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FINAL REPORT

Measuring Impact II Evaluation



Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM)

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Acronyms

CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
EI	Environmental Incentives
EQ	Evaluation Question
FOS	Foundations of Success
INRM	Integrated Natural Resources Management
KII	Key Informant Interview
LA	Learning Agendas
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MI	Measuring Impact
MI2	Measuring Impact II
P&R	Pause and Reflect
PE	Performance Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from a midterm performance evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Measuring Impact II (MI2) activity. This evaluation was commissioned by the Biodiversity Division in the Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure within the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation.

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

From 2012 to 2018, USAID contracted the Measuring Impact (MI) activity to “increase USAID’s capacity to design, monitor, evaluate, and improve the impact of global biodiversity conservation and natural resource management programs” across the biodiversity portfolio.¹ In 2014, USAID introduced the Biodiversity Policy, which aims to create more “strategic, focused, and results-oriented” programming to conserve biodiversity in priority places and integrate biodiversity into development. The goal of MI, and subsequently MI2, was to support the Policy through technical assistance to enhance the effectiveness and impact of USAID biodiversity conservation and integrated programs. Building on MI, MI2’s initiatives aim to strengthen the adoption of adaptive management to enable and encourage this approach in Agency business processes, increase the capacity and motivation of key Agency stakeholders, and reinforce the use and value of evidence and learning. MI2’s approach employs the Conservation Standards, which are a set of principles and practices that “bring together common concepts, approaches, and terminology for conservation project design, management, and monitoring.”² The Conservation Standards approach focuses on developing clear theories of change (ToCs) and results chains that detail program logic for biodiversity conservation. The use of the Standards during MI and MI2 also comes at a time when the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning has been encouraging the use of logic models/ToCs.³

MI2, led by Environmental Incentives, LLC, with partners Foundations of Success (FOS) and ICF Macro Inc., supports Missions, the Biodiversity Division, the Natural Climate Solutions Division, Regional Bureaus, and the Global Health Bureau with evidence-based design, implementation, and adaptive management monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). MI2 also provides support for planning and implementing Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) practices, evaluation design and support, as well as research, assessments, and analysis. MI2’s three strategic approaches (field support, Cross-

¹ Environmental Incentives, LLC, FOS, and ICF Macro Inc. “Measuring Impact (MI).” n.d. USAID Biodiversity Links. <https://biodiversitylinks.org/projects/completed-projects/measuring-impact>.

² Conservation Measures Partnership. 2020. Review of Conservation Standards for the Practice of Conservation. <https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/CMP-Open-Standards-for-the-Practice-of-Conservation-v4.0.pdf>.

³ USAID Learning Lab. 2017. How-To Note: Developing a Project Logic Model (and its Associated Theory of Change). July, 2017. https://usaidealarninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/project_logic_model_how_to_note_final_sep1.pdf

Mission learning, and enabling conditions) provide scaffolding for adaptive management, evidence, and learning at scale.

Between August 2018 and September 2021, MI2 supported 31 Missions and Regional Offices with interventions across the Program Cycle. Nearly half of the support provided to Missions was for Pause and Reflect (P&R) sessions. Twenty of these Missions also received support from MI.⁴ Activities conducted during FY2021 included Program Cycle technical support workshops, Learning Labs, webinars, learning events, conferences, training, and coaching for the Biodiversity Advisors.⁵

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

This evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which MI2 has achieved its objectives; understand the influence of tools and methods on adaptive management, evidence use, and learning; and identify best practices and areas for improvement for future MI2 implementation. The insights from this evaluation may contribute to understanding how to enhance the impact and effectiveness of biodiversity and conservation activities across USAID Missions. The evaluation was guided by five main evaluation questions (EQs):

EQ1. How has MI2 directly contributed to the quality and utilization of evidence, learning, and adaptive management within USAID's biodiversity and integrated programs?

EQ2. What evidence is there of MI2's contributions to institutionalizing or enculturating the Conservation Standards and adaptive management in biodiversity and integrated programming throughout USAID's Program Cycle?

EQ3. If MI2 has contributed to utilization of learning and adaptive management approaches, in what ways has that been seen to influence strategy, decision-making, and program implementation indirectly linked to MI2 (e.g., Mission activities broadly, post-MI2 activities, across Missions/Offices, etc.)?

EQ4. In what ways does MI2 differ from other CLA efforts (e.g., supported by Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning) or Mission-based MEL contracts for biodiversity programs?

EQ5. In what ways have programmatic or contextual factors influenced MI2 implementation and achievement of results?

METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team addressed the EQs by, in part, assessing how MI2 developed the capability, opportunity, and motivation of actors to use adaptive management practices across the USAID Program Cycle. The Evaluation Team relied on key informant and small group interviews with USAID

⁴ Environmental Incentives. 2022. "MI2 Mission Matrix." Microsoft Excel, May 13, 2022.

⁵ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. "MI2 FY21 Annual Report." USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2Q2.pdf.

Washington and Mission respondents, MI2, and implementing partners, as well as two outcome harvesting case studies to obtain data to answer the EQs. While the Evaluation Team strived to mitigate potential sources of bias, some limitations of this evaluation include recall bias, selection bias, comparison bias, response attribution bias, and a small sample size comparative to total individuals who were exposed to the program.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

IMPLEMENTATION OF MI2

Overall, this evaluation found that MI2 was well implemented, encountering a few challenges that affected implementation.

- **MI2 services were in high demand by Missions; however, not all Missions could access MI2 support** depending on MI2 staff availability and overlap of requests (e.g., multiple large buy-ins occurring at the same time). High demand is likely influenced by Missions' positive perceived value of MI2 support.
- **Restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic** influenced implementation and downstream outcomes for participation and capability. Pivoting to virtual work resulted in both expected challenges (limited connectivity and software, reduced efficiency, scheduling challenges) and a few unexpected positive impacts (expanded inclusion through virtual platforms, increased independence of implementing partners) as working virtually did allow for inclusion of those who otherwise may not have been available in person and may have jumpstarted independent facilitation capabilities.
- To a degree, the change to a **buy-in mechanism** influenced Mission ability to access MI2. This provided opportunities for longer-term MI2 engagements for adaptive management with some Missions and limited access for others given MI2's low overall budget ceiling, coupled with high demand for MI2 support. Shifting to a buy-in mechanism raised concerns that the leadership and ownership of adaptive management was unevenly transferred to MI2, which affected future Mission capability for engaging with this approach.

MI2 CONTRIBUTION TO USAID STAFF, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES (OUTCOMES)

Through tools, technical support, and programmatic resources, MI2 contributed to USAID and implementing partner staff capabilities (skills) and motivation to engage in and improve learning, and adaptive management tasks within the context of biodiversity programs and activities.

- Overall, MI2 encouraged and supported more **systematic and robust ways of approaching program logic, activity design, and implementation for biodiversity programs**. For example, the use of ToCs/results chains, MEL plans, P&Rs, and Learning Group activities helped inform the understanding of activity progress and workplan development, supported the development of procurement and project documents, and drove adjustments to activities and approaches towards results.

- MI2 helped both USAID and implementing partner respondents **bring together project participants and stakeholders to connect diverse ideas and viewpoints** for informing situation models and ToCs grounded in the program or activity context.
- MI2 support and training contributed to **increased investment in time and attention** for considering MEL design and implementation for adaptive management and developed **skills and confidence** to use the Conservation Standards for USAID and implementing partner staff.
- There are **several factors that limited stakeholders' ability to apply the approaches and tools in practice**. These included USAID processes, structures, and constraints to staff time, capacity, and resources which affected their ability to fully utilize the Conservation Standards and fully engage in the process (see Factors below).

HOW DID MI2 SERVICE DELIVERY AND SUPPORT CONTRIBUTE TO THESE OUTCOMES?

MI2's service delivery influenced how they contributed to the uptake of evidence, learning, and adaptive management products and practices. Overall, the high regard for MI2's staff and the quality of technical support and work (described as professional, well-organized, systematic, and useful) contributed to high interest and engagement from Missions—highlighted across critical components of their service delivery.

- **MI2 facilitators' skills, expertise, and organization (particularly in facilitation and knowledge management)** enabled the integration of learning into the design and implementation process, bringing together stakeholder perspectives, streamlining adaptive management activities (e.g., P&R), and supporting USAID staff with limited bandwidth.
- Facilitators' **conservation and biodiversity technical expertise** positively impacted the design and reflection processes, though this same expertise also created some challenges in developing programming that aimed to integrate objectives and approaches across multiple sectors.
- The extent of **MI2 staff awareness of and experience with USAID processes, policies, and priorities** influenced how technical support was provided to Missions.
- Long-term engagements with MI and MI2, and consistent support from the same MI2 staff, as well as MI2 staff contextual and institutional **knowledge of USAID**, positively affected the perceived quality of assistance, uptake of adaptive management, participant understanding of the Conservation Standards, and trust across implementation.

MI2 INFLUENCE ON USAID PRACTICE AND CULTURE OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

MI2 (and MI) has influenced USAID's practice and culture of adaptive management, as evidenced by growing interest in MI2 approaches and tools, as well as the extent to which they have been used without MI2 support.

- **Almost half of respondents have and/or plan to continue to use tools and approaches from MI2 for conducting design and adaptive management tasks**, with examples of independent use and integration into day-to-day practice. Respondents feel

confident in using adaptive management approaches without MI2 support and continue to use facilitation skills and techniques, workbooks, publications, and resources from Learning Groups and MI2, as well as results chains.

- **The Conservation Standards approach has achieved some degree of institutionalization within USAID biodiversity programs** through use of the Standards in activity start-up, design, and P&R processes. Online engagement with MI2 resources is high and there are a few examples of diffusion of approaches in other parts of the Agency.
- While MI2 **improved capabilities to understand and facilitate the Conservation Standards for biodiversity program planning, and two Missions** no longer need MI2 support to facilitate adaptive management tasks, there were many reported challenges to using the Standards without support from a technical mechanism like MI2. While this evaluation surfaced high perceived value for these tools, it did not seek to assess whether their use has led to improved effectiveness in program design and implementation, which may be an important factor to determine future use. These factors highlight both opportunities and challenges to wider institutionalization of the Conservation Standards as an approach for strategic thinking and adaptive management more broadly at the Agency.

WHAT FACTORS EXTERNAL TO THE MI2 PROGRAM INFLUENCED THESE OUTCOMES?

This evaluation identified several contextual and programmatic factors that influence uptake and sustainability of learning, evidence use, and adaptive management practice at USAID. These findings echo insight from other assessments of evidence use, learning, and adaptive management in development and conservation (e.g., see Wild and Ramalingam 2018, Gerber et al. 2020), as well as the performance evaluation of MI (see Berard et al. 2017).

- The institutionalization and adoption of MI2 approaches have been encouraged, in part, by **“champions”** (Mission and Washington staff, implementing partners, and USAID staff who received Biodiversity Advisor training) who have helped improve the application of the Conservation Standards and encourage its use across Missions.
- USAID respondents often reported a lack of **available time and resources** (including access to software) to organize and facilitate the Conservation Standards process in the same way MI2 does. This perception of limited capacity (even though MI2 developed improved capability) to facilitate and engage in the design and adaptive management process influenced the degree to which these tools may be used in the long-term. Many respondents expressed desires for a “light” version of the Conservation Standards process to address this challenge.
- **USAID internal processes, structures, and timelines significantly influence both uptake of approaches and tools, as well as post-MI2 sustainability.** These include policy and design timelines, contract obligations, and Mission priorities. At times, inflexible contractual obligations hindered the implementation of revised MEL plans and adaptation of activities based on learning from P&Rs. In addition, mismatches between tools/outputs and needs across the Program Cycle and/or local partner priorities influenced perceptions of tool/output utility, particularly around the use of results chains more broadly.

While MI2 has institutionalized an appreciation of and capability for adaptive management, opportunities to apply these tools and approaches vary across the Agency, depending on one or a combination of these factors. A lack of capacity, resources, internal processes, and structures reflects the important role that institutional factors play in creating opportunities for adaptive management “champions” to emerge. While this evaluation surfaced some of these factors, a closer examination of how these factors influence the ability of USAID staff to encourage and implement adaptive management practices and culture more broadly is needed to inform future programming.

USE OF EVIDENCE

Progress towards evidence-based practice across the Agency, particularly for consideration and inclusion of external evidence, has not been consistent.⁶ MI2 support helped USAID and implementing partner respondents identify where and when evidence was needed to support program logic and inform adaptive management. While MI2 encouraged participants to integrate evidence, most respondents reported that it was not always brought in, nor was it clear how it could be obtained. In cases where evidence was integrated (whether identified by teams or by MI2), MI2 provided technical guidance to use that evidence in design and adaptive management activities. The identification and integration of evidence during MI2 was influenced by two primary factors: facilitator expertise and alignment of time and resources.

LEARNING GROUPS

MI2 has supported six Learning Groups in the Biodiversity Division and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Bureau and provided technical leadership to develop and implement learning agendas. Generally, Learning Group events and products are well regarded and well attended by USAID. However, their utility for Missions (across the Program Cycle and uptake and application from events) depends on whether topics aligned with current Mission needs and whether staff had time to attend. The Learning Groups fostered an interest in developing and using learning agendas more broadly across USAID, as well as opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, particularly for Cross-Mission and cross-Agency collaboration.

PERCEPTIONS OF CLA

This evaluation found mixed respondent perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of MI2’s overall approach compared with other approaches for CLA. As a CLA approach, the strengths of MI2’s approach included that it was credible (based on the broader use of the Conservation Standards in the conservation sector), systematic, and organized. However, the weaknesses of MI2’s approach included its intensive process (long sessions, in-depth facilitation) which posed challenges for wider participation and collaboration by a broader group of stakeholders (e.g., local community members, private sector partners, time-limited staff). Strengths of other CLA approaches mentioned by respondents (e.g., approaches and guides from the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning and the Learning Lab, data-

⁶ “Evidence” in this section refers to external evidence – e.g., scientific research, grey literature reports, reviews, local knowledge, expert knowledge, etc.) which includes both evidence products (e.g., research, analyses, synthesis, knowledge gathering) and evidence guidance (materials and tools for integrating evidence).

driven models, participatory processes, and dialogues) included their flexibility, emphasis on participatory processes, and overall efficiency. However, one weakness is their generic focus, which can be hard to tailor to biodiversity conservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Select recommendations for **USAID and MI2** regarding current management and implementation include:

- Ensure leadership and management of technical assistance (requests, scope) is shared between USAID and MI2, ensuring MI2 tasks respond to USAID needs, expectations are clear, and processes are connected.
- Continue to have a consistent set of facilitators working with Missions throughout a portfolio where possible. This combination can contribute to building trust, relationships, and potentially improve capabilities of USAID staff to use the Conservation Standards and other adaptive management practices in ongoing activities.
- Ensure a match between facilitator background and topic area prior to engagement (in particular for marine expertise) and broader inclusion of a diversity of topic experts and local stakeholders. MI2 could continue to develop facilitator skills and capabilities for determining when and how to adapt the Conservation Standards for integrated projects and work to engage with the community of practice for evidence-informed practice from a wider array of disciplines.
- Prioritize identification, robust assessment, and use of broader types of evidence in program design, particularly to support and socialize existing evidence resources (e.g., Evidence in Action), and work with USAID to identify opportunities and resources to bring in external evidence and better align with activity timelines.
- Identify areas where guidance and tools can be developed to help address barriers to uptake of the Conservation Standards and adaptive management in general. For example, MI2 could develop guidance on how to translate complex results chains for different purposes across the Program Cycle and for different audiences. If USAID can both sensitize staff at multiple levels to these adaptive management tools and identify key actions and methods to communicate these products through existing processes, this will clear two bottlenecks (staff familiarity and acceptance of adaptive management tools and clarity on how to translate tools across the Program Cycle) to sustainability.

Select recommendations for **USAID** regarding broader institutionalization of evidence, learning, and adaptive management through a technical support mechanism include:

- Identify realistic and feasible opportunities to implement different types of adaptive management tools. Whether it is the Conservation Standards, or another type of CLA tool intended to improve adaptive management practice, opportunities must exist for those practices to be implemented and aligned across the Program Cycle. For example, better communication and collaboration between technical support teams, USAID, and implementing partners can help inform when and where different types of adaptive management tools and outputs (e.g., results chains) are best suited for different purposes and audiences across the Program Cycle.

- Examine the Program Cycle and USAID internal processes for barriers to uptake and sustainability. While most award approaches can accommodate adaptive management throughout the Program Cycle, this evaluation surfaced cases with less flexibility to accommodate adaptive management practice. Encouraging and supporting USAID Agreement Officer's Representatives and Contracting Officer's Representatives to be open to more flexible and iterative award approaches may help facilitate realized adaptive management practice. For example, the use of co-creation with implementing partners may help improve continuity of program logic between program and activity design, and better inform adaptive management.
- Conduct an in-depth assessment of the utility of different types of CLA approaches (including the Conservation Standards as well as approaches within and outside biodiversity conservation) for different types of integrated programming and programming needs. If USAID has an interest in focusing on the Conservation Standards, a potentially insightful effort could be undertaking an assessment to learn what others (at USAID as well as other organizations) have done to tailor the Standards to different needs. This could also inform the development of a "light" version of the Conservation Standards where it is best fit-for-purpose (particularly in comparison to other CLA approaches).
- Critically review staff capacity to implement different types of CLA approaches (including the Conservation Standards approach and other tools introduced by MI2), as well as ability of USAID staff to serve as impartial facilitators. Without addressing staff bandwidth, it is unrealistic to expect Mission staff to implement this approach. This assessment should focus on what types of individual and institutional changes are needed to ensure sustainability of different types of CLA approaches. Based on the findings of this evaluation, if sustainability is the goal, USAID/Washington will either need to provide continued access to technical support for implementing CLA that is as engaged as MI2's implementation of the Conservation Standards, or make substantial changes to enable Missions to take on these tasks and responsibilities in order to shift away from this type of central technical support mechanism.
- USAID should ensure that evidence, learning, and adaptive management is incorporated early in the Program Cycle. This will allow for iteration and flexibility to better integrate broader perspectives, make time to identify, assess, and integrate evidence, and identify key resources and learning opportunities.

Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from a midterm performance evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Measuring Impact II (MI2) activity. USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment Office of Forestry and Biodiversity commissioned the evaluation. USAID's Statement of Work for the evaluation is provided in Annex D. The first section of this report provides background information about MI2. The second section describes the purpose of the evaluation and presents the evaluation questions (EQs). The third section explains the methodology of this evaluation and its limitations. The fourth section presents the

Evaluation Team’s findings (organized by type of finding), conclusions (overall and for each EQ), and overall recommendations.

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

USAID’s Biodiversity Policy seeks to make the Agency’s investments in conservation and integrated programs more effective, while recognizing that good development relies on conservation. From 2012 to 2018, USAID contracted the Measuring Impact (MI) Activity to “increase USAID’s capacity to design, monitor, evaluate, and improve the impact of global biodiversity conservation and natural resource management programs” across the biodiversity portfolio.⁷ MI2’s goal is to enhance the effectiveness and impact of USAID biodiversity conservation and integrated programs. MI2’s initiatives aim to strengthen the adoption of adaptive management to enable and encourage this approach in Agency business processes, increase capacity and motivation of key Agency stakeholders, and reinforce the use and value of evidence and learning. MI2 provides facilitation and support, including support for enhanced utilization of evidence, and learning throughout the full activity design lifecycle.

EVOLUTION OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND EVIDENCE USE IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

The use of evidence in decision-making across the federal government, as well as the environment and development sectors globally, has been well recognized (Pullin et al. 2020, Hernandez et al. 2019). Increasingly, the structures and systems for progressing evidence-based decision-making have grown. For example, a wide array of global initiatives has emerged to foster awareness and build capacity for adaptive management and evidence-based practice – for example, through multi-institutional initiatives like the Global Learning for Adaptive Management Initiative⁸ and the emergence of collaborative efforts such as the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence,⁹ and the Global Commission on Evidence. In the United States, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (2018) calls for systematic plans for collecting data and evidence for identifying and addressing policy questions.¹⁰ Within the U.S. Government, USAID is consistently recognized as a leader in evidence use and runs several initiatives to promote evidence-based practice including the Learning Lab and through repositories of data and knowledge like the Development Data Library and the Development Experience Clearinghouse.

As environmental challenges become increasingly complex, addressing them requires integration of evidence and learning across multiple sectors and consideration of a diversity of perspectives and sources of knowledge. As such, a wide variety of decision-support frameworks and tools (hereafter, *approaches*) have emerged and evolved to guide and facilitate evidence-based practice within the

⁷ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. “Measuring Impact (MI).” n.d. USAID Biodiversity Links. <https://biodiversitylinks.org/projects/completed-projects/measuring-impact>.

⁸ Global Learning for Adaptive Management Initiative: <https://odi.org/en/about/our-work/the-global-learning-for-adaptive-management-initiative-glam/>

⁹ Collaboration for Environmental Evidence: <https://environmentalevidence.org/>

¹⁰ [U.S. Congress. 2019. TITLE I – Federal Evidence-Building Activities. PUBL435.PS \(congress.gov\)](https://www.congress.gov/bills/115/435)

conservation and natural resource management sectors. These approaches generally aim to support actions to achieve defined objectives more effectively through informing the planning, implementation, and adaptive management of programs and projects (e.g., Systematic Conservation Planning, causal models, geospatial and other prioritization tools, Participatory Planning, and systematic evidence syntheses [see Schwartz et al. 2017, Cheng et al. 2020, Pullin et al. 2020]).

At USAID, the Biodiversity Policy was established in 2014 to foster more “strategic, focused, and results-oriented programming that applies scientific and evidence-based approaches.” The Policy explicitly outlines the use of a suite of approaches to guide program and activity design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and adaptive management. In particular, the Policy and Program Cycle Operational Policy (ADS 201) require the use of clear theories of change (ToC) to ground program logic and articulate assumptions and pathways to impact. MI was a contract (2012-2018) that aimed to “develop effective performance measures, enhance cross-project learning, foster communication, and build capacity for adaptive management to improve the impact of global biodiversity conservation and natural resource management programs.”

At the core of MI’s approach was the Conservation Standards for the Practice of Conservation (now commonly known as the Conservation Standards), which is a set of principles and practices that “bring together common concepts, approaches, and terminology for conservation project design, management, and monitoring.”¹¹ The Conservation Standards originated in the conservation sector and are promoted by the Conservation Measures Partnership and adopted by many organizations. MI adapted the Conservation Standards for USAID’s Biodiversity Programming priorities, structures, and languages.¹² The use of ToCs through the Conservation Standards is central to MI’s approach to create more rigorous thinking about how and why a program is hypothesized to achieve its objectives. MI worked to develop capacity and tools, encouraged evidence use and learning, and promoted policies to support adaptive management throughout the Program Cycle (MI Final Report 2018). A performance evaluation of MI concluded that the mechanism was able to further USAID’s capacity and appreciation for adaptive management and evidence use, particularly at the Agency level (Performance Evaluation of MI 2017).

MEASURING IMPACT II

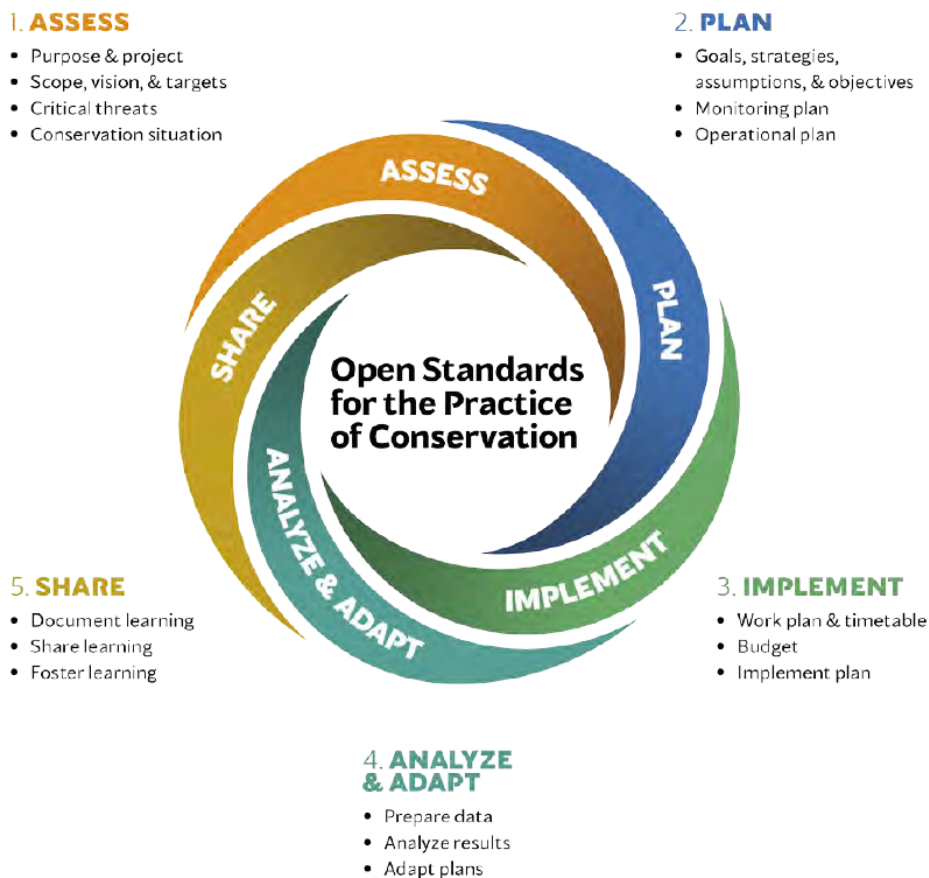
As a follow on to MI, MI2 seeks to build upon MI to increase the impact and effectiveness of USAID biodiversity and conservation projects. Environmental Incentives, LLC (EI) supported by partners Foundations of Success (FOS) and ICF Macro Inc. (ICF) led MI and continue to lead MI2.¹³

¹¹ <https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/CMP-Open-Standards-for-the-Practice-of-Conservation-v4.0.pdf> (Conservation Measures Partnership 2020)

¹² CS guidance document

¹³ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. “Measuring Impact II Semi-Annual Progress Report Fiscal Year 2021.” USAID.

Figure 1: Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (Conservation Standards) as applied at USAID



MI2’s high-level ToC is as follows:

If key Agency stakeholders are capable and motivated to implement adaptive management practices as part of biodiversity and integrated programming in all phases of the Agency’s Program Cycle; and Agency business processes enable and encourage adaptive management; and there are evidence, tools, and resources that support enhanced technical knowledge in programming; then biodiversity conservation and integrated programming in USAID will become more effective and impactful.

MI employed the Conservation Standards, and MI2 continues to use the Standards’ principles and tools for pursuing their strategic approaches, particularly in “Building the Adaptive Management Capacity and Motivation of Key Stakeholders” and “Enhancing the Effectiveness, Use and Generation of Evidence and Learning in Biodiversity Conservation.”¹⁴ The MI2 approach is grounded in the Conservation Standards concepts and the facilitation approach is tailored to respond to the programming context and needs of the Mission and implementing partners. There are at least 15 distinct applications of Conservation Standards to the Program Cycle. For each distinct application, MI2 tailors the facilitation approach based on the context, including USAID available time, resources and capacity, language needs, technical

¹⁴ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. “Measuring Impact II FY19 Work Plan.” USAID.

expertise based on programming context, funding sources, level of certainty, number, and capacity of implementing partners, and other variables.¹⁵

MI2’s three strategic approaches (field support, Cross-Mission learning, and enabling conditions) provide the scaffolding for adaptive management, evidence, and learning at scale. MI2’s change management approach links all three approaches through a shared set of concepts and tools. Combined, these strategic approaches work together to enable evidence access, use and generation, applied learning, and adaptive management at various scales. The Cross-Mission learning approach aims to connect evidence and learning across scales through helping Missions to standardize data collection on common approaches; collecting and comparing qualitative and quantitative data across Missions; integrating external evidence and knowledge; synthesizing, distilling, and disseminating lessons learned; establishing and strengthening relationships; and building learning networks to continue to learn and innovate, both within and across contexts. The table below summarizes the linkages between MI2’s strategic approaches.¹⁶

Table 1: Linkages Between MI2 Strategic Approaches¹⁷

Approach	Action	Linkages across strategic approaches
Field support	Help Missions to build project/activity level situation models and ToCs grounded in a very specific and unique context .	Linking design and MEL systems (using the Conservation Standards) enables a Mission to ask and answer what are the enabling conditions in my context, what strategic approaches are most effective in my context?
Cross-Mission learning	Help the Agency to build generic ToCs and pinpoint information gaps for the most commonly used approaches , providing a shared framework for evidence and learning across contexts – on a regional or global scale .	Grounding global or regional learning agendas in common ToCs helps the Agency to integrate evidence across Missions and from external sources to ask and answer under what conditions is this strategic approach most effective?
Enabling conditions	Help to strengthen staff capacity and create time and resources to apply biodiversity programming best practices.	Building USAID and implementing partner staff capacity to ask the right questions and to access, use, and generate evidence through assessments, literature reviews, evidence synthesis, and designing and implementing ToC-based programs, and MEL/CLA.

¹⁵ This clarification was added following review of the report by MI2.

¹⁶ Explanation provided by MI2

¹⁷ Table provided by MI2

MI2 employs different elements of the Conservation Standards to support USAID throughout the Program Cycle. Table 2 below includes examples.

Table 2: Tools used in the Conservation Standards Approach

Tools used in the Conservation Standards Approach		
<p>Situation models are a graphic representation of a context or problem analysis. This tool is used to foster collaborative discussion and understanding of targeted biodiversity focal interests and other ecosystem service and human well-being interests, and threats and drivers that influence them.</p>	<p>ToCs clearly state expected outputs and outcomes, predicted causal pathways, and assumptions behind proposed strategic approaches.</p>	<p>Outcomes and indicators are components that must be explicitly identified and linked to a ToC.</p>

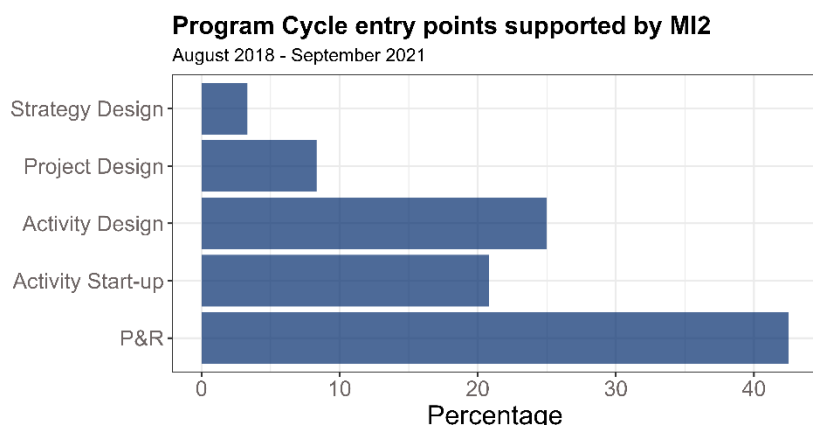
MI2 is a primary Mission support mechanism for the USAID Biodiversity Division to affect the quality of biodiversity activity design, implementation, and overall conservation practice at the Agency. MI2 supports Missions, the Biodiversity Division, Regional Bureaus, and the Global Health Bureau with evidence-based design, implementation and adaptive management, MEL, and CLA plan development and implementation, evaluation design, support and research, assessments, and analysis. Between August 2018 and September 2021, MI2 supported 31 Missions and Regional Offices with interventions across the Program Cycle. Nearly half of the support was for Pause and Reflect (P&R) sessions (see Figure 2).¹⁸ Twenty of these Missions also received support from MI.¹⁹ FY 2021 activities included Program Cycle technical support workshops, Learning Labs, webinars, learning events, conferences, training, and coaching for the Biodiversity Advisors.²⁰

¹⁸ MI2 notes that the proportion of P&Rs to other activities is skewed by the fact that in long-term engagements they may do three or four P&Rs with one Activity, but there is only one Activity Design and one Activity Start-up. By time and attention, MI2 may likely have invested more in design and start-up because those are the times when many very important decisions are made, such as selecting BFIs and Strategic Approaches.

¹⁹ Environmental Incentives. 2022. "MI2 Mission Matrix." Microsoft Excel, May 13, 2022.

²⁰ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. "MI2 FY21 Annual Report." USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2Q2.pdf.

Figure 2: Summary of MI2 support (source: MI2 Mission matrix)



EVALUATION PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

In 2021, USAID requested the Integrated Natural Resource Management mechanism to conduct a performance evaluation of the MI2 contract. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which MI2 has achieved its objectives and supported USAID with improvements in biodiversity programming to inform future programming with similar objectives. This evaluation sought to understand the adaptive management and evidence-based learning tools and methods used by MI2, find synergies and best practices utilized throughout the implementation of MI2, and identify potential gaps and areas for improvement in the use of MI2-type support mechanisms as a tool for enhancing the impact and effectiveness of biodiversity and conservation activities across USAID Missions.

The intended users of the evaluation include, but are not limited to, the USAID Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation, USAID Operating Units incorporating biodiversity and conservation in programming, especially USAID Missions, MI2 and other implementing partners, and other United States Government donors.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS²¹

The following EQs were developed iteratively by USAID and the Evaluation Team.

Table 3: Evaluation questions and scope

	Evaluation Question	Explanation and Scope
I	EQ1. How has MI2 directly contributed to the quality and utilization of evidence, learning, and adaptive management within USAID’s biodiversity and integrated programs?	EQ1. This question (and sub-questions) focused on MI2’s impact on specific programs that they worked with directly. The question speaks specifically to the contribution of data, information, and adaptive management tools to influence decisions within a specific program during MI2 support.

²¹ The evaluation questions were revised from the original scope of work in January 2022 for clarity.

	Evaluation Question	Explanation and Scope
	<p>EQ1a. What is the uptake of learning programs and products generated by MI2?</p> <p>EQ1b. How have USAID respondents applied this learning throughout the Program Cycle?</p> <p>EQ1c. To what extent has MI2 contributed to increased investment in MEL across the Program Cycle in USAID biodiversity activities?</p>	<p>EQ1a. This focused on the uptake of learning programs and products using the Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation framework.</p> <p>EQ1b. This focused on the application of evidence and learning during technical support.</p> <p>EQ1c. This focused on whether and how MI2 has contributed to changes in MEL investment in biodiversity activities. We considered “investment” to include investment in time, attention, budget, etc.</p>
2	<p>EQ2. What evidence is there of MI2s contributions to institutionalizing or enculturating the Conservation Standards and adaptive management in biodiversity and integrated programming throughout USAID’s Program Cycle?</p> <p>EQ2a. Do Mission respondents continue adaptive management approaches post MI2 support? What challenges/improvements are reported and how could this be strengthened?</p>	<p>EQ2. This focused on how adaptive management tools (e.g., the Conservation Standards, P&R, After Action Reviews) have been encultured and/or diffused across biodiversity and integrated programming at USAID. **This evaluation question encompasses one overarching question (EQ2) and a sub-question (EQ2a).</p>
3	<p>EQ3. If MI2 has contributed to utilization of learning and adaptive management approaches, in what ways has that been seen to influence strategy, decision-making, and program implementation indirectly linked to MI2 (e.g., Mission activities broadly, post-MI2 activities, across Missions/Offices, etc.)?</p>	<p>This question is focused on MI2’s indirect impact on programming that followed after MI2 (but was not directly involved with) within a Mission or Office. This question speaks specifically to the contribution of skills, learning, capacity, and awareness gained through working with MI2 to other programming and strategies.</p>
4	<p>EQ4. In what ways does MI2 differ from other CLA efforts (e.g., supported by Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning) or Mission-based MEL contracts for biodiversity programs?</p> <p>EQ4a. What are the strengths and weaknesses for future implementation of an MI2-like model for Mission support, relative to other common CLA or MEL efforts or approaches used by USAID?</p> <p>EQ4b. How has MI2 involved biodiversity/conservation specialists or other sector specialists in designing and adaptively managing biodiversity and integrated programming? If so, how has that been perceived as influencing activity design and management?</p>	<p>EQ4: This investigated two distinct areas through its sub-questions. EQ4 is answered by EQ4a.</p> <p>EQ4a. This explored MI2 program in relation to other CLA efforts across or outside of the Agency based on the perception of select respondents, particularly those with a breadth of experience across the Agency. This question explored the perceived strengths and weaknesses of future implementation of MI2’s approach and other approaches to CLA based on experiences of respondents.</p> <p>EQ 4b: This explored how biodiversity and other types of specialists were involved by MI2 in program activities and how this influenced activity design and implementation. In particular, this question explored (to the extent possible) the effectiveness of facilitators with a biodiversity/conservation background vs. not. (Note the data is limited to what respondents remember and their perception).</p>

	Evaluation Question	Explanation and Scope
5	<p>EQ5. In what ways have programmatic or contextual factors influenced MI2 implementation and achievement of results?</p> <p>EQ5a. MI2 changed to a Mission buy-in approach instead of being centrally funded as MI. Did this impact the program implementation and results, and if so, how?</p> <p>EQ5b. Have programmatic or contextual factors been identified as affecting MI2 implementation, uptake, and post-MI2 sustainability? If so, how so?</p>	<p>EQ5. EQ 5 is answered by its sub-questions.</p> <p>EQ5a. This explored the impact of the buy-in approach on implementation.</p> <p>EQ5b. This explored specific programmatic (specific to MI2 or USAID) and contextual factors (external, beyond the control of USAID or MI2) that influence MI2 implementation, uptake of tools and learning, and the extent to which MI2 adaptive management approaches are/can be utilized independently of MI2 support (post-MI2 sustainability).</p>

Methodology

The Evaluation Team answered the EQs using semi-structured, key informant and small group interviews and through outcome harvesting. The approach was informed, in part, by assessing how MI2 employed the Conservation Standards across the USAID Program Cycle operations by developing the capability, opportunity, and motivation of actors to use adaptive management practices. This model of behavior defines three key components that need to be present for changes in practice and behavior to occur. These elements are:

- **Capability:** the skills, awareness, and ability to engage in a particular practice or behavior.
- **Opportunity:** the contexts and situations that make a change in behavior possible or prompt it. This can include both physical and social factors such as time, resources, requirements, participation, and others.
- **Motivation:** the rationale and reasons to pursue that behavior, for example, perception of utility/value, compliance with rules, interest.

