USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE 4

Technically Strong and Politically Savvy

Enhancing Thinking and Working Politically When Practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID

July 2020

CONTRACT INFORMATION

BRIDGE Contract Information

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Front Cover Photos: Top: Henry Mutabaazi, International Gorilla, Conservation Program (IGCP) Uganda Country Coordinator, discusses the Change Map of the IGCP Enterprise Approach with other IGCP staff in Kabale, Uganda. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. Bottom Left: Close up of a young African elephant, Lake Manyara, Tanzania. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. Bottom Center: A sea horse in the seagrass of Barra Bay, Inhambane, Mozambique. Photo Credit: Luca Crudeli. Bottom Right: A male rhino, Sabi Sands, South Africa. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg.

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ACRONYMS

CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CRM	Coastal Resource Management
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
EAFM	Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management
FES	Foundation for Ecological Security
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
LGU	Local Government Unit
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MMAF	Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries
NGO	Nongovernmental Organizations
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
SMS	Short Message Service
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This supplemental guide offers practical advice for thinking and working politically (TWP) when practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID. The Conservation Standards are a widely used, systematic approach for planning, monitoring, and adapting programs aiming to conserve biodiversity.[1] TWP is an approach to international development that brings greater attunement to the political dynamics of the local programming context in order to enhance development results. Given strong evidence that political factors[2] overwhelmingly drive the loss of biodiversity,[3] this guide is based on the premise that conservation programs will be more effective when they skillfully integrate TWP.

USAID has a long history of engagement with the Conservation Standards going back to its underpinnings in the Global Conservation Program (GCP),[4] a 10-year partnership between USAID and six leading nongovernmental organizations.[5] In 2012, USAID's Office of Forestry and Biodiversity initiated an intentional approach to bringing the Conservation Standards into the Agency's work through a program called *Measuring Impact*. Using an experiential process with USAID staff and implementers, *Measuring Impact* adapted practices from the Conservation Standards to the Agency's requirements and culture.[6] This adapted approach to practicing the Conservation Standards is now generally accepted as best practice for biodiversity programming at USAID and is integrated into the Agency's training programs and guidance.

There are inherent overlaps and tensions in the practices of the Conservation Standards and TWP at USAID. Both ways of working align in emphasizing a clear understanding of the programming context, including political factors; a theory of change that focuses on results, rather than actions; and active collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) throughout the program cycle. In practice, however, the two ways of working often diverge in their prioritization of results and interventions, as well as the speed and structure of reflection and adaptation processes. These differences reflect variance in the centers of gravity between the two approaches: the Conservation Standards tends to lead with a technical orientation and TWP with a political one. Appreciating that the most successful initiatives include both attributes invites us to consider: *how can USAID more consistently design and support conservation programs that are technically strong and politically savvy?*

This supplemental guide unpacks areas of alignment and divergence between the Conservation Standards and TWP as they are practiced at USAID, and it offers recommendations for drawing on the strengths of both approaches to enhance biodiversity programming (Figure A). It builds on existing experiences in thinking and working politically when practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID. The goal is to clarify nuanced, but important attributes of TWP and their implications for how the Conservation Standards are practiced. The theory of change is that offering an explicit vision for enhancing TWP in the practice of the Conservation Standards at USAID will strengthen dialogues and experimentation that will ultimately bring these practices together more effectively and systematically.

The primary audiences for this guide are USAID staff and implementers who facilitate practices from the Conservation Standards to design, implement, and adapt biodiversity programming at the Agency. It also serves as a resource for USAID's partners as they develop proposals, lead programs, and craft CLA approaches. USAID staff from other sectors or conservation practitioners from other organizations may also find the guide of interest as they wrestle with similar issues and challenges.

The guide is the result of significant, iterative inputs from contributors, and is envisioned as a 1.0 version that will be updated as further experience accumulates around its recommendations. We invite and encourage your feedback.

1 See Conservation Measures Partnership page "The Open Standards for Conservation".
2 From a TWP mindset, politics is used as a shorthand to describe a range of factors and ways of working that influence human behavior and societal change. In this usage, politics refers to social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors that create both formal rules for governing and implicit power dynamics. Politics also refers to the way that interactions and exchanges between groups and individuals influence relationships, ideas, conflicts, and collaborative action (see Section 1.1).
3 See the Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.
4 See Conservation Measures Partnership page "History".
5 See the USAID "Global Conservation Program Homepage".
6 See Measuring Impact: Six Years of Improving Conservation at USAID.

SECTION 1
Strengthening Biodiversity Outcomes by Thinking and Working Politically

- TWP is a shorthand to describe a range of factors and ways of working that influence human behavior and societal change.
- Given strong evidence that political factors overwhelmingly drive the loss of biodiversity, this guide aims to provide practical advice for thinking and working politically when practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID.

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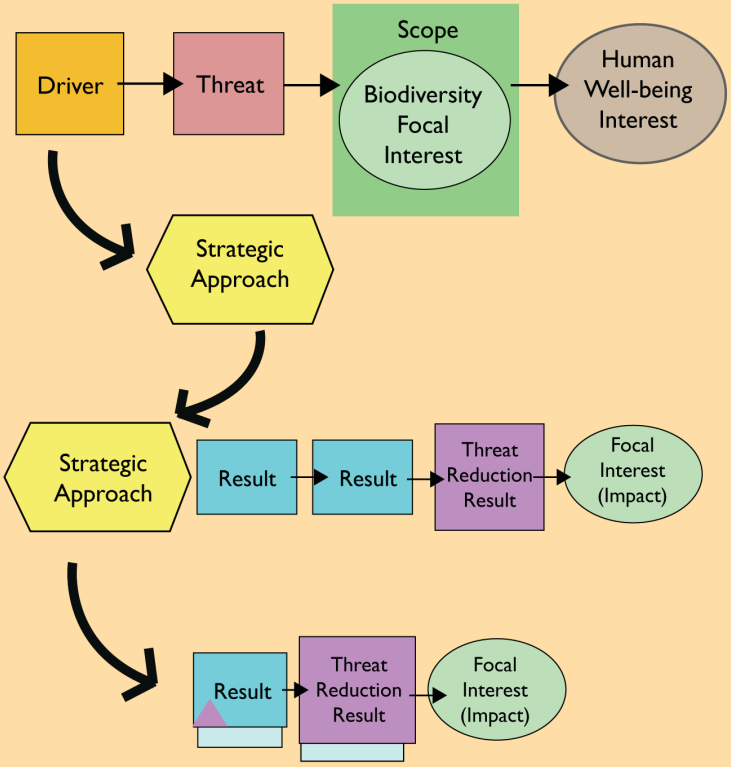
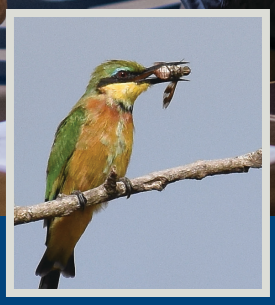
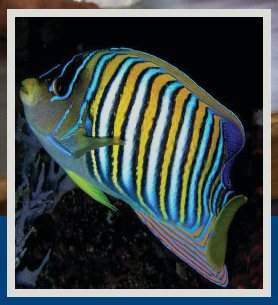


SECTION 4
Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting

- Is ongoing CLA helping the program engage with local political dynamics to optimize outcomes?
- Are the resources and flexibility needed for good CLA established during program design & procurement?

Figure A. Guide At A Glance. This guide offers tips and advice for facilitators on thinking and working politically when practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID to make conservation programs more effective.





STRENGTHENING BIODIVERSITY OUTCOMES BY THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY

SECTION I

1. STRENGTHENING BIODIVERSITY OUTCOMES BY THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY

This supplemental guide aims to provide practical advice for thinking and working politically (TWP) when practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID. The Conservation Standards are a widely used, systematic approach for planning, monitoring, and adapting programs aiming to conserve biodiversity.[7] TWP is an approach to international development that brings greater attunement to the political dynamics of the local programming context in order to enhance development results. Given strong evidence that political factors overwhelmingly drive the loss of biodiversity,[8] this guide is based on the premise that conservation programs will be more effective when they skillfully integrate TWP.

This section presents the main elements of thinking and working politically and why they are important for achieving biodiversity conservation. It introduces areas of alignment and tension in the way TWP and the Conservation Standards are often practiced at USAID. The section closes by identifying how this guide aims to build from the strengths of both frameworks to enhance biodiversity programming at the Agency.

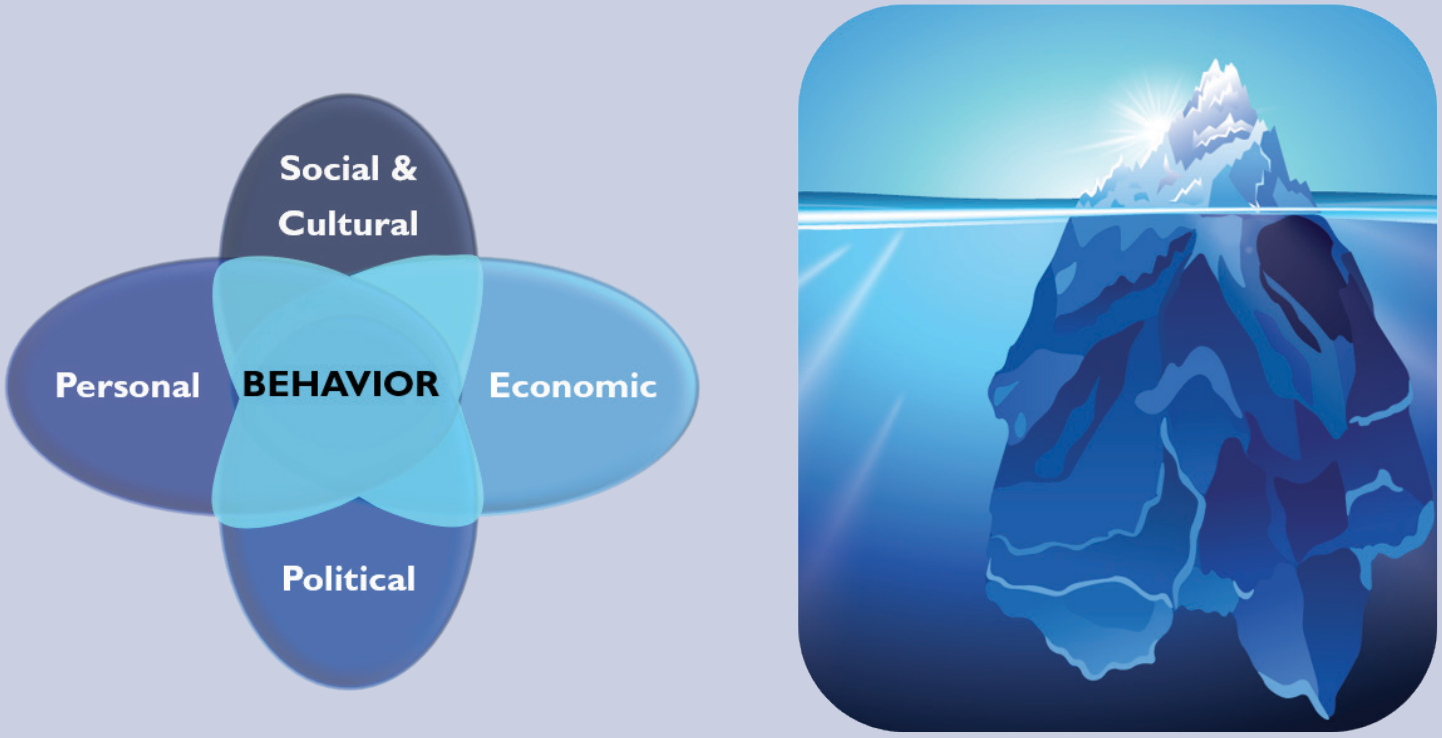


Figure 1.1. The meaning of politics in TWP. From a TWP mindset, politics refers to a broad set of factors and ways of working that influence human behavior. Thinking politically involves looking deeply at both the overt and hidden forces that motivate the decisions of individuals and groups. In the same way that the largest part of an iceberg exists below the waterline, TWP recognizes that human behavior often results from beliefs, incentives, and power structures that are largely unspoken and deeply rooted in cultural, economic, political, and personal dynamics. Working politically includes facilitating relationships and experiences that change human awareness, collaboration, and influence to achieve the structural shifts needed to address development and conservation problems. When practitioners are working politically, they appreciate that the way knowledge is created and shared will often determine its influence, and they are attuned to catalyzing effective processes and interactions as an essential pathway to impact.[9]

7 See Conservation Measures Partnership page "The Open Standards for Conservation".
8 See footnote 3.
9 See FHI 360 page "Keys of SCALE+".

1.1 What is thinking and working politically?

TWP refers to a paradigm for international development that has emerged over the last 15 years. It is a response to evidence demonstrating the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches to development that have focused on addressing a lack of technical, human, and financial resources[10] (see Resource Box 1.1). The reorientation proposed by TWP is a shift from strengthening management to a deeper restructuring of incentives and power dynamics through greater emphasis on actors and process.[11]

The TWP community of scholars and practitioners uses the word *politics* more broadly than its typical dictionary definition.[12] From a TWP mindset, *politics* is used as a shorthand to describe a range of factors and ways of working that influence human behavior and societal change (Figure 1.1). In this usage, politics refers to social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors that create both formal rules for governing and implicit power dynamics.[13] Politics also refers to the way that interactions and exchanges between groups and individuals influence relationships, ideas, conflicts, and collaborative action.[14] Throughout this guide, the phrases *politics, politically aware, or politically informed* refer to the broad understanding of these terms associated with TWP.

From a TWP mindset, politics describes a range of factors and ways of working that influence human behavior and societal change. It refers to social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors that create formal rules and implicit power dynamics.

Defining thinking and working politically

From a practitioner's perspective, TWP has been defined as:[15]

Thinking politically: *Being more informed about the dimensions of power at play in specific development contexts, how interests converge and diverge over certain issues, and how power and interests are shaped.*

Thinking politically includes:

- Investigating how competing interests and power relations among stakeholders support or hinder interventions and the achievement of program outcomes.
- Bringing a holistic perspective to the factors and institutions shaping behavior, including the use and management of natural resources, to identify effective entry points for programming.

The TWP community identifies three hallmarks of the approach: use political insight, work within the local context, and implement flexibly and adaptively.

Working politically: *Using an understanding of power and politics to increase the impact of programs, by expanding the range of interventions and increasing adaptability throughout the program cycle – not just in the design phase.*

Working politically includes:

- Facilitating and strengthening alliances to advance explicitly political goals, such as adopting reforms for fisheries or forestry governance.
- Empowering stakeholders to develop locally appropriate ways of implementing technical interventions that respond to changing political dynamics with deft course corrections and adaptive management.

10 See Thinking and Working Politically: Learning from Practice. Overview to Special Issue; What Does the Evidence Tell Us about 'Thinking and Working Politically' in Development Assistance?; and Thinking and Working Politically - Are We Seeing the Emergence of a Second Orthodoxy?

11 See Thinking and Working Politically Through Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Guide for Practitioners.

12 See Discussion Note: Thinking and Working Politically and Strengthening Political Economy Analysis in USAID Biodiversity Programming.

13 See Thinking and Working Politically Through Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Guide for Practitioners.

14 See footnote 9.

15 Adapted from presentation "How Large, Traditional Aid Programs Can Be Politically Smart: Experience from Southeast Asia" based on input from USAID implementers.

Resource Box 1.1. Traditional versus more politically aware ways of working in international development. In this table, Menocal et al. (2018) suggest how TWP shifts traditional approaches to international development by giving greater focus to process and actors. Reproduced from Thinking and Working Politically Through Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Guide for Practitioners.

	More Traditional Approaches	More Politically Aware Approaches
Problem Definition and Identification	Technical problems due to lack of resources or technical capacity. Problems are identified through an orderly top-down process.	Institutions, power dynamics, and incentives that are not aligned with reform efforts; problems are identified, debated, and refined by domestic actors in an ongoing process of reflection and learning.
Vision of Change	More normative, based on what ought to be.	More strategic and pragmatic, based on what exists.
Changes Sought	"Best practice" based on a pre-established understandings or blueprints, top-down diffusion of innovation.	"Best fit" grounded in contextual realities, more organic change and "good-enough" reforms based on what is politically feasible as well as technically sound.
Implementation Approach	Linear, rational sequencing in fixed annual work plans and results frameworks; fidelity to plan, with more limited attention to risk, uncertainty, and the potential of failure.	Iterative cycles of planning, action, reflection, and revision (drawing on local knowledge). Explicit attention to risks, which are managed by making "small bets." Incrementalism based on trial and error.
Ways of Working	Provision of expert technical assistance and capacity development within limited timeframes.	Facilitating, convening, and brokering partnerships and spaces for collective action based on long-term engagement, with focus on local ownership.
Ways of Learning	Periodic formal evaluation.	Rapid cycles of learning and reflection throughout program implementation.
Key Partners	Traditional donor stakeholders, including government institutions at different levels, regulators, service delivery civil society organizations, etc.	Greater attention to stakeholders outside the traditional comfort zone of donors, including "development entrepreneurs," local chiefs and power brokers, youth leaders, religious leaders, etc.
Indicators of Success	Easily quantifiable (and usually short-term) outputs aimed at higher-level outcomes.	Process-based indicators, with focus on fostering relationships and building trust, as a measure of gradual progress toward higher-level outcomes.

Three core principles of TWP: political insight, local context, adaptability

The definition above highlights three core principles that the TWP community identifies as hallmarks of the approach: use political insight, work within the local context,[16] and implement flexibly and adaptively[17] (see Resource Box 1.2). USAID governance expert David Jacobstein describes TWP and its three core principles this way:[18]

> *TWP encourages active understanding of context in an ongoing way. It promotes programs that align with domestic momentum to generate reform and a willingness to work with partners to help navigate political obstacles. Practitioners build coalitions, frame issues, and shift incentives so that actors change their behavior in ways that unblock or enhance development results. They keep their finger on the pulse of how the politics around a result are shifting, and adjust their programming to new opportunities and new knowledge.*

Resource Box 1.2. Implementing the three core principles of TWP. Adapted from The Case for Thinking and Working Politically.

Principle	Characteristics of Implementation
Use political insight	• Interrogate the program and the sector with a relentless focus on power dynamics, interests, incentives, and institutions. • Be frank about where power resides and on whose behalf it is being used. • Move away from idealized models of development change and start with contextual realities. • Recognize the multiple (and potentially contradictory) nature of interests at play. • Focus on problems identified and articulated by local actors, not outsiders. • Ensure (as far as possible) that locally defined problems and proposed solutions are accepted as legitimate by all relevant stakeholders, thereby ensuring ownership.
Work within the local context	• Work with and through domestic stakeholders, convenors, and power-brokers. • Understand the network of stakeholders involved and facilitate coalitions of different interests, rather than relying on a "principal-agent" relationship with one Ministry and its Minister.
Design and implement flexibly and adaptively	• Be guided by the program goal, and do not be overly prescriptive in how to achieve it. Strategy should set a clear goal, allowing for significant flexibility and iteration in the day-to-day efforts to make progress toward these goals. • Recognize that politics are not static; continue to assess the local context, test original assumptions, and adapt programs based on new information and opportunities. • Merge design and implementation with a focus on a series of small "experimental" or "incremental" steps and monitor results. In this way, implementation and monitoring & evaluation become one concurrent process. • Periodically engage in "review and reflection" exercises to critique and understand what is working and what is not—and adapt in response to what does not work. • Understand your own agency's political economy, i.e., which issues can be negotiated and which ones cannot.

16 Conservation practitioners are typically explicit about the geographic scale of their work and are often interested in addressing problems at the scale of ecosystems, which can include large spatial areas. In contrast, TWP practitioners use the word local to differentiate the perspectives of place-based stakeholders from those of foreign donors or other outsiders; local is not intended to recommend working at a small geographic scale.

17 See The Case for Thinking and Working Politically: The Implications of 'Do Development Differently'.

18 See the blog post "Two Tunes, One Dance: Keeping Programming Agile".

1.2 Thinking and working politically in biodiversity conservation

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released an extensive, systematic assessment of biodiversity, concluding that politics, as broadly defined in Section 1.1, is the main driver of biodiversity loss and consequently a key leverage point for conservation (see Figure 1.2). Taken within the context of international development, perhaps the results were unsurprising. Many of the world's high biodiversity areas occur in developing countries with weak governance. For example, all 11 countries prioritized for investment under USAID's Biodiversity Policy,[19] are in the lower 50th percentile of the countries ranked by the Worldwide Governance Indicators initiative[20] when their scores are averaged across the six indicators. The same experiences that have led development practitioners from health and education to TWP are also evident in biodiversity conservation: technically strong approaches often fail to achieve their outcomes when politics are not adequately considered (Resource Box 1.3).[21]

Politics, as broadly defined here, is the main driver of biodiversity loss and consequently a key leverage point for conservation.

Echoing IPBES, USAID's Biodiversity Policy identifies these political factors as the enabling conditions for conservation and key leverage points for intervention:[22]

> *Underlying social, economic, and legal conditions (or "enabling conditions") can have a profound influence on governance; on power dynamics among stakeholders and their rights, use, and access to biodiversity; and on the ability to achieve and sustain conservation impact at scale.*

The policy goes on to observe that governance and power influence biodiversity conservation through both the overt formal structures that manage resource use and hidden dimensions of power, noting, "power often trumps formal governance systems or structures."

Resource Box 1.3. Common political problems in international biodiversity conservation.

The indirect drivers of biodiversity loss identified through the IPBES analysis are reflected in common political problems encountered in conservation programs. For example, an informal online survey of 25 USAID staff and implementing partners rated these 10 political problems as regular occurrences in the conservation programs they support.

1. Government agencies lack budgets to implement critical tasks.
2. Resource users are eking out subsistence livelihoods and feel they can't afford reductions in resource use today to increase future sustainability.
3. Wealthy, powerful stakeholders are capturing the benefits of natural resources at the expense of the majority of less influential stakeholders.
4. Licenses or permits are issued based on political or economic influences, rather than scientific advice about sustainable harvesting levels.
5. Natural resources are exported to lucrative foreign markets, creating scarcity for subsistence use by local stakeholders.
6. Government ministers and staff don't want to take the political risks needed to implement the reforms required to achieve sustainability.
7. Natural resource management or enforcement actions are distorted by incentives that lead key actors to abuse positions of power for personal financial gain (e.g., low-paid park rangers accept bribes).
8. Enforcement actions are ineffective because rule-breakers are excused without consequences in exchange for political support.
9. Government agency culture creates a disincentive for staff to do their work well.
10. Government staff are not trusted by key stakeholders, making implementation of key conservation tasks difficult or unfeasible.

19 See USAID Biodiversity Policy.
20 See the page "Worldwide Governance Indicators".
21 See Thinking and Working Politically: Lessons from Diverse and Inclusive Applied Political Economy Analysis and Thinking and Working Politically - Are We Seeing the Emergence of a Second Orthodoxy?
22 See footnote 19.

