



USAID
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Learning Agenda

COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

CROSS-MISSION LEARNING AGENDA



MAY 2023

CONTRACT INFORMATION

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ACRONYMS

CWC	Combating Wildlife Crime
CWT	Combating Wildlife Trafficking
DDI	Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation
DDI/Biodiversity	Biodiversity Division of DDI's Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure
END	Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act
MI2	Measuring Impact II
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

I. WHAT IS A LEARNING AGENDA?

Achieving development results requires an intentional and collaborative strategy for continuous learning through all stages of the Program Cycle. As a strategy for continuous learning, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI) Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure implements a Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program to increase the effectiveness of commonly-applied strategic approaches in USAID biodiversity programs. This Learning Program aims to improve understanding of the conditions under which specific strategic approaches are successful in achieving desired outcomes, and why.

The Learning Program takes a community of practice approach to knowledge creation, sharing, and synthesis. Collaborative Learning Groups develop and pursue shared learning agendas with support from the Measuring Impact (2012-2018) and Measuring Impact II (MI2) activities. A learning agenda defines the specific learning questions a Learning Group collaborates to answer, the learning activities involved, and the intended learning products and outcomes.

The Learning Program frames each learning agenda around the specific theory of change underlying a common strategic approach. A theory of change, or development hypothesis, articulates how a team believes a set of actions or strategic approach will lead to the desired outcomes. It lays out the sequence of expected intermediate results and assumptions made in implementing a strategic approach, as well as important enabling conditions and limiting factors. The Learning Program uses results chain diagrams as a tool to illustrate theories of change, making explicit the expected results and any underlying assumptions, and identifying learning questions based on those assumptions. See Appendix A for further explanation of the use of theories of change and results chains in developing learning questions.

II. WHY A LEARNING AGENDA FOR COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING?

USAID has a long history of support for biodiversity conservation, including programs that help park authorities and rural communities reduce poaching and trafficking of wildlife. Such programs are usually part of broader investments in protected area management or community-based natural resource management. The definition of wildlife trafficking is the illegal hunting, transport, and commerce of wildlife and wildlife products. USAID has prioritized wildlife trafficking for action due to the volume and scope of the threat, guided by a [2014 Executive Order on Combating Wildlife Trafficking](#) (and associated National Strategy and Interagency Task Force), and the [2016 Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt \(END\) Wildlife Trafficking Act](#) and its [2022 reauthorization](#). Cross-Mission collaboration enables USAID staff and implementing partners to capitalize on previous experiences, share the latest information, and spread innovative ideas across Missions on this critical issue.

USAID highlights ten common strategic approaches used to combat wildlife crime in its [Measuring Efforts to Combat Wildlife Crime](#) toolkit. The Combating Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) Learning Group elected to focus learning efforts on theories of change for strategic approaches #1, #2, and #7 from the toolkit,¹ defined as:

¹ This document will continue to use #1, #2, and #7 for consistency with the [Measuring Efforts to Combat Wildlife Crime toolkit](#).

Strategic Approach #1. Reduce Consumer Demand through Behavior Change Methodologies: The use of social marketing and other methodologies to raise awareness and change the behaviors of target audiences, especially consumer choices and reporting of illegal products and markets.

Strategic Approach #2. Build Capacity for Effective Enforcement and Prosecution: The provision of financial or technical assistance to improve the capacity of governments and agencies to enforce wildlife laws and prosecute wildlife criminals.

Strategic Approach #7. Increase Community Conservation Action and Support to Combat Poaching and Trafficking: Efforts to build community support and action to decrease poaching and illegal activity.

USAID is currently applying these strategic approaches in a number of countries. The Learning Program focuses on testing key assumptions and building the evidence base regarding the effectiveness of these approaches across USAID Mission programming.

III. FRAMEWORK FOR THE LEARNING AGENDA: THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The CWT Learning Group developed detailed results chain diagrams for each of the three strategic approaches (see Appendix B), drawing from a review of USAID documents, peer-reviewed literature, gray literature, and input from USAID staff. Because the three strategic approaches are frequently carried out in parallel to achieve a common set of results, the Learning Group also developed a single overarching results chain. In 2022, the Learning Group adapted the overarching results chain to an icon-based theory of change (see Figure 1).²

The overarching results chain begins with the three strategic approaches, which lead to a number of intermediate results.

Strategic Approach #1. Reduce Consumer Demand through Behavior Change Methodologies is expected to result in target audiences responding to messages and exhibiting the desired behavior change. As more people adopt the behavior change, this changes social norms within the broader population. These results should lead to reduced purchases of the target illegal wildlife products.

