



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COMBATING CONSERVATION CRIME LEARNING AGENDA

Latin America and the Caribbean Environment

November 2020

Photo by Eric Stoner
Forest Canopy in Para state Brazil

Purpose and Context

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is a key partner in the U.S. Government's interagency Task Force on Combating Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) and on conservation crime more broadly. The 2013 CWT Executive Order and the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016 established combating wildlife trafficking as a U.S. government priority. With the 2017 Executive Order on Transnational Organized Crime, the Administration added combating conservation crimes to the interagency CWT effort, highlighting the links between transnational organized crime and illegal logging, illegal extraction and trade of gold, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The LAC Environment Combating Conservation Crime (CCC) Learning Program and Agenda address the need to understand the drivers, actors, and patterns of conservation crimes particular to the LAC region, and the conditions under which prioritized CCC strategic approaches best function to achieve environment outcomes. This learning agenda is designed to gather and share evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to deter conservation crimes to **inform USAID programming for biodiversity conservation and sustainable landscapes**. It defines **learning questions** and then develops types of **learning activities** to address them.

This Learning Agenda complements the USAID Office of Forestry and Biodiversity's CWT Learning Program. While FAB's CWT Learning Program contributes to global learning, it has been primarily informed by CWT efforts in Africa and Asia, the regions with the deepest history of attention to this issue. The particular dynamics of conservation crime in Latin America necessitate focused learning. For example, understanding and addressing threats to the safety of Indigenous and other local communities, who are often the frontline defenders against conservation crimes, is especially urgent in the LAC region.

The Learning Agenda will also link to the Targeting Natural Resource Corruption Learning Series and USAID's [Self-Reliance](#) and [Democracy, Human Rights and Governance](#) Learning Agendas and [Environment and Natural Resource Management Framework](#).

Purpose and
Content

Framework

Community
Reporting

Law
Enforcement

Corruption

Learning Questions



Framework: Strategic Approaches and Their Theory of Change

Mission engagement and the review of activity documents identified five strategic approaches (yellow hexagons in Figure 1) as the most widely relevant approaches to combating conservation crime in LAC Environment programming. Surveys and interviews with LAC Environment Officers further indicated strengthening reporting by indigenous/local communities and strengthening law enforcement as the two strategic approaches with the most pressing knowledge gaps. Interviews also surfaced a third priority area for learning: corruption--both as a facilitator of conservation crime and as a disruptor of these two priority strategic approaches.

The Learning Agenda is framed by a high-level theory of change that depicts the assumptions regarding how strategic approaches (yellow hexagons) contribute to intermediate results (blue boxes) and achieve ultimate outcomes (green oval). It provides a framework to help teams plan for, learn about, and adapt their strategies to enhance environment programs and to facilitate shared learning across different mission contexts. This Learning Agenda focuses on two priority strategic approaches (yellow hexagons with bolded text) and on corruption as a cross-cutting issue. The learning questions (Table 1) center on testing the hypothesized conditions under which both priority strategic approaches are effective at deterring conservation crime and the role of corruption in facilitating conservation crime.

