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Resource Guide

BEST PRACTICES FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

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Front Cover: Village teams review monthly data during a quarterly review meeting in the Kumi District, Uganda. © 2017 Laura Wando, Courtesy of Photoshare.

Back Cover: Women carry drinking water from the Ayeyarwaddy River, Myanmar. © 2005 Kyaw Winn, Courtesy of Photoshare.

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ACRONYMS

MEL	**Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning**
MPA	**Marine Protected Area**
USAID	**United States Agency for International Development**

I. OVERVIEW

Healthy ecosystems are an important source of goods and services that are vital for addressing global development challenges. Conservation protects biodiversity and these critical goods and services. Given biodiversity's relevance for global development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is one of the world's largest conservation donors. The Agency works to conserve biodiversity in priority places and integrate biodiversity across development sectors. Effectively engaging stakeholders is a core component of successful and sustainable biodiversity conservation programs and an essential element in helping countries transition to self-reliance.

This resource guide is intended to help USAID mission staff to systematically approach engaging stakeholders in biodiversity conservation planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning within the Program Cycle. While the focus of this document is biodiversity conservation, its concepts, practices, and tools can be used in other development sectors and in integrated programming.

This resource guide breaks the process of stakeholder engagement into four steps:

1. Consider the objectives of stakeholder engagement and assess the program context.
2. Focus on getting to know and understand key stakeholders, their priorities, and their motivations.
3. Ensure that stakeholders are included in decision-making and involved in all relevant aspects of the program.
4. Work to develop a true partnership with external stakeholders.

For each step, this document describes key concepts and resources, and summarizes relevant case studies about stakeholder engagement in biodiversity conservation programs. A checklist summarizing each step and associated tools and techniques is provided in four worksheets at the end of this guide. The document also discusses challenges that teams may encounter when engaging stakeholders and provides suggestions for how to overcome those challenges. The purpose of this document is not to provide a prescriptive methodology but rather to describe a framework and introduce relevant tools that can allow teams to apply key concepts and choose the approaches best suited to their goals.

II. INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity conservation programs take place in complex contexts involving a web of social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental constraints and opportunities. Teams must navigate and adjust to the constantly changing nature of local conditions when designing, implementing, and evaluating programs. Engaging with stakeholders provides teams with perspectives that can help improve outcomes. Understanding whom to engage, as well as when and how, are important considerations in biodiversity conservation program design and implementation.

A key component of the USAID Program Cycle and Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting approach is stakeholder engagement, with teams seeking to understand and respond to the priorities and perspectives of local actors, including the partner country government, beneficiaries, civil society, private sector, and academia. Learning about local priorities and perspectives can help provide a better understanding of the context in which a program takes place.

This resource guide provides a framework for effective stakeholder engagement. It presents evidence-based, practical guidance regarding key steps and practices for effectively engaging stakeholders in biodiversity conservation programs (See Table 1 on page 5). It also provides teams with key tools and resources, allowing them to choose the approaches best suited to their needs.

Table 1. Overview of the key guidance for engaging stakeholders

Stakeholder Engagement Steps and Action Points	
Step 1	Teams should consider the objectives of stakeholder engagement and assess the context of the program. • Identify the purpose and scope of stakeholder engagement • Analyze the socio-economic, political, and social contexts to inform program design • Plan for consistent and sustained support of engagement efforts
Step 2	Teams should focus on getting to know and understand key stakeholders, their priorities, and their motivations. • Identify key stakeholders and gauge their level of interest and influence • Assess different stakeholder perspectives and values • Understand stakeholder motivations and priorities • Design engagement efforts that reflect local values and culture
Step 3	Teams should ensure that stakeholders are fully included in decision-making and involved in all relevant aspects of the program. • Involve stakeholders early in the program planning process • Build continued stakeholder involvement into program design • Include multiple sources of knowledge in decision-making • Plan to monitor stakeholder engagement throughout
Step 4	Teams should work to develop a true partnership with external stakeholders. • Develop and document shared expectations • Build trust and respect • Foster local leadership • Consider the costs of engagement for stakeholders

III. WHAT IS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND WHY IS IT USEFUL FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS?

What is a stakeholder?

Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions who affect or are affected by a decision or activity; they can be directly or indirectly involved (see Table 2 for common examples).[1,2] Stakeholders include those with vested interests in or influence over the natural resources of an area, those who have something to gain or lose based on a program's intended outcomes, and/or those implementing or supporting conservation strategic approaches. All conservation programs have stakeholders, but they can vary greatly in how – and to what extent – they are involved. The USAID Biodiversity and Development Handbook recommends that stakeholders should be involved from the beginning and throughout a program and notes that their involvement and support is crucial for success.[3]

Table 2. Common Stakeholders in Biodiversity Conservation

Common Stakeholders in Biodiversity Conservation[3]
Stakeholders in biodiversity conservation can be found at all levels of society. Any single stakeholder group may be diverse, and understanding that diversity will strengthen a team's stakeholder engagement approach to conserving biodiversity. Some stakeholders – called "hidden stakeholders" – may be less obvious and could include those from underrepresented groups. Common examples of stakeholders in biodiversity conservation programs include: • Groups living in or near an area of high biodiversity (such as farmers, pastoralists, hunters, fishers, forest product collectors, or ethnic groups) • Indigenous peoples living in or near an area of high biodiversity • Marginalized groups (such as women, indigenous groups and indigenous peoples' organizations, and the lowest socioeconomic stratum) • Government at local, regional, or national scales • Non-governmental organizations • Researchers and research institutions • Formal community-based organizations • Private sector organizations • USAID staff

What is stakeholder engagement?
Stakeholder engagement is the process of including stakeholders in an action or decision-making process. Stakeholder engagement can bring to light the issues that matter most to those affected by a programming decision and ensures that stakeholders are represented in decision-making. Stakeholder engagement can provide program implementers with a range of viewpoints and perspectives, as well as valuable knowledge about the local social and ecological systems, which can lead to more robust program design and implementation and more sustainable outcomes.

