

CAN – Andean Community of Nations

CBCM – Community-Based Complaint Mechanism

CIMAL – Information Center on Migration for Latin America

CO – Country Office

COM – Chief of Mission

DG – Director General

DOE – Department of Emergencies and Operations

DTM – Displacement Tracking Matrix

ESMT – Extended Senior Management

GCM – Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration

GCU – Gender Coordination Unit

GMDAC – Global Migration Data Analysis Centre

HCT – Humanitarian country team

HQ – Headquarters

IATI – International Aid Transparency Initiative

IDF – IOM Development Fund

ILO – International Labour Organization

IM – Information Management

IOM – International Organization for Migration

JIU – Joint Inspection Unit

KSP – Knowledge Sharing Platform

LHD – Labour Mobility and Human Development Division

M&D – Migration and development

M&E – Monitoring and evaluation

MERCOSUR – Common Market of the South

MHD – Migration Health Division

MIGOF – Migration Governance Framework

MiMOSA – Migration Management Operational Systems Application

NFI – Non-food items

ODG – Office of the Director General

OIG – Office of the Inspector General

OSUMI – Observatorio Sudamericano sobre Migraciones

PIU – Project Information Unit

PLACMI – *Programa Latinoamericano de Cooperación Técnica en Migraciones*

PRM – United States Bureau Population, Refugees, and Migration

PSEA – Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

RBM – Results-based management

RMM – Resettlement and Movement Management

RO – Regional Office

RPC – Regional Program Coordinator

RTS – Regional Thematic Specialists

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SDL – Staff Development and Learning

SEA – Sexual exploitation and abuse

SMT – Senior Management

SOP – Standard Operating Procedures

SSU – Staff Security Unit

TOR – Terms of Reference

UN – United Nations

UNASUR – Union of South American Nations

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- ANNEX 1: Terms of Reference
- ANNEX 2: List of Documents Reviewed
- ANNEX 3: Data Collection Tools
- ANNEX 4: List of Interviewees

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. With over 65 years of experience in implementing projects around the world, IOM has become an important reference point for migration-related information, policy, and technical advice. Many of the projects implemented lead to improvements in the lives of migrants, their families and communities, whereas others benefit the governments with whom IOM works with by enhancing their migration management capacities.

To capitalize on the work of the Organization and its growth in recent years, IOM's Director General (DG) introduced a series of reform processes in support of IOM's main commitments and goals to:

- 1) Maintain IOM as the lead migration agency;
- 2) Strengthen IOM's capacity to serve migrants and member states; and,
- 3) Increase governments and public recognition of migration's contribution to humanity.

Consultations with IOM staff in 2012 revealed the immediate need to address the "dysfunctional knowledge management" prevailing in the Organization. While IOM generates, processes and disseminates extensive knowledge at various levels and through Country and Regional Offices, the knowledge-based interventions are uneven, knowledge is 'personalized' and not institutionalized, and there is a need to systematically develop knowledge in IOM's priority areas.

IOM considers that to enhance the capacity of the Organization to generate, access and use knowledge in support of its leadership role in migration issues, more forward-looking approaches may be needed with the following aims:

- a) Improving IOM's capacity to organize, store, retrieve and share essential administrative and migration-related information;
- b) Meeting the needs of Member States/donors for the consistent and systematic capture of the results, evaluation and analysis of IOM programmes;
- c) Assisting IOM staff through increased knowledge sharing and communication among offices worldwide;
- d) Augmenting IOM's analytical and research capabilities;
- e) Improving IOM's ability to analyse trends and make projections of key aspects of migration; and,
- f) Becoming a more effective learning Organization.

In turn, these approaches would, also:

- 1) Improve **organizational culture** for knowledge generation, capture, usage, and sharing;
- 2) Improve **institutional structures and processes** for knowledge management in IOM;
- 3) Enhance options for **technology solutions** in support of knowledge management;
- 4) Improve **coherence and connectivity** within IOM and with external partners;

- 5) Decrease costs, duplication, reinvention and number of repeated mistakes; and,
- 6) Improve IOM's **measurement** of knowledge-related results.

2. REVIEW BACKGROUND

The Office of the Director General (ODG) approached the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct a review, analysing what knowledge management is at IOM, identifying existing knowledge management efforts, and preparing a set of actionable recommendations that may inform the development of a practical guidance note, and possibly a strategy, on knowledge management in the Organization (see Annex 1 for the Terms of Reference (TOR)).

More precisely the review addresses the following questions:

- Do specific IOM policies and strategies facilitate knowledge management and its institutionalization in the Organization?
- What types of knowledge management efforts have been undertaken at HQ, regional office (RO) and country office (CO) level since the consultations of 2012 and how can these efforts be categorized?
- What funds or specific resources have been allocated for implementing knowledge management efforts since the start of the consultations in 2012?
- How does HQ and field offices (regional and local level) perceive and support ongoing knowledge-related initiatives and practices in IOM?
- Do IOM staff at HQ and field offices (at both regional and local level) require executive support (management, funding and tools) and capacity building for developing knowledge management efforts?
- What factors (internal and external) have influenced the implementation of knowledge management efforts undertaken since 2012?
- What is the outcome of knowledge management efforts undertaken since 2012 on IOM as a lead agency on migration-related issues?
- What changes (including cultural change), if any, have these knowledge management efforts produced (directly or indirectly, intended or unintended)?
- What can be concluded about the IOM's capacity to organize, store, retrieve and share essential administrative and migration-related information in the framework of knowledge management?
- What recommendations can be provided on the relevance of a formal knowledge management strategy in IOM and for developing practical guidance on knowledge management implementation in the Organization?

3. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for this exercise consisted primarily of an extensive documentation review and analysis covering:

- Official documents prepared for internal and external use;
- Internal knowledge management papers, guidelines and training package;
- Institutional questionnaire;
- Knowledge management activity documents and related activity reports;
- UN knowledge management documents, including existing knowledge management strategies; and,
- Any other relevant documentation on knowledge management (see Annex 2 for the list of documents reviewed).

Following the documentation review, three global surveys were sent out: one to all Chiefs of Mission (COMs); one to all Regional Thematic Specialists (RTSs); and, another to all Heads of Division/Unit (see Annex 3 for a copy of the surveys).

In parallel, interviews were conducted with key IOM staff at HQ and field offices (regional and local level), who have framed and managed knowledge management activities, and been tasked to follow-up on the implementation of knowledge management efforts, including regional directors and department directors (see Annex 3 for a copy of the interview guides and Annex 4 for the list of interviewees).

Note: While there was a significant amount of overlap in the questions asked for comparison purposes, certain questions differed due to the different roles and responsibilities of the respondents. Consequently, given the overlap or lack thereof for the various questions asked in the surveys and during the interviews, the number of survey respondents and interviewees are specified for each question in the analysis presented in this report. For a breakdown of the number of survey respondents and interviewees, see Table 1.

Table 1. Category and Number of Survey Respondents and Interviewees	
Category	Number
Survey	
Heads of Division/Unit	8
Knowledge Management Training Participants	5
Chiefs of Mission	19
Regional Thematic Specialists	10
Interviews	
Department Directors	9
Senior Management	4
IT Staff	3
Regional Officers	2
Regional Directors	5
Total Survey Respondents and Interviewees:	65

The report is essentially built on the views of IOM staff, namely how staff understand knowledge management in the Organization and what knowledge management efforts have been undertaken since the broad consultations on the issue in 2012. The review also intends to present a set of actionable recommendations that may inform the development of a practical guidance note, and possibly a strategy, on knowledge management in IOM.

4. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

4.1. Knowledge

“Confusion as to what constitutes knowledge may mislead staff and managers into believing that knowledge management does exist in their daily routine or business processes, just by another name.”¹ To identify the existence and extent of knowledge management practices in IOM, a number of survey respondents and interviewees were asked to define knowledge.² Of the total responses received, 79 per cent defined knowledge as experience and know-how and 21 per cent as information. For an example of the definitions obtained, see Table 2.

Staff have described knowledge as:	
1	“An experience; a consequence of an experience. We want to take advantage of this experience to improve our ability to improve a situation; it can be learnt from an experience; it can be learnt from other people; this can be by coaching, by learning, by the information available, and a certain experience in an area, professional or personal.” (Experience)
2	“What we know.” (Know-how)
3	“Information we have, search and look to get.” (Information)

These results highlight that the IOM staff surveyed and interviewed for this exercise have a sound understanding of knowledge, which is built on data³ and information⁴, and created within the Organization (see Figure 1). This general understanding of knowledge among the participating IOM staff is in line with the definition of knowledge employed in the draft “Strategic Framework on Knowledge Management 2013-2017” that was prepared in 2013, following the broad consultations carried out in 2012. Specifically, in the Strategic Framework, knowledge is defined as follows: “Know-how, applied information, information with judgment, or the capacity for effective action.”⁵

¹ Dumitriu, Petru. *Knowledge Management in the United Nations System*. Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, 2016.

