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BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE



A CASE STUDY OF THE INTEGRATED GORONGOSA
AND BUFFER ZONE PROJECT, MOZAMBIQUE

OCTOBER 2018



This work is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development through the contract number AID-OAA-I-14-00014/AID-OAA-TO-15-00020 for the Biodiversity Results Integrated and Development Gains Enhanced (BRIDGE) Project. BRIDGE is funded and managed by the USAID Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment/Office of Forestry and Biodiversity.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The case study team extends their gratitude to the past and present USAID/Mozambique staff and key people in USAID/Washington for their generosity with their time and support.

COVER PHOTO: Landscape view of Gorongosa National Park. Photo by Susanna Jolly.

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ACRONYMS

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CLA	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
FAB	Forestry and Biodiversity Office
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GNP	Gorongosa National Park
IGBZ	Integrated Gorongosa and Buffer Zone
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

Ranger boat patrol graduation. Photo by Susanna Jolly.



CASE STUDY SUMMARY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Mozambique intentionally integrated biodiversity conservation with other development sector activities to advance natural resource management and improve human well-being through the Integrated Gorongosa and Buffer Zone (IGBZ) project. USAID/Mozambique decided to design an integrated project because they believed they could achieve greater impact than they would through traditional sector-driven approaches. Further, using an integrated approach in the IGBZ project has enabled the mission to mobilize other agriculture, education and health resources for biodiversity conservation and to amplify investments to address a wider range of development needs in the Gorongosa region.

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 USAID/Mozambique. As biodiversity conservation is the focal point for the IGBZ's integration approach, the case study emphasizes *biodiversity* integration but has implications for integration across sectors at USAID broadly.

Three enabling conditions contributed to biodiversity integration in USAID/Mozambique's IGBZ project:

- **Strong institutional support at all levels:** High-level and high-profile leadership and support for integrated approaches, combined with internal champions, contributed to support for an integrated project.
- **Integrated, flexible funding:** The project's Global Development Alliance (GDA) funding mechanism enabled USAID and the Carr Foundation to co-conceptualize and co-design the IGBZ project. This pre-award flexibility facilitated integration across biodiversity conservation, agriculture, education and health.
- **A culture of inclusiveness and adaptive management:** Project champions facilitated inclusive design and implementation processes and identified opportunities for collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA).

Based on their experiences with integration, USAID/Mozambique staff shared recommendations for other missions.

Throughout design, implementation and evaluation:

- Develop and formalize a process-oriented protocol to clarify staff roles and responsibilities and facilitate direct line management for integration tasks.
- Establish an integrated working group that meets regularly.
- Continue to support the Agreement Officer's Representative's (AOR, or the USAID manager) role as a communication bridge who regularly coordinates with activity leads and staff at all levels.
- Continue to ensure Program Office support to facilitate additional coordination and collaboration.

As part of monitoring and evaluation efforts:

- Maintain annual review meetings and facilitate additional formal opportunities for project staff to convene to pause and reflect on progress and ensure more frequent CLA opportunities.
- Continue to engage Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) staff in project meetings and field visits and promote a MEL approach that facilitates learning.

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/Mozambique, 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 provides a brief **background** on Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park (GNP) and initial conservation efforts as part of the Gorongosa Project.
- Section Two presents the **enabling conditions** for integration.

- Section Three identifies **challenges** that the mission encountered in integration and offers some **recommendations** for addressing them.
- Section Four suggests **lessons learned** for other USAID missions and offices interested in adopting integrated approaches.
- Section Five shares **brief conclusions on integration**.



A girls club volunteer gives a lesson to a girls club member. Photo by Susanna Jolly.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Since the establishment of GNP in 1960, the area has experienced a number of challenges and threats to its biodiversity, resulting in declining habitat and species numbers. After 15 years of civil war (1977-1992), with much of the conflict occurring in and around the park, animal populations were severely reduced. The principal human threats to the park are illegal and unsustainable fishing in Lake Urema, bushmeat hunting, agricultural expansion into the park, human-wildlife conflicts, including lions becoming trapped in snares, and illicit harvesting of timber.

In addition to the 408,600 hectare national park, there is a 533,300 hectare sustainable development zone that serves as a buffer zone around the park. There are an estimated 177,000 people living in the sustainable development zone and an estimated 2,500 living in the protected area (see Figure 1). The people living around Gorongosa face significant development challenges, including food insecurity, limited access to health services and education and poverty-related social problems.

The Gorongosa Restoration Project began in 2004 with support from its founding organization and primary donor, the non-profit Carr Foundation. In 2017, the Gorongosa Restoration Project changed its name to the Gorongosa Project. During implementation, the Gorongosa Project identified integrated work with communities in the buffer zone as critical to the GNP's long-term restoration and sustainability. The Gorongosa Project began implementing activities to improve education, food security, nutrition, health and livelihoods.

In 2008, USAID helped forge an agreement between USAID/Mozambique, the Carr Foundation, the Portuguese Institute for Aid and Development and the Government of Mozambique. Through this agreement, the Carr Foundation committed \$20 million over 20 years for the Gorongosa Project, and USAID provided \$5.5 million from 2008 to 2014. The agreement required the Gorongosa Project to use a science-based approach to the park's restoration and to support sustainable development in the buffer zone.