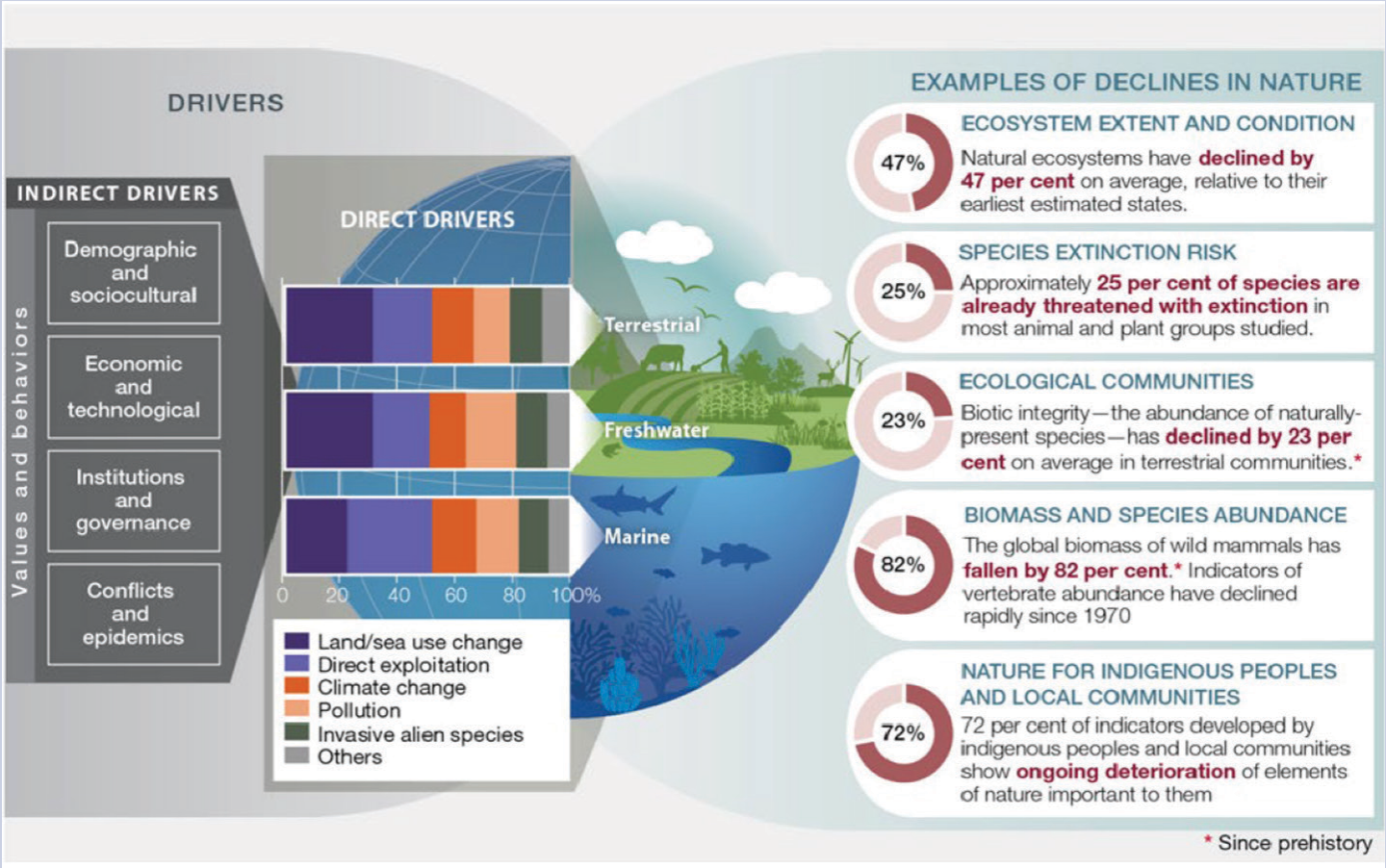


Figure 1.2. IPBES summary figure illustrating direct and indirect drivers of declines in nature (Reproduced from IPBES Summary for Policymakers 2019). The IPBES summary report provides this explanation for *institutions and governance systems and other indirect drivers:*

> *The ways in which societies organize themselves, and the resulting influences on other components. They are the underlying causes of environmental change that are exogenous to the ecosystem in question. Because of their central role, influencing all aspects of human relationships with nature, these are key levers for decision-making. Institutions encompass all formal and informal interactions among stakeholders and social structures that determine how decisions are taken and implemented, how power is exercised, and how responsibilities are distributed. Institutions determine, to various degrees, the access to, and the control, allocation and distribution of components of nature and anthropogenic assets and their contributions to people. Examples of institutions are systems of property and access rights to land (e.g., public, common-pool, private), legislative arrangements, treaties, informal social norms and rules, including those emerging from indigenous and local knowledge systems, and international regimes such as agreements against stratospheric ozone depletion or the protection of endangered species of wild fauna and flora. Economic policies, including macroeconomic, fiscal, monetary or agricultural policies, play a significant role in influencing people's decisions and behaviour and the way in which they relate to nature in the pursuit of benefits. Many drivers of human behaviour and preferences, however, which reflect different perspectives on a good quality of life, work largely outside the market system.*

Thinking and working politically is attuned to local power dynamics in ways that allow practitioners to better address indirect threats to biodiversity, improve support to the enabling conditions for conservation, and more effectively implement technically sound responses to conservation problems. It achieves this attunement by bringing political sensitivity into a flexible approach to development and conservation. Broadly speaking, politically informed conservation includes these approaches:[23]

1. Get politically informed

- Support political economy, social network, and other politically oriented analyses;
- Engage in informal discussions with knowledgeable people;
- Elevate local staff who understand the politics;
- Broaden the program's circle of contacts; and
- Unpack power dynamics.

2. Bring political awareness to planning and implementation

A. Select intervention points with political sensitivity

- Avoid reform-averse leadership;
- Avoid issues with minimal chance of impact; and
- Be aware of the likely pace of legal and policy changes.

B. Build strategic relationships

- Find and work with influential leaders and organizations from civil society who can convene and broker reform efforts. These actors may be non-traditional conservation partners;
- Look beyond traditional government counterparts and identify other government actors with strong interests in reform;
- Take time to build relations with power brokers at all levels, including community leaders; and
- Engage in assertive policy dialogue, for example by organizing joint donor advocacy at strategic moments.

C. Expand the range of responsive actions

- Facilitate strategic technical dialogues, informed by an understanding of local political dynamics;
- Question approaches that rely exclusively on capacity building and technical assistance; and
- Critically evaluate the appropriateness of global "best practice" for your local situation.

3. Enable flexibility

- Allow partners the space to experiment, improvise, fail, and adapt.

23 See footnote 15.

1.3 Thinking and working politically and the Conservation Standards at USAID

In 2012, USAID's Office of Forestry and Biodiversity initiated an intentional approach to bringing the Conservation Standards into the Agency's work through a program called *Measuring Impact*. Using an experiential process with USAID staff and implementers, *Measuring Impact* adapted practices from the Conservation Standards to the Agency's requirements and culture.[24] This adapted approach to practicing the Conservation Standards is now generally accepted as best practice for biodiversity programming at USAID and is integrated into the Agency's training programs and guidance.

This guide offers recommendations for how USAID can more consistently design and support conservation programs that are technically strong and politically savvy.

There are inherent overlaps and tensions in the practices of the Conservation Standards and TWP at USAID. Both ways of working align in emphasizing: a clear understanding of the programming context, including political factors; a theory of change that focuses on results, rather than actions; and active collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) throughout the program cycle.

In practice, however, the two ways of working often diverge in their prioritization of results and interventions, as well as the speed and structure of reflection and adaptation processes. These differences reflect variance in the centers of gravity between the two approaches: the Conservation Standards tend to lead with a technical orientation and TWP with a political one. Appreciating that the most successful initiatives include both attributes invites us to consider: *how can USAID more consistently design and support conservation programs that are technically strong and politically savvy?*

This supplemental guide unpacks areas of alignment and divergence between the Conservation Standards and TWP as they are practiced at USAID, and it offers recommendations for drawing on the strengths of both approaches to enhance biodiversity programming. It builds on existing experiences in thinking and working politically when practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID. The goal is to clarify nuanced, but important attributes of TWP and their implications for how the Conservation Standards are practiced. The theory of change is that offering an explicit vision for enhancing TWP in the practice of the Conservation Standards at USAID will strengthen dialogues and experimentation that will ultimately bring these practices together more effectively and systematically. The following sections aim to articulate this vision.

24 See footnote 6.

TOOLS FOR THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY

SECTION II

2. TOOLS FOR THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY

TWP involves surfacing and acting on meaningful insights about politics and power (see Section 1.1). Tailored analyses and skillful convenings can support both thinking and working politically, depending on how they are implemented. For example, when program teams actively participate in a political economy analysis, the process of synthesizing information creates a shared vision for action that constitutes the first steps of working politically. Similarly, the processes of convening groups at different stages of the program cycle can be an effective way of identifying important political information, as well as fostering trust, expanding networks, and building the foundations for collaborative action.

Tailored analyses and skillful convenings can support both thinking and working politically, depending on how they are implemented.

This section describes analyses that are relevant to TWP and offers suggestions for convening groups in ways that are politically aware. Both tools are directly relevant to practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID, as described below.

2.1 Analyses

Practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID draws on existing information and identifies key information gaps. Teams collect and review existing information[25] throughout the program cycle to help them model the program context, develop responsive interventions, and make sense of program experiences. Including politically oriented analyses and social science literature in these reviews will make this ongoing CLA practice more politically aware. Resource Box 2.1 identifies relevant analyses that may be available from USAID offices and implementing partners or other organizations. It should be noted that assessments commissioned by other donors that touch on sensitive political issues may be not publicly available, but can be requested from the donor with the assistance of USAID.

Including politically oriented analyses and social science literature in information reviews will make this ongoing CLA practice more politically aware.

Applying practices from the Conservation Standards to systematically plan and learn from biodiversity programs often reveals important questions that teams might like to answer through tailored studies. When your team brings a TWP mindset to your work, you are likely to find that many of these questions are politically oriented. For example, during a recent midterm reflection workshop with implementers in Ghana, expert staff identified that the main questions they had about the program's theory of change were largely political.[26] As a result, USAID implemented a political economy analysis (PEA) to better understand key questions around support for fisheries reforms, dynamics within the Ministry of Fisheries, and political interference in enforcement (see From the Field Box 4.1). Since important political dynamics will shift throughout program implementation, it is useful to build the capacity for this type of ongoing reflection and political analysis into program procurements (see Section 4).

25 USAID's Evidence in Action guidance recommends drawing from past evaluations and the scholarly and grey literature.
26 See Result Chains and Learning Questions from SFMP's Mid-term Evaluation.

Resource Box 2.1. Politically oriented analyses that can inform the practice of the Conservation Standards at USAID.

Analysis	Description	Resources
Political Economy Analysis (PEA)	PEAs provide structured field-based analyses of the power dynamics and the socioeconomic forces influencing specific issues. Ideally, PEAs are considered living documents and are updated on an ongoing basis. USAID's Applied PEA guidance recommends that teams include USAID staff, implementers, local experts, and consultants facilitate shared learning and action. PEAs are sometimes available from other donors.	USAID Applied Political Economy Field Guide
Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Assessments	DRG assessments systematically investigate the status of governance in a specific context. They consider factors like inclusion, government effectiveness, accountability, and human rights to identify areas where deficits may exist. DRG assessments also include analyses of key actors and institutions across government, civil society, and the private sector, and describe the main political drivers in the current context.	USAID Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework
Corruption Analysis	Corruption analyses investigate dimensions of this issue for specific sectors. They can clarify how corruption is facilitated or discouraged, suggest the effects of underlying intersections of power and interests, and identify the victims, perpetrators, and opponents of corruption. To understand these issues, they explore the legal, institutional, and social context, as well as specific dimensions of corruption, such as conflicts of interest, collusion, subsidies, licensing, bribes, and political interference in law enforcement[27] (also see Annex A).	Practitioner's Guide for Anticorruption Programming; Targeting National Resource Corruption (TNRC); U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre; C4ADS
Conflict Assessments	Conflict assessments help to place the current situation in the context of recent history and identify the main grievances and sources of resilience in local communities. Focusing on issues like ethnic and religious identity and recurrent social patterns, conflict assessments give an accounting of conflict trends and sources of social and political tension.	USAID Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0
118/119 Analysis	Many topics included in the 118/119 analysis have political components, such as reviews of legal and regulatory frameworks and information on management authorities. Some 118/119 analyses may also discuss persistent political problems or political drivers of large-scale change.	118/119 Tropical Forest and Biodiversity Analysis: Best Practices Guide; 118/119 Tropical Forest and Biodiversity Analysis
Gender Analysis	Gender analysis is a tool to identify, understand, and explain gaps between males and females in households, communities, and countries. It identifies the gender norms, problems of gender-based violence, and power relations in a specific context (e.g., country, geographic, cultural, institutional, economic, etc.). Gender analysis also examines the different impacts of development programs on males and females, including unintended or negative consequences.	ADS Chapter 205 Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle; Gender Integration in Democracy, Human Rights, Governance
Governance Indices and Analyses of Recent Political Developments	Governance indices provide current snapshots of national performance across key issues such as political and economic freedom, corruption, transparency, voice and accountability, regulatory quality, rule of law, effectiveness, and stability. These rankings may be supplemented by analyses of political trends and severe political challenges in countries that are experiencing crises of fragility and instability.	Freedom House; Worldwide Governance Indicators; Transparency International; International Crisis Group
Social Science Research	Social science research includes work in policy studies, development economics, anthropology, sociology, behavioral science, geography, and cross-disciplinary work that combines these areas with natural sciences. Useful assessments are often found in both the scholarly and gray literature.	Jstor.org; Web of Science; Oxford journals; PEA literature reviews; gray literature bibliographies

27 See Guide to Using Corruption Measurement and Analysis Tools for Development Programming.

2.2 Convening

Priya Parker introduces her book, *The Art of Gathering*, with this observation:

> *Lawgivers have understood, perhaps as well as anyone, the power inherent in gatherings. In democracies, the freedom to assemble is one of the foundational rights granted to every individual. In countries descending into authoritarianism, one of the first things to go is the right to assemble. Why? Because of what can happen when people come together, exchange information, inspire one another, test out new ways of being together.*

Well-designed convenings reveal and influence your political context. When practicing the Conservation Standards at USAID, workshops are typically held to support program design, start-up, and learning processes. Program implementers also regularly host convenings as part of their work. Recognizing that convenings have a political character allows planning teams to be more explicit in identifying their goals and more intentional in planning agendas that can achieve them. Here are some tips for convening as part of thinking and working politically.

Well-designed convenings reveal and influence your political context.

1. Form an effective planning team

Workshop planning teams should reflect the goals of the event and the knowledge and skills needed to realize these aspirations. Typically, the main organizations that are expected to act on workshop outcomes should be involved in planning the event. This involvement fosters ownership and helps align the workshop structure to achieve the practical and political outcomes that will be needed to enable follow-on implementation. The planning team should include someone with political insight about potential event participants and the dynamics between them. It should also include expertise in facilitation, workshop design, local logistics, and the technical focus of the workshop. For example, the planning team for a recent program start-up workshop in Malawi included staff from USAID, the main implementing partners, the Ministry of Fisheries, and a support contractor with expertise in facilitation and the Conservation Standards.

Workshop planning teams should include someone with political insight about potential participants and the dynamics between them.

2. Explicitly identify the goals of the convening

Convenings are typically better when planning teams are explicit about the technical and political goals for the event.[28] Articulating clear goals will help teams make decisions about how to structure the agenda, which participants should engage in different parts of the workshop, and what advance work is needed to enable success.

For example, the team planning the start-up workshop in Malawi began with the premise that their goal was to help key partners develop a shared theory of change for the program. However, when they started identifying workshop participants, it became clear they actually wanted to achieve a number of different things during the workshop. In addition to the obvious workshop goal, they also wanted to: increase support from government and USAID leaders, foster goodwill with a large number of stakeholders who wouldn't be directly involved in implementation, strengthen social capital and good relationships between implementing organizations working together for the first time, and train the core implementing team in using results chains to meet USAID requirements for planning and monitoring. With this clearer understanding of the political and technical goals for the workshop, the planning team was able to rework the agenda and participant invitations to achieve what they really wanted out of the event. They realized they actually wanted three events, instead of just one: 1) a one-day socializing event that exchanged information and built support for the program, 2) a three-day workshop to strengthen relationships among implementers and develop a shared theory of change for the program, and 3) a half-day workshop to train the core team in using practices from the Conservation Standards for their work on the program. Each event involved different participants and had different political and technical goals.

28 From *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters.*

3. Consider size and diversity when selecting participants

The specific goals of your workshop will help guide you in selecting participants. Two important considerations when developing participants lists are the size of your gathering and diversity among the participants. The size of your gathering will affect its tone, energy, and what it can achieve. Planning teams should try to match the size and goals of their events, rather than over-inviting participants in the spirit of inclusivity. Limiting invitees when it is appropriate often respects the time of essential participants and allows the workshop to achieve important goals that might be compromised by a larger group.[29] For example, in the Malawi start-up example described above, 75 people were invited to the socialization event and 35 to the three-day workshop that aimed to deepen working relationships and develop a shared theory of change.

Two important considerations when developing participants lists are the size of your gathering and diversity among the participants.

Fostering diversity in participants is important for thinking and working politically. Participants will view conservation problems and solutions differently depending on their expertise, organizational affiliation, and experience. When selecting workshop participants, consider how creating diversity in these areas can support TWP:

- **Diversity in expertise** - Consider inviting relevant participants with backgrounds that complement the natural sciences, such as governance, gender, anti-corruption, land tenure, law, private sector engagement, etc.
- **Diversity in organizations** - Look for opportunities to include relevant male and female participants from different types of organizations, including national and local government, local and international civil society organizations, academia or other research organizations, resource user or industry associations, community or religious leaders.
- **Diversity in experience** - Include participants who bring different experiences based on their gender, age, socio-economic status, or ethnicity. Look to include both deep local experience as well as international experts who can share inspiration from other places.

4. Design the workshop to encourage open, meaningful political sharing

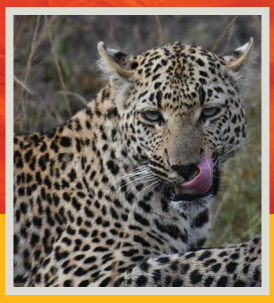
Because political information can be sensitive and subtle, it may not organically arise in workshops unless facilitators have given special consideration to workshop participants, dynamics, and processes. Workshops are more likely to illuminate important political factors when facilitators create a clear value for this type of information and establish a friendly, open, and trusting tone for discussions. These attributes are also part of working politically through the way they deepen social networks and help form an authentic shared vision around problems and solutions. Resource Box 2.2 offers tips for designing and facilitating workshops that support TWP.

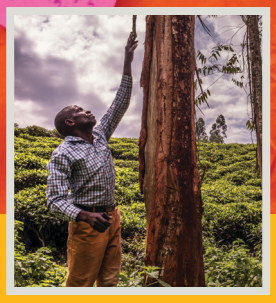
Because political information can be sensitive and subtle, it may not organically arise in workshops unless facilitators have given special consideration to workshop participants, dynamics, and processes.

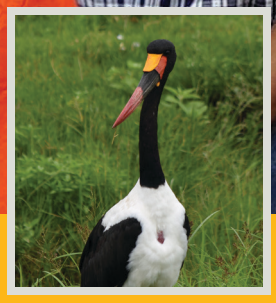
29 See footnote 28.

Resource Box 2.2. Tips for designing and facilitating workshops that support TWP. Workshop participants will avoid sharing sensitive, meaningful political insights unless they feel safe and comfortable speaking freely about these issues. Workshop organizers and facilitators can create an atmosphere that promotes open and insightful dialogue by being attuned to these considerations.

Consideration	Tips
Establish an expectation for candid discussion	Consider having influential leaders, such as senior USAID staff, welcome participants with an invitation to discuss failure as well as success, and complex political issues that will influence program goals and outcomes. Facilitators and leaders should also be prepared to model this behavior by openly sharing information and insights.
Create an atmosphere that is friendly and appreciative	Participants are more likely to share engaged, thoughtful insights when they feel valued and relaxed. Facilitators should arrange agendas and use language and humor that support participants in deepening relationships, building trust, exploring new ideas, and sensing that their contributions are appreciated. Pay particular attention to how you set the tone in pre-session communications. On the first day of a workshop, give special focus to building connections. Over the long-term, these relational outcomes of a workshop are often more important to TWP than the development of a specific product.
Pay attention to energy levels, breaks, food, and caffeine	Many times, important political insights are discovered around workshop breaks, lunches, dinners, or overnight. Facilitators should appreciate the value of down-time during workshops and build workshop agendas with an awareness of how participant energy levels are likely to change during the day. Avoid the temptation to shorten breaks. Be thoughtful about the trade-offs of doing working lunches. Use higher-energy facilitation techniques after meals when participants' focus will naturally be lower. Participants will struggle to offer creative contributions when they are hungry, tired, or stressed out because there were not breaks to allow a mental reset or because they were up late catching up on email around overly long workshop days.
Be sensitive to participant dynamics	In some cases, interactions between participants can stifle engagement in the workshop and political sharing. Facilitators should pay attention to these dynamics and try to anticipate them in workshop planning. For example, if the participation of a senior government official will silence the contributions of her staff, consider inviting her to participate at the beginning and end of the workshop, but not during the main working sessions. Facilitators can also consider using small groups or creating opportunities to provide anonymous input as ways to support political sharing.
Practice active listening	Participants will generally engage more deeply in workshops when they feel heard. Active listening by facilitators will support participants in feeling heard and is often a helpful approach when participants are working through conflicting or sensitive ideas. To practice active listening, the facilitator can reflect back his understanding of what the participant has shared and ask for the participant's confirmation that key ideas have been accurately captured.
Use a variety of facilitation techniques	Facilitators should offer a variety of ways to engage and share information. Break-up plenary discussions with opportunities for individual reflection as well as times participants can talk through nascent ideas in pairs or small groups. While political insights will eventually be shared in plenary discussions, they may first surface in smaller groups or through individual side conversations; facilitators can create these spaces.







THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY WHEN PRACTICING THE CONSERVATION STANDARDS AT USAID

SECTION III

3. THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY WHEN PRACTICING THE CONSERVATION STANDARDS AT USAID

At USAID, key practices from the Conservation Standards framework have been adapted to fit the Agency's requirements and culture. This adapted approach is generally accepted as best practice for biodiversity programming at the Agency and is described in a series of How-to and Supplemental Guides.[30] This section builds on existing guidance and experience to offer tips for enhancing thinking and working politically at four key steps in USAID's practice of the Conservation Standards:

1. Developing situation models to create a shared understanding of the programming context;
2. Identifying programming interventions using the situation model and other experiences;
3. Constructing results chains for proposed interventions to clarify and probe assumptions in the underlying theory of change; and
4. Measuring key results and context variables to inform monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts.

3.1 Politically informed situation models

Situation models are a type of context analysis[31] and an important entry point for designing politically informed programs. They support the design of conservation programs by identifying potential intervention points that are logically connected to the program's goals for biodiversity conservation and human well-being. Explicitly including relevant political considerations in situation models allows the political context to be intentionally considered as part of conservation planning.

Situation models are a type of context analysis and an important entry point for designing politically informed programs.

In conservation programs, situation models typically use three main elements to describe the program context (see Example 3.1). Ovals are used to describe the program's focus on specific components of biodiversity (green ovals) or human well-being (brown ovals). Pink rectangles are used to represent direct threats to biodiversity. Orange rectangles are used to describe the drivers behind these threats. Political considerations are most commonly represented as drivers.

Drivers describe our working understanding about why a threat to biodiversity is taking place. When drivers effectively represent both the technical and political reasons that people are engaged in actions that threaten biodiversity, situation models can provide a solid foundation for conservation planning that is both technically strong and politically savvy.

Situation models are most useful for planning when they include important drivers while avoiding unnecessary complexity; therefore, design teams should make considered choices about which technical and political drivers to include. When identifying drivers, be careful not to miss political factors that are highly influential but out of obvious view because they operate behind the scenes of more explicit formal processes. Your goal is to include the most important drivers, not just the most obvious ones. Here are five tips for surfacing essential, hidden drivers that will strengthen your conservation planning.

When identifying drivers, be careful not to miss political factors that are highly influential but out of obvious view because they operate behind more explicit formal processes.

30 See the USAID Biodiversity Conservation Gateway and the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation.
31 See How-to Guide 1: Developing Situation Modules in USAID Biodiversity Programming.

1. Clarify drivers that will guide you in selecting your interventions

As you develop your model, you will often get a sense that some drivers are going to be important points for implementing a programmatic intervention. Take a closer look at these high-value drivers to see if they are politically informed and specific enough to guide your team in selecting a strategic approach that can effectively achieve your goals (see From the Field Box 3.1).