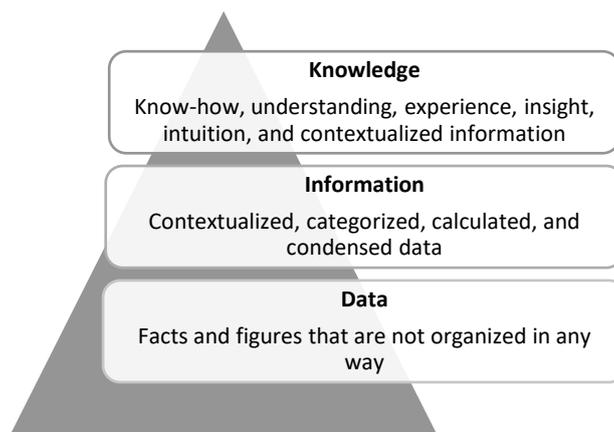
² Nearing the end of the data collection process for this exercise, a question was added on the definition of knowledge. Consequently, it was only possible to obtain responses from 14 survey respondents and interviewees.

³ Data are discrete, objective facts about events, including numbers, letters and images without context.

⁴ Information is data with some level of meaning, usually presented to describe a situation or condition, thereby having an added value over data.

⁵ International Organization for Migration. “Strategic Framework on Knowledge Management 2013-2017.” *Internal Document*, (August 2013): p. 2.

Figure 1. Distinguishing knowledge from information and data



Source: Dumitriu, Petru. *Knowledge Management in the United Nations System*. Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, 2016.

4.2. Knowledge management

Numerous definitions exist of knowledge management, varying from simple to complex that reflect the specific objectives of organizations according to their priorities. For example, emphasis can be placed on the process and its systematic nature, or on coordination and synergies that can be created.⁶ In the UN, the definition proposed as a starting point for individual organizations for developing practical knowledge management strategies is as follows:

“The systematic processes, or range of practices used by organizations to identify, capture, store, create, update, represent and distribute knowledge for use, awareness and learning across the organization.”⁷

Following from this, several UN organizations have developed their own definitions. For instance, for the International Labour Organization (ILO), “a comprehensive knowledge management strategy has many dimensions and encompasses the full spectrum of generating, collecting, capturing, storing, codifying, transferring and communicating knowledge.” Despite the use of different expressions, all definitions highlight the need for a systematic and comprehensive approach to knowledge management that is embraced and promoted by managers and staff, and which encompasses in a coherent whole people, processes and technology⁸ (for a review of knowledge management in the UN system, see the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports by Larrabure (2007) and Dumitriu (2016)).

In IOM, the broad consultations carried out in 2012 and the knowledge management efforts that were undertaken at the time, including a stocktaking exercise of knowledge management

⁶ Dumitriu, 2016.

⁷ Larrabure, Juan Luis. *Knowledge Management in the United Nations System*. Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, 2007, p. 4.

⁸ Dumitriu, 2016.

in the Organization⁹, followed by the drafting of a strategic framework on knowledge management, were informed by two definitions:

1. “Knowledge management comprises a range of strategies and practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute and enable the adoption of insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizational processes or practice.”¹⁰
2. “A combination of data and information, to which it is added expert opinion, skills and experience, resulting in a valuable asset that aids decision-making.”¹¹

Both definitions are informed by the knowledge management process and its systematic nature, rather than coordination and the synergies that can be created. In the present review, 77 per cent of the 65 survey respondents and interviewees provided a similar definition of knowledge management. For instance, one survey respondent defined knowledge management as,

“a process which allows collecting, analyzing and referring to data, policies, programmes, information and other sources of knowledge about an organization, for further expanding, developing, reviewing, adapting operations and management, and creating an effective institutional memory available to all.”

Another 14 per cent of the respondents and interviewees focused on the capacity to identify, create, absorb and share knowledge. For one survey respondent, knowledge management is:

“The capacity of an institution/organization to extensively share its knowledge at different levels, so that everyone has access to this knowledge, rather than reinventing the wheel each time, which may lead to doing the same errors again. Avoid that the full knowledge on a given topic sits with a handful of staff members so the activity can continue if these people leave the organization.”

Unlike the former definition, which focuses on explicit knowledge, the latter touches upon tacit knowledge. Whereas explicit knowledge can be captured and codified, for instance, in the form of a document or an audio/visual recording, tacit knowledge is the knowledge embodied in the minds of individuals and their personal experiences. This form of knowledge “is very difficult to articulate, put into words or images, [and is] typically highly internalized knowledge such as knowing how to do something or recognizing analogous situations.”¹² This is also perhaps one of the reasons that “many managers and professionals tend to focus on explicit and quantifiable knowledge only.”¹³

Ensuring that tacit knowledge is not lost when staff members leave the Organization such as through handover notes was raised on several occasions by respondents and interviewees in this exercise. Given the projectized nature of IOM’s operations, the loss of tacit knowledge is

⁹ Knowledge Management Working Group. *Knowledge Management Inventory Report*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2012.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 9.

¹¹ IOM 2013, p. 2.

¹² Dumitriu 2016, p. 56.

¹³ Ibid, p. v.

further accentuated, requiring important attention in how knowledge management is conceptualized and applied in practice. “We are all acutely aware that as a highly-operational agency, knowledge within IOM is vested mainly in tacit forms that seldom gets translated into explicit forms via case studies, algorithms, evaluation reports, scientific papers, etc.” The loss of knowledge and insight when experienced staff leave is a problem that many other UN organization also face, as highlighted by Dumitriu in the 2016 JIU report.

The remaining 9 per cent of definitions received from the IOM staff surveyed and interviewed focus on access to and the application of information, coordination and synergies, networking and communication, and the use of skills to improve the quality of daily work.

Given the above, any definition of knowledge management that is officially adopted should include both explicit and tacit forms of knowledge to ensure that knowledge embodied in the minds of individuals and personal experiences are used to inform the administrative and operational work of the Organization.

5. IOM'S ENGAGEMENT IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

5.1. State of knowledge management in IOM

As the lead UN agency on migration, IOM has a wealth of knowledge on migration-related issues. Most IOM staff surveyed and interviewed acknowledged the importance of knowledge management and the need to establish a coherent, systematic approach to managing existing knowledge aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery to beneficiaries and to support continuous learning across the Organization. According to a regional director interviewed, "If we had good knowledge management, it would improve performance and output of COs, feed information to staff regarding staff development and project implementation. We could also improve engagement with government offices." Similarly, for a COM surveyed, "the information collection/produced/shared internally within IOM can help improve efficiency and the impact of our activities (lessons learned), better communicate results (including publications) to member states, donors and partners, and ensure sustainability of projects, actions, strategies and staff over time."

When asked about how one understands knowledge management in IOM, of 56 respondents and interviewees, 64 per cent mentioned that at the moment knowledge management is inefficient/dysfunctional to non-existent in the Organization, characterized by fragmented efforts, no coherent strategy in place, and a failure to learn. "Knowledge management in IOM is very haphazard; I do not think there is a common understanding of what constitutes knowledge management, there are no standard practices of how knowledge is managed." Related to this, 14 per cent of the respondents to this question mentioned that there is no clear understanding of and guidance on knowledge management. As such, staff do contribute to knowledge management, but without knowing it or calling it as such. On a more positive note, 20 per cent of respondents and interviewees mentioned that efforts had been made to manage the rich knowledge the Organization has; however, there is still a long way to go to reach the level of management "that reflects a culture in the organization and an organized institutional memory." 25 per cent of all the survey respondents and interviewees were also aware of the previous knowledge management efforts that began with the 2012 consultations, which they considered as "unfinished" and not having borne fruit.

5.2. Internal policies and strategies supportive of knowledge management

Looking at existing IOM policies and strategies, half of the 25 survey respondents and interviewees that answered this question confirmed that these do facilitate knowledge management and its institutionalization in the Organization. Among the policies and strategies referenced were:

- Knowledge management strategies, including the Strategic Framework (2013-2017);
- Data protection and data governance;
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E);
- Project development handbook;
- Results-based management (RBM); and,
- Staff Development and Learning (SDL).

The other half of the survey respondents and interviewees that answered this question reported, however, that existing IOM policies and strategies facilitate very little, if at all, knowledge management and its institutionalization in the Organization. “Because we are spread out in different locations, have different priorities, and a different culture that is more business driven than normal UN, every mission wants to get maximum return on knowledge management, so they develop their own systems and gather data in specific ways that serve their needs without taking into account institutional requirements.”

5.3. Types of knowledge management efforts implemented (2012-present)

Since the consultations carried out in 2012, survey respondents and interviewees at HQ, ROs and COs reported having implemented knowledge management efforts. In this review, these efforts, although in practice they tend to overlap, have been categorized into three areas, according to their primary intended purpose: knowledge storage, knowledge sharing, and knowledge management.