How can stakeholders be engaged?
Engagement ranges from stakeholders merely receiving information about an initiative to full collaborative partnerships. Different groups of stakeholders can engage in different ways through the various stages of the Program Cycle. Stakeholder engagement can be viewed along an intensity continuum, with activities generally grouped as follows:

- **Informing —** Participants are informed about what has already been decided or what action has been or will be taken.
- **Consulting —** Stakeholders are consulted on preferences for alternatives, decisions, or actions in which other actors make the final decision. This can include participation in exchange for material incentives or in response to contractual obligations.
- **Decision-Making —** Collaborative, two-way communication, and effective partnering with stakeholders in all relevant activities and phases of the decision-making process, including identifying the problem, consultation, gathering information, formulating alternatives and exploring their potential consequences, implementation, and evaluation.[*,4-12]

Another, more locally-led stakeholder engagement approach that is sometimes undertaken by USAID is when, after defining jointly agreed-upon parameters, local stakeholders take the lead in making decisions and taking action. In this instance, these stakeholders communicate about their decisions or actions with USAID staff.

[*] USAID has a long history of working to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Existing and emerging guidance can help USAID staff to work with such groups. Examples include the USAID Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment, the USAID Vision for Action on Promoting and Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals, and the Agency's work promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.

Why is stakeholder engagement important in achieving conservation goals?
Engaging stakeholders appropriately is prudent for two reasons. First, involving stakeholders is important for ethical reasons and can help a program appropriately address governance and equity-related issues. Secondly, involving stakeholders has a practical element because their participation has been associated with improved program outcomes. USAID's Local Systems Framework emphasizes the efficacy of engaging stakeholders to sustain a program's results. Local partners are generally better able to sustain a program's intended outcomes when they are directly embedded in all relevant steps of the process. Table 3 includes a synopsis of points for each argument.

Table 3. Reasons for engaging stakeholders

Governance- and equity-related reasons to engage stakeholders[13-16]	Practical reasons to engage stakeholders[17,18]
• Reduced marginalization of those underrepresented in decision-making • Increased stakeholder trust in and ability to act on decisions • Accounting for diversity of values • Promotion of social learning where stakeholders learn from each other and build new knowledge while developing new relationships	• Increased diversity in decision-making bodies leading to higher quality decisions that are better adapted to the local social-cultural and environmental contexts • Development of common ground and trust to reduce or prevent conflict • Promotion of ownership of the development solution or intervention, leading to heightened support for and more successful implementation • Potential for reduced implementation costs • Increased sustainability of the program's intended outcomes

IV. HOW TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS

This resource guide suggests approaching stakeholder engagement in four steps. These steps and the tools available to support their use are summarized in four worksheets at the end of this document.

Step 1. Teams should consider the objectives of stakeholder engagement and assess the context of the program.

1.1. Identify the purpose and scope of stakeholder engagement. A clear sense of purpose is critical to designing and implementing a stakeholder engagement program.

Important Considerations:

- What are your program's intended outcomes?*
- Why are you engaging stakeholders?
- What are the benefits of stakeholder engagement?
- What are stakeholder motivations for engagement?
- How will success be measured?

1.2 Analyze the programmatic, socioeconomic, political, and social contexts to inform program design. A clear understanding of a program's socioeconomic, political, and social landscape involves an evaluation of past engagement efforts, including prior successes and failures, which can provide insights about how to proceed.

* USAID's *Biodiversity How-To Guide 1: Developing Situation Models in USAID Biodiversity Programming* and *Supplemental Guide 1: Defining Scope and Biodiversity Focal Interests in USAID Biodiversity Programming* provide guidance for defining program outcomes.

Follow the Evidence:
An initiative to work with local stakeholders to create a marine protected area (MPA) on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua illustrates the importance of historical and institutional factors. In this case, local stakeholders were distrustful of the national government, which made them skeptical of a government-backed MPA. Navigating this context required planners to acknowledge these complex social issues and to be patient and flexible. MPA planners allocated time to listen to communities in order to understand and learn about the conflicting issues, worries, and concerns local people had concerning a new MPA. Likely in part as a result of these efforts, a majority of the engaged communities approved going forward with the MPA.[19]

Important Considerations:

- What is the historical context of the program?
- Have similar programs been undertaken previously? If so, did the programs achieve their objectives? What were the key elements driving success?
- What stakeholders, or stakeholder groups, have been engaged in the past? Did these engagement efforts result in successful program outcomes? Why or why not?
- What is the relationship of the USAID team with other stakeholders?
- Are there relevant activities, events, or communication channels that could be used to engage stakeholders?

Learning more about the following aspects of a community can help the team better understand the context (adapted from Tools of Engagement: A Toolkit for Engaging People in Conservation[18]):

- Access to natural resources/property ownership structure
- Community boundaries (social and geographic) and identity
- Condition of and dependence on natural resources and landscapes
- Demographics
- Economic conditions, including livelihoods
- Education
- Environmental values
- Form of governance
- Gender roles/norms
- Health-related issues and access to healthcare
- Infrastructure, public services, and public safety
- Local culture and related practices, including recreation activities
- Religious and spiritual practices
- Social networks

Follow the Evidence:
A systematic review of 136 community-based conservation projects from 40 countries around the world focused on conservation challenges in managing forests, grasslands, wildlife, and fisheries. A key finding of the study was that local contexts can affect program success – both positively and negatively. However, the study also found that a well-designed engagement strategy can overcome unfavorable aspects of the local and national socio-political and economic contexts.[20]

Tools and Techniques:

- USAID's Rapid Assessment Tips describe several different methods that can be used to perform assessments of stakeholders. USAID often uses a Political Economy Analysis to understand the actors that need to be engaged to leverage change in a system.
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency has developed a profiling guide and social science toolkit for assessing the social dynamics involved in community engagement. The guide is intended to help practitioners better understand community values and processes.[23]

- A community assessment tools guide by Rotary International details six different tools that can be used for community assessment: community meeting, survey, focus group, interview, asset inventory, and community mapping.[24]
- Situation models provide a graphic representation of a problem or context analysis. These models can help the team to identify and better understand the key forces impacting a program. The process of developing a situation model presents an opportunity to engage stakeholders early in the process and incorporate diverse views, including outside experts, and groups that may be underrepresented (e.g., women or indigenous groups). USAID published a *How-To Guide on Developing Situation Models in Biodiversity Programming*.