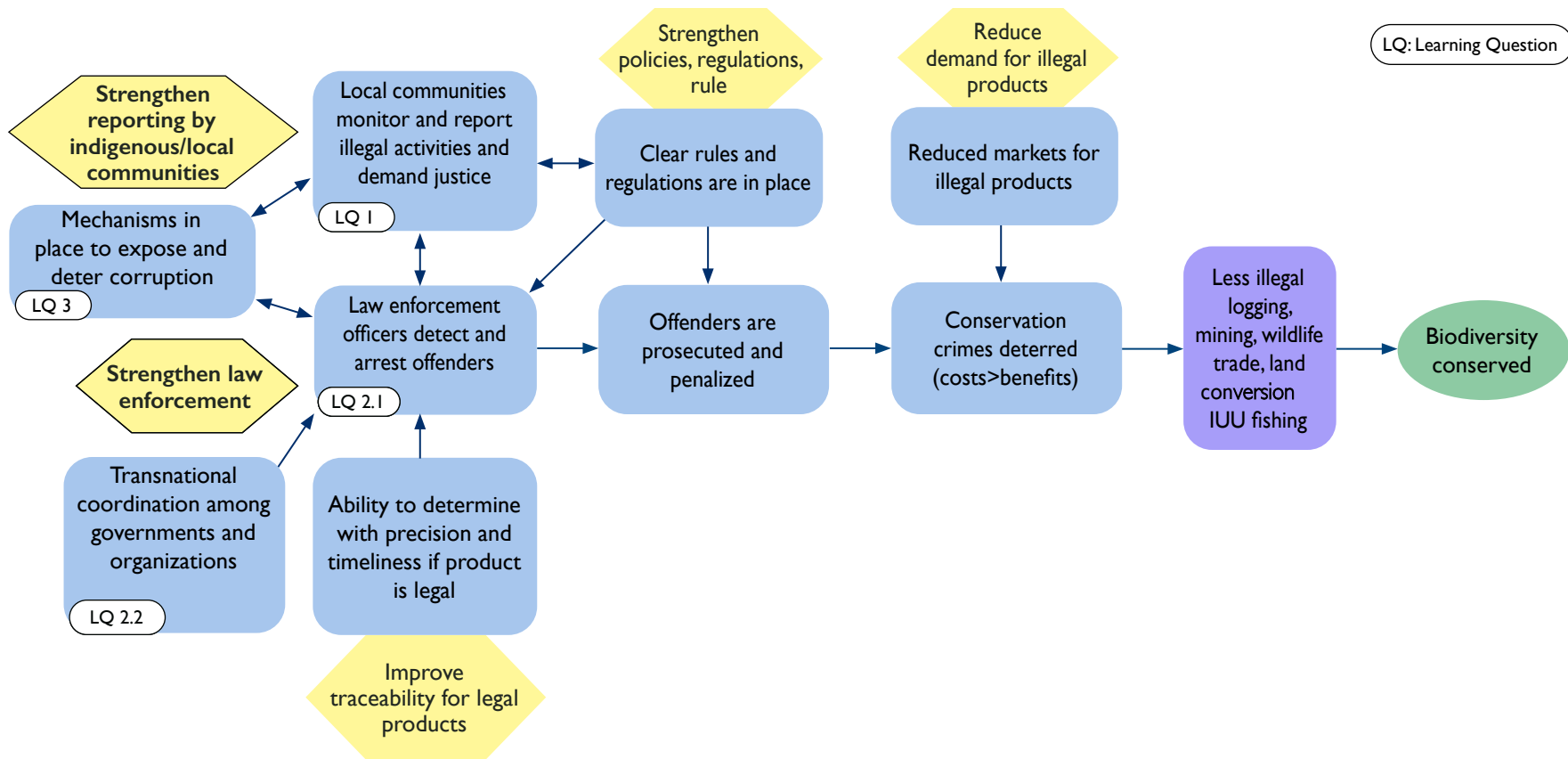


Figure 1. High-level theory of change for Combating Conservation Crime



CCC Learning Questions

Strategic Approach I: Strengthen Indigenous/Local Community Reporting	
Learning Questions	Conditions Missions hypothesize influence effective deterrence of conservation crime
LQ. 1: Under what conditions is community reporting effective at deterring conservation crime?	<i>Community members have incentives to monitor and report crimes, including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of indigenous/local communities, including protection from retaliation • Security of territorial claim/title • Alternative livelihoods to illegal practices/cooperation • Weak relationship with illegal actors • Trust that reporting will result in effective government action
	<i>Community members have the ability to monitor and report crimes, including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial resources • Access to and capacity to use tools/technology: drones, GPS, mobile phones, software • Socially cohesive community organization • Clear procedures for reporting to government authorities • Government recognition that communities are partners in CCC



Photo by Eric Stoner
 Kayapo Fire Warriors in Brazil. Indigenous communities are often the first responders to fires set to illegally expand livestock and agricultural production in the Amazon.