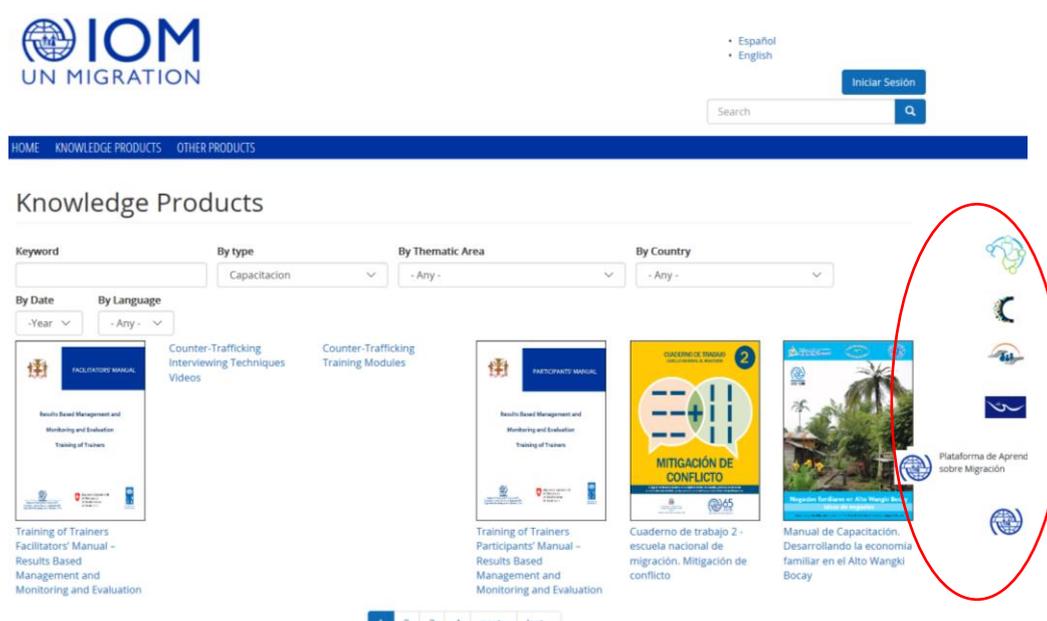
Storing knowledge

Of the 21 survey respondents and interviewees that discussed the storage of knowledge, 62 per cent reported using repositories (both online and in physical format); 43 per cent also reported using common drives and shared folders. For example, at HQ, the Department of Emergencies and Operations (DOE) created the OPS system (http://doe.eu/iom/net/doe_ops/), which is an online repository of all DOE projects that are searchable by region, thematic area, sector, cross-cutting issues such as gender and protection, date (start/end), and context (conflict or natural disaster). OPS was created by a staff member in response to the prevailing need at the time for a tool to measure results and to help prevent a duplication of efforts such as by helping calculate the number of beneficiaries receiving direct and indirect assistance.

The Migration Health Division (MHD) created the IOM Migration Health Research Portal, which is a repository of technical resources (including policy briefs, research papers, technical reports, training manuals, guides and fact sheets, and relevant health data profiles at country, regional and global level that are at the nexus of migration and health) and projects (ongoing and completed from around the globe), aimed at improving evidence-based policy and practice.

In the field, the RO in San Jose has created an online platform with all knowledge products from projects implemented in the region provided by IOM offices such as trainings on human trafficking, gender, migration and health. The platform also links together the other existing online knowledge storage and knowledge sharing platforms in the region such as *Plataforma de Aprendizaje sobre Migración* in an effort to avoid a duplication of efforts (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Knowledge Management Platform in the Regional Office in San Jose



The RO in Brussels is in the process of creating a collaboration space on resettlement on SharePoint that will be used as a document repository for focal points in the region, as well as for communicating relevant developments (knowledge sharing). Other, less frequently employed tools for storing knowledge reported by survey respondents and interviewees are internal and external databases (14 per cent) and e-mail (10 per cent).

Sharing knowledge

When it comes to sharing knowledge, survey respondents and interviewees reported using a combination of systems and tools. For knowledge sharing systems, almost half of the respondents and interviewees that discussed this issue made references to PRIMA for All, which is expected to be rolled out globally in the fourth quarter of 2018. This central project information and management system, which is built in SharePoint, will systematically capture, monitor and report on all IOM project results. These functions are expected to facilitate the drawing of best practices and the identification of lessons learned, which will help improve transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of programming. Other frequently referenced knowledge sharing systems included PRISM, Office365 (OneDrive, SharePoint, Teams and Yammer), Migration Management Operational Systems Application (MiMOSA), the IOM website and intranet, and portals and platforms. For example, the Labour Mobility and Human Development Division (LHD) manages the global knowledge hub on migration and development (M&D), which is a one-stop shop for all things related to M&D practitioners and the general public.

“The platform also hosts a community of practice of almost 5,000 members. It houses a library, project database where many M&D related projects are contained; it allows members to chat, exchange, and has online discussions and other different functionalities all meant to foster knowledge exchange, partnerships and enhanced understanding of M&D issues.”

Recently, DOE launched the Resettlement and Movement Management (RMM) Portal which is a platform that provides staff with up to date information on the latest developments in the field of migration (such as on global population flows, movement needs, partnerships with member state governments and agreements with airlines), and quick access to guidelines and key information and tools (including stories, pictures, statistics and reports).



Other knowledge sharing systems mentioned by respondents and interviewees were the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), MigApp and WhatsApp.

As for knowledge management tools, face-to-face and online trainings (50 per cent), meetings, conferences, and workshops (47 per cent), handbooks, guidelines, manuals, and procedures (30 per cent), and information products (20 per cent) were the most frequently referenced by survey respondents and interviewees for managing knowledge (n=30). For example, the training provided by the Staff Security Unit (SSU) was mentioned as an important tool for dispersing knowledge to staff,

“The training component has become very important for us to be able to become a responsive organization instead of being a reactive organization. We needed to have staff on the ground trained to act in an appropriate manner in hostile environments. We now have 12 certified trainers. The benefits come back to IOM who now has become self-sufficient in delivering the training and passing on the knowledge.”

Another example of how training has been used to manage knowledge in the Organization is the Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms (CBCM) developed by DOE to assist humanitarian country teams (HCTs) or the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) networks to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) cases. This was accomplished in seven countries by delivering contextualized trainings for members of the PSEA networks and developing action plans to implement joint in-country PSEA activities over the following year. IOM developed the CBCM training based on lessons learned from past CBCMs, and lessons learned from each training country were systematically incorporated into successive training, so that the final training package (available in 2018) will be a relevant toolkit for staff training in the years to come.

Regarding handbooks, guidelines and procedures, numerous examples exist. For instance, each department has produced an important number of specific guidelines in their respective fields of activity (Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR), Emergency, Movement, Border Management, etc.), policy papers and policy briefs, strategies, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Other, less frequently referenced tools employed for sharing knowledge in IOM include e-mail, M&E activities, newsletters, press releases, and short-term assignments and exchange programmes.

A prominent example of evaluation activities used for sharing knowledge, both internally and externally, is the review of all IOM Development Fund (IDF) projects ex-post evaluations during the 2017 calendar year. The goal of the review is to collate the key findings from all the evaluations, analyse them, formulate lessons learnt, and then provide recommendations to be shared with project developers, managers and technical specialists, and to feed into the IDF's Strategic Plan and funding disbursement decision-making. In turn, lesson learned on project development, implementation, reporting and evaluation are shared with colleagues worldwide by IDF through its News Alerts. The online IDF Newsletter, which showcases successful IDF initiatives, is also shared with Member States twice a year.

Managing knowledge

In terms of managing knowledge, survey respondents and interviewees who touched upon this issue (n=13) considered human resources (46 per cent) and IT systems (31 per cent) as important. For human resources, respondents discussed efforts undertaken, such as by the RO in Buenos Aires, to include knowledge management functions in the roles and responsibilities of staff and the creation of knowledge management focal points. Regarding IT systems, one recent novel initiative is the Contract Approval and Filing Execution (Cafe) system developed by the Office of Legal Affairs (LEG),

“In 2011, we had just over 3,000 contracts. Today, we have between 15,000-16,000 contracts per year. This is a huge growth in information and consequently knowledge. What we did then is we started to develop templates for contracts, and now the next step is the Cafe system.”

The following are two detailed examples of knowledge management in IOM that demonstrate the combined use of knowledge storage, sharing, and management systems, tools, and processes.

Example 1: Piloting Knowledge Management in the Region of Central America

A renowned case of knowledge management in IOM is the example of the South America region, which was identified as a pilot for the draft strategic framework on knowledge management that emerged from the 2012 consultations and subsequent inventory carried out. In fact, the Regional Office in Buenos Aires has been pursuing knowledge generation and capacity building efforts in the region since 1995, when it first began to implement the Council Resolution endorsing the *Programa Latinoamericano de Cooperación Técnica en Migraciones* (PLACMI). This programme, which has reportedly improved the capacity of governments in Latin America to manage migration, as well as assisted them in the harmonization of legislation and migratory policy, has resulted in the wide recognition of IOM's technical expertise and knowledge reference.

Since the early years of the 21st century, in its role as technical secretariat for the South American Conference on Migration, the RO in Buenos Aires also maintains the South American Observatory on Migration (*Observatorio Sudamericano sobre Migraciones*

(OSUMI)), which is an important tool in compiling strategic information that helps support public policy development in the region. It also provides a space to connect officials assigned by their governments that are represented in the South American Conference on Migration. Other known knowledge services and products developed and utilized by the RO include the flagship publications, “Cuadernos Migratorios,” which address migration issues in the region, thereby contributing to policy, research, and programme development.

While “Migration Profiles” are a key knowledge product of IOM worldwide on the status of migration in countries, the region took the product a step further. In providing a regional foundation for migration policy development, the region designed a tool to analyse not only specific country characteristics but also common points of concern among composing member states. The RO also maintains the Information Center on Migration for Latin America (CIMAL), which is a central online portal that serves as a one-stop shop for migration data and information in the region. Over the years, the region has produced various research publications, including on labour migration, remittance flows, trafficking in persons, and on the impact of existing policies. Efforts are being made to have the knowledge management initiatives mostly funded by the host governments, who see the IOM as a technical partner with consolidated knowledge and expertise in various areas and as such are willing to support IOM to have these resources in the region.

