



USAID TAXONOMY

What is a "Taxonomy" and Why Do We Need One?

Information Everywhere

The development community wants to locate relevant data/information on topics of interest easily and quickly. But the amount of information—held in various document and information resources and available through different databases—is already huge and is growing constantly. We need a guiding tool to find the valuable, specific information we seek.

Taxonomy: Your Guide to Knowledge Resources

A taxonomy is a tool that:

- Categorizes information and resources based on their content.
- Organizes information in an easy-to-navigate tree, or subject hierarchy.
- Structures information to provide intuitive guidance through pieces of data that relate to a specific context.
- Provides narrowed, context-specific information for a broad audience; everyone gets exactly what she/he needs.
- Helps users find relevant information quickly and easily.

What can a USAID-wide Taxonomy Provide?

- ✓ An initial entry point to an intuitive and useful interface for all USAID staff and partners to quickly survey Agency resources and easily retrieve information relevant to their work and interests.
- ✓ Simple access to USAID's databases available through CDIE Online, Communities of Practice, discussion groups, and other knowledge resources of the Agency.
- ✓ Information on everything related to USAID activities: document and web content, information on people, services, instructions, business processes, etc.
- ✓ Sharing of knowledge assets in a given area, whether programmatic or operational.
- ✓ Wider sharing of information, regardless of the source, with all USAID staff and partners working in all different areas.

What Has Been Done to Build the USAID Taxonomy?

- The Development Information Services (DIS) team has already started to develop the USAID taxonomy, initially to support the topical search feature of the Development Experience Clearinghouse.
- Beginning as a joint effort of DIS research staff, library staff, and DEC personnel, the taxonomy team consulted with appropriate USAID, DEI, DIS, and DEC personnel for input and coordination with other taxonomy-related efforts.
- In its present phase, the taxonomy is a 3- to 4-level subject hierarchy based on 14 categories covering many of the core and hot topics of the Agency.
- Main categories currently covered:
 - Agriculture
 - Democracy and Governance
 - Donor Coordination
 - Economic Growth
 - Global Development Alliance
 - Health
 - Human Capacity Development/Education
 - Humanitarian Assistance
 - Information and Communication Technology for Development
 - Management/Performance Measurement
 - Muslim World
 - Natural Resources and the Environment
 - Trafficking in Persons
 - Women in Development

Realizing the Vision: The Next Steps

- Develop a USAID-wide taxonomy, shared across all Operating Units, to support the Agency's Knowledge for Development strategy.
- Identify appropriate technologies necessary to connect the taxonomy with people's needs and knowledge resources.
- Develop and maintain the taxonomy through a collaborative partnership of USAID and partner subject experts working with the DIS taxonomy team, in order to develop a taxonomy that is flexible enough to grow and accommodate changes according to the needs of the Agency.

More Questions?

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