



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

A CASE STUDY OF USAID  
IN WESTERN HONDURAS



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**DISCLAIMER**  
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**COVER PHOTO TOP:** Girls playing with hula hoops during celebrations for the International Day of Biodiversity. Photo by USAID ProParque.

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# ACRONYMS

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
DO	Development Objective
GEMA	Gobernanza en Ecosistemas, Medios de Vida y Agua (Governance in Ecosystems, Livelihoods and Water)
GIS	Geographic Information System
IR	Intermediate Result
MESCLA	Monitoring & Evaluation Support for Collaborative Learning & Adapting
MIRA	Manejo Integrado de Recursos Ambientales (Integrated Management of Environmental Resources)
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

Community leaders and local partners identify sites vulnerable to landslides in the municipality of Corquin. Photo by USAID ProParque.



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# CASE STUDY SUMMARY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Honduras aimed to achieve bigger, better, more sustainable results by integrating biodiversity conservation with other development sectors. USAID/Honduras made the decision to integrate its biodiversity, education, food security and nutrition, and governance sectors based on growing evidence that achieving the Agency's poverty reduction goals would require a multi-sector approach and integration of multiple funding streams and activities. The mission combines technical approaches across sectors, designs activities to focus on the same geographic region and works collaboratively to reinforce results and contribute to more sustainable development.

This case study aims to help USAID missions and USAID/Washington advance institutional learning around biodiversity integration by illustrating the approach and process used by the mission. As natural resource management and water emerged as focal points for integration, the case study emphasizes *biodiversity* integration but has implications for integration across sectors at USAID broadly.

Four enabling conditions contributed to biodiversity integration in USAID/Honduras's programming:

- **Institutional leadership and support at all levels:** Mission leadership facilitated discussions on integration and adoption of an integrated approach in the 2015-2019 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). Individuals from across the mission, including new employees, supported integration, with numerous champions facilitating integration during conceptualization, design and implementation.
- **A clear mission vision of integration:** The CDCS, Project Appraisal Documents (PADs), development objective (DO) 2 charter and integration definition institutionalized and operationalized the mission's vision for integration.
- **A well-defined organizational structure with knowledge management:** The DO 2 structure, encompassing a team lead, five working groups and a steering committee, facilitated norms of working across sectors and regular information exchange.
- **A willingness to adapt:** Staff revisited assumptions and assessed emerging evidence throughout the program cycle, enabling the mission to refine its approaches based on learning.

Based on their experiences with integration, USAID/Honduras staff developed the following recommendations to support other missions.

During strategic planning and design:

- Incorporate lessons learned and utilize evidence to inform and adapt integration.
- Learn from other mission and donor experiences with integration before designing integrated programs.
- Define integration in the CDCS and PADs.
- Develop impact and process indicators.
- Include special provision language on integration in procurement documents.

Throughout design, implementation and evaluation:

- Maintain regular meetings and a coordination structure for integration.
- Promote adaptive management by revisiting assumptions and adjusting to project learning and implementation realities and revising documents and strategies to reflect learning.
- Document approaches to facilitate institutional knowledge management and learning.
- Recognize and reward individuals for their integration efforts, such as by including integration in annual employee work plans.

As part of monitoring and evaluation efforts:

- Invest in evaluation that captures the value and impact of integrated programming.

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# CASE STUDY PURPOSE AND AUDIENCES

This case study aims to help USAID missions and USAID/Washington advance institutional learning around biodiversity integration. By detailing the approach and process used by USAID/Honduras, this case study illustrates the enabling environment for achieving development goals across sectors through biodiversity integration and offers lessons learned for USAID missions, bureaus and offices interested in pursuing integration. The case study may be of particular interest to biodiversity and natural resource management specialists who are interested in learning how to integrate biodiversity with other sectors and other Agency staff interested in learning how to work across sectors.

The case study features the following sections:

- Section One describes the **history of biodiversity programming and evolution of integration** at USAID/Honduras.
- Section Two presents the **enabling conditions** for integration.
- Section Three identifies **challenges** that the mission encountered in integration.
- Section Four offers **recommendations** for other missions interested in adopting integrated approaches.
- Section Five shares brief **conclusions** on integration.



Hiking Trail in Cerro Azul Meambar National Park (PANACAM).  
Photo by USAID ProParque.

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# SECTION ONE: THE EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATION AT USAID/HONDURAS

The evolution of USAID/Honduras's biodiversity programming illustrates how lessons learned in the environment sector underscored the need for an integrated approach to achieve more sustainable development. In the 1980s, mission assistance in natural resource management relied on a model of integrated watershed management with a focus on sustainable hillside agriculture, as exemplified by the Land Use Productivity Enhancement (LUPE) activity. After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the mission's focus expanded to include forest cover protection in upper watersheds and restoration of heavily damaged lower watersheds. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, with the Honduras Environmental Protection Fund and the first Congressional biodiversity earmark disbursements, environment programming began to focus on protected areas, predominantly in a site-based and local level manner. This emphasis led to the multi-faceted Manejo Integrado de Recursos Ambientales, or Integrated Natural Resource Management, (MIRA) activity, which included integrated watershed management, policy and regulatory reform, community-based disaster risk reduction and conservation enterprises.

While MIRA contained elements of an integrated approach, the activity had only slight success in creating systemic solutions to recurrent conservation challenges. The subsequent ProParque activity incorporated technical aspects of MIRA – such as protected area management and market-based conservation enterprises – but structured activities and assistance holistically, aiming for integrated solutions and systemic change. ProParque worked in the same geographic locations as the mission's municipal governance and food security activities, where the interconnections between conservation, governance and poverty alleviation became evident on a daily basis. The frequent interaction among programs, intentional or otherwise, played a significant role in shaping mission perceptions about the need for integrated programming and contributed to both the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) process and the design of the Gobernanza en Ecosistemas, Medios de Vida y Agua, or Governance in Ecosystems, Livelihoods and Water (GEMA), activity – the environment piece of current development objective (DO) 2 programming.