Collaboration is also promoted with entities representing regional integration processes such as the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). A recent technical cooperation agenda that was jointly designed by the RO and MERCOSUR highlights the complementary expertise in knowledge and capacity building services that IOM offers. MERCOSUR highlighted initially the need for IOM to deliver training on trafficking in persons at the regional level, as well as to conduct extensive research on the impact of the residence agreement on the MERCOSUR member countries. UNASUR also called upon IOM to deliver migrants’ human rights training as part of their human rights capacity building services.

Overall, establishing data collection and processing capacity, as well as continuous specialized technical assistance capacity at the regional level, has become a necessity for IOM to remain a reference in migration for the region and be able to address programme needs within the region, as per current cooperation demands. Thus, the region has established a data and research unit that works closely with the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) in Berlin and has produced since several briefs that help inform policy in the region.

Example 2: Supporting Regional Migration and Vulnerable Migrants Protection Programmes through Global Knowledge Management

IOM currently implements ten United States (US) Bureau Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)-funded regional programmes on assistance to vulnerable migrants in Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa and Yemen, the Greater Mekong Subregion and Malaysia, China, Western Balkans, North Africa, West Africa, and Central Asia. These programmes aim to:

- Build government capacity to identify protection concerns and implement humane migration management practices;
- Provide direct assistance to vulnerable migrants;
- Support regional dialogues on migration;
- Promote coordination between IOM and UNHCR and other key actors; and,
- Promote emergency migration management capacities among participating countries.

The significant experience acquired by IOM in the management of regional migration flows through these programmes had, however, not been systematically captured, analysed, and shared beyond each region, either internally (between the various programmes or within the Organization), or externally (with PRM and other relevant stakeholders). Accordingly, it was identified that IOM needed to:

1. Learn from its regional approaches and create interregional strategies and collaborations to feed into the development and implementation of the regional programmes; and,
2. Inform relevant international migration dialogues and processes, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM), or the development of global policies and programmes, by IOM and PRM alike.

On 26–28 May 2015, IOM organized its first meeting of the IOM Regional Programme Coordinators (RPC) and relevant RTSS to foster communication, cooperation, and exchange of lessons learned and good practices between the regional programmes. All participants recognized the need to strengthen knowledge-sharing and learning processes to better capture, develop, share, and effectively use knowledge gained through the implementation of the regional programmes. The PRM-funded project “Global Knowledge Management: Support for Regional Migration and Vulnerable Migrants Protection Programs” was developed as a follow-up to the global meeting to sustain and structure information exchange and cooperation among the regional programmes, as well as with other relevant internal and external initiatives and processes.

Since its inception in September 2016, the PRM Global Knowledge Management Project has accomplished, among other things, the development of four Knowledge Uptakes on Addressing Trafficking in Persons (see Figure 3 for a snapshot), Effective Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situation, Information Campaigns, and Migrant Resource and Response Mechanisms. By drawing upon IOM’s experience in supporting migration policy and implementing operational programmes and services to protect migrants in vulnerable situations, the Knowledge Uptakes showcase lessons learned and promising practice-oriented solutions. In turn, these can feed, for instance, into the IOM organized Global Meeting of the Chairs and Secretariats of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration or the GCM, and serve as a global knowledge product for policy-makers and practitioners.

Figure 3. Excerpt from PRM’s Knowledge Uptake on Addressing Trafficking in Persons



This Knowledge Uptake provides lessons learned and promising practice-oriented solutions to feed into the consultations for the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) and serves as a global knowledge product for policymakers and practitioners. The Knowledge Uptake draws upon IOM’s years of experience in supporting migration policy and implementing operational programs and services to address trafficking in persons and protect victims, including through IOM’s U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Populations, Refugees and Migration (PRM)-funded Global Assistance Fund (GAF) and Regional Migration Programs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND GOOD PRACTICES

Protect victims of trafficking through timely identification. Identifying victims of trafficking is paramount; it is particularly important for front-line responders, such as police officers, border officials, healthcare staff, and labour inspectors.

In MesoAmerica, IOM’s Regional Migration Program provided trainings to build the capacity of governments, specifically border officials and national police, on identification and assistance to victims of trafficking through basic interviewing techniques and profile identification. Furthermore, the Regional Migration Program assisted El Salvador in developing national protection mechanisms, and Guatemala in developing the “Guidelines for Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Persons.”

In the Dominican Republic, the Regional Migration Program facilitated the establishment of the Border Monitoring Network, a joint initiative of the government and civil society to strengthen coordination in identification and referral of migrants in vulnerable situations, such as victims of trafficking.

5.4. Global, regional and local level views on ongoing knowledge management initiatives and practices

The various efforts discussed above that have been undertaken by staff at HQ and field offices to store, share and manage explicit and tacit knowledge are viewed as having been largely effective. Specifically, of the 34 survey respondents and interviewees that discussed the effectiveness of knowledge management efforts, the majority (68 per cent) reported these as having been effective, with only 12 per cent viewing them as not effective. The remaining respondents to this question either did not know the extent to which the efforts have been effective (12 per cent) or felt that these were only somewhat effective (8 per cent).

As most knowledge management efforts that have been implemented thus far in IOM are not funded through any specific contributions allocated to knowledge management (see section 4.6 below for a discussion on funding sources for knowledge management in IOM), very few respondents were able to discuss their cost-effectiveness. Of the five respondents that did

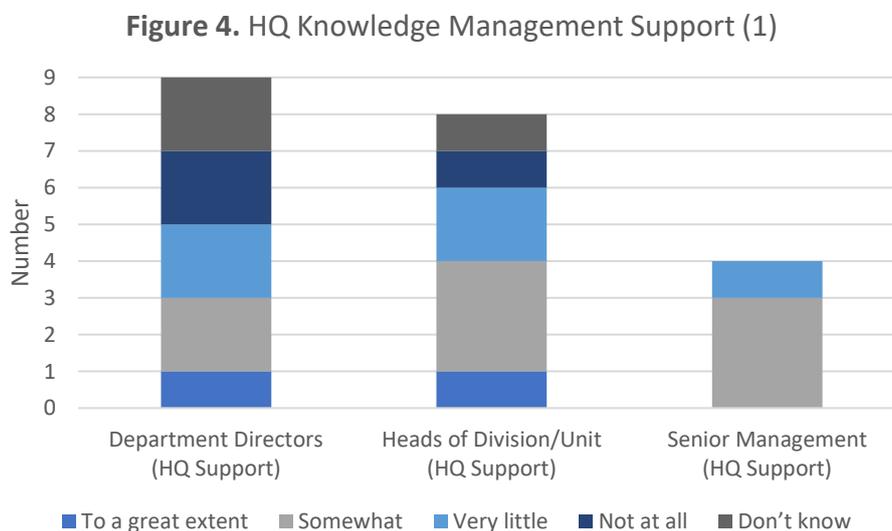
touch upon this issue, four reported the knowledge management efforts undertaken as having been cost-effective.

Similar to the issue of cost-effectiveness, given the recent emergence of knowledge management efforts in IOM and the prevailing gap in the resources currently being allocated in support of such efforts (both human and financial), few respondents were able to discuss their sustainability. Specifically, three out of five respondents reported knowledge management efforts as being sustainable, whereas the two remaining respondents reported efforts as being sustainable given that “they depend on extra-curricular, pro-bono, and enthusiasm-based personal initiatives.”

When staff at HQ, RO and CO level (Regional Directors, Chiefs of Mission, Department Directors, other senior management, heads of division/unit, regional officers and regional thematic specialists (RTS)) were asked about the extent to which they have HQ and/or RO knowledge management support, basic skills in knowledge management, knowledge about knowledge management, and tools for managing knowledge, the responses received varied, especially between staff at HQ and those in field offices (ROs and COs). The following section will discuss the results obtained from staff at the global, regional and local levels for these four issue areas.

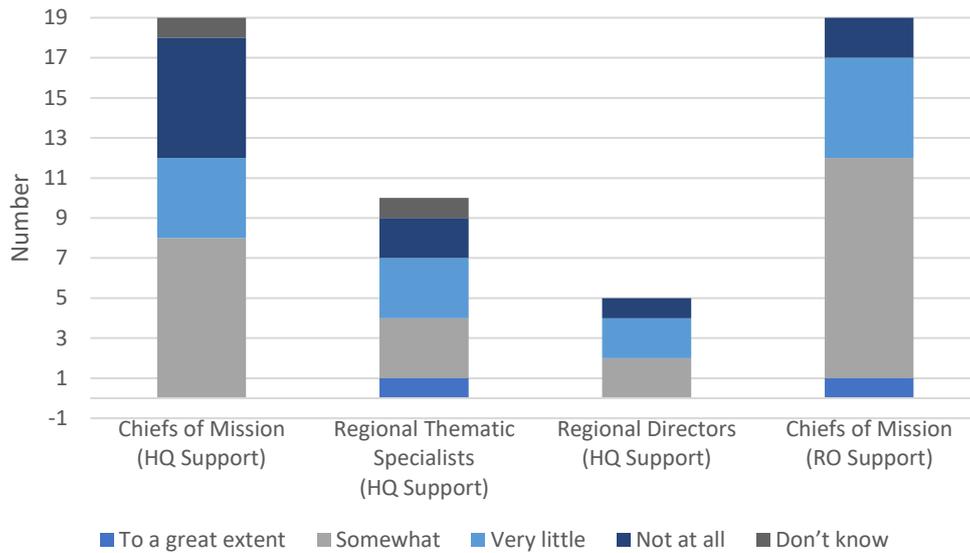
1. HQ and/or RO Knowledge Management Support

Of the Department Directors, division or unit Heads and other senior management interviewed (n=21), almost half or more in each category felt they had HQ knowledge management support either to a great extent or somewhat (see Figure 4).