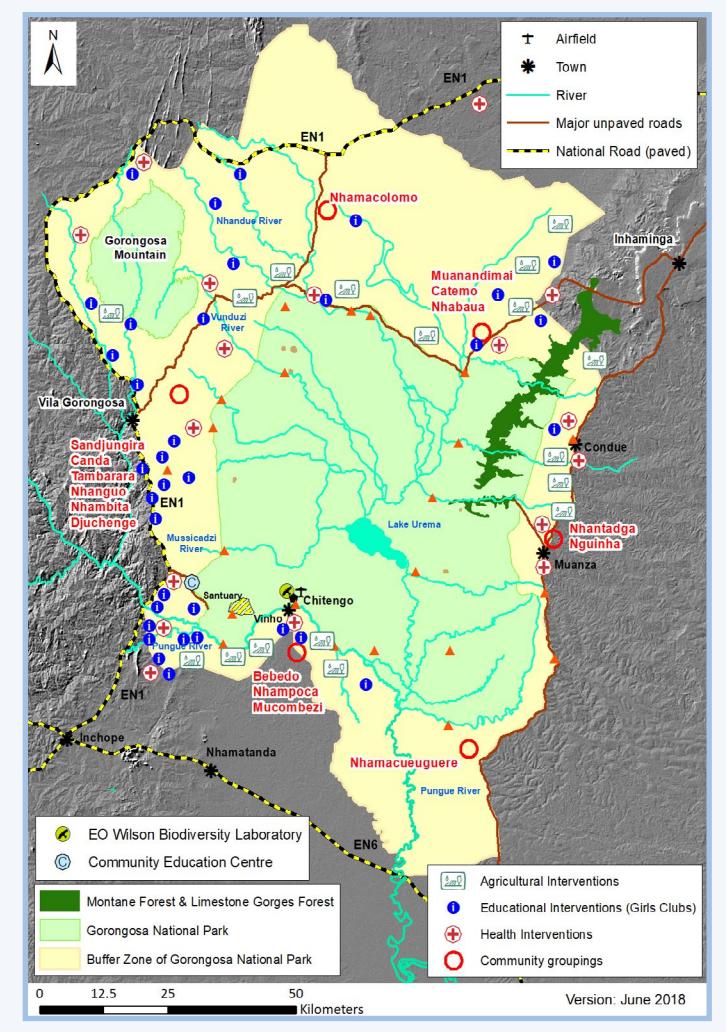


FIGURE 1: GNP AND BUFFER ZONE

This map illustrates the locations of the agricultural, education, health and natural resource management interventions.

Source: Gorongosa Project Department of Scientific Services in 2018

The Carr Foundation is currently committed to the 30 year restoration of GNP and to the sustainable development of the communities surrounding the park. The Gorongosa team has reintroduced species to the ecosystem, planted more than three million trees in the area and collaborated with the Mozambican government to extend the park's boundaries to include Mount Gorongosa. The park hosts a significant number of scientific research projects through the new E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Laboratory and supports education and training opportunities for Mozambican and international students. This research and educational support has enabled landmark scientific studies of the ecosystem and wildlife, fostered a cadre of Mozambican students, raised the visibility of the park, and supported dozens of technician and service jobs. The improved scientific knowledge base about Gorongosa contributes to informed conservation and management decisions in the park and development efforts in the buffer zone.

Following a collaborative design process in 2014, USAID established the IGBZ project through a GDA with the Carr Foundation in February 2015. The IGBZ's overall goal is effective environmental governance to reduce threats to GNP's biodiversity. The main strategies to achieve this goal are:

- enhanced application of knowledge in planning and management decisions,
- increased local support for conservation of GNP,
- increased resilience of household economies in the buffer zone, and
- effective enforcement of conservation laws and regulations.

The GDA's theory of change is: "If local application of environmental laws/regulations are strengthened; if sustainable livelihood alternatives are created in critical buffer zone sectors; if reliable knowledge guides planning and action; and if buffer zone populations and decision makers appreciate the value of GNP as an engine for economic development, then environmental governance will improve and threats to GNP's biodiversity will decline."

MAJOR MILESTONES AND EVENTS IN THE GNP	
YEAR	MILESTONE/EVENT
1960	GNP created during Portuguese colonial rule.
1975	Mozambique declares independence under the Mozambique Liberation Front Party. Samora Machel is appointed as president.
1977-1992	Mozambican National Resistance begins an insurrection against the Mozambique Liberation Front Party that turns into a civil war. GNP region becomes the Mozambican National Resistance stronghold.
1994-1999	First international attempts to restore the GNP begun with funding from the African Development Bank, European Union and International Union for the Conservation of Nature.
2004	The Carr Foundation and Government of Mozambique signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a Gorongosa Restoration Project to restore GNP.
2005	First USAID support to Gorongosa Restoration Project for a fenced wildlife sanctuary.
2008 - 2012	USAID funds the "Assistance to the Carr Foundation: Gorongosa National Park" activity to support biodiversity conservation, food security, education and health initiatives at GNP. This grant is later extended until 2014.
2010	Government of Mozambique incorporates Mt. Gorongosa in GNP and announces the addition of a 3,300 sq km buffer zone around the park.
2015-2020	USAID continues support of the Gorongosa Project through a GDA that created the IGBZ project.
2016	Government of Mozambique approves a 25 year extension of the joint management of agreement for GNP.

