



MEASURING IMPACT

SIX YEARS OF IMPROVING
CONSERVATION AT USAID
FINAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2018



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



FOREWORD

By Cynthia Gill, Director, USAID Office of Forestry and Biodiversity (FAB)



Conservation is a foundation of development. To this end, USAID implements a wide range of conservation and development programs designed to sustain our planet and its people. Advancing human well-being and creating sustainable, healthy societies

depends on how effectively we steward our natural resources – the forests, fisheries, water, air, and diverse flora and fauna that sustain and enrich life for Earth's billions of human inhabitants.

Given the rapidly escalating threats to the natural world and the increasingly complex social, economic, and environmental factors at play, **we need to work smarter and faster to achieve our goals.** And that requires becoming **highly systematic about measuring impact** in order to understand which approaches work well, which do not, and why, and to **continually adapt** based on evidence and learning. It also requires reaching across traditional divides to share learning and develop **cross-sectoral solutions** to the multi-faceted challenges facing conservation and development practitioners.

That is why, in 2014, USAID released a comprehensive **Biodiversity Policy** that mandates increased rigor in conservation programming and encourages greater integration with the Agency's development objectives. The Policy provides a blueprint for embracing innovation, evidence, collaboration, and learning – the essential elements of **adaptive management**. It will move the Agency and its partner countries toward achieving our shared goal of conserving biodiversity for sustainable, locally-led development that promotes human well-being, while increasing the self-reliance and resilience of the countries we support.

Launched in 2012, **Measuring Impact (MI)** was designed to build USAID's capacity to implement the Biodiversity Policy and institutionalize the practice of adaptive management to lead to better biodiversity conservation and integrated programming throughout the Agency.

In the past six years, we have worked at the **mission, cross-mission, cross-sectoral, and Agency levels** to achieve significant progress toward these goals – a quiet revolution in the development community. I am proud to say that we have:

- **Engaged with 20 missions** – providing them with a robust suite of tools and evidence to improve programming;
- **Created USAID's first biodiversity cross-mission learning groups**, who are actively collaborating to improve outcomes for commonly used strategic approaches;
- **Engaged with experts across sectors to improve evidence and understanding** that conservation is critical to good development outcomes; and
- **Collaborated with the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL)** to ensure that our practices support the Agency's Program Cycle Operational Policy and its emphasis on theory of change-centered programming and Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA).

When it comes to biodiversity and integrated programming, the alignment and collaboration between missions, bureaus, sectors, policymakers, and implementing partners is getting stronger every year and will continue to do so as we build on the relationships and practices FAB established through MI.

I hope you will refer to the Appendix for an extraordinary list of practical resources that are now available to improve conservation and other development sector programs all over the world. The tools and evidence generated by FAB and MI get us one significant step closer to effectively preserving our global biological heritage and improving human well-being for generations to come.



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Cover photo: Homesteads dot the valley below Nkuringo. The forested hills beyond are the start of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, home to many of Uganda's iconic mountain gorillas. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID.

Photo above: Mountain gorilla, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID.

Table of Contents photo: A busy fishing port in the Philippines demonstrates the importance of sustainably managed fisheries as pillar of the local economy. Credit Jason Houston.

Acknowledgments photo: Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve is the site of innovative efforts to engage local communities in forest conservation efforts. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID.



“

Over the past six years, we have empowered people and strengthened the systems that are fundamental to sustaining institutional change and achieving organizational effectiveness. We have done this because we know that conservation of biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being and thus to sustainable development. Functioning natural systems are critical to our own human survival.”

— Carrie Thompson,
Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for
Economic Growth, Education, and Environment

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ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
B+WISER	Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy & Ecosystem Resilience
BFS	Bureau for Food Security
BRIDGE	Biodiversity Results and Integrated Development Gains Enhanced
CAM	Central America and Mexico Regional
CARPE	Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
DCHA	Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
E3	Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment
ECO	Environmental Communications, Learning, and Outreach
FAB	Office of Forestry and Biodiversity
LAC	Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
LER	Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research
LEARN	Learning and Knowledge Management
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MI	Measuring Impact
OAA	Office of Acquisition and Assistance
PHE	Population, Health, and Environment
PPL	Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning
ROUTES	Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species
RDMA	Regional Development Mission for Asia
SAR	South America Regional
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
SPP	Office of Strategic Program Planning
U.S.	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
Wildlife TRAPS	Wildlife Trafficking, Response, Assessment, and Priority Setting

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USAID OPERATING UNITS

Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3),
 Office of Forestry and Biodiversity (FAB),
 Particular thanks to Cynthia Gill, Director
 Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL), Office of
 Learning, Evaluation, and Research (LER)
 PPL, Office of Strategic Program Planning (SPP)
 Bureau for Food Security (BFS)
 Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
 (DCHA)
 United States (U.S.) Global Development Lab
 Bureau for Africa
 Bureau for Asia
 Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)
 Bureau for Global Health
 E3, Office of Global Climate Change
 Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance
 (OAA)

MISSIONS

USAID/Brazil
 USAID/Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment
 (CARPE)
 USAID/Central America and Mexico Regional (CAM)
 USAID/Colombia
 USAID/East Africa Regional
 USAID/Guatemala
 USAID/Indonesia
 USAID/Madagascar
 USAID/Malawi
 USAID/Mozambique
 USAID/Nepal
 USAID/Peru
 USAID/Philippines
 USAID/Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA)
 USAID/Senegal
 USAID/South America Regional (SAR)
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 Annie Wallace, USAID/SAR
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OTHER USAID CONTRACTS, INCLUDING EXTENSIVE WORK WITH STAFF OF:

Biodiversity Results and Integrated Development
 Gains Enhanced (BRIDGE)
 Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
 Environmental Communication, Learning, and
 Outreach (ECO)
 Learning and Knowledge Management (LEARN)
 Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of
 Endangered Species (ROUTES)
 Wildlife Trafficking, Response, Assessment, and Priority
 Setting (Wildlife TRAPS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CHALLENGE

Conserving biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being. Healthy and biologically diverse natural systems not only provide the goods and services that sustain life for Earth's 7.5 billion inhabitants, they are also key to improving living conditions for its poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Over the last century, environmental degradation is occurring at an increasingly rapid pace, putting sustainable development and human peace and prosperity at risk. To effectively stem the tide of biodiversity loss, **conservation practitioners need to work smarter, faster, and better** – to achieve a higher return on investment and increase the capacity and self-reliance of countries receiving assistance to sustain good development outcomes.

David Marcelo, Kalahan Educational Foundation, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, uses a 3D map for sustainable land management. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is playing a leadership role in transforming the conservation sector toward greater efficiency and effectiveness. The Agency is one of the world's largest funders of biodiversity conservation, with projects in more than 50 countries. It also supports governments, local communities, civil society, and the private sector in addressing the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss. And USAID is committed to creating solutions that integrate biodiversity conservation with other development goal – including food security, gender equity, public health, democracy, and governance.

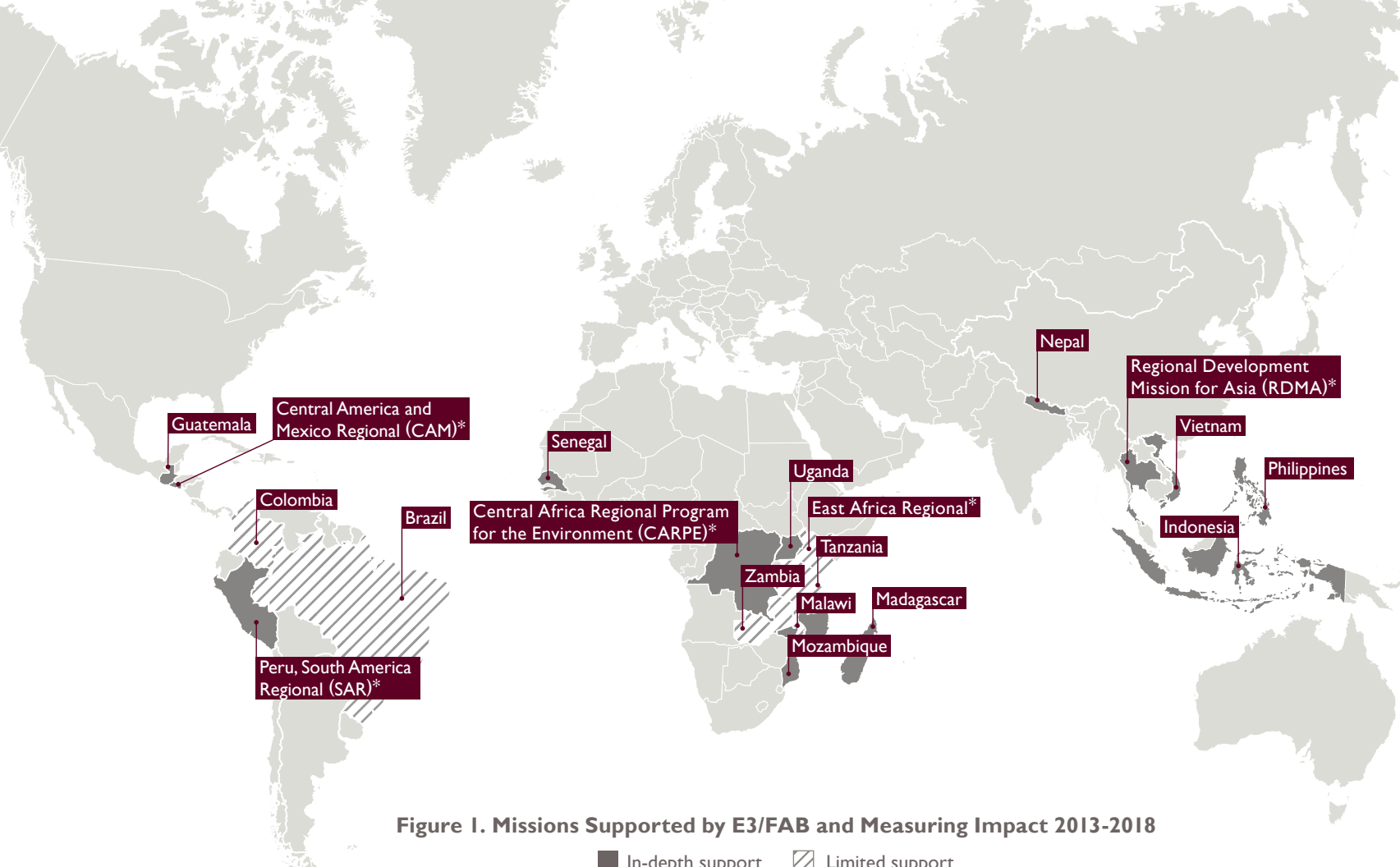


Figure 1. Missions Supported by E3/FAB and Measuring Impact 2013-2018

■ In-depth support ▨ Limited support

*Regional programs and missions are represented by the country where they are based



“

We rely on healthy, biodiverse ecosystems to both survive and thrive. So, in conserving biodiversity, we are enabling our own growth and development and enriching our lives on this planet.”

— Colin Holmes,
Environment Officer and MI Contracting
Officer's Representative, USAID/FAB

THE APPROACH

USAID launched its first **Biodiversity Policy** in 2014, mandating increased rigor in conservation programming and greater integration with other development sectors. The Agency's Office of Forestry and Biodiversity (FAB) initiated the Measuring Impact (MI) contract to help implement the Biodiversity Policy and, more specifically, increase the use of evidence-based adaptive management to improve outcomes.

Through MI (2013-2018), FAB honed a set of practices to improve the way biodiversity programs are designed and implemented – aligning with the work of PPL to advance theory of change-centered programming and Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) within the USAID Program Cycle.

FAB's work under MI has been a partnership among missions; regional bureaus for Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean; and USAID staff with expertise in food security, climate change, democracy and governance, and global health.

“

The accomplishments of USAID and MI have revolutionized USAID's conservation work – through improved evidence, practices, and policies – leading to better conservation and human well-being outcomes.”

— Cynthia Gill,
Director, USAID/FAB




Two Batwa women in southern Uganda, a group historically marginalized by conservation efforts. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

THEORY OF CHANGE

Central to FAB's approach is the use of a **theory of change**, which encourages more rigorous thinking around how, why, and under what assumptions a program is expected to achieve its objectives. MI itself was guided by a theory of change, which is represented in Figure 2 below.

In essence, the MI theory of change shows how USAID, with the help of MI, will strengthen the enabling conditions needed to effectively implement the Biodiversity Policy and institutionalize adaptive management at multiple levels, ultimately leading to better conservation and other development outcomes.

ENABLING CONDITIONS STRENGTHENED

 DEVELOPING CAPACITY AND TOOLS THAT ENABLE **PEOPLE** TO PRACTICE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

USAID staff and partners are addressing complex development challenges, constrained by limited time and financial resources, as well as competing demands.

To aid adoption of best practices and support champions of adaptive management, FAB developed capacity and produced practical, user-friendly tools that improved programming across the USAID Program Cycle.

Highlights:

- Facilitated **1600 staff days of workshops** in 20 USAID missions and seven Washington-based operating units
- Produced **three Biodiversity How-To Guides**, which serve as foundational guidance for designing more effective conservation programs using core tools of adaptive management, including situation models, results chains, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plans, and pause and reflect events
- Facilitated **peer-to-peer learning events** and pause and reflect workshops to identify course corrections needed to improve outcomes
- Developed **stakeholder engagement guidance** to increase local project ownership and responsiveness to local priorities

Improved the way:

20 missions + **7** Washington-based operating units design and implement programs...

representing **50%** of total USAID spending on biodiversity conservation and...

75% of spending by USAID's Tier I biodiversity missions

 ENSURING THAT **EVIDENCE & LEARNING** INFORM DECISIONS

Generating, sharing, and applying evidence and learning to program design and implementation is a cornerstone of good adaptive management. Through MI, FAB strengthened the knowledge and evidence base for biodiversity programming and the contribution it makes to human well-being. Highlights:

- Created **cross-mission learning groups** on two key strategic approaches – conservation enterprises and combating wildlife trafficking
- Produced **Evidence in Action** guide to help practitioners generate, apply, and share evidence
- Developed the **Combating Wildlife Crime Toolkit** to help teams measure progress and improve performance
- Conducted a **20-year Retrospective Evaluation of longstanding conservation enterprises**
- Published a **review of gender and governance**, one of the *Environmental Evidence* journal's five most influential papers in 2016

6 research products submitted for publication

4,000+ unique hits on cross-mission learning platforms

 PROMOTING **POLICIES** AND GUIDANCE THAT SUPPORT ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM CYCLE

FAB's progress in supporting use of adaptive management was amplified by Agency-level reforms that emphasized learning, effectiveness, and efficiency. Highlights:

- Channeled inputs and lessons from mission programming experiences to support **Agency-wide tools and guidance on adaptive management**
- Supported the Agency's focus on using CLA with **technical inputs from the biodiversity context**

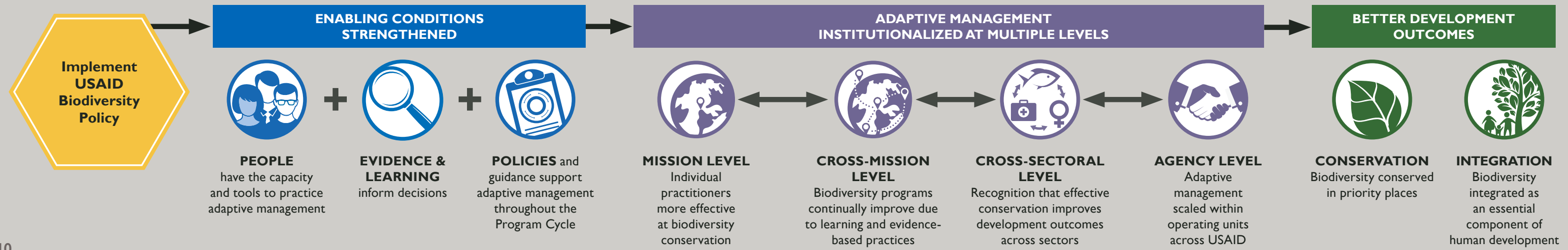
9 USAID guidance documents now include biodiversity best practices

2 award-winning CLA cases



Tourists on jungle safari led by conservation enterprise in Chitwan, Nepal. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

Figure 2. Theory of Change for Measuring Impact



“

One of the most exciting things about my work, and something I've always liked about the work of FAB and the MI contract, is their commitment to learning about what is working in our development programs, what isn't, and why. I can't think of another office and contract that embody the ethos of our Program Cycle more than these folks do, and it really warms my heart. Being transparent about our findings and translating learning into action gives us the power to correct course and ultimately increase the effectiveness of our investments.”