Important political drivers are often first identified in ways that are too vague to inform high-impact programming. If your model includes drivers such as *lack of political will, weak enforcement, or corruption*, your team will need to unpack these drivers to identify the types of interventions that are needed. For example, *lack of political will* is often identified as a driver in situations where measures that could advance sustainability are not being adopted or implemented. To identify an effective intervention, your team needs to understand more about this situation. More specific drivers might include: *resource users support reforms, but have little voice in the current process; resource users are against reform because they do not perceive a problem; the Minister supports reforms, but faces opposition from foreign interests who are heavily investing in the country;* or *the President wants to loosen harvesting restrictions to build support for his reelection.* Each of these more specific drivers would suggest a different type of intervention for building support to implement more sustainable management measures.

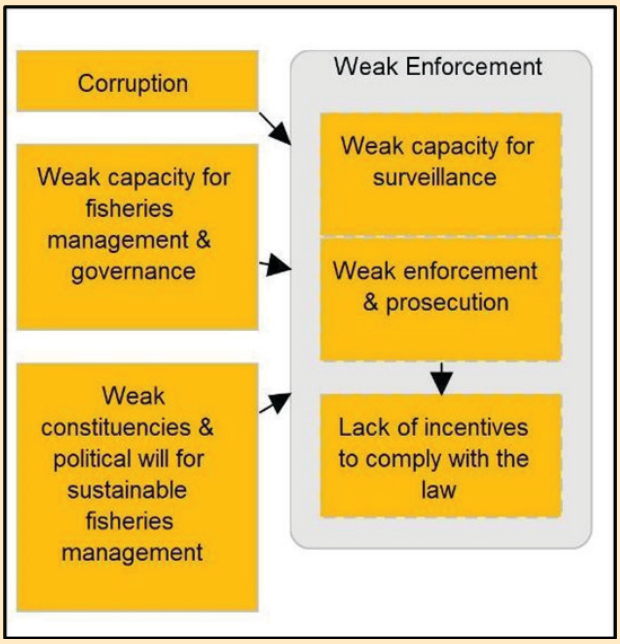
The simple question, "why" is a powerful facilitation tool for helping to surface political drivers.

Open-ended facilitation questions will initiate the conversations needed to bring greater resolution to these high-value drivers. Facilitators can ask, "why is that?" or "could you tell me more about that please?" The simple question, "why" is a powerful facilitation tool for helping to surface political drivers. Annex A offers a series of question flow charts to further support you in unpacking seven high-value drivers that are too vague to inform good programming.

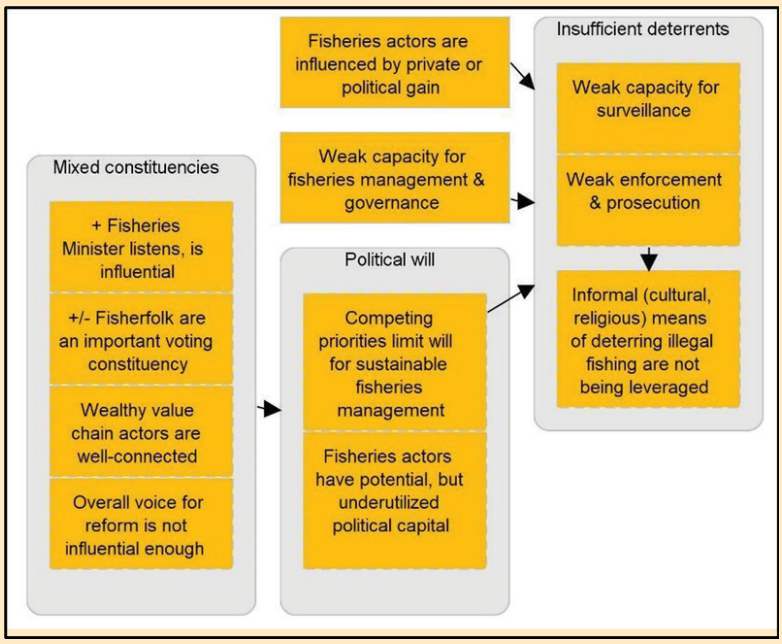
From the Field Box 3.1. Unpacking vague drivers.

One USAID Mission combined developing a situation model with conducting a PEA to inform a new program design. First, a cross-sectoral team of USAID staff identified drivers of overfishing and illegal fishing in the country. In the initial situation model, the team named weak constituencies and political will for sustainable management as one of the main drivers for weak enforcement. Next, members of the design team from the Mission and USAID/Washington conducted a week of field work as the basis for a PEA. The team included USAID technical experts, foreign service nationals with a deep understanding of the local context, and a consultant with expertise in PEA. Based on their interviews, the design team replaced the initial vague drivers with more specific factors that could better inform the selection of strategic approaches (see From the Field Box 3.2).

Before PEA



After PEA



2. Include drivers that explain the difference between management on paper and management in practice

Often in conservation, the way things are designed to happen *on paper* is not the way they work in reality. Unpacking the difference between how official documents describe resource use and management and how these actions happen in practice can reveal important drivers. For example, perhaps the Ministry of Fisheries has the legal authority to enforce fishery regulations. However, several officers who have apprehended fishers breaking the law are subsequently transferred to less desirable posts. There is a conflict between the official mandate of the Ministry and the way government staff are treated when they act on these authorities. In this case, your situation model could include a driver such as: *Government staff risk demotion when they take enforcement actions.*

Facilitators can invite participants to identify these informal drivers with questions that explore the difference between the formal system and the more common reality. A facilitator might ask, "I hear you saying that x is the formal process; is that what tends to happen in practice?" "Why?"

3. Include political drivers that explain past experiences which have led to the current situation

Situation models will be better guides for programming when they reflect an intentional inquiry of how things have come to be the way they are. Often, drivers such as *weak enforcement, inadequate regulations, or ineffective management* represent a history of failed reforms. Delving into this history can provide important insights about who benefits from the status quo and what underlying political forces have shaped the current situation. To support this kind of reflection, facilitators can ask about past efforts to change the situation and the types of factors that caused past work to succeed or fail. For example, a facilitator might ask, "Have there been any efforts to improve management?" "What was the result?" "What barriers prevented the program from achieving its goals?" "What factors allowed the program to succeed in x?" "Why?"

4. Include actors as well as factors

Politically informed situation models identify the key stakeholders and groups who are likely to determine the success or failure of our conservation efforts. Even the most technically sound conservation interventions are likely to fail if they have not adequately considered the social and political context in which implementation is proposed. Drivers that vaguely point to the actors involved, such as *lack of constituencies or lack of political will* should be replaced with a more specific identification of the stakeholders who are central to the situation of interest. As a general approach, facilitators can clarify these drivers by asking questions about "who?" "Who is benefiting from the current situation?" "Who will win or lose if conservation measures are implemented?" "Who has an influential voice in shaping the opinions of key groups?"

5. Include drivers that offer potential opportunities for change

Dynamic and emerging political, economic, and technological factors can offer powerful opportunities to achieve change and should be reflected in situation models as opportunity drivers. Drivers representing opportunities are designated with a "+." These factors might include significant changes in leadership, policies, or markets. For example, if a recent change in administration has elevated a conservation champion into a powerful ministerial position, you are probably going to design a program that takes advantage of this new leadership to advance conservation. In contrast, if the new Minister aims to roll-back existing environmental protections to promote economic growth, you will design a very different intervention. Facilitators can help identify opportunity drivers by asking, "Do you see any important changes or opportunities that could significantly influence the current situation?"

As you design your situation model, these five tips will support you in developing a product that is politically savvy as well as technically sound. In the next section, we will explore how to use this model to select politically informed interventions.

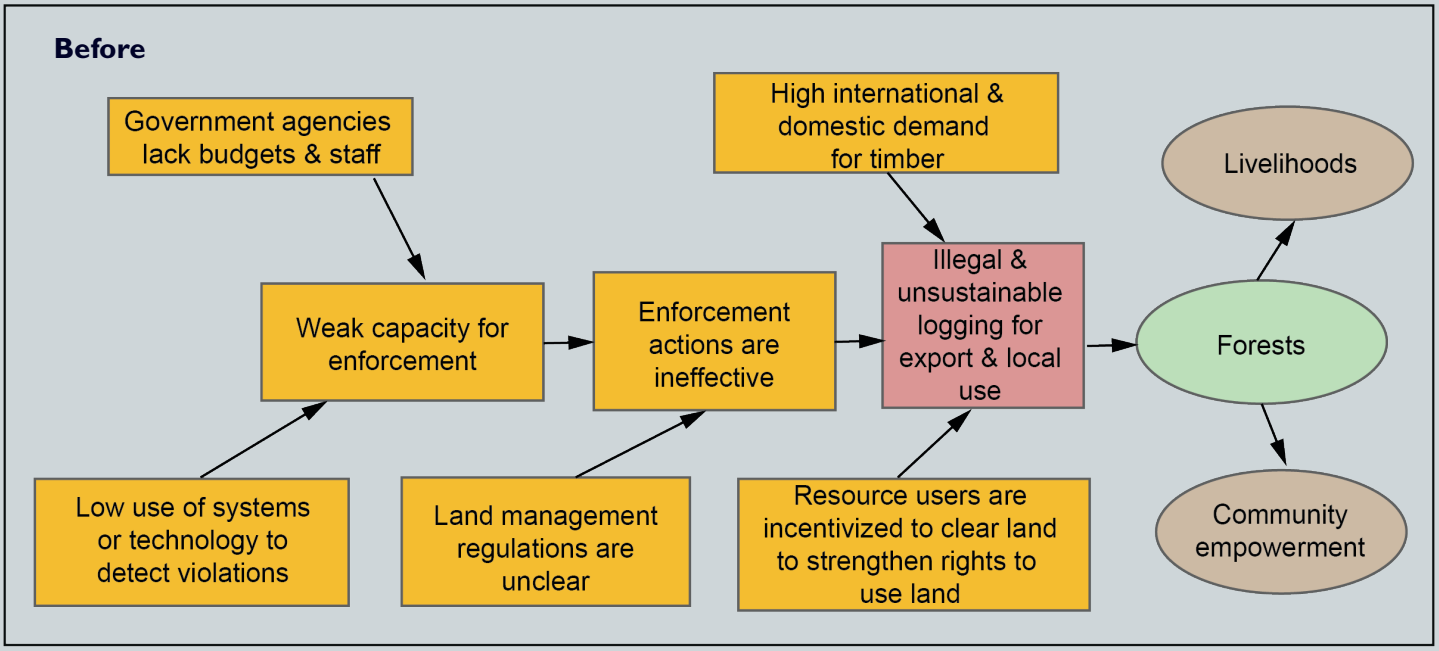
Facilitator Questions

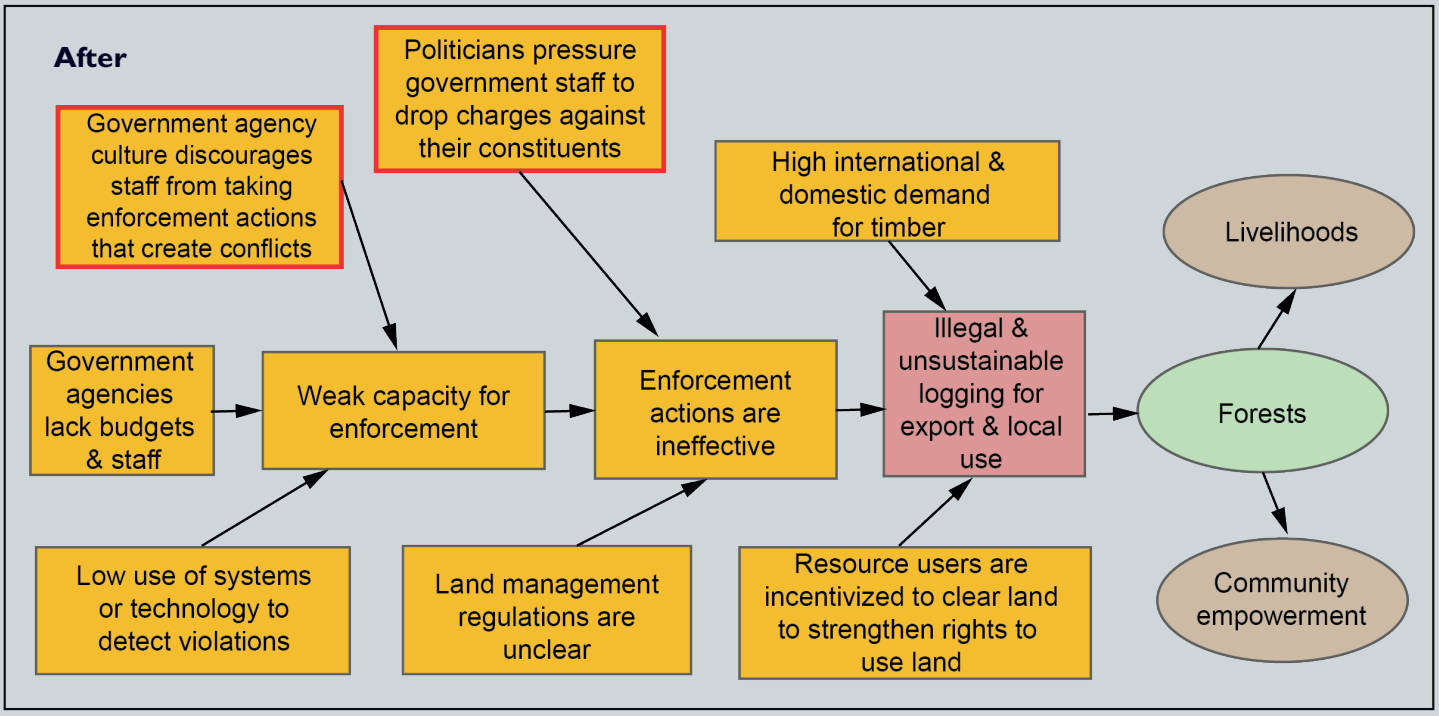
- "I hear you saying that x is the formal process, is that what tends to happen in practice?" "Why?"
- "Have there been any efforts to improve management?" "What was the result?" "Why?"
- "Who is benefiting from the current situation?" "Who will win or lose if conservation measures are implemented?" "Who has an influential voice in shaping the opinions of key groups?
- "Do you see any important changes or opportunities that could significantly influence the current situation?"

Example 3.1. Developing a Situation Model.

This team is developing a situation model to understand the drivers behind illegal and unsustainable logging. Based on workshop conversations, the facilitator senses the team will want to work toward strengthening enforcement, and she decides to unpack some of the political dimensions around these issues. She uses these questions:

- *Other than weak capacity and ambiguity in regulations, are there any other reasons—perhaps less obvious reasons—that enforcement is ineffective?*
- *If there were better systems and technology to detect violations and if government agencies had better budgets and staff, then would there be adequate capacity for enforcement? Why or why not?*





3.2 Politically informed strategic approaches

The heart of conservation programs are the actions they take to achieve their goals. When applying the Conservation Standards at USAID, these actions are described as *strategic approaches*. Strategic approaches consist of a set of interventions or activities that will be implemented to achieve specific results.

To select strategic approaches, design teams use their situation model,[32] information about potential actions that could be implemented,[33] and their own creativity. Teams will typically start by brainstorming potential strategic approaches. This broader list of candidate strategic approaches is then reduced to a focused set by assessing the likely impact and feasibility of each potential strategic approach.[34,35] Political considerations should inform both of these assessments.

Strategic approaches are a set of interventions or activities that will be implemented to achieve specific results.

Situation models help teams identify high-impact interventions. Teams use these maps of the most important threats and drivers to target interventions points that can logically be expected to achieve meaningful change. This analysis helps teams to identify new strategic approaches and to assess the value of continuing interventions that have been used in the past.

Most of the strategic approaches implemented by USAID programs are aiming to change drivers in the situation model, with an ultimate goal of reducing threats to biodiversity and improving human well-being in the process. These drivers may be political or technical. Here we offer suggestions for bringing political considerations into your efforts to plan strategic approaches intending to influence both kinds of drivers.

Influencing political drivers

If your team is working from a politically informed situation model, there is a good chance that one of your political drivers will be identified as a potential target for intervention. In this case, your team will want to identify potential strategic approaches that can influence the political driver. Annex B provides examples of elements of strategic approaches that can be implemented in response to the common political drivers or problems.

Sometimes teams can find it challenging to identify strategic approaches for political drivers. For example, you may wonder if it is feasible to change a driver or if it would require budgets, time, safety risks, or participation that is outside the scope, or manageable interest, of the planned program. Here are some tips to help.

1. Clarify the specific political problem

Vague problems often feel unmanageable. For example, it can feel overwhelming to address *corruption*. However, if you have narrowed the driver to, *the management of park entry fees is opaque or enforcement is corrupted by bribery*, then specific responsive options can be identified. For example, you might collaborate with USAID colleagues with expertise in Democracy, Rights, and Governance to support the government's audit service in investigating management of the park entry fees. Or you could address bribery in enforcement by facilitating systems for greater transparency around enforcement actions, such as the 700DALOY SMS Hotline in the Philippines, which allows anyone who reports violations to track the enforcement actions that are implemented in response.[36]

Clarify vague political problems to help identify effective strategic approaches.

You may be able to clarify vague political drivers during workshops to design or start-up programs if participants familiar with the issue are involved (See Sections 2.2, 3.1, and Annex A). If the political driver is likely to influence program implementation and is not well understood, it may be strategic to implement or commission

32 See How-to Guide 2: Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Programming.
33 See footnote 25.
34 See Supplemental Guide 3: Prioritizing and Selecting Strategic Approaches in USAID Biodiversity Programming.
35 Teams also sometimes use additional evaluation criteria for prioritizing strategic approaches, such as institutional priorities or perceived advantages compared to other donors.
36 See Local Private Sector Partnership 700DALOY, Crowdsourcing Marine Protection: Local Partner Brand Recognition Makes the Difference.

a study that unpacks the vague driver into more specific components. Political economy analysis, corruption analysis, organizational capacity assessment, or stakeholder analysis are examples of studies that can improve the selection or implementation of strategic approaches (see From the Field Box 3.2 and Section 2.1).

2. Bring in tailored expertise

Many conservation practitioners have specialized training in the natural sciences, allowing them to bring strong expertise to technical aspects of biodiversity conservation. It is often necessary to bring in complementary expertise to identify and implement responsive strategic approaches for political issues. Once teams have clarified the political driver, they may identify the need to engage Agency or outside experts in democracy, rights, and governance; anti-corruption; organizational change; private sector engagement; business development; gender; land tenure; political advocacy; or other specific areas of political expertise.

It is often necessary to bring in tailored expertise to identify and implement responsive strategic approaches for political issues.

For example, case studies of conservation enterprises in rural communities have found they are more successful when enterprises are developed with support from *enterprise enablers*. These experts can who can identify relevant legal and regulatory issues, key marketing challenges, essential management skills, or business linkages needed to effectively implement this strategic approach.[37,38,39] This kind of targeted expertise can give greater substance to strategic approaches responding to politically informed drivers.

3. Engage local stakeholders

Local insight is a significant asset in planning effective and durable responses to political drivers. USAID governance expert David Jacobstein writes, "TWP approaches presume that savvy local players with strong social capital and a well-honed ability to read between the lines are necessary to inform programming."[40] Politically aware local stakeholders often uniquely understand how social and cultural factors influence change or resistance. They have probably observed the success or failure of parallel efforts to achieve change and can bring that experience into the evaluation of potential strategic approaches. Recognizing the diversity in local stakeholders, teams should engage local perspectives beyond the easily accessible elites in country capitals.

4. Look for inspiration from other places

While strategic approaches need to be aligned with the local political context, it can be helpful to seek inspiration from other geographies that have successfully addressed similar, sticky political issues. When considering strategic approaches from other geographies, the team should closely consider whether they are likely to succeed in the new, unique context (also see Section 3.3). Annex B provides examples of elements of strategic approaches that have been implemented in response to common political issues.

Local insight is a significant asset in planning effective and durable responses to political drivers.

A team may also want to consider examples of what has not worked in other places, because learning from failure is as important as learning from success. Exploring both successes and failures also helps establish a focus on learning, which may be more comfortable for stakeholders that could take offense from comparisons.

5. Evaluate political risks in the local context

In some cases, addressing political drivers directly is risky or inadvisable. Supporting reforms that affect the power dynamics of the status quo can be expected to evoke resistance. To evaluate program risks, it is important to ask "will opposition to these new approaches be so great as to make them unlikely to succeed?" Reform efforts are more likely to succeed when they align with existing or emergent domestic momentum for change, which may come from government, civil society, or other groups. When there is political leadership that is strongly reform-adverse, pursuing reforms can be counterproductive or even harmful to broader donor interests or the stakeholders the effort was aiming to assist. The input of local

37 See Enterprise Strategies for Coastal and Marine Conservation: A Summary of Best Practices.
38 See Building a Conservation Enterprise: Keys for Success.
39 See The Nature of Conservation Enterprises: A 20 Year Retrospective Evaluation of the Theory of Change Behind this Widely Used Approach to Biodiversity Conservation.
40 See footnote 17.

stakeholders and colleagues working directly on political issues can help guide prudent decision-making to avoid the dangers of "blowback" and reputational risk.

6. Address safety and social safeguards

When identifying potential strategic approaches, teams should consider both safety and social safeguard issues. Prior experiences have shown that program interventions that disturb powerful status quo interests can provoke threats and violent responses that threaten the safety of program staff, partners, or sites. Programs that address illicit activities like unlawful logging, fishing, mining, or wildlife trafficking can be targeted for disruption by law violators. Teams should be alert to the existence of *no-go zones* where instability or criminal activities, like drug trafficking, may make program activities impossible.

When identifying potential strategic approaches, teams should consider both safety and social safeguard issues.

Teams should also assess whether proposed strategic approaches might have negative, unintended consequences on local actors or communities. They should be alert to perceptions of *winners and losers* as the result of technical interventions and how such sensitivities might erode cohesion or exacerbate disparities within communities and local cultural systems. Further serious concerns may include gender-based violence,[41] threats, intimidation, or other physical violence by both law-breakers and anti-poaching forest rangers, park guards, or law enforcement agents acting with impunity. In cases where tensions or violence are possible, attention needs to be given to the design of monitoring systems that will be able to quickly identify and mitigate risks to children, women, indigenous peoples,[42] or other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

From the Field Box 3.2. Aligning strategic approaches with the local political context.

After conducting a PEA and revising their situation model (see From the Field Box 3.1), the design team reviewed potential responsive interventions. Before conducting the PEA, the design team had proposed focusing on strengthening enforcement capacities as a key strategic approach for their new program. After looking more deeply into the local context, the team shifted their approach. They recognized that a number of political forces were working against effective, top-down enforcement by the government. While they still believed enforcement was part of the solution, the design team determined it was equally or more important to engage cultural, social, and market forces that could create incentives for legal, sustainable fishing practices. They felt this adjustment would reduce the overall need for enforcement and increase stakeholder support for taking enforcement actions in a narrower set of cases. They adjusted their strategic approach to reflect this shift in focus.

Before

After

41 See Equal Rights, Equal Justice: Toolkit for Addressing Gender-based Violence Through Rule of Law Projects.
42 See USAID's Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Bringing political considerations into technical drivers

Teams should also incorporate political considerations into their assessments of the likely impact and feasibility of strategic approaches aimed at changing technical drivers (see Example 3.2). Engaging local stakeholders and relevant experts, as well as working from a politically informed situation model, can support this work. Looking at the success or failure of past efforts can help teams infer how political factors may influence potential technical interventions.

Teams should also incorporate political considerations into their assessments of the likely impact and feasibility of strategic approaches aimed at changing technical drivers.

