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HIGHER EDUCATION SOLUTIONS NETWORK – BI-ANNUAL REPORT (FY 2015)

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Center on Conflict and Development
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I. Executive Summary

During first part of fiscal year (FY) 2015, the Center on Conflict and Development (ConDev) at Texas A&M University (TAMU) staff and researchers continued to expand its presence at TAMU, with the Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) universities, with USAID Missions, and made substantial progress towards Transformative Solutions for people living in fragile and conflict-affected countries. ConDev has continued to pursue research opportunities, engagement, and innovations within the four identified high priority subjects, including food security, natural resource management, youth, and local institutions. Specifically, ConDev has focused on the following in the first half of FY15: community-led land rights adjudication and registry using GPS technologies; conflict-resistant food systems; disadvantaged youth integrating their aspirations into regional development plans; and local organizations mitigating conflict and raising local voices among national elites.

ConDev has flourished with student engagement activities and increasing student involvement with the lab staff and with ConDev partners. Through two additional capstone courses with the Bush School of Government and Public Service, focused on Ghana and Benin, nine students participated in that research. Both capstone courses provided students real experience working for industry clients and four students were given the opportunity for travel to Benin with Dr. Jessica Gottlieb for data collection. Four 2014 Student Media Grants Program (SMGP) grants were awarded to students from TAMU and Ibadan University for implementation in FY 2015. Additionally, an SMGP Showcase was held to display the work from Nicaragua and Mali with the 2013 awardees. ConDev staff also taught courses through the TAMU system and delivered a series of lectures and seminars for students and faculty.

FY 2015 also provided ConDev staff the opportunity to engage with HESN labs and USAID through the TechCon held in November 2014. ConDev staff presented research and participated in the lecture series, held meetings with HESN Labs and USAID Officials and Missions, and students presented work in the Innovation Marketplace.

ConDev staff have expanded the depth of work in countries such as Ghana through the Ghana Land Tenure project, AgriCorps, and the No-Till Center; and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through the Best Practices in Coffee and Cocoa research study and through exploring opportunities to collect baseline data for evaluation of community-based protected area and conflict management in Virunga National Park, DRC. Programs also expanded in Guatemala and El Salvador, and continued progressively in Botswana and South Africa. Activities were added in Rwanda to design and complete a DRC/Rwanda customs facility.

Additionally, ConDev has been able to respond swiftly to requests from the Africa Bureau, Sustainable Development Office, and Education Division (AFR/SD/ED). ConDev and the USAID/Nepal Mission have also begun a beneficial working relationship allowing ConDev research opportunities. FY 2015 has been off to an excellent start and more results and partnerships will continue to flourish through the end of FY 2015.

2. Major Milestones and Events Completed

The Center on Conflict and Development (ConDev) reached several major milestones and achievements in the first half of the FY15 reporting period, including: the establishment of the Congo Peace Center, the contribution to AgriCorps for the growth of the program and implementation of seven agriculturalists to Ghana for 4-H program development and agricultural education, and the support of two capstone courses for graduate students to study Benin and Ghana, with five students traveling to Benin. ConDev also supported over 100 students in experiential engagement through novel courses, internships, and student competitions.

ConDev had a strong presence at HESN's TechCon in November 2014 with fourteen students and staff in attendance. ConDev staff participated in three roundtables and lectures, and five students presented research at the Innovation Marketplace. Through this opportunity, ConDev staff were able to network with fellow HESN labs, meet with HESN leadership, and interact with USAID Missions. Through meetings at the event, ConDev staff were able to explore potential areas of collaboration and express interest in working with new Missions. ConDev's nimble structure and ability to respond swiftly to requests serves as an advantage when entering new discussions with potential partners.

ConDev has continued to strengthen projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) stemming from the Congo Peace Center, including completing surveys from the Best Practices in Coffee and Cocoa research study, beginning construction on a trade facility on the Rwanda-DRC border, finalizing the construction of an administrative building, and holding two successful peace dialogues in Masisi and Rutshuru. Additional works in progress within the DRC include joint research between ConDev and the Catholic University of Graben (UCG), a Congo Peace Center peace facilitation strategy, and evaluation programs within the Virunga National Park. ConDev is also continuing to focus on Latin American projects, including developing food security and conflict projects in El Salvador and Guatemala and biodiversity in Peru.