— Melissa Patsalides,
Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator,
USAID/PPL

Two sisters in the high Himalayan agricultural community of Kailas, Nepal. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONALIZED AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

To effect lasting change, FAB focused on institutionalizing the practice of adaptive management at multiple levels.



AT THE MISSION LEVEL

Mission staff now have improved capacity and additional tools to practice adaptive management, and they are:

- Effectively **analyzing development challenges** using situation models
- **Improving program design** using theories of change with explicit assumptions
- **Maximizing learning and adapting** with custom performance indicators and learning questions that challenge assumptions in the theory of change
- **Regularly conducting pause and reflect exercises** at key points during implementation and making course corrections as needed
- **Engaging with MI-trained USAID Biodiversity Advisors** on adaptive management practices and process

70 situation models

200 theories of change

35 theory of change-based MEL plans

33 theory of change-based pause and reflect events



Sorting xate palm, Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID



AT THE CROSS-MISSION LEVEL

FAB catalyzed collaboration and learning across missions using common learning agendas and generalized theories of change. Missions are now improving programs by:

- **Systematically sharing knowledge and learning** around best practices through collaborative learning groups
- **Using a richer, actionable knowledge base**, which to date has been shared on USAID's Biodiversity Conservation Gateway and through 475 dissemination activities that included webinars, guides, learning products, case studies, evidence syntheses, online lessons, infographics, online portals, newsletters, videos, wiki knowledge bases, and photo stories



AT THE CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL

FAB collaborated with other development sectors to develop evidence and tools that facilitate cross-sectoral programming. This included:

- Creating USAID's **first-ever Biodiversity and Development Research Agenda** that identifies knowledge gaps, prioritizes questions, and supports the work of FAB's Biodiversity Integration Working Groups
- Making **evidence-based decisions** to support better outcomes for biodiversity and gender, food security, health, and other key sectors
- Helping practitioners **put evidence into action** at each phase of the Program Cycle in support of more effective biodiversity and integrated programming



AT THE AGENCY LEVEL

USAID has revised its policies and guidance to focus on adaptive management. FAB and MI joined a dedicated community of USAID professionals that translated these policy innovations into new best practices for USAID mission staff. USAID is increasing its efficiency and effectiveness across sectors by:

- **Adaptively managing programs** using the 2016 USAID Program Cycle Operational Policy revisions (Automated Directive Systems 201)
- **Using a CLA approach** with guidance from PPL and contributions from multiple development sectors, including biodiversity

BETTER DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES



Improving development outcomes, including in biodiversity conservation, is a long-term effort that requires an investment that continues beyond the six years of MI. But by building adaptive management capacity, developing tools and guidance, and promoting an evidence-based approach, USAID can now make more efficient and effective use of its biodiversity investments while supporting countries on the journey to self-reliance.



In addition to preserving a global biological heritage for future generations, the ultimate return on the Agency's investment in biodiversity conservation will be partner countries with more resilient societies, greater food security, stronger governance systems, healthier people, and the capacity to manage their natural resources sustainably.

MILESTONES



MISSION LEVEL
Secured commitment from 5 focal missions to build capacity for adaptive management; FAB and MI piloted tools in 2 missions



CROSS-MISSION LEVEL
Developed agenda for Agency-wide learning on biodiversity programs



MISSION LEVEL
Provided technical assistance and training to eight missions, as well as regional bureaus

Supported development of SAR regional framework for evaluating impact of multiple missions spanning 12 activities

Supported use of theories of change to enhance effectiveness and learning in two key Philippines activities (ECOFISH and B+WISER)

Supported start up activities across eight landscapes in Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) with theories of change and MEL frameworks

Trained USAID staff on Miradi software to enhance use of results chains



MISSION LEVEL
Expanded support to 13 missions, impacting more than 30 projects/activities

Co-created first framework to mainstream learning and adapting processes into USAID biodiversity programs

Tested evaluability of learning questions using B+WISER and ECOFISH theories of change

Co-created shared learning agenda across eight landscapes in CARPE, identifying common strategic approaches and shared MEL framework



CROSS-MISSION LEVEL
Developed generalized theory of change for conservation enterprises for missions to learn using a common framework

Synthesized and shared evidence to investigate assumptions within conservation enterprises theory of change

Developed toolkit for measuring and designing wildlife trafficking interventions, including 10 high-level example theories of change



MISSION LEVEL
Expanded support to 16 missions, impacting approximately 40 projects/activities, including evaluations

Supported completion of the Agency's first regional natural resource management project and MEL plan in SAR

Co-developed theories of change to inform year one work plan and MEL plan for Nepal's PAANI Program

Collaborated with mission program office in Uganda to develop first biodiversity learning review to inform programmatic decisions and increase impact

Developed six learning modules on adaptive management practices for USAID Conservation and Development training course

Produced three *Biodiversity How-To Guides* with step-by-step guidance on USAID's approach to promoting adaptive management in biodiversity and integrated programming



MISSION LEVEL
Provided technical assistance and training to 19 missions, introducing pause and reflect to three and stronger evidence generation practices to four

Completed design of three activities for regional threat reduction in SAR, complementing programs in Colombia, Peru, and Brazil

Co-developed pause and reflect for PAANI's work plan, resulting in better alignment of tasks, outcomes, indicators and targets in year two

Disseminated guidance on using geospatial tools for evidence-based biodiversity programming

Launched Biodiversity Advisors program to strengthen the capacity of USAID staff to deliver technical assistance to missions.



MISSION LEVEL
Expanded support to 20 missions, representing more than 75% of the biodiversity funding directed to Tier 1 missions; improving 63 projects/activities

Created *Evidence in Action* to help missions globally use and generate evidence to improve programming

Completed full cycle adaptive management in the Philippines using a theory of change for the final evaluation of B+WISER and start-up of Fish Right

Facilitated shared learning across two sites implementing similar approaches in Mozambique with USAID and implementing partners

Collected adaptive management tools in a "treasure chest" for Biodiversity Advisors to use when facilitating program design

FY13

FY14

FY15

FY16

FY17

FY18



CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL
Prepared USAID's first *Biodiversity and Development Research Agenda* to prioritize evidence needed to inform cross-sectoral programming



AGENCY LEVEL
Developed roadmap for planning and collaboration around best practices in adaptive management



CROSS-MISSION LEVEL
Analyzed learning at USAID and developed engagement strategies around the most common approaches to conservation

Identified cross-mission learning groups as most effective approach to reach people programming for biodiversity

Prioritized learning around two commonly used strategic approaches – combating wildlife trafficking and conservation enterprises



CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL
Supported efforts of USAID Food Security Integration Working Group to increase awareness and evidence of importance of fisheries to food security



AGENCY LEVEL
Identified strategies for disseminating knowledge, tools, and guidance to reach key audiences



CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL
Produced short briefs synthesizing the evidence on linkages between fisheries and food security in nine key countries to inform cross-sectoral planning

Launched research on gender and biodiversity to fill knowledge gaps around governance in forestry

Supported development of global situation model for sustainable landscapes program as a tool for understanding and connecting drivers of land-use GHG emissions and programming interventions



AGENCY LEVEL
Piloted use of Miradi software to support teams' adaptive management decision-making

Demonstrated use of results chains for final evaluations of complex programs, including the Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems (SCAPES) final evaluation report



CROSS-MISSION LEVEL
Launched cross-mission learning groups for both conservation enterprises and combating wildlife trafficking

Fostered active participation among learning groups worldwide through dedicated online platform and in-person activities

Identified and shared the rewards and risks associated with community engagement in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking



CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL
Piloted the application of results chains to the MEL plan in a Feed the Future program

Published high-level global fisheries and nutrition resource to share with key sectors and promoted through virtual learning events

Published findings on gender and governance in *Environmental Evidence* journal



AGENCY LEVEL
Developed USAID Miradi language pack and three Miradi quickstart guides for key programming phases

Provided key input to revision of USAID's Program Cycle operational policy

Won Agency CLA case competition with video on Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program



CROSS-MISSION LEVEL
Hosted nine virtual learning events with thought leaders on conservation enterprises and combating wildlife trafficking

Published newsletters to share resources and best practices from learning groups Agency-wide

Conducted extensive literature review to disseminate knowledge on key enabling conditions for conservation enterprises



CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL
Assessed USAID-CIFOR partnership and shared findings to strengthen the partnership in future collaboration

Developed synthesis of evidence to examine the link between population, health, and environment



AGENCY LEVEL
Helped institutionalize results chains as a logic model option with their inclusion in the Agency's How-To Note on Project Logic Models



CROSS-MISSION LEVEL
Shared lessons from combating wildlife trafficking programs around the world through a case study compilation, an in-person learning event in South Africa, and virtual learning events

Published *20-year Retrospective Evaluation* of conservation enterprise programs

Delivered three regional MI closeout events to celebrate progress and share learnings



CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL
Published guidance on integrating fisheries and conservation programs using results chain tools

Analyzed data from World Bank activities to understand and share effectiveness of integrating biodiversity and livelihood goals



AGENCY LEVEL
Completed interactive, online versions of two *Biodiversity How-To Guides* for Agency use

Developed and shared resources for adaptive management during USAID activity start-up

Collaborated with Mozambique Mission on winning CLA case example, "Seeing the Forest for the Trees"



HOW MEASURING IMPACT IMPROVED CONSERVATION AT USAID

To meet the Biodiversity Policy mandate to improve rigor and outcomes in biodiversity programming, FAB and MI focused on effecting change at multiple levels – including at the Mission, Cross-Mission, Cross-Sectoral, and Agency levels.

The next four sections detail the challenge, approach, and impact at each of these levels and provide a compelling look at how USAID drives change to improve conservation and other development outcomes Agency-wide.

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Young girl fishing, Bangladesh.
Credit: Johannes Go, USAID

IMPACT AT THE MISSION LEVEL

Helping Practitioners Be More Effective at Biodiversity Conservation

CHALLENGE

USAID designed the MI activity to address the need for greater programmatic rigor, improved adaptive management practices, and conservation evidence to respond effectively to the increasingly complex threats to biodiversity around the world. Through MI, USAID aimed to help staff who program biodiversity funds increase their use of the latest evidence while rigorously applying theories of change and adaptive management practices to improve program design and implementation.

When the MI activity began, missions faced several challenges to achieving these goals:

- **Developing skills and capacity:** At the start of MI, mission staff and implementing partners embraced the opportunity to use adaptive management practices to strengthen the design and implementation of their programs. They asked for support – training, hands-on technical assistance workshops, online resources, and guidance – that would increase individual and institutional capacity to improve program design, implementation, evaluation, and programmatic learning.
- **Applying proven tools appropriate to a mission’s context:** Each mission works with a unique combination of threats, biodiversity interests, partners, stakeholders, and contextual factors. They needed adaptive management tools that were based on best practices without requiring a one-size-fits-all approach. This included tools to improve problem analysis; program design and implementation; monitoring, evaluation, and learning; and ongoing adaptation to improve outcomes.
- **Applying knowledge and evidence:** Many missions and their partners lacked the evidence needed to assess whether or not programs were on track and why and which programs required course corrections to achieve longer term outcomes. Missions needed more research and knowledge about the effectiveness of strategic approaches used across the USAID portfolio. They also wanted practical frameworks for generating and applying evidence in their own programs to learn and adapt over time.



Jabiru Stork in the Paraguayan Chaco, a region where USAID supports conservation of fragile ecosystems. Credit: Wiedfried Giesbrecht

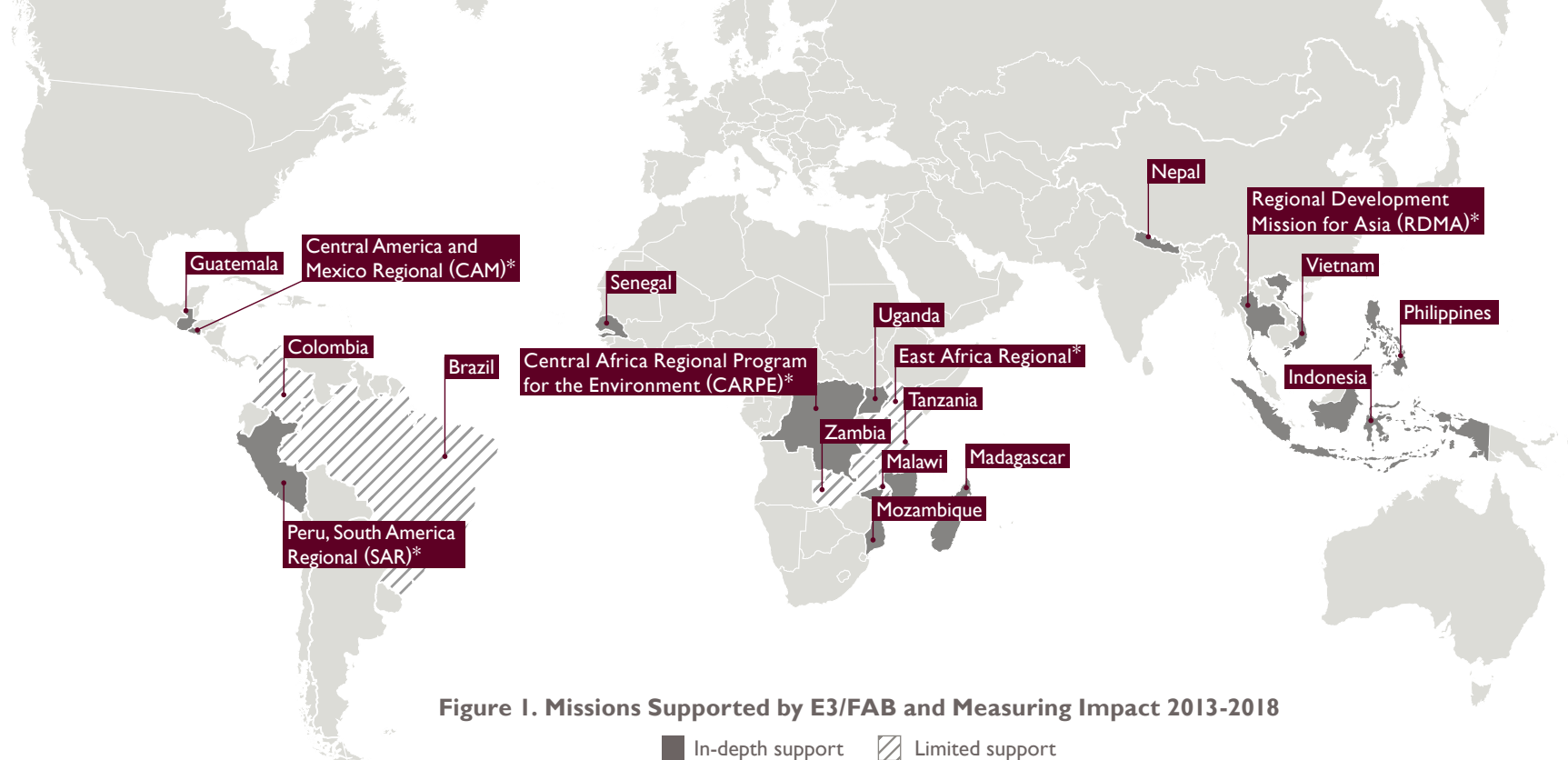


Figure 1. Missions Supported by E3/FAB and Measuring Impact 2013-2018

■ In-depth support ▨ Limited support

*Regional programs and missions are represented by the country where they are based