1.3. Plan for consistent and sustained support of engagement efforts. Teams should budget time and funds explicitly for stakeholder engagement activities. This includes the cost of facilitators, meeting venues, and other potential collaboration and learning activities. It may also include costs for assessment teams to conduct analyses or mapping exercises. The budget should consider funding for these activities throughout the life of the program, as initial support for stakeholder engagement activities that decreases as the program progresses has been seen as a contributor to program failure. Teams should also consider budgeting resources for necessary communications support in order to solicit feedback from stakeholders throughout the life of the program and share key lessons.

Follow the Evidence:
Research has shown that integrating different forms of knowledge across stakeholders increases the level of understanding of the system but also makes it more difficult to anticipate the impacts of different implementation options.[21] An analysis of a multinational conservation program in Southern Africa found that when too many stakeholders are involved, discussions can be very broad and conceptual, and therefore less likely to provide guidance for action.[22] Overall, while evidence suggests that integrating knowledge from different stakeholders can have some limitations, use of multiple sources can foster better outcomes.

Step 2. Teams should focus on getting to know and understand key stakeholders, their priorities, and their motivations.

2.1. Identify key stakeholders and gauge their level of interest and influence. Identification of people, groups, institutions, and government agencies that have interest in a program or will be affected by it and learning about their relationships with it are essential. Teams must balance the benefits of inclusiveness (such as higher participation and broader capacity development) with the drawbacks of having too many stakeholders (such as higher costs or difficulty in reaching consensus).

Important Considerations:
Ways to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have been identified include:

- Conducting desk research to identify all possible stakeholders. A few key questions can help to identify individuals or groups that can be categorized under three different stakeholder types.[1]
  - Primary stakeholders
    - Who stands to be directly affected by the program, either positively or negatively?
    - Whose approval or input is needed before a program can move forward?
  - Secondary stakeholders
    - Who stands to be indirectly affected by the program, either positively or negatively?
  - Tertiary stakeholders
    - Who is not directly or indirectly affected but can have significant impact (either positive or negative) on the program by influencing others?

- Carrying out surveys both virtually and in person, through interviews, attending conferences and meetings, and leveraging social media can help ensure that the engagement process captures all of the stakeholders important to program outcomes and includes methods that are inclusive of heterogeneous groups (for example, both literate and illiterate stakeholders).
- A Request for Information can be used to find potential stakeholders and learn more about their level of interest on a given issue. A Request for Information can solicit ideas, insights, and feedback as well as provide detail around the level of capacity and technical capabilities of potential stakeholders.

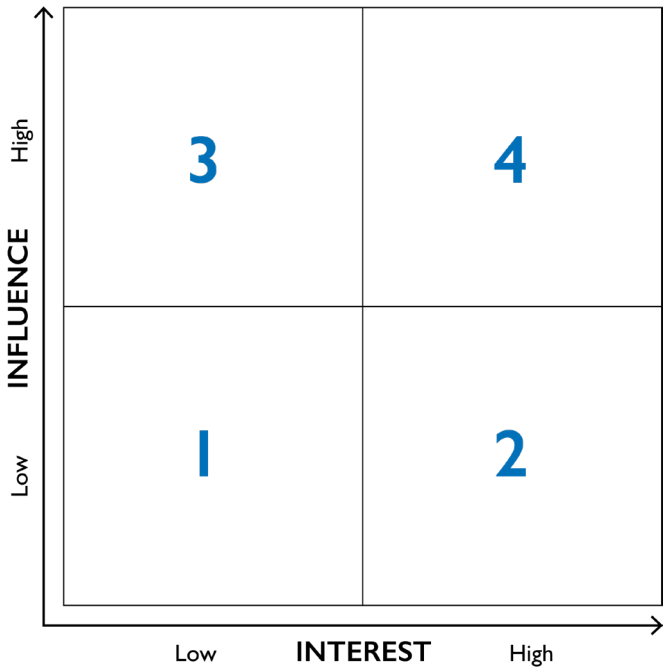


Figure 1. Stakeholder analysis grid with four quadrants. Stakeholders in each quadrant vary between their level of interest in a program (low or high) and level of influence over a program (low or high), adapted from Vogler et al. (2017).[25]

Tools and Techniques:

- A stakeholder analysis grid can be used to visualize how stakeholders compare in terms of their influence and interest in a given program (Figure 1). The horizontal axis is used to define the stakeholder's position regarding an issue. A similar tool, called a stakeholder analysis map, is shown in Figure 2 on page 11.
- The "3 Rs" Approach: Understanding the rights, risks, and responsibilities of each stakeholder in relation to a program can help the team gain an initial understanding of different stakeholders' perspectives.[26]
- Collaboration maps allow teams to graphically depict the program's relationships with key stakeholders. These maps are a learning tool that can help the team gain a shared understanding of who the key stakeholders are, and their interest and influence. Findings from a collaboration map can help to determine how the program can strategically allocate its time and efforts to build relationships.[27] USAID's Learning Lab produced a facilitation guide for collaboration mapping.
- Network mapping is an interview-based tool used to understand the actors within a given network, how they are related to each other, their level of influence, and their goals. These maps can provide a clearer view of a situation and foster discussion. Information gained from a network map can also allow teams to be more strategic in how they approach complex situations.[28] A description of network mapping can be found in the Net-Map Toolbox.