TABLE I: MAJOR MILESTONES IN THE GNP'S HISTORY

USAID MOZAMBIQUE GOAL: Mozambique leverages emerging opportunities to achieve inclusive socio-economic development

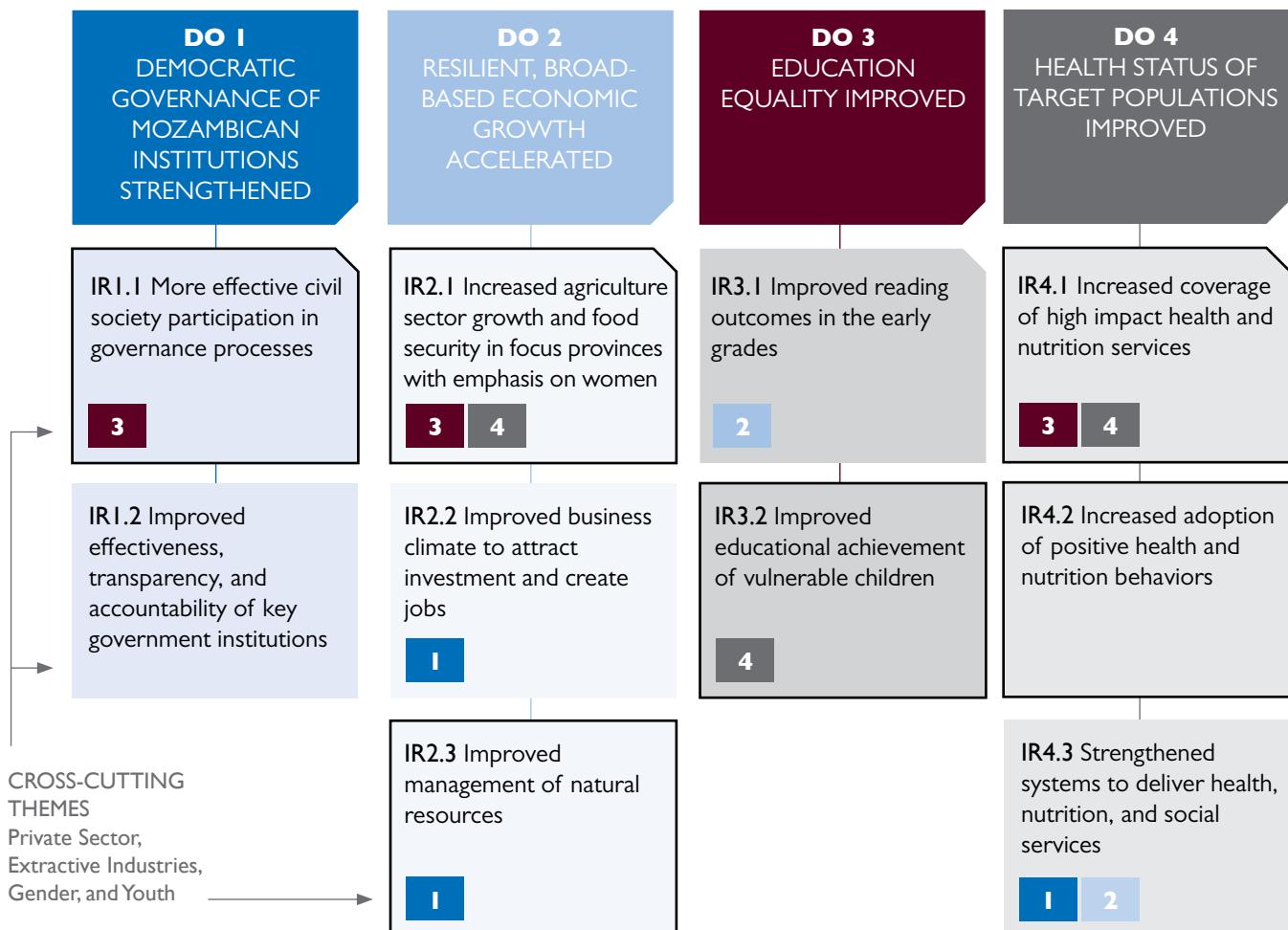


FIGURE 2: USAID/MOZAMBIQUE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Figure 2 presents USAID/Mozambique's CDCS Results Framework. The numbered boxes in the Intermediate Results indicate cross-linkages between USAID/Mozambique. The black outlines around the Intermediate Results denote results to which the IGBZ project directly contributes.

The IGBZ project's objectives contribute to all four of USAID/Mozambique's Development Objectives, reflecting the project's integrated nature (see Figure 2). The IGBZ project contributes to five of USAID/Mozambique's Intermediate Results (IR 1.1, IR 2.1, IR 2.3, IR 4.1 and IR 4.2), as outlined in the 2014-2019 USAID/Mozambique Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS, the mission country strategy).

The GDA partnership promotes the integration of four primary sectors: biodiversity conservation;

agriculture and food security; health; and education. The first three sectors were part of the original GDA; the GDA was modified to include education in 2017. The GDA is scheduled to end in February 2020.

The IGBZ project's technical approach incorporates integration through co-location and coordination among Gorongosa Project departments and an integrated package of activities. In its annual work plans, the IGBZ project explicitly links biodiversity conservation in the park with development activities in the buffer zone. The work plans describe how



USAID and Gorongosa Project staff in the Science Center. Photo by Susanna Jolly.

the project aims to reduce threats to the park's biodiversity through activities that target improved food security, nutrition, education and health as well as increased enforcement of conservation laws and regulations. For example, the IGBZ project links biodiversity conservation in the park to income and employment opportunities and promotes adoption of positive health and nutrition behaviors through education, the "Model Moms" activity and integration with high nutrient agricultural activities.