MISSION-LEVEL APPROACH

Through MI, FAB worked with 20 missions to meet missions’ biodiversity programming needs with a two-fold approach:

1. **Developed USAID capacity for improved programming effectiveness** through more than 5,000 person-days of technical assistance for mission and regional bureau staff – a combination of in-person workshops and virtual support. FAB and MI collaborated with missions and regional bureaus to identify specific programming needs, set team capacity building goals, and develop a tailored technical assistance and training package. FAB and MI met missions wherever they were in the Program Cycle to provide demand-driven, on-the-job training and support that addressed real-life programming challenges.
2. **Co-developed best practices with missions.** Twenty missions that program biodiversity funds participated in the MI technical support program. FAB and MI provided assistance with implementation of the Biodiversity Policy and increasing the use of evidence-based adaptive

management to improve outcomes. The missions, in turn, provided local knowledge, technical expertise, and a willingness to test and refine practices. Together, missions and FAB co-created new tools and practices, then tested and refined them for application in other missions and other sectors. With the leadership and collaboration of USAID’s PPL Bureau, these field-tested approaches informed Program Cycle policy improvements and CLA products being developed at the Agency level for use on a global scale. Using this collaborative, co-creation approach, FAB, missions, and MI developed robust problem analyses, stronger theories of change, and links from theories of change to MEL frameworks – **all essential building blocks for adaptive management and evidence-based decision-making.**

MI initially focused on just five missions, but ultimately expanded its reach to support **20 missions** around the world that program more than half of all USAID biodiversity funds (and more than **three-quarters of the biodiversity funding directed to Tier I¹ biodiversity missions**).

¹ As described in USAID’s Biodiversity Policy, Tier I missions are responsible for activities in USAID-assisted countries or regions that are the highest ranked in terms of biological criteria based on the Global Environment Facility’s Global Benefits Index for Biodiversity and that contain a preponderance of globally significant ecoregions as determined by the World Wildlife Fund’s Global 200 list. Tier I Operating Units are: Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and South America Regional; Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, and Central Africa Regional; Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Vietnam and the Regional Development Mission for Asia. (Source: <https://www.usaid.gov/biodiversity/policy/geographic-priorities>)



Mercedes “Ched” Limsa (right), former executive director, Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan (NATRIPAL), Philippines, discussing strategic link between conservation and livelihoods with indigenous tribal communities in Palawan. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

ACHIEVEMENTS

Conservation and other development staff at USAID missions are faced with solving some of the world’s most complex but significant challenges under tight timeframes, limited financial resources, and competing demands. Yet with support from FAB and MI, they were able to not only adopt but co-develop adaptive management best practices. Specifically, missions have improved the following:

UNDERSTANDING THREATS AND DRIVERS IMPACTING BIODIVERSITY

In order to select strategic approaches most likely to improve conservation outcomes, MI-supported missions are now using the following adaptive management “tools of the trade” to improve their understanding of the development context and conservation challenge:

- **Situation models:** Graphic depictions of the problem analysis, situation models make the priority drivers and threats to biodiversity clear and illustrate the links between biodiversity conservation and broader development objectives.
- **Threat assessment tools:** To focus attention on top threats, MI encouraged use of the threat

assessment and ranking tool, which integrates information and evidence about threats, drivers, and contextual factors into the design process. This tool has also been used successfully in combination with other assessment tools common in development programming, such as Political Economy Analyses.

Understanding the highest priority threats and being clear about the causal relationships between factors and actors driving those threats has empowered teams to select strategic approaches targeted at the root causes of biodiversity loss and create the enabling conditions required to sustain change.

APPLYING THEORIES OF CHANGE TO STRENGTHEN PROJECT AND ACTIVITY DESIGN

Theories of change can be used to clarify the logic underlying a program’s approach and can provide a link between planning, learning, and adapting during implementation. They can help program teams clarify underlying programmatic assumptions and identify appropriate indicators to support monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

MI helped missions and implementing partners:

- **Co-develop more than 200 results chains to strengthen theories of change** around a set of strategic approaches that are commonly used in biodiversity programs.
- **Establish a framework to test important programmatic assumptions** to examine “leaps of faith” in logic and adjust expected results and actions in project and activity design accordingly.
- **Improve capacity to use evidence** to confirm the conditions under which certain approaches were likely to be effective and improve decision making about how best to invest resources.
- **Increase USAID capacity to engage implementing partners in program-enhancing adaptive management practices** like jointly developing, refining, and validating results chains, MEL plans, and work plans. These tools support dialogue between USAID and its partners about what works, what does not, and why, and sets the expectation that potentially changing course to improve outcomes is not only encouraged, but critical to success.



Going through that process, through those results chains, it gave us a really surprisingly smooth concept review within our immediate leadership, because we were able to back up our logic. It allowed us to be clear and communicate exactly what we thought we could do.”

— Annie Wallace, during her time as Environment Foreign Service Officer in USAID/SAR



How-To-Guides Help Mainstream Adaptive Management in Biodiversity and Integrated Programming

With MI support, FAB developed three comprehensive *Biodiversity How-To Guides* that provide in-depth guidance on key adaptive management tools and practices to support teams (USAID and implementing partners) as they design and manage biodiversity programs within USAID’s Program Cycle and in accordance with the Agency’s Biodiversity Policy.

- **How-To Guide 1:** Shows how to develop situation models to map the biodiversity conservation problem that needs to be addressed.
- **How-To Guide 2:** Shows how to depict a program’s theory of change by using results chains as logic models detailing expected results and programmatic assumptions behind each proposed strategic approach.
- **How-To Guide 3:** Shows how to define outcomes and indicators for MEL using the results chains developed in the second guide.

These *How-To Guides* are focused on biodiversity programming, but their concepts, practices, and tools are used in programming for other development sectors, as well as in integrated programming. The methodology is based on the *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation*, a resource that is widely used in the global conservation community.

MAKING BETTER USE OF INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning provide missions and implementing teams with helpful information to make sound programming decisions. Good MEL relies on asking the right questions, measuring change, and applying new knowledge to programming. FAB and MI helped missions:

- **Co-develop 35 project and activity MEL plans** based on their theories of change. By helping missions and implementing teams identify performance indicators linked to their theories of change, FAB and MI facilitated learning-oriented program monitoring and evaluation and evidence-based adaptive management.
- **Develop learning agendas**, a set of questions and actions that help test programmatic assumptions underlying the theory of change during implementation. With MI support, missions and their implementing partners addressed learning questions through their monitoring programs, performance and impact evaluations, and learning reviews. Shared learning agendas helped mission staff share lessons learned in priority programming areas such as combating wildlife trafficking and conservation enterprises.
- **Improve evaluation scopes of work** to provide actionable findings and recommendations for adaptive management. Using theory of change-based monitoring plans and learning questions helped missions make better use of investments in evaluations.

- **Equip USAID staff with the right tools and capacity** to incorporate MEL findings into planning for their next program or activity, carrying adaptive management throughout the full Program Cycle.

TESTING APPROACHES TO ENABLE LEARNING AND ADAPTING

In supporting 20 missions that program biodiversity funds, FAB and MI identified common challenges in programming and the needs of end users in the field. Mission staff contributed technical knowledge, expertise about the local development system, energy, and creativity to the testing and refining of new practices that would support widespread uptake of an adaptive management approach. With these insightful contributions from missions, FAB and MI led efforts to:

- **Incorporate collaborating, learning, and adapting into procurement** to ensure that missions and implementing partners would have adequate time and resources to apply these principles during implementation. This helped USAID set the expectation with implementing teams that learning and adapting are essential to delivering better development outcomes, not just an ancillary consideration.

A fisher dries his catch in the sun in the Philippines. Improving the management of fishing practices and conserving critical fish habitats can enhance the natural productivity of the fish resources, leading to improved benefits for people and nature. Credit: Joel Polcarpio for USAID/Philippines



Schoolgirls in Kenya's Laikipia District participate in reforestation efforts while learning about the importance of protecting natural resources. Credit: Delphin King, Laikipai Wildlife Forum

- **Establish activity start-up processes and practices**, including a theory of change workshop that brings USAID and implementing partner staff together to set a course for success during the activity start-up phase. Through collaborative planning, the full team can develop a shared vision for success over the life of the activity, an agreed set of metrics to measure progress, and a process for making course corrections as needed. The theory of change and its related results chain then become the foundation for activity work plans, monitoring and reporting processes, and evaluations to help systematize learning and adapting.
- **Promote pause and reflect practices.** Achieving ambitious outcomes in complex development contexts requires teams to honestly examine their progress and make thoughtful adjustments to changing circumstances or unanticipated results. MI piloted pause and reflect practices during more than 13 in-person workshops around the world. These opportunities brought multiple stakeholders together at key points in the planning and implementation process to identify necessary course corrections before the end of the funding period; build shared ownership over the activity's progress; and improve outcomes. This model is well established and becoming standard practice with MI support: many teams are now able to replicate this or similar approaches on their own to inform future programming decisions.





A villager constructing a raft to transport timber downstream on the Arajuno River, Ecuador. Credit: Tomas Munita/CIFOR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LATIN AMERICA

Developing a Cohesive Vision for USAID Investment in the Amazon

Challenge

USAID is the third-largest conservation donor in the Amazon, making it a key player in combating threats to one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth. Many implementing partners and a complex array of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders work with USAID operating units in Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and Washington, D.C. to address the threats and drivers of biodiversity loss in the region. Within this complex and multi-layered development context, the challenge was to coordinate the efforts of various USAID operating units to achieve a greater overall return on investment in the Amazon and improve conservation and other development outcomes across the region.

“

The results chain process gives you a clear pathway to follow for biodiversity programming. It is also clear and logical, starting with ‘What is it that you want to conserve?’ and then, ‘What are the threats? What are the drivers?’ and then, ‘What can you do about them?’ And then the process helps with prioritization of all kinds of tasks as you plan and implement your program.”

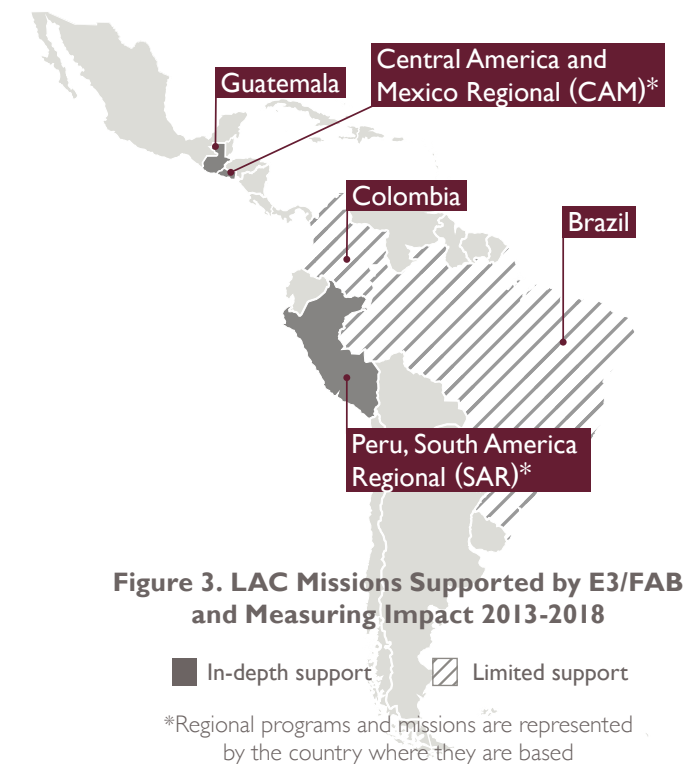
— Holly Ferrette, during her time as Director, Office of Environment and Sustainable Growth in USAID/Peru

Approach

With MI support, FAB engaged a collaborative working group that drew on USAID stakeholders from across the Amazon region and from Washington, D.C. to develop an Amazon Vision that could inform priority-setting and strategic planning for USAID investments at many scales in the region.

The Amazon Vision in turn informed a systematic, evidence-based regional project design process that included developing:

- **Regional situation models:** After identifying key threats to Amazonian forests and rivers, the design team developed situation models that graphically described the most significant drivers of these threats. Situation models enabled a structured discussion of potential strategic approaches, which the team prioritized based on the extent to which a threat should be addressed regionally; the availability of scalable solutions; the extent to which a threat affects indigenous lands and communities; and the opportunity for regional activities to complement bilateral efforts and other donors’ initiatives.



- **Regional results chains:** Working collaboratively on results chains, the team was able to produce a graphic depiction of how it believed each strategic approach would contribute to achieving specific results and lead to a region-wide reduction in deforestation and conservation of Amazonian forests and rivers. After building consensus around these results chains, they had a tool for defining learning questions that would allow them to test programmatic assumptions over time; create a regional MEL plan; share results more easily across the region from a number of independent operating units; and adapt strategy and activities as needed to improve outcomes.

Results

USAID produced an overarching Amazon Vision, which describes the alignment among more than 18 activities programmed by USAID/SAR, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil. USAID will use the Vision to promote synergies across its various Amazonian programs and to collect and consolidate results against regional strategic goals. They are able to communicate the cumulative impact of USAID programs in the Amazon for the first time.

Using Evidence to Enhance Project Design in Peru

Challenge

Peru's Amazonian forests face a variety of threats including unsustainable agricultural expansion, hydrocarbon extraction, poorly planned hydropower, and illegal gold mining. However, data on the severity and location of many of these threats is difficult to obtain because the forests are remote and difficult to access. When USAID/Peru began design of a new five-year environment and sustainable growth project, lack of evidence made it difficult to prioritize places and threats and communicate conservation objectives to stakeholders. In order to strengthen buy-in among internal and external stakeholders, the Mission also needed to demonstrate how conserving biodiversity and reducing land-based sources of greenhouse gas emissions contribute to USAID's overall development objectives.

Approach

With support from FAB and MI, USAID/Peru sought the best available evidence on areas of highest biodiversity value and key threats. They collected data from academic literature, NGOs, and government sources, as well as the USAID GeoCenter, an important partner in the process. Analyzing available geospatial data enabled the team to select priority landscapes based on sound evidence. These landscapes are highly biodiverse and very threatened, and they align with national development priorities.