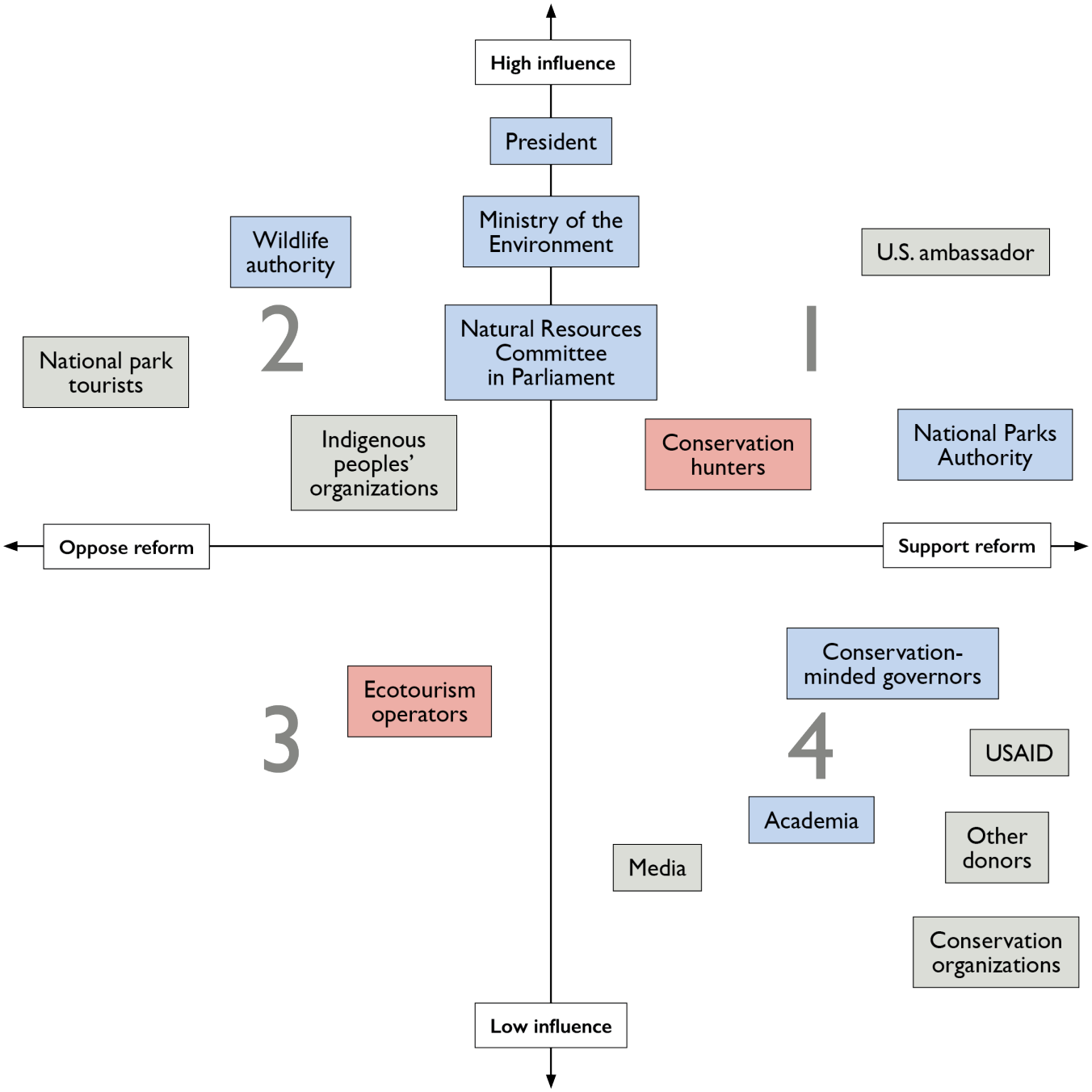


Figure 2. An example of a stakeholder analysis map. The horizontal axis represents support of or opposition to a strategic approach and the vertical axis represents the level of influence of the stakeholder. Blue boxes designate government actor; pink boxes designate private sector actors; grey boxes designate other stakeholders.

2.2. Assess different stakeholder perspectives and values. Recognizing and considering diverse value systems is a critical part of this step.[29] Teams should acknowledge both inter- and intra-group variation, as well as respect existing structures and institutions. Additionally, teams should acknowledge differing values among members of the team and local stakeholder groups or among stakeholders. While it is natural to have different perspectives, if they are not properly addressed, they can lead to a communication breakdown, erosion of trust, and less successful outcomes.

Follow the Evidence:
Women and men in villages within two communal conservancies in Namibia had different human-wildlife conflict risk perceptions, as women had greater "worry" for conflict's effects on local livelihoods. One implication of this finding was that if strategic approaches to reduce human-wildlife conflicts were framed solely in terms of male-oriented viewpoints they might discourage participation by women, for whom these issues were just as relevant. This could be overcome by designing interventions that targeted the perceptions and needs of both women and men.[30]

Tools and Techniques:

- The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has developed a preliminary guide regarding diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits. The guide includes detail on specific methods for integration and bridging of values, including integrated modeling, multi-criteria decision analysis, narrative approaches, and deliberative valuation.[31]

2.3. Understand stakeholder motivations. Economic and social benefits can both be motivating factors for stakeholders. Economic benefits are most effective when they are tangible, sufficient, and sustained.[32] Well-designed programs should have a clear logic linking stakeholder incentives with overall project objectives.[33] Stakeholder behavior can also be motivated by social norms and factors such as personal well-being, conservation for future generations, and providing a public environmental good.

Important Considerations:

Societal attitudes and values can be powerful drivers of behavior change. Thus, they are important to understand when designing strategies that address social motivating factors. Some questions to consider when engaging stakeholders include (adapted from National Audubon Society's Tools of Engagement):[18]

- What do stakeholders already know (or think they know) about the issue that the program is addressing?
- How do the stakeholders feel about the issue (what is their attitude toward it)?
- How can you demonstrate that the program's approach is aligned with stakeholders' values?
- How can you make the issue more emotionally relevant to stakeholders?
- How important is this issue to stakeholders, and how does it affect their goals?
- What motivates stakeholders to care about this issue or its solutions?
- What motivates stakeholders to engage with each other?
- Do stakeholders believe any change is likely to resolve the issue?
- Do stakeholders need more information in order to take action?
- What do stakeholders think that others (especially others whom they respect or admire) will think of them for participating in the program?