The Strategic Analytics Lab at ConDev has shown remarkable success with a study focused on school violence in Ghana, South Africa, and Botswana for the USAID Africa Bureau's Education Division; as well as Nepalese work, including conducting econometric analysis of food security drivers using geo-coded, village level Nepalese data, evaluating the effects of individual perceptions of foreign aid effectiveness, and implementing a household level survey data examining coping strategies and social resiliency.

3. Key Activities

Objective 1: Inform better solutions through data collection, analysis and dissemination

Due to ConDev's structure, experience, and support from upper administration at the university, staff are able to work quickly and nimbly in response to requests from USAID-Washington, in-country Missions, Bureaus, and other donors.

ConDev received a request from the Africa Bureau to provide analysis on a 'violence in schools' dataset, which has turned into a future publication, joint presentation with USAID at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) annual conference, and potential for more engagement. Drs. Tkach and Kibriya headed up the paper entitled "The Effect of School Violence on Academic Performance: Evidence from Ghana, Botswana, and South Africa" and all presentations with the study. ConDev will finalize the report in the second half of FY15.

ConDev staff also provided a quick turn around on a baseline study for a hydropower and soap factory intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by Virunga Alliance, which was aimed at curbing violence in an area that is sensitive for the park.

Key graduate student research has been submitted for publication in addition to the research that has been submitted for publication from other ConDev researchers. White papers and research briefs regarding ConDev and Conflict and Development Foundation (CDF) projects are continually released, building the repository of ConDev articles. Dr. Kibriya and students Yu Zhang and Zhicheng Xu completed a white paper entitled "Pre-colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary Conflicts in Africa" in January 2015.

ConDev staff are using innovative measures to map land tenure rights in Ghana. Community based mapping methods using GIS are being employed to help mitigate conflict over land ownership. Farmers, working in conjunction with researchers, are using GIS technologies to create maps of their farms which will be used as a record of land boundaries and rights.

In Nepal, staff have completed a paper, "Geo-spatial Investigation of Aid Effectiveness in Nepal: Improving Development Assistance Practices through Empirical Analysis." The Nepal work is not yet completed, as progress has stalled due to the natural disaster in Nepal and ConDev's sensitivity to the issue.

Staff are collecting data on African conflict, climate change and economic growth, including some mapping activities of the African continent. They also designed a survey to be executed in Guatemala in FY 2015 as part of the Transformative Solutions grant for new technologies in Guatemala.

Objective 2: Identify, assess and foster scaling of high impact innovative solutions

Previously, in FY 2014, ConDev launched the Transformative Solutions (previously known as Innovations, Technologies, or Approaches) award competition and has continued to work with the program since. Six awards were given (Senegal-1, DRC-4, Guatemala-1) in FY 2014. Project preparation and implementation are in progress; all projects are on track and leading towards promising results and project conclusions. In FY 2015, the next call for proposals was released and received 21 proposals. The grantees will be announced in the second half of FY 2015.

In the first half of FY15, five Transformative Solutions grants were still in progress or completing research. Most projects will continue through FY15. Updates on each project are listed below:

“Monitoring Militaries: The Role of Citizen Accountability in Reducing Army Abuse”: Research is complete; the first set of data is being analyzed and will take some time due to its robustness and complexity. There will be follow up research in the second half of FY15.

“Crowdsourcing Peace: Closing the Feedback Loop in War-to-Peace Transitions”: Research in the DRC was slow; it took more time to get funding to this group than expected. However, research based in South Sudan (funded through another, non-ConDev grant) has initial information already available and expects to begin collecting data in three to four months. Data collection in the DRC will follow.

“Pairing ICT and farmer-to-farmer learning structures to improve productivity and build social cohesion among smallholder cacao farmers in North Kivu, DRC”: Farmer-extension agents will be provided with smart phones through which information can be exchanged with company extension workers and with other farmer-extension agents. Spatial data generated by smart phones will be used for better understanding of the geographic distribution of specific production issues, while image-capture capability will help agents diagnose and properly advise on these and other production issues.

“Sharing the Land: Using GIS to Diminish Local Land Disputes in Eastern Congo”: Data collection on land ownership and conflict in Masiani neighborhood is in progress while the project team met with 29 local community leaders to record their perceptions, opinions, attitudes and experiences. A digital base map of the city has been built, which has key information that is necessary for future data analysis such as road names, neighborhood boundaries, and other points of interest on top of which conflict data, demographic data, and data on the development of infrastructure can be layered.