Results

The evidence-based design process helped USAID/Peru build a common understanding among stakeholders about where they needed to work and why. The process was also well documented and reproducible, so the program can be revised as new information becomes available – a key requirement for successful adaptive management.

Key Product:

[Biodiversity Case Example: Incorporating Geospatial Analysis into USAID Biodiversity Program Design](#)

Deforestation threatens biodiversity and increases the risk of land slides in San Martin, Peru.
Credit: Marlon del Aguila Guerrero/CIFOR





Salvatrice Musabyeyezu of the International Gorilla Conservation Program Uganda talking with the Batwa people about their tourism program. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

HIGHLIGHTS FROM AFRICA

Exploring Programmatic Assumptions in Uganda

Challenge

One year into implementation of the Uganda Biodiversity Program, USAID and its implementing partner, the African Wildlife Foundation, needed additional information on specific programmatic assumptions in order to test their theory of change.

In particular, they wanted to investigate the central programmatic assumption behind one of their main strategic approaches: promoting conservation enterprises. The assumption was that if communities and landowners benefit from biodiversity conservation, their attitudes and practices toward conservation will improve, which will reduce critical threats to natural resources. But key questions remained: Do we understand what conditions must be met for communities to adopt conservation enterprises? What do communities perceive as benefits? What actually drives behavior change in this particular context?



We have already learned, from testing our assumptions in the theory of change, that villagers may need additional support in financial management and equitably sharing the benefits among the community to motivate the needed attitude and behavior changes.”

— Sam Mwandha, during his time as Senior Program Officer with African Wildlife Foundation

Approach

To deepen insight into this aspect of their conservation enterprises theory of change, the team applied a learning review based on USAID’s CLA methodology. Unlike the pause and reflect learning tool, which brings stakeholders together during annual reporting or work planning to assess overall progress against activity implementation and monitoring goals, a learning review provides the opportunity to dig deeper into a specific learning question or programmatic assumption in order to test a theory of change and adapt if necessary.

The methodology focuses on investigating the evidence – existing information and primary data are collected when needed – to enhance learning and develop a more robust theory of change. To revisit assumptions behind its conservation enterprise approach, the Uganda Biodiversity Program worked with FAB and MI to develop a set of learning questions based on its theory of change. They then used those questions as a framework for assessing existing monitoring and evaluation data and filling information gaps through additional primary data gathering, including key informant interviews and focus group discussions with community members.

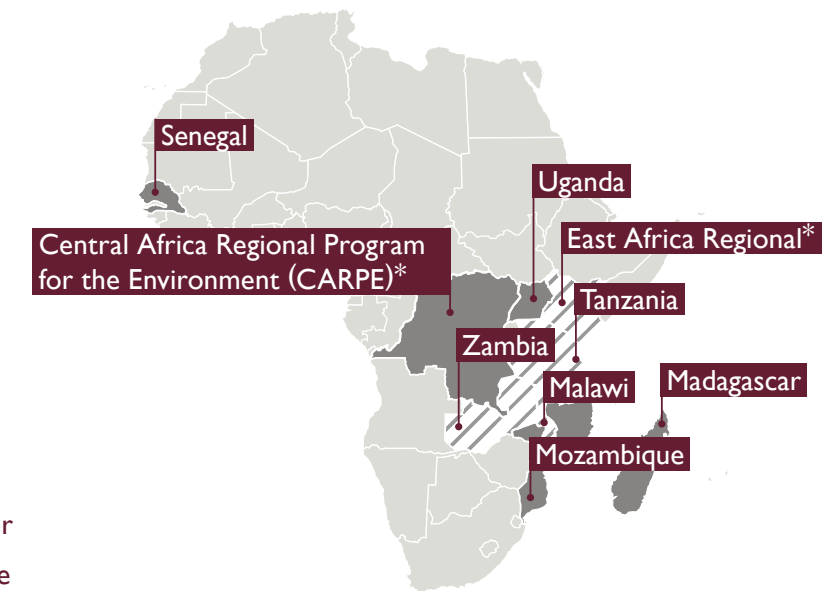


Figure 4. Africa Missions Supported by E3/FAB and Measuring Impact 2013-2018

■ In-depth support ▨ Limited support

*Regional programs and missions are represented by the country where they are based

This process resulted in some important insight into what was driving and motivating community and household decision-making, a critical factor for any strategic approach targeting community behavior change.

Results

The team applied its learning about motivations for engaging in conservation enterprises and conservation friendly behavior to adapt implementation and monitoring. For example, after seeing a clear need for better financial management and business skills to encourage community participation in conservation enterprises, the team hired staff and adapted training accordingly. They also found that, in addition to income, communities valued having a good relationship with protected area authorities, so they linked this benefit more strongly to conservation enterprises.

Based in part on this commitment to learning, USAID/ Uganda extended the Uganda Biodiversity Program contract by an additional year, giving the partner more time to make course corrections and learn more about the efficacy of conservation enterprises at their sites.

Strengthening Cross-Activity Learning in Mozambique

Challenge

Mozambique is a country of exceptional marine and terrestrial biodiversity, but it faces extreme poverty, as well as governance and economic development struggles. It is also a hotspot for wildlife trafficking. USAID/Mozambique engaged FAB and MI to support the co-design and learning approach for two activities across two sites – Gorongosa National Park and Niassa National Reserve – to address poverty and reduce the threat of poaching in these areas. The Mission sought assistance using existing results chains to identify learning opportunities for priority common strategic approaches, co-develop key components of a cross-activity learning agenda, develop a roadmap to improve MEL, and provide opportunities for cross-activity networking and co-learning.

Approach

One of the mechanisms for collaborative learning was the cross-activity learning review – conducted with support from FAB and MI at the activities' mid-term evaluation point. As the two sites shared common theories of change about how various strategic approaches, specifically improving law enforcement and promoting alternative livelihoods, would lead to biodiversity conservation, a key objective of the learning review was to identify learning questions that would allow a deeper examination of the context within which these theories of change held true.

Cross-activity teams prioritized the questions using a novel, multi-step approach. They refined the top two learning questions (one for each strategic approach) for further investigation, detailing how existing data and evidence could address these questions and identifying new data generation needs. As a first priority, they agreed to address a question related to understanding the local criminal justice system in each protected area and improving rates of prosecution and sentencing for wildlife crime, using the structure developed in the cross-activity learning review. The other detailed learning question, as well as the other priority questions, will be incorporated into the learning agendas of each activity and that of the Mission's biodiversity and ecotourism project.

Results

This case offers a good example of the effectiveness of creating the expectation of learning starting at the design phase and continuing over the activities' lifetimes. The mid-term learning review reinforced this approach with opportunities for formal and informal exchanges. By the end of the learning review process, Mission staff had worked with partners from both activities to establish a joint community of practice committed to ongoing sharing and learning tied to their common theories of change. Their common theories and associated learning questions are integrated into each site's MEL plan, which will bolster the Mission's project-level learning and structure the scope of work for their intended end-of-activity evaluation. The Mozambique Mission and MI won a 2018 CLA Case Competition prize for "Seeing the Forest for the Trees: CLA Strengthens Conservation in Mozambique," a write-up of this learning review.

Workshop participants map biodiversity focal interests to address the threat of elephant poaching in Niassa National Reserve, Mozambique. Credit: Kathleen Flower, Measuring Impact.





Multi-stakeholder workshop to assess and apply learning for the PAANI project in Nepal. Credit: Olaf Zerbok for USAID

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ASIA

Annual Pause and Reflect Strengthens Programming in Nepal

Challenge

USAID/Nepal supports a number of country goals, from conserving Nepal’s rich biodiversity to helping vulnerable communities combat the negative and rapidly growing effects of global climate change. In response, the Mission’s environment office recently designed two integrated activities that work together to enhance Nepal’s ability to manage water resources for multiple users and uses, including climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation.

Activity staff are working across eight priority watersheds in three different river basins across western Nepal, covering an enormous and remote geographic scope from the Himalayan foothills to the Terai Arc Landscape. They are using a range of strategic approaches and need opportunities to come together and discuss what’s working, what is not, and to coordinate their collective efforts.



One of the key takeaways from doing this over the past couple years, for me, is that it’s a process. You don’t just do one of these workshops and then that’s it. It is much more impactful when you keep doing it from year to year.”

— Karolyn Upham during her time as Deputy COR for PAANI in USAID/Nepal

Approach

In addition to helping USAID/Nepal with integrated design, FAB and MI introduced them to the pause and reflect exercise to ensure they were coming together on an annual basis to review programmatic assumptions and share learning. A pause and reflect event is a multi-day workshop to analyze progress towards activity-wide goals and adapt assumptions and work plans as needed to improve outcomes over time. In this case, FAB and MI brought together more than 60 people, including practitioners from eight priority watersheds within three different river basins, as well as technical experts from the capital.



The process became smoother and as a result, our second year work plan and M&E plan are much more coherent. We have aligned each of the activities under our seven approaches that link better and explain the program better.”

— Shanker Khagi, Energy Specialist, USAID/Nepal



Figure 5. Asia Missions Supported by E3/FAB and Measuring Impact 2013-2018

■ In-depth support ▨ Limited support

*Regional programs and missions are represented by the country where they are based

Results

Engaging in pause and reflect exercises in years one and two of this activity led to several important strategic shifts to improve activity effectiveness:

- The team adjusted its targets to be more realistic, choosing to go deeper rather than broader with certain strategic activities. For example, they determined that focusing on fewer hydropower operators to showcase proposed environmental best practices would be more effective than trying to engage with too many partners.
- The team developed and began tracking learning questions in their MEL plan that will inform their final performance evaluation and produce insights for possible course corrections.
- The team modified its approach to improve the linkage between upstream and downstream site-based activities, through increased communication among partners via basin-level town hall meetings to identify integrated solutions to specific issues.

Using Data to Improve a Strategic Approach in the Philippines

Challenge

USAID and the Government of the Philippines have long worked together to address threats to biodiversity. They have jointly invested in capacity building and governance programs to empower communities to protect important natural resources that drive the country's economic development. As a result, they can point to a collection of successful approaches that have achieved conservation results over many years.

The challenge facing USAID/Philippines and its partners is the need for evidence on why certain approaches do or do not work, which could enhance their ability to scale up and sustain the right interventions in the right places at the right time to achieve lasting impact.

Approach

With FAB and MI support, the USAID-supported Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+WISER) activity began gathering data to assess key programmatic assumptions behind its most frequently used approach – strengthening law enforcement. One of the tools employed was SMART, the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool, which they piloted in key protected areas to gather and analyze data to determine the relationship between law enforcement actions, threats, forest regeneration, and biodiversity. With USAID/Philippines and FAB and MI support, B+WISER used the results from this analysis to rigorously examine their theory of change about if and how law enforcement actions lead to conservation. Based on this analysis, they updated their results chain and related learning questions as well as their strategy and activities.

The Philippine Government was impressed enough with the SMART data and USAID and its implementing partners' approach to monitoring and evaluation that it provided funding for use of the tool in all of the country's 160 protected areas.

Results

The Philippines now supports the world's largest national-scale SMART deployment, using state-of-the-art digital data collection and analysis to continually learn and adapt their law enforcement approach. Their transparent, iterative, and collaborative approach to monitoring and evaluation has improved decision making and adaptive management at every level. For example, at the activity mid-term evaluation, the B+WISER team made a critical decision to change scope and adjust strategic approaches, moving away from reliance on payments for ecosystem services to test the potential contributions of an assortment of conservation financing approaches, including public-private partnerships, user fees, and government funding. USAID supported revision of the activity's geographic scope to improve focus and granted a one-year extension to expand SMART application to the rest of the Philippines' national protected area system. USAID's flexibility allowed B+WISER to leverage the government's interest and resources to invest in a national law enforcement monitoring system and further expand programming from seven to 177 field offices.

Forests in the Philippines.
Credit: Andrew Watson, DAI



The outputs [from the MI workshop “Designing Performance Evaluations”] made the scope of work much more explicit and specific, thereby simplifying the evaluator’s job and ensuring a more useful evaluation.”

— Nora Pinzon, Deputy Program Office
Director, USAID/Philippines

IMPACT AT THE CROSS-MISSION LEVEL

Catalyzing Cross-Mission Learning

CHALLENGE

USAID missions often use similar strategic approaches to biodiversity conservation, yet they face barriers to sharing knowledge across missions, hindering their ability to use evidence-based practices, enhance efficiency, and improve outcomes.

At the beginning of MI, USAID missions expressed great interest in collaboration and learning but noted several challenges:

- **Limited time and opportunity for cross-mission exchange:** USAID missions are deeply knowledgeable about their local systems and contexts. However, they have limited time and opportunities to participate in cross-mission learning efforts that would improve understanding of the conditions under which specific approaches are most effective or to collectively develop and share evidence and best practices. Missions needed practical, helpful opportunities for cross-mission exchange.
- **Need for support to use learning:** Despite great interest in using evidence and learning, missions lacked clear guidance on how to do so. They expressed a need for processes and practices that would help them apply learning in service of improved outcomes.
- **Difficulty accessing knowledge resources during program design and implementation:** Missions repeatedly noted the challenge of finding concise, relevant, and useful knowledge products to inform decision-making at key points during program design, implementation, and evaluation.

With missions hungry to use learning and evidence to improve programming, along with the Agency's launch of the CLA framework, conditions were ideal to develop and launch a cross-mission learning initiative.



USAID has been around for over 50 years and has a wealth of experience in a number of areas ... But people working at USAID just do not have the time to be digging through documents; they're often burdened with many programs and initiatives, so we need to have evidence available and presented in a way that is most helpful for them."

— Cynthia Gill, Director, USAID/FAB

CROSS-MISSION LEVEL APPROACH

In response to these challenges, FAB created the Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program, with the goal of developing:

- Common frameworks that would enable missions to share and compare information
- Forums for dialogue and collaboration
- A series of learning products to share evidence and best practices
- A learning network of USAID staff, empowered and enabled to share knowledge and experience



Multiple stakeholders discuss a heifer program in Bwindi-Mgahinga Conservation Area, Uganda – one of six sites that took part in USAID's cross-mission Conservation Enterprises Retrospective. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

The learning program included:

- **A commitment to sound organizational learning principles:** MI conducted and published two seminal analyses: (1) [Making Use of the Portfolio: Organizational Learning at USAID](#), which explores previous and ongoing learning efforts, best practices, challenges, and lessons within USAID to identify the optimal approach for Agency learning efforts, including the Cross-Mission Learning Program, and (2) [What Learning Looks Like at USAID](#), a review of learning activities implemented across the Agency to determine their utility and help optimize resources to improve development outcomes.
- **Creating USAID's first cross-mission learning groups:** FAB identified two important areas on which to focus cross-mission learning – combating wildlife trafficking and conservation enterprises – and, with MI's support, established learning groups for each. Working with USAID mission staff, the learning groups developed generalized theories of change to depict common assumptions about how different strategic approaches lead to biodiversity conservation, as well as learning agendas.

- **Systematically sharing knowledge and learning:** Through the learning groups and other activities facilitated by FAB and MI, mission staff working on similar strategic approaches were able to share knowledge and experiences through virtual learning events, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, and online platforms that curate electronic reference materials and support information sharing.
- **Creating a richer, more actionable knowledge base on USAID’s Biodiversity Conservation Gateway:** Using the learning agendas developed for combating wildlife trafficking and conservation enterprises, the MI team produced evidence syntheses needed to fill knowledge gaps and made them available through this online portal.