Follow the Evidence:
A review of engagement efforts in Mexico and Jamaica found that local communities and their advocates possessed a much broader definition of biodiversity and its purpose than policymakers and managers. These communities viewed biodiversity as important for subsistence and autonomy as well as to meet cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic needs. Further, the study found that these communities better mobilized and achieved greater conservation outcomes when the importance of natural resources was tied to such intangible values rather than to economics.[34]

Follow the Evidence:
A study of 13 coastal communities in Indonesia investigated reasons why community members participated in management of the local MPA. The study found strong evidence that societal expectations and norms were a leading factor driving individuals to participate. Specifically, when individuals felt expectations from their family, friends, community, and religious leaders to get involved, their participation was more likely. This research shows that it can be beneficial to understand and work within the frames of existing norms and institutions.[38]

2.4. Design engagement efforts to reflect local values and culture. Engagement efforts that are built from the stakeholders' value base and reflect their culture are more likely to be successful. While acknowledging that culture is neither static nor monolithic, engagement decisions should be culturally appropriate and made by or with stakeholders; this is particularly relevant when stakeholder livelihoods are involved.

Important Considerations:

- Have you acknowledged and addressed any differences in value systems among key stakeholders and with the program team?
- Are decisions about stakeholder engagement made in consideration of local values and culture, with an emphasis on collaboration?
- Are the methods for engagement under consideration aligned with the value base of key stakeholders?
- Are the methods of engagement under consideration aligned with the day-to-day activities of key stakeholders?

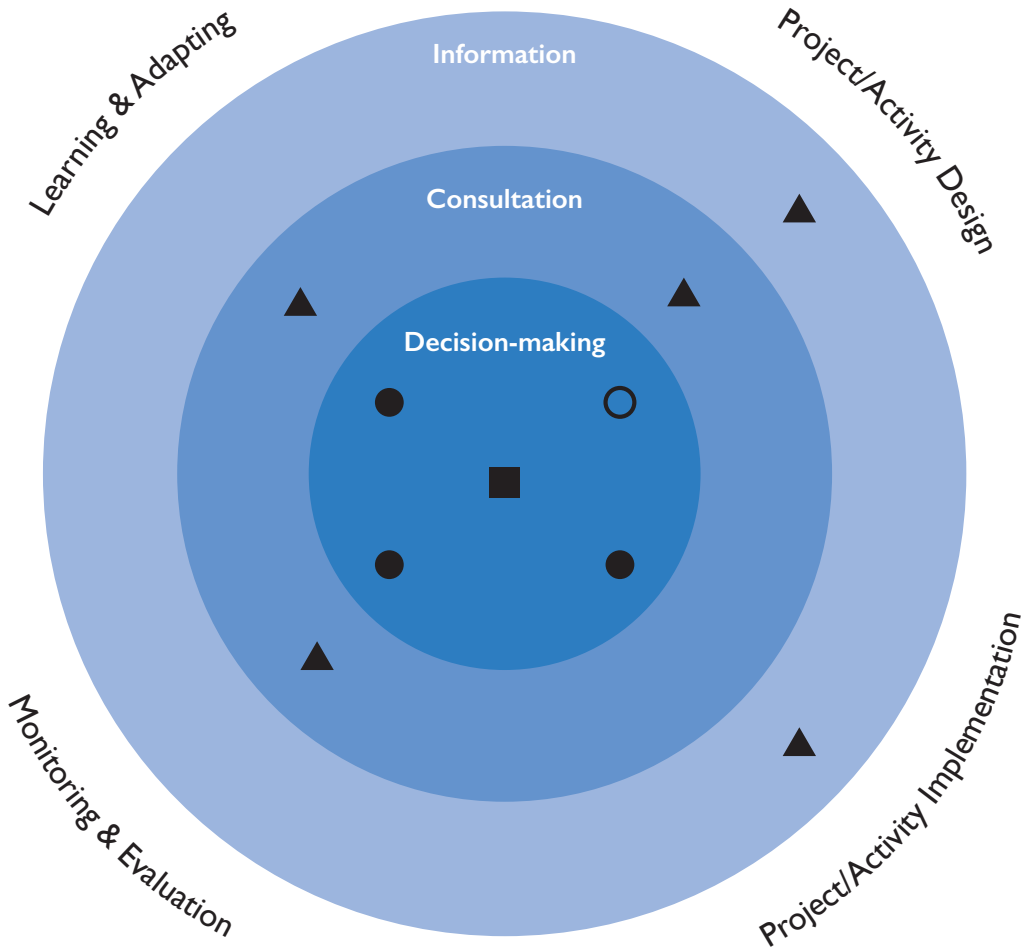
Follow the Evidence:
A program in Ghana unsuccessfully attempted to introduce and train local communities living around a protected area in alternative livelihood strategies. The attempts failed because the strategies promoted livelihood activities with no tradition or history in the region and did not address human-wildlife conflicts. The sole exception was an eco-tourism plan that was co-developed with the community and highlighted existing cultural attractions in the village, as well as ecological sites of interest in the nearby park. In this case, the enterprise rooted in community tradition helped the village to generate employment and sustain its culture despite restrictions on access to the protected area.[45]

Step 3. Teams should ensure that stakeholders are included in decision-making and involved in all relevant aspects of the program.

3.1. Involve stakeholders early in the process. Engaging stakeholders early in a program has been shown to be a factor in program success. Engagement can be initiated as early as the point of developing or validating the situation model. Including stakeholders in the early stages of planning can foster a sense of ownership over the program and its outcomes.[36,37]

3.2. Build continued stakeholder involvement into program or activity design. While it is wise to involve stakeholders as early as possible, teams should draft a plan for stakeholder engagement to occur throughout implementation of the Program Cycle (See Figure 3 on page 14), as failure to plan adequate time for continued engagement could negatively impact the program's success. Also, the degree of engagement can vary through the life of the program. To this end, teams should be strategic regarding the level of intensity and timing of stakeholder engagement throughout the process, realizing that different stakeholders can be involved in different ways across different stages of implementation.[29]