“Enhancing Livelihood and Incomes of Rural Women through Postharvest Technology”: The project has made progress in achieving the following deliverables stated in the proposal: 1. Employment generation and increasing income for 60 women at APAC-PNT in Comalapa. 2. Estimated 25% reduction in postharvest losses of fresh produce with the use of this Modified Atmosphere Packing system. 3. New product development for 13 different fruits, vegetables, and herbs through market specialized production. 4. Contacts with local buyers as Guatemalan supermarkets and distributors for Central America has been made while packaging of products has recently been initiated.

Dr. Ruyle is working with Dr. Amy Smith of MIT and Ecoexist to explore options for collaboration on elephant deterrent projects and workshop ideas. ConDev staff have collected baseline data on the impact of development projects on community members living around the boundaries of Virunga National Park. The timing of the surveys will be before the full-scale launch of Congo Peace Center and Virunga Alliance community development projects.

Objective 3: Expand the community of problem solvers

ConDev has continued to develop its student engagement strategy as a method of expanding the community of problem solvers. Through internships, student grants, novel course development, and seminars, ConDev staff work to actively engage students both at TAMU and other institutions.

The ConDev/Bush School of Government and Public Service semester-long capstone courses enabled students to participate in projects focused on Ghana, "Determinants of Youth Employment in Ghana" and one, which included travel to Benin, "Information and Democratic Accountability: A Field Experiment in Benin". ConDev managed the Student Media Grants Program that included four new winners, three from Texas A&M University for research in India and Peru and one from Nigeria with water focused research in Nigeria. All new SMGP awards were selected in Fall 2014 with student research taking place in Summer 2015. ConDev also hosted the SMGP Showcase for two previous winners with their research in Spring 2015: "Natural Resource Conflicts and Conservation Narratives in Nicaraguan Forests" and the other "Profiling Chronic Food Insecurity in Mali". ConDev participated in the Big Ideas competition with the University of California at Berkeley, resulting in a ConDev-specific category on Conflict and Development. Additional awards for youth are being given in Knysna, South Africa for disenfranchised youth to envision their futures through a youth innovation project. Awards will be given in the second half of FY 2015. The competition is part of a larger South African research initiative to create and evaluate a privately led model for the economic integration of a disadvantaged Black community into the economic mainstream in the Eastern and Western Cape sub-regions of South Africa—namely, in the districts of Thornhill and Knysna.

Through the Agricultural Economics department, Dr. Edwin Price's course, "Economics of Foreign Intervention, Conflict and Development," has been established as a permanent course in the university system. With the establishment of the course, Dr. Price can continue to plan and establish a minor in Conflict and Development through the TAMU system.

ConDev again took students to TechCon 2014 and had all five provide presentations in the Innovation Marketplace. Students selected to participate in the TechCon delegation completed a competitive application process at ConDev before submitting their applications to the HESN TechCon committee. Additionally, ConDev has continued to offer a ConDev Lecture Series by bringing in guests such as Dr. Jendayi Frazer, Honorable Marty McVey and others to engage students, staff, and TAMU faculty. Through continued engagement, ConDev staff are growing the network of future researchers and promoting ConDev activities throughout the university.

4. Engagement of Partners and Other Actors

4.1.1. Interdisciplinary Collaboration

The ConDev staff have been working to increase interdisciplinary activities and partnership engagement through grants, internships, and innovation opportunities.

The ConDev internship program is open to all TAMU students, both undergraduate and graduate, from any department. Five interns will be selected in the second half of FY 2015. In addition to the ConDev internship, staff promoted the HESN internship opportunity throughout the TAMU system. Seven students from TAMU were selected for HESN internships in the second half of FY 2015.

In addition to internships, grant and innovation opportunities have been made available to all TAMU students. Working with partners within TAMU and other departments and colleges in the university,

students from all backgrounds have participated in the Big Ideas at Berkeley competition, received SMGP awards, and are invited to the Engineering Invent-a-thon in late 2015.

The Transformative Solutions grant was open to all students and faculty through the TAMU system. Proposals were received and reviewed from across campus. The Transformative Solutions grant will be open to university researchers in future RFAs as well.