The Evaluation Team used the capability, opportunity, and motivation model to frame data collection and analysis of causal pathways to identify adaptive management outcomes. This was used to explore what enables and hinders desired adaptive management behavior both during engagement with MI2 and post-MI2 support. It is assumed that changes to MI2 recipients’ capability, opportunity, and motivation dimensions are required in order to use the new MI2 practices. We recognize that not all aspects of the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework are under the direct management control of MI2, particularly those related to opportunity (for example, that may be more closely tied to broader institutional contexts and dynamics). However, whether and how MI2-promoted approaches were institutionalized characterizes the range of barriers to uptake, which can inform implementation of similar types of programming. The Evaluation Team used USAID guidance on capability, opportunity, and motivation frameworks to organize data collection and analysis. Below we have summarized the evaluation methodology. Please see Annex B for the full description of the evaluation methodology.

EVALUATION DESIGN

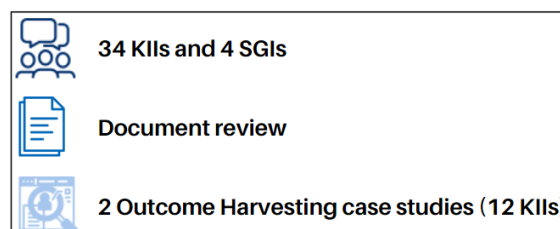
DESK REVIEW

The Evaluation Team conducted a desk review of background documents (see summary in Annex A) to understand MI2 tasks and lay the groundwork for answering the EQs. The team conducted a content analysis of twelve “buy-in” scopes of work using Dedoose²² according to capability, opportunity, and motivation, USAID Program Cycle phases, and the Conservation Standards lifecycle. The Evaluation Team also reviewed relevant documents to understand MI2 tasks at each Mission prior to conducting interviews, to tailor probes to respondents appropriately and develop initial outcome descriptions for the outcome harvesting methodology.

KEY INFORMANT AND SMALL GROUP INTERVIEWS

The Evaluation Team conducted 38 semi-structured, remote key informant interviews (KIIs) (34) and small group interviews (SGI) (4) with 47 USAID Washington respondents, USAID Mission respondents (including Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service Nationals across 16 Missions and regional offices,²³ implementing partners, as well as three MI2 respondents), to provide insight into all five EQs.²⁴ Out of the USAID respondents, 12 were Biodiversity Advisors (3 Washington, 9 Mission). The sample also included two Learning Groups (Combating Conservation Crime and Combating Wildlife Trafficking), both selected based on the availability of participants.

Figure 3: Summary of data collection



Out of 31 Missions that received MI2 support between August 2018 and September 2021, 20 had also received support from MI. Out of the Missions sampled for this evaluation (13) all but one was supported by MI.²⁵ See Figure 4 for a breakdown of MI2 support provided to sampled Missions, half of which received support for P&Rs and none of which received strategy design support. The Evaluation Team identified the sample, using 93 potential key informants provided by USAID spanning USAID Washington, USAID Mission, and implementing partner staff across 19

Table 4: Summary of respondents

Respondents	#
USAID Washington	8
MI2	4
Mission Staff	29
Implementing partner	18
Total	59

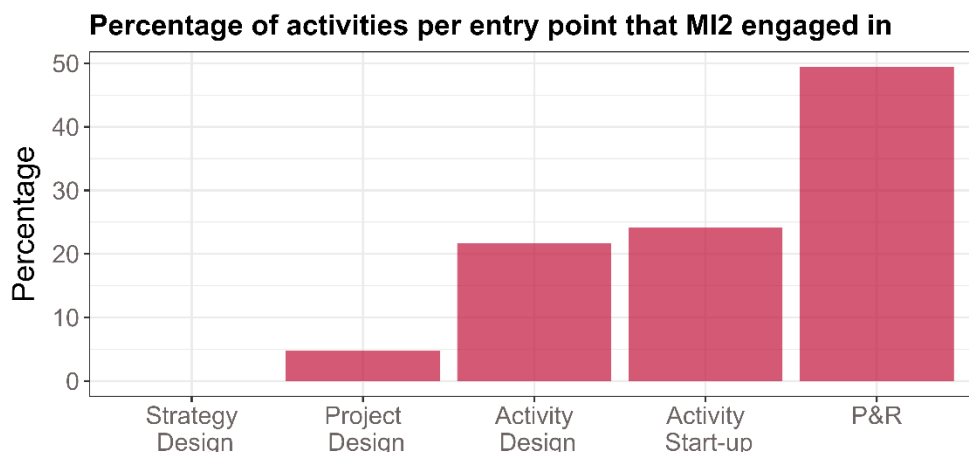
²³ This refers to current posting which may not be receiving MI2 support. However, participants had all interacted with MI2.

²⁴ This statement encapsulates all KIIs and small group interviews conducted independent of the outcome harvesting methodology, which is discussed separately below.

²⁵ Environmental Incentives. 2022. “MI2 Mission Matrix.” Microsoft Excel, May 13, 2022.

Missions and regional Bureaus. The Evaluation Team conducted snowballing²⁶ as needed to obtain the final sample. See Table 4 above for a summary of all respondents inclusive of those interviewed for outcome harvesting.

Figure 4: MI2 support to sampled Missions



The Evaluation Team used qualitative thematic analysis to identify emerging themes from interviews across all five EQs through coding interviews using a pre-identified codebook in Dedoose, then elicited themes using a virtual whiteboard, meeting once per week to share findings. For questions focused on the contribution of MI2 to the quality, uptake, and application of evidence, learning, and adaptive management, the Evaluation Team used the capability, opportunity, and motivation model of behavior (explained above in detail) that defines three key components that need to be present in order for changes in practice and behavior to occur.

DEFINITIONS

Throughout this analysis²⁷ we considered that:

- *Adaptive Management* consists of tools and approaches used for programmatic learning (e.g., within a project/activity) and application of what was learned within the same program context. This includes tools for adaptive management such as P&Rs, After Action Reviews, etc., and the application of that learning to adapt/adjust workplans. Because MI2’s approach is centered on the Conservation Standards, it is hard to disentangle adaptive management practice uptake, and its application, from the uptake and application of this practice based on the Conservation Standards approach. We have attempted to distinguish between the two where possible.

²⁶ Snowballing refers to finding respondents through referrals from existing respondents.

²⁷ The conceptual underpinning of the MI2 ToC defines these concepts differently. The ToC defines *Adaptive Management* as **happening at various scales** - activity, project, strategy, regional, Cross-Mission and sector wide. The MI2 AM tools and approaches **connect learning and evidence across scales**. Evidence is defined the same way. The process of adaptive management for a project/activity relies on *learning* from both within project/activity **and external sources**.

- *Evidence* can be derived from multiple sources (including the research literature, grey literature and programmatic reports, and personal experience).
- *Learning* consists of activities and applications of knowledge and lessons from outside the context of an activity or through formal learning events and initiatives. This includes learning through formal mechanisms such as Learning Groups, webinars, exchanges, the formulation of learning agendas, as well as applications of knowledge learned to programs, projects, and activities. MI2 supports six Learning Groups, four in partnership with the Biodiversity Division and two with the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, some of which began during the tenure of MI.

OUTCOME HARVESTING²⁸

The Evaluation Team used outcome harvesting to explore how MI2 outcomes are achieved in complex contexts with high levels of uncertainty around the optimal causal pathways to achieve success. Outcome harvesting works backward: outcomes are identified, then evaluative methods are used to articulate the causal pathway that led to the outcome.²⁹ Outcome harvesting was chosen to complement the broader picture of performance garnered through KIIs and small group interviews, because it provides an in-depth understanding of the capability, opportunity, motivation, and contextual factors that enable or present a barrier to the success and institutionalization of MI2 practices.

The Evaluation Team used MI2 task documents (provided by MI2) and discussions with MI2 and USAID staff to identify two “successful” MI2 tasks for in-depth outcome harvesting. It is important to emphasize that while the outcome harvesting approach focuses on “successful” examples, it explicitly investigates the factors that both contribute to and inhibit that success. MI2 and USAID suggested exploring the Fish Right program in the Philippines and the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group due to their noted successes. After a review of available documentation and additional consultation with MI2 and USAID, the Evaluation Team developed initial outcome descriptions, then conducted 12 semi-structured interviews to further explore each outcome. The team then developed clear outcome statements, causal chains, and enabling factors that contributed to the outcome statements, and the significance of each statement using the data collected. The four outcome descriptions (Conservation Enterprises [2] and Fish Right [2]) were then validated by respondents for agreement and accuracy. The detailed outcome harvesting Case Studies can be found in Annex E. Detailed information about the outcome harvesting Methodology can be found in Annex F.

LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The limitations to this evaluation include recall bias, selection bias, comparison bias, response attribution bias, interpretation bias, and a small sample size comparative to the reach of the program. The team

²⁸ We recognize that not all aspects of the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework are under the direct management control of MI2, particularly those related to Opportunity. However, the EQs require us to look at the institutionalization of MI2-promoted approaches and barriers to uptake, even those beyond MI2 control, and this information is likely to be useful for USAID in understanding how to maximize the impact of MI2 and similar programming.

²⁹ Wilson-Grau, Ricardo, and Heather Britt. 2012. “Outcome Harvesting.” USAID Learning Lab. Ford Foundation. <https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Outome%20Harvesting%20Brief%20FINAL%202012-05-2-1.pdf>.

mitigated these limitations through a variety of measures, including engaging a diverse group of stakeholders, corroborating thematic findings by comparing them across respondent types, working closely with USAID to ensure the EQs and scope of questions were clear and documented, and presenting preliminary results to get initial feedback. The Evaluation Team validated outcome harvesting descriptions through respondent review. Limitations and mitigations are discussed in detail in Annex F.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

FINDINGS

Across the programs and Offices MI2 worked with, the Evaluation Team spoke with 47 respondents to explore the EQs, paying particular attention to the influence of MI2 on outcomes for staff and programs, both during technical support and after support had ended. In addition, these findings explore the diffusion of MI2's influence across biodiversity and environmental programming at USAID, as well as outside of these program areas and for implementing partners.

Due to the qualitative nature of this evaluation, “respondents” refers to findings expressed by all types of stakeholders (Washington and Mission, implementing partners, MI2). “USAID respondents” refers to both Washington and Mission respondents. For ease, the Evaluation Team uses the “Conservation Standards” or “MI2 approach,” interchangeably to describe a process of adaptive management.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MI2

The findings in this section relate directly to perceptions of MI2 implementation and the emerging factors affecting it. A description of the MI2 program can be found in the Introduction to this report.



MI2 services are in high demand by Missions; however, Missions are not able to access support to the extent they would like.

Respondents/small group interviews shared overall positive feedback about MI2 services and their utility for the Mission. Eight respondents referenced (directly or indirectly) what the Evaluation Team interprets as a “high demand” for MI2 support throughout the Program Cycle (4 Mission, 2 Washington, 1 implementing partner, 1 MI2). Mission demand for MI2 services was driven by the perception that they provide high quality support. One respondent described this demand from Missions as “a product of their [MI2’s] success” (Washington respondent). While there was high demand, other respondents noted that they were not able to obtain MI2 or Washington facilitation support as often as they would have liked, or for specific tasks, which delayed design activities or were perceived as a gap in services (4 Mission, 1 implementing partner). In the perspective of one Washington respondent, MI2 has struggled to staff the many different workstreams. This is in part due to large buy-ins that require support for multiple activities at the same Program Cycle stage and time period. One MI2 staff member noted that MI2 had to staff up to meet demand for services. However, MI2 and USAID Washington staff felt that MI2 was quickly able to staff up.

“I would say I would like to have more time, from the teams that they have...sometimes I feel that they're not as available as it should be for us...they should be there for the support

throughout the whole implementation of the task. So, I would say that's one of the things that I would like to improve, the availability of whoever's in charge of implementing each task, not the administrative team of MI2, they will be there.” (Mission staff)

Anecdotally, it is worth noting that two Washington respondents shared perspectives about MI2’s responsiveness to requests for support and its impact on implementation. One Washington respondent noted that Statement of Work development may have involved too many people, which was inefficient for time and budget. Another respondent perceived the scoping process to be too fast, which affected the quality of the final product.



COVID-19, and the transition to virtual support, influenced implementation of MI2.

In March of 2020, just over one year into MI2's period of performance, COVID-19 forced it to shift implementation into a virtual space for an indefinite period, causing some delays in implementation of USAID activities and MI2 tasks as Mission priorities shifted to respond to the pandemic.

Several respondents (n=7) noted difficulties arising from having to shift to virtual work, including challenges due connectivity issues, scheduling, and efficiency. Some USAID and implementing partner respondents reported that local partners (government, private sector, those in rural areas) were not able to join virtual sessions (due to lack of access to the internet or individual computers to participate) and perceived that this may have affected building and strengthening relationships for activity design and implementation. One MI2 respondent raised concerns about the ability to build consensus or buy-in for the new model and engage more introverted participants using virtual platforms. MI2, USAID, and implementing partner respondents all noted challenges in scheduling virtual meetings across multiple time zones. Typically, MI2 conducts intensive, in-person workshops to engage participants in the Conservation Standards process. In translating this process, there were some concerns from one MI2 and one Washington respondent that virtual workshops were less effective and efficient and were further exacerbated by the pandemic by reducing time for participants to participate in workshops (e.g., illness, access to workspace, child and family care). Three respondents noted delays in the implementation of MI2 tasks and USAID activities, including one implementing partner noting the need to revise workplans developed with MI2 because of COVID-19 priorities and two respondents (one implementing partner, one Mission) sharing that COVID-19 resulted in delays in MI2 support.

Two USAID respondents shared unexpected positive impacts of shifting to virtual work that are worth noting. One Washington respondent perceived that the virtual space allowed for the inclusion of a broader range of subject matter experts that otherwise may not have been available, and a Mission respondent noted that an implementing partner consortium that had previously worked with MI2 formed its own group of coaches to conduct P&Rs, while MI2 supported remotely.



The shift to a buy-in mechanism presented both opportunities for and challenges to implementation.

Previously, MI was centrally funded by the USAID Office of Forest and Biodiversity, while MI2 included an opportunity for other operating units to access MI2 services³⁰ through a buy-in mechanism. By the end of FY 2021, there were 16 ongoing buy-ins: Africa Bureau, Amazon Regional Environment Program, Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment, Caribbean Development Program, Bureau for Global Health, LAC) Bureau, and the Indonesia, Colombia, Liberia, Kenya East Africa, Madagascar, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru, and Regional Development Mission for Asia Missions.³¹ Fifteen (8 represented in the sample) of the 31 Missions and Regional Bureaus supported by MI2 used the buy-in mechanism, while USAID Washington supported 16 (5 represented in the sample). Buy-ins comprised approximately 84 percent of available funding.³² EQ 5a explores perceptions of the impact of this shift on program implementation and outcomes.³³ Notably, the existence of a Mission buy-in option meant that Missions could access MI2 for their different adaptive management needs.

Positive Effects on Implementation

USAID (3 Washington and one Mission) and MI2 respondents shared several positive implications of the buy-in approach on implementation. One MI2 respondent perceived that the buy-in mechanism created opportunities for more long-term MI2 engagement with projects and workflows, including multiple opportunities for engagement with a Mission or Office over time. In the same vein, an MI2 respondent and a Washington respondent noted that the depth and breadth of services made possible by bigger buy-ins allowed for more learning and adaptive management. Two respondents (one MI2 and one Washington) perceived that buy-ins fostered increased Mission engagement with and commitment to the MI2 approach, and one respondent credited the buy-in approach with enabling Missions to obtain more tailored support. Further, a Mission respondent commented that they “like[d] the fact that [MI2] was really easy to buy in” and that while the process of working with MI2 to develop this request required less details than they were accustomed to (e.g., with the budget), they felt “it worked out just fine” (Mission respondent, small group interview).

Regarding benefits outside of Missions, one MI2 respondent speculated that the buy-in approach benefits the Biodiversity Division as whole, because Division staff take advantage of the buy-in as an opportunity to be more engaged with the Missions and attend workshops (the switch to virtual workshops also supported this engagement). This engagement allows Biodiversity Division staff “to say ‘this is the contract we kind of own even if we're not the only ones funding it’” (MI2 respondent), giving

³⁰ Biodiversity core funds are still available to Missions.

³¹ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. “MI2 FY21 Annual Report.” USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2Q2.pdf.

³² Environmental Incentives. 2022. “MI2 Mission Matrix.” Microsoft Excel, May 13, 2022.

³³ Eleven respondents (MI2 staff, Washington staff, Mission staff) were asked about their perception of the change to buy-in mechanisms.

Washington influence over policy and strategy implementation priorities, and allowing Washington staff to share learning between Missions.³⁴

“I think the thing with buy ins - I'm guessing there are pros and it helps get services that Missions need to them in a nice and expediated way. MI2 can set up big workflows with Missions. Challenges with buy in are [that] Missions source out core functions to MI2 and this results in disempowerment of Missions in designing and implementing their programs.”
(USAID Washington staff)

Challenges With the Buy-in Approach

Notably, challenges and constructive criticism of the buy-in approach were raised primarily by USAID Washington respondents (n=6) (as well as one Mission respondent). One Washington respondent perceived that when Missions are not already familiar with the MI2 approach, they do not participate in buy-ins, and another Washington respondent believed that the first phase (MI) was necessary to “sell the approach and get people socialized” (Washington respondent).³⁵ Two Washington respondents perceived that the buy-in ceiling is not high enough for all interested Missions to participate, particularly given the high demand for MI2 support. “Missions can't access funds anymore because they are at [the] ceiling, they're not available...I think it could have been a good model if there were enough ceiling for everyone that wanted to buy in to be able to buy in...I think the buy in was a good idea, but I don't think we knew we needed such a big ceiling for it” (Washington respondent).

Washington respondents also mentioned challenges related to factors hindering sustainability and increasing capability. Two Washington respondents shared that the buy-in mechanism results in less Mission engagement in the design process (Mission staff just showing up for sessions with little preparation) or seeing MI2 as a contractor only to provide specific services. This disengagement can result in technical staff not learning as much from the process, and USAID disempowerment in design and implementation. One of these respondents noted that with the central funding model, Washington staff made sure Missions were engaged before sending MI2 support, but with the buy-in process, Missions are more directly involved with MI2 and perceived that Mission staff time and priorities may also contribute to disengagement. Another challenge was ensuring that MI2 services addressed projects with a wider lens and not as only stand-alone engagements, “making sure that it was folded in[to] MI2[’s] vision and not a standalone thing” (Washington respondent). One Washington respondent believed that buy-ins did not allow for deeper adaptive management (in contrast to an opinion above).

Another Washington respondent discussed the demand for MI2 driven by buy-ins. “I think sometimes Missions put a lot of demands on MI2 – sort of with expectations that they are sort of at their call” (Washington respondent). This respondent also thought MI2 was a bit less prepared for workshops during the first year (driven by demand), but that they have improved, and implementation was not

³⁴ In MI2’s review of this report, they also noted the added value role of the Biodiversity Division and Regional Bureau staff in helping MI2 to scope the needs of a Mission and to help tailor the process and tools to align with the given context.

³⁵ However, MI2 report reviewers note that a number of new Missions, OUs, Global Health, CDP and others have bought into the mechanism.

substantially affected. This respondent and another Washington respondent raised concerns that the demand led to requests outside MI2's scope and/or capacity, which MI2 could flag with Washington, but also needed to push back on a bit more.

Additional Perspective

One Mission respondent shared a preference for a mixed capability because core funding can be used in “tight spaces” or for Washington priorities, and the ability for Missions to buy-in for their specific priorities is helpful. However, both mechanisms may require negotiations with Washington as elaborated in the quote below:

“It works both ways- when you have no money and you have a good case, having that resource in Washington [central funding] is awesome...we wouldn't be able to do certain things without it. But when I just want to ask for [some]thing, but there's no space for you to buy-in, then you have to negotiate it with Washington before you even get to the partner.” (Mission staff).

MI2 CONTRIBUTION TO USAID STAFF, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES

Through technical support and facilitation, MI2 aimed to improve the quality of adaptive management and evidence use for programming decisions for USAID biodiversity programs. As part of their approach, MI2 deployed numerous different types of tools and resources (many of which were developed under MI) to help staff improve capacity for program design and planning. Examples include the adaptation of the Conservation Standards for USAID contexts, the Biodiversity How-To Guides, guidance on using Miradi, the Evidence in Action guides, and indicator toolkits for different topic areas. MI2 aimed to influence how staff conducted situation and problem analyses for program planning and inform program design with systematic tools for working through program logic and applying evidence. The following outcomes describe how MI2 (including tools, resources, and how they were deployed) contributed to outcomes for USAID staff, programs, and activities.

Across all findings, USAID staff reported that they were often resource constrained. This influenced the need and desire to access technical support for program strategy, design, and adaptive management tasks, and played a role in respondents' perceptions of approaches and tools that were used. This theme consistently emerges across findings of outcomes and mechanisms during and after MI2 support.



MI2 introduced more systematic and robust ways of approaching program logic and activity design for biodiversity programs and built skills and confidence to use the Conservation Standards.

USAID and implementing partner respondents expressed appreciation for the adaptive management tools and experience with working with MI2. Respondents perceived that through working with MI2, they were able to improve aspects of activity and program design. These include using more systematic and robust ways to define and articulate program logic, think more strategically about programs, identify

threats and drivers, and choose strategic approaches. A USAID Washington respondent reflected that after working with MI and MI2, they felt that:

“... we [USAID staff and implementing staff] are more methodological about trying to pull out the relationships, especially threats and drivers that drive a particular thing that’s happening in the field...I think the process [visually mapping theories of change] helps them to really pull those factors apart.... I think it has helped with the thought process, and the management and implementation.” (USAID Washington respondent)

The use of the Conservation Standards approach for adaptive management allowed respondents to strengthen program design and MEL plans. Respondents particularly valued ToCs when explicit about program assumptions and expected outcomes. Specifically, USAID and implementing partner respondents expressed that MI2 facilitation of adaptive management activities and support for the use of these tools (e.g., Conservation Standards) helped them better articulate program logic. One implementing partner respondent described that the process helped clearly state their assumptions, while a few other USAID and implementing partner respondents emphasized that the process helped them to think more logically and realistically, especially in designing activities in complex situations.

USAID and implementing partner respondents shared that working with MI2 helped them navigate project planning in complex scenarios. A few USAID and implementing partner respondents also shared that using the Conservation Standards tools with MI2 facilitation helped unite multiple conceptual elements and ground them within the project context. For example, one Mission respondent highlighted that MI2 staff helped them work through their situation model and identify which strategic approaches would make sense to pursue with the resources they had available. In some USAID and implementing partner perspectives, the Conservation Standards process helped articulate strategy within the context of broader regional strategy and understand what other countries/regions are doing that likely has implications for their strategy (especially for cross-boundary challenges). One Mission and one Washington respondent articulated that engaging in the Conservation Standards approach helped connect the activities of multiple Missions to better understand how they connect to broader strategies across a region (e.g., Amazon).

However, USAID and implementing partner respondents also noted that working through the formal Conservation Standards process was often long and intensive, and while valuable, it often made the process feel challenging. For example, a Mission respondent noted that in their experience, using this process to provide all possible ideas ends up with complicated situation models and ToCs (e.g., a “spaghetti” diagram) that was then difficult to use in practice. In other examples, implementing partner and Mission respondents noted that they often felt time and resource constrained during activity start-up. While engaging in the formal Conservation Standards process to develop their ToC was insightful, respondents perceived that it was challenging to balance engaging in that process with other demands on their time for their activity (see Factors). On the other hand, a few USAID respondents noted that with enough time, Missions became accustomed to the process and/or understood how to engage new people into the process.

For some Mission respondents, working with MI2 helped them build their confidence to facilitate the Conservation Standards process, and for others, how to engage in ToC thinking. For example, USAID and implementing partner respondents reported that they gained and/or improved facilitation skills for conducting adaptive management tasks. Eight USAID and implementing partner respondents felt that they became more comfortable either co-facilitating a Conservation Standards process (e.g., a ToC workshop or a P&R workshop) or leading facilitation of this process. These respondents also observed that others they were working with or had received training with also demonstrated enhanced ability for facilitation. For example, as mentioned above, due to COVID-19, an implementing partner consortium from one activity that previously worked with MI2, received remote training from MI2 on the P&R facilitation approach, and in turn, facilitated these sessions and work planning independently. In this case, respondents' skills improved after only a short period of interaction; however, for most respondents, these skills were built over multiple interactions with MI and MI2. (See outcome harvesting Case Study #2 Annex E for more details about facilitation.)

Some USAID respondents developed capacity through the Biodiversity Advisors training program, as well as "learning by doing" through MI2 assistance on their projects. MI2 and Washington respondents reflected that the engagement of adult learning specialists may have improved the Biodiversity Advisors training. One Mission respondent who became a Biodiversity Advisor highlighted that the collection of resources and examples from the training were useful to go back to, particularly for identifying different approaches for adaptive management activities, like P&Rs. Another Mission respondent who had worked with a Biodiversity Advisor cohort described that they were:

"... mostly paying attention to the questions they were asking and the way they were facilitating and how they were engaging the participants and asking probing questions. I learned how to help participants when they were struggling and asking questions and giving hints for participants to come up with that information. Their facilitation style is what I learned." (USAID Mission Respondent).

However, while respondents indicated that they felt comfortable facilitating in the future, other factors including ones related to available time and resources, position, and perceptions of neutrality, influenced perceptions on whether they would facilitate independently. (See section on Sustainability and Factors below.)



USAID and implementing partner staff are better able to connect diverse ideas and viewpoints within the room to build situation models and theories of change (capability).

Generally, USAID and implementing partner respondents perceived that MI2 helped them better understand and consider perspectives of other sectors and stakeholders that were critical to their activity. Respondents expressed that using the Conservation Standards tools—particularly in building ToCs—helped bring together teams and coordinate thinking around biodiversity programming design, work planning, and learning. One Washington respondent perceived that focusing training for USAID

staff on how to identify biodiversity focal interests and threats (using the Conservation Standards) was key as it aligned with the Biodiversity Code.

A few USAID respondents expressed that MI2 facilitation and organization helped ensure that they could work better with partners in co-creation and have continuity through the activity in terms of process and knowledge management (see Service Delivery below). Some USAID respondents reported that using the Conservation Standards approach helped them be more coordinated with partners in work planning and joint design across related activities within a region or a project. For example, in one case there were "two different activities, [that] had not spent a lot of time interacting with each other to understand what each other were trying to achieve and [nor] identifying those common intermediate results within the broader USAID project level ToC that they both were working towards. So, it [working with MI2 and the Conservation Standards] was a good opportunity to identify how they felt they were making progress, how they felt they should be or could be working together better" (Washington respondent). One Mission respondent explained that they were motivated to engage with MI2 because:

"...by demonstrating what are the benefits of working with MI2 in integrating our activities within their bilateral and regional portfolio... It's a way to say we need to work together in a more integrated way...we can share those plans and we can avoid duplicity and be working in a more complementary way." (USAID Mission Staff)

Some respondents described cases where there were challenges integrating participants and perspectives from other sectors. In particular, a few Washington and implementing partner respondents described difficulties in bringing private sector partners into the Conservation Standards process. For example, an implementing partner described challenges in engaging private sector partners in the co-creation process for a broader conservation project (with a private sector component) as the process was intensive and took up multiple meetings but did not touch on components that the partners were interested in and instead focused on areas that were outside their area of expertise and influence. For this respondent, they worried that their ability to work with these private sector partners again has been diminished because they did not feel that engaging in the Conservation Standards process was a good use of their time (see Service Delivery). Another implementing partner respondent noted USAID terminology and jargon as a barrier to engagement with the private sector.



Increased investment of time and attention to monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) and use of MEL outputs during pause and reflects (motivation).

Fifteen USAID and implementing partner respondents described how MI2 supported the development, implementation, and use of MEL plans for their activities and programs. Given that respondents were at different stages of implementation, insight into change in investment for and impacts of MEL varied across the sample. Overall, through working with MI2, Mission and implementing partner staff increased their attention on MEL design and implementation, as well as increased time spent on MEL design in a handful of cases. Changes in investment for MEL manifested in different forms, from attention and value

of MEL design, systems, and processes, to funding and dedication of resources. MI2 respondents felt that their interaction helped recognize and daylight MEL needs, which has encouraged staff participation, increased investment of time, and encouraged cooperation across teams to ensure that MEL indicators were being collected.

“We had an organized MEL plan because the ToC for the project is clear, so it was easy to coordinate different strategic approaches we are implementing. It’s not like the different pieces were not speaking to each other . . . to me, it was not going to be easy if MI2 was not involved in that project.” (implementing partner respondent)

Respondents perceived that the tools and processes that MI2 introduced streamlined MEL development and improved sharing and communications across activity stakeholders. For example, respondents noted that ToC and facilitation support helped bring indicators together across multiple areas and partners and provided common interface for adaptive management. In another example, an implementing partner respondent reported that the workbooks that MI2 introduced to their activity helped coordinate reporting across activity components. As a result, several USAID and implementing partner respondents perceived that MI2 contributed to improved capacity and awareness around MEL and improved the quality of MEL plans. For example, one Mission and one implementing partner respondent reported that they are going beyond performance indicators and incorporating other information and data and sharing that learning with others. A few implementing partner respondents also expressed that MEL plans were more grounded in theory, aligned to results chains, and incorporated other information and data beyond standard indicators. A few Mission and implementing partner respondents felt they would not have been able to develop relevant, robust, custom indicators that met USAID standards and expectations without MI2 support. In one case, an implementing partner respondent perceived that MI2 helped them communicate more openly with USAID about concerns and questions during MEL plan development, which has improved their confidence that their plan will be well received by USAID.

USAID respondents also expressed that they valued the time spent developing MEL plans and perceived increasing interest in and resources for MEL over time. One Washington respondent expressed that MI2 helped foster a culture of valuing critical thinking on MEL, using it for the purposes of adaptive management, and tying it more closely to the ToC and program objectives. Another Washington respondent reported seeing increased interest from Missions in MEL and increased investment of time and budget in targeted assessments to inform MEL. One implementing partner respondent observed that available resources and support for MEL, particularly through the MI2 mechanism, signaled the Agency’s commitment to improved investment in MEL.



There were both opportunities and challenges for applying outputs from tools and approaches to adaptively managing activities.

Nearly every USAID and implementing partner respondent perceived that building a ToC and/or results chain (regardless of how it was built, the perceived quality or robustness, or how they felt about the process of developing it) was a critical component for better understanding their activity progress and

they continually referred to them during adaptive management tasks. One Mission respondent described that by going through the Conservation Standards process, they were able to have “clear links between the chain of planning, monitoring, and the end results we are expecting [which] helped the team in defining work planning and doing annual reflections.” Another Mission respondent cited the importance of using a ToC to consolidate their ideas into a logical results-oriented framework. Operationally, Mission respondents (one KII and one small group interview) also highlighted that working to refine and clarify their ToC was helpful for writing procurement documents, concept notes, and program descriptions.

Mission and implementing partner respondents reported that the ToCs and MEL plans helped track progress for activities during P&Rs, determine whether the logic is working, and whether assumptions are valid. However, just a handful of Mission and implementing partner respondents described cases where, with MI2 facilitation and technical support, they were able to then adjust their workplans accordingly. One implementing partner respondent recounted that after a P&R, they realized that different project partners needed to work more closely together, which they addressed through adjusting their activity implementation. Two implementing partner respondents highlighted that using the Conservation Standards approach and developing and using a ToC throughout their activity helped it to be more results oriented. Another implementing partner respondent described how it took multiple years for them to determine how their individual strategic approaches interacted with each other, and through working through individual and combined ToCs, they were able to better work towards impact.

“Initially we thought we would have 11 strategic approaches ... implemented in all the watersheds where we were working. At the P&R meetings, we noted that not all watersheds are similar, they’re different contexts, they have different issues, [so] we were selective [about] in which watershed we would implement different strategic approaches. The P&R workshops really guided us in identifying this.” (implementing partner respondent)

MI2 and USAID respondents also perceived that the use of improved MEL plans during P&Rs should help track progress towards objectives and inform adaptive management of activities. Like P&Rs, only a few respondents described using their MEL plans to make changes to their activities. This may be because respondents were at different stages of activity implementation and may not have had a chance to leverage data from their MEL plans. A few implementing partner respondents described that having an improved MEL plan based on the ToC and using that as the basis for the P&Rs, helped guide work planning from year to year. This was particularly the case for one implementing partner whose MEL specialist worked closely with MI2. In one case, an implementing partner refined their activity when it became clear that some assumptions were not being met. In another case, through participation in the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group-run Impact Lab, one implementing partner respondent described how working through the Conservation Standards process helped them determine which activities they should prioritize in order to strengthen enabling conditions (see Appendix E: Outcome Harvesting). Generally, respondents did describe how engaging in P&Rs and using a ToC/results chain helped track progress, but respondents did not explicitly note how changes to investment in and/or quality of MEL plans may have contributed.

Some implementing partner and Mission respondents also reported challenges using and learning from the MEL plans and P&Rs. During this evaluation, we surfaced several different programmatic and contextual factors that influenced whether activities were able to apply learning to inform program and activity design, as well as adaptively manage ongoing activities. For example, a few USAID and implementing partner respondents noted that there was not a change in investment in resources (time, budget) to support more in-depth or extensive MEL implementation. A few implementing partner respondents noted that contractual obligations and the mismatch in existing staff capacity hindered the implementation of revised MEL plans. While MI2 engagement helped think about what else needed to be collected, it did not align with existing systems or existing skill sets, which was challenging for some teams. One Mission respondent reported that some indicators they developed were not a priority for their government counterparts and they did not have resources to focus on it, but they were able to still include them by integrating them across projects versus focusing them in one area. These factors are discussed in further detail in the Factors section below.

“In reality, what we had was limited flexibility in the design of our project and we had to deal with our contract deliverables. They were set, the magnitude and programming of the targets were all established in the contract. These things could not be changed. Even though we say we should be adjusting those programs, we couldn’t do those things. These were the limitations we were facing; the most we could do was adjust our activities.” (implementing partner respondent)

HOW DID MI2 SERVICE DELIVERY AND SUPPORT CONTRIBUTE TO THESE OUTCOMES?

The findings in this section focus on MI2’s delivery of technical support (“service delivery”) and how that contributed to the outcomes detailed above. However, as a reminder, the nature of the data limits our ability to clearly disaggregate between the specific approach used for adaptive management (Conservation Standards) from *how* this approach was implemented (by MI2), as respondents often discussed these two elements interchangeably. The Evaluation Team has endeavored to disaggregate between the two where possible.

Generally, USAID and implementing partner respondents reported that they enjoyed working with MI2, as staff were friendly, professional, and easy to work with. Respondents perceived that working with MI2 provided an opportunity to engage with the Conservation Standards when they were otherwise too time and resource constrained to do so. Several Mission and implementing partner respondents were motivated to engage with MI2 and use different types of tools and support (P&R, non-specific “tools,” and MI2 facilitation), as they perceived it would help them meet the learning needs and stakeholder needs.



The quality of MI2 facilitation (including facilitation style, knowledge management, organizational skills) influenced uptake of design and adaptive management approaches.