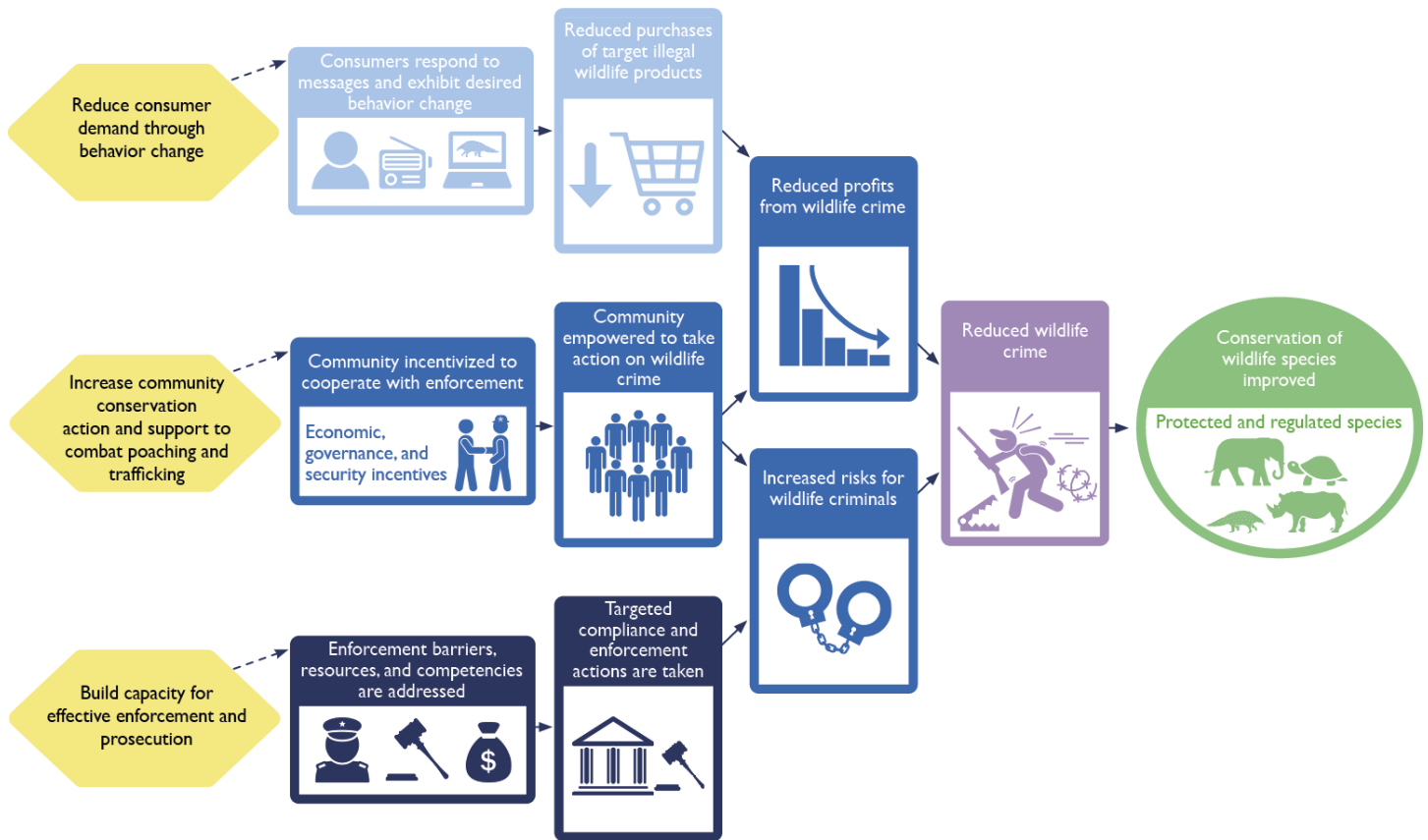
Strategic Approach #2. Build Capacity for Effective Enforcement and Prosecution is expected to lead target audiences (rangers, customs officials, police, judges, etc.) to acquire and maintain the needed resources and competencies. Additionally, it should remove barriers to key enforcement actions. Once competencies are in place and barriers removed, target compliance and enforcement actions are expected to be taken. Enforcement actions should both increase the risks for wildlife criminals and contribute to reducing purchases of target illegal wildlife products by consumers.

Strategic Approach #7. Increase Community Conservation Action and Support to Combat Poaching and Trafficking is expected to establish community incentive structures (related to economics, governance, security, or other factors) that will, in combination with the removal of enforcement barriers, lead communities and enforcement agencies to establish effective cooperation.

² Appendix C presents the icon-based theory of change in Spanish.

All of these results should reduce the profits of, and increase risks for, wildlife criminals, leading to a reduction in overall levels of wildlife crime, and therefore, better prospects for protected and regulated species.

Figure 1: Icon-based Theory of Change for CWT. This shows how the three focal strategic approaches (yellow hexagons) will lead to key intermediate results (blue boxes) that together contribute to reduced wildlife crime and improvements in protected and regulated species. See Appendix C for the icon-based theory of change in Spanish.



