

Learns is Learning

Quarterly Updates

USAID Learns

Monitoring, Evaluation,
Collaborating, Learning
& Adapting

April - June
2021

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Photo: Participants sharing feedback on the new USAID Saving Threatened Species activity during the Strategic Alignment Validation Exercise (SAVE), May 5, 2021 (photo credit: USAID Learns)

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Recent Highlights: Getting Local Buy-In

Over the last quarter, USAID Learns spent time supporting USAID/Vietnam and implementing partners (IPs) in collaborating with local stakeholders, conducting research and evaluations, and providing monitoring, capacity building, and other facilitation services. The stories below highlight some of the recent ways USAID Learns is adding value in support of better programming and, ultimately, results.

USAID/Vietnam, IPs, and Government of Vietnam (GVN) stakeholders align strategic priorities for three new activities in the environment and higher education sectors.



Image: Participant discussion at the USAID Saving Threatened Species SAVE facilitated by USAID Learns

Building off the findings of the [GVN Project Approval Study](#), USAID Learns helped facilitate collaboration between USAID/Vietnam, new IPs, and the GVN to ensure GVN buy-in on new activities prior to award. Through this approach - known as the SAVE (strategic alignment validation exercise) - USAID/Vietnam hopes to ease IP efforts in obtaining project approval after award by identifying the managing agency, introducing the IP to the GVN, and obtaining GVN buy-in on activity objectives.



NEXT STEPS

USAID Learns is working in close consultation with the Office of Acquisition & Assistance (OAA) to develop a SAVE Toolkit for USAID Agreement/Contracting Officer's Representatives (A/CORs) by September 2021

This quarter, USAID Learns supported three SAVES for new USAID activities - Saving Threatened Species, Collective Impact to Reduce Environmental Pollution, and Partnership for Higher Education Reforms. Each process was slightly different but all resulted in USAID and IPs obtaining GVN input to help finalize the awards.



APPRECIATION

Special thanks to Bruce Gelband (head of OAA) for his overall leadership and guidance on SAVES; to USAID A/CORs including Thao Nguyen, Duong Nguyen, and Thang Nguyen; the IPs World Wildlife Fund, Winrock International, and Indiana University; and GVN counterparts

GVN counterparts appreciated the extra effort to engage them earlier in the process. A representative from the managing agency for the USAID Saving Threatened Species activity stated that the SAVE workshop helped him and his colleagues understand the technical approach and provided space to listen to feedback from across different stakeholder groups.

Throughout the process, USAID/Vietnam and USAID Learns documented templates used, lessons learned, and tips for future SAVES.

Recent Highlights: MEL Planning & Peer Learning



USAID Learns supports alignment between the Mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP) and Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plans (AMELPs)

Last quarter, during the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Officer (MELO) gathering with IPs, USAID/Vietnam shared highlights from the Mission's PMP, the guiding document for how the Mission monitors, evaluates, and learns from implementation. This quarter, USAID Learns supported IPs to align their AMELPs to the PMP. This included promoting an understanding of shared indicators; reviewing and advising on the updates; and providing guidance on the development of beneficiary feedback plans, a new USAID requirement.



Image: USAID/Vietnam [Performance Management Principles](#) in the PMP



USAID IPs share knowledge and experience on collaborative work planning with GVN counterparts

USAID Learns supported USAID/Vietnam to host a webinar on collaborative work planning with the GVN. This session attracted nearly 130 participants from IPs and USAID. The peer learning session featured two USAID IPs - Winrock International (Vietnam Forests & Deltas) and PATH (Healthy Markets) - sharing their approaches to collaborative work planning with the GVN. IP participants also shared their "do's" and "don'ts" based on their experience. 100 percent of post-event survey respondents considered this webinar helpful, with several sharing appreciative comments praising the session as an opportunity to learn from other organizations and well-timed to the current work planning cycle.



RESOURCES: Links to all resources supported by USAID Learns in this quarter can be found on page 5, including the new AMELP template and slide deck from the webinar on collaborative work planning

APPRECIATION: Many thanks to Winrock International and PATH for sharing their experiences with the entire IP community!

Our Plans for Next Quarter

The following table is an illustrative list of upcoming tasks for USAID Learns in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year.

Research & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trade Facilitation Program Mid-Term Evaluation (ongoing)• Disabilities Quality of Life Baseline (complete design)• Tuberculous Private Sector Engagement Assessment (final)• BUILD-IT Sustainability Review (final)
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data quality assessments (DQAs) (ongoing)• AMELP support (ongoing)• Most Significant Change pilot completion and scale-up decision
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IPs needs assessment survey sent out• Support to USAID on site visit tools and resources• Roll out of the Development Information Solution (DIS) training• Training for new IPs in context-driven adaptation• MEL Officers' July gathering
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize SAVE tools• Facilitate disability partner collaboration on rehabilitation training• Facilitate an additional SAVE for new health programming• Facilitate a roundtable for USAID on local capacity development

New Resources for USAID/Vietnam and IPs

Below are some useful resources (with embedded links) that USAID Learns has supported USAID/Vietnam in developing in recent months.



Research & Evaluations

The most recently completed research and evaluation assignments are found on [USAID/Vietnam's website](#). Next quarter, the Vietnam Forests & Deltas final evaluation will be added.



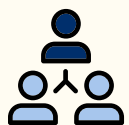
Performance Management

USAID/Vietnam performance management principles: These principles are part of USAID/Vietnam's PMP, and guide the implementation of USAID/Vietnam's approach to performance management. For more information on the principles, [see this blog](#) posted to USAID Learning Lab.

Managing towards results: Getting familiar with USAID/Vietnam PMP: While the Mission's PMP is not a public document, [this slide deck](#) and [associated materials](#) from the quarter two MEL Officer's gathering provides highlights on the Mission's approach to performance management and how that flows down to IPs.

New AMELP template: USAID/Vietnam's [Activity MEL Plan template](#) is now updated in line with recent changes to USAID's operational policy (ADS 201).

Developmental Evaluation - An Approach to Learning and Adapting in Complex Programming: If you are interested to learn more about developmental evaluation, you can view [this webinar](#) introducing the approach to USAID/Vietnam staff.



Collaborative Work Planning

Collaborative work planning with GVN partners: USAID Learns supported USAID/Vietnam to host a webinar on undertaking collaborative work planning with the GVN. For more information, see page 2, [the slide deck from the session](#), and [the recording](#).

Our Why.

About USAID Learns

We exist to help USAID/Vietnam and partners achieve better development results.

To effectively implement the USAID/Vietnam Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2020-2025, the Mission has contracted an institutional support mechanism, USAID Learns, to act as a force multiplier for the Mission and over 40 activities. USAID Learns staff and consultants provide ongoing technical assistance in Program Cycle processes: strategy, project, and activity design; monitoring; research and evaluation; collaborating, learning & adapting (CLA).

The ultimate 'why' of USAID Learns is to contribute to more sustainable and locally-owned development results in USAID's programming. Our team does this by:



Advancing evidence-informed decision-making



Strengthening collaboration between USAID, Implementing Partners (IPs), and local stakeholders



Improving staff knowledge and skills in monitoring, research and evaluation, and CLA



ADDITIONAL
RESOURCE

For more information on USAID Learns' services and who to contact if you need support, please [click here](#).