

E3/FAB LEARNING AGENDA

FAB has developed a highly collaborative, cross-Mission learning agenda on conservation enterprises under its 5-year Measuring Impact contract that leverages relevant evidence and experience in different country contexts to improve project design, implementation, and impact. Building on a literature review and organizational analysis of learning at USAID, the learning agenda team used an inductive approach to develop the conservation enterprises learning agenda. The agenda focused on the practical knowledge needs of Mission staff and implementing partners. The team elicited theories of change and learning questions from staff at eight Missions and the E3/FAB office, and synthesized them into a shared theory of change. They then mapped evidence from the literature and Missions onto their shared theory of change and produced a searchable, editable wiki.

The agenda identifies learning gaps and includes key learning questions, planned activities, and learning group products with explicit definitions of purpose, value, and audience for each. FAB's learning agenda initiative also took a communities-of-practice approach in establishing a problem-focused, collaborative Conservation Enterprises Learning Group to implement learning activities and develop products. Its efforts have had a strong, diverse stakeholder representation and high response rates from the field. FAB recently developed a second learning agenda focused on combating wildlife trafficking and has launched a Combating Wildlife Trafficking Learning Group.

Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Created learning agenda (completed) ✓ Generating knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Capturing/ synthesizing knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Sharing knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Applying knowledge (ongoing) <input type="checkbox"/> Updating/ adapting learning (planned)
Materials	Learning agenda ; Making Use of the Portfolio: Organizational Learning at USAID (literature review and technical analysis) ; Framework for Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program ; Research Agenda
Key Learning Questions/ Themes	<p>Five sequential learning questions related to FAB's theory of change:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are enabling conditions in place to support sustainable enterprise? 2. Does the enterprise lead to benefits for stakeholders? 3. Do the benefits realized by stakeholders lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors? 4. Do positive changes in stakeholders' behaviors lead to a reduction in threats to biodiversity (or restoration)? 5. Does a reduction in restoration lead to conservation?
Key Learning Activities	<p>The learning agenda identifies multiple, specific learning activities, planned learning products, and intended use/value of products for each learning question.</p>
Timing	<p>2015: Initiated by Measuring Impact project/contract; supported by Bureau and Office leadership</p> <p>2016: Final report released in April</p>

Steps in Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducted literature review and organizational analysis of learning efforts at USAID 2. Elicited information about what works, learning needs, and theories of change from stakeholders and Missions 3. Developed a theory of change based on Mission documents and interviews 4. Mapped evidence and questions onto theory of change and produced a searchable wiki 5. Identified evidence gaps and priority topics 6. Created collaborative Learning Groups (including FAB, interested Missions, and other interested USAID staff) to address learning agenda questions 7. Convened people (through various platforms) to improve evidence dissemination and use
Current Learning Agenda Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating learning groups ● Developing interactive platforms for improving dissemination and use of evidence ● Maintaining a log of use of application of learning to USAID work
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People are highly engaged and feel a strong sense of ownership. ● FAB's elicitive approach to evidence gathering and consultative/dialogues in developing a shared theory of change created strong buy-in. ● Problem-driven and utilization-focused approaches keep the learning agenda relevant to end-users. ● Strong, high-level support provided project resources and legitimacy.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The initial, exploratory research took too long—need to maintain momentum around initial discussions and launch learning group activities more quickly ● Still exploring different formats for disseminating findings and improving use (IT platforms have been challenging) ● Still identifying best ways to measure progress and use
Promising Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Used highly participatory, elicitive processes that generated a lot interest and high response rates from Mission staff ● Established cross-Mission collaborative learning groups to help create and use the learning agenda
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin with an elicitive and participatory process that engages Missions 2. Frame the learning agenda around a specific theory of change to focus learning on conditions under which key assumptions hold true 3. Focus learning agendas on a finite set of specific/practical questions. 4. Create on learning activities and products with clear purpose and value to defined audience(s) so evidence provides actionable guidance 5. Do as much work as possible prior to meetings so when groups are convened they can use time effectively
Point of Contact	Megan Hill, Natural Resource Management Specialist, FAB