Assessing the soundness of assumptions and effectiveness of the strategic approaches in this theory of change will help inform what works, what does not, and which conditions are most relevant to success or failure. The Learning Group will explore specific questions regarding the assumptions in the theory of change (see Section IV). An overarching guiding question for each strategic approach will quickly orient group members to the Learning Agenda:

- Strategic Approach #1: What does effective demand reduction look like?
- Strategic Approach #2: What are the characteristics of effective law enforcement capacity-building?
- Strategic Approach #7: What is best practice for community management of wildlife?

IV. IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING LEARNING QUESTIONS

Initially, the Learning Group facilitators identified and prioritized a set of learning questions by conducting a systematic literature review. This review assessed available information and evidence regarding the effectiveness of the CWT strategic approach focused on building capacity for enforcement.³ Once facilitators established an understanding of the existing evidence base, they interviewed staff from five Missions regarding the relevance of these questions to their biodiversity programming. The Biodiversity Division of DDI's Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure (DDI/Biodiversity) presented the draft theory of change and learning questions at the Environmental Officers Conference in Washington, D.C., in February 2016, to a session with more than 25 attendees from USAID Missions, Regional Bureaus, and Washington offices. Participants confirmed their interest in participating in the Learning Group and provided valuable feedback on the theory of change and learning questions.

After this initial investigation, potential members expressed interest in expanding the scope of the Learning Group beyond capacity-building for enforcement to include two additional strategic approaches. Learning Group facilitators conducted a rapid synthesis of available documents and information for the two additional approaches.

Both the systematic literature review (Strategic Approach #2) and the rapid syntheses (Strategic Approaches #1 and #7) found a similar pattern in evidence related to each theory of change. Overall, the majority of evidence corresponded to the results on the left side of the generalized results chain (Figure 1), and evidence became more scarce moving toward the shared results on the right side. For example, the facilitators found a lot of information about past CWT activities (e.g., training events, social marketing campaigns) and the challenges that USAID staff and implementing partners encountered, but much less evidence about the measurable results of these activities (e.g., whether trainees applied new skills after the event, whether community members changed their behavior as a result of the social marketing campaign).

Across the three approaches, there was a lack of attention to monitoring and data systems, compounded by the difficulty of measuring both behavior change and illegal activity. There was an even larger gap in longitudinal data sets, so the longer-term impacts of CWT efforts were almost completely unknown. Additionally, there was sparse evidence to support the relationships among the shared results (i.e., reducing profit, increasing risk, decreasing crime, and increasing species protection). Without this information, it is difficult to determine the appropriate balance of CWT strategic approaches for a given context. To address the major gaps from these reviews, DDI/Biodiversity identified learning questions for each strategic approach and circulated them with key CWT experts for review and input.

In 2022, the CWT Learning Group published *What Have We Learned*,⁴ a graphic that outlines lessons learned and resources for each learning question. After five years of intentional learning activities, the facilitators recognized the need to update the Learning Agenda and surveyed members to assess changes in their knowledge gaps and new priorities. To encourage broad participation, they conducted two cycles of surveys. The first survey asked respondents to answer open-ended questions about their current knowledge gaps and proposed learning activities. This survey uncovered five key themes: the role of gender and youth in CWT activities, coordination with other agencies, the relationship between CWT and other natural resource crimes, strategies to reduce corruption, and building social and political constituencies to advocate for wildlife. The second survey asked respondents to prioritize the new themes. The 22 respondents prioritized three themes: the relationship between CWT and other natural resource crimes, the role of gender and youth in CWT activities, and building social and political constituencies to advocate for wildlife.

³ This [literature review](#) is available on the CWT Collaborative Learning Group page as an independent reference.

⁴ This [brief](#) is available on the CWT Collaborative Learning Group page.

V. THE LEARNING AGENDA

Table I describes the key questions the CWT Learning Group identified and the proposed approach to engaging interested Missions and members of other Learning Groups in addressing these questions.

Table I: Learning Questions, Envisioned Activities, and Proposed Products. The text in blue indicates new additions to the Learning Agenda in 2023.

CROSS-MISSION LEARNING AGENDA FOR COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING			
Learning Questions	Envisioned Learning Activities	Proposed Learning Products	Use/Value of Learning Products
STRATEGIC APPROACH #1: Reduce Consumer Demand through Behavior Change Methodologies			
<p>Guiding question: What does effective demand reduction look like?</p> <p>What is the effect of reducing the supply of illegal wildlife products as a consumer demand reduction strategy?</p> <p>What are the most appropriate metrics and methodologies for monitoring demand reduction activities, especially the link between attitudes and behavior change?</p> <p>Are certain messaging strategies more effective than others (e.g., positive messaging, messaging with enforcement information, etc.)?</p>	<p>Group members share their experiences and learn about the evidence base and best practices for demand reduction approaches.</p> <p>To support this activity, the Learning Group facilitators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct support to missions to define Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan indicators and generate evidence • Collect information on what is working and what is not in monitoring demand reduction activities • Examine and disseminate new tools on demand reduction • <i>Coordinate with the Wild Meat Learning Group on wild meat demand reduction</i> • <i>Spotlight findings from the USAID Reducing Demand for Wildlife Activity including through a meta-analysis of USAID Wildlife Asia campaigns</i> 	<p>Examples or models of behavior change indicators (case studies, briefs, webinars with experts)</p> <p>Compilation of demand reduction “best practice” materials</p> <p>Webinars or in-person presentations of new information and evidence</p> <p>Discussions via the CWT Learning Group Google Group</p> <p><i>Development of a measuring demand reduction brief</i></p> <p><i>Presentation of a meta-analysis of reducing demand for wildlife</i></p>	<p>The learning activities and products will help USAID:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement more effective demand reduction strategic approaches • Identify appropriate indicators to track project progress and effectiveness