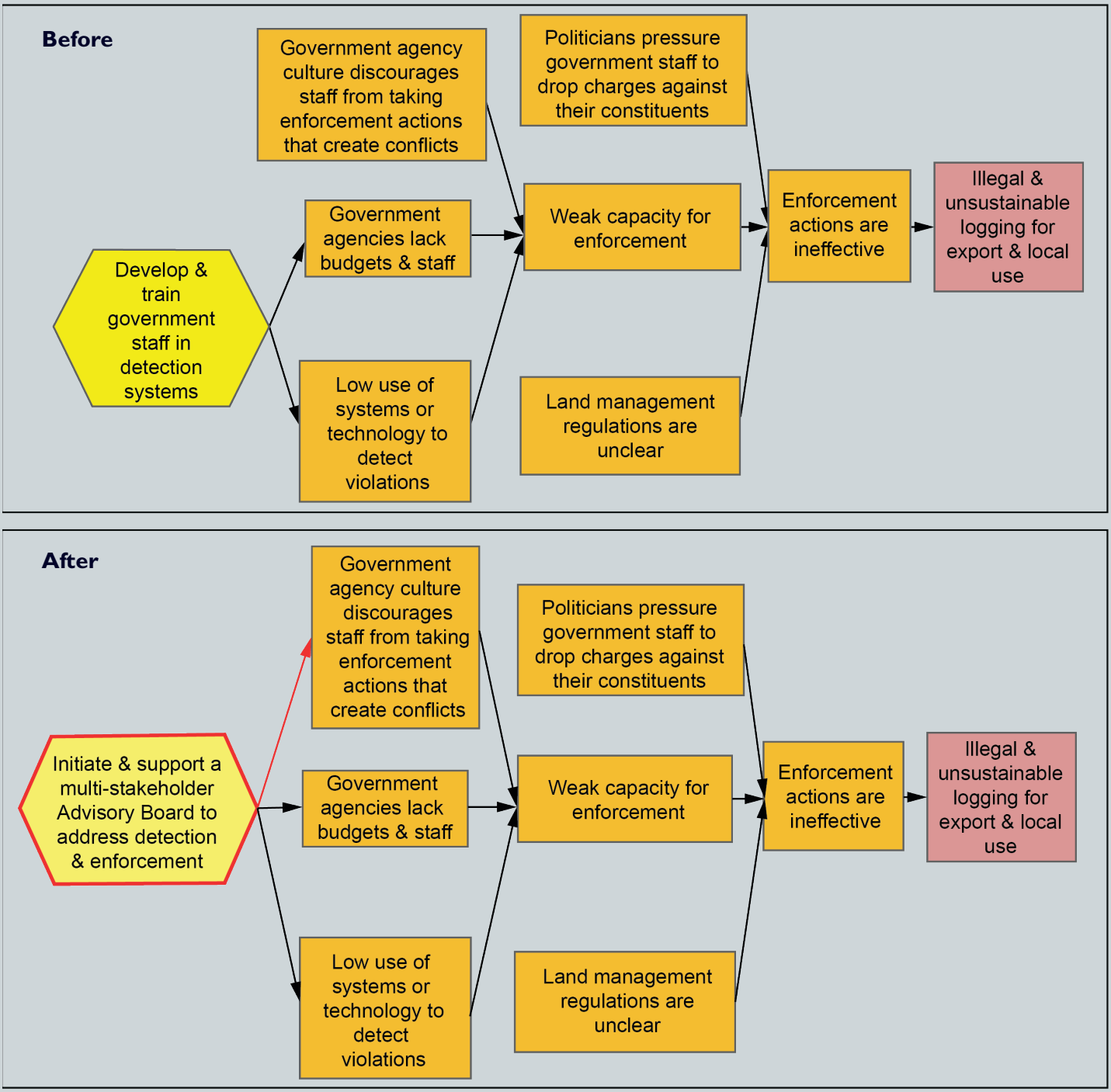
In assessing the likely impacts of a potential strategic approach, teams should consider both ecological and social outcomes. How are different groups likely to be affected by the proposed strategic approach? Will it inadvertently increase existing social inequalities? Is this approach likely to be supported and continued after the program ends?

Developing results chains for a likely strategic approach offers additional ways to assess the influence of the local political context on implementation. The next section offers tips for developing politically informed results chains.

Example 3.2. Selecting Strategic Approaches.

While brainstorming strategic approaches to address "weak capacity for enforcement," the team identifies the need to develop systems and technology to detect violators and to train government staff in the new system. The facilitator is aware that this traditional development approach does not address important political issues identified in the situation model. She uses these facilitation questions to guide participants in identifying a strategic approach that is more politically informed:

- *I'm aware we identified the government's aversion to conflict as a source of weak capacity for enforcement, and I'm wondering if a detection and training approach can be effective given that political context?*
- *Are there other stakeholders that should be involved to address the potential for conflicts in enforcement?*



3.3 Politically informed results chains

Results chains are visual representations of a program's theory of change. Whether a theory of change will deliver a program's intended goals is heavily influenced by the political context in which the program is implemented. Therefore, when designing or evaluating a theory of change, it is important to intentionally consider the way political characteristics will influence the program's outcomes. Results chains are a useful tool for explicitly identifying a program's theory of change and reflecting on its alignment with the program's political context.

Results chains are visual representations of a program's theory of change.

As their name suggests, results chains identify the sequence, or chain, of intermediate results the team believes will lead to achieving a program's ultimate goals.[43] In conservation programs, intermediate results are represented as blue rectangles (see Example 3.3). A results chain depicts a program's thinking about how one intermediate result will cause the next one, eventually reducing one or more threats to biodiversity; threats are shown as purple rectangles. Arrows are used to show the team's ideas about how one result will lead to another. Each arrow represents a specific assumption that can be tested with monitoring data to track program implementation and understand if the theory of change is holding up in the reality of implementation.

Political factors influence both the results and arrows in a results chain and should be an explicit part of your team's conversations about whether your chains are working or could be expected to work in your particular context. As teams develop and evaluate results chains, you should probe the extent to which your chain is aligned with your political context. Teams should also document assumptions about the political context that are critical to the efficacy of your results chain. Here are general suggestions for including political factors in the development and documentation of your results chains.

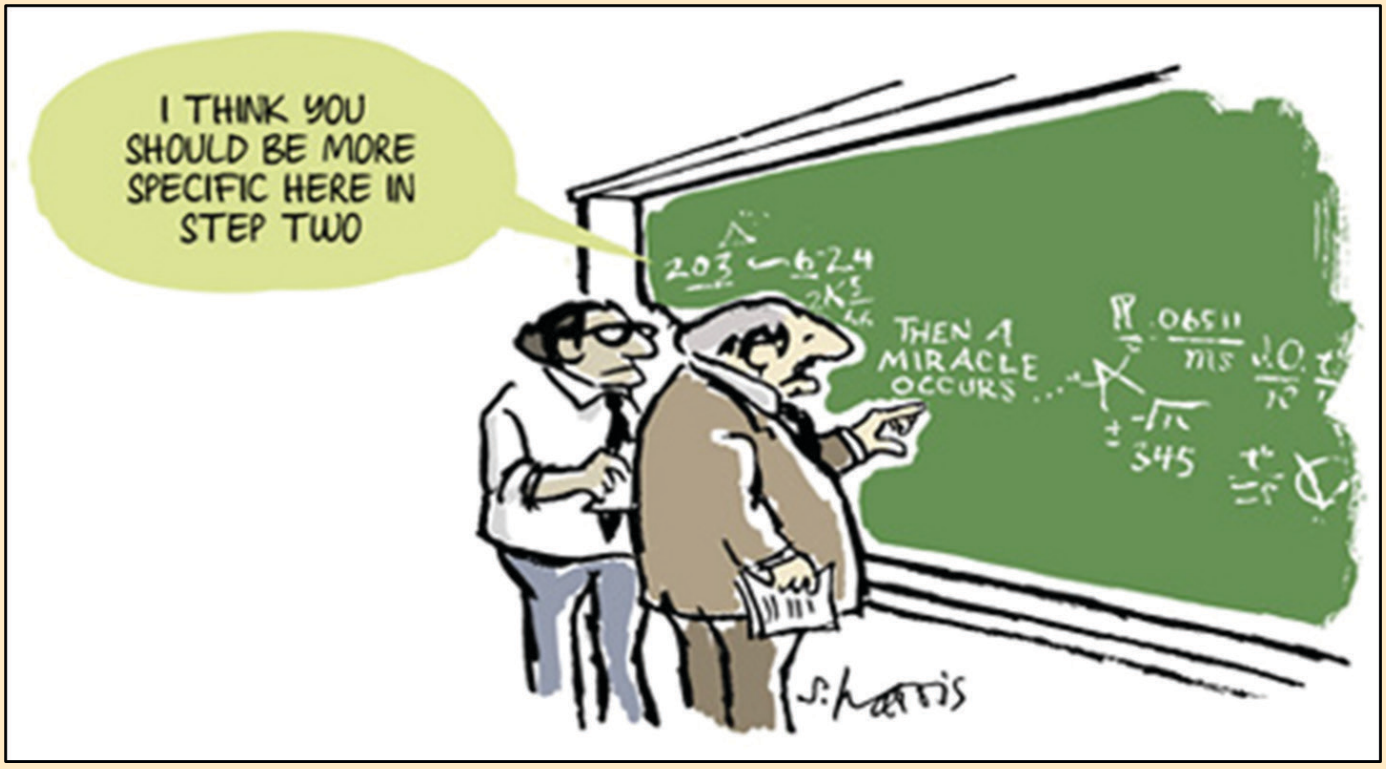


Figure 3.1. Evaluating the logic in a results chain. Results chains help teams test the logic of their theory of change and identify leaps of faith that could prevent the program from achieving its goals. Whether the logic is solid or miraculous depends on the specific political context in which it will be implemented. *Reproduced with permissions from: ScienceCartoonsPlus.com*

43 See How-to Guide 3: Defining Outcomes & Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming.

Including political factors in the development of results chains

As teams develop and evaluate results chains, you should probe the extent to which your chain is aligned with your political context.

When teams are developing or evaluating a draft results chain, they will typically *read* the chain as a series of *if-then* statements and reflect on whether the resulting statement is logical. Facilitators will sometimes introduce this step in the process as "looking for magic" (Figure 3.1). Can the team reasonably assume that achieving the result identified in Box A will lead to the achievement of Box B, or does it seem that the proposed cause and effect would probably require a leap of faith? When assessing the logic in a results chain, teams should consider the two questions below to develop theories of change that are politically informed.

1. Does the results chain logic incorporate political influences as well as technical considerations?

Because results chains typically describe approaches for shifting policies, management arrangements, and stakeholder behavior, the strength of their logic is influenced by political considerations. For example, consider the theory of change that *if people understand the importance of exercise, then they will exercise more*. This relationship may seem logical if it is evaluated on its technical merits, outside a specific political context. More realistically though, this logic will only hold up in certain situations. Perhaps increased awareness leads to increased exercise when people have a minimum amount of free time; or access to child care; or other motivating factors, such as wanting to look great. In the absence of these political factors, perhaps increased awareness about the importance of exercise only leads to increased stress and frustration in people who increasingly feel they are falling short; perhaps they soothe these bad feelings by binge-watching reality TV and getting even less exercise than before.

Facilitators can help teams consider if their results chain is sensitive to political influences by asking: "I see that on the surface, it looks like Result A would lead to Result B, but I'm wondering if there are social, economic, or political reasons that logic might not hold up in practice?"

Facilitators can help teams consider if their results chain is sensitive to political influences by asking questions such as:

- "Is there any reason Result A would not lead to Result B in this context?" or
- "I see that on the surface, it looks like Result A would lead to Result B, but I'm wondering if there are social, economic, or political reasons that logic might not hold up in practice?" or
- "In another place I worked, Result A didn't end up leading to Result B because of Driver Z; is that a consideration here?"

From the Field Box 3.3 provides a further example of evaluating and strengthening a results chain by incorporating political considerations.

2. Does the results chain reflect the local context?

The Conservation Standards are used by many organizations in the field, and helpful efforts have been made to develop a library of results chains for common strategic approaches.[44] This resource and other similar toolkits[45,46] provide a valuable starting point for conservation practitioners. Importantly, however, existing results chains should be evaluated and updated to fit new situations.[47]

Tailoring solutions to the local context is a cornerstone of politically informed conservation and development. For example, one large development organization decided to implement a common approach to strengthening fisheries management in a new context. At the new site, the number of fishing boats exceeded the ecological carrying capacity of the coastal area. The implementer responded with a strategic approach that had been successful in several other countries. They developed a *buy-back* program, where boat owners would be compensated for their fishing boats and retrained into the new livelihood of their choice. The program was only available to men under 45 years old, based on the assumption that men over this age would soon retire anyway from the physically demanding life of fishing. After a year of implementation, no buy-backs

44 See the Foundations of Success webpage "CAML - The Conservation Actions & Measures Library".
45 See Measuring Efforts to Combat Wildlife Crime: A Toolkit for Improving Action and Accountability.
46 See footnote 38.
47 A note for facilitators: Consider the impact on team process when sharing existing results chains. Depending on the team and situation, it can be helpful to work independently first to encourage critical, probing analysis; the team might then review an existing chain to see if it sparks ideas about other results, relationships, or factors that could be important. If an existing chain is shared early in the process, perhaps because a team is a little stuck in getting started, it is particularly important for the team to investigate how the theory of change should be adapted to their unique, local context.

Tailoring solutions to the local context is a cornerstone of politically informed conservation and development.

had been requested. Follow-up interviews with local stakeholders found that men tended to work as crew on fishing boats owned by others until they were in their mid-40s, at which point they had saved enough money to buy a boat; the shift from crew to boat owner was a way to earn income in retirement and represented improved social status in the community. The structure of the buy-back program had eliminated all the men that owned boats from participating and had provided inappropriate incentives for the desired behavior change.

Teams adapting a strategic approach from another location can take several steps to test whether the results chain reflects the local context:

- Include local experts on the team or engage local stakeholders through interviews or focus groups (see Section 2.2)
- Build rapid testing, reflection, and flexibility into the procurement (see Section 4)
- Use the facilitation questions identified above

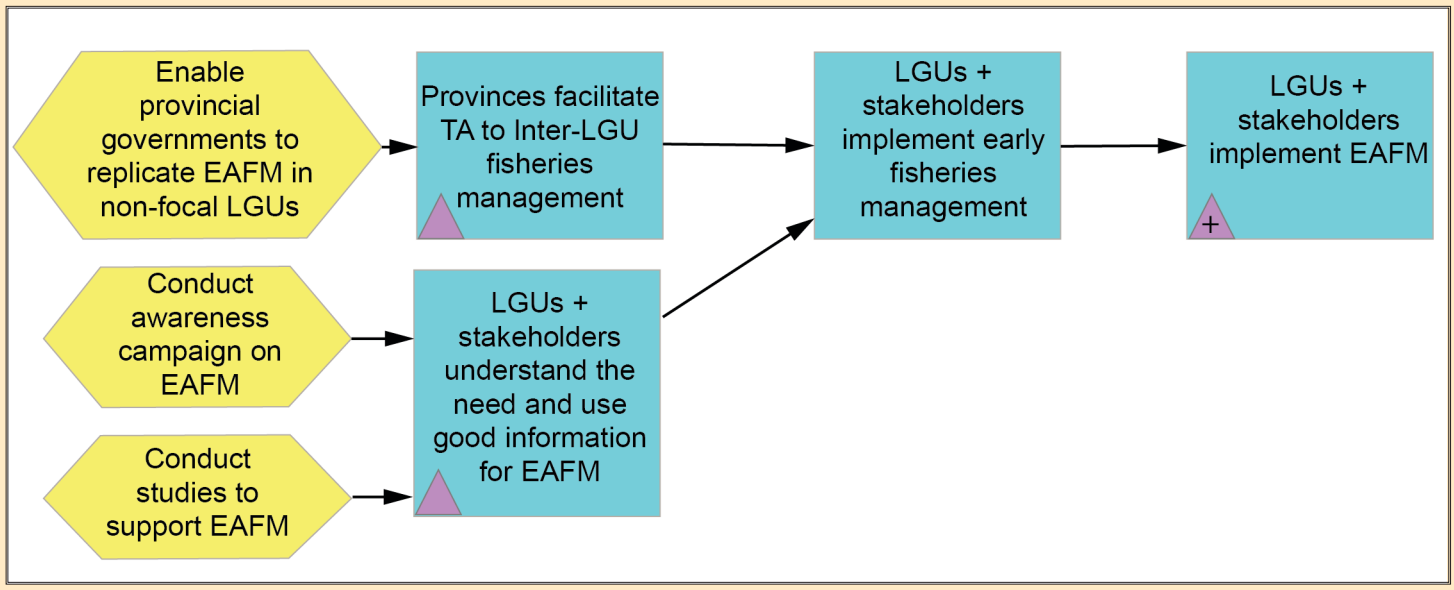
Documenting political assumptions in results chains

In many cases, teams developing and evaluating results chains may decide that the chain logic seems reasonable as long as specific political conditions are in place. In this case, the team should document these critical assumptions and consider monitoring associated context variables. For example, perhaps a program plans to raise awareness about the impacts of timber concessions on local communities by strengthening media coverage of this practice. The program assumes that the country's political leaders will continue to respect a free and open press and that increased investigative journalism will build national support for reforms to timber concessions. However, during program implementation, political elites who benefit from the timber concessions react to the bad press with hostility, use their influence to have journalists charged for unrelated crimes, and pressure government staff to continue the concessions. With these changes in political context, the program's theory of change is putting partner journalists in danger and appears less likely to catalyze reforms in timber concessions. The program's management team will need to identify the significance of these political changes and adapt their strategy (also see Section 4).

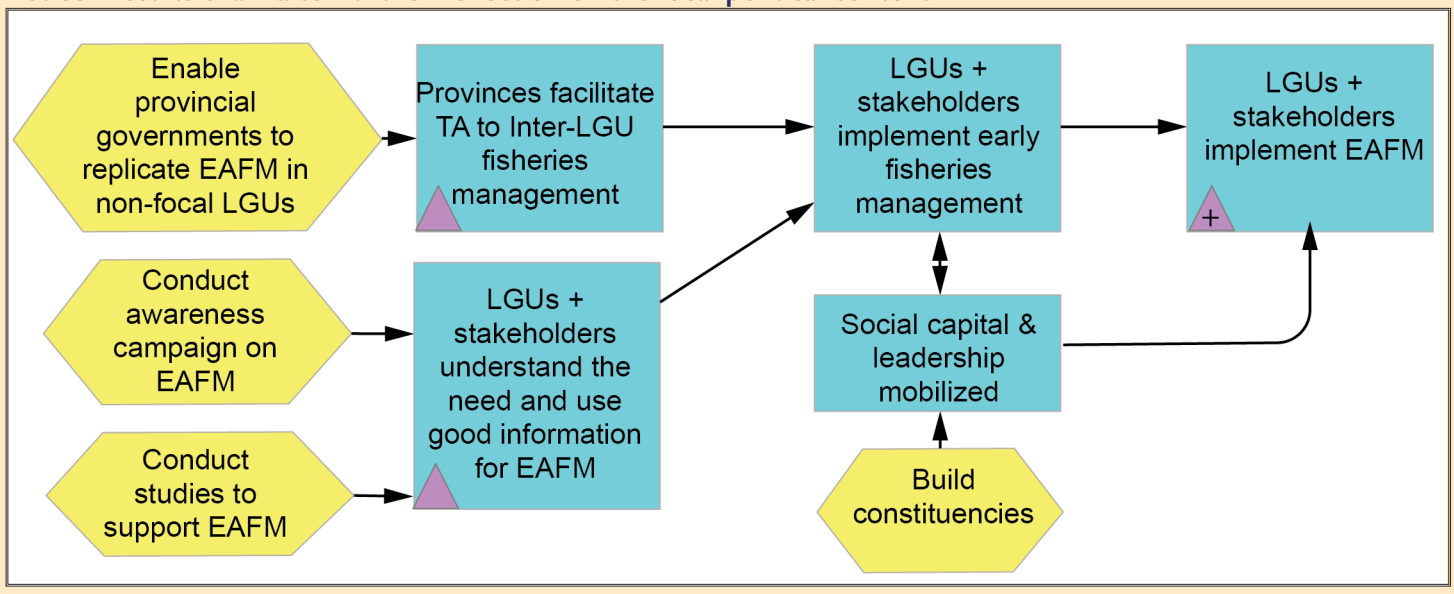
From the Field Box 3.3. Including political results in a program's theory of change

Two years into program implementation, staff from USAID and an implementing partner held a workshop to reflect on the program's theory of change and their progress to date. Workshop participants decided to develop a results chain to describe their theory of change as a support for their discussions and analysis. At a high level, the program's theory of change was that building the capacities of provincial government, local government, and local stakeholders would lead to piloting ecosystem approaches to fisheries management (EAFM). Having successfully piloted EAFM, the program hypothesized that local groups would further expand EAFM in their locations. However, as they reflected on their experience, the team realized that only a few sites were making the jump from piloting EAFM to implementing a more comprehensive approach. About halfway through the workshop, an implementing staff member arrived one morning with an idea about why some sites graduated to comprehensive EAFM and others stopped after the pilots. He observed that the graduating sites had developed stronger social capital between community leaders, government officials, and program staff. To expand EAFM, sites needed more than technical expertise and experience; they needed trust, social capital, and effective local leadership to guide the expansion. Since strengthening these supportive political factors takes additional time and resources, the team added this intermediate result to their chain and identified a specific strategic approach to focus on achieving this new result.