Follow the Evidence:
Benefits should be not only appropriate but also sufficient. An analysis of community-based natural resource management initiatives in Mozambique and Namibia found that benefits to community stakeholders were of low value and not distributed frequently enough. The inadequacy of these benefits discouraged participation in the programs. Local communities were also concerned that the benefits did not compensate for the negative impacts of higher wildlife populations and increased human-wildlife conflict. These weaknesses in the stakeholder engagement program led to discontent and lack of participation, hampering the success of the community-based natural resource management initiatives.[35]



KEY

- ■ Stakeholder leads or co-leads the project/activity and involvement in it
- ● Stakeholder participates in decision-making throughout the project/activity
- ○ Internal stakeholder participates in decision-making throughout the project/activity
- ▲ Stakeholders engage in varying degrees throughout the project/activity

Figure 3. The intensity of engagement for different stakeholder groups across the Program Cycle. The intensity of engagement can range from receiving information to being involved in decision-making (intensity of engagement is represented by the concentric circles) across the different phases of the USAID Program Cycle (indicated by the text surrounding the circles). The central square represents the USAID team responsible for strategic direction and decision-making. Other shapes represent diverse stakeholder groups who are engaged at different times and varying degrees of intensity. Adapted from Sterling et al. 2017 for the USAID context.[29]

3.3. Include multiple sources of knowledge in decision-making. Conservation decisions based on multiple sources of knowledge can be more effective than those that do not consider different sources.[29,39,40] In particular, local and traditional ecological knowledge should be respectfully and appropriately included in decision-making processes.

Important Consideration:

When indigenous, local, and western scientific knowledge are considered in parallel, they can be complementary and lead to development of new insights and innovations.[41] Holding open forums with diverse stakeholders, including those who have deep understanding of local knowledge systems – as contributors or facilitators – can create space to co-produce knowledge. These forums should use processes that are collaborative and actively encourage the sharing of multiple views and methods.[42]

Follow the Evidence:

Three case studies from Canada's Arctic demonstrate how knowledge co-production among indigenous groups, scientists, and managers allowed for more effective adaptive management of fisheries. Biodiversity conservation goals were met when the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Inuit and Inuvialuit, particularly in relation to the inherent variability of the Arctic, were acknowledged and synthesized with scientific projections of regional climate change effects on sea ice and sustainable yield scenarios for fishery management.[43]

3.4. Plan to monitor stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement efforts should be explicitly considered in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plans.

Important Considerations:

- Has the team included performance indicators related to stakeholder engagement for monitoring and evaluation throughout the program as well as appropriate data collection and analysis? Co-developing indicators and other measures with stakeholders helps ensure the selection of meaningful indicators as well as mutual understanding of results.
- Has the team planned to regularly share feedback about the progress of stakeholder engagement activities?
- Has the team considered entry points in the MEL Plan for engaging researchers and research institutions?

Tools and Techniques:

- To support teams in building in adequate time and resources for proper monitoring and evaluation, *Biodiversity How-To Guide 3: Defining Outcomes and Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming* will be useful. These tools and resources can be shared with stakeholders as useful and appropriate.

Follow the Evidence:

A meta-analysis of 29 case studies from around the world found that in co-managed, community-based conservation initiatives, traditional ecological knowledge, alongside scientific knowledge, was considered the basis for good natural resource management decision-making. One successful case involved co-management of caribou in Canada, in which Cree elders monitored over-hunting by younger members of the community and made them aware of traditional hunting rules. Community-based initiatives such as this combine traditional rules and official regulations as well as sanctions established by informal and formal institutions.[44]

Step 4: Teams should work to develop a true partnership with external stakeholders.

4.1. Develop and document shared expectations. This can be done by being explicit about the goals of the program, the role of the stakeholders, and how success will be measured.

Important Considerations:

A results chain visually depicts a theory of change by explicitly showing the relationship between a program's intended actions and its expected outcomes. Results chains are the tool of choice in representing the logic in USAID biodiversity programs, and their use is suggested by USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning as a tool to represent logic models. Developing a results chain with stakeholders can help to make sure all members of the team share a common understanding of the factors and assumptions involved, and potential strategic approaches available before making decisions and identifying key performance indicators to determine whether a program is on track.

Ideally, results chains should reflect and connect to the complexity of the local social and ecological systems, and the stakeholders' values and knowledge. The results chains should be considered within the broader context of the system at hand, taking into account interrelationships, feedback loops, and nonlinearities.[46] Results chains from different stakeholder perspectives provide important information about their thinking and reasoning, and can help understand their motivations. Teams should emphasize to local stakeholders that the results chain can be modified as local conditions change and the team learns about the program's effectiveness during implementation. Transparent adaptive management of the program should include annual (at least) reports to stakeholders in forums that they can easily access to inform them of progress and challenges and solicit their input to adaptive management decisions.

Tools and Techniques:

- USAID Office of Forestry and Biodiversity has developed *How-To Guide 2: Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Biodiversity Programming*, and USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning published a *How-To Note on developing a project logic model and its associated theory of change*.

Follow the Evidence:

A study of three programs involving stakeholder engagement in Scotland found that early involvement of stakeholders was the most important variable in determining how much the stakeholders learned throughout the process.[16]

4.2. Build trust and respect. This fosters successful program outcomes, although different approaches may be necessary to earn trust or to be respectful of different stakeholders.

Important Considerations:

- Budget adequate time for relationship building into a program's timeline. Sustained investment in relationship building, including on an individual basis, has been associated with program success.[47]
- Trust building involves effective communication, including early communication of responsibilities and uncertainties. This includes achieving clarity about program objectives, how decisions will be made and communicated, and how the program will be managed.
- Transparent sharing of progress and challenges is also an important part of adaptive management.