CROSS-MISSION LEARNING AGENDA FOR COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Learning Questions	Envisioned Learning Activities	Proposed Learning Products	Use/Value of Learning Products
STRATEGIC APPROACH 2: Build Capacity for Effective Enforcement and Prosecution			
<p>Guiding question: What are the characteristics of effective law enforcement capacity-building?</p> <p>How do institutional arrangements, especially dedicated units and embedded programs, impact the uptake of skills and knowledge?</p> <p>What are good examples of systems, particularly judicial systems, that have made improvements in CWT enforcement?</p> <p>What factors are necessary for effective cooperation among national, sub-national, and local authorities, especially for Wildlife Enforcement Networks?</p> <p>What are some successful examples of partnerships used to deliver competency-building activities, and what made them work?</p> <p>For specific audiences: Which competency-building methods and content work best, especially for maintaining skills and retaining staff?</p> <p>What are effective strategies to reduce corruption?</p> <p>What are effective ways to coordinate with other agencies?</p>	<p>Group members share their experience and learn about the evidence base and best practices for capacity-building for CWT</p> <p>To support this activity, the learning group facilitators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize a case study collection (open to interagency and USAID) and a learning event for socialization Undertake a comparison of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing, timber, and CWT interagency activities (common threats, drivers, barriers, and approaches) to harvest potential new approaches and methodologies 	<p>Case study briefs from entries (from case study collection) Summary brief on best practices in law enforcement capacity-building, including measuring outcomes (derived from case studies and learning events)</p> <p>Diagnostic tool to identify barriers and approaches to implementing desired actions</p> <p>Collection of training resources (who is doing what, where, and when) Webinars or in-person presentations of new information and evidence to the learning group and others</p> <p>Discussions via the CWT Learning Group Google Group</p> <p>Targeting Natural Resource Corruption webinar</p> <p>Development of a Transboundary Cooperation brief</p>	<p>The learning activities and products will help USAID:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply tools and evidence to design and implement more effective capacity-building approaches Identify potential barriers and challenges to the sustainability of capacity building efforts Measure progress of and effectiveness of different approaches
STRATEGIC APPROACH 7: Increase Community Conservation Action and Support to Combat Poaching and Trafficking			
<p>Guiding question: What is best practice for community engagement on wildlife crime?</p>	<p>Group members share experiences and learn about the evidence base for increasing community conservation action and support to combat poaching and trafficking</p>	<p>Webinars or in-person presentations of new information and evidence to the Learning Group and others</p>	<p>The learning activities and products will help USAID:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the enabling conditions that may be important for community management of wildlife

CROSS-MISSION LEARNING AGENDA FOR COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

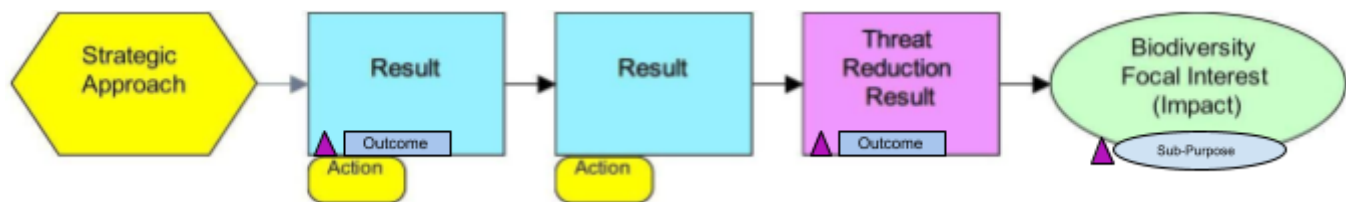
Learning Questions	Envisioned Learning Activities	Proposed Learning Products	Use/Value of Learning Products
When are certain community incentive structures (economic, governance, security, others) more important relative to others?	<p>To support this activity, the learning group facilitators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate Wilkie, et al. (Rewards and Risks Associated with Community Engagement in Anti-Poaching and Anti-Trafficking) Synthesize available information on the conditions under which community members are more likely to work with enforcement agencies (What is the tipping point? What are the economics underlying the tipping point?) Support forums that increase dialogue Compare the CWT Learning Agenda with other environmental programs that are widely considered to effectively include youth participation (e.g., the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands) 	<p>Discussions via the CWT Learning Group Google Group</p> <p>Produce a CWT and Gender summary</p> <p>Host a webinar with Joni Seager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design effective approaches to enable community and government collaboration in combating wildlife trafficking
What are successful examples of community-government collaboration that have resulted in increased support for combating wildlife trafficking?			
What is the best way to involve communities in wildlife conservation?			
How can CWT programming integrate gender and youth considerations?			
GENERAL QUESTIONS			
How does CWT relate to other natural resource crimes?	<p>Group members share experiences and learn about linkages between wildlife and other natural resource crimes</p> <p>To support this activity, Learning Group facilitators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate case studies, guidance documents, and other relevant resources 	<p>Produce a summary of selected resources</p> <p>Host a webinar on the connections between the illegal wildlife trade and illegal logging, or a similar topic</p> <p>Host a virtual learning event for activities that focus on different natural resource crimes</p>	<p>The learning activities and products will help USAID:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill a significant gap in understanding of linkages to inform effective programming