Intentional integration at USAID/Honduras has included several stages. In 2012, USAID/Honduras

began discussing opportunities for pursuing integration. Individuals shared anecdotal field evidence that underscored overlaps between activities, such as recognition that sound water resources management was critical to the sustainability of food security activities. Others observed that improvements in local governance capacity were necessary for sustainable natural resource management. These early discussions among mission leadership and staff contributed to increasing awareness that achieving USAID's poverty reduction goals would require a multi-sector approach and integration of multiple funding streams and activities.

Staff from different offices shared this thinking during meetings. These initial discussions helped mission leadership and staff be more attuned to opportunities to increase integration on the ground. Further, a field visit by the mission director to ProParque sites in 2012 illustrated how a single activity was integrating protected area management, rural enterprise growth, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and clean energy development activities. The mission director explained that the co-location of ProParque and the food security and municipal governance activities allowed him to observe how these activities

were working together to achieve poverty reduction and development. Although collaboration across these activities had not originally been intentional, this observation convinced him of the importance of trying to replicate this integrated approach at a portfolio scale.

As the mission began considering integrated approaches, technical staff sought out evidence on integration, such as external expertise on the linkages among natural resource management, water and governance, and integrated water resources management. Staff also used evidence from USAID, including the 118/119 Tropical Forest and Biodiversity Assessment and climate change assessments, to support discussions on integration. For example, the 2013 climate change assessment for Southern and Western Honduras found that, due to climate change, farmers had shifted their agricultural practices to higher, more biodiverse areas, negatively impacting biodiversity. This concrete evidence of the linkages between agriculture and biodiversity provided further motivation for USAID/Honduras to explore integrated approaches that would simultaneously address water availability and production challenges and ensure biodiversity conservation.

Similarly, a ProParque analysis found that climate change was impacting Honduras’s cloud forests; moisture was no longer reaching high peaks, changing the nature of the hydrological cycles at a watershed level, negatively impacting existing ecosystems and creating challenges for the agroforestry and forestry sectors, particularly small-scale producers. This finding provided further evidence for pursuing an integrated approach.

### Setting the Stage: A Framework for Integration

*“Before, we were thinking about integration...but integration really became structured with the CDCS.”*

—USAID/Honduras staff

USAID/Honduras explicitly captured its thinking on lessons learned from the mission’s biodiversity programming and the need for a multi-sector approach to poverty reduction through its 2015-2019 CDCS (Figure 2). The mission completed the CDCS in December 2014. The emphasis on integration in the CDCS, and DO 2 in particular, reflects a Front Office decision