In contrast, of the participating COMs, RDs and RTSs (n=34), half or more from each category reported having very little to no HQ knowledge management support (see Figure 5). Many COMs (63 per cent), however, felt they had RO knowledge management support to a great extent or somewhat.

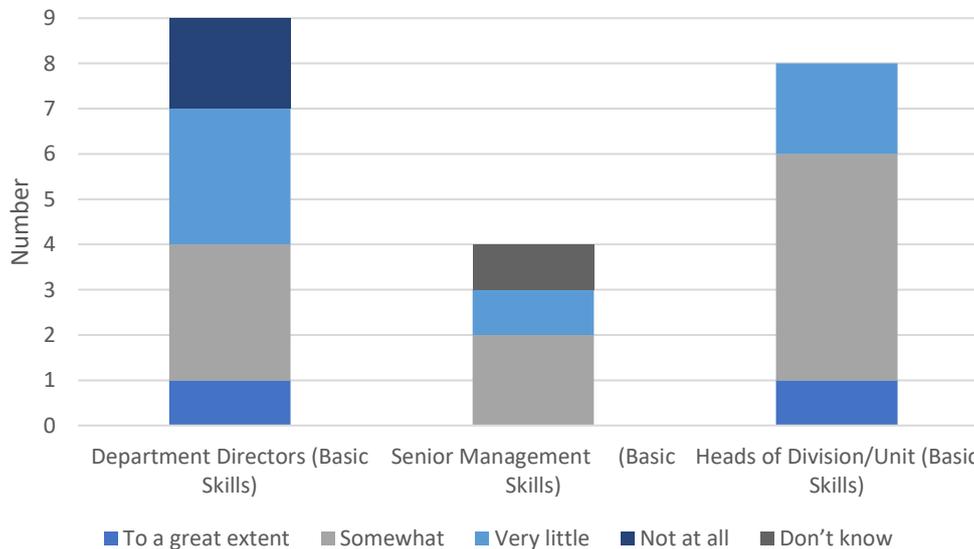
Figure 5. HQ and RO Knowledge Management Support (2)



2. Basic Skills in and Knowledge of Knowledge Management

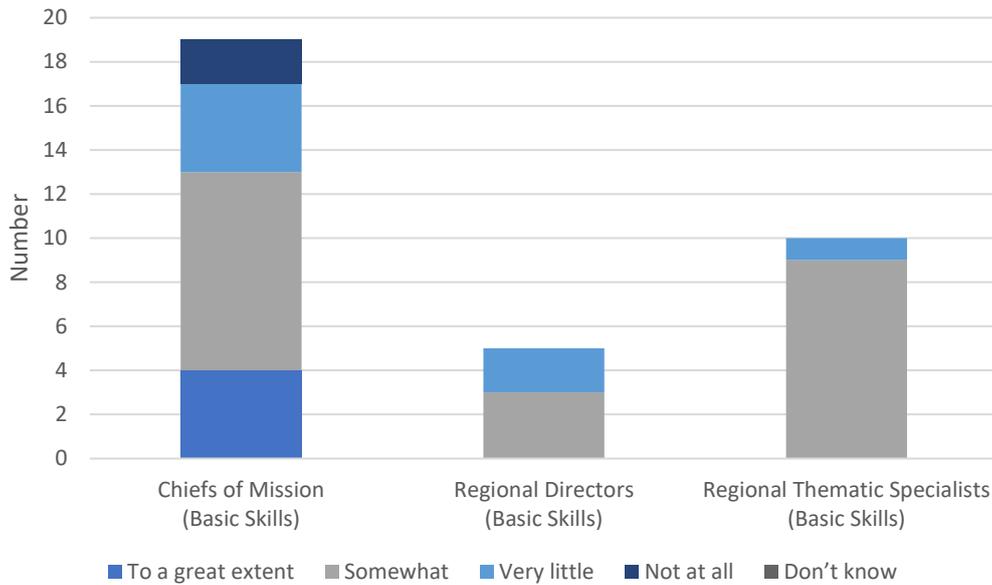
At the HQ level, almost half of the Department Directors, half the other senior management, and most heads of division/unit reported having basic skills in and knowledge of knowledge management to a great extent/somewhat (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Basic Skills in Knowledge Management (1)



Similarly, at field offices, most COMs surveyed and regional directors interviewed, along with more than 90 per cent of all RTs surveyed, reported having the basic skills in and knowledge to manage knowledge (see Figure 7).

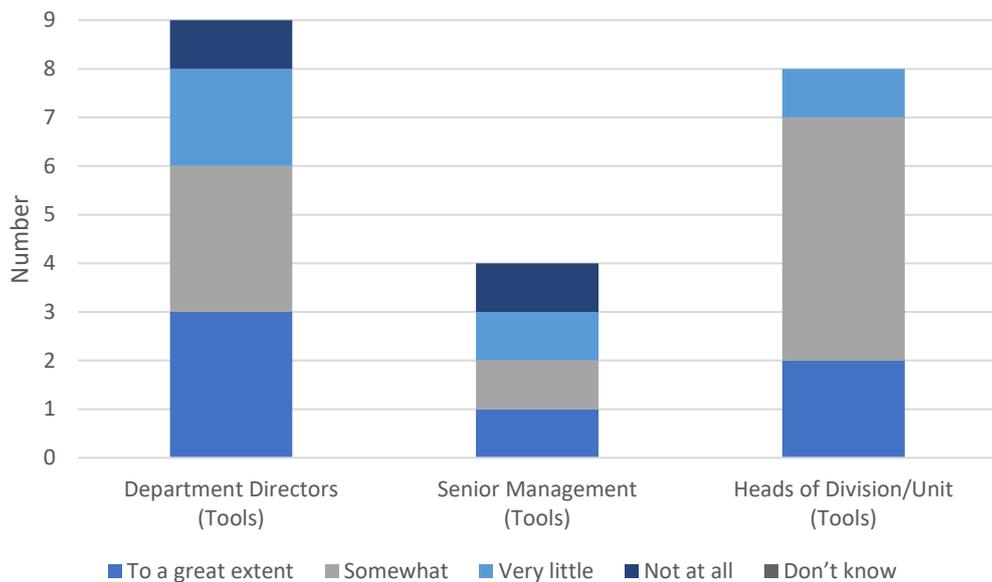
Figure 7. Basic Skills in Knowledge Management (2)



3. Tools for Managing Knowledge

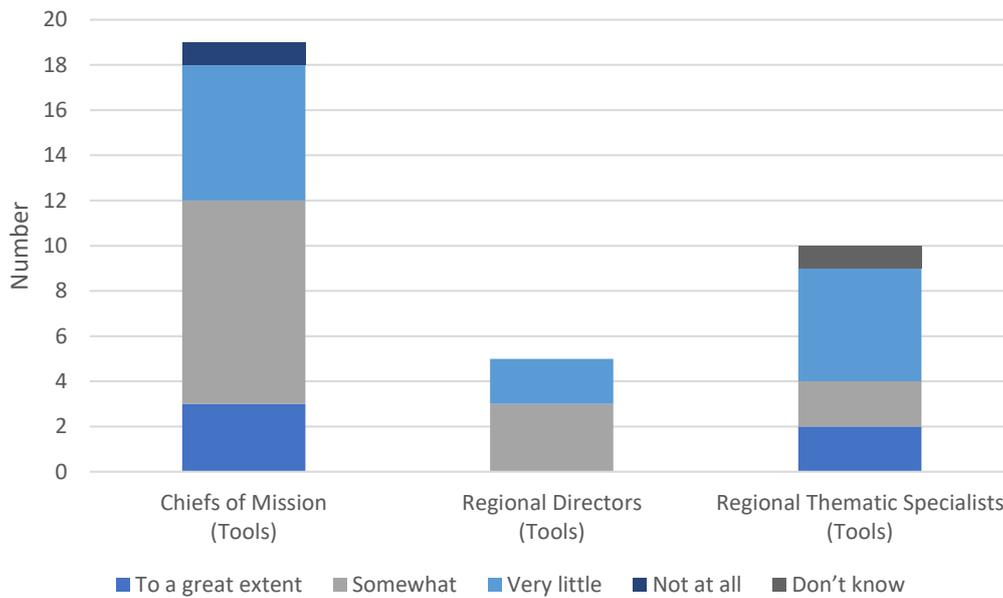
As for knowledge management tools, at the HQ level, more than half of the Department Directors, half of the other senior management, and most heads of division/unit reported having to a great extent/somewhat the necessary tools for managing knowledge (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Tools for Knowledge Management (1)



At ROs and COs, most participating COMs and RDs reported having knowledge management tools to a great extent/somewhat, compared less than half of the RTSs surveyed (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Tools for Knowledge Management (2)



5.5. Challenges and opportunities for managing knowledge

The following section looks at the factors that have facilitated and hindered the implementation of knowledge management efforts since the consultations in 2012.