APPENDIX A: USING A THEORY OF CHANGE AS A FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-MISSION LEARNING

The Learning Program frames each learning agenda around the specific theory of change underlying a common strategic approach. A theory of change or development hypothesis articulates how and why a team believes a purpose or result is expected to be achieved. It is a description of the logical causal relationships among a strategic approach and multiple levels of conditions or preliminary results needed to achieve a long-term result. It can be presented in text or diagrammatic form, or both. The results chain can represent theories of change through a box and arrow logic model.

The structure of results chains represent a series of causal statements that link short-, medium-, and long-term results in an “if...then” fashion, leading ultimately to the expected impacts on the focal and related interests (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Example Results Chain. The arrows in the results chain represent key assumptions that can be the basis for defining learning questions.



	Strategic Approach: A set of actions undertaken with a common focus that work together to achieve a series of results in a results chain.
	Result: Preliminary or short-term results needed to achieve a threat reduction result and ultimately the biodiversity focal interest impact (e.g., rangers have improved knowledge, more effective law enforcement). There can be many results in a development hypothesis; key results get outcome statements.
	Threat-Reduction Result: The desired reduction in a specific threat that a program seeks to achieve (e.g., decrease in illegal hunting).
	Biodiversity Focal Interest (Impact): Definition of the broad parameters or rough boundaries (geographic or thematic) for where or on what a program will focus (e.g., elephants, forests).
	Assumption: Depicts that one result is assumed to lead the other. Assumptions can be the basis of Learning Questions that monitoring, evaluation, or learning approaches can address.

Results chains help teams do the following:

- Brainstorm and prioritize strategic approaches with a focus on results, not actions
- Articulate the theory of change
- Document assumptions
- Define the expected results at multiple levels (purpose, sub-purpose, etc.)
- Define realistic timeframes
- Provide a framework for collaborating, learning, and adapting
- Identify the conditions under which strategic approaches work, do not work, and why

The arrows in the results chain represent assumptions regarding the effectiveness of the strategic approach. Measuring the extent to which (and under what conditions) one outcome leads to another can test these assumptions. A variety of monitoring, evaluation, and learning approaches can address learning questions.