Most respondents highlighted that MI2 facilitation played a central role in their ability to engage with the Conservation Standards, guide program design, undertake adaptive management tasks, and assess and apply evidence and learning from MEL activities. As a whole, USAID and implementing partner respondents appreciated MI2 support to organize and facilitate the process as it allowed them to engage more fully.

USAID and implementing partner respondents reported that facilitation from MI2 was an important component for using the Conservation Standards and conducting adaptive management with multiple partners and stakeholders. Respondents noted that the MI2 facilitators' topical expertise (discussed below) as well as their ability to synthesize many perspectives to inform activity design and adaptive management (e.g., P&Rs), and keep the conversations productive and moving forward (along with facilitation tools, icebreakers, and knowledge management). In particular, the results chain helps coordinate activity planning and adaptive management activities, particularly for activities with multiple components. For example, one implementing partner respondent shared that their results chain was useful for aligning the work of over 50 activity staff. Mission respondents expressed that having an external facilitator to guide and organize the discussions in workshops (for design, start-up, and P&Rs) was particularly valuable and also emphasized that MI2 helped move the process forward and organized information and materials.

USAID and implementing partner respondents perceived that MI2's engagement of implementing partners during the startup and planning/pre-award stage helped get Missions and implementing partners on the same page. Two respondents (implementing partner, Mission) highlighted that MI2's facilitation of P&Rs and technical support to make sense of findings helped them determine how to apply learnings to keep the project on track.

“They were crucial in that step, not just to make sure the Open [Conservation] Standards were integrated but facilitating the whole process to lead the Mission and the private sector who were fully engaged into the process and into finalizing the design and awarding the project.” (Small Group Interview, Mission respondent)

MI2 also provided workshop facilitation in at least three languages,³⁶ which may have helped facilitate participation across multiple stakeholders. However, one implementing partner and two Mission respondents mentioned challenges where MI2 facilitators did not have corresponding language capacity to facilitate participation by local stakeholders (e.g., local government, national government, beneficiaries, implementing partner staff). For example, one Mission respondent described that while the facilitators spoke French, their level of fluency did not match the participants. They stated that:

“...there's a difficulty in understanding each other due to [this] limitation and [it] may limit exchange of ideas, ways to capture ideas from participants. It was tiring when both

³⁶ MI2 reviewers also shared that workshop materials are available in English, Spanish and French.

participants and facilitators are making efforts to understand each other.” (Mission respondent)

For a few USAID and implementing partner respondents, MI2 facilitation was helpful for connecting knowledge across the Agency. A Mission respondent discussed how they were using MI2 to help them work collaboratively with other Mission offices with MI2 support on integration. Two respondents (MI2, Washington) mentioned the benefit of sharing challenges and lessons learned across the MI2 Team in multiple countries, including facilitators from USAID, to improve the quality of the intervention.



MI2 staff awareness of and experience with USAID processes, policies, and priorities was a critical factor for providing responsive technical support.

Respondents perceived that up-to-date knowledge and familiarity with USAID policies, processes, and priorities was critical for successful support to program design and adaptive management. For example, two MI2 staff reported that it was critical for them to be able to connect with USAID counterparts to receive updates on changes in guidance and strategy so they could respond accordingly. In addition, four respondents (2 MI2, 1 Washington, 1 Mission) noted that MI2 were experienced in connecting and aligning with USAID policies or products.

“I just think ... the value that we get from Washington and Mission points of contact, is the fact that you know, we're not behind the firewall. We don't always have a bird's eye view of new guidance being rolled out in the Agency. We have to rely on our Biodiversity Division counterparts to ensure that, if there's going to be a shift in Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning guidance or tools or policy, that we are quickly and efficiently able to pick that up so that the support we provide the Missions is on target with today's needs.” (MI2 staff)

However, two USAID respondents reported that MI2 staff with less experience with USAID initially experienced challenges in designing projects aligned with the Agency's processes. In another example, a Mission respondent described how less experienced MI2 staff had difficulty translating a results chain (with which MI2 staff are very familiar) to a results framework (where MI2 staff may have less familiarity but is required by the program office). This finding is further discussed in the Factors section as it is also a barrier to uptake at the institutional level.

“If it's just someone who is familiar with the tool [Conservation Standards] but does not have good knowledge of what the Mission is doing, it is not easy [for] them ... to capture the expectations from the team.” (Small Group Interview, Mission respondent)



Biodiversity and conservation subject matter expertise of MI2 facilitators influenced the process and products of technical support.

The evaluation explored how the involvement of biodiversity and other types of specialists as facilitators may have influenced activity design and implementation.³⁷ MI2 respondents also perceived that the relevant technical background is necessary for effective facilitation. Not only was a strong technical background needed to engage deeply in biodiversity program areas, but one respondent noted that it enabled them to quickly identify local technical experts for support.

Most USAID and implementing partner respondents perceived that facilitators' technical backgrounds contributed to the end products of the sessions they facilitated. Implementing partner respondents highlighted that facilitators' backgrounds could make it easier for them to guide discussions, analyze cause and effects, and problem-solve in their areas of expertise. For example, one Mission small group interview described how the facilitators could "cite examples from other places ...to guide the discussion [and] offer additional insight. Thinking that we would not have gone into [without them]." One Mission respondent shared that they would not have secured buy-in into the MI2 mechanism if facilitators did not have sector-specific backgrounds, as this expertise was necessary to engage people from various activities. However, many respondents attributed their positive experience to MI2's facilitation skills rather than their technical background.

On the other hand, there were a few cases where respondents perceived that the facilitator's background in biodiversity and conservation posed challenges during the design process. For example, two Washington respondents reflected that MI2 facilitators with biodiversity backgrounds may have unintentionally influenced activity design towards their specific technical areas of expertise and were less adept at integrating other technical areas and perspectives (however, others had very strong perceptions of facilitators as impartial to the process as well). In another case, the combination of a specialized background and the Mission being less involved and handing over the whole process to MI2 (see disempowerment discussion in buy-in section) resulted in a perceived program design that was less aligned with Mission objectives and more aligned with the specific expertise of facilitators. In another case, a Washington respondent shared instances of MI2 facilitators with specialized backgrounds missing opportunities to integrate political, social, and economic factors into situation models when raised by participants with these backgrounds. This respondent noted that results chains "give you a shared language. It really strengthens programs." However, they noted that they experienced some cases where the facilitators "have a background, just in natural sciences. I have seen examples where they've taken what I would consider some of the more important factors, political, social, economic factors, out of situation models rather than adding them in and kind of repeatedly, I think quite accidentally...not hearing when participants in a workshop are adding results into results chains that are drawing more from backgrounds that aren't natural science backgrounds, and that are pointing towards strategies that get more at power dynamics."

In another example, two Washington respondents specifically noted cases where MI2 facilitators did not have specific marine expertise needed for design or a learning group. One stated, "Gets back to your

³⁷ Twenty key informant or small group interviewees were specifically asked about their perceptions of the background of MI2 facilitators (7 Mission-based respondents, 6 implementing partners, 5 Washington staff and 2 MI2 staff).

question about whether or not having that conservation knowledge is important. Maybe it is – having a mismatch – we’re not getting to where we need to be at certain places” (Washington staff).

Integration

At USAID, the emergence of the Environment and Natural Resource Management Framework is the most recent example of efforts to coordinate and unify environmental, natural resource, and climate change work across the Agency and guide cross-sectoral investments. These include areas such as governance and rights, conflict, health, food systems, and urban areas. In a few cases, USAID and implementing partner respondents described challenges in integrating social, political, and climate factors into the Conservation Standards process while working with MI2. For these cases, it is challenging to disentangle perceptions of the tool (Conservation Standards) and perceptions of how it was facilitated by MI2. The following describes the perceptions of USAID and implementing partner respondents who described their experience of using the Conservation Standards for integration.

“Sometimes if you have the background of the discussion then you have more tools to manage the discussion. They know the sector and if there’s something important going on, then they need more time. If we are talking about something that is not critical, then they have the ability to move the people to the context. They know the context. At the same time, I realized that they actively try not to interfere with the discussion which is important.”
(implementing partner respondent)

While USAID and implementing partner respondents generally valued using the Conservation Standards for biodiversity programming, particularly to help “keep their eye on the [biodiversity] goals” (Washington respondent), some others perceived that some of the ways in which the Standards are framed and phrased is not always straightforward for connecting and addressing sector approaches and priorities. For example, a Washington respondent described their experience working on activity design with a Mission where participants struggled with the language and framings utilized within the Standards (e.g., ecosystem services, human well-being), particularly at USAID. As mentioned above, an implementing partner respondent described challenges in bringing private sector partners into the Conservation Standards process, as the terminology was grounded in biodiversity and conservation domains which were difficult to align with the private and agricultural sectors. One Mission respondent noted that the software used for implementing the Conservation Standards approach did not allow for comprehensive and clear integration of climate considerations, which was frustrating for their climate counterparts who were part of the co-creation.

MI2 (as well as MI) has worked to refine and adapt the Conservation Standards for biodiversity programming within the international development context at USAID. While the Conservation Standards use a threat-based and biodiversity-centered approach to conservation planning and strategy, MI2 respondents describe their efforts to continue to adapt the tools to be more responsive to audiences beyond the biodiversity sector. An MI2 respondent recognized that some of the tools are “not well suited for multiple audiences beyond the biodiversity sector,” but they remain open-minded and responsive to the needs of USAID. This is exemplified by the experience of a Washington

respondent in co-designing a multi-country program. They described that while they struggled to better represent human well-being targets beyond characterizing them as “threats,” through collaboration and perseverance with their MI2 colleagues, the Conservation Standards “held up to that stress” and they were able to successfully integrate different sectors into the process.

In another example, in 2019–2020, MI2 worked with the USAID Washington-funded Biodiversity Results and Integrated Development Gains Enhanced (BRIDGE) Activity to produce a [Thinking and Working Politically](#) guide to better integrate political considerations into activity design for biodiversity programs using the Conservation Standards. Following the development of this guide, Washington and MI2 staff worked together to develop training for USAID and MI2 facilitators to use the guide. One USAID organizer reflected that using concrete examples and a case study approach for the training was very effective for helping facilitators understand how to identify governance and democracy questions and political factors when working through a ToC. This effort was well received by Washington respondents, but it is not yet clear what the uptake or impact of it has been for practice at Missions, nor did the Evaluation Team uncover any additional insights on other efforts to adapt the Conservation Standards for integrated and cross-sectoral programming.



Long-term MI2 engagement and MI2 contextual knowledge influenced uptake and perceived quality of outputs.

Many USAID and implementing partner respondents expressed that the sustained engagement with MI2 (or continued support following MI) provided sufficient time to understand, value and implement the Conservation Standards process and the tools involved. In some scenarios, Missions and the Biodiversity Division, who had worked with MI previously, may have had more time to familiarize themselves with the Conservation Standards approach and value it. This is corroborated by reports from Washington respondents that it takes longer for Missions new to MI2 to see the value and support their approach.

Many USAID respondents noted positive effects of working with MI2 over multiple engagements and/or the same facilitators. One Washington respondent shared an example of how MI and MI2 working continually with a Foreign Service Officer resulted in program improvement over time.

“MI2 has worked with her on three different Missions. They moved to a Mission where they have issues with programming. We’ve seen Foreign Service Officers who have experience with MI and MI2 and seen programs improved significantly with them moving into that role. We’ve seen more openness in talking about challenges/opportunities, better adaptive management, better planning...” (USAID Washington staff)

Some Mission and implementing partner respondents expressed that in order to continually use the ToC for adaptive management, there needs to be sufficient capability and opportunity to follow up on the ToC throughout the activity. For example, for some Mission activity teams, the ability to engage MI2 for regular P&Rs was helpful to check in on how they were moving through the Conservation Standards process. Respondents also expressed that consistent MI2 facilitators held deeper institutional knowledge of the project to inform the activity steps and built trust and social relations with the team. In some

cases, for follow-on activities or in cases where MI2 had a long-term engagement with the Mission (See outcome harvesting Case Study #2 Annex E), they understood the challenges and opportunities within that Mission’s context to inform new program design. Two respondents (1 implementing partner, 1 Washington staff) believed that the ability to involve MI2 at the start of the project and engage throughout, or address design challenges at the beginning of the process, was influential to success.

“I think they [MI2] have had good quality staff and they have retained their key personnel ... (e.g., Chief of Party and other activity managers) who are really solid, some who have carried over from MI and are very strong and have a good understanding of USAID... there’s probably a handful of four or five FOS facilitators that were excellent that we’ve known all along and they’ve been great as demand increased for their work.” (Washington staff)

In contrast, respondents who did not have consistent or sustained MI2 support reported challenges for co-creation and adaptive management. For example, one Mission respondent reported delays in the co-creation process due to turnover and shifts in facilitators. Two other respondents reported that support from MI2 for a single P&R session was insufficient to help them understand how to apply insights from the P&R for adaptive management.

MI2 INFLUENCE ON USAID PRACTICE AND CULTURE OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

This section describes whether and how approaches and tools introduced by MI2 continue to be used without MI2 support and the degree to which they have influenced USAID practice and culture. We caveat that it is difficult to disentangle the influence of MI versus MI2. The next section describes in more detail the factors that influence these outcomes around sustainability.



There is some evidence of improved capability to understand and, in some cases, ability to facilitate the Conservation Standards for biodiversity program planning and/or use tools independently of MI2.³⁸

³⁸ MI2 notes that it is not always the goal of MI2 for USAID Mission staff or implementing partners to facilitate the Standards independently.

Building a Culture of Adaptive Management at the Philippines Mission and Beyond:

Outcome Harvesting Case #2 presents two examples of how the MI2 approach has informed programming beyond MI/MI2's initial engagement and influenced the project design approach of an implementing partner. See Annex E for more information.

A total of 16 respondents (5 Mission, 3 Washington, 8 implementing partner) reported both direct and indirect experience of using knowledge, tools, and skills learned through MI and MI2 without MI2 support. Respondents most frequently mentioned continuing to conduct P&Rs (n=8 USAID, implementing partners, MI2), while three of the eight respondents (2 Mission, 1 Washington) mentioned using specific components of the Conservation Standards (understanding of threats, the results chain, and/or the ToC) as the basis for their P&Rs. For example, a Washington respondent reported that they “always use the results chains

that [were] developed ... for the annual Pause and Reflect... In Papua New Guinea, it's just become [a] very accessible, easy basis for identifying their midterm evaluation questions.” Two implementing partner respondents reported that they continue to use the results chains they developed with MI2 within their activities without MI2 support, while two have developed or refined results chains independently.

Four of the eight USAID (Mission and Washington) respondents confirmed that they have incorporated tools/approaches into regular work processes or work. For example, a Washington respondent commented that they continue to use the approaches they and their colleagues learned as Biodiversity Advisors and/or through experience working with MI2 to provide support to Missions. A Mission respondent stated, “we received support from MI2 for [project in Asia] and then we just use the ToC to do a Pause and Reflect sessions within [project in Asia] every year without MI2.”

Respondents also reported that they continue to use other tools such as facilitation techniques, as well as published resources and guides from MI2. Two implementing partner respondents continued to use general facilitation techniques learned from MI2 such as tools for organization and skills for facilitating discussion and surfacing perspectives. One implementing partner continued to use workbooks to work through the Conservation Standards (see also outcome harvesting Case Study #2, Annex E). USAID and MI2 respondents also shared that Washington and Mission staff use resources such as the How-To Guides for USAID Biodiversity Programming as well as webinars from Learning Groups to inform biodiversity programs.

“We always try to use this theory of change during our routine or regular monitoring. So that's without the support of MI2, and then we also we only use MI2 for something big a big workshop or training for implementing partners.” (USAID Mission Staff)

*“When we use these tools, we use them ourselves. Without MI2 or USAID. The people know the difference and like that way of facilitation and organization of these workshops. We have a lot of demand trying to keep working with them using these tools.”
(implementing partner respondent)*

Respondents expressed confidence in their ability to use adaptive management approaches without MI2 support. USAID and MI2 respondents shared that some Missions (the Philippines and Madagascar) no longer need MI2 support and can facilitate adaptive management tasks independently. This may be due in part to extensive support that these Missions have received from MI and MI2 in the past (both Missions received support in FY21, however³⁹) (See outcome harvesting Case Study #2 in Annex E). One Mission also brought in new evidence without MI2 support. “Champions” may also facilitate and encourage the continued use of learned approaches and tools independent of MI2 support (discussed under Factors). Examples of champions include a trained Mission staff member who facilitates P&Rs for Missions across the region and a group of implementing partner facilitators forming a “community of practice” to implement MI2 approaches with MI2 providing virtual “coaching” support during the pandemic. This is further discussed in Factors below. However, given that this evaluation occurs before MI2 closes and most respondents have ongoing MI2 support, it is not surprising that one Mission respondent said they have not yet had the opportunity to use the approaches independently.



There is increased awareness and interest in using adaptive management tools for Biodiversity Programs as well as more broadly.

The Conservation Standards approach has achieved some degree of institutionalization within USAID Biodiversity Programs as a method that can align with recommended practices for adaptive management and the use of ToCs and evidence by USAID. For example, the approach explicitly includes steps to identify drivers and threats to biodiversity and integrate those into a results chain (as a type of ToC), which aligns with requirements outlined in the Biodiversity Code (identifying threats and drivers). Within a Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning “how-to-note” on developing ToCs, guides written by MI on developing situation models and results chains for biodiversity are included as an example of methods. However, despite asking most respondents about their awareness of MI2’s influence on broader USAID strategy and culture, just 13 could offer thoughts or examples directly related to this question.

Anecdotally, USAID respondents perceived that the process of designing biodiversity programming, developing MEL plans, and conducting adaptive management has become more systematic, particularly with the use of the Conservation Standards to structure activity start-up, design, and P&R workshops. MI2 perceives that structuring activity start-ups and P&Rs using components from the Standards is an innovation for USAID. USAID respondents noted that MI2 support for adaptive management and program design has helped Offices and Missions develop capabilities to identify and assess strategies for biodiversity programming more effectively and efficiently. Some USAID and implementing partner respondents noted that experiencing the Conservation Standards process helped increase awareness of good adaptive management practice – including the value of starting it early in an activity and maintaining it as a continual process. Some Missions stated that P&Rs were already part of the culture of the Mission, but MI2 further adds that to that culture by introducing specific adaptive management tools to carry them out. For example, an implementing partner respondent appreciated how MI2 brought

³⁹ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. “MI2 FY21 Annual Report.” USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2Q2.pdf.

“adaptive tools for those virtual meetings...and [how] it was well prepared and [MI2] had experience in managing online meetings.”

Respondents expressed continued interest in using adaptive management resources and tools across Missions and in different parts of the Agency. For example, MI2 reported that a Mission requested targeted training for Mission and implementing partner staff on adaptive management approaches (e.g., a request to train Mission staff to use the Good to Great Tool). MI2 respondents reported that the How-To Guides on Biodiversity are the most downloaded resource from Biodiversity Links, and there is high online engagement with the Conservation Enterprises and Combating Wildlife Trafficking Toolkits since they have been published. A handful of Washington and MI2 respondents indicated that interest in the use of the Conservation Standards and other tools (from MI2 as well as MI) has diffused to different parts of the Agency (e.g., Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance). For example, the Conservation Standards approach to building a ToC is being used in other sectors outside of biodiversity for project design (e.g., Sustainable Landscapes). However, it is important to note that the diffusion of these tools is influenced both by their introduction during MI and their continued use during MI2. Different factors, described below, including early adopters, Mission support, and suitability, may influence enculturation timelines.

WHAT FACTORS EXTERNAL TO THE MI2 PROGRAM INFLUENCED THESE OUTCOMES?

While USAID and implementing partner respondents reported gains in capabilities and motivation to use tools and apply learning to program activities, many reported that they encountered opportunities and limitations in applying these tools in practice.



Champions encouraging use of MI2 practices

The institutionalization and adoption of MI2 approaches has been encouraged, in part, by “champions” who have received formal and informal training in using and facilitating the Conservation Standards. Champions include a variety of stakeholders, including Mission staff, implementing partners, and Washington staff, as well as USAID staff who received Biodiversity Advisor training. These champions have helped improve the application of the Conservation Standards and encourage its use across Missions. Examples include:

- A Mission staff who facilitates P&Rs within and across Missions using the Conservation Standards approach
- A Program Office at the Mission encouraging and supporting use of the Standards and MI2 (outcome harvesting Case Study #2)
- Staff from implementing partners who formed a group to provide facilitation support for the Standards
- Foreign Service Officers (including some who received Biodiversity Advisor training) encouraging and supporting the use of the Standards as they move from Mission to Mission

“Another example [of individuals carrying learning from MI2 from one Mission to a new Mission] is two individuals [Foreign Service Officers]...who worked with us in the...environment office in Uganda and are working within their new Mission to support and advance these approaches within their programming. Another interesting example in Uganda was a [Foreign Service National], he was POC and led the charge in the cross-activity learning agenda...The Uganda Mission has a reputation for being a CLA incubator. It’s the Mission culture over there.” (MI2 staff)

USAID respondents perceived that long-term engagements with Biodiversity Advisors provided staff with opportunities to practice their skills and develop their confidence and capability. For example, two USAID respondents highlighted that the Biodiversity Advisors cohort contributed additional expertise and support at the activity level, particularly in cases where MI2 (or another technical support mechanism) was not available (see also outcome harvesting Case Study #2 Annex E).

One Mission respondent noted that as a Biodiversity Advisor, they served as a resource for facilitating implementation of the Biodiversity Code at a new Mission. This was helpful, as previously this Mission did not have staff with conservation expertise and experience with biodiversity funds, resulting in ongoing frustrations between Washington and the Mission. However, one Washington respondent noted that while Biodiversity Advisors can deliver MI2-esque support independently, not all are able to, and it is important to weigh the costs and benefits of using USAID Biodiversity Advisors for facilitation over MI2 staff.

MI2 perceives that USAID champions have been and continue to be key for connecting them to Missions to encourage and explore opportunities for support. Both MI2 (1) and Washington (2), respondents felt that it was part of their role to convince Missions to utilize MI2 and their approach.



Perceived time and resource constraints present obstacles to USAID staff to implement the Conservation Standards process independent of MI2

On the whole, USAID and implementing partner respondents perceived that they experience time and resource constraints in carrying out activity design, implementation, adaptive management, and learning. Thus, while respondents appreciated the systematic and organized facilitation support from MI2, many reported low bandwidth to engage in and/or facilitate what was described as an “intensive” Conservation Standards process.

As discussed previously, while some respondents continue to use the Conservation Standards approach and associated tools for adaptive management, others report challenges in doing so. A Washington respondent described the Conservation Standards as an “engaged and heavily facilitated” process that requires significant time and resources to understand and be comfortable with, which was often more than staff felt they had available. While some USAID staff were trained as Biodiversity Advisors, out of the eight Biodiversity Advisors who reported trying or considered trying to facilitate the Conservation Standards on their own, half reported time limitations for themselves and/or the participants to do so (all Mission respondents). In particular, USAID respondents perceived that they do not have the available time and resources to organize and facilitate the process and meaningfully participate.

“The team finds MI2 too intense...but also I have a team that has a lot on their plates, we’re understaffed. So, the time commitment for the MI2 process is, for them, very burdensome.” (Mission staff)

Both MI2 and USAID observed that the lack of Mission bandwidth may affect overall uptake and sustainability of the process. For example, one Washington respondent speculated that “some Missions probably see it [the Conservation Standards/MI2 approach] as time consuming and maybe overly prescriptive and overly burdensome.” Many Mission respondents see MI2 as a mechanism to facilitate needed processes that they do not have time to manage and meet needed deadlines. One Mission respondent expressed that they have gotten used to having MI2 facilitation support to use the Conservation Standards, and without them, they are not sure if they could do it on their own. Some USAID and implementing partner respondents expressed that they would want technical support for facilitation in the future to use this process.

Others mentioned that using the Conservation Standards for activity design (both in person and virtually) was a “lengthy” process. One Washington respondent expressed that using this approach resulted in “a very long design process” spanning one to two years. Due to this lengthy process, another Washington respondent reported that some Missions declined to work with MI and MI2. The time required to carry out the full Conservation Standards process may also make it challenging for different types of stakeholders to participate, which can also introduce new challenges. For example, one Mission respondent noted that the lack of consistency of participants (especially in the virtual space) is a barrier to the process (implementation). In another example, a Washington respondent expressed concern that Mission staff could not engage in the lengthy process and turned over more of the process to MI2, potentially reducing Mission ownership of activity design and adaptive management. A few USAID respondents suggested that a lighter version of the Conservation Standards might help mitigate this issue as well as general time constraint challenges. In some cases, Mission staff are already implementing their own “light” version of the Conservation Standards based on their experience working with MI2 in the past and/or through training they received as Biodiversity Advisors.

“I think it’s really good to have facilitators who are immediately on board who understand the topic and area able to help convert those conversations into meaningful theories of change. But on the other hand, in the context of overburdened staff who are looking for all the help they can get, I think it can inadvertently lead to some programming getting out of USAID hands.” (USAID Washington staff)



USAID internal processes, structures, and timelines influence uptake and post-MI2 sustainability

USAID internal processes, structures, and timelines significantly influence both uptake of approaches and tools, as well as post-MI2 sustainability. Examples of processes, structures, and timelines include the

Program Cycle structure, contract structure and flexibility, and staff structure and capacity. These elements can create or thwart opportunities to move learning, products, and tools across different stages of the Program Cycle. Multiple respondents mentioned these internal issues as barriers to fully utilizing adaptive management approaches with or without MI2 support.

“Well, the other barrier is USAID being their own barrier to their own work...we as bureaucrats create these rules and guidelines and other parameters of which you have to get other people to approve things in an effort to make it better, but in the process you're making it more complicated...So you end up with these 400+ page project documents, that because it has proprietary information like budgets, is just sitting in our P drive and not even on a website. So you ask yourself, what was that effort all about?” (Mission staff)

Program Cycle

USAID and implementing partner respondents reported that the Conservation Standards were particularly useful in technical tasks for scoping and developing strategy for programs, activities, and work planning.

“Using the situation model and ToC and results chain helped environment folks convince the Mission that the work that the environment team was doing was central to the goal of the [Country Development Cooperation Strategy]. That's a reason why they've been excited about using the approach.” (Washington respondent)

However, some USAID respondents reported challenges using the Conservation Standards (and resultant products) for other tasks and in other parts of the Program Cycle, which may impede long-term sustainability of this approach. Respondents reported challenges when trying to use the products (e.g., results chains) for more operational and communication tasks – such as budgeting, communication with Program Offices and management, procurement, and solicitation. Three Mission respondents noted instances where the results chain was not understood or was misinterpreted by key stakeholders, including USAID senior management. One of these respondents noted that the results chain was less valued as it moved up the management chain, to the point where it might not be included in key documents. A few Washington respondents reported challenges in translating results chains that emerged from program design to solicitations/procurements and eventual activity design with implementing partners. For example, a couple of respondents reported that results chains were too detailed to use in solicitations and were either excluded or significantly simplified. USAID staff described challenges in balancing the desire to include the results chains and ToCs emerging from intensive design processes within solicitations with the desire to allow implementing partners the creativity to respond to solicitations with their own ToCs.

A few respondents also made observations about different aspects of the Program Cycle that introduced challenges, and while these are single observations, they present some potentially interesting areas to

explore further. One Mission respondent reflected that “if you're in specific sectors, like natural resource management, you aren't probably going to get results in a five-year period⁴⁰...so why not 10 years [for the Program Cycle]? That would certainly make our job a lot easier.” They also cited that much of the five-year process is taken up by activity design and start-up (which may take 2-3 years) followed by implementation, which limits time to carry out learning activities. Two respondents (Mission, MI2) discussed a lack of continuity of USAID staff across the Program Cycle that also impedes adaptive management and learning across activities as institutional knowledge is not always retained. One Washington respondent raised observations that sometimes, there can be misalignment between the priorities of the activity and the Program Office for indicator measurement and reporting. They describe that while Washington staff encourage development of custom indicators for adaptive management, these are often in addition to the standard indicators required for reporting to Congress and are often prioritized by Program Offices over custom indicators.

Contractual Flexibility

Respondents reported improvements in using adaptive management approaches for programmatic learning; however, in some cases, they observed that different types of contractual mechanisms and limits to contractual flexibility influenced their ability to adapt their programs accordingly. For example, assistance awards were preferred over contracts because of their flexibility to adapt deliverables without incurring fees. Two Mission respondents had positive opinions regarding Global Development Alliance (GDA) mechanisms as they had: (1) the flexibility to interact with local partners without the restrictions imposed by an open competition award, and (2) a built-in co-creation process. One Mission respondent stated, “GDAs for me are the best way to work in a synergistic way or more integrated way from the very beginning.” All types of stakeholders expressed frustration with not being able to make needed changes to deliverables and targets due to contract limitations. For example, respondents reported challenges in changing indicators when they realized they were not as useful because of contract inflexibility. Some implementing partners observed that the ToC and results chains they developed with partners and USAID during activity start-up (post-award) were different from what was detailed in their proposal (pre-award). These respondents reported that they did not have the contractual flexibility to adjust their programming and deliverables to respond to this new (and often regarded as improved) ToC.

“P&R was designed to help us adapt to current conditions... In reality, what we had was limited flexibility in the design of the project. We had to deal with our contract deliverables. These were all set; the magnitude and programming of the targets were all established in the contract. These things could not be changed. [So] even though we say we should be adjusting those programs. We couldn't do those things. Those were limitations we were facing...In terms of real targets, they were set and we were bound to produce them at the time we said we will.” (implementing partner respondent).

⁴⁰ For added context, the respondent refers to *biophysical* results, which are difficult to assess in shorter time frames.

However, several other implementing partners noted cases where USAID did accommodate changes to activities or anticipated outcomes that emerged from the MI2 process. One implementing partner respondent indicated that having USAID staff attend the design session helped them understand why changes were needed.

USAID Staff Structure and Capability

Differences in staff structure and capabilities at USAID Missions and implementing partners also influenced the degree of uptake and post-MI2 sustainability. While Foreign Service Officer movement between Missions may contribute to enculturating adaptive management (spreading MI2 tools, skills, and practices to other Missions), some Mission respondents reported challenges in sustaining capacity for adaptive management within an office or activity when Foreign Service Officers move on or switch roles. One Washington respondent believed that Foreign Service Nationals were a key factor for Missions who no longer need MI2 support. Staff structure is also linked to challenges related to the Program Cycle. One Washington respondent observed that a lack of staff continuity from program design to procurement to award results in a disconnect between those who design programs and those who write procurements, which can result in adaptive management components getting “lost in translation.” In an additional perspective, at USAID, some Washington respondents noted a broader culture that prioritizes action over “research,” which contributed to confusion about how to prioritize adaptive management.

Variation in existing staff capability also influenced the degree of uptake of adaptive management tasks. For example, USAID and implementing partner respondents reflected that while custom indicators were important, they were often unrealistic to collect because they did not have the right skills and capacity on their teams, took too long, and/or were too expensive to collect. For example, one implementing partner respondent reported that it was challenging for them to be able to gather the data needed to assess during a P&R much less any other part of the project as it progressed. In another example, an implementing partner respondent indicated that MI2 worked to integrate learning questions into their MEL approach, however their MEL team did not have the right expertise for that (technology and database focused rather than facilitation focused). Mission respondents also shared that having Washington staff engaged in their learning activities was important.



Government or implementing partners priorities influence uptake and sustainability

Four respondents (2 Mission, 1 implementing partner, 1 Washington) shared examples of receiving support from MI2 but faced challenges implementing this support and/or resulting products due to misalignments with local governments (e.g., changing local government priorities, the lack of government buy-in to MI2 processes, delays in obtaining government approvals for documents and visas).



However, a Washington respondent shared a case of positive government buy-in where a government stakeholder had contracted MI2 to work with them on developing results chains.

Similarly, an implementing partner respondent also noted that existing buy-in at their headquarters for the Conservation Standards approach influenced their staff ability to work with MI2.

Accessibility of software and tools to implement the Conservation Standards

On the one hand, as reported earlier, respondents reported that the open accessibility of the How-To Guides is important for helping them adopt and continue to use the Conservation Standards. However, a few respondents mentioned that the accessibility of the Miradi software influenced their uptake and continued use of the Conservation Standards and resulting products (e.g., results chains, etc.). implementing partners without access to subscription-based software could not review and refine their ToCs between sessions with MI2. One Mission respondent noted that the tools that MI2 uses could be useful in other forums, however they would require access to the software. Two implementing partners shared that they could not implement the MI2 approach without MI2 due to a lack of connectivity, technology, and the Miradi software. Other USAID and implementing partner respondents reflected that the Miradi software was useful but not critical to the process, and that other tools for visualizing and mapping out ToCs could be used. They expressed that the process of clarifying assumptions and detailing logic is really the key, versus using a specific set of visual parameters and software.

USE OF EVIDENCE

Progress towards evidence-based practice across the Agency has been varied, as Missions and other Operating Units determine what practices are feasible, realistic, and fit-for-purpose. MI2 aimed to foster evidence-based thinking within USAID Biodiversity programs through different products and services. In order to distinguish between programmatic evidence emerging from USAID programs and activities, this section focuses on external evidence, e.g., scientific research, grey literature reports, reviews, local knowledge, expert knowledge, etc. used to inform strategy, design, and implementation of programs. This includes both evidence products (e.g., research, analyses, or synthesis), evidence guidance (materials and tools for integrating evidence), and the process of introducing and integrating that evidence into Program- and Activity-level decisions.

Encouraging and supporting evidence-based practice is a central pillar of MI2's approach; however, only 13 respondents (4 Washington, 4 Mission, 2 Mission small group interviews, 3 implementing partner) were able to speak to this focal area. One MI2 respondent perceived that they have moved the needle towards improved evidence-based practice through Learning Groups and highlighting where there are needs for evidence, and then bringing that together for Missions. MI2 respondents perceived that the production of assessments and toolkits (e.g., Conservation Enterprises and Combating Wildlife Trafficking Toolkits, LAC Private Sector Learning Agenda, Amazon Vision) and sharing of resources had high interest and post-production engagement by USAID and implementing partner staff, as well as external users (based on web traffic on [BiodiversityLinks](#)). Two Mission and implementing partner respondents referred to these guides as "reference documents," citing their importance for staying up to date with current thinking (see outcome harvesting Case Study #1, Annex E). Three Mission respondents reported that MI2 also helped them review existing knowledge about strategies and interventions from within and outside the Agency to inform Mission activities. For example, MI2 recounted how they quickly responded to an emergent need from a Mission by contracting on-the-

ground experts to review the landscape of issues for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in South America to inform the scope of new Mission activities.

Outcomes for Evidence-Based Practice

Overall, as described in the outcomes above, MI2 helped USAID and implementing partner respondents better understand when and where they needed additional evidence to support program logic. Mission and implementing partner respondents reported that having MI2 probing on what evidence supported their assumptions helped them clarify threats and better shape their approach. For example, a Washington respondent noted that trying to identify expected outcomes influenced activity teams to push for additional evidence to inform their ToC.

“I feel that through the tools through the engagement of experts through review of available resources, that we are helping Missions in a more rigorous way, systematic and rigorous way to ask and answer those questions.” (MI2 respondent)

In a few cases, USAID respondents explicitly described how MI2 helped bring evidence into the design process. A Washington respondent recounted that MI2 conducted targeted research that generated evidence to guide the choice of strategic approach during the design phase. A Mission respondent described how MI2 helped them bring in existing evidence from a political economy analysis and an existing assessment conducted by another Mission into their design process through facilitation. One Mission and one implementing partner respondent also recounted how MI2 brought in evidence to identify indicators for their MEL plan.

On the other hand, a handful of USAID respondents (2 Washington, 2 Mission, 2 Mission small group interviews) perceived that while MI2 encouraged them to look for evidence to support activities, external evidence was not always brought in or a clear part of the process. Mission respondents expressed wishes that MI2 could help them better identify what kind of evidence is needed and provide support to locate it. One Mission small group interview described how MI2 produced a study for them to inform program design, but it was not well integrated into the program design process. One Washington respondent expressed that “a ToC is only as good as the people in the room.” In this respondent's experience, the process mostly runs with what people are aware of, and a more systematic approach that brings in evidence (versus facilitation that asks what evidence you are using to support this) often does not occur, thus it is dependent on the participants and on the facilitators present. Two implementing partner respondents echoed this point, describing how their team wished that MI2 support could be more data and local knowledge driven, as well as provide a better understanding of what is already known and where there are gaps in knowledge to be considered in design.

Post-MI2 Sustainability of Evidence-Based Practice

Most respondents did not report instances of bringing in and using external evidence without MI2 support. Three USAID respondents recounted cases where they brought in their own evidence into the activity design process, either without MI2 assistance, solely by MI2, or facilitated by MI2.