Initial results chain



Revised results chain after further reflection on the local political context

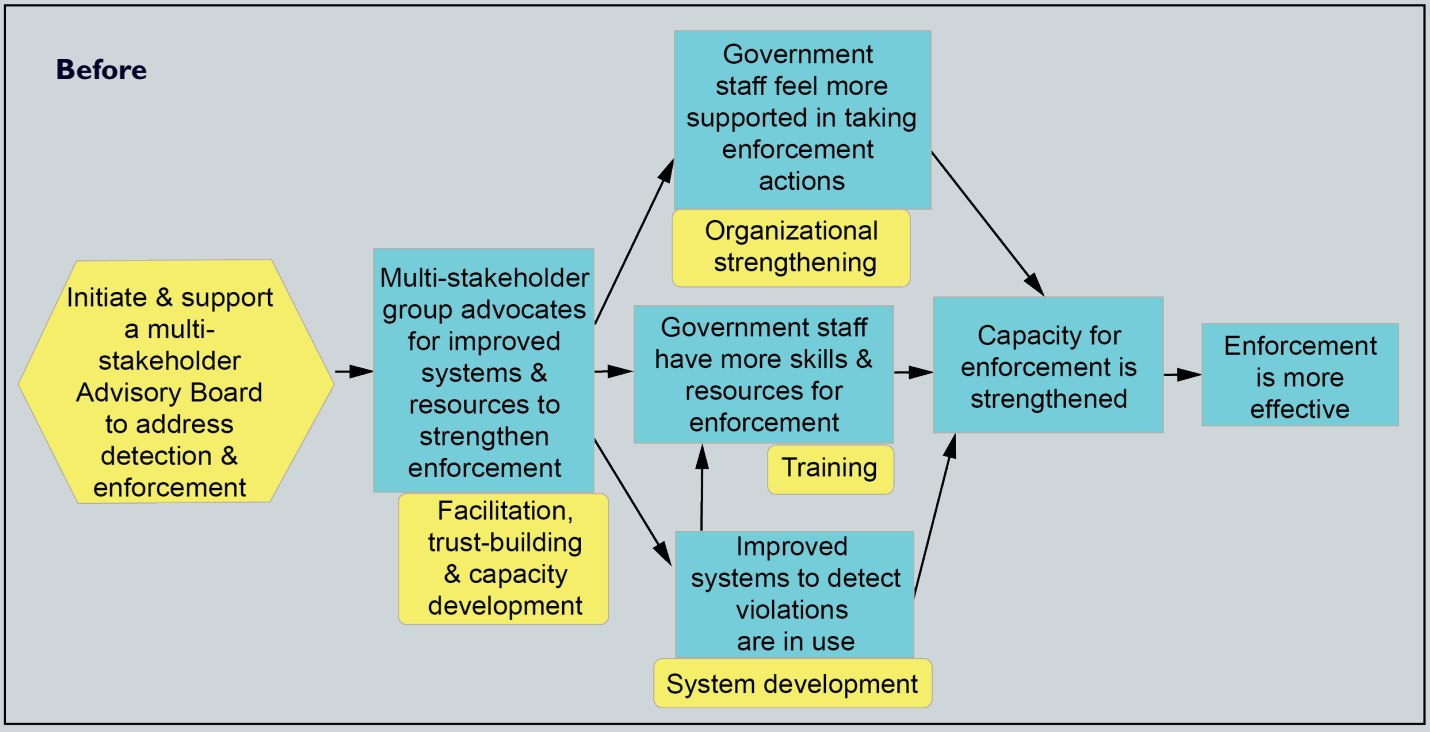


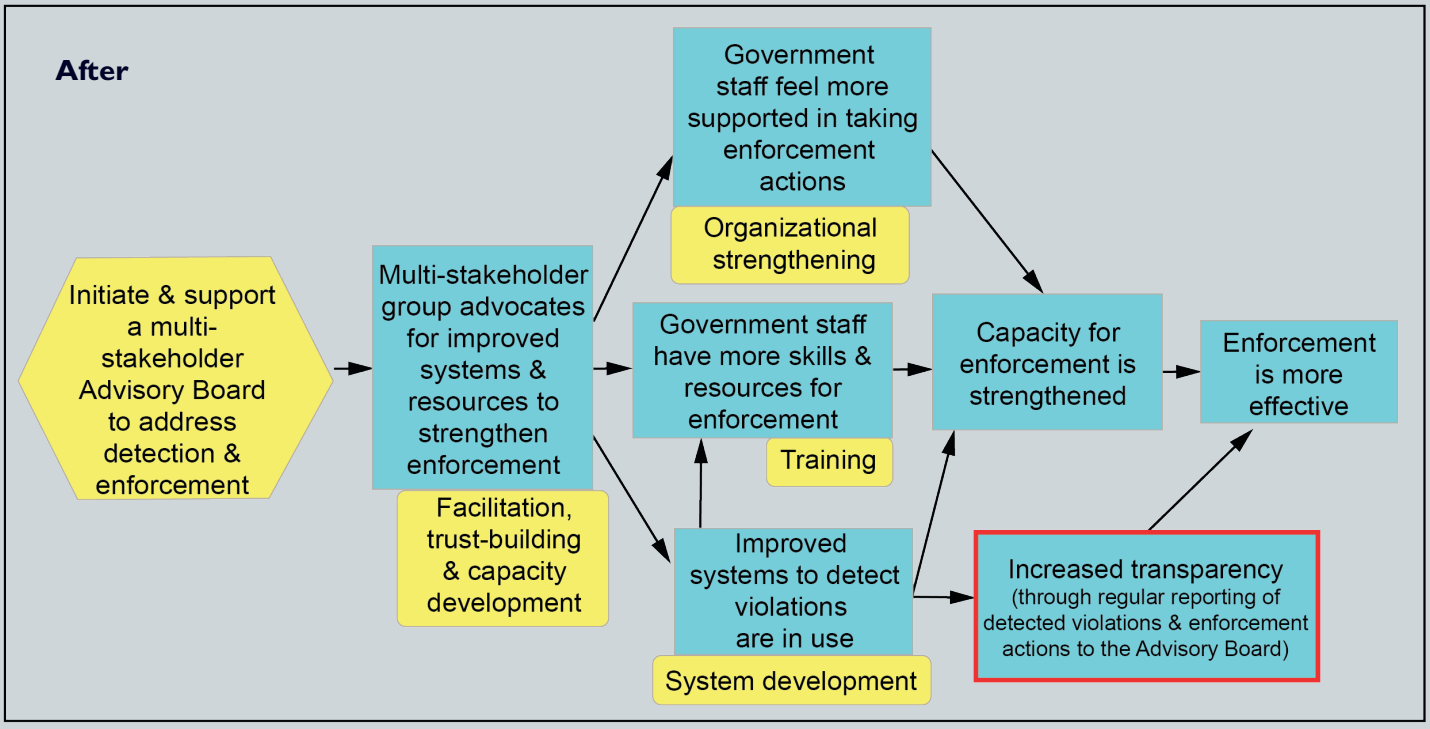
Example 3.3. Developing Results Chains.

The team develops a draft results chain for their strategic approach. Using the standard convention, they show the results they expect to achieve as blue rectangles and the actions they will take to achieve those results as yellow rectangles with rounded edges. The team knows that the logic in their results chain is influenced by political considerations. As they read through the chain together, they realize that increased capacity for enforcement will not necessarily lead to enforcement being more effective in their local context due to the influence of political elites. They add an additional result to address this local political factor.

Facilitation Questions:

- *Is there any reason that strengthening capacity for enforcement would not lead to more effective enforcement in this context? Why not?*





3.4 Measuring political results

Effective monitoring allows conservation practitioners to understand the impacts of their actions and to make informed decisions about adaptive management. Results chains provide a strong intellectual framework for developing effective monitoring plans.

As teams look across their results chains, they will identify key results and relationships that are critical points for understanding their progress and achieving their goals. These *key results* are an important focus of monitoring efforts and they are designated in the chain with a purple triangle.[48,49] When selecting what to monitor, teams should avoid the temptation to focus on what is easiest to measure, rather than what is most relevant and meaningful. Often, what is most relevant is a politically informed result. So how do you measure it?

Teams should avoid the temptation to focus on what is easiest to measure, rather than what is most relevant and meaningful.

Experts in social measurement can develop indicators for important results that occur in politically informed results chains. For example, there are widely used indicators for measuring important, conceptual results such as social capital or women's empowerment. There are also robust ways to measure changes in constituent support and expanded social networks. From the Field Box 3.4 provides an example.

At USAID, teams will measure key results for different purposes, including performance monitoring and learning. Results and indicators that are nominated for performance monitoring are documented in approved monitoring plans and tracked against annual targets. In some cases, teams may want to monitor a key result and indicator primarily to help answer questions they have about implementation or to identify changes in context. Teams are likely to find it is useful to measure political variables as part of these learning processes. Whichever approach is used, monitoring efforts will be most useful when they are focused on key results and relationships, and if you are engaged in TWP these will often be political.

Experts in social measurement can develop indicators for important political results.

From the Field Box 3.4. Measuring conceptual results: the example of social capital.

After identifying the mobilization of social capital and leadership as a key result in their chain (see From the Field Box 3.3), program implementers determined they wanted to start measuring changes in social capital to help inform their work. They adapted approaches from the World Bank's methodology[FI] and added appropriate questions into existing surveys that the team conducts at periodic intervals throughout program implementation.

[FI] See Measuring Social Capital: An Integrated Questionnaire (English).

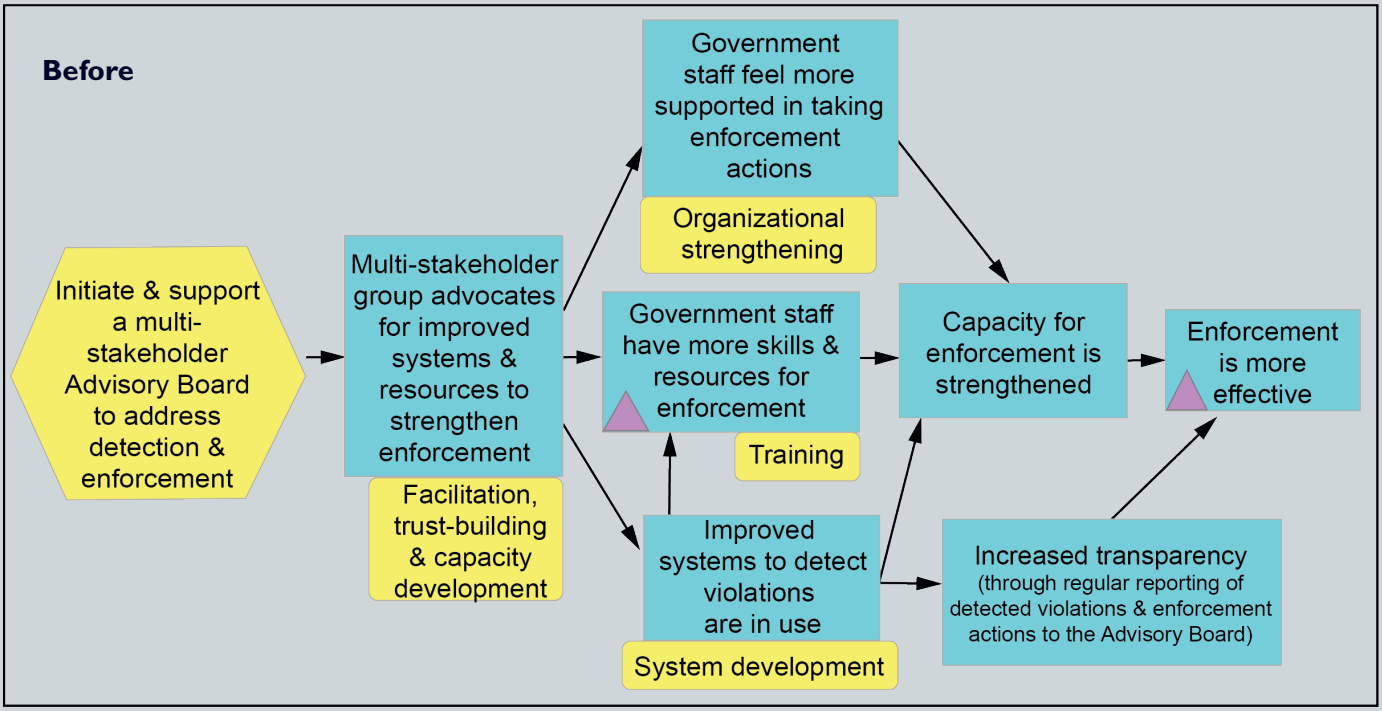
48 This section focuses narrowly on the measurement of key results in line with *How-to-Guide 3: Defining Outcomes & Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming* (See footnote 43). Implementing the type of CLA described in Section 4 requires additional data collection and analysis to understand both changes in context and developments in implementation. Useful resources for these broader efforts are presented in the USAID Learning Lab's MEL Toolkits and include Complexity-aware Monitoring.

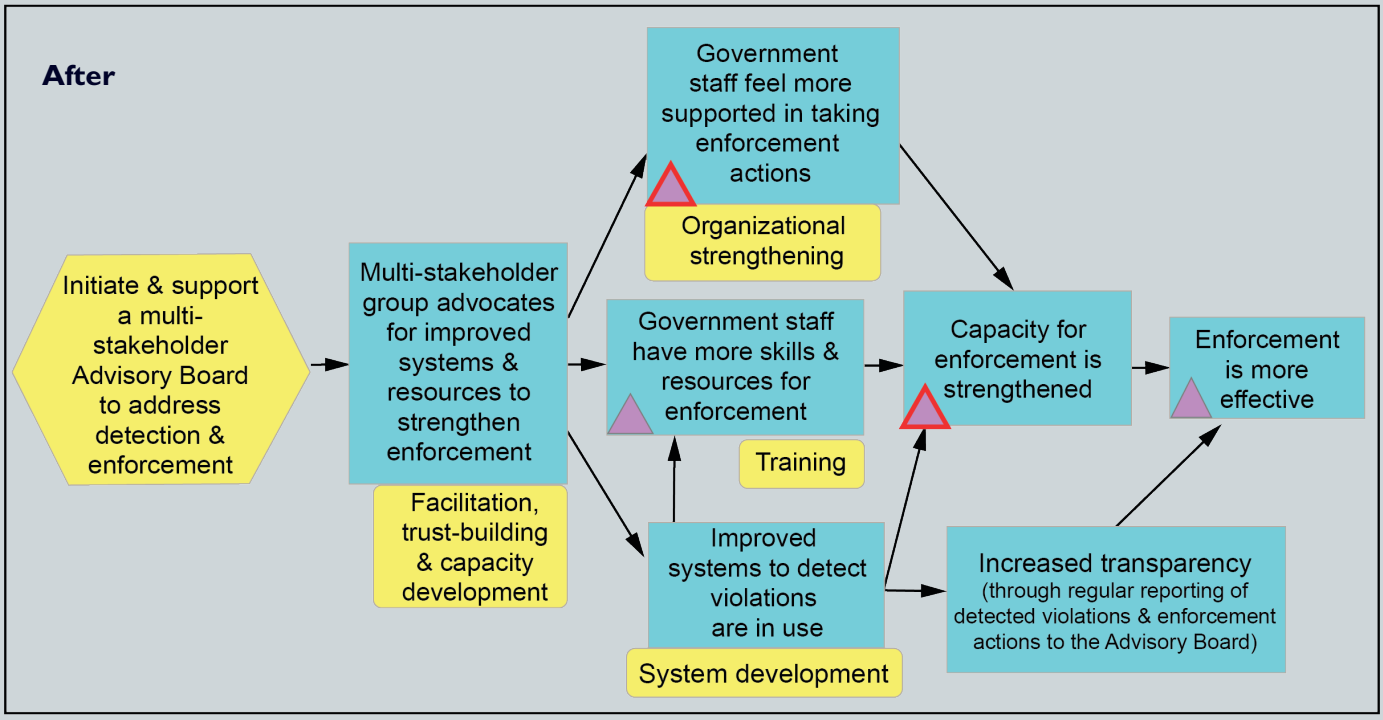
49 See footnote 43.

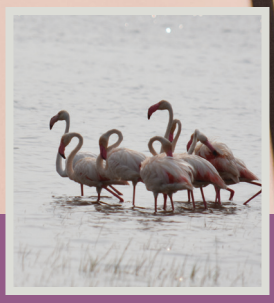
Example 3.4. Measuring Political Results.
The team wants to monitor indicators of the most important results in their chain, as noted by purple triangles. Initially they propose to monitor the number of government staff trained and the number of enforcement actions implemented, because these results are easy to measure. The facilitator helps the team consider if these are the most important results and how they could develop outcome statements and indicators for additional key results that may be harder to measure. The team consults with an expert in organizational capacity and culture to develop indicators for two additional results and to improve measurement of government staff skills and resources.

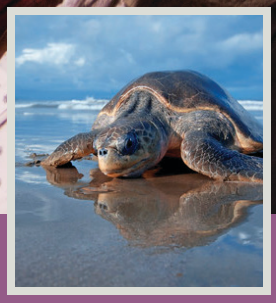
Facilitation Questions:

- *Will you be able to understand the reasons for changes in enforcement actions if you only measure the number of staff trained? What other results are important to measure?*
- *If you want to develop meaningful indicators for these changes in staff capacity, what type of expertise should we consult?*









COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

SECTION IV

4. COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

The ability to adapt program implementation based on systematic learning is highly valued by the Conservation Standards, TWP, and USAID. USAID describes this process as collaborating, learning, and adapting, enabled by an open organizational culture, effective knowledge management processes, and appropriate resources (Figure 4.1). USAID research[50] has found this process improves development outcomes:

> *The systematic application of CLA approaches, led by people who have the knowledge and resources to carry them out, enables USAID to be an effective learning organization and thereby a more effective development organization.*[51]

This section offers suggestions for implementing politically informed CLA using the Conservation Standards at USAID.

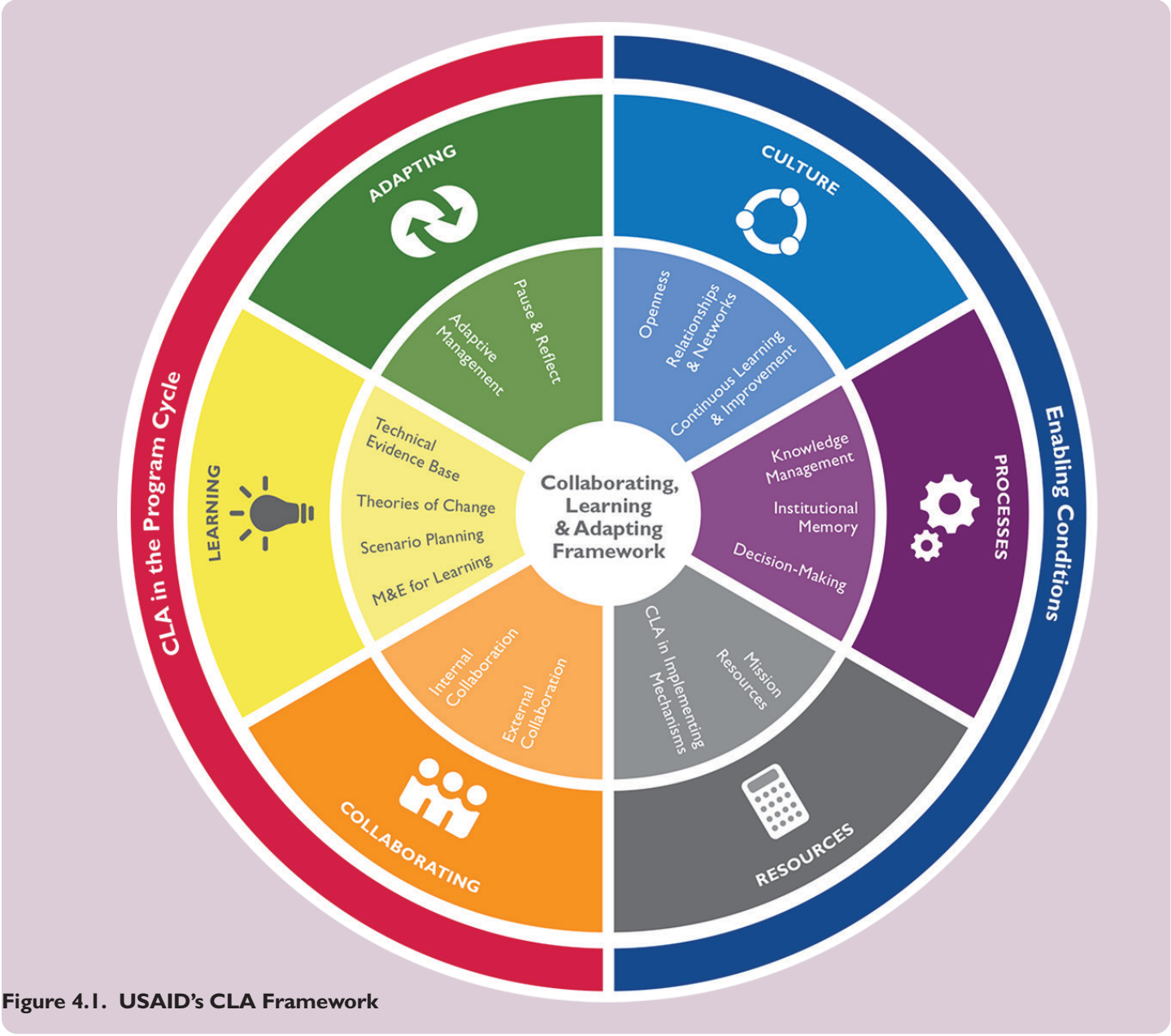


Figure 4.1. USAID's CLA Framework

50 See "What Difference Does Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Make to Development? Key Findings from our Literature Review".

51 See the USAID Learning Lab webpage "CLA Toolkit".

4.1 Politically informed CLA using the Conservation Standards

The Conservation Standards provide a strong intellectual architecture for CLA. At USAID, biodiversity conservation programs typically develop detailed monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plans based on their situation models and results chains. At a minimum, these tools help to demonstrate the program's compliance with USAID's Biodiversity Code[52] and provide a basis for evaluating program performance. When combined with politically informed approaches to CLA, they offer the potential to transform conservation results.

Thinking and working politically when practicing CLA with the Conservation Standards includes bringing greater attention to the processes used in collaboration and learning. Effectively facilitating shared reflection and learning between individuals and groups is a high-impact way to work politically (also see Section 2.1). Bringing a TWP lens to CLA recognizes the importance of being intentional about the methods used for reflection, who is involved, and how frequently CLA practices are conducted. Politically informed CLA recognizes the dual goals of revealing important insights about programmatic work and fostering local momentum to act on evolving information.

Bringing a TWP lens to CLA recognizes the importance of being intentional about the methods used for reflection, who is involved, and how frequently CLA practices are conducted.

Here are four suggestions for implementing CLA with the Conservation Standards in a way that is politically informed.

1. Frequency: Approach CLA as a regular process

Results chains are a useful CLA tool for clarifying assumptions (Section 3.3), informing MEL plans (Section 3.4), and creating a shared vision for a program's theory of change at different points in implementation. However, these simplified models rarely capture the feedback loops and tipping points that many technical disciplines—ranging from systems ecology to political science—suggest are common pathways of change.[53] The one-way direction of change implied by arrows in a results chain is best interpreted as a snapshot in time that invites regular questioning, monitoring, and adaptation. Approaching CLA as an ongoing part of program management and implementation can support conservation programs in being more politically informed, particularly when they include the focus areas and process attributes described here.

During regular reflection processes, teams can explore:

- "What political considerations may be influencing program implementation?"
- "How has the program context changed?"

2. Focus: Include reflection on changes in context and political information

To be politically informed, CLA efforts should include and look beyond indicators that monitor changes in key outcomes in the program's results chain and performance monitoring plan. Reflection processes should include broader questions about how accurately the results chain seems to describe what the team is observing in practice and whether the team's theory of change remains attuned to the local situation (Example 4.1). Conducting these reflection processes with empowered, local staff and partners in open, trusting situations are excellent ways to surface political factors that affect the program's overall impact and durability. In addition to informing adaptive management, these inquiries may identify areas of political uncertainty that might be helpful to explore further through a politically oriented analysis (see Section 2.1 and From the Field Box 4.1).

Informal or facilitated team discussions can explore:

- "Is implementation following your results chain? Why or why not?" "What political considerations may be influencing program implementation?"
- "How has the program context changed?" "Do these changes warrant revisions in your theory of change?"

52 See the webpage "USAID Biodiversity Code".

53 See *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems*.

From the Field Box 4.1. Implementing a political economy analysis as part of CLA

For one USAID Mission, the results of a Pause and Reflect workshop with implementing partners led to implementation of a PEA that is informing USAID's next generation of programming. USAID and implementers from the Sustainable Fisheries Management Program (SFMP) held a workshop near the program's midpoint to identify potential learning questions for a mid-term review.[F2] The workshop created and analyzed a situation model and results chains to identify and prioritize learning questions. Noting that the top five questions to emerge were primarily political (see below), USAID staff from the Mission and Washington initiated a PEA. The PEA was planned and implemented by a cross-sectoral team of USAID staff with support from consultants with expertise in PEA, Ghanaian fisheries, and logistics. The team spent several months planning the PEA, including doing a cogent literature review and refining the focus and methods for the analysis. After a week of field data collection, the team met for several days in Accra to collaboratively synthesize their findings and develop recommendations. A consultant subsequently led the formal report write-up.[F3] The PEA process not only gave the team deeper political insights into barriers and opportunities for improved fisheries management, it also served to foster a shared vision among USAID staff about how to approach future Agency investments in the sector.

Learning Questions Identified During Pause and Reflect

1. **Can Ghana's small pelagic fishery recover without action to reduce the illegal Saiko catch?**

   This question reflects a change in the program context over the first two years of implementation. When the program began, illegal fishing by industrial trawlers was not thought to be a threat to the type of fish targeted by artisanal fishers. New types of illegal fishing changed this assessment by the program mid-point, leaving the program to wonder if they could achieve their overall goals without an expansion in focus.

2. **To what extent does strengthening fishing organizations and having more fisherfolk engaged in decision-making lead to artisanal fisherfolk having a more effective voice and greater influence in national policy deliberations, as measured by the extent to which reforms serve their interests? Why or why not?**

   This question focuses on key assumptions in the program's results chain: that strengthening fishing associations will eventually result in national policies better reflecting the interests of artisanal fishers.

3. **To what extent and under what conditions does having opinion leaders support fishery reforms lead to high-level policymakers supporting fishery reforms? Why or why not? How does this relationship change based on the specific policy reform being considered?**

   This question focuses on key assumptions in the program's results chain: that engaging key opinion leaders will eventually result in adoption of fishery reforms by policymakers.