Illustrative project highlights include:

- **Agriculture:** training farmers on food security, improved farming technologies and management practices, the value of intercropping, land use practices, crop rotation, and the value of growing at least two nutritious crops.
- **Natural Resource Management:** training Natural Resource Management Community Promotors to engage with individuals and hold meetings with communities to encourage natural resources management in the buffer zone in support of park-friendly livelihoods
- **Education:** supporting the Gorongosa Girls' Clubs to increase availability of supportive education spaces; improve reading skills; and increase access to information, skills, services and support.
- **Health:** mobile health brigades provide vaccinations, pre/post natal care, family planning and HIV/AIDS

counseling/testing/prevention. The Model Moms activity educates community moms about adequate nutrition for women and children, the use of locally available foods to increase family nutrition and community and household gardens.

- **Law enforcement:** over 150 law enforcement rangers received training, including the first six female scouts in the nation's history. As a result of increased, targeted wildlife law enforcement training, there has been a 72 percent reduction in poaching in 2017, compared to 2016.

The IGBZ management structure is composed of one biodiversity AOR, who is responsible for coordinating with USAID activity managers in agriculture, health and education. Activity managers provide the biodiversity AOR with updates on their sector activities and contribute to annual reports, project work plans and the MEL plan. The biodiversity AOR also serves as the main point of contact between USAID and the IGBZ project's Chief of Party. Over the life of IGBZ, there will have been four biodiversity AORs.

The life of project budget for the GDA is US\$11 million and the Gorongosa Project is providing \$11 million in matching funds. Over the GDA's five-year timeframe, the IGBZ total estimated cost for each sector is: biodiversity (\$6 million); health (\$2 million), agriculture (\$2 million); and education (\$1 million).

SECTION TWO: INSTITUTIONAL ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR INTEGRATION

Enabling conditions that helped USAID/Mozambique integrate biodiversity conservation with agriculture, health and education programming include:

- strong institutional support at all levels,
- flexible funding mechanisms and
- a culture of inclusiveness and promotion of CLA.

Institutional Leadership and Support at All Levels

High-level support and internal champions were critical in identifying opportunities and implementing an integrated approach. The U.S. Ambassador's good working relationship with Greg Carr, the founder of the Carr Foundation, focused high-level attention on the Gorongosa Project, which increased the park's national and international profiles and helped to lay the foundation for support to the IGBZ project. Strong U.S. Government leadership in Washington provided further support and commitment to formalizing an integrated approach.

Staff described the mission director as a strong supporter of the project, who advocated for the project during discussions with Washington, D.C. During the project's design phase, for instance, the mission director was critical in allowing the project to use funding in a non-traditional way.

Further, the Carr Foundation's **high-profile public-private partnership** with the Government of Mozambique, and a number of documentary and feature films aired in the United States and Mozambique, have increased attention on the park. Gorongosa has been featured in the New York Times, the New Yorker, Outside, the Financial Times and many other print publications as well as in film segments on National Geographic, BBC, CBS, ABC and many others. In 2016, the International Conservation Caucus Foundation presented the

President of Mozambique, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, with the Conservation Merit Award for his leadership in expanding biodiversity conservation in GNP through a public-private partnership between the Government of Mozambique and the Carr Foundation. In 2017, Gorongosa Project members were recognized at the International Conservation Caucus Foundation Gala for the Gorongosa Project's work in GNP.

Front Office and Program Office support for the IGBZ project's integrated approach continued throughout the project's design and implementation. Together, the Ambassador and the mission director visited the park to understand the IGBZ project's role in improving community health and livelihoods through the project's agricultural, health and biodiversity activities. Other senior USAID staff who visited the park fostered interest in the project, such as by asking questions about the Gorongosa Project during mission portfolio reviews or by informally sharing progress with Front Office staff. These actions ensured that high-level staff stayed informed and engaged on the project. Further, their support has meant that staff never "had to do a hard sell at the Front Office level."

In addition, **internal champions** played an instrumental role in the project's conception, design and implementation. The biodiversity AOR first recognized the opportunity to use the GDA as a flexible funding mechanism to support co-funding and integration. She then coordinated and increased collaboration across sectors in the co-design process

by initiating conversations with staff from across the mission about opportunities for engaging with the project. Several staff said that they viewed the chance to participate in an integrated project as an opportunity to achieve greater impact than they would through traditional sector-driven approaches as well as to generate increased benefits for beneficiaries.

During implementation, the biodiversity AOR promoted collaboration through organizing **field trips for sector activity managers**. Staff described joint field visits as “incredibly valuable” opportunities to develop working relationships across sectors and increase their understanding of the value of an integrated project. During the project’s initial implementation, the AOR invited staff from multiple technical sectors and the implementing partner to participate in field visits, which allowed the project team to share different technical perspectives and increase their understanding of other sectors’ activities. The AOR explained that these trips facilitated conversations among staff that generated ideas and built trust across sectors. During the project’s third year, the successor biodiversity AOR continued to facilitate joint field visits to encourage connections and conversations among staff. Different sector activity managers traveled to the field alongside rotating staff from the Program Office

or the MEL team to ensure staff participation from across the mission. Activity managers said that they shared recommendations from previous visits with staff who participated in subsequent trips to ensure continuity in information sharing and follow up.

The biodiversity AOR also encouraged cross-sectoral collaboration through **sector-specific trainings and meetings**. For instance, mission environment staff participated in a health sector training. Such coordination and collaboration helped to break down sectoral silos and contributed to ensuring a shared project agenda and common understanding of project goals among staff.