Factors Influencing Outcomes and Sustainability

Similar to findings on factors influencing the uptake and sustainability of adaptive management, respondents cited two primary factors influencing evidence-based practice: facilitator expertise and alignment of time and resources.

The skills, expertise, and institutional knowledge of the facilitators was cited as an enabling factor for incorporating evidence into the design process. USAID respondents noted that knowledgeable facilitators (both on the topics, as well as the activities) could wade into the minutiae, understand jargon, and help bring in relevant examples and information from outside of the project (whether through reviewing resources or engaging experts) in a more "systematic" way. Two Mission-based teams cited that having an impartial facilitator and longer onramps helped teams get to common understanding and incorporate evidence they brought in to support their situation analysis and ToC.

"The ability of the facilitators was [really useful] to switch the mode of talking in the same jargon, the same language and use similar examples when talking about ... where we should focus programming." (USAID Mission Focus Group)

There were many factors cited that hindered evidence application including mismatched timelines and available capacity. Mission and implementing partner respondents mentioned that the timelines for when evidence is needed (e.g., for a decision) versus how long it might take to obtain evidence were often mismatched. One Washington respondent noted though that timelines were "out of MI2 control, [the] challenge is out of our [USAID's] bureaucracy. Usually, the timing and mismatch between when USAID needs to make a decision and when evidence is available. We don't plan far enough in advance to build in time for evidence work." Four respondents (2 Mission, 1 Washington, 1 implementing partner) expressed that identification and synthesis of research evidence was outside the scope of MI2's capabilities or process.

"That's not really the role that we see for them. It's not like we say, 'what would be options for integrating social inclusion into crafting our work?' It would be more 'tell us what others are thinking and doing in terms of including social inclusion in their work.' And so the distinction is more secondary synthesizing where they're not [doing] primary research type of action." (Mission staff)

One implementing partner respondent expressed wanting to bring in evidence, but did not feel like MI2 provided the opportunities, and it was challenging to bring in broader types of knowledge (e.g., from local partners). One Mission respondent reflected that while MI2 could help generate or synthesize evidence, they were less equipped to do so in a cost-effective manner. However, another Mission respondent felt that finding and applying evidence should be a mutual responsibility between USAID and MI2.

LEARNING GROUPS

MI2 has supported six Learning Groups in the Biodiversity Division and LAC Bureau and provided technical leadership to develop and implement learning agendas. During MI2, four new Learning Groups were set up: LAC Private Sector Engagement, LAC Combating Conservation Crime, Wild Meat, and Marine Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries. The findings in this section focus on outcomes for learning across Missions from three Learning Groups – Combating Wildlife Trafficking, LAC Combating Conservation Crime, and Conservation Enterprises – stemming from two small group interviews, outcome harvesting (Conservation Enterprises), and two USAID respondents (1 Mission, 1 Washington). Learning within programs and activities is covered in previous sections. It is important to note here that findings may not be reflective of the full breadth of outcomes and factors from Learning Groups under MI2.

Outcomes for Learning Groups

Learning Groups, events, and products were generally well regarded by USAID. In FY 21, Learning Group webinars had over 500 attendees, noting that it is likely some USAID staff attended multiple webinars.⁴¹ MI2 perceives that the Learning Groups help activities and Missions understand the context within which different strategic approaches might be effective, and then translate that knowledge into their own circumstances and programming. Two USAID respondents corroborated this belief, reflecting that some Learning Group materials (including learning agendas) were useful to inform program strategy and design. One USAID respondent highlighted that structuring the Learning Group around the learning agenda helped organize research activities around shared questions across Missions, particularly for Learning Groups that have been in place longer.

MI2 set up a systematic and organized way of developing learning agendas that enabled collaboration and surfacing of different perspectives. MI2 respondents noted that they typically iteratively develop learning agendas to ensure that diverse needs for learning are addressed with a broader stakeholder group. A Washington respondent described how MI2 (as well as MI) worked with a focused group of USAID Washington staff to develop scopes for Learning Groups and associated activities, often iterating them over time (see outcome harvesting Case Study #1, Annex E). In another case, MI2 modified their approach to respond to the specific needs of a Regional Bureau. Typically, the iterative approach requires significant and frequent USAID staff involvement; however, in this case, the involved Mission staff had limited time to engage in multiple workshops. Accordingly, MI2 adopted a “sprint” approach where Mission staff submitted ideas for a learning agenda, and MI2 worked with the Regional Bureau to synthesize and solicit feedback for prioritization. The Regional Bureau respondent appreciated MI2’s flexibility in adapting to their needs and perceived that this helped empower Missions to lead the process.

The formation of and participation in Learning Groups fostered peer-to-peer learning opportunities across Missions, which occasionally led to the application of learning. In a few cases, participants either applied learning gained from other Missions to inform their activity design or initiated cross-Agency

⁴¹ Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc. n.d. “Measuring Impact II FY 2021 MEL Performance Indicator Report.” USAID.

collaboration. USAID and implementing partner respondents indicated that learning about experiences and activities from other Missions and agencies informed their thinking about their own programs. In the Conservation Enterprises Impact Labs, participants expressed that knowledge sharing and surfacing allowed Missions and implementing partners to identify where there were potential “leaps of faith” or misalignment across actors in their ToCs and/or assumptions, and to then refine their assumptions collaboratively. Some participants in this Conservation Enterprises Learning Group event applied what they learned from others to inform their program activities. For example, identifying and incorporating strategies for behavior change (see outcome harvesting Case Study #1, Annex E). In another case, a Mission respondent began collaborating with another agency that had presented a webinar organized by the Combating Conservation Crime Learning Group to address shared objectives within their region.

“I think we can learn a lot from listening to other agencies: what are [they] doing? What work that we cannot do? Speaking with them has been super useful because they have expertise in things that we don’t do and we can’t do sometimes. So I think the learning agenda is an opportunity to kind of expand the universe of our knowledge and to learn.”
(USAID Combating Conservation Crime Learning Group Focus Group).

Post-MI2 Sustainability of Learning Groups

The sustainability of Learning Groups without MI2 was not explicitly discussed by any respondents. The sustainability of outcomes from the Learning Groups may include some of the outcomes for peer-to-peer learning outlined above; however, these respondents reported recent experiences, so it is not yet clear how these outcomes will fare in the long-term.

Factors

The extent of learning taking place may hinge on several factors influencing implementation of the Learning Groups and alignment of topics and material delivery with USAID needs. It is worth noting that factors varied across respondents who spoke about Learning Groups, and most were raised by one or two respondents. MI2 respondents perceived that implementation of learning is often hard when MI2 staff are less embedded in the Agency and have limited access to information about Agency priorities. On the other hand, two Washington respondents worried that the results chain focus may not be appropriate and other skills may be needed to foster learning (e.g., knowledge management, facilitation, topic expertise). For example, one Washington respondent reported challenges in organizing a marine-focused Learning Group where the MI2 lead did not have sufficient marine expertise. However, MI2 brought in adult learning specialists to help design materials and delivery, which was perceived by another Washington respondent as critically helpful for improving learning across participants.

Numerous factors influenced Mission perceptions of the utility of Learning Groups, including resource constraints, alignment with priorities, and clarity of engagement. Two Mission respondents expressed that the number of Cross-Mission Learning Groups and number of products makes it hard to tell them apart and determine what they should use and where to look for it.

“Even if it's important, if you don't have the funding, it doesn't make sense to put a lot of energy on something that you know you cannot program to address.” (Participant in the Combating Conservation Crime Learning Group).

Mission respondents expressed that they do not have the bandwidth to engage in something that they do not have a mandate or funding to program for. Three Mission respondents also highlighted that it was not always clear how some webinars and presentations from the Combating Conservation Crime and Combating Wildlife Trafficking Learning Group aligned with their needs.

“...is not just knowledge, but there's also like how to get things done or practical things as well. So I think facilitating those exchanges in a way that is meaningful and useful and practical because Missions are super busy, so to be very targeted, I think is something that that would be very important.” (Mission respondent, Combating Conservation Crime Learning Group)

In another example from the Combating Conservation Crime, one Mission respondent explained that if the information presented by external experts is not salient to the constraints and processes of USAID, it is often hard to determine how it can be used. Thus, for a few of the Mission respondents, they focused on identifying relevant information from the Learning Group's online materials. In contrast, a Mission participant in the Combating Conservation Crime Learning Group expressed that they wished the Learning Group would help them hear from perspectives beyond the “USAID echo chamber” so they could better learn from the broader sector.

In contrast, one Mission respondent expressed that for their Office, having frequent support from one Washington staff member to identify where and how to integrate a broader learning agenda into their work was critical.

A couple of Mission respondents expressed concern about being able to engage in determining Learning Group directions. A Mission small group interview expressed that they did not feel that the needs of their Mission could be reflected in the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group activities and wish they could be more engaged in prioritizing future topics. The respondent wondered whether the needs of Washington staff who were more engaged in the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group drove the events and workshops.

“I'd rather be more proactive where the Missions also get to say, hey, we need X, Y, and Z, in this time frame. Can we have a conversation about it? And that would feed into, you know, the product that comes out.” (Mission respondent)

Another Mission respondent said they were not clear about how to engage more deeply (see outcome harvesting Case Study #1, Annex E).

PERCEPTIONS OF COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

USAID encourages CLA practices that are “systematic and intentional throughout the Program Cycle” and details in the ADS that CLA should include “strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management.” MI2’s approach to CLA practices for biodiversity programs focuses on a set of specific and structured processes within the Conservation Standards approach to provide scaffolding for planning, monitoring, and learning (situation models, results chains, and MEL plans) and facilitation support for learning and adaptive management (utilizing results chains as the basis for annual P&Rs and adjusting activities), as well as encouraging the consideration and integration of evidence throughout the process. This section of the evaluation seeks to surface perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of MI2’s overall approach for CLA, in addition to comparing perceptions of MI2’s approach to other CLA approaches respondents experienced at USAID and/or beyond. Many of the perspectives and comparisons here have been discussed in detail in previous sections on Factors.

USAID and implementing partner respondents reported that MI2’s approach to CLA was strong because it was built around the Conservation Standards. This meant it was systematic and organized, making it useful to help teams to define problems, articulate logic, and have standard practices to do that. They reported that they found it credible because it is grounded in an approach from the broader conservation sector. One Mission respondent observed that MI2 could better develop CLA for biodiversity conservation projects because they have sector expertise, while a more general contract may not. One Washington respondent noted that the strength of MI2’s approach is that it promotes CLA aligned with what the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning is promoting, which helps Missions see value in it.

As described earlier, USAID and implementing partner respondents observed that the length of time required to engage in the full Conservation Standards process makes it difficult for USAID and implementing partner staff to participate, depending on available time, resources, and alignment with activity timelines. Thus, while it helps bring together different perspectives in the room, it does make it difficult to open inclusion for collaboration for a broader group of stakeholders who would be able to fully engage given time, incentives, capacity, etc. However, USAID and implementing partner respondents also highlighted that it is useful for bringing together groups of stakeholders in general and around activity design focused on conservation.

Thirteen respondents (4 Washington, 7 Mission, 2 implementing partner) reported that they were familiar with other CLA approaches. These approaches varied, but many tended to be more generic in focus (e.g., not framed around biodiversity conservation). Five USAID respondents (3 Mission, 2 Washington) were most familiar with CLA resources from the Agency, for example with approaches and guides from the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning and the Learning Lab, and the process for developing project appraisal documents. Three respondents (1 of each Washington, Mission, implementing partner) were not familiar with any other specific formalized or explicit approaches. Respondents described that other approaches are structured as guidance rather than step-by-step instructions and focused on elements such as collaborative and participatory processes for dialogue and discussions, guides and tools for learning, and other types of generic tools for exploring program logic.

While these other approaches varied, they were generally viewed by respondents as helpful in promoting overall CLA culture and were good for promoting cross-Agency learning and sharing. For example, one Mission respondent described their “Friday CLA” meetings that offer opportunities for

sharing, learning, and collaboration across Mission staff and implementing partners that span multiple topics. Respondents described other approaches as less time-consuming and more efficient, and with more room to bring in more participatory processes for broader stakeholders' engagement, perspectives, and data/information. For example, one Washington respondent shared their experience working with a university group to identify relevant interventions to address threats for program design through a participatory approach using socio-ecological modeling. They recounted that the approach “built a model and did it through a participatory way with both internal and external stakeholders and brought together publicly available data and ran simulations to understand what impact different interventions would have on threats we were trying to reduce.” They observed that they have not experienced this type of participatory and data driven approach with MI2. An implementing partner respondent highlighted an experience from working at an international non-profit organization where their CLA process included frequent and sustained engagement with community members, which they felt was limited through their experience with MI2.

Another Washington respondent reflected on approaches from the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning that they worked on, which provide guidance on how to integrate adaptive management into different parts of the Program Cycle (grants, contracts, work planning, start-up, etc.). They perceived that it made those approaches more modular and nimbler and can be brought in at different points in the Program Cycle, which can help address the issues with contract obligations and inflexibility. A few Mission respondents highlighted that they experienced situations where teams generated ToCs in a less structured manner with facilitation support and perceived they still got to a similarly effective end product (program design, MEL, as a tool for adaptive management).

CONCLUSIONS

This section contains overall conclusions from the evaluation which span multiple questions, as well as integrate capability, opportunity, and motivation elements. The conclusions are organized by each of the sections in Findings.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MI2

Three primary factors influence implementation of MI2 interventions: high demand of services from USAID, the COVID-19 pandemic, and change to a buy-in mechanism. These factors were primarily outside of MI2's control, but ultimately influenced MI2's ability to respond to requests as well as deliver technical support.

MI2 services were in high demand by Missions; however, not all Missions could access MI2 support depending on MI2 staff availability and overlap of requests (e.g., multiple large buy-ins occurring at the same time). However, high demand is likely influenced by Missions' positive perceived value of MI2 support.

In March 2020, MI2 quickly pivoted to a virtual support model during restrictions from the **COVID-19 pandemic**. In some activities, local stakeholders had difficulties accessing virtually which may have affected participant interactions (e.g., relationship strength, consensus building), created scheduling challenges across time zones, and were perceived as less efficient than in-person workshops. However, working

virtually did allow for inclusion of those who otherwise may not have been available in person and may have jumpstarted independent facilitation capabilities.

Overall, the change to a **buy-in mechanism** allowed more Missions to engage MI2 for adaptive management, often over longer periods of time. While this was useful for building commitment from Missions for adaptive management practice, there was also concern that the buy-in mechanism transferred adaptive management tasks to MI2 rather than developed Mission capability to lead those tasks. In particular, the buy-in approach also created a higher demand for MI2 services which were, at times, out of their scope and initially, beyond their existing staff capacity. Conversely, this approach limited access to MI2 support for some Missions given MI2's low overall budget ceiling.

MI2 CONTRIBUTION TO USAID STAFF, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES (OUTCOMES)

Through tools, technical support, and programmatic resources, MI2 contributed to USAID and implementing partner staff capabilities and motivation to engage in and improve learning and adaptive management tasks and skills within the context of biodiversity programs and activities.

Overall, MI2 encouraged and supported more **systematic and robust ways of approaching program logic, activity design, and implementation for biodiversity programs** using situation models, results chains, and MEL plans. ToCs, results chains, MEL plans, P&Rs, and Learning Group activities. These helped inform the understanding of activity progress and workplan development, supported the development of procurement and project documents, and drove adjustments to activities and approaches towards results.

MI2 helped both USAID and implementing partner respondents to **bring together project participants and stakeholders** to connect diverse ideas and viewpoints for informing situation models and ToCs grounded in the program or activity context.

MI2 **contributed to increased investment in time and attention** by Mission staff and implementing partners, considering **MEL design and implementation** for adaptive management. MI2's support was linked to increased interest, value, and attention to developing more robust MEL plans to track activity progress and conduct adaptive management. The use of the Conservation Standards to develop a ToC, along with MI2 technical expertise, helped USAID and implementing partner respondents identify custom indicators aligned with expected outputs and outcomes.

MI2 also contributed to USAID and implementing partner **staff skills and confidence to use the Conservation Standards**. In particular, Biodiversity Advisors benefitted from both training and "learning by doing" with MI2 assistance.

However, while this evaluation found that MI2 helped develop appreciation and skills for design and adaptive management more thoughtfully and systematically, it also uncovered **several challenges for stakeholders to apply these approaches and tools to adaptively managing activities**. For example, multiple implementing partner and Mission respondents reported contextual factors related to USAID processes, and structures hindered their ability to adapt their programs according to learning. Across the board, respondents identified constraints to staff time, capacity, and resources that affected their ability to fully utilize the Conservation Standards and the ability of external stakeholders to fully engage in the process (see below).

HOW DID MI2 SERVICE DELIVERY AND SUPPORT CONTRIBUTE TO THESE OUTCOMES?

At its core, MI2 is centered around developing and delivering technical support and resources to strengthen capacity and enabling conditions for evidence-based practice for program design and adaptive management for biodiversity programs at USAID. This evaluation surfaced several aspects of MI2's service delivery that influenced how they contributed to the uptake of evidence, learning, and adaptive management products and practices from Washington Offices and Missions.

Overall, high regard for MI2's staff and quality of technical support and work contributed to high interest from Missions to engage with them. Their support is often described as well-organized, systematic, and useful to inform activity design, MEL, and adaptive management. In particular, respondents identified several critical components which contribute to the uptake of design and adaptive management skills.

MI2 facilitators' skills, expertise, and organization enabled the integration of learning to the design and implementation process, bringing together stakeholder perspectives, and streamlining adaptive management activities (e.g., P&R). Facilitation and knowledge management by MI2 was particularly important as Mission and implementing partner respondents were often limited in time and resources to carry out those tasks on their own. In particular, facilitators' **conservation and biodiversity technical expertise** positively impacted the design process as they were able to guide participants in design and reflection processes more effectively and push them to explore technical areas more deeply. However, respondents highlighted some challenges in developing integrated programming given specific facilitator expertise.

The extent of **MI2 staff awareness of and experience with USAID processes, policies, and priorities** influenced how technical support was provided to Missions. In particular, MI2 staff who were able to engage with USAID staff over longer periods of time contributed to higher perceived quality of assistance and outputs, as well as uptake of practices. The depth of MI2 staff contextual and institutional knowledge of USAID programming and conservation context helped USAID and implementing partner partners connect the dots across critical elements for projects and surface lessons and insights from past experiences. In addition, the long-term engagement of MI2 with Missions contributed to participant understanding of the Conservation Standards and provided opportunities to build and develop trust across implementation.

MI2 INFLUENCE ON USAID PRACTICE AND CULTURE OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

MI2 (and MI) influenced USAID's practice and culture of adaptive management, as evidenced by growing interest in MI2 approaches and tools and the extent to which they have been used without MI2 support. Notably, this evaluation found that **almost half of respondents have and/or will continue to use tools and approaches from MI2 for conducting design and adaptive management tasks, with examples of independent use and integration** into day-to-day practice. Respondents feel confident in using adaptive management approaches without MI2 support. Specifically, respondents continue to use facilitation skills and techniques, workbooks, publications, and resources from Learning Groups and MI2, as well as results chains.

The Conservation Standards approach has achieved some degree of institutionalization within USAID biodiversity programs, through its use in activity start-up, design, and P&R

processes, and high online engagement with MI2-developed resources. A few respondents also noted examples of interest in and diffusion of approaches in other parts of the Agency.

In addition, this evaluation found that MI2 **improved capabilities to understand and facilitate the Conservation Standards and use resulting outputs (e.g., results chains, situation models) for biodiversity program planning**. While there are some cases where Missions no longer need MI2 support and can facilitate adaptive management tasks independently, many others raised challenges for independent facilitation and use of the Conservation Standards without support from a technical mechanism like MI2. While this evaluation surfaces high regard and perceived value for these tools, it did not seek to assess whether their use has led to improved effectiveness in program design and implementation. These factors, which are discussed in detail below, highlight opportunities and challenges to wider institutionalization of the Standards as an approach for strategic thinking and adaptive management more broadly at the Agency (see Factors).

WHAT FACTORS EXTERNAL TO THE MI2 PROGRAM INFLUENCED THESE OUTCOMES?

This evaluation identified several contextual and programmatic factors that influence uptake and sustainability of learning, evidence use, and adaptive management practice at USAID. Many of these factors are out of the control of the MI2 program. Notably, the factors surfaced from this evaluation echo findings from other assessments of evidence use, learning, and adaptive management across a wide range of applied fields in development and conservation (e.g., see Wild and Ramalingam 2018, Gerber et al. 2020) as well as some findings from the performance evaluation of MI (see Berard et al. 2017).

The institutionalization and adoption of MI2 approaches has been encouraged, in part, by “**champions**” who have received formal and informal training in using and facilitating the Conservation Standards. Champions include Mission staff, implementing partners and Washington staff, and USAID staff who received Biodiversity Advisor training. These champions have helped improve the application of the Standards as well as encourage its use across Missions. Champions have also improved the efficacy of the Conservation Standards as an adaptive management tool for USAID through revising and adapting it to fit broader needs, as well as sharing their learning and encouraging the use of the Standards across the Agency.

Using the Conservation Standards for design and adaptive management requires knowledgeable facilitation, knowledge management, and human resources, in order for it to be used to its full potential. USAID respondents often reported they are not equipped to do this because they do not have the **available time and resources** to organize and facilitate the Conservation Standards process in the same way MI2 does, as well as meaningfully participate. This perception of limited capacity (even though MI2 developed improved capability) to facilitate and engage in the design and adaptive management process influenced the degree to which these tools may be used in the long-term. Notably, many respondents expressed desires for a “light” version of the Conservation Standards process they experienced with MI2, in order to better meet capacity, timeline, and resource priorities.

USAID internal processes, structures, and timelines significantly influence the uptake of approaches and tools, and post-MI2 sustainability. Several contextual factors, including policy and design timelines, contract obligations, and Mission priorities, influenced opportunities to apply evidence, learning, and adaptive management tools and practices. At times, contractual obligations—such as

deliverables, budgets, and staffing—were inflexible, which served as an effective barrier for implementing revised MEL plans as well as adapting activities based on learning from pause and reflects, particularly if they were significantly different from the initial activity design. In some cases where MI2 engagement occurred at a “sweet spot” at the start of the activity, some of these issues were circumvented. However, for other activities, MI2 support came when implementation was already underway, which sometimes led to challenges for applying tools and outputs for adaptive management and learning.

Lastly, this evaluation identified **mismatches between tools and outputs** and their utility for different purposes and needs in different parts of the Program Cycle. Notably, this evaluation found that results chains did not serve as effective tools to communicate program strategy to broader audiences given their inherent high level of detail. This finding is also echoed in the performance evaluation of MI.

Local government or implementing partner priorities, and the extent of their buy-in to use MI2 processes, and participant access to software and tools to implement the Conservation Standards, also influence the uptake and sustainability of adaptive management.

Thus, while MI2 has institutionalized an appreciation and capability for adaptive management, opportunities to apply these tools and approaches vary across the Agency depending on one or a combination of these factors.

USE OF EVIDENCE

MI2 used different products and support to promote evidence-based thinking within USAID biodiversity programs,⁴² MI2 support helped USAID and implementing partner respondents identify where and when evidence was needed to support program logic and inform adaptive management, however evidence was not always brought in, nor was it clear how it could be obtained. In cases where evidence was integrated, MI2 provided technical guidance to use that evidence in design and adaptive management activities. The identification and integration of evidence during MI2 was influenced by two primary factors: facilitator expertise and alignment of time and resources. Interestingly, respondents did not raise concerns about knowing where to find evidence or how to identify relevant and robust evidence. These challenges are often raised as a barrier for evidence-based practice from other assessments in conservation and other fields (e.g., Pullin et al. 2004, 2020, Walsh et al. 2019).

LEARNING GROUPS

MI2 has supported six Learning Groups in the Biodiversity Division and LAC Bureau and provided technical leadership to develop and implement learning agendas. Generally, Learning Group events and products are well regarded and well attended by USAID; however, their utility for Missions depended on whether the topics aligned with current Mission needs and whether staff had time to attend. The Learning Groups fostered an interest in developing and using learning agendas more broadly across USAID, particularly for the LAC Regional Bureau, which engaged MI2 to support Mission-driven Learning Groups. The Learning Groups have fostered peer-to-peer learning, particularly for Cross-

⁴² “Evidence” in this section refers to external evidence – e.g., scientific research, grey literature reports, reviews, local knowledge, expert knowledge, etc.) which includes both evidence products (e.g., research, analyses, synthesis, knowledge gathering) and evidence guidance (materials and tools for integrating evidence).

Mission and cross-Agency learning and collaboration. The sustainability of Learning Groups without MI2 was not explicitly discussed by any respondents. Various factors, including MI2 access to Agency priorities and specific subject matter expertise, resource constraints, alignment with priorities, and clarity of engagement, influenced Mission perceptions of the utility of Learning Groups. Lastly, the degree of uptake and application of learning and evidence for different purposes across the Program Cycle was influenced by whether the process and products of learning and evidence aligned with Mission needs and priorities. This is especially the case for the uptake and application of learning from Learning Group events (e.g., webinars).

PERCEPTIONS OF COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

As a CLA approach, the strengths of MI2's approach included that it was built around the Conservation Standards, which implied a systematic, organized approach that was credible given its use more broadly in the conservation sector. However, the weaknesses of MI2's approach were that the lengthy and intensive process makes it difficult to be more participatory and collaborative. Strengths of other CLA approaches (e.g., approaches and guides from the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning and the Learning Lab, data-driven models, participatory processes, and dialogues) included the tendency to be more flexible, efficient, and better able to incorporate participatory processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this evaluation found that MI2 has increased awareness and capability for adaptive management practice, and there is overall interest and evidence of perceived value of the use of evidence and the Conservation Standards approach for design and adaptive management of biodiversity programming. However, the widespread use of adaptive management tools and outputs are limited by a number of factors, including limited staff and available time and resources as well as programmatic factors related to USAID's structures and processes (e.g., policy and design timelines, contract obligations, existing capacities and resources, feasibility). While many of these factors are outside of the control of the MI2 program, these are quite common and predictable within and across development and conservation organizations. Additionally, while the focus of this evaluation was not on the impact of MI2 (and the use of the Conservation Standards) on improved conservation outcomes, anecdotally, we do not find robust evidence regarding the impact of MI2 and the use of the Standards for CLA on program effectiveness or efficiency. This is important to consider as improvements to design and adaptive management practice and incorporation of evidence-based approaches are hypothesized to lead to improved program implementation, which is thought to lead to improved program outcomes.

Thus, the following include recommendations for future analyses that USAID can conduct in order to determine what types of CLA are best suited for different purposes and when, where, and how they can be deployed most efficiently. While beyond the scope of this evaluation, we also recommend that USAID consider evaluating the impact of the use of the Conservation Standards (during MI and MI2) on whether and how programs were able to achieve desired outcomes in order to better understand if, when, and how the Standards can be deployed moving forward. These recommendations also include some specific recommendations from respondents.

CURRENT MI2 MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

In order to more effectively and efficiently leverage MI2 to support evidence, learning, and adaptive management for USAID, we recommend that **USAID**:

- Communicate the parameters of MI2 support clearly with Missions and consider other technical support mechanisms for areas outside of MI2's scope and capacity (e.g., research, MEL development and implementation, assessments, etc.).
- Ensure leadership and management of MI2 engagements is shared between USAID and MI2 to ensure activities are responsive to dynamic USAID needs, expectations are clear, and processes are connected.
- Identify areas where guidance and tools can be developed to help address barriers to uptake of the Conservation Standards and adaptive management in general. For example: MI2 could develop guidance on how to translate complex results chains for different purposes across the Program Cycle and for different audiences. If USAID can both sensitize staff at multiple levels to these adaptive management tools and identify key actions and methods to communicate these products through existing processes, this will clear two bottlenecks (staff familiarity and acceptance of adaptive management tools and clarity on how to translate tools across the Program Cycle) to sustainability.

We recommend that **MI2 and USAID** continue to do the following for current MI2 management and implementation:

- Continue to have a consistent set of facilitators from MI2 working with Missions throughout a portfolio where possible. This combination can contribute to building trust, relationships, and potentially improve the capabilities of USAID staff to use the Conservation Standards and other adaptive management practices in ongoing activities. Continue pairing Biodiversity Advisors with MI2 and providing necessary resources and time for them to engage with this ongoing training opportunity.
- Consider regularly engaging with Missions to solicit feedback and priority topics from Learning Group participants and attendees to ensure that Learning Group topics meet Mission needs, and that the current platform responds to staff capacity to attend the Learning Groups. Thought might be given to the maintenance of Learning Groups by USAID if capacity and bandwidth exist to contribute to meeting the targeted learning needs of Missions.
- Respondents had the following specific suggestions for Learning Groups: revisit learning agendas periodically and adjust as needed; continue to enhance the sharing of best practices and facilitate exchanges at a global level, and source topics and experts from group members themselves (including experts outside of USAID).

We recommend that **MI2** consider the following for ongoing implementation:

- Develop guidance on how to simplify or lighten implementation of the Conservation Standards to enable a lower barrier to entry for Missions with low bandwidth. This guidance should detail when and where different intensities of the Standards or other adaptive management and CLA tools are complementary and useful. We suggest that MI2 work collaboratively with current and past USAID activities to co-create options that Missions and implementing partners can use if time and resources are not available to move through the complete process.
- Prioritize identification, robust assessment, and use of broader types of evidence in program design, particularly to support and socialize existing evidence resources (e.g., Evidence in Action), and work with USAID to identify opportunities and resources to bring in external evidence and better align with activity timelines.
- Ensure a match between facilitator background and topic area prior to engagement (in particular for marine expertise) and broader inclusion of a diversity of topic experts and local stakeholders. MI2 could continue to develop facilitator skills and capabilities for determining when and how to adapt the Conservation Standards for integrated projects and engage with the broader community of practice for evidence-informed practice from a wider array of disciplines.
- Respondents had the following specific suggestions for implementation: be cognizant of challenges of working virtually, especially time zone alignment and language barriers, to ensure inclusion; consider hiring local facilitators as MI2 counterparts; keep remote sessions fluid, adaptive and time efficient; and provide timely feedback and lessons learned from other activities as applicable.

BROADER INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF EVIDENCE, LEARNING, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT THROUGH AN MI2-LIKE APPROACH

If USAID wants to institutionalize and build the Agency's capability to conduct and facilitate adaptive management approaches generally, we recommend they consider the following:

- Identify realistic and feasible opportunities to implement different types of adaptive management tools. Whether it is the Conservation Standards, or another type of CLA tool intended to improve adaptive management practice, opportunities need to exist for those practices to be implemented and aligned across the Program Cycle. For example, better communication and collaboration between technical support teams, USAID, and implementing partners can help inform when and where different types of adaptive management tools and outputs (e.g., results chains) are best suited for different purposes and audiences across the Program Cycle.
- Examine the Program Cycle and USAID internal processes for barriers to uptake and sustainability. While most award types can accommodate adaptive management throughout the project implementation cycle, this evaluation surfaced cases with less flexibility to accommodate adaptive management practice. Encouraging and supporting USAID A/CORs to be open to more flexible and iterative award approaches may help facilitate realized adaptive management practice. For example, the use of co-creation with implementing partners can help improve

continuity of program logic between program and activity design, and better inform adaptive management.

- Conduct an in-depth assessment of the utility of different types of CLA approaches (including the Conservation Standards as well as approaches within and outside biodiversity conservation) for different types of integrated programming needs. If USAID has an interest in specifically focusing on the Conservation Standards, a potentially insightful effort could involve learning about what others (at USAID as well as other organizations) have done to tailor the Standards themselves, as well as their implementation, to incorporate different perspectives and sectors. This could also inform modifications of the approach that are fit-for-purpose (particularly in comparison to other CLA approaches).
- Critically review staff capacity to implement different types of CLA approaches (including the Conservation Standards and other tools introduced by MI2), as well as the ability of USAID staff to serve as impartial facilitators. This assessment should focus on what types of individual and institutional changes are needed to ensure sustainability of different types of CLA approaches and what evidence of effectiveness is needed to determine when to invest in one approach or another. Based on the findings of this evaluation, if continuing to use the Conservation Standards is the goal, USAID/Washington will either need to consider a way to continue access to technical support for implementing CLA that is as engaged as MI2's implementation of the Conservation Standards, or make substantial changes to enable Missions to take on these tasks and responsibilities in order to shift away from this type of central technical support mechanism. USAID may also benefit from reflecting on the expectation of "sustainability" of specific tools used within the MI2 intervention versus sustainability of motivation to value and engage in adaptive management and evidence-based practice, as a whole.
- USAID should assess factors that enable or hinder activities and programs from pursuing evidence-based practice. This evaluation surfaced a few examples of when evidence was brought into design and implementation, despite overall regard for the value of using evidence. It is unclear how widespread this pattern may be as this evaluation focused on MI2's delivery on evidence-based practice. Thus, a future assessment should be broader in focus.
- Given the investment in MI and MI2 services over the last ten years, further investment in clear knowledge management of tools, strategies, planning, and evidence that is accessible at the Mission level and beyond would contribute to building opportunities for adaptive management practices at the Agency.
- USAID should ensure that thinking about evidence, learning, and adaptive management is incorporated early in the Program Cycle. This will allow for iteration and flexibility to better integrate broader perspectives, make time to identify, assess, and integrate evidence, and identify key and resources and learning opportunities.
- Respondents had the following specific suggestions to reduce barriers to uptake and sustainability: revisit the five-year Program Cycle because the design process takes 1-2 years to complete and consider training the Mission MEL teams in the MI/MI2 approach.

Annex A: Summary of References and Report Utilized

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MI2 provided the Evaluation Team with a Google Drive folder of background information for the MI2 program. Several key documents are cited throughout the report and are referenced above/below. Given the volume of background documents, the Evaluation Team has included a bulleted summary of types of documents below for reference:

- MI2 MEL Plan
- USAID and MI2 Weekly Learning Labs: virtual design notes, field support debrief presentations, stakeholder engagement notes, P&R notes, start-up notes, situation model notes, learning lab calendar, etc. for learning labs listed below
- Mission Briefs
- Learning Events Scoping and Agendas documentation
- Technical Product Scoping Sheets- Enabling Conditions
- Field Support Scoping and Agendas
- Mission Buy-In Statement of Work and Cost Responses

OUTCOME HARVESTING DOCUMENTS

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Wilson-Grau, Ricardo, and Heather Britt. (2012). “Outcome Harvesting.” *USAID Learning Lab. Ford Foundation*.

Annex B: Methodology

OVERVIEW

The Evaluation Team answered the EQs using semi-structured, key informant and small group interviews and through outcome harvesting. The Evaluation Team’s approach was informed, in part, by assessing how MI2 employed the CS across the USAID Program Cycle operations by developing the capability, opportunity, and motivation of actors to use Adaptive Management (AM) practices. The capability, opportunity, and motivation model of behavior defines three key components that need to be present for changes in practice and behavior to occur. These elements are capability—or the skills, awareness, and ability to engage in a particular practice or behavior; motivation—or the rationale and reasons to pursue that behavior—for example, perception of utility/value, compliance with rules, interest; and last, opportunity—or the contexts and situations that make a change in behavior possible or prompt it. This can include both physical and social factors such as time, resources, requirements, participation, and others.

The Evaluation Team used the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework to frame data collection and analysis of causal pathways to identified AM outcomes. This was used to explore what enables and hinders desired AM behavior both during engagement with MI2 and post-MI2 support. It is assumed that changes to MI2 recipients’ capability, opportunity, and motivation dimensions are required in order to use the new MI2 practices. We recognize that not all aspects of the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework are under the direct management control of MI2, particularly those related to Opportunity (for example that may be more closely tied to broader institutional contexts and dynamics). However, the EQs whether and how MI2 promoted approaches were institutionalized and characterize the range of barriers to uptake, which can inform implementation of similar types of programming. The Evaluation Team used USAID guidance¹⁰ on capability, opportunity, and motivation frameworks to organize data collection and analysis. Below we have summarized the evaluation methodology.

EVALUATION DESIGN

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Desk Review

The Evaluation Team conducted a desk review of background documents as needed to gain understanding of MI2 tasks and lay the groundwork for answering the evaluation questions. A summary of documents reviewed can be found in Annex A.