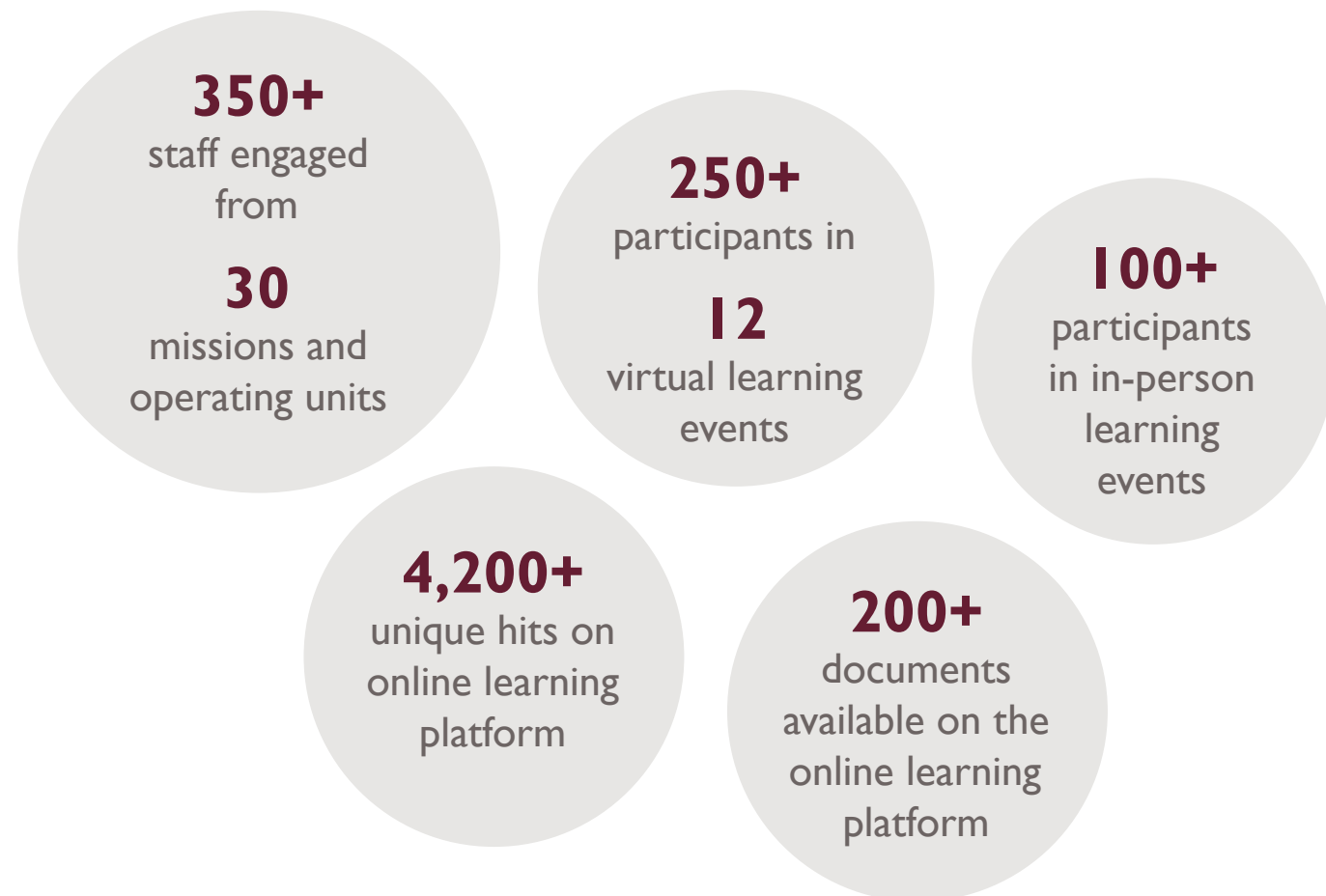
There are many interventions that missions are doing around the world that are similar. So why not capture those general approaches in a very common theory of change and then allow missions to take a look at that and adapt it for their own use and tweak it in a way that we can both implement them in our country and then contribute to learning at the cross-mission level?"

— Heather D’Agnes, during her time as Deputy Director, Environment Office, USAID/Indonesia



Rodolfo Rodrigo, president of SATIKCA, an indigenous peoples’ organization in Palawan, Philippines, holds a map of their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

By the Numbers



FOCAL AREA: CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES

Building a Community of Practice

The first cross-mission learning group focused on **conservation enterprises**, one of the strategic approaches most commonly used by USAID missions and their partners. Conservation enterprises are businesses that generate economic and social benefits in ways that help meet conservation outcomes. Examples of conservation enterprises include ecotourism, non-timber forest products, craft-making, and beekeeping, all focused on achieving conservation outcomes.

USAID’s conservation enterprises learning group developed a generalized theory of change (Figure 6 on page 43) to describe how conservation enterprises lead to biodiversity conservation, along with a set of learning questions to test underlying assumptions. The theory of change assumes that supporting the enabling conditions for conservation enterprises will lead to benefits for stakeholders that will lead to changes in their attitudes and behavior, and ultimately contribute to a reduction in threats to biodiversity.

Despite prevalent use of this strategic approach, there are persistent gaps in practitioners’ understanding about the assumptions behind the theory of change and the conditions required to achieve and sustain biodiversity conservation. USAID and its partners have often lacked the right metrics to quantify progress, as well as meta-analyses to understand the effectiveness of different efforts to conserve biodiversity through the conservation enterprises approach.

CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES CROSS-MISSION LEARNING AGENDA

The [conservation enterprises learning agenda](#) poses a series of questions that can be explored for a particular enterprise, not only improving its design and implementation, but generating insights that further validate the learning group's generalized theory of change:

- Are enabling conditions in place to support a sustainable enterprise?
- Does the enterprise lead to benefits for stakeholders?
- Do the benefits realized by stakeholders lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors?
- Do positive changes in stakeholders' behaviors lead to a reduction in threats to biodiversity (or restoration)?
- Does a reduction in threats (or restoration) lead to conservation?

MI engaged learning group members, conducted research, and synthesized existing information to build a knowledge base and facilitate a community of practice around these questions.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Conducted a 20-year retrospective evaluation of conservation enterprises to gain long-term insights** (see page 43 for more): To better understand the conditions required for long-term enterprise and conservation sustainability, FAB and MI conducted a [Retrospective Evaluation](#) of conservation enterprises at six sites where the approach had been in use for at least two decades. Each site featured partnerships between local communities and one or more implementing organizations, and all received some USAID support during that time. The opportunity to look beyond the traditional donor funding period into the long-term outcomes of supporting conservation enterprises enabled USAID and its partners to generate valuable new insights to help practitioners improve design and management of this strategic approach.

- **Applied a generalized theory of change to review and learn from past USAID investments in conservation enterprises:** In addition to the retrospective evaluation described above, FAB and MI conducted a desk review of a range of other conservation enterprises supported by USAID over the past two decades. They produced a technical brief, [Conservation Enterprises: Using a Theory of Change Approach to Synthesize Lessons from USAID Biodiversity Projects](#), that uses the learning group's generalized theory of change as a framework for systematic review of lessons learned and underlining assumptions.
- **Engaged practitioners through multiple storytelling methods:** To bring both the human and biodiversity impact of conservation enterprises to life, a photographer accompanied the evaluator to each of the six sites covered in the retrospective evaluation. These photos tell powerful stories through a variety of media, including an [online photo essay](#), a large-scale photo exhibit, and presentations at practitioner events.
- **Sustained engagement among learning group members through webinars:** Five webinars drew 80 attendees and provided opportunities for learning group members to connect with each other as well as with experts on topics relevant to the conservation enterprises learning agenda. [Webcasts](#) are available and topics included:
 - Enabling conditions for conservation enterprises
 - Gaps in existing evidence base for conservation enterprises
 - Review of experiences from Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve
 - Using theories of change to design monitoring systems for conservation enterprises

- **Produced technical brief on keys to success for enterprises:** MI produced a technical brief, [Building a Conservation Enterprise: Keys for Success](#), which summarizes guidance from a range of resource documents on the enabling conditions for a sustainable conservation enterprise. It provides practitioners with important insights grounded in the literature that can be applied directly to the design of conservation enterprise approaches.
- **Provided useful planning tools for busy practitioners:** MI created a [Conservation Enterprise Planning Checklist](#) to help practitioners plan their enterprise approaches and identify the most important considerations in the context of a particular site.

- **Built the evidence base around integrating biodiversity and livelihoods:** Using a database of World Bank project evaluations, MI conducted an analysis to contribute to the evidence base around the benefits and effectiveness of [Integrating Conservation and Livelihood Goals](#).

Member of conservation enterprise in western Himalayas, Nepal carries handmade paper down the mountain for sale to international markets. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID





Exploring The Nature of Conservation Enterprises

Over the past two decades, USAID has supported conservation enterprises of different types, at different scales, and involving different partners all over the world.

So, what do we know about the effectiveness of this strategic approach? Why do some conservation enterprises endure while others fail? And most importantly, do they lead to sustainable conservation outcomes?

Most of the evidence we have to date for the effectiveness of a conservation enterprise approach resulting in improved biodiversity is based on reviews conducted within the typical three- to five-year donor funding period. Rarely do donors go back to review what has happened at a site post-project, let alone two decades after initial support, as is the case for this retrospective evaluation.

To gain deeper insight, a USAID review team visited six sites in four countries (Nepal, Guatemala, Uganda, and the Philippines) that had received USAID support for a conservation enterprise approach at some point over the past 20 years.

Using a Common Theory of Change to Compare Results

The team used the cross-mission learning group's generalized theory of change for conservation enterprises (Figure 6 below) to examine outcomes across sites. This enabled them to garner deeper insight into the theory's underlying assumptions, which will help practitioners at any given site improve design and management of this strategic approach.

What Did They Find?

While each site is different, the team was able to ground-truth a set of conditions identified as key to enterprise and conservation sustainability. These include everything from ensuring community ownership and resource rights to building market linkages to putting sound governance systems in place.

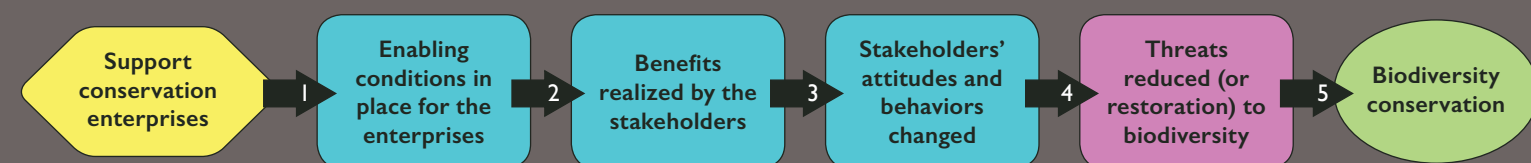
Other Findings Include:

- **The implementing partner's role evolves over time**, going from providing technical assistance for enterprise establishment to helping communities form long-term business partnerships and alliances.
- **Both cash and non-cash benefits matter**, and it is usually only a small subset of community members who receive cash benefits in the form of wages or dividends. The majority benefit from improved community services, such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare, provided by enterprise revenue.
- **Fostering local leadership capacity, including the ability to manage leadership transitions over time, is critical** to achieving and sustaining every outcome in the theory of change.
- **It is important to understand that different stakeholders are motivated by different benefits**, and thus, multiple incentives may be required.
- **Enterprises are most effective when part of a suite of strategic approaches**, including awareness-building, law enforcement, and sometimes formal education and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

[Download Retrospective Report](#)

[Explore photo essay](#)

Figure 6. Generalized Theory of Change for Conservation Enterprises



Left: Satya Devi Shereshta, chair, Cheta Cheli Wool Spinning Group – a conservation enterprise in Chitwan, Nepal – gathers product for market with Buddi Maya Ghale (left). Credit: Jason Houston for USAID

FOCAL AREA: COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Addressing a Global Crisis

The second cross-mission learning group focused on **combating wildlife trafficking**, a U.S. government and USAID priority. Due to a dramatic escalation in the scope and volume of wildlife trafficking in recent years, the U.S. government has increased efforts to combat this crisis and respond to the 2014 Executive Order on Combating Wildlife Trafficking (and associated National Strategy and Interagency Task Force) and the 2016 Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act.

In this context, USAID staff needed high-quality, useful information to inform development of new projects and activities. FAB created the combating wildlife trafficking cross-mission learning group and its learning agenda to draw lessons from prior experience, share insights, and spread innovative ideas across missions.

COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING CROSS-MISSION LEARNING AGENDA

Developed as a collaborative effort that drew on the expertise of mission staff, other U.S. government agencies, and implementing partners, the [combating wildlife trafficking learning agenda](#) focused on three priority strategic approaches and related learning questions:

1. **Reducing consumer demand through behavior change methodologies.** Many new USAID field programs recognized the need to use social and behavior change communication methodologies to alter negative consumer choices and encourage reporting of illegal products and markets. But they were not sure how to most effectively apply the best practices.
Key learning question: What does effective demand reduction look like?
2. **Building law enforcement capacity to combat wildlife trafficking.** Many USAID field programs recognized the need to provide financial and technical assistance to improve the capacity of governments and agencies to enforce wildlife laws and prosecute wildlife criminals, but working with law enforcement and the judiciary was relatively new to biodiversity conservation programs.
Key learning question: What are the characteristics of effective law enforcement capacity building?

3. **Increasing community conservation action and support.** USAID field missions have a long history of working with communities and biodiversity conservation but recognized the need to build greater community support and action to decrease poaching and illegal activity and to share their lessons more broadly.

Key learning question: What is best practice for community management of wildlife and efforts to decrease poaching?

With MI support, FAB set out to answer these learning questions and advance missions' collective understanding and ability to act on these priority topics.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Synthesized evidence on the effectiveness of capacity building for enforcement and prosecution:** Many USAID missions and implementing partners use law enforcement capacity building as one approach to combating wildlife trafficking. To better inform their efforts, FAB and MI distilled the findings of more than 200 grey literature and peer-reviewed documents on enforcement capacity building. The [findings](#) highlight evidence on the effectiveness of certain actions and identify areas that require more study.

- **Compiled lessons from diverse contexts through a global case study compilation:** Learning what works and what does not from implementers on the ground provides valuable, timely knowledge to USAID. To that end, in 2017 USAID released a global call for case studies from ongoing projects that address questions posed in the combating wildlife trafficking learning agenda. The call attracted 49 entries from 22 countries and regions. USAID selected [12 cases](#) that provided novel insights that best helped answer learning questions and that identified lessons other groups could use. Common themes emerged among these cases, such as the role of technology, building effective partnerships, fostering local ownership, and leveraging outside experts and internal champions.
- **Convened thought leaders to advance global learning:** FAB and MI organized an in-person knowledge exchange bringing together 27 experts in combating wildlife trafficking from around the world to share information and identify priority actions to accelerate the adoption of effective innovations in building capacity of enforcement and prosecution to combat wildlife crimes. Experts represented nine implementing partners, nine USAID missions, and three government agencies engaged in the fight against wildlife crime. The event featured keynote speakers from the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, as well as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- **Sustained cross-mission engagement through webinar series:** FAB hosted seven webinars for members of the learning group, attracting more than 175 attendees, who learned from each other as well as from guest experts. Speakers included Gayle Burgess (Behavior Change Coordinator, TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network), Sal Amato (Law Enforcement Specialist, RTI International), and David Wilkie (Executive Director, Conservation and Communities, Wildlife Conservation Society). The [webcasts](#) are available at USAID's Biodiversity Conservation Gateway.
- **Provided missions with better information about the role of communities in combating wildlife crime:** With MI and mission support, researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and the Smithsonian Institution developed a synthesis and analysis, [Rewards and Risks Associated with Community Engagement in Anti-Poaching and Anti-Trafficking](#), which explores the roles communities play in countering wildlife crime, the motivations and benefits for individuals and communities to engage in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts, and the risks and mitigation measures associated with their involvement.



Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros,
Chitwan National Park, Nepal.
Credit: Jason Houston for USAID



Using Shared Tools to Combat Wildlife Trafficking Across Asia

Challenge

Southeast Asia is a major center for illegal wildlife trade. The region is a hub for both consumers and suppliers of wildlife products and contains important cross-border transit routes. Addressing the wildlife crime crisis is a priority for USAID, including better coordination of efforts throughout the region. Bilateral USAID missions in Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and RDMA are on the front lines of this effort.

Currently, approaches to combating wildlife trafficking include strengthening capacity for enforcement and prosecution and reducing demand through social and behavior change communication initiatives. But until recently, there has not been a way to share, measure, evaluate, and learn which actions work best and under which conditions to effectively reduce threats. Furthermore, there have been too few opportunities for missions to collaborate on metrics, compare results, and improve outcomes at the regional level.

Approach

With the help of MI, experts in the field, missions, and implementing partners, FAB developed a toolkit called *Measuring Efforts to Combat Wildlife Crime: A Toolkit for Improving Action and Accountability*. It contains high-level results chains and associated metrics that missions can adapt for their needs and still use as a common framework for sharing results and learning. Using this toolkit, FAB and MI provided direct technical assistance to USAID's missions in Indonesia, the Philippines, RDMA, and Vietnam to strengthen activity design, implementation, and coordination.

For USAID, this work was an **opportunity to harmonize efforts to combat wildlife trafficking across three levels** in the world's most critical demand region for wildlife trafficking:

- Local/national – where missions and implementing partners could select, implement, track, and share progress on strategic approaches
- Regional – where USAID actions in individual countries could be harmonized and “rolled up” to understand both individual and collective impact
- Global – where learning and results from missions in Asia could inform efforts to combat wildlife trafficking in other countries and regions

Results

USAID and its partners are now using the combating wildlife trafficking toolkit to improve focus, alignment, and results. They are also measuring and sharing results in order to extend the reach of learning and increase effectiveness.

The toolkit is also helping missions:

- Focus their combating wildlife trafficking work on species of greatest concern based on where they were sourced and consumed;
- Identify priority threats and choose the most effective strategic approaches, programmed at the right scale, to be effective; and
- Make activity design and start-up more efficient with generalized tools they can adopt and tailor to their needs.

Youth anti-poaching campaign, Nepal. Credit: USAID

IMPACT AT THE CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL

Improving Understanding that Conservation is Development

CHALLENGE

USAID recognizes that reducing threats to biodiversity must be coordinated with other development goals: tackling extreme poverty, increasing food security, improving public health, increasing climate change resilience, and improving gender equity. Through its Biodiversity Policy, the Agency is committed to improving the understanding that **conservation is development** and investing in programs that integrate across sectors.

Women fishing in the Terai region of Nepal. USAID is supporting efforts to improve management of water resources at multiple sites in Nepal through climate change adaptation and conservation of freshwater biodiversity. Credit: Olaf Zerbock

The challenge lies in understanding when and how collaboration across sectors will improve overall development outcomes, as well as assessing the contributions biodiversity conservation makes to achievement of other development goals.



USAID is a development agency – not a conservation organization per se – but our work is firmly grounded in the reality that conservation is development and that functioning natural systems are critical to human survival and to a country’s own journey to self-reliance.”

— Cynthia Gill, Director, USAID/FAB



A community scout surveys the landscape from Kittenden Outpost, Kenya. Credit: Matthew Erdman for USAID

CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL APPROACH

To address this challenge, USAID’s Biodiversity Policy calls for **evidence-based approaches** to fill knowledge gaps and improve integrated programming. Through MI, FAB made significant progress on this front by taking the following approaches:

- **Developed USAID’s first-ever *Biodiversity and Development Research Agenda*:** The Agenda prioritized evidence needed to promote the link between biodiversity conservation and other development outcomes, particularly in the context of major Agency initiatives on food security, gender equity, global health, and climate change. The Agenda was designed to bridge the gap between the research community and conservation practitioners and policymakers by articulating the most critical questions to answer in order to advance biodiversity conservation and integrated programming.
- **Created actionable evidence:** To support decision makers at both the mission and Agency levels, FAB synthesized existing information on the link between biodiversity and other development goals; conducted meta analyses; and provided new evidence products in a format directly relevant to USAID programming needs.
- **Supported use of an evidence-based approach:** FAB created capacity-development tools and practices to help USAID staff understand when and how to apply evidence to programming decisions (see Achievements on page 50).
- **Collaborated with other development sectors:** FAB and MI worked to understand the needs of practitioners working in food security, health, gender, and climate change and supported the work of FAB’s Biodiversity Integration Working Groups, a set of internal initiatives developed to inform USAID’s implementation of Goal 2 of the Biodiversity Policy, *to integrate biodiversity as an essential component of human development*. This included sharing tools that would facilitate integrated design, such as results chains, and providing evidence supporting the value of integrated programming.



ACHIEVEMENTS

HELPED PRACTITIONERS PUT EVIDENCE IN ACTION

To operationalize USAID's commitment to evidence-driven programming and learning, FAB and MI published a four-part guide for biodiversity practitioners, [Evidence in Action](#). It turns theory into practical steps for generating and applying evidence to biodiversity programs in the context of the USAID Program Cycle. The team produced a companion interactive online learning resource, [Acting on the Evidence](#), to aid adoption and effective use of *Evidence in Action*.

The MI team also supported individual missions in identifying evidence gaps, developing targeted learning questions and related research scopes of work, and gathering and applying new data to improve program design. See page 26 for a case from South America.

CHAMPIONED INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING OF WILD FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY

Around the world, healthy ecosystems make valuable daily contributions to food security. From the provisioning of wild foods to pest control and pollination, biodiversity supports food security in critical ways that are often little known and undervalued.

To improve the application of knowledge about the importance of biodiversity to food security programming, FAB and MI identified wild fisheries as a top priority area around which to build an action-oriented evidence base. Fish provide a significant portion of people's protein intake in many developing countries. Additionally, wild fisheries contribute to economic growth and provide livelihood opportunities to women in USAID partner countries. Despite their importance, many wild fisheries are declining and national strategies for food security often overlook them.

To further the dialogue around integrating fisheries and food security programming, MI helped FAB's Food Security Integration Working Group synthesize existing evidence and produce a comprehensive briefing book: [Fishing for Food Security: The Importance of Wild Fisheries for Food Security and Nutrition](#). *Fishing for Food Security* makes the case for integrating fisheries into development objectives and supports it with data that increases the legitimacy and programmatic focus on this key issue.



I've been pleased at the appetite within the Bureau for Food Security (BFS) for learning more about the importance and potential impact of wild fisheries to their work. When FAB conducted a webinar to highlight the fisheries briefing book and country profiles produced under MI, we had more than 180 people in attendance from all over the world. BFS also incorporated information from the briefing book into their food security training program, which reaches both Washington, D.C. decision makers and mission staff."

— Barbara Best, Ph.D., Senior Coastal Resource Management and Policy Specialist, USAID/FAB

In 2016, Congress passed the Global Food Security Act, which called for USAID and other relevant agencies to develop the U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy 2017–2021. The evidence contained in the fisheries briefing book helped support the argument that wild capture fisheries are critical to food security, nutrition, and livelihoods and ensure that fisheries were ultimately integrated into the global strategy.

FAB and MI also developed resources to help missions advocate for incorporating wild fisheries into their country-level strategies. Specifically, MI produced nine country profiles focusing on select [Feed the Future](#) priority countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana, Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, and Tanzania. To date, the evidence contained in these profiles has been used to integrate fisheries and biodiversity into the Senegal Global Food Security Country Plan and the Ghana Global Food Security Country Plan.

Based on technical assistance to missions, FAB and MI also worked with BFS to produce an illustrative [case example](#) demonstrating how adaptive management tools like situation models and results chains can help activity designers effectively integrate the combined goals of improved food security and nutrition and improved fisheries conservation. It provides an easy-to-digest example of what an integrated design process looks like, as well as how Global Food Security Strategy and Biodiversity Policy priorities overlap.



I routinely direct colleagues to MI's evidence products, because they provide a really strong basis for discussion of the links between biodiversity and food security."

— Moffatt Ngugi, during his time as Agriculture, Environment & Climate Advisor, USAID/BFS

DEVELOPED INNOVATIVE GENDER AND BIODIVERSITY EVIDENCE MAP

The Biodiversity Policy acknowledges the importance of supporting gender equity in the conservation context, as well as the gender benefits that often come from conservation programs. Gender differences in natural resource use are well documented. Women, men, boys, and girls use and interact with the natural environment in different ways, yet women and girls often have little influence on the governance of natural resources.

Despite much interest from the conservation community in recent years, the gender dimensions of conservation programs are still not fully understood. To help build the evidence base around this critically important topic, FAB and MI joined an international team of researchers to develop the first systematic evidence map of gender and natural resource governance.

[“Does the Gender Composition of Forest and Fishery Management Groups Affect Resource Governance and Conservation Outcomes: A Systematic Map”](#) was cited as one of the five most influential papers published in the journal [Environmental Evidence](#) in 2016. MI staff co-led the research efforts that informed this publication.

Felisa Navas Pérez, president of the Asociación Forestal Integral Cruce la Colorada – a community organization holding a forest concession in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID



The team followed a rigorous research protocol, identifying and examining more than 11,000 records to develop a comprehensive map of the available evidence. Notably, the team found that “for India and Nepal, there is strong and clear evidence of the importance of including women in forest management groups for better resource governance and conservation outcomes.” This is the first systematic evidence map on this topic, and despite the dearth of evidence, the research suggests there are potentially many pathways linking the participation of women in natural resource management to better governance and conservation outcomes.



Gender issues rarely receive the attention in conservation that they do in other sectors. That’s why I was proud when, in 2016, FAB was an active participant in the first systematic evidence map of the impact of gender on natural resource governance. This publication improved appreciation within USAID and beyond of the importance of gender equity in forest and fisheries management.”

— Diane Russell, from her time as Senior Social Scientist, USAID/FAB

SUPPORTED INTEGRATION OF HEALTH AND BIODIVERSITY

Research in the last few decades has shown that poor management and unsustainable use of forests, rivers, and oceans, as well as loss of biodiversity, can negatively affect human health and well-being. At the same time, implementing integrated conservation and development programs can lead to human health benefits. Given the importance of global health for the Agency and the many clear linkages between conservation and health, improving the design and implementation of integrated biodiversity and health programs was a priority for FAB and MI.

MI supported FAB’s Health and Biodiversity Working Group in exploring the linkages between human health and biodiversity conservation and strengthening the evidence base around population, health, and environment, as well as emerging infectious disease.

Through MI, FAB advanced the integration of health and biodiversity on a few key fronts:

- **Strengthened the Evidence Base to Support USAID’s Population, Health, and Environment (PHE) investments:** Programming in PHE aims to improve access to health services, while helping communities better manage their natural resources and ecosystems. Working with the Health and Biodiversity Working Group, MI developed an evidence synthesis, [“Population, Health, and Environment as a Biodiversity Conservation Strategic Approach,”](#) to strengthen the evidence base supporting the linkages between human health and environment.
- **Integrated Wildlife Trafficking into Efforts to Understand the Ebola Epidemic:** The Ebola virus is a global threat that must be tackled by multiple sectors in addition to global health. With support from MI, FAB hosted an “Ebola Risk Mapping Symposium,” to bring together different groups and initiatives contributing to addressing this epidemic, including experts in wildlife distribution, trade, and consumption.

SUPPORTED INTEGRATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

In many countries, USAID’s biodiversity and sustainable landscapes programs are both designed to reduce deforestation. With biodiversity, the ultimate goal is reducing the loss of species and ecosystems, while with sustainable landscapes, the goal is reducing land-based greenhouse gas emissions. Although the long-term goals of biodiversity and sustainable landscapes programming are different, the actions needed to achieve these goals are often complementary and sometimes even the same. Integrated programming, if appropriate, can lead to more efficient and effective programs.

To this end, FAB and MI worked closely with USAID’s sustainable landscapes team and missions in South America on integrated project and activity design for the Amazon Regional Environment Program.

FAB and MI also assisted USAID/Peru in designing an integrated biodiversity and sustainable landscapes project, as well as a separate climate adaptation project for a different region of the country. Working with many of the same mission staff on the design of both projects helped the team clarify geographic areas in which biodiversity conservation, sustainable landscapes, and climate adaptation goals and strategic approaches overlap and where they differ. FAB and MI also assisted USAID/Vietnam and USAID/Zambia in the design of integrated projects with the same objective.

DEVELOPED A GLOBAL SITUATION MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

FAB and MI helped the Office of Global Climate Change develop a global situation model for sustainable landscapes programming that describes the overall aim of the program (to reduce land-based greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and land management practices) and the many social, economic, cultural, and institutional factors that contribute to land-based emissions. This global model is a valuable tool during the problem analysis stage of project design, and missions can adapt it to their country’s specific context, just as FAB and MI helped Peru accomplish.

Sunset in San Martin, Peru – an area threatened by deforestation and the impacts of climate change.
Credit: Marlon del Aguila Guerrero/CIFOR



IMPACT AT THE AGENCY LEVEL

Supporting Agency-Wide Efforts on Adaptive Management

CHALLENGE

USAID is committed to making the most effective and efficient use of its investments while supporting countries on their journey to self-reliance. To this end, the Agency is working to strengthen policies and practices that mainstream the use of evidence-based adaptive management throughout its Program Cycle. The Program Cycle is USAID's operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming to advance U.S. foreign policy. It includes guidance and procedures for:

- Making strategic decisions at the regional or country level about programmatic areas of focus and associated resources
- Designing projects and supporting activities to implement country strategic plans
- Learning from performance monitoring, evaluations, and other relevant sources of information to make course corrections as needed and inform future programming

As USAID works to increase programmatic rigor and effectiveness across sectors, contexts, and funding streams, it faces practical challenges, including identifying field-tested practices, tools, and processes that can be replicated, customized, or scaled Agency-wide.

Tanzania's elephants are icons of the Kilimanjaro landscape which are severely imperiled by poaching to supply the illegal ivory trade.
Credit: Matthew Erdman for USAID



Working with our partners, how do we measure their progress, their challenges, and the effectiveness of our investments? How do we know where our resources can best make a difference?"