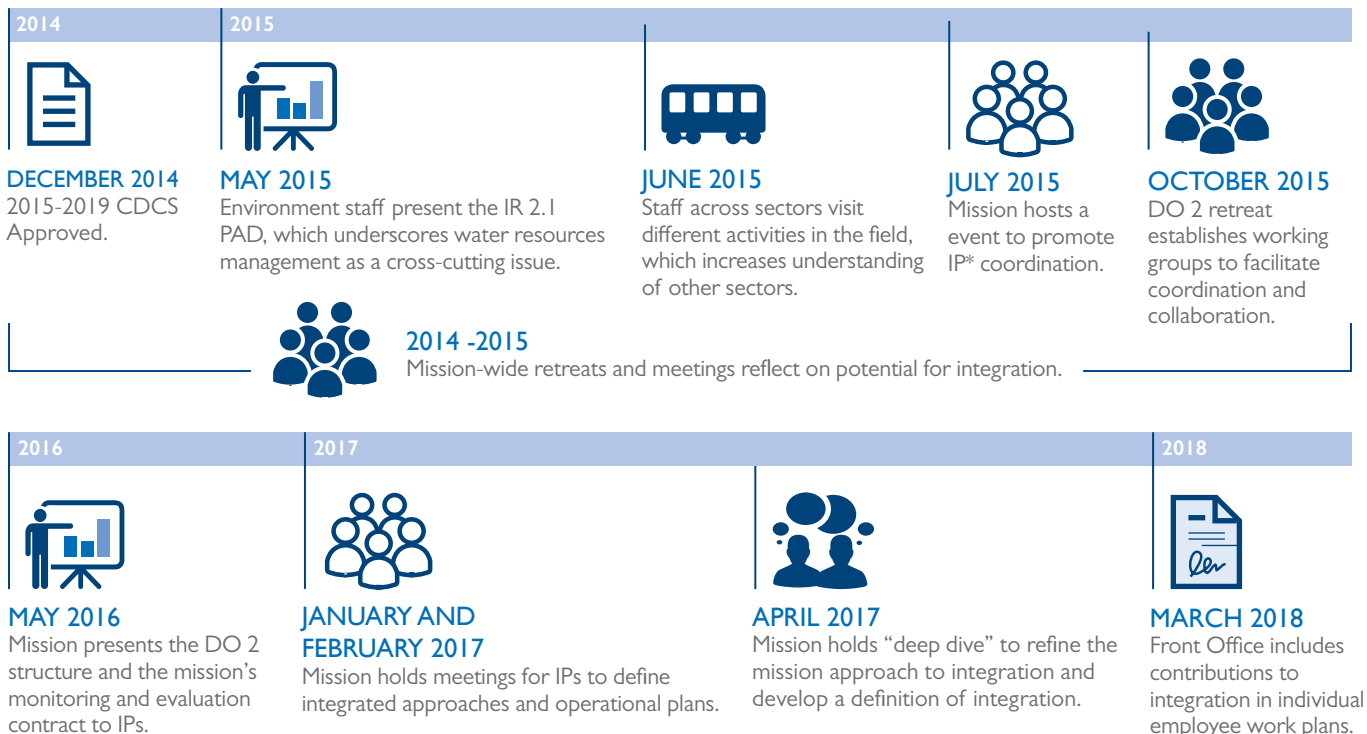
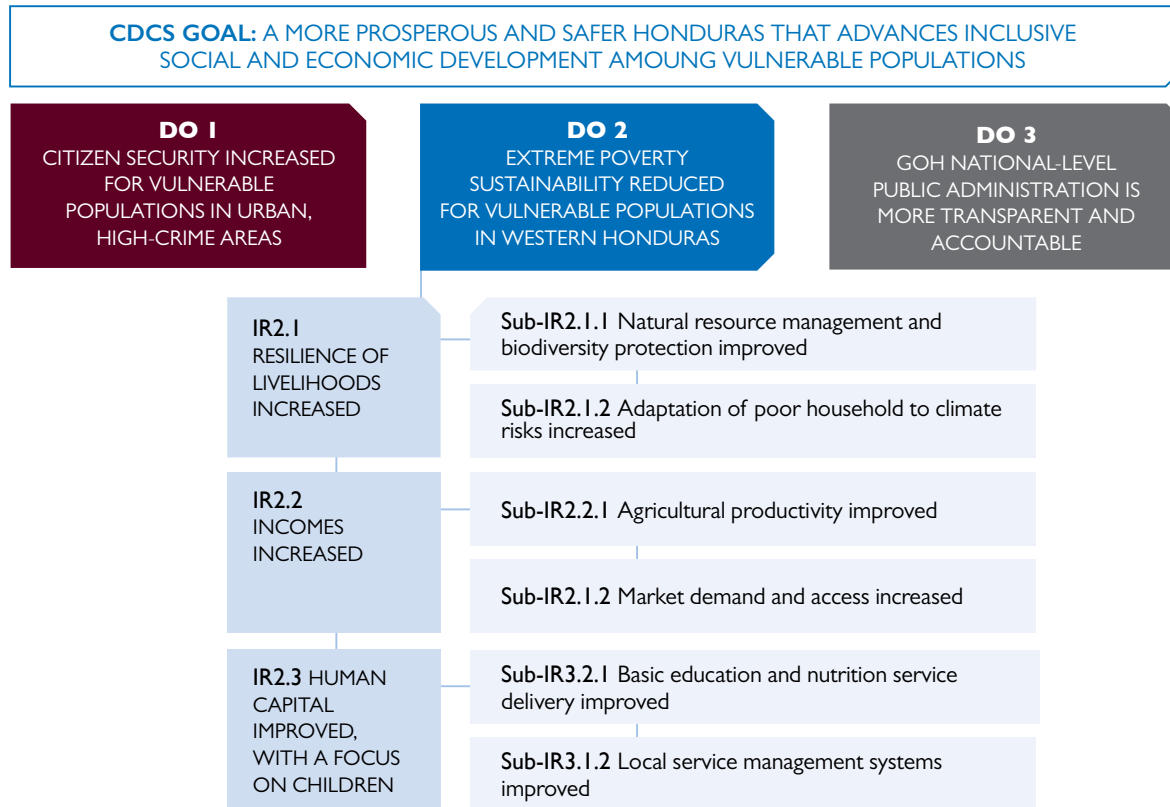


FIGURE 1: USAID/HONDURAS INTEGRATION TIMELINE

\*IP=implementing partner





**FIGURE 2: USAID/HONDURAS COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY**

USAID/Honduras emphasizes integration as a fundamental approach to achieve the mission’s three DOs, and each DO team operationalizes integration in different ways.

that all activities that contribute to poverty reduction would work in the same geographic area. The mission selected Western Honduras because extreme poverty, undernutrition, climate change vulnerability, low educational levels and other socio-economic challenges are ubiquitous in the region. Further, agricultural expansion in Western Honduras threatens the regions’ protected areas, biodiversity conservation and forest cover. The preservation of these areas and ecosystems is fundamental to ensuring consistent water supplies for agriculture.

All of these challenges are major contributing factors to irregular migration from Western Honduras to the U.S. In alignment with the U.S. Government’s Strategy for Central America (CEN), addressing economic, environment, education, food security and nutrition, and governance challenges in this region is crucial to improving peoples’ livelihoods and reducing poverty, and therefore addressing migration.

### **Creating a Structure for Integration**

*“People have embraced integration... the mantra is that we can achieve bigger, better, more sustainable results if we are integrated. Everyone really believes this.”*

—USAID/Honduras staff

In late 2014 and 2015, USAID/Honduras convened a series of mission-wide retreats and meetings that explored the potential for the mission to achieve bigger, better, more sustainable results through integration. In early 2015, following the CDCS’s approval, Front Office staff presented the framework for the DO implementation teams and designated DO leadership. The mission director explained that the DO structure would not replace the role and authority of the technical or support offices but would enable staff to work in support of the DO objectives; in other words,

the office structure did not change but was “overlaid” with the DO teams. Team leads are responsible for facilitating, leading, convening, guiding and enabling staff to achieve DO goals. Although this overlaid structure is not unique, the ways in which USAID/Honduras operationalized it to advance integration are unique.

After presenting the proposed DO structure, mission leadership invited individuals to share their concerns and then provided guidance in response. Many people stressed that the retreat and subsequent meetings facilitated mission-wide discussion, set the tone for integration across the mission and ensured credibility in the process. In June 2015, staff visited different activities in the field, resulting in enhanced understanding of other sectors and increased trust among colleagues.