4.1.2. Partner Engagement

During this reporting period, ConDev staff had several important interactions with partners, including with the Catholic University of the Graben (UCG) in DRC, and with the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO) and the University of San Carlos (Guatemala) in Latin America. While ConDev staff have projects in several countries, partner interactions mainly dealt with work in DRC, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru. In DRC, ConDev staff continue to collaborate with the Howard G. Buffett Foundation and various local non-governmental organizations on projects in North Kivu and Virunga National Park. They also do so in Rwanda. In Central America, ConDev staff collaborated extensively with FLACSO, the University of San Carlos in Guatemala (USAC), and Save the Homeless International Project (SHIP) on research topics regarding food security, conflict, and migration. The partnerships and cooperative agreements that ConDev has created benefit the research, funding streams, and student engagement opportunities.. ConDev is able to communicate funding, research, and student opportunities with a wider audience through the addition of new partners.

ConDev has had issues with the turnover of key leaders in our partnerships. Deans and leaders from our major partners have changed from when we created the proposal, and the replacements didn't understand the nature of the agreements and the prescribed roles. This ended up being a major distractor, and we had to devote additional time to ameliorating the situation.

4.2. Summary of Collaboration Across HESN

ConDev staff collaborated with six other HESN Labs during this reporting period. Through HESN meetings, such as TechCon and the Lab Director's Convening, ConDev staff have future collaboration plans with many of the HESN Labs and will continue to explore research and collaborative opportunities.

University of California at Berkeley: ConDev staff worked extensively with staff from the Development Impact Lab (DIL) promoting the University of California at Berkeley's Big Ideas competition at Texas A&M University (TAMU). For FY 2015, ConDev collaborated with Big Ideas to create a new category for the competition on "Conflict and Development" that was used to assist ConDev in identifying potential Transformative Solutions. Additionally, two ConDev staff served as judges for the competition. Winners will be announced in the second half of FY15.

Michigan State University (MSU): ConDev provided a Student Media Grants Program award to an MSU student to study conflict and hunger in Mali. His research was completed and presented at TechCon 2014 and at the ConDev SMGP Showcase. Additionally, ConDev and the Global Center for Food Systems Innovation (GCFSI) have begun exploring collaborations on an agricultural project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

AidData Center for Development Policy: ConDev and AidData have collaborated on a study titled “Geo-spatial Investigation of Aid Effectiveness in Nepal: Improving Development Assistance Practices through Empirical Analysis.” Deliverables include household level analysis, food security policy recommendations, student engagement (Nepalese and TAMU) and scholarly publications. The primary analysis will examine household coping strategies, the effects of shocks, and how these forces impact social resilience. The primary implications of the research will inform food and agriculture related foreign assistance.

ResilientAfrica Network (RAN): ConDev and RAN are collaborating on the Ugandan Environmental Management of the Oil Sector (EMOS) project. TAMU is sub-contracted by Tetra Tech to build capacity at Makerere University on the impacts of the oil and gas sector on the biodiversity and environment of the Albertine Graben of Uganda. Many of the proposed drilling areas are along the DRC border, which may result in conflict over oil between the two countries. This project is strictly capacity building at the university level.

International Development Innovation Network (IDIN): ConDev and the International Development Innovation Network (IDIN) are collaborating to plan a workshop on elephant deterrent strategies in Botswana with Ecoexist.

4.2.1. Data

As discussed under the Objectives, ConDev is working with several datasets and expecting additional ones by the end of FY15. ConDev researchers are continuing work with the Best Practices in Coffee and Cocoa data, AidData’s Nepal geocoded data, Africa Bureau/Education Division’s school violence data, and will have additional data from the Transformative Solutions grantees by the end of FY15.

4.2.2. Solutions (Creation, Testing, Scaling)

As discussed above, the second round of the Transformative Solutions grant was launched in FY15 and the awardees will be announced in the second half of FY15. The existing Transformative Solutions are in progress and/or completed. Additional information on those can be found under Objective 2.

4.2.3. Student Engagement

As stated above, ConDev staff are working to engage students in many different ways. ConDev sponsored the “Conflict and Development” category at the Big Ideas at Berkeley competition focused on developing a proposal on a Big Idea that will prevent, mitigate, or help resolve conflict. ConDev researchers also assisted in the development of that category. Additionally, researchers acted as judges for the competition.

In November 2014, ConDev staff and several students attended the second HESN TechCon in San Francisco, California. Five students from TAMU attended and presented their innovative research idea at the Innovation Marketplace.

During this reporting period, ConDev awarded four new SMGP Fellows: three to TAMU students and one to a student from Ibadan University in Nigeria. Applications were received from 12 different universities, including five different HESN labs.