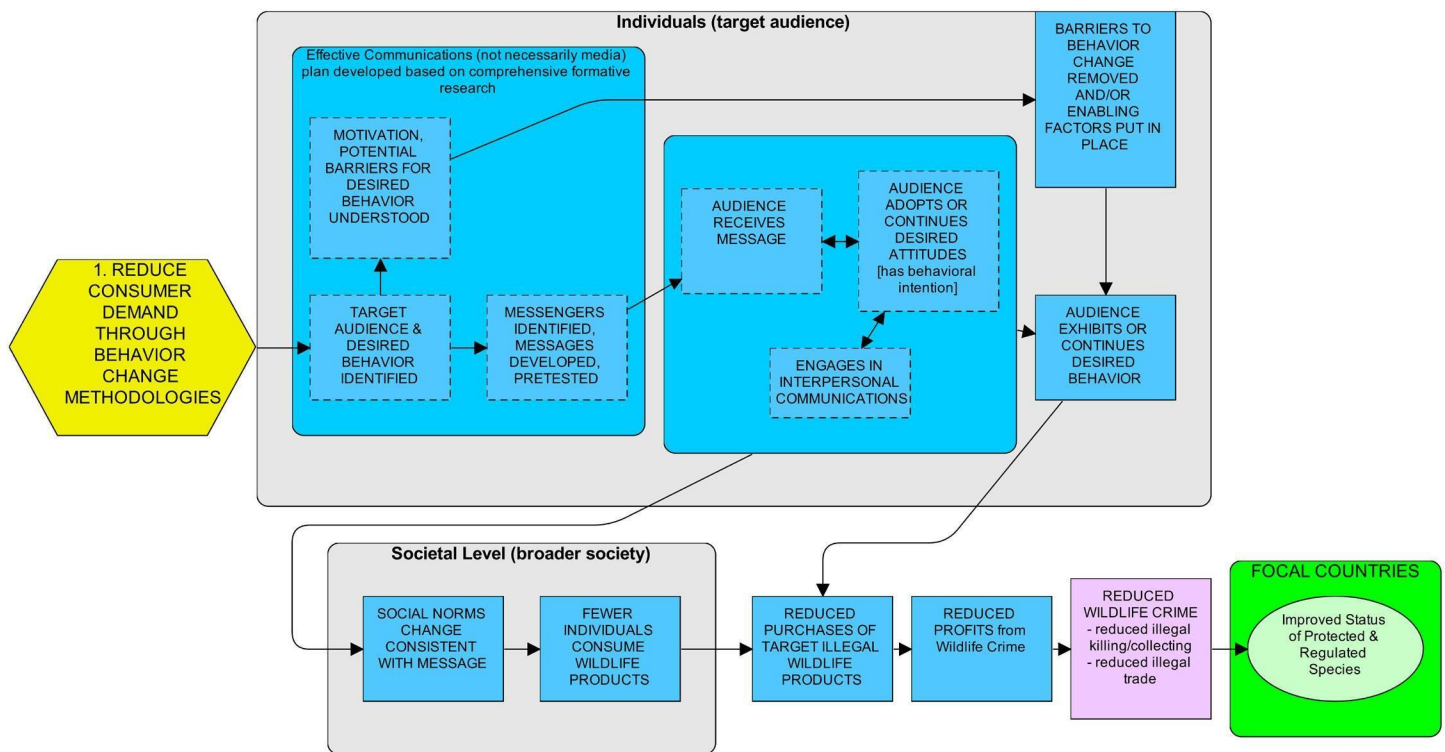
APPENDIX B: DETAILED RESULTS CHAIN DIAGRAMS FOR STRATEGIC APPROACHES

The following results chain diagrams and associated descriptions were developed for [Measuring Efforts to Combat Wildlife Crime: A Toolkit for Improving Action and Accountability](#). Further feedback from DDI/Biodiversity resulted in subsequent revisions.

Strategic Approach #1. Reduce Consumer Demand through Behavior Change Methodologies

This theory of change starts with the identification of target audiences (i.e., specified demographic within a population in a targeted geography) and the behaviors that the campaign aims to change. Next, the Learning Group researches the motivation for the current (undesirable) behavior and potential barriers to changing the desired behavior to understand the target audience. The group then identifies the messengers and develops and pretests messages. Then the target audience receives the messages and knowledge, and barriers to behavior change are removed or enabling factors for behavior change are put in place. At this point, the target audience should begin to adopt the desired attitudes and talk with other people about it (interpersonal communications), which will help with uptake of the message and adoption of desired attitudes by members of the target audience. Removing barriers, changing attitudes, and frequently engaging in interpersonal communication should result in the target audience adopting or continuing the desired behavior, leading to fewer purchases and therefore reduced profits from wildlife crime. This will lead to reduced occurrences of wildlife crime and improvements in status of protected and regulated species.

Figure 3: Results Chain for Strategic Approach #1. Reduce Consumer Demand through Behavior Change Methodologies



Additionally, as the target audience adopts the desired attitudes and communicates with others about them, there should be a change in the larger population's social norms, including improved perception of the value of wildlife and awareness of, and concern for, the consequences of wildlife crime. These changes in perception, awareness, and

concern in the general population should result in fewer individuals and actors engaging in the undesired behavior and further reductions in purchases of wildlife products.