Throughout implementation, both the first and the second AOR promoted **joint work planning, monitoring and evaluation**. For example, both AORs organized an annual review meeting in the park. The meeting brings together sector activity managers and the implementing partner to discuss activities and review progress, in line with the project’s MEL plan. Staff described this annual event as an opportunity for individuals who work in different sectors and different areas of the park to interact and learn from each other and share what works and what may need improvement.



Girls club members and supporters gather for a photo on the day of the Gorongosa Girls Club Launch. Photo by Susanna Jolly.

Flexible Mechanisms and Partnership Approaches

The **flexibility of the GDA as a contractual mechanism** further enabled an integrated approach in the IGBZ project. The GDA is a **public-private partnership** in which USAID and its private sector partner (in this case, the Carr Foundation) collaborate to develop and implement activities, with a focus on delivering development impact and building upon complementary interests. USAID grants and cooperative agreements are often awarded to implementing partners based on responses to solicitations issued by field missions or USAID/Washington operating units. Solicitations are crafted to convey USAID's expectations around project implementation and management. In contrast, the GDA mechanism fosters co-conception, co-design and co-implementation by enabling USAID and the private sector partner to conceptualize a project together and to discuss the project design prior to the award process. The process of developing mutually agreed objectives empowers the private sector implementing partners to promote field relevant activities and to coordinate among other implementing partners.

Staff highlighted these aspects of the IGBZ GDA, describing the GDA as a **flexible mechanism** that helped facilitate integrated design and planning in the pre-award phase. During the design phase, staff from across mission teams participated in meetings with the Carr Foundation on their work in the Gorongosa Project. This interaction between USAID and the grantee ahead of finalizing the agreement enabled the mission and the Carr Foundation to take the local context into account and build on knowledge gained through prior investments in the area. Staff emphasized the importance of having these discussions from the beginning, saying this initial engagement enabled staff from across the mission and the Carr Foundation to share project risks, responsibilities and rewards. As a result, the design process was more interactive and adaptive than traditional USAID processes.

The IGBZ project team further facilitated an interactive design process by using the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation methodology to develop a **situation model** with support from USAID's Bureau

for Economic Growth, Education and Environment, Forestry and Biodiversity Office (FAB), Measuring Impact project and the mission. This work included the strategic approaches needed to respond to key threats and detailed theory of change diagrams and results chains for each. The timing of this process allowed inputs from the situation model and results chain process to inform the final GDA application. Implementers described the theory of change and results chains as useful in developing language and concepts with which to discuss project linkages with local stakeholders. In addition, this process established the use of evidence-informed decision-making among IGBZ staff and partners as well as future opportunities for learning about the linkages between target interventions and outcomes across sectors.

During the post award stage, a FAB and Measuring Impact team helped the IGBZ project develop its initial work plan. This collaborative process brought together USAID and the Carr Foundation to revisit the results chain in developing the work plan. The biodiversity AOR said that this process helped the IGBZ project team to take "ideas down to an implementation level" and identify additional areas for collaboration.

Overall, the GDA process facilitated internal collaboration across USAID and external collaboration with the Carr Foundation. This collaboration enabled mission staff and the implementing partner to articulate a shared vision for integration and partnership and ensure staff ownership of the project and staff commitment to integration during implementation. The willingness of both the mission and the implementing partner to support **collaborative adaptive design and management** is a notable aspect of the project's integration efforts.

The GDA has also enabled the project to leverage additional contributions from other donors to the GNP. These donors include the Governments of Canada, Ireland, Norway and Portugal, the Global Environment Facility, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and other public and private sector donors.

In addition to the GDA's flexibility during the pre-award phase, the use of Feed the Future funding

contributed to both co-location and co-funding. The Ambassador's and the mission director's strong support for the project was instrumental in allowing the mission to program Feed the Future funding outside of the defined Feed the Future zones of influence, in contrast to standard practice. This flexibility in the use of Feed the Future funding contributed to co-located, co-designed and co-funded programming within a biodiversity conservation priority area. This co-location and co-funding is particularly noteworthy because Feed the Future zones of influence do not have a high degree of overlap with important biodiversity areas.

A Culture of Inclusiveness and CLA

The ways in which individuals at the mission built relationships across sectors and promoted opportunities for reflection suggest a broader culture of promoting inclusive management and CLA. This inclusive, adaptive culture supported integration in several instrumental ways.

An elephant viewed on a game drive in the GNP.
Photo by USAID Mozambique.



First, the biodiversity AOR ensured an **inclusive design and implementation process** for the project. The AOR consistently invited and welcomed participation of staff from across the mission during the GDA's conception and design. Several staff had multi-disciplinary backgrounds and experiences, which meant they had the background or training to understand cross-sectoral approaches. For example, the point of contact in the health sector had a master's degree in environmental studies and climate change and one of the mission's education officers had been a governance officer; consequently, once the AOR initiated a conversation about an integrated project, these staff were interested in and willing to engage in conversations. These staff then advocated for the project within their sector teams.

The biodiversity AOR continued to facilitate collaboration during implementation, both during discussions at the mission and on joint field visits. This approach contributed to an inclusive project in which staff felt comfortable sharing ideas and contributing to project conception, design and implementation. Further, this approach encouraged other staff to become champions for the project. Such an environment is a key enabling condition for a **culture that encourages collaboration** and can also promote a learning culture.

Staff further highlighted the biodiversity AOR's role in efficiently managing staff time and coordinating among biodiversity, agriculture, health and education staff. Employees described how the first and second AOR actively engaged with staff from across the mission to understand their sector priorities, discuss project activities in informal settings and ensure support for work plans and budgets. Although staff valued meetings with their counterparts from across the mission, they described one on one meetings as particularly effective in learning and sharing information.