In the spring semester of 2015, Dr. Ed Price taught “Economics of Foreign Intervention, Conflict and Development”. This course has received approval to become a regular course in the catalog instead of a special course, as it was previously categorized. Additionally, ConDev and partners are continuing to work on developing a minor in Conflict and Development.

In collaboration with the College of Engineering, ConDev and the Engineering Innovation Center (EIC) are working together to create a unique learning experience for students. An Aggies Invent-a-thon will be hosted by the EIC featuring development needs sourced from ConDev and ConDev partners. Additional course opportunities are being considered between ConDev and the EIC.

5. USAID Engagement

5.1. USAID/Washington Interactions

Weekly or bi-weekly phone conferences allowed ConDev and USAID Washington staff to engage on organizational decisions, upcoming events, reporting and logistics, program/country updates, and priority research areas. ConDev staff visited USAID Washington for several Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) events. Staff and students attended the annual HESN TechCon in November. During the meeting, ConDev staff met with other HESN collaborators, discussed USAID Mission engagement, and planned future partner outreach. Students participated in discussions and presented during the Innovation Marketplace; additionally, staff presented or participated in technical sessions and roundtable discussions.

5.1.2. Other (Non-Lab) USAID/Washington Interactions

ConDev researchers partnered with USAID’s Africa Bureau on a school based violence study on Botswana, Ghana, and South Africa for a forthcoming USAID sponsored publication. Through this collaboration, ConDev is exploring a potential buy-in opportunity from the Africa Bureau for future research. Researchers partnered with USAID Africa Education Office at the CIES (Comparative and International Education Society) conference on a joint panel in Washington, DC.

ConDev researchers began a successful engagement with USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA)/Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation (CMC). ConDev staff delivered on their request to explore logistics around a series of in-country workshops between USAID, the Department of State, and the US military to discuss how programs can work to counter violent extremism. A workshop outline and plans for future exploration and involvement were made. ConDev researchers quick turnaround on DCHA/CMC’s request has provided a successful starting point for the working relationship and future activities.

USAID official Larry Garber was named to the ConDev Advisory Board. Mr. Garber will serve as the only external member of the Advisory Board and will provide his guidance and support to ConDev and the future planning of ConDev activities. His experience and knowledge will add depth to the Board, in addition to providing the USAID representation for the Board.

5.2. USAID Mission Interactions

ConDev staff also had extensive contact with various USAID Missions, including:

DRC Mission: ConDev has worked extensively with the DRC Mission to continue improving relationships and communication between the partners. ConDev's AOR, Michelle Jones, has also visited with ConDev and Mission staff in DRC. The relationship is slowly developing as each actor learns what the others require and finds ways to accommodate those needs. The joint development of a Terms of Reference document has been initiated to guide future partnership and collaboration. The Best Practices in Coffee and Cocoa preliminary results data has been used to inform the Feed the Future strategy development process.

Peru Mission: Proposed research activities for FY 2015 were discussed and USAID officials provided advice regarding studies and partnership selection.

Ghana Mission: ConDev has received Mission officials concurrence on AgriCorps activities and the Ghana Land Tenure project.

6. Monitoring & Evaluation

6.1. M&E Updates

In January 2015, M&E Coordinator Dr. Leslie Ruyle accepted the role of Network Coordinator and kept her Student Engagement responsibilities. During Spring 2015, Ms. Melanie Balinas took over the duties as the Monitoring, Evaluations, and Awards Specialist for the Center.

At the halfway point of FY 2015, ConDev is on track to meet or exceed many of the targets. FY 2014 showed great success in many areas of ConDev and they are continuing into FY 2015. Several activities will be completed in the second half of FY 2015. These activities include, but are not limited to, the new Transformative Solutions grants being awarded, SMGP grantees reporting back on their activities, the ConDev and USAID internship program, administrator meetings, Lab Director's Convening, and the selection of a new Communications Manager.

6.2. Deviance from M&E Targets

ConDev staff and researchers succeeded in meeting or exceeding several monitoring and evaluation targets. Explanations for selected measures are as follows:

Gin2- ConDev was able to launch the Transformative Solutions grant RFA and chose awardees earlier than expected. No new awards were granted in the first half of FY 2015, but they will be awarded in the second half of FY 2015 and be on track to meet the target.

HESN O1-in3- ConDev staff exceeded the target for the number of data-related analyses through

achieving three separate analyses with the Strategic Analytics Lab. They have worked with data or mapping analyses in Ghana, Nepal, DRC, and with the Africa Education project.