— Mark Green, USAID Administrator at the launch of the Agency Redesign, 2018

APPROACH

Based on its experience on the ground providing missions with support, FAB was well positioned to help the Agency address these challenges by applying adaptive management to biodiversity programming. This practical experience, along with implementation of the Biodiversity Policy, the MI initiative, and a strong collaboration with USAID's PPL Bureau, has enabled FAB to make important contributions to Agency-level efforts to mainstream more rigorous programming and learning practices.

PPL sets priorities, direction, and recommendations for Agency processes and tools that support using a theory of change approach to programming. Over the life of MI, PPL worked directly with FAB to enhance these efforts by incorporating field-tested practices from the biodiversity conservation sector. This included:

- **Customizing biodiversity programming tools and practices for use in other sectors:** All sectors, including forestry and biodiversity, need tools and practices to support widespread application of adaptive management. FAB and MI took proven tools from the conservation sector and generalized them for use in other USAID sectors.
- **Channeling lessons from mission programming experiences to inform development of Agency-wide tools and guidance:** FAB's experiences supporting missions, and understanding the realities and constraints they face in designing and managing programs, provided useful insights that informed efforts to develop Agency-wide technical support tools and practices.
- **Supporting the Agency's focus on collaborating, learning, and adapting with technical inputs from the biodiversity context:** This included using CLA in early phases of design, procurement, and during activity start-up, as well as operationalizing CLA approaches to support more effective programming.



FAB's on-the-ground experience honing learning and adaptive management best practices in the context of the Program Cycle intersected well with our efforts to institutionalize proven practices through Agency-level policies and guidance. This overlap has been the foundation of a really fruitful partnership between FAB and PPL."

— Melissa Patsalides, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID/PPL

- **Partnering across the Agency:** FAB and MI developed new practices and knowledge collaboratively in partnership with missions; regional bureaus for Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean; USAID staff with expertise in climate change, water, food security, and global health; and implementing partners.

Over the six years of MI implementation, FAB applied, tested, and learned from biodiversity programming best practices, adaptations, and country-specific approaches. FAB also documented and disseminated knowledge on advances and innovations in biodiversity conservation based on its experience applying the Open Standards in the USAID context, as well as learning from research. Parallel to the Agency revisions to its Program Cycle Operational Policy, FAB developed its own sector-level technical guidance (see *How-To Guides* sidebar on page 21) that supported use of adaptive management to improve project and activity design, activity implementation, and MEL.

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting in Action

MI was proud to produce the Agency's CLA Video Contest winning submission, "[Connecting the Dots: USAID's Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program](#)," in November 2015. The video describes the need to better understand effectiveness and demonstrates how a theory of change can serve as the foundation for learning. In the video, the theory of change for how a Brazil nut enterprise contributes to improved conservation is narrated by field teams who show how they are exploring and testing assumptions and sharing lessons. It also shows how multiple missions taking the same general strategic approach can use this common framework as a basis for collaboration on learning and sharing evidence. The video showcases USAID's technical leadership in using collaboration and learning to accelerate the pace of change and extend the reach of results.

ACHIEVEMENTS

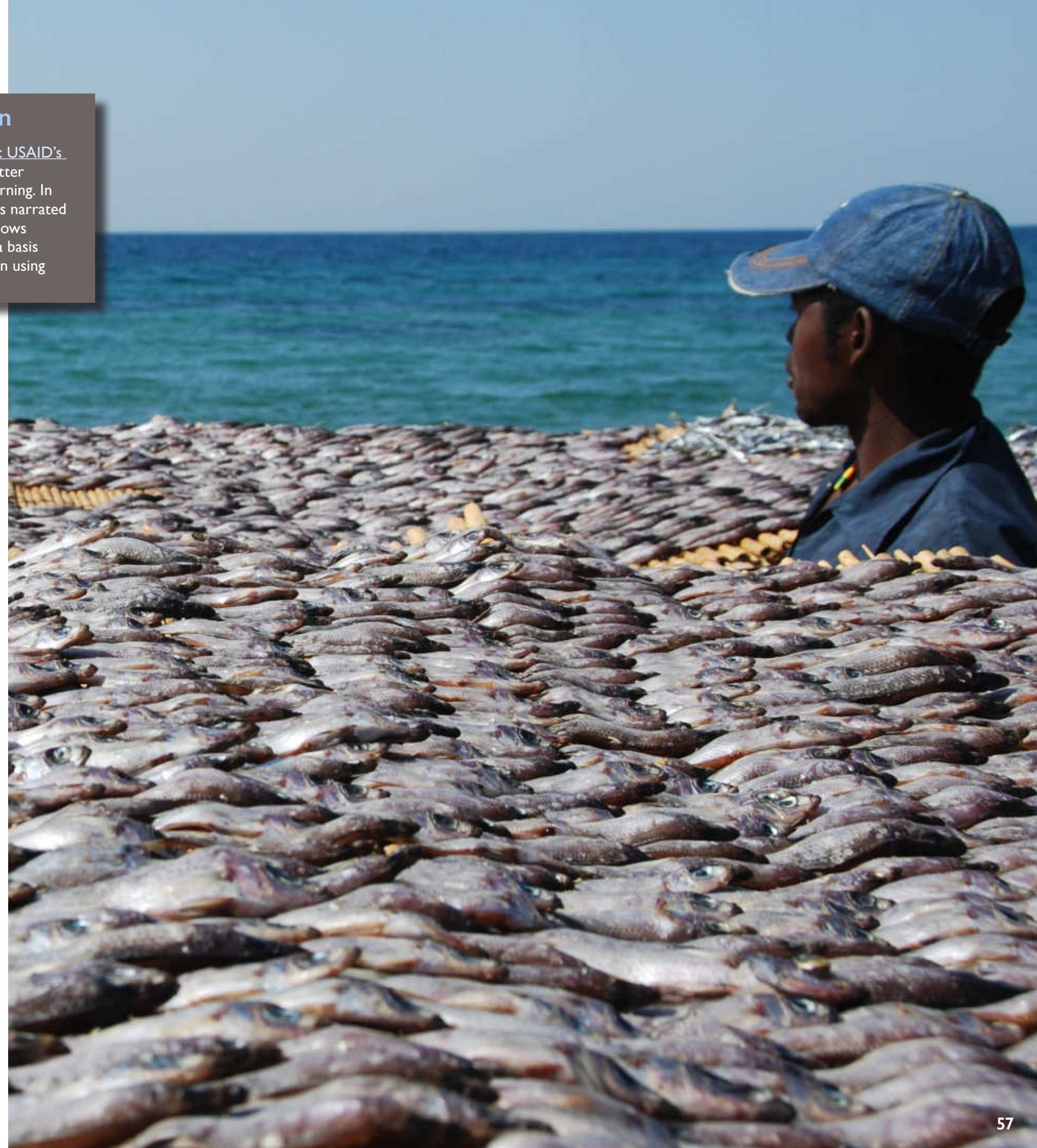
USAID, led by PPL, revised its programming policies and guidance in 2016 to increase efficiency and effectiveness by promoting a theory of change-based approach to program design and evaluation and encouraging use of evidence-based adaptive management. FAB and MI joined a dedicated community of USAID professionals that contributed to these innovative changes. Highlights include:

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 2016 AUTOMATED DIRECTIVES SYSTEM 201 USAID PROGRAM CYCLE OPERATIONAL POLICY REVISIONS

USAID's Program Cycle provides the framework for considering a range of approaches to address specific development challenges in a given country context. With MI support, FAB has honed signature adaptive management tools like situation models and results chains in the field, because they are useful for reflecting the complexity and long timeframes needed for conservation outcomes. Given their usefulness beyond the biodiversity sector, FAB supported PPL's efforts to apply these tools across the Agency. Support included:

- **Promoting field-tested biodiversity tools and processes in Agency-level guidance:** FAB worked with PPL's Office of Strategic Program Planning (SPP) to incorporate experiences providing technical support to missions into revisions of the Program Cycle Operational Policy. This included highlighting the importance of a well-informed problem analysis, the need for more detailed guidance linking project design to activity implementation, the importance of explicitly stating programmatic assumptions, and designing MEL plans that encourage learning at multiple scales in the Program Cycle.
- **Use of results chains as a type of logic model across the Agency:** In 2017, PPL released its [Program Cycle How-To Note: Developing a Project Logic Model \(and its Associated Theory of Change\)](#), which describes the usefulness of developing logic models to support program design. This Agency resource includes references to FAB's [Biodiversity How-To Guides](#) and describes results chains as tools for using logic models to illustrate a project's theory of change (see sidebar: "Grounding Proposed Solutions in a Better Understanding of the Problem" on page 59). PPL's revised Program Cycle training on project design now uses some of these biodiversity programming tools to teach concepts and tackle challenges across international development as a whole.

Fisherman in the USAID-supported Lake Niassa Reserve, Mozambique, where local communities are beginning to sustainably enjoy their rich biodiversity. Credit: Caroline Simmonds Cook



- **Emphasizing adaptive management during activity start-up:** Two MI-developed resources, [Start-up Guidance for USAID Biodiversity Activities – Process Overview](#) in five steps and [Tips for USAID Biodiversity Activity Start-Up \(Steps 3-5\)](#), which provides templates and checklists, provide robust theory of change-centered guidance on how to incorporate best practices for learning and adapting into activity start-up. FAB designed these resources to help teams plan and mobilize biodiversity resources and ensure alignment between the revised activity logic model, work plan, and MEL plan with the project logic model, as well as to enable learning and adapting during activity implementation. These resources are applicable to program planning in other sectors across the Agency.

PROMOTING COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

According to USAID’s ADS 201, “strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management link together all components of the Program Cycle.” The Agency is committed to using CLA in its work to help ensure that programs are coordinated, grounded in a strong evidence base, and iteratively adapted to remain relevant throughout implementation. FAB helped operationalize CLA by developing concrete tools and guidance for establishing the proper enabling conditions and overcoming obstacles to adoption. FAB was able to draw upon experience working in missions by:

- **Implementing collaborating, learning, and adapting approaches:** MI coordinated with the LEARN activity to (1) help describe the relationship between CLA and development outcomes and (2) share the analytical framework it uses to assess uptake of best practices in biodiversity programming in the Program Cycle. FAB pinpointed case examples illustrating best practices in development outcomes and helped PPL connect with mission champions to tell these stories in order to promote uptake of the approach Agency-wide.
- **Incorporating collaborating, learning, and adapting in procurement:** From its experiences with missions, FAB distilled key challenges and opportunities pertaining to procurement and to the establishment of enabling conditions and contributed to the PPL and OAA authored guidance documents *Incorporating CLA in the*

Procurement Process; Incorporating CLA in Solicitations; and Incorporating CLA in Activity Management in the CLA in Activity Design and Implementation section of the CLA Toolkit.

- **Increasing the evidence base for collaborating, learning, and adapting:** MI and LEARN forged a partnership to enrich CLA practice in biodiversity programs and inform the community with examples of innovative learning efforts under MI, including the Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program. Along with USAID’s Office of Food for Peace, U.S. Global Development Lab, and Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, FAB and MI helped develop a learning agenda that describes which forms of learning are most effective in the Agency context and to what degree a CLA approach helps improve development outcomes. MI also joined the Partners for Learning group called the Learning Dojo to develop and pursue a shared learning agenda focused on improving effectiveness.

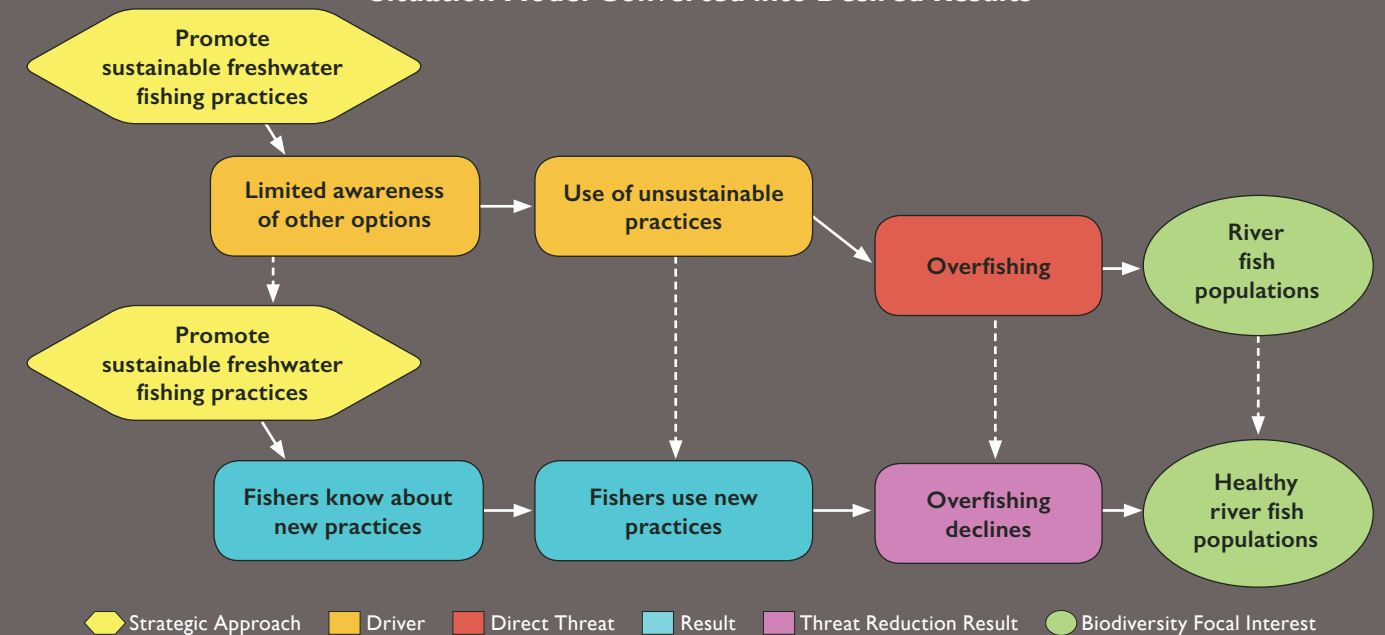
LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE AGENCY TO ENHANCE PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Enhancing program effectiveness is at the center of USAID Program Cycle implementation, so FAB partnered with the Water Office, BFS, and DCHA office to understand what kinds of tools and processes worked or did not work for their sectors. Through these partnerships, FAB produced foundational technical documents that contribute to development outcomes, such as improved fisheries or enhanced governance. MI also collaborated and coordinated across FAB’s and USAID’s other mechanisms, including LEARN, ECO, and BRIDGE to assist with application and uptake of best practices in their focal areas. FAB also worked with a variety of key audiences (program officers, technical staff, and contracting officers) across the Agency (PPL, OAA, regional bureaus, missions, and technical bureaus) to share its innovations and lessons learned.

Grounding Proposed Solutions in a Better Understanding of the Problem

Based on the widely used concept of understanding the nature of the problem before proposing solutions, FAB encourages the use of problem analysis tools like the situation model. As illustrated in figure 7, a situation model is like a problem chain, whose components can then be reframed into the desired outcomes of the program intervention. By using a situation model to draft a results chains, practitioners use the logical pathways of the problem analysis as a basis for drafting the logical pathways for a theory of change.

Figure 7. Grand River Project Example – Selected Components from a Situation Model Converted into Desired Results



PPL highlighted this biodiversity best practice and used a biodiversity conservation example to promote results chain use in the *Program Cycle How-to Note: Developing a Project Logic Model (and its Associated Theory of Change)*.