The first and second biodiversity AOR actively sought out such **informal interactions with staff** from across the mission to ensure support and maintain momentum. For example, both AORs said that they regularly interacted with agriculture and conservation staff because these staff are located within the Agriculture, Environment and Business office and they attend meetings together. Consequently, both

AORs intentionally visited staff from the health and education offices to ensure regular interactions and incorporation of cross-sectoral perspectives. Staff at all levels identified these informal relationships among the biodiversity AOR and participating staff as critical to developing and supporting integration. These informal interactions also built trust among staff, a critical factor in facilitating CLA.

Second, employees identified **adaptive management** and a **CLA approach** as instrumental in both the IGBZ project's design and implementation. The USAID/Mozambique CDSC (the mission country strategy) states that mission programs "will institutionalize collaboration, continuous learning and adaptive implementation" throughout the program cycle and outlines ways the mission will pursue a CLA approach. These approaches include promotion of a learning culture, a mission Learning Action Plan, a CLA learning agenda and CLA implementation strategies.

During implementation, the mission has supported **learning as a key project component**. One manager said strong learning aspects of IGBZ were "built into the DNA" of the project and have continued to be emphasized during implementation. For example, the mission has used internal CLA and after action reviews. In addition, the environment team worked with the CLA advisor to host a cross-GDA learning workshop that offered mission staff an opportunity to reflect on implementation of the IGBZ GDA and a second GDA that USAID/Mozambique is implementing in the Niassa National Reserve. Such opportunities to pause and reflect and foster collaboration and learning among partners and Agency staff represent best practice in adaptive management and are critical to learning and improved performance.

USAID and Gorongosa Project staff reflect on challenges and lessons learned during Cross-GDA Learning Review Workshop in March 2018. Photo by Susanna Jolly.



SECTION THREE: INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

The challenge is not “managing the project, it is about having many people managing the project...because you have to reach agreement, you have to have everyone on board and agree on how to move forward, so it takes time to reach consensus.”

—IGBZ project activity manager

Challenges encountered by USAID/Mozambique in conceptualizing, designing and implementing integrated approaches in the IGBZ project relate to:

- finding time to collaborate,
- managing staff across sectors,
- minimizing disruptions from staff turnover,
- developing a MEL plan,
- measuring co-benefits and
- addressing attribution.

Finding Time to Collaborate

Mission staff recognized that working across sectors and communicating with the project’s different activity managers was necessary in implementing the project but said it was challenging to consistently bring everyone together. Staff at all levels identified finding a time to hold a meeting with staff from across the mission as a key challenge in maintaining project momentum.

A related challenge is that, given how busy mission staff are, finding time and space for reflection and learning is often de-prioritized or does not happen. Individuals supported CLA in theory but often did not make time for such reflection outside of annual review meetings. In particular, staff felt that both the project’s MEL plan and knowledge management deserved additional time and reflection.

Managing Staff across Sectors

Staff highlighted challenges related to line management and clear, agreed-upon timeframes for decision-making. Both the first and second biodiversity AOR described obstacles in receiving technical input from staff who were busy with competing priorities and were not under their direct supervision. As an illustration, during the project’s first year, some activity managers did not provide input on the

work plan within the requested timeframe and did not respond to requests for information. The project was then forced to approve pieces of the work plan and delay submission of other sections.

Minimizing Disruptions from Staff Turnover

Staff turnover at USAID missions impacts project momentum and continuity. Within the IGBZ project’s five-year timeframe, there will be four different biodiversity AORs and other activity managers may transition in and out of the mission. Staff who began working at the mission during implementation described it as a challenge to immediately move project activities forward. As one person explained, the project’s ultimate goal remains the same “but everyone who comes in has a different view of implementation, different experiences of success and different ways of envisioning and achieving success.” The implementing partner also identified staff turnover as a challenge, saying “it is not the same people at the table as it was last year,” which means that institutional memory can be lost or project approaches may be revisited. Individuals emphasized that relationships with the mission, the implementing partner and external partners like the Government of Mozambique can help to maintain focus and alignment during staff transitions.

Developing a MEL Plan

All staff felt agreeing on the project's MEL plan was significantly more work than designing the MEL plan for a non-integrated project. Each of the four sectors have their own funding streams, standard indicators and reporting requirements, all of which had to be considered in the project's MEL plan. The resulting MEL plan has over 50 indicators, including a number of custom indicators, some of which are subject to change. Staff recognized that the plan's 50 indicators will require substantial data collection efforts and create an additional burden for report writing and for the implementing partner. In addition, some staff observed that their colleagues had varying levels of understanding on MEL and reporting processes, which meant that some staff needed additional training.

Measuring Co-Benefits

Quantifying the benefits of integration depends on a robust MEL system and may be challenging to assess within the project's five-year timeframe. One of the project's next challenges is measuring the cross-sectoral linkages across its four different funding streams and activities to evaluate which interventions support integrated programming and advance biodiversity conservation and to analyze how integration helps to achieve the mission's development objectives.

Although staff considered re-designing some indicators to capture broader cross-sectoral integration, that approach would have layered additional "integration indicators" on top of the MEL plan's existing 50+ indicators, which staff ultimately thought would be too burdensome for the implementing partner. Still, the IGBZ project has completed a baseline survey and its MEL plan aims to capture whether or not integration approaches have led to additional co-benefits. The Gorongosa Project has also invested in creating a new MEL integrated database. Although it is too soon to know whether the project's integrated approach has generated additional benefits, future analysis has the potential to highlight entry points and incentives for biodiversity conservation.