At an October 2015 DO 2 team retreat, staff established working groups to facilitate coordination and collaboration. The team deliberately aligned the working groups with USAID’s program cycle (Figure 3). This mirroring means that the number of people on the working groups and the groups’ workloads shift over time. The working groups encourage participation from across offices and include support staff to ensure a multi-sectoral perspective. In addition, all design team leads participate in the Planning Working Group and all contracting/agreement officer’s representatives (COR/AORs) and activity managers participate in the Achieving Working Group.

The DO 2 team developed a charter that describes the team’s norms and values and establishes clear roles and responsibilities for the team lead, working group heads, steering committee and

**Learning Working Group** promotes strategic collaboration, continuous learning and adaptive management throughout the DO 2 team. This working group coordinates with the Achieving Working Group to check if the CDCS is being fulfilled and to facilitate adoption of any required measures to achieve high level results.

**Budget and Resources Working Group** compiles budget information from different technical offices contributing to DO 2 and facilitates sharing of pipeline management and budget practices between offices.

**Communications and Support Working Group** focuses on internal and external communications of DO 2, helps with agenda-setting for DO 2-wide meetings and assists with retreat planning and logistics.

**Planning Working Group** assures integration is included in PADs and activities developed under DO 2.

**Achieving Working Group** provides strategic and technical input to the DO 2 team on integration as it relates to implementation of activities.

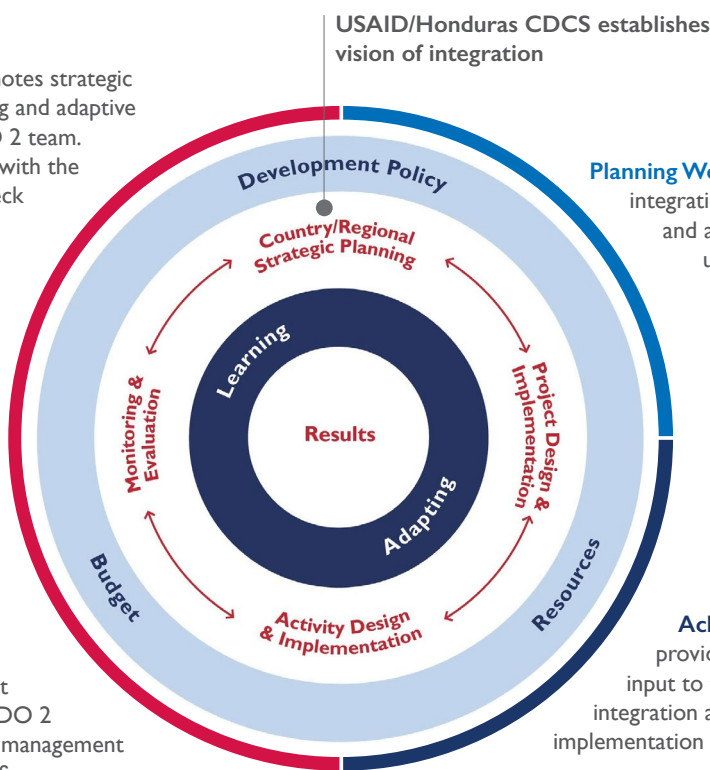


FIGURE 3: DO 2 WORKING GROUPS ALIGN WITH USAID’S PROGRAM CYCLE

The DO 2 team established five cross-sectoral working groups that align with USAID’s program cycle. A steering committee composed of the team leader, working group coordinators and office heads meets bi-weekly to coordinate activities, report progress and collaborate to address issues.

team members. The team meets at least quarterly to review progress, address challenges, identify needs, make any needed charter updates and gather feedback. In addition, the team holds an annual retreat. In 2016, the mission started conducting portfolio reviews by DOs rather than by offices.

### **Making Integration Work**

*“We knew we wanted to do integrated work, but we didn’t know how to do it. That changed with the presentation on water.”*

—USAID/Honduras staff

Although both the CDCS and the DO 2 team organizational structure were critical in enabling integration, mission staff said designing the Project Appraisal Documents (PADs) represented the first step in understanding how to implement integration. There are four PADs under DO 2: 1) biodiversity conservation, 2) agriculture and nutrition, 3) governance and 4) education.

#### **Integrating Activities through PADs**

In May 2015, mission environment staff presented on a PAD for IR 2.1 to the DO 2 team. They highlighted the importance of water across DO 2 activities. For example, agricultural fields and communities require water, and water is essential to improve sanitary conditions and nutrition in households and in schools. They also underscored the importance of forest cover and vegetation in maintaining healthy watersheds and catchment areas by facilitating infiltration, reducing runoff and influencing water quantity and quality.

*This presentation “showed that water was a fundamental issue and management of water resources was a cross-cutting issue that warranted an integrated approach...it was a very eye-opening and important moment.”*

—USAID mission director, 2012 to 2017

Individuals from across the mission identified this presentation as critical in helping them to understand water as an issue that warranted an integrated approach, both programmatically and organizationally. The adopted IR 2.1 PAD aims to achieve improved watershed management, strengthened local institutions to support environmental governance, biodiversity conservation, promotion of renewable energy and increased economic opportunities through market-based conservation.

#### **Identifying Opportunities for Co-Location Across Sectors**

After adopting the IR 2.1 PAD, USAID/Honduras undertook a mapping exercise to support the design of integrated activities (Box 1). To identify locations best suited for integrated assistance, the Feed the Future team mapped its household interventions, which were spread across the region’s 131 municipalities. The governance sector analyzed municipal capacity and status to identify potential activity locations. The mission then mapped biodiversity hotspots to find opportunities to co-locate and co-program Feed the Future, municipal governance and biodiversity activities. In addition, USAID/Honduras mapped areas with the lowest reading scores for third and sixth grade. The mission combined each layer into

### **BOX 1: THE ROLE OF GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS IN BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION**

Geospatial data and analysis provide an opportunity to promote biodiversity integration at USAID throughout the program cycle. As the USAID/Honduras mapping experience illustrates, the use of geospatial analysis during program design can help identify biodiversity focal interests and areas of stress or conflict for food security or governance programming. By simultaneously using data from multiple sectors (such as biodiversity hotspots, household-level nutrition status and municipal capacity), USAID/Honduras identified overlaps in programming and opportunities for integrated design. Similar opportunities may exist for program implementation, evaluation and mission-level strategy development.