4. **To what extent and under what conditions can different approaches for delivering economic benefits maintain or enhance fisherfolk income and/or well-being while fishery management reforms are being implemented?**

   This question focuses on key assumptions in the program's results chain: that strategies for engagement, finance, and post-harvest processing can allow fisherfolk to be resilient when new harvesting restrictions are enacted.

5. **To what extent and under what conditions can increased budget allocations and strengthened human resources lead to the institutional and organizational changes that are most needed to transform the Fisheries Commission into a responsive, accountable government agency that can: a) engage in co-management, b) effectively enforce rules, and c) deliver relevant monitoring and analysis?**

   This question focuses on key assumptions in the program's results chain: that working to strengthen the budget and human resources of the Fisheries Commission will be enough to transform this government agency into a responsive partner that can collaborate with industry, civil society, and research groups to strengthen fisheries management and science.

[F2] See Result Chains and Learning Questions from SFMP's Mid-term Evaluation.

[F3] See Advancing Reforms to Promote Sustainable Management of Ghana's Small Pelagic Fisheries: An Applied Political Economy Analysis (PEA).

3. Process: Foster trust and empowerment

USAID identifies culture as an enabling condition for CLA, described as including openness, relationships and networks, and continuous learning. These characteristics also create the environment to surface relevant political insights and develop innovative solutions to political problems. Approaching program design and implementation as an ongoing learning experience, with an openness and curiosity toward failure as well as success, can help foster the trust needed to enable candid conversations about political factors influencing program outcomes. Engaging strategic coalitions in learning efforts about the status and dynamics of a conservation problem can empower stakeholders to act collectively to adapt the use and management of natural resources.

When using the Conservation Standards to guide learning, it is useful for teams to remember that adaptive management is often a political process, not just a technical one. The influence of learning often depends more on how it was facilitated and who was involved than the empirical *rightness* of the findings.[54] Bringing political awareness to the design of learning processes and events can enhance trust, empower potential conservation advocates, and strengthen the results of conservation programs (also see Section 2.2).

Adaptive management is often a political process, not just a technical one. The influence of learning often depends more on how it was facilitated and who was involved than the empirical *rightness* of the findings.

4. Enable flexibility, time, staff, and budget in the procurement process[55]

Even with the best intentions, teams cannot effectively implement the CLA, TWP, and Conservation Standards practices recommended in this guide without sufficient budget, staff, time, and flexibility. Building these resources into funder-implementer relationships and formal procurement processes are foundational steps for enabling this type of effective programming.

From a pragmatic perspective, implementing the practices advocated here requires a commitment to approaching accountability in a way that encourages thoughtful experimentation and occasional failure.[56] It requires a willingness to invest in iterative, participatory learning as a functional part of implementation. And it requires a collaboration between funders and different implementing organizations that is sensitive to the power asymmetries between them and the different ways each group wields influence that can advance a shared agenda. Equity and trust concerns in how these risks, uncertainties, and benefits are distributed between funders and implementers should be addressed explicitly.[57]

Teams cannot effectively implement the practices recommended in this guide without sufficient budget, staff, time, and flexibility.

The procurement process communicates funder expectations for programming and typically establishes the binding legal framework that structures resource allocations, management processes, and deliverables. Here are some questions to consider to set up procurement processes in a way that enables thinking and working politically when practicing CLA with the Conservation Standards.

- **Have the human and financial resources needed to implement these practices been identified and budgeted?** The solicitation, negotiation process, and formal agreement are places for funders to communicate expectations and priorities for resource allocation. The solicitation need not be prescriptive about staff, rather it can be specific about the skill set desired in staff individually and collectively. If funders want implementers to think and work politically when practicing CLA with the Conservation Standards, it is helpful to ask for those skills in appropriate key personnel and activity staff. These skills include technical competencies, nuanced understanding of the local context, and political awareness, as well as soft skills, such as convening, brokering, and openness to experimentation.[58]

54 See Seeking our Shared Wisdom: A Framework for Understanding Knowledge Coproduction and Coproductive Capacities.

55 This section is intended to guide a broad suite of procurement systems used by funders, including those used by USAID for contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants. Language should be interpreted based on typical dictionary definitions, not specialized usages at USAID that may be associated with a particular procurement mechanism.

56 See Adapting to Learn and Learning to Adapt: Practical Insights from International Development Projects.

57 See footnote 56.

58 For more information, please consult A Guide to Hiring Adaptive Employees from USAID's CLA Toolkit.

Insufficient budget is a frequently cited barrier to CLA. Proposers can address this issue by planning for people and systems to capture, analyze, and use learning, including the costs of ongoing learning events that may require a significant level of effort. Funders can look for and value allocations to these activities in proposed budgets. A flexible approach that emphasizes learning is likely to present implementers with challenges in developing a cost proposal because it is harder to budget for outcomes than actions. In addition, this approach is likely to reveal emergent information needs that were not clearly articulated in the solicitation or formal agreement. Funders can acknowledge this uncertainty in the solicitation and ask proposers to describe the decision-making processes and cost principles that will build a transparent and mutual commitment to resourcing CLA, TWP, and the Conservation Standards during implementation.

Program procurement processes can enable TWP, CLA, and the Conservation Standards.

- **Will management structures and processes support CLA?** The solicitation and formal agreement lay the foundations for the organizational structures and process that will be deployed during implementation. In the solicitation, funders can consider requesting that proposers describe the processes and approaches to decision-making they will use to practice CLA, TWP, and the Conservation Standards during implementation. This may include periodic workshops as well as rapid-cycle learning in between workshops.

  Additionally, funders may find it helpful to organize formal agreements with implementers around outcomes, rather than approaches, to enable greater flexibility in responding to dynamics in the local context and ongoing learning. Situation models and results chains are particularly useful for helping teams focus on outcomes, rather than outputs or actions (see Section 3). These tools are also helpful for structuring MEL and CLA processes (see Section 3 and above). If funders want implementers to use these tools, it may be helpful to include an explicit requirement to do so in the solicitation and formal agreement.

- **Do your evaluation criteria establish your expectations for practicing CLA, TWP, and the Conservation Standards?** The criteria against which responses will be reviewed, and their relative weight, are an opportunity to clearly communicate the importance of CLA, TWP, and the Conservation Standards to proposers. In the solicitation, funders may wish to include review criteria that assess the extent to which a proposer's response accounts for CLA, TWP, and the Conservation Standards in the technical approach, management approach, and staffing plan.

- **Will the deliverables timeline allow a collaborative start-up process and enable ongoing adaptive management?** The timeline for initial activity deliverables and subsequent year reports and work plans is a key structuring element that is typically defined during procurement. Programming contexts vary, and funders will want to align the timeline for initial activity deliverables[59] with their unique context to allow adequate time for a program start-up. To enable CLA with the Conservation Standards, it is helpful to collaboratively develop results chains for the new program in a start-up workshop after key staff for the new program have been onboarded. These results chains provide the organizing structure for work plans and MEL plans that are focused on outcomes.[60]

  Funders can request that proposers describe the processes and approaches to decision-making they will use to practice CLA, TWP, and the Conservation Standards.

  Start-up may be a rapid process in contexts where implementers are able to mobilize key staff quickly and have a good understanding of the problem. In other contexts, when implementers need time to set-up and mobilize staff, funders might request an interim work plan within 30-60 days of award; these plans typically cover the initial three to six months of implementation and outline the steps that will be taken to develop the full work plan and MEL plan, based on results chains. Finally, in contexts where funders are developing new programs or the local context is particularly complex, the start-up process may benefit from an extended and explicit inception phase.[61]

59 Initial deliverables may include a start-up workshop, collaboratively developed results chain, work plan, MEL plan, and additional analyses.

60 See footnote 43.

61 An inception period is a "period during which the initial framing of objectives, targets and outputs is revisited and revised" (See footnote 56). One approach to inception periods is the Refine and Implement model piloted by USAID Food For Peace. For more information, please consult The Refine and Implement Pilot: USAID Food for Peace's Approach to Adaptable Mechanisms from the 2016 CLA Case Study Competition and Food for Peace Frequently Asked Questions for Refine and Implement Pilot Approach.

This approach is also recommended if a funder wants to use a rapid procurement process that shifts many of the analyses typically conducted in design to the early stages of implementation. An extended inception phase can enable implementers to deepen their understanding of on-the-ground conditions, map the governance landscape, develop relationships, and identify meaningful metrics before committing to a life of activity strategy or developing detailed work plans.[62]

If funders want to systematically enable adaptive management during implementation, it is suggested that the timeline for annual reports and work plans in the following years should be sequenced so that the activity team has sufficient time to conduct reflection processes before work planning.

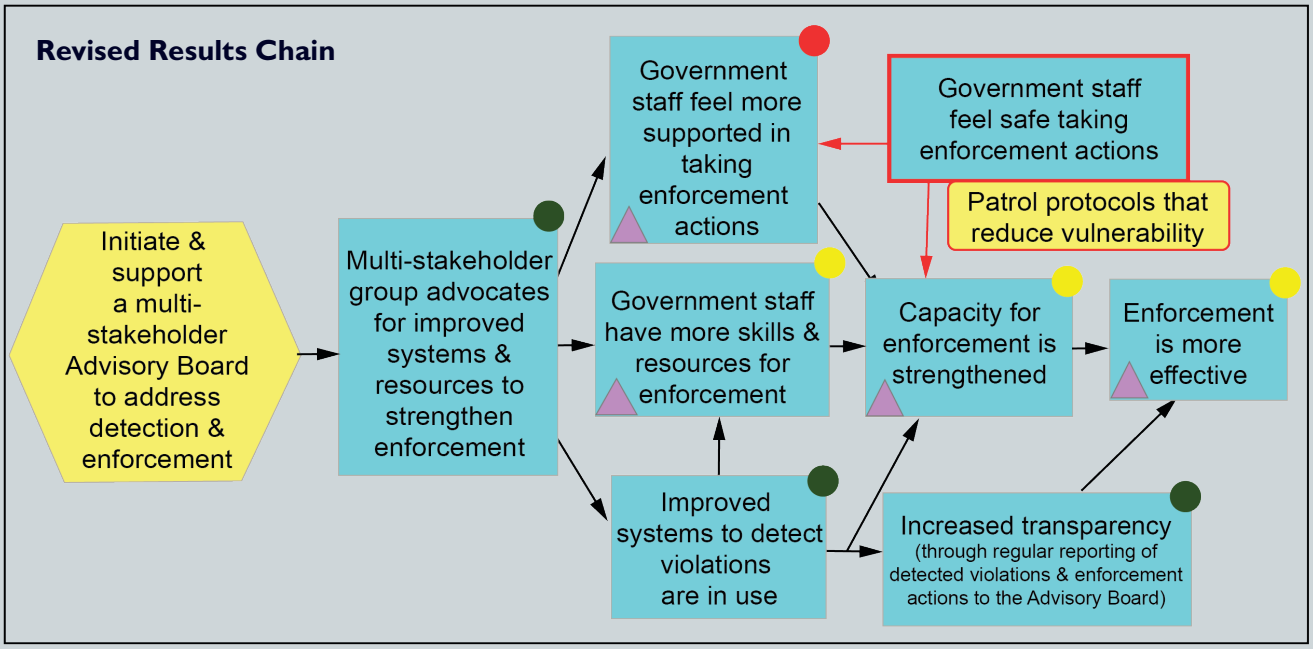
62 Personal communication with USAID's Office of Democracy, Rights, and Governance.

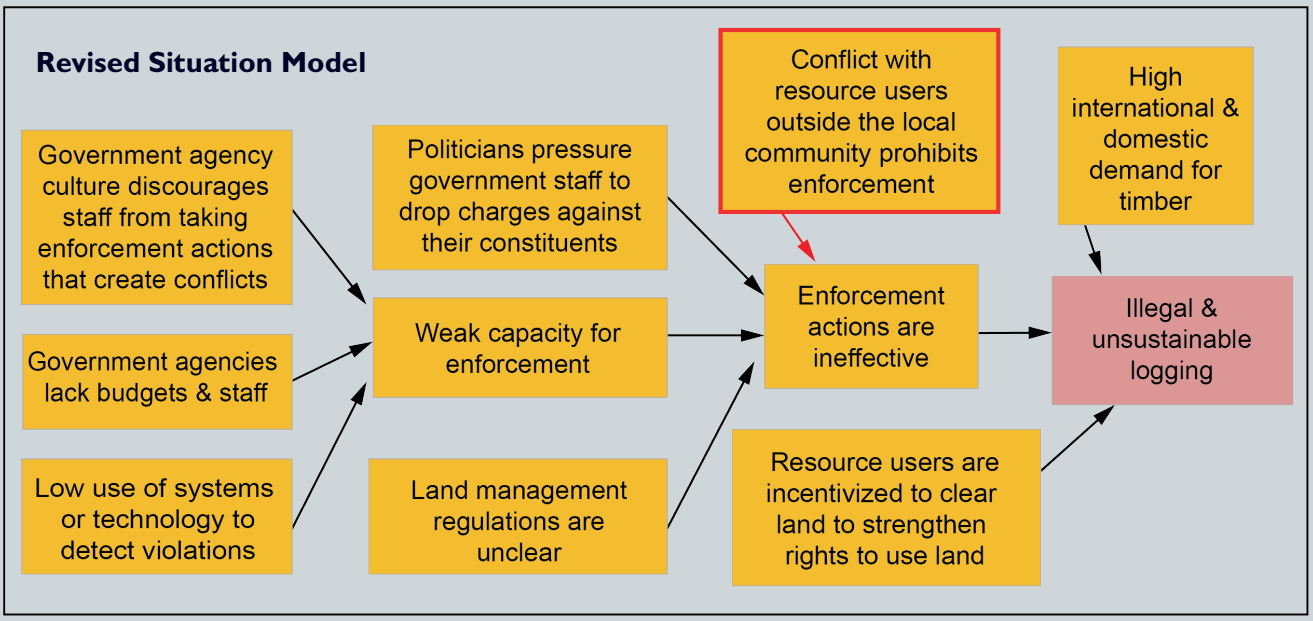
Example 4.1. Practicing Politically Informed CLA.

As part of their ongoing CLA efforts, the team hosts a workshop before developing their Year 3 work plan to reflect on their theory of change, the results they are seeing in practice, and changes in their local context. They co-design and implement the workshop along with the Enforcement Advisory Board to gain greater political insight and to continue to foster program ownership by the Board. Prior to the workshop, the team reviews their monitoring data and conducts key informant interviews to evaluate progress for each result in their chain. They share their findings on the results chain as green dots for results that have been achieved, yellow for results with mixed progress, and red for results showing weak progress. From their data and the workshop discussions, the team learns that although government staff now feel more supported by their supervisors to conduct enforcement actions, they are feeling unsafe taking enforcement actions because of a new threat that has come into the region. The original situation model is based on local communities as the main drivers of illegal logging and the program's initial theory of change was designed to reduce conflicts with local communities. Now, however, an economic downturn and increased price of timber products has led to increased illegal logging activity by new, outside actors moving into the region. Working with the Enforcement Advisory Board, the team updates their situation model and results chain.

Facilitation Questions:

- *Why aren't government staff feeling more supported in taking enforcement actions?*
- *How has the program context changed? How should we update our theory of change in response?*





Postscript: Closing Thoughts and Encouragement

By providing an explicit, visual description of the context and theory of change for programming, the Conservation Standards offer powerful tools for teams planning, monitoring, and adapting programs for biodiversity conservation. They allow teams to communicate clearly in developing a shared vision and thinking through the assumptions that underpin their ideas and investments. However like all models, situation models and results chains will only produce meaningful results when they are focused on the most influential factors. Development experience tells us that the most influential factors are often not the obvious ones written in formal documents, but the political ones that operate powerfully below the surface. The more hidden nature of these political factors cannot excuse their omission from our conservation efforts if we are going to achieve the transformation needed to address the broadscale threats to biodiversity that are driving an unprecedented rate of ecosystem loss and species extinction.

Thinking and working politically provides an orientation for integrating influential political considerations into the Conservation Standards. It is a way of working with implications for the content of our models, the way we facilitate workshops, the partnerships we form, and our approach to procurement and adaptive management. In this Guide, we've offered suggestions for integrating political considerations into the Conservation Standards at five key entry points: 1) when identifying drivers in situation models, 2) in selecting strategic approaches, 3) in evaluating and documenting results chains, 4) in measuring key program results, and 5) in CLA through the way we reflect on our programs, adjust our approaches, and create flexibility through procurements. We hope the Guide has given you a sense of what it means for conservation programming to be politically informed, and that you identify further ways to bring this perspective into your important work.

In most cases, biodiversity practitioners will not be able to realize politically informed programming on their own. Practitioners applying the Conservation Standards do not need to have all the answers; you need to ask questions that allow you to diagnose the most influential factors and to seek out relevant expertise. Truly addressing the political factors that determine conservation results will require collaborating with colleagues from complementary fields, such as experts in changing organizational culture, countering corruption, brokering coalitions, and empowering disenfranchised people in discovering their rights and voice. These collaborations will require patience in the uncomfortable process of leaving one's technical comfort zone and developing new relationships and trust that allow us to address problems that previously seemed out of our manageable interest.

Technical excellence is critical to successful conservation. It's also not enough. Effectively, durably conserving biodiversity requires us to be technically sound and politically savvy. We appreciate your curiosity and heart in exploring politically informed conservation. Stay in touch as you apply this Guide and let us know what you learn.

Yours in conservation,
Heidi, Jeff, and Kelsey

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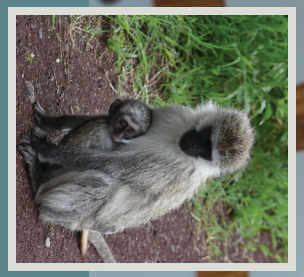
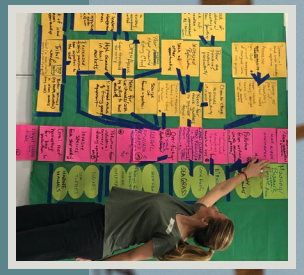
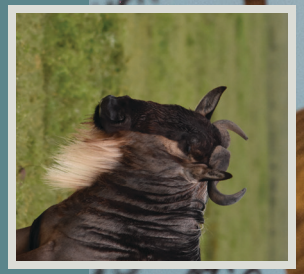
ANNEXES







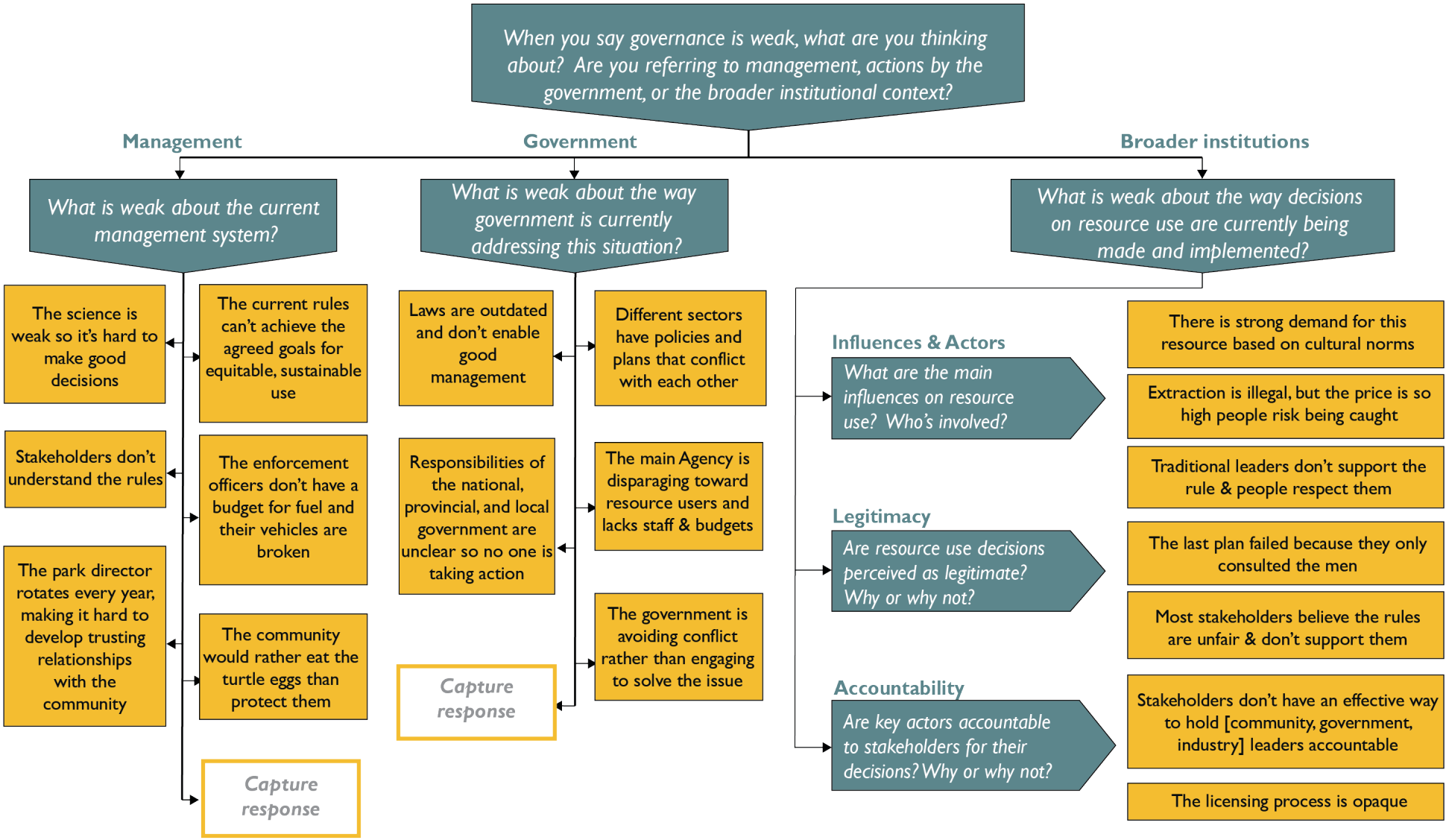
ANNEX A. FACILITATION QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFYING DRIVERS IN A SITUATION MODEL

These annexes offer explanatory notes and illustrative questions that facilitators can use to unpack vague political drivers in situation models. Each annex also provides examples of drivers that are more specific and better able to inform the selection of strategic approaches (See Section 3.1). In practice, questions and drivers will be tailored to your specific context and there are no right questions or right drivers. We hope these annexes provide inspiration to support you in identifying important political drivers that guide you to effective interventions.