Looking at the opportunities for managing knowledge, of the 50 survey respondents and interviewees that responded to this question, 38 per cent reported staff interest, motivation and determination to engage in knowledge management as the key facilitating factor. Other important factors reported as facilitating knowledge management were: the effectiveness and efficiency of activities (28 per cent), leadership (24 per cent), and the availability of human and financial resources (24 per cent). Less prominent factors that were mentioned as having facilitated the implementation of knowledge management efforts over the past few years include:

- Knowledge about and experience in managing knowledge;
- Availability of knowledge management systems, tools and processes;
- Staff meetings and training;
- Donor pressure/interest to implement knowledge management; and,
- Information sharing and staff exchanges of experiences.

In contrast, the absence of many of the facilitating factors discussed above was reported by survey respondents and interviewees as having hindered the implementation of knowledge management efforts. Specifically, of the 54 survey respondents and interviewees that responded to this question, 52 per cent mentioned the lack of human and financial resources and another 43 per cent mentioned the lack of time and competing priorities as the two main factors that have hindered the implementation of knowledge management efforts. Other factors identified by respondents and interviewees as having undermined knowledge management efforts include a lack of:

- Knowledge about and experience in managing knowledge;
- Institutional knowledge management guidance and support;
- Leadership;
- Organizational culture; and,
- Incentives, interest and willingness to engage in knowledge management.

Speaking on the last point, one respondent was of the view that, “IOM expects people to know knowledge management, expects people to dedicate time to knowledge sharing and knowledge management. The lack of success in IOM is due to a lack of incentives to do knowledge sharing and to create communities of practice.”

Other, albeit less frequently cited factors by survey respondents and interviewees as having hindered the implementation of knowledge management efforts include the lack of systems, tools, techniques and processes, the absence of a knowledge management strategy, projectization, and no cross-fertilization due to working in silos. “We do not market our own services to everyone in our Organization; we do not know what others do.” Similarly, another respondent stated that, “We tend to work in silos and knowledge dispersion is not really open. We have publications, but no one reads them. We market ourselves to ourselves.”

Most of these challenges were also raised by participating UN system organizations in the 2016 JIU review of knowledge management.¹⁴ According to the participants, when it comes to designing and implementing knowledge management efforts there is:

- “[A] lack of common terminology, strategic vision and guidance within the United Nations Secretariat and system-wide;
- [A] lack of support and sponsorship at senior management level;
- Insufficient staff awareness and organizational culture, including absence of recognition, incentives and sanctions with respect to knowledge-sharing attitudes;
- Difficulties in measuring knowledge management impact and in adopting indicators;
- [A] loss of tacit knowledge owing to lack of continuity and adequate knowledge-retention policies;
- Persistence of the bad practice of working in silos;
- Incompatibilities artificially created by the technological infrastructure; and,
- [A] lack of financial resources.”¹⁵

5.6. Funding sources for knowledge management

In the absence of an organization-wide policy and implementation strategy on knowledge management, survey respondents and interviewees reported that to date, little, if any, funding or budget lines have been dedicated to knowledge management efforts. Of the 53 survey respondents and interviewees that discussed this issue, 40 per cent reported that efforts undertaken since the consultations in 2012 have been largely financed through project

¹⁴ Participating UN, its funds and programmes: CEB, UN (as listed in ST/SGB/2015/3), UNAIDS, UNCTAD, ITC, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women and WFP. Participating specialized agencies and IAEA: FAO, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WHO, WIPO and WMO.

¹⁵ Dumitriu 2016, p. 10.

funding. Other frequently reported funding sources for knowledge management were regular staff costs (36 per cent) and department, division/unit, RO and CO budgets (25 per cent). According to one respondent, “there is no specific funding for knowledge management in our office. Knowledge management activities can only be implemented in the framework of projects if required or allowed by respective donors; and through the dedication of individual staff.” Other reported sources of funding for knowledge managing efforts undertaken at HQ and field offices include co-funding or co-sharing schemes, donor funding, extra-budgetary funds and savings, grants, in-kind contributions, and research funding.

5.7. Outcomes and impact of knowledge management efforts implemented

In light of the diverse knowledge management efforts implemented at HQ and in field offices since 2012, the staff surveyed and interviewed were asked to comment on the changes and

“Knowledge management helps to qualify and identify what the organization knows, when and in what form the knowledge is located, how organized is the access to knowledge and what are the best ways to transfer knowledge to the right people at the right time. Knowledge management will help organizations learn from past failures and successes, redeploy and reuse existing knowledge assets, solve problems or innovate, foster and develop the right competencies, update and remove obsolete knowledge and ensure that knowledge and competencies are not lost.” *Excerpt from the 2016 JIU Report.*

outcomes that these efforts have produced. However, as acknowledged by other studies such as the JIU 2016 report, measuring the impact of knowledge management is an important challenge.¹⁶ While knowledge management prevents a waste of money, time and human resources, it is difficult to measure what is prevented. Specifically, “it is difficult to quantify the time spent in, or the cost of, finding the right information or reproducing knowledge that already exists or using obsolete instead of up-to-date information or investing in technology

without assessing its potential to improve the availability and accessibility of knowledge.”¹⁷

Despite this challenge, the responses received highlight that, to date, the knowledge management efforts undertaken in IOM have produced a series of changes at the organizational, HQ, RO, and CO level.

“Knowledge management is a culture; it is not something we can fix with a policy document or a new IT system, really a culture which takes time to change. I think part of our change came with the structural reform in 2009 which forced more collaboration across the different field offices. The Organization is already doing the right things to improve knowledge management by restructuring, putting tools in place like PRIMA for All, putting processes in place like the Project Handbook to ensure

¹⁶ For example, see: 1), De Brun, Caroline. *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library. Knowledge Management, 2005; 2) Larrabure, Juan Luis. *Knowledge Management in the United Nations System*. Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, 2007; and 3) 2 UNDP. *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework 2014-2017*. New York: UNDP, 2014).

¹⁷ Dumitriu 2016, p. v.

doing things which are standard in different places. All efforts push towards the right direction.”

Globally in IOM, the consolidation, sharing of and improved access to knowledge, and greater awareness of diverse issues, topics and work of various parts of the Organization were the most frequently cited changes by survey respondents and interviewees. According to one respondent, “I have seen a lot of changes. We are now able to have knowledge of what’s going on globally for the first time; we can say what results are on a yearly basis.” Other reported changes include enhanced effectiveness and reporting, a reduction in the duplication of efforts, and structural reforms. On the other hand, five out of the 14 respondents and interviewees that spoke about the changes produced by knowledge management efforts in the Organization reported no changes or that it was too early to identify any. “I appreciate knowledge management, but I do not see evidence of its impact yet. This is probably because it is still in the making, something not yet finalized, but I can see the overall goal of having it.”

In contrast, at the HQ level (departments and divisions/units), a greater number of changes was reported by the staff surveyed and interviewed (n=16). Specifically, knowledge management efforts have reportedly enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and reporting of activities (44 per cent), consolidated and improved access to information and data (25 per cent), and improved the quality of knowledge produced, stored and shared (19 per cent). Other reported changes were increased visibility of knowledge products and interest among staff to share knowledge and collaborate, increased use of knowledge produced, and cultural and attitudinal changes. In contrast, one-third of respondents and interviewees reported “no change,” “too early to identify any,” or that “these [changes] are not measurable”.

At the RO level, three of the six survey respondents, each from a different office, mentioned that knowledge management efforts have enhanced responsiveness and efficiency of activities, increased the capacity of staff to develop and share knowledge internally and externally, and increased understanding of issues and topics such as donor dynamics. The other half of the respondents reported having observed little to no changes or that it was too early to identify any changes emerging from the knowledge management efforts implemented to date.

At the CO level, three of the five survey respondents mentioned that knowledge management efforts did not produce any changes or that it was too early to provide an analysis on this matter. The remaining two respondents mentioned that knowledge management efforts undertaken improved efficiency and awareness of the value added of activities, as well as the identification and sharing of expertise, created spaces for staff exchanges, and promoted cultural changes regarding the use of new technologies.

A Success Story of Knowledge Management in IOM: The IOM Netherlands MiMOSA Development and Training Team

MiMOSA is the IOM global database system to capture individual migrant biographic and demographic information required for processing and reporting operational services

provided for Medical Screening, Migrant Training, Assisted Voluntary Return, Pre-Consular Services, Counter Trafficking, and Movement.

In the IOM office in the Netherlands, four staff, in addition to their normal workload, developed a customized version of MiMOSA to meet donor requirements for data collection and data exchange, as well as other requirements specific to the Dutch immigration chain. The customized version of MiMOSA covered all the areas and stages of AVRR case management (pre-departure counseling, airport assistance, and post-arrival reintegration operations). All documents were made digitally available to all staff at all times, which reduced archiving costs and the amount of time that staff spent on administrative matters. In particular, the full digitalization of the AVRR case management enabled IOM NL to process many more AVRR cases, increasing from 2,941 in 2015 to an estimated 5,000 in 2016, with the same number of employees. The customized version of MiMOSA also improved reporting, and additional tools enabled project managers to monitor, evaluate, and report on project activities and outputs. Another reported outcome of this knowledge management initiative is that communication with migrants increased through the provision of information in real time. For example, a new tool automatically dispatched departure information (flight details) from the IOM system to the migrant's phone.

Following the launch of the customized version of MiMOSA, the four staff went on to train their colleagues on how to use it and provided on-going operational support to 49 staff, of whom 22 were field migrant counsellors, 11 movement staff, and 16 project management staff.