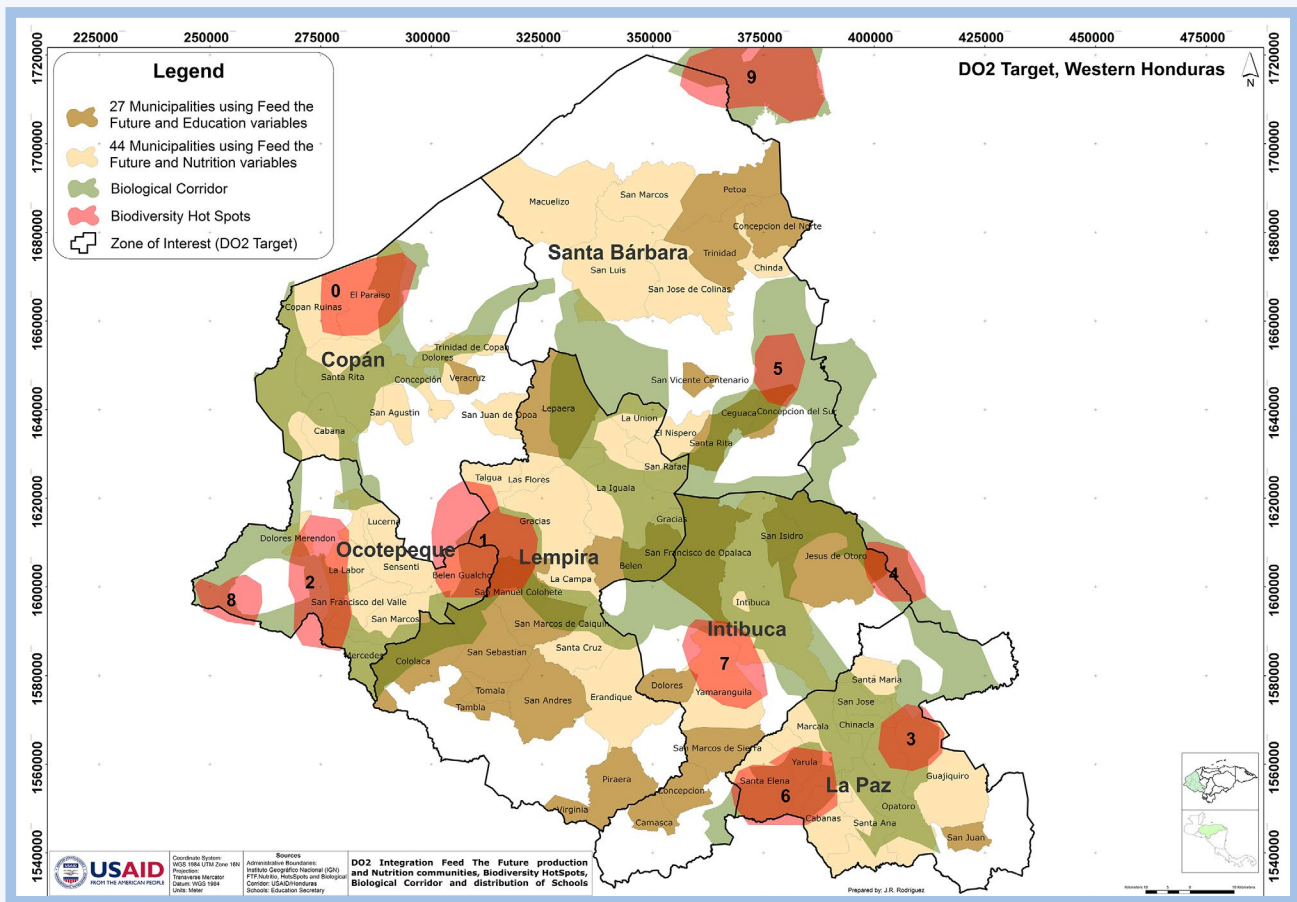


FIGURE 4: PRIORITY LOCATIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY, EDUCATION, FEED THE FUTURE AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE INTERVENTIONS.

a geographic information system (GIS) map, which identified over 90 municipalities in which USAID’s programming requirements were aligned. Then, 87 municipalities became the focus areas for DO 2 activities (see Figure 4). Staff said this mapping exercise facilitated cross-sectoral conversations and increased their understanding of different sector activities.

**Designing Integrated Activities and Refining the Approach**

After identifying potential areas for co-located programming USAID began designing integrated activities. The main activities that emerged as the cornerstones of the DO 2 portfolio addressed food security and nutrition (the Mercado and Dry Corridor Alliance activity), environmental governance and biodiversity conservation (the GEMA activity) and municipal governance and local services delivery (the Honduras Local Governance activity).

During implementation, DO 2 team members further refined the mission’s integration approach, including during the following meetings with implementing partners:

- a learning and experience exchange event in July 2015, which represented the first step in promoting greater coordination among implementing partners in Western Honduras;
- a meeting to present the DO 2 strategy and structure, including the Monitoring & Evaluation Support for Collaborative Learning & Adapting (MESCLA) activity, in May 2016;
- a meeting for implementing partners to share their understanding of integration and discuss integration approaches in January 2017; and
- a meeting for implementing partners to define an integrated approach and operational plans in February 2017.