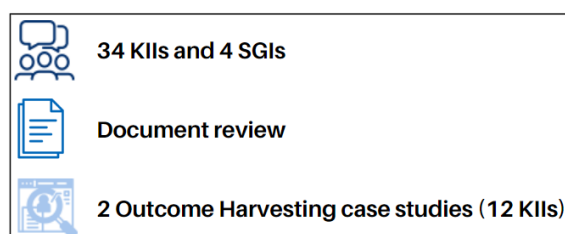
During the initial document review, the Evaluation Team identified relevant CS phase(s)/steps that MI2 tasks used (Assess, Plan, Implement, Adapt, Share) to improve the relevant Program Cycle Phases in addition to the method used (workshops, trainings, etc.) to develop the capability, opportunity, and motivation of actors to use enhanced AM practices. This does not assume that the CS were used in all

MI2 tasks (the evaluation is not meant to measure the fidelity to the CS), but the Evaluation Team identified when they are used and how their use was intended to influence specific Program Cycle phases. The Evaluation Team conducted a content analysis of twelve “buy-in” scopes of work, containing the following sections: purpose of activity, management capabilities, descriptions of tasks, who was managing each task, objectives, and outputs.

In addition, the Evaluation Team reviewed relevant documents to understand MI2 tasks at each Mission prior to conducting interviews, in order to tailor probes to respondents appropriately. The Evaluation Team also reviewed documents related to the two outcome harvesting cases (see below) to draft the initial outcome descriptions and draft relevant interview questions for respondents.

Key Informant and Small Group Interviews

The Evaluation Team conducted 38 semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) (34) and small group interviews (SGI) (4) with 47 USAID Washington staff, USAID Mission staff (including Foreign Service Officers [Foreign Service Officers] and Foreign Service Nationals), and implementing partners across 16 Missions and regional offices⁴³, as well as three MI2 staff, to provide insight into all five evaluation



Summary of data collection

questions.⁴⁴ Out of the USAID respondents, twelve were Biodiversity Advisors (3 Washington, 9 Mission). The sample also included two Learning Groups (Combating Conservation Crime) and Combating Wildlife Trafficking, both selected based on the availability of participants. Out of the 31 Missions that received MI2 support between August 2018 and September 2021, 20 had also received support from MI. Out of the Missions sampled for this evaluation (13) all but one was supported by MI.⁴⁵ See Figure 4 for a breakdown of MI2 support provided to sampled Missions, half of which received support for P&Rs and none of which received strategy design support.

Summary of respondents

Respondents	#
USAID Washington	8
MI2	4
Mission Staff	29
Implementing partner	18
Total	59

MI2 and USAID provided a sample of 93 potential USAID Washington, USAID Mission, and implementing partner staff across 19 Missions and regional Bureaus. The Evaluation Team used a

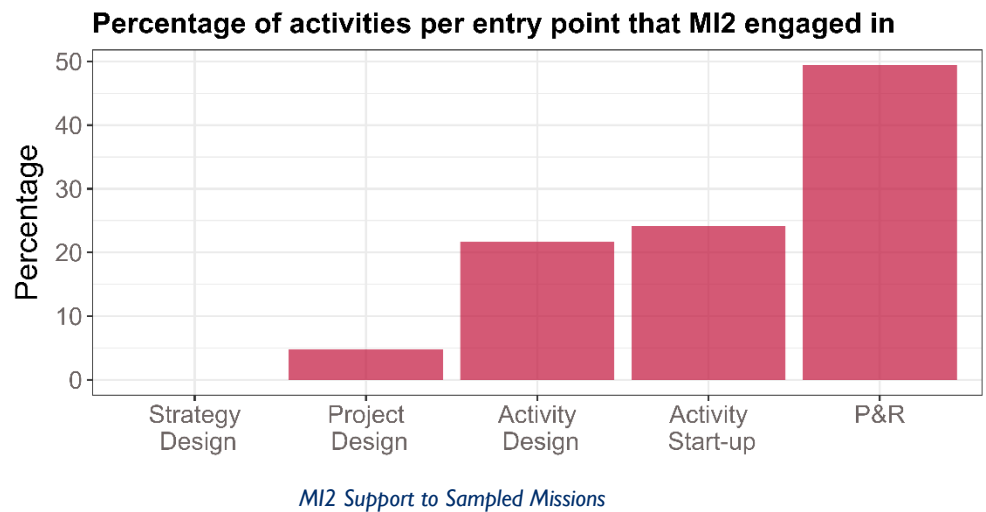
⁴³ This refers to current posting which may not be receiving MI2 support. However, participants had all interacted with MI2.

⁴⁴ This statement encapsulates all KIIs and small group interviews conducted independent of the outcome harvesting methodology, which is discussed separately below.

⁴⁵ Environmental Incentives. 2022. “MI2 Mission Matrix.” Microsoft Excel, May 13, 2022.

purposive sampling approach, selecting potential respondents according to their involvement in certain activities, which were labeled by “Branch” in accordance with the original evaluation design. An Evaluation Team member with familiarity of Missions identified others who might also provide insight into the evaluation questions, and others were identified during a review of program documents. The Evaluation Team then attempted to ensure that there was a mix of Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service Nationals and Biodiversity advisors represented across the countries identified (target numbers for each group are described in the inception report). Snowballing⁴⁶ then occurred in two ways: (1) target respondents forwarding invitations to other staff (those with more relevant perspectives, or others to include); (2) direct recommendations to the Evaluation Team for additional respondents for specific subjects (e.g., outcome harvesting, Learning Groups). We continued to do additional outreach to meet our target sample per the inception report. Ultimately, as happens with many evaluations, the final sample comprised respondents who were available within the data collection period.

See Table 4 for a summary of all respondents, inclusive of those interviewed for outcome harvesting. All interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams or Google Meets and included an interviewer, notetaker, and recording/transcription software (if given consent).



Outcome Harvesting⁴⁷

The Evaluation Team used outcome harvesting to explore how MI2 outcomes are achieved in complex contexts with high levels of uncertainty around the optimal causal pathways to achieve success. Outcome harvesting works backwards: outcomes are first identified then evaluative methods are used to articulate the causal pathway that led to the outcome.⁴⁸ Outcome harvesting was chosen to

⁴⁶ Snowballing refers to finding respondents through referrals from existing respondents.

⁴⁷ We recognize that not all aspects of the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework are under the direct management control of MI2, particularly those related to Opportunity. However, the EQs require us to look at the institutionalization of MI2 promoted approaches and barriers to take-up, even those beyond MI2 control, and this information is likely to be useful for USAID in understanding how to maximize impact of MI2 and similar programming.

⁴⁸ Wilson-Grau, Ricardo, and Heather Britt. 2012. “Outcome Harvesting.” USAID Learning Lab. Ford Foundation. <https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Outome%20Harvesting%20Brief%20FINAL%202012-05-2-1.pdf>.

complement the broader picture of performance garnered through KIIs and small group interviews, because it provides an in depth understanding of the Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation and contextual factors that enable or present a barrier to the success and institutionalization of MI2 practices.

The Evaluation Team used MI2 task documents (provided by MI2) along with discussions with MI2 and USAID staff to identify 2 “successful” MI2 tasks for in-depth outcome harvesting. It is important to emphasize that while the outcome harvesting approach focuses on “successful” examples, it explicitly investigates the factors that both contribute to and inhibit that success. MI2 and USAID suggested exploring the Fish Right program in the Philippines and the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group because of noted successes. After a review of available documentation and additional consultation with MI2 and USAID, the Evaluation Team developed initial outcome descriptions, then conducted 12 semi-structured interviews to further explore each outcome.

Conservation Enterprises: The original description of initial outcomes from the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group was based on document review of the Learning Group and outputs (see Annex A). This description was then developed further through a series of KIIs. First, the broad range of outcomes was explored with two individuals (MI2, USAID Washington) who have been involved with the learning group formation, learning agenda development, subsequent learning group coordination, and leadership. From this description, we conducted three KIIs with Mission and implementing partner respondents who participated in a coordinated training workshop called the Conservation Enterprises Impact Labs, that was conducted by the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group to further understand a specific set of outcomes.



Philippines Mission activities influence on additional design/programming: The original description of initial outcomes from



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the Philippines Mission resulted from document review, as well as discussions with USAID all focused on the Fish Right program. The outcomes were further explored using seven KII respondents (USAID staff and implementing partners) suggested by MI2 and USAID and complemented with snowball sampling. The interviews focused on how future program designs had been influenced by staff and implementing partners who were part of the Fish Right program.

Detailed information about the outcome harvesting Methodology can be found in Annex F. The detailed outcome harvesting Case Studies can be found in Annex E.

ANALYSIS

Desk Review

For the initial document review of 12 Statement of Works, the Evaluation Team conducted a content analysis using Dedoose according to capability, opportunity, and motivation (for example, providing training was linked to capability, while organizing and facilitating time for reflection was linked to motivation), Program Cycle phases and the CS lifecycle.

Key Informant and Small Group Interviews

The Evaluation Team used qualitative thematic analysis to identify emerging themes from interviews across all five evaluation questions. The Evaluation Team (including the TL, PM/ES and two PAs) coded 38 KIIs and small group interviews using a pre-identified codebook (see the table below) in Dedoose so that the data was analyzed in a consistent and transparent manner. The TL developed the structured codebook to ensure codes responded to the EQs and identified capability, opportunity, and motivation elements.

Codebook

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
I	Participant information	Parent item do not code to this	
I.1	Which mechanism do they have experience with?	Code for only one of the following based on their response	
I.1.1	MI		
I.1.2	MI2		
I.1.3	Both		
I.1.4	Unsure		
I.2	With which Office/Bureau/Mission (s) did they work with MI2 and their role	List all Offices, Bureaus, and/or Missions where they worked with MI2. For implementing partners and MI2 staff, this should include all the examples of USAID offices that they worked with using MI2 support and what they did	Anything about role with MI2- involvement in terms of role (activity manager, biodiversity forest advisor)
I.3	Current post	List current Office, Bureau, and/or Mission or organization where they are posted	
I.4	Current role	List current role/title in their current posting	
I.5	Current posting type	Code based on current position - see definitions below	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
I.51	Washington	Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization; Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance; Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation; Bureau for Global Health; Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA); Bureau for Resilience and Food Security; Bureau for Foreign Assistance; Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs; Bureau for Management; Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning; Program Office	
I.52	Regional Bureau	Bureau for Africa, Bureau for Asia, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Bureau for the Middle East	
I.53	Mission	Country-level Missions, Advancing Religious Freedom and Pluralism, Central Africa Regional, Central Asia Regional, Eastern and Southern Caribbean, Middle East Regional, Middle East Regional Platform, Pacific Islands, Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), Sahel Regional Office, Southern Africa Regional, West Africa Regional	
I.54	Implementing partner	Any external organization that is implementing a USAID-funded program and/or mechanism	
I.55	MI2	Current MI2 staff	
I.56	Other	Any other posting type where you don't know where to categorize it	
I.6	Biodiversity Advisor	Complete if the participant received Biodiversity Advisor training and/or is a current Biodiversity Advisor	
I.7	Project Names	On which projects was MI2 working with them? Code all mentioned projects that they worked on MI2 with	e.g., HEARTH (Kafue, Garamba, TSIRO), FishRight, Protect Wildlife, Green Annamites--> this is all

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
			DIRECT MI2 support, not MI (if unclear include text that supports it)
I.8	Support type	Type of support MI2 provided - this includes both tools and approaches. List all mentioned types of support that the participant mentioned	
I.81	Facilitation	Provide facilitation and workshop design technical assistance for workshops, conversations, dialogues, etc.	Facilitation, building agendas, virtual and in-person events, tools for collaborative working (e.g., Mural), bringing people together for conversation, collaboration, etc.
I.82	Monitoring and Evaluation	Utilize the Open Standards/Conservation Standards approach to defining outcomes and indicators for MEL	Defining outcomes, indicators, developing MEL plans with CS, PIRS
I.83	Theory of Change	Utilize the Open Standards/Conservation Standards approach to identify direct threats/pressures/drivers, build a situation model, identify strategies/interventions/actions, develop a ToC/results chain	ToC, results chains, situation models
I.84	Evidence	Find and/or generate evidence for a need within the project, apply evidence to answer a need in the project, scope and conduct research activities. Includes helping groups understand and learn how to identify when to bring in evidence, how to find and assess evidence, and how to apply evidence within the Program Cycle (should be co-coded w/ training)	Research reports, publications, syntheses, assessments, methods
I.85	Learning	Conduct activities and/or provide assistance to learn and share knowledge. This can be learning writ broadly (e.g., about a topic area, evidence base, etc.) or more narrowly (e.g., focused on a specific activity in order to adapt, evaluate, etc.) with either USAID internally and/or external audiences	Pause and Reflect workshops, Learning Groups, Learning events, Conferences, Learning Agenda, Webinars,

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
I.86	Training	Conduct activities to train and/or produce materials to guide USAID staff and/or implementing partners to understand and/or apply specific adaptive management tools, evidence, and/or learning	
I.87	Software Tools	Provide assistance and access to software tools for CS process (or other processes)	E.g., Miradi
I.88	Other	Any other examples of support that is provided	
I.9	Program Cycle Stage	For this participant, what stage(s) of the Program Cycle did they work with MI2 for direct support?	
I.91	Strategic Planning	This includes activities that provide technical assistance to USAID in terms of identifying strategic directions, priorities, approaches, etc. for current and future programs and/or portfolios	Learning agenda, prioritization, approaches to use in program strategy and design (e.g., Thinking and Working Politically)
I.92	Project Design/Implementation	This includes activities that provide technical assistance to USAID prior to procurement	Project co-creation, project design workshops, implementation tasks leading to procurement
I.93	Activity Design/Implementation	This includes activities that provide technical assistance to USAID and implementing partners in activities post-award until activity close	Activity start-ups, implementation, pause and reflects, after action reviews, etc.
I.94	MEL	This includes activities that provide technical assistance to USAID and/or implementing partners in designing and/or implementing monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities	Baseline data collection, MEL Plan creation, evaluations
2	Contributions + capability, opportunity, and motivation		

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
2.1	Evaluation Question 1 (Contribution to program)	Include any text where the respondent describes how MI2 support contributed to outputs and/or outcomes for programs/activities. Ensure you include information about the type of support, where and when this support occurred, what outputs/outcomes resulted from that support.	
2.2	Evaluation Question 1 (Capacity of respondent)	Include any text where the respondent describes how MI2 support contributed to the capacity of USAID staff and/or implementing partners and/or other participants in using adaptive management tools and/or evidence and/or learning. Ensure you include information about the type of support, where and when this support occurred, any contextual factors, what changes to capacity resulted from that support.	Capacity includes ability, skills, awareness, etc.
2.3	Evaluation Question 1 (Opportunity to use tools/approaches)	Include any text where the respondent describes opportunities for USAID staff and/or implementing partners and/or other stakeholders to use adaptive management tools and/or evidence and/or learning. Ensure you include information about the type of support, where and when this support occurred, any contextual factors, what changes to opportunities resulted from that support.	Opportunity includes space, participation, event, funding, policy/practice standards, etc.
2.4	Evaluation Question 1 (Motivation to use tools/approaches)	Include any text where the respondent describes USAID staff and/or implementing partners and/or other stakeholders' desire/motivation to use adaptive management tools and/or evidence and/or learning introduced or employed by MI2 (during MI2 support). Include any contextual factors.	Motivation includes interest, perception of value and/or utility, etc.

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
2.5	Evaluation Question 1 (MEL)	Include any text where the respondent described how MI2 support contributed to changes in MEL investment within the project. This can include changes to interest, funding and resource investment, time investment, change in priority of MEL within project, etc.	
3	Perceptions		
3.1	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Perceptions of the Open Standards)	Include any text where the respondent describes perceptions of success, challenges, utility, interest, etc. in the Open Standards approach (identify direct threats/pressures/drivers, build a situation model, identify strategies/interventions/actions, develop a ToC/results chain). Ensure that you capture text about how the CS was used and when in the Program Cycle it was used and why it was used and any contextual factors	Note: Sometimes CS is not mentioned directly so you have to note the different approaches)
3.2	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Perceptions of other Adaptive Management tools)	Include any text where the respondent describes perceptions of success, challenges, utility, interest, etc. in using other adaptive management tools that were distinct from the Open Standards approach. Ensure that you capture text about how it was used and when in the Program Cycle it was used and why it was used and any contextual factors	Note: Used outside of CS- NOT --> identify direct threats/pressures/drivers, build a situation model, identify strategies/interventions/ actions, develop a ToC/results chain. Can include collaboration, conversation, P&Rs, AARs, etc.

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
3.3	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Perceptions of Evidence)	Include any text where the respondent describes perceptions of success, challenges, utility, interest, etc. in bringing evidence in, generating evidence, and/or using evidence during MI2 support. Ensure that you capture text about if and how the evidence was used and when in the Program Cycle it was used and why it was used and any contextual factors.	
3.4	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Perceptions of Learning (Program))	Include any text where the respondent describes perceptions of success, challenges, utility, interest, etc. in programmatic learning during MI2 support. Ensure that you capture text about how the learning was generated/shared, if and when in the Program Cycle it was used and why it was used and any contextual factors.	
3.5	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Perceptions of Learning (Broad))	Include any text where the respondent describes perceptions of success, challenges, utility, interest, etc. in external learning during MI2 support. Ensure that you capture text about how the learning was generated/shared, if and when in the Program Cycle it was used and why it was used and any contextual factors.	e.g., Learning labs - where Missions share case studies/experiences and external of USAID people are brought in

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
3.6	EQ ALL (Perceptions of MI2 Implementation)	Include any text where the respondent describes perceptions of MI2's implementation process (scoping, workplans (for MI2), reporting, communication, staffing, facilitation, etc.). Ensure you capture text about which aspect of implementation, success/challenges, and any contextual factors	These don't fit into any category.
4	Post MI2 Contributions		
4.1	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Using tools post-MI2)	Capture entire blocks of text where respondents described what types of tools they used after or outside of MI2 support, what happened after use and why, and any contextual factors that were associated.	
4.2	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Decision and ability to use tools post-MI2)	Capture entire blocks of text where respondent described why or why not they chose to use the tool, how it went, and any contextual factors that were associated. This includes capacity, opportunity, and/or motivation to use or not use tools/approaches.	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
4.3	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (Sustainability of MI2 contribution)	Include any text where respondent describes their perception on whether the contribution of MI2 will be or is sustainable after MI2 will be over. Include any contextual factors that are associated.	This is focused on whether what MI2 produced or facilitated - e.g., a program ToC, a MEL plan, etc. - continued to be used or is planned to be used in the program/activity/Office moving forward. For example, using the situation model that MI2 helped them create to inform activity design and implementation moving forward.
4.4	Evaluation Question 3 (MI2 contribution to USAID)	Include any text where respondent describes their perception on if and how MI2 has contributed to USAID as an institution (can be as a whole or specific Offices/Bureaus/Missions) - this can include diffusion of practices to others who have never worked with MI2, changes to standard operating procedures, priorities, decisions, desired ways of working, procurement, etc. Include any text that describes how this contribution occurred or might occur and any contextual factors	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
4.5	Evaluation Question 2 & 5 (MI2 contribution to interest to use tools post-MI2)	Capture entire blocks of text where respondent described interest (or no interest) in using tools/approaches from MI2 experience outside of MI2 support. Can be of themselves or others.	This is focused on whether the respondent described interest or explicitly no interest in using the types of tools/approaches that MI2 used - in another situation without MI2. For example, using a situation modeling approach in another activity design.
5	CLA		
5.1	Evaluation Question 4 (Familiar with other CLA tools?)		This is the response directly to the question about other CLA approaches
5.11	Yes		
5.12	No		
5.2	Evaluation Question 4 (Comparison of other CLA tools to MI2)	Include the name of the tool(s) and any similarities or differences to MI2 and also how they compared	This is the response directly to the question about other CLA approaches
6	Funding model		
6.1	Evaluation question 5 (Change to Mission buy-in)	Do not code - parent item - only code below if the respondent was aware that it had changed to Mission buy in	
6.11	No impacts reported overall	Include text if respondent said there were aware of the change and there were no impacts	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
6.12	Impact on MI2 objectives	Include text on how Mission buy-in impacted the ability of MI2 to pursue their objectives - e.g., use and application of adaptive management tools, evidence, and learning, quality of the work produced or assistance provided	
6.13	Impact on USAID objectives	Include text on how Mission buy-in impacted the implementation of USAID programs and activities (e.g., programmatic impacts, program staff including implementing partners, design, etc.) that MI2 was able to (or not able to) support	
6.14	Impact on MI2 implementation	Include text on how this impacted MI2 implementation (e.g., staff, structure, working approach, budget, scope of work)	
6.15	Impact on USAID staff	Include text on how this impacted USAID staff and their ability/interest/capacity to participate in MI2 supported activities or to obtain MI2 support	
7	Biodiversity Expert Facilitation		
7.1	Evaluation question 4 (Biodiversity/conservation facilitators)	Do not code - parent item - only code below if the respondent was aware of facilitator's background	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
7.11	Impact on own perceptions of workshop	Include text where respondent describes how the facilitators background impacted their perception of the workshop. Include positive, negative, neutral, mixed perceptions	If it is JUST about perceptions of facilitation without referring to the facilitator's backgrounds, this should go into perceptions of MI2 implementation in 3.6
7.12	Impact on other's perceptions of workshop	Include text where respondent describes how the facilitators background impacted other participant's perception of the workshop. Include positive, negative, neutral, mixed perceptions	
7.13	Impact on activity/program design and implementation and MEL	Include text where respondent describes how the facilitators background impacted how the program/activity/MEL was designed during the workshop. Include positive, negative, neutral, mixed perceptions	
8	Recommendations		
8.1	Evaluation Question 4 (Recommendations for improvements/changes to MI2)	Include any recommendations for changes to MI2 – if this is in comparison to other CLA tools, please ensure you include text that indicates that	
9	Contextual Factors (EQ5)		
9.1	Helped	Anything that supported implementation, uptake, and/or sustainability of MI2 adaptive management learning/tools/products (during and after MI2 support)	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
9.11	Flexible Contract	Flexibility in changing targets, indicators, timelines, etc.	
9.12	Timeline	The project timeline allowed for changes	
9.13	Human resources	The right people or enough people were available to make changes	
9.14	Mission support	Support at the Mission level (program officers, leadership, etc.)	
9.15	Specific policies	Mention of any USAID policies that made it easier to make changes	
9.16	Washington support	Support from any offices in Washington	
9.17	Funding	Any funding streams or additional funding	
9.19	Other	Anything else that helped	
9.2	Hindered	Anything that was an obstacle to implementation, uptake, and/or sustainability of MI2 adaptive management learning/tools/products (during and after MI2 support)	
9.21	Not flexible contract	No flexibility to change targets, indicators, or other parts of the contract, including timeline	
9.22	Timeline	The project timeline did not allow for changes	
9.23	Human resources	The right people or enough people were not available to make changes (including Foreign Service Officers who move from Mission to Mission)	
9.24	Mission support	Support at the Mission level (program officers, leadership, etc.)	

Code #	Code Name	Code definition	Explanations/Examples
9.25	Specific policies	Mention of any USAID policies that made it harder to make changes	
9.26	Washington support	Support from any offices in Washington.	
9.27	COVID	Any mention of COVID as a barrier	
9.28	Funding	Lack of available funding or funding restrictions	
9.29	Other	Anything else that hindered	

Following the initial coding, the codes were downloaded into excel and then added to a virtual white board (Miro board) according to relevant EQs. The Evaluation Team (the TL and the PM/ES) then elicited themes using the Miro board, meeting once per week to share findings and further refine emerging themes. For questions focused on the contribution of MI2 on the quality, uptake, and application of evidence, learning, and adaptive management, the Evaluation Team used the capability, opportunity, and motivation model of behavior described at the beginning of this Methodology Annex.

Outcome Harvesting

Following data collection, the Evaluation Team reviewed the interviews (not coding in a formal manner because of the small sample size) for each case study to develop (1) clear outcome statements, (2) causal chains and enabling factors that contributed to the outcome statements, and (3) the significance of each statement. The Evaluation Team attempted to identify themes and trends among multiple respondents but given the small sample size this investigation was limited, and The Evaluation Team prioritized creating causal chains from the information available. The Evaluation Team then validated outcomes with participating respondents over email. More information on outcome harvesting Methodology can be found in Annex F.

Method	Limitation	Mitigation
Desk Review	Lack of standardization between documents: During the initial document review, the Evaluation Team intended to conduct a content analysis of all MI2 technical assistance design documents across Missions using capability, opportunity, and motivation coding, but design documents (agendas, Statement of Works) were not standardized enough to do consistent coding in a single type of document.	The Evaluation Team only coded the most standardized Statement of Works - 12 “buy-in” Statement of Works.
Key Informant and Small Group Interviews	Recall Bias: Respondents may have had difficulties remembering specific details about their involvement in MI2 tasks, especially in terms of remembering decision-making and behaviors during the time of their involvement.	Protocols and tailored probes were designed using program documents (incorporating specific documented events, timelines, etc. for MI2) to prevent conflation with other learning/adaptive management related programming and the previous iteration of MI.
	Selection Bias: The participants in KIIs and small group interviews may be individuals who have had a more pronounced experience with MI2 than other potential participants (either strongly positive or strongly negative).	The selection of KII and small group interview participants was based on a wide variety of criteria. Starting with respondents selected by MI2 and USAID to best speak to the evaluation questions, the Evaluation Team then identified additional respondents through document review and snowball sampling with respondents.
	Comparison Bias: The ability to distinguish strengths and weaknesses of CLA versus MI2 in their separate contributions to specific adaptive management processes and outcomes is difficult due to their similarities. Like MI2, other CLA approaches seek to build similar capability, opportunity, and motivation elements for similar adaptive management outcomes; hence answering any question relating to how they differ (EQ 4) has some possible recall bias in data collection.	This risk of bias was mitigated using outcome harvesting, which focused on MI2 tasks and on explaining positive outcomes by building an evidenced causal chain moving backwards. This reduces the risk that respondents conflate the contributions of overlapping CLA and MI2 efforts; however, MI2 tasks take place in contexts where USAID is often using multiple CLA approaches to build a culture of AM.

	<p>Response/Attribution Bias: Respondents may have difficulty differentiating results from their own work compared to those of MI2. This bias can include respondent difficulty in differentiating specific MI2 tasks from other programmatic activities as well as attributing those results to those activities.</p>	<p>Before KIIs/small group interviews, all respondents were asked about their involvement in MI versus MI2 and asked to share only information from MI2 tasks or to tell the interviewer if they could not recall if activities were from MI or MI2.</p>
	<p>Small sample size comparative to reach of the program and subsequent small “n” for most findings: Findings were variable among participants, and even where there were trends the n was relatively small—three or four respondents in some cases. Similarly, given the nature of semi-structured interviews not all questions were asked to all respondents and not all respondents offered perspectives on all questions.</p>	<p>The diverse and rich experiences and examples shared by respondents have generated consistent and clear themes that the Evaluation Team confidently presents as a basis for conclusions and recommendations. The Evaluation Team has provided the n for questions where the n is particularly relevant.</p>
	<p>Interpretation Bias: There is always a risk of interpretation of data being biased towards the perceptions of evaluators.</p>	<p>The risk of bias was mitigated through ensuring a diverse group of stakeholders, working closely with USAID to ensure the EQs were interpreted correctly and the scope was clear, and presenting preliminary results to USAID to obtain initial feedback. The Evaluation Team also addressed recall and causal pathways via outcome harvesting studies. The Evaluation Team did peer-checking (validation) through the outcome harvesting.</p>
<p>Outcome HA</p>	<p>Selection Bias: MI2 and USAID selected the cases for outcome harvesting and the potential sample of respondents, so the selection is biased towards cases that likely demonstrated more positive outcomes and a sample of respondents with more positive experiences/feedback than a random sample might have yielded.</p>	<p>However, the purpose of outcome harvesting is not to identify generalizable conclusions regarding the outcomes of MI2, rather it is used to explore examples of causal pathways in depth, focusing on contributing and inhibiting factors.</p>

Annex C: Data Collection Instruments

BRANCH I (PERFORMANCE): USAID AND MI2 STAFF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

Name	
USAID Mission/Mission Office	
Title	
Date	
Interviewer	
Note Taker	

Interview Sections	Questions and Probes	Respondent Type	EQ
I. Introduction	<p>Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today. [If consent is not signed obtain verbal, recorded consent] Do you have any questions? As a reminder we are evaluating the MI2 project, which ran from FY2018 – FY2021. This was a follow-on to a previous project called MI. Though they may have been similar, we are only looking for information about MI2 and ask that you consider our questions in reference to only MI2 activities and outcomes.</p> <p>Please share your name and position.</p> <p>For HQ USAID staff and MI2 staff: Please share your involvement with the MI2 project, and how long you have been involved. (Probes: what specific activities were you involved in?)</p> <p>For Mission-based respondents or others: Please share how you have been involved with MI2 (Probes: with which Missions did you receive direct support and when, what projects or parts of the project cycle were you involved with at the time?, what activities specifically were you involved in)</p> <p>What is your role and Mission now? *Prior to interview review country specific information based on info given in sample and prepare probes related to activities</p>	All	N/A

Interview Sections	Questions and Probes	Respondent Type	EQ
<p>2. MI2 Performance</p>	<p>2.1: In your experience what is an example of success in applying learning and/or adaptive management within a MI2-supported activity? Why do you consider this to be successful? [Probe: what happened for the participants? For the agency? Why was this helpful/useful?] How/why do you think that happened? Are there other examples you can give [was this the most important?]?</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>EQ1, 2,3,5</p>
	<p>2.2: In your experience, what is an example of a major challenge for MI2? Why do you think this is so significant? How/why did this impact MI2's progress? How did this impact the participants capacities/opportunities/motivations to use/apply the tools/learning? Can you think of other examples?</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>EQ1, 2,3,5</p>
	<p>2.3: [Depending on the respondent: For yourself or for activities you are familiar with?] In your experience, did you use/see examples of how skills and learning from MI2 support were used in other contexts? [Probe: e.g., post MI2 support, outside of MI2 support] Why were those skills/learnings applied? What was it aimed to accomplish? What happened after they were applied?</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>EQ 2,3,5</p>
<p>3. Contextual Factors</p>	<p>Now we are interested in learning about what other factors influenced stakeholders/your ability to apply MI2 adaptive management learning/tools/products to your work.</p> <p>3.1: Can you think of any internal factors that helped or hindered implementation? [Probe: MI2 design, staff directly involved, etc.]</p> <p>3.2: Can you think of any external factors that helped or hindered implementation? [Probe: Mission priorities, funding, country context, etc.). How so? [Probe for an example if needed to hone in]</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>EQ5</p>
	<p>3.3: At one point, MI2 changed from being centrally funded to a Mission-buy-in approach. How did this change affect MI2 implementation, in your opinion (if at all)? Do you think this change in implementation affected end results?</p>	<p>Respondents who were active with the MI2 program under both models</p>	<p>EQ5</p>

Interview Sections	Questions and Probes	Respondent Type	EQ
4. CLA	<p>4.1: Are you familiar with other approaches to CLA? In your experience, how do those compare to MI2? How are they similar or different? Do you see any advantages/drawbacks of MI2's approach?</p>	Respondents with considerable time at the agency, and familiarity with CLA approaches	EQ4
	<p>4.2: The MI2 program explicitly brought in staff with biodiversity and conservation backgrounds as facilitators. Were you aware of this? Can you think of an example of when these specialists were involved?</p> <p>In this example, did the disciplinary background of these facilitators influence your perception of the workshops and their utility?</p> <p>How do you think this workshop would have proceeded if these specialists were not involved? Why do you think that is the case?</p>	All	EQ4
	<p>4.3 If above questions are answered:</p> <p>Are you aware of how these efforts affected the <i>design</i> or management of programs (biodiversity/conservation/integrated) if at all?</p>	Only if prior question is answered	EQ4
5. Reflection	<p>5.1: In retrospect, are there any other changes you wish you could have made to MI2 to help it better achieve its objectives? How so?</p>	Respondents with considerable time at the agency, and familiarity with CLA approaches	EQ1, 2, 5
6. Closing	<p>6.1: Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with MI2?</p> <p>6.2: Is there anyone you think we should be talking to about MI2? If so, please share their name and email and we may contact them.</p>	All	N/A

BRANCH 3: INDIRECT CROSS MISSION LEARNING STUDY FGD INSTRUMENT (CROSS-MISSION LEARNING GROUP)

Names	
USAID Mission/Mission Office	
Title of Each Participant	
Date	
Interviewer	
Note Taker	

Discussion Section	Questions and Probes
1. Introduction	<p>Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today. [If consent is not signed obtain verbal, recorded consent] Do you have any questions?</p> <p>Today we will be speaking about [Name of Cross-Mission Learning Group]. As a reminder we are evaluating the MI2 project which began in FY2018 as a follow-on to Measuring Impact (or MI). Though they may have been similar, we are only looking for information about MI2 and ask that you consider our questions in reference to only MI2 activities and outcomes.</p> <p>Please share your name and position and current role.</p>
2. Learning Group Objectives	<p>1.1: In your perspective, what is the purpose of this Learning Group as a whole? What do you hope to gain out of being in this LG? Have the group objectives (or your objectives) changed over time? If so, why did it change?</p> <p>How did MI2 engage with this group?</p>
3. Identification of Success and Enablers	<p>2.1: What do you think is a success of this Learning Group? Can you describe that in more detail? Why do you say this? 2.2: What do you think led to this success? (Probe: in relation to MI2 support)</p> <p>Were there other factors (e.g., people, tools, alignment, funding, opportunities, etc.) that made this successful?</p>
4. Identification of Barriers	<p>3.1: What are some challenges that this Learning Group has faced? What caused these problems? How significant were the problems? Did MI2 support help you overcome these challenges? If so, how?</p> <p>What else helped you overcome these challenges? How so?</p>

BRANCH 3: INDIRECT CROSS MISSION LEARNING STUDY KII INSTRUMENT

Name	
USAID Mission/Mission Office	
Title	
Date	
Interviewer	
Note Taker	

Interview Section	Questions and Probes	Type of Respondent	EQ
I: Introduction	<p>Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today. [If consent is not signed obtain verbal, recorded consent] Do you have any questions? As a reminder we are evaluating the MI2 project which began in FY2018 as a follow-on to Measuring Impact (or MI). Though they may have been similar, we are only looking for information about MI2 and ask that you consider our questions in reference to only MI2 activities and outcomes.</p> <p>Please share your name and position and current role.</p> <p>For Mission-based respondents or others: Please share how you have been involved with MI2 (Probes: with which Missions did you receive direct support and when, what projects or parts of the project cycle were you involved with at the time?, what activities specifically were you involved in).</p>	All	N/A
2. Relevant Adaptive Management Practice <i>(Identifying the relevant MI2 Practices envisioned for uptake)</i>	<p>2.1: What was the main purpose of the (insert MI2 intervention from doc rev or intro question) in your mind? What type of change in program management do you think this was meant to result in? What did you hope would result from this [insert name of MI2 intervention]?</p> <p>(Probe: have a list of adaptive management practices relevant to the specific MI2 activity)</p>	All	EQI
3. Overall perception and experience	<p>3.1: As a whole, can you reflect a bit on your experience working with MI2? What was successful? What was challenging? Why?</p>	All	EQI

Interview Section	Questions and Probes	Type of Respondent	EQ
	<i>(Use response to help probe for following questions)</i>		
4. Immediate activity capability, opportunity, and motivation	4.1: In your experience, can you describe how MI2 supported learning or use of an adaptive management tool? When did you apply/use this learning/tool? For what purpose? (Probe: stages of Program Cycle)	All	EQ1,2
	4.2: What did this [insert learning/tool] help you accomplish within [insert name of activity]? [Probe: understanding how to apply the learning/tool, process, be more consistent in practice, more robust MEL, etc.] Why do you think that happened (or didn't happen)? [Probes: did it happen as expected? Was that surprising? Funding, opportunity, context, timing, attitude etc.] 4.3: Did MI2 support influence your awareness of how, when, and where to apply this [insert tool/learning that they are talking about]? How so? 4.4: Did MI2 support influence your ability to do that? (e.g., skills). How so?	All	EQ1, 2, 5
	4.5: If MI2 was not involved – do you think you would still have gotten to the same end point?	All	EQ1,2,5
	4.6: Are there any other examples of learnings/tools from your experience with MI2 that you want to discuss?	All	EQ1,2,5
	5. Post MI2 Activities (Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation)	<p>Now we are interested in knowing more about specific skills, tools and adaptive management approaches that you utilized after MI2 support was finished or in another context outside of MI2? (if applicable).</p> <p>5.1: Have you had the opportunity to use these skills/tools after or outside of (insert MI2 activity)? Can you tell me about it? Why were those skills/tools applied? How did it go? What happened after they were applied? (Probe: project, program, Mission-level impacts?)</p> <p>5.2: What has helped you the most in using these new skill/tools? What has been the biggest barrier? (Probes: Were there funding barriers? Timeline</p>	Only respondents who utilized MI2 learning/tools/product after the initial intervention