Addressing Attribution

Attribution represents a challenge for individual USAID sectors and for USAID as a whole. In an integrated project, sectors may not always receive the same recognition for their efforts as in a single-sector project. Further, given the Gorongosa Project's high profile, staff said promoting the GDA partnership in Gorongosa Project communications and explicitly acknowledging USAID funded activities is often challenging. The implementing partner observed that project beneficiaries are not always familiar with the sponsors of Gorongosa Project activities and may be unaware that USAID has supported activities from which they have benefitted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on their experiences, USAID/Mozambique staff recommended several actions for other missions interested in pursuing integration. These recommendations focus on formalizing staff roles and responsibilities and increasing communication and CLA opportunities.

Throughout design, implementation and evaluation:

- Develop and formalize a process-oriented protocol to clarify staff roles and responsibilities. The protocol would facilitate direct line management for integration tasks, set timeframes for reviewing documents and ensure that staff, and their supervisors, are aware of staff commitments to the project.
- Establish an integrated working group that meets regularly to facilitate more consistent communication and meetings.
- Continue to support the biodiversity AOR's role as a communication bridge who reaches out to different activity leads and staff at all levels of the project on a regular basis.
- Continue to ensure support from the Program Office to facilitate additional coordination and collaboration.

As part of monitoring and evaluation efforts:

- Maintain annual review meetings and facilitate additional formal opportunities for staff to convene to pause and reflect on progress and challenges and ensure more frequent CLA opportunities. Staff suggested holding review meetings bi-annually to increase opportunities for reflection and learning.
- Continue to engage MEL staff in project meetings and field visits to incorporate their perspectives and to promote a MEL approach that facilitates learning.

SECTION FOUR: LESSONS LEARNED

Staff universally agreed that the additional effort of working on an integrated project was worth it.

Although some dynamics are unique to the IGBZ project, other factors and approaches can be leveraged by USAID missions and offices that are interested in learning how to better integrate biodiversity for effective and sustainable development outcomes.

First, USAID/Mozambique integrated project components over time. The IGBZ project initially focused on integrating three sectors, which allowed the project time to “find its feet” and discover how to collaborate across sectors. As the biodiversity AOR put it, “pulling together three or four or five funding streams is ambitious and you do not want to put too much on a young project.” In the project’s second year, mission staff and the implementing partner revisited the linkages between the education sector’s priorities and biodiversity conservation; after a series of conversations, the GDA agreement and budget were modified in 2017 to include an education component. This experience suggests that missions may want to focus initial integration efforts on two to three sectors and then gradually consider whether additional integration would be beneficial.

A second lesson is the importance of staff at all levels visiting the project site. When high-level staff, such as the Ambassador, mission director and deputy mission director, visited the Gorongosa Project, these staff then advocated for and promoted the IGBZ project. Further, individuals stressed the benefits of activity managers and staff from the Program Office and Financial Management Office in participating in joint site visits. Such visits brought together different teams and sectors, increased staff awareness of cross-sectoral priorities and activities and contributed to increased collaboration across sectors. These experiences underscore how field visits can generate additional support, facilitate conversations about integration and relationships among project staff, and enhance understanding of integration benefits.

Third, staff highlighted a culture of openness, receptivity to listen to creative ideas and activities, and individuals’ ability to understand and appreciate work outside of their sectors as instrumental in designing and implementing integration. Mission staff felt that this culture of openness and receptivity influenced the implementing partner to become more adaptive in its work as well. Further, individuals demonstrated a willingness to invest additional effort in developing and implementing the project, from following up with sectors to ensure their technical inputs into the work plan to continuing to refine the MEL plan. Although these personal and cultural dynamics can be difficult to concretely identify, much less promote, USAID/Mozambique’s experience underscores the importance of creating an environment that encourages staff and the implementing partner to think and work creatively across sectors and to recognize and reward staff who invest additional time and effort in ensuring project success.

Further, a successful integration project can foster additional integration efforts, both within a mission and within the wider donor community. Several staff said the IGBZ project has helped to foster additional integration among USAID offices, such as between the Agriculture, Environment and Business Office and the Education, Democracy and Governance Office. In addition, USAID has shared the IGBZ experience with donor partners in Mozambique and is beginning to promote an integrated approach across the broader donor community and with the Government of Mozambique.

The park’s high-profile public-private partnership and strong relationship with the host government offer lessons learned for other USAID staff working with high-profile areas or partners. On the one hand, it is an opportunity: attention on GNP has helped to attract



Mike Marchington presents at the Cross-GDA Learning Review Workshop in March 2018. Photo by Susanna Jolly.

donors to the project and scientific researchers to the park; the latter has facilitated significant education and training opportunities for Mozambicans, increased scientific understanding of the GNP and provided income generating opportunities for the buffer zone communities. On the other hand, managing high-profile partnerships that have strong Congressional interest may require a greater degree of awareness of political realities in both the host country and in Washington. Such partnerships also necessitate increased staff time to ensure that all partners share a common understanding of project aims and activities.