6. IOM BEST PRACTICES IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The following best practices in knowledge management were taken from the responses provided by IOM staff worldwide through the ODG/RBM managed Institutional Questionnaire (January – December 2017). Of the total responses received to the questionnaire (n=162), a number of best practices were provided, which have been categorized into four broad categories. The most prominent best practices cited across these four categories are coordination meetings, followed by newsletters, webinars, and a number of IT systems and tools.

1. Meetings: Most respondents (81 per cent) mentioned meetings as a best practice for knowledge management, the majority of which were coordination meetings (65 per cent). The remaining meetings cited by respondents as best practices for knowledge management were staff meetings, Senior Management meeting (SMT) meetings, working groups, retreats, consultations, and planning meetings.

2. Information products: 45 per cent of the respondents mentioned information products as a best practice for managing knowledge, of which newsletters (52 per cent) and reports (12 per cent) were the most prominent types of information products, followed by information sheets and snapshots, news updates, best practices documents, briefs, and presentations.

3. Training: 31 per cent of the respondents mentioned training as a best practice for managing knowledge, of which the majority of references pertained to webinars (75 per cent).

4. Tools: 14 per cent of the respondents mentioned tools as a best practice for managing knowledge, which were largely split across the following types: Information sharing platforms (17 per cent), databases (9 per cent), Office365 (Teams and SharePoint, 17 per cent), common drives (17 per cent), social media (4 per cent), websites (17 per cent), and repositories (17 per cent).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN IOM

Based on the documentation review and the survey and interview data collected, the following are the main recommendations which capture several different, albeit interrelated issues, that fall under two broad categories of recommendations: 1) defining and operationalizing knowledge management in IOM, and 2) institutionalizing knowledge management and promoting organizational cultural change. These recommendations will be presented using specific examples from the survey respondents and interviewees, as appropriate.

7.1. Defining and Operationalizing Knowledge Management in IOM

Recommendation 1: Conduct an in-depth, organization-wide review of existing knowledge management efforts to identify and understand what is being done (or not), by whom, why, how, and what can be improved

In 2012, a stocktaking exercise was undertaken by the Knowledge Management Working Group¹⁸ under the overall guidance of IOM's Director General. The purpose of the exercise was to establish foundations towards a knowledge management process within the Organization by creating an inventory of existing knowledge management practices. This inventory could be used as a baseline for conducting a more in-depth, organization-wide analysis of existing knowledge management efforts to identify and understand what is being done (or not), by whom, why, how, and what can be improved.

Recommendation 2: Establish a knowledge management policy and strategy with a vision to guide efforts undertaken

Based on the in-depth, organization-wide analysis, IOM staff surveyed and interviewed recommended that a knowledge management policy and strategy be developed that can guide current and future efforts undertaken. This recommendation is echoed in the 2016 JIU report, according to which those UN organizations, which have not already done so, should develop knowledge management strategies and policies aligned with the mandate, goals and objectives of their respective organizations, by the end of 2018.¹⁹ The following are a select number of statements from IOM staff surveyed and interviewed that speak to this recommendation:

- "I am insisting a lot on a policy with an implementation strategy for monitoring and overseeing the implementation process. IOM is becoming bigger than before. We should start with a pilot office and then try it in another office and see how it goes. Having a policy is good, but it needs to be applicable, it needs to be real and not have been developed by someone from outside the Organization. We need a person inside the Organization that is impartial, and that can lead a task force group who can meet to obtain more views once the policy has been developed and then present it before the PCC. If you don't have a policy and a strategic plan, something is missing. There is a need to regularly

¹⁸ The establishment of a Knowledge Management Working Group was mandated by the DG to improve the IOM's capacity to capture, store, retrieve, and share essential information in a practical and user-friendly manner (IOM 2013, p. 8).

¹⁹ Dumitriu, 2016, p. vii.

monitor to see if knowledge management efforts are fruitful or not (estimated in time or money).”

- “This is a top priority for us, but we should not make it too complicated. It should fit into other ongoing efforts aimed at greater transparency and accountability and improving our M&E, so that we continue having everything moving forward in a coherent way under MIGOF. If we know where we are going, we can adapt to changes, and in migration, we need to adapt all the time.”

In discussing the development of a policy and strategy on knowledge management for IOM, a small number of staff made references to the **previous knowledge management efforts undertaken**, starting with the consultations in 2012 (especially the inventory and the draft strategic framework on knowledge management), and how parts of these **could be picked up again**. According to one respondent,

“There was a time that HQ identified **knowledge management focal points for each region**, who were to have a direct liaison with HQ...We need to revitalize this, what are the needs of the region and how can we partner with HQ for better assistance. If there are already knowledge management focal points in place, they need to be empowered with the tools and skills to fulfill their roles, otherwise, the strategic framework sits nicely on the website, and nothing happens.”

Other aspects that staff surveyed and interviewed mentioned that could be picked up again include the recommendations in the inventory report and “ensuring that the vision, goals, and objectives contained in the strategic framework are implemented across the Organization.”

In moving forward with a knowledge management policy and strategy, including the development of an implementation plan with indicators for monitoring progress, a number of related recommendations were provided by survey respondents and interviewees. First, there is a need to **clarify the concept of knowledge management**. “What I saw of it [knowledge management], saw it as too vague for people to make any tangible actions upon, more about removing the vagueness so that people can understand what it means to them, what actions they should take, and what tools are available.” Furthermore, there is a need to **distinguish between what is “nice to know” from that which we “need to know.”** “We remain limited in our collective capacity to identify which pieces or kinds of information are necessary (as opposed to merely relevant), for the practical achievement of strategic tasks and goals in a particular place.”

In clarifying the concept of knowledge management and identifying relevant knowledge, a respondent provided the following questions for reflection:

1. “To what use is the collected information to be put, and how can it be used as evidence?”
2. How do we build the necessary systems to ensure that this takes place in our Organization?”

Following from the above recommendations is the need to **establish accountability and quality control measures** to ensure that staff at various levels comply with the knowledge management policy and implementation strategy, in the eventuality that these are developed, for instance, to produce quality handover notes. For example, at the Mission level, as part of the ‘Exit Clearance Form’, reference is made to handover notes or files that

departing staff needs to provide. Regional Directors, Chiefs of Missions and Heads of Office have also been noted to provide handover notes.

Recommendation 3: Allocate sufficient human and financial resources for implementing knowledge management efforts

- “If you really want knowledge management to be successfully implemented, don’t add it on top of everything else, but add it as standard activity and ensure that the resources are there to absorb all of the new activities.”
- “If we want knowledge management, we have to put money behind it. Otherwise, we will not have it. Then people can do things that are beneficial. Often people associate effectiveness and efficiency with cheap. While something may be cost efficient, it may not be effective.”

Recommendation 4: Further develop (existing) information technology systems and tools, especially repositories, for managing knowledge

- “A knowledge sharing platform (KSP) is needed as soon as possible. Countries work in isolation and repeat the same projects without knowing that other colleagues are working on the same subject. A KSP will help. It will also help to build a more corporate direction and thematic coherence.”
- “It would be great to have a directory of all staff in IOM and their respective areas of expertise. Then, if you want to know something about migration law, you can go onto the intranet, for example, and identify the staff with expertise on migration law.”
- “One innovative element of knowledge management can be to have a direct link with beneficiaries by developing a reporting mechanism where beneficiaries can provide feedback on the services provided such as in the form of a blog.” The following link provides an example of such a reporting mechanism for citizenship governance in India whereby citizens can report malpractices of public offices directly to the Office of the President: <https://www.india.gov.in/>.

In implementing this recommendation, it is important that duplication of IT systems and tools, especially repositories, are detected, addressed and avoided in the future. The problem of duplicating efforts is also encountered by many other UN organizations. According to the JIU 2016 report, “The proliferation of uncoordinated or difficult to access repositories has often had a negative impact on staff’s and decision makers’ ability to find relevant content quickly, as well as on the overall cost of the content.”²⁰

Recommendation 5: Identify a ‘leader’ and build ownership of knowledge management

- In addition to the need for strong leadership (“knowledge management starts at the top but includes the rest”), survey respondents and interviewees also mentioned the need to task an individual, a unit, or a division with the responsibility for managing knowledge within the Organization. “Then have a concrete plan and deliverables that are measurable

²⁰ Dumitriu 2016, p. v.

with enough incentives to create some sort of a movement within the Organization to take us from where we are now to a new level of maturity on knowledge management.”

7.2. Institutionalizing Knowledge Management and Promoting Organizational Cultural Change

Recommendation 6: Articulate to staff the benefits of knowledge management and provide them with the moral incentives or symbolic rewards to engage in knowledge management practices

- “For knowledge management to be sustainable, you need to have buy-in, and for that you need to communicate the benefits of engaging and investing in knowledge management.”

Survey respondents and interviewees suggested two ways of incentivizing staff to engage in knowledge management. The first is to create the opportunity for staff to showcase their knowledge management efforts to IOM senior staff such as at the SMT, Extended Senior Management meeting (ESMT), or the Global Chiefs of Mission meeting. “A practice group that does the best in implementing knowledge management would come to Geneva and present their model, including lessons learned, during the Global Chief of Mission; RMO is one practice area, migration health is another practice area.”