In these meetings, mission staff stressed the importance of identifying synergies between activities to achieve integration and using adaptive management to make adjustments based on results.

### ***Defining and Communicating Integration***

After presenting the mission’s vision on integration to implementing partners in February 2017, mission staff realized they needed to provide additional guidance to implementing partners on how to coordinate and integrate. Mission staff also realized a need for greater internal clarity on integration. Consequently, the DO 2 team organized an internal “deep dive” on integration in April 2017 to discuss the mission’s approach to integration, including external communication with implementing partners, and to develop a definition of integration.

During the deep dive, individuals shared external and anecdotal evidence on integration in development. One person presented evidence from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation on the landscape of integrated approaches and definitions. Others shared anecdotal evidence on integration approaches from other USAID missions, such as USAID/Malawi.

Individuals proposed definitions of integration during the deep dive. Responses included: working together, without duplicating efforts, to achieve goals; developing and executing joint work plans; joint action with individual responsibility for achieving objectives; and complementary field activities that combine efforts to reduce poverty. Staff agreed on the following definition:

**DO 2 integration refers to a continuous process that addresses systemic needs of local populations by combining technical development approaches across sectors, designing activities to converge on the same target populations in a geographical space, and working collaboratively across all stakeholders to mutually reinforce results.**

These internal discussions resulted in consensus about expectations of integration with concluding, ongoing and new activities. For ongoing activities, the DO 2 team agreed that coordination that leads to integration must be active, integration approaches should be described in work plans and CORs must give other CORs the opportunity to read work plans and monitoring, evaluation and learning plans. For activities under design or in procurement, team members agreed activity design should enable multi-sectoral integration and coordination with existing activities, and mission learning on integration should be incorporated into procurement documents. The team further agreed to present new activities to DO 2 team members in brown bag lunches to allow comments and adapt activity designs before formal clearance. Staff underscored the importance of inviting individuals from different technical offices to participate in these design discussions, especially to encourage CORs to link their current activities with new ones.



Visitors cross a bridge in Honduran protected area. Photo by USAID ProParque.

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# SECTION TWO: INSTITUTIONAL ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR INTEGRATION

Enabling conditions that helped the mission integrate its biodiversity, education, food security and nutrition, and governance programming in Western Honduras include:

- institutional leadership and support at all levels,
- a clear mission vision of integration,
- a well-defined organizational structure with knowledge management and
- a willingness to adapt.

*“To make this kind of change, you need a champion. In our case, our champion was our mission director.”* —USAID/Honduras staff

## **Institutional Leadership and Support at All Levels**

High-level support and internal champions were critical in identifying opportunities and implementing an integrated approach. Employees universally recognized the **mission director’s support** as crucial in highlighting integration as the primary approach for achieving USAID/Honduras’s goals. Staff emphasized “the message from the top was very clear.” The mission director and deputy mission director walked around the mission to discuss implementation, resulting in transparent, frequent communication on the importance of integration.

Individuals also recognized their **colleagues’ roles in supporting and championing integration**. Staff stressed different people advocated for and facilitated integration at different points in time. As an illustration, the first DO 2 team lead worked in the education office; after this employee left USAID/Honduras, the controller, from the Office of Financial Management, has served as the team lead. During the design phase, key Front Office personnel served as champions. During implementation, program office employees and technical officers championed discussions on integration definitions and implementing partner meetings.

The **rotation of working group coordinators** has enabled multiple staff to play a leadership

role and ensured that a few individuals have not shouldered the extra work of coordinating and leading integration for the past four years. Employees from the technical, program and other support offices participate in and lead the working groups, which rotate their leadership annually. The mission has also recognized individual champions for their integration efforts through awards (Box 2).

Several people described the particular combination of USAID/Honduras staff as important in advocating for and driving integration. USAID/Honduras personnel had immense **respect for their colleagues**, describing their high degree of professionalism. The mission director “felt we had the right kind of people” to design and implement an integrated approach.

Another factor that facilitated integration was an **influx of new mission staff** when integration discussions began. Several people emphasized that new employees’ participation in developing integration strategies helped leverage existing staff perspectives and experiences and created a stronger vision for integration. For example, one person joined USAID/Honduras in 2014 with experience on integration and shared how other donors use integration during the final CDCS revisions. Others rotated to USAID/Honduras from missions that had implemented integrated approaches and described their experiences

## BOX 2: AWARDS FOR INTEGRATION

USAID/Honduras presented staff with the following awards for integration efforts during U.S. Embassy and USAID all-staff meetings.

SUMMARIZED DESCRIPTION	DATE
For leadership in developing an integrated strategy to increase resilience in Western Honduras	May 2016
For planning and implementing the DO 2 partners meeting	June 2016
For designing and implementing an innovative mapping strategy that identifies municipalities in Western Honduras best suited for integrated assistance	June 2017
For improving the governance and environment sectors through their commitment to collaboration, learning and adaptive management	June 2017
For planning and executing the DO 2 retreat	July 2017
For contributions to the mission to sustainably reduce poverty for families in Western Honduras by leading the DO 2 Learning Working Group and designing the IR 2.2 PAD.	December 2017
For leadership in USAID's Program Planning Working Group to sustainably reduce poverty in Western Honduras	December 2017

and shared documents with USAID/Honduras staff. This combination of new employees and staff with previous experience with integration enriched integration discussions at USAID/Honduras.

*“The vision was set: integration, integration. It was on everyone’s lips.”*

—USAID/Honduras staff

### **Clear Mission Vision of Integration**

The mission director emphasized integration as his vision for USAID/Honduras, and staff shared and adopted this vision. Employees said that their colleagues universally accept integration as the way in which the mission works. In addition, USAID/Honduras articulated this vision in the CDCS, PADs, procurement documents and other documents.