Interview Section	Questions and Probes	Type of Respondent	EQ
	<p><i>constraints? Contract constraints? Did you have leadership support? Was there institutional support/constraints? Attitude?)</i></p> <p>5.3: How did you mitigate these challenges? (follow-up for the two above)</p> <p>5.4: Would the same thing have happened if you did not apply these learnings/tools?</p>		
<p>6. CLA [Optional]</p>	<p>6.1: Are you familiar with other approaches to CLA?</p> <p>[If yes] In your experience, how do those compare to work done under MI2? Do you think they supplement each other? Do you think they ever work at odds? Why?</p>	<p>USAID staff with considerable time at the agency, and familiarity with CLA approaches</p>	<p>EQ4</p>
	<p>6.2: The MI2 program explicitly brought in staff with biodiversity and conservation backgrounds as facilitators. Were you aware of this?</p> <p>[If yes] Can you think of an example of when and how these specialists were involved?</p> <p>In this example, did the disciplinary background of these facilitators your perception of the workshops and their utility?</p> <p>How do you think this workshop would have proceeded if these specialists were not involved? Why do you think that is the case?</p>	<p>USAID staff with considerable time at the agency, and familiarity with CLA approaches</p>	<p>EQ4</p>
	<p>6.3: If above questions are answered: Are you aware of how have these efforts affected the <i>design</i> or <i>management</i> of programs (biodiversity/conservation/integrated) if at all?</p>	<p>Only respondents who were able to answer the above question</p>	<p>EQ4</p>
<p>7. Reflection</p>	<p>7.1: In retrospect, are there any other changes you wish you could have made to MI2 to help it better achieve your activity objectives? How so?</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>8. Closing</p>	<p>8.1: Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with MI2?</p> <p>8.2: Is there anyone else you think we should be talking to about MI2? If so please share their name and email and we may contact them.</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>N/A</p>

BRANCH 4: MISSION STAFF EXPERIENCE STUDY FGD INSTRUMENT

Names	
USAID Mission/Mission Office	
Title of Each Participant	
Date	
Interviewer	
Note Taker	

Interview Section	Questions and Probes	EQ
Introduction	<p>Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today. [If consent is not signed obtain verbal, recorded consent] Do you have any questions? As a reminder we are evaluating the MI2 project, which began in FY2018. This was a follow-on to a previous project called MI. Though they may have been similar, we are only looking for information about MI2 and ask that you consider our questions in reference to only MI2 activities and outcomes.</p> <p>We will start with a round of brief introductions, please share your name, position, and how long you have been with this Mission and USAID in general.</p>	N/A
I: Relevant Adaptive Management Practice <i>(Identifying the relevant MI2 Practices envisioned for uptake)</i>	<p>1.1: What was the main purpose of the MI2 support in your mind? What type of AM tools and/or learnings were introduced/used? What type of change in program management do you think this was meant to result in? What did you hope would result from this support?</p> <p>(Probe: have a list of adaptive management practices relevant to the specific MI2 activity)</p>	EQ1
2. Overall perception and experience	<p>2.1: As a whole, can you reflect a bit on your experience working with MI2? What was successful? What was challenging? Why?</p> <p><i>(Use response to help probe for following questions)</i></p>	EQ1
3: MI2 Activity Contributions to Mission (can span all capability, opportunity, and motivation elements)	<p>3.1: What did MI2 help you accomplish within [insert name of activity]? [Probe: understanding how to apply the learning/tool, process, be more consistent in practice, more robust MEL, etc.] Why do you think that happened (or didn't happen)? [Probes: did it happen as expected? Was that surprising? Funding, opportunity, context, timing, attitude etc.]</p>	EQ2

Interview Section	Questions and Probes	EQ
	<p>3.2: Do you think that the MI2 activity helped contribute to overall Mission objectives?_Can you describe why it was successful? How did it contribute to this?</p> <p>3.3: If MI2 was not involved – do you think you would still have gotten to the same end point?</p>	
<p>4: Opportunities and Motivations to Utilize Adaptive Management Approaches (during and after MI2 support)</p>	<p>4.1: In your experience, do you think there were specific external factors (e.g., <i>Were there funding barriers? Timeline constraints? Contract constraints? Did you have leadership support and encouragement? Incentives to do so?</i>)_that helped and or perhaps hindered in your ability to use adaptive management approaches and tools that MI2 introduced to your project?</p> <p>4.2: Since the activity ended, have there been opportunities or interest from the Mission in further utilizing AM approaches? Can you tell me about it? (Probes: <i>When, Where, Why</i>)_How did it go?</p>	<p>EQ2 and 5</p>
<p>5. CLA [Optional]</p>	<p>5.1: Are you familiar with other approaches to CLA? [If yes] In your experience, how do those compare to work done under MI2? Do you think they supplement each other? Do you think they ever work at odds? Why?</p> <p>5.2: The MI2 program explicitly brought in staff with biodiversity and conservation backgrounds as facilitators. Were you aware of this? [If yes] Can you think of an example of when and how these specialists were involved? In this example, did the disciplinary background of these facilitators your perception of the workshops and their utility? How do you think this workshop would have proceeded if these specialists were not involved? Why do you think that is the case?</p> <p>5.3: If above questions are answered: Are you aware of how these efforts have affected the <i>design</i> or management of programs (biodiversity/conservation/integrated) if at all?</p>	<p>EQ4</p>
<p>6: Applied Learning</p>	<p>6.1: In your experience, did MI2 support learning within your activity? If so, can you describe how MI2 supported learning? What was this learning supposed to inform? (Probe:</p>	<p>EQ1, 2, 5</p>

Interview Section	Questions and Probes	EQ
	<p>stages of Program Cycle). Was this learning used? Why or why not?</p> <p>6.2: Do you think there were any missed learning opportunities during implementation? Could you detail these missed opportunities?</p>	
7: Reflection	7.1 In retrospect, are there any other changes you wish you could have made to MI2 to help it better achieve your activity objectives? How so?	

INRM MI2 EVALUATION: CONSENT FORM AND DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

USAID INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (INRM) MEASURING IMPACT 2 (MI2) EVALUATION: FGD CONSENT FORM

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We are researchers from the USAID Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) Activity, and we have been contracted by USAID (the US government) to evaluate the USAID Measuring Impact 2 (MI2) Activity, an Activity funded by USAID’s Biodiversity Division. MI2 is led by partner Environmental Incentives (EI) who is supported by partners Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc.⁴⁹ Our Evaluation Team is composed of independent evaluators who are not part of USAID or the MI2 Activity. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which MI2 has achieved its objectives and supported USAID in improvements in Biodiversity programming, in order to inform MI2 programming, as well as future USAID programming with similar objectives. We will ask you questions related to the performance of the MI2 Activity, including perceived outcomes, successes and opportunities and the extent to which you and your Mission or group utilized new skills and approaches learned through this activity. You were selected from a list of key individuals provided through USAID and MI2, or suggested to the Evaluation Team by another respondent. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals who were involved in the MI2 Activity. Today’s interview is expected to last approximately 2 hours.

Reporting and Confidentiality: The information that you and others provide will be used to write an evaluation report, which will be shared with USAID and made public. However, only the Evaluation Team – nobody else – will have access to any recorded transcripts or notes. Considering the specificity of your role and time-specific knowledge of this project, we cannot guarantee anonymity of the information that you provide. However, we will not report your name or other personally identifying information. We may provide a respondent list as part of the final report.

Due to the private nature of this evaluation research, we ask that all focus group participants agree not to share anything that is discussed with anyone outside of this group once this conversation ends. Nonetheless, there is a risk that other discussion participants will repeat what is shared here today. Remember that you are free to refuse to answer any question.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to participate or answer specific questions, you do not have to. Should you choose to participate, please know that you may change your mind and stop the interview at any point. There will be no consequences if you choose not to participate.

Risks and Benefits: We do not anticipate that your participation in this interview will result in any risks or direct benefits to you, but your inputs may lead to recommendations that benefit future USAID programs, and therefore, the general public.

Contact: If you have any concerns or questions about the evaluation, you may contact the Social Impact’s Institutional Review Board at “irb@socialimpact.com”, or the Evaluation Team Leader, Samantha Cheng, at sam_cheng@INRMproject.com or by phone [WhatsApp] at 1-617-953-2624

⁴⁹ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XHWC.pdf
Measuring Impact II Evaluation

- Do you have any questions for us before we get started?
[Please contact us if you have any questions before signing]
 - Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this interview?
[Check or place an X next to “Yes” or “No”]
 Yes No
 - Are you comfortable if we record this interview?
[Check or place an X next to “Yes” or “No”]
 Yes No
-

Please sign below if you agree to participate:

Participant signature

INRM MI2 EVALUATION: CONSENT FORM AND DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

USAID INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (INRM) MEASURING IMPACT 2 (MI2) EVALUATION: KII CONSENT FORM

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We are researchers from the USAID Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) Activity, and we have been contracted by USAID (the US government) to evaluate the USAID Measuring Impact 2 (MI2) Activity, an Activity funded by USAID’s Biodiversity Division. MI2 is led by partner Environmental Incentives (EI) who is supported by partners Foundations of Success, and ICF Macro, Inc.⁵⁰ The Evaluation Team is composed of independent evaluators who are not part of USAID or the MI2 Activity. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which MI2 has achieved its objectives and supported USAID in improvements in Biodiversity programming, in order to inform MI2 programming, as well as future USAID programming with similar objectives. We will ask you questions related to the performance of the MI2 Activity, including perceived outcomes, successes and opportunities and the extent to which you and your Mission or group utilized new skills and approaches learned through this activity. You were selected from a list of key individuals provided through USAID and MI2, or suggested to the Evaluation Team by another respondent. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals who were involved in the MI2 Activity. Today’s interview is expected to last approximately 45-60 minutes.

Reporting and Confidentiality: The information that you and others provide will be used to write an evaluation report, which will be shared with USAID and made public. However, only the Evaluation Team – nobody else – will have access to any recorded transcripts or notes. Considering the specificity of your role and time-specific knowledge of this project, we cannot guarantee anonymity of the information that you provide. However, we will not report your name or other personally identifying information. We may provide a respondent list as part of the final report.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to participate or answer specific questions, you do not have to. Should you choose to participate, please know that you may change your mind and stop the interview at any point. There will be no consequences if you choose not to participate.

Risks and Benefits: We do not anticipate that your participation in this interview will result in any risks or direct benefits to you, but your inputs may lead to recommendations that benefit future USAID programs, and therefore, the general public.

Contact: If you have any concerns or questions about the evaluation, you may contact the Social Impact’s Institutional Review Board at “irb@socialimpact.com”, or the Evaluation Team Leader, Samantha Cheng, at sam_cheng@INRMproject.com or by phone [WhatsApp] at 1-617-953-2624

- Do you have any questions for us before we get started?
[Please contact us if you have any questions before signing]

⁵⁰ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XHWC.pdf
Measuring Impact II Evaluation

- Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this interview?
[Check or place an X next to “Yes” or “No”]
 Yes No

- Are you comfortable if we record this interview?
[Check or place an X next to “Yes” or “No”]
 Yes No

Please sign below if you agree to participate:

Participant signature

Annex D: Evaluation Statement of Work

OVERVIEW OF INRM

The Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) activity provides on-demand support services and technical assistance for USAID Missions, Bureaus, and Independent Offices, and is managed by the Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure in the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation. INRM supports integrated analysis and programming across development sectors. By using a multi-sectoral lens, INRM seeks to strengthen the impacts of USAID's core environmental programming by recognizing synergies, adopting best practices, and building broader constituencies for integrated programming. The activity is designed to help USAID operating units achieve higher impact environment programming and to support the uptake of principles and approaches outlined in the Agency's Environmental and Natural Resource Management Framework.

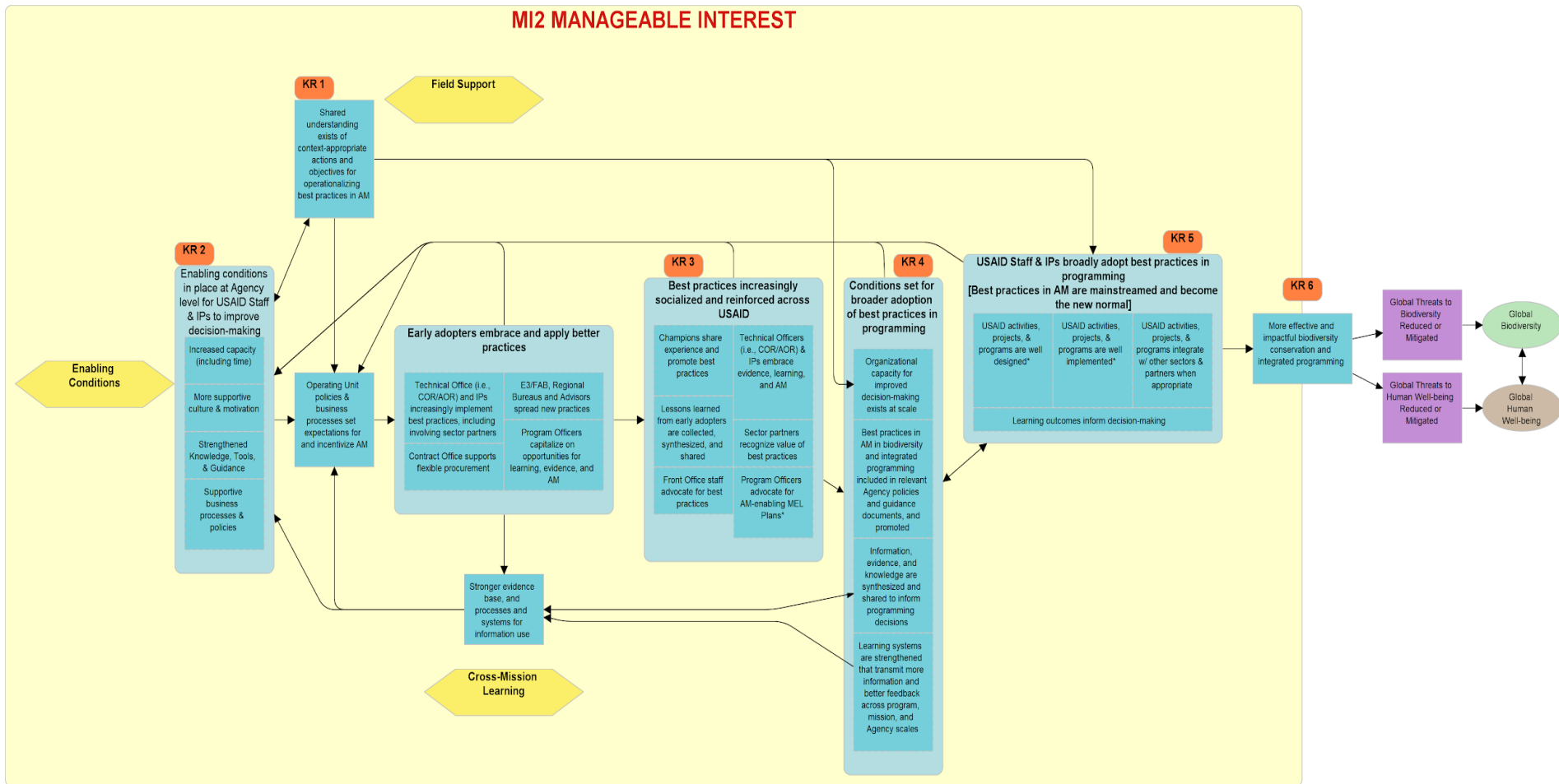
BACKGROUND

USAID's Biodiversity Policy seeks to make the Agency's investments in conservation and integrated programs more effective, while recognizing that good development relies on conservation. Measuring Impact II's (MI2) goal is to enhance the effectiveness and impact of USAID biodiversity conservation and integrated programs. MI2's initiatives aim to strengthen the adoption of AM to enable and encourage AM in Agency business processes, increase capacity and motivation of key Agency stakeholders, and reinforce the use and value of evidence and learning. MI2 does this through providing facilitation and support, including support for enhanced utilization of evidence, and learning throughout the full activity design lifecycle.

MI2's high-level ToC is as follows:

If key Agency stakeholders are capable and motivated to implement AM practices as part of biodiversity and integrated programming in all phases of the Agency's Program Cycle, and Agency business processes enable and encourage AM, and there are evidence, tools, and resources in place that support enhanced technical knowledge in programming, then biodiversity conservation and integrated programming in USAID will become more effective and impactful.

The figure below depicts the detailed ToC as a results chain, with results depicted within the manageable interest of MI2 those for which it is accountable by activity end.



Results chain depicting MI2 theory of change.

Note: Strategic approaches are indicated by yellow hexagons, intermediate results by blue boxes, threat reduction results by pink boxes, indicators by purple ovals, actions by yellow ovals and the program scope and focal interests by green and brown ovals. An orange result box indicates a result outside MI2's manageable interest.

MI2 is the primary tool for the USAID Biodiversity Division to affect the quality of biodiversity activity design, implementation, and overall conservation practice at the Agency. For that reason, it is important to learn if MI2 is an effective means to achieve greater conservation and improve the effectiveness of USAID conservation practice. In FY2020, there was a Stakeholder Needs Assessment conducted to assess the needs of USAID technical staff who conduct biodiversity conservation programming, as well as a Biodiversity Programming Practices survey, the findings from which are reported in the MI2 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Performance Indicator Report.

PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This Scope of Work (Statement of Work) covers a program evaluation for MI2 at the request of USAID's Biodiversity Division. The INRM lead personnel will be Mike Duthie, the INRM Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Lead as well as an Evaluation Team Leader (TBD). The activity manager will be Kyle Rearick, Senior Social Scientist, USAID Biodiversity Division. Other USAID/Washington points of contact include Ioana Bouvier, INRM Contract Officer's Representative, and Olaf Zerbock, INRM Alternate Contract Officer's Representative.

The anticipated start date is early 2021 and the expected length of the activity is approximately 6 months. The Evaluation Team should include a detailed Work Plan with the Inception Report, including estimated deliverable due dates.

Objective: Conduct a performance evaluation of MI2. The following are proposed evaluation questions. We note that some refinements of the questions may be agreed in discussions between the Evaluation Team and USAID and documented in the Design Report.

- **Evaluation Question 1:** How has MI2 contributed to the quality and utilization of evidence, learning, and AM in USAID's biodiversity and integrated programming?
 - What is the uptake of learning programs and products generated by MI2?
 - How have USAID staff applied this learning throughout the Program Cycle?
 - To what extent has MI2 contributed to increased investment in MEL across the Program Cycle in USAID biodiversity activities?

- **Evaluation Question 2:** What evidence is there of MI2s contributions to institutionalizing or enculturating the Conservation Standards and AM in biodiversity and integrated programming throughout USAID's Program Cycle?
 - Do Mission staff continue AM approaches post MI2 support? What challenges/improvements are reported and how could this be strengthened?

- **Evaluation Question 3:** If MI2 has contributed to utilization of learning and AM approaches, in what ways has that been seen to influence strategy, decision making, and program implementation?

- **Evaluation Question 4:** In what ways does MI2 differ from other CLA efforts (e.g., supported by Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning) or Mission-based MEL contracts for biodiversity programs?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses for future implementation of an MI2-like model for Mission support, relative to other common CLA or MEL efforts or approaches used by USAID?
 - Has MI2 contributed to an increased involvement of biodiversity/conservation specialists or other sector specialists in designing and adaptively managing biodiversity and integrated programming? If so, has that been perceived as improving activity design and management?

- **Evaluation Question 5:** In what ways have programmatic or contextual factors influenced MI2 implementation and achievement of results?
 - MI2 changed to a Mission buy-in approach instead of being centrally funded as MI. Did this impact the program implementation and results, and if so, how?
 - Have programmatic or contextual factors been identified as affecting MI2 implementation, uptake, and post-MI2 sustainability? If so, how so?

METHODOLOGY

This Statement of Work does not define a full methodology for the evaluation within this document, but rather outlines several required components of a methodology that INRM will build upon in the evaluation design. The Evaluation Team will use primarily qualitative approaches and a combination of secondary (existing) and primary (new) data during the evaluation. The evaluation is anticipated to identify a small number of Missions (number to be discussed and agreed between the Evaluation Team and USAID) which will be used as case studies. For these Missions, the Evaluation Team will speak to relevant Mission Staff who were engaged with MI2 (including staff who may have since moved to other Missions) as well as conduct content analysis of relevant Mission documents over time (including before MI2). The Evaluation Team will seek to identify Missions with varying degrees of engagement with MI2, potentially including a Mission with biodiversity programming that did not substantially engage with MI2. The evaluation will not be able to establish a rigorous counterfactual and will rely heavily on small samples (e.g., relatively small number of Missions) and qualitative data. Accordingly, responses to evaluation questions will not be able to rigorously identify causality but will explore areas where MI2 is associated with the outcomes in question, as well as perceptions and evidence of MI2 contribution to those outcomes.

The INRM GESI Advisor will review the design to ensure any opportunities for analysis of Gender and social inclusion are addressed throughout the methodology. The Evaluation Team will seek participation from a wide array of stakeholder groups. INRM proposes at minimum the following methods to answer the evaluation questions above:

Rigorous content analysis of program documents: We propose using content analysis with strong reliability and reproducibility checks as part of the coding approach. Documents throughout the USAID

Program Cycle will be analyzed from before MI, during MI, and during MI2. This approach would help answer evaluation question 1 regarding whether MI has had an impact on quality and utilization of MEL data and systems in USAID's biodiversity programming, as well as potentially evaluation question 2 on institutionalization of AM approaches. Documents reviewed would focus on the large number of USAID Program Cycle documentation that MI2 developed or supported. This may include an assessment of externally conducted evaluations, to evaluate the extent to which MI2 approaches lead to better biodiversity program outcomes and impacts. The evaluation design will need to consider the movement of USAID staff who have been trained by (or worked closely with) MI2 to new Missions in the analysis.

Review of survey data: Utilization of the MI2 Biodiversity Programming Practices survey data, conducted to assess beliefs about the value of AM and associated practices in USAID's biodiversity and integrated programs, and perceptions about uptake and implementation. The survey aims to reach a broad sample of USAID staff supporting the Agency's biodiversity programming, including staff from Washington and Missions and both recipients and non-recipients of MI2 technical assistance.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews: The purpose of the interviews would be to understand the underlying reasons for observations made in the survey and content analysis. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with a variety of stakeholders including MI2, USAID, and implementing partner staff in biodiversity programming, both in DC and at the Mission level. Any primary survey or interview data collection must consider survey fatigue among respondents and minimize duplication or overlap from other data collection activities, particularly those referenced in this document.

Case Studies: Case studies can be conducted to provide a deeper dive into programs where MI/MI2 has been providing long-term support, such as the Philippines, South America Regional (SAR), and Madagascar programs. Additional case studies of programs with no or little MI/MI2 interaction, such as Southern Africa regional, could serve as a comparison, and identify opportunities for further impacts.

Other sources of information that will be reviewed may include:

- Study on adoption of AM language in procurement documents
- Stakeholder Needs Assessment interview data
- AM in the USAID Combating Wildlife Trafficking Portfolio interview data
- USAID Policy, Planning and Learning (Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning) Mission Listening survey data
- MI Evaluation

DELIVERABLES AND WORK PLAN

The contractor's Evaluation Team must produce the following work and materials:

Inception Report (including detailed work plan). The Evaluation Team must submit a detailed Inception Report that illustrates what kinds of evidence the Evaluation Team will use to answer each evaluation question and clearly define methods and tools for collecting this evidence. The report will also include a data management plan, which will cover quantitative and qualitative data access, privacy, security, and general management across the lifetime of the activity, including data collection, transfer,

storage, analysis, and dissemination/sharing (including USAID and Development Data Library submission as relevant). The work plan must provide a timeline for the different stages of the evaluation work and delineate responsibilities among the Evaluation Team members.

In-Brief with USAID. The contractor will provide relevant staff at USAID with a virtual presentation at the conclusion of the Inception Phase and before starting data collection activities. During this presentation, the contractor must review final design and implementation plans, as well as final data collection instruments.

Data Collection. The Evaluation Team will collect data in line with the methods above. The contractor assumes approximately three weeks for primary data collection (i.e., qualitative, semi-structured interviews) with key stakeholders. Collection of secondary data, including data generated from the MI2 Biodiversity Programming Practices survey and Needs Assessment, as well as relevant program documents, will be on-going. The Evaluation Team will also gather any MI2 M&E data not already reviewed during the inception stage.

Out-brief with USAID. The contractor must present the evaluation purpose and methodology as well as preliminary findings to all interested staff at USAID following data collection but prior to writing the initial report draft. The out-brief purposes are for the Evaluation Team to obtain additional inputs/insight on the contexts and data interpretation and to solicit ideas for actionable recommendations. The Evaluation Team will have at minimum 5 days between completion of data collection and the out-brief to allow for ample time for preliminary analysis and compilation of findings.

Draft and Final Program Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Team will produce a single evaluation report, which must meet the criteria outlined in USAID’s Evaluation Policy.⁵¹ The contractor must propose concrete recommendations that can be offered for consideration in the AM of MI2. USAID will provide written feedback on the draft report according to the agreed timeline.

Phases, Tasks, Timeline, Outputs

Timeline	Phases and Tasks	Outputs
Weeks 1-7	<i>Phase 1. Inception Report</i>	
	Task 1	Conduct desk review
	Task 2	Inception report draft, detailed workplan, and tools
	Phase 1 Deliverable(s)	Inception report, detailed workplan, and tools finalized
Weeks 8-14	<i>Phase 2: Data Collection</i>	
	Task 1	Virtual in-brief
	Task 2	Collect data including conducting interviews, accessing prior study data, and compiling additional program documents
	Task 3	Virtual out-brief
	Phase 2 Deliverable(s)	Virtual in-brief and out-brief

⁵¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>

Timeline	Phases and Tasks	Outputs
Weeks 15-22	<i>Phase 3: Reporting</i>	
	Task 1	Data analysis including content analysis of documents, coding of key informant interviews, etc.
	Task 2	Draft evaluation report
	Phase 3 Deliverable(s)	Final evaluation report

EVALUATION TEAM AND INRM SUPPORT

INRM will deploy an effective personnel structure to conduct the work outlined in this Statement of Work. An illustrative team to conduct the MI2 program evaluation might include:

- Evaluation Team Leader – Senior-level position with extensive expertise (>10 years) in research design, mixed-methods evaluations, designing data collection tools and analysis. Specialization in AM and experience with the USAID Program Cycle.
- Senior Evaluation Expert – Senior-level position with extensive expertise (>10 years) in conducting research, evaluation, and with a strong focus on learning.
- Mid-Level Evaluation Expert – Mid-level position with expertise (>6 years) in conducting research, evaluation, and with strong skills in content analysis.

Significant effort will be made to include gender balance in the Evaluation Team members, and at least one of the Evaluation Team members will have proven experience in gender and social inclusion. All deliverables will also be reviewed by INRM’s Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Lead.

The INRM MEL/CLA Lead will serve as the Evaluation Director and point of contact with USAID to provide quality assurance and technical oversight throughout all stages of the evaluation and assessment. The INRM GESI Lead will serve as the GESI Advisor, contributing at key points to ensure adequate consideration of gender and social inclusion throughout the evaluation. The Director of Administration and Operations will help support contracting and logistics.

In addition, the contractor will provide support from an Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Assistant. The Evaluation Manager will provide day-to-day oversight of progress against work plan, milestones, and deliverables, ensuring contract compliance, monitor progress during data collection, and play a critical role in managing quality assurance using the contractor’s established tools and processes. The Evaluation Assistant will provide administrative support as needed (e.g., during recruitment and copy-editing). Both the Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Assistant will have evaluation experience and assist in the design, data management and analysis as needed. The contractor will provide CVs for the proposed Evaluation Team as well as the roles and responsibilities for all Evaluation Team members.

COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

At the start of the assignment the contractor, in consultation with the INRM Communications and Knowledge Management Senior Manager, will develop a communications plan to disseminate key findings

and lessons learned from the final reports across relevant USAID platforms. Example deliverables may include a blogpost providing an overview of the activity and key findings, a profile of an Evaluation Team member (in the form of a written or video interview) to provide a “human face” in describing the importance of this work, or a live webinar/learning event for USAID and select implementing partners. To help foster knowledge sharing and collaboration across the Agency, all communications products (including captured video from live events) will be posted on appropriate USAID knowledge portals for easy access and future reference.

BUDGET

The below budget is based on the level of effort estimates above.

Summary of Activity Costs	Total
Salaries & Wages	\$ 9,422
Fringe	\$ 2,762
Subcontractors & Consultants	\$ 193,246
ODCs	\$ 700
Indirect Costs (Overhead and G&A)	\$ 26,832
Contract Fee	\$ 12,231
Total Activity Budget	\$ 245,193

ANNEX I – REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION OF REPORTS

Evaluation and Assessment Reports: All deliverables that are in written format must be in plain, grammatically correct English language; be submitted in appropriate electronic format (i.e., Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint Presentation, and PDF); and meet all the requirements.

Copies of the report must be prepared in English. Both the draft and final evaluation reports must meet the criteria to ensure the quality of the evaluation report and follow the guidelines for formatting outlined in the “[How to Note: Preparing an Evaluation Report](#)” (which also refers to the USAID Graphic Standards Manual and Sample Evaluation Report Template). At the minimum, the report should include the following:

- 1) Covers with correct branding and marking
- 2) Table of contents
- 3) Acronyms
- 4) Executive Summary of no more than five (5) pages
- 5) Main report with findings, conclusions, and recommendations not to exceed 40 pages
- 6) Annexes including a copy of this statement of work, tools used to collect data to answer the evaluation questions including informed-consent forms, a list of informants/respondents with appropriately redacted personally identifiable information; and a signed statement from each

Evaluation Team member attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing any existing conflict of interest.

The 40-page report excludes covers, table of content, acronyms list, executive summary, and annexes).

The English version of the report must be professionally edited. To the extent possible the Contractor must align the evaluation and reports with the “[USAID Evaluation Policy](#).” In particular, the Contactor should carefully review Section 5 entitled, “Evaluation Requirements.” One example of the many points highlighted in this section is that, where available, the evaluation should use sex and age-disaggregated data and incorporate attention to gender relations in all relevant areas.

Annex E: Outcome Harvesting Case Studies

CASE #1: CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES LEARNING GROUP AND THE CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES IMPACT LABS

BACKGROUND

The Conservation Enterprises Learning Group originated during MI. The impetus for bringing together the Learning Group was to build a community of practice amongst diverse actors within USAID working on similar conservation enterprise approaches. While an estimated 25% of programs receiving biodiversity funding includes support for conservation enterprises as a strategic approach, there was not a forum for USAID staff to exchange lessons. The Conservation Enterprises Learning Group aimed to provide a forum for practitioners to exchange resources and experience for this common approach to inform project design elements and conservation enterprises. The Conservation Enterprises Learning Group was part of a broader effort to improve learning across the Agency around key biodiversity interventions. As part of this broader effort, MI and USAID undertook a number of different initiatives to collate and synthesize evidence and experiences to identify priority topics for learning (e.g., a desk review on common strategic approaches at USAID). During the tenure of the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group, the MI team similarly worked to understand the landscape of approaches and state of evidence on effectiveness for conservation enterprises (e.g., a systematic review of alternative livelihood approaches, a desk review on conditions important for the durability of outcomes over time). As a whole, these activities helped inform the development of a generic ToC and learning questions for the Conservation Enterprises Learning Agenda. MI also supported a session at the 2016 Environmental Officers Conference where EOs discussed their conservation enterprise approaches and challenges, as well helped validate the learning questions and further develop the Learning Agenda.

Following onto the Learning Agenda, MI and USAID led a series of Learning activities which included hosting a series of webinars and newsletters to share information with the collaborative learning group. MI conducted a 20-year retrospective of USAID Biodiversity Programming and the impact of conservation enterprises. They also conducted the Conservation Enterprise Learning and Experience Exchange that helped validate the Conservation Enterprises MEL Framework, as well as other learning products.



After the close of MI, MI2 focused on the next stage of the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group priorities - providing a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework, improving peer-to-peer sharing

across USAID biodiversity programs implementing conservation enterprise approaches, and sharing findings from the learning group in a peer-reviewed journal article. Under MI2, the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group initiated two knowledge sharing activities—a poster session on conservation enterprise case studies at the 2019 Environment Officers Conference (EOC) and the Conservation Enterprise Impact Labs (Impact Labs) in 2021.

The 2019 EOC included a poster session and gallery walk of ToCs from 9 activities that employed conservation enterprise approaches. As part of this session, MI2 and USAID Washington shared a draft of the Conservation Enterprise MEL Tool for feedback. The session organizers received feedback from participants that the Tool could be useful for them in working with their partners on defining outcomes and how to measure them. The MEL Tool was subsequently transformed into formats to help new partners to help orient stakeholders to their activity and define objectives and assumptions.

The first Impact Lab engaged participants from six biodiversity activities that incorporated conservation enterprise approaches. For each activity, both Mission staff (e.g., AORs, CORs, other specialists) and implementing partner staff (COPs, DCOPs, MEL and other specialists) attended. The Impact Lab consisted of five virtual sessions – with each focused on a different assumption along the ToC. The objective of the Impact Lab was to help activities define their assumptions in their ToC, their approach to measuring outcomes, and share lessons learned to date. Participants came from many different perspectives – from Missions with long-standing environmental and biodiversity focused programs to relatively new programs. All participants were interested in integration – particularly in enterprise approaches - linking interventions that address both direct threats to biodiversity as well as build resilience of communities to environmental challenges such as climate change.

METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team consulted with MI2 and USAID to identify potential outcomes for exploration and respondents who were familiar with the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group’s activities. The Evaluation Team then conducted two exploratory KIIs with individuals who had had long-term engagement and leadership in the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group. This allowed the Evaluation Team to identify potential outcomes from the Impact Labs for deeper examination. The Evaluation Team also reviewed documents (see Annex A of the evaluation report) related to the Impact Labs to develop the draft outcome descriptions which were shared prior to interviews with respondents. The Evaluation Team interviewed a total of three Impact Lab participants. The outcome statements below are based on the interviews and the outcomes/causal chains/enabling factors have been identified to the extent possible with the available information. The Evaluation Team validated outcomes with respondents over email.

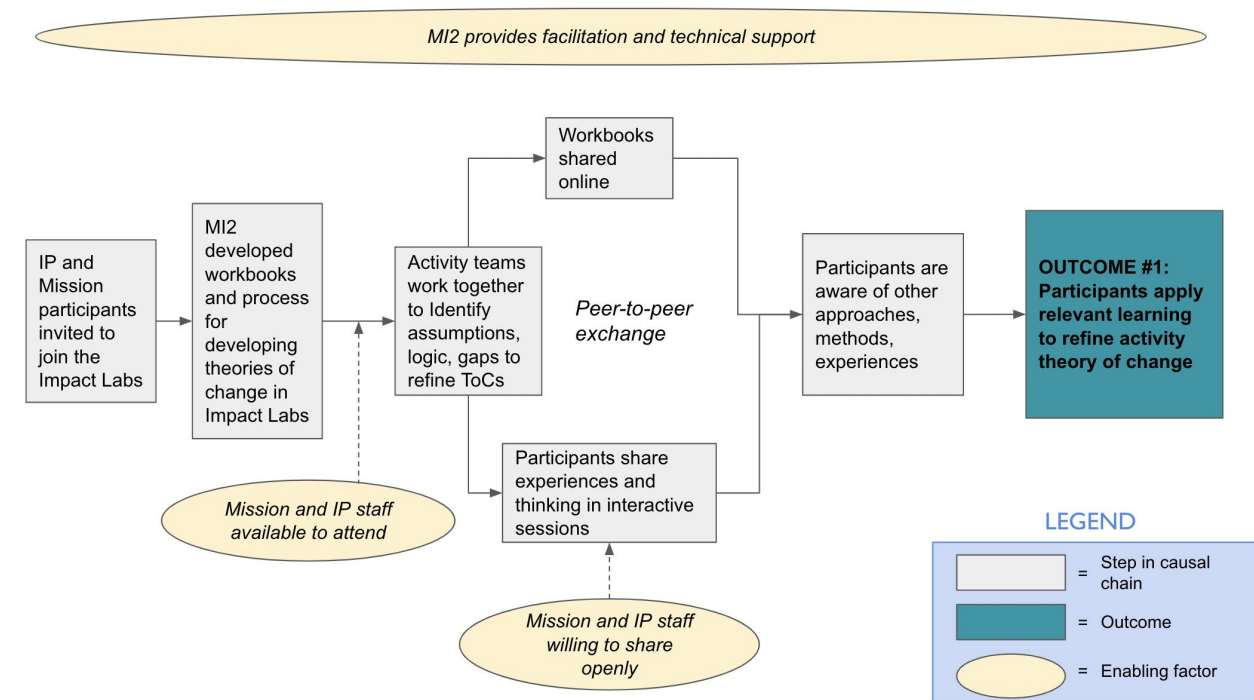
OUTCOME #1

Participants in the Conservation Impact Lab Refined Their Theories of Change as a Result of Peer-to-Peer Learning from the Training Sessions.