Another related ‘showcasing’ option is to organize an exposition of all knowledge management models during which a winner is identified. The second suggestion for incentivizing staff to engage in knowledge management is to have a knowledge management component included in the staff TORs, as well as the Staff Evaluation System (SES). This approach would also help institutionalize knowledge management in the work of the Organization, thereby helping, over time, to establish a knowledge sharing culture. The 2016 JIU report puts forth a similar recommendation for UN organizations:

“The executive heads of UN system organizations...should take incremental measures aimed at embedding knowledge management skills and knowledge-sharing abilities in their respective staff performance appraisal systems, annual work plans, job descriptions and organizational core competences, by the end of 2018.”²¹

Recommendation 7: Organize regular staff trainings and provide the necessary guidance, information, and support on knowledge management systems, tools, and processes

As pointed out in the 2016 JIU report, “Knowledge management is – par excellence – a participative process, in which the personal proactive attitude of knowledge workers is essential...Decision and empowering guidelines and frameworks are essential to stimulate staff’s involvement in knowledge creation, sharing and use.”²² Sharing this view, the following are several recommendations provided by the IOM staff surveyed and interviewed:

²¹ Dumitriu 2016, p. vii.

²² Ibid, p. vi.

- “Suggest the development of training on knowledge management to be led out of each Regional Office for one nominated Knowledge Management Focal Point within each Mission. This focal point would subsequently guide the creation, harnessing, sharing, utilization, and dissemination of knowledge management products, and identify the scope to strengthen knowledge management within existing programming, as well as promoting knowledge management more generally.”
- “With all the new tools and possibilities, we would need better guidance on how to make the most out of them (e.g., MS Teams vs. SharePoint).”
- “Share knowledge management tips and tools that can be put in place and adapted to the Mission’s size and human/financial resources.”

Recommendation 8: Update and create handbooks, manuals, and guidelines

- “The Chief of Mission Handbook is a valuable tool, but we should change the focus to make it an administrative handbook that sets out guidelines on how things should be done, which may strengthen knowledge management.”
- “Strengthen the scope for sharing knowledge management products between Missions and encourage Missions to develop guidance notes when creating novel knowledge management products that can act as points of reference for Missions who wish to replicate the efforts.”

Recommendation 9: Leave handover notes and mentoring/sharing expertise with staff

In order to prevent the loss of tacit knowledge when staff leave and new persons join, respondents and interviewees recommended that an induction programme be created for new staff. “This package shall be created on the basis of a standard checklist, to be customized depending on the thematic area/country. Induction packages should be mandatory for all new staff on SST [Special Short Term] and FT [Fixed Term contract].”

- “IOM staff should contractually be due to leave a handover, using a standard format (that may vary depending on the sector).”
- “Outstanding senior staff in IOM that have a wealth of experience could contribute to training/producing written operational guidance on specific topics to ensure that their expertise is not lost when they leave the Organization.”
- “Mentorship reinforces belonging, creates a positive and caring environment, and enables passing of knowledge between more senior and junior staff.”

This recommendation is also echoed in the 2016 JIU report, according to which, “the executive heads of the United Nations system organization...should establish norms and procedures for the retention and transfer of knowledge from retiring, moving or departing staff, as part of the organizations’ succession planning processes.”²³

Recommendation 10: Increase the communication and marketing of knowledge, both inside and outside the Organization

- “We should make more efforts in the way we show what we have done and know. We are not very creative. A lot of our people should get more training on how to present and engage with what we do.”

²³ Dumitriu 2016, p. vii.

- “Every organization should have someone looking after internal communications. Turn Staff Advisory into something people remember and implement rather than delete.”
- “We have a lot of space in the hallways. We need to look at putting more of what we do as an organization in these places, such as posters or putting information boards in elevators.”
 - For example, each month we could present the key activities and people in one department/division/unit, such as “Did you know...? Have you met...? This could also be done virtually via the intranet.
- “More communication needs to be done, but then the systems in place also need to work. OneDrive takes long to connect and is hard to work with sometimes (slow and difficult to trust).”

This recommendation speaks to the results obtained from the IOM’s institutional questionnaire (January – December 2017) about the use of internal knowledge products and how there is a tendency to share more externally than internally. Specifically, of the responses received pertaining to the use of internal knowledge products, 42 per cent reported sharing these externally, compared to only 15 per cent who reported sharing these internally. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programming, it is essential that this gap in communication and internal marketing of services and expertise housed in the various departments, divisions, units, or offices be addressed.

Recommendation 11: Use meetings, discussion groups, and forums to share knowledge, especially lessons learned

Recommendation 12: Systematically document, monitor and evaluate work to harvest experiences and lessons from activities implemented in support of evidence-based programming

Other recommendations, albeit less prominent, emerging from this review are the following:

- **Ensure greater coordination between HQ and ROs and ROs and COs**
 - “The HQ should encourage synergy among field missions in order to ensure symmetry of information diffused and used.”
- **Knowledge management should be both a top down and bottom up approach**

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present review of knowledge management in IOM has focused on identifying how staff understand knowledge management in the Organization and what knowledge management efforts have been undertaken since the broad consultations on the issue in 2012. The review has also presented a set of actionable recommendations that may inform the development of a practical guidance note, and possibly a strategy, on knowledge management in the Organization.

Evidence revealed that most IOM staff surveyed and interviewed acknowledge the importance of knowledge management and the need to establish a coherent, systematic approach to managing existing knowledge aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery to beneficiaries and to support continuous learning across the Organization.

“If we had good knowledge management, it would improve performance and output of COs, feed information to staff in terms of staff development and project implementation. We could also improve engagement with government offices.”

With IOM being a highly-operational agency where knowledge is primarily vested in tacit forms, any definition of knowledge management that is adopted needs to include both technical and tacit forms of knowledge. Doing so will help ensure that knowledge embodied in the minds of individuals and personal experiences will also be used, alongside technical knowledge, to inform the administrative and operational work of the Organization.

Since 2012, a series of efforts to store, share, and manage knowledge has been undertaken at HQ and field offices; however, these have been disjointed given the absence of a momentum to finalize the draft policy and strategy that came out of the consultative processes of 2012 to guide its implementations. This disjointedness in the efforts implemented has increased the risk of duplication, which needs to be addressed moving forward, as this will result in confusion when it comes to storing, sharing and managing knowledge in the Organization. Knowledge management, however, has been identified as a challenge being faced by many UN system organizations in their attempt to “systematically develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve their cross-cutting goals.”²⁴ One of the explanations for this is that knowledge management is not yet a strategic priority and there are no common practices that are accepted or shared system-wide across the different UN organizations.²⁵

Related to this challenge, survey respondents and interviewees were split in their views as to the extent that existing IOM policies and strategies facilitate knowledge management and its institutionalization in the Organization, highlighting the need to address this issue if efforts to improve knowledge management are to be effective, efficient, and sustainable.

Nevertheless, data revealed that most knowledge management efforts implemented are perceived by staff as having been effective with the most frequently reported changes and

²⁴ Dumitriu 2016, p. iii.

²⁵ Ibid.

outcomes produced by such efforts being enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, and reporting of activities, especially due to the identification and sharing of expertise, consolidated and improved access to information and data, and improved quality of the knowledge produced, stored, and shared.

As most knowledge management efforts that have been implemented thus far in IOM are not funded through any specific contributions allocated to knowledge management, very few respondents could discuss their cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

Looking forward, the following is an overview of the recommendations that emerged from this exercise for improving knowledge management in the Organization:

1. Conduct an in-depth, Organization-wide review of existing knowledge management efforts to identify and understand what is being done (or not), by whom, why, how, and what can be improved with a focus on knowledge sharing, on building a knowledge management culture, and on how much to invest specifically in knowledge management.
2. Establish a knowledge management policy and strategy with a vision to guide efforts undertaken.
3. Prepare a resources mobilization plan and fundraising strategy to allocate sufficient human and financial resources for implementing knowledge management efforts.
4. Further develop (existing) information technology systems and tools, especially repositories, for managing knowledge.
5. Identify a 'leader' and build ownership of knowledge management.
6. Articulate to staff the benefits of knowledge management and provide them with the moral incentives or symbolic rewards to engage in knowledge management practices.
7. Organize regular staff trainings and provide the necessary guidance, information, and support on knowledge management systems, tools, and processes.
8. Update and create handbooks, manuals, and guidelines.
9. Leave handover notes, mentoring or sharing expertise with staff.
10. Increase the communication and marketing of knowledge, both inside and outside the Organization.
11. Use meetings, discussion groups, and forums to share knowledge, especially lessons learned.
12. Systematically document, monitor, and evaluate work to harvest experiences and lessons from activities implemented in support of evidence-based programming.

As evidenced, a number of the key challenges raised and recommendations provided are echoed in the 2016 JIU report, which is a review of knowledge management in the UN system aimed at identifying best practices to be considered, emulated and adapted in accordance with the resources and needs of each organization.²⁶ As part of the UN family, these similarities reinforce the importance making knowledge management an institutional priority, addressing the prevailing challenges, and implementing the recommendations presented above in a timely manner.

As a final note to this review, it important to reiterate the value of storing, sharing (both internally and externally), and managing the knowledge produced by the Organization for the purpose of developing activities in a more cohesive manner, adapting and utilizing existing tools, saving time and resources, adding value to the daily work of IOM staff, and increasing IOM's institutional credibility as the UN Migration Agency.

²⁶ Dumitriu 2016, p. iii.