A.1: Weak governance
A.2: Weak institutional capacity
A.3: Corruption and political interference
A.4: Inequality in access to resources and decision-makers
A.5: Lack of constituencies
A.6: Lack of political will
A.7: Weak enforcement

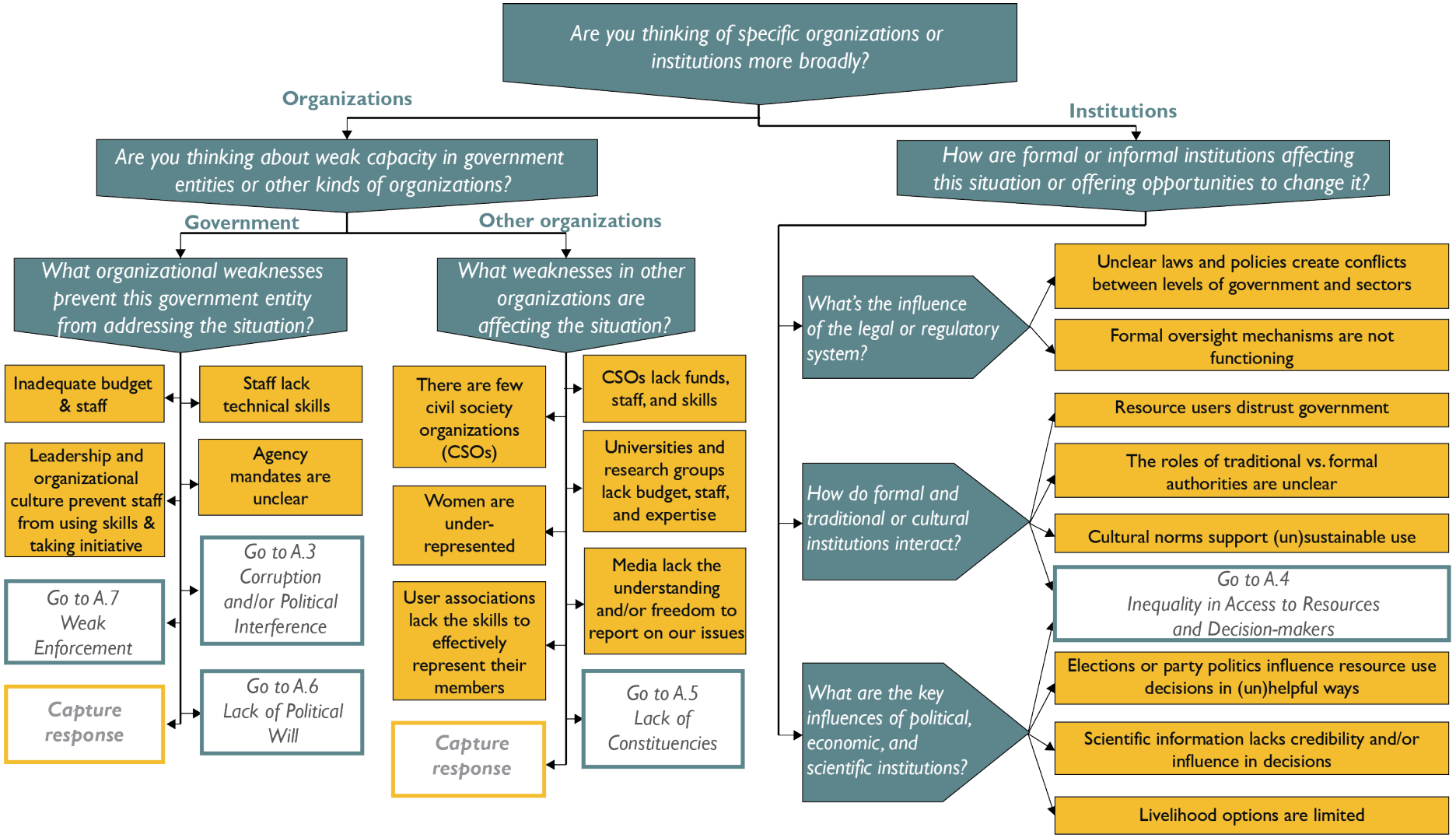
A.1. Weak Governance

The term *governance* is used different ways in situation models. For many disciplines, *governance* is the process by which decisions of public concern are made and implemented; broadly speaking this process can include interactions of government, traditional authorities, civil society, and/or the private sector. Some teams use governance more narrowly to focus on government structures and decision-making processes. Within conservation, governance and management are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes intended to distinguish the scale of decision-making. When used distinctively, governance is often seen as establishing the broader institutional goals and structures that will determine more narrowly focused management decisions about how to allocate resources within an established institutional framework. Because the phrases *governance* or *weak governance* are used inconsistently and are inherently broad, it is helpful to further unpack what teams actually mean by this phrase to better inform the selection of strategic approaches.



A.2. Weak Institutional Capacity

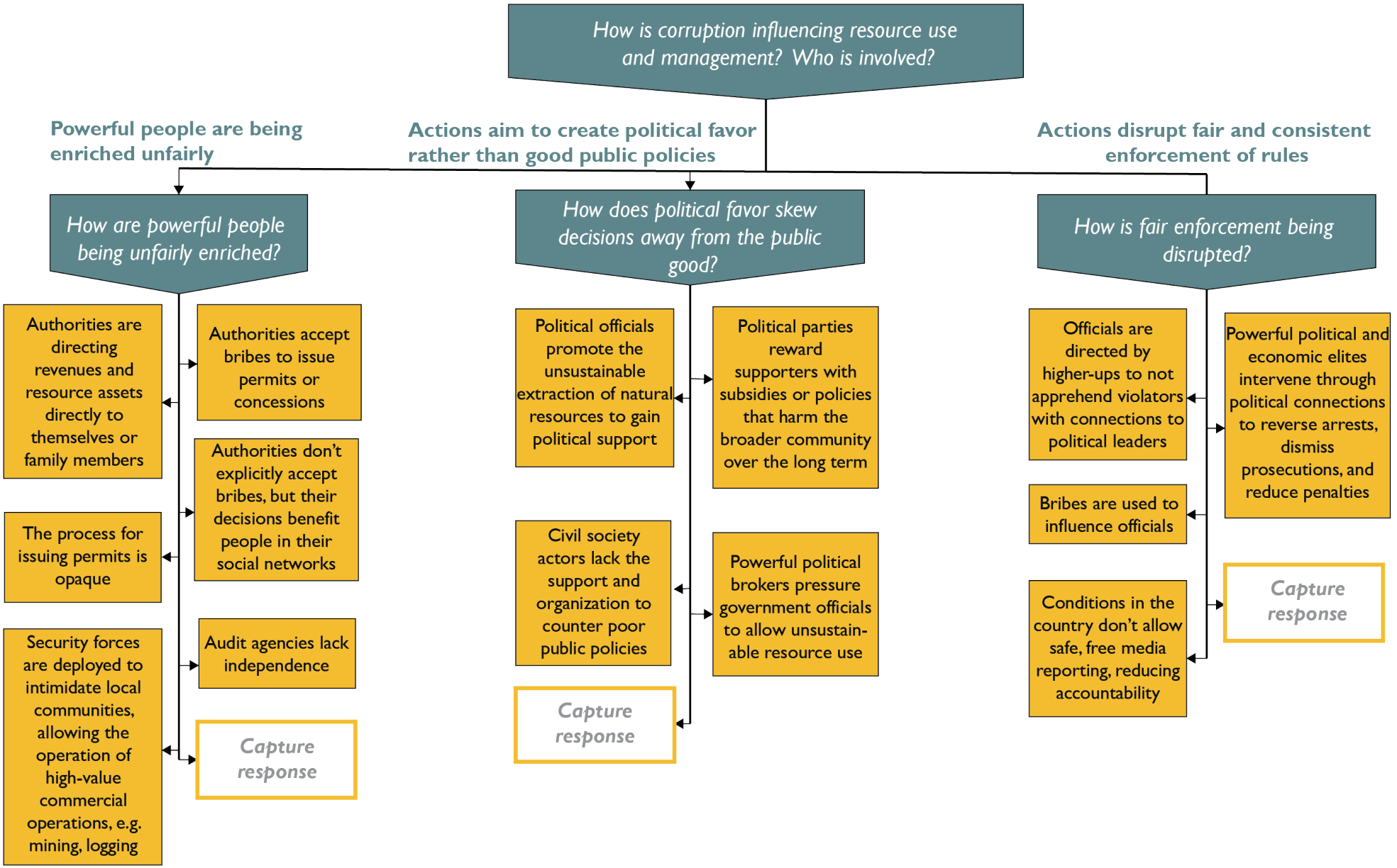
Weak institutional capacity is a vague driver that may be pointing toward a range of dimensions related to decision-making, management, and use of natural resources. Within political science, institutions are typically described broadly as the rules that constrain and prescribe the interactions of political actors with one another.[1] These can be formal rules like laws and regulations or informal rules like values and norms.[2] However, within the context of situation model workshops, participants may refer to "weak institutions" to describe varying circumstances, including inadequate capacity by government entities or other organizations; a lack of oversight by branches of government, media, or civil society; distrust or conflicts that prevent groups from implementing their mandates or working together; weaknesses in formal legal or organizational structures, etc. To help workshop participants clarify their situation, we offer questions that either suggest a more specific driver or direct you to another section of this annex to bring more appropriate resolution to the political issues that are influencing conservation.



1 See Encyclopedia Britannica webpage "Institution: Political Science".
2 See Beyond the Washington Consensus: Institutions Matter.

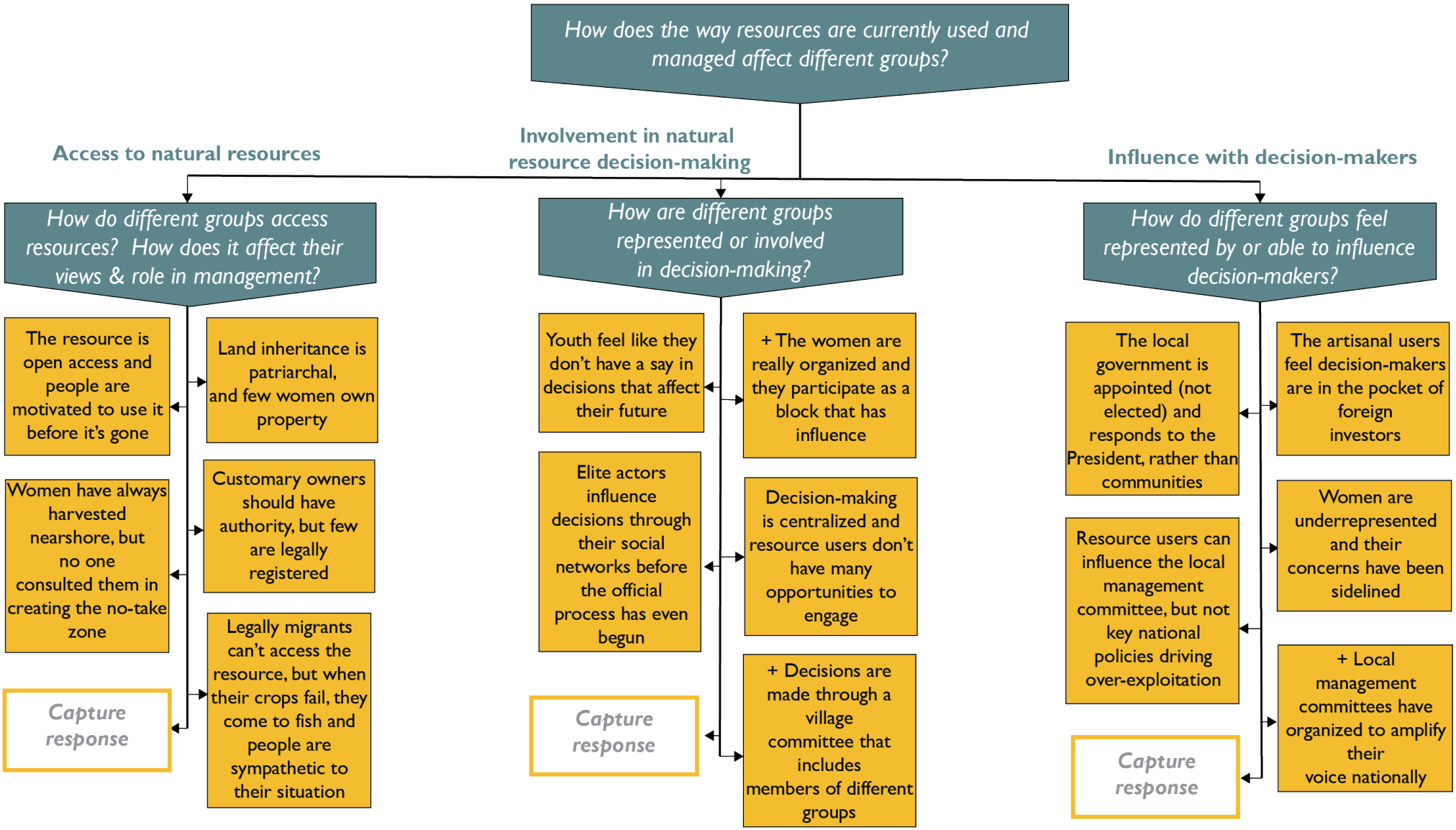
A.3. Corruption and Political Interference

Corruption and the related term political interference refer to a range of political problems that negatively affect biodiversity conservation in many countries. While these terms convey a general sense of bad conduct, they cover many different specific behaviors. Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, but the abuse of public power may take many forms (e.g., conflicts of interest, cronyism, influence peddling, nepotism). Political interference is a widely used term applied to actions by public officials that alter or block the implementation of the rule of law.

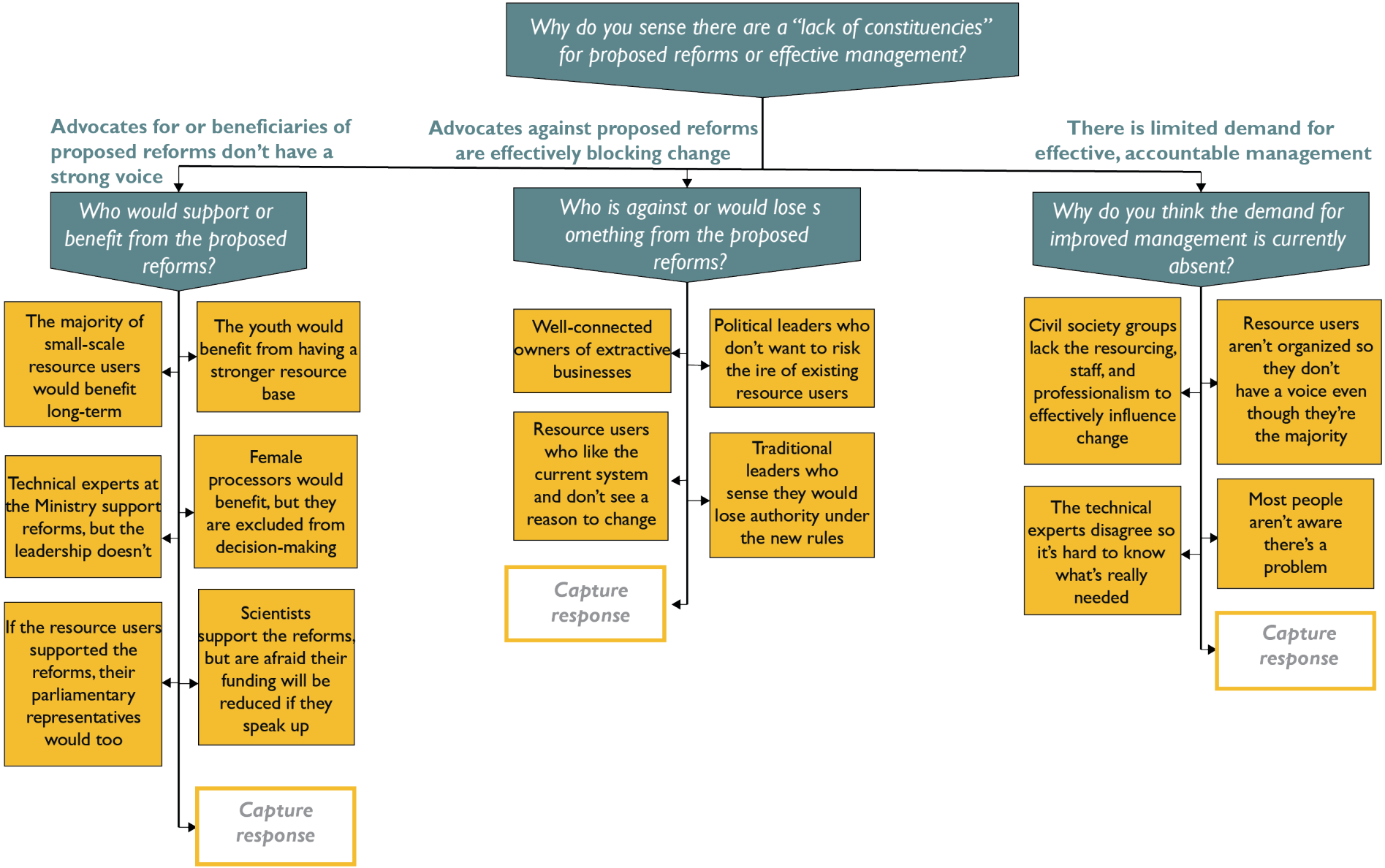


A.4. Inequality in Access to Resources and Decision-makers

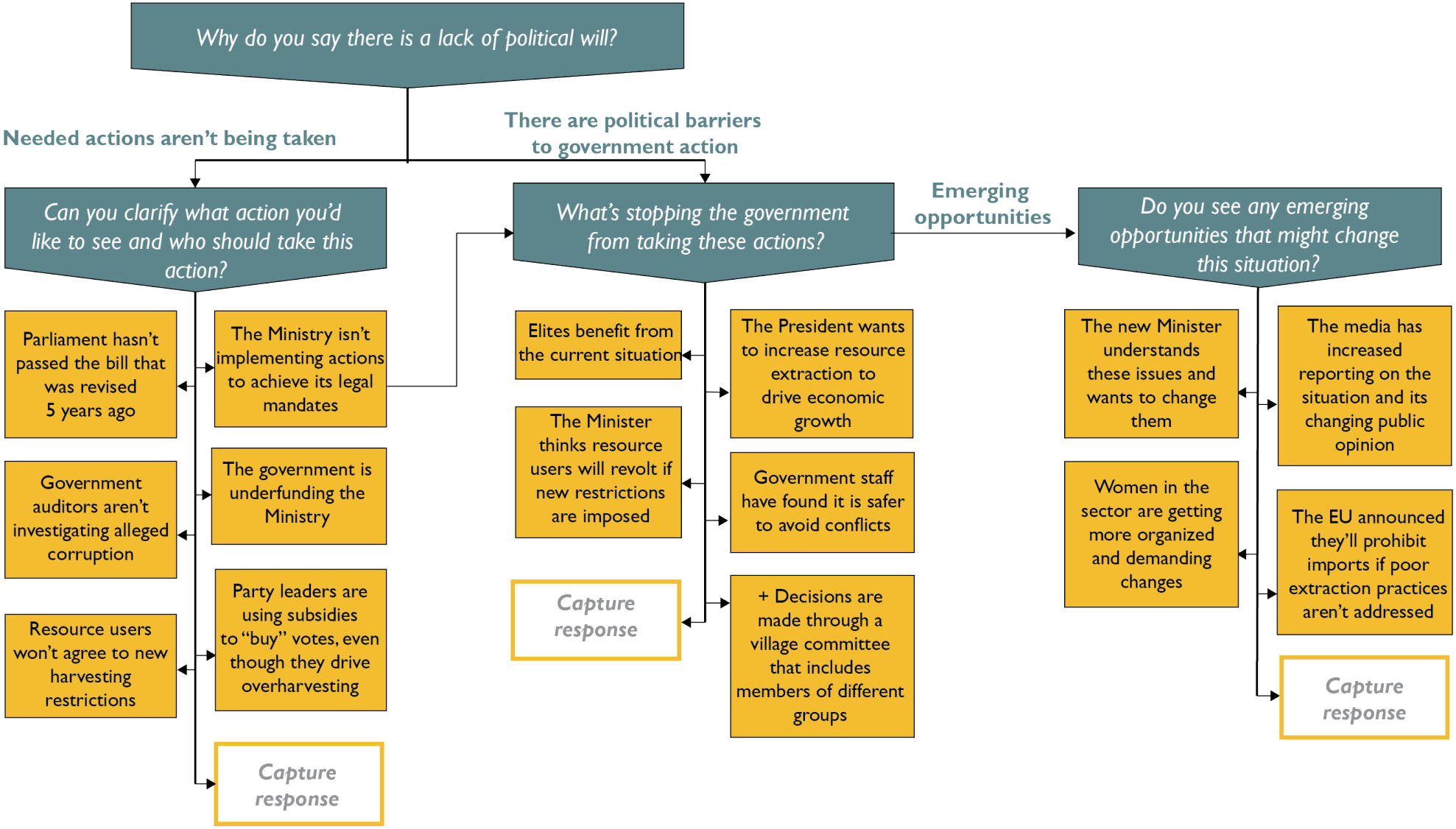
While sometimes omitted from situation models, issues of equality, secure resource tenure, and access to decision-makers are meaningful components of the conservation context that are highly relevant to program design. These factors are often correlated with socio-economic status, education, gender, ethnicity, religion, and age. Explicitly thinking through issues of equity, resource access, influence, and representation will help guide teams in developing programs that are perceived as legitimate and are therefore more effective in achieving conservation goals.



Teams often identify *lack of constituencies* as the reason proposed reforms are not adopted or relevant authorities are not held accountable for effectively implementing management responsibilities. Without understanding more about these situations, it is not possible to select an appropriate strategic approach. Constituents are the people that politicians or leaders of other groups have been elected to represent. A constituency is often a group of persons associated by some common tie, issue, or occupation. In order to exercise voice and influence, constituencies must be informed and organized. Effective constituencies are often the result of alliances, coalitions, and effective leaders.



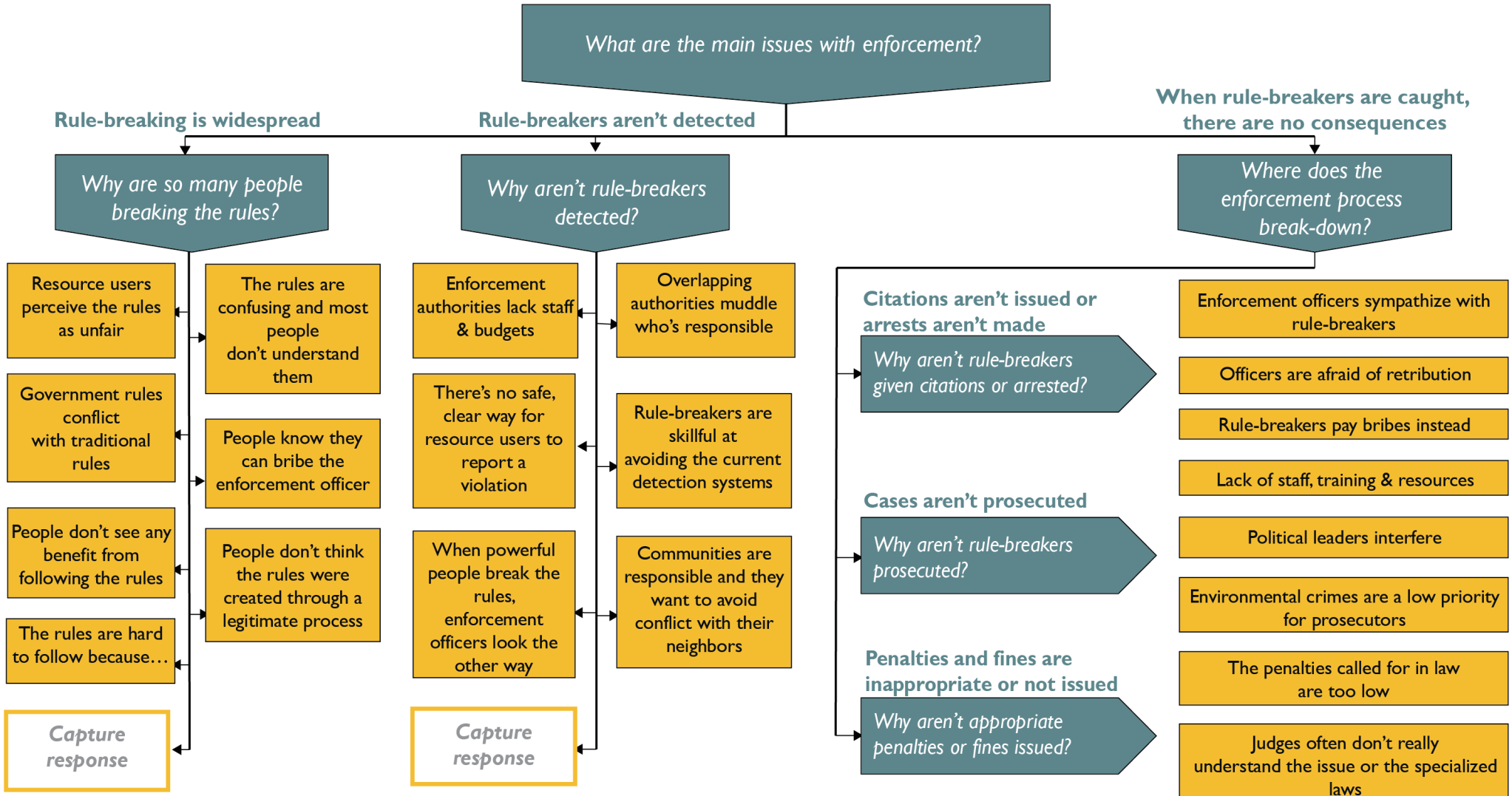
Teams often identify *lack of political will* in situation models to signal that government leaders or authorities are not adopting reforms, implementing existing mandates, or acting to address difficult problems, such as interference in enforcement.[3] Less frequently, teams use this phrase to describe a lack of will by resource users or civil society to take management actions or hold government accountable. Without understanding more about these situations, it is not possible to select an appropriate strategic approach. To unpack this term, teams can clarify what action is not being taken and investigate the reasons for inaction, which may include inherent political risks that government officials would rather avoid.