HESN 01-in-07- ConDev staff exceeded the target for the number of US students serving as fellows in developing countries. Through the Benin and Ghana capstone projects, SMGP grants (four additional grants), and research opportunities, ConDev exceeded the target.

HESN IR 2.2-in1- ConDev staff will be on target for the number of white papers, articles, assessments, analyses, and evaluations through compiling various development project reports for FY 2015. As of the first half of FY 2015, ConDev staff have completed research in Guatemala and completed a well-received paper on the school violence study for the Africa Bureau.

HESN O1-in2- ConDev staff exceeded the target for the number of data sets provided through creating two separate data sets with the ConDev/Bush School Capstones focused on Ghana and Benin.

HESN IR 3.4-in3- In FY 2014, ConDev staff and researchers were able to increase the level of engagement with the DRC hub, due to a new, unexpected research project—"Best Practices in Coffee and Cacao"—funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. The total number of participants almost doubled the original target of 220 (500 total). Through the creation of successful hubs in FY 2014, no new hubs were necessary in FY 2015. Two peace dialogues were held by the CPC, one in Rutshuru and one in Masisi. The dialogues were a great success and each event hosted more than 100 participants.

HESN IR 3.4-in2- In FY 2014, the ConDev staff established the Congo Peace Center in DRC and the No-till Agriculture Center in Ghana, thus exceeding the original target by one; however, no new hubs were necessary in FY 2015. So while no new activity has happened in FY 2015, the original target was met.

HESN IR 3.4 CD-in1- ConDev staff had many opportunities to provide workshops, seminars, and lectures for outside actors. Drs. Price and Ruyle were both given the opportunity to present at TechCon 2014 on topics related to student engagement and agriculture and conflict. Additionally, Dr. Price was invited to lecture at the University of Nebraska, with the Gents of TAMU, with MSC Bethancourt at TAMU, and with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). Dr. Ruyle and Ms. Balinas engaged with students on campus for Big Ideas at Berkeley and the SMGP competition and Showcase. ConDev hosted distinguished guests for lectures, including Dr. Jendayi Frazer and the Honorable Marty McVey.

HESN IR 3.1-in1- In FY 2015, ConDev was able to capitalize on courses with the Bush School and within the College of Agriculture, thus leading to an increase for this indicator. SMGP fellowships were awarded to four additional students, nine students participated in ConDev-funded capstone courses through the Bush School, and Dr. Price taught "Economics of Foreign Intervention, Conflict and Development" during the Spring 2015 semester.

7. Lessons Learned / Best Practices

In FY 2014, ConDev staff changed the overall focus of the organization from a hub-based strategy with four target countries and four themes to a strictly thematic based strategy in which research is driven by ConDev's youth employment, local institutions, food security, and natural resource management themes. Since ConDev works along the conflict spectrum, ConDev and USAID discussed this revised strategy to limit the significant disruption caused when time is invested in research and implementation design only to be prevented from completing the work due to security issues. It is still critically important to ConDev to work in fragile and conflict-affected countries, thus in FY 2015 ConDev staff, with USAID guidance, created a conflict definition to determine in which countries ConDev will prioritize its work.

In FY 2015, ConDev staff and university partners re-evaluated the working relationship, communication standards and understanding of the original partnership agreement. New ConDev liaisons were identified for each partner in efforts to create a stronger network. Regular meetings are held to discuss grants, the work plan, and other relevant issues. Additional communication with the Global Development Lab was taken to assure HESN that ConDev and partners can maintain a healthy working partnership. ConDev staff continue to expand the network of on-campus partners and are engaging with the Colleges of Engineering and Liberal Arts, in addition to exploring other opportunities.

The HESN internship program worked very well for ConDev in FY 2014 and had many students placed in internships at USAID and ConDev headquarters. To better align the two separate processes, ConDev ran the FY 2015 internship process at the same time as the HESN internship call. This change simplified the process for both ConDev and interested students. This change also allowed more students to apply for both opportunities and has led to a quality selection of TAMU students being awarded positions within USAID and ConDev.

The FY 2015 call for the Transformative Solutions grant was placed, but due to a long selection process, winners have yet to be notified. ConDev staff will focus on the review process and administrative requirements to award grantees in a timely manner moving forward. As ConDev staff work to solidify relationships with university partners and board members, the process for reviewing and approving proposals will be sped up.