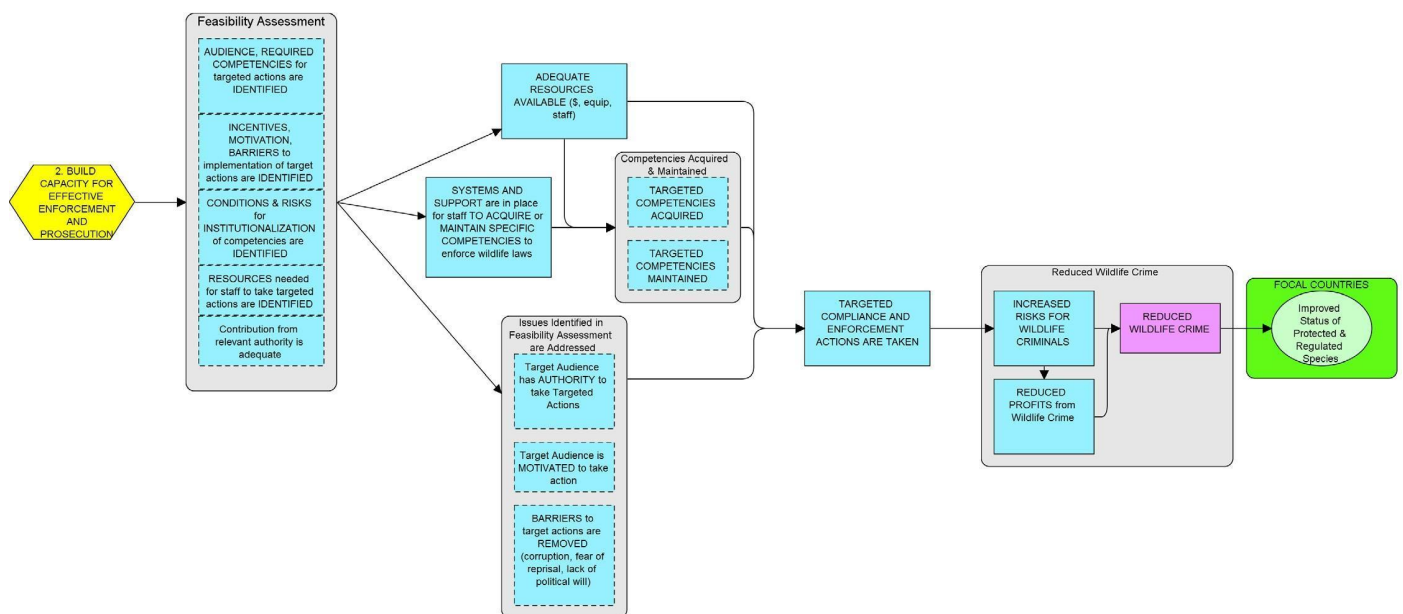
Strategic Approach #2. Build Capacity for Effective Enforcement and Prosecution⁵

This theory of change begins with a feasibility assessment that identifies:

- The target audiences and required competencies for the targeted compliance and enforcement actions
- The incentives, motivations, and barriers to implementation of target actions
- The conditions and risks for institutionalization of competencies
- The resources and contributions from relevant authorities needed for staff to take targeted actions

Following the needs assessment, the Learning Group takes actions to address the identified gaps and issues. These actions should result in the provision of adequate resources (staff, equipment, financial support) to undertake targeted actions. These actions should also result in the provision of adequate institutional support for staff and create the conditions for institutionalization of competencies.

Figure 4: Results Chain for Strategic Approach #2. Build Capacity for Effective Enforcement and Prosecution



⁵ This results chain is a streamlined version from the one that appears in [Measuring Efforts to Combat Wildlife Crime: A Toolkit for Improving Action and Accountability](#). This version reflects adaptations in response to Mission feedback to clarify connections and reduce perceived redundancy.

It is expected that the targeted audiences acquire and maintain the desired competencies through training. When combined with adequate resources and the fulfillment of the enabling conditions, it is expected that this will lead the targeted audiences to carry out the desired compliance and enforcement actions. This should improve the enforcement and prosecution of existing laws and agreements, which should increase the risks to wildlife criminals. Reducing their profits and overall levels of wildlife crime should ultimately lead to improvements in status of protected and regulated species.