3 See the blog post "Targeting Corruption in Environmental Crime and Natural Resource Governance: How Can Thinking & Working Politically Help to Unlock Political Will?"

A.7. Weak Enforcement

Weak enforcement covers several distinct processes, including compliance, detection, arrests, prosecution, adjudication, and penalties. These components involve diverse sets of issues and key actors that are useful to differentiate.



ANNEX B. IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC APPROACHES FOR POLITICALLY INFORMED DRIVERS

Sometimes, even when teams have identified a specific political driver, it can be difficult to select a responsive intervention or strategic approach (See Section 3.2). This annex aims to help with that challenge. It describes interventions that have been implemented in response to the kinds of common political problems listed in Resource Box 1.3. The annex is organized by the driver categories presented in Annex A. These interventions vary in their scope. Some are discrete actions that might form part of a larger strategic approach; others are implemented as a strategic approach or even as a program involving multiple strategic approaches. We hope these successful examples are helpful to your brainstorming as you identify strategic approaches for political drivers.

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Driver Category: Weak Governance			
Despite formal decentralization, governments do not manage budgets or relationships to meet the needs of local communities.	Facilitate improved coordination and incentive structures among municipal, regional, and national levels of government to increase capacity for budget planning and improved natural resource management.	In the Philippines, devolved responsibility for coastal resource management to local communities was hampered by weak technical capacity and limited budget support. USAID's Coastal Resource Management Project worked to create a nested system of support for local government units (LGUs) through incentives and policy reforms from the regional and national levels to help them prioritize coastal resource management (CRM) and develop CRM plans for funding by the national government. At the outset of the project, only 10 of 29 LGUs in the project areas allocated an annual CRM budget, but seven years later all 29 LGUs had dedicated budgets. Average annual budgets for coastal resource management in the project areas increased by 174 percent.	Modeling the Way: Lessons in Developing Capacities for Coastal Management in the Philippines
	Overcome low trust between national authorities and marginalized groups by establishing community-based committees to work in coordination with local government on natural resource management and dispute resolution.	USAID supported the Peace Centers for Climate and Social Resilience in Borana, Ethiopia. Working in coordination with local and regional government on resource access issues that were sources of tension between local communities and the national government, these community-based centers addressed vulnerabilities to climate change and managed the sharing of natural resources. Local peace committees implemented the rehabilitation of shared water resources and worked with government to reduce conflict.	Peace Centers for Climate and Social Resilience, Borana, Ethiopia
Driver Category: Weak Institutions			
Government agencies lack budgets and staff.	Expand community engagement and develop a shared sense of ownership of natural resources to establish public-private partnerships that support fee-based management and sustainable use of natural resources.	The Bunaken National Marine Park Co-Management Initiative in Indonesia created a partnership of local communities, the private sector, NGOs, and central and local levels of government to increase stakeholder engagement and accountability in sustainable park management. These collaborative relationships catalyzed the establishment of expanded, diversified, and accountable funding mechanisms and park fees to support effective co-management and community development.	Bunaken National Marine Park Co-Management Initiative

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Driver Category: Weak Institutions (continued)			
Government agencies lack budgets and staff.	Establish a diversified and well-managed trust fund to provide sustainable financing for improved natural resource management and community well-being.	The Blue Abadi Fund works to protect and secure the long-term benefits of marine resources for livelihoods, food security, and financial sustainability in the Bird's Head Seascape of West Papua, Indonesia. The fund is supported by diversified revenue sources, including government allocations, visitor fees, local financing mechanisms, and local fundraising.	Blue Abadi Fund
Key stakeholders don't trust government, making collaborative management difficult.	Create partnerships between key civil society organizations and formal government authorities to increase understanding, coordination, and joint planning and actions to support biodiversity conservation.	Mesa Técnica is a partnership among three civil society organizations working to build capacity for wildlife trafficking enforcement in Guatemala. Low capacity and corruption have hampered enforcement efforts and raised public doubts about government commitment. Personnel from these organizations sit on a committee that works in collaboration with law enforcement authorities to pursue investigations into wildlife trafficking offenses. Trafficking activity is identified through social media and tip-offs from partner institutions, with follow-up actions by relevant government authorities.	Mesa Técnica in Guatemala and A Global Assessment of Community-Based Natural Resources Management: Addressing the Critical Challenges of the Rural Sector
Driver Category: Corruption and Political Interference			
Management or enforcement actions fail when key actors use positions of power for personal gain.	Strengthen both formal and informal support for enforcement by providing professional training and performance-based awards to enforcement personnel and conservation benefits to local communities.	The Conservancy Rhino Ranger Incentive Program seeks to build upon local values and institutions to combat poaching. The program shifts the focus away from criminal acts to strategies that create incentives that increase the value local people attach to saving rhinos. The program provides performance-based rewards that motivate rhino ranger teams to complete quality patrols, with an enhanced training curriculum, state-of-the-art rhino monitoring, and improved field patrol equipment.	Conservancy Rhino Ranger Incentive Program
	Expand the enforcement focus beyond government to engage communities and strengthen dialogue and collaboration aimed at improving professional performance in law enforcement.	In Mozambique's Gorongosa and Niassa National Parks, wildlife criminals have frequently avoided prosecution, jail sentences, and fines and engaged in repeated poaching and other illegal behaviors. In response, USAID's Biodiversity and Tourism (BIOTOUR) project identified actions to improve the full cycle of the criminal justice system, from apprehension through trial, conviction, and sentencing. This included greater stakeholder collaboration between all law enforcement actors and communities, as well as deepening of dialogue and material support among institutional partners to resolve issues involving questions about the performance of enforcement responsibilities.	Conservation and Law Enforcement in Gorongosa and Niassa in Mozambique
Licenses or permits are issued based on political or economic influences.	Support open, well-regulated public systems of service delivery, such as one-stop centers, to reduce the opportunities for opaque actions that facilitate corrupt transactions and undue political and economic influence.	The Governance and Accountability Project II in Bosnia and Herzegovina worked to address a variety of sensitive public service transactions marred by corruption (e.g., favoritism, kickbacks, bribes). The project helped municipalities to institutionalize public input in strategic planning for rule-based service delivery and supported the establishment and operation of more than 30 Citizens' Service Centers. This system, based on clearly mandated procedures and transparent transactions, resulted in increased citizen satisfaction with fairness in the provision of services; complaints involving municipal issues declined by 20-40 percent.	Analysis of USAID Anticorruption Programming Worldwide (2007-2013)

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Driver Category: Inequality in Access to Resources and Decision-making			
Wealthy, powerful stakeholders are capturing the benefits of natural resources at the expense of the majority of less influential stakeholders.	Support organization and collective action by majority resource users to advocate for more equitable, sustainable management arrangements.	Ghana's artisanal fisheries have faced a crisis of sustainability due to overfishing and illegal fishing, in part due to illegal catches by foreign industrial trawlers. USAID's Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) helped to strengthen the voice of fisherfolk through better organized and influential resource user groups, including the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council and women fish traders and processors associations. SFMP's support enabled these groups to influence government decisions that were previously skewed by the interests of elite Ghanaian "owners" of the industrial fleets. Thus empowered, fisherfolk gained commitments from the government to take steps to enforce laws against illegal fishing by the industrial fleet.	Advancing Reforms to Promote Sustainable Management of Ghana's Small Pelagic Fisheries
		Southwestern Uganda is home to the mountain gorillas of the Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks. People displaced by the parks suffered poverty and crop raiding by wildlife. They also engaged in poaching for bushmeat. The International Gorilla Conservation Programme and partners implemented an enterprise approach to conservation to enhance incomes of local people by diversifying livelihoods into tourism and other sustainable enterprises, providing alternatives to illegal resource use and encroachment on the park.	Report: The Nature of Conservation Enterprises: A 20-year Retrospective Evaluation of the Theory of Change Behind this Widely Used Approach to Biodiversity Conservation
	Work with government to strengthen legal reforms and empower local populations to realize their land tenure rights, while advancing biodiversity conservation.	Securing Rights to Land and Natural Resources for Biodiversity and Livelihoods (SECURE) supported the Government of Kenya to strengthen land and resource rights of indigenous coastal communities, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in and around three national reserves on the northeast coast of Kenya. The project provided critical input to three land bills, leading to stronger and more inclusive language in legislation passed by the Kenyan Parliament in 2012. It also completed a participatory mapping process in forest areas that inventoried natural resources for the purpose of identifying community land boundaries, protecting/conserving area resources, and serving as the framework for establishing shared use and access rights.	Securing Rights to Land and Natural Resources for Biodiversity and Livelihoods (SECURE)
	Empower marginalized women by helping them organize to increase their rights and voice in the sustainable management of natural resources.	The TRY Oyster Women's Association in The Gambia brought together approximately 500 poor female oyster harvesters from 15 villages to form cooperatives. The women were given exclusive resource rights based on an oyster and cockle co-management plan. TRY adopted new, sustainable oyster harvesting and processing techniques, planted mangroves, and supported small-scale enterprise development. TRY increased the value of locally harvested oysters, partnered with government agencies to provide vocational training for young women, and positioned female oyster harvesters as important stakeholders in planning and decision-making for the Tanbi Wetlands National Park.	TRY Oyster Women's Association and Advancing Gender in the Environment: Gender in Fisheries -- A Sea of Opportunities

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Driver Category: Inequality in Access to Resources and Decision-making (continued)			
Wealthy, powerful stakeholders are capturing the benefits of natural resources at the expense of the majority of less influential stakeholders.	Educate girls and provide training and employment opportunities linked to biodiversity conservation.	Girls in the buffer zone area of Gorongosa National Park often have few educational opportunities and are frequently compelled to enter into child marriages. With support from the Carr Foundation, Girls Education in Gorongosa National Park has provided schools, health care, and education to support the establishment of the first female rangers and tourism guides in the park. By linking park protection to improved education and livelihoods, girls are able to increase their life choices and develop skills that help to strengthen security and the rule of law in support of conservation.	Empowering Girls, Conserving Nature (video 9:31)
	Facilitate legal reforms to formalize the political and economic rights of women in terms of professional status, political participation, social benefits, and workplace safeguards.	USAID Oceans has worked to support legal reforms to empower women in the fishing industry. In the Philippines, a resolution to promote gender equality (membership on local councils, pay equity, social benefits, health and safety) was adopted by a federation of more than 100 fishing industry companies at the 2019 National Tuna Congress. Amendments to empower women were formally submitted to the Gender Code and Fishing Code of General Santos City. In Indonesia, at the national level, recommendations were submitted to the new Ministerial Decree on Gender Mainstreaming, and in Bitung City, USAID Oceans worked with the local fisheries office for policy changes to enable women to officially register within the Fisher Registration System.	The Oceans and Fisheries Partnership: Human Welfare and Gender Equity
	Support women's rights to access resources through cooperatives that ensure fair market prices and promote resource sustainability and biodiversity conservation.	In coastal Nicaragua, female harvesters of black cockles received very low prices for their products while timber extraction and over-exploitation of mollusks threatened their livelihoods and biodiversity. Though its Central American Regional Program on Management of Aquatic Resources and Economic Alternatives (MAREA), USAID supported the local women's El Rosario Cooperative, ensuring their resource access, adding processing techniques to market their cockles as higher value appetizers, and providing training in marketing and business skills. Cooperative members fenced and planted mangroves, and worked to repopulate cockles.	Central American Regional Program on Management of Aquatic Resources and Economic Alternatives
Natural resources are exported to lucrative foreign markets, creating loss of benefits or scarcity for use by local stakeholders.	Prevent illicit export of wildlife assets by raising awareness in civil society and empowering citizens to report wildlife trafficking.	The Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) supported the EAGLE Network to reduce wildlife trafficking by increasing the capacity of media and civil society to report crime and encourage governments to take efforts to reduce it. EAGLE helps to gather evidence of wildlife trafficking to provide the basis for arrests, monitors prosecution and court proceedings, and supports media exposure to raise public awareness about wildlife crime.	Eagle Enforcement Network

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Driver Category: Inequality in Access to Resources and Decision-making (continued)			
Natural resources are exported to lucrative foreign markets, creating loss of benefits or scarcity for use by local stakeholders.	Organize and support a group of farming households to produce environmentally sustainable crops for local consumption and reduce threats to biodiversity.	In Zambia, large-scale contract farming promoted household planting of tobacco and cotton, increasing the amount of cleared land. Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO) has responded by working with 40,000 farming households to adopt eco-agriculture and organic farming techniques, which reduce environmental impacts. More than 700 wildlife poachers have left their risky, illegal activities for the security of organic farming linked to reliable markets. Farm surplus of grains and legumes is purchased and processed by COMACO and sold to ecotourism visitors to South Luangwa National Park. Households have transitioned from food deficit to food surplus and realized an average net increase of US$300 in household incomes.	Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO)
Driver Category: Lack of Constituencies for Sustainability			
Resource users are eking out subsistence livelihoods and don't support reductions in resource use today to increase future sustainability.	Develop self-governing community institutions and common property tenure to provide incentives for the restoration of ecosystems and the conservation of land and water resources essential for sustainable rural livelihoods.	In India, the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) helped form community institutions to raise awareness and plan joint actions for the improvement and conservation of degraded forests and grasslands. FES combines self-governance, the establishment of common property regimes, socio-ecological learning, and behavior change to restore ecosystems and improve livelihoods for 13 million people across 8 states.	Foundation for Ecological Security
	Develop collaborative arrangements between the private sector and communities for new, sustainable, and commercially viable resource-based activities that reverse land degradation.	USAID's PERFORM project awarded a grant to Kawandama Hills Plantation (KHP), a Malawian company. KHP and Lucheche Cooperative (LC), a local agricultural cooperative, harvested Corymbia citriodora tree leaves, from which KHP distills export-quality citronellal. Through new land use practices, KHP and LC improved 120 hectares of degraded land. KHP produces Malawi's only legal and sustainably sourced charcoal. LC members benefit from these sustainable practices through earnings that pay for agricultural inputs, livestock, houses, and school fees.	PERFORM Project: Kawandama Hills
	Develop science-based solutions for sustainability and build social trust with local communities to gather support for short-term reductions in resource use that contribute to long-term benefits.	In Balayan Bay, Philippines, overfishing resulted in a severe decline of fish stocks that are essential to food security. A temporary closed season was necessary to regenerate fish stocks, but local communities were uncertain about how to minimize economic impacts or whether they could withstand the loss of food and income. USAID's ECOFISH convened a multistakeholder technical working group and engaged local champions to build social trust and develop a cash-for-work program. The resulting closed season contributed to an increase in fish stocks, with minimal livelihood impacts.	ECOFISH: Turning to Science to Build Consensus

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Driver Category: Lack of Political Will			
Government ministers and staff don't want to take the political risks needed to implement the reforms required to achieve sustainability.	Reduce political risk by engaging higher and broader levels of government, for example through the creation of a Presidential Task Force.	In Indonesia in 2015, a Presidential Task Force (Task Force 115) was established to strengthen and focus the country's fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing based on principles of "sovereignty, sustainability, and prosperity." This included a compliance audit of all foreign vessels, closing foreign investment for the capture-fisheries sector, and the dramatic step of the demolition of illegal foreign fishing vessels to create a deterrent effect. A study published in Nature, Ecology & Evolution estimated that Indonesia's policies reduced total fishing effort by 25 percent, with the potential to generate a 14 percent increase in catch and a 12 percent increase in profit.	Indonesia's Fight Against Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Indonesia's Explosive IUU Policy is Working
	Develop coalitions to support the implementation of government actions in criminal prosecutions.	The Space for Giants program combats the illegal wildlife trade in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area in southern Africa. A central tactic is to support law enforcement and judicial authorities in each country. Space for Giants trains police and rangers on evidence collection, monitors trials, and provides guidance booklets to legal authorities on loopholes and case law to strengthen prosecutions against suspected wildlife criminals, ensuring that existing and reformed laws become a more robust deterrent.	Space for Giants
	Reduce political risks by facilitating public-private collaboration to develop profitable commercial activities that also support conservation goals.	The government of the state of Acre, Brazil built political support and reduced perceived political risks by working in collaboration with companies and local communities to promote successful business models that also reduced deforestation. Collaborative initiatives included schemes for zero-deforestation cattle-raising, timber certification, and economic benefits to indigenous people for protecting forests. Acre reduced deforestation by 60 percent in 2010.	Working Towards Zero Deforestation: Lessons from Acre, Brazil
Driver Category: Weak Enforcement			
Enforcement actions are ineffective because rule-breakers are excused without consequences in exchange for political support.	Develop alternative enforcement methods, such as the innovative use of technology, to increase transparency and public trust and strengthen political support to hold rule-breakers accountable.	In the Philippines, an SMS-based anonymous system for reporting illegal fishing practices (700DALOY) is linked to a reliable tracking system that keeps the public informed about follow-up law enforcement actions and encourages the public to make such reports. It promotes transparency, accountability, and public participation, and has increased public trust of the police force. This reporting system has led to more than 3,000 reports and 25 arrests, helping to protect valuable marine resources.	700DALOY SMS Hotline

Politically Informed Driver	Elements of a Strategic Approach	Example	Resources
Opportunity Category: An Emergent Situation Creates New Opportunities to Reform Resource Management Toward Greater Sustainability			
A new, influential government, private sector, or civil society leader is supportive of reforms to achieve sustainability.	Take advantage of the window of opportunity provided by the arrival of a new cabinet minister who has a stated commitment to sustainable use of natural resources.	The new Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) in Indonesia advocated a strengthened commitment to law enforcement efforts to stop illegal fishing. With this new political support, USAID supported MMAF in improving law enforcement officers' capacity to address illegal fishing activities, including a specific initiative to address illegal activities through a partnership with Interpol.	USAID SEA Project: Law Enforcement Component and Safeguarding Our Seas: SEA Project and NOAA Collaboration
Regional or global forums effectively create incentives for new reforms.	Leverage significant international initiatives that support the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources to increase domestic political support for reforms to advance biodiversity conservation.	The Peruvian Amazon is rich in timber and natural resources, but tax revenues from their extraction have often been misused. To address this problem, USAID strengthened the Government of Peru's ability to remain compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. USAID trained over 1,000 community leaders in participatory budgeting, resulting in greater engagement in annual budgeting processes and new channels to monitor government expenditures for the benefit of the public.	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Peru

ANNEX C. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Section 1 Photos: Top: Representatives from the Bagmara community advocate for their interests to be included in the agenda for the upcoming general assembly meeting to decide how to spend the approximately US$300,000 generated by activities overseen by the Bagmara Buffer Zone User Group. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Left:** A bee-eater eating a horsefly. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Bottom Center:** Nora Abrina, President of SAKOAS Peoples Organization, discusses enterprise projects at a community meeting, Aborlan, Barangay Sagpangan, Palawan, Philippines. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Right:** An angelfish in East Timor. Photo Credit: Nick Hobgood.

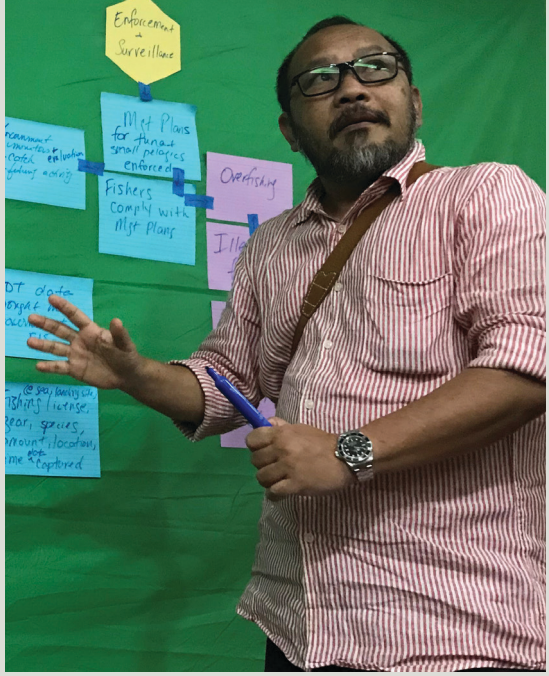
Section 2 Photos: Top: Judy Boshoven (grey top, standing second left) of the USAID Conservation Enterprise Retrospective team, with Dr Bishma P. Subedi (pink shirt), Executive Director for the Asian Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresrouces (ANSAB), discussing the theory of change for sites in Nepal. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Left:** Poetry, speeches, and singing competitions highlighted the importance of conservation in the Cyclops Nature Reserve in Jayapura, Papua, at World Water Day celebrations. Photo Credit: USAID Indonesia LESTARI project. **Bottom Center:** A lion relaxes in a field. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Bottom Right:** Sofia Mendez of USAID Honduras creates a situation model and results chain as part of her learning during the Biodiversity & Development 201 course in Washington, D.C. Photo Credit: Kirby Crider.

Section 3 Photos: Top: A workshop participant reviews and discusses their activity results chain during a pause and reflect meeting in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo Credit: Farid Maruf. **Bottom Left:** Leopard. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Bottom Center:** At the edge of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, Sunday Phenehasi examines a tree in a farmer's field that was stripped of bark and damaged by gorillas. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Right:** A saddle-billed stork. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg.

Section 4 Photos: Top: Ana Villegas, USAID LAC Bureau, talks to participants about situation models and results chains as part the Biodiversity & Development 201 course in Washington, D.C. Photo Credit: Kirby Crider. **Bottom Left:** A group of flamingos. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Bottom Center:** Beda Mwebesa, former International Gorilla Conservation Program (IGCP) Incentives Coordinator, discusses the Change Map of the IGCP Enterprise Approach with other IGCP staff in Kabale, Uganda. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Right:** In Nicaragua, an endangered sea turtle makes its way across the beach at the La Flor Wildlife Refuge. Photo Credit: Jerry Bauer, US Forest Service.

Annex Cover Photos: Top: Discussing the theory of change for sites in Nepal related to Asian Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Left:** A vervet monkey with her baby. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Bottom Center:** Heidi Schuttenberg facilitates a group through a co-creation process by reviewing their situation model at a workshop in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Photo Credit: Lisa Dabek. **Bottom Right:** A wildebeest. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg.

Back Cover Photos: Top Left: Ecotourism at the Subterranean River, a coastal cave with kilometers of navigable water that is recognized as one of the seven natural wonders of the world, provides an economic alternative to traditional forest livelihoods in Sabong Beach, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Top Center:** Farid Maruf, the team leader for seafood traceability under USAID Oceans, discusses an activity results chain at a Pause and Reflect workshop in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo Credit: Melinda Donnelly. **Top Right:** A fish-eating hawk sits on a branch. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Middle:** Salvatrice Musabyeyezu, International Gorilla Conservation Program (IGCP) Tourism Specialist, talks with the Batwa about their tourism program. Photo Credit: Jason Houston. **Bottom Left:** The tail of a lioness. Photo Credit: Heidi Schuttenberg. **Bottom Center:** A draft theory of change in progress during a workshop focus on a USAID project in Gorongoza National Park. Photo Credit: Measuring Impact II Project. **Bottom Right:** A leopard plays with her young cub. Photo credit: Heidi Schuttenberg.



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