The five teams that participated in the Impact Labs engaged in a series of virtual sessions. They prepared for each session by watching a pre-recorded video and completing a corresponding section of the workbook. They could access the completed workbooks of other teams and additional resources via a

website. For multiple participants, this was their first time interacting with practitioners outside of their own country context. Respondents expressed that the live sessions and the workbooks provided them with opportunities to learn how others were thinking about their ToCs to validate or revise their own logic. Respondents also reported that the sessions broadened their awareness of the state of the sector. In particular, these sessions served as dedicated blocks of time where teams could engage in learning and actively work on their ToCs. Respondents reported that key lessons learned were related to building the enabling conditions needed to achieve desired conservation outcomes, for example: better understanding local community stakeholder attitudes and behaviors related to conservation and attitudes, expected outcomes, and enabling conditions. While respondents regarded the Impact Labs as an important networking opportunity, they have yet to act on this potential network given the impact Labs have recently concluded at the time of the interviews.

CAUSAL CHAIN



Implementing partner and Mission participants all received an invitation to join the workshop through either MI2 directly or their USAID Activity counterpart (e.g., COR, AOR). Activity teams used the workbooks to work together to identify mismatches in their assumptions in a ToC, determine how they are measuring outcomes, and share lessons. Workbooks were also shared online where they were available for all teams to review other teams' approaches which influenced and inspired their thinking and increased awareness of other approaches, methods, etc. MI2 also provided facilitation and guidance throughout the Impact Labs to walk through and refine ToCs with participants. Through asynchronous and synchronous exchange and facilitation support from MI2, participants learned about other approaches, experiences, and lessons from other teams, which influenced refinements to their ToCs.

ENABLING FACTORS

Peer-to-Peer Exchange through Direct and Indirect Methods

All of the respondents expressed that the exchange of experiences and knowledge during the interactive portion of the Impact Labs helped them validate and explore their own program logic and assumptions. While all the respondents acknowledged that they work in very different contexts, they appreciated that diversity because it meant they were exposed to something that was relevant to their work that would otherwise not be aware of.

“Enjoyed being able to network with others from different...Missions or different countries...working on some of the same issues, but from a different perspective, contextually.” (Impact Lab Mission participant)

One respondent reported that browsing other team’s workbooks and materials was informative for going through the workshop process and understanding the different components of the ToCs.

Availability of Staff to Attend

MI2 hosted virtual sessions for the Impact Labs to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic and participants in multiple geographies. On one hand, one respondent reported that the virtual session was conducive for their team to participate as they would not have had time and resources to travel for an in-person workshop. However, on the other hand, this meant that the sessions had to accommodate multiple time-zones as well as balance depth with brevity with the online format. One respondent perceived that this limited opportunities to bring in other information (e.g., evidence from broader literature) beyond past field experience, to inform the ToC process.

Willingness to Speak Openly

The facilitators of the Impact Lab initially perceived that the participants may have been hesitant to share information openly; however, the participants all expressed that they did not feel any reticence to openly share information, as they wanted to take full advantage of the opportunity to exchange.

“I think there is some reticence to share that secret special sauce. But I told my staff at the end of the day...having the network and being able to communicate and learn from what others have done, even though maybe it's not completely relevant because it's different from Kenya to say Zimbabwe, it's going to pay dividends. So, our team went in with a lot of good faith.” (Impact Lab Mission Participant)

Dedicated Time

Originally, the Impact Labs intended to serve as a peer-to-peer sharing opportunity; however, in practice, it served as a space to clarify assumptions and work on ToCs amongst the team members within an activity. (However, only one respondent highlighted this factor).

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This outcome is significant because without engagement in the Impact Lab, program staff may continue to implement their activities within a “bubble” and may not have refined their ToC to better reflect important enabling conditions, clarify assumptions and refine expected outcomes, and determined how to measure them.

OUTCOME #2

Participants in the Impact Labs Adapted the Implementation of Their Conservation Enterprise Approaches Activities to Better Reflect Expected Outcomes and Enabling Conditions, Based on Lessons Learned During the Impact Lab.

Overall, participants reported they used approaches and insights from their refined ToCs to adapt activity implementation. One caveat for this outcome is that only a short amount of time has elapsed between the end of the Impact Labs (June/July 2021) and when these interviews occurred (March/April 2022). None of the respondents reported revising their activity objectives based on how they refined their ToC. This is not unexpected given activities are ongoing, as well as the influence of other programmatic and contextual factors that were surfaced in other parts of this evaluation, including contractual obligations. Thus, the outcomes reported here reflect changes to activity management, learning, and process – all of which are intended to help activities better meet their stated objectives under contract.

THE FOREST ALLIANCE

The Forest Alliance used the refined ToC to identify expected behavior change outcomes and update their MEL plan. Specifically, they added more detail to the scope of activities to support expected behavior changes. In addition, following the Impact Lab, the team used lessons learned and their refined ToC to improve their learning questions related to expected outcomes. Insights gained through the training sessions and documents from the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group as well as awareness about other activities, allowed them the time and opportunity to explore what type of stakeholder behavior change they expected as a result of their enterprise approach.

USAID HAY TAO

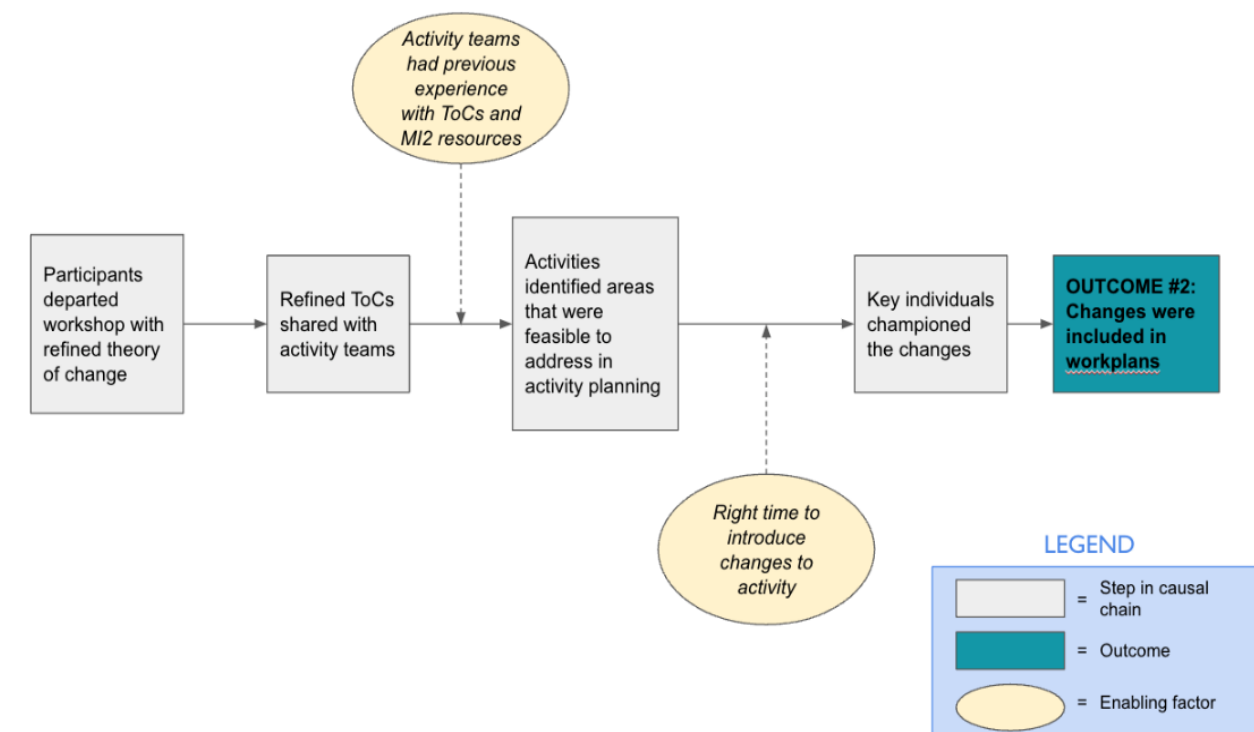
USAID Hay Tao used the refined ToC to define a business model for conservation enterprises with a mechanism for profit return to biodiversity conservation and well-being of the local community through job creation. This type of initiative aimed to reduce threats to biodiversity. The Program identified expected benefits for stakeholders and key enabling conditions to deliver on both biodiversity outcomes and stakeholder benefits. In particular, in their refined ToC, they indicated that legal frameworks to

support conservation enterprise was a critical enabling condition for the success of the implementation of conservation enterprise initiatives. In response, the activity prioritized collaboration and engagement with a national platform to develop a proposed law to support conservation enterprise initiatives in Madagascar. The bill is now supported by the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade, and Consumption for future submission to Parliament.

RESILIENCE ANCHORS

Resilience ANCHORS identified approaches for one of their strategic objectives focused on conservation enterprises. They are currently developing this approach for implementation.

CAUSAL CHAIN



Participants left the workshop with their refined ToCs and shared them with their activity teams. Activity teams identified areas that were important and feasible to address in their activity planning. For teams with previous experience with ToCs and/or had worked with MI or MI2 resources and support previously, integrating their refined ToCs into activity planning went more smoothly given existing familiarity with the format and purpose. Key individuals championed these changes with their activity. Respondents reported that a key enabling condition to initiating changes to their work plan was alignment in timing – that the refined ToCs arrived during work planning and/or co-creation windows. Teams ultimately adapted the tasks in their workplans related to supporting conservation enterprise (e.g., emphasize and prioritize different activities, bring in additional stakeholders for design and work planning, revise MEL plans) according to their refined ToCs and all are currently implementing changes.

ENABLING FACTORS

Timing Within the Activity

Respondents expressed that the ability to apply insights from the Impact lab and their refined ToCs are contingent on alignment with the activity timeline. One respondent reported that “it was a good timing” for refining their ToC as they had just finished post-award co-creation and had yet to begin work planning and implementation. For USAID Hay Tao, the Activity team gained insights regarding the importance of strengthening enabling conditions and adapted their workplan to address this—however, the respondent stated that they will not be able to follow what happens as the activity is about to end.

“I think it's very important to develop this kind of ToC with the beginning of the project itself, because we developed the ToC, but it is at the end of the project, and we cannot see the impact on biodiversity conservation because the time is too short to implement this kind of ToC.” (Impact Lab Implementing Partner participant)

Previous Interaction with MI2, Theories of Change, and Learning Group Resources

All three participant respondents entered the workshop with existing ToCs and/or frameworks for conservation enterprises. All but one Activity team co-developed their ToC with stakeholders. Two respondents noted that they used the resources from the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group website to inform their initial ToCs prior to joining the Impact Lab sessions. They both also reported that these resources (e.g., the conservation enterprise ToC, research reports and assessments) helped them understand the rationale and evidence behind each ToC components. Two respondents reported long term engagement with MI2 to develop their Activity's ToC and their teams were already familiar with the Conservation Standards approach. Continued engagement with MI2 or continued knowledge exchange may be important for helping teams implement refined ToCs.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Refined ToCs indicated where and how activities could be adjusted to improve pathways to impact. With the appropriate motivation, timing, and support – activity teams are able to implement changes to their activities. While this is an encouraging outcome for improvements for activity implementation and AM, the degree to which the refined ToCs can be actually used in activities depends on how much familiarity teams have of a ToC approach as well as alignment with the activity timeline.

POTENTIAL FUTURE OUTCOMES TO EXPLORE

The following findings reference additional potential outcomes of the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group more broadly. This outcome harvest focused on the activities and outcomes of the Impact Labs; however, the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group has a much broader range of activities that span the life of both MI and MI2. Thus, it is challenging to disentangle the influence of each mechanism. These potential outcomes are primarily focused on the potential utility and diffusion of tools and documents produced by the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group, as well as their work on Cross-Mission and

cross-Agency learning (which is also discussed in the Findings in the Evaluation Report). It is important to note that only two respondents discussed these potential outcomes, both of whom have long-term engagement and leadership in this group. If resources allow, future work should explore the impact of the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group on changes to USAID practices on conservation enterprises.

GENERAL FINDINGS FOR CROSS-MISSION AND AGENCY-WIDE LEARNING

Finding: The Conservation Enterprises Learning Agenda has had high numbers of views and engagement and has inspired numerous learning activities across the Agency.

The Conservation Enterprises Collaborative Learning Group developed the Learning Agenda at the beginning of MI, and it has not since been updated. The Learning Agenda provides a generalizable ToC for supporting conservation enterprises as a strategic approach, learning questions related to high-level assumptions in the ToC, and various learning activities that are designed to explore the learning questions. A USAID respondent involved with the Learning Group stated that the original ToC will likely not be updated and that the group intended the learning questions to serve more as a framework for examining the assumptions in the ToC (i.e., the conditions under which outcomes are more or less likely to be achieved and sustained over time), as opposed to questions that would be answered through activities within a given timeframe. Many of the activities proposed in the Learning Agenda have been completed, and as part of MI2, the learning group has synthesized lessons in many products that have been shared both among learning group participants and more broadly. While the ToC itself might not change, the respondents observe that activities will address these learning questions within their own activity and adapt their workplans based on what they learn. Because MI2 has not explicitly measured use of the products and uptake of the findings, the degree to which they have influenced programmatic decision making is still unknown, except for anecdotal information.

Finding: The webinars hosted by the Learning Group have high attendance by USAID, implementing partners, and non-USAID individuals and often generate useful feedback for MI2 to improve activities and products in the Learning Group.

Anecdotally, USAID Washington respondents observed that Missions use the ToC and the tools from the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group (e.g., the Conservation Enterprise Checklist, the MEL Framework, etc.) in different Activities, for example, in procurement descriptions. MI2 uses the Conservation Enterprises Learning Agenda to organize presentations and knowledge sharing in the regular Conservation Enterprises Learning Group webinars. Feedback during the webinars and other learning events helped MI2 better understand the needs of USAID users. For example, in the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group and the development of the MEL Framework, MI2 found providing specific indicators was not useful because USAID participants worked in very different contexts. Instead, MI2 produced guidance that focused on broader measures from the ToC and the different methods you might use to assess them depending on the level of robustness that is needed. However, MI2 has no formal ability to track use and application of any of these tools and knowledge learned through these webinars.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING FINDINGS

Finding: The Conservation Enterprises Learning Group inspired interest in Cross-Mission learning groups and increased investment in promoting organizational learning.

Two Learning Groups were initiated as pilots (Conservation Enterprises and Combating Wildlife Trafficking) during MI which generated a lot of interest at USAID. Over time, MI and MI2 staff along with Biodiversity Staff, have learned more about how to facilitate these Learning Groups and developed resources required to facilitate them. MI2 and Biodiversity staff used these lessons to “replicate” (and evolve) the Learning Group concept.

With these experiences in mind, MI2 and the Washington team introduced instructional designers and experts in adult learning through MI2 to better design, implement, and manage learning groups in order to encourage and improve experiences and engagement for participants and help build a community of practice. However, frequent staffing changes at the beginning of MI2 was challenging for continuity of learning activities and increased load for the Learning Groups management team. However, a few individuals from MI2 and USAID Washington with long-term engagement provide consistency and institutional knowledge.

Mission and implementing partner respondents (n=8) highlight that while they are interested in the Learning Groups, four Mission respondents (both in multiple focus groups and individually) perceived it is unclear how Missions can be more engaged in the process of identifying topics and directions of the Learning Groups. This is an exception for the LAC Bureau-led Combating Conservation Crime and PSE Learning Groups, where a respondent involved in both outlined that Mission staff who chose to engage value the process.

“I just think that it would be nice for the Missions to also have the ability to really push for other specific areas. You know, we see these things come out - then we react to them. But I would like to kind of get away from reaction and take a more proactive approach and say, these are the areas that we really think would be useful. Could you potentially do workshops or lab workshops or whatever in these areas?” (Impact Lab Mission Participant)

Further areas to explore for this outcome would be understanding whether and how Learning Groups have been responsive to Mission and implementing partner needs and explore ways to improve responsiveness.

CASE #2: BUILDING A CULTURE OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AT THE PHILIPPINES MISSION AND BEYOND



BACKGROUND

Measuring Impact (MI) and MI2 have provided technical assistance to USAID/Philippines since FY14 across five different programs, including the Ecosystems Improved for Sustainable Fisheries (ECOFISH) Activity (2012-2017) and the Fish Right Activity (2018-present). MI and MI2 provided support across the Program Cycle to these programs, from designing ToCs and results chains during Startup, to conducting P&Rs, MEL, After Action Reviews and bringing in evidence to support decision-making.

The ECOFISH Activity aimed to conserve marine biodiversity, enhance ecosystem productivity, and improve fisheries and related livelihoods in eight marine key biodiversity areas using an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management for social, economic, and ecological sustainability. It was implemented in partnership with Tetra Tech and a consortium of local NGOs.

The Fish Right Activity aimed to enhance the sustainable use and resilience of critical coastal and marine resources (especially wild/capture fisheries) that provide food, livelihoods, and coastal protection to communities. It is implemented in partnership with the University of Rhode Island (URI) and a consortium of NGOs similar to ECOFISH.

One of the local NGO consortium partners under both ECOFISH and Fish Right is Community Centered Conservation Philippines (C3Ph). C3Ph was established in 2010 with the aim to develop conservation efforts through capacity building of local individuals and institutions through grassroots research and training. Since then, C3PH has been involved in a number of activities towards biodiversity conservation.

METHODOLOGY

Following an initial consultation with MI2 and USAID to determine potential outcomes to explore, MI2 provided an initial list of respondents who were familiar with Fish Right and how staff who worked on Fish Right may have influenced the design of subsequent programs without MI2 support. The Evaluation Team reviewed this list and through our own channels identified one additional respondent. Following a review of documents related to Fish Right, the Evaluation Team created two draft outcome descriptions and causal chains to explore with respondents. Given the time and resources available to explore these outcomes, one of the two was chosen based on the information provided in initial interviews. Respondents suggested two additional respondents, and in total seven respondents were interviewed. Respondents were provided with draft outcome descriptions to review prior to the discussion. The

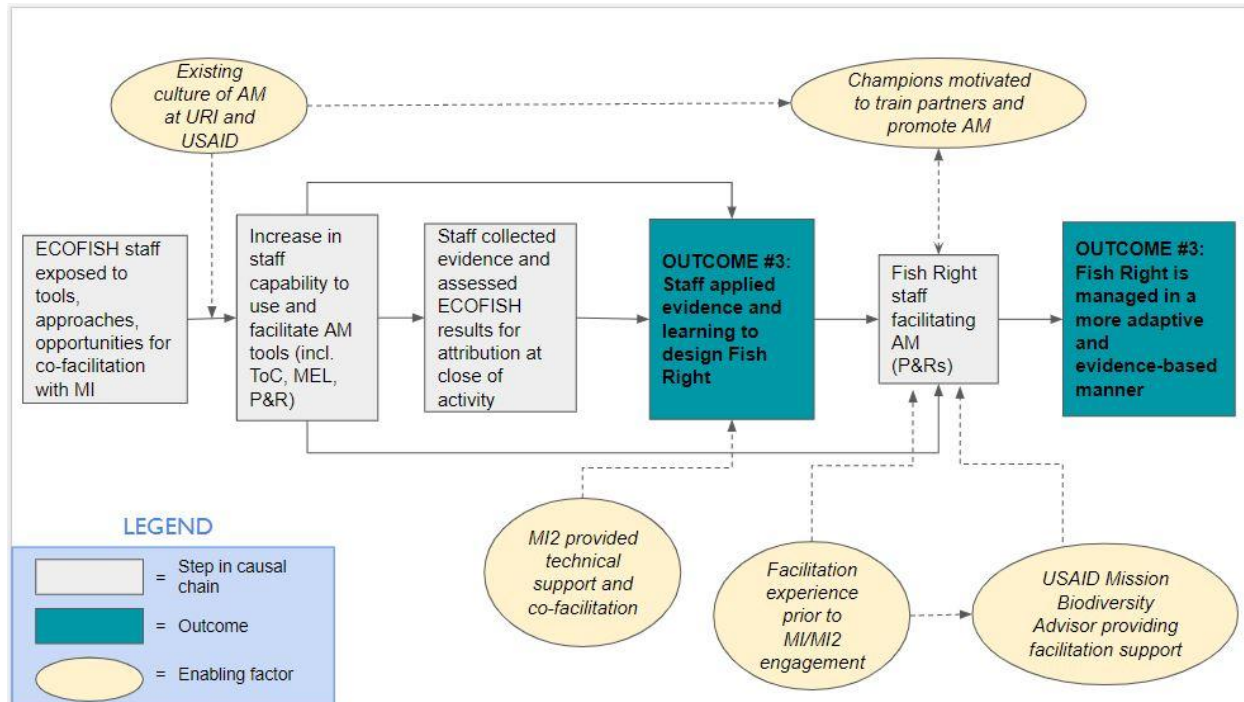
outcome descriptions below are based on the interviews conducted and outcomes/causal chains have been identified to the extent possible with available information. The Evaluation Team validated outcomes with respondents over email.

OUTCOME #3

Long-Term Engagement with Both MI and MI2, Bolstered by an Existing Culture of Adaptive Management at USAID and Implementing Partners, Imbued Staff with the Skills to Lead Theories of Change Design, Pause and Reflects, and Develop Facilitation Skills that Informed the Design and Management of a More Adaptive, Evidence-Based Activity, the Fish Right Program.

The Philippines Mission has received support from MI (ECOFISH program: 2012-2018) and MI2 (Fish Right program: 2018-present) and others such as B+WISER (initiated 2012) and Protect Wildlife (initiated 2016) across the Program Cycle – from designing ToCs and results chains, to conducting P&Rs, and bringing in evidence to support decision-making. This support enhanced the value of an existing AM culture in long-term fisheries management at the USAID Philippines Mission and its implementing partners. This long-term engagement with MI/MI2 fostered skills, knowledge, and hands-on experience with a number of ECOFISH staff (who already had substantial facilitation experience) which molded champions who embraced the value of AM. These champions worked with MI2 and a trained Biodiversity Advisor to support and lead the design and AM of Fish Right. Examples of this include URI staff who facilitated small groups during the startup workshop, and facilitation of the P&R process in Year 2 and 3 of Fish Right – without direct MI2 facilitation support independent of MI2 and staff promotion of MI2 approaches (use of ToCs, P&Rs and facilitation skills—all as part of the CS) through training consortium partners.

CAUSAL CHAIN



ECOFISH staff exposure to MI/MI2 tools and approaches during ECOFISH (including training and co-facilitation opportunities) AND existing culture of AM at URI AND existing culture of AM at the USAID Philippines Mission → increase in ECOFISH staff knowledge (using results chains to question if results were attributable to ECOFISH and evidence collection at the end of ECOFISH) and skills (use of ToC and P&R AM tools and facilitation techniques) → application of learning to design/start-up of Fish Right (ECOFISH evidence, skills mentioned above, involvement of variety of local stakeholders) and co-facilitation with MI2 → independent facilitation supported by Biodiversity Advisor (facilitators have facilitation experience beyond USAID and MI/MI2) during Year 2 (P&R) and Year 3 (ToCs) → strong motivation to train partners and promote methodology internally and externally by champions (Biodiversity Advisor and other key staff) → design and management of a more adaptive, evidence-based activity, the Fish Right program, compared to ECOFISH.

ENABLING FACTORS

Long-Term Engagement Spanning ECOFISH and Fish Right Programs

Long-term engagement in programming by MI/MI2 and staff who worked on both the ECOFISH and Fish Right program provided the amount of engagement necessary for staff who worked on ECOFISH and Fish Right (and with both MI and MI2) to develop the skills necessary to use tools and facilitate processes to implement AM independently of MI2.

“And I think it would have been very, very difficult for a new project, for a new team without some of us coming from ECOFISH with already this experience.” (implementing partner respondent)

In particular, one Mission respondent emphasized the importance of MI/MI2’s support in facilitating an open dialogue about existing knowledge and evidence in biodiversity conservation, and effectively capturing this learning for use in AM – which would not have happened as quickly without MI/MI2.

Biodiversity Advisor

One key staff received training as a Biodiversity Advisor prior to engaging with MI2. They were equipped with facilitation skills, AM knowledge, and previous use of the tools which enabled them to facilitate these processes without direct MI2 support, making them a crucial piece of AM during the Fish Right program.

Long-Term Engagement with Adaptive Management Approaches

Two respondents emphasized the importance of a 20-year culture of AM at USAID and URI, preceding MI/MI2, which contributed to the adoption of the MI2 approach during ECOFISH and FishRight.

At the USAID Philippines Mission, one Mission responded emphasized that *“MI’s engagement facilitated a process that enhanced the value of AM that is already practiced in the long-term fisheries management engagement of the USAID Mission and its implementing partners.”* This culture of AM at the Mission is a result of several factors. First, relationships play a crucial role – both the longevity of relationships between USAID and its partners, which allows for an *“open and honest exchange of knowledge and learning”* and collaborative Mission-Washington relationships. Second, USAID’s value of evidence-based learning supports intentional assistance design processes at the Philippines Mission that enhance the existing evidence on biodiversity conservation.

One respondent shared that prior to working on ECOFISH and Fish Right, URI had utilized a similar AM approach for the prior 20 years. While additional learning took place by URI staff, this culture already existed within the operations of this implementing partner, so AM was not a new concept, and its adoption cannot be solely attributed to MI/MI2.

“So, when we started the Fish Right project, you had to Philippines staff that was very used to thinking and the methods of MI and you had a URI team that have been sort of steeped in the same AM type thinking on its own. So, you know it was very natural fit...it's very hard to pinpoint exactly, you know, MI contribution at that point versus so that technical assistance and sort of all hands-on training that the Philippines staff had received for many

years before and...URI experience and technical background. So, it's not like we just started from scratch on that first code design workshop.” (implementing partner respondent)

However, another respondent believed that a long-term engagement with USAID had substantial influence on URI’s AM approach, stating:

“URI's ToC, assumptions and results chains were enhanced by the AM approach adopted by close to 20 years of USAID Philippines' engagement in sustainable fisheries management.” (Mission respondent)

Facilitation Skills

Facilitation skills proved crucial to implementing MI2 AM approaches independent of MI2, and the Fish Right staff who participated in co-facilitating and independently facilitating MI2 approaches had facilitation skills prior to any involvement with MI2 from previous work. Mission staff, including the biodiversity advisor, brought unique facilitation skills including the “right personality” (not rubbing people the wrong way, encouraging people throughout the process, and quickly sensing the capacity of participants and mentoring as needed) and benefitted from having relationships with activity staff – all skills that contributed to the success of their work.

Champion Staff

Champions were crucial to integrating the MI2 approach at the Mission and the success of the MI2 approach to AM. Seen as a linchpin to the success of the approach during Fish Right, one staff member in particular was mentioned frequently by other respondents. This staff member believed it was their role to promote the tools in project development, such as monitoring and measuring the impact of development projects. This individual hopes it becomes a standard tool in the Philippines, as it would be a huge step for the country. Additionally, by becoming a standard tool, it would reduce wasted funding at the government level for development projects, improving project efficiency. Program Officers were mentioned as key to implementing overall Agency policies on programming, as well as to using and socializing the use of the ToC at the Mission (though the use of a ToC would have happened regardless).

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This outcome is significant because without the existing culture of AM at USAID and its implementing partners, followed by the long-term engagement of MI/MI2 with key champions, Fish Right may have been a replica of the ECOFISH project, and/or utilization of knowledge and evidence for AM between the two programs may have occurred more slowly.⁵²

OUTCOME #4

Community Centered Conservation Philippines (C3PH), Improved Its Approach to Project Design After Exposure to Adaptive Management Approaches during ECOFISH, and Receiving Training on the MI/MI2 Approach in 2016.⁵³

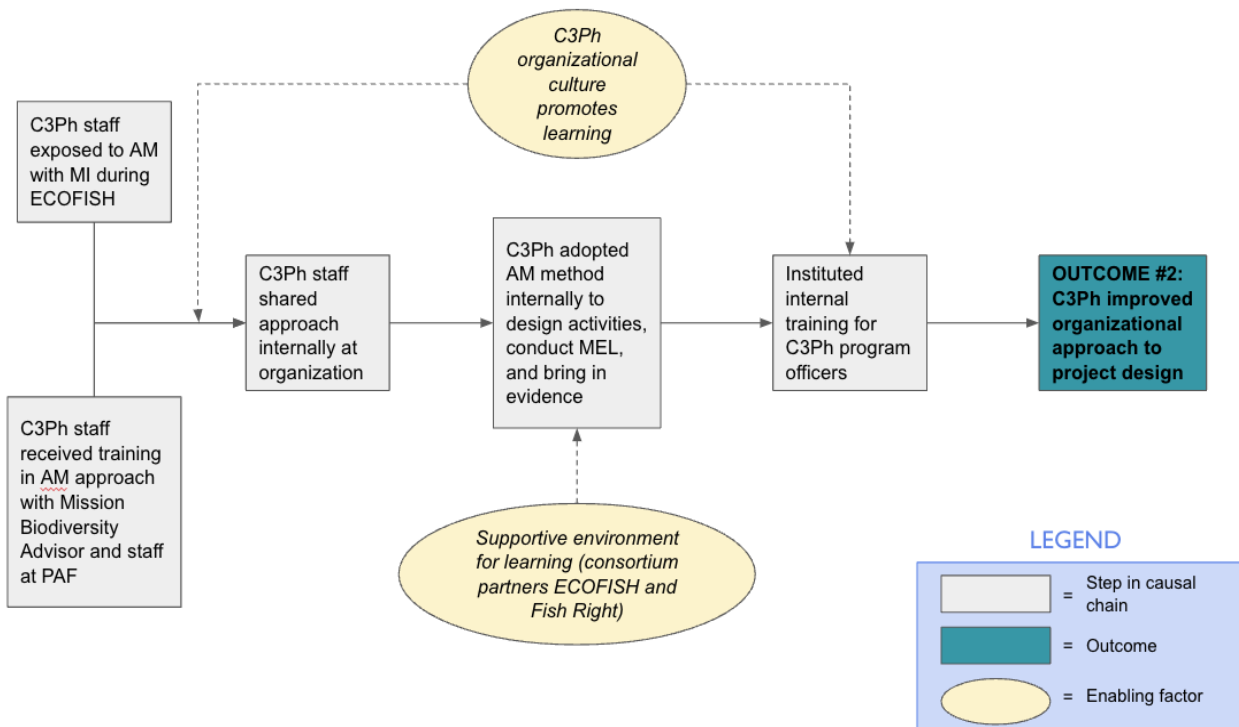
C3Ph started working with MI in 2012 (ECOFISH) and continued with Fish Right starting in 2018, benefiting from trainings, mentoring, and exposure to the MI2 methodology (ToC, situational analysis, results chains development, P&R) from MI2, Mission staff, and the Fish Right consortium of NGOs. Notably, a training delivered by a Biodiversity Advisor and other Mission staff as part of the Philippines American Fund grant in 2016⁵⁴ on ToC and results chain development was influential to this improvement. C3Ph enhanced their internal system in 2016 to integrate MI2 CS/AM into their process of project design, MEL activities, and use of evidence, having previously relied on a log frame approach. This improvement was enabled by C3Ph's youth as an organization, an existing culture of learning at C3Ph, and supportive board members. Program Officers at C3Ph are now required to attend internal trainings to understand how to present activities using a simplified version of results chains or ToCs, demonstrating that these approaches are now embedded in C3Ph systems.

⁵² One reviewer of this Significance Statement noted that the statement is too simple and attributes too much to MI2 without considering the importance of USAID and the implementing partner. The statement was updated to include the culture of adaptive management at USAID and its implementing partners, which is discussed in detail under "Enabling Factors."

⁵³ This training was conducted through an American Philippines Fund grant. It is unclear if MI2 supported this workshop.

⁵⁴ The Philippine-American Fund Grant in 2016 was created through biodiversity funding.

CAUSAL CHAIN



Exposure to MI AM approaches during ECOFISH and training in the MI/MI2 approach conducted by Biodiversity Advisor (champion) and other staff through Philippines American Fund in 2016 (biodiversity funds were used to deliver this training) → sharing the approach internally as part of learning culture → adoption of this method internally (Change from Logical framework approach) to design projects, conduct MEL and bring in evidence → internal required training for POs to foster understanding and use of process.

ENABLING FACTORS

Organizational Culture

C3Ph is a young learning organization and realizes the need to be adaptive even in their internal systems. C3PH believes in using preparatory activities (MI2 methods) to facilitate change, including working with all relevant stakeholders to understand local issues. C3PH's internal procedures require that when staff attend trainings or seminars, they then share that information with other C3PH staff. From this sharing of information, a decision is made about whether to incorporate this new learning into their systems.

Supportive Environment for Learning

Training and mentoring by ECOFISH/Fish Right consortium partners played a crucial role in building C3Ph staff capacity to implement AM at the organization.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This learning and support accelerated C3Ph's use of an AM approach. While they were already on the path to AM and would have eventually started using it, they believe it would have taken longer, without the support of MI/MI2 and the USAID/Philippines Mission.

POTENTIAL FUTURE OUTCOMES TO EXPLORE

The following findings reference additional potential outcomes of the ECOFISH and Fish Right program support by MI/MI2. There was not enough evidence to consider them full outcomes, but they may have some value for future exploration. Given that outcomes were harvested at the mid-point of MI2, they are focused on how MI and MI2 influenced the capacity of Fish Right staff and partners to conduct MI2 approaches independent of MI2. If resources allow the impact of this increased capacity and cultural shifts at a Mission and organizational level on program success should be explored, as well as changes in capacity at the NGO and in-country government levels.

FINDING: OTHER PROGRAMMING POTENTIALLY INFLUENCED BY ECOFISH, AND FISH RIGHT STAFF VERSED IN MI METHODOLOGY

Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans, and Landscapes (SIBOL)

An ECOFISH staff and a current Fish Right STTA staff trained in MI2 methodologies provided support to SIBOL's co-development workshop and first P&R.

Our Fish, Our Future

Though there were contradicting opinions about the influence of staff who were involved in Fish Right and ECOFISH, the participants closest to Our Fish, Our Future do not believe they influenced program

development because MI2 was involved, and the implementing partner may already have been aware of the design methodology. The situation analysis, collaborative facilitation approach, and the MEL and workplan templates were useful when developing Our Fish, Our Future.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) Biodiversity

At least two staff (one Philippines-based and one Washington-based) contributed to development of PNG Biodiversity and/or environmental programming; however, it was mentioned that MI2 was involved in this as well.

Strengthening Urban Resilience for Growth with Equity (SURGE) Project

MI2 did not support the development of the SURGE program. The biodiversity advisor and two other staff members (one exposed to MI2 and the other not) supported another person under the USAID CBI, Mission-wide program. This person under the USAID CBI program wanted additional funding to extend the SURGE water program. The three staff helped design a one-day training/meeting (building a generic results chain that was discussed at that one-day meeting) with the implementing partner so they could design the extended program on water based on situational analysis and results chain they helped built.

Regional Marine Program Regional Development Mission of Asia

The biodiversity advisor was involved in development of this new program.

FINDING: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS TRAINED IN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT BY MI, MI2, PARTNER STAFF AND BIODIVERSITY ADVISORS

Local partners received extensive training on AM and specific MI2 methodologies throughout their involvement with ECOFISH and Fish Right.

Philippine-American Fund Workshop and Subsequent Support

Following engagement with MI, the biodiversity advisor and one other Mission staff continued to build capacity with local NGOs who were recipients of small grants from the Philippine-American Fund covering several sectors. Biodiversity funding was used to buy into this funding mechanism. Upon releasing an RFP for the grants asking for a ToC and results chain, the staff realized that NGO partners were unable to produce these requirements for biodiversity funds, so they held tutoring sessions, put information on the web, and held a pre-proposal workshop for award recipients. The workshop included a simplified version of the ToC and workplan development during the standard startup workshop, and subsequent follow up in the field with each of eight NGOs (some of whom were also partners of ECOFISH and Fish Right). One respondent recalled that the NGOs then went beyond these exercises to test their own assumptions to confirm they were meeting their own objectives—including the use of aerial surveys to understand their impact on deforestation—but this particular claim was not validated with the NGOs themselves. Following this training, the Mission staff organized a symposium

for NGOs to present progress after they were tutored by the Mission staff—this was an opportunity for MI2 to reflect how to help the Mission and for the Mission to help NGOs. One respondent thought that MI or MI2 did support these workshops. This is the same workshop that led to C3Ph adopting AM approaches at their organization, and it may be worth it to contact other participants to see of potential other outcomes of the workshop.

Government Entities

One respondent promotes the ToC approach with government organizations, part of their role in reporting on the 22 projects in which the Mission is involved. They also promote Miradi as a management and financial tool. The Department of Agriculture is now using the ToC as a framework, but the respondent does not know if this was solely influenced by their work. At the request of the Bureau of Fisheries as well as local governments at a Fish Right site, the Fish Right team has provided guidance to these entities on how to develop the results change for their programs, including the ToC.