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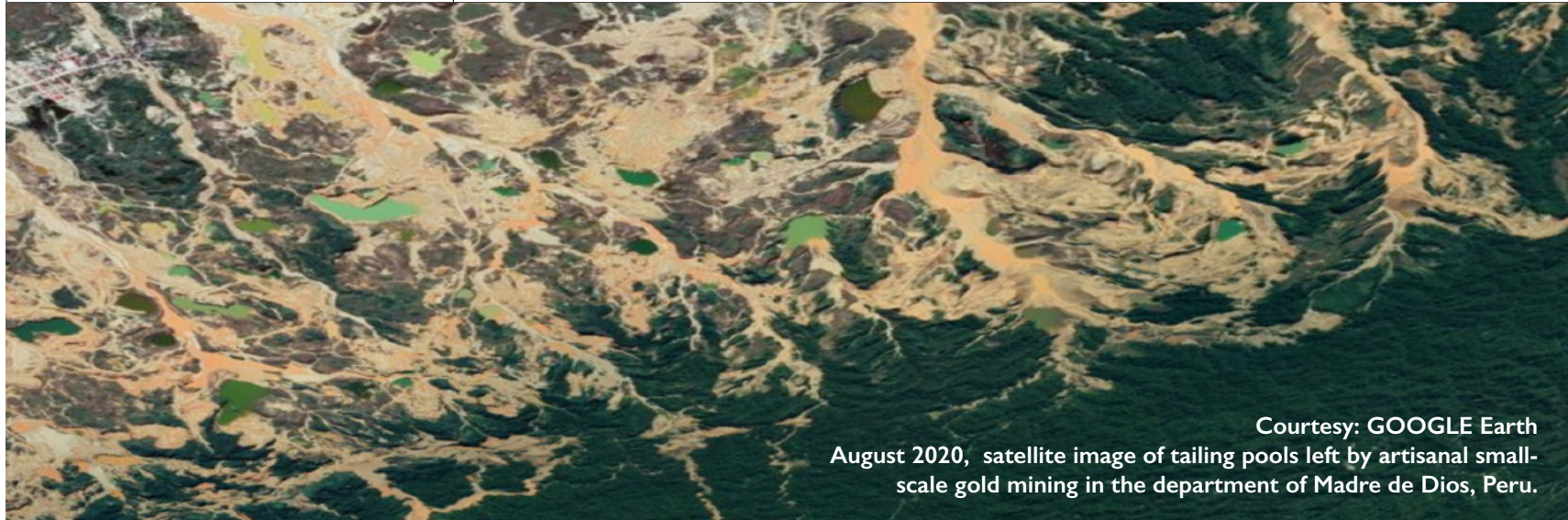
Law Enforcement

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Strategic Approach 2: Strengthen Law Enforcement

Learning Questions	Conditions Missions hypothesize influence effective deterrence of conservation crime
<p>LQ2.1: Under what conditions is law enforcement effective at deterring conservation crime?</p>	<p><i>Law enforcement agencies/officials have the political support to combat conservation crime, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for the economic, security, and health impacts of conservation crimes • Widespread condemnation of bribery • Protection for whistleblowers • Safety from threats of retaliation • Adequate financial and human resources • Clear roles for relevant government agencies and transparency in their operations • Inter and intra agency coordination • Significant penalty for conservation crime <p><i>Law enforcement agencies/officials have the technical capacity to combat conservation crime, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the economic, security, and health impacts of conservation crimes • Systems for timely, accurate data capture and sharing to detect different conservation crimes • Recognition of and ability to interpret GPS and drone data as legal evidence
<p>LQ2.2: Under what conditions does transnational coordination improve the effectiveness of combating conservation crime?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional agreements to address transnational crime • Government policies and commitment of resources to ensure coordination and information sharing between governments across the region • Coordination and information sharing among donors, INL, DEA, INTERPOL, WENs



Courtesy: GOOGLE Earth
 August 2020, satellite image of tailing pools left by artisanal small-scale gold mining in the department of Madre de Dios, Peru.

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Cross-cutting: Corruption and Conservation Crime

Learning Questions	Factors Missions hypothesize influence effective deterrence of conservation crime
<p>LQ3: What are the factors related to corruption that impact the effectiveness of combating conservation crime?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective or biased ground-level law enforcement • Interference in judicial processing of conservation crimes • Corrupt elites that shape natural resource governance policies for personal benefit • Complicated regulations • Presence of transnational criminal organizations & convergence of conservation crime with drug trafficking, etc. • (+) Investigative journalism & watchdog organizations • (+) Transparent information systems (ex. MCSNIFFS lumber tracing) • (+) Anti-corruption champions

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Photo: Ben Schapiro for USAID
Illegally harvested stingray at a Santo Domingo market in the Dominican Republic.

Learning Activities and Products

This program will respond to Mission learning needs by fostering an accessible environment for staff to connect with experts and each other to build and share evidence. Based on Mission feedback, the program will prioritize a few products and activities each year to address one or more of the learning questions.

How to Engage

To give input, share feedback, or sign up for the LAC Environment Learning newsletter, visit <https://mportal.net/biodiversityconservation-gateway/learning-groups>

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