### **Well-defined Organizational Structure and Effective Knowledge Management**

The Front Office established a clear organizational structure based around the DOs to facilitate coordination and collaboration across technical and support offices. The DO 2 structure encompasses the DO team leader, the five working groups and the steering committee. The DO 2 charter establishes roles and responsibilities for these groups. The team leader, the working groups and regularly scheduled meetings ensure continued focus and dialogue. In addition, the team uses a shared drive that contains presentations, meeting agendas and minutes, and activities related to integration. This explicit sharing of information helps the mission document its efforts over time and

provides an institutional memory for new employees or for staff who want to reflect on past decisions or approaches. Such knowledge management can ensure that individuals do not duplicate efforts over time. Several people stressed this well-defined structure ensured regular ways of working, encouraged regular information exchange and facilitated accountability.

### **Willingness to Adapt**

USAID/Honduras has responded to challenges and initiated change in numerous ways, such as by adapting its work to new geographic areas, revising its definition of integration and holding annual retreats to review progress and adapt approaches. To address challenges related to adding integration to implementing partner contracts, the team worked with the Office of Acquisition and Assistance and the Program Office to add special provision language to requests for proposals and applications. The team revised its charter six times, such as by adding the team’s norms and values or including the office heads on the steering committee. Most recently, the Front Office acknowledged that staff were not evaluated for their integration efforts. Consequently, each employee’s contribution to integration and DO results in individual annual work plans. Office chiefs retain responsibility for supervising individuals but feedback from the DO team leader and team members on that person’s contribution to integration is now considered in evaluating performance. As these and other examples illustrate, mission staff have demonstrated a willingness to take time to reflect on their approaches and processes and adapt as necessary.

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# SECTION THREE: INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

*“I don’t think we can regret anything. These challenges were just something that had to happen because we were learning how to do integration.”* —USAID/Honduras staff

Challenges encountered by USAID/Honduras in conceptualizing, designing and implementing integrated approaches to achieve DO 2 relate to:

- the mission organizational structure,
- the extra time and effort required to implement integration,
- a shift in mission leadership’s emphasis on integration,
- the sequencing of activities and
- measuring integration.

## **Mission Organizational Structure**

The USAID/Honduras organizational structure remains based on technical offices, with the DO teams “overlaid” on top of the technical offices. Several people said this structure does not match office priorities. Technical staff felt that the parallel office and DO structures put pressure on them to achieve results both to their particular office and to the DO 2 team. Although such expectations are in line with the mission’s vision on integration, in which employees are expected to contribute to both sector objectives and DO 2 results, technical staff stressed that this expectation created significant additional work. A few people suggested the mission consider restructuring the office layers to align the office structures around integration efforts.

## **Time and Effort Required for Integration**

Similarly, conceptualizing, designing and implementing integrated programming requires extra time and effort. Some individuals said integration is “an extra level of job.” Others stressed collaborating across the mission requires extra time. People said it took longer to develop activities and work plans with staff who had a limited understanding of other sectors. Others recognized their lack of familiarity with biodiversity conservation or GIS, observing that they had invested significant time in understanding different sector terms and approaches to be able to collaborate across sectors. Overall, individuals emphasized integration is

a “daily, continuous” process that requires constant staff motivation, investment and accountability.

## **Shifts in Emphasis on Integration**

Turnover in mission leadership and Front Office staff has contributed to a shift in emphasis on integration. The previous mission director strongly promoted integration and was instrumental in the adoption of integrated approaches throughout the mission. Similarly, several Front Office employees played an essential role in early discussions on integration and PAD designs. After these people left USAID/Honduras, Front Office participation in integration efforts decreased. Despite this shift in emphasis, mission staff generally felt USAID/Honduras had maintained momentum on integration, in part because other technical and support staff had advocated for and championed integration during implementation. This finding underscores the importance of having multiple champions for integration across the mission, with different individuals advocating for integration at varying times. Moreover, this finding highlights the importance of developing a process of capturing and measuring positive impacts of integration to generate evidence that employees can share with leadership to ensure continued momentum on integration.

## **Activity Sequencing**

The CDCS assumes that all field activities will be implemented simultaneously but project



procurement is not aligned across offices and sectors. Consequently, different sectors and activities are at varying stages, creating challenges for integrated implementation. For example, education activities were closing out and in design while other sectors were beginning implementation. Staff observed that some advanced activities are reluctant to work with newer activities, fearing that collaboration will slow or hinder progress. At the same time, individuals stressed that different activity timeframes are normal within USAID and emphasized that imperfect timing is not a reason to avoid pursuing integration.