8. Future Activities

Looking forward to the second half of FY 15, ConDev staff plan to work on:

Events:

- Lab Director's Convening: Join the fellow HESN labs in Washington, DC for the annual LDC meeting in April 2015 for the Mid-program Review
- Congo Peace Center dialogues and interfaith conferences: The CPC will continue to promote local voices and peace building through community dialogues and interfaith conferences

- Center Advisory Board Meeting: The Center Board will continue to meet in FY15 for the continued guidance of ConDev
- Aggies Invent: ConDev will partner with the College of Engineering at TAMU for an Aggie Invent-a-thon and other potential collaborative efforts
- DCHA/CMC: Potential workshop on civilian and military response to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)
- Collaboration with Harvard Medical School to host workshop, potentially in Mozambique

Research:

- ConDev and HGBF staff will continue to explore opportunities for research and impact evaluations in Virunga National Park
- Market Tracking Study around Virunga National Park and baseline study of impacts of electricity and a factory around Mutwanga area in DRC- Implemented in February 2015
- Best Practices in Coffee and Cocoa: Research, surveys, and analysis will continue with the BPCC
- Transformative Solutions: Five recipients of the TS grants will be announced and will receive their funding to conduct research studies in the field of conflict and development.
- AFR/SD/ED: Potential impact evaluation buy-in to evaluate effect of program targeting school-based gender-related violence in Uganda
- Migration and Development Initiative in El Salvador: Exploring potential partnership with Catholic Relief Services in El Salvador (CRS) and Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas” (UCA) to conduct a Youth Migration and Development Study in Cacao Production Communities of El Salvador. The objective is to determine the impact of CRS’ pilot intervention to explore and offer alternatives to migration for young people and to study how those opportunities affect young people’s attitudes about and intent to migrate. Project in early stages of development.
- Youth Violence in El Salvador and The Olympic Values Educational Program: Working with proposed partners on a concept note to conduct a study to evaluate if participating in sports programs in vulnerable cities of El Salvador can have a positive impact in crime reduction and help keep youth out of gangs. Project in early stages of development.
- Coffee Rust and the Effects on Migration: Exploring collaboration with FLACSO to study the impact that the coffee rust crisis has had on migration of agricultural laborers in the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras). Project in early stages of development.

Student Engagement:

- HESN and ConDev internships in summer 2015
- SMGP research being conducted in India, Haiti, Kenya, and Nigeria. The next round of competition to open in August.

Program Management:

- Hire Communications Manager
- Announce FY 2015 Transformative Solutions grantees

- ConDev and Washington State University are collaborating on a program to bring Rwandan students to TAMU to study agriculture

9. Environmental Monitoring

ConDev's FY 2015 work plan was reviewed for potential environmental impacts and received a negative determination with conditions threshold decision for the "Enhancing Livelihood and Incomes of Rural Women through Postharvest Technology" in Guatemala. To be in compliance with the environmental regulations, the subawardee is responsible for ensuring that: 1) waste materials, such as plastic packaging, be disposed of in accordance with local requirements and not dumped illegally; 2) gas tanks meet international and/or local safety standards; 3) food is prepared and washed to remove any contaminants such as pesticide residue, chemical or biological fertilizers prior to packaging; and 4) quality control procedures be in place to ensure spoiled food is not packaged and sold for consumption. The subawardee has been meeting with these standards through following strict quality control procedures, following the Ministry of the Environment guidelines, and conducting proper training of all staff on the necessary environmental considerations.

10. Other

Per the request of Dave Ferguson, ConDev Director Dr. Price created the "Way Forward" objectives for ConDev to strive for in building strong on-campus relationships with partners. The following items are the objectives created and the progress ConDev staff have made to achieve them. ConDev staff are working diligently to ensure all efforts are being made to better the relationships with partners, to ensure transparency in all processes, and to keep ConDev on track for success.

1. Add a Senior Advisor for partnerships the responsibilities of the Senior Advisor for Partnerships: Mr. Howard W. Buffett has been added to the Senior Advisors for ConDev and has begun to fully engage with activities.
2. Monthly meetings will Bush School: These will be convened by the Director of AgriLife Research and Dean of the Bush School, beginning in March 2015. They may or not continue with that frequency, depending upon needs.
3. Continued meetings of Senior Advisors. These meetings will commence when the Dean of the Bush School and Dean of the School of Public Health appoint new senior advisors. Possibly by May 1, 2015 (for new academic year): Meetings for Senior Advisors are in the plan; however, the delay is not within the control of ConDev scheduling. This will take place in the second half of FY 2015.
4. Continued frequent consultation as needed with faculty and administrators regarding student and research matters (this is ongoing and irregular, at least once per month): Drs. Ruyle and Price have frequent interaction and meetings with faculty and administrators regarding student and research matters.