Follow the Evidence:
Elite capture – when resources intended for a broader group are usurped by a few members of higher status – can undermine a program by inhibiting key elements such as transparency, trust, and equity. In Indonesia, corruption of a local leader damaged social trust and, consequently, the sasi (a local marine tenure system) was disputed, contributing to overfishing.[44] In community-based natural resource management initiatives in southern Africa, reduced benefits to community members and seizure of decision-making power by the program staff was a key reason for growing community dissatisfaction with the initiatives.[35]

Tools and Techniques:

- A skilled, unbiased, outside facilitator (a non-stakeholder) can facilitate discussions to manage stakeholder group interactions. A facilitator will typically encourage effective communication and work with the group to set common goals and reduce conflict. Research has shown that facilitated discussion can help foster collaboration and willingness to participate.[48]
- Peer-to-peer learning events such as participatory meetings and informal gatherings (i.e., brown bag lunches) can be a great method for sharing knowledge and gaining stakeholder input. These events can be organized in a wide range of formats, such as working through a case study, debating different sides of an issue, and having presentations. USAID's Technical and Operational Performance Support Program provides guidance on designing participatory meetings and brown bags.
- Scenario planning is a type of planning process that asks stakeholders to develop and share their mental models of the future in order to find innovative solutions to complex problems. Scenario planning helps stakeholders to consider future desirable and undesirable aspects as well as tradeoffs. This knowledge can be used to determine appropriate collective action.[49]
- Developing the capacity of stakeholders strengthens their ability to set goals and objectives and to achieve them effectively, while a lack of capacity can lead to reduced performance. [50] Capacity building activities can include a wide range of actions including training workshops, courses, and professional development for key stakeholder groups and organizations to provide them with knowledge, skills, resources, tools, and incentives for more productive engagement. Detailed guidance can be found in USAID's Human and Institutional Capacity Development Handbook.
- Communities of practice allow groups of people who share a common interest to come together to exchange knowledge and further their work. These types of meetings can provide a space for stakeholders to learn from each other regarding a particular area of interest. USAID published a brief on communities of practice and the Office of Forestry and Biodiversity hosts a Cross-Mission Learning Program to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing.

4.3. Foster local leadership. Leadership and local champions are associated with success in conservation initiatives.[29] Since strong leaders can be important for program success, teams should work to develop leadership at the local level that can build capacity for effective engagement.

Important Considerations:

- When leadership falls on a few people, these leaders can face challenges in balancing competing priorities affecting their capacity to engage in the program or activity. Teams should work to actively manage and mitigate conflicting demands on local leaders and build additional leadership depth when needed.
- Engaging stakeholders can lead to social conflict if it is poorly executed.[35,51,52] When "outsiders" try to engage community members, organizations, or institutions without fully understanding how they interact with each other, manage resources, and make decisions, conflict can arise.[53] Teams should also keep in mind the dynamic nature of culture and the fluid nature of communities, which can shift and define themselves differently based on different contexts and through time.[54,55]

Follow the Evidence:
A study of biodiversity conservation governance in Costa Rica found that the presence of charismatic leaders with long-term local ties (even if not from the region) and contacts in international arenas can be key to developing and supporting conservation action. These "boundary" individuals were able to use their outside networks to secure stable sources of funding while building capacity and vision at the local level.[56] Similarly, a review of natural resource management programs in Indonesia found a strong link between active community leaders and effective program implementation.[57]

4.4. Consider the costs of engagement for stakeholders. Teams should be aware of the costs of engagement to stakeholders, in terms of time, resources, and opportunity costs. USAID staff and implementing partners approach a program with a specific mindset, as its implementation is part of their professional duties; for local stakeholders, engagement is usually an additional task on top of their regular daily responsibilities, such as work and childcare. Teams should consider that household responsibilities may make participation particularly difficult for women and plan to provide ways to ensure women's representation. Stakeholder participation, particularly by women, should not be understood as a form of free labor, and teams should consider how gender norms may shape how women participate. Operational principles and organizational roles and responsibilities to integrate gender equality and female empowerment throughout the Program Cycle are outlined in the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy.

Important Considerations:

- Teams should be aware of the potential for stakeholder fatigue, which is when the commitments related to engagement begin to take a toll on participants. Stakeholder fatigue can reduce participation in programs and lead to low morale. Fatigue can build quickly when individuals are brought in for much consultation but are not actively involved in decision-making.[55] Stakeholder fatigue can be mitigated with regular feedback on progress towards outputs and outcomes. Additionally, careful, selective engagement with stakeholders across a program (See Figure 3 on page 14) can help to minimize fatigue.[55]

V. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Biodiversity conservation programs achieve better outcomes when they are developed and implemented with key stakeholders. This involves first identifying stakeholders and acknowledging the range of viewpoints, values, and perspectives they bring to a program. Inclusion of stakeholders is important not just for practical reasons (e.g., consideration of diverse perspectives can lead to higher quality decisions, better suited to local context) but also for moral and ethical reasons (e.g., those that are directly affected by an action should be involved in the decision-making process). This resource guide lays out a set of principles and approaches to working with stakeholders throughout a program's planning and implementation process.

Stakeholder engagement efforts bring an inherent level of complexity by including a range of actors and their values. However, the wealth of tools and resources (as well as growing evidence from practice) provide practical guidance to assist planning and design and ultimately support continued progress and adaptive learning. While a program's success is certainly not guaranteed by simply including stakeholders, following the key engagement principles laid out in this guide can promote an inclusive process and help to achieve better and more sustainable outcomes.

Four worksheets that USAID teams can use to strengthen their engagement of stakeholders in biodiversity programming can be found in the Annex to this document.

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VIII. ANNEX

Step 1 Worksheet: Identify Objectives and Context

Consider the objectives of stakeholder engagement and assess the program's context.

Sub-step	Important considerations
Identify the purpose and scope of stakeholder engagement	□ What are the program's intended outcomes? □ Why are you engaging stakeholders? □ What are the benefits of stakeholder engagement? □ What are stakeholder motivations for engagement? □ How will success be measured?
Analyze the socio-economic, political, and social contexts to inform program design	□ What is the historical context of the program? □ Have similar projects been undertaken previously? If so, did the projects achieve their objectives? What were the key elements driving success? □ What stakeholders, or stakeholder groups, have been engaged in the past? Did these engagement efforts result in successful program outcomes? Why or why not? □ What is the relationship of the USAID team with other stakeholders? □ Are there any existing and relevant activities, events, or communication channels that could be used to engage stakeholders?
Plan for consistent and sustained support of engagement efforts	□ Budget explicitly for stakeholder engagement efforts

Tools and Techniques:

1. USAID's Rapid Assessment Tips describe several different methods that can be used to perform a community assessment.
2. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has developed a profiling guide and social science toolkit for assessing the social dynamics involved in community-engagement. The guide is intended to help practitioners better understand the values and approaches of a community.
3. The USAID Learning Lab's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Toolkit on Engaging Stakeholders provides guidance, tips, and links to resources.
4. A community assessment tools guide by Rotary International details six different tools that can be used for community assessment: community meeting, survey, focus group, interview, asset inventory, and community mapping.
5. USAID published How-To Guide 1: Developing Situation Models in USAID Biodiversity Programming.