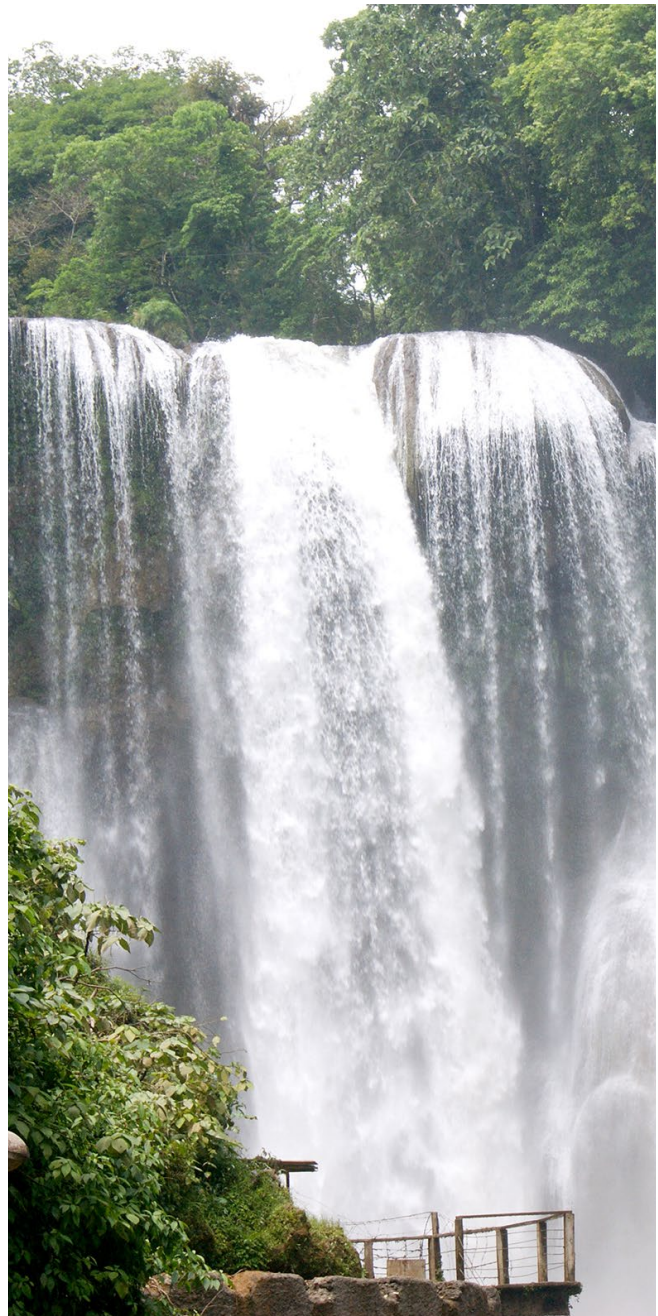
### **Measuring Integration**

Different activity timeframes further complicate efforts to measure impacts, particularly because significant time may be necessary to deliver results from an integrated approach. One person suggested it may take two to three CDCSs, or eight to 12 years, to allow the different funding streams and activities time to achieve results. Others cautioned that results take more time to materialize in some sectors, such as the environment and governance sectors, than in others, further complicating efforts to measure the co-benefits of integrated programming.

In addition, MESCLA is tasked with developing a monitoring and evaluation system for USAID/Honduras programming, including DO 2 implementing partners. However, MESCLA did not start until 2016, when several DO 2 integrated activities, including GEMA, were already underway. This timing meant that MESCLA missed the opportunity to add integration indicators to relevant activities.

The DO 2 team considered developing indicators to measure integration but ultimately decided it was not feasible to ask implementing partners to incorporate integration indicators for activities that were already underway. As a compromise, the team adopted a process-based indicator that asks partners to report on the number of activities planned and implemented with other partners. Although staff recognize this indicator will not enable the mission to evaluate the impact of different interventions on integrated programming or the impact of integrated programming on activity outcomes, there is potential

to conduct an impact evaluation of GEMA. Further, staff observed that USAID's standard biodiversity indicators are not designed to measure integration efforts and expressed an interest in either re-designing some standard biodiversity indicators or creating custom indicators to measure integration.



ProParque used an improved model to evaluate and measure the environmental impact of hydroelectric projects.  
Photo by USAID ProParque.

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# SECTION FOUR: RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on their experiences, USAID/Honduras staff recommended several actions for other missions interested in integration.

## **During strategic planning and design:**

- Incorporate lessons learned from previous mission programming and utilize evidence to inform and adapt integration approaches.
- Take time to learn from other mission and donor experiences with integration at least one year before designing integrated programs. It takes significant time for a mission to understand these experiences and consider how to apply them to their own context.
- Define integration in the CDCS and PADs to ensure staff agree on the “why” and the “how” of integration during conceptualization, design and implementation.
- Develop impact and process indicators in the design phase to ensure that USAID can capture the full spectrum of learning throughout each phase of integration. Missions should be open to revising monitoring, evaluation and learning plans.
- Include special provision language on integration in procurement, such as in requests for proposals and applications.

## **Throughout design, implementation and evaluation:**

- Maintain regular meetings and a structure for integration to allow staff to coordinate, share work plans and reflect on progress and challenges. Working groups and coordination by the steering committee and team lead are also essential.
- Promote adaptive management by revisiting assumptions over time to adjust to project learning and implementation realities and by revising documents and strategies to reflect learning.
- Document approaches to integration over time to facilitate institutional knowledge management and learning.
- Recognize and reward individuals for their integration efforts through awards. Including integration in annual employee work plans also shifts integration from “volunteer work” to work that is recognized and valued.

## **As part of monitoring and evaluation efforts:**

- Invest in evaluation that captures the value and impact of integrated programming and in evaluation that goes beyond the timeframe of an activity or a CDCS to look at the long-term sustainability of integration approaches.



USAID mission director inaugurates the Nutrition Center.  
Photo by USAID/Honduras.

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# SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

In summary, USAID/Honduras exemplifies co-conceptualized, co-designed, co-funded, co-implemented integration across the biodiversity, education, food security and nutrition, and governance sectors. In Honduras, improved conservation and management of natural resources, particularly water, has increased understanding across the mission of the importance of natural resources for supporting development gains in other sectors.

USAID/Honduras embraced integration across the entire mission, rather than in a single activity or office. Their experience offers lessons that may be useful for other missions, bureaus and offices that are interested in integrating biodiversity and other sectors to improve development outcomes. In particular, the mission advanced integration through strong institutional leadership and support at all levels, communication of a clear vision, a well-defined organizational structure and effective knowledge management, and a willingness to continually adapt.

## REFERENCES

USAID/Honduras. 2016. Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2015-2019. Updated 11 May 2016.

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BACK COVER PHOTO: USAID Nutrition Training Center. Photo by USAID/Honduras.



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