Finally, staff universally agreed that the additional effort of working on an integrated project was worth it. Although some described integration as labor and time intensive, they did not view these efforts as a burden. Most staff described integration as an exciting opportunity, saying it provided them with new ways to describe their work and opportunities to tie their activities to other sectors. At the same time, some individuals cautioned that an integrated approach may not always be appropriate for all USAID missions. They

explained that USAID missions should not be mandated to implement integrated approaches but should proactively decide whether an integrated approach is appropriate for the country and the project. On the whole, however, staff stressed that the extra effort invested in the project's design and implementation was worthwhile in advancing the project and building a stronger, integrated approach.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

During project creation, Mission staff and the implementing partner developed a situation model, results chain and theory of change, which established the use of evidence-informed decision-making and future opportunities for learning.

Learning is embedded into the USAID/Mozambique CDCS and “built into the DNA” of the project.

Next steps: One of the IGBZ project’s next challenges is to use its MEL plan to analyze how integration has helped to achieve the project’s development objectives.

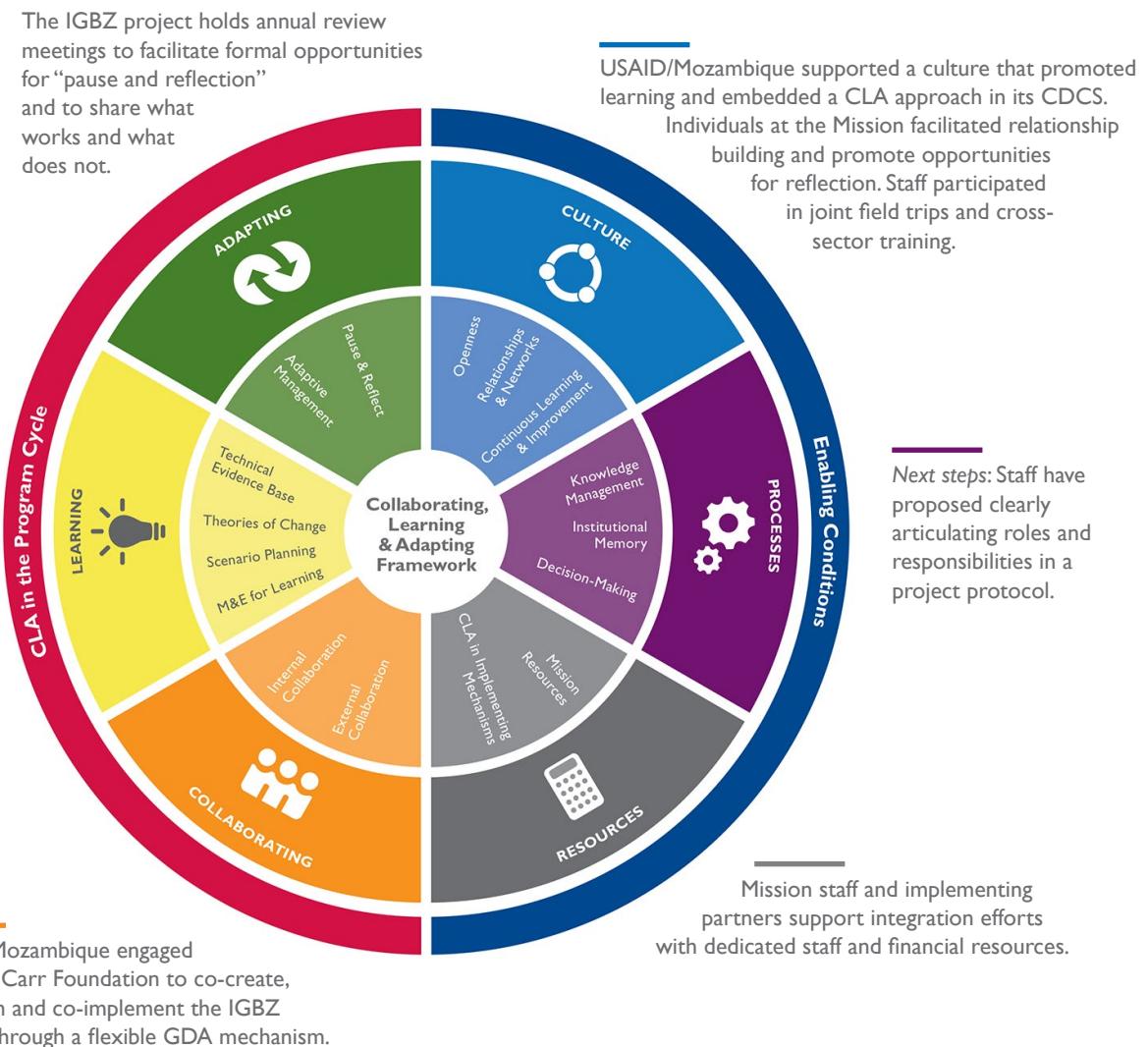


FIGURE 3: CLA FRAMEWORK ILLUSTRATING USAID/MOZAMBIQUE ACTIONS

In summary, the IGBZ project exemplifies co-designed, co-funded and co-located integration across biodiversity conservation, agriculture, health and education. The IGBZ project explicitly links biodiversity conservation in the park with development activities in the buffer zone to strengthen natural resources management and improve food security, nutrition, health and education.

USAID/Mozambique advanced integration in several key ways. In particular, the mission advanced

integration through strong institutional support, including both high-level and high-profile support and internal champions; flexible funding mechanisms; and a culture of inclusiveness in which staff built relationships across sectors in combination with a mission culture of promoting CLA. Although it is too soon to evaluate whether integration in GNP has yielded additional co-benefits, USAID/Mozambique’s experience offers insights and lessons for other USAID missions and offices interested in learning how to better integrate biodiversity for improved development outcomes.

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Impalas. Photo by USAID Mozambique

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