Wilma Aquilar, former secretary of the SATRIKA association of tribal people, speaks about a conservation and development strategy at a community meeting in Palawan, Philippines. Credit: Jason Houston for USAID





SUSTAINING IMPACT

Building on Innovation and Lessons Learned

USAID launched a new Biodiversity Policy in 2014 grounded in the recognition that human development and well-being are dependent on healthy biodiverse ecosystems. Implementing the Biodiversity Policy – in essence accelerating the impact of conservation and integrated programming to improve lives around the world – required a stronger commitment to, and capacity for, rigor and adaptive management in USAID biodiversity programming. That was the goal behind FAB’s MI initiative.

This report has provided an overview of all that FAB and MI accomplished toward this goal. So what is next? How will USAID build on these successes, and what did the Agency learn that will help it adapt and sustain impact going forward?

KEY LESSONS FROM MEASURING IMPACT

LESSON #1: REMOVING BARRIERS TO ADOPTION OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND APPROACHES IS KEY TO SCALING IMPACT

Through MI, FAB has created a rich set of resources, training materials, learning products, how-to guides, and evidence to support adoption of best practices in biodiversity conservation and integrated programming. However, creating the materials is not enough. Addressing the very real barriers to adoption, at both the mission and Agency level, has also been a focus for MI, one that will only increase in importance going forward. To sustain the advances made in adoption of new tools and practices, MI focused on:

- **Aligning biodiversity programming guidance to Agency practice and policy.** A supportive policy environment at the Agency level enabled the creation, testing, and refinement of new practices encouraged by FAB and MI, while missions brought technical expertise, creativity, and willingness to trial new practices. The result was new guidance, case examples, interest groups, procurement experiences, and other tools that validate, encourage, and facilitate the use of best practices in adaptive management. For example, the 2017 Agency-wide *How-To Note on Logic Models* incorporates the use of results chains as a method for depicting theories of change and uses a biodiversity case example to do so.

- **Putting the user’s needs front and center** in designing tools and practices. All MI materials were co-developed with missions based on real-life projects, activities, and needs, and they favor practical evidence and solutions over theoretical frameworks. The result is user-centric design and tools that work within the time constraints and complex circumstances facing practitioners in the field.
- **Making knowledge and tools relevant and accessible** by putting systems in place to ensure practitioners could access the right information at the right time to improve programming. FAB’s [Biodiversity Conservation Gateway](#) is a central part of this knowledge management hub and provides a publicly available, online portal with access to all of the resources listed in the Appendix. Relevant resources were also made available in the internal USAID ProgramNet site and the public site [Learning Lab](#).

LESSON #2: PEERS ARE THE ULTIMATE MESSENGERS FOR CHANGE

When it comes to demonstrating the value of new practices to improve development outcomes, the experience of fellow practitioners carries the most weight. That is why FAB and MI focused on the following efforts to ensure continued adoption and sustainability of results beyond the life of MI:

Left: Managing marine protected areas in Fiji helps protect biodiversity and coastal livelihoods. Credit: Nick Hobgood

- **Creating the Biodiversity Advisors Program.** MI helped train 16 USAID staff from FAB, regional bureaus, and missions to support the use of adaptive management by their USAID colleagues. Through an individualized program of coaching and mentorship, Biodiversity Advisors developed capacity in facilitation, adaptive management, and learning that they can use to help missions apply and mainstream best practices.
- **Supporting peer-to-peer engagement.** This is the most powerful way for development practitioners inside USAID and beyond to learn from each other, share insights, and accelerate uptake of innovations. In-person learning events and workshops over the six-year life of MI reinforced a growing network of USAID staff committed to continuous learning.
- **Having peers promote the success and value of learning and adaptive management.** Through cross-mission learning groups and other learning events, FAB and MI invited mission practitioners to share their experiences applying new practices and learn from one another. A variety of events, such as webinars, newsletters, and knowledge syntheses reinforced learning and strengthened the network of practitioners.

LESSON #3: INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING BENEFITS FROM TOOLS AND EVIDENCE DRAWN FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS

Through implementation of the Biodiversity Policy, USAID is committed to demonstrating that conservation is an essential component of good development. To sustain progress with other USAID development sectors FAB and MI focused on:

- **Sharing tools and approaches across sectors.** Through MI, a set of tools that had been used primarily for biodiversity was applied to the design and implementation of programs that integrated funds, objectives, and staff of other sectors with biodiversity. In turn, biodiversity programming was informed and strengthened by tools and approaches that have been developed in other sectors and that complement the tools commonly used for biodiversity program design.
- **Building an evidence base.** Through MI, FAB made progress demonstrating the link between fisheries and food security; gender and natural resource governance; and biodiversity and public

health, water, and climate change. To sustain these advances, FAB will continue to build the evidence base around the value of integration and use it to inform collaboration with other sectors to achieve common goals.

LESSON #4: LEADERSHIP AND CO-CREATION ARE KEY TO INSTITUTIONALIZING ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Successful adaptive management – including adopting more rigorous learning and evidence-based approaches – takes time, resources, and collaboration. In implementing MI, FAB learned that an essential ingredient in increasing adoption of new practices is a leadership culture that encourages staff to ask hard questions, change course when things aren't working, and transparently share successes and setbacks. To sustain progress, FAB and MI focused on:

- **Right-sizing support to the mission's need.** Understanding a mission's priorities, competing demands, and opportunities allowed FAB and MI to provide each mission with support tailored to their needs and context. Avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach helped mission teams allocate the right time and resources to their work with MI.
- **Co-creating tools and solutions supports durable change.** FAB and MI learned early that co-creating tools, approaches, evidence, and resources with missions, regional bureaus, other technical bureaus, and PPL enabled adaptive management; helped ensure ownership; and sustained use among the target audience of practitioners. Having developed a wealth of field-tested resources and network of on-the-ground practitioners, the next step is to broaden the user base and strengthen systems for users to continually channel learning back into program implementation.
- **Sharing success stories** to help other USAID staff and implementing partners see the value of adopting new practices in learning, theory of change-centered programming, and evidence-based adaptive management. In addition to regional close out events that celebrated the progress and learning of many missions, MI worked with FAB and mission staff to develop two prize-winning CLA case examples that highlight the progress made by USAID staff in support of more effective biodiversity conservation programming.



Villagers planting seedlings in Cambodia. Credit: Jeremy Holden, USAID

EXPANDING IMPACT

The approaches developed by FAB and MI are increasingly considered expected practice in the 20 missions that received MI support. However, there is an opportunity to raise expectations and demonstrate the value of theory of change-centered programming and evidence-based adaptive management in many other missions, as well as the larger system of implementing partners, donors, and contractors within which USAID operates. Going forward, FAB will continue to collaborate with colleagues within and outside of USAID to drive uptake of adaptive management best practices and strengthen evidence-based approaches for more effective biodiversity conservation programming and greater development results.

Fortunately, the biggest lesson FAB and MI learned throughout this initiative is that USAID staff are deeply committed to learning and adapting, energized by opportunities to improve their practice, and eager to contribute to tools that help improve development outcomes on a global scale.

APPENDIX

Key Terms

Adaptive Management

An intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context. (ADS 201)

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)

CLA involves strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management. CLA approaches to development include collaborating intentionally with stakeholders to share knowledge and reduce duplication of effort, learning systematically by drawing on evidence from a variety of sources, taking time to reflect on implementation, and applying learning by adapting intentionally. (ADS 201)

Learning Questions

Learning questions drive the identification of information needs, and thus, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plans and research agendas. Learning questions, when answered, help teams work more effectively and make better, more informed decisions.

Open Standards

The [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) is a framework of concepts, approaches, and shared terminology to guide conservation programming. The Open Standards help teams be systematic about planning, implementing, and monitoring their conservation initiatives so they can learn what works, what does not work, and why, and ultimately adapt and improve their efforts.

Pause and Reflect

A component of learning and adaptive management, pause and reflect is the act of taking time to think critically about ongoing activities and processes and to plan for the best way forward. (ADS 201)

Results Chain

A results chain is a graphic representation of a theory of change. It is a type of logical model that uses boxes and arrows to display the causal and sequential progression of results that planners believe are necessary to achieve a program's purpose.

Situation Model

A situation model is a graphic representation of a context or problem analysis that displays a program's focal interests, the main factors or forces influencing those interests, and the causal relationships among those factors.

Theory of Change

A theory of change is a description of the logical causal relationships among a strategic approach and multiple levels of conditions or results needed to achieve a long-term result or purpose.

Key Products

ALL PRODUCTS AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://BIT.LY/MI-PROJECT-RESOURCES](http://bit.ly/mi-project-resources)



TOOLS AND GUIDANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMMERS

BIODIVERSITY HOW-TO GUIDES

1) [Developing Situation Models in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#); 2) [Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#); 3) [Defining Outcomes and Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#)

These resources provide step-by-step guidance on key tools and practices that support design and management of USAID biodiversity programs within the Program Cycle and in accordance with the Biodiversity Policy. They are also available in an interactive format.

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDES

1) [Defining Scope and Biodiversity Focal Interests in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#); 2) [Rating Direct Threats in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#); 3) [Prioritizing and Selecting Strategic Approaches in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#)

These supplemental guides provide more in-depth information on some of the most important steps of biodiversity programming. Supplemental guide 3 includes a worksheet to help users with this key step.

MIRADI USER GUIDES

1) [Develop Situation Models](#); 2) [Use Results Chains](#); 3) [Define Outcomes and Indicators](#)

These user guides provide a general overview of Miradi Adaptive Management Software for several biodiversity programming tools.

BIODIVERSITY THREAT RATING WORKSHEET

This Excel-based [worksheet](#) helps design teams that rate direct threats to biodiversity.

INCORPORATING GEOSPATIAL DESIGN INTO USAID BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

This [biodiversity case example](#) describes the use of geospatial data and analysis for program design, including examples and lessons learned in Peru.

START-UP GUIDANCE FOR USAID BIODIVERSITY ACTIVITIES (PROCESS OVERVIEW)

[This short resource](#) describes five main steps involved in initiating a new biodiversity or integrated activity, including a theory of change workshop. This two-pager explains the core tasks and provides important tips and considerations for each step.

TIPS FOR USAID BIODIVERSITY ACTIVITY START-UP (STEPS 3-5)

[This handout](#) provides recommendations for developing theory of change-based activity work plans and MEL plans using results chains during activity start-up. It also includes some recommendations on how to enhance the learning components of activity implementation. Use in combination with the “Process Overview” handout.



FRAMEWORK FOR THE BIODIVERSITY CROSS-MISSION LEARNING PROGRAM

USAID’s Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program is working to systematically capture and share [lessons on theories of change](#) for common strategic approaches in the USAID biodiversity portfolio.

MAKING USE OF THE PORTFOLIO: ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AT USAID

[This technical analysis](#) explores previous and ongoing social learning efforts, best practices, challenges, and lessons in USAID as a foundation for using learning to strengthen the Agency’s forestry and biodiversity programs.

CLA-IN-ACTION VIDEO: BIODIVERSITY CROSS-MISSION LEARNING PROGRAM

[This video](#) was a winning submission from PPL’s 2015 CLA Case Competition. The video highlights CLA in action through the Conservation Enterprises Cross-Mission Learning Program launched in 2015 by FAB.



COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING LEARNING AGENDA

[The learning agenda](#) is composed of learning questions related to the key assumptions underlying the theory of change for combating wildlife trafficking.

MEASURING EFFORTS TO COMBAT WILDLIFE CRIME: A TOOLKIT FOR IMPROVING ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

[The toolkit](#) includes 10 major strategic approaches for combating wildlife crime, elaborates theories of change for each, and proposes indicators for the key results expected. The theories of change are intended to help users rapidly craft site-specific actions to counter poaching and wildlife trafficking.

REWARDS AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ANTI-POACHING AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING

[This research paper](#) explores the roles communities do and should play in countering wildlife crime, motivations and benefits for individuals and communities to engage in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts, and risks and mitigation of risks associated with involvement.

HOW DOES DEVELOPING ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY REDUCE WILDLIFE CRIME?

[This technical brief](#) uses a theory of change to describe how building the capacity of enforcement officers and prosecutors is expected to lead to conservation outcomes.

COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING CASE EXAMPLE COMPILATION SYNTHESIS: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTION

Based on questions posed in USAID’s combating wildlife trafficking learning agenda, the Agency selected [12 case examples](#) with broadly applicable, insightful lessons that can support cross-site and cross-organizational learning. Case examples represent programs in Kenya, Namibia, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Guatemala, and Tanzania.



RESOURCES FOR CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES

CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES LEARNING AGENDA

The [learning agenda](#) is composed of learning questions related to the key assumptions underlying the theory of change for conservation enterprises.

CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES: USING A THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH TO SYNTHESIZE LESSONS FROM USAID BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

In an effort to increase the understanding of conservation enterprises' activities and outcomes and to improve the effectiveness of biodiversity programming, [this brief](#) uses a generalized theory of change as a framework to synthesize lessons from past USAID-funded conservation enterprise initiatives.

THE NATURE OF CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES: A 20-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE BEHIND THIS WIDELY USED APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

[This rare look-back](#) at conservation enterprise approaches includes a review of six sites where an enterprise approach to conservation has been implemented for over 20 years.

INTEGRATING LIVELIHOOD AND CONSERVATION GOALS: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF WORLD BANK PROJECTS

Using a database of World Bank project evaluations, [this analysis](#) aims to contribute to building the evidence base around the integration of biodiversity conservation and livelihood goals.

CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES: KEYS FOR SUCCESS

[This technical brief](#) summarizes the guidance from key resource documents on the enabling conditions that support a sustainable enterprise. It includes important insights grounded in the literature that can be applied directly to the design of conservation enterprise approaches.



TOOLS FOR TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AGENDA

The [Biodiversity and Development Research Agenda](#) is a framework for building the evidence base for the links between biodiversity conservation and development outcomes.

EVIDENCE IN ACTION: HOW TO DEPLOY EVIDENCE FOR STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

[Unit 1: Understanding an Evidence-Based Approach](#); [Unit 2: Using Evidence](#); [Unit 3: Generating Evidence](#); [Unit 4: Building the Evidence Base; Acting on the Evidence](#)

Evidence in Action walks practitioners through steps to apply evidence and an evidence-based approach to the design and implementation of strategic approaches for biodiversity conservation in the USAID context. A companion [interactive learning resource](#) helps mission staff and partners apply it to the design and implementation of biodiversity programs.



TOOLS FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS: ASSESSING THE STATUS OF EVIDENCE

[An analysis](#) by USAID's research partner the American Museum of Natural History evaluated 148 references, selected through a rigorous systematic review process, to identify key lessons for stakeholder engagement.

RESOURCE GUIDE ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN USAID BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

[This guide](#) compiles evidence into a four-step process and presents a systematic approach to engaging stakeholders in biodiversity planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning within the Program Cycle.




TOOLS FOR INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

FISHING FOR FOOD SECURITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF WILD FISHERIES FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

This [briefing book](#) explores the role of fisheries in global development and showcases case studies of USAID fisheries programs in Cambodia, Senegal, Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Liberia.

INTEGRATING FOOD SECURITY AND WILD FISHERIES CONSERVATION IN USAID BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

This [illustrative case example](#) shows how to use situation models and results chains tools to effectively integrate the combined goals of improved food security and nutrition and sustainable management of wild or capture fisheries.



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