



# USAID

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# MEASURING IMPACT

2013-2018

## THE CHALLENGE

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

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

**The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is well positioned to play a leadership role** in transforming the conservation sector toward greater efficiency and effectiveness. The Agency invests more than \$265 million each year to conserve biodiversity in more than 50 countries, making it one of the world's largest funders of conservation as a means to advance resilience. It also supports governments, local communities, civil society, and the private sector in addressing the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss. USAID is committed to creating integrated solutions between biodiversity conservation and other development sectors – including food security, gender equity, public health, democracy, and governance.

# THE THEORY OF CHANGE

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

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

## Strengthening Enabling Conditions

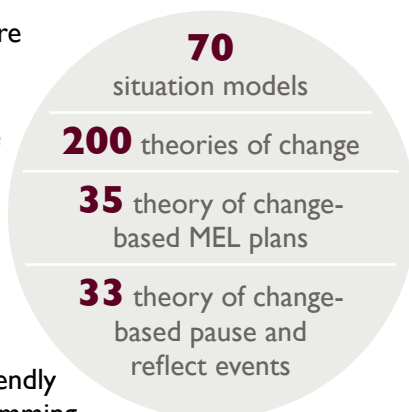
To strengthen the enabling conditions for adaptive management, MI focused its efforts on three fronts – **people, evidence & learning, and policies**. This included:



GIVING **PEOPLE** THE CAPACITY AND TOOLS TO PRACTICE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

USAID staff and partners are addressing complex development challenges, constrained by limited time and competing demands. To aid adoption of best practices and support champions of adaptive management, FAB developed capacity and produced practical, user-friendly tools that improved programming across the USAID Program Cycle. Highlights:

- Facilitated training workshops for **1600 staff in 20 USAID missions** and seven Washington operating units



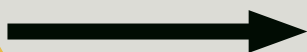
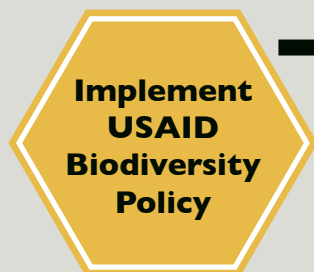
- Produced three **Biodiversity How-To Guides**, which serve as foundational guidance for designing more effective conservation programs using core tools of adaptive management, including situation models; theories of change; monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plans; and pause and reflect events
- Facilitated peer-to-peer **learning events** and **pause and reflect workshops** to identify course corrections to improve outcomes
- Developed **stakeholder engagement guidance** to increase local ownership and responsiveness to local priorities



ENSURING THAT **EVIDENCE & LEARNING** INFORM DECISIONS

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

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



**PEOPLE** have the capacity and tools to practice adaptive management



**EVIDENCE & LEARNING** inform decisions



**POLICIES** and guidance support adaptive management throughout the Program Cycle

**ENABLING CONDITIONS STRENGTHENED**



## Adaptive Management Institutionalized at Multiple Levels

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



AT THE MISSION LEVEL

**Improved the way:**

**20** missions + **7** global operating units design and implement programs...

representing **50%** of the total USAID biodiversity earmark and...

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

Mission staff now have the capacity and tools to practice adaptive management. They are:

- **Effectively analyzing development challenges** using situation models
- **Improving program design** using theories of change with explicit assumptions
- **Maximizing learning and adapting** with custom indicators and learning questions
- **Regularly pausing and reflecting** at key points in the Program Cycle
- **Engaging with USAID Biodiversity Advisors** on adaptive management practices and processes



HELPING **POLICIES** AND GUIDANCE SUPPORT ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM CYCLE

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

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

**9**

USAID guidance documents now include biodiversity best practices

**1**

award-winning CLA video



### ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONALIZED AT MULTIPLE LEVELS



#### MISSION LEVEL

Individual practitioners more effective at biodiversity conservation



#### CROSS-MISSION LEVEL

Biodiversity programs continually improve due to learning and evidence-based practices



#### CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL

Recognition that effective conservation improves development outcomes across sector



## AT THE CROSS-MISSION LEVEL

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

- **Systematically sharing knowledge and learning** around best practices through collaborative learning groups
- **Using a richer, actionable knowledge base** on USAID's Biodiversity Conservation Gateway

**350+** staff from **30** missions engaging in cross-mission learning

**475+** opportunities to learn and share



## AT THE CROSS-SECTORAL LEVEL

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

- **Making evidence-based decisions** that result in better outcomes for biodiversity and gender, food security, health, and other key sectors
- **Putting evidence into action** at each phase of the Program Cycle



## AT THE AGENCY LEVEL

USAID, led by the PPL Bureau, has revised its policies and guidance to focus on adaptive management in the Program Cycle. FAB and MI joined a dedicated community of USAID professionals that contributed to these innovative changes. USAID is increasing its efficiency and effectiveness across sectors by:

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

## Better Development Outcomes



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



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



## BETTER DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES



### AGENCY LEVEL

Adaptive management scaled within operating units across USAID



### CONSERVATION

Biodiversity conserved in priority places



### INTEGRATION

Biodiversity integrated as an essential component of human development

# THE APPROACH

USAID launched its first **Biodiversity Policy** in 2014, mandating increased rigor in conservation programming and greater integration with other development sectors. The Agency's **Office of Forestry and Biodiversity (FAB)** initiated the **Measuring Impact (MI)** contract to help implement the Biodiversity Policy and, more specifically, increase the use of evidence-based adaptive management to improve outcomes. Through MI (2013-2018), FAB honed a set of practices to improve the way biodiversity programs are designed and implemented – building on the efforts of the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) to advance collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) within the USAID Program Cycle.

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

"What's most profound about the work FAB did through MI is that we have generated a heightened level of support – through evidence, policies, and practices – for investing in biodiversity conservation as a means to improve development outcomes and human well-being."

—Cynthia Gill, Director, USAID Office of Forestry and Biodiversity

## IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AT MISSIONS ACROSS THE GLOBE



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

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

—Colin Holmes, Environment Officer  
and MI Contracting Officer's  
Representative, USAID Office of  
Forestry and Biodiversity



Above: Gorilla with the Rushegura group in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda; Cover: Gathering fodder from community-managed forest, Nepal; Inside top: Greater one-horned rhinoceros in Chitwan National Park, Nepal; Inside bottom: Sustainably harvesting chicle in Guatemala.

*All photos: Jason Houston for USAID*



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