Step 2 Worksheet: Understand Stakeholder Priorities

Focus on getting to know and understand key stakeholders and their priorities.

Sub-step	Important considerations
Identify key stakeholders and gauge their level of interest and influence	□ Identify people, groups, and institutions that have interest in a program or will be affected by it (through surveys or "desk" research) □ Balance the benefits of all-inclusiveness (such as higher participation and broader capacity development) with the drawbacks of having too many stakeholders
Assess stakeholder perspectives and values	□ Acknowledge both inter- and intra-group variation and respect existing structures and institutions □ Acknowledge value disconnects among members of the team and local stakeholder groups or among stakeholders
Understand stakeholder motivations	□ What do stakeholders already know (or think they know) about the issue that the project is addressing? □ How do the stakeholders feel about the issue? □ How can you demonstrate that the project's approach is aligned with stakeholders' values? □ How can you make the issue more emotionally relevant to stakeholders? □ How important is this issue to stakeholders, and how does it affect their goals for the future? □ What motivates stakeholders to care about this issue or its solutions? □ Do stakeholders believe any change is likely to resolve the issue? □ Do stakeholders need more information in order to take action? □ What do stakeholders think that others (especially others whom they respect or admire) will think of them for participating in the program?
Design engagement efforts to reflect local values and culture	□ Have you acknowledged and addressed any disconnects in value systems among key stakeholders and with the program team? □ Are decisions about stakeholder engagement made in consideration of local values and culture, with an emphasis on collaboration? □ Are the methods for engagement under consideration aligned with the value base of key stakeholders? □ Are the methods of engagement under consideration aligned with the day-to-day activities of key stakeholders?

Tools and Techniques:

1. Stakeholder analysis grids or maps can be used to visualize how stakeholders compare in terms of their level of influence and interest in a given issue or program. An example of a stakeholder analysis grid can be found in page 10 of stakeholder analysis in environmental and conservation planning produced by the American Museum of Natural History.
2. Collaboration maps allow teams to graphically depict the program's relationships with key stakeholders. USAID's Learning Lab had produced a facilitation guide for collaboration mapping.
3. Network mapping is an interview-based tool used to understand the actors within a given network, how they are related to each other, their level of influence, and their goals. A description of network mapping can be found in the Net-Map Toolbox.
4. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has developed a preliminary guide regarding diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits.

Step 3 Worksheet: Ensure Meaningful Involvement

Ensure that stakeholders are included in decision-making and involved in all relevant aspects of the program.

Sub-step	Important considerations
Involve stakeholders early on in the process	□ Including stakeholders in the early stages of planning can foster, improve, or increase local ownership over the program or activity
Build continued stakeholder involvement into program design	□ Draft a plan for stakeholder engagement throughout the Program Cycle
Include multiple sources of knowledge in decision-making	□ Conservation decisions based on multiple sources of knowledge can be more effective □ Local and traditional ecological knowledge should be respectfully and appropriately included in decision-making processes
Plan to monitor stakeholder engagement	□ Have you built in data collection on performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation throughout the program? □ Have you planned to provide regular feedback about the status of engaging stakeholders and related program activities to the team? □ Have you considered entry points in your MEL Plan for engaging researchers and research institutions?

Tools and Techniques:

1. *Biodiversity How-To Guide 3: Defining Outcomes and Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming* can help teams in building in adequate time and resources for proper monitoring and evaluation.

Step 4 Worksheet: Develop True Partnerships

Work to develop a true partnership with external stakeholders.

Sub-step	Important considerations
Developing and documenting shared expectations	□ Developing a results chain with stakeholders can help to make sure all members of the team share a common understanding of the factors and assumptions involved, and potential strategic approaches available
Build trust and respect	□ Budget adequate time for relationship building into a project timeline □ Effective communication (including early communication of responsibilities and uncertainties) and transparency are essential for building trust
Foster local leadership	□ Work to actively manage and mitigate conflicting demands on local leaders and build additional leadership depth when needed □ Avoid conflict from "outsiders" who try to engage community members without fully understanding how they interact with each other, manage resources, and make decisions
Consider the costs of engagement for stakeholders	□ Be aware of the costs of engagement to stakeholders, in terms of time, resources, and opportunity costs □ Consider that household responsibilities may make participation particularly difficult for women and plan to provide alternatives to ensure women's representation □ Be aware of the potential for stakeholder fatigue, which is when the commitments related to engagement begin to take a toll on participants

Tools and Techniques:

1. A results chain visually depicts a theory of change by explicitly showing the relationship between a program's intended actions and its expected outcomes. USAID has developed a How-To Guide 2: Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Biodiversity Programming.
2. Peer-to-peer learning events such as participatory meetings and informal gatherings (e.g., "brown bag" lunches) can be a great method for sharing knowledge and gaining stakeholder input. USAID's Technical and Operational Performance Support Program provides guidance on designing participatory meetings and brown bags.
3. Scenario planning is a type of planning process that asks stakeholders to develop and share their mental models of the future in order to find innovative solutions to complex problems.
4. Developing the capacity of stakeholders strengthens their ability to set goals and objectives, and achieve them effectively. Detailed guidance can be found in USAID's Human and Institutional Capacity Development Handbook.
5. Communities of practice allow a group of people who share a common interest to come together to exchange knowledge and further their work. USAID published a brief on communities of practice and the Office of Forestry and Biodiversity hosts a Cross-Mission Learning Program to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing.

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