Additional Training for Fish Right Consortium Partners

Two respondents are training Fish Right staff from seven organizations to use tools such as Miradi and how to facilitate. Consortium partners were perceived to be excited to get training, as it gives them more opportunities to be involved as well as skills for proposal development. However, partners are sometimes hesitant because of time involved, but now this is a requirement for USAID projects in the Philippines. The team of four that is training Fish Right consortium partners are interested in the results chain and see its value for the biodiversity program—however, they want to know where the program is heading. They use MI2’s model of guiding partners and co-facilitating this process in three sites with partners.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Sources are referenced in Annex A of the Evaluation Report.

Annex F: Outcome Harvesting Methodology

The Evaluation Team used outcome harvesting to explore how MI2 outcomes are achieved in complex contexts with high levels of uncertainty around the optimal causal pathways to achieve success. Outcome harvesting works backwards: outcomes are first identified then evaluative methods (including some methods from other approaches such as Contribution Analysis and Scenario Planning) are used to articulate the causal pathway that led to the outcome.

In this portion of the evaluation, we used the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework to frame data collection and analyze causal pathways towards identified AM outcomes. This was done to provide evidence about what enables and hinders desired AM behavior both during engagement with MI2 and post-MI2 support. It is assumed that changes to MI2 recipients' capability, opportunity, and motivation dimensions are required in order to use the new MI2 practices and/or outputs. We recognize that not all aspects of the capability, opportunity, and motivation framework are under the direct management control of MI2, particularly those related to Opportunity (for example that may be more closely tied to broader institutional contexts and dynamics). However, the EQs required us to look at whether and how MI2 promoted approaches were institutionalized and characterize the range of barriers to uptake, which can inform implementation of similar types of programming.

STEP ONE (DESIGN THE HARVEST)

The harvest questions that will be used to identify MI2 tasks for outcome harvesting are the evaluation questions. These questions have been slightly refined after identification of activities and outcome descriptions occurred. However, they are still in the same vein of inquiry. Based on the intention of each question—we determined that the Outcome Harvest was most likely going to provide findings for the following EQs: 1, 2, 3, and 5.

EQ 1. How has MI2 directly contributed to the quality and utilization of evidence, learning, and AM within USAID's biodiversity and integrated programs?

- What is the uptake of learning programs and products generated by MI2?
- How have USAID staff applied this learning throughout the Program Cycle?
- To what extent has MI2 contributed to increased investment in MEL across the Program Cycle in USAID biodiversity activities?

EQ 2. What evidence is there of MI2s contributions to institutionalizing or enculturating the Conservation Standards and AM in biodiversity and integrated programming throughout USAID's Program Cycle?

- Do Mission staff continue AM approaches post MI2 support? What challenges/improvements are reported and how could this be strengthened?

EQ 3. If MI2 has contributed to utilization of learning and AM approaches, in what ways has that been seen to influence strategy, decision making, and program implementation indirectly linked to MI2 (e.g., Mission activities broadly, post-MI2 activities, across Missions/Offices, etc.)?

EQ 4. In what ways does MI2 differ from other CLA efforts (e.g., supported by Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning) or Mission-based MEL contracts for biodiversity programs?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses for future implementation of an MI2-like model for Mission support, relative to other common CLA or MEL efforts or approaches used by USAID?
- How has MI2 involved biodiversity/conservation specialists or other sector specialists in designing and adaptively managing biodiversity and integrated programming? If so, how has that been perceived as influencing activity design and management?

EQ 5. In what ways have programmatic or contextual factors influenced MI2 implementation and achievement of results?

- MI2 changed to a Mission buy-in approach instead of being centrally funded as MI. Did this impact the program implementation and results, and if so, how?
- Have programmatic or contextual factors been identified as affecting MI2 implementation, uptake, and post-MI2 sustainability? If so, how so?

STEP TWO (DATA GATHERING AND OUTCOME DESCRIPTIONS)

The function of this step was to identify MI2 tasks with higher probability for success as indicated by documentation that highlights the successful decision making caused by the MI2 task. MI2 task documents (provided by MI2) along with discussions with MI2 and USAID staff were used to identify two MI2 tasks for in-depth outcome harvesting. It is important to emphasize that while the outcome harvesting approach focuses on “successful” examples, it explicitly investigates the factors that both contribute to and inhibit that success, and the outcome harvesting approach is supplemented with the broader picture of performance using other methods to ensure that the evaluation gains a full, representative picture of performance.

The following activities were identified:

- Conservation Enterprises Learning Group (ongoing activity).
- Philippines Mission activities—in particular—Fish Right (ongoing) and subsequent follow-on activities.

In order to build out the outcome descriptions and causal chains—we interviewed participants (more information below) and reviewed key program documents in these two activities to better identify:

- How skills, capacities, tools gained from MI2 support were used to arrive at this outcome.

- Identify key aspects of context and actors who were involved in arriving at this outcome.
- What achieving this outcome meant—was it successful? How so? If not, why not?
- Identify perspectives on whether they would have arrived at the same outcome, if they had not used the skills, capacities, tools gained from MI2 support. Would the process have differed?

STEP THREE (KIIS WITH KEY ACTORS)

In this step, the Evaluation Team gathered the perspectives of key actors and stakeholders to validate, expand, modify, and provide additional evidence for 1) the outcome description and 2) the causal chain that contributed to it. Using the documentation and a list of key stakeholders provided by MI2, an initial list of actors was developed for semi-structured KIIs (see protocol below), and respondents referred additional actors for KIIs (i.e., Snowballing) as the causal pathway was iteratively built.

CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES LEARNING GROUP

The Evaluation Team conducted two exploratory KIIs with individuals who had had long-term engagement and leadership in the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group (USAID and MI2) and who have been involved with the learning group formation, learning agenda development, subsequent learning group coordination and leadership. This allowed the Evaluation Team to identify potential outcomes from the Impact Labs for deeper examination. The Evaluation Team reviewed documents related to the Impact Labs and created a draft outcome statement and causal chains to explore with respondents. A total of three Impact Lab participants (Mission and implementing partner respondents who participated in a coordinated training workshop, called the Conservation Enterprises Impact Labs, that was conducted by the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group) were interviewed. Respondents were provided with the draft outcome description to review prior to the discussion.

PHILIPPINES MISSION ACTIVITIES

MI2 provided an initial list of respondents (Mission and implementing partner respondents) who were familiar with Fish Right and how staff who worked on Fish Right may have influenced the design of subsequent programs without MI2 support. The Evaluation Team sent two draft outcome descriptions to KII participants to review prior to the discussion. Given the time and resources available to explore these outcomes, the Evaluation Team chose to pursue one outcome based on the information provided in initial interviews. Respondents suggested two additional respondents, and in total seven respondents were interviewed. The interviews focused on how future program designs had been influenced by staff and implementing partners who were part of the Fish Right program.

The original interview protocol (see Table I) was used as a guiding document to develop tailored questions for the semi-structured interviews. The Evaluation Team developed guiding questions and probes for the semi-structured interviews in an iterative manner as initial outcome descriptions and causal pathways were developed before and during data collection. Guiding questions and probes are found in the table below.

Interview Sections	Questions and Probes
<p>Section 1: Outcome Description (Relevant Outcome Description to be sent to respondent at least one week before KII)</p> <p>Example (for demonstration purposes): A Water Resource Management activity was able to modify its training content in response to initial feedback from beneficiaries. This modification was possible, in part, because an MI2 Activity focused on integrating flexibility into programs at the planning stage.</p>	<p>1.1: Can you tell me a bit more about this situation we described? Probes: Does this outcome resonate with you? Who was involved? What was the impetus or need for this [insert outcome name]?</p> <p>1.2: How does this outcome relate to [you/activity/Mission]? What do you think about [insert outcome name]? What did it allow (or not allow) [you/activity/Mission] to do? How so?</p>
<p>Section 2: Causal Pathway (Partly based on answers to Section 2)</p>	<p>2.1: What led to this outcome? How did that happen? [Probes: who was involved? Why do you think that happened?] [Continue to probe backwards as necessary, both for MI2 and non-MI2 related aspects]</p> <p>2.2: Were there any surprises or setbacks as you worked towards the outcome? What were they? When did they occur? Who was involved? How was it resolved?</p>
<p>Section 3: Unknowns</p>	<p>3.1: If you had not had MI2 support, how do you think this process might have gone? Would you have arrived at the same/similar decision/outcome? Would the change have occurred in a similar or different timeline?</p> <p>3.2: Do you think your experience with MI2 in this activity will affect your work/perspective in the long run? How so?</p> <p>3.2: What is relevant that we have not discussed? What else should we be thinking about?</p>

Conservation Enterprises Learning Group
<p>Exploration of Learning Group as a Whole</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Immediate</i> – How did you move from research findings to tools? Who was involved in that process? • <i>Immediate</i> – Without the research findings, would you have known those tools were needed? How would they have been different?

- *Intermediate* – How do you anticipate these tools (e.g., ToCs, Planning Tool, MEL Framework) will lead to different outcomes than the previous/existing tools? What is important about the new tool designs that will enable better development work?
- *Intermediate* – Have the research outputs emerging in response to the Learning Agenda been used? How have they been used? Has it influenced how you approach biodiversity programming? How so? What aspect of the Learning Agenda and/or the outputs led to this change? Who was involved in that change?
- *Intermediate* – Without that aspect of the Learning Agenda/outputs - would this change/improvement still been made?
- *Immediate* – What tools and processes were useful in facilitating learning and knowledge sharing? How did you decide to do that? Did you think they were impactful? How or how not?
- *Intermediate* – Have you learned anything through participating in this Learning Group that you applied to your project work? If so, what? Would you have taken the same action if you did not have this information from the Learning Group?
- *Intermediate* – Have you shared anything in the Learning Group that others have applied to their project work? What was it and who used it?
- *Intermediate* – How is the Learning Agenda informed and updated (who and what processes are involved, what tools have been useful (and not), timing of the process steps like pause and reflect sessions, etc.)

Questions to explore in the Impact Labs

- What were the outcomes of the impact labs for participants and programs?
- What did the participants gain? What did they think was helpful/not helpful?
- Why did that happen? What influenced that decision?
- Who was part of the process/how did the process go?

Philippines Mission

- *What specific adaptive management skill sets, practices, tools, etc., did MI2 build capacity in? (Pause and Reflect, Direct field support for Fish Right results chain revisions)*
- *Out of the two outcome descriptions, I'd like to focus on one, but hope we can get to two. Is there one you think you are able to speak to a bit better?*
- *[If the second OD is chosen - which of the potential outcomes, would you like to focus on? Can this be attributed to MI2 entirely?]*
- *If neither description resonated with you, what do you think was a longer-term outcome that MI2 may have contributed to?*

1.1: Can you tell me a bit more about this situation we described? Probes: Does this outcome resonate with you? Who was involved? What was the impetus or need for this [insert outcome name]?

- *How were the skill sets, practices, tools, etc., used in the two new programs (if possible, these skills, etc., should be mapped to the Program Cycle of the two new programs to identify how this new knowledge influenced the lifecycle)?*
- *What information was used to design the projects?*
- *Why that information was useful or unique, what information they would have used if they did not have this learning?*
- *How might the project have been different/how would that difference have changed the course of the projects? (Also, to explore is the process. Was it more collaborative with wider stakeholders than previous designs? If we can link things like that to MI2 learnings that is significant as well - if they are doing their work differently AND it is creating more consultative, or data driven projects.)*
- *How was USAID supportive of the CLA approach? Were there policies, money, or people who were more committed? Contractual flexibility? MI2 specific intervention vs others?*
- *Who were key champions and how did MI2 uniquely draw them out?*
- *How did the program make the decision to focus on solutions and not performance of groups? What were the benefits/drawbacks of this approach?*
- *What factors led to DA-BFAR adoption of Need more info about this adoption - were relationships/offers of funding a part of this decision? Without quantification workshop would this have been adopted?*
- *What happened after/what were the outcomes of:*
 - *Training facilitators from DA-BFAR and LGUs to use and refine the tool*
 - *Positive messaging to encourage fishers to engage more consistently in legal, reported, and regulated fishing*
 - *LGUs and other stakeholders to set up community watch systems to encourage greater citizen engagement to document good practices and learn from former illegal fishers the factors and reasons behind their conversion*

1.2: How does this outcome relate to you, Fish Right and the Philippines Mission? What do you think about [insert outcome name]? What did it allow (or not allow) [you/activity/Mission] to do? How so?

2.1: What led to this outcome? How did that happen? [Probes: who was involved? Why do you think that happened?] [Continue to probe backwards as necessary, both for MI2 and non-MI2 related aspects]

- *Enabling conditions:*

- *Capacity and time*
- *Knowledge, tools, and guidance*
- *Business practices and policies*
- *Culture (CoP Enabling?)*
- *Early adopters who embraced and applied best practices (P&R, use of evidence specifically)*
- *Best practices socialized and reinforced across USAID (P&R, use of evidence)*
- *Conditions set (examples?)*
- *Broad adoption of best practices by USAID and partners*
- *Effective and impactful USAID programs*
- *Biodiversity and human well-being improved*

2.2: Were there any surprises or setbacks as you worked towards the outcome? What were they? When did they occur? Who was involved? How was it resolved?

3.1: If you had not had MI2 support, how do you think this process might have gone? Would you have arrived at the same/similar decision/outcome? Would the change have occurred in a similar or different timeline?

- *If you had not learned of the tools/approaches from MI2, what would have been your design process? How would the programs look different, if at all? Do you expect project outcomes to be different because of the design process? If so, how?*

3.2: Do you think your experience with MI2 in this activity will affect your work/perspective in the long run? How so?

3.3: What is relevant that we have not discussed? What else should we be thinking about?

- *Who else should I be talking to?*

STEP FOUR (ANALYSIS)

Following data collection, the Evaluation Team reviewed the interviews (the Evaluation Team did not code in a formal manner because of the small sample size) for each case study to develop (1) clear outcome statements, (2) causal chains and enabling factors that contributed to the outcome statements, and (3) the significance of each statement. The Evaluation Team attempted to identify themes and trends among multiple respondents but given the small sample size this investigation was limited, and the Evaluation Team prioritized creating causal chains from the information available.

STEP FIVE (EXPERT REVIEW AND VALIDATION)

During this step the Evaluation Team enlisted Daniel Evans, INRM Biodiversity Expert, and Rachel Santos, Social Impact outcome harvesting Advisor, to provide expertise. They were given the draft Outcome Descriptions and casual chains with supporting evidence for review. The experts focused on the following during their review:

- 1) Provide expert opinion on the strength of the causal pathway (evidence gaps, etc.)
- 2) Assess the outcome description/causal pathway against existing best practices in AM and biodiversity programming to identify potential performance gaps, and
- 3) Validate the analytical work thus far and provide additional credibility to findings.

The results were integrated into the Outcome Description and Causal Pathway and sent to respondents for validation, which is currently in progress. The Evaluation Team and USAID agreed not to validate the outcome descriptions in a separate presentation with USAID because validation with respondents themselves was considered more relevant and valuable.

STEP SIX (FINALIZING OUTCOME DESCRIPTIONS AND CAUSAL PATHWAYS)

During this step the Evaluation Team validated outcome descriptions and significance statements with respondents over email. The Evaluation Team then updated outcome harvesting narratives with this information.

OUTCOME HARVESTING LIMITATIONS

Limitation (Selection Bias): MI2 and USAID selected the cases for outcome harvesting and the potential sample of respondents, so the selection is biased towards cases that likely demonstrated more positive outcomes and a sample of respondents with more positive experiences/feedback than a random sample might have yielded.

Mitigation (Selection Bias): However, the purpose of outcome harvesting is not to identify generalizable conclusions regarding the outcomes of MI2, rather it is used to explore examples of causal pathways in depth, focusing on contributing and inhibiting factors.

Annex G: Evaluation Questions

The conclusions are included for each evaluation question below.

EQI. How has MI2 directly contributed to the quality and utilization of evidence, learning, and AM within USAID’s biodiversity and integrated programs?

This question (and sub-questions) focus on MI2’s impact on specific programs that they worked with directly. In particular, this question speaks specifically to the contribution of data, information, and AM tools to influence decisions within a specific program during MI2 support.

Overall, there was high interest and engagement with MI2 technical support from both Washington Offices and Missions. Generally, MI2 technical support, evidence, and research products were regarded as organized, systematic, and useful for sharing knowledge. These products have had high engagement and anecdotally, some Missions and implementing partners are actively using guidance documents, learning agendas, and assessments to inform ongoing strategy and activity implementation. MI2 has supported six Learning Groups in the Biodiversity Division and LAC Bureau and provided technical leadership to develop and implement learning agendas. Generally, events and products are well regarded and attended by USAID and may encourage Cross-Mission and cross-Agency learning and collaboration. The Learning Groups also fostered interest in learning agendas more broadly.

MI2 facilitation of AM activities and use of AM tools, such as the CS, helped USAID and implementing partner respondents improve the quality of activity and program design through better articulation of program logic. Examples include working out nuances in complex activities, comprehensively developing situation models and results chains, identifying threats and drivers, and identifying gaps in logic. In particular, facilitation support and knowledge management by MI2 were cited as important factors that influenced the use and improvement in the quality of AM thinking.

While USAID and implementing partner respondents reported gains in capabilities and motivation to use evidence, pursue learning and implement AM, many reported that they encountered limitations and opportunities in applying approaches and tools in practice. This was due to a wide array of factors outside of the control of the MI2 program, including limited staff and available time and resources, complex and lengthy processes for using the CS, as well as programmatic factors related to USAID’s structures and processes (e.g., policy and design timelines, contract obligations, Mission priorities, existing capacities and resources, feasibility).

EQIa. What is the uptake of learning programs and products generated by MI2?

We used a capability, opportunity, and motivation approach to assess the uptake of learning and products generated by MI2. Uptake is assessed across three areas of MI2’s contribution: changed *capability* of respondents, *opportunity* to use skills, knowledge, and products gained through MI2, and respondents’ *motivation* to use them. Examination of MI2’s proposed technical support to Missions indicate that the majority include at least two capability, opportunity, and motivation dimensions (92

percent of 12 buy-in Statement of Works) which implies stronger likelihood of proposed support to result in behavioral change.⁵⁵

Capability: Elements of capability present for both uptake and sustainability include confidence in one’s ability to use the CS approach and apply insights to learning, both in current projects and other forums. Longer-term MI2 engagement with Missions and pairing Biodiversity Advisors with MI2 for coaching increased confidence and improved skills. Biodiversity Advisors were also helpful in providing additional expertise and support at the activity level, particularly in cases where MI2 (or another technical support mechanism) is unavailable. Engagement with MI2 supported participants to gain the capacity to utilize MI2 tools, facilitation techniques, and other skills for conducting AM tasks, but MI2 also helped them think differently around program design and strategy. MI2 also helped participants to better understand the perspectives of other sectors and stakeholders. The greatest barrier to continuing the MI2 approach without MI2 is Mission bandwidth to be able to plan and lead the process.

Opportunity: Without the opportunity for Missions and implementing partners to engage with MI2 in the first place, they would not have had the opportunity to utilize the CS, tools, or skills-building unique to MI2. This engagement with MI2 facilitation created opportunities for them to engage in the program design and learning process. This aligns with the conclusion for “Capability” that highlights the lack of Mission bandwidth to be able to lead these processes independently. However, opportunities to utilize AM approaches during MI2 engagement and independently of MI2 were influenced by a number of factors including the degree of Mission support and commitment, alignment with stakeholder (including government) needs and priorities, as well broader culture for AM within the Agency. Most importantly, USAID internal processes, structures, and staff buy-in can either offer opportunities to use/continue using the MI2 approach or challenge efforts at different stages of the Program Cycle – including contractual flexibility to make changes, applicability of MI2 tools to existing Agency mechanisms and tools and how information is communicated.

Motivation: Mission and implementing partner respondents are motivated (or perceived to be motivated) to use AM tools by a number of factors. At the onset of MI2 there was already an established motivation across USAID for pursuing and valuing evidence-based practice, particularly for respondents who had previous experience with MI. USAID and implementing partner respondents were also motivated to use these capabilities because they perceived the tools as useful for advancing activity objectives. Implementing partners are motivated by perceived Mission support and interest of their partners. Motivation for uptake is hindered by several factors including the intensive and engaged nature of using the CS approach, lack of perceived value, and competing priorities for time, resources, and capacity. In particular, the complex and lengthy processes for using the CS were often at odds with activity timelines, capacity of stakeholders to engage, and existing resources.

A summary of how these capability, opportunity, and motivation elements emerged across evidence, learning, and AM, approaches, and products is provided in the table below.

⁵⁵ This was identified during the content analysis of 12 buy-in Statement of Works- see Methodology section for more details.

Summary of capability, opportunity, and motivation elements across evidence, learning, and adaptive management for USAID + implementing partner respondents

	Evidence	Learning	Adaptive Management
Capability	Can identify where evidence is needed to support program logic.	<p>Can think more systematically about program design and strategy</p> <p>Can understand and integrate perceptions of other stakeholders and sectors in strategy, design, and implementation.</p>	<p>Understand and facilitate CS approach.</p> <p>Learned and/or improved facilitation skills and tools.</p>
Opportunity	<p>Access to buy into MI2 support provided the opportunity to engage with MI2 and use these tools and approaches in their programs.</p> <p>Facilitation was perceived by USAID and implementing partners as critical for creating opportunities for both deeper and broader participation in the learning and design process.</p> <p>Using tools and products from the CS process were often intensive; for some stakeholders, had a long runway to comprehension; and were not always fit-for-purpose for a wider range of applications outside of design and activity AM.</p> <p>Contextual factors related to USAID’s internal structures and processes were seen as limiting the use of products in the next phases of activities.</p>		
Motivation	Existing culture at Agency values evidence-based practice.	<p>Tools could meet activity objectives and improve Mission CLA practice.</p> <p>Previous engagement with MI was positive and wanted to continue.</p> <p>The process of learning and AM was enjoyable, and engagement was made easier through facilitation.</p> <p>Missions and implementing partners perceived that MI2 and their approach is promoted by Washington and is a requirement for biodiversity activities.</p>	

There are clear signs that MI2 contributed to the uptake of evidence, learning, and AM practices, by improving USAID and implementing partner respondents’ capabilities and motivation to engage with the CS. However, respondents had varied opportunities to apply these capabilities (including tools and learning), and to facilitate adaptive management in program activities. This was due to a wide array of factors, including limited staff and available time and resources, complex and lengthy processes for using the CS, as well as programmatic factors related to USAID's structures and processes.

EQ1b: How have USAID staff applied this learning throughout the Program Cycle?

This question focuses on the application of evidence and learning during technical support. As discussed above, nearly half of MI2 tasks involved P&Rs, with one-fourth of engagements supporting activity design. Thus, findings about application of learning fall into three broad categories: AM activities (such as P&Rs), the application of evidence during the design phase, and from Learning Group activities.

Some activities have applied learning from MEL activities and Learning Groups to inform program and activity design, as well as adaptively manage ongoing activities. In particular, the use of the CS for AM allowed respondents to generate programmatic learning and identify when and how to adjust activities to better achieve desired objectives. In addition, Learning Groups and their events fostered peer-to-peer learning opportunities. In a few cases, participants either applied learning gained from other Missions to inform their activity design or initiated cross-Agency collaboration. MI2 facilitators' skills, expertise, and institutional knowledge were critical in cases where programmatic and/or external evidence was applied to stages of the Program Cycle.

A number of programmatic and contextual factors influenced the application of learning and evidence for AM and program design. These included contractual obligations, mismatch in timelines and needs of USAID and implementing partners, the lengths and capacity of the CS, and existing capacity and resources to apply learning (see EQ5).

EQ1c. To what extent has MI2 contributed to increased investment in MEL across the Program Cycle in USAID biodiversity activities?

This question is focused on whether and how MI2 has contributed to changes in MEL investment in biodiversity activities. We considered "investment" to include investment in time, attention, budget, etc.

MI2 contributed to an overall increased investment in time and attention thinking about MEL design and implementation for AM by Mission staff and implementing partners. In particular, respondents highlighted the importance of MI2 support for tracking activity progress over time and for custom indicator development. However, there was not always an increased investment in capacity and/or resources to account for more in-depth or extensive MEL implementation. Contractual obligations and existing staff expertise and capacity hindered the implementation of revised MEL plans (see EQ5b). However, it is possible because MI2 has helped foster a culture of critical thinking and appreciation of MEL, particularly for AM, that there will be continued interest and increased investment in the future.

EQ2. What evidence is there of MI2's contributions to institutionalizing or enculturating the Conservation Standards and AM in biodiversity and integrated programming throughout USAID's Program Cycle?

This evaluation question encompasses one overarching question (EQ2) and a sub-question (EQ2a) which were analyzed separately.

EQ2 focuses on how AM tools (e.g., the CS, P&R, After Action Reviews) have been enculturated and/or diffused across biodiversity and integrated programming at USAID. The majority of respondents discussed their perceptions working with MI2 to use the CS and the outputs from the CS for AM tasks during P&Rs, thus these findings focus primarily on the CS and pathways and challenges to

institutionalizing the CS for AM at USAID. However, the CS, as an approach, are used through conservation, and perceptions of the approach can vary depending on how they are facilitated and adapted. Thus, in this evaluation, we aimed to distinguish between impressions of the CS approach itself and perceptions of how it has been implemented by MI2.

PATHWAYS

Generally, USAID and implementing partner respondents felt that the CS is extremely useful for biodiversity and conservation programming, as it helped them think more systematically about program logic, integrate stakeholder perspectives, and guide MEL for AM. In particular, respondents highly valued results chains as a “lodestone” for activities, serving as a guide for implementation and common framework for monitoring and P&RS. Through working with MI2, respondents expressed an appreciation for and motivation to continue AM practices in the future and to prioritize AM tasks early on in activity design. The CS as a tool for AM has been encouraged by champions such as the Biodiversity Advisors program, which has helped build capabilities to facilitate both the use of the tool but also to build other skills (e.g., facilitation, incorporating other perspectives and sectors). In addition, USAID and implementing partner respondents helped enculturate the CS approach as they encouraged the use of the CS (with or without MI2 support) in new activities and other Missions. There has been continued interest from Missions and implementing partners to continue using the CS, both for new activities as well as other by stakeholders and other parts of the Agency. These champions helped improve the efficacy of the CS as an AM tool by revising and adapting it to fit broader needs, as well as sharing their learning and encouraging the use of the CS across the Agency.

CHALLENGES

This evaluation surfaced three inter-related challenges for broader institutionalization of the CS for AM at USAID. These challenges stem from both contextual factors at USAID as well as aspects of the CS itself and facilitator expertise. First, in order for CS to be used to its full potential, it requires knowledgeable facilitation and knowledge management. Across the board, respondents expressed that having long-term engagement from organized facilitators with topical expertise was critical to leverage the CS for AM through an activity. However, respondents perceived that engaging in (as well as facilitating) the CS process takes significant time and resources. USAID respondents often reported they are not equipped to do this because they do not have the available time and resources to organize and facilitate the process, as well as meaningfully participate. Second, MI2 staff had strong facilitation and biodiversity and conservation expertise which allowed them to probe and encourage participants to identify evidence to support logic as well as bring in topical expertise and experience from other projects. However, this evaluation also identified concerns across USAID and implementing partner respondents that integrating perspectives from broader stakeholders and other sectors has been difficult. Respondent experiences suggest that integration challenges stem from both the way that the CS is structured (e.g., lack of specific components and guidance for integrating climate factors) and the way that it is facilitated (e.g., lack of facilitator expertise in other sectors outside of conservation). Third, this evaluation highlighted mismatches between the CS and its outputs with existing opportunities, needs, and priorities across the Program Cycle. On one hand, respondents reported challenges in adapting programs according to learning from using the CS for AM due to contract obligations, timing, and

existing resources. On the other hand, mismatches also occurred when respondents attempted to use outputs of the CS (e.g., results chains) outside of more detailed and technical areas (e.g., design and AM) of the Program Cycle.

It should be noted that this evaluation occurred just as MI2 is developing guidance to integrate climate considerations into the CS. While this encouraging, limited capacity at USAID to continue to use and facilitate the CS implies that there may be limited capacity in the future to continue to adapt the CS for other integration needs, especially without a dedicated technical support mechanism focused on the CS. Existing constraints on time and capacity, resources, and alignment for USAID staff may pose challenges for the long-term sustainability of using something like the CS that requires significant facilitation support without availability of consistent external technical support. Many of the challenges this evaluation highlighted are not limited to the CS and are likely relevant to the future of AM practice at USAID as a whole (e.g., expertise, capacity, resources, alignment). Thus, this raises an important point for USAID to consider moving forward – to what degree does it make sense to continue to adapt AM tools to fit the current system, versus when does institutional-level change need to happen to foster more flexibility and support for AM in practice.

See Recommendations for suggestions to improve the enculturation of the CS and AM.

EQ2a. Do Mission staff continue AM approaches post-MI2 support? What challenges/improvements are reported and how could this be strengthened?

This question focuses on Mission and implementing partner respondents' use of AM approaches independent of MI2, including capability, opportunity, and motivation elements contributing to sustainability of AM. Elements of this discussion are further explored within EQ3 and EQ5b.

Mission and implementing partner respondents who continue to use AM approaches without MI2 support, commonly used results chains and continued to conduct P&Rs (described as facilitation of these processes without MI2 support and using existing products developed with MI2 to facilitate these processes). Missions that use these tools regularly have staff and implementing partners as facilitators. Washington and MI2 respondents perceived that two Missions (the Philippines and Madagascar) no longer need MI2 support for AM. However, USAID respondents (including Biodiversity Advisors) also reported not using tools from MI2 because of low bandwidth or because an opportunity has not yet presented itself.

While USAID and implementing partner respondents felt capable and confident in using the approaches, Mission bandwidth hindered their use without the support of MI2. Opportunities for implementing partners and USAID respondents to use approaches in activities were driven by the degree of Mission commitment and host country government support, and USAID internal processes. The lengthy process of using the CS/MI2 approach also may disincentivize staff to continue using them. Foreign Service Officer movement between Missions also presents a challenge to sustaining the capacity and experience for implementing AM, but can also contribute to enculturating AM. Suggestions to strengthen AM post-MI2 support can be found under Recommendations.

EQ3. If MI2 has contributed to utilization of learning and AM approaches, in what ways has that been seen to influence strategy, decision making, and program implementation indirectly linked to MI2 (e.g., Mission activities broadly, post-MI2 activities, across Missions/Offices, etc.)?

This question is focused on MI2's indirect impact on programming that followed after MI2 (but was not directly involved with) within a Mission or Office. This question speaks specifically to the contribution of skills, learning, capacity, and awareness gained through working with MI2 to other programming and strategies.

It is difficult to determine conclusively how MI2 may have influenced strategy, decision-making, and program implementation more broadly within USAID, particularly as it is difficult to disentangle the influence of MI versus MI2. Anecdotally, respondents reported that the use of the CS makes the design processes more systematic, which had led to a perception of improving quality of programming. Quality of biodiversity programming has become more systematic. This may be attributed, in part, to the role of “early adopters,” individuals who received training in using the CS (e.g., Biodiversity Advisors), and others who gained practical expertise in using them—encouraging use at Missions and activities. In addition, there has been some interest that respondents noted, in exploring the utility of the CS for other sectors outside of Environment at USAID.

EQ4. In what ways does MI2 differ from other CLA efforts (e.g., supported by Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning) or Mission-based MEL contracts for biodiversity programs?

This question investigates two distinct areas through its sub-questions. First, the question explores MI2 program in relation to other CLA efforts across or outside of the Agency based on the perception of select respondents, particularly those with a breadth of experience across the Agency. Second, the question explores the perceived influence of MI2 facilitator backgrounds in biodiversity, conservation, and other sectors on the implementation of MI2 support with Missions and implementing partners. EQ4 is answered by EQ4a.

EQ4a. What are the strengths and weaknesses for future implementation of an MI2-like model for Mission support, relative to other common CLA or MEL efforts or approaches used by USAID?

This question explores the perceived strengths and weaknesses of future implementation of MI2's approach and other approaches to CLA based on experiences of respondents.

As a CLA approach, strengths of MI2's approach included its broader credibility as it is used by other organizations in the conservation sector and its perceived quality and relevance as a systematic, organized approach focused on designing and implementing conservation programs. However, the highlighted weaknesses of MI2's approach included its perceived intensive process that was often described as “long” and made it difficult to be more inclusive for participants with less available time, capacity, and resources, which may result in less collaborative processes and products that are less informed by broader perspectives). Strengths of other CLA approaches (such as socio-ecological monitoring, CLA meetings, a CLA process with frequent and sustained engagement with the community, Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning approaches) included that they tended to be more flexible, efficient, and better able to incorporate participatory processes. However, a weakness is that the biodiversity and conservation approaches are not targeted.

EQ4b. How has MI2 involved biodiversity/conservation specialists or other sector specialists in designing and adaptively managing biodiversity and integrated programming? If so, how has that been perceived as influencing activity design and management?

This question is intended to explore how MI2 involved other biodiversity and other types of specialists in program activities and how this influenced activity design and implementation. In particular, this question explores (to the extent possible) the effectiveness of facilitators with a biodiversity/conservation background.⁵⁶

MI2 has involved biodiversity/conservation specialists or other sector specialists as facilitators in designing biodiversity and integrated programming, as well as part of P&Rs. Most perceived that this positively impacted the design process as MI2 was able to guide the process more effectively, and push teams to explore technical areas more deeply. However, at times, the specific technical backgrounds of facilitators were less effective when working with integrated programming, and in some cases, may have unintentionally influenced the design process. Mismatched technical background (marine expertise specifically) with the activity team was also a challenge.

EQ5. In what ways have programmatic or contextual factors influenced MI2 implementation and achievement of results?

This EQ explores programmatic (internal to MI2 or USAID) and contextual (external and out of the control of MI2 or USAID) factors which have influenced MI2 program implementation and achievement of results (uptake and post-MI2 sustainability). The sub-questions answered the overarching EQ below.

EQ5a. MI2 changed to a Mission buy-in approach instead of being centrally funded as MI. Did this impact the program implementation and results, and if so, how?

MI, MI2's predecessor, was centrally funded by what is now the Biodiversity Division, while MI2 includes an opportunity for other operating units to buy MI2 services was funded through a buy-in mechanism. This evaluation question explores respondent perceptions of this shift and its impact on program implementation and results.⁵⁷

Overall, the change to a buy-in mechanism from central funding impacted program implementation and results in a myriad of ways depending on the perspective of respondents. On the one hand, the buy-in approach allowed more flexibility, a deeper engagement with and stronger commitment from Missions over a longer period of time and was perceived by some Missions as easy to access. This may have resulted in more opportunities for AM, according to one Washington respondent. On the other hand, the buy-in mechanism created a higher demand for MI2 services, which included stand-alone requests for MI2 services outside of their scope, and reduced access to the buy-in for some Missions who were not already on board with the approach and were not able to access because of a low buy-in ceiling. Buy-in demand filled a need for Missions efficiently and easily, however this also led to possible reduced

⁵⁶ Twenty key informant or small group interviewees were specifically asked about their perceptions of the background of MI2 facilitators (7 Mission-based respondents, 6 implementing partners, 5 Washington staff and 2 MI2 staff).

⁵⁷ Eleven respondents (MI2 staff, Washington staff, Mission staff) were asked about their perception of the change to buy-in mechanisms.

ownership or disempowerment of Missions during the design process, and possibly did not lead to more AM, according to one Washington respondent.

EQ5b. Have programmatic or contextual factors been identified as affecting MI2 implementation, uptake, and post-MI2 sustainability? If so, how so?

This question explores specific programmatic and contextual factors (defined above) that influence MI2 implementation, uptake of tools and learning, and the extent to which MI2 AM approaches are/can be utilized independently of MI2 support (post-MI2 sustainability).

Programmatic factors affecting implementation included MI2 facilitation expertise and high level of organization, a lack of USAID contextual knowledge and specific language skills among facilitators and the perception that the approach was overly time consuming. Programmatic factors unique to uptake included the length of MI2 engagement, with a longer and deeper engagement proving most beneficial and MI2 as an impartial third party. The most influential programmatic factor for both uptake and post-MI2 sustainability was USAID's own internal processes, structures, and staff buy-in at multiple levels throughout the Program Cycle.

Regarding contextual factors, not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of MI2, forcing the team to quickly pivot to a virtual space with both negative and unexpected positive consequences, also resulting in delays in implementation of USAID and MI2 tasks during the transition. Uptake was influenced by MEL knowledge and/or team structure levels, and both uptake and post-MI2 sustainability were influenced by both government and local partner priorities.