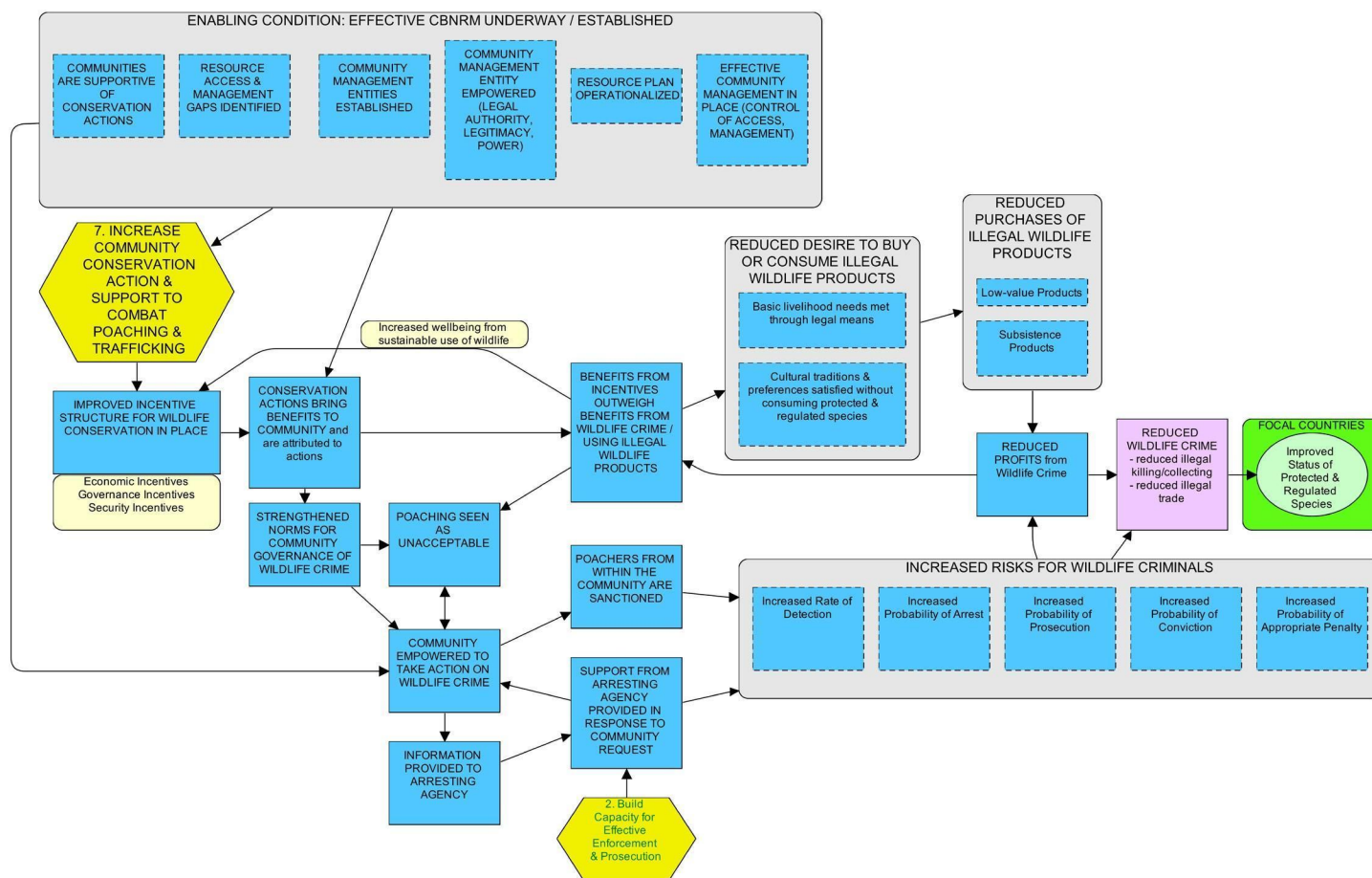
Achieving the results in the theory of change may require strategic approaches to support national and sub-national policy and legislative reforms. These reforms would enable adequate institutional support for staff and the creation of the conditions for institutionalization of competencies, and improve enforcement and prosecution of existing laws and agreements.

Strategic Approach #7. Increase Community Conservation Action and Support to Combat Poaching and Trafficking

This theory of change assumes that effective community-based natural resource management is already underway or established. It also assumes that management systems are in place, including local control of access to resources. This strategic approach then aims to improve incentive structures for wildlife conservation. Incentives could be related to governance, security, or personal income.

Incentives should lead to community benefits that are attributed to conservation actions. When these benefits outweigh those derived from wildlife crime or the use of wildlife products, then community members will reduce their desire to purchase or consume illegal wildlife products. This should result in reduced purchases (demand) for those products. Reduced purchases should lead to reduced profits from wildlife crime and reduced levels of wildlife crime, which should result in improvements to the status of protected and regulated species.

Figure 5: Results Chain for Strategic Approach #7. Increase Community Conservation Action and Support to Combat Poaching and Trafficking



In addition, if community members receive benefits that are attributed to conservation actions, this should strengthen norms for community governance, including efforts to fight wildlife crime. This will lead to the perception of poaching as unacceptable. When combined with effective community-based natural resource management, this should lead to the empowerment of communities to take action on wildlife crime. When communities are empowered, they will sanction poachers from within their community, resulting in increased risks for poachers. Community empowerment should also lead the community to provide information to arresting agencies about poachers from outside the community. If the community provides information to arresting agencies, the arresting agencies should respond adequately, leading to increased risks for poachers from outside the community and reduced profits from participation in wildlife crime. By reducing wildlife crime, the status of protected and regulated species should improve.


Furthermore, adequate support from arresting agencies (when the community provides information about outside poachers) should reinforce and enhance community empowerment to provide further information about poaching. Conversely, a lack of adequate support from arresting agencies in response to information from the community will undermine community empowerment. This will result in less information provided to arresting agencies, a diminished perception within the community of poaching as an unacceptable activity, and reduced sanctions to poachers within the community. It may be necessary to build the capacity of law enforcement to enable them to provide adequate support.

APPENDIX C: ICON-BASED THEORY OF CHANGE IN SPANISH

Identical to the English Icon-Based Theory of Change, this graphic shows how the three focal strategic approaches (yellow hexagons) will lead to key intermediate results (blue boxes) that together contribute to reduced wildlife crime and improvements in protected and regulated species.

Figure 6. Icon-based Theory of Change for CWT in Spanish



Two paw prints are visible in the sand. The top print is smaller and has five distinct pads. The bottom print is larger and has a large, rounded pad at the front with four smaller pads behind it. The sand is light brown and has some vertical ridges on the left side.

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