5. Second meeting of the Center Advisory Board is scheduled for March 6, 2015: The Center Advisory Board met on March 10, 2015. The meeting minutes will be made available when provided by the administration.
6. Research grants, student employment, and internships are competitively awarded. These are announced and competed on a scheduled basis. Current "Transformative Solutions" proposals (18) have been distributed to the Advisory Board for review: The TS proposals were sent to the Advisory Board, Senior Advisors, ConDev researchers, USAID, and TAMU partners for input. All future grants and scholarship protocols are undergoing revisions to ensure a competitive and transparent process.
7. Representatives of the Bush School and other cooperating colleges will continue to have a standing invitation to join weekly USAID conference calls, that some have attended. The director will remind partners of this opportunity when new Senior Advisors are appointed, and minutes of the meetings will be sent to them: USAID/ConDev email lists have been updated by AOR, Michelle Jones, to accurately reflect the invitation to the weekly phone call and minutes.
8. Until recently, Senior Advisors were sent agendas and minutes of weekly ConDev staff meetings. That will be resumed on April 1, 2015: Senior Advisors are invited and given access to the staff meeting agenda and minutes. The invitation process for the meetings is being reviewed for the second half of FY 2015.
9. Other specific objectives with the Bush School depend in part upon their resumption of administrative participation in HESN activity planning: All additional Bush School objectives are ongoing.
10. Led by Director Nessler, ConDev staff will meet with the new dean of the School of Public Health (SPH) and plan cooperation (by April 15, 2015): Dr. Price met with Dean Jay Maddock and they are planning on a cooperative and communicative working relationship.
11. Continued funding of graduate and undergraduate students focused on conflict and development issues in public health: ConDev employs one PhD student, Jaehyun Ahn from SPH and is continually open to additional students.
12. Funding of a senior advisor to HESN from the School of Public Health. Target appointment by April 15, 2015): As Dean Maddock is new to SPH, this has not been completed yet.
13. Exploration cooperation with foreign schools of public health/medicine for work in post-conflict environments: Ongoing.
14. New areas of cooperation will be identified through (minimally) bi-monthly meetings with the senior advisor for public health, and, depending upon the wishes of the new dean, periodic meetings with senior administration. This objective is slowly progressing, ConDev is still in discussions with the newly appointed Dean of the School of Public Health.
15. Other specific objectives with respect to the School of Public Health will depend on outcomes of meeting with the new dean by April 15, 2015): Ongoing and will be determined at a later date, given continued cooperation from SPH.
16. Continued cooperation with the College of Liberal Arts, through shared faculty, Jendayi Frazer, leader of the Congo Peace Center, and a post-doctoral fellow, Benjamin Tkach, and HGBF-funded research.
17. Establish a plan of activity with faculty in the College of Engineering and the Mays School of Business, and a plan of activity will be established by May 1, 2015: Activities with additional faculty have been progressing, most successfully with the College of Engineering. ConDev and

the Engineering Innovation Center (EIC) are working together on an “Aggies Invent-a-thon) focused on innovations used in development, as selected by ConDev and field partners.

18. Other specific objectives with respect to other colleges will depend on discussions and agreement with those colleges: Ongoing, Network Coordinator Dr. Ruyle has been focused on increasing conversation and activities with other colleges at TAMU.

B. Transparency

1. HESN research funding, HGBF Student Media Grants, and internships are awarded through transparent competitive processes. Selecting and funding process is undergoing revisions to ensure even greater transparency. The FY 2015 Transformative Solutions proposals went through three rounds of reviews, including panels with ConDev, TAMU partners and boards, and USAID.

2. HGBF-funded implementation projects are made available for evaluations through the Transformative Solution grant, program. Information regarding these projects are shared through college and public seminars, senior advisor/dean discussions, and Board presentations. Ongoing.

C. Work Planning

1. Individual meetings are held with each partner for work planning. The records of these discussions have been provided to ConDev’s AOR. Partners are provided copies of the annual work plan in USAID electronic platform format at the same time as ConDev staff, for comment and correction before submission to USAID: Work plan emails, discussions, and meetings are shared amongst all ConDev partners and given adequate time to respond and/or participate. FY 2016 work planning will take place in